



INFORMAL MEETING OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY MINISTERS
BUCHAREST, 10-11 APRIL, 2019

Background note

Workshop 1: Women with disabilities in the world of work

The European Union and its Member States have a strong mandate to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities and the legislation in this area covers specific aspects of their lives.

The European Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities comprises clear commitments to ensure an increased attention to the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities.

At EU level, about 27.5% of women aged over 16 declare an activity limitation, compared to 23.0% of men of the same age group. EU legislation provides protection against gender discrimination with regard to employment. Also, antidiscrimination legislation on the basis of disability exists in the area of employment.

Among the 20 principles contained in the European Pillar of Social Rights, some are particularly important to gender equality and women with disabilities: equal opportunities for women and men on the labour market, including the right to equal pay; equal treatment in relation to social protection, education and access to goods and services.

Nevertheless, persistent cultural, social, legal, physical and institutional barriers pose restrictions to the full inclusion of women with disabilities in society in all areas of private and public life, including education and employment.

For women with disabilities, low rates of access to education and technical and vocational training programmes, as well as the lack of opportunities to access the labour market result in a lack of skills and professional qualifications.



In addition, the stigma and discrimination that women with disabilities are facing, as well as inaccessible work environments, are restrictions to their participation on the labour market and they lead to less safe working conditions.

This can also be observed in existing statistics at European level, according to which, in 2016, persons with disabilities in the EU were more likely to face in-work poverty than the general population. In terms of gender, the employment rate of women with disabilities (45.9%) was slightly lower than that of men with disabilities (50.6%). Looking at the overall quality of life perceived by people with disabilities, Eurofound finds that the extent to which they feel left out of society varies considerably depending on whether they are employed or not. Those who have a job report far less often feeling left out of society than long-term unemployed respondents or those who are unable to work because of their disability.

While many measures have been taken to promote the rights of women with disabilities, the corresponding policies are limited. There is a need to translate the global policy into the national context by strengthening the public policies for women with disabilities. It is crucial to significantly reduce inequalities that women with disabilities face in all areas of private and public life.

Questions for discussion:

How can Governments contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to ensure that no woman is left behind?

What good examples of policies, programs and other best practices are identified at MS level to reduce inequalities faced by persons with disabilities and also to ensure the access of women with disabilities to the open labour market?

What strategies should be put in place in order for women's rights movements to mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities and to foster their participation in all areas of life?