



# **Transfer of Employment Support Tools for People with Disabilities T-EST**

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## **Report on the Adaptation Potential Analysis of the Employment Support Toolkit in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey**



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## Table of Content

<b>Table of Content.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Analysis of National Support Measures for People with Disabilities in the Transfer</b>	
<b>Countries.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Bulgaria.....	6
Romania.....	7
Turkey.....	9
<b>Research and Methodology.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Main Findings of the Interviews.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>I. Questionnaire for people with disabilities.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Personal data of the respondents.....	12
Barriers encountered while searching for a job.....	13
Awareness of rights and support measures assured by law.....	13
Experiences with vocational training and their benefits.....	14
Future expectations and plans on working and attending trainings or counseling.....	14
Supported Employment.....	15
Services of Supported Employment.....	16
<b>II. Results based on interviews with NGO representatives.....</b>	<b>17</b>
NGO's institutions participating in the interviews.....	17
Motivation and barriers to labour market integration.....	18
Provided support services by organisations.....	20
Problems and barriers regarding the employment of people with disabilities.....	21
Current legislation.....	22
Experience working with people with disabilities and provided services.....	22
Implementation of supported employment.....	23
<b>III. Result based on the interviews with company leaders.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Characteristics of employees included in the survey.....	24
Working experience with people with disabilities.....	25
Type of disability and working field of the employees with disabilities.....	25
Flexibility of employers and adaptation made for the employees.....	25
Basis of hiring people with disabilities and overall perception of work-ability.....	25
Awareness on legal requirements and benefits.....	27
Integration of person with disability in work – needs and adaptations.....	28
Supported employment.....	29
<b>Final Conclusions.....</b>	<b>30</b>

## Introduction

*T-EST –Transfer of Employment Support Tools for People with Disabilities* is a Leonardo da Vinci/ Transfer or Innovation project (project nr. 2012-1-AT1-LEO05-06976) funded with the financial support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. In line with the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020 the project aims to transfer the approaches and tools of Supported Employment (SE) to countries that lack efficient vocational support services for people with disabilities, especially to Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

SE is a well known concept in the European countries as supportive measure for people with disabilities that promotes participation in society by enhancing the possibilities of employment on the open labour market. It's a method of working with disabled people and other disadvantaged groups to access and maintain paid employment in the open labour market. Supported Employment includes assistance to the employee before, during, and after obtaining a job as well as support to the employer. Key to this is the job coach function.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with the project's objectives, to assure a successful and effective transfer and implementation of the concept and supportive scheme of the SE a study has been conducted to identify the national backgrounds with regard to employment support for persons with disabilities in the transfer countries and the adaptation needs of the toolkit.

This document is a report on the findings of the empirical investigation that has been made.

The first part summarizes the particularities of the cultural background and social service systems in each of the three transfer countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey), that is based on the presentation of the partner organisations during the first project meeting in Graz, Austria in 2012 December.

The second part of the current report concludes the data resulting from the interviews with the three main stakeholders of the project, people with disabilities, organisations with activity on the field of employment of disadvantaged people, and possible employers – managers of enterprises and companies.

Further stages of the transfer project are training of transfer and implementation coaches from the transfer countries to empower them to use the toolkit and to successfully accompany the transfer process in the respective countries, pilot implementation of the SE service in the three partner countries through service providers accompanied with a large scale awareness raising campaign to disperse information regarding the SE service and to include the situation of people with disabilities in the common dialog of social participants.

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<sup>1</sup> (2010) - European Union of Supported Employment Toolkit pag. 6

## Analysis of National Support Measures for People with Disabilities in the Transfer Countries

It is widely recognized that people with disabilities are one of the most economically inactive groups who face significant barriers when trying to access the open labour market. They are facing challenges not only on the job market but in the society as well.

Definition of disability is a crucial element in creating appropriate programs and measures for an inclusive society<sup>2</sup>. Countries use different terms and criteria to determine disability and entitle different social pillars for the strategic coordination of social security measures of people with disability.

As for the scope for this report it's difficult to compare the data obtained by the partner organisations, but they do highlight some similarities.

The implementation of principles and objectives of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is a responsibility of the consigning countries. Given the diversity of the public policies, services and available resources in the three transfer countries, international mainstream policies can have little effect on the lives of the people with disabilities, especially on their occupation possibilities. Therefore a synergy of power is needed, the alignment of the public opinion towards the importance of assuring the personal rights of people with disabilities, inclusion measures for people with special needs in society and on the labour market and provision of qualitative education.

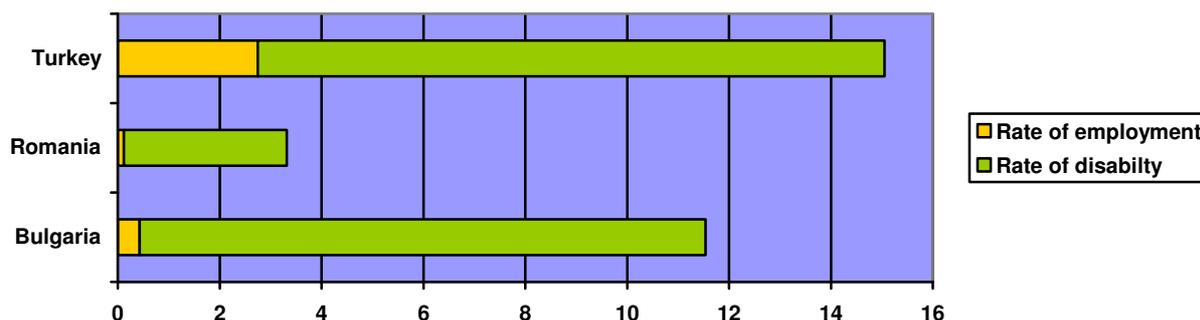
Transfer counties although different policy structures share a lot of similarities:

- Promotion and facilitation of occupation among people with disabilities through measures provided by legal policy framework of the countries.
- Accompanying measures for people with disabilities through technical aids, special tax deductions or exemptions, flexible work arrangements and an employment quota system
- Accompanying measures for employers include wage subsidies, financial supports for workplace adaptation, tax reductions for employers and flexible work arrangements
- There are no clearly defined Supported Employment programmes or projects. However, sheltered workshops, specialised enterprises and other forms of support do exist in the countries. Any related services are financed by EU funding and national public funding.
- There are no provisions to support lifelong learning/continuous vocational training for people with disabilities.

### *Statistical Data on People with Disabilities*

	Bulgaria	Romania	Turkey
Rate of disability in the country (%)	11,11%	3.20%	12.3 %
Total number of persons with disability	858 769	689 156	8.500 000
Employment rate (%)	3,9%	4.02%	22.19%,

<sup>2</sup> (2004) – Definitions of Disability in Europe, A comparative Analysis, European Commission, DG. for Employment and Social Affairs [[ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2088&langId=en](http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2088&langId=en)], accessed on 19.04.2013



## Bulgaria

In Bulgaria 858 769 people has a type of disabilities (2009), every 9th from the total population of the country. The workability rate is at 45%, and approx. 3,9% of the total unemployment rate (11,2% - 2011- [www.noi.bg](http://www.noi.bg)) are persons with disabilities. 39% of the people with disabilities hasn't any qualification, and 41% has primary or lower education.

### Key players/organisations/institutes:

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

National Employment Agency and its Regional and Local Employment Offices

### Social political arrangements for the occupation of people with disabilities

In Bulgaria the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Labour Code, Social Insurance Code, Law on Protection against Discrimination, Law on Integration of People with Disabilities, Law on Employment Promotion, Corporate Income Tax Act, and Income Taxes on Natural Persons Act assures the special protection of persons with disabilities.

Accompanying measures for people with disabilities include technical aids, special tax deduction or exemptions, flexible incapacity benefits/disability pension and employment quota system; however, the quota system is not enforced in practice.

Accompanying measures for employers include wage subsidy and financial support for workplace adaptation.

The Law on Integration of People with Disabilities aims at creating conditions and guarantees for equal opportunities of disabled people, their social integration and support to their families and integration of disabled people in a work environment. Some of the benefits for disabled people are:

- Disability pension (depends of the way and time of occurrence of disability, of the social status and the age);
- Social integration allowances (calculated on the basis of the social assessment made by the Social Assistance Agency; it is in direct link with the type of disability mentioned in the medical work capacity assessment) – allowances for education, transport, for rent of communal apartment, for accessible information, balneotherapy and rehabilitation, for medicines and dietetic feeding, for use of ICT;
- Other aids and benefits (assigned by the Social Assistance Agency on the basis of the medical assessment): means for purchase of medical equipment; grants for house reconstruction; grants for heating, personal assistant; easy terms for admission and reduced taxes in universities.

**Tax reliefs for disabled people:** · Exemption of vignette; · the annual assessment basis for calculation of the income tax for persons with more than 50 % of disability is reduced with 7920

BGN [≈4050€]; · 75% reduced property tax for principal house (apartment) for persons with more than 50 % of disability; · Motor vehicles of persons with 50 % of disability and higher are exempted of tax (motor up to 2000 sm<sup>3</sup> and up to 117.64 kW); · 50% reduction of the patent tax for persons with more than 50 % of disability.

### **Labour market**

*The normative protection of the labour market is a consequence of the specific statute of disable people as a vulnerable group:* · Normative protection of discharge – need of agreement of the Labour Inspectorate and the Work Capability Assessment Commission; · Right of longer annual leave (26 days); · Access to programmes for vocational qualification and requalification, and subsidized employment as well. According to the Labour Code an employer with more than 50 employees shall provide annually jobs suitable for vocational rehabilitation of persons, their number being 4 to 10 per cent of the total number of jobs depending on the economic sector and half of this quote must be for disable people.

### **Special programs and services, facilities to support employees and employers**

There are no clearly defined Supported Employment programs or projects in Bulgaria. However, sheltered workshops, specialised enterprises and other forms of support do exist in the country. Sheltered employment is more common for specialized factories, cooperatives, and disabled unions activities get also support from the municipality.

In line with the international requirements the integration of people with disabilities in the society and labor market are supported by National Strategy for insurance of equal opportunities of people with disabilities 2008 – 2015, National strategic reference framework (2007-2013), National development plan for equal employment opportunities (2010), Law on integration of disabled people: · Programmes for employers to ensure, adapt and equip the access to the workplace of persons with disabilities - social projects (for easy access to the workplace; for health and safety work conditions; for vocational training; for preparation activities to implement ISO certification and payment of up to 50% of the needed tax, and economic projects (projects for adapting and equipment of new workplaces, improvement or creation of new production facilities, infrastructure and transport); · Measures for encouragement of employers to hire unemployed disable young people up to 29 years old, and young people from social houses completed their education; · Measures for employers to hire unemployed persons with disabilities; · Measures for encouragement of employers to hire unemployed disable people on a seasonal or hourly work; · Programmes for allocation of free of interest credits for disabled people.

## **Romania**

Disability rate among Romania's population is at 3.20% (689 156 person), of that 4.02% is employed. Almost 2/3 of the working age people with disabilities are unemployed, where the national unemployment rate is 4.73 %. In Harghita County especially, an administrative unit of the country, live 7930 persons are facing with a type of disability, accounting 2.66% of the county's population, and 2.57% of the adults are in institutional care. The employment rates to 4.18 %.

The system of the disability pension raises many controversial issues, people who lose 50% or more of their work ability due to working accident or disease are entitled to incapacity benefits, if they previously were contributors to the national pension budget. Although it's allowed work part-time, they are at risk to lose the financial support. In September 2012 (INSSE) 794.000 persons received incapacity pension (2012, INSSE), 7,09% of the Romanian population, from which a significant proportion isn't employed.

### **Key players/organisations/institutes:**

- Directorate General of Persons with Disability under Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection,
- National and county Employment Offices under Ministry of Labor,
- NGO's

### **Social political arrangements for the occupation of people with disabilities**

The Law 448/2006 Regarding the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Disabled Persons is the most followed commandment that stipulates the right of the persons with disabilities seeking a job. It is built on the concept of "Access for All" (public utility buildings, common transport, parking spaces, library etc.).

The law secures the equal rights of persons with disabilities to work and achieve income and the free access to professional evaluation and orientation made by the evaluation commission. Employment can be on the open labor market, at the domicile, at protected workplace or in authorized protected unit.

Persons with disability (looking for a job or employed) benefit from free access to vocational trainings, adaptations to the workplace and the exemption from the payment of the tax on salary.

Counseling during the pre-employment period, during the employment, and during the trial period, by a counselor specialized in labor mediation; a paid trial period upon employment, of at least 45 working days; paid prior notice, of minimum 30 working days, granted upon the termination of the individual labour contract from the initiative of the employer for reasons not imputable to him/her; the possibility to work less than 8 hours per day, as provided by law, in case he/she benefits from the recommendation of the evaluation commission in this regard. Unfortunately although law requires these benefits, only a very small proportion of these are available.

Public and private institutions and organizations with more than 50 employees are obligated to hire persons with disabilities to cover 4% of the company's work-force. Alternatively they can pay a tax consistent with 50 % of the gross minimum wage for each person not employed (350 lei.~77 €), or they can buy goods or services produced by enterprises or organizations of people with disabilities.

Employers of persons with disability benefit from financial supports for workplace adaptation and transportation, tax reduction to the insurance budget (unemployment, VET, employment of people with disabilities).

Protected units, like protected workplaces or sheltered workshops are exempt from the payment of the tax on profit (provided that at least 75% of the fund is reinvested for restructuring or for the purchase of technological equipment).

### **Special programmes and services, facilities to support employees and employers**

Although the legislation has improved in the last 7 years, there are still differences between the legal texts and their concrete implementation, as well as limitations in the resources allocated for active measures for participation at local levels. The founding allocated to support employment among people with disabilities it's not enough to support the services assured by law.

Supported Employment initiatives do not exist at the national level, however there are a number of initiatives (approximately 5-10 initiatives) at the local/regional levels which to a certain extent are related the concept aiming at increasing the possibility of disabled people to find a job in the open labour market. The occupation of people with disabilities is promoted by private initiatives of organisations and NGO's founded mostly by EU.

## Turkey

According to statistics ([www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr)), in Turkey, there are about 8.5 million people with different physical and mental disabilities which account approximately 12.3 % of the total population. 58,6 % of them are male, 41,4 % are female and 62,4 % lives in urban areas and 37,6 % lives in rural areas. According to the 2010 figures, employment rate of people with disabilities (over the age of 12) is 22.19%, and 77.81 % is not involved in any work. In Izmir there are 39.630 PWD registered.

### Key players/organisations/institutes:

The Disabled and Elderly Affairs Directorate General under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies

Turkish Employment Agency (İŞ-KUR): Responsible for workers employment in private sector and the public sector.

State Personnel Department: Responsible employment for civil servants in the public sector.

### Social political arrangements for the occupation of people with disabilities

Employment is a constitutional right for all in *Turkey*. According to Disabilities Act (5378) choosing a profession and getting vocational education can not be restricted for the people with disabilities. According to Disabilities Act; discriminatory practices against persons with disabilities can not be used during technical evaluation, selection process and hiring, and in terms of proposed working hours and conditions and in job application forms; and employment of the people with disabilities that are difficult to reintegrate into the labor market, will be primarily provided through sheltered workplaces.

*Turkish* Employment Agency provides fund for the projects focusing on vocational training, rehabilitation and employment of disabled people, as well for sheltered workplaces: which are adapted workplaces especially for the employment of severely mentally & physically disabled people. Disability Act gives responsibility of vocational rehabilitation of disabled people to related organizations and local governments.

The legislation specifies that private businesses with 50 or more workers have to employ 3% PWD and public offices have to employ 4% PWD. Based on quota system calculations; private sector must employ +21.244 more labourer with disabilities, and public sector must employ +24.554 more staff with disabilities (ISKUR data,2011)

Employers who employ more persons with disabilities than the legal requirement of 3%, or hire persons with disabilities although not having an obligation or disabled persons above a reduced working capacity of 80% are subsidized by 50 percent of reduction of social insurance contribution for each disabled worker. The part of reduction is paid by the Treasury. People with disabilities who are active in the labour market, benefit from tax reductions which amount differs according to the degree of disability. This measure is administered by the Ministry of Finance.

### Special programmes and services facilities to support employees and employers

*In Turkey* there are also private vocational rehabilitation centers which provides vocational trainings as well as physiotherapy and rehabilitation services. The companies who want to hire a person with disability should apply to Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) where all unemployed PWDs registered. İŞKUR matches the supply and demand of workforce.

There are also projects supported by the EU IPA Program (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance). Such as: Improved Integration of Disabled Persons into Society Grant Scheme; Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education Grant Scheme; Strengthening Civil Society in the Pre-accession Process: NGO Grant Facility Component: Enhancement Of Social Inclusion Of People With Disabilities Grant Scheme.

## Research and Methodology

Like many models of employment intervention, Supported Employment values the initial client engagement process<sup>3</sup>. But the attitude towards work (attitude of unemployed and employers) is defined by the social factors, like historical events, economy, education, and political views.

Contextual information about the national system for benefits and employment provisions gave just preamble understanding of the inclusion of people with disabilities to education and on the labour market. The goal of this research was to get information about the problems and barriers encountered by people with disabilities in the process of getting employed based on their experience and those of employers.

The research doesn't corresponds to the criteria of scientific research, the data can't be validated, since it doesn't responds to the number of persons required to ensure the representativeness<sup>4</sup> of the information gathered during the interviews. But for our purpose, interviews helped identifying different aspects for the better use of Supported Employment Toolkit and the support measure's adaptation needs to assure the successfulness and efficiency of the transfer and implementation process.

The research was conducted in the three transfer-countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey during March-April 2013. Three main categories of the target group, people with disabilities, leader of companies and managers of NGO's were asked to take part in an interview. For the number of the interviewed, see table below:

*Number of interviews implemented by the partner-organisation on the target group*

	<b>People with disabilities</b>	<b>Managers of NGO's</b>	<b>Company leader</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	10	8	15
<b>Romania</b>	8	7	7
<b>Turkey</b>	13	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>

As research method we relied on *structured interviewing*. Partner-organisation from the transfer-countries used the same kit of question, interview guides developed on the first project meeting. Three different interview guides were used for accessing data and opinion from people with disabilities, company leaders and NGO managers.

Main objectives followed during the interviews conducted with people with disabilities:

- understanding the target groups perceptions on disability and employment;
- relation between early work experience and attitude toward work;
- awareness of social rights and benefits on the field of occupation;
- assessment of difficulties encountered while searching for a job;
- benefits of lifelong learning;
- overall usability of SE Toolkit

<sup>3</sup> (2010) - European Union of Supported Employment Toolkit pag. 13

<sup>4</sup> See Babbi, Earl (2010) - The practice of social research, Wadsworth,/Cengage Learning, Belmont, Australia

Main issues covered by the interview guide for representatives of NGO's:

- motivation of people with disabilities seeking a job
- barriers encountered by people with disabilities on the job-market
- assistance provided by the NGO for the integration of people with disabilities on the labour market
- awareness of legal framework, support measures for job seekers and employers
- concerns of employers to hire persons with special needs
- possibility of implementation of SE

Main issues covered by the interview guide for representatives of companies:

- experience working with people with disabilities
- attitudes towards disability and an employee with disability
- willingness, difficulties and concerns hiring a person with disability
- possible interventions on the work assessment, adaptations of the workplace for the person with disability
- awareness of legal framework, support measures for job seekers and employers
- opinion on Supported Employment

Studying the problems of disability meant in one way or another, exposing the neglected sides of society. The observation of the employment difficulties from the three main participant sides identified needs of interventions on specific areas.

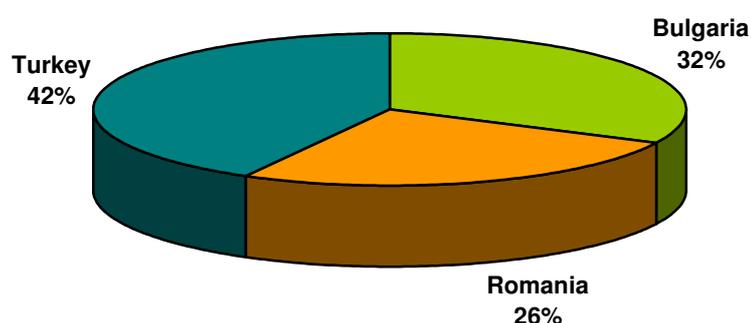
We caution the reader that the current study is for the purpose of an efficient implementation of the supported employment concept and service by the participant project partners. The data presented in this report aren't representative just and the result can't be interpreted in a scientific way.

# Main Findings of the Interviews

## I. Questionnaire for people with disabilities

### Personal data of the respondents

31 interviews were made with people with disabilities. The interview-partners are 19-50 aged, mostly from urban area. The respondents 45% is female and 55% is male.



The respondents' educational level is distributed as follows:

Educational level	Bulgaria	Romania	Turkey
Elementary school	-	25%	15%
High school	60%	12.5%	85%
Vocational school	20%	37.5%	-
University	20%	25%	-

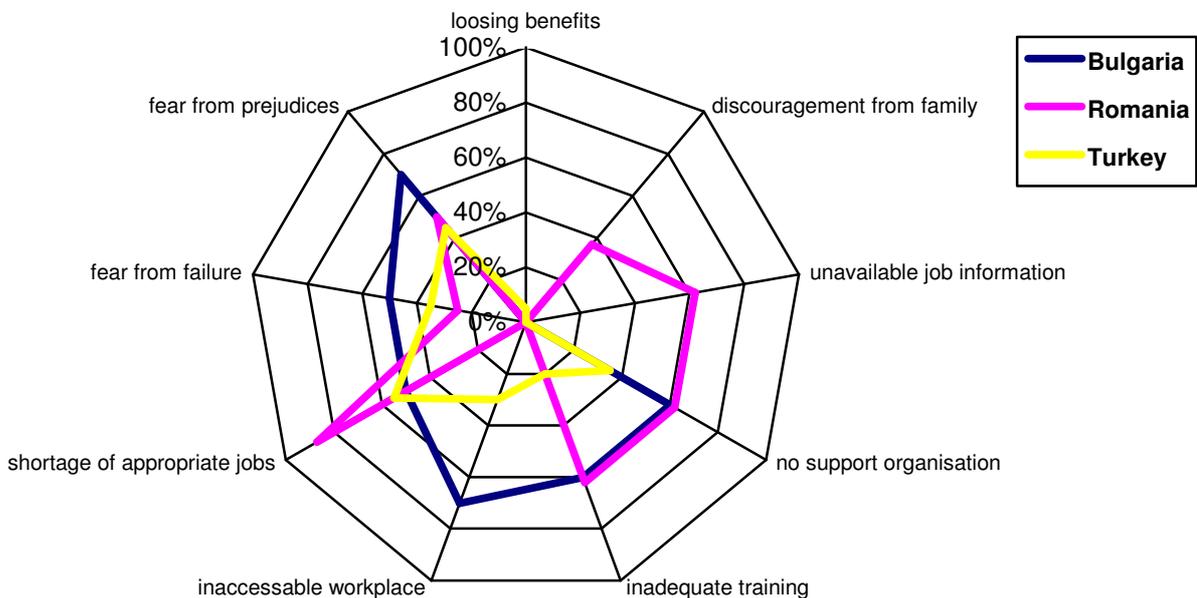
68 % of the total interview-partners have a disability since birth, 22% has a visual, 16% a hearing, 29% a motor, 32% mental and other type of disability.

### *Occupation of people with disabilities (%)*

	Employed		Unemployed
	Competitive, regular employment	Sheltered workshop, Protected work	
<b>Bulgaria (N=10)</b>	0	30%	70%
<b>Romania (N=8)</b>	25%	0	75%
<b>Turkey (N=13)</b>	8%	0	92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10 %</b>	<b>79%</b>

The percentage allocation of the active group of the respondents represents well the national rate of employment in the three transfer-countries. More than three-quarters of the interviewees don't have a working relationship. They're engaged in different handicraft activities, or part-time jobs. Bulgarian respondents 30% are occupied in sheltered workshops. Romanian respondents 25% (2 people) is employed on the open labour market. They are working as special educational needs teacher and as self-employment masseur. 8% of the Turkish respondents (1 person) is employed.

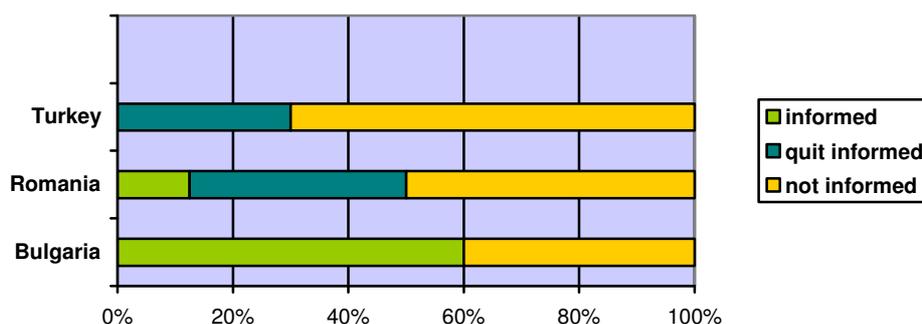
## Barriers encountered while searching for a job



Respondents from the three transfer-countries consider the shortage of accessible jobs as one major reason for the high unemployment among people with disabilities. During their job search the interviewees relate, that they had to face the competition with all the jobseekers, since there weren't any available jobs for them. They also had to confront themselves with the fear from prejudices. The third most frequently mentioned barrier is considered by the respondents the lack of supporting organisation, followed by an important socio-educational problem, the inadequate training they received during their studies.

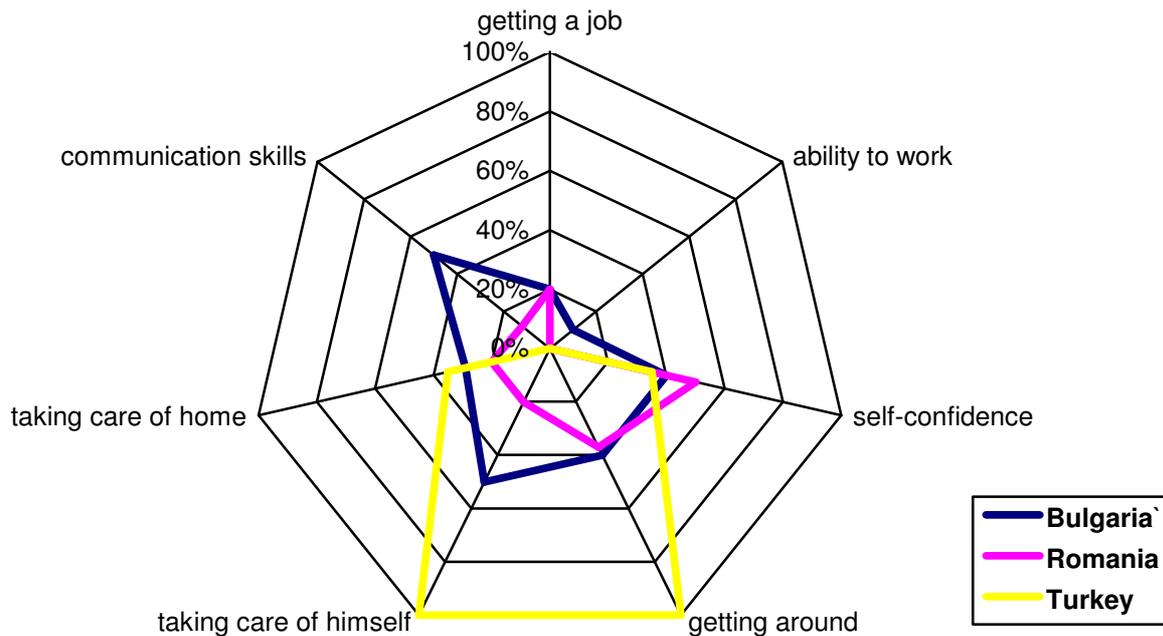
Differences among the responses from the transfer-countries suggest a wide correlation of personal and socio-structural issues. As result from the interviews we could observe that information on available jobs are not reaching the people with disabilities looking for employment. Furthermore, although Romanian respondents didn't mention accessibility, to the and on the workplace, it is also a considerable impediment for people with disabilities, while just a few buildings are accessible to all categories of people. Transportation in Harghita country is assured by special NGO's.

## Awareness of rights and support measures assured by law



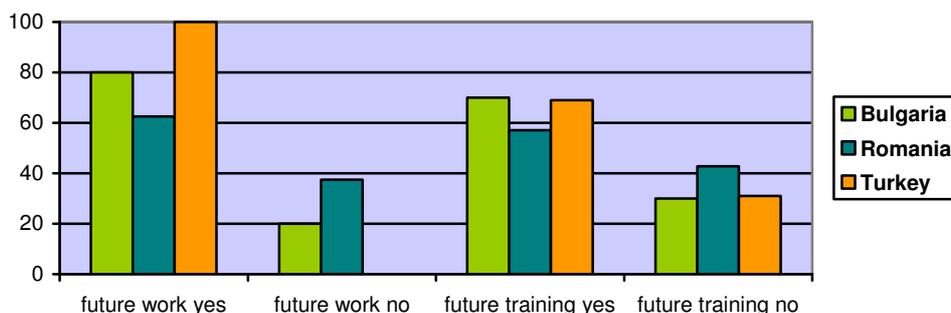
As the graphs shows the level of awareness of the rights and support measures assured by law indicate, that the respondents aren't acquainted with the legislative framework of the social support policies. Bulgarian 40% is not informed about legal requirements. Romanian respondents 37.5% consider having some knowledge about the legal framework, and half of the participants in the research consider being not informed. Turkish respondents 30% are quit informed, 70% is not informed about legal requirements.

### Experiences with vocational training and their benefits



As we can see vocational trainings helped the respondents on a personal level, they improved their self esteem and self confidence, and also give them knowledge of practical life skills for the common daily challenges.

### Future expectations and plans on working and attending trainings or counseling



Most of the respondent in the three transfer country have the **desire to work**, but realistic view on the social economic situation prevents them from having positive future expectation. All the three countries respondents indicate that accurate job opportunities are limited.

Bulgarian respondents' 80% indicates that they will look for job opportunities in the next six month. Among the Romanian respondents losing the social benefits or disinterest to work holds 37,5% back from looking for a job. 25% would prefer to be employed in case there were available jobs and 37.5% are currently looking for suitable jobs.

Turkish respondents indicated that If there is a job which is suitable for their disability, available work hours and suitable transportation, they could work. They stated that they are actively looking for a job and registered to İŞKUR, but they are feeling more and more hopeless because they think that there are no suitable job opportunities for them.

Most respondents state that attending **vocational trainings** or counselling sessions can improve basic job-seeking skills.

70% of the Bulgarian respondents, half of the Romanian respondents, and 69% of the Turkish respondents are planning to participate on future training.

## Supported Employment

The first part of this report showed that there are just a few special services for supporting the employment of people with disabilities. These are mostly part of the labour office's services. Supported Employment, as defined by the European Union of Supported Employment is not a known service in the transfer countries.

As our research showed, none of the Bulgarian respondents have had any **experience with the service**, and they haven't even heard about it. The same attitude can be observed among Turkish respondents. Just only one thinks that the service might be similar to services provided by İSKUR. As result of a project implemented by the Romanian Ministry of Labour, and of the trainings organized as part of the project for organisations of people with disabilities, two respondents (20%) had knowledge about the service, but they stated, they had nowhere to turn for advice or additional information, one person heard from acquaintances about the service.

The answers on the question whether **supported employment** can help in the process of **getting a job** form two groups, of those with a resigned attitude and those with belief in the success of the service.

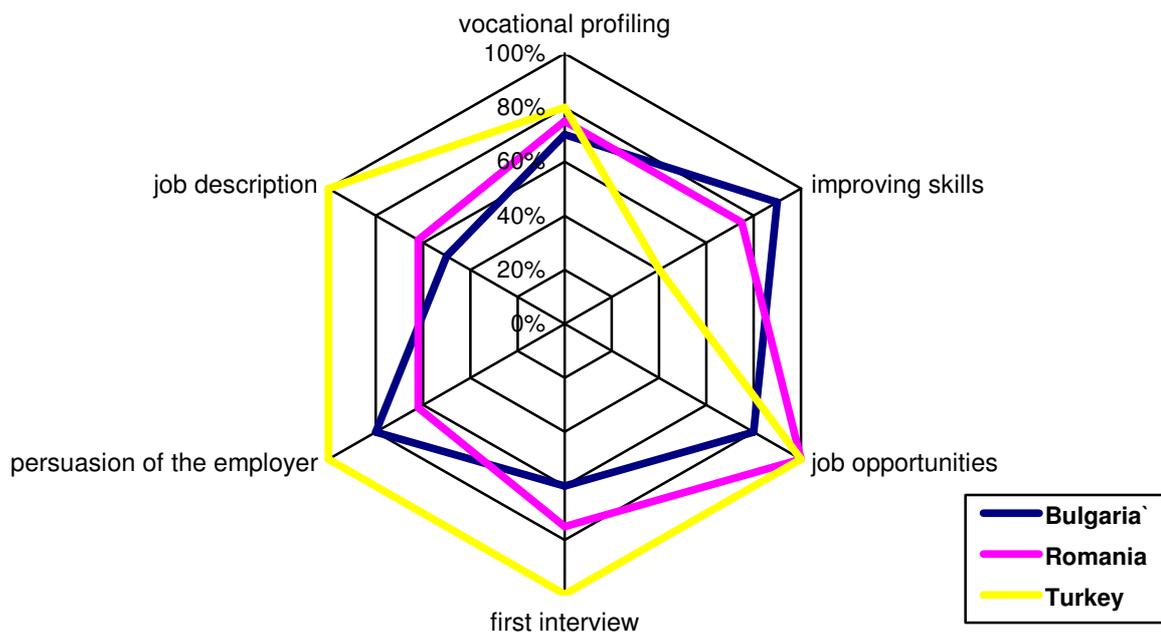
Uncertainty can be caused by the unknown feature of the supported employment service, but it might be also an indicator of the overall assessment on the effectiveness of supporting services.

Bulgarian respondents 40% think that supported employment might help finding and maintaining a job, the rest 60% has no opinion. Romanian interview-partners 37.5% has a positive opinion about the effectiveness of the SE, one person (12.5%) is skeptical, but engages services like this with optimism. Half of the respondents couldn't make a statement. Considering more than half (62%) of the Turkish respondent's opinions, SE can help integrating people with disabilities on the labour market, 15% thinks, that the service can't help getting a job, 23% are inconclusive about the service.

## Services of Supported Employment

Based on the figure below respondents would use almost all of the services provided by Supported Employment. The mostly availed services are the identification of job opportunities and vocational profiling. The need to improve basic skills isn't mentioned by all of respondents of the three transfer-countries; however a significant majority would use the service of trainings.

As finding appropriate jobs proves to be most difficult part of getting employed, most of the respondents would use the services provided by Supported Employment before and during hiring, but a considerable high percentage of respondents would use both, pre-work and after-work services also.



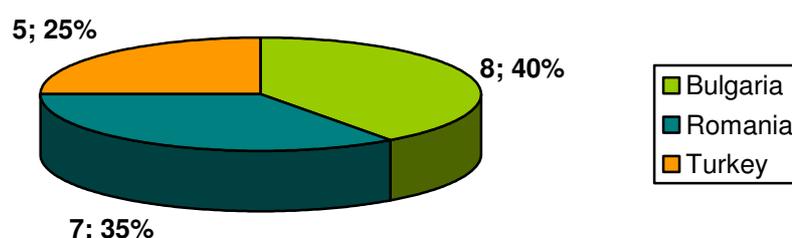
Bulgarian respondents state that they need more assistance in the preparation phase to engage an available job (90%). They'd lack in techniques for a successful interview (65%), and persuasion, argumentation about the work performance (80%) preparation of CV and cover letter. Others point out the need for assistance to reach employers and to raise awareness among them on the person's work-abilities (80%).

Romanians seek services to identify job opportunities (100%). They state that the information flow about available is at a low-level and the distribution is characterized by personal relationships. The vocational profiling services are not correct and interview-partners consider having more abilities and being able to do more than the assessment includes (75%). Three-quarters of the respondents would also use services to improve their job-skills and would also ask for assistance to pursue the employer.

Interview-partners in Turkey would use in a rate 100% all the services provided by Supported Employment. Only 20% of the respondents states, that they are satisfied by the vocational profiling they have and thus they don't need this service and 40% would take part in initiatives to improve job skills. Based on their statements they'd use assistance to find a proper job and approaching the employer. Respondents also mention to get considerable help from ISKUR, but they don't think it is enough.

## II. Results based on interviews with NGO representatives

### NGO's institutions participating in the interviews



20 interviews were conducted with representatives of NGO's. Organisations were unions of disabled, organisations of people with disabilities, organisations for the rights of people with disabilities or disadvantaged groups providing primarily trainings and consultation, recruitment and employment agencies.

*Table of organisations according to working field*

	Bulgaria (N=8)	Romania (N=7)	Turkey (N=5)
<b>Working field</b>			
Organisation of people with disabilities	75%	43%	60%
Civil engagement organisations	25%	29%	-
Recruitment, employment agencies	-	14%	40%
National agencies		14%	
<b>Type of organisations</b>			
NGO's	100%	71%	60%
Governmental organisation, association	-	29%	40%

Organisations manage mostly local initiatives, 25% of the Bulgarian organisations included in the analysis are working at national level and all Romanians one are providing support on regional or national level. Among the NGO's there are some with more than 500 beneficiaries per year, especially in Turkish and Romanian organisation.

Many disabled people's organizations already attempted to change perceptions on disability at the community level. Representatives of NGO's state, employment rate among people with disabilities is at low rate due to many factors, including lack of access to education and vocational rehabilitation and training, lack of access to financial resources, disincentives created by disability benefits, the inaccessibility of the workplace, and employers' perceptions of disability and disabled people. Misconceptions about the ability of people with disabilities continue the difficult employment of people with disabilities, while some people with disabilities have indeed low self-expectations.

The table below summarizes the feedback gathered from the representatives from local and national NGOs regarding **barriers** and problems people with disabilities getting employed

	Bulgaria	Romania	Turkey
On the side of the demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Architectural barriers</li> <li>- Environmental obstacles</li> <li>- Employers disinterest for hiring people with disabilities despite advantages</li> <li>- Prejudges toward the disabled people abilities, focus only on their disadvantages or limitations</li> <li>- Lack of appropriate understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of available jobs</li> <li>- Architectural barriers</li> <li>- Refusal of adaptation needs</li> <li>- Fear of additional cost while hiring a person with disability</li> <li>- Communication difficulties</li> <li>- Psychological and social mentality issues - ignorance, unconsciousness (lack of information)</li> <li>- Fear from the unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inappropriate working conditions</li> <li>- Transportation issues</li> <li>- Limited working fields</li> <li>- People with disabilities are not taken seriously</li> <li>- Employment based on fear of legal penalty rather than for the sense of social responsibility</li> <li>- high expectations</li> </ul>
On the side of supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less motivation within the group of people with a degree of disability to 50%.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fear to lose benefits, pensions</li> <li>- Insufficient self-confidence</li> <li>- Comfort and inactivity trap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerns about expectation</li> <li>- fear of rejection.</li> <li>- fear to lose benefits, pensions</li> <li>- fear from the possibility of being fired</li> </ul>

## Motivation and barriers to labour market integration

### .....in Bulgaria

The feedback gathered from the *Bulgarian* representatives from local and national NGOs which consist of disabled union and organisations of disabled people shows that the highest proportion of people with a degree of disability of 50% to 70% are most active and motivated to use the various services of the Job Centres. Many of them regularly follow the announced vacancies are informed about opportunities for training, including prequalification courses and implemented them successfully. More passive group is that of people with a degree of disability to 50%. The majority of those registered unemployed with low education and skills. Lack of motivation determines the lower employment rate among those people.

The other important fact is the behavior of the employers, consider respondents from NGO's – they still are not convinced about the disabled people abilities and focus only on their disadvantages or limitations which are coming generally from the lack of appropriate understanding in the society in Bulgaria. Employers do not hire people with disabilities, lack of interest from private sector about the advantages which provides people with disabilities (such as high motivation, dedication, less sick leaves etc.).

Mostly of the employers still are not willing to invest some money or even to apply for available financial support from the Government for adaptation of the workplace or purchase of assistive technologies which are needed in the workplace. This causes architectural barriers and affordable

housing and urban environment. People with disabilities are deprived of the opportunity to move freely and exercise their rights, incl. right to work;

Policies for employment of people with disabilities are not effective enough. On one hand, those who have managed to find a job are not adequately protected from the risk of losing their jobs due to external reasons. No enough support from state institutions.

The qualification on people with disability raises another issue of the labour market integration. They cannot take part of retraining courses offered by the National Employment Agency due to educational requirements. It turns a vicious circle - the lack of education hinders the realization of the free labor market, but does not allow for inclusion in the state system for training and retraining, which condemns their unemployment.

#### ..... in Romania

Romanian responses on the motivation of people with disabilities differ by the type of organisations. NGO's consider that motivation of people with disabilities could be higher. The young population among people with disabilities entering the labour market is very high, but elderly people don't want to work. It is a matter of personality and personal engagement. Theoretically people with disabilities should be motivated because benefits are not enough to conduct a decent life. On the other side unions of disabled, governmental associations accentuate that regardless of high motivation, there are just a few possibilities for employment; financial resources are not enough to stimulate employment. Others point out the shortcoming of the special education system and of other structural factors.

Most of the representatives consider that employers are not receptive and feed a number of prejudices toward people with disabilities. The social distance between people with disabilities and those without is very high and most importantly people as well the employer have a fear of the unknown. It is a matter of social mentality that has to be change in order to fulfill the integration of people with disabilities. Most of the respondents concern the fact of the low level of information on the problem of disabilities among employees. They are not familiarized with the legal framework.

Another problem is considered to hinder employment of people with disabilities is the employers' fear of additional cost for the adaptation of working environment. Currently there is a shortage of job opportunities and workplaces are not adapted, so people with disabilities face a concurrence with other.

The current educational supply does not correspond to the expectations of working fields. Profiles of special school provide education in fields that are not required by the economical market of employment, there are no educational centers for vocational trainings. Persons who develop disabilities with time don't have any support, and they prefer not to work, so they diminish the risk to lose benefits.

Family can also counterwork the employment of people with disabilities; overprotection can produce low self-expectations. Other respondents mention communication difficulties while collaborating with employers (especially organisation of deaf).

#### ..... in Turkey

*Turkish* respondents consider on the on hand that people with severe disabilities don't want to work because of the caring costs and they don't want to lose support money they are getting form the government. The possibility of being fired from work in a short period causes significant concerns for people with disabilities. After they fired the process of getting back the disability wage again takes long time and in the meantime they fear of having no money to support themselves. Inactivity trap, the comfort of caring fees and disability wages may also lower the motivation of getting employed.

On the other hand responders point out, that people with disabilities which are at the legal level of working limit of 40% disability are willing to participate in the work life. But the high unemployment rate of people with disabilities is primarily linked to employers' side that have negative attitudes

toward people with disabilities. Some respondents consider that people with disabilities get hired as unqualified workers, not based on their skills or expertise.

One of the biggest problems is, considered by respondents, not finding an authorized person to answer the problems and the fear of rejection of people with disabilities. The companies hire them with a fear of legal penalty rather than for the sense of social responsibility. The workplaces don't want to employ disabled people except the legally obliged companies. Some firms slow down the process of employment by taking the advantage of loopholes in the law. They take advantages from the one month trial period and at the end of the trial period they fire the disabled person and then this cycle goes on. Another problem is that employers choose the disabled according to his/her disability, they don't want to employ severely disabled person. The amendment of the disability law changed the rating of the disability level in 2007. This change lowered the percentage of disability rates and this made more difficult for people with disabilities to find job.

Transportation issues and inappropriate workplaces is considered as a main obstacle in the employment of people with disabilities. The employers prefer to employ the less disabled ones over severely disabled people. The vocational skills and education level of the PWDs are very low. The rate of graduating from college in PWDs is 2%. They are not able to work under heavy conditions. Due to the low educational level they are not employed at office works. The biggest obstacle for the employment is the limited working fields. There is no office work area that disabled people can work. Disabled people mostly are not taken seriously in most companies. In some cases they couldn't even get a chance to meet the person in charge of hiring. Especially mentally disabled people are exposed to workplace abuse.

NGO leaders drew attention that the awareness of the employers should be raised. They state that the employers' approach should not be hiring a person with disability for the job, but finding a job for the person. People with disabilities are employed at wrong/unsuitable jobs and as a result of this after a short period they quit. They should also lower expectations.

## **Provided support services by organisations**

Based on the information received from people with disabilities who took part in the present analysis we could draw the conclusion that there are not enough support services for persons seeking a job, or trying to maintain a job relationship. However on the side of the supply, based on the interviews, we can observe a diversity of support services as well as a lot of proactive advocacy activity aiming to support integration of people with disabilities in society and the competitive labour market. Supported employment as tools doesn't exist in any of the three counties although several services are provided for people with disabilities.

Services are addressed mostly to people with disabilities, however in Turkey the rate of employment support for employers is also considerable.

*Bulgarian* organisations provide consultation services, vocational education and courses tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities. All of the interviewed organisations are acting to make people with disabilities and disadvantaged more competitive on the open labour market. The initiatives and projects which those NGOs carry out are sample of long-term investment in human resource development. Their teams strongly believe that human factor is the most valuable asset of making a successful business. Their work in many cases is designed to act as a bridge between different stakeholders: employers, people with disabilities and disadvantaged people, trainers, policy makers, experts working in the sphere of disability.

Mostly of the respondents are attempting to combine best practice examples, recognized in many European countries, and with innovative approaches for educational and vocational training and courses tailored to the specific needs of people with disabilities. All of the organisations' representatives pointed out that the work potential of people with disabilities should also be used by the employers not only as a demonstration of social engagement, but mainly as a rational practice.

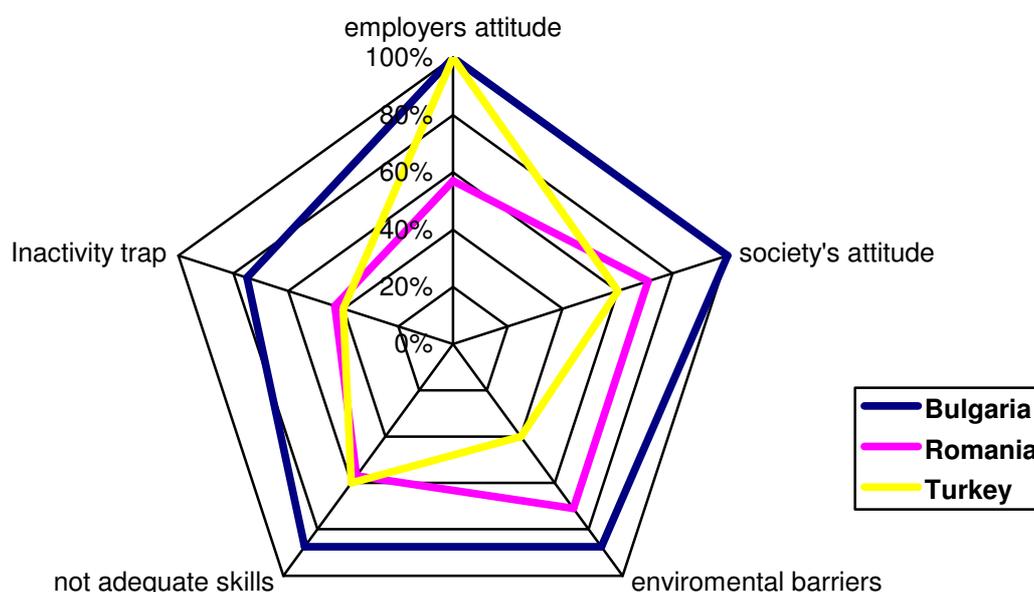
Most *Romanian* organisation try to draw the public attention and raise awareness for a better acceptance among society regarding problems of disability. They collaborate with different social actors and unions of disabled in various projects. Some organisations are elaborating proposals for political strategies. Most of the organisations provide consultancy and emotional support; they inform people with disabilities about their rights and benefits. Others provide education and training on various fields, others prepare people with disabilities in sheltered workshops.

*Turkish* organisations provide labour mediation, counseling services for employers, job counseling participation on job interviews and training

One organisation provides for each person with disability a job consultant who is responsible for guidance and job counseling. The service is alike supported employment, but the direct involvement of the job seeker is low. Firstly, the problems of the person faces during job seeking period are determined. They also give support in CV preparation. They make contact with the employer and give information about the person with disability who is looking for a job and they inform whether they get a job or not. The persons with disability can visit their job consultants whenever they want. They also give rehabilitation services to them.

Another one provides services for employers though to the legal obligation of them to hire people with disabilities. They make an assessment on the possible working conditions, collect the employers demands and mach it with the needs of people with disabilities.

## Problems and barriers regarding the employment of people with disabilities



As depicted in the figure above activists on the fields of disability consider that the employers' attitude and misconception, the societies feeling toward people with disabilities, including friends and parents overprotection, the environmental barriers and the inadequate education and training of job seekers makes it difficult getting a job. It is a multidimensional phenomenon that it is combined with tradition and lack of information and suggests a big social distance between people with disability and those without.

## Current legislation

Whether the supporting legal framework is helping integrating people with disabilities on open labour market, opinions point in one direction that rectifications are needed to increase its efficiency. Bulgaria and Romania's employment legal requirements should be enforced that way, that companies oblige themselves to the quota measures, where Turkey respondents show the negative effects of the strict liabilities and force exertion through massive tax or fee retributions.

*Bulgarian* respondents' declare that in general the national legislation is good - so far it proposes some benefits for workers with disabilities, such as exemption of taxes, but there are some benefits for people with disabilities that do not motivate them working. It supports the equal employment opportunities as well as access to quality training and qualification for people with disabilities but in the reality the education, training and re-training & prequalification programmes and course are not accessible designed for people with disabilities which did not allows them to attend and to become qualified jobseekers. Some respondents declared the need for change in the some laws concerning to the ratified UN Convention on the Rights of disabled people. (Art. 12). The rules for capacity assessment have to change.

The Bulgarian quota requirement, in the opinion of the interviewed NGO representatives should also be adjusted that way, that companies employ people with disabilities instead of paying the fines.

In order to ensure maximum precautions and security for people with disabilities - against abuse and the civil turnover and public relationships should introduce forms of reporting the activities of individuals and organizations engaged in supporting measures and effective sanctions for abuse custody and supporting functions that include administrative penalties.

85.7% of the *Romanian* NGO representatives stated that the support and legal framework does not provide enough support. The financial support measures, tax exemptions should be increased or more focused. Based on another opinion the legislation is good as it is, but there should be also implemented. Many of the amendments of the legal framework can't be taken into account, since it's obligations aren't mandatory due to financial loops in the budget, or the insufficient structural system.

In *Turkey* legislation is considered useful (80%); however respondents made some critic on the penalty system of the legal framework. They emphasise that companies employ person with disabilities due to legal obligation and fear from penalty, fines being considerable high. It is also mentioned that law doesn't assures the reasonable working conditions, sometimes person with disability himself quits the job because of not being able to stand hard conditions. Other opinion says that not the legislation but the public education for person with disabilities is insufficient and the schools are inadequate.

Employment under legal obligation raises a lot of questions, although people with disabilities have full access to the public exams, they are still discriminated, since adaptations are none taken for their special needs. Respondents state that the awareness among people regarding disability should be raised and they indicate the need for personal support for the employed and to be employed person with disability.

## Experience working with people with disabilities and provided services

All interviewed organisation had working experiences with people with disabilities regardless of their disability, age or education level; they were either contractual hired employees or contributed as volunteer to NGO's activities.

Organisational behavior in the three transfer country regarding the occupation of people with disabilities does not differ. Organisations involved them especially in initiatives orientated towards

social integration and professional realization of disabled people (by financial support through National and EU projects).

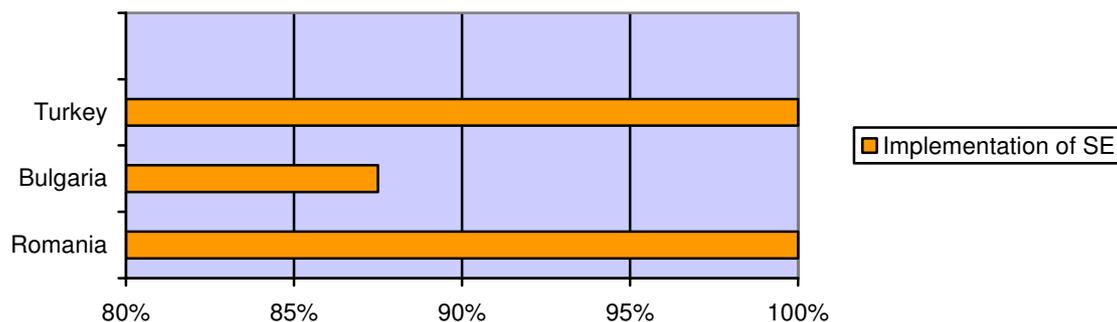
Respondent report neither difficulties nor challenges, expect challenges based on the architectural barriers and affordable housing assistive technologies or transportation issues. Furthermore one respondent reported a role model character of one college with high degree of disability, and the impact made on other to look for job opportunities.

People with disabilities were integrated on the fields of consultancy, administration, management, and expertise. They provided special services like special needs pedagogy, trainings, support on the employment of other people with disabilities (BG, TR), job matching services (BG, TR).

Bulgarian and Romanian NGO's involved in the current study provide one or more services for people with disabilities finding a job. They support their clients through conciliation and guidance, they give psychological support and help them gathering information on the available jobs. Interviews showed that beyond information on trainings and legal rights, orientation and personal support, they can't assure more professional assistance to the person.

Duo to legal obligations in Turkey regarding employment of people with disabilities organisations role is much higher on the field of protection against misconduct and abuse against the worker.

## Implementation of supported employment



All interviewed organisation are interested in services of Supported Employment. Some of them are also willing to implement the toolkit in the practice. They expressed need for financial support since they do not have financial and human resources to organize and implement it as well as special trainings.

### III. Result based on the interviews with company leaders

This chapter covers the study of the views of employers on the socio-professional integration of persons with disabilities on the labor market in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

Based on the interviews we can distinguish two major groups of employers, those who had early experience with people with disabilities and socially distanced employers. According to the responses it can be stated, that interacting with people with disabilities can positively influence employers' opinions regarding how to relate to them. Many consider that among people with disabilities are many potential employees value.

Lack of awareness among companies about facilities to hire persons with disabilities, and the community approaches can contribute to insufficient labor integration and leads to the perpetuation of prejudices and discrimination.

#### Characteristics of employees included in the survey

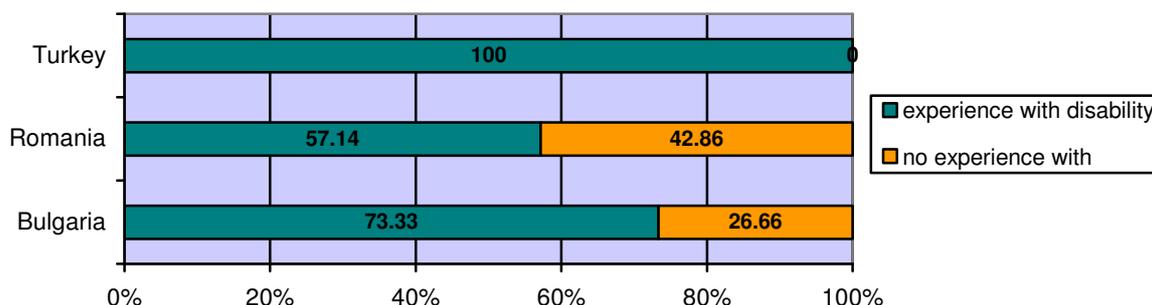
	Bulgaria (N=15)	Romania (N=7)	Turkey (N=4)
Micro companies (staff 1-9)	40%	-	25%
Small enterprises (staff 10-49)	33%	14%	25%
Medium enterprises (staff 50-500)	13%	43%	50%
Big companies (staff > 500)	7%	43%	-
Institutions	7%	-	-

Companies working field are predominant in the food industry, services and sales, they are part of the local economy.

Working field of the interviewed *Bulgarian* companies represents different economic sectors such as transport, financial and other services, construction, sales, production and food industry. 47% are performing their activity locally, 47 % at national level and 6% at international level. *Romanian* companies are working in the sales, tourism, health care, garment production, metal-industry, services and food-industry at local, national and international level. *Turkish* companies have a local working area and represents education, construction and the field of research and technology.

Concerning their capital most of the Bulgarian companies are private (73%), 7% are private-foreign, 13% are cooperatives and 7% are public institution. Most Romanian companies function with national capital (86%), and 28% provides goods and services for local market, where others production is part of the regional and international economic change.

## Working experience with people with disabilities



Absolute majority of companies has and had experience working with people with disabilities. The assessment of the performance of people with disabilities is mostly positive. Company leaders complained about communication and collaboration difficulties, the employees with disabilities were too pretentious, very sensitive, easily getting offended, they couldn't meet expectations.

## Type of disability and working field of the employees with disabilities

Companies employed people with disability with mental, motor, visual, deaf-mute, health type. They've been occupied in different field of the enterprise activity. They worked, or are still working in the production field, as well as in administration, provided services for clients of the enterprise. Companies without experience of collaboration with people with disabilities would rather prefer working with persons with motor disability integrated in administration (accountancy, dispatcher) or services (cleaning, masseur, etc.)

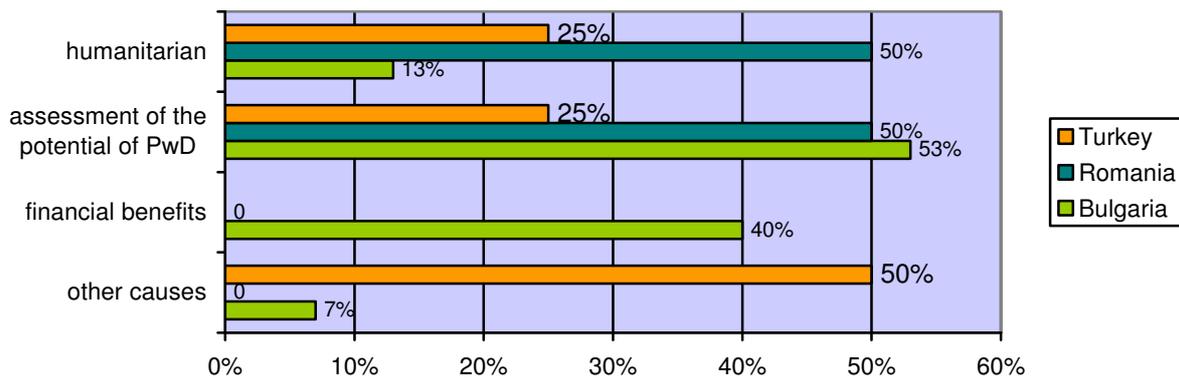
## Flexibility of employers and adaptation made for the employees

Depending on the nature of the activities to be carried out and the type of disability adaptations can be made in different ways and forms. Half of the *Bulgarian* respondents have already made adaptations for their employees with disabilities, such as free access to the workplace; assistive technologies; some adjustments at the specific workplace at the kitchen; flexible chairs. Municipalities are created suitable and accessible environment for people with disabilities. 50% of the respondents didn't implement any adaptation, nor is willing to do so. *Romanian* company-leaders consider in a percentage of 43% that there aren't any solutions for the adaptation of the work process, work-environment's physical conditions. At the same rate managers state being open to changes, if the upcoming cost are reasonable. Only in the case of one company (12.5%) could be the accessibility issue be solved.

*Turkish* respondents stated that beside visual warnings, no special embossed warnings for visually impaired people, embossed screens, no other adaptations were made.

## Basis of hiring people with disabilities and overall perception of work-ability

As we can observe on the graph bellow enterprises hire people with disabilities primarily based on the assessment of their abilities to work. Humanitarian causes play also an important role in the employment policy of the companies.

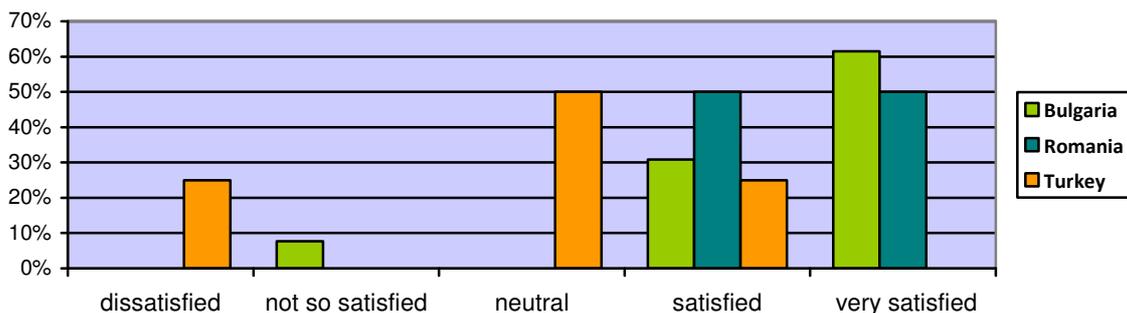


13 % of *Bulgarian* respondents are hiring people with disabilities because of humanitarian causes, 53% - because of the realistic assessment of the potential of disable people, 40% - for financial benefits and 7% - because of friendship. *Romanian* companies consider in equal proportion humanitarian and professional principles. 50% of *Turkish* companies employed people with disabilities because legal obligation, 25% considered humanitarian and realistic assessment of work ability of people with disability.

Employers consider that people with disabilities can produce similar **performance** as person without disability. Most entrepreneurs and managers from *Bulgaria and Romania* who had experience with disability are very satisfied or satisfied with the work-performance of employees with special needs. *Turkish* employers express less positivism.

It's also important to consider the strong relation, though statistically not significant correlation, between experience working with disability and the positive projection of work-abilities of people with disabilities. Company managers without experience are having doubt about the ability of persons with disability to perform specific task required by the job.

The number of sick leaves is reduced comparing to those without disabilities. The disabled employees are much more motivated and strictly perform their tasks. Frequently they express their gratitude to their managers for the appropriate behavior manner-state *Bulgarian* respondents.



Regarding **concerns** the respondents' answers distribute depending on the attitude hiring people with disabilities. However they consider having a disabled workforce will not cause any disadvantages for their companies.

Most of the *Bulgarian* employers (80%) do not have any concerns in regards of people with disabilities. In some cases the respondents said that they have some concerns related to the occupational health and safety procedures which normally the disabled employees should follow as well. Sometimes they are prejudice among some colleagues of the disabled employees. Performing accurately is a basic expectation by employers as well as by newly appointed employees. All respondent considered that hiring people with disabilities wouldn't constitute any

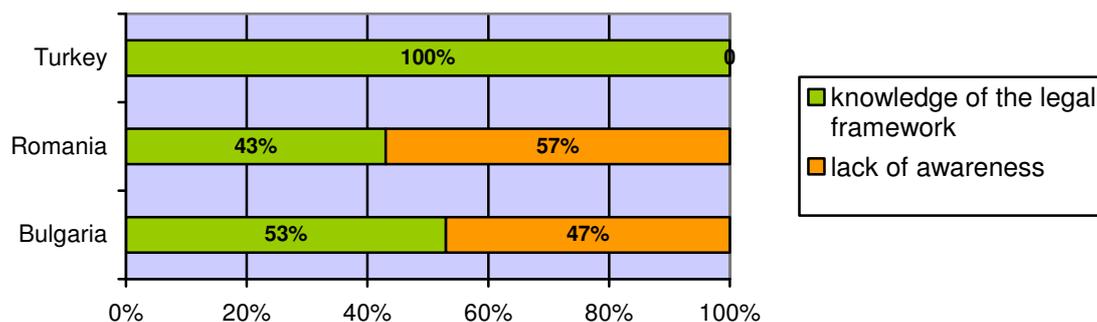
disadvantages. The only issued the need of some disabled employees for more time for training at the beginning after their recruitment.

*Romanian* managers consider while hiring the ability that they can hold the work rhythm, the ability to get along and in safe term with clients, and the ability to stand up in production (4 respondents, 57%). However other state the most important is to perform the work accurately (2 respondents – 28%). One manager hadn't any kind of concerns. Hiring people with disabilities can't be related to taking a risk.

Meanwhile *Turkish* respondents consider in a rate of 50-50% the disadvantages for the company related to hiring people with disabilities. They take into consideration safety issues in the work field and accessibility of the workplace as obstacles to hire people with disabilities. All the respondents are reserved to employ people with disabilities. Some respondents report abuse of people with disability after hiring under legal obligation.

### Awareness on legal requirements and benefits

To address labour market imperfections and encourage the employment of people with disabilities, many countries have laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. Many countries also have specific measures, for example quotas, aiming to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. But the implementation and effectiveness of disability protection provisions varies considerably. Often they are poorly enforced and not well known.



About half of the *Bulgarian* respondents (53%) have knowledge of the legal requirements regarding employment of people with disabilities. They mention its positive aspect, but at the same time they make a critic on the bureaucratic way of implementation, the limited financial framework and the short time of the financing. Others highlight the need for changes so that there should exist more ways to stimulate the employers to ensure permanent employment of PwD, to create the needed specific work conditions such as accessible work place, increase of the qualification of employees according to the employer's needs and to the interest and potential of employees.

Lack of awareness is common for 57% of the *Romanian* managers and company leaders. All respondents respect quota requirements, but most respondents consider the existence of the support policy unimportant, they rather build on the performance of people with disabilities.

Among *Turkish* respondents the rate of managers aware of the legal benefits and other legal requirements is 100%. Respondents complained about the limited financial support they get in cases where workplace environment adaption is needed. Others assert the recently changes of ISKUR in implementing social policies for people with disabilities, not taking enough into consideration the needs of private sector.

**Quotas**, as tailored intervention do exist in all the three transfer countries for the employment of people with disabilities in the public and private sectors. In many cases fines or other substitute obligation are imposed on employers who fail to meet their quotas.

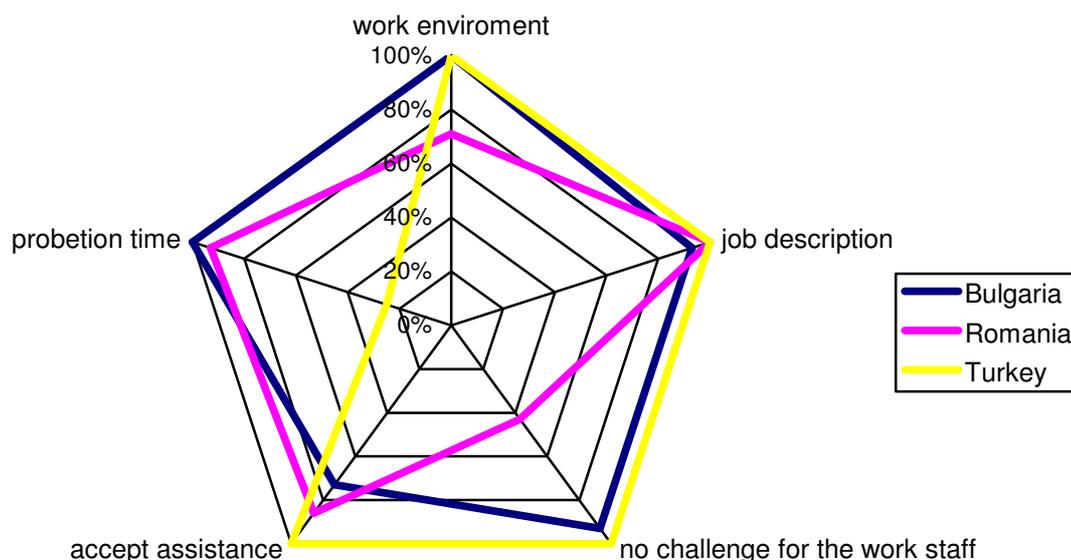
The obligation to hire persons with disabilities for companies which have more than 50 employees is known by 73% of *Bulgarian* questioned companies. Most of them (93%) respect it. All the *Romanian* enterprises correspond to the required obligation; they prefer more to by use the substitutive possibilities; however they don't believe in its effect to correct labour market imperfections. *Turkish* quota obligation is known and respected by all respondents company.

## Integration of person with disability in work – needs and adaptations

The respondents consider that the provided legal support system does not include every aspects of the employment process of people with disabilities. The needs mentioned by employers are concerning issues like:

- information and training on the job;
- preliminary preparation and training of the employer and employee;
- specific adaptations of job and environment in accordance to the personal for an effective performance;
- mediation between colleagues;

### Adaptations foreseen by employers



As the graph indicates employers are open to consider the possible adaptation issues on the **workplace** to improve or to assure the best performance of the hired personnel with disability. *Bulgarian and Turkish* respondents state that they implemented adaptation when it was necessarily. *Romanian* respondents however pointed out that that they would make adaptations, just in bearable conditions, for example reasonable costs for changes. 28% considers it impossible to make arrangements for the special needs of the new workforce.

Company managers and leaders do not have any concerns changing the **job description** according to the skills and abilities of the employee. Most of *Bulgarian* respondents declared that so far it was not necessarily to make any changes in the job descriptions since they would like to put the disabled employees on the same requirements as those without disabilities. The respondents do not prioritize them. *Turkish* employers specified that after an assessment of the work abilities of the staff with special needs, they give them jobs according to their capabilities

and adapt work hours individually. *Romanian* respondents 57% would change the job description just with conditions.

The potential and actual employers consider that **working together** with a colleague with disability would rather not be a problem for the working staff. *Turkish* respondent comments that if the person really wants to work and has no intention to abuse his working relation, there would be no difficulty in working with them. *Romanian* managers in a proportion of 43% consider that there might be some difficulties in the integration into the work community, 14% (1 respondent) finds it being dependable on the ability to adapt, like in every case of new working staff member.

## Supported employment

Overall we could observe a high rate of employers who are willing to employ people with disabilities in case there were fit for the job. They would also accept assistance supporting the person with disability seeking a job. The presence of assistance wouldn't be considered as a disadvantage in many cases.

*Bulgarian* respondents' 73% would accept a free of charge assistance for people with disabilities looking for a job. *Romanian* questioned company leaders welcome and highlight the importance of supported employment tools. They consider as the most needed service the assistance provided by the **recruitment** since people with disabilities can't meet employers. *Turkish* respondents have 100% positive attitude towards support tools and services.

Respondent indicate that they'd require and appreciate a specialized support of job-coaching and counseling on the workplace.

The possibility to gather work experience without any payment isn't restrained by companies. Most of the respondent would agree to employ just for a **trial or probation time** people with disabilities.

*Bulgarian* respondents' 93% would like to participate in such initiative but they need to know more about its requirements and what additional resources – human, time, financial support are required from their part. They would participate in such initiative in case they need new staff, or by real necessity – a concrete work project, by a lower degree of disability. *Romanian* company leaders consider it possible and even desirable the initiative of the persons with disability, but they question the issue of no payment. *Turkish* respondents point out that legal obligations required by law. Thus it's impossible to employ a person even a disabled one without social insurance as volunteer or job tester. Furthermore they can accept trial but not free because of the concerns about legal obligations. Anyhow 75% of the respondents would rather not hire job testers.

While hiring a person with disability respondents declare that they would need **different kinds of support**. Primarily financial support is mentioned by all respondents. They would also accept the assistance provided for the already employed working staff to help diminish the social distantness in the working collaboration and socialisation.

*Bulgarian and Romanian* company leaders declare that some support could be beneficial for most of interviewed companies (BG 67% gave a positive answer). 60% of them need assistance so that the statutory staff accepts the new work colleague. If this process requires financial resources, then they will apply for. *Turkish* respondents, unlike the previous opinions, state that they do not need additional support.

Questioned company leaders are quite interested to get more information on supported employment services. Bulgarian 93%, all the Romanian and 50% of the Turkish respondent would state to receive gladly more information on the SE.

## Final Conclusions

Theoretically almost all jobs can be performed productively by someone with a disability, and given the right environment most people with disabilities can be productive. But working age persons with disabilities experience significantly lower employment rates and much higher rates of unemployment than persons without disabilities.

Findings from the research of adaptation potential of the Supported Employment Toolkit suggest that the success of participation on the labour market must be reported to the social norms accepted by organizations and employers, personal skills, self and carrier management. But beyond personal factor, the social, institutional, political and economical aspects have also a high influence of the low employment rate of people with disabilities. The convergence of these main elements might influence a successful process of finding a job.

Employment rate among people with disabilities is at low rate. This is due to many factors:

- Lack of access to qualitative education and vocational rehabilitation and training, disincentives created by disability benefits, the inaccessibility of the workplace, and employers' perceptions of disability and disabled people. The possibilities for vocational education tend to be much lower for people with disabilities than for the labour force in general. Although legislation prescribes that lifelong learning possibilities should be available for people with disabilities, there are only few opportunities in reality and these have a limited impact on the possibilities of disabled people to obtain and maintain jobs.
- Misconceptions about the ability of people with disabilities to perform jobs are an important reason both for their continued unemployment and – if employed – for their exclusion from opportunities for promotion in their careers. Such attitudes may stem from prejudice or from the belief that people with disabilities are less productive than their non-disabled counterparts. However, based on results employers are open to receive the personal initiative of people with disabilities and are ready to support it. Studying organisations and employees we can observe a positive attitude towards the integration of people with disabilities on the labour market. They demonstrate that people with disabilities have appropriate skills, strong loyalty and low rates of absenteeism. Companies with earlier experience with people with disabilities find it efficient and profitable to hire people with disabilities.
- Some people with disabilities have low self-expectations about their ability to be employed and may not even try to find employment. The social isolation of people with disabilities restricts their access to social networks, especially of friends and family members that could help in finding employment.
- An active contact between people with disabilities and companies is needed and useful. If it is possible to bring companies to the topic “employment of people with disabilities” and if there is a good job matching (see assessment of the potential of people with disabilities), it will work. Secondly Romanian experts in this working field also said in the interviews that employers have a fear for the unknown – an active contact makes “it” known.



# **Transfer of Employment Support Tools for People with Disabilities**

Leonardo da Vinci / Transfer of Innovation

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[www.t-est.eu](http://www.t-est.eu)



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