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Ergo  Art

2023-1-SI01-KA220-HED-000166987
(Application form ID: KA220-HED-EF096731)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons Learned, Policy Recommendations, and Transferability Criteria

Project Title

Ergonomic workplace design for workers with disabilities and their long-term employment

Project Acronym: **ERGOART**

January, 2026

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to present a comprehensive set of joint policy recommendations developed within Work Package 5 (WP5) of the Ergoart project. These recommendations build upon experiences gathered across partner countries, lessons learned during implementation, and analyses of existing policies and practices related to disability, accessibility, vocational rehabilitation, and inclusive labour markets. The aim is to provide guidance that is actionable, transferrable, and sustainable beyond the life of the project.

The document integrates empirical findings from pilot activities, cross-country exchanges, expert consultations, and reviews of European and national policy frameworks. Drawing on international standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), and relevant EU directives, this document delivers a cohesive set of recommendations that can support systemic improvement in the fields of accessibility, equality, and employment.

Methodologically, the recommendations are derived from:

- comparative analyses of partner countries' practices,
- evaluations of training programmes and pilot actions,
- interviews and focus groups with stakeholders (a person with the interest -employee),
- review of international and national legislation,
- interdisciplinary consultations with practitioners from rehabilitation, social services, ergonomics, and labour market institutions.

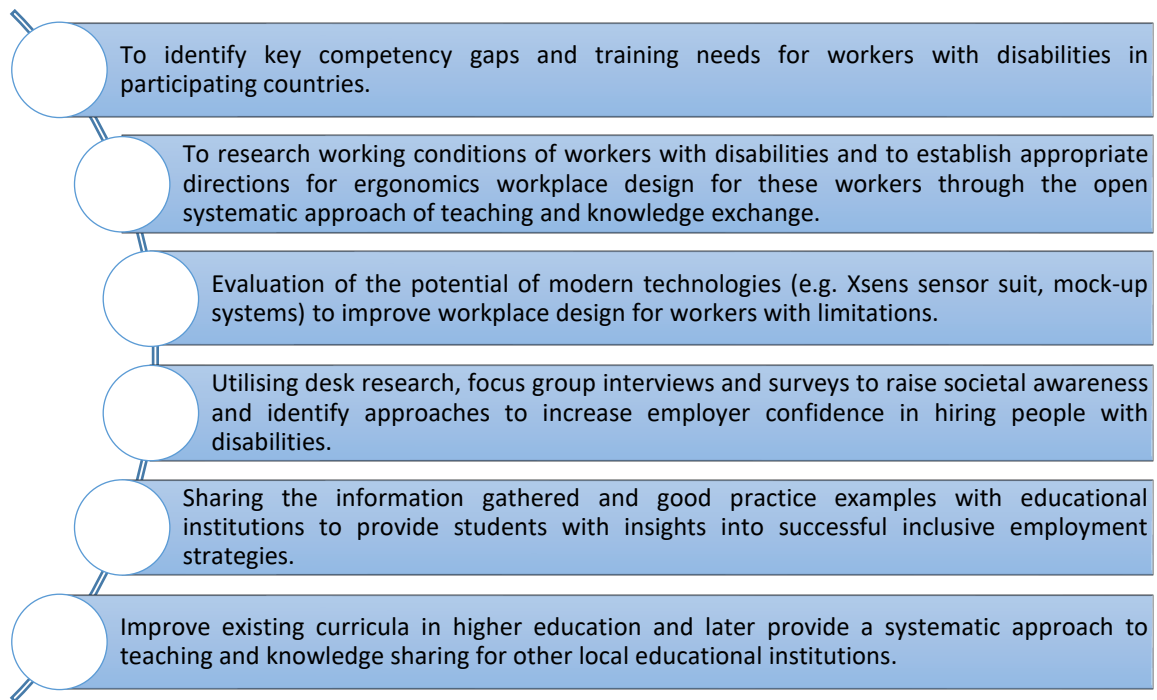
The chapters 3 to 5 present the principal findings and reflections, present three central policies recommended by the project, and define criteria that ensure their transferability and adoption across different national and institutional contexts.

2 About the Project

As part of the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme, a project entitled **“Ergonomic workplace design for workers with disabilities and their long-term employment”** (ERGOART) was launched in September 2023. The ERGOART project focuses on finding solutions to improve existing curricula in higher education and later provides a systematic approach to teaching and knowledge sharing for other local educational institutions.

The aim of project was to obtain detailed information on the current situation of people with disabilities in general and specifically in the cultural sector in various countries and in Slovenia. In depth study analyse examples of good practise in the employment of people with disabilities in the cultural sector, to serve as model concepts for educational institutions.

The objectives of the project are:



The project will be completed by the end of February 2026.

3 Lessons Learned

3.1 Organisational Lessons

Across partner countries, organisations involved in the project highlighted several recurring insights regarding organisational capacity, project management, and internal structures:

The importance of cross-sectoral collaboration

Successful implementation required continuous coordination between rehabilitation institutions, employment services, educational organisations, and social service providers. Fragmented systems often hindered (blocked) the flow of information and slowed the implementation of interventions. The lesson learned is that integrated service delivery significantly improves outcomes.

Need for stable internal structures

Organisations with established internal protocols for accessibility, inclusive communication, and case management were able to implement project activities more efficiently than those relying on ad-hoc procedures. Stability enhances effectiveness.

Resource limitations

Partners reported persistent challenges relating to insufficient staff capacity, limited training, and lack of technological tools. Accessibility and inclusive design require investment, and inadequate resources slow implementation.



Importance of leadership

Institutional leadership played a crucial role. Engaged leaders promoted a culture of inclusion, ensured allocation of resources, and reinforced the importance of accessibility. Where leadership support was limited, progress was slower.

3.2 Lessons Related to Stakeholders

Stakeholder participation emerged as essential for successful policy implementation:

Employers require ongoing guidance and support

Many employers want to include persons with disabilities but lack knowledge about legal requirements, workplace accommodations, or the economic benefits of inclusive employment. Engagement strategies must therefore include training and advisory services.

Interdisciplinary cooperation enhances outcomes

Rehabilitation professionals, psychologists, occupational therapists, job coaches, and specialists bring unique expertise. Successful models involve multidisciplinary collaboration rather than isolated specialist interventions.

Civil society organisations are key partners

Civil society contribute lived experiences, advocacy, and user-centred perspectives that institutions alone cannot provide. Their involvement is valuable in shaping realistic and person-centred policies.

Communication must be accessible and multilingual

Lessons learned from stakeholder meetings show, that communication should conform to accessibility standards (e.g., easy-to-read versions, captioned materials, sign-language interpretation) to ensure full participation.

3.3 Lessons Related to Target Groups

The target group — persons with disabilities — provided crucial insights:

Individual needs vary widely

A uniform model cannot address the complexity of diverse impairment types, social contexts, and personal preferences. Approaches must be individualized, using frameworks such as ICF to reflect the interplay of environmental, personal, and functional factors.

Stigma and attitudinal barriers persist

Participants often reported discrimination, low expectations from employers, and assumptions about their abilities. Awareness raising is therefore a fundamental component of any inclusive employment strategy.



Importance of holistic support

Participants benefited most when vocational rehabilitation was complemented by psychological support, counselling, and mentorship.

Digital accessibility is a growing barrier

As services move online, persons with sensory, cognitive, or motor impairments highlighted challenges with poorly designed interfaces, inaccessible application processes, or incompatible software. Digital inclusion must therefore be central to future policies.

3.4 System-Level Lessons

At the macro level, several systemic challenges were identified:

Variations in legal frameworks

National legislation varies considerably across partner countries, particularly regarding employment quotas, accessibility obligations, and vocational rehabilitation rights. This affects consistency in implementation.

Funding mechanisms are not harmonised

Some countries rely heavily on state funding, others on EU support, and others on employer incentives. Sustainable policies require stable funding sources.

Insufficient monitoring and evaluation

Many existing policies lack rigorous monitoring indicators, resulting in limited data on effectiveness. We learned that measurable indicators are essential for assessing long-term impact. Mostly manually conducted (ergonomic) analyses and assessments.

Need for digital transformation

System-wide implementation would benefit from investment in digital platforms that support assessment tools (ICF-based systems), case management, and accessible e-services.

4 Policy Recommendations

Ergoart project proposes three core policies to strengthen inclusion, accessibility, and employability. These recommendations are formulated to be actionable, evidence-based, and adaptable across diverse contexts.

4.1 Policy 1: Inclusive Workplace and Accessibility Policy

Rationale

The physical, digital, and organisational accessibility of workplaces is a prerequisite for equal participation as reinforced by the European Accessibility Act (EAA) 2019/882, which came into effect on June 28, 2025, requiring a wide range of products (such as computers,



smartphones, and ATMs) and services (including banking, transport, and e-commerce) to comply with common accessibility standards across the EU, as well as by the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, which provides a comprehensive framework to improve the lives of persons with disabilities and includes initiatives such as the Disability Employment Package aimed at increasing their participation in the labour market. Despite existing directives, accessibility remains inconsistent across Europe. Strengthening accessibility at organisational and systemic levels improves employment opportunities and enhances overall productivity.

Recommendations

- Implement universal design principles in all new workspaces.
- Adopt organisation-wide accessibility audits (physical, digital, communicational).
- Ensure compliance with digital tools.
- Provide reasonable accommodations: ergonomic adjustments, assistive technologies, flexible arrangements.
- Integrate inclusive procedures (accessible recruitment, onboarding, training).
- Introduce annual mandatory training for leadership and personnel.

Expected Impact

Improved access, reduced discrimination, and increased labour market participation of persons with disabilities.

4.2 Policy 2: Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Safeguard Policy

Rationale

Despite legislation such as the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), discrimination remains widespread. A structured organisational policy ensures consistent practice and legal compliance.

Recommendations

- Adopt a zero-tolerance policy on discrimination.
- Establish a confidential reporting mechanism with clear procedures.
- Appoint an internal equality officer.
- Organise awareness-raising campaigns.
- Implement regular staff training on anti-discrimination and disability rights.

Expected Impact

A safer, more inclusive organisational culture, better protection of rights, and reduced discriminatory incidents.

Implementation Pathway

1. Draft policy text and obtain leadership approval.
2. Train designated equality officers.
3. Create anonymous reporting tools.
4. Conduct annual climate surveys to measure inclusion.



Monitoring Indicators

- Number of reported incidents
- User satisfaction with resolution mechanisms

4.3 Policy 3: Supported Employment and Skills Development Policy

Rationale

Employment is central to social inclusion, yet persons with disabilities face barriers such as lack of skills, insufficient employer support, and unclear pathways to employment. Supported employment — combining job coaching, mentorship, and individualized plans — is proven to increase long-term employability.

Recommendations

- Introduce job coaching models (e.g., Place-Train-Maintain this means we place people in work at the earliest opportunity, train them to do the job in the way the employer wants it done and provide ongoing support to maintain them in the job.)
- Develop individualised employment plans using ICF assessments.
- Establish partnerships with local employers.
- Use Ergoarts module for students focused on ergonomic design of workplaces for persons with disabilities. This module should equip future professionals with the knowledge and practical competencies needed to analyse functional abilities, understand ergonomic principles, assess job demands, and design workstations that support safety, performance, and inclusion. Strengthening students' expertise in ergonomic adaptation ensures a knowledgeable future workforce capable of creating workplaces that genuinely accommodate diverse needs.

Expected Impact

Increased employment rates, improved job retention, and higher levels of independence.

Implementation Pathway

1. Recruit and train job coaches.
2. Conduct functional assessments (ICF-based).
3. Match participants with appropriate employers.
4. Deliver continuous mentoring during the first 12 months of employment.

Monitoring Indicators

- Employment rate after 6 and 12 months
- Retention rate
- Participant satisfaction

5 Transferability Criteria

Transferability determines whether recommended policies can be adopted in different national or institutional contexts.



5.1 Political Feasibility

- Alignment with national strategies and EU frameworks
- Support from governmental institutions
- Stakeholder involvement in policy preparation

5.2 Institutional Transferability

- Existence of organisations capable of implementing accessibility audits, job coaching, and inclusion programs
- Availability of trained professionals

5.3 Legal Compatibility

- Compatibility with national disability, labour, and anti-discrimination laws

5.4 Financial Sustainability

- Long-term funding mechanisms (state, municipal, EU, employer-based)
- Cost-benefit analysis showing the economic advantage of inclusive employment

5.5 Cultural and Social Factors

- Societal attitudes towards disability
- Engagement of civil society organisations

6 Conclusions and Next Steps

This document provides a comprehensive overview of lessons learned, policy recommendations, and transferability criteria that emerged from the project. The three key policies — inclusive workplace policy, equality policy, and supported employment policy — are rooted in international best practices and reflect real needs expressed by stakeholders and persons with disabilities.

Through the integration of accessibility, equality, and employment support, these recommendations aim to strengthen inclusive practices and contribute to sustainable, fair, and equitable labour markets across Europe.