



Active employment policies and labour inclusion of people with disabilities and/or incapacities. A case study in Portugal ¹

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Abstract. This research is based on the Social Model of Disability, which understands disability as a social construct based on human rights, and presents the support measures taken by the Portuguese public employment service and their applicability on the labour inclusion of people with disabilities or incapacities. It is a political conception that aims to transform society by contributing to the construction of a more sustainable and inclusive society. The study analyzes an integrated set of measures to support the qualification and employment of people with disabilities, using interviews and statistical data provided by the Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (IEFP) and a Resource Centre that integrates this public in Portuguese territory.

Keywords: Labour market, disability and incapacity, public policies, emancipatory proposals.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. Explanatory models of disability. 4. Public Policies of employability support. 5. Labour inclusion of people with disabilities and/or incapacity. 6. Conclusions. 7. Acknowledgements. 8. Bibliography

1. Introduction

Given the topicality and the importance of the topic, the directives for diversity and inclusion present in political agendas and international, European and national legislation have the objective of ending discrimination and breaking the obstacles present in the lives of people with disabilities.

In Portugal, the explanatory theoretical model that frames and allows a deeper understanding of the country's policies and approaches regarding disability is the Social Model

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of Disability, which considers disability as not only an individual characteristic, but also the result of social barriers and discriminatory attitudes. A similar analytical perspective is the one defended by V. Ferreira et al (2017), who assert that “people with disabilities are subjected to multiple processes of exclusion and discrimination”.

The Social Model of Disability offers a critical perspective on disability. According to this model, the physical, sensorial, or cognitive limitations are not the main problem that people with disabilities face. Rather, it is the attitudes and social norms, as well as policies and discriminatory practices, which create the barriers and limitations that prevent their full participation in society, including the labour market. The importance of eliminating the remaining barriers for the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in all social spheres should be emphasized.

Lately, the topic of disability and/or incapacity can be found in the daily agenda more and more often, promoting human rights, a new perspective, and the sensitization of society in general, regarding the important role all agents must play, with the objective of changing the current mentality and achieving an effective social transformation that would lead to the improvement of these people’s quality of life.

Neto (2022) says that “to speak of equal rights, nonetheless, refers not only to the legislation, but also specifically to the public inclusion policies that seek to implement the universalization of such rights”.

Through public policies, the State seeks to guarantee the rights established in the Portuguese Republic’s Constitution, with the objective of promoting a just and equal society.

According to Pinto (2015, 174) “in this way, a progressive neglect of the welfare models and their substitution for policies based on the promotion of human rights, a movement that has grown since 2006, with the approval by the United Nations’ General Assembly of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

On a national level, there is a broad and thorough theoretical framework through which, via public policies, the State intends to guarantee the rights established in the Portuguese Republic’s Constitution, with the goal of promoting a just and equal society.

It should be noted that the involvement of different agents, like the State, civil society organizations, the private sector and the community in general all promote an inclusive and participatory governing method.

In order to achieve a more inclusive society with equal opportunities, fomenting the real implementation of employment and social inclusion policies, it is necessary to raise awareness on the importance of the cooperation of all agents.

Nevertheless, and taking into account the official data of the Disability and Human Rights Observatory ⁴, it can be seen that despite the existing legislations and the combined

⁴ <http://oddh.icsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/>

measures to support corporations and entities of the public and social sectors, the employability of people with disabilities and incapacities is still a social problem, ignoring the persistence of barriers obstructing their social integration.

This is, therefore, an especially relevant problematic, given the vulnerability of this objective public and the difficulties towards their insertion in the labour market, a situation that has only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This work has the objective of displaying, within the topic of the labour inclusion of disabled and incapacitated people, the support measures that in Portugal are managed by the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), promoters of professional integration and its applicability in the insertion of people with disabilities in the work world, based on the analysis of the case carried out by a social economy organization (Resource Centre).

Given the importance of diving deep into the analysis of the legislation, the public policies and the support programs that exist in Portugal towards the inclusion of people with disabilities in the job market, the choice landed on a Portuguese case.

The option to study a specific Resource Centre, to the detriment of other cases, in the area of employability is integrated into the Resource Centre RUMO, which is the only Resource Centre in the Setúbal Peninsula, with the exception of APPACDM. It encompasses the area of Seixal, Almada, Montijo, Barreiro. RUMO Works with the Barreiro Employment Centre/Montijo Employment Centre, Almada Employment Centre, and Seixal Employment Centre.

The Resource Centre promotes programs and approaches that have the objective of supporting and promoting the employability of disadvantaged people. The alliances with employers, civil society organizations, and other relevant agents in the area of the employability of people with disabilities, such as the Barreiro/Moita Employability Net, should be mentioned.

As was mentioned by the People with Disabilities' Rights Committee: General Observation num. 8 (2022, 1) regarding the right of people with disabilities to work and be employed “the work experience in the open labour market can be promoted through internships, learning plans within the workplace, scholarships, grants, and financial incentives to corporations, like internships and other learning plans within the workplace. Besides being essential in order to develop the abilities of people with disabilities, work experience offers an opportunity to transform the conditions of employment and to build connections and understanding between employers”.

2. Methodology

This is a mixed methods study, considering the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative techniques and the consequent advantages of methodological triangulation (Woolley, 2008; Paranhos, et al, 2016).

With the objective of constructing a more solid investigation design, an integrated approach of data gathering techniques was chosen that allowed the interpretation of the available (documental review) and provoked (survey with interviews) information about the enforcement of support measures for the qualification and employment of disabled and incapacitated people in Portugal in the time period between 2017 and 2021.

Documental review and the semi-structured interviews were performed. The documental review focused on the consultation of available information on the topic the study is about, including the gathering of statistical data, of the IEFP (area of Professional Rehabilitation) and of the organization of the social economy, with the goal to identify and comprehend the demand and integration of this public-objective in the support measures.

The semi-structured interviews allow the obtention of more detailed information, as well as the exploration of individual perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were also directed at seven privileged informants, given the relevance of their knowledge and the functions they perform in the area of disability and employability in Portugal.

The selection of these key informants is because these individuals count with specialized knowledge, pertinent professional experience, and involvement in the area of study, being considered relevant for an integral and profound understanding of the topic in question.

The key informants have been selected according to specific criteria, that being, the capacity to offer valuable information given the knowledge they possess, and in this way of providing a more complete and contextualized vision of the topic.

The information collected, after the transcription of the recordings of the interviewees, was subjected to a content analysis (thematic categorical), in order to triangulate the approaches to the subject under analysis.

This work is a case study about a particular Portuguese territory (belonging to the District of Setúbal), the area of intervention of a social economy organization, whose practices to promote employability among people with disabilities or incapacities constitute the object of study of this article. In order to do so, data has been gathered on the people aimed at by these support measures for professional reinsertion executed in this Resource Centre.

This Portuguese case was chosen because we considered it relevant to identify the national public policies within the topic of the employability of disabled or incapacitated people; to describe the support measures promoted by the IEFP and their applicability on the integration of people with disabilities; the availability of the data, either those accessible through the IEFP's website or those gathered in the exploratory interviews.

The decision to study a specific Resource Centre – RUMO, instead of other cases or studies is because, in terms of employability, it is the only Resource Centre of the Setúbal Peninsula, with the exception of Associação Portuguesa de Pais e Amigos do Cidadão com Deficiência Mental (APPACDM, which is merely a Centre in Setúbal, meaning that RUMO is a Resource Centre in Seixal, Almada, Montijo, Barreiro, and they work with every Job Centre in those areas, these being the Barreiro/Montijo Job Centre, the Job Centre in Almada and the Job Centre in Seixal).

The specialization and knowledge of the institution's members should be mentioned, since it was their expertise what allowed us to obtain a profound perspective, based on everyday practices. The availability of RUMO's Administration to collaborate with us should also be noted.

3. Explanatory models of disability

In order to understand and explain disability and incapacity, several models and analytical perspectives have been put forth across time. The way in which it is viewed has immediate consequences in the lives of people.

The Movement for People with Disabilities, in Portugal, dates back to the first half of the 20th century and, as a result of this social movement, new social policies were created and scientific investigation on this area was promoted. It is in this context where Fontes (2016, 40) adds that “the way in which we look at disability is far from being irrelevant, the way in which we define the problems and solutions found is essential...”.

This social movement, originated in England, inspired the so-called Social Model for Disability, which “has as its objective to promote the emancipation of people with disabilities so they can critically understand their place in society” (França, 2013, 60). The sociologist Paul Hunt (1966) was a pioneer in this approach when he spoke about the social limitations that people with disabilities experience. The social character currently being attributed to this phenomenon leads to the idea that disability must be eradicated, and this social transformation refers to the fact that people with disabilities must take control of their lives and, at the same time, professionals and specialists must work to achieve the ideal of independence for these people. This conception of disability is opposed to another model, called the biomedical model (or medical model), which excludes psychological and social factors and includes only the biological factors in its approach to disability. Its origins are uncertain, and even though it supposedly adjusts to the interest of modern medicine on disability, its conceptual and ideological formalization is contemporary with the social model.

While the medical approach understands disability as an individual problem, the social model showcases a perspective focused on the organizational aspects of society. This new

approach draws from the premise that the obstacle for the participation of people with disabilities in society is not their disability, but the way in which society understands disabilities.

The social approach to disability has also been the object of criticism, for its excessive emphasis on the discrimination of people with disabilities and its more adequate application in situations in which the disability is less impairing.

As a response to the criticism received by the biomedical and social models of disability, a new model was created, namely the biopsychosocial or relational model. This model is supported by the new International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), which differs from the previous one⁵. This new classification of health conditions (WHO, 2002) also intends to incorporate the ideas of the social model.

In this framework, since 2006, with the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD | resolution A/RES/61/106), *assistentialism* and charity cease to be the directives of public policies, giving way to new policies promoting human rights, this convention was ratified by Portugal in 2009 and has as its main objective the protection and assurance of equal and full access to all human rights and fundamental freedoms to all people with disabilities, with the goal of promoting the regard for their dignity. It also points out the necessity to promote employment and employability, a factor that can be decisive to an increase in self-esteem, socialization, autonomy, and the emancipation of people with disabilities.

According to Veiga (2014), being placed in the labour market, the acquisition of a job and its continuity all contribute to eliminate and overcome the obstacles/barriers that people with intellectual disabilities face when trying to enter the job market.

According to the World Report on Disability⁶, which is also referenced by the International Labour Organization, more than a billion people in the world are estimated to live with a disability, which represents around 15% of the global population. Of these, around 80% are of working age, despite which it remains one of the population segments with the highest rates of unemployment (ILO)⁷, and as such is one of the most exposed to an insufficient social protection.

The Summit of the United Nations that took place in New York in September of 2015 approved the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the new 2030 Agenda, which will remain in place for 15 years (2015-2030). Aligned with the objectives of the International Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN), the 2030 Agenda is an international action plan, and, amongst the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, it places decent work for

⁵ The International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (1976) is the main document that sustains the concepts and Dynamic of the Medica Model

⁶ Published by the World Health Organization in 2011 with the title World Report on Disability

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/lisbon/temas/WCMS_650799/langpt/index.htm

everyone, as well as social justice, as the focus of the politics for a sustainable and inclusive growth and development. The integration to the job market allows for stability and economic independence.

Portugal adopts a disability/incapacity/inclusion model based on the social model, which considers that a disability is not an inherent condition problematic to the individual, but an interaction between the functional limitations and the environmental and social barriers.

The data of the Disability and Human Rights Observatory⁸ reveal that in Portugal between 2009 and 2018 the number of unemployed people with disabilities increased by a 41%, while the general population decreased a 38%. The same tendency has been observed in 2019 and later years, and this situation only worsened with the pandemic.

It is understood that access to employment is still unequal to people with disabilities.

The complexity of the issue at hand and bearing in mind the goal of building a more inclusive society, presupposes that the studies on disability, specifically in the field of employability, could be based on an action-investigation perspective, in which the knowledge of a topic can contribute to the identification of intervention strategies that ultimately lead to the different sectors of society acting together.

4. Public policies of employability support

Regarding labour inclusion, Portugal has implemented different measures and policies with the objective of promoting employability and the participation of people with disabilities in the job market.

Among the main baseline documents meant to fight the social exclusion and discrimination of this vulnerable group of people, promoting a more just society for everyone, regardless of whether they have a disability or incapacity, it is important to highlight the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The European Disability Strategy (2021-2030) and the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (ENIPD) (2021-2025), intend to promote at a European level a new outlook on disability to create a more inclusive society. The international legislation aims to ensure that to make human rights be observed and recognized in the daily lives of all men and women, with the aim of making the rights inherent to the dignity and dignity of all persons with disabilities a reality. The European and National Legislations share the same goal, and it is clear that the objectives that can be achieved with every new diploma, every new Strategy, intend to fight the discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities.

The reference standards, in the different coverage levels, emphasize the new approach to disability and, consequently, the framework of inclusion policies that they promote. A

⁸ <http://oddh.icsp.ulisboa.pt/index.php/pt/>

perspective that is supported by the experts interviewed in the course of this investigation, and which is reflected below on the political orientations that are intended to be developed in Portugal.

“(…) the job we try to do internally in the matter of policies, legislation and then the practice and practical applicability of these same policies, is always inspired and framed in those international standards regarding matters of promotion and protection of people with disabilities, especially, as it should be, regarding what was established in the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.” (Interview 3)

Nonetheless, as stated by Martins et al. (2016), the political directives with both national and international scopes, transposed to Portugal, claim to promote an inclusive society, but the recognition of the rights of people with disabilities is far from translating into a real change.

Table 1. Reference texts on Disability

International	European	National
Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (UN) – Resolution approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 09/12/75 It calls for action on a national and international level to make sure that it is utilized as the common base and reference framework for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities, so that these people can develop their abilities performing activities that are as diverse as feasible, as well as with the objective of promoting their integration to normal life as much as possible.	European Disability Strategy (2021-2030) This document aims to guide the action of the Member States and Institutions of the European Union, in order to promote the defence of democracy and human rights of persons with disabilities in Europe and to advance in all areas of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons. This new strategy, which succeeds the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, defines three priority fields of action: - EU rights - Independent and autonomous life - No discrimination and equal opportunities. This strategy's main goal is to guarantee that all people with disabilities in Europe can enjoy their rights, participate in society and the economy with equal conditions to other	The National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with Disabilities (ENIPD) (2021-2025) The ENIPD 2021-2025 has as its strategic axes 8 general and specific objectives: - Citizenship, equality and no discrimination, the promotion of an inclusive environment, education and qualification. - Work, employment and professional training. - Promoting autonomy and an independent life. - Measures, services and social support. - Culture, sports, tourism and leisure. - Knowledge, investigation, innovation and development. ENIPD 2021-2025, looking to strengthen the commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities and to building a society that is more just,

	people, can decide where, how and with whom they want to live, move freely within the EU regardless of their support needs, and stop being discriminated.	supportive and that respects diversity and considers it a factor of wealth and progress, in order to achieve the previously identified axes, establishes general and specific objectives, measures, actions, goals, deadlines and the entities that are responsible and involved in this.
International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO) The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) is a model on the functioning and disability (WHO, 2001), which went from a classification of “consequences of the illness” (1980’s version) to a classification of “components of health”. It integrates the disability models, both the medical and the social ones, and recognizes the environmental factors as much as the health factors. The ICF represents a change in paradigm, given that the Social Model on Disability promotes the emergence of new inclusion policies.	The European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 In March 2021, the European Commission adopted the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, which has an objective to improve the life of people with disabilities in Europe and in the whole world. The Strategy is based on the previous European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which paved the way for a Europe without barriers in which people with disabilities can enjoy their rights and fully participate in society and the economy. Ensure the full participation of people with disabilities in society, with equal conditions, makes the principles of the European Union’s Treatise which establish equality and no discrimination, central axes of the adopted policies.	

Source: own elaboration

a) Professional Rehabilitation

In Portugal we have seen a reinforcement of the public policies, specifically the support measures adopted by the IEFP. And in the area of professional rehabilitation there is an

integrated set of measures destined to support the qualification and employment of people with disabilities, who have difficulties to access, maintain and progress in the area of employment.

Portugal was one of the first countries to sign the 159 Convention on “Rehabilitation” by the International Labour Organization (ILO) implemented by the International Labour Conference on June 20, 1983 (approved for its ratification in the 63/98 Resolution of December 2 of the Republic’s Assembly). Through the Law Decree 290/2009 of October 12, the Programme for the Employment and Support of People with Disabilities, which defines the regime of technical and financial support for the development of employment and support policies to the qualification of these beneficiaries, which includes the following measures: a) Qualification Support; b) Support for the Integration, Maintenance and Reinsertion into the labour market; c) Employment Support; d) Merit award.

With the amendments established in the Decree n. 8376-B/2015 of July 30, the Entity Brand Inclusive Employer is created, with the goal of sensitising society in general on the importance of the employability of people with disabilities. This measure came to replace the merit award.

The specificity of each of these measures will be described in the following paragraph (according to the information located in <http://iefp.pt/reabilitação-profissional>).

The measure of *Qualification Support* measure includes actions regarding initial and continued professional training for people with disabilities, promoted by specialised entities, whose goal is the integration, permanence, and progression within the labour market.

The second measure corresponds to the *Support for the Integration, Permanence and Reinsertion within the Labour Market*, whose objective is to facilitate the integration and permanence of disabled and incapacitated people within the labour market. These supports integrate the following modalities: information, evaluation and orientation for qualification and employment, placement support, monitoring after the placement and adaptability of the working station, and the elimination of architectonic barriers.

On the other hand, the measure of *Employment Support* has as its main objective to enable beneficiaries in terms of relational, personal and professional skills to facilitate the transition of people with disabilities and incapacities to the normal work regime.:

Insertion Practices that correspond to activities performed in a labour context by disabled and incapacitated people, with the aim of evaluating the conditions for exercising a professional activity, developing their personal and professional competences, improving them, in order to promote and facilitate their professional insertion and better their performance. The practice periods have a duration of 12 non-renewable months.

Employment-Insertion Contracts: with the aim of carrying out socially necessary jobs that satisfy social or collective needs of a temporal nature, in the area of projects promoted by public or private collective non-profit entities for a period of no more than 12 months.

Protected Employment: it consists of a professional activity developed by disabled or incapacitated people, with reduced labour capabilities, in productive structures created specifically for this purpose, called Protected Employment Centres.

Employment supported by the Open Market: measure in which the worker signs a job contract with the employer, minding the rights observed by the Labour Code. Once evaluated the labour capability of the person, the existent incapacity measured in relation to another worker in the same position is economically compensated by the IEFP.

Inclusive Employer Entity Brand: its objective is to promote the recognition and public distinction of the open and inclusive management practices developed by the employers, related to disabled and incapacitated people. This recognition is granted every 2 years, in odd years, and is directed at those employers who contribute to the deployment of an inclusive labour market and that stand out for referential practices in the following domains: i) recruitment, development and progression; ii) maintenance and recovery; iii) accessibilities; iv) service and community outreach.

In order to create an inclusive environment that allows the exercise of citizenship, it is essential that the State, the private sector and the sector of social and charitable economy develop adequate public policies, services and proximity care. The support measures described above are framed according to the spirit of the law and translate the practices developed in the context of this study.

It is important to note the necessity of a continuous work to ensure the full participation and equal opportunities in the labour market for all.

In this way, once the main strategic and legal frames have been exposed, we go on to describe the empirical context and practices of labour inclusion for disabled and incapacitated people.

5. Labour inclusion of people with disabilities and incapacities: contexts and practices

5.1 – Contexts

The Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP) is the national public service for employment whose mission consists of promoting the creation and quality of employment and fighting against unemployment through the enforcement of active employment policies, including professional training.

5.1.1 Unemployment registered in the IEFP

For Continental Portugal, in relation to the diverse types of disability, and during the relevant time period, a greater increment of unemployment can be observed in intellectual

disabilities; in the general, psychological, sensorial and other functions, the greatest increment was produced in relation to disabilities regarding other organs in general.

As for the reduction of unemployment, it is most significant in the case of auditory, visual and linguistic impairments.

Table 1. Unemployment registered, in the IEFP by disabled and incapacitated users in Continental Portugal and the District of Setúbal

	Au dito ry disa bilit ies	Disabili ties of the general, sensoria l and other functio ns	Li n g ui sti c di sa bilit ies	Disa biliti es in other orga ns	Aest hetic impe rfecti ons	In te lle ct u al disa bilit ies	Mus culos kelet al disab ilities	Psyc holo gical disab ilities	Visu al disab ilities	T ot al
Continental Portugal										
2017	1219	2091	245	685	85	3565	2667	1511	843	12911
2018	1014	2175	200	681	71	3426	2287	1507	774	12135
2019	920	2015	170	814	69	3349	2388	1540	762	12027
2020	1014	2201	168	1047	80	3738	2680	1709	783	13420
2021	968	2184	176	1092	82	3801	2750	1725	805	13583
VA (2017 to 2021)	-251	+93	-69	+407	-3	+236	+83	+214	-38	+672
District of Setúbal										
2017	91	277	17	64	12	283	210	235	61	1250
2018	85	319	15	81	4	255	193	259	60	1271
2019	76	306	16	100	7	219	213	202	78	1217
2020	87	319	15	123	11	239	234	200	65	1293
2021	87	306	13	125	10	225	250	241	68	1325
VA (2017 to 2021)	-4	+29	-4	+61	-2	-58	+40	+6	+7	+75

Source: based on the data provided by the IEFP

As far as the District of Setúbal is concerned, a slight decrease in unemployment can be observed in relation to auditory, linguistic, and aesthetic impairments. There have been no significant changes regarding unemployment within these categories in 2020 and 2021. On the

other hand, there has been an increase in unemployment for disabilities in other organs, and in intellectual, musculoskeletal, sensorial and other disabilities. The tendency that can be observed in the District of Setúbal follows the one registered in the continent, in which the unemployment registered in the IEFP increased from 2017 to 2021, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Registered unemployment in the IEFP by disabled and incapacitated users according to age group – Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal.

Age group	Continental Portugal						Age group	District of Setúbal					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
<25 years old	1701	1548	1430	2679	2576	+875	< 25 years old	182	159	117	239	251	+69
25 - 34 years old	2708	2479	2443	1540	1461	-1247	25 - 34 years old	265	249	217	139	131	-134
35 - 54 years old	5961	5454	5461	6003	6010	+49	35 - 54 years old	594	601	586	589	597	+3
>55 years old	2541	2654	2693	3198	3536	+995	>55 years old	209	262	297	326	346	+37
Total	12911	12135	12027	13420	13583	+672	Total	1250	1271	1217	1293	1325	+75

Source: based on data submitted by the IEFP

This increase took place in the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, contrary to the tendency observed until then. The same behaviour occurs in the District of Setúbal. This tendency gets confirmed in the Report “People with Disabilities in Portugal- Human Rights Indicators 2020”, released by the Observatory on Disability and Human Rights.

At first glance it shows a decrease of unemployment in almost every age group, until 2019, except in the age group that includes users that are 55 years old or older. In relation to the totals of these users, it is observed that, in the last two years, 2020 and 2021, there is an increase in the unemployment rate among these users. The age group with the highest prevalence of unemployment is that of users between 35 and 54 years of age. This observation maintains the trend, with an increase in the pandemic years, 2020 and 2021.

At the level of the District of Setúbal, in its users with disabilities, in the time interval also contained between the years 2017 to 2021, inclusive, in a first evaluation there is evidence of a reduction of unemployment in the age group 25-34 years, maintaining the trend even in pandemic years.

Data shows that the unemployment among people with disabilities increased during the years of the pandemic, in Continental Portugal as well as the District of Setúbal, with the exception of the age group composed of people between 25 and 34 years old, where it decreased both in Portugal and Setúbal.

Table 3. Unemployment registered in the IIEP by disabled and incapacitated users according to educational group Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal

Group Clasificacións	Continental Portugal						Group Clasifications	District of Setúbal					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
< 1st cycle elementary education	1238	1228	1162	1327	1361	+123	< 1st cycle elementary education	110	101	82	93	84	-26
1st cycle Elementary education	2306	2090	1981	2137	2067	-239	1st cycle Elementary education	192	185	173	175	178	-14
2nd cycle Elementary education	2430	2190	2137	2288	2289	-141	2nd cycle Elementary education	250	252	234	227	238	-12
3rd cycle Elementary education	3454	3196	3123	3592	3418	-36	3rd cycle Elementary education	359	345	334	347	330	-29
Secondary	2701	2731	2881	3188	3486	+785	Secondary	275	330	332	367	395	+120
Higher	782	700	743	888	962	+180	Higher	64	58	62	84	100	+36
Total	12911	12135	12027	13420	13583	+672	Total	1250	1271	1217	1293	1325	+75

Source: based on data provided by the IIEP

In Continental Portugal, contrary to the increase registered up to secondary education level, unemployment rates at higher education level are substantially lower. This can be explained by considering the different obstacles and limitations that disabled and incapacitated students that pursue a higher education face daily, as well as the fact that mandatory education corresponds to up to 12th grade. In 2017, the number of registered unemployed with a higher education degree was 782, with a downward trend until 2019. In 2020 and 2021, pandemic years, the trend is reversed, with a total of 962 unemployed users in 2021.

In general, until 2019 there is a decrease in unemployment at all educational levels, with the exception of the group including users with secondary education and users with tertiary education, which shows an increase in unemployment from 2020 onwards. Similarly to the previous observations, the increase in unemployment registered occurs in the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, as opposed to the tendency up to 2019. It can be observed that the

tendency in the District of Setúbal for secondary and tertiary education is the same as in continental Portugal.

Table 4. Unemployment registered in the IEFP by users with disabilities and incapacities according to gender - Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal

Gender	Continental Portugal						Gender	District of Setúbal					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
Men	7261	6570	6395	7041	6999	- 262	Men	677	672	618	672	670	- 7
Women	5650	5565	5632	6379	6584	+ 934	Women	573	599	599	621	655	+ 82
Total	12911	12135	12027	13420	13583	+ 672	Total	1250	1271	1217	1293	1325	+ 75

Source: based on data provided by the IEFP

In continental Portugal, male unemployment decreases until 2019. In 2020, the year of the pandemic, there is an increase that reverses the tendency in 2021.

The highest increase was recorded for women, and at a much higher rate compared to men. The data presented in the Report of the Observatory on Disability and Human Rights 2021, p. 8, also says that “the effects of the pandemic crisis were more severe towards the employability of people with disabilities than towards the general population and, within this group, towards disabled women.”

At District level, as on the continent, the data regarding the male gender shows a decrease in unemployment until 2019. In 2020 there is an increase, tendency that gets slightly reversed in 2021. The data regarding the female gender maintain the tendency observed for Continental Portugal, that is, that of increase. From reading the tables presented, it can be concluded that there has been an increase in the number of unemployed persons registered with the IEFP in Continental Portugal, as well as in the District of Setúbal, with a more significant increase in the pandemic years, which affected women more than men.

5.1.2 Placements made through the services of the IEFPE

In Continental Portugal, among the different categories of disabilities, an increase can be seen in the employment of disabilities of other organs as well as musculoskeletal disabilities.

Regarding users with linguistic and auditory disabilities, data shows a decrease in the new placements. It can also be observed that in the year of the pandemic, 2020, there was a decrease in the unemployment registered within certain kinds of disabilities, with a rise in 2021, in general.

Regarding the new employments registered by the IEFP, in comparison to 2019, the general tendency is the decrease in new employments, registering an increase in 2021.

Table 5. Placements registered in the IEFP by disabled and incapacitated users according to type of disability Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal

	Auditory disabilities	Disabilities of the general, sensorial and other functions	Linguistic disabilities	Disabilities in other organs	Aesthetic imperfections	Intellectual disabilities	Musculoskeletal disabilities	Psychological disabilities	Visual disabilities	Total
Continental Portugal										
2017	144	251	42	70	13	443	248	199	74	1484
2018	146	253	37	93	9	518	223	219	66	1564
2019	112	263	33	101	10	557	205	213	83	1577
2020	78	162	27	59	10	341	164	138	52	1031
2021	128	251	24	94	14	437	269	192	77	1486
RV (2017 to 2021)	-16	0	-18	24	1	-6	21	-7	3	-2
District of Setúbal										
2017	10	17	2	5	1	22	18	17	2	94
2018	3	18	4	1	-	16	9	12	2	65
2019	5	22	2	7	2	13	12	9	2	74
2020	4	6	2	5	-	8	11	8	2	46
2021	4	17	-	7	-	12	17	16	6	79
RV (2017 to 2021)	-6	0		2		-10	-1	-1	4	15

Source: based on data provided by the IEFP

Table 6. Placements registered in the IEF, according to age, by disabled users
Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal

Age group	Continental Portugal						Age group	District of Setúbal					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
< 25 years old	206	224	217	312	403	197	< 25 years old	17	8	8	8	21	4
25 – 34 years old	479	509	517	156	195	-284	25 – 34 years old	31	17	17	17	10	-21
35 - 54 years old	704	734	728	483	755	51	35 - 54 years old	38	35	35	35	37	3
>55 years old	95	97	115	80	133	-38	>55 years old	8	5	5	5	11	3
Total	1484	1564	1577	1031	1486	2	Total	94	65	65	65	79	-15

Source: based on data provided by the IEF

Between the years 2017 and 2021, at first glance it can be observed that in Continental Portugal there has been an increase in new employments (+197), in the age groups of people that are <25 years old and over 51, and in the age groups between 35 and 54 years old. From 2020 onwards there is a significant decrease of new employments (-284), in the age groups between 25 and 34, under 38 and in the group of 55 years old and above. In 2021 there is an increase in the new placements in Continental Portugal in all the groups. In the District of Setúbal there can be seen a slight increase in new employments in the groups composed by people that are <25 years old and +55 years old.

Table 7. New employments registered in the IEF by disabled users, according to qualification group
Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal

Grade group	Continental Portugal						District of Setúbal						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)	Grade group	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)

< 1st cycle elementary education	68	65	62	41	44	-24	< 1st cycle elementary education	5	4	-	1	-	
1st cycle Elementary education	203	193	165	103	136	-67	1st cycle Elementary education	9	7	5	3	6	-3
2nd cycle Elementary education	310	304	319	195	257	-53	2nd cycle Elementary education	15	8	15	9	9	-6
3rd cycle Elementary education	513	586	537	329	478	-35	3rd cycle Elementary education	29	29	18	10	23	-6
Secondary	331	345	411	304	477	146	Secondary	33	13	31	20	34	1
Higher	59	71	83	59	94	35	Higher	3	4	5	3	7	4
Total	1484	1564	1577	1031	1486	2	Total	94	65	74	46	79	-15

Source: based on data provided by the IEFPP

In table 7, regarding Continental Portugal, it can be noted that, in the year 2020, year of the pandemic, there was a decrease in the employments in all categories, while in 2021 there was an increase. The group that includes users with qualifications in secondary and higher education registered the greater increase, while the rest of the groups observed a decrease in the employment of disabled and incapacitated people.

According to Brazão (2018, p.2) “if a scarce educational formation, low academic grades or difficulties and disadvantages in relation to other individuals can be observed, it is important to guarantee professional training opportunities for these people so that they can have access to employment like any other person”. It seems that educational qualifications are a relevant factor for the employability of disabled and incapacitated people.

Regarding the District of Setúbal, in relation to registered users with disabilities and incapacities, a decrease in the total number of job placements can be seen (-15). This same tendency can be observed in Continental Portugal since in 2020, year of the pandemic, there was a decrease in the number of placements in all categories, observing an increase in all categories in the year 2021. A slight increase in the group composed by people with secondary education can be seen. The same as with the group composed of users with a higher education.

Table 8. Job placements registered in the IEFPP by disabled and incapacitated users according to gender Continental Portugal and District of Setúbal

Gender	Continental Portugal						Gender	District of Setúbal					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)

Men	913	911	881	577	748	-165	Men	58	26	40	27	40	-18
Women	571	653	696	454	738	167	Women	36	39	34	19	39	3
Total	1484	1564	1577	1031	1486	+2	Total:	94	65	74	46	79	-15

Source: based on data provided by the IEFPP

In Portugal, there has been a decrease year after year in new employments for men. As for women, there has been an increase in the number of placements, except for the year 2020, when there was a decrease in new employments. In 2020, year of the pandemic, there can be seen a greater decrease in employments regarding both disabled men and women.

The pandemic notwithstanding, in 2021 there was a partial increase in new employments. As for the District of Setúbal, the tendency is the same as in Continental Portugal, since the data shows that within the male gender there was a decrease in employment year after year, especially during the pandemic. Regarding the female gender, an increase in the number of employments can be observed, with the exception of 2020, when there was a decrease, but in 2021 there was an increase in the number of job placements of disabled users.

5.2 The practices of Social Economy Organizations

5.2.1 The Portuguese Federation of Professional Training and Employment (FORMEM)

The Portuguese Federation for Professional Training and Employment (FORMEM) is a non-governmental organization for people with disabilities, registered in the National Institute for Rehabilitation, that performs an important role in the implementation of the employability of disabled and incapacitated people through adopting employment measures. It has as its mission the socio-professional inclusion of people with disabilities, as can be seen in the information found in <https://www.formem.org.pt>

The actions taken by this institution are distributed around 5 action axes: influencing public policies, training organizations, the production and dissemination of knowledge, invigorating civil society, autonomy and sustainability.

Created in 1991, FORMEM currently represents around 50 private entities, from North to South Portugal, which develops professional training and employment opportunities for disabled and incapacitated people.

It is made up of organizations that work in the areas of professional training and the employment of disabled and incapacitated people and has as its objectives: promoting a greater intervention of public and private organisms responsible for the actions of professional formation and employment of disabled and incapacitated people, developing the training of organizations and technicians who support the professional qualification and socio-professional

inclusion of disabled and incapacitated people and promote the politics and practices of socio-professional inclusion.

FORMEM has developed a permanent reflection regarding the following topics in the area of disability, working in projects with the Academy, with the goal of spreading scientific knowledge: Professional Training, Employment, Professional Evaluation and Orientation, Organizational Culture, Quality Management, Life Quality.

Together with its associates it develops activities in the area of: Updated information, the promotion of the work performed, the formation in diverse areas, the organization of Working Days, national and international exchanges, annual encounters of people with disabilities.

Among the diverse information available in their webpage⁹ they claim that “FORMEM’s mission will only be complete when any person, with any kind of disability, can find close to their living area the resources necessary to have a good quality of life and participate in a community where their “gifts” are valued and their disadvantages don’t impact their lifestyle, and where the organizations specialized in the continued search for excellence are supported.

RUMO is one of FOREM’s associates, that in Portugal develops actions of professional training and promotes the hiring of disabled and incapacitated people. Likewise, it promotes the formation of its technicians, so that this constant improvement becomes a reality.

As is pointed out by the interviewee, to find the right job for each person is incredibly important:

“It was the perfect job for that person. It is what management uses as Job Matching. Job Post Design, there are different nomenclatures. RUMO does a lot of work with support. It has a lot of experience in this area as well” (Interview 7)

5.2.2 Case study of an Organization of Social Economy RUMO

RUMO is a non-profit cooperative that, since 1981, has social solidarity as its main objective, together with the development of support activities in different areas of intervention for disadvantaged people, focused on the defense of individual rights, specifically in the framework of the promotion of the right to equal opportunities and inclusive education, work and community.

Consulting the corresponding website¹⁰ it is possible to get to know their mission, vision, values and the methodology they employ.

This organization’s mission is the inclusion of disadvantaged people in education, work and community, from the perspective of the Movement of Employment Support. It considers that the social inclusion of disadvantaged people and the exercise of citizenship entail the

⁹ <https://www.formem.org.pt/pt/>

¹⁰ <https://www.rumo.org.pt/>

participation in every level, in a perspective of fraternal and non-discriminatory self-determination.

RUMO has as its main objective the promotion of the right to equal opportunities, and the inclusion in the areas of education, work and community.

“The fact of establishing and creating nets of employment in communities where we manage to incorporate and gather many partners, whether it be at an institutional, municipal level, or at the level of local authorities, private or public companies, the fact that we can gather all these partners and be the mediators that manage their relationships, allow us to drive our mission to a successful conclusion.” (Interview 8)

Through their daily practices, they develop actions directed towards empowerment and self-determination, which allows a greater autonomy for disabled and incapacitated people, promoting a greater employability, with the consequent greater quality of life for them, their families and society in general.

“Essentially, our intervention entails the use of the model of supported employment. ‘Supported employment’ has a premise that values here objectively there has to be some work at the level of labour matching working with the potential and capabilities of the person, as well as their weaknesses, as well as understanding what the potential and capabilities of the companies are and somehow finding a company profile adequate for the person in front of us.” (Interview 8)

RUMO develops its activity through net-working, believing that this way, the establishment and consolidation of associations is the more effective source of social, economic and cultural developments in a community.

“In this first approach, in this first triage with the Rehabilitation Technician and with the Technician of the Resource Centre, the person is met with a solution, the most adequate solution for them. Regarding employability, this is integrated in the RUMO Resource Centre, which is the only Resource Centre in the Setúbal Peninsula, with the exception of APPACDM, which is merely a Resource Centre in Setúbal, meaning, we are the Resource Centre Seixal. Almada, Montijo, Barreiro, all this area here is ours, and we work with all the Employment Centres in this area, which is to say, the Employment Centre Barreiro/Montijo, the Employment Centre in Almada and The Employment Centre in Seixal”. (Interview 8)

Regarding the methodology, it bases its intervention in the principles and good practices of the international movement of Supported Employment.

This entails the individualized monitoring of the disabled and incapacitated people, the promotion to the access to the competitive labour market, assuming all people have their place in society and the right as citizens to access a profession freely chosen, in pursuit of autonomy and self-determination.

In this way, the methodology is based on the following: *Empowerment* – self-determination; *Job-matching*, a good job-matching is a process that facilitates finding the adequate person for the adequate position, fighting against discrimination, and fomenting the

insertion based on the skills, universality – all people must have the opportunity to be integrated in the job market.

Accredited for the Services of Employment of Almada, Barreiro, Montijo and Seixal, attending the resident recipients of the municipalities belonging to these services (Almada, Seixal, Sesimbra, Barreiro, Moita, Montijo and Alcochete).

“If there is a derivation to the area of Rehabilitation, the area of Employment, it should be derived to the person in our Resource Centre and there it starts its route, in what is called socio-professional integration, that is, to first get close to the person and the Technicians, then to define a plan of intervention and socio-occupational integration and then to bring up the topic of support towards their hiring, and if they get the job contract, there is also a post-hiring monitoring...” (Interview 8)

Occasionally they intervene as well in specific actions of the Employment Service of Setúbal, specifically at the level of IAOQE interventions (Evaluations of the Work Capacity) and of post-hiring monitoring.

These actions are directed towards disabled and incapacitated people subscribed to the Employment Offices and referred by these to the Resource Centre.

RUMO is relevant as a specific study and as good practice because of its integrated focus, focus on the development of capabilities, alliances and collaboration, as well as the continuous evaluation and monitoring. These elements contribute to the promotion of employability and inclusion of disabled and incapacitated people, turning RUMO into a significant example of good practices.

The good practices developed are spread through workshops, Transnational Erasmus+ projects, as well as the development of certified formation processes. It should also be noted the openness of the Management department, which allows easy access to data and information.

Therefore, it is considered that the selection of Portugal, as well as the Resource Centre in particular, are relevant given their contributions to the understanding of the problem at hand, which is the employability of people with disabilities.

Information, evaluation and orientation for qualification and employment

Table 9. Disabled and incapacitated users covered by RUMO’s activity. Information, Evaluation and Orientation for Qualification and Employment (IAOQE), according to gender

Gender	Covered by the IAOQE					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)

Man	321	287	160	110	160	-161
Woman	252	234	156	78	109	-143
Total	573	521	316	188	269	-304

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

In 2017, 573 interns benefited from the Action of Information, Evaluation and Orientation for Qualification and Employment (IAOQE), of which 321 were men and 252 women. In 2021 a significant decrease can be observed, 161 men and 143 women less. This decrease was produced in the expanse of 5 years, observing a greater increase in 2020.

Table 10. Users with disabilities and incapacities covered by RUMO's action, Information, Evaluation and Orientation for Qualification and Employment (IAOQE), according to age.

Age group		Covered by the IAOQE					
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
15-19		88	97	37	29	57	-31
20-24		106	70	36	22	31	-75
25-44		278	230	141	73	104	-174
45-49		57	51	38	24	33	-24
50-54		22	28	27	16	23	+1
55-64		22	44	37	24	19	-3
>64		0	1	0	0	2	+2
Total		573	521	316	188	269	- 304

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

Year after year a decrease in almost every age group has been registered, except for the groups of people between 50 and 54 years of age and over 64, which have seen a slight increase. Regarding the age groups, we can see that the one between 25 and 44, even though it registered a greater decrease year after year, had a greater number of students through the IAOQE.

Table 11. Users with disabilities and incapacities covered by RUMO's action, Information, Evaluation and Orientation for the Qualification and Employment (IAOQE), according to qualification.

Qualifications of the group	Covered by the IAOQE					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV - 2017 to 2021
<4	33	16	16	13	9	-24
1º cycle	64	93	33	24	21	-43

2° cycle	126	128	51	28	43	-83
3° cycle	235	176	108	62	110	-125
Secondary	98	86	83	50	69	-29
Undergraduate degree	15	18	24	9	14	-1
Master's and doctorates	2	4	1	2	3	1
Total	573	521	316	188	269	-304

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

Between 2017 and 2021 there was a notable decrease in the number of users covered by this action (-304), especially in 2020 and 2021, pandemic years. If in 2017 the users amount to 573, the total decreases significantly in 2021, up to 269 users.

The group of users with 3rd cycle studies shows the greater decrease, followed by the group of users with 2nd cycle studies. In the area of IAQQE and in this phase, the disabled and incapacitated people have the option of accessing different products that allow them to mitigate the limitations of activity, as well as the determination of the work capacity and also the specialized orientation of technicians qualified for it.

Later they can integrate support actions for their hiring, that will be referenced later, in companies, municipalities, etc., where they get experience in a labour context, with the goal of promoting the employability of the person. On the field, it is important to know whether the competences necessary for the realization of a particular task have been achieved. And about relational competences, do they need to be reinforced? How was their integration? Several factors are decisive for the success of their integration and their tutor in the job posting is fundamental during the whole process.

Table 12. Disabled and incapacitated users covered by RUMO's action, Information, Evaluation and Orientation for Qualification and Employment (IAQQE), according to gender

Gender	Covered					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
Man	144	151	170	121	129	-15
Woman	121	139	192	151	137	+16
Total	265	290	192	272	266	+1

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

These actions have as their main objective to promote the employability of people with disabilities, so RUMO expects and wants there to be integration, preferably through the subscription of a work contract, or through measures of supported employment in the open market or in integration internships.

The variation between each year registered, as seen through the end extremes of this time interval, that is, the data of 2017 and 2021, shows a discreet decrease for men and an increase for women. It is also possible to see that the year 2020, year of the pandemic, a significant decrease can be registered regarding the number of users, for men as well as for women. Apparently, the context of the pandemic had a negative toll on these postings.

Table 13. Disabled and incapacitated users covered by RUMO's activity, Hiring Support, according to age

Age group	Hiring support					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV - 2017 to 2021
15-19	1	6	5	2	4	-3
20-24	32	45	42	26	43	+11
25-44	168	166	183	134	130	-38
45-49	28	36	46	45	34	+6
50-54	22	20	37	25	23	+1
55-64	12	16	48	39	31	+19
>64	2	1	1	1	1	-1
Total	265	290	362	272	266	-1

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

It can be seen that there has been an increase in the colocations from 2017 to 2019, and from 2020 onwards there has been a decrease in hirings in general, integrated in a labour context, +19 candidates.

As for the age group composed of 55 to 64-year-olds, there has been an increase that can be explained by the fact that the concept of disability has changed with time and, nowadays, people with oncological or chronic illnesses are considered disabled. We can conclude that in this age group people get diagnosed with illnesses that are incompatible with the professions they used to perform, and they are redirected to the IEFP for their professional rezoning.

Speaking of the decrease in the age group of people from 25 to 44 years old, we put forward some hypotheses to explain it: have they received a greater formation? Is this also the group that manages to integrate itself the best within the organizations? It should be mentioned

that after a year of benefiting from Hiring Support, if they are not integrated, they can be rezoned again, which can happen more than once.

Table 14. Disabled and incapacitated users covered by RUMO's action, Information, Evaluation and Orientation for Qualification and Employment (IAOQE), according to group qualification.

Group qualifications	Hiring support					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV (2017 to 2021)
<4	18	13	18	14	8	-10
1 st cycle	29	22	32	26	26	-3
2 nd cycle	37	37	45	36	31	-6
3 rd cycle	110	126	138	90	101	-9
Secondary	56	74	104	85	77	+21
Undergraduate degree	14	18	24	20	22	+8
Master's and doctorates	1	0	1	1	1	0
Total	265	290	362	272	266	-1

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

Generally speaking, the number of users covered by the Hiring Support Action decreases, and a variation of -1 can be observed between 2017 and 2021. From 2017 to 2019, the tendency is to increase, but in 2020, pandemic year, there was an inversion of this tendency.

Table 15. Monitoring after the hiring, Measure of active employment

Gender	Covered by the Measures of active employment					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV - 2017 to 2021
Man	59	151	170	121	129	+ 70
Woman	60	139	192	151	137	+ 77
Total	119	290	362	272	266	+ 147

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

The data regarding the post-hiring monitoring, this action, shows the success of the methodology employed in the action of colocation support, since the transition is produced through the integration of the candidate in the area of the active employment measures (Contract of Employment-Insertion, insertion or contract practices in the area of the measure of supported employment with disabilities.)

The post-hiring accompanying gives the person the specialized support of technicians, in case there is anything that requires their intervention, as well as to reassure the recipient

entity, since if it was ever necessary, they would count with the quick intervention of an expert in the subject, that could solve any problem that may arise.

Table 16. Monitoring after the hiring, Work Contract

Post-hiring Monitoring						
Gender	Covered by a work contract					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	RV - 2017 a 2021
Man	72	97	167	151	130	58
Woman	52	66	120	118	110	58
Total	124	163	287	269	240	116

Source: based on data provided by RUMO

The success of the Hiring Support action is clear from the transition that ends with the integration of the candidate in a work contract. In 2017, 72 men and 52 women integrated in a work contract were the subject of monitoring after their hiring, and the tendency continues to increase up until 2019.

The monitoring that follows the hiring, done by the RUMO technician, is one of the factors of success, since it allows for the fast resolution of any situation that may arise and that requires an adequate intervention.

“This is the main engine that drives people to achieve a certain success in their socio-professional integration, which is why we respect the motto ‘a life project for each person’, because we provide this for each person individually, and each person is different, they all have different characteristics and therefore, getting to know them individually, somehow we manage to achieve this job-matching in the most adequate manner and, to some extent, we empower people to their best potential, so that we can answer to the needs of the companies”. (Interview 8)

In this same line, Valmorisco (2016) argues that “these results are made possible thanks to the union of several elements: sustainable financing, work methodology, a strong political leadership, working with the company’s fabric (introducing companies to professional profiles based on an accurate analysis of competences), networking, an intervention deadline decided by the person and the composition of the multiprofessional teams, among other factors.”

In relation to the politics of labour inclusion, considering the synergies between company sectors, public and social, can be crucial for the promotion of the labour inclusion of people with disabilities.

It is important to address the barriers that forbid the participation and to demystify the stereotypes and preconceptions associated to people with disabilities, so we show some

proposals that could contribute to the change of mentalities, such as cinema cycles, followed by debates on the subject, for the sensitization of the potential employers and of society in general.

6. Conclusions

People with disabilities and incapacities have been discriminated against in the access to the labour market and the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the negative impact on this community, increasing the unemployment of this sector of society, that is already vulnerable in itself.

Through the different studies developed and the official statistical data, it can be observed that, although there is a legislation that pursues the equality in the labour market and the support measures and incentives for the employers, according to the statistical data, the access to employment is still unequal for people with disabilities. The data shows that in pandemic years, the unemployment of disabled and incapacitated people increased in Continental Portugal, and the District of Setúbal follows the same tendency as Continental Portugal.

The organizations of social economy develop actions focused on the capacitation of people with disabilities through professional training and hiring support that, according to data are greatly important for the integration of people with disabilities in the labour market and their resulting emancipation.

Based on the acquired information, the factors that measure the success of the actions developed by RUMO are: to give visibility and look at the diversity of people - The social model of disability/The model of supported employment; a direct and articulated contract with the corporate network, which promotes the greatest success in professional training and in the employment of people with disabilities, a continued affirmation of rights, the awareness and sensitization of society as a whole, demanding from the interlocutors and people who make the decisions an effective capacity of self-actualization in response to the needs of people with disabilities.

The change in paradigm and in the existing legislation have contributed to disabled and incapacitated people being aware of their rights and to their intention to exercise them with equality, so that this fact has promoted the appearance of changes in mentality, and it has been observed that people with disabilities seek the IEFP, conscious of their rights, in order to better their quality of life through their work.

These measures and policies have been implemented to promote the labour inclusion of people with disabilities in Portugal. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there are still challenges that need a constant work in order to guarantee the full participation and equal opportunities in the labour market for everyone.

As we have pointed out, this research is based on the Social Model of Disability and Human Rights, which promotes the emancipation of people with disabilities and a more sustainable and integrating society in which everyone has a place and *“no one is left behind”*.

In this way, the Social Model of Disability proposes a critical approximation to the traditional conceptions of disability, highlighting the importance of eliminating the barriers that forbid their effective participation in society.

For these reasons it is important to keep implementing policies and practices that guarantee the promotion of an inclusive organizational culture that values diversity, in accordance with the National Strategy for the Inclusion of People with disabilities 2021-2025: “the inclusion of people with disabilities is a strategic objective for the appreciation of all citizens. Only a society that includes all people can develop its true potential”.

It is worth mentioning that the labour inclusion of people with disabilities will bring economic benefits to society in general, since diversity encourages the creation of a more inclusive environment, and therefore, of more productivity.

This work is part of a more ample investigation related to a PhD in Sociology by the Évora University, on “The employability of people with disabilities: a sociological approach to the tendencies of policies and practices”, which analyses the tendencies in the politics and practices for the employability of people with disabilities, identifying the main challenges they must face to define future strategies. So that soon they will count with new results, in agreement with the objectives of the Thesis.

The work conforms a case study on the Portuguese territory (belonging to the District of Setúbal), an area of intervention of an organization of social economy, whose practices that promote the employability in people with disabilities constitute the object of study of this work. For this, data on the beneficiaries of the support measures for professional rehabilitation that take place in this Resource Centre has been compiled.

Understanding the tendencies in employability policies and practices is necessary to develop future strategies that can contribute to the betterment of the life quality of these people.

As a future perspective, we consider a comparative study on the employability policies of people with disabilities in different countries to be of the utmost importance, with the end of identifying which ones of the approved strategies contribute to the success or the failure of said policies.

We only hope that words will turn into facts, so that the full enjoyment of the fundamental human rights and liberties of all people with disabilities can become a reality.

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