



Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries

Country: Cyprus
Author(s): Simoni Symeonidou

Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the *Thematic report on the implementation of EU Employment Strategy in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people*.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the European Employment Strategy from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in support of disability policy mainstreaming. More specifically, the report will review implementation of EU Employment Strategy and the PROGRESS initiative with reference to policy implementation evidence from European countries, including the strategies addressed in the EU Disability Action Plan (such as flexicurity and supported employment).

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

New quantitative data:

Unfortunately, no quantitative data could be collected. Personal communication with the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities was sought, but no data existed.

New policy changes:

A new department has been introduced, namely the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities¹ which aims to organize all services offered to disabled people under a new and more effective framework. This department replaced another department known as the Service for the Care of Disabled People. The area of employment is one fundamental priority of the newly established department, and thus several initiatives were taken towards this end (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2009a). In particular, the department initiated a consultation process with disabled people's groups and other state representatives to promote legislation regarding the employment of disabled people. It also contributed in establishing a new organization, named the Organization of Vocational Development and Rehabilitation, which aims to design and implement vocational training programs and to co-ordinate or provide funding for programmes that promote disabled people's employment, either in the open market or in sheltered workplaces. More importantly, the department is now working towards the development of a unified disability assessment plan, which is expected to facilitate disabled people's inclusion in different areas (society, education, employment). In parallel the department continues to co-ordinate existing schemes targeting employers who wish to hire disabled people in their workplaces or disabled individuals who wish to establish their own business.

The most important legal development is a new law named 'Hiring People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Law' (N. 146(I)/2009). The Law came into force on the 23rd of December 2009 and it aims to minimize the exclusion of disabled people from the workforce by introducing a hiring quota of 10% of disabled people in the public sector. It came into force from the 23rd of December 2009. The passing of this Law was necessary as Cyprus had to be at par with international and European conventions and directions regarding the inclusion of disabled people in employment. In summary, this law concerns disabled people who have an impairment that reduces the possibility of their finding and maintaining a job. Applicants are expected to hold all the necessary qualifications for the job, to pass any written or oral exams necessary and to be able to respond to the duties entailed in the job. The process, as defined by the law, necessitates that the applicants go through a committee set up by the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities that is expected to assess their impairment. Then all the applicants are listed and 10% of the total number of the applicants is selected for the posts available. Disabled people who are appointed to work for the public sector are entitled to assistive technology equipment and other arrangement that will facilitate their work. The Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities is responsible for the implementation of the law. It is also expected that impact will be monitored and all the necessary bodies will be kept informed (Council of Ministers, Houses of Parliament and the Cyprus Confederation of Organization of Disabled People).

¹ <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf>



New research evidence:

A recent paper by Damianidou and Phtiaka (2010) presents a case study research of a young woman with mobility impairment who has been facing difficulties in finding a job. Her story is analysed from different angles and it demonstrates that no matter how many qualifications a disabled person may have and no matter how much government support is allocated to business companies in order to hire disabled people, employers' negative attitudes towards disability act as the main barrier towards employment. This case study raises several issues regarding disabled people's employment in Cyprus, such as the impact of employment training schemes funded by the European Union, the quality of government schemes that encourage the employment of disabled people and the quality of the vocational orientation of disabled people in the school setting). This paper gives light to issues related to disabled people's employment and it addresses the role of school in influencing the development of social attitudes towards disability which in turn have an impact on the employment of disabled people. It is an important piece of research which raises issues that need to be researched further in the context of Cyprus.

The economic crisis:

According to a recent state report prepared for the European Union (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2009b) the government expects that the economic crisis will not have a major impact in Cyprus, except for in the area of tourism. The report notes that although there is no official data to enable us an estimation of the impact of the international economic crisis in vulnerable groups, the government expects that no serious problems will emerge in the short term. Importantly, reducing the risk of poverty and integrating vulnerable groups (i.e. disabled people) into the labour market are among the government priorities reported in the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2008-2010 (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 2008). Despite the fact that the government reassures the public that there will be no impact of the international economic crisis in Cyprus, the situation is not clear. This explains disabled people's expressed intention to safeguard the implementation of the new employment law (N.146(I)2009) explained earlier, by engaging in a meaningful ongoing dialogue with the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities (Cyprus Confederation of Disabled People's Organizations, 17th February 2010). The nature of the Cyprus economy in the context of a broad economic crisis remains unclear and thus, disabled people's organizations are expected to actively seek the improvement of employment opportunities for their group

References

Cyprus Confederation of Disabled People's Organizations (2010, 17th February) Letter to the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities. Retrieved from the electronic archive of the Cyprus Confederation of Disabled People's Organizations (www.kysoa.org.cy) on the 10th of June 2010. (in Greek)

Damianidou, H. and Phtiaka, H. (2010) The vocational rehabilitation of disabled people in Cyprus and the role of school, in: N. Tsangaridou, S. Symeonidou, K. Mavrou, H. Phtiaka and L. Kyriakides (Eds) *Proceedings of the Cyprus Pedagogical Association Conference entitled 'Management of Educational Change: Research, Policy, Practice'*, Nicosia. (in Greek)



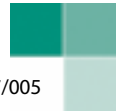
Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities,
<http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf> (in Greek)

Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (2009a) *Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance*. Nicosia: Republic of Cyprus. (in Greek)

Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (2009b) *Cyprus*. Report retrieved from the electronic archive of www.europa.eu on the 10th of June 2010. (in Greek)

Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (2008) *National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2008-2010*. Report retrieved from the electronic archive of www.europa.eu on the 10th of June 2010.

N. 146(I)2009 Hiring People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Law. Republic of Cyprus. (in Greek)



PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

1.1 Academic publications and research reports (key points)

Research on disability issues and the employment of disabled people in particular is extremely limited. Unfortunately, a platform of disabled academics is not yet established in Cyprus and disability is mostly researched in the field of education. Thus, the most important publications regarding the employment of disabled people come from government representatives.

The Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Republic of Cyprus, 2009) is an important source of information regarding the employment of disabled people. It provides detailed information about the activities of the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities, a department that belongs to the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. Regarding employment, the 2009 Annual Report describes the activities of the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and the existing programmes aiming to support disabled people's vocational training and employment.

A recent paper by Damianidou and Phtiaka (2010) presents a case study research of a young woman with mobility impairment who has been facing difficulties in finding a job. Her story is analysed from different angles and it demonstrates that no matter how many qualifications a disabled person may have and no matter how much government support is allocated to business companies in order to hire disabled people, employers' negative attitudes towards disability act as the main barrier towards employment. This case study raises several issues regarding disabled people's employment in Cyprus, such as the impact of employment training schemes funded by the European Union, the quality of government schemes that encourage the employment of disabled people and the quality of the vocational orientation of disabled people in the school setting). This paper gives light to issues related to disabled people's employment and it addresses the role of school in influencing the development of social attitudes towards disability, which in turn have an impact on the employment of disabled people. It is an important piece of work that raises issues that need to be researched further in the context of Cyprus.

Another report comes from the Cyprus Workers' Confederation and describes part of the employment condition in Cyprus (Poulida and Theocharidou, 2006). It lists the relevant legislation regarding employment and it comments on government initiatives to improve the quality of life of disabled people. It also provides statistical data from the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind regarding employment. Poulida and Theocharidou, 2006: 6) end their report by listing the main challenges facing the employment of disabled people in Cyprus, which are:

- Limitation for job alternatives, even for disabled people who have received higher education
- Absence of qualified personnel to deal with the assessment of the abilities, needs and interests of disabled people, in order to provide appropriate counseling
- Lack of a rehabilitation centre with all necessary infrastructures that will provide vocational training in accordance to the needs of the labour market, and will take into account the employability prospects of each individual person
- Accessibility is another major challenge. The poor transportation network, the absence of appropriate sidewalks and of easy access to buildings are some indicative barriers that prevent disabled people from their right to full participation in the workplace.

It has already been mentioned that academic research in the area of employment is nearly non-existent. However, a research project about the personal experience of disability and the disability movement in Cyprus (Symeonidou, 2005) addresses, among other issues, the personal experiences of disabled people in finding and maintaining a job. This was a qualitative, historical and interpretive study and disabled people with different types of impairments reflected on their life experiences. They described mixed feelings throughout their journeys in finding a place in the workforce. This research project emphasized disabled people's frustration in their efforts to find a job, their feelings of distress in the workplace due to stigmatization, their experiences of unequal treatment in promotion and their varied relationships with colleagues. It also related disabled people's opportunities to receive University education – a difficult process for most and a dream that never came true for some– with their continuous efforts to find a 'decent' job.

Last but not least, there are a few websites that provide information about disabled people's employment conditions in Cyprus. The website of the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities² provides information about disability related issues in Cyprus and it contains the basic legislative documents in full text. This website is in Greek. In addition, there are a couple of websites developed as a result of international cooperation, but it should be noted that information on these is not constantly updated. One such website was developed by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work³ and it includes key documents, links to national providers of information on the topic and information about the "state of play" regarding the integration and retention of disabled workers in Cyprus. This website is in English. Another relevant website is Employ@bility⁴, which provides a list of articles and legislative documents regarding employment in Cyprus. This website is in Greek.

In conclusion, research data about the employment opportunities and conditions in Cyprus is limited. There is an urgent need for academic research regarding the implementation of the existing legislation and the conflicts emerging as a result of piecemeal legislation for employment. Furthermore, disabled people's voice needs to be heard in research regarding employment as they have important experiences to share, which are strongly related with the Cypriot culture. There is a lack of powerful political will for their full inclusion in the workplace.

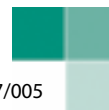
1.2 Employment statistics and trends (key points)

As mentioned above, employment data regarding disabled people is limited in Cyprus. The only official sources for such data are the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, but again, not much statistical data is reported. In the most recent Annual Report (Republic of Cyprus, 2009), employment data for disabled people is absent. Statistical data recorded in the 2007 Annual Report (Republic of Cyprus, 2007) is summarized as follows: The proportion of disabled people employed in different areas of the economy: It is reported that in 2007, 4.3% of disabled people were employed in the protogenic sector (i.e. agriculture), 22.7% in the secondary sector (i.e. industry) and 73% in the tertiary sector (i.e. services). These percentages remained similar since 2002. Information is also provided about the percentages of employment in specific job positions that correspond to each sector.

² www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf

³ www.osha.europa.eu/en/campaigns/hwi/topic_integration_disabilities/cyprus

⁴ <http://www.intercol.edu/employability>



Data about unemployed disabled people: It is reported that in 2007, there was a total of 12,017 disabled people who were registered as unemployed; 5,209 were men and 6,808 were women. Further information is provided about the types of job positions that are related to the unemployment of disabled men and women.

Data about the funds allocated through programmes for supporting the employment of disabled people: It is reported that a budget of €150,127.66 was allocated to support 200 disabled people who participated in the existing employment schemes (1 disabled person participated in the Disabled People's Self-Employment Programme, 7 disabled people participated in the Disabled People's Vocational Rehabilitation Programme in Areas not offered in the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and 192 disabled people participated in the Supported Employment Programme).

It is worth reporting that statistical data from Cyprus is also absent from European Reports, indicating the lack of such information. In particular, in the Study of Compilation of Disability Statistical Data from the 2007 Administrative Registers of the Member States of the European Union (APPLICA, CESEP and European Centre, 2007), data from Cyprus is not recorded in any of the areas investigated. This includes the share of disabled people in the total population of working age, the share of employed disabled people in total employment, the share of unemployed disabled people in total unemployment, the share of inactive disabled people in total inactivity, and the employment, unemployment and inactivity rates among disabled people.

Another important report is the 2007 National Reform Programme of Cyprus Progress Report, prepared by the Planning Bureau (2007). In this report, the intentions of the Cypriot state to make improvements or changes in different areas, including employment, are reported in detail. Once again, this national document which was submitted to the European Commission, does not mention the governmental plans about encouraging disabled people's inclusion in the workforce. Rather, it describes the intentions of the government to include women, migrants and EU citizens in the workforce.

In conclusion, there is an urgency for meaningful statistical data regarding employment, as such information is expected to add to the efforts for improving employment opportunities and employment schemes for disabled people in Cyprus. Such data should be reliable, up to date and easy to access. It should also allow a comparison of the employment and unemployment rates of disabled and non-disabled people. Last but not least, it should cover different groups of the population such as disabled and non-disabled men and women, young and older disabled and non-disabled people, people with different kinds of impairments, people with congenital or acquired impairments and, disabled and non-disabled people who are migrants or from ethnic minorities.

1.3 Laws and policies (key points)

The first legislative documents about the employment of disabled people in Cyprus date from the mid-1980s and they were the result of pressures and negotiations by of single-impairment organizations with the state (Symeonidou, 2005). As a result, for many years, there was piecemeal legislation giving priority to the hiring of different groups of disabled people in the Civil Service. It was not until the year 2000 that a general piece of legislation was passed, safeguarding, among other things, disabled people's rights in employment.

Regarding policy for the employment of disabled people, the most important development is a new law named 'Hiring People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Law' (N. 146(I)/2009). The Law came into force on the 23rd of December 2009 and it aims to minimize the exclusion of disabled people from the workforce by introducing a hiring quota of 10% of disabled people in the public sector. It came into force from the 23rd of December 2009. The passing of this Law was necessary as Cyprus had to be at par with international and European conventions and directions regarding the inclusion of disabled people in employment. Briefly, this law concerns disabled people who have an impairment that reduces the possibility of finding and maintaining a job. Applicants are expected to hold all the necessary qualifications for the job, to pass any written or oral exams necessary and to be able to respond to the duties entailed in the job. The process, as defined by the law, necessitates that the applicants go through a committee set up by the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities that is expected to assess their impairment. Then all the applicants are listed and 10% of the total number of applicants is selected for the posts available. Disabled people who are appointed to work for the public sector are entitled to assistive technology equipment and other arrangements that will facilitate their work. The Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities is responsible for the implementation of the law. It is also expected that impact will be monitored and that all the necessary bodies will be kept informed (Council of Ministers, Houses of Parliament and the Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of Disabled People).

The 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) is another important piece of legislation in Cyprus as it legitimizes disabled people's rights, including their rights in employment. It is in force together with the 2004 Disabled People's (Amended) Act (N.57(I)/2004). This legislation relies on the principle of non-discrimination and it safeguards disabled people's inclusion in social-community life and employment. The 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) comprises of four parts: Employment, Establishment of a Council for Disabled People, Establishment of a Special Fund for Disabled People and Other Arrangements.

According to the 2000 Disabled People's Act (127(I)/2000), disability is described as any form of insufficiency or impairment causing permanent or of undefined duration physical, intellectual or mental barrier to a person, whose medical record and other personal data also decrease or eliminate the possibility of completing one or more activities considered as normal and vital for the quality of life of each non-impaired person of the same age.. The basic rights of disabled people recorded in the 2000 Disabled People's Act (127(I)/2000) are: early identification and treatment, provision of personal support, accessibility in the built environment, educational integration, accessibility in information and communication, vocational training and rehabilitation, descent living conditions, establishment of personal and family life and participation in cultural, social, sports, religious and entertainment activities [article 4(2)].

Regarding employment, the 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) legitimizes equal treatment regarding the procedure of applying for a job, hiring, promoting, firing, compensating and other terms and privileges concerning employment [article 5(1)]. It also encourages the development of vocational rehabilitation programmes to motivate prospective employers of disabled people and the establishment of new work positions for disabled people in the civil service [article 5(2)a]. The 2004 Disabled People's (Amended) Act (N.57(I)/2004), clearly forbids any kind of direct or indirect discrimination in all areas related to employment and working conditions [article 5a].



Alongside the legislation described above, there are two pieces of legislation safeguarding ways of funding vocational rehabilitation and employment initiatives for disabled people. The first is the Establishment of a Special Fund for the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People (N.103(I)/2000). The establishment of this Special Fund aimed in promoting vocational training and employment of disabled people through the development of relevant programs falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. In particular, the Special Fund sponsors training workshops of the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People, promotes self-employment for disabled people, sponsors teams of disabled people who wish to run small businesses, supports any entertainment or sports activities held at the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and sponsors any other initiatives that promote the vocational rehabilitation of disabled people trained there or elsewhere. The second legislation relates to funding: the Establishment of Provident Lottery Fund Act (N.79(I)/1992), which establishes a Provident Fund aiming to provide further financial assistance to disabled people. This fund originates mainly from the release of a special lottery and from a governmental grant. The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance allocates the necessary budget for education, vocational rehabilitation and evolution, social integration, financial aid and improvement of the level of living conditions of disabled people.

It has already been mentioned that piecemeal legislation regarding employment is still in force, giving priority to the hiring of different groups of disabled people in the Civil Service. The most important acts are:

- The 1987 Civil Educational Service (Amended) Act (N.180/1987, Amendatory Act of N.10/69 Civil Educational Service Act): it legitimizes a quota of 3% for hiring disabled people in the Civil Educational Service and a quota of 5% for hiring people who became disabled as a result of war.
- The 1988 Blind Telephone Operators Act (N.17/1988): this legitimizes the right of blind telephone operators who possess all the required qualifications to have priority whenever there are telephone operator vacancies in the Civil Service, the Civil Educational Service. In cases where there are no blind candidates, other disabled people can be employed according to priority, as long as they possess all the necessary qualifications.
- The 1990 Civil Service Act (N.1/1990): It gives priority to the hiring of disabled people when they demonstrate equal qualifications with other candidates.
- The 1992 Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and Dependent Persons of Killed, Missing, Disabled and Pent Persons Act (N.53(I)/1992): It legitimizes a 10% quota for hiring disabled people and dependent persons of killed, missing, disabled and pent persons⁵ in the Civil Service.
- The 1997 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Disabled People and Children of Missing Persons Act (N.55(I)/1997)
- The 1998 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Victims and Children of Pent Persons (N.100(I)/1998): It legitimizes a quota of 10% for the hiring in the Civil Service of war (disabled) victims and children of pent persons.

Last but not least, the Cyprus Parliament is committed to adopting European and International Conventions regarding the rights of disabled people to employment.

⁵ Person living in the area of Cyprus that is occupied by Turks



1.4 Type and quality of jobs (summary)

Commenting upon different types of employment opportunities for disabled people in Cyprus is a rather difficult task as the existing sources of information are restricted. Arguably, there are two main initiatives towards this end.

To begin with, there is only one state centre for the training and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people, the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People. According to the 2009 Annual Report (Republic of Cyprus, 2009), there were 3 sheltered workshops in the Centre: a sheltered workshop for shoe making (23 disabled employees), a sheltered workshop for carpentry (8 disabled employees) and a sheltered workshop for sewing and embroidery (2 disabled employees).

Apart from the sheltered employment provided at the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People, there are two other sheltered employment workshops directed to people with specific types of impairments: sheltered employment for people with visual impairments who are trained to make items out of straw (i.e. baskets, bassinets etc.) and sheltered employment for people with hearing impairments who are trained in carpentry and furniture making.

According to the 2009 Annual Report (Republic of Cyprus, 2009), in 2009 the Department for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities ran programs promoting the vocational rehabilitation of disabled people. Such programs were:

- Disabled People's Self-Employment Program: This program allocated €3,417.20 to disabled people who wish to be self-employed.
- Disabled People's Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Areas not offered in the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People: This program allocated €1,708.60 to disabled people who wished to be trained in areas not offered at the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People.
- Supported Employment Program: This program allocated €11,960.21 to supported employment programs implemented by disabled people's organizations. These programs supported disabled people working in the open labour market.
- Establishment and Functioning of Small Business Units for the Self-Employment of Disabled People: This program allocated €8,543.01, to disabled people wishing to establish a small business unit.

According to the 2009 Annual Report, in 2009 a total budget of €263,525 was allocated to support disabled people who participated in the programs reported above.

Interestingly, single-impairment organizations make their own efforts in securing employment for their members. One such example is the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind, which collaborates closely with the School for the Blind, and which provides training programs in the use of information technology. According to Poulida and Theocharidou (2006) these programs are mainly directed towards adults that are visually impaired and who either require retraining for a specific position or seek a new career.

However, these programs are not available throughout the year and there is often a long waiting period due to a lack of appropriate staff. The only training program that has been



running regularly since 1988 is one for switchboard operators. Poulida and Theocharidou (2006) note that at the time of their report, 60 persons had completed the program successfully and all had been employed in the public sector and in banks. It has already been mentioned that there is a special law giving priority to the hiring of people with visual impairments as switchboard operators and thus, the training program for switchboard operators has thrived for quite a long time.

Poulida and Theocharidou (2006) report that, according to the statistics announced by the President of the Pancyprian Organization of the Blind, 40.9% of the visually impaired people living in Cyprus are of working age. At the time of their study, of this group of persons, 20.85% were employed in the public or the semi-governmental sector, and only 12.53% in the private sector, such as insurance companies, banks and investment institutes. The majority of the 35% of people with visual impairments were employed occupied as switchboard operators. Only 30 were graduates of higher education institutes and occupied in governmental positions and the education sector. Only a small percentage of 1% was self-employed, while 30% were unemployed. The remaining 35.6% received a monthly disability pension or other financial support from the government.

Unfortunately, other data recording the employment of different impairment groups is non-existent and thus, no further information can be given at this stage and no comparisons can be made.



PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

2.1 Reasonable accommodation in the workplace

The general principles outlining reasonable accommodation in the workplace are legitimized by the 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000) and the 2004 Disabled People's (Amended) Act (N.57(I)/2004). However, there is no research evidence to suggest that disabled people enjoy reasonable accommodation in the workplace.

2.2 Other activation policies

All activation policies are mentioned in Part One.

2.3 One example of best practice

The programs offered by the Service for the Care of Disabled People demonstrate a positive response to eliminating disabled people's exclusion in the workforce. It has already been mentioned that these programs aim to support self-employment, vocational rehabilitation, supported employment and the establishment of small businesses. However, these programs need to be evaluated as it appears that not many disabled people are enrolled each year. The programs may be extended, improved or replaced with new ones in order to provide motives for disabled people and their prospective employers to enroll.



PART THREE: SUMMARY INFORMATION

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations (summary)

Generally speaking, the state has expressed the political will to include disabled people in the labour market by the passing of the 2000 Disabled People's Act (N.127(I)/2000), which emphasizes the issue of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in employment. It has also made an effort to legitimize the inclusion of disabled people in the Civil Service through piecemeal legislation safeguarding quotas in the hiring of disabled people. However, this commitment has had limited success (APPLICA, CESEP and European Centre, 2007). Overall, there seems to be a gap between policy and practice in Cyprus.

Arguably, there should be a co-ordinated effort to evaluate implementation and the sufficiency of existing legislation regarding disabled people's employment. Not only that, but policies should be improved according to research results. Furthermore, the existing programs run by the Service for the Care of Disabled People aiming to support disabled people's employment should also be evaluated. Government officials should investigate the reasons for the small numbers of disabled people who show interest in these programs year on year. Questions about the efficacy of the programs and the adequacy of the budget allocated should be raised and discussed. State officials should invite disabled people to participate in such discussions and be open to suggestions for improving the existing programs or developing new ones. Priority groups should also be set (i.e. disabled women, migrants, older workers, people with specific kinds of impairments) and their inclusion in the labour market should be carefully planned for.

The inclusion of disabled people in the labour market on equal terms with non-disabled people should be a top priority for the Cypriot state. To this end, committed policy makers, state officials and disabled activists should work together in order to improve the existing situation.



3.2 References

APPLICA, CESEP and European Centre (2007) *Study of Compilation of Disability Statistical Data from the 2007 Administrative Registers of the Member States of the European Union* (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index/comp_disb_final_en.pdf)

Damianidou, H. and Phtiaka, H. (2010) The vocational rehabilitation of disabled people in Cyprus and the role of school, in: N. Tsangaridou, S. Symeonidou, K. Mavrou, H. Phtiaka and L. Kyriakides (Eds) *Proceedings of the Cyprus Pedagogical Association Conference entitled 'Management of Educational Change: Research, Policy, Practice'*, Nicosia. (in Greek)

Republic of Cyprus (2009) *Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance*.

Republic of Cyprus (2007) *Annual Report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance*.

Poulida, O. and Theocharidou, M. (2006) *Workers with disabilities in the Republic of Cyprus*. (http://osha.europa.eu/en/campaigns/hwi/topic_integration_disabilities/cyprus/index_html/state_of_play.pdf/view) (in Greek)

Planning Bureau (2007) *National Reform Program of Cyprus Progress Report*, (http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/national-dimension/member-states-autumn-2007-reports/index_en.htm).

Symeonidou, S. (2005) *Understanding and theorizing disability and disability politics: the case of the Cypriot disability movement*. PhD Thesis. School of Education. University of Cambridge.

Legislation (in Greek)

N. 146(I)/2009. *Hiring People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Law*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.103(I)/2000. *Establishment of a Special Fund for the Centre for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.127(I)/2000. *Disabled People's Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.57(I)/2004. *Disabled People's (Amended) Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.79(I)/1992. *Establishment of Provident Lottery Fund Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.180/1987. *Civil Educational Service (Amended) Act (Amendatory Act of N.10/69 Civil Educational Service Act)*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.17/1988. *Blind Telephone Operators Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.1/1990. *Civil Service Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.53(I)/1992. *Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled People and Depended Persons of Killed, Missing, Disabled and Pent Persons Act*. Republic of Cyprus.



N.55(I)/1997. *Vocational Rehabilitation of War Disabled People and Children of Missing Persons Act*. Republic of Cyprus.

N.100(I)/1998. *The 1998 Vocational Rehabilitation of War Victims and Children of Pent Persons*. Republic of Cyprus.

Relevant Websites

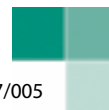
Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities,
www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dsid/dsid.nsf

Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy>

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work,
www.osha.europa.eu/en/campaigns/hwi/topic_integration_disabilities/cyprus

European Commission – Growth and Jobs,
http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/national-dimension/member-states-autumn-2007-reports/index_en.html

Employ@bility, <http://www.intercol.edu/employability>



Annex 1: Quantitative data on the employment of disabled people

Year:	Absolute? (N)	Percentage (%)	Change (from previous year)
Disability rate	Sample from 2002 LFS ad hoc survey module	12.2%	
Employment rate of disabled people	"	8.3%	
Activity rate of disabled people			
Inactivity rate of disabled people	"	21.5%	
Employment in open labour market			
Employment in sheltered workshop			
Reason for leaving the labour market due to disability or long standing health problem			

Year:	% Permanent	% Temporary
Permanent contracts vs. short term contracts		

Year:	% Full-time	% Part-time
Full time vs. part time jobs		

Year:	Public sector	Private sector	(e.g. comment or give % employers meeting obligations?)
Fulfilment of employment quota (if it exists)			

Participation in training of disabled people		(e.g. comment or give number of people participating in vocational or work-related employment)
---	--	---



Annex 2: 2008-9 Laws and policies on the employment of disabled people

Name of law:	Hiring People with Disabilities in the Greater Public Sector Law (N. 146(I)/2009)
Date of entering into force:	The Law came into force from the 23 rd of December 2009.
Objective:	The Law aims to minimize the exclusion of disabled people from the workforce by introducing a hiring quota of 10% of disabled people in the public sector.
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	It is expected that this law will contribute to the inclusion of disabled people in the workforce. It was very recently introduced, and thus, it was not assessed officially yet. However, the Department of Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities is responsible for its implementation and it is expected to evaluate its impact and keep all the necessary bodies informed (Council of Ministers, Houses of Parliament and the Cyprus Confederation of Disabled People's Organizations)



Annex 3: 2008-9 Research/evaluation on the employment of disabled people

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	<p>Damianidou, H. and Phtiaka, H. (2010) The vocational rehabilitation of disabled people in Cyprus and the role of school, in: N. Tsangaridou, S. Symeonidou, K. Mavrou, H. Phtiaka and L. Kyriakides (Eds) <i>Proceedings of the Cyprus Pedagogical Association Conference entitled 'Management of Educational Change: Research, Policy, Practice'</i>, Nicosia.</p>
Key findings from the research:	<p>This paper presents a case study of a young woman with mobility impairment who has been facing difficulties in finding a job. Her story is analysed from different angles and it demonstrates that no matter how many qualifications a disabled person may have and no matter how much government support is allocated to business companies in order to hire disabled people, employers' negative attitudes towards disability act as the main barrier towards employment. This case study raises several issues regarding disabled people's employment in Cyprus, such as the impact of employment training schemes funded by the European Union, the quality of government schemes that encourage the employment of disabled people and the quality of the vocational orientation of disabled people in the school setting).</p>
Comment or assessment:	<p>The paper gives light to issues related to disabled people's employment and it addresses the role of school in influencing the development of social attitudes towards disability which in turn have an impact on the employment of disabled people. It is an important piece of research which raises issues that need to be researched further in the context of Cyprus.</p>