

# **DIGITABILITY**

**PROMOTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES' EMPLOYMENT  
BY ENHANCING THEIR DIGITAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES TO SUPPORT  
A REMOTE WORKING SCHEME**

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## **WP2.4 STATE ANALYSIS REPORT**

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<b>1. Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. State Analysis Assessment .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 Survey Design for employers and employees .....	5
3.2 Survey Conclusions for employers .....	6
3.3 Survey Conclusions for employees .....	6
3.4 Experts Inferences .....	7
3.5 Overall Findings .....	8
<b>4. Legal Framework and Regulations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4.1 EU Policies .....</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1.1 Definition and European Policy Response .....	9
4.1.2 The new strategy for the rights of individuals with disabilities 2021-2030 .....	9
4.1.2.1 Developing new skills for new jobs .....	10
4.1.2.2 Fostering access to quality and to sustainable jobs .....	10
4.1.2.3 EU Employment Equality Directive 2022 .....	11
4.1.2.4 Social Economy Action Plan 2021 .....	11
<b>4.2 Employment situation of individuals with disabilities in the EU .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4.3 Alternative employment models .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4.5 EU Strategy and Disability Employment Package – Summary.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5. Risk Management and Opportunities.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5.1 Reference Documents .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5.2 Definitions.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5.3 Risk Management &amp; Process .....</b>	<b>16</b>
5.3.1 Risk Identification .....	17
5.3.2 Risk Quantification (Analysis & Prioritization) .....	20
5.3.3 Risk Response & Risk Strategy Execution .....	25
5.3.4 Examples of risks and possible treatment plans .....	26
5.3.5 Evaluation of results & Reporting .....	29
5.3.6 Risk Monitoring & Control .....	29
<b>5.5 Management of Opportunities .....</b>	<b>30</b>
5.5.1 Fields and Identification of opportunity.....	30
5.5.2 Opportunity Analysis.....	32
5.3.6 Opportunity Respond Step .....	33
5.5.4 Evaluation of Opportunity Step.....	34
5.5.5 Opportunity Monitoring & Review Step .....	36
<b>6. Prioritization of Activities Process .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6.1 Empowerment and Employees Preparation .....</b>	<b>36</b>
6.1.1 Self Awareness .....	36
6.1.2 Skills Development .....	39



6.1.3 Resume and Interview Preparation .....	40
6.1.4 Networking .....	42
6.1.5 Job Search Strategies .....	42
<b>6.2 Employers Assessment for Accessibility .....</b>	<b>44</b>
6.2.1 Workplace Assessment .....	44
Self-Assessment questionnaire .....	45
6.2.2 Policies and Training Against Discrimination .....	45
Change Management in recruitment .....	46
6.2.3 Hiring Procedures and Evaluation Program.....	47
Assessment Phase for Persons with Disabilities .....	47
<b>7. References.....</b>	<b>48</b>

### About DIGITABILITY

Action type	KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training (VET)
Priorities	HORIZONTAL: Addressing digital transformation through development of digital readiness, resilience and capacity VET: Increasing the flexibility of opportunities in vocational education and training

*Following the COVID-2019 pandemic, businesses around the world are being forced to modify the way they operate under a new environment and conditions. The Covid-19 pandemic crisis is shaking up traditional workplace structures and causing business models to rethink the way essential tasks can be done. The pandemic-related upswing in working from home may have long-term benefits and concurrently numerous digital challenges for many employees, especially employees with disabilities. This sudden switch to remote work has highlighted the importance of digital accessibility at work and the need of digitally literate employees– wherever that work takes place. Further to this, the world is experiencing a huge digital transformation of our societies in real-time. These changes deeply impact the world of work as a whole.*

*Digitability Project’s vision is to promote people with disabilities’ employment by enhancing their digital skills and competences to support a remote working scheme through the development of a more digital resilient educational scheme for both training providers and trainees.*

*The prime motivation of the project “Digitability” is to create a framework that Employees with Disabilities and Candidate Employees with Disabilities will obtain new digital skills to facilitate their daily work life especially in remote working and will receive focused training on improving their digital skills to better place them in job market. On the other hand, VET providers and SME Associations will be equipped with useful tools (Training Course, VET Trainers Certification, Open Learning Platform) to effectively respond to their stakeholders’ needs and will provide its trainers with improved knowledge for delivering trainings to people with disabilities. In order for this ambitious goal to be achievable, a structured, well-defined and tailored to the specific needs of the target group educational package should be developed to apply not only to VET Providers and Organizations but also to employees and candidate employees with disabilities. Hence a multidisciplinary experienced team of project members will design and develop training solutions that could equip target group personnel with digital skills to implement all required changes in business operations to a more future regarding the working environment. This will have a direct impact on a very big number of people. According to European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, 87 million persons in the EU have some form of disability.*

*The sole responsibility of this publication lies with the author.*

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## 1. Executive Summary

This report shares findings from a survey conducted in four European countries, exploring how people with disabilities can find jobs. It also looks at the risks and opportunities businesses face when hiring inclusively, following guidelines from ISO 31000. The report focuses on breaking down the potential challenges and benefits for companies that actively hire people with disabilities. Additionally, it offers straightforward steps for the entire employment process for both individuals with disabilities and employers. It also covers relevant laws and regulations related to employing persons with disabilities.

## 2. Introduction

This document delves into various aspects crucial for understanding and enhancing the employability landscape of individuals with disabilities in European workplaces. It begins by exploring the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, emphasizing the transformative potential of technology, employer risks, and the training program needs. These insights, guiding the formulation of informed strategies and policies aimed at creating more inclusive and supportive workplaces. In tandem, the document recognizes the importance of risk management and opportunities processes in fostering adaptability and sustainable growth within organizations. This holistic approach extends to the recruitment scale, especially concerning the employment of persons with disabilities. The report underscores the significance of aligning risk management and opportunities strategies with recruitment practices to ensure a cohesive and inclusive workforce.

The EU Policies section further contributes to this comprehensive approach by outlining the commitment to the EU's dedication to addressing challenges in accessibility, introducing initiatives such as the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 which forms a cornerstone for shaping policies that promote human rights, equal opportunities, societal participation, and non-discrimination.

The document concludes by providing a practical guide to empower the recruitment process and its preceding steps for both employers and employees. This crucial chapter encapsulates actionable insights for enhancing inclusivity in the workplace, tying together the overarching themes of the survey and reinforcing the commitment to creating an environment that values and supports individuals with disabilities.

## 3. State Analysis Assessment

### 3.1 Survey Design for employers and employees

The comprehensive effort of data collection targeted disabled individuals and employers, resulting in a rich dataset meticulously analysed and documented in the "Digitability State Analysis Assessment." The outcomes of this analysis provide crucial insights into the current employment landscape and the integration of digital tools in workplaces for individuals with disabilities. These insights serve as a cornerstone for guiding the subsequent phases of the project, directing the development of customized solutions tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by disabled individuals across the European Union.

Within the DIGITABILITY project, the outcomes of the assessment are strategically housed in Work Package 2 (WP2). The responses from participating employees offer valuable perspectives on their employment status, overall skills, competences, and the efficacy of existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs for digital skills. The survey also delves into employer perspectives, exploring their knowledge, awareness, and capacity to enhance recruitment processes to better accommodate individuals with disabilities. This multifaceted approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the landscape and sets the stage for targeted interventions and improvements.

The assessment adopted a dual-focused approach, targeting two distinct groups—Disabled Working Individuals (or Job Seekers) and Employers (or Human Resources Managers). Project partners from DIGITABILITY disseminated the questionnaire through diverse channels such as websites, emails, newsletters, and social media accounts. With this assessment avenues identified for enhancing support and resources for disabled individuals, fostering their inclusion and empowerment in the workforce. The insights gained from the assessment have the potential to inform policymakers, advocates, and program developers, guiding the creation of initiatives that champion equal opportunities and accessibility for disabled individuals throughout the European Union.

Project Target Groups:

Working Individuals and/or Job Seekers with Disabilities - With active participation of employees with disabilities, the assessment shed light on their employment status, overall skills and competences, existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs related to digital skills, and preferences for such programs.

Employers and/or Human Resources Managers - The assessment also engaged employers and human resources managers. The assessment delved into recruiting challenges, associated risks and opportunities in hiring individuals with disabilities, and the impact of teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***3.2 Survey Conclusions for employers***

Reviewing the information from the employers who participated in the survey revealed interesting facts about their businesses. Most of the companies were located in cities, with many being smaller businesses employing fewer than 50 people. Many of the business owners or managers who took part had been running their companies for a long time, with over 10 years being the common duration. The survey collected responses from various industries such as Trading, Education, and Media, showcasing a mix of different types of businesses.

Regarding workplace diversity, more than half of the companies reported having employees with disabilities, indicating a positive step towards inclusivity. The most frequently reported type of disability was related to physical challenges, such as difficulties with movement. Various other types of disabilities were also reported, emphasizing the need for different types of support tailored to individual needs.

Examining how companies supported employees with disabilities, many business owners felt their companies had what it took to create an accessible workplace. However, some were uncertain or disagreed, suggesting potential areas for improvement. Some companies expressed a neutral stance, indicating uncertainty or a lack of information about how well their workplace supported people with disabilities. Concerning the use of technology at work, most business owners considered it helpful for including people with disabilities. However, some were uncertain or disagreed, implying that there might be more to explore regarding how technology can enhance the workplace for everyone.

The important conclusion drawn from the employers' survey is that there is a positive trend toward workplace inclusivity, with more than half of the companies reporting having employees with disabilities. This suggests a growing commitment to diversity and accessibility in the workplace. Additionally, the survey highlighted areas for potential improvement, such as the need for more inclusive infrastructure and increased awareness of how technology can enhance workplace accessibility. In the end, the findings emphasize the significance of continuous efforts to create inclusive policies and practices that cater to a diverse range of abilities, fostering a supportive work environment for everyone.

### ***3.3 Survey Conclusions for employees***

The survey revealed a diverse group of participants, with a majority currently employed and actively contributing to the workforce. While some participants reported unemployment, the survey emphasizes the varied

employability statuses of individuals. Insights into company operations indicated a concentration of employment opportunities in Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and Cyprus. The predominant business models include on-site work and a hybrid approach, underscoring the importance of inclusive infrastructure regardless of the operational model. Regarding disability-related training for HR staff, uncertainty among respondents highlights the need for enhanced efforts in disability inclusion and education within companies. In the digital skills and technology usage assessment, participants reported a broad spectrum of disabilities beyond the provided categories. The survey identified potential gaps in access to VET training programs for digital skills, emphasizing the demand for educational initiatives. The active use of modern technology devices by disabled individuals in the workplace signals a positive trend, but attention is needed to ensure accessibility and inclusivity for all.

From the survey findings, several key conclusions can be drawn:

1. The survey participants exhibit a diverse range of employability statuses, with a significant majority currently employed. However, a notable portion reported unemployment, emphasizing the need for targeted efforts to address varied employment needs within this group.
2. The concentration of employment opportunities in Greece, Italy, Lithuania, and Cyprus suggests potential regional variations in job availability for individuals with disabilities. Tailoring support and initiatives to these specific regions may enhance inclusivity.
3. The prevalent business models of on-site work and hybrid approaches underline the importance of inclusive infrastructure across various operational models. Efforts should be directed at ensuring workplaces are accessible for disabled employees, regardless of the chosen model.
4. The uncertainty among respondents regarding disability-related training for HR staff indicates a potential gap in awareness and education. Companies could benefit from increased efforts in providing training to enhance disability inclusion in the workplace.
5. The identification of disabilities beyond the provided categories highlights the diverse needs of individuals. Inclusive policies and practices should address a wide range of disabilities, ensuring tailored support and accommodations for each unique case.
6. The findings suggest a potential gap in access to VET training programs for digital skills. Efforts to develop inclusive and accessible VET programs are crucial to bridging this gap and providing equal opportunities for skill development.
7. The overwhelming agreement on the usefulness of educational programs for digital skills indicates a strong demand among disabled individuals. Initiatives to provide such programs can empower individuals and enhance their abilities in the digital age.
8. While a majority of disabled individuals actively use modern technology devices, more attention is needed to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Efforts to provide accessible technology solutions will support the needs of disabled individuals in the workplace.

### **3.4 Experts Inferences**

#### **Challenges in Employment and Workplace Inclusivity**

In exploring the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in employment, the survey identified recurring obstacles that impact their professional journeys. Notably, employer mistrust and prejudice based on perceived



limitations were highlighted, emphasizing the crucial role of acceptance and support in fostering employment opportunities. Unsuitable work environments, health-related changes, and psychological barriers were identified as additional hurdles during the job search process. The significance of lifelong learning, vocational training, and finding competent assistance in employment centers emerged as essential strategies for overcoming these challenges.

Transitioning into the workplace, individuals with disabilities encounter various obstacles, showcasing the need for targeted support. Lack of exposure to diverse work environments, unsuitable workstations, and health-related challenges were identified as significant barriers. Communication barriers, both interpersonal and architectural, hinder acceptance and trust among colleagues. The findings underscore the importance of building trust with employers, fostering harmonious coexistence, and addressing the diverse challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

### **Leveraging Technology for Inclusion**

The survey delved into how technology can enhance inclusion for individuals with disabilities in the modern corporate environment. The findings highlighted the transformative potential of assistive technology, making tasks such as reading, writing, communication, and information search more accessible. The benefits of remote work and modern communication systems in enhancing productivity and functionality for disabled workers were emphasized. Accessible technology tools were identified as empowering individuals with disabilities to perform effectively in their professional roles. The results underscored the positive impact of technology in promoting inclusivity, opening doors to resources and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

### **Employer Risks and Training Program Needs**

Examining the risks perceived by employers when hiring individuals with disabilities, the survey uncovered concerns such as prejudice, scepticism, and potential mental health challenges among employees. However, a notable percentage of respondents saw no risks, emphasizing the importance of inclusive practices and adapting workplaces to meet the needs of disabled individuals. The study also indicated a perceived need for more training programs designed to help individuals with disabilities find and maintain employment. The content of these programs, as suggested by respondents, should encompass adaptations to the workplace, assistive technology, awareness-raising activities, and comprehensive skills development.

In conclusion, the survey results offer valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in employment, the role of technology in fostering inclusion, employer perceptions and risks, and the demand for targeted training programs. These findings provide a foundation for informed strategies and policies aimed at creating more inclusive and supportive workplaces for individuals with disabilities.

## **3.5 Overall Findings**

Analysing the survey results from employees, employers, and experts gives us a detailed picture of what it's like for individuals with disabilities in the job market. When we looked at what employers had to say, we found that most of the businesses were in cities and covered a variety of industries, showing they want to include everyone. More than half of these businesses have employees with disabilities, which is a good sign for diversity. However, there are areas where businesses can do better, like making their workplaces more inclusive and understanding how technology can help everyone at work.

Now, looking at what the employees told us, we see a mix of people, with most of them currently working. But some are still looking for jobs. We also learned that most businesses prefer employees to work either on-site or in a mix of on-site and remote settings. However, some companies are not sure if they are ready to support employees with disabilities. This means there's room for improvement in how companies understand, and help disabled workers.

The experts shared insights about the challenges people with disabilities face in getting and keeping jobs. Trust issues with employers, not having the right kind of workplace, and health-related concerns were some of the challenges mentioned. The experts also told us how important it is for people with disabilities to keep learning and getting the right kind of training to overcome these challenges. When it comes to technology, it was clear that it can really help people with disabilities do their jobs well. Employers, though, are worried about some risks, like not understanding how to support employees with disabilities or facing mental health challenges.

In the end, the overall findings tell us there's a positive direction in including people with disabilities in the workforce. But there's work to be done, especially in making workplaces more inclusive and using technology in the right way. The challenges people with disabilities face are many, and it's crucial to provide the right support and education. The survey results give us a starting point to make sure workplaces are welcoming, diverse, and supportive for everyone.

## 4. Legal Framework and Regulations

### 4.1 EU Policies

#### 4.1.1 Definition and European Policy Response

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities characterizes individuals with disabilities as those experiencing long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when combined with various obstacles, might impede their complete and effective engagement in society on an equal footing with others.

Approximately 87 million individuals in the EU are affected by some type of disability. In Europe, numerous people with disabilities face disparities in opportunities compared to others. Accessibility challenges persist in schools, workplaces, infrastructures, products, services, and information, limiting their access. Additionally, they may encounter unfavourable treatment or unfairness.

In their commitment to enhancing the social and economic well-being of individuals with disabilities, the EU and its Member States draw inspiration from the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Emphasizing the principles outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights, Principle 17 underscores the entitlement of individuals with disabilities to receive income support ensuring a dignified life, access to services facilitating participation in the labour market and society, and a work environment tailored to their requirements.

The European Union, along with all its Member States, is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This significant agreement has informed the development of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 (*United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission, n.d.*).

#### 4.1.2 The new strategy for the rights of individuals with disabilities 2021-2030

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 is designed to address the multifaceted challenges encountered by individuals with disabilities. Its overarching objective is to advance in all dimensions outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both at the European Union and Member State levels. The primary aim is to ensure that individuals with disabilities in Europe, without regard to factors such as sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, or sexual orientation, can fully enjoy their human rights, access equal opportunities, participate in society and the economy on an equal basis, make decisions about their living arrangements, move freely within the EU irrespective of their support needs, and no longer face instances of discrimination.

Expanding upon the established European Quality Framework for Social Services, the Commission aims to introduce, by 2024, a dedicated framework known as the "Social Services of Excellence" for individuals with disabilities. This initiative seeks to enhance the delivery of services for persons with disabilities and boost the appeal of employment opportunities in this sector. This includes efforts towards upskilling and reskilling service providers to elevate the overall quality of support provided (Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission, n.d.).

#### **4.1.2.1 Developing new skills for new jobs**

According to the European Skills Agenda, each country should have plans for skills, and these plans need to consider the specific needs of people with disabilities. It's crucial to make sure that everyone, including people with disabilities, has the same chances to go to school and get training for jobs.

Countries need to adjust their education and training rules to support people with disabilities, following the UNCRPD. However, many young people with disabilities end up in special schools instead of regular ones because regular schools aren't accessible, don't provide necessary support, and may not adjust to their needs. The Council Recommendation on vocational education and training encourages countries to create training programs that include and help people with disabilities.

The Commission pledges to collaborate with the European Network of Public Employment Services to create opportunities for shared learning. This initiative aims to better understand the skills required in the job market and improve guidance services for employed individuals and vulnerable groups. The focus will be on addressing skills gaps, especially in digital skills, often through partnerships with social enterprises that promote labor market inclusion. This commitment aligns with the goals outlined in the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. Additionally, Member States will receive assistance in obtaining assistive technologies and ensuring an accessible digital learning environment and content.

The Commission urges Member States to:

- Establish goals for the involvement of adults with disabilities in learning, aiming to enhance their engagement. Ensure that national skills strategies address the specific requirements of persons with disabilities to contribute to the objectives of the skills Agenda and the action plan implementing the Pillar of Social Rights.
- Implement targeted measures and adaptable training formats to guarantee inclusive and accessible Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs, extending the inclusivity to persons with disabilities.
- Expand support for collaboration between pertinent stakeholders in the social economy, building on the outcomes of the Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills under the Pact for Skills. This includes identifying digital skills needs and incorporating assistive technology to enhance employability.

#### **4.1.2.2 Fostering access to quality and to sustainable jobs**

The Commission will help countries in the EU by supporting businesses that help people with disabilities. These businesses not only provide services for people with disabilities but also help them find jobs in regular workplaces. The situation of these businesses can be different in each country in the EU. To assist countries in including marginalized groups, EU laws allow for special contracts, and competition laws permit extra help for hiring workers with disabilities. At the same time, countries are creating policies for 'inclusive entrepreneurship,' focusing on groups that are not represented enough, like women, young people, migrants, and people with disabilities.

In 2022, the Commission plans to introduce measures to improve job opportunities for people with disabilities. This involves working together with the European Network of Public Employment Services, social partners, and disability organizations. The package aims to help EU countries follow the guidelines for employment, providing

guidance and promoting shared learning on enhancing employment and integration services. It also focuses on encouraging hiring through affirmative action, challenging stereotypes, ensuring reasonable accommodation, ensuring health and safety at work, and providing vocational rehabilitation for chronic diseases or accidents. The package explores creating quality jobs in sheltered employment and pathways to regular job markets.

The Commission also:

- Published an implementation report on the EU Employment Equality Directive in 2021. If needed, it proposed legal changes, especially to enhance the effectiveness of equality bodies.
- Issued an Action Plan on Social Economy in 2021. This plan aimed to enhance the conditions for the social economy, emphasizing opportunities for persons with disabilities. It focused on social enterprises that contributed to integrating individuals into the open job market.

#### **4.1.2.3 EU Employment Equality Directive 2022**

According to Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the Union has various goals, including making its people happy and supporting the long-term development of Europe through a strong and fair economy. This involves achieving full employment, making social progress, ensuring a high level of environmental protection, and promoting fairness and equality between men and women. Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) adds that the Union must also consider things like ensuring high employment, providing sufficient social protection, and fighting against social exclusion (DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2022).

Several directives related to individuals with disabilities:

1. Member States must make sure that information about the lowest wages set by law and the protection these wages get from universally applicable group agreements, along with details about how to seek justice, is easily accessible to the public. This information should be available in the most appropriate language, as decided by each Member State. It should be presented in a way that's easy to understand and access, especially for people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, not all workers in the Union are effectively safeguarded by minimum wages. In some Member States, even if workers are technically covered, they end up getting paid less than the legal minimum wage because the rules aren't being followed. This non-compliance tends to affect certain groups more, such as women, young workers, those with lower skills, migrants, single parents, people with disabilities, those in non-standard jobs like temporary or part-time work, and workers in agriculture and hospitality. This situation pushes down wages. In Member States where minimum wage protection relies only on collective agreements, the percentage of uncovered workers is estimated to be between 2% and 55% of all workers.

2. The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities insists that workers with disabilities, including those in sheltered employment, should be paid equally for the same work value. This principle is also important when it comes to minimum wage protection. Workers need easy access to clear information about both legal minimum wages and the protection provided by group agreements. This ensures transparency and predictability about their working conditions, including for people with disabilities, following Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

#### **4.1.2.4 Social Economy Action Plan 2021**

On December 9, 2021, the European Commission introduced a new plan for the social economy. This plan includes specific steps to unlock the full potential of the social economy, building on previous initiatives like the 2011 Social Business Initiative and the 2016 Start-up and Scale-up Initiative.

Despite progress in past initiatives, there are still needs in various areas. The action plan focuses on improving the conditions for the social economy in Europe, such as visibility, recognition, access to finance, and markets (Social Economy Action Plan - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission, n.d.).

The Covid-19 pandemic emphasized the need for a fair, sustainable, and resilient economic model. The action plan aims to boost social investment, support the growth and innovation of social enterprises, and create jobs. It outlines initiatives in three key areas:

- Creating favorable conditions for the social economy.
- Providing opportunities and supporting capacity building.
- Enhancing recognition of the social economy and its potential.

Access to funding, identified as a challenge in previous initiatives, remains a focus, with efforts to improve financial access for social economy organizations.

The EU's Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) Programme, and its 2021-2027 successor, are vital for helping people with disabilities in business. They focus on two key things: microfinance and social enterprise finance. Microfinance is like small loans for businesses that struggle to get traditional bank loans. The EU supports this through a set of rules called the European Code of Good Conduct and by guaranteeing loans to small businesses. Social enterprise finance helps businesses that want to do good things for society. The EU supports them with investments, guarantees, and grants. This support continues in the next funding period (2021-2027) under the InvestEU programme and the European Social Fund Plus. It's all about making sure everyone has a fair chance to succeed in business and contribute to society.

## ***4.2 Employment situation of individuals with disabilities in the EU***

Research funded by the European Commission and led by European Disability Expertise indicates that before the COVID-19 pandemic, improvements in job markets didn't really help people with disabilities catch up in employment. Despite a better overall job situation, the gap in employment for those with disabilities didn't close. Many people with disabilities still have untapped potential for work, contributing to a more than 4% drop in the EU's employment rate in 2019.

In all EU countries, fewer people with disabilities have jobs compared to those without disabilities. According to the 2022 Commission report, only 51.3% of people with disabilities are employed, while 75.6% of those without disabilities have jobs. The employment rates for people with disabilities vary a lot between EU countries. In Ireland, Greece, and Croatia, the rates are lowest, at 32.6%, 32.6%, and 37%, respectively. On the other hand, Denmark, Latvia, and Estonia have the highest employment rates for people with disabilities, at 60.1%, 60.8%, and 64.9%.

The Commission thinks that in 2019, only 47.4% of people with disabilities aged 20 to 29 had jobs, while 57.8% of those without disabilities in the same age group were employed. This is just a small improvement for young people with disabilities compared to 2017 and 2018. Problems with finishing school and getting qualifications mean that young people with disabilities start their first job later than others. This often leads to them having lower-level jobs compared to people of the same age without disabilities (European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023, n.d.).

## ***4.3 Alternative employment models***

The best way for people with disabilities to work just like everyone else is to have jobs in the regular job market. Many countries, government organizations, groups for people with disabilities, foundations, and other groups have created various plans to make this happen. They work alongside other policies like setting a certain number

of jobs for people with disabilities, helping with job placement, and making sure workplaces are suitable. But these plans can have different outcomes and effects, and the quality of jobs can vary. It's important to also make sure the rights of employees with disabilities are respected.

#### 1) Sheltered Employment

For people with disabilities, "sheltered employment" is common, but it has issues like lower pay, fewer career opportunities, and a lack of job stability. A new proposal, "Exploring quality jobs in sheltered employment and pathways to the open labour market," is coming in 2023 to understand and improve this model. The current way often separates people with disabilities and denies them basic work rights. The key, as per the Convention of the Rights of Person with Disabilities (CRPD), is to follow inclusion, respect rights, and transition to regular jobs. Social economy organizations, focusing on social goals and reinvesting allowances, are good examples for a better employment model.

#### 2) Work Integration and Social Enterprises (WiSEs)

WiSEs (Work Integration Social Enterprises) are a special way of helping people in tough situations, especially those with disabilities. These organizations focus on both business and social goals, seeing their social purpose as more important. In some places, only non-profit groups can lead these initiatives. WiSEs provide jobs and social support to help employees learn and prepare for regular jobs later on. They use the money they make to continue their social work, but they often need outside support, either from the government or private sources.

#### 3) Supported Employment

This way of finding jobs pays special attention to helping people with disabilities get ready for regular jobs. Job specialists help them recognize their skills, create a job profile, find suitable jobs, and support them after starting. This process may seem expensive, but it ensures that people with disabilities are fully included in regular jobs. This is successful for both the person and society, both socially and economically.

#### 4) Work Enclaves

Work enclaves are like supported employment but not as well-known. They give jobs to people with disabilities by combining a protected space with regular jobs. In these "enclaves," companies provide special support to help people with disabilities do specific tasks in regular job settings. This support includes help, adjustments, and a focus on career growth. It's like a training period where people have full work rights and get paid. The idea is that this time prepares them to become regular employees in the regular job market later on. But if this transition isn't planned, and the enclave's work isn't closely linked to the main services of the company, so the workers with disabilities don't interact with others, it can be seen as a form of separation.

#### 5) Job Design

Job carving or crafting is about making a new job in a business. It can happen either from the employee's ideas (crafting) or from the employer and experts (carving). This involves changing tasks and workplaces to fit people with disabilities, and both the employee and employer get training for it (European Human Rights Report Issue 7, 2023, n.d.).

### **4.5 EU Strategy and Disability Employment Package – Summary**

The Commission has agreed on a plan called the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2021 to 2030. In this plan, there are important activities called "flagship initiatives" to help the rights of people with disabilities in the EU. One of these initiatives is the Disability Employment Package, aiming to make it better for people with disabilities to find jobs. Even though this plan doesn't make new laws, it suggests things to improve existing laws in six areas. These areas include:

- making job services more accessible,
- encouraging employers to hire people with disabilities,
- providing guidelines for employers to make workplaces suitable,
- preventing disabilities from chronic diseases,
- giving guidelines for vocational rehab in case of sickness, and
- studying better job options for people with disabilities.

Some of these ideas, like guidelines for workplace accommodation and actions to help hiring, could be really useful for creating more inclusive job markets in the EU. But a big challenge is getting enough money and making sure these ideas are followed in each country. It will take a lot of effort to make sure the plan works and brings real changes for people with disabilities.

## 5. Risk Management and Opportunities

### 5.1 Reference Documents

- I. ISO 31000:2018 - Risk management – Guidelines
- II. ISO 14001:2015 - Environmental management systems — Requirements with guidance for use

### 5.2 Definitions

#### Consequence

A consequence represents the outcome of an event and its impact on objectives. Consequences can be certain or uncertain, and they can have direct or indirect positive or negative effects. They can be expressed qualitatively or quantitatively. Consequences have the potential to escalate through cascading and cumulative effects.

#### Event

An event refers to the occurrence or change of a specific set of circumstances. It can have one or more instances, multiple causes, and various consequences. Events can include both expected and unexpected occurrences and can act as risk sources.

#### Likelihood

Likelihood is the chance of something happening. In risk management, likelihood refers to the probability or frequency of an event occurring over a given period. It can be defined, measured, or determined objectively or subjectively, using general terms or mathematical methods. In some languages, the term "probability" is used instead of "likelihood," but in risk management, "likelihood" is intended to have a broad interpretation like the concept of "probability" in languages other than English.

#### Opportunity

A favourable or advantageous circumstance or combination of circumstances. A potential event or condition that has the potential to create a positive outcome for a project or business objective if pursued.

#### Opportunities Register

A dynamic document repository is established to record and pursue opportunities.

#### Residual risk

Whatever risk level remains after planned responses are applied.

#### Risk

Risk refers to the effect of uncertainty on objectives. It involves deviations from expected outcomes, which can be positive or negative and can create opportunities or threats.

Risks are typically expressed in terms of risk sources, potential events, their consequences, and their likelihood. Objectives can have various aspects and categories and can be applied at different levels.

### **Risk appetite**

It is the level of risk that an organization is prepared to accept in pursuit of its objectives, before action is deemed necessary to reduce the risk. It represents a balance between the potential benefits of innovation and the threats, that change inevitably brings.

The ISO 31000 risk management standard refers to risk appetite as the "Amount and type of risk that an organization is prepared to pursue, retain or take".

### **Risk Management**

Risk management encompasses coordinated activities aimed at directing and controlling an organization in relation to risk. It involves identifying, assessing, and addressing risks to effectively mitigate their impact and achieve objectives.

### **Risk Register**

A dynamic document repository is created and updated to record the results of the risk management process during the project/program. Risks are registered.

### **Risk Source**

A risk source is an element that, either individually or in combination, has the potential to give rise to risk. It serves as a basis for the occurrence of events that may lead to positive or negative consequences.

### **Stakeholders**

In business, a stakeholder is any individual, organization, group, or party that has an interest or stake in an organization and the outcomes of its actions.

Stakeholders can be categorised as either internal or external to an organisation. Internal stakeholders are individuals who have a direct relationship with the company, such as employees, owners or investors, and their interest in the organisation comes from this direct relationship.

On the other hand, external stakeholders are not directly engaged in the day-to-day operations of the firm but are being affected in some way by the actions and results of the firm. External stakeholders include entities such as suppliers, creditors, and various public groups.

**ISO 31000:2018:** ISO 31000 is an internationally recognized standard for risk management, providing organizations with guidance and principles to effectively identify, assess, and address risks. It offers a systematic approach to risk management, enabling organizations to make informed decisions, improve performance, and enhance resilience. ISO 31000 is widely regarded as a best practice for risk management in various industries and sectors.

**ISO 14001:2015:** ISO 14001 is an international standard for environmental management systems (EMS). It provides a framework that organizations can follow to establish, implement, maintain, and improve their environmental performance. The standard sets out the criteria for an effective EMS, which includes identifying environmental aspects, setting objectives and targets, implementing operational controls, and conducting regular reviews and evaluations.



### **5.3 Risk Management & Process**

In order to avoid confusion, from this point on -unless otherwise noted- this document and the respective terminology will be focused on Risks. However, it should be relatively simple for the dedicated learner to adapt the process and **focus on the opportunities as well**, instead of risks only.

The Risk Management process should be closely associated with the management and decision making of the organisation and should be integrated into the structure, functions, and processes of the organisation. It can be implemented at different levels, such as strategic, operational, programmatic or project level.

Within an organisation, multiple applications of the risk management process can be adopted, designed to achieve objectives, and aligned with the specific external and internal context in which they are applied. While the risk management process is usually pictured as a sequential approach, in practice it is an ongoing process that allows for continuous improvements and adjustments.

The below is a typical flow for an effective and efficient Risk Management. The Risk management process has four (4) phases which comprise of seven (7) steps.

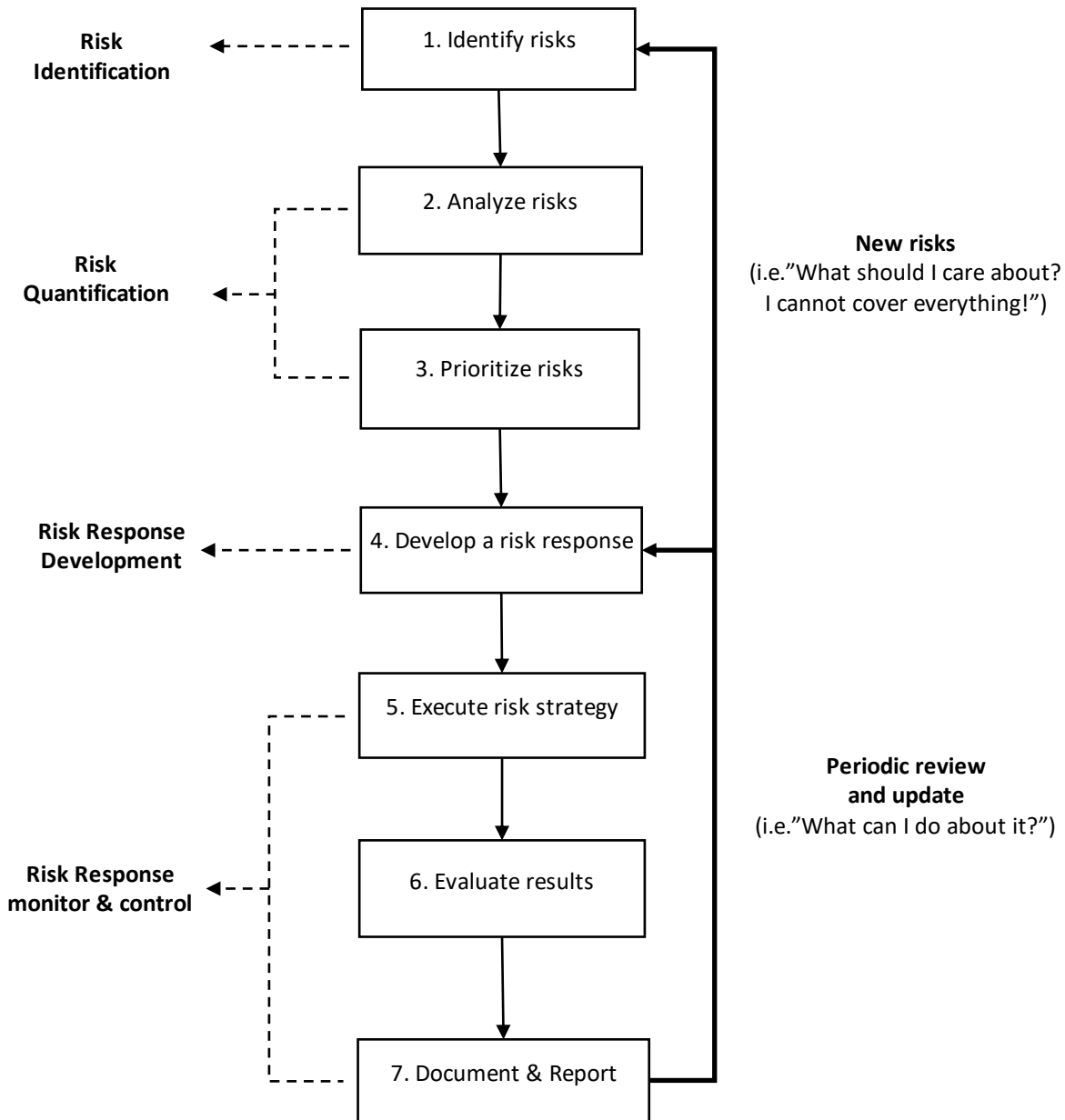


Figure 1. Risk Management Process

Throughout the risk management process, the dynamic and ever-changing nature of human behaviour and culture should be considered.

### 5.3.1 Risk Identification

The first step in Risk Management is the identification of risks and threats that could undermine key our initiatives or our Innovation Management project.

To effectively identify risks, all project activities and factors (internal or external) will be analysed for risks and threats that may impact the project negatively. Risk identification should be performed not only during project planning, but continuously through the project life cycle.

Both internal and external risks should be identified:

- **Internal** risks can be controlled or influenced by the project or planning team, such as resource assignments & availability, schedule and cost estimates, contract type.

- **External** risks are those risks beyond the control of influence of the project or planning team, such as customer decisions, market shifts or government actions.

The effectiveness of the entire risk management process is only as good as the quality and specificity of the threat event statements.

The following are two (2) recommended general formats for threat event statements either for risks or for opportunities):

- “ \_\_\_\_\_ may occur during \_\_\_\_\_ thereby causing an impact to \_\_\_\_\_”.
- “If \_\_\_\_\_ occurs, then an impact to \_\_\_\_\_ will occur”.

#### **Example of risk categories:**

- Organizational
- Financial (including exchange rates, inflation, taxation, competition)
- Political
- Legal & Regulatory (including licensing, contract ambiguity, lawsuits)
- Social (including public interest)
- Environmental
- Technical & Knowledge (including technological maturity, complexity, customizations)
- Supply Chain
- Public interest
- Natural hazards
- Market changes

#### **Examples of risk categories that are tailored to the level of recruitment for individuals with disabilities:**

##### **Operational**

1. Providing necessary training and support to disabled employees may require additional time, resources, and expertise, which can strain operational capabilities.
2. Integrating accommodations or adjusting work processes for disabled employees may disrupt existing workflows and require coordination among teams, potentially impacting productivity, and efficiency.
3. Ensuring the health and safety of disabled employees is crucial. This requires conducting thorough assessments of the workplace to identify potential hazards or barriers that may affect disabled individuals.
4. Some customers or clients may have limited awareness or understanding of disabilities, which could result in negative reactions or reluctance to engage with a business that employs disabled individuals. This may lead to decreased customer satisfaction or loss of business opportunities.
5. Inadequate communication channels or a lack of awareness and education about disabilities within the company. It can lead to misunderstandings, limited collaboration, and missing of the qualitative and quantitative targets of the company.

##### **Financial**

1. Employers may need to adjust their insurance coverage or benefits packages to comply with legal requirements and adequately support disabled employees, which can lead to increased costs.
2. Employees may need specific equipment and tools or specific training consultancy-education that will be costly for the organisation.
3. If the company does not comply with the policy-laws of the state, then this can result in lawsuits quite costly for the company.

### **Reputational - Market**

1. How an employer is perceived in society can impact their brand image and reputation. Hiring practices that demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion can enhance an organization's public perception. Conversely, if an employer is seen as discriminatory or unsupportive of disabled individuals, it can harm their reputation and affect relationships with customers, partners, and the community.
2. Instances of insensitivity, mistreatment, or discrimination towards disabled employees can quickly spread through social media platforms. Negative experiences shared by employees or customers can go viral, leading to significant reputational damage and potential boycotts.

### **Legal**

1. Failure to comply with disability-related laws and regulations, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the United States or similar legislation in other countries, can expose employers to legal risks.
2. Insufficient or improper documentation related to disability accommodations, performance evaluations, or disciplinary actions can be used as evidence against employers in legal disputes.
3. Employers may face legal risks if their workplaces, websites, or digital platforms do not meet accessibility standards. Failure to provide accessible environments or digital content may violate disability laws and result in legal action.

Effective risk identification may include clustering techniques. The most common tools and clustering techniques used to identify risks are the following:

- Expert interviews
- Delphi technique
- Nominal Group Technique (NGT)
- Crawford Slip
- Proportion method
- SWOT analysis
- Existing checklists, questionnaires, and templates (based on lessons learned and the idea that no new project also represents a completely new set of risks).

### **Risk register**

Next step within Risk Identification is the creation of a Risk Register - a form to document the risks identified.

Information can include (for both Risks & Opportunities):

- Risk / Opportunity ID
- Category
- Project (optional)

- Risk / Opportunity owner (person responsible to manage the opportunity)
- Risk / Opportunity event statement (a.k.a. risk / opportunity description)
- Probability
- Impact / benefit
- Risk / Opportunity score (probability \* impact)
- Ranking / priority
- Response – treatment (could contain references to separate plan documents, control or measures)
- Residual Risk / Opportunity score after treatment (updated after every implementation of a response strategy)

The form provided below can be used. This form is called the Risk Register and is used to document and track the identified potential business risks, the likelihood, impact and severity of each risk, and the actions proposed and selected to address (minimize/mitigate) the risks.

Risk ID	Category	Project	Risk Owner	Risk / threat event statement	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Ranking / Priority	Response – treatment	Residual Risk score
or Opportunity ID		(optional)	Or Opportunity Owner (Person responsible to manage the risk / opportunity)	Or Opportunity event (a.k.a. Risk / Opportunity Description)	Or Likelihood	Or Consequences	Probability * Impact	Priority to handle	(could contain references to separate plan documents, control or measures)	Or Opportunity score (updated after every implementation of a response treatment)

Figure 2. Risk Identification Matrix (part of Risk Register)

Here is an example of a template that can be used:



### 5.3.2 Risk Quantification (Analysis & Prioritization)

After completing the previous step, more information needs to be collected in the Risk Register document.

However, when viewed from a management perspective, this raw risk list lacks differentiation in terms of company concerns and requirements. It fails to provide management with a comprehensive understanding of the following:

- Which risks are significant and which risks are not.
- Which risks require immediate attention, and which could potentially be overlooked.
- Which risks are urgent, and which can be addressed later.

Without answers to these questions, it becomes difficult to make informed decisions about risks.

Should you prioritize and focus on the top ten risks or solely on those considered most important? What if the company does not have the necessary resources to address all the risks listed?

It is important to find a way to quantify and prioritise the risks so that each employer, manager or risk expert/consultant can start working on the most important ones without wasting time, money, and resources on those that are of secondary importance.

To do this (Quantification and Prioritisation) the calculation and evaluation of two factors for each of the risks is required. These factors are Probability (Likelihood) and Impact (Consequences).

**A. Probability (Likelihood)** of a risk is directly related to the probability of the risk occurring.

Our aim is to prioritise the risks so that we can decide which ones to deal with first.

For the purposes of our work, it is sufficient - and applicable in almost all cases - to use our common sense and understanding of the business environment along with the simple approach outlined below.

In the context of a typical risk hierarchy, it is sufficient to define and use a Probability Scale using a 3, 4 or 5 step (or more) scale.

SCALE		PROBABILITY TO HAPPEN <sup>1</sup>
1	Unlikely	Less than 7% Never happened or may happen once every 15 to 20 years
2	Moderate	Between 8% and 40% Expected to happen once every 6-15 years
3	Likely	Between 41% and 80% Expected to happen once every 1-5 years
4	Almost Certain	Greater than 80% Expected to happen more than once every year

Figure 3. Likelihood Assessment Matrix

The levels for calculating the Probability (Likelihood) of risk are:

**Rare:** A risk event is impossible or rare to occur

**Unlikely:** A hazard is not very likely to occur

**Possible:** A hazard can happen

**Likely:** A hazard has a high probability of happening

**Almost certain:** A common risk phenomenon

**B. Impact (Consequences)** refers to the estimated impact / consequences that a risk may have on the business when it occurs.

<sup>1</sup> You could change the numbers of years and percentages according to your needs, the data presented on this example are for presentation purposes only.

Risk (negative impact)		
SCALE	IMPACT (CONSEQUENCES) <sup>2</sup>	
1	Insignificant	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : none <u>Financial</u> : loss of < 500 € <u>Operational</u> : operations interruption less than 1 day <u>Reputational</u> : no impact <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : none
2	Minor	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : first aid treatment <u>Financial</u> : loss between 500 € and 2.500 € <u>Operational</u> : operations interruption 1 to 2 days <u>Reputational</u> : few unsatisfied customers <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : minor non-compliance with regulatory requirement
3	Major	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : Medical treatment required <u>Financial</u> : loss between 2.500 € and 10.000 € <u>Operational</u> : operations interruption 3 to 5 days <u>Reputational</u> : several unsatisfied customers. Limited spread of news <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : Significant noncompliance with key regulatory requirements – Legal action against the owner or the company
4	Severe	<u>Health and safety</u> : Death or extensive injuries <u>Financial</u> : Total Error of Equipment, Lawsuit or Loan > 50% yearly revenue <u>Operational</u> : Total labour force loss, total loss of business opportunities, significant management problems <u>Reputational</u> : many unsatisfied customers. Publication in town media. <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : Long-term / permanent non-compliance with key regulatory requirements – Loss of permit – More than one Legal actions against the owner or the company

<sup>2</sup> All numbers and estimates can be changed.

POSITIVE RISKS (OPPORTUNITIES) IMPACT SCALE		
SCALE	IMPACT (CONSEQUENCES) <sup>3</sup>	
1	Insignificant	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : none <u>Financial</u> : unexpected sales (or savings) of < 1.000 € <u>Operational</u> : none <u>Reputational</u> : no impact <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : none
2	Minor	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : none <u>Financial</u> : unexpected sales (or savings) between 1.000 € and 10.000 € <u>Operational</u> : required operations improvements of 5% (to support extra sales) <u>Reputational</u> : Positive statements from a couple of customers <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : none
3	Major	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : none <u>Financial</u> : unexpected sales (or savings) between 10.000 € and 30.000 € <u>Operational</u> : required operations improvements of 20% (to support extra sales) <u>Reputational</u> : Positive statements from some customers. Limited spread of news in a couple of blogs, result in new sales and several phone calls <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : new sales contracts require legal support
4	Severe	<u>Health &amp; safety</u> : none <u>Financial</u> : unexpected sales (or savings) of more than 30.000 € <u>Operational</u> : required operations improvements of 70% (to support extra sales) <u>Reputational</u> : Positive statements from several customers. Extended spread of news in media, result in new sales and huge number of phone calls. <u>Regulatory / Legal</u> : new sales contracts require extended legal support

Figure 4. Assessment Criteria-Consequences

- C. **Risk Score**, the quantification of a Risk by producing a value that provides an insight into the 'size' of the Risk in terms of Probability and Impact and in relation to the magnitude of these values.

This is calculated by multiplying the probability score by the Impact score:

$$\text{Risk Score} = \text{Probability (likelihood)} \times \text{Impact (consequences):}$$

<sup>3</sup> All numbers and estimates can be changed.



Risk Matrix is a grid-style “**traffic light system**” that is used to help visualize the rating of identified risks. Colours are used in the form of traffic lights to differentiate the severity of the risks and help work better with risks prioritization:

Scale starts from **Green** (the least severe risks) and ends to **Red** that colours the most severe risks in the scale for the scales of 1-4 we have picked above.

Here is a Risk as well as an Opportunity matrix:

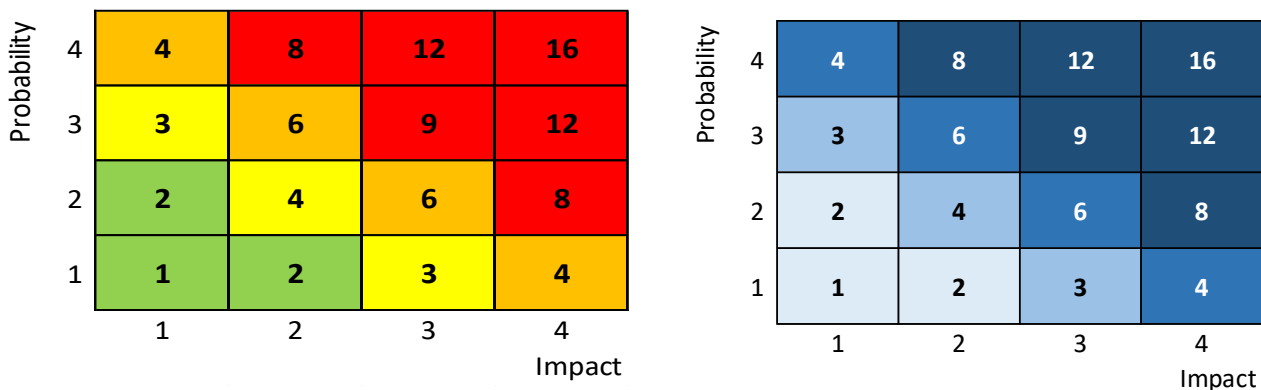


Figure 5. Impact Assessment Criteria

The areas in each of the matrix defines the significance of the risk that may be evaluated to be at the specific box.

- **Red (deep blue)** = Significant risks that must be treated asap (Severe)
- **Orange (blue)** = Less significant Risks that should be treated (Minor)
- **Yellow (light Blue)** = Medium risks that may be treated (Major)
- **Green (very light blue)** = Minor risks that company need not spend resources in treating as long as they retain the same rating (Insignificant),

It is clear that the above list defines the priority the risks in relation to urgency and significance of treatment.

Looking at the Matrix, we understand that the most important risks are those that have **both high Probability AND high Impact therefore are in the top right corner of the Matrix.**

Here is an example of three Risks (Riks 1, Risk 2 and Risk 3) that have been analyzed and their risk is quantified:

Risk ID	Category	Project	Risk Owner	Risk / threat event statement	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Ranking / Priority	Response – treatment	Residual Risk score
or Opportunity ID		(optional)	Or Opportunity Owner (Person responsible to manage the risk / opportunity)	Or Opportunity event (a.k.a. Risk / Opportunity Description)	Or Likelihood	Or Consequences	Probability * Impact	Priority to handle		
R-01	Financial		Finance Dept	Risk 1	2	4	8	2nd		
R-02	Operational		Logistics Dept	Risk 2	1	3	3	3rd		
R-03	Reputational		Marketing Dept	Risk 3	4	3	12	1st		

Figure 6. Risk & Opportunities Register

### 5.3.3 Risk Response & Risk Strategy Execution

Based on the prioritization that took place in the previous step, we then have to move forward and decide on the measures to implement to ensure we will minimize the risk (that is to reduce its Probability and / or Impact and therefore reduce its Risk score and the overall impact it may have on the organization).

There are 4 types of risk treatment response:

- I. **Avoid the risk:** (remove it completely, away from company's life) by deciding not to start or continue with the activity that gives rise to the specific risk;

Risk avoidance is sometimes adopted when an activity or situation involves a high level of risk which cannot be adequately treated to an acceptable level by another approach.

The risk might be too high against the potential benefits for the company associated with the activity / situation as well as the costs of a risk mitigation solution could also be too high to be affordable or to balance the benefits.

- II. **Mitigate the risk:** By choosing this risk management response, it is possible to reduce the probability of a risk or minimize its impact if it occurs.

By applying this strategy to a particular threat, it becomes vital to implement one or more control measures that alter the overall level of risk.

These controls can take various forms, such as policies, procedures, practices, technical measures, devices, and other actions that reduce the overall risk.

- III. **Transfer the risk:** A risk transfer strategy involves switching all or part of the risk to another place or party. Although the probability of the event remains unchanged or unaffected, this approach minimizes the impact on the organization.

Transferring the risk is somehow a form of Risk Mitigation Strategy. Transferring is usually in the form of:

(a) insurance coverage in cases of high impact risks, so that you get back the monetary amount related to the value of the destruction / loss of premises, goods, equipment, profits, health etc. including legal liability risks

(b) subcontracting or outsourcing of a project or an activity (usually secondary to business objectives) or a service to a third party.

- IV. **Accept the risk:** To acknowledge the risk and be willing to accept the consequences if it happens. There are two ways to approach this:

- Passive acceptance: Making a conscious decision to take no action in response to the risk.
- Active acceptance: Developing a disaster plan and implementing it if the risk event happens.

Based on the above, a number of measures and controls are decided and implemented, that result in the mitigation of existing risk exposure of the organization (or the project).

As of our example, the picture could be as below:

Risk ID	Category	Project	Risk Owner	Risk / threat event statement	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Ranking / Priority	Response – treatment	Residual Risk score
or Opportunity ID		(optional)	Or Opportunity Owner (Person responsible to manage the risk / opportunity)	Or Opportunity event (a.k.a. Risk / Opportunity Description)	Or Likelihood	Or Consequences	Probability * Impact	Priority to handle	(could contain references to separate plan documents, control or measures)	Or Opportunity score (updated after every implementation of a response treatment)
R-01	Financial		Finance Dept	Risk 1	2	4	8	2nd	Deployment of measure 1 and measure 2 that change the Impact to 2 while probability remains 2	4
R-02	Operational		Logistics Dept	Risk 2	1	3	3	3rd	No measures taken	3
R-03	Reputational		Marketing Dept	Risk 3	4	3	12	1st	Deployment of measure 3 and measure 4 that change the Probability to 3 and the Impact to 2	6

Figure 7. Risk Register with risk treatments.

We can clearly see the residual risk exposure of the organization to be significantly lower (see last column above) once the measures decided were implemented.

### 5.3.4 Examples of risks and possible treatment plans

We have developed some examples of the risks with possible treatment approached, considering the above techniques:

You will also notice that “Accept” as an option of risk treatment is discussed at the end of the examples.

Risk Category	Risk	Possible Treatment Plans	
Operational	Inappropriate training programs and strain operational capabilities	Mitigate	Offer specialised training programmes and set up support systems to help employees in their roles.
		Transfer	Exploration the possibility of outsourcing some training and support functions to external service providers or partnering with organizations that specialize in innovation management.
		Avoid	Allocate specific innovation training programs which are united in the whole responsibility and timeline training of a new employee.
	Impact in productivity, and efficiency	Mitigate	Regular communication and coordination will be crucial to maintain productivity and efficiency.
		Transfer	Engagement and creation of relevant groups from employees and stakeholders in the process of integrating or adapting work processes with innovation standards.
		Avoid	Have group tasks that help the employees work together
		Mitigate	Use agile development methodologies and track progress closely.

Risk Category	Risk	Possible Treatment Plans	
	Difficulty executing innovation projects on time	Transfer	Outsource some or all of the innovation project to a third-party vendor.
		Avoid	Carefully plan innovation projects.
Financial	Difficulty executing innovation projects within budget	Mitigate	Develop a budget for innovation and track spendings carefully
		Transfer	Outsource some or all the innovation project to a third-party vendor with a set price.
		Avoid	Carefully budget innovation projects.
	Financial losses due to product liability lawsuits or other legal claims related to innovation.	Mitigate	Obtain adequate product liability insurance.
		Transfer	Transfer the risk of financial losses due to product liability lawsuits to an insurance company.
		Avoid	Avoid developing or selling innovating products or projects that are inherently risky.
Legal	Failure to comply with applicable laws and regulations related to innovation, such as intellectual property laws, data privacy laws, and environmental laws.	Mitigate	Frequently review and update policies, practices, and procedures to align with legal requirements.
		Transfer	Cooperation with legal counsel specializing in innovation law to ensure full compliance with innovation-related laws and regulations.
		Avoid	Working with specialist innovation advisors and overseeing all legal documents, equipment and building units for greater company coverage.
	Failure to obtain necessary permits or licenses.	Mitigate	Train staff in HR and managers of appropriate documentation practices to ensure accuracy and knowledge in response to legal questions.
		Transfer	Engage with third-party service providers who can undertake the task.
		Avoid	Working with specialist innovation advisors and overseeing all legal documents for greater company coverage.
Strategic	Failure to identify and prioritize innovation opportunities	Mitigate	Invest in market research and competitive intelligence.
		Transfer	Partner with external innovation experts.
		Avoid	Develop a systematic process for identifying and prioritizing innovation opportunities.

Risk Category	Risk	Possible Treatment Plans	
Reputational	Public backlash against an innovation that is perceived as harmful to society or the environment.	Mitigate	Conduct thorough societal and environmental impact assessments before developing and releasing new products or services.
		Transfer	Establish a third-party oversight body to review the innovation and advise the company on how to minimize its negative impacts.
		Avoid	Focus on markets where there is strong public support for the innovation.
	Potential boycott or reputational damage on social media platforms	Mitigate	Have a process in place for users to appeal content removal decisions.
		Transfer	Partner with third-party organizations to help with content moderation.
		Avoid	Avoid developing features that could lead to boycotts or reputational damage.

Risk Category	Risk	Possible Treatment Plans	
All Categories	Inappropriate training programs and strain operational capabilities	Mitigate	Offer specialised training programmes and set up support systems to help employees in their roles.
		Transfer	Exploration the possibility of outsourcing some training and support functions to external service providers or partnering with organizations that specialize in innovation management.
		Avoid	Allocate specific innovation training programs which are united in the whole responsibility and timeline training of a new employee.

Risk	Strategy Respond Method	Possible Actions
Every Risk Category	Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Passive Acceptance:</b> This means that the risks are being recognized but the company does nothing to minimize the cause or the effects.</li> <li><b>Active Acceptance:</b> The organization has identified the threats that might be in the operational, financial, reputational, legal field, and has created a disaster or emergency plan to face these risks in the appropriate time.</li> </ul> <p>A resilience plan includes all the untreated threats a company might face and provides solutions and fast action-responds to each one of them.</p>

### 5.3.5 Evaluation of results & Reporting

#### Evaluation of the initial implemented action plan

Once the action plan is implemented, an evaluation is required to ensure that risk mitigation, as decided and implemented, was effective and efficient and risk remains within the acceptable limits. If a gap or weakness is identified in the overall assessment and implementation further steps and actions where the organization can follow are necessary.

Some typical steps of this evaluation and related decisions are listed below:



Figure 8. Actions after Risk Evaluation

Finally, the updated Risk Register, is maintained to ensure risks are documented and monitored as required.

### 5.3.6 Risk Monitoring & Control

This represents the final stage in a process of effective risk management within an organization.

The initial step of the process involves ongoing communication and consultation. Throughout this process, it is important to maintain frequent communication with your organization and other stakeholders who may be affected by the risks.

It is highly recommended that your organization establish a systematic approach to monitoring and reviewing its risk management strategy. This is necessary because risks are constantly evolving. The risk management strategy should be included in a document that will be regularly updated to reflect changes affecting the business. New risks will arise while existing risks may decrease or intensify.

These changes may result from internal organizational changes as well as external factors beyond your control.

To ensure effective monitoring and review of the risk management strategy, there are many valuable methods that can be used depending on the risk the company is facing.

Let's share a step-by-step risk monitoring and review methodology in the specific recruitment process:

- a) Maintain a comprehensive and easily accessible project documentation file, with particular emphasis on the Risk Register. Ensure that emergency and recovery plans are available at agreed points and locations for quick access in the event of a disaster.
- b) Provide appropriate information and training to all staff regarding the solutions and controls implemented. Schedule regular training sessions, at least once or twice a year, to raise awareness and share the necessary knowledge among responsible individuals. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities outlined in selected measures and controls, ensuring they are diligently followed by staff (e.g., designated back-up person understands their responsibilities and fulfills them daily).
- c) Foster a culture of risk awareness in your company's day-to-day operations. It is important to encourage everyone to approach every new process, action, or decision with a risk management perspective. Ultimate success would be to embed risk management as a standard in all decision-making processes.
- d) Annual repetition of the risk management cycle, updating the Risk Register, improving risk assessments by implementing new measures and controls, preparing plans, and improving overall resilience. With each repetition, the process will become smoother and more efficient, leading to greater resilience for the company.
- e) Establish a regular review process, such as quarterly or semi-annually, to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of implemented solutions-practices, measures, and controls. Monitor changes in the internal and external business environment, identify emerging risks and revise risk treatments and priorities accordingly. Update the Risk Register and address new or modified risks as required.
- f) Conduct annual emergency plan exercises, ensuring they remain up-to-date and enabling your teams to effectively recover systems, operations, and services as planned. Confirm that the personnel involved in the exercises understand their roles and responsibilities as defined in the plans and can respond effectively when needed.
- g) Maintain a file to record adverse events (including near misses), changes, trends, successes, and failures. Analyze these incidents to learn from negative incidents and failures and improve the company's resilience by strengthening existing measures or implementing new ones.

## **5.5 Management of Opportunities**

### **5.5.1 Fields and Identification of opportunity**

Throughout the project lifecycle or business, opportunities can be identified that lead to significant time and cost savings. However, if these opportunities go undetected, they may be lost completely. Therefore, the management of positive risks should receive considerable attention.

The process of identifying opportunities is not meant to reveal every possible fortunate incident that could happen. Instead, it concentrates on identifying major events with a realistic likelihood of happening, including those with a reduced probability of incidence.

There are three different and independent ways for opportunity identification:

### Observing the trends

- Entrepreneurs can gain awareness of developing trends by two methods: thorough study and observation, or by gaining customized predictions and market analyses from independent research firms. These trends can exist in the economic, social, technological, political, or regulatory field.

### Solving a Problem

- Sometimes, opportunity identification results in identifying a problem and devising a solution to it. These problems can be identified by observing trends, but they can also arise through simpler means, such as intuition, luck, or chance. Some business ideas clearly come from a desire to address a particular problem. In this case, the high unemployment rate of disabled individuals can be considered as a social and economic problem and filling this social gap covers many socio-political and economic needs.

### Discovering gaps in the market

- These gaps exist when a product or service is necessary for a particular group of people, but the size of the market is not large enough to attract the attention of major distributors or manufacturers.

Moreover, a pertinent question to consider now is, "What changes and potential opportunities exist?" We can measure the importance of an opportunity to the company by assessing its significance and the likelihood of it happening. Similar to the previous risk register, it's crucial to create a register specifically for positive risks.

This register should encompass details like the number of opportunities, their causes, the category of positive risks, and the dates they were identified and addressed. Keeping a thorough record of positive opportunities in our document ensures readiness for any situation and equips us for similar events in the future.

The same pattern will be followed as in Risk Identification. The opportunities also can be called as positive risks, in order these to be found in a particular business field, some techniques can be used:

- Brainstorming
- SWOT Analysis
- Market Needs – Market research
- Project Plans
- Stakeholder Interviews etc.

For every potential opportunity there is ongoing analysis and management throughout its life-cycle. The following actions are taken:

- a) Create a sustainable opportunity capture management plan.
- b) Coordination of specific tasks related to opportunity seizing.
- c) Implementation and supervision of opportunity seizing activities.
- d) Regular reporting on the status of opportunity.

The above examples on the target group of the project are divided into 3 categories of opportunities:



### Technological

Hiring disabled individuals can help the business in many different areas. One of them is the technological factor. Bringing a person with a disability into the company pushes management systems and communication channels to open and include technological advances. The company is likely to create, integrate and further improve its hybrid or remote working models and to go a step further in developing its internal systems such as CRM, Intranet and internal websites, G suite, etc.

### Environmental

With technological developments, new systems, and remote working, less carbon is released to the environment. Having as a reason the employability of people with diverse abilities, companies are committed and contribute to a certain extent to improve their environmental performance. Based on ISO 14001, the result of the integration of environmental management and strategic plans of the organization concerned is offered and can be achieved.

### Market

Gaining access to new markets and broadening the company's customer base in terms of employability of people with disabilities. The organization can gain knowledge of the needs and preferences of disabled customers and other organizations interested in this sector.

The culture of inclusiveness and disability-friendly policies help to bring together peers and stakeholders that help to develop new partnerships and at the same time contribute to the reputation of the organization as a socially responsible and innovative entity.

In addition to expertise, appropriate infrastructure and a disability-inclusive mentality, a company having acquired new contracts from disabled individuals or aims to achieve it, actively contributes to the functional and healthy role of society, the economy, the environment, and the future of all people.

### 5.5.2 Opportunity Analysis

Once there is a visible picture of the opportunities that the company can engage in, we choose which ones to reject and which ones to accept. As shown in the table below, depending on how important they are to the business and the impact they have, they can be rejected or accepted.

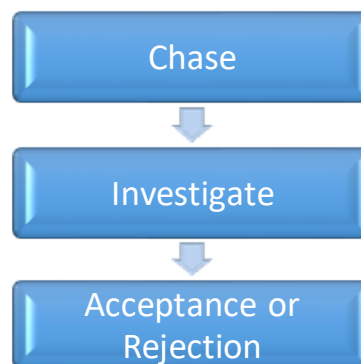


Figure 9. Decision Making Process

The step-by-step methodology of opportunity decision making process is:

- I. Chase the opportunity: Continuously monitor market trends, customer needs and business environment changes to identify opportunities. New ideas, technologies and new business models may be closer than you think.
- II. Investigate the opportunity: Evaluating the potential benefits and risks of an opportunity and making informed decisions about pursuing it. It would be more conscious to adapt flexibility and willingness strategies based on market and business needs and dynamics to optimize success.
- III. Decision making:
  - a) Decline the opportunity: In this stage we consider that this decision is not beneficial for the company and its targets. We move forward seeking new positive risks.
  - b) Accept the opportunity:

After accepting the opportunity some steps must be implemented

    - i. Devoting necessary resources, time, and effort to the smooth achievement of the opportunity.
    - ii. Create a strategic plan that outlines the specific steps, and timelines required to effectively execute the opportunity.
    - iii. Implementation of the planned plan to turn the opportunity into reality and achieve the desired results.
    - iv. Continuous monitoring and management of potential risks and challenges that may arise while pursuing the opportunity.

The assessment stage involves quantifying, characterizing, and prioritizing opportunities of the company once they have been identified in the Opportunities Register document, as in the same step of the risk management. The objective is to hierarchize the list of opportunities, highlighting those that demand the highest level of management attention.

In the assessment process, a consistent quantitative assessment is given to the opportunities which have been identified, considering both their likelihood and their consequences.

After identifying opportunities, we prioritize them using a positive risk assessment document. We then update the positive risk register or create one if one does not exist. We develop a table with a traffic light system (using a different color) to assess the positive risk. This approach helps us to provide a visualization of the hierarchy of positive risks. By organizing the register list by the positive risk rating column, we can easily answer questions such as "Which positive risks do we need to address first?" and "Which opportunities will benefit our company the most?"

### 5.3.6 Opportunity Respond Step

Opportunity analysis includes evaluating various options to respond to detected chances looking at how the outcomes may change depending on the adjustments to the risk factors. Through these analyses, the most crucial factors are identified, providing valuable insights into preferred risk management strategies. There are four techniques or options available for managing risks and opportunities:

- Opportunity control or mitigation of risks/opportunities involves actively managing risks to reduce the likelihood of their occurrence or minimize their impact on the organization.
- Opportunity avoidance entails eliminating high-risk sources and replacing them with lower-risk solutions.
- Opportunity transfer relates to the re-allocation of opportunities from one part of the system to another or the transfer of opportunities to external stakeholders.

Opportunity acceptance or acceptance of the status involves the recognition of the presence of a specific opportunity condition and a conscious decision to accept the relevant level of opportunity without the need for further control attempts.

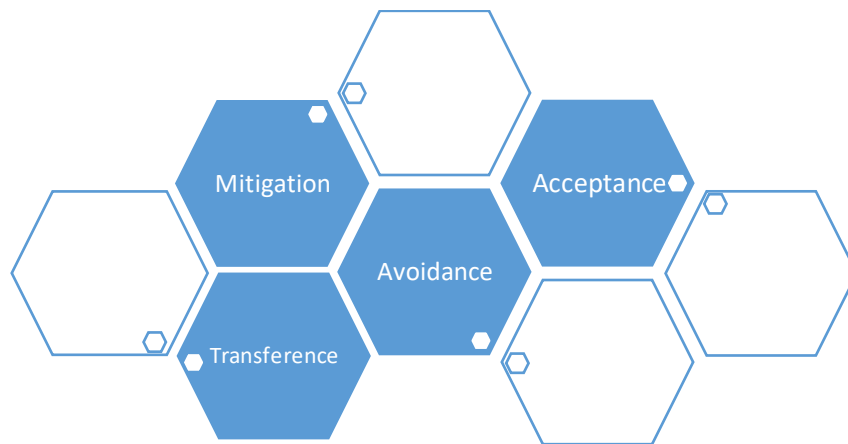


Figure 10. Respond Strategies

Regardless of which of the four techniques is chosen, a risk/opportunity management plan is developed that includes the tasks to be performed, a schedule for performing the tasks, the resources required and the total cost. For example:

- Avoidance may identify additional planning tasks to develop lower risk solutions
- Transfer may identify tasks to restructure procurement plans and related contracts.
- Control/reduction identifies proactive tasks to increase the opportunity Probability and/or Benefits
- The acceptance may identify actions to be taken if the risk/opportunity materializes

#### 5.5.4 Evaluation of Opportunity Step

To evaluate the opportunities management that a company followed, in specific the opportunity of recruitment disabled individuals, the company or the department that manages these situations must reconsider the implemented strategic plan.

In this case on the mentioned opportunity, it must be checked whether the way the company has changed its recruitment model and implemented new standards is properly structured and understood by the rest of the workforce.

Several opportunity evaluation methods can contribute to the assessment of this undertaking. Some of them are:

- Management by Objective
- Critical Incident Method
- Self-Evaluation
- Ratings scale
- Performance Test

Once the weaknesses of the strategic goal achievements are identified, then it would be good to record them on the opportunity document, which includes the categories, dates, management methods, application areas and people who will follow or contribute to this effort.

This will make it easier for opportunity managers to oversee and implement new methods and ways of dealing with risks, but also to handle similar situations that may arise in the future.

For this target group and goal of this document we are going to set an example for one of the above evaluating methods. The method presented is the Management by Objectives, which refers in the human factor of the company as the project's target by hiring disabled individuals.

### Management by Objectives as an Evaluation Method

Management by objectives (MBO) is an approach to people management that includes collaborative goal setting, recording, and monitoring among managers and employees within a specific time scale. This technique helps ensure that organizational goals and plans are communicated by top-level management and trickle down through the organization, while finally translating into individual goals for all members of the organization.

Performance evaluation: During this stage, a progress report is made comparing the actual progress in achieving the objectives set and the pre-defined targets. This evaluation helps to track the organization's attempts to promote diversity and inclusion, helping to ensure that objectives linked to the recruitment and support of people with disabilities are being met.

MBO, when implemented in the recruitment process, intends to increase the general efficiency of the organization by clearly setting measurable targets and results that are agreed both by the management and the employees. This approach encourages the active involvement of all stakeholders in the design of strategies and action plans to meet these goals.

→ A step-by-step methodology of this technique in an example of an opportunity, specifically the recruitment of people with disabilities who are the target group of the project is presented below:

1<sup>st</sup> Step: The first step is to specify or update the organizational objectives, especially considering the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce. These objectives should be linked to the overall mission and vision of the company, with a focus on promoting diversity and fostering an inclusive work environment.

2<sup>nd</sup> Step: The second step entails effectively communicating organizational goals related to hiring people with disabilities to all employees. This would ensure that the entire workforce is aware of the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion and understands how it fits in with wider organizational goals.

3<sup>rd</sup> Step: At this phase, employees at all different levels are supported to actively contribute to setting their individual goals through brainstorming or team meetings to assist in setting company goals and helping new colleagues with disabilities. By involving people with disabilities and other employees in this process, they gain a sense of ownership and empowerment, which enhances their motivation and commitment.

4<sup>th</sup> Step: A crucial element of the goals set in step two is that they must be countable. This allows both employees and managers to monitor the progress of disabled employees and the same people to participate actively in this process. Also, they will know and have assess on how well they are meeting their personal goals, contributing eventually to the overall organizational goals.

5<sup>th</sup> Step: The final step entails evaluating the progress of disabled and other employees in relation to the goals that have been set. Honest feedback is provided, highlighting successes and areas for improvement for each employee. In addition, appropriate recognition and rewards are given to encourage them to celebrate their successes and their positive contribution to the organization's diversity and inclusion efforts.

### 5.5.5 Opportunity Monitoring & Review Step

The opportunity monitoring and review step is an important part of the positive risk management process for every business sector. This step involves continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implemented opportunity management strategies to ensure their effectiveness and relevance in the dynamic business environment.

The following is a detailed outline of the risk monitoring and review process:

- a) Establish a monitoring and review plan that outlines the frequency, scope, and methodology of the opportunities monitoring and review process.
- b) Identify the opportunity indicators that alert the business owners or HR managers to changes in the corporate environment.
- c) Collect and analyze data on the risk indicators, for example the HR department can arrange meetings with the workforce to identify some factors that affect their performance or accessibility audits on the company building or equipment so that no one is marginalized.
- d) Evaluate the effectiveness of opportunity management strategies: Use the data collected to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of the implemented opportunity management strategies in addressing identified positive risks.
- e) Identify gaps and weaknesses in the opportunity management process such as inadequate opportunity assessment or treatment strategies and take corrective action.
- f) Take corrective action such as revising risk management strategies, implementing additional opportunity controls, or improving the positive risk management process.

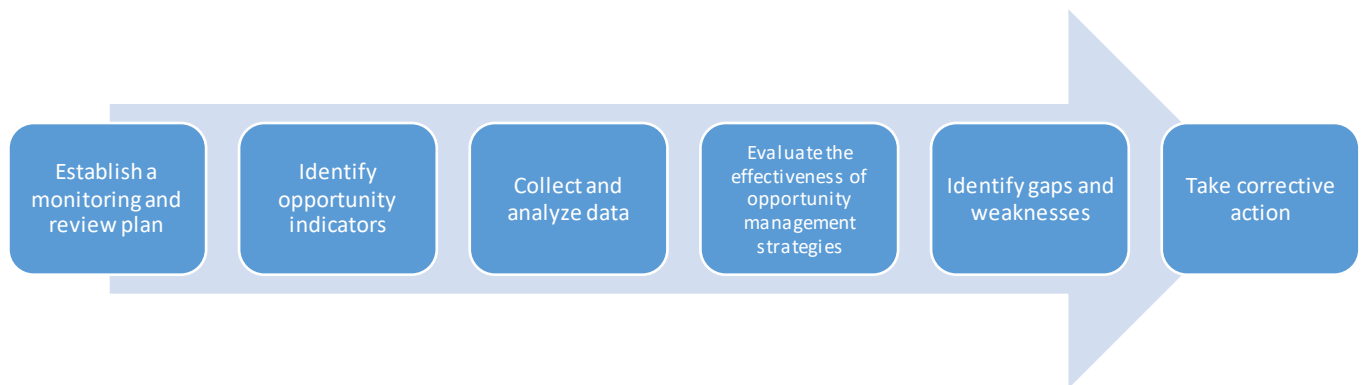


Figure 11. Opportunity Monitoring and Review Process

## 6. Prioritization of Activities Process

### 6.1 Empowerment and Employees Preparation

#### 6.1.1 Self Awareness

In the realm of business, self-awareness, as defined by organizational psychologist Tasha Eurich, is the capability to perceive ourselves comprehensively grasping our identity, recognizing our values, reactions, and influence on others, and understanding our place in the world. The comprehension of self-awareness necessitates an examination of its internal and external facets. Internally, it involves the clarity with which we perceive our own values, reactions, and the effects we have on those around us. Conversely, external self-awareness involves comprehending how others perceive us, completing the holistic understanding crucial for navigating the dynamics of the business environment (Castrillon, n.d.).

### What is self-awareness?

Focusing on positive aspects and understanding emotional triggers exemplify everyday manifestations of self-awareness. External factors beyond one's control often influence mood, and self-awareness becomes a tool to manage how one perceives their life. This involves the interpretation of both mental and emotional states, giving rise to two overarching types of self-awareness:

1. **Public self-awareness:** This entails being cognizant of how one appears to others, facilitating adherence to social norms and the demonstration of socially acceptable behaviour.
2. **Private self-awareness:** This involves reflecting on and recognizing one's internal state of mind. Individuals with private self-awareness engage in self-reflection, cultivating an awareness of their emotions and reactions. Such awareness is crucial in professional settings for fostering effective interpersonal dynamics and decision-making.

Exploring oneself and fostering self-awareness can yield numerous benefits that significantly contribute to achieving success in one's career.

How it can actively foster professional development:

- **Empathy** → According to research published in the Journal of Cognitive Enhancement, the better you know and understand yourself, the more effectively you can interpret the mental states of others around you. Consequently, cultivating self-awareness enables individuals to perceive situations from the perspective of their colleagues, ultimately enhancing their communication skills in the workplace.
- **Enhance communication skills** → Understanding your communication style makes it simpler to adjust it for different audiences, a crucial skill in diverse team settings. Improved self-awareness also enhances active listening, fostering better engagement and facilitating the building of trust and loyalty with your team.
- **Stress management** → Engaging in self-awareness allows you to recognize emotions and behaviours that serve as indicators of your overall well-being. This awareness enables you to take proactive measures if you sense irritability or burnout. For instance, if you observe that excessive coffee consumption contributes to anxiety and disrupts your sleep, being aware of this allows you to make lifestyle adjustments that positively impact your mental and physical health.
- **Time management** → Self-awareness plays a crucial role in effective time management. Consider identifying your peak performance hours—those times when you are most productive. If you find yourself most energized in the early morning, allocate that time for analytical tasks. Conversely, if you typically experience a dip in energy during the late afternoon, it's an opportune moment to concentrate on less demanding administrative duties.
- **Decision making** → When a person is self-aware and aware of their emotions, they act logically and wisely in the decision-making process, aware of potential conflicts and biases in the workplace.

### **Self-awareness for career exploration**

Engaging in self-reflection through thoughtful questioning is a pivotal practice for both career and character exploration. By posing questions to oneself, individuals embark on a journey of introspection, gaining insights into their values, interests, and aspirations. This process not only fosters a deeper understanding of personal motivations but also aids in identifying potential career paths aligned with one's passions. Moreover, it contributes to character development by promoting self-awareness and resilience. In essence, making inquiries to oneself is a powerful tool for navigating the complexities of career choices and building a strong foundation for personal growth and fulfilment (Career Exploration, 2021).

A table of self-awareness questions is set out below:

<b>Interests, Preferences, and Dislikes</b>	<b>Values</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What topics or subjects captivate your curiosity?</li> <li>✓ Which problems or challenges are you enthusiastic about addressing?</li> <li>✓ What activities bring you joy?</li> <li>✓ Can you recall experiences that you found unfavorable?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What principles guide your lifestyle choices?</li> <li>✓ What values are fundamental to your decision-making?</li> <li>✓ Is there a characteristic about yourself that you are committed to preserving?</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Attributes</b>	<b>Experience and Bias</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How would you characterize your personality?</li> <li>✓ In which areas do you excel, and what are your strengths?</li> <li>✓ What is your collaborative working style?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ When do you resist acquiring new knowledge or skills?</li> <li>✓ Describe your social circle—does it encompass diverse perspectives?</li> <li>✓ Reflect on assumptions you've made and how you plan to challenge them in the future.</li> <li>✓ How do you expose yourself to fresh experiences and viewpoints?</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b>	<b>Energy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identify your current skills and highlight those you enjoy using.</li> <li>✓ What new skills would you like to acquire?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What activities invigorate or drain your energy?</li> <li>✓ Recall instances when you were highly engaged or lost track of time due to intense focus.</li> </ul>
<b>Stress</b>	<b>Work View</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How do you recognize stress?</li> <li>✓ Identify situations when you feel most uncomfortable.</li> <li>✓ What strategies do you use to cope with stress?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Why do you pursue work?</li> <li>✓ Define what constitutes meaningful and fulfilling work for you.</li> <li>✓ Envision your ideal work environment.</li> <li>✓ What role do you want work to play in your life?</li> </ul>
<b>Mindset</b>	<b>Decision Making</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Identify areas in your life where you embrace a learning and adaptable mindset.</li> <li>✓ In which aspects do you feel resistant to change?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reflect on past decision-making processes.</li> <li>✓ What factors weigh heavily in your decision-making?</li> </ul>
<b>Managing Transitions, Risk Aversion</b>	<b>Purpose, Mission, and Vision</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How do you navigate change?</li> <li>✓ What is essential to you when adapting to new plans?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Define your core values and motivations.</li> <li>✓ What propels you forward?</li> <li>✓ Outline your path to achieving your goals.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Assess your openness to new experiences and opportunities.</li> <li>✓ How do you handle setbacks?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What impact do you aspire to make?</li> </ul>
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### 6.1.2 Skills Development

Investing in skills development is paramount for navigating the ever-evolving landscape of one's career. Continuous learning and honing of skills not only enhance professional expertise but also open doors to new opportunities. In today's dynamic job market, staying relevant requires adapting to emerging trends and technologies. Whether acquiring technical proficiencies or refining soft skills such as communication and leadership, ongoing skills development ensures a competitive edge. It empowers individuals to take on diverse challenges, contribute meaningfully to their work, and position themselves for career advancement.

#### Three Essential Business Skills

In the business world, three crucial skills stand out: functional, self-management, and special knowledge skills. Functional skills are the technical capabilities required to perform specific job tasks, like coding languages for a web developer. These skills are typically gained through formal education or training, but they can also be developed on the job. Self-management skills, such as time and stress management, are essential for professional and personal effectiveness. While some may naturally possess these skills, many acquire them through experience or training. Special knowledge skills, on the other hand, encompass unique abilities that make an individual valuable to a company, such as multilingualism or in-depth industry knowledge. While harder to acquire, these skills provide a significant competitive advantage in a business career (Career Advancement, 2022).

There are ways for one person to enhance their knowledge. Some of them are:

**On-the-Job Training:** On-the-job training is a hands-on approach where employees acquire new skills while actively performing their work responsibilities. This method seamlessly integrates learning into the daily work routine, providing practical experience and immediate application of acquired skills. For example, a graphic designer learning new software tools while working on a project or a sales associate refining negotiation skill through real customer interactions.

**Skills Workshops:** Skills workshops are organized events, often by businesses, aimed at enhancing specific competencies among participants. These workshops offer a focused and structured environment for skill development, allowing participants to learn from experts, engage in interactive activities, and network with peers. For example, a marketing team attending a workshop on social media strategies or a leadership workshop focusing on effective communication for managers.

**Formal Courses and Qualifications:** Formal courses involve structured educational programs provided by institutions, leading to recognized qualifications or certifications. This method provides in-depth knowledge, often through a curriculum designed by experts in the field, and results in a formal acknowledgment of the acquired skills, which can enhance career prospects. For example, enrolling in a coding bootcamp to learn programming languages or pursuing a project management certification for career advancement.

**Self-Directed Learning:** Self-directed learning is an independent exploration of resources such as books, online courses, and platforms like YouTube and Udemy. This approach offers flexibility, allowing individuals to learn at their own pace and tailor their learning experience to suit their specific needs and interests. For example, learning a new language through online language courses, acquiring coding skills through self-paced tutorials, or gaining marketing insights by reading industry-related books.



### 6.1.3 Resume and Interview Preparation

A resume serves as a representation of an individual's identity, encompassing personal and professional details. It emphasizes attributes such as skills and proficiency in various technologies. A well-crafted and professional resume allows interviewers to discern the skills relevant to a specific job.

A resume serves as an introduction to the relevance of skills, experience, qualifications, and accomplishments for a recruiter or potential employer. Considering that a recruiter or employer may allocate only a brief time for reviewing resumes, it's essential to concisely communicate the most relevant achievements. If the document effectively conveys suitability for the role, the resume accomplishes its purpose – an invitation for an interview. Demonstrating skills, experience, and future potential is imperative. While a one-page presentation is commendable, the average resume length usually extends to around two pages (Career Advice Hays, n.d.).

#### Guide for a comprehensive CV

To create an impressive resume, you should follow the structure outlined below. Clean and clear formatting should be used for optimal presentation.

1. **Contact information:** Initially, there should be basic information such as name, phone number, email address (business email) and perhaps, if available, a LinkedIn profile.
2. **Professional Summary:** Creation of a paragraph of 50 to 150 words outlining the potential employee's relevant experience and skills. Tailor each time possible to coincide with the specific position being applied for, incorporating keywords from the job description.
3. **Skills Summary:** Creation of a summary list of relevant systems, skills and competencies that need immediate attention. Use keywords from the job description, providing a summary of relevant competencies.
4. **Achievements:** Presentation of major career/school/university achievements supported by facts, statistics or links.
5. **Professional Experience:** Presentation of a detailed work history in reverse chronological order, emphasizing recent positions.
6. **Include positions and main responsibilities.:** Address any gaps in the CV in a positive manner, highlighting experience gained from previous work or through seminars.
7. **Education and qualifications:** Indicate academic qualifications, the year of completion, the name of the institution and a summary of the course of study.

➔ Can AI write the perfect resume or CV?

AI proves beneficial as a tool for crafting well-structured and formatted resumes, but it does have limitations.

The ultimate goal of a resume is to convey to the reader that the candidate is suitable for an interview. This requires aligning unique skills and experiences with the specific job applied for.

AI-generated resumes often lack the necessary customization to stand out; they tend to be generic and may not effectively align with the specific job's requirements. Thus, it is crucial to personalize an AI-generated resume, showcasing how skills and experiences precisely match the role's demands.

Furthermore, it's important to review an AI-generated resume for accuracy. The content may not always capture the most up-to-date or industry-specific terminology, leading to inaccuracies in presenting skills, experiences, achievements, and qualifications. Thorough scrutiny and editing are essential to ensure an accurate representation of the candidate's profile.

### Interviewing Tips

A well-crafted resume serves as an introduction, opening doors to opportunities. However, the interview becomes a crucial moment where compatibility with the University and alignment with its values come into play. Consider the following theoretical insights to elevate interview skills:

#### 1. Preparation Through Practice

Whether for a first interview or the 51st, involves exploring common questions posed by interviewers. Theoretical application of the SOAR method (situation, obstacle, actions, results) aids in articulating experiences and skills that add value.

#### 2. Emphasizing Positivity

In a theoretical interview context, emphasizing strengths and providing examples of past successes becomes crucial.

#### 3. Timely Arrival

Theoretical planning of the route, anticipating potential issues, and arriving early for the interview signify professionalism.

#### 4. Maintaining Composure

Techniques for maintaining composure during the interview include minimizing distractions, maintaining eye contact, and actively listening to each question for precise responses.

#### 5. Interviewer Interaction

Theoretical interaction with the interviewer involves asking questions about the position, management style, and overall university dynamics. Seeking feedback on qualifications and addressing areas needing clarification is a crucial aspect.

#### 6. Post-Interview Courtesy

Sending a thank-you note within 24 hours after the interview, referencing shared discussions, and briefly reiterating valuable skills signify professionalism.

#### 7. Emphasizing Cultural Fit

In a theoretical framework, understanding that cultural fit is as critical as skills becomes important. Discussions center around how "soft" skills complement "hard" skills and positively influence the university's culture.

### 6.1.4 Networking

Establishing a solid professional network can greatly contribute to one's career advancement. Having the right referral increases the likelihood of securing a job. If someone's contemplating a career shift, their professional network becomes a valuable resource for connecting with individuals in the industry they aspire to enter. (weesiang, 2020)

Why for a person to network?

1) **Access to job opportunities**

It increases the likelihood of receiving introductions to potentially relevant people or even a referral.

2) **Career advice & support**

Discussing common challenges and opportunities opens the door to valuable suggestions and advice.

3) **Long lasting relationships**

The point of networking is to develop and nurture professional relationships.

Elevating your networking skills in the business realm demands dedicated effort and practical application. Here's an extensive guide on enhancing one's networking proficiency (Nallalingham, 2023):

- Define networking goals: Establish clear goals before attending a networking event to maintain focus and maximize your time by steering clear of conversations that are not pertinent to your objectives.
- Preparation of Elevator pitch: Write a concise, convincing introduction that presents your skills, experience and career ambitions. A well-prepared presentation creates a positive first impression and facilitates meaningful discussions.
- Attend networking events (physical or online):
  - Physical: Participate in industry-relevant events like conferences and workshops to expand your professional network and gain insights from experts. Research attendees in advance, connect with organizers or speakers, be open to new connections, ask open-ended questions, and actively listen.
  - Online: Utilize platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter to connect with professionals. Engage in online groups and discussions relevant to your interests. Create a professional profile, connect with purpose, personalize messages, share valuable content, participate in discussions, and maintain professionalism.

Networking is a crucial element for career success. By setting goals, perfecting your pitch, actively participating in events, engaging online, following up, and helping, you can elevate your networking skills. Authenticity, respect, and generosity are key. With dedication, you can become a confident and effective networker, unlocking new opportunities for career growth.

### 6.1.5 Job Search Strategies

There are three distinct job-search strategies: exploratory, focused, and haphazard (Stevens & Beach, 1996; Stevens & Turban, 2001). Jobseekers employing an exploratory strategy demonstrate dedication and a motivation to thoroughly explore their options. This strategy inherently involves openness to emerging opportunities, with individuals actively gathering job-related information from diverse sources like friends, family, and former employers. Those adopting a focused strategy identify their top choices early in their search, establishing clear

employment goals. They concentrate their efforts on a small number of carefully screened employers, applying only for positions that align with their needs, qualifications, and interests. On the other hand, individuals utilizing a haphazard strategy follow a trial-and-error approach during their job search, changing tactics without a clear rationale and passively collecting information from both within and outside their educational or professional background.

In contrast, both exploratory and haphazard job-search strategies exhibit less direction toward specific goals compared to a focused job-search strategy. However, both exploratory and focused job-search strategies share the common aim of securing a satisfying and fitting job, whereas a haphazard strategy is oriented toward obtaining any job, irrespective of its nature (Koen et al., 2010).

By employing the strategies outlined below, one can recognize the various approaches available for navigating the job search process. Seeking assistance from sources like former colleagues and one's professional network can be a valuable step. With strong connections and relationships, numerous opportunities can present themselves. Implementing 3 to 5 job strategies is crucial to enhance the chances of securing employment (Chan, Diana, 2020).

### 1) Apply Online

In the current virtual landscape, the predominant method for job applications involves submitting them online. Many individuals rely solely on platforms like Indeed or LinkedIn, patiently awaiting a response. Surprisingly, despite the widespread use of this approach by over 90% of job seekers, it results in less than a 3% chance of securing an interview. Clearly, this method alone proves to be less effective. To enhance the efficacy of online applications, individuals should explore alternative avenues, such as the "back door" approach, which emphasizes establishing a more personal connection. This entails identifying key figures, such as higher managers or recruiters, and seeking ways to bolster their chances of securing an interview. The strategies outlined below can aid in implementing this approach.

### 2) Asking for Referrals

A proactive step an individual can take is seeking referrals. This involves reaching out to friends or individuals within their desired industry, posing questions and making statements that express their career preferences and interests. Those who engage in this practice stand to gain significantly, as research indicates a higher likelihood of securing employment through second-level connections. Studies further highlight that job seekers are five times more likely to receive a job offer when recommended by someone within their network. Therefore, it is beneficial to reconnect with people who know and have worked with you, as this can undoubtedly open numerous doors.

### 3) Connection with Agency recruiters or executives

This approach proves advantageous for professionals at mid to senior levels due to their extensive industry experience, enabling them to connect with external recruiters and present various opportunities to jobseekers. Jobseekers can explore collaborations with renowned recruiting firms, midsize entities, and independent recruiters. Building strong relationships with these recruiters is crucial. It's imperative to reach out to the right recruiters who have the authority to hire in the desired industry and profession. A targeted search on platforms like LinkedIn or Google can help identify suitable recruiters for networking purposes. It's important to note that recruiters serve the interests of employers, not jobseekers; their primary role is to identify the best candidates for specific roles. Consequently, jobseekers may not always find immediate opportunities upon reaching out, but nurturing the relationship remains valuable.

All of these strategies can be into consideration, and the difference will be noticeable on job research, on the attitude and self-confidence of jobseekers.

## **6.2 Employers Assessment for Accessibility**

### **6.2.1 Workplace Assessment**

Creating a comfortable and efficient computer workstation can pose challenges for individuals with disabilities, given their unique needs and limitations. Nevertheless, by implementing an appropriate setup, it becomes feasible to address those needs and enhance their overall comfort and productivity (Ergonomic Workstation for PWD, 2023).

Here are some guidelines on crafting an ergonomic workstation tailored to the requirements of people with disabilities:

#### **I. Assess the individual's needs**

To create a comfortable and tailored workstation for someone with disabilities, the first step is to really understand their unique needs and challenges. This involves a thoughtful needs assessment, considering factors like mobility, vision, hearing, and other physical or cognitive aspects. By gaining insight into these specific requirements, the right workstation components and configuration can be identified that will truly work best for the individual.

#### **II. Adjustable workstation**

For those with disabilities, an adjustable workstation is a fantastic choice because it lets to personalize it to fit to their specific needs. Features such as height, tilt, and how far things are from them, and this can be achieved with tools like Sit/Stand Tables, Monitor Arms, and Adjustable Keyboard Trays. These adaptable elements not only make their work setup more comfortable and efficient but also help reduce the chances of developing musculoskeletal issues. If this is not feasible, look for a spot to put the office with great space if the employee has physical impairments.

Fine-tuning the arrangement of the workstation can have a notable impact on the individual's comfort and productivity. Take into account factors such as the distance between the workstation and other tools, the accessibility of power outlets, and the positioning of regularly used items.

#### **III. Assistive Technology**

When creating an ergonomic workstation for individuals with disabilities, it's essential to take into account the role of assistive technology. This encompasses tools such as screen readers, voice recognition software, and alternative keyboards, which significantly aid individuals with disabilities in accessing and utilizing technology more efficiently. As an example, a range of keyboards specifically designed for the visually impaired, including Large Print Keyboards and Braille Keyboards.

#### **IV. Proper Lighting**

The workstation has to be well illuminated, and the lighting can be adjusted to meet the individual's requirements. Adding a Task Lamp is a thoughtful consideration to ensure optimal lighting conditions.

#### **V. Ergonomic Accessories**

Incorporating Ergonomic Workstation Accessories (if possible and needed) like a keyboard tray, mouse pad, and footrest can play a vital role in minimizing the risk of musculoskeletal disorders. These accessories are adaptable, allowing customization to meet the specific needs of the individual, whether it's offering additional wrist support or alleviating pressure on the feet.

## VI. Accessibility

It's essential to guarantee that the workstation is accessible to the individual, irrespective of any mobility limitations they may have. This might involve adjusting the workstation's height, placing items within easy reach, and ensuring that the individual can navigate a wheelchair or other mobility aid effortlessly.

### **Self-Assessment questionnaire**

This document/survey provides some questions for the employers, co-founders or staff managers to identify areas of possible accessibility barriers (Disability Friendly Workplace – Self Assessment, n.d.):

- Is the building accessible via public transport? Yes, No, N/A
- Are there designated accessible parking bay(s) for individuals with disabilities? Yes, No, N/A
- Is the office path wide enough for a person using a wheelchair or walking frame to pass by someone else? Yes, No, N/A
- Is the office path free from hazards that may pose risks to individuals who are blind or vision impaired? Yes, No, N/A
- Is there a ramp into the building? Yes, No, N/A
- Is the entrance door an automatic self-opening door? Yes, No, N/A
- Is the floor surface slip-resistant throughout the facility? Yes, No, N/A
- Are there stairs between floors? Yes, No, N/A
- Is there an alternative accessible route close to the stairs, such as a ramp or lift? Yes, No, N/A
- Are emergency exits clearly marked and accessible? Yes, No, N/A
- Is there a unisex accessible toilet available? Yes, No, N/A
- Are staff lunchrooms accessible, considering factors like door width, slip-resistant floor surface, and well-lit non-glare lighting? Yes, No, N/A
- Are noise levels in work areas/lunchrooms maintained at levels acceptable to employees? Yes, No, N/A
- Are work areas well-lit, non-glare, and is the lighting evenly spread? Yes, No, N/A
- Is office equipment (e.g., printers) accessible? Yes, No, N/A
- Are desks and chairs capable of being adjusted for height? Yes, No, N/A

Answering these questions provides a comprehensive assessment of the workplace's inclusivity and accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

### *6.2.2 Policies and Training Against Discrimination*

#### What is workplace discrimination?

Workplace discrimination occurs when an individual is treated unjustly due to factors such as their sexuality, gender, age, race, disability, religion, and more. Employers may be in violation of the law if they treat someone differently based on these characteristics. Direct discrimination takes place when an individual receives unequal treatment compared to others. On the other hand, indirect discrimination arises when certain laws and regulations place specific employees at a disadvantage (Workplace Discrimination, n.d.).

#### **Workplace Discrimination Training**

Workplace discrimination training is a program specifically designed to teach employees about unacceptable behaviour and how to prevent discrimination in the workplace. These programs, created by lawmakers, aim to address, and prevent discrimination, fostering an inclusive, positive, and productive work environment.

These procedures benefit both employees and the organization by aiding in better decision-making related to hiring, promotion, and other formal relationships.

Here are steps an employer can take to minimize instances of discrimination in the workplace.

1) Establish a written policy outlining procedures and rules

Workplace anti-discrimination procedures can vary based on the nature and culture of the organization.

Ensure that the company's employment policy adopts a zero-tolerance approach to any form of prejudice and harassment. To prevent instances of harassment, encourage employees to come forward and engage in investigations, assuring them of confidentiality (to a reasonable extent) and protection for complainants.

2) Implement a procedure for addressing discrimination issues

Employees who feel they have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment should report the matter to the human resources manager, their immediate supervisor, or administrator and should feel at ease when doing so.

In such cases, organizations should consistently address issues through a fair and impartial inquiry, even if there is no legal obligation. This showcases your company's commitment to equal and fair treatment for all employees. Timely resolution of workplace prejudice issues should be a priority to avoid losing credibility and trust.

3) Mitigate bias in the hiring process

Unconscious biases are unintentional stereotypes that influence our behavior and perceptions of others.

Although this may not always be at the forefront of business considerations, extensive research indicates that the hiring process is often unfair and biased.

These biases can hinder diversity, impeding progress in areas such as promotions, recruitment, and retention. Awareness training is the initial step in addressing unconscious bias in the workplace, allowing employees to recognize and understand their own biases.

Providing short-term on-the-job support through external job coaches (Jasper & Waldhart, 2013), participating in job training programs (Kwan, 2020), and receiving prompt, factual feedback, along with personalized training (Gröschl, 2013), are recognized as effective strategies. According to Pérez-Conesa et al. (2020), a shift towards inclusive cultures that offer generic training, professional development, and internal communication systems for all employees could eliminate the need for disability-specific practices. However, the implementation of adapted professional development systems for persons with disabilities (PWD) remains a challenge thus far.

### *Change Management in recruitment*

Change management theories include various approaches and models designed to help organisations manage and successfully handle changes. These theories emphasize on understanding the dynamics of change, identifying possible barriers, and implementing appropriate strategies to foster smooth and effective transitions. Various well-known change management theories include, among others, Lewin's change management model, Kotter's 8-step change model, and the ADKAR model etc.

The employability of disabled individuals isn't yet embedded in the work system, (especially in the 4 countries that the survey was conducted), and in the overall employability strategies of companies. Change management theories succeed in identifying, analyse, and address challenges that arises during transitions within an organization.

Listed below are some of the benefits that change management theories can offer to businesses in relation to the specific target group of the document. These benefits may include:

- A structured and systematic approach to managing organizational change. Referring to the employment of disabled individuals, a precise framework is provided with guidelines for the organization's integration of change or the intense emotions that change can bring.
- Identify, educate, and address negative issues or theories about hiring someone with diverse abilities.
- Reducing the phenomenon of resistance to hiring people with disabilities through strategies to support employees' emotions and reduce old habits.
- Transparent and effective communication that must exist between all departments within the company. It helps to eliminate misconceptions and active efforts to include diversity.
- Supporting training opportunities and developing employee preparation for the changes brought about by the recruitment of people with diverse abilities. Training may include disability awareness programs, disability awareness workshops and support for managers to create an inclusive working environment.

### *6.2.3 Hiring Procedures and Evaluation Program*

Evaluate your current interview and hiring procedures as the starting point, acknowledging the potential need for adjustments to accommodate Persons with Disabilities (PwD) effectively. Your agency team members will identify and pre-screen potential candidates, while the employer will handle the interviews and make the final hiring decisions (Cambria et al., 2013).

Key Considerations:

- Incorporate interview and hiring target dates into your overall plan, specifying milestone dates for initiating the process and setting a goal for onboarding the selected candidate.
- If online applications and employer references are part of the process, provide information on how individuals with disabilities can request accommodations for completing the application or job search.
- The center or agency supporting a candidate can collaborate with your HR staff to develop and conduct effective interviews tailored to each candidate.
- Conducting a "getting to know you" interview can be invaluable for employers, offering firsthand insights into how to best facilitate the transition for each prospective employee.
- Employers exploring apprentice programs or similar intake initiatives may consider hiring on a fixed-term contract basis.

### *Assessment Phase for Persons with Disabilities*

This concluding phase facilitates an ongoing learning process and continual enhancement. Effective feedback is crucial for any company project or initiative. Your plan for hiring Persons with Disabilities (PwD) should outline the type of feedback necessary for evaluating and improving your efforts. Document successful strategies and remain open to suggestions for refinement.

To maintain organizational motivation and interest, it is essential to celebrate success stories, recognizing those who contributed to the program's achievements and the success of individual candidates.

Suggested initiatives:

- Develop a timeline in your plan for conducting periodic assessments of your PwD employment.
- Ensure supervisors and other stakeholders engaging with PwD employees have a straightforward means to communicate progress, benefits, and identify any remaining challenges.



- Sharing this information within the team will reinforce effective practices and continuously technological improvement.
- The feedback plan may also involve benchmarking with other companies, either in terms of general program effectiveness or specific elements of interest. The Single Point of Contact (SPOC) or the specific center that the person with disabilities belong should assist in identifying an appropriate employer for benchmarking purposes.

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