

Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries

Country: Bulgaria
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Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the Thematic report on the implementation of EU Employment Strategy in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the European Employment Strategy from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in support of disability policy mainstreaming. More specifically, the report will review implementation of EU Employment Strategy and the PROGRESS initiative with reference to policy implementation evidence from European countries, including the strategies addressed in the EU Disability Action Plan (such as flexicurity and supported employment).

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

New quantitative data:

The situation with disability statistics remains unchanged – inconsistencies are still in place and different sources release different numbers, which is due to the lack of harmonisation in definitions and lack of understanding for social dimensions and their impact on disabled people. Such a statement can be found in comprehensive research commissioned by the Agency for Disabled People (ADP) in 2009, where the number of people with permanent disabilities is estimated at 715.500, which is 9,31% of the entire country's population. At the same time, according to the National Social Security Institute (NSSI), the number of pensions for "health reasons and disability" in 2008 was 945 926, which is a decrease of 1,7% compared with 2007, when this number was reported at the level of 962 422. The Social Assistance Agency (responsible for disability allowances transfers) reports cash transfers to 477.429 disabled adults with over 71% lost ability to work.¹ It is very hard to judge the number of disabled people (as defined by the UN Convention). This also makes it difficult to develop new policies and plan financially for them.

It is necessary to note, again, that disabilities are not included in the mainstream labour and employment reports of the National Statistics Institute (NSI), which are issued on quarterly basis.² Any research requires a special effort of writing a request under the Access to Public Information Act.

There is no substantial change in numbers and trends concerning the employment of disabled people. Given the lack of general disability data it is hard to calculate (precisely) the employment-unemployment rates, though according to the Employment Agency the average monthly employment rate among disabled people in 2008 was 5.3% (as compared to 5.0% in 2007).³ In 2008, again, almost half of the unemployed disabled people (45,6%) had only completed basic education and only 8,7% had a university degree, while 49,4% had no professional training or qualifications at all.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) Annual Report for 2008 says that 33 jobs for disabled people were created⁴ whereas ADP reports over 80 jobs opened with funding worth €143.165 for adaptations at the work place (accessibility, equipment and access to employment).⁵ Using the ADP data it appears that a job for a disabled person costs between €1.200 and €1.700. As an educated guess, it could be concluded that people with extensive disabilities were not among the employees, given the low level of technical aids available, inaccessible urban environments (including transport) and lack of personal assistance at work. In addition, this example shows the data discrepancies which exist in the information released within one ministry alone.⁶

Special enterprises – private entities with a requirement for a certain share of disabled employees – continue to receive subsidies and tax breaks.

In 2009 there were 230 such enterprises, which employed around 2.500 disabled people. There is no information in the public domain that shows the size of subsidies for these special work settings.⁷

The quota system continues to be exploited as an instrument for employment of disabled people.

¹ BG 2996/018-343.05.01 Capacity Building of the Agency for Disabled People to Plan and Implement the State Disability Policy, May 2009; Complex Analytical Report; <http://ahu.mlsp.government.bg> (last check – 21st October 2009)

² National Statistics Institute, http://www.nsi.bg/Labour_e/Labour_e.htm (last check - 27th October 2009)

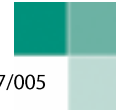
³ Official letter dated 12th May 2009 in response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act

⁴ MLSP Annual 2008 Report; www.mlsp.government.bg

⁵ Agency for Disabled People, response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act dated July 2009.

⁶ Agency for Disabled People, response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act dated July 2009.

⁷ Agency for Disabled People, response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act dated July 2009.



Again, there is no quantitative data on this type of employment and there is no monitoring and evaluation to establish how effective and efficient this measure is. Based on information from the Labour Inspection Office, there is no revenue generated from penalties for violation of quota requirements.⁸

It is worth restating here that disability status is associated with retirement regardless of the age, which often disrupts the real picture of employment status among disabled people. There is evidence showing that many disabled pensioners, though at working age, do not apply for a job at all, even less think about registering at the Employment Office as unemployed.⁹

New policy changes:

2008 was an election year for Bulgaria – both for the European and National Parliaments. This prevented politicians from introducing any decisive new policies, including those to do with disabilities. Thus the new Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008 – 2015 is a “copy-paste” document of the previous one although it was meant to be a continuation.¹⁰ The document has been drawn up without any evaluation of the results achieved by the previous strategy and without proper consultations with disability organisations. It even lacks a reference to the previous strategy. Most of the political parties’ platforms/programmes did not mention disabilities in particular: they focused on “combating the implications of the economic crisis” and stating measures for “social inclusion” in general.

Minor changes in legislation were introduced with the intention of solving legal implementation problems but the system remains unaltered, with disabilities still viewed as a medical problem.

New research evidence:

Disabilities in Bulgaria 2000 – 2008, National Centre for Health Information, 2009 (to be released).

BG 2996/018-343.05.01 Capacity Building of the Agency for Disabled People to Plan and Implement the State Disability Policy, May 2009; Complex Analytical Report is a result of a PHARE funded project and represents an overall review of the disability policies as run by the Government.

Evaluation of Assistance Services for Disabled People – an initiative included in a larger project implemented by the Centre for Independent Living to assess the existing assistance services in Bulgaria provided under different programmes.

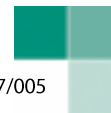
The economic crisis:

The economic crisis in 2008 was heavily underestimated and no measures were taken until middle of 2009 when massive lay-offs started and Parliamentary elections had taken place. The overall unemployment grew by 7% with no specific mention of its disability component. It could be speculated though that – due to the legal protection of disabled people – not many of them will lose their jobs but the ultimate results are still to be seen.

⁸ Labour Inspection Office, response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act dated July 2009.

⁹ BG 2996/018-343.05.01 Capacity Building of the Agency for Disabled People to Plan and Implement the State Disability Policy, May 2009; Complex Analytical Report; <http://ahu.mlsp.government.bg> (last check – 21st October 2009)

¹⁰ Mladenov, T., Anatomy of the Copy-Paste Policy: About the “New” Strategy for the Disabled People; http://www.cil.bg/userfiles/nabliudatelnitsa/Anatomiq_na_copy-paste_politikata.pdf



PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

1.1 Academic publications and research reports (key points)

The Bulgarian portfolio of disability research documents is still quite thin – generally, as well as by types of disabilities or by social areas (not employment), although a couple of new research papers have been released in 2008/2009. It was only in 2001 that the national census data included disabilities as an indicator in its data collection forms and reported that 263,143 Bulgarians have a medically identified disability. Later in 2005 the National Statistical Institute performed a Disability Research (www.nsi.bg) aimed at determining the health and social status of disabled people in Bulgaria and the possibilities for their integration but refrained from making policy recommendations.

In 2005, the Open Society Institute (EUMAP and Mental Health Initiative) in cooperation with the Open Society Foundation - Sofia and the Bulgarian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (BAPID) issued a monitoring report called Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities: Access to Education and Employment (2005-06) (http://www.eumap.org/reports/2005/inteldis_country/bulgaria). It represents a comprehensive overview of the legislative framework related to education and employment, public policies implemented in the area and 36 recommendations for improvement. The key findings conclude that people with intellectual disabilities have no access to proper education and training, which results in almost 100% unemployment rate within this social group of disabled people. The few employed usually occupy low-paid jobs in sheltered workshops.

The above research involved also the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, which is active in policy monitoring of mental disabilities and institutionalisation of disabled children, psychiatric hospitals and institutions for people with mental health problems (www.bghelsinki.org) though not focusing especially on employment.

The International Disability Rights Monitor (IDRM) for 2007 (<http://www.ideanet.org>) performed by the Centre for International Rehabilitation (CIR) in Chicago, US, covered fourteen European countries and Bulgaria was one of them.

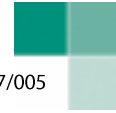
It could be well summarised that domestic research is almost non-existent – at least what is made available publicly. Most of the research results come from international sources and are funded internationally. On the other hand there is little interest on the part of local researchers and research institutes to study disabilities from social perspective, including employment. There is not much funding allocated for disability research either – government is not pushed effectively to invest in research, private donors are interested in action, whilst post-research action is hardly ever noticeable. So far no evidence could be found that public policies have been seriously questioned by influential actors (EC for instance) on the grounds of unreliable data, irrelevancy or inconsistency.

The following papers came out in 2008 and 2009:

Disabilities in Bulgaria 2000–2008, National Centre for Health Information, 2009 (to be released soon) – statistical data on newly certified disabled people broken down by regions, health status (diagnosis), age.

BG 2996/018-343.05.01 Capacity Building of the Agency for Disabled People to Plan and Implement the State Disability Policy, May 2009; this complex Analytical Report is a result of a PHARE funded project and represents an overview of the Government's disability policies.

Evaluation of Assistance Services for Disabled People provided on the grounds of legal regulations in Bulgaria – Centre for Independent Living, Sofia.



1.2 Employment statistics and trends (key points)

The situation with disability statistics remains unchanged – there are still inconsistencies and different sources provide different numbers, which is due to the lack of harmonisation in definitions and lack of understanding for social dimensions and their impact on disabled people. The NSI research of 2005 covered 3,000 people at the age of 16 to 64. 92% of them fall into the age group of 16–64 years. It found that 51% percent of the disabled male population and 49% of disabled women have low educational levels (up to primary education). 43% of disabled men and 42% of disabled women had completed high school education. Differences occurred in university education levels, where 6% of men with disabilities and 10% of women with disabilities have a university degree.

Disability pension is the main source of income for 72% of the respondents, 8% rely on support from another person, 8% receive salary for work or pension for work. Only 13% of the respondents are currently employed, i.e. remuneration for job. 8% of all employed are involved in subsidised programmes.

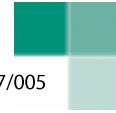
Comprehensive research commissioned by the Agency for Disabled People (ADP) estimates the number of people with permanent disabilities in 2009 at 715,500, which is 9.31% of the entire country's population. At the same time, according to the National Social Security Institute (NSSI), the number of pensions for 'health reasons and disability' in 2008 was 945,926, which is a decrease of 1.7% compared with 2007, when this number was reported at the level of 962,422. The Social Assistance Agency (responsible for disability allowances transfers) reports cash transfers to 477,429 disabled adults with over 71% lost ability to work.

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In order to raise people with disabilities' competitiveness on the labour market, vocational training programmes have been launched. These are based on targeted projects for unemployed disabled people and usually cover computer skills, specific professional skills (for example, accounting), foreign languages, etc. Their duration is limited to 2–3 months. NGOs and training providers licensed by the Vocational Training Agency are eligible for funding.

The research report says also that only 6% of the employed receive special on-the-job support, whereas 16% admit a need of such. 14% of the latter cannot specify the type of support needed, another 12% look for moral support and the same number claim a need for help related to their job. Still different but serious problem for disabled people constitutes the infrastructure – for 5% only it is accessible, 46% encounter difficulties, 24% judge it as entirely inaccessible. Almost a third of the respondents think that they can do certain type of work. The overwhelming preferences go for permanent job contracts (75%) in the public or private sector, 22% share no preferences and 3% only would like to develop their own business. 11% of the disabled in the sample are willing to join vocational training programmes with the top priority given to computer courses (58%), foreign language courses (13%), accountancy and business related trainings (7%).



The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) Annual Report for 2008 says that 33 jobs for disabled people were created whereas ADP reports over 80 jobs opened with funding worth €143,165 for adaptations at the work place (accessibility, equipment and access to employment). Using the ADP data it appears that a job for a disabled person costs between €1,200 and €1,700. As an educated guess, it could be concluded that people with extensive disabilities were still not among the employees, given the low level of technical aids available, inaccessible urban environments (including transport) and lack of personal assistance at work. In addition, this example shows the data discrepancies which exist in the information released within one ministry alone.

Due to the lack of reliable statistics it is hard to estimate current rates of unemployment among people with all types of disabilities, though the National Action Plan on Employment for 2008 reports their average number for the first nine months of 2007 at 14,928 and for the whole year – 14,414, which is by 9.4% less than in 2003. The same government document says that the unemployment rate among disabled people over the last three years is approximately 5% of the overall number of registered unemployment. These numbers could be misleading, however, given that most of the disabled people are pensioners and anecdotal evidence shows that when unemployed they are refused registration with the Labour Offices.

The government does not have reliable statistics to back up its policies, which in turn does not allow independent researchers to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of these policies with consistent methodologies – when this happens it is usually concluded on the grounds of extrapolations, assumptions and partial data. Official data could be obtained from special reports issued and posted on the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (MLSP) (www.mlsp.government.bg) and its agencies – the Employment Agency (www.az.government.bg) and the Agency for Disabled People (www.ahu.mlsp.government.bg). Primary data however is available upon request under the Access to Public Information Act, which is a time-consuming exercise requiring an individual letter of request to each institution separately.

The main reason for the above situation could be identified in the very definition of disability, which is explicitly medical – disability status is granted as ‘percentage of lost ability to work’ on the basis of medical diagnosis alone without any assessment reference to the environment. Furthermore, disability status is one of the eligibility criteria for all relevant benefits (except for monthly integration allowance – a negligible amount of money), including free public transport, tax relieves, access to rehabilitation, technical aids or support for daily activities.

This leads to a situation where the statistical group of ‘disabled people’ is comprised of people with lasting health problems and people with impairments (disabled as defined by the UN Convention), all under the same statistical heading. Thus ‘employment rates among disabled people’ include all employees with disability status regardless of their impairment, which in turn blurs the picture of unemployment – most people with severe disabilities are unemployed, not to mention those with intellectual disabilities (OSI Report of 2005).

It is commonly believed that disability-related prejudices among employers account for the high unemployment rates among disabled people. Though it might be true, this assumption has never been tested in Bulgaria through qualitative research, interviews with employers, etc. There is, however, hard evidence in support of other reasons for disabled people not being able to find a job: (1) on individual level - low education, lack of working experience and social skills; and (2) on environmental and policy level – inaccessible built environment and transport, lack of adequate technical aids and personal support on the job.



1.3 Laws and policies (key points)

Most of the Bulgarian legislation passed after 1990 includes antidiscrimination clauses and the regulations related to employment are no exceptions. Article 2 of the Employment Promotion Act states that ‘when this law is implemented no direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, age, gender, religion, political or trade unions affiliation, social and family status, physical or mental disabilities, is allowed’.¹¹

The Labour Code also deals with the employment of disabled people. It introduced the quota system, which applies to businesses with 50 plus workers employed and requires them to reserve 4% of the jobs for ‘people with reduced working abilities’. It also provides for protection against dismissal – no matter what the reason for this is, the employer has to go through a hard procedure to acquire an approval of the Labour Inspection Office and the Expert Medical Panel. There is circumstantial evidence that this procedure discourages employers from having disabled people in the business despite the state agencies’ loose control, which results in no fines for non-compliance with this requirement. As in some other countries, some companies circumvent their quota obligations by placing orders with special enterprises.

The Law on Integration of Disabled People contains a whole section on employment where mainstream employment is mentioned, the quota system and special enterprises are regulated in a comprehensive manner.¹² Its Article 25 requires the Agency for Disabled People to keep a record of special enterprises and to provide funding for their business development projects on the top of the subsidies granted by virtue of having disabled people on the payroll.

Further, taxation laws stipulate incentives for the self-employment of disabled people in addition to start-up business grants provided by the Agency for Disabled People. People with a disability status are entitled to double the normal tax-free income allowance.¹³ Employers of disabled people benefit from corporate tax relief proportionate to the number of the disabled people hired in the business, while special enterprises are totally exempted from paying corporate taxes on the profit they make, as well as from paying local taxes.¹⁴

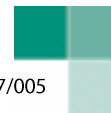
There are number of policy documents that contribute to the shaping of the labour market in Bulgaria. The Revised Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2008 – 2015 (www.mlsp.government.bg) and National Action Plan on Employment for 2008 (www.mlsp.government.bg) are the key documents that proclaim equal treatment in employment, flexecurity of the labour force, lifelong learning and improved opportunities for job accommodation of all Bulgarian citizens. The Strategy to Provide Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008-2015 <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/index.htm>, is designed to specify the measures to strengthen the position of the disabled people on the labour market. Its Goal 5 aims at ‘providing opportunities for employment of disabled people and their involvement in programmes for job search and accommodation’. The seven bullets formulate the key areas of intervention: improved efficiency of the employment programmes for disabled; better targeted incentives for the employers to hire disabled workers; change in attitudes of the employers; support for employers to adjust the working environment; promotion of training and lifelong learning among disabled people; increase in self-employment; promotion of social entrepreneurship. These priorities speak for themselves: disabled people will not yet enjoy the support they need to find and retain a job.

¹¹ Employment Promotion Act, prom. State Gazette 112, 29th December 2001, last amendments of 2006

¹² Special enterprises are commercial entities registered under the Bulgarian corporate law as trade companies or cooperatives which have a defined share (different according to the nature of impairment) of disabled workers in the overall employment. For example, enterprises for deaf people have to employ 30% of their workforce with disabilities, whereas this share in case of physical and visual impairments is 50%.

¹³ Individual Income Tax Act of 1st January 1998. The tax-free level of income was BGN 180 (Euro 90) for 2005.

¹⁴ Corporate Taxation Act of 5th December 1997.



These Strategy measures will benefit the employers' community, perhaps people with granted disability status, but it is quite unlikely that they will change the labour situation of people with profound disabilities in the years to come, as they haven't done so until now.

Low education levels, lack of professional experience and social skills, which make disabled people vulnerable in the labour market, are tackled by the government through vocational training programmes. Their objectives are to raise disabled people's competitiveness on the labour market. These are based on targeted projects for unemployed disabled people and usually cover computer skills, specific professional skills (for example, accounting), foreign languages, etc. Their duration is limited to 2–3 months. NGOs and training providers licensed by the Vocational Training Agency are eligible for funding. At the same time the Agency for Disabled People funds corporate business projects to adjust the working environment – to build ramps, to adapt and equip a working place to the needs of the disabled employee.

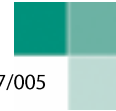
2008 was an election year for Bulgaria – both for the European and National Parliaments. This prevented politicians from introducing decisive new policies, including those to do with disability. Thus, the new Strategy on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008–2015 is a 'copy-paste' document of the previous one although it was meant to be a continuation. The document has been drawn up without evaluation of the results achieved by the previous strategy and without proper consultations with disability organisations. It even lacks a reference to the previous strategy. Most of the political parties' platforms/programmes did not mention disability in particular: they focused on 'combating the implications of the economic crisis' and stating measures for 'social inclusion' in general.

Minor changes in legislation were introduced with the intention of solving legal implementation problems but the system remains unaltered, with disability still viewed as a medical problem.

1.4 Type and quality of jobs (summary)

There is no national statistical data or research evidence that would accurately inform about the type and quality of jobs performed by disabled people, though given the reported low educational levels for the disabled community it could be assumed that these would be low qualification jobs, which implies also low salary ones. Government reports quote decreasing numbers of subsidised employment but fail to provide information on the number of disabled people employed in the open market.

There are 91 specialised enterprises employing 14,572 disabled people, the new Strategy to Provide Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008 – 2015 says. Most of them are associated with organisations of disabled people with officially acknowledged national representative status. In 2005, enterprises run by the Union of Deaf People received €267,000 for 14 projects, the Union of the Blind got funding for 9 projects worth €275,000, National Union of Cooperatives of Disabled People received €271,000 for 9 projects. Data for 2008/2009 show that special enterprises continue to be favoured through subsidies and tax breaks. In 2009 there were 230 such enterprises, which employed around 2,500 disabled people. The quota system also continues to be exploited as an instrument for employment of disabled people. Again, there is no quantitative data on this type of employment and there is no monitoring and evaluation to establish how effective and efficient this measure is. Based on information from the Labour Inspection Office, there is no revenue generated from penalties for violation of quota requirements.



PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

2.1 Reasonable accommodation in the workplace

Each year, the Agency for Disabled People is given a budget to finance adaptations on the workplace, access to the workplace, necessary equipments for disabled people on the job, etc. In 2005 the Agency reported that 49 individual mainstream business projects were funded at a total value of €120,000 to create accessible working environment. The size of funding, however is fixed at minimum level (for physical access to the work place €2,250; for adjustments on the work place €1,250 and for equipment at the work place: € 2,500) and regardless of the individual needs of the disabled person. There is no personal assistance or transportation allowance for disabled employees.

Currently the Employment Agency, along with the MLSP, run disability programmes that support the demand side of the labour market. Under these programmes, employers may apply for funding to employ disabled people with a commitment to maintain the job for 24-36 months. The allocated money is earmarked for minimum monthly salaries over 12 months plus social security contributions. However, disabled employees under these programs have no access to individual support on the job, such as personal assistance, mobility allowance, etc. It is reasonable to expect that people with health problems would constitute the major group of beneficiaries of such programs. The Employment Agency reports for 2005 that 1,313 people with disabilities got a job under their programmes and the budget for supporting employers amounted to approximately €1 million.

2.2 One example of best practice

There are isolated cases of successful and meaning employment of disabled people in the open market though the size of the phenomenon does not make them a 'good practice'. It is often the individual manager who makes things happen rather than the system.

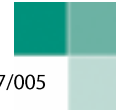


PART THREE: SUMMARY INFORMATION

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

Generally, disabled Bulgarians – referring to the UN Convention definition of disabilities – are still not included in the open labour market yet despite the growing size of funding allocated for the purpose. Most of the employment activation policies affect positively people with disability status, who do not need special adaptations, technical aids or personal assistance. Statistical data on employment of disabled people is scarce and questionable in terms of reporting methodology and accuracy. It is reasonable to assume that low education levels and lack of professional experience and social skills, account for the low employment rates among the disabled population. The existing welfare schemes and benefits for special enterprises are responsible for the preferred employment in sheltered facilities usually managed by non-disabled people. Substantial funding allocated for mainstream employers is not tailored to the needs of individual job applicants, which significantly diminishes its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. Lack of accessibility and individual on-the-job support makes people with profound disabilities lifelong outsiders for the open labour market.

In order to change the employment situation of disabled people new types of public support should be designed focusing on the individual needs of disabled people. In addition, access to mainstream education should be more widely open for children and young people with all kinds of impairments. And finally, the existing employment promotion programmes should be evaluated (from an inclusion perspective) and amended in a way that would accommodate the needs of all disabled people, including those with the most severe disabilities. Special attention should also be paid to the effectiveness of the quota system as a tool for disability employment policies. Extensive research should precede the process of revision suggested above. It should cover attitudes (on both sides – of employers and disabled people), levels of satisfaction and disabled citizens' aspirations.



3.2 References

Research on People with Disabilities in Bulgaria, National Statistics Institute, 2005
<http://www.nsi.bg/SocialActivities/Press.htm>

Employment of People with Disabilities in Bulgaria - Problems and Perspectives (Integrated vs. Specialised Employment), GEORGI SMATRAKALEV, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences - Institute of Economics
http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=265914

Rights of People with Intellectual Disabilities: Access to Education and Employment (2005-06); Open Society Institute (EUMAP and Mental Health Initiative) in cooperation with the Open Society Foundation - Sofia and the Bulgarian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (BAPID)
http://www.eumap.org/reports/2005/inteldis_country/bulgaria

IDRM: Regional Report of Europe, 2007; Centre for International Rehabilitation, Chicago;
<http://www.ideanet.org>

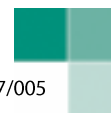
Strategy to Provide Equal Opportunities for Disabled People 2008-2015, Council of Ministers, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies <http://www.mlsp.government.bg/bg/docs/index.htm>

Revised Employment Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for 2008 – 2015, Council of Ministers, Sofia 2008 (www.mlsp.government.bg)

National Action Plan on Employment for 2008, Council of Ministers, Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Sofia 2008 (www.mlsp.government.bg)

BG 2996/018-343.05.01 Capacity Building of the Agency for Disabled People to Plan and Implement the State Disability Policy, May 2009; Complex Analytical Report (<http://ahu.mlsp.government.bg>)

Mladenov, T., Anatomy of the Copy-Paste Policy: About the 'New' Strategy for the Disabled People (http://www.cil.bg/userfiles/nabliudatelnitsa/Anatomiq_na_copy-paste_politikata.pdf)



Annex 1: quantitative data on the employment of disabled people (2008)

Year:	Absolute? (N)	Percentage (%)	Change (from previous year)
Disability rate (different sources provide different numbers)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Employment rate of disabled people	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Activity rate of disabled people	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Inactivity rate of disabled people ¹⁵	12.486	5,3	13,4%
Employment in open labour market ¹⁶	2.207	11,9	0,3%
Employment in sheltered workshop	2.500		
Reason for leaving the labour market due to disability or long standing health problem			

Year:	% Permanent	% Temporary
Permanent contracts vs. short term contracts	n.a.	n.a.

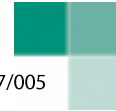
Year:	% Full-time	% Part-time
Full time vs. part time jobs	n.a.	n.a.

Year:	Public sector	Private sector	(e.g. comment or give % employers meeting obligations?)
Fulfilment of employment quota (if it exists)	n.a.	n.a.	

Participation in training of disabled people	998 disabled people are reported by the Employment Agency to be participating in training to get a job. MLSP 2008 Report cites a 3 times higher number.	(e.g. comment or give number of people participating in vocational or work-related employment)
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¹⁵ Employment Agency, response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act dated July 2009. This reflects the number of unemployed disabled people registered with the Labour Offices in the country.

¹⁶ Employment Agency, response to a request under the Access to Public Information Act dated July 2009. Numbers show disabled people in subsidized employment, which is earmarked for people with disability status.



Annex 2: 2008-9 laws and policies on the employment of disabled people

Name of law:	Law on Integration of Disabled People
Date of entering into force:	01.01.2005 (amended 18 times since then, last amendment dated 15th September 2009).
Objective:	Provides for integration of disabled people in all areas of public life – prevention, education, employment in mainstream environment, special enterprises, quotas, etc.; monthly integration allowances; organisations of disabled people. It imposes an obligation on the government to design and operate programmes promoting integration of disabled people.
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	Its implementation shows that the law does not help disabled people to get integrated because: (1) disability assessment procedure is regulated by the Ministry of Health and the disability status is granted on the basis of health condition; (2) individual assessment is not carried out from a social inclusion perspective; (3) financial support is set at very low levels for all beneficiaries at; (4) inclusive policies are left to the line ministries in charge for the provision of public services; (5) the Agency for Disabled People is not authorised to control the implementation of the law, which is at the discretion of line ministries.

Name of law:	Labour Code
Date of entering into force:	01.01.1987; last amendment dated 2nd June 2009.
Objective:	Regulates labour relations in general; provides for protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability; job protection for disabled people (does not allow termination of a labour contract with a disabled person without the consent of the Labour Inspection Office); quotas for disabled employees depending on the size of the employer.
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	The Code does not have any impact – quota requirements are not controlled, employers are not sanctioned; instead of having troubles with firing disabled people employers prefer not to hire them (this is an educated guess, since no impact assessment of this piece of legislation has been performed from disability perspective).

Name of law:	Employment Promotion Act
Date of entering into force:	01.01.2002; last amendment dated 15th September 2009.
Objective:	Promotes employment in general with special attention to vulnerable groups, one of which is disabled people. The Act allows for the design and implementation of programmes, which for the time being include training of unemployed people, subsidised jobs and support for the labour costs of the employers.
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	Currently there are three major programmes promoting employment of disabled people. They do help people with disability status find jobs but anecdotal evidence shows

	that these are not people with severe impairments who encounter environmental barriers. Further, employment is usually terminated with the end of the programme. All three programmes need in-depth assessment and evaluation of their impact.
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Name of law:	Social Assistance Act
Date of entering into force:	15.05.1998; last – 11th – amendment dated 15th September 2009.
Objective:	Provides help for low income families and for social services to vulnerable groups – day-care centres, sheltered and protected housing, home attendance, personal and social assistance.
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	From the perspective of social inclusion this legislation does not help disabled people to live in their communities since the services are delivered in institutional settings. There is no provision for support at work.

Annex 3: 2008-9 research/evaluation on the employment of disabled people

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Sofia Consult Group, Ikonomika 2000 Club and Vitosha Research, Review of the Situation of Disabled People in Bulgaria, May 2009
Key findings from the research:	Comprehensive analysis of the entire disability policy, in which employment is only one component. It concludes that there are too many “strategic” policy documents, which are not implemented; the institutional framework needs to be approved; reliable statistical data is noticeably missing; disability assessments require serious rethinking (there are no specific recommendation on this subject); employment policies help integration in the open labour market but need further tuning; social policies are not targeted well enough to bring about substantial change in the lives of disabled people. It is made up of two parts: a review of the policies and study of the disability population (on the basis of representative sample).
Comment or assessment:	As the very first effort commissioned by the Bulgarian government this research is extremely helpful with putting together the various components of the disability policies, including the perspective of the constituency. On the other hand it does not explicitly state the values and principles that researchers relate to in their findings – it tries to be “pragmatic” and “objective”. The report can be useful for reference in further analysis performed on areas of public life.
Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Publications of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: MLSP 2008 Report, Labour Offices Report
Key findings from the research:	These include some data on disabilities, showing success in policy implementation on the grounds of numbers – both expanded coverage and increased funding.
Comment or assessment:	Reports include data which differ from statistics provided by other sources – it is not clear which numbers are correct and what do they reflect.