

**COMMITTEE :** Discrimination (ILO5)

**ISSUE:** How can we promote workplace design to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities?

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## INTRODUCTION



Hello delegates, my name is Mina DEGRUSON, I'm 17 and I'm in the British section at the Lycée International de Ferney-Voltaire. This will be my third edition of FerMUN and I'm delighted to be able to be the chair of the ILO 5 committee on the theme of discrimination. This year, one of the issues our committee will be focusing on is the inclusion of people with disabilities in the working environment. This is a very important subject because it is part of the fundamental issue of equality.

I hope that this report will give you some ideas for your research.

I'm looking forward to meeting you all at the conference and to our future debates!

## KEY WORDS

**Workplace:** According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a workplace is any premises made available to a person for the purpose of working (a home can also be considered a workplace). Workplaces must offer a safe and healthy environment to workers, taking into account their needs in terms of welfare and well-being, in particular by providing facilities such as toilets, shower rooms, changing rooms, rest rooms and a clean place to eat during breaks.

**Persons with disabilities:** The first article of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states: ‘Persons with disabilities are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers (accessibility, mobility, communication, etc.), may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.

**Reasonable accommodation:** Workplace accommodation involves adapting and modifying machinery and equipment and/or changing the content and organisation of work. For example, adapting the working environment and working hours to allow access to the workplace in order to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation does not impose disproportionate or undue burdens, adapting to both the employee and the employer.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion is the act of including someone in a group in order to put an end to their exclusion (particularly social exclusion). Through inclusion, a society considers all its members to be ‘normal’. In the workplace, this refers to the fact that all people, regardless of age, origin, faith or disability, should have the same opportunities and the same access to resources.

**Unemployment :** An unemployed person as defined by the ILO is a person aged 15 or over who simultaneously meets the following three conditions: being without work in a given week; being available for work within two weeks; having actively sought work in the last four weeks or having found a job starting in less than three months.

**NEET (‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’):** NEET is a term used to describe a young person aged between 16 and 24 who is not in employment, education or training.

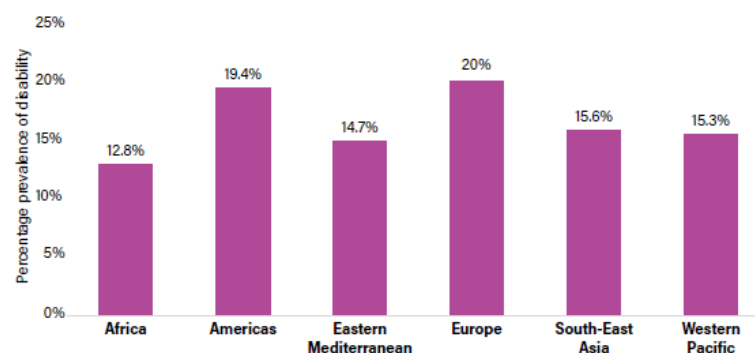
## OVERVIEW

The inclusion of people with disabilities in the world of work is one of the objectives set by the UN in its Sustainable Development Goals. Indeed, the aim of SDG 8 is to promote a shared and sustainable economic growth in order to provide decent, quality employment for all.

According to the WHO (World Health Organisation), it is estimated that in 2023, more than 1.3 billion people

worldwide had a significant disability, which represents more than 16% of the world's population. Around 142 million of these people had a severe form of disability. This affects every region of the world, as the graph above shows.

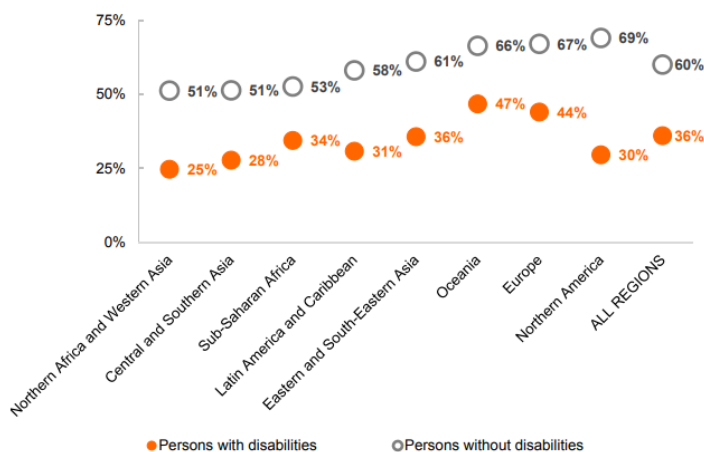
Figure 2. Prevalence of disability, by WHO region, 2021



Source: Global burden of disease data, 2021

More than 60% of disabled people are of working age, but their unemployment rate is higher than that of other workers. Their median unemployment rate is 7.6%, compared with 6.0% for non-disabled people. This translates into an employment rate of 36% for people with disabilities, compared with 60% for people without disabilities. The graph below compares the employment rate of people with and without disabilities in different regions of the world.

Figure II.77. Employment to population ratios for persons aged 15 years and over, by disability status, in 8 regions, in 2006-2016.



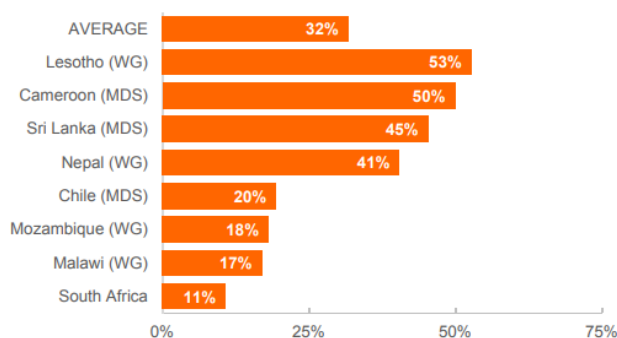
There is a gap of 24 percentage points between the employment rates of people with and without disabilities.

## Adapting the workplace to people with disabilities

Because of their disability, some people are unable to work under the usual conditions adopted in certain companies and therefore require so-called reasonable accommodation. This would enable disabled people to exercise all their fundamental rights on an equal basis. In addition, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) states that an employer has a duty to adapt the workplace, where necessary, by removing physical obstacles (fitting a ramp on a staircase, for example) and other barriers. However, the initiative for these changes should be reasonable, so as not to disrupt the operation of the business. In this way, reasonable accommodation makes the workplace more inclusive while ensuring that activities continue to be carried out effectively. ('Practical guide-promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments' - ILO)

However, as the graph below shows, lack of accessibility and accommodation remain barriers to employment for disabled people, preventing them from being able to work in decent conditions.

Figure II.78. Percentage of persons with disabilities who report that their workplace is hindering or not accessible, in 8 countries, around 2013.



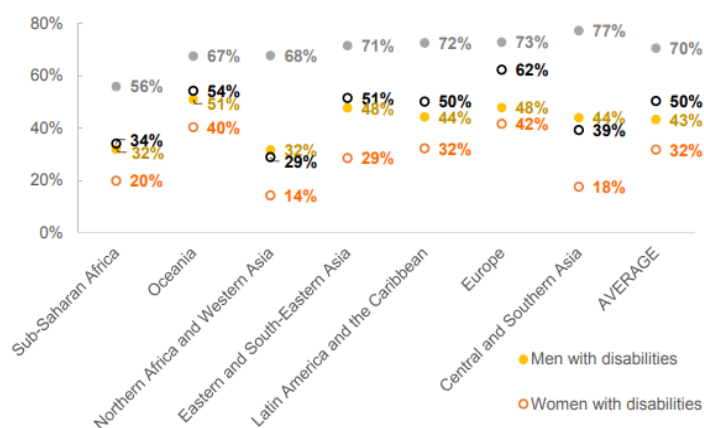
Note: (WG) identifies countries with data collected with the Washington Group Short Set of Questions; (MDS) identifies countries with data collected with the Model Disability Survey. Data from Cameroon and South Africa were collected in selected regions and are not nationally representative.

Source: UNDESA (based on data from SINTEF<sup>11</sup>) and WHO.<sup>100</sup>

## Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities are doubly segregated by their disability and their gender. Their invisibility in a number of social spheres and the absence of positive role models contribute to limiting their educational and career opportunities and choices. This results in considerable gaps in employment rates, as shown in the graph below.

Figure II.52. Average employment-to-population ratios,<sup>265</sup> for persons aged 15 years and over,<sup>266</sup> by disability status and sex, in 6 regions,<sup>267</sup> 2006-2016.<sup>268</sup>



Source: ESCAP,<sup>6</sup> ESCWA,<sup>7</sup> Eurostat,<sup>9</sup> ILO<sup>269</sup> and UNDESA<sup>78</sup> (on the basis of data from IPUMS<sup>10</sup> and SINTEF<sup>11</sup>).

## The situation of young disabled people

Young disabled people are more likely to be not in employment, education or training (NEET). The barriers disabled people face in accessing the workplace start early. Young disabled people aged 15-29 are up to five times more likely to be outside the education system and not in employment or training than their non-disabled peers. This is the case in Europe, where 30.6% of 15-29 year-olds say they are in this situation.

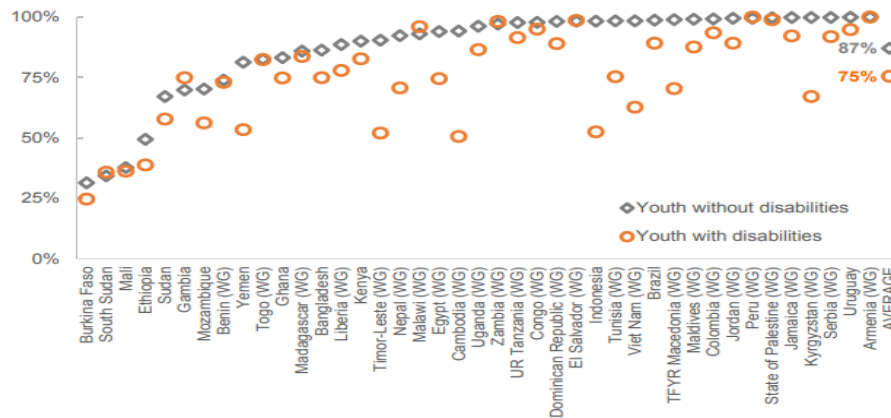
The large number of young disabled people who do not improve their future employability by investing in their skills and gaining experience are particularly at risk of exclusion from the labour market and social exclusion. Education is therefore one of the major obstacles to access the working environment for disabled people.

There are therefore many barriers for people with disabilities that prevent them from being included in education systems. In 2013, only 44% of member nations of the United Nations had systems in place to enable young people with disabilities to be taught in the same classroom as pupils without disabilities.

As a result, young people with disabilities have fewer opportunities to enter the labour market.

The following graph shows that young people with disabilities are less likely to have had access to education in many countries.

Figure II.26. Percentage of youth aged 15 to 29 years old who ever attended school, by disability status, in 41 developing countries, around 2012.



Note: (WG) identifies countries with data produced using the Washington Group Short Set of Questions. Data on youth with disabilities from El Salvador, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Peru, Serbia, TFYR Macedonia, and Viet Nam are based on 25 to 49 observations and should be interpreted with caution.

Source: UNDESA<sup>78</sup> (on the basis of data from DHS<sup>6</sup>) and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (on the basis of data from IPUMS<sup>10</sup> and School to Work Transition Surveys<sup>192</sup>).

## **RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS**

25 June 1958

### **Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention**

Although Convention No. 111 does not explicitly mention disability among the grounds for discrimination, ILO Member States are encouraged to adapt their national legislation to cover all forms of discrimination, including those based on disability.

20 June 1983

### **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention**

This convention, which came into force on 20 June 1985 and has been ratified by 85 countries, promotes equal opportunities and treatment for people with disabilities in the world of work.

13 December 2006

### **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

The Convention, which came into force on 3 May 2008, links the fundamental rights of all people with those of people with disabilities.

2014-2017

### **Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan**

The aim of this action plan was to guide ILO's projects in order to make it an inclusive organisation for women and men with disabilities.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- **Quota system:** Already applied in many countries, a quota system would oblige employers to hire a certain percentage of people with disabilities.
- **International standards:** Greater promotion of international standards, particularly those of the ILO, concerning people with disabilities would give disabled workers a higher profile and raise awareness of their rights.
- **Work placements:** the possibility of training and work placements in the company can enable people with disabilities to acquire the qualifications, know-how and professional behaviour required for certain jobs in the company. This type of experience provides an opportunity for the employer to assess the skills and aptitude of a disabled worker and possibly recruit him or her at the end of the training period.
- **Awareness-raising:** it is crucial to communicate with other employees to keep them informed of the strategies put in place by the company to enable disabled people to work in the best possible way. If employees are made aware of the situation, communication and contacts will flow more smoothly. It will therefore be easier to achieve results that suit everyone.
- **Adaptation:** adaptation measures are necessary to enable disabled people to work in better conditions. To make changes to the workstation more effective, the employer can consult the disabled worker concerned, as well as employee representatives, to discuss accommodation solutions.



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