

# **A Blueprint for Equal Employment Opportunities for Disabled People in Europe**

A ground-breaking strategy to end discrimination against people with disabilities in the European labour market within 10 years has been unveiled by Workability International – the world’s largest organisation representing employers of disabled workers.

The Reykjavik Declaration was issued by Workability International Europe as new EU figures revealed that unemployment among people with disabilities in member States is now more than three times higher than for the rest of the working age population.

The organisation – whose 18 European members employ over 800,000 workers with disabilities – is calling for a partnership between Governments, employers and people with disabilities in an effort “to reach a position within 10 years where the proportion of working-age Europeans with disabilities in employment equals the rest of Europe’s working-age population”.

Workability International Europe president, Hans Vrind, said the strategy is based on six proposals:

- Adequate financing by national Governments to employment services which support the primary aim of providing people with disabilities with access to mainstream employment along with guarantees of investment in successful programmes.
- Properly resourced employment supports for people whose disabilities prevent them from accessing mainstream jobs on their own initiative.
- The establishment of a European Employers’ Forum on Disability, along with similar groups at national level in each EU member State.
- A collective voice for providers of employment and training services for people with disabilities so that greater influence can be brought to bear on the European Parliament, the European Commission and national Governments.
- Positive measures to support Accession States to improve employment opportunities for their disabled citizens.
- A commitment from the EU to provide regular and realistic statistics relating to people with disabilities in employment so that progress can be monitored.

“Equality of opportunity in the world of work is still a pipedream for millions of people with disabilities around Europe, despite the undeniable cost benefit case for getting them into the workforce,” declared Mr Vrind.

“But through these six achievable steps we can wipe away generations of discrimination and create a Europe where people with disabilities are judged on their abilities and where all citizens are finally given the opportunity to contribute fully to the economic and social life of their communities and their nations.”