**Abstract for the Fifth Annual Conference of Alter**

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**Title of the session**: Employment and Disability across Europe: Thoughts from the public sector

**Abstract of the session**:

In Europe, the principle of non-discrimination has been integrated in national laws of most countries - following the adoption of Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 and the Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000. However, the way this issue is taken into account in national or local policies may vary from one country to another. Regarding the participation of persons with disabilities to the open labour market, the range of policies remains very broad and substantial differences can be observed in terms of employment enablers, social services support, social security systems and environmental infrastructure. To date, little research has focused on this issue within the public sector. Even if at the European level, the term “public sector” or even the term “public employment” refer both to various realities for historical and political raisons, focusing on this sector was an opportunity to support discussions on how European countries were dealing with issues related to the employment of persons with disabilities. We especially focused on policies and measures implemented.

Two sources of data were used. First, each country’s representative has written a report on her/his country’s situation including: definitions of disability and of public sector as well as an overview of the current national employment policy and statistical data. Then, to illustrate the implementation of these policies, six standard case studies were developed. Data were collected for 12 countries from 2013 to 2015 and were collectively analysed during three seminars of two days.

This session will include tree presentation. The first one will present an overview of the policies implemented. The second one will explore the barriers and facilitators met by persons with disabilities to access paid jobs. And a third one will focus on emergent solutions and challenges. The session will aim at discussing and completing the results of this research project.

**Abstract of Presentation 1**: Overview of the policies implemented

**Presenter**: **Darina Ondrusova** - Institute for Labour and Family Research, Slovakia

Within the European Union, each country has developed its own policy. One of the responses that have been implemented in some countries has been a quota scheme. We analysed the country’s reports to describe more precisely in which country such a system is currently implemented and if so, what are the characteristics of these schemes. We identified three different categories of countries.

The first category regroups countries (France, Germany, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) which have endorsed a quota scheme approach both for private and public sectors. This involved for employers which do not respect the quota to pay monetary penalties. The amount of these penalties as well as the way to respond to the obligation and the level of the quota vary from one country to another.

The second category regroups countries (Portugal and Ireland) which have set a target for public employers. In Ireland there is a target of 3% of workers with disabilities employed by public employers. In Portugal, the target is applied on recruitment. According to the number of positions open by a public employer, a percentage of it should be reserved for persons with disabilities.

The third category regroups countries (Finland, Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom) which do not have a quota scheme. Some of these countries gave up their quota scheme (UK) and in others; there is currently a discussion to implement such policy (Netherlands). To be noted, in UK, there is a public sector equality duty.

However, during the discussion of the research group, it has been difficult to identify which kind of policies might be the most effective to increase persons with disabilities participation to the open labour market as few data are available and as beneficiaries of these policies varies from one country to another. All countries have adopted and/or revised their non-discrimination law in the past decade.

**Abstract of Presentation 2**: Barriers and facilitators to access paid jobs

**Presenter**: **Marie-Renée Guével** - EHESP-Sorbonne Paris Cité, France

To illustrate how facilitators and barriers met by persons with disabilities in accessing paid jobs are addressed in the different countries, we analysed the data collected through the six standard case studies. Each case study was describing a person with disabilities working for a public employer. Neither, representativeness nor comprehensiveness was sought but we have tried to vary the type of impairments, the type of public employers, the level of education and the stage in working life. For each standard case study, a series of questions has been developed in order to describe what would happen to the person described, if she/he could benefit from some support, from what kind of support and from whom.

First results of this analysis show differences between countries for the following themes: involvement of persons with disabilities in the process of accessing or retaining a job, reasonable adjustments, workers with disabilities’ status, employers’ organisation, as well as structures (public employment service, dedicated public services, persons with disabilities’ associations, etc.) involved in supporting persons with disabilities and employers.

For example, from one country to another, the way employers set an organisation to respond to their social responsibility to address issues related to the employment of persons with disabilities. For example, in Ireland and in France, figure such as disability liaison officer, was identified. The role of occupational services within or outside employers’ organisation was also different from one country to another.

**Abstract of Presentation 3:** Emergent solutions and challenges

**Presenter**: Johanna Gustafsson - Örebro University, Sweden

Also based on the first results of the analysis of the analysis of the standard case studies, we are able to identified challenges such as aged issues, support programmes sustainability, “Not in Education, Employment nor in Training” – NEET, and lack of coordination between the various structures involved in the support of persons with disabilities.

To address some of these difficulties and challenges of the employment of persons with disabilities, the discussions between the different countries show the emergence and the development of new solutions to support the integration of persons with disabilities into the open labour market. Supported employment and customised jobs were notably mentioned. These approaches focus on the individual skills and takes into account opportunities for work in the direct environment of the persons involved. Both supported employment and customised jobs includes vocational training and individual tailored support. Vocational training can take place on the job site, but also outside, depending of the individual needs of the persons and the circumstances. However, their development varies greatly from one country to another.

For example, supported employment is at an early stage in France with first experimentations currently implemented. On the contrary, supported employment is more developed in the Netherlands and customised jobs in Sweden.

**Keywords**: Employment, Policies, Practices, Barriers, Facilitators, Solutions, Challenges, Europe, Public Sector

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