



Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries

Country: Cyprus
Authors: Simoni Symeonidou

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).

PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

1.1 Academic publications and research reports (key points)

Unfortunately, a platform of disabled academics is not yet established in Cyprus. Thus, research in disability issues in general and issues regarding the employment of disabled people in particular is extremely limited. The most important publications regarding the employment of disabled people come from government representatives.

The Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2007) is an important source of information regarding the employment of disabled people. It provides detailed information about the activities of the Service for the Care of Disabled People, a department that belongs to the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. Regarding employment, the 2007 Annual Report describes the activities of the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and the existing programmes aiming to support disabled people's vocational training and employment.

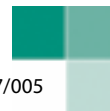
Another recent report comes from the Cyprus Workers' Confederation and describes part of the employment condition in Cyprus (Poulida and Theocharidou, 2006). It lists the relevant legislation regarding employment and it comments upon the activities and programmes of the Service for the Care of Disabled People. It also provides statistical data provided by the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind regarding employment. Poulida and Theocharidou, 2006: 6) end their report by listing the main challenges facing the employment of disabled people in Cyprus, which are:

- Limitation for job alternatives, even for disabled people that have received higher education
- Absence of qualified personnel to deal with the assessment of the abilities, needs and interests of disabled people, in order to provide appropriate counselling
- Lack of a rehabilitation centre with all necessary infrastructures that will provide vocational training in accordance to the needs of the labour market, and will take into account the employability prospects of each individual person
- Accessibility is another major challenge. The poor transportation network, the absence of appropriate sidewalks and the absence of easy access to buildings are some indicative barriers that prevent disabled people from their right of a full participation in the workplace.

It has already been mentioned that academic research in the area of employment is non-existent. However, a recent research project about the personal experience of disability and the experience in the disability movement in Cyprus (Symeonidou, 2005) grasps, among other issues, the personal experience of disabled people in finding and maintaining a job. As this was a qualitative historical research with an interpretive nature, disabled people with different types of impairments reflected on their life experiences and they unfolded mixed feelings throughout their journeys in finding a place in the workforce. This research project emphasizes disabled people's frustration in their efforts to find a job, their feelings of distress in the workplace due to stigmatization, their experience of unequal treatment in promotions and their relationships with their colleagues which varied. It also related disabled people's opportunities to receive University education – a difficult process for most of them and a dream that never came true for some of them – with their continuous efforts to find a 'descent' job.

Last but not least, there are a few websites that provide information about disabled people's employment conditions in Cyprus. The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance website (www.mlsi.gov.cy) provides information about the Service for the Care of Disabled People and it contains the basic legislative documents in full text. This website is in Greek, Turkish and English. In addition, there are a couple of websites developed as a result of international cooperation, but they should be handled with care as they are not constantly updated. One such website was developed by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (www.osha.europa.eu/en/campaigns/hwi/topic_integration_disabilities/cyprus) and it includes key documents, links to national providers of information on the topic and information about the "state of play" regarding the integration and retention of disabled workers in Cyprus. This website is in English. Another relevant website is Employ@bility (<http://www.intercol.edu/employability>) which provides a list of articles and legislative documents regarding employment in Cyprus. This website is in Greek.

In conclusion, research data about the employment opportunities and conditions in Cyprus is limited. There is an urgent need for academic research regarding the implementation of the existing legislations and the conflicts emerging as a result of piecemeal legislation for employment. Furthermore, disabled people's voice needs to be heard in research regarding employment as they have important experiences to share which are strongly related with the Cypriot culture and the lack of powerful political will for their full inclusion in the workplace.



1.2 Employment statistics and trends (key points)

Unfortunately, employment data regarding disabled people is restricted in Cyprus. The only official source for such data are the Annual Reports prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance year by year, but again, restricted statistical data is reported. In what follows, the statistical data recorded in the 2007 Annual Report (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2007) is summarized:

- Data about the proportion of disabled people employed in different areas of the economy: It is reported that in 2007, 4.3% of disabled people are employed in the protogenic sector (i.e. agriculture), 22.7% in the secondary sector (i.e. industry) and 73% in the tertiary sector (i.e. services). These percentages remain similar since 2002. Information is provided about the percentages of employment in specific job positions that correspond to each sector.
- Data about unemployed disabled people: It is reported that in 2007, there was a total of 12,017 disabled people who were registered as unemployed; 5,209 were men and 6,808 were women. Information is provided about the types of job positions that are related to the unemployment of disabled men and women.
- Data about the funds allocated through the programmes for supporting the employment of disabled people. It is reported that a budget of £126,642 was allocated to support 200 disabled people who participated in the programmes reported above (1 disabled person participated in the Disabled People's Self-Employment Programme, 7 disabled people participated in the Disabled People's Vocational Rehabilitation Programme in Areas not offered in the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and 192 disabled people participated in the Supported Employment Programme).

It is worth reporting that statistical data from Cyprus is also absent from European Reports, indicating the lack of such information. In particular, in the Study of Compilation of Disability Statistical Data from the 2007 Administrative Registers of the Member States of the European Union (APPLICA, CESEP and European Centre, 2007) data from Cyprus is not recorded in any of the areas investigated, including the share of disabled people in total population of working age, the share of employed disabled people in total employment, the share of unemployed disabled people in total unemployment, the share of inactive disabled people in total inactivity, and the employment, unemployment and inactivity rates among disabled people.

Another important report is the 2007 National Reform Programme of Cyprus Progress Report, prepared by the Planning Bureau (2007). In this report, the intentions of the Cypriot state make improvements or changes in different areas, including employment, are reported in detail. Once again, this national document which was submitted to the European Commission, does not mention the governmental plans about encouraging disabled people's inclusion in the workforce. Rather, it describes the intentions of the government to include women, migrants and EU citizens in the workforce.

In conclusion, there is urgency for meaningful statistical data regarding employment as such information is expected to add to the efforts for improving employment opportunities and



employment schemes for disabled people in Cyprus. Such data should be reliable, up to date and easy to access. It should also allow the comparison regarding the employment and unemployment between disabled and non-disabled people. Last but not least, it should cover different groups of the population such as disabled and non-disabled men and women, young and older disabled and non-disabled people, people with different kinds of impairments, people with congenital or acquired impairments and, disabled and non-disabled people who are migrants or from ethnic minorities.

1.3 Laws and policies (key points)

The first legislative documents about the employment of disabled people in Cyprus are dated in the mid-1980s and they were the result of pressures and negotiations on behalf of single-impairment organisations with the state (Symeonidou, 2005). As a result, for many years, there was piecemeal legislation giving priority to the hiring of different groups of disabled people in the Civil Service. It was not until the year 2000 that a general piece of legislation passed, safeguarding, among others, disabled people's rights in employment.

The 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) is the most important piece of legislation in Cyprus as it legitimizes disabled people's rights. It is in force together with the 2004 Disabled People's (Amended) Act (N.57(I)/2004). This legislation relies upon the principle of non-discrimination and it safeguards disabled people's inclusion in social-community life and employment. The 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) comprises of four parts: Employment, Establishment of a Council for Disabled People, Establishment of a Special Fund for Disabled People and Other Arrangements.

According to the 2000 Disabled People's Act (127(I)/2000), disability is described as any form of insufficiency or impairment causing permanent or of undefined duration physical, intellectual or mental barrier to a person, whose medical record and other personal data also decrease or eliminate the possibility of completing one or more activities considered as normal and vital for the quality of life of each person of the same age that does not have any kind of insufficiency or impairment.

The basic rights of disabled people recorded in the 2000 Disabled People's Act (127(I)/2000) are: early identification and treatment, provision of personal support, accessibility in the built environment, educational integration, accessibility in information and communication, vocational training and rehabilitation, descent living conditions, establishment of personal and family life and participation in cultural, social, sports, religious and entertainment activities [article 4(2)].

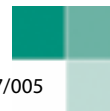
Regarding employment, the 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) legitimizes equal treatment regarding the procedure of applying for a job, hiring, promoting, firing, compensating, compilation and other terms and privileges concerning employment [article 5(1)]. It also encourages the development of vocational rehabilitation programmes to motivate the prospective employers of disabled people and the establishment of new work positions for disabled people in the civil service [article 5(2)α]. The 2004 Disabled People's (Amended) Act (N.57(I)/2004), clearly forbids any kind of direct or indirect discrimination in all areas related to employment and working conditions [article 5a].

Alongside the legislation described above, there are two legislations safeguarding ways of funding vocational rehabilitation and employment initiatives for disabled people. The first one is the Establishment of a Special Fund for the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People (N.103(I)/2000). The establishment of this Special Fund aimed in promoting vocational training and employment of disabled people through the development of relevant programmes falling in the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. In particular, the Special Fund sponsors the training workshops of the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People, promotes self-employment for disabled people, sponsors teams of disabled people who wish to run small businesses, supports any entertainment or sports activities held at the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and sponsors any other initiatives that promote the vocational rehabilitation of disabled people trained in the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People or elsewhere. The second legislation related to funding is the Establishment of Provident Lottery Fund Act (N.79(I)/1992) which establishes a Provident Fund aiming to provide further financial assistance to disabled people. This fund originates mainly from the release of a special lottery and from governmental grant. The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance allocates the necessary budget for education, vocational rehabilitation and evolution, social integration, financial aid and improvement of the level of living conditions of disabled people.

It has already been mentioned that piecemeal legislation regarding employment is still in force, giving priority to the hiring of different groups of disabled people in the Civil Service. In what follows, the most important acts are listed:

- The 1987 Civil Educational Service (Amended) Act (N.180/87, Amendatory Act of N.10/69 Civil Educational Service Act): It legitimizes a quota of 3% for hiring disabled people in the Civil Educational Service and a quota of 5% for hiring people who became disabled as a result of war.
- The 1988 Blind Telephone Operators Act (N.17/1988): It legitimizes the right of blind telephone operators who possess all the required qualifications to have a priority whenever there are vacancies of telephone operators in the Civil Service, the Civil Educational Service, and in legal persons of public right. In case that there are no blind candidates, other disabled people can be employed according to priority, having in mind that they possess all the necessary qualifications.
- The 1990 Civil Service Act (N.1/1990): It gives priority to the hiring of disabled people in the cases they demonstrate equal qualifications with other candidates.
- The 1992 Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and Depended Persons of Killed, Missing, Disabled and Pent Persons Act (N.53(I)/1992): It legitimizes a quota of 10% for the hiring in the Civil Service of disabled people and depended persons of killed, missing, disabled and pent persons.
- The 1997 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Disabled People and Children of Missing Persons Act (N.55(I)/97)
- The 1998 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Victims and Children of Pent Persons (N.100(I)/1998): It legitimizes a quota of 10% for the hiring in the Civil Service of war (disabled) victims and children of pent persons.

Last but not least, the Cyprus Parliament is committed in adopting European and International Conventions regarding the rights of disabled people regarding employment.



1.4 Type and quality of jobs (summary)

Commenting upon different types of employment opportunities for disabled people in Cyprus is a rather difficult task as the existing sources of information are restricted. Arguably, there are two main initiatives towards this end.

To begin with, there is only one state centre for the training and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people, the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People. According to the 2007 Annual Report (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2007), the areas of vocational training provided are: shoe making, furniture making, carpentry, sewing and embroidery making. It is also reported that in 2007 there were three workshops and the average training time was twelve months. In 2007, thirty six disabled people were trained in the Centre. According to the 2007 Annual Report, the Centre also employs disabled trainees who are able to participate in production and it allocates them a production allowance alongside a training allowance.

Apart from the sheltered employment provided at the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People, there are two other sheltered employment workshops directed to people with specific types of impairments: sheltered employment for people with visual impairments who were trained to make items out of straw (i.e. baskets, bassinets etc.) and sheltered employment for people with hearing impairments who were trained in carpentry and furniture making.

According to the 2007 Annual Report (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2007), in 2007 the Service for the Care of Disabled People continued to run programmes promoting the vocational rehabilitation of disabled people. Such programmes are:

- Disabled People's Self-Employment Programme: This programme allocates £2000 to persons with serious impairments who wish to be self-employed. It also sponsors loan interests of £300 for five years.
- Disabled People's Vocational Rehabilitation Programme in Areas not offered in the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People: This programme allocates £1000 to disabled people who wish to be trained in areas not offered at the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People.
- Supported Employment Programme: This programme allocates £7000 to organisations who wish to provide services in supported employment for disabled people with serious impairment in the form of personal guidance and support in the open market.
- Establishment and Functioning of Small Business Units for the Self-Employment of Disabled People: This programme allocates £3000 to disabled people wishing to establish a small business unit. It also sponsors loan interests of £200 annually for seven years. In cases of teams of disabled people, £500 are allocated for each additional person.

According to the 2007 Annual Report, in 2007 a budget of £126,642 was allocated to support 200 disabled people who participated in the programmes reported above. In particular, 1

disabled person participated in the Disabled People's Self-Employment Programme, 7 disabled people participated in the Disabled People's Vocational Rehabilitation Programme in Areas not offered in the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and 192 disabled people participated in the Supported Employment Programme. The statistical data provided in the 2007 Annual Report indicate that since 1994, there is a gradual increase in disabled people's participation and in the budget allocated to this end (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2007: 100).

Interestingly, single-impairment organisations make their own efforts in securing employment for their members. One such example is the the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind which collaborates closely with the School for the Blind which provides training programmes about the use of information technology. According to Poulida and Theocharidou (2006) these programmes are mainly directed towards adults that are visually impaired and either require retraining for a specific position or seek a new career. However, these programs are not available throughout the year and there is often a long waiting period due to lack of appropriate staff. The only training program that is running regularly since 1988 is that for the switchboard operators. Poulida and Theocharidou (2006) note that 60 persons have completed the programme successfully and all of them have been employed in the public sector and in banks. It has already been mentioned that there is a special legislation giving priority to the hiring of people with visual impairments as switchboard operators and thus, the training programme for switchboard operators thrived for quite a long time.

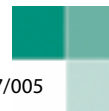
Poulida and Theocharidou (2006) report that according to the statistics announced by the President of the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind 40.9% of the visually impaired people living in Cyprus are at a working age. From this group of persons, 20.85% are employed in the public or the semi-governmental sector, and only 12.53% in the private sector, such as insurance companies, banks and investment institutes. The greatest majority of the 35% of people with visual impairments are employed are occupied as switchboard operators. Only 30 of them are graduates of higher education institutes and are occupied in governmental positions and the education sector. Only a small percentage of 1% is self-employed, while the 30% is unemployed. The remaining 35.6% receives a monthly disability pension or other financial support from the government.

Unfortunately, other data recording the employment of different impairment groups is non-existent and thus, no further information can be given at this stage and no comparisons can be made.

PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

2.1 Reasonable accommodation in the workplace

The general principles outlining reasonable accommodation in the workplace are legitimized by the 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) and the 2004 Disabled People's (Amended) Act (N.57(I)/2004). However, there is no research evidence to suggest that disabled people enjoy reasonable accommodation in the workplace.



2.2 Other activation policies

All activation policies are mentioned in Part One.

2.3 One example of best practice

The programmes offered by the Service for the Care of Disabled People demonstrate a positive response to eliminate disabled people's exclusion in the workforce. It has already been mentioned that these programmes aim to support self-employment, vocational rehabilitation, supported employment and the establishment of small businesses. However, these programmes need to be evaluated as it seems that not many disabled people are enrolled every year. They may be extended, improved or replaced with new ones in order to provide motives for disabled people and their prospective employers to enrol.

PART THREE: SUMMARY INFORMATION

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

Generally speaking, the state has expressed the political will to include disabled people in the labour market by the passing of the 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) which emphasizes the issue of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in employment. It has also made an effort to legitimize the inclusion of disabled people in the Civil Service through piecemeal legislation safeguarding quota in the hiring of disabled people. However, this commitment had limited success (APPLICA, CESEP and European Centre, 2007). Overall, there seems to be a gap between policy and practice in Cyprus.

Arguably, there should be a co-ordinated effort to evaluate the implementation and sufficiency of the existing legislation regarding disabled people's employment. Not only that, but policies should be improved according to research results. Furthermore, the existing programmes run by the Service for the Care of Disabled People aiming to support disabled people's employment should also be evaluated. The government officials should investigate the reasons explaining the small numbers of disabled people who show interest in these programmes year by year. Questions about the efficacy of the programmes and the adequacy of the budget allocated should be raised and discussed. State officials should invite disabled people in such discussions and be open to suggestions for improving the existing programmes or developing new ones. Priority groups should also be set (i.e. disabled women, migrants, older workers, people with specific kinds of impairments) and their inclusion in the labour market should be carefully planned.

The inclusion of disabled people in the labour market on equal terms with non-disabled people should be a top priority for the Cypriot state. To this end, committed policy makers, state officials and disabled activists should work together in order to improve the existing condition.

3.2 References

Please include a list of references for the publications and sources of evidence mentioned in your report (we will include this list of sources on our web pages).



References

APPLICA, CESEP and European Centre (2007) Study of Compilation of Disability Statistical Data from the 2007 Administrative Registers of the Member States of the European Union (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index/comp_disb_final_en.pdf)

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Legislation

N.103(I)/2000. Establishment of a Special Fund for the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People Act.

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N.57(I)/2004. *Disabled People's (Amended) Act*.

N.79(I)/1992. Establishment of Provident Lottery Fund Act.

N.180/1987. Civil Educational Service (Amended) Act (Amendatory Act of N.10/69 Civil Educational Service Act)

N.17/1988. Blind Telephone Operators Act

N.1/1990. Civil Service Act.

N.53(I)/1992. Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and Depended Persons of Killed, Missing, Disabled and Pent Persons Act.

N.55(I)/97 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Disabled People and Children of Missing Persons Act.

N.100(I)/1998. The 1998 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Victims and Children of Pent Persons.



Relevant Websites

Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, (<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy>)

*European Agency for Safety and Health at Work,
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