AGENDA

ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts Webinar

ENHANCING THE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

18 November 2026, 10.00 – 12.00 CET

BACKGROUND

Promoting the employment of persons with disabilities remains a major challenge for labour markets across Europe and the EU Neighbourhood. Despite progress in legislation, policy frameworks and awareness of disability rights, persons with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to accessing and remaining in employment. These include limited access to appropriate skills development and employment support, inaccessible workplaces, employers' concerns about recruitment and accommodation costs, and persistent stereotypes and discrimination. While many countries have introduced measures to promote inclusive employment, translating policy commitments into effective and sustainable labour market outcomes remains challenging. Addressing these barriers requires not only appropriate legislation and public support measures, but also stronger employer engagement, accessible and effective employment services, and closer cooperation between public authorities, social partners and persons with disabilities themselves.

Recent European and international work has highlighted the importance of moving from policy commitments to practical measures that support the recruitment, retention and career development of persons with disabilities. The European Commission's EU Anti Poverty Strategy but more importantly the **Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030** and the related Disability Employment Package provide a framework for strengthening employment opportunities, including through employer support, reasonable accommodation and more effective employment services. Building on this agenda, the European Training Foundation has been examining approaches to the labour market integration and skills development of persons with disabilities in its partner countries, including the challenges affecting the implementation of inclusive employment policies. This work underlines the need to better understand which policy instruments and support services produce results, how employers can be encouraged to adopt inclusive practices, and how the gap between existing policy frameworks and their implementation can be overcome. Particular attention is also needed to the participation of persons with disabilities in the design and delivery of services intended to support them.

Within this context, the webinar will explore how research evidence and practical experience can inform more effective approaches to promoting the employment of persons with disabilities, combining European, regional and country-level perspectives. Following an ETF introduction to frame the topic, the presentations will examine the role of employers and social partners in facilitating inclusive employment and reasonable accommodation, the effectiveness of employment support measures, and the potential of participatory approaches to bridge the gap between policy and practice. The discussion will provide an opportunity to identify practical lessons and policy implications for strengthening inclusive employment in ETF partner countries.

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker
10.00-10.05	Opening, rules of engagement, overview of agenda	Cristiana Burzio, ETF
10.05-10.35	**From policy to practice: advancing employment for persons with disabilities** *The presentation will draw on 10 country notes mapping policies to support the employment of persons with disabilities. It will examine why legislative, strategic and institutional frameworks do not consistently translate into effective support, exploring the barriers to implementation and opportunities for improvement.* Q&A 10'	Chairperson: Vardan Baghdasaryan, Skills Lab regional facilitator Piotr Stronkowski, Human Capital Development expert at ETF
10.35-11.00	**The role of social partners in facilitating reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities at the workplace** *The contribution presents the preliminary findings from a research project exploring the role of social partners in facilitating the implementation of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities at the workplace.* Q&A 10'	Chairperson: Vardan Baghdasaryan, Skills Lab regional facilitator Angelina Atanasova, Research Support Officer, Eurofound
11.00-11.25	**Designing with, not for: co-creating services with persons with disabilities to close the policy-practice gap** *Drawing on experience from North Macedonia, this contribution shows how participatory design and local evidence can turn inclusion policy into practice.* Q&A 10'	Chairperson: Branka Andjelkovic, Skills Lab regional facilitator Snezana Mircevska Damjanovska, Social Protection, Labour Activation & Education Policy Expert, North Macedonia
11.25-11.50	**Why don't people with learning difficulties feel welcome in the workplace?** *This presentation, based on primary research, asks why, 30 years after the introduction of the UK Disability Discrimination Act, the work environment continues to be perceived as unwelcoming by people with learning difficulties.* Q&A 10'	Chairperson: Branka Andjelkovic, Skills Lab regional facilitator Simon Roberts, Associate Professor of Public and Social Policy, University of Nottingham (UK)
11.50-12.00	**Conclusions and wrap-up**	Cristiana Burzio, ETF

FURTHER READING

European Commission, Disability Employment Package

ETF (2026), Labour market (re-)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities

Eurofound (2026), Disability employment policy tools for engaging employers