

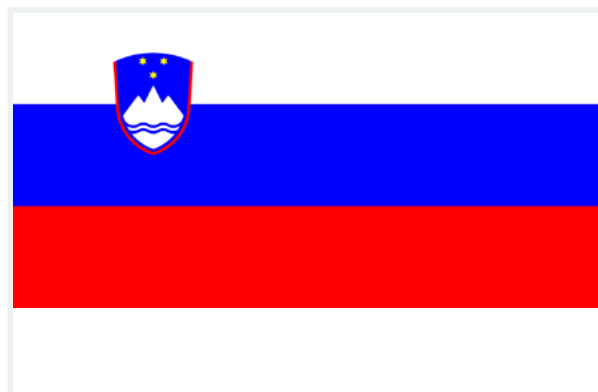


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Slovenia

Tomaž Čučnik, Director of the Institute of
Disability Enterprises of Slovenia, Mag. Mojca
Vaupotič, General Secretary of NSIOS



Introduction

This collection of country reports is part of the research on Digital Skills, Accommodation and Technological Assistance for Employment, conducted by the European Disability Forum (EDF) with the support of [Google.org](https://www.google.org).

The aim of the study is to explore the situation of persons with disabilities in the open labour market, focusing in particular on the potential of digital skills training and the use of accessible and assistive technologies to foster inclusion in the workplace.

National experts from each EU Member State (with the exception of Luxembourg) and the UK analysed their respective national contexts. They outline policies and programmes to support reasonable accommodation as a Human Resources (HR) procedure, map trends in the use of accessible and assistive technologies in the workplace, and explain the main limitations experienced by employees with disabilities in acquiring accessible or assistive technology that meets their needs. They also analysed the barriers faced by persons with disabilities related to digital skills and highlight some good practices at national level.

The national reports cover the following countries: the UK, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Luxembourg is the only EU Member State that is not part of the study due to not finding a suitable national expert on the topic.

Glossary

Assistive devices: external devices that are designed, made, or adapted to assist a person to perform a particular task. Many people with disabilities depend on assistive devices to enable them to carry out daily activities and participate actively and productively in community or professional life.

Assistive technology: any item, piece of equipment, service or product system including software that is used to increase, maintain, substitute or improve functional capabilities of persons with disabilities or for, alleviation and compensation of impairments, activity limitations or participation restrictions.

Disability allowance: payments that persons with disabilities can receive from the State to cover basic living costs and services.

Discrimination: any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of one or several grounds (sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) that damages or nullifies the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field, on an equal basis with others.

European Union (EU): a unique economic and political union between 27 European countries, as it stands at the time of publication of this report.

EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC): a regular cross-sectional and longitudinal sample survey by Eurostat that provides data on income, poverty, social exclusion and living conditions in the European Union.

General Comment: a General Comment is a treaty body's interpretation of human rights treaty provisions, thematic issues or its methods of work. General Comments often seek to clarify the reporting duties of State Parties with respect to certain treaty provisions and suggest approaches to implementing those provisions.

Member State(s) (of the EU): the EU currently consists of 27 countries, also called "Member States". Each Member State is party to the founding treaties of the European Union and is therefore subject to the privileges and obligations of membership. Unlike members of most international organisations, the Member States of the EU are subject to binding laws in exchange for their representation within the common legislative and judicial institutions.

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Number of observations (n): indicates the number of employers each national expert managed to interview.

Open labour market: this refers to work in a mainstream or “regular” employment setting, as opposed to a setting that has been created specifically to employ a specific group of employees, such as persons with disabilities.

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPD): represent the interests of their members with disabilities and have the mandate to advocate for the realisation of their human rights and lobby for the consideration of their interests.

Percentage points: this term expresses the arithmetic difference of two percentages, whereas percent (%) refers to the rate of change. For example, if Country A has an employment rate of 30% and Country B has an employment rate of 60%, Country B’s employment rate is 30 percentage points higher than Country A’s but is also higher by 100%.

Persons with disabilities: individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Reasonable accommodation: the necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. To be “reasonable”, the accommodation cannot impose a disproportionate or undue burden. Denial of reasonable accommodation is a form of discrimination.

The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI): an index that the European Commission reports between 2014-2022, monitoring Europe’s overall digital performance and tracks the progress of EU countries in their digital competitiveness.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): an international human rights treaty that reaffirms that all persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The CRPD clarifies that all persons with disabilities have the right to participate in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural life of the community in the same way as anyone else.

National Overview

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and the signed international conventions, the state is obligated to promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for persons with disabilities, as well as to encourage respect for their inherent dignity. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes the obligation to create conditions for the equal participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market by removing barriers and fostering equal opportunities.

Slovenia is a country that does not maintain a registry of disabled individuals. According to data from various disabled organisations affiliated with the National Council of Disabled Organisations of Slovenia, we estimate that there are over 115,000 registered disabled individuals in Slovenia, accounting for 5.43% of the total population. Among them, there are 35,640 working-age disabled individuals who are part of the employed workforce, constituting 3.83%. Among the employed disabled individuals, the majority possess a high school education (61.20%), and there is also an observed increase in the number of employed disabled individuals with higher education degrees (3.80%).

The system of employing disabled individuals is stable and remains unchanged. It is well-received among employers, who have a relatively good understanding of it. Due to this familiarity with the system and adequate information, employers do not incur additional costs when hiring disabled individuals. Consequently, this translates to more efficient integration of disabled individuals into the work process, as employers have more time for effective placements.

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	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total no. of employees	909,965	847,279	923,590	930,232
No. of disabled employees	35,021	34,9339	35,406	35,640
% of disabled employees among all employees	3.85%	4.12%	3.85%	3.85%
Total no. of unemployed	75,292	87,283	65,969	53,181
No. of unemployed persons with disabilities	12,989	12,185	10,589	8,751
% of unemployed persons with disabilities among all unemployed	17.25%	13.96%	16.05%	16.46%
No. of employments of unemployed people with disabilities	2,875	2,828	3,003	2,452

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

In Slovenia, with the aim of providing employment for as many disabled individuals as possible, there are several different forms of employment available: disability enterprises, employment centres, and employment in all other forms of employment relationships. In all three forms of employment, disabled individuals are employed in accordance with the applicable labour legislation, and they are entitled to all rights like other employees without disability status, receiving fair compensation for their work. The employment system is focused on promoting the employment of disabled individuals in the open labour market, with regular employers and in regular job positions. An especially successful form of employment is highlighted as inclusive disability enterprises, which are part of the social economy and provide an employment option for severely disabled individuals. The work positions for disabled individuals in these enterprises can receive additional financial support. Disability enterprises offer job positions to both disabled and non-disabled individuals,

often targeting vulnerable groups in the labour market. While disability enterprises are established with the intention of employing disabled individuals, those employed in these enterprises are free to choose employment and are not exclusively tied to working in such companies.

An employment centre is a legally significant entity established to provide sheltered work positions for disabled individuals with the most severe forms of disability. These individuals, with a disability level ranging from 30% to 70% of expected work capacity, are issued a decision by the Employment Service of Slovenia, based on the opinions of rehabilitation providers, that they are employable only in sheltered work positions. Such disabled individuals make up a small percentage of all disabled individuals in the labour market.

Disabled individuals employed in sheltered work positions receive professional guidance throughout the work process and perform their tasks under the instructions and support of professional staff and colleagues employed within the employment centre. This applies even if work processes occur outside the premises of the employment centre.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of active employment centres	66	65	65	66
No. of disabled employees in sheltered workplaces within employment centres	703	725	755	826
Total no. of employees in employment centres	978	1,023	1,087	1,184
Ratio between the no. of employees in sheltered workplaces within employment centres compared to all employees in employment centres	71.90%	70.90%	73.00%	70.00%

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

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Disability enterprises are commercial companies that operate as such and provide suitable programmatic, personnel, technical, and spatial conditions for the type and degree of disabled workers they employ inclusively with other employees. A disability enterprise is required to employ and train at least 40% disabled individuals out of all employed workers in the company. As of the end of 2022, there were 158 companies registered in the Disability Enterprises Register. Among these, small and medium-sized enterprises dominated. Disability enterprises in Slovenia employ one-sixth of all working-age disabled individuals in the country.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of CEPD*	146	152	155	158
No. of disabled employees in CEPD*	5,944	5,865	5,981	6,030
Total no. of employees in CEPD*	11,715	11,528	11,562	11,700
% of disabled individuals among all employees in CEPD*	50.70%	50.90%	51.70%	51.50%

*Companies employing people with disabilities

Source: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

Both mentioned forms (employment centres, disability enterprises) should not be equated with protective workshops, where a special form of employment is offered, but not within the framework of labour legislation. In the case of disability enterprises and employment centres, employment is provided with all rights under labour relations. All forms of employment in disability enterprises and employment centres are established in accordance with specific collective agreements depending on the sector to which the respective company belongs.

Users of protective workshops generally lack legal capacity and have disabilities that render them unable to perform gainful work. These workshops primarily serve purposes of socialisation and care. Some participants in these workshops also perform simple tasks, but without receiving a wage; instead, they receive a symbolic reward. They do not receive benefits like holiday pay, nor are they entitled to paid leave and other rights provided under labour legislation.

The mentioned employment forms have positive effects and, in conjunction with the quota system for employing disabled individuals, contribute to positive employment trends and a high level of employment in various economic situations, including economic crises.

Incentives for employing individuals with disabilities involve a reduction in the taxable base for corporate income tax (CIT) by 50% to 70% of the salaries of disabled individuals (the effective tax rate is typically 7% of the taxable base). The reduction in the taxable base for personal income tax on income received by disabled individuals ranges from 40% to 70%.

The introduced quota system defines the obligation for legal entities to employ a specific number of individuals with disabilities:

- It defines the percentage of employees as the obligation to employ individuals with disabilities, ranging from 2% to 6% based on the nature of the business.
- It rewards employers if they employ a greater number of disabled individuals than mandated by the quota and provides incentives for employers hiring disabled individuals even when they are not obligated by the quota.
- It exempts the payment of contributions for pension and disability insurance for employed disabled individuals exceeding the defined quota and for disabled individuals in companies not subject to the quota obligation.
- It specifies the contributions that employers must pay in case they do not employ the required number of disabled individuals as stipulated by the quota.
- It provides subsidies for the wages of disabled employees due to reduced work performance resulting from their disability.
- It offers additional payments to employers to cover the costs associated with employing disabled individuals (payment for support services, workplace adaptation costs, funding for vehicle adaptations).

In 2021, financial incentives for individuals with disabilities were as follows:

- Average total financial incentive per employed individual with a disability: €431.
- In companies exceeding the quota: €383.
- In disability-specific companies and employment centres: €931.

Digital Skills

Digital inclusion is understood as the ability of individuals to access the available information and communication infrastructure, digital technologies, solutions, and services, to use them competently and securely, to trust them, and thus actively participate in the information society. In today's technologically supported and information-rich environment, citizens actively shape the digital environment, which is essential for democratic processes and practices. The digital environment provides a crucial platform for social dialogue and is the context in which citizens increasingly exercise their rights to social, economic, and political participation.

Digitalisation is becoming not just a choice but an expectation and a necessity. On one hand, the development and implementation of technologies are necessary; on the other hand, there is a need for accessibility, adequate training, and the equal inclusion of individuals in the developing digital society – digital inclusion. Digital competencies involve the confident, critical, and responsible use of digital technologies in learning, work, and societal collaboration. They encompass a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

According to data from the Statistical Office of Slovenia (SURs), in the first quarter of 2021, 93% of citizens had access to the internet (compared to 90% in the first quarter of 2020), and 89% used it regularly (compared to 87% in the first quarter of 2020). The percentage of people who did not use the internet even during times when work, education, and social interactions shifted online was 8% in 2021 (compared to 11% in 2020). The lowest percentage of internet users was in the age group of 65 to 74, at 62% in 2021, which was significantly higher than the 51% in 2020. In this age group, the highest percentage of those who have never used the internet is also present, reaching 31% in 2021 (compared to 44% in 2020).

The OECD notes that the digital skills of adults in Slovenia are low and that investments in adult education are also low. The Slovenian Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development (UMAR) finds that the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected Slovenia's economy in 2020 and significantly impacted people's quality of life, while also bringing some new opportunities. However, some unresolved development challenges were exacerbated during the pandemic. This is closely related to insufficient investments in certain areas, particularly in intangible capital (including information and communication

technology and employee training), which is an important factor in the productivity of modern economies. UMAR also notes that providing “future skills” (such as those related to digital and green transformation, as well as an aging population) is becoming a growing challenge.

One of the biggest shortcomings in Slovenia is the lack of preparedness of the population to participate in the information society. This necessitates the implementation of various measures to improve the situation. Addressing the identified gaps in digital knowledge, skills, the number and qualifications of ICT professionals, and connectivity is essential to ensuring that all citizens have full access to services enabled by digital technologies and that they actively contribute to the development of the digital society.

In Slovenia, statistical data on the level of digital knowledge and skills of disabled individuals is not collected and processed. The assessment of disabled organisations is generally that these skills are poor, insufficient, and low. It is important to note that this largely depends on the type of disability and the generation of disabled individuals. Younger disabled individuals tend to be more aware, seek more information, and possess better skills in terms of new digital technologies and capabilities. They often acquire digital skills through formal education. The number of students with special needs in Slovenia increases each year. In line with the EU Strategy for People with Disabilities 2021-2023, Slovenia has set goals to increase the participation of adult disabled individuals in education, ensure inclusive and accessible vocational education and training programmes, and strengthen the provision of guidance services to disabled individuals to bridge knowledge and skills gaps, especially in the digital realm.

Assistive Technologies

In Slovenia, an employer can apply to the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute of Slovenia and the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability, and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia for payment of appropriate workplace adaptations and tools for work based on an individual adaptation plan. The plan should indicate that due to disability, the disabled individual can only be employed in a modified workplace or requires adapted work tools to perform tasks. Under certain conditions, the provider of vocational rehabilitation services can also apply for workplace adaptations for disabled individuals, even during the period of vocational rehabilitation.

Supportive technology refers to devices, equipment, and software that assist individuals with disabilities in performing tasks and activities that would be difficult or impossible without assistance. Assistive technology supports mobility, communication, education, and employment. Examples of supportive technology include:

- Mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches, and walking frames.
- Hearing aids and cochlear implants for individuals with hearing impairments.
- Screen readers and speech recognition software for individuals with visual impairments.
- Alternative keyboards and pointing devices for individuals with motor or dexterity impairments.
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices for individuals with speech or communication difficulties.
- Prosthetics for individuals who have lost limbs due to injury or illness.
- Adaptive switches and environmental control units that enable individuals with physical disabilities to control their surroundings.

Additionally, digital accessibility is crucial. It involves designing and developing digital content, applications, and tools so that they are accessible to individuals with physical and visual impairments. Digital accessibility ensures that disabled individuals can access and use digital content, tools, and applications just like non-disabled individuals. The goal is to provide equal access for everyone. In line with this, the Republic of Slovenia has adopted the Law on the Accessibility of Products and Services for Disabled Persons, along with the Regulation on the

Accessibility of Products for Disabled Persons. This regulation defines detailed conditions regarding the accessibility of products, labelling, and the compliance assessment procedure. It covers various products specified in the first paragraph of Article 3 of the Law on the Accessibility of Products and Services for Disabled Persons.

The purpose of this regulation is to contribute to the proper functioning of the EU's single market, particularly by eliminating and preventing barriers to the free movement of certain accessible products and services arising from different accessibility requirements. This would increase the availability of accessible products and services in the internal market, improve access to relevant information, and enable disabled individuals to enhance their digital knowledge and skills.

Reasonable Accommodation

In Slovenia, reasonable workplace accommodations for disabled individuals are regulated by appropriate laws, including the Employment Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act and the Pension and Disability Insurance Act. These laws stipulate the employer's obligation to adapt the workplace based on an individual's limitations and abilities. The actual adaptations are not prescribed; they are evaluated individually for each disabled individual. The initiative is aimed at supporting employers in hiring disabled individuals, where work positions or work tools need to be adjusted due to disability and specific needs.

Additionally, the European legislative framework on state aid allows the subsidisation of salaries for disabled employees up to a maximum of 75% and 100% subsidisation of the cost of workplace adaptation for disabled individuals.

From the survey, it is evident that having access to the individual's health or rehabilitation record would greatly assist employers in adapting workplaces for disabled individuals. Employers become aware of limitations through official decisions, which often describe an individual's limitations too generically and fail to consider their individual capabilities. Nevertheless, every disabled individual must undergo a medical examination by an authorised occupational health physician before starting work or when adapting the workplace.

The most common workplace adaptations, as indicated in the survey, include:

- modified work schedules,
- remote work options,
- adapted work equipment (adjustable desks, specialized chairs),
- use of specialized technical aids (wheelchairs, lifts, keyboards, mice, screens, etc.),
- voice control options, special communication devices,
- mentoring.