

# **EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH MORE SEVERE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES.**

**PROJECT AION**

Iceland   
Liechtenstein  
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The AION project benefits from funding worth EUR 195,828 from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA Funds.

The aim of the project is to develop a comprehensive, systemic model of preparing people with more severe intellectual disabilities for professional activity. Preparing vocational workshops along with educational programs and methodology. Developing a coherent and systemic strategy to support the employment of people with intellectual disability on the labor market in cooperation with the Polish Labor Office in Sosnowiec. Developing a professional development path and a strategy for inclusion in the open and/or protected labor market, taking into account the educational, legal and organizational support for schools, people with disabilities, public institutions and entrepreneurs that may potentially employ people with disabilities.

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## 1. Introduction

Employers' attitudes towards employing people with more severe intellectual disabilities play a key role in their integration into the labor market. Although legal regulations and support programs promote professional activation of this group, reality often reveals existing fears and stereotypes that influence employers' decisions. This chapter examines the literature on these attitudes, focusing on the barriers, motivations and potential benefits of employing people with more severe intellectual disabilities.

The literature on the subject points out that one of the most important factors limiting the employment of this group is the lack of knowledge and experience of employers in working with people with intellectual disability. These concerns often concern potentially lower productivity and the need to adapt workplaces.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the challenges associated with communication and integration in team are often perceived by employers as difficult to overcome.

Another important problem is insufficient awareness of the available forms of support and financial relief that may be available to employers employing people with disabilities. intellectual disability.<sup>2</sup> Many employers are not aware that they can benefit from financial assistance for adapting workplaces or subsidizing wages, which leads to concerns about potential costs and complexity of administrative processes.

Despite numerous barriers, there are also motivations encouraging employers to employ people with more severe intellectual disabilities. Positive experiences with such employees can change the attitude of both employers and other team members.<sup>3</sup> Employers who have made the decision to employing people with disabilities often see not only financial benefits, but also social

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<sup>1</sup> K. Pawłowska-Cyprysiak, *Work and employment of people with intellectual disabilities*, Central Institute for Labor Protection – National Research Institute, <https://m.ciop.pl/CiOPPPortalWAR/file/95598/Praca-i-zatrudnienie-osob-z-niepelnospr-int-2-SP-25-K-Pawlowska-Cyprysiak.pdf>, [accessed: August 1, 2024].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Employment of disabled people*, niepetnosprawni.pl, <https://www.niepetnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/16563>, [accessed: August 1, 2024].

benefits, including an improvement in the atmosphere in the workplace work and building an inclusive organizational culture.

In addition, more and more attention is being paid to the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in... motivating employers to employ people from intellectual disability.<sup>4</sup> Employing these people may contribute to improving the company's image and increasing its competitiveness on the market.

Research shows that people with more severe intellectual disabilities can be valuable employees, especially in tasks requiring repetition and precision.<sup>5</sup> Their loyalty and commitment to work often exceeds that of other groups of employees, which promotes stability and reduces staff turnover.

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<sup>4</sup> *Labor market – Employment of people with disabilities*, Ministry of Family and Social Policy, <https://rynekpracy.praca.gov.pl/api/files/view/1773317.pdf>, [accessed: August 1, 2024].

<sup>5</sup> K. Pawłowska-Cyprysiak, *Work and employment of people with intellectual disabilities*, Central Institute for Labor Protection – National Research Institute, <https://m.ciop.pl/CiOPPortalWAR/file/95598/Praca-i-zatrudnienie-osob-z-niepelnospr-int-2-SP-25-K-Pawlowska-Cyprysiak.pdf>, [accessed: August 1, 2024].

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK

### Purpose, subject and research problems

**Purpose of the study:** The aim of the study is to analyze employers' attitudes towards employing people with... deeper intellectual disability and identifying barriers that make it difficult for them to take up work. Additionally, the study aims to develop recommendations that could encourage employers to employ this group of people more often and to identify examples of good practices used by companies that already employ people with intellectual disabilities.

**Subject of the study:** The subject of the study are the attitudes, opinions and experiences of employers related to the employment of people with more severe intellectual disabilities.

### Research problems:

1. What are the main barriers that employers identify in the context of employing people with... deeper intellectual disability?
2. What are employers' recommendations for other companies regarding hiring people from intellectual disability?
3. What practices used by companies employing people with intellectual disabilities have proven to be effective?

## Research methods, techniques and tools

**Research methods:** The study was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. The survey was addressed to employers from various sectors of the economy. The survey used closed questions that allowed for the quantification of attitudes and opinions, and open questions that allowed for obtaining more detailed and qualitative data.

### Research techniques:

- **Questionnaire:** It consisted of closed and open questions. Closed questions were constructed in a way that allowed for the assessment of general attitudes and opinions of employers, while open questions allowed obtaining more detailed information and personal reflections of respondents.
- **Data analysis:** The data from the surveys were subjected to statistical analysis, including both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

### Research tools:

- Questionnaire

## Organization: research area and research sample

**Research area:** The survey was conducted among companies registered in Poland, mainly in large cities with over 100,000 inhabitants. These companies represent different sectors of the economy, which allows for obtaining a diverse sample in terms of activities, size of enterprises and approach to employing people with disabilities.

**Research sample:** The research sample consisted of 18 companies that responded survey, divided into two groups: companies employing people from intellectual disability and companies that do not employ such people.

### 3. Research

#### Description of the research sample

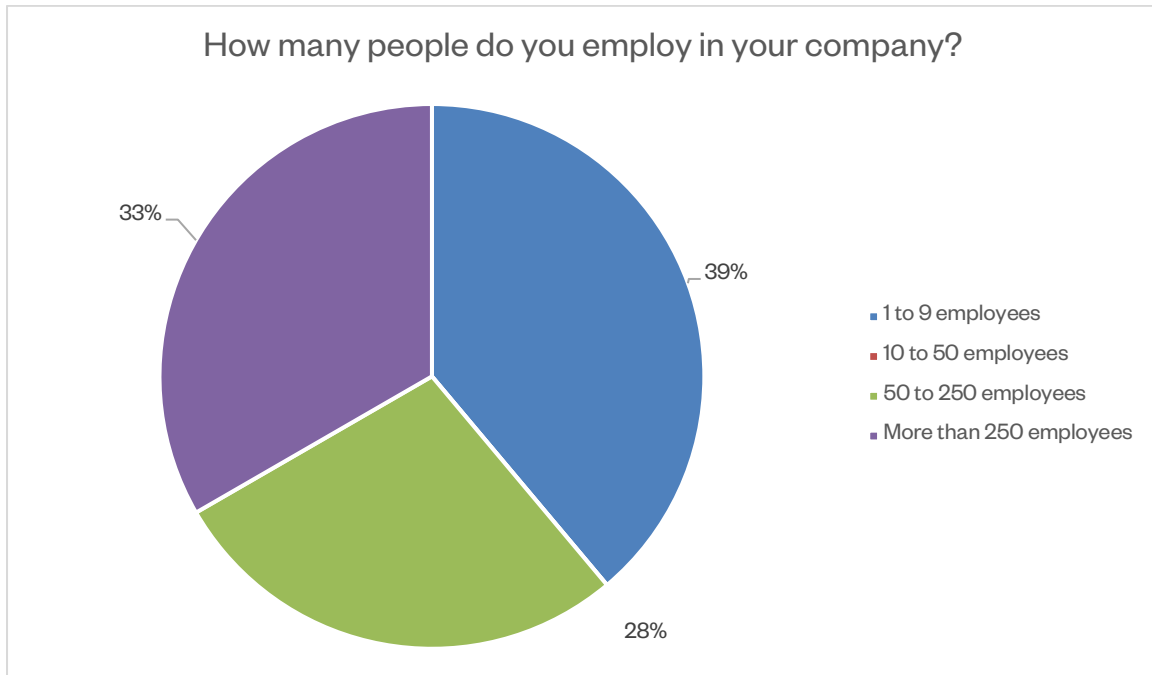
The research sample consisted of 18 companies representing various sectors of the economy. The majority of respondents were enterprises operating in the industrial sector (40%), which indicates significant interest in research in this industry. The next sectors in terms of the number of respondents were services (25%) and health care (20%). Companies from telecommunications sector accounted for 15% of the surveyed sample. In terms of size, most respondents were representatives of large enterprises employing more than 250 employees, while 30% of the sample were medium-sized enterprises (50-250 employees) and the remaining 20% were small enterprises (less than 50 employees).

#### Statistical description of variables

The statistical analysis of the survey included several key variables that represent the characteristics of the surveyed companies:

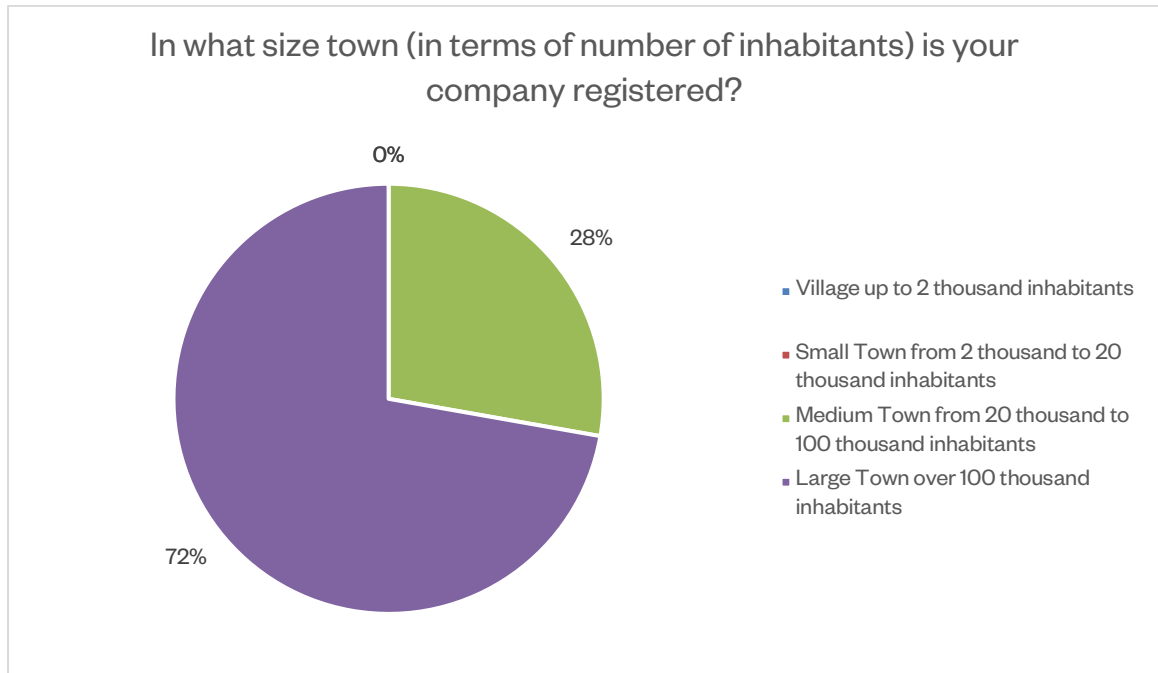
- **Company size:**
  - 50% of the surveyed companies are large enterprises employing over 250 employees.
  - 30% are medium-sized companies employing from 50 to 250 employees.
  - 20% are small companies employing less than 50 employees.





**Company location:**

- 75% of companies were based in large cities with over 100,000 inhabitants.
- 15% of companies were registered in medium-sized cities (from 20 to 100 thousand inhabitants).
- 10% of the companies came from smaller towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants.



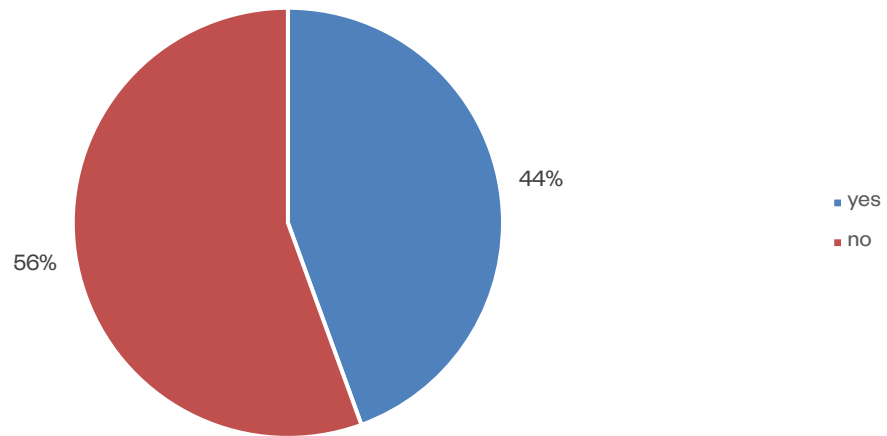
#### Sector of activity:

- 40% of companies operate in the manufacturing industry.
- 25% of companies provide services.
- 20% of companies are related to health care.
- 15% of companies operate in the telecommunications sector.

#### Employment of people with intellectual disabilities:

In the survey conducted among entrepreneurs, special attention was paid to the analysis of their experiences related to employing people with intellectual disabilities. The results showed that of all respondents, 44.4% (equivalent to eight companies) already had experience in hiring such people. These employers have demonstrated openness to diversity in their teams and have taken steps to include people from intellectual disabilities to their structures. However, the remaining 55.6% of respondents (i.e. ten companies) have never employed people from this group. This significant number of companies indicate that there are challenges or barriers that prevent them from making the decision employment of people with intellectual disabilities.

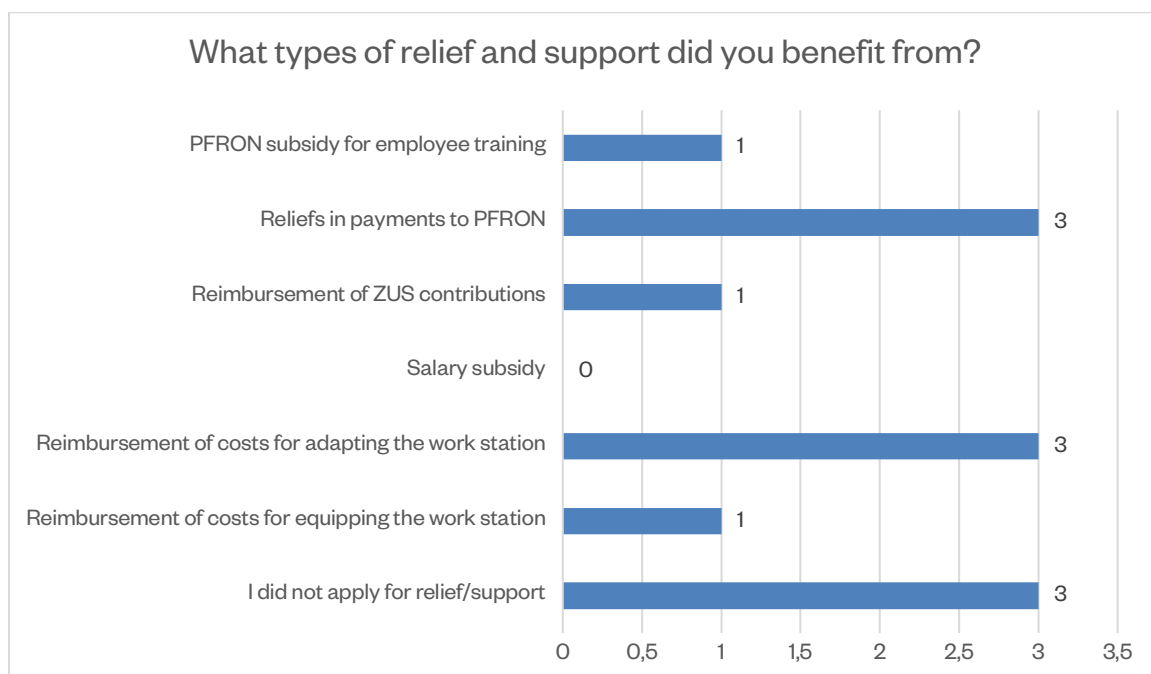
Have you ever employed a person with an intellectual disability in your company?



### Knowledge of support and relief offers:

When it comes to knowledge of support offers and discounts available when employing people from... intellectual disabilities, the study showed clear differences between employers who already employed such people and those who did not. Among employers who did not employ people with intellectual disabilities, as many as 80% admitted that they did not know about the available support offers and reliefs that they could be entitled to if they employed such employees. Only 20% of this group were aware of the existence of such offers, which indicates a significant information gap. Otherwise, in the group of employers who employed people with intellectual disabilities, 62.5% were aware of available support and relief offers, while 37.5% admitted that they did not have sufficient knowledge on this subject. This means that even among entrepreneurs who have experience in employing people with disabilities, there is still a need for better information about available forms of support.

### Benefits not from relief



Use of reliefs and financial support by employers employing people with intellectual disability was also analyzed. The results showed that 62.5% of employers who employed such people actively used the reliefs they were entitled to, which indicates their awareness and ability to use

available support tools. WITH on the other hand, 37.5% of these employers did not use any form of support, which may be due to lack of knowledge, complicated application procedures or satisfaction with the current state of affairs without the need to seek additional support.

Among employers who took advantage of relief and support, the most frequently indicated forms of support were relief in payments to the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PFRON) and reimbursement of costs for adapting the workplace, each of which was used by 37.5% of respondents. Refund of ZUS contributions was used by 12.5% of entrepreneurs. These results emphasize the importance of relief and financial support in the process of employing people with intellectual disability, but also indicate the need to increase awareness among employers about available support options, so that even more companies can use them.

#### **Barriers to employment of people with more severe intellectual disabilities:**

Among employers who do not employ people with intellectual disabilities, the most frequently mentioned barriers are:

1. **Difficulties in carrying out tasks:** 50% of employers were afraid that people with... people with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty performing their duties.
2. **Communication problems:** 30% of employers expressed concerns that communication difficulties may negatively impact work efficiency.
3. **Team integration problems:** 20% of employers indicated concerns about integration of people with intellectual disabilities with the rest of the team.
4. **Lack of knowledge about available reliefs:** 80% of employers admitted that they are not aware of support offers, which further discourages them from employing people with disabilities

## Recommendations for employers

Based on the data analysis, several key recommendations were identified that may help increasing the employment of people with more severe intellectual disabilities:

### 1. Employer education:

**Training and information campaigns:** Employers' awareness of the potential of people with intellectual disabilities and available forms of support should be increased. Organizing training, workshops and information campaigns can help break stereotypes and alleviate employers' concerns. These activities should also include providing knowledge about available reliefs and subsidies.

### 2. Financial and administrative support:

**Tax credits and subsidies:** Employers should be encouraged to employ people with disability by offering attractive tax reliefs and subsidies for adapting jobs. The procedures for applying for these forms of support should also be simplified to make them more accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises.

**Simplifying administrative procedures:** It is necessary to simplify formalities related to the employment of people with disabilities. This can be achieved by creating special support points for employers, which will help in completing all formalities and advise on applicable regulations.

### 3. Adaptation of workplaces:

**Flexible work environment:** Employers should consider introducing flexible working hours and the possibility of remote work for people with intellectual disabilities. This type of flexibility can significantly increase their chances of employment. Additionally, it is worth investing in adapting workplaces to the needs of these employees, which may include both physical and technical modifications.

**Training programs:** Development of training programs tailored to specific needs of people with intellectual disabilities can significantly increase their chances of effective employment. These

trainings should include the development of professional skills and social competences, which will help employees better adapt to the work environment.

#### 4. Integration and mentoring programs:

**Mentoring programs:** The introduction of mentoring programs, under which new employees with intellectual disabilities receive support from more experienced colleagues, can significantly facilitate their adaptation to a new workplace. Mentoring allows for individual support and building trust in the team.

**Inclusion training:** Regular training for employee teams that raises awareness of working with people with intellectual disabilities can contribute to creating a more friendly and supportive work environment. These types of initiatives promote openness and diversity in companies.

## 4. Summary

An analysis of employers' attitudes towards employing people with more severe intellectual disabilities showed that the main barriers are concerns about work efficiency, lack of appropriate qualifications and potentially high costs associated with adapting workplaces. However, there are numerous opportunities to overcome these barriers, including through employer education, financial support and the use of proven good practices.

The recommendations include the need to increase awareness of the potential of people with intellectual disability, introduction of financial support programs and administrative and promoting an organizational culture based on inclusion. Companies that already employ people with disabilities are an excellent example of how an appropriate approach and adaptation of working conditions can lead to success.

### Main conclusions of the study:

**Education and awareness of employers:** The study results indicate the need to intensify educational activities addressed to employers. Lack of knowledge about available reliefs and forms of support is a significant barrier to the employment of people with intellectual disabilities. Information campaigns, training and access to reliable information can help overcoming resistance and including people with intellectual disabilities in the labor market.

**Financial support and simplification of procedures:** Employers who benefit from tax reliefs and subsidies point to their positive impact on decisions regarding the employment of people with disabilities. At the same time, the procedures for obtaining this support are often perceived as too complicated, which discourages smaller companies in particular. Simplifying these procedures and improving the availability of information may encourage more employers to employ people with disabilities.

**Adaptation of workplaces:** Companies that have decided to adapt workplaces to the needs of people with intellectual disabilities report positive results. Adapting job positions and introducing



flexible forms of employment (e.g. flexible working hours, the possibility of remote work) may not only increase the productivity of these employees, but also improve their job satisfaction.

**The importance of an individual approach:** Individual approach to each employee intellectual disability is crucial to their professional success. Companies that implement this approach observe better results in terms of work efficiency and employee engagement. Mentoring programs and ongoing support for these employees can further strengthen their integration in the team and improve their adaptation to the new work environment.

**Promoting inclusion and diversity:** Companies that have introduced policies that promote inclusion and diversity, experience better cooperation in teams and greater involvement of all employees. Diversity is seen as a driver of innovation and creativity, which benefits the entire organization. Promoting such values can attract more diverse talent and create more dynamic and effective teams.

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