

**RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

in Montenegro and Albania with the aim of easier employment and better competitiveness in the market



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**List of Abbreviations**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **PWD** | *Persons with disabilites* |
| **EU** | *European Union* |
| **A.C.C.E.N.T** | *Project Accessibility, civic conscience, employment of persons with disabilities.* |
| **UN** | *United Nations* |
| **NGO** | *Non gowernment organizations* |
| **CSO** | *Civil Soiciety organization* |
| **IDEP** | *Individual development-educational program* |
| **CRBE** | *Central Register of Business Entities* |
| **AEI** | *Adult Education Institution* |
| **RC** | *Resource Centre* |
| **OSCE** | *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* |
| **ITP** | *Individual Transition Plan* |

# Introduction

The research on the educational needs of persons with disabilities in Montenegro and Albania with the aim of easier employment and greater competitiveness in the labor market was conducted in the period from May to September 2021.

The research was organized as one of the activities of the A.C.C.E.N.T. - Accessibility, civic conscience, employment of persons with disabilities.

The A.C.C.E.N.T project addresses common needs in Montenegro and Albania, to create employment opportunities and increase employability for people with disabilities through:

a) creating an appropriate environment,

b) development of a functional institutional framework,

c) improving their competencies and professional skills and

d) strengthening dialogue between all stakeholders

The overall goal of the project is to increase employment and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the cross-border area of Albania and Montenegro. The project holder is Caritas of the Archdiocese of Bar, and the project partners are Caritas Albania, Progetto Speranza and the Association of Paraplegic Lawyers. The A.C.C.E.N.T project is implemented through the action program of cross-border cooperation Montenegro - Albania 2014 - 2020, and is funded by the European Union. In Montenegro, project activities are carried out in the municipalities of Bar and Ulcinj, while project activities in Albania are carried out in the municipalities of Shkodra and Lezhe.

People with disabilities in Montenegro and Albania face barriers to employment. Barriers occur in various areas starting from access to infrastructure and information, through barriers in education, employment, political, social and cultural life. There are many reasons for this situation, such as the unfavorable economic situation in the Western Balkans, which leads to the fact that the inclusion of PWDs and the implementation of national action plans is not invested as much as necessary, through the problems caused by the COVID 19 pandemic to which PWDs are particularly exposed. In both countries unemployment rates are high (15.26 Montenegro, 11.7 Albania) and the incompatibility of the education system with the labor market which was also identified.

In this research, we have tried to identify some significant difficulties in the employment and education of PWD, which are related to prejudices against PWD, inaccessible and unsuitable environment for their work and education, insufficient information about the rights related to the inclusion of PWD in the labor market, but also to inadequate educational structure of PWD, lack of work experience and acquired skills due to numerous obstacles in the field of acquiring education and professional development.

Due to above stated obstacles, the analysis of the position of unemployed PWDs in relation to the rest of the unemployed population shows that they on average acquire a lower level of education. In the area of employment, the research shows that they rely too much on institutions but they also state that they do not trust those institutions and therefore are not active in looking for a job. They are also partialy excluded from society therefore in conversations with them we have also find out that they need to be trained on how to activly look for job.

The research consists of several parts. The first part presents the methodology that we have used in the research, followed by situational analysis, environmental analysis and analysis of education and employment in both countries. Then, the research of interest groups was presented, ie. persons with disabilities themselves, their associations and organizations, the employers who employ them and their capacities. A special focus in the research was education and their educational needs.

At the end of the research, recommendations are presented for PWDs as well as for the institutions of the system (all stakeholders) in order to overcome certain barriers and to increase the competitiveness of PWDs in the labor market by providing opportunities for education and training for occupations for which there is demand. On the other hand respecting their limitations and making the most of the remaining abilities of persons with disabilities and adjust them to the demand on the labor market. On the one hand, we have occupations that are attractive in the labor market, and on the other hand occupations that can be done by people with disabilities based on the type of disability that they have is. There is a great variability in the restrictions in relation to the type of impairment, and it is necessary to compare occupations on the one hand and the ability of persons with disabilities to perform them on the other, in order to obtain valid recommendations for occupations for each group. We have tried with this research to single out occupations that can be performed by most people with disabilities.

We have also identified community support services that will provide people with disabilities with equal opportunities in fulfilling their work obligations.

Finally we have presented two lists:

a) Proposal of occupations for which persons with disabilities can be subsequently trained through adult education, which currently do not exist for PWDs or are insufficiently present in the regular school system and which may be needed on the labor market.

b) List of generic (general) competencies that will provide people with disabilities with the possibility of become more employable in the labor market.

# Research methodology

The goal of research is to create a report, which contains a list of needs and existing employment opportunities for PWDs. In addition to that a list of new professions for PWDs and a list of main competencies required for professional integration of PWDs should be prepared. In order to complet the tasks required research is conducted in 2 phases.

The first phase refers to the *desk research* or research of secondary sources of data on education that are presented in existing documents:

• previous research in the field

• strategies,

• action plans,

• implementation reports implemented and published by the competent ministry or municipality

Also, this phase includes a review and analysis:

• educational standards, competencies and qualifications

• Licensed education providers for certain and their programs

• examples of good practice

The results and conclusions obtained in this phase represent a ***situational analysis*** of educational needs and employment opportunities for PWDsin Montenegro and Albania. Based on the situational analysis, the main topics were identified, which were further researched in cooperation with stakeholders in the second research step.

The second phase, ie*. qualitative research* was conducted through questionnaires and online interviews with relevant groups. This way of working is harmonized with the existing COVID 19 situation so that our respondents would not be exposed to additional risk while on the other hand we wanted to achieve a significant result. We have identified 24 stakeholders from Albania and Montenegro with whom we had in depth discussions about: their positions on the research topic, problems that are most commonly encountered by PWDs etc. We were also interested to learn about their proposed solutions as well as their capacities for implementation of those solutions. The following were identified as relevant stakeholders:

• Organizations and associations that work with people with disabilities

• Persons with disabilities

• Educational institutions that work with people with disabilities

• Employers who employ PWDs

Taking into account the information obtained through this methodology, at the end of the study, detailed conclusions and recommendations were presented in order to bridge the gap between the employment needs of PWDs and the existing labor market opportunities for their employment.

# Laws, strategies and policies related to education and employment of persons with disability

## Policy framework Montenegro

In Montenegro, the analysis of adopted laws, policies and strategies at the state level recognizes the commitment to EU accession. When drafting state strategies and policies, European regulations and international legal acts that the state has signed and ratified are taken as a basis, and as such have precedence over domestic laws. The Constitution of Montenegro, as the highest legal act, Article 6 guarantees the protection of human rights and freedoms, Article 7 promotes the prohibition of iniciating or supporting hatred or intolerance on any grounds, proclaims the prohibition of discrimination, Article 68 guarantees special protection of persons with disabilities. In 2015, a new Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities was adopted, which is fully harmonized with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Based on the Conclusion of the Parliament of Montenegro, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights formed an expert team that, in order to implement the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. This team has analyzed 56 regulations in the areas defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: electronic communications, traffic, independent living and community life, family and marital relations, laws defining legal, procedural and business capacity, as well as the areas of education and vocational training, health care, social and child protection and adequate living standards and political and public life. The expert team included representatives of state administration bodies, the Committee for Human Rights and Freedoms of the Parliament of Montenegro, representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, in the presence of the OSCE Mission and the UN Delegation. Based on the analysis, recommendations for harmonization of regulations with the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been defined.

In accordance with international legislation, documents of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union, the strategies of Montenegro[[1]](#footnote-1) insist on building a policy in the field of disability according to the social model that puts respect for human rights and freedoms in the foreground. The social model recognizes and emphasizes that the obstacle to the full participation of persons with disabilities in society is not only the invalidity that these persons have, but there are also numerous obstacles that persons encounter in social interactions, which are reflected in e.g. physical, normative, psychological, emotional and barriers in attitudes. According to this model, the company is obliged to enable PWDs to achieve their full development by removing barriers, as well as to ensure inclusion in all areas of society on an equal basis.

Regarding education, persons with disabilities in Montenegro acquire their occupation through secondary (later possibly university) education through the application of inclusive education programs, ie by attending "regular" schools, and through regular and adapted curricula or through attending special institutions for the education of persons with disabilities.

The *General Law on Education and Upbringing*[[2]](#footnote-2) of Montenegro promotes the concept of equality and prohibition of discrimination in the field of education, and it states: “Montenegrin citizens are equal in exercising the right to education, regardless of nationality, race, gender, language, religion, social origin or other personal characteristic. " (Article 9 of the Law) Also, this Law establishes specific standards of inclusive education, ie the manner of adjusting education programs to children with special educational needs (Article 21 of the Law).

Education of persons with disabilities in Montenegro is also regulated by the *Law on Upbringing and Education of Children with Special Educational Needs*, [[3]](#footnote-3) which provides definition of children with special educational needs, in terms of this law, those are namely: children with disabilities (children with physical, mental and sensory disabilities, children with combined disabilities; children with difficulties in development) and children with behavioral disorders; severe chronic diseases; long-term ill children and other children who have learning difficulties and other difficulties caused by emotional, social, linguistic and cultural barriers. Among the key goals of inclusive education of children with disabilities, Montenegrin legislation envisages ensuring equal opportunities for upbringing and education for all children, ensuring appropriate conditions that enable optimal development, and timely guidance and inclusion in the appropriate education program.

The *Law on Adult Education*[[4]](#footnote-4) in Montenegro stipulates that adult education is part of a unique education system of Montenegro that allows adults, by personal choice, to participate in education, training or learning in order to improve knowledge, skills and competencies or acquire appropriate qualifications for employment or personal development.

Key skills (in the field of information and communication technology, foreign languages, etc.) that the Law on Adult Education of Montenegro states as important for performing work within the profession are acquired in accordance with the Law on National Professional Qualifications.[[5]](#footnote-5) They are also are acknowledged in the process of acquisition of professional qualifications. Article 22 of the same Law states that “adults with special educational needs”, including persons with disabilities, “are included in an educational program, in an education program that is adapted in terms of conditions, content and manner of performance, in accordance with this by law and with special regulation. ”

The adopted and valid strategic documents in Montenegro are: *The* *Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro for the period 2016-2020* that is implemented within the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare and whose strategic goal is to provide conditions for full and active participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of social life on an equal basis through the development and implementation of equal opportunities policy, especially in employment, labor, education, culture and housing. Montenegro is committed to ensuring the right to education without discrimination and to forming an inclusive education system for all at all levels. In addition to this Montenegro is comitted to lifelong learning aimed at the full development of human resource potential, dignity and self-worth through inclusion in the general education system, with reasonable adaptations according to needs of individuals. Then, *Strategy for protection of persons with disabilities from discrimination and promotion of equality for the period 2017-2021*. year, whose strategic goal in the field of education, training and vocational training is to provide inclusive education at all levels, for all pupils and students. Also, *National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2030* - which has a special strategic goal Improving the state of human resources and strengthening social inclusion, while within the strategic goal Supporting values, norms and patterns of behavior important for the sustainability of society defined measure Stimulating employability and social inclusion.

Given the focus of the A.C.C.E.N.T. project, we were particularly interested in the role of civil society organizations in organizing adult education in the context of enabling people with disabilities to access adult education programs, and the ability of organizations that are well aware of the needs of people with disabilities to offer education programs. Article 27 of the mentioned *Law on Adult Education of Montenegro* regulates "that adult education is organized in a school, specialized organization for adult education, institutions for accommodation and care of persons with disabilities and with organizers of adult education, who meet the prescribed conditions and have a license to work." Adult Education Institution (Organizer of Adult Education) - may start working only when it obtains a license from the Ministry of Education and registers in the Central Register of Business Entities (CRBE), and the conditions for establishing an institution (organizer of adult education) are prescribed by Article 46 of the General Law on education and upbringing. Persons with disabilities are not essentially recognized as a subgroup in the process of adult education. The need to regulate the manner (the way) of adapting educational programs to the educational needs of persons with disabilities has not been identified in Montenegro.

## Policy framework Albania

Policy framework supervising inclusion, education and employment of PWD in Albania consists from laws, strategies, action plans and supporting by laws. Right for education and employment of PWD is garanteed by The Constitution of the Republic of Albania, main legal documents supporting this area are:

* Law No. 108/2012 “On the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”
* Law No. 10221, of date 04.02.2010 (amended) “On Protection Against Discrimination”
* Law No. 8137 of date 31.07.1996 (amended) “On the Ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”
* National Action Plan on PWD 2016-2020, which is expected to be replaced by the National Action Plan on PWD 2021-2025, which adoption is in progress
* Law No. 15/2019 “On the Promotion of Employment”
* Law No. 7961, of date 12.7.1995 Labor Code of Albania (art. 20)
* Secondary legislation related to the above laws.

Albanian Governement in close colaboration with civil sector has developed National Strategy on People with diabilities which was adopted by Council of Ministers in January 2005. The goal of this document was to improve access of PWD to social and medical care, education, culture, sports, employment, information transportation and pearticipation and representation in public life. In addition to this strategic document which was developed using collaborative approach and with support of OSCE Presence in Albania National Council for the Affairs of People with Disabilities was formed as the body to support systematic apporach and ensure state-society collaboration in above mentioned thematic fields. Strategy provided situation analysis as well as 6 objectives for PWD that need to be achieved. Monitoring and reporting structure was established and National Action Plan on People with Disabilities was adopted.

Latest Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020, has been drafted in full compliance with the fundamental principles of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy, in the framework of Albania’s EU integration process. Similar to Montenegrin situation Albania is also following EU regulations and international acts in developing policy framework. A step further prom previous practice was participatory apporach and inclusion of PWD from all disability categories in working froup that drafing Action Plan. Action plan therefore higlights the needs but also the barriers that they are facing. Document also presents progress made from adoptation of Strategy in 2005 until development of National Action Plan 2015 with intention to build up on that proces – New Action Plan for period of 2021-2025 is cureently in process of adaptation.

National Disability Council that was established pursuant to the Law “On the inclusion of and accessibility for persons with disabilities” became operational in April 2015 and it is now sanctioned by law, with clearly defined legal duties and functions. Members from organisations for the disabled make up 41 per cent of the total number of Council members, of which 43 per cent are women. This marks the highest National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities, 2016-2020 – 39 percentage of female representation to date, thus helping maintain gender balance in representation.

Law “On the inclusion of and accessibility for people with disabilities” is setting up the principles for the inclusion of persons with disabiliteis which are:

1. Non-discrimination, which ensures that people with disabilities are not treated in a differentiated way on account of their disability;

2. Equality, including gender equality, which ensures that people with disabilities enjoy equal opportunities;

3. Autonomy of persons with disabilities and respect for their right to make independent decisions;

4. Guaranteeing accessibility by removing barriers of all kinds;

5. Inclusion, which enables a fair and equal participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life;

6. Participation of persons with disabilities through individual consultations and active involvement of disabled persons and their representative organisations, including children with disabilities;

7. Application of a two-pronged approach in order to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are maximally addressed in the mainstream legislation and the number of issues dealt with separately is reduced to a minimum;

8. Progressive realisation, which requires that the government takes measures to ensure the inclusion of and accessibility for all persons with disabilities to the highest level possible with the resources available, without affecting the rights already gained, which are in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Like in Montenegro, UN Convention has been ratified by law therefore it has precedence wherever domestic legislation provisions may be in contravention of its principles. In the years to come, the government will focus its attention on aligning the domestic legislation with the standards and principles set out in the Convention.

Albanian Governement with this policy framework has comitted to support the inclusion of PWD in following areas:

• Accessibility (including physical accessibility and access to information),

• Equality,

• Employment and Vocational Education and Training (VET),

• Education,

• Social care,

• Health care,

• Participation in political and public life (including cultural and sports activities),

• Promotion of collaboration, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation.

The priority areas were defined in line with those identified in the European Disability Strategy. Funding for the implementation comes from governement budget (budget lines from respective ministries, local governemnts, CSOs) and where the funding is lacking estimates for donor funding needs were presented.

# Education of persons with disability

## Education of PWD in Montenegro

The existing legal framework in Montenegro, which refers to the field of education, provides a formal opportunity for persons with disabilities to be educated without discrimination, ie under the same conditions as other citizens. The Montenegrin education system for children with special educational needs as the first choice and imperative sets inclusive education within regular schools, which is evidenced by the constant increase in the number of children with special educational needs in those institutions. The strategy of inclusive education in Montenegro was adopted for the period from 2019 to 2025 and represents the continuation of the implementation of the measures of the strategy that referred to the period 2014-2018. Basic recommendations from the Inclusive Education Strategy 2019-2025 years are:

• Improve the cooperation of the departments of health, education, children and social protection in order to provide services for the timely development of children with special educational needs (early detection, intervention, learning) and psycho-socio-educational-economic support to the family.

• Improve the cooperation of relevant public entities, partners and civil society and develop monitoring and coordination mechanisms and records.

• Ensure the participation of all children with special educational needs in the educational system with adequate support and cooperation between services at all levels and social protection that exists at the local level.

• Review the work of steering commissions in order to achieve the greatest possible degree of consistency, accountability and uniform approach in accordance with the human rights model.

• Promote early participation and learning of children with special educational needs, continuity of schooling, further development and practice of individual transition through levels of education and upbringing with an emphasis on a cross-sectoral approach.

• Develop a culture of inclusive responsibility and active roles of teachers and professional associates in working with children with special educational needs.

• Continuously work on strengthening the teaching process, conditions, environment for the achievements of children with special educational needs, coordination, understanding of job descriptions and monitoring the role of assistants.

• Continuously promote an inclusive process to enable children with special educational needs to be educated together with their peers with the participation and empowerment of parents.

• Improve the services of resource centers for inclusive education, strengthen new functions of integrated departments, modernize and refine the work of mobile teams.

• Work to improve the accessibility and equipment of schools.

• Continuously improve the literature in the field of inclusive education and develop specialized didactic and teaching aids

The basis for working with children with special educational needs is IDEP - Individual Developmental-Educational Program. Kindergartens and schools for each child develop an IDEP within which the academic and developmental goals to be achieved by children with special educational needs are defined. In order to facilitate the adjustment of children with special educational needs, a *Program of transition from kindergarten to primary school* was made. Also, an *Individual Transition Plan* − 1 (ITP – 1) has been developed for the transition of students from primary to secondary school in order to assess the abilities and skills of a child with special educational needs. In order to facilitate the transition to the labor market for students with special educational needs, the *Individual Transition Plan-2* (ITP-2), which connects education and employment, was developed and adopted. In this part, the school cooperates with various service providers for the assessment of employability, vocational rehabilitation providers, resource centers, employment services, employers, etc.

When analyzing the level of implementation of the Strategy, activities, measures and budget funds in Montenegro are mainly focused on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in primary education. This is because the acquisition of basic education is legally mandatory for all citizens. Secondary education takes place under seemingly equal conditions but not nearly as equal. Secondary education takes place within the implementation of inclusive education programs and through a system of special schools that deal with the education of persons with disabilities. When it comes to "regular" high schools, people with disabilities in Montenegro attend special classes in those schools. Classes take place according to an curriculum (plan and program) that is adapted to their needs. Then there are also so-called *mixed classes* where a person with a disability attends classes according to the regular program (in the case of only physical disability) or according to an individually adapted program in accordance with the IDEP.

Based on the above, impression can be created that, at least for people with physical disabilities, all education programs that exist in the country are available – for a a fairly wide choice of occupations. Practice however shows that this is completely incorrect due to the architectural inaccessibility of the facilities in which schools are located, the inability to come and go to school caused by the inaccessibility of public transport and the inaccessibility of high school dormitories that prevent high school attendance of PWDs to schools that are located outside of their place of residence. From the point of view of institutions, work is being done to improve conditions and to eliminate evident barriers to accessibility, but this has not yet been fully implemented. Based on previous research, it has been noticed that it is common practice for commissions formed at social work centers to recommend not continuing education after primary school, due to lack of adequate school for occupation in the place of residence, inaccessibility of schools in the municipality and the family's inability to provide support for their children for going to school and for overcoming obstacles.

An alternative to inaccessible schools that people with disabilities can formally enroll is the enrollement in a special institutions for the education of people with disabilities. There are 3 such institutions in Montenegro:

• RC "Podgorica" ​​specializes in early intervention in children with visual impairments and physical disabilities.

• RC „1. June ”specializes in children with autism spectrum disorders, and includes training for kindergartens and individual treatments for children with special educational needs.

• In RC "Dr Peruta Ivanović", Kotor, parents stay with children with hearing and speech impairments for the purpose of early intervention and preparation for inclusive education

## Education of PWD in Albania

The right to education for all children in Albania including children with disabilities is presented and ensured in a variety of laws and regulations, as well as under the Social Targets of the *Constitution*. The *Law on pre-university education* defines the principles guiding the

education of children with disabilities, including development of their physical and intellectual potential, improving their quality of life and ensuring their full integration in society and the labour market. The Law promotes the concept of inclusive education, emphasizing that inclusion in special education institutions should be temporary and inclusion in mainstream kindergarten and schools is of prime importance.

Although there is commitment from the state, 2011 Census data show that only 55.6 per cent of persons with disabilities over 15 years of age have completed basic education. Only 3.3 per cent of persons with disabilities have completed (post)university studies and almost a quarter (24.3 per cent) never attended education. More recent data show that in Albania the right to education is enjoyed by only 30% of children with disabilities, is what has been stated in the study of Save the Children and World Vision, published in April 2018, the first national study on the prevalence of disability in children 2 to 17 years old (for 10 municipalities with 4,896 children with disability, only 1,255 are enrolled in schools, which for these 10 municipalities it is 26 percent), which contradicts the data provided by the government in its report that 55.6% of people with disability over 15 years of age, have completed basic education, according to the census of 2011.

In order to support better inclusion of PWD in education, Albania has identified the barriers that state needs to overcome. One of the needs is to support PWD with teachers and assistant teachers. There were appointed about 700 assistant teachers in September 2018, however they are only qualified as regular teachers and have no knowledge about the support they have to provide to children with disability. This figure is still low compared to the needs of the country and their training is not sufficient or qualitative. There is opportunity for development of programs for building capacities of assistant teachers.

Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has adopted comprehensive teacher profile but very few teachers are trained and universities in their curricula for the new teachers' training, especially teachers preparing for LSE, include very few disability related school subjects.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Another important issue is the level of accessibility in schools which is very low even though there is a law on accessibility and standards for the construction of schools, kindergartens and nurseries. Particularly there are no accessible toilets which causes that most children (girls) drop out of school.

Students with sensorial impairments also face specific barriers as there are no sign language interpreters and braille teachers. These teachers can be found in the only two specialized schools that cover all of Albania, namely: The Institute for Blind and The Institute for Deaf Students. The Albanian sign language is not part of the school curriculum, students are taught through oral and doctrinal methods.[[7]](#footnote-7) These results with the fact that 97% of adults with hearing disability are functional illiterate. Illiteracy in the non-hearing population is five times higher than in other groups of people with disabilities (20%) and 35 times higher than in the population of people without disabilities (2.8 %).[[8]](#footnote-8)

Students with hearing disabilities cannot attend high school or university because of lack of interpretation in Albanian Sign Language.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Another accessibility issue is the transport for students with disability which is, just like in Montenegro, not offered. Some students with disabilities can benefit from free transportation, but in rural areas there is not transportation means at all, or they are totally not accessible.

Research shows that in Albania detailed budgets for the education of children with disability in MES are designated only for the special schools, in which according to the statistics for all these 8 schools (6 MMR schools and 2 Institutes) there are enrolled about 600 children with disabilities. No steps were taken to eliminate special education and transformation of special schools to resource centers to help further inclusion in mainstream schools.[[10]](#footnote-10) In rural areas is harder to educate a disabled child.

The schools and kindergartens do not have a budget allocated for the purchase of a didactic material base for quality education of children with disability[[11]](#footnote-11). In higher education, there are no inclusive policies for students with disabilities[[12]](#footnote-12). There is a DCM no. 517, dated 01.08.2014 which sets out quotas for students with disabilities admitted to public universities, but only for blind and paraplegics and quadriplegics.

Vocational education and training programs are a key way to improve a person’s qualifications and skills. Persons with disabilities are eligible for free vocational training courses but the VET center s are building premises are largely inaccessible34. Besides, these centers do not yet have guidelines for adjusting the curricula to the needs of disables participants in place; their staff have not been trained in the field and no disabled persons are employed in any of the centers. In 2015, 134 persons with disabilities completed VET courses free of charge. 34 Out of ten VET Centers (two in Tirana, seven in the districts and one mobile center in the North-eastern region of Albania) only three are partly accessible.

According data from Save the Children report main barriers for inclusive education in Albania are[[13]](#footnote-13):

* The lack of direct investments from the government for the implementation of strategies on inclusive education for children with disabilities
* The ambiguous data provided by the responsible institutions in relation to the total number of children with disabilities: The State Social Service only provides the total number of people with disabilities: 17,786 or about 3.6 per cent of the population. his statistic only refers to people receiving monthly disability payments and, in addition, accurate data on the various categories of disability are missing. The Institute of Statistics does not provide any data on the number of children with disabilities enrolled in the public education system either. The collection of data on disability problems seems to be difficult.
* The lack of capacity building and training for teachers on inclusive education
* The lack of flexible curricula adapted to the needs of children with disabilities: The existing curricula do not contain the necessary information on the skill building of children with disabilities and the teaching for these children is based on the core curriculum which has no provision for their special needs.
* The lack of direct investments and financial plans for the implementation of inclusive education

# Labour market situation and occupations for PWD

## Labour market situation of PWD in Montenegro

The link between the formal education and the demand for occupations on the labor market in Montenegro has been inconsistent and inadequate for many years. In secondary vocational education through efforts to introduce the so-called *dual education* and to connect the business sector with educational institutions, in certain areas there are small improvements. However, given the requirements for additional knowledge and skills required by employers, and given technological developments, much remains to be done in this area, especially towards creating a fertile ground for networking and developing business-education cooperation in various sectors.

Professional rehabilitation, training and employment of persons with disabilities is of special public interest and belongs to the field of social protection. According to the Law on Professional Rehabilitation, Training and Employment of Persons with Disabilities[[14]](#footnote-14) in Montenegro, persons with disabilities can be employed and work on the labor market under general and under special conditions. Under general conditions, persons with disabilities are employed in the open labor market, such as in state bodies, judicial bodies, local government bodies, public services, institutions, funds, public companies, companies and other legal entities that are not established specifically for the employment of persons with a disability. Under special conditions, persons with disabilities are employed in institutions or companies established for the purpose of employing persons with disabilities.

In order to present the situation on the labor market in Montenegro, we will list some of the data from the Report "Inconsistency of the labor market and education system in Montenegro - Creating an environment for sustainable development of enterprises in Montenegro", prepared by the Union of Employers of Montenegro in cooperation with prof. Dr. Milivoje Radović and Dr. Jovan Đurašković in 2016. [[15]](#footnote-15)

In the structure of the Montenegrin economy, the service sector - tourism and trade - is the most represented. From the point of view of employment, the reports of the Employment Service and the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro record the following problems:

* long-term unemployment - persons who have been waiting for employment for more than 1 year
* high youth unemployment rates
* disparity in regional unemployment and therefore the untapped human potential is noticeable.
* Intensive employment of workers from the countries of the region, despite the high unemployment rate, due to the lack of professional staff, primarily in service activities during tourism season.

From all stated above we can conclude that the formal education system has not managed to harmonize its offers with changes in the labor market, and as a result a situation is created where labor is imported despite the high unemployment rate in the country. This is also recorded in the Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning Strategy. A special problem that exists on the market is the insufficient specialization of study and educational programs at the level of general secondary education, which leads to the creation of knowledge with low usage value. This is especially evident in the field of digital technologies where schools are very often not even equipped with either the technical capacity or the quality of the workforce skills to provide the knowledge needed by the market. Possession of additional knowledge and skills significantly improves employment, which is why more and more young people are enrolling in language courses, professional training programs, computers, special software programs, retraining and additional training programs of Employment Agency Montenegro, etc

In Montenegro, according to the data of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare from 2015[[16]](#footnote-16), most vacancies are created in the sectors of trade, administrative, support and service activities, tourism and catering. Most often professional vocational profiles are at the level of secondary education. According to the data of the Employment Bureau from 2015[[17]](#footnote-17), the employment of foreigners is higher than the employment of domestic labor in the areas: construction as much as five times, catering and tourism 50.3%, and in trade 34.2%.

According to the data from the report, the requirements and preference of employers are mostly focused on hiring staff with narrow specializations. Stakeholders pay special emphasis on the importance of education and training programs: additional training, retraining, or specialization - in metal processing, crafts, agriculture, informatics, foreign languages, catering.

According to employers, the biggest shortcoming of the education system of Montenegro is the insufficient representation of practical classes during education, as well as the problem of weak cooperation between the institutions of the education system and employers.

At the level of primary and secondary education in Montenegro, it is important to note the positive developments that have occurred, such as the introduction of the concept of elective classes, pandemic-encouraged adoption and incorporation of IT into the learning process, the introduction of modern literature. However, much remains to be done in the context of improving education in Montenegro and aligning it with labor market needs.

In previous research, conducted by Caritas a table with 18 occupations offered to persons with disabilities in institutions dealing with PWD education has been identified and presented down. The table presents the occupations offered within two special educational institutions - resource centers.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Montenegro | |
| Resource center for audio and vision in Kotor | Public institution resource center for children and youth „Podgorica" |
| Aeromechanic-painting | Legal and administration technician (level –IV) |
| Salesperson | Salesperson (level –III) |
| Bucher | Administrator (level –III) |
| Cook | Sales technician (level –IV) |
| Hair Stylist |  |
| Bookbinder |  |
| Bakers |  |
| Operator in preparing for print |  |
| Shoemaker |  |
| Electrical installer |  |
| Aeromechanic |  |
| Auto electrician |  |
| Plumber |  |
| Carpenter |  |

In addition to the above-mentioned centers, there are two other private institutions that are engaged in work with persons with disabilities - Pamark and ZOPT. Those institutions are specially licensed for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. Their program is based on levels. Employment agency contracts Pamark or ZOPT so that their teams can evaluate the disability regarding emoployment. After evaluation PWDs can attend trainig for improvement of their skilss for employment and for selfemployment.

PWDs in Montenegro can attend same schools and training for employment like persons without disabilities if accessibility to the facility is provided or if the programs are adapted to their disability needs. There are no methodological rools at the state level that provide instructions on how to adjust the program to the PWD needs, that is left to the education provider.

According to the data shown in the table of occupations, it is clear that a total of 18 occupations are offered to persons with disabilities in Montenegro. We notice that the cook, salesman, administrator, car lacker and car painter are repeatedly represented in one or in both public institutions that deal with the education of PWDs.

The reson for this is because creation of curricula for the above occupations is approached in such a way that they are already intended for a certain group of persons with disabilities in relation to the type of disability. Market demand for those occupation is not taken in considereation. Curricula is based on what is considered to be suitable for certain type of disability and therefore there is a narrowed choice of occupations or clichés of occupations for all persons with certain types of disabilities. We usually meet a large number of visually impaired people who are physiotherapists or telephone operators, as well as a hearing impaired person as shoemakers, and a person with mild intellectual disabilities as bakers.

Such a system of creating curricula in relation to the physical or mental impairment that is the cause of disability for PWD justifiably takes into account the limitations caused by the disability, but on the other hand it does not take into account the individual interest of PWD and needs of the labor market.

Part of the problem is that in the entire system of care for people with disabilities, the emphasis is not on later employment in the profession but on a number of other circumstances that make up the social status of people with disabilities (socialization / social isolation, family's ability to attend school, need for institutional placement during schooling, etc.). Thus, high school often has the role of caring for a person with a disability, prolonged work on his / her socialization and preparation for leaving the system of institutions, and less often it represents a real preparation for the labor market.

## Labour market situation of PWD in Albania[[18]](#footnote-18)

Employment is one of the challenges faced by all categories of people with disabilities, regardless of whether they have received or not a relevant vocational training. From the data provided by the National Association of Labor Invalids of the Republic of Albania,[[19]](#footnote-19) it is reported that there are currently employed only 274 labor “invalids” in the public sector and 312 labor “invalids” in the private sector, while the total number of labor “invalids” for 2017 at urban level is n = 62,412 and at rural level n=7,304[[20]](#footnote-20). According to the National Employment Service data[[21]](#footnote-21) from n = 89,780 unemployed jobseekers registered for 2017 at this entity, n = 479 are registered as unemployed job seekers with disabilities, of which are evidenced as employed through the intermediary service only n = 18 persons with disabilities whereas employed from the employment promotion program[[22]](#footnote-22)only n=79 people with disability.

The very low number of workers with disability is also due to the fact that there is a lack of the capacity of specialists in employment offices to welcome and guide people with disabilities who show up at employment offices. Current employees do not have the relevant profile and qualifications *to receive, evaluate and refer the case, in accordance with the job needs of any person with disability that is registered at employment offices*[[23]](#footnote-23). There is still no entity under the Albanian regulatory framework to enable the performance assessment of each jobseeker with disabilities and to assess their needs for vocational training in line with skills and needs of the labor market.

The law "On Promotion of Employment” foresees the so-called "quota system”, stated that “*every employer employing more than 24 employees is obliged to employ 1 (one) person with disabilities for every 25 employees of his staff. The employer is given the opportunity to hire a person with severe handicap instead of five persons with a mild handicap (term used in the law)[[24]](#footnote-24).* For years this law has not been implemented by both public and private employers, as evidenced by a recent monitoring report of ADRF[[25]](#footnote-25). According to the data of this monitoring report, it is ascertained that out of the 72 public institutions contacted, 68 of them provided the required information. *Moreover*, *only 3 of these institutions had met the quota requirement for the employment of persons with disabilities.* Montenegro has similar law but entities that don’t hire PWD are required to pay fee on salary of employees each month This fee then goes to special Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PWDs and it is used according to government program.

The Albanian regulatory framework still lacks a model for the type of adjustments and accessibility of the workplace and the work process so that each of the private or public institutions may be forced to adapt the working environments for the employment of the category of workers with disability in accordance with the required standards. *Also, the staff of employment offices emphasizes the need for capacity building / training provision in order for them to be clearer on the practical implementation of the concept of "reasonable accommodation in the workplace", what are the possibilities provided in the legal and sub-legal acts in this regard and how this obligation can be implemented in practice[[26]](#footnote-26).*

In the context of promoting employment, it is worth pointing out that the promotion of long-term employment of people with disabilities is "legally conditioned" precisely because the law "On Social Assistance and Services”[[27]](#footnote-27) foresees forfeiture of disability payment/allowance 48 months from the moment of employment of a person with disabilities[[28]](#footnote-28). It is precisely this conditional provision that obstructs the principle and the general spirit of employment promotion, where people with disabilities due to this legal condition are not only not encouraged for long-term employment but are not even inclined to engage in the job search process.

The Republic of Albania Labor Code prohibits any discrimination in the employment and vocational training of persons with disabilities. This category has the right to work on appropriate job positions as assessed by the Medical Commission defining their job capability (MCWCA). According to this Code, the employer must provide appropriate jobs and facilities for persons with disabilities. Working hours for persons with disabilities are reduced to 6 hours per day or full 8 hours but with less demanding functions (supposedly adopted for their type of disability - only labor invalids). *These facilities defined by the Medical Commission of Work Capability Assessment (MCWCA) are neither monitored nor enforced*.

*Vocational training programs*: According to the data collected by an assessment report conducted by ADRF, it is found that[[29]](#footnote-29) Vocational Training Centers face infrastructure and informational barriers in providing training courses for all categories of persons with physical, sensory or intellectual disabilities. Vocational Training Centers encounter difficulties during the teaching process for the categories of persons with disabilities, with particular emphasis on the lack of information and professional capacities on how to vocationally capacitate persons with disabilities. Current curricula are not standardized, tailored and overall are very technical, so that they are not accessible to be used by all categories of persons with disabilities.

Teaching curricula are inadequate for the category of blind persons who find it difficult to provide materials in the appropriate format (braille or audio) and for the category of persons with intellectual disabilities (simplified formats).

As areas for improvement research identifies that vocational training program should be oriented towards the needs of the labor market with the aim of employing persons with disabilities. Public Employment Offices should play an active role in employment advising and establishing links between professional training centers, private employers, and associations of persons with disability.

# Analysis of the education and employment needs of PWDs in Montenegro

As part of the this study the research of the needs of PWD in Montenegro and Albania was conducted. In this research we had interviews and questionnaire with 40 people with disabilities from Albania and Montenegro. We were interested in their views on the issues of: employment, the need to have special knowledge and skills, prejudices related to people with disabilities, the education they have and the activities they undertake to get a job.

## Analysis of PWDs in Montenegro

In Montengro we have coducted interview with 20 PWD out of which 58,82% were male and 41,18 % were female.

Our research was supported by employees of PWD as well as by their organization therefore respondents can be categorized as more active PWD because most of them even if they are currently not employed already had some type of work experience. Table down shows their employment status. In our sample 32% of PWD were unemployed (with or without any type of income and housewife) while 68% were employed some with more than 10 years of experience.

Next table shows respondents work experience and we can see that most of them they already had work experience and only 2 participants didn’t have any work experience.

Regarding their age, we had 4 PWD that belong to youth category but most participants were in medium age group. According to unemployment data in Montenegro most registered unemployed persons are in medium age group 30-55 years old. Our sample reflects that. Main difficulty with this age group is the fact that they remain unemployed for more than 1 year because their qualifications are not in line with labour market needs. Special training programs from Employment agency are organized each year so that they can obtain additional qualifications for open jobs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AGE | ANSWER |
| 18-29 | 4 |
| 30-55 | 12 |
| 56-65 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 20 |

PWD that took part in our research had mainly physical types of disability including hearing or visual impairment as can be seen in the table. We have selected sample this way based on the recommendations from Employment agency and Agency for professional rehabilitation of PWD- Pamark, because they consider that persons with mental and organic disability need different approach and their employers should have additional capacities for their support therefore, they should be researched separately.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| TYPE OF DISABILITY | Answer |
| Disorders of voice-speech communication | 0 |
| Hearing impairment | 1 |
| Visual impairment | 3 |
| Intellectual difficulties | 0 |
| Mental and organic disorders | 0 |
| Chronic diseases | 1 |
| Physical disability | 11 |
| Multiple damages | 4 |
| TOTAL | 20 |

In cross referencing education and work experience we have noticed that all PWD interviewed had some type of additional qualifications.

Most of them 69% had low or medium level of education but all of them had some other qualifications like: computer skills -basic or advanced, driving license, knowledge of one or more foreign languages. Therefore, they have compensated education with additional qualifications making themselves more employable. Correlation between qualifications and employment was positive and strong.

Only 3 participants in our research were permanently employed. Mainly this was the case with PWD who are self-employed. When it comes to working for someone else then the employment contracts were temporary. Montenegro has program for support of PWD with employment where they can obtain financial support from Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of PWDs. Depending from type of disability employee of PWD will get 50% or 75% refund on the employee’s gross salary. This employment measure increases employment of PWDs in Montenegro and also leads to sustainability of their business.

Regarding the reason for unemployment respondents expressed that they don’t have knowledge or skills for work and that they need to obtain additional skills and qualifications. Some of them are evidencing the lack of workplace adaptation and workplace support as the reason for their unemployment.

We also wanted to explore how active PWD are in searching job. They mainly take passive approach. Following adds from Employment bureau was the basic approach that they use in searching jobs. Some PWDs are researching newspapers for job openings and asking friends. Only 3 participants responding that they were searching for self-employment possibilities and they were also informed about the measures for the support for PWDs. In cross referencing we have also noticed that their education and additional qualifications were higher therefore we have also found positive correlation between skills and self-employment.

Regarding which measures should be taken so that employment of PWD increases in Montenegro they still feel that there are stereotypes of PWD from employers and they thing that programs should target the suppression of those stereotypes. Some of the ways that they suggest is to present best practices of employed PWDs and sharing the experiences between employees. Stereotypes are perceived as the highest barrier for their employment.

Some PWD - 19,44% of them, feel that they would need education and training perceiving the link between the education and employment and understanding that they need to be involved in skills development programs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT | PERCENTAGE |
| Additional education and training | 19.44% |
| More open and willing employers to employ PWDs | 22.22% |
| Suppression of stereotypes and prejudices about PWD | 25.00% |
| Better traffic infrastructure | 5.56% |
| Raising your self-confidence | 11.11% |
| I do not know | 16.67% |
| TOTAL | 100.00% |

On the other hand, PWD in Montenegro don’t perceive traffic infrastructure or self-confidence as barriers for their employment. Only 4 participants expressed that they need to improve motivation and self-confidence so that they can start their own business. Linking this type of personality traits to self-employment.

## Analysis of PWDs in Albania

In Albania we have coducted questionaire with 33 PWD out of which 53,57% were female and 46,43 % were male. Most respondends 64.29% were in mid age chategory 30 to 55 years old.

When it comes to our sample in Albania, only 5 PWD was permanently employed while others were in temporary employmen or uneployed. Considering the age group it is evident that they are excluded from work. Table down shows their employment status. In our sample respondents, around 45% of applicants were on temporary employment status while half of applicants were unemployed (with or without any type of income and housewife). Considering the fact that only 4 respondents belong to the youth age group we would expect more of PWD to be employed or on permanent employment status. However, this is not the case. This is again evidence of their exclusion from employment compared to healthy individuals in this age group. Respondents also report that they need to wait for a job for a very long period of time. In most cases, they were waiting for job for years.

On the other hand, there is strong positive correlation between education and employment – the higher they are educated they are more employed in line with their education. Also employed individuals have more additional skills regardin IT and knowledge of languages.

Next table shows respondents work experience and we can see that most of them had already work experience of mainly two to five years. Considering the age group, it would be expected that they had more work experience but most of respondends report that they were waiting for position for a long time. People who were permanently employed had more than 10 years of experience which shows that they are loyal to the company/insititution that employed them.

Short time work experience - less than 6 month and from 6 months to 1 year was also very frequently reported. About 20% of PWDs report that they have less than 1 year work experience.

PWD that took part in our research had mainly physical types of disability 36.11% including hearing or visual impairment as can be seen in the table. Others had intellectual difficulties 25% and 16% of respondents had mental and organic disorders and close to 14% had some disability linked to chronic diseases. In cross references we were able to show that persons with physical disability are easier to employ because people with intellectual or mental disabilities need more support in the workplace. They need job assistance and work environment which if familiar with their disability and how to treat them. Most of people with intellectual disabilities in Albania are unemployed on some type of assistance or have some short time temporary jobs.

In cross referencing qualifications/education with work experience we have noticed that all PWD interviewed had some type of additional qualifications.

Regarding level of education primary level of education had 30.77% respondends. This is completed 8 years of primary school. Also, 34.62% applicants had high school education therefore, most of the respondents were in this two chategories. However, 6 persons have completed high level education that includes Bachelor, Master or PhD level degrees. In cross referencing we again could conclude that if they have mental disorders, they are less included in society and PWDs with physical disability had higher level of education.

All respondents also had other qualifications mainly computer skills -basic or advanced. They also had knowledge of two or more foreign languages and some participants had driver’s license but very few of them. Therefore, they have compensated education with additional qualifications making themselves more employable. Correlation between qualifications and employment was positive and strong. Opinion about obtaining additional qualification and knowledge was also positive.

Regarding the reason for unemployment respondents expressed that their main difficulty is getting to work as well as that workplaces are not adapted to their disability. After that also they are stating that they are facing prejudice from others and in most cases, they felt that they are less valued members whithin the society. In addition to this many of them feel that they don’t have knowledge or skills for work, no work experience and that no one is looking for their profession. With education from A.C.C.E.N.T. project they can be supported to obtain additional skills and qualifications to go into training to obtain different specialization that is more in line with market needs. In Albania PWD are mainly recognizing the need for infrastructure adaptation for accessing the work and support at the workplace as areas where authorities should focus their improvement.

In Albania we also explored how active PWD are in searching job. Asking friends and acquaintances was the basic approach that they use in searching jobs – which is very different from Montenegro. They also asked influential people to support them. Some PWDs are following ads through Employment bureau as well as searching internet for job openings. Only one person from Albania’s sample was exploring opportunities to start his/her own business. Person had high level of education and also additional skills, particulary in languages knowing two or more languages. Support for self-employment in Albania is not as strong as in Montenegro therefore no one in our sample was looking or searching for self-employment possibilities and they are not much attracted to self-employment.

They were also asked to answer which are the main obstacles for their employment and they have identified opinions of employers and distrust in institutions. With projects this can be influenced with marketing activities and raise the awareness activities where best practices can be presented and prejudices can be eliminated. The fact that they also lack financial support to attend additional training and courses again testifies on their social exclusion and economics difficulties that they face. PWDs in Albania are constantly remaining in poverty circle because they cannot fund their education that would increase their employment possibilities. Therefore this needs to be addressed with support projects and strategies.

Regarding which measures should be taken in order to support the increasing of the PWDs employment in Albania, the respondant feel that employers in Albania are not willing or open to employ PWD – 36% of them feel that measures should be taken to give them more incentives to support employment of PWDs. We could argue that similar program for employment of PWDs like the one that exists in Montenegro could bring benefits in creating more willing employers. The expenses of hiring PWD with that type of support are much less than the expenses of hiring person without disability. PWDs in Albania also state that don’t trust institutions because they don’t offer them anything. Whith 38.71% of them stating this it is our recommendation that projects should be developed that would increase capacities as well as sensibility of institutions towards issues and needs of PWDs in Albania.

Responded also emphasize that there should be more actions to suppress stereotypes and prejudices about PWD from whole society and not just employers.

Only small percentage of PWD - 23% of them, feel that they would need education and training so that they become more employable. They are not perceiving well the link between the education and employment and this should be promoted to them. Also, some of respondents state that they lack financial means to be able to attend training therefore in preparing projects this should be taken into consideration. The same number of PWD also perceive traffic infrastructure as barrier for employment and strategies should address the infrastructure so that coming to job can become easier for them.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT | ANSWER |
| Additional education and training | 13 |
| More open and willing employers to employ PWDs | 19 |
| Suppression of stereotypes and prejudices about PWD | 12 |
| Better traffic infrastructure | 6 |
| Raising your self-confidence | 6 |
| I do not know | 0 |
| TOTAL | 56 |

PWDs respondents in Albania don’t want to start their own business. Only few participants expressed that they need to improve motivation and self-confidence. Most respondends feel that the reason of their unemployment is linked to environment and institutions in the system where they are willing therefore external. With reards to themselves they are taking passive approach in training, education and employment search which is similar to the situation of PWDs in Montenegro.

# Analysis of the demand for skills and occupations in Montenegro and Albania

## Demand for skills and occupations in Montenegro

For the purposes of market analysis, we relied on previous research in these areas, and we also compared job advertisements on the website of the Employment Service and on the website [www.zaposli.me](http://www.zaposli.me) for the period from 15.08.2021 to 15.09.2021. In our research, we focused on the program area of the project, ie. In the municipalities of Bar and Ulcinj.

The first thing that we have noticed was that on the website [www.zaposli.me](http://www.zaposli.me), out of 220 vacancies, only one job was related to work in Ulcinj, while there were no vacancies for Bar. Comparing the above with the announcements of the Employment Bureau, we have noticed a big difference because for the same period of time, there were 63 vacancies on the Employment Agency official website. According to the Law in Montenegro, every new job must be advertised on the official website of the Employment Bureau while private employers rely on the website ZaposliMe when they need to find the appropriate expertise or qualifications among the unemployed. The largest number of vacancies through this site are related to work at locations of Podgorica, Budva, Tivat. As for the project's program area, there are jobs related to several municipalities along the coast, for example. Courier for work on the coast or merchandiser for the coast. Both occupations require driver's licence.

Through the official website, we have noticed that 40% of jobs were related to seasonal work. For our research, it did not matter whether those jobs were really vacant (or someone is working there and just needs to prolong contrat for certain time period) or whether employers already had recommendations for those jobs. Out goal in this research was to see which type of jobs were open, in which areas, and what level of qualifications were required by employers. Seasonal jobs that were in demand were related to: trade, catering and hygiene and maintenance services, controllers and collectors. The reason for this was the increased volume of work during summer season and most demand was for seasonal jobs. Regarding qualification demand was for qualifications from level I to level IV, ie. unqualified work and other levels until secondary education level. It was emphasized, on every advertised position that it is necessary for the applicant to already have work experience in the field.

When it comes to other advertisements for all vacancies, a level of qualification higher than high school is required. Areas in which jobs are advertised in Bar and Ulcinj are: language teachers, psychology, pedagogy, pharmacists, directors of institutions, doctors, employees in municipalities, agricultural engineers. We have noticed that advertisements for open jobs in these 2 municipalities were mainly referred to employees in institutions owned by the state or local municipality, on the other hand private sector published only 2 job advertisements. In cases when it comes to advertisements of state-owned institutions like schools, cultural centers, tourism organizations, local municipality, communal department or similar, then there is a special requirement that applicant need to have passed a professional exam. Therefore, this means that jobs are not available for people who have not previously worked in state institutions, which is mostly the case for people with disabilities. Advertisements of this type are generally linked to the people who already work there and they need to change contract status from temporary to permanent.

The most sought additional knowledge and competencies are:

* good communication skills, which refers primarily to business communication written and verbal, but also to eloquence and good expression in general, and negotiation skills
* sales skills
* driver's licence B category – this category refers to driving cars,
* knowledge of foreign languages, primarily English, Russian and Italian
* presentation skills
* flexibility in working hours
* teamwork, setting priorities, multitasking ability, self-organization, nice behavior, kindness
* Advanced computer skills are required in almost all job advertisements, especially knowledge of working in MS Office package, where MS WORD and MS EXCEL are most often highlighted, while for certain occupations such as accounting or hospitality, knowledge of specific programs is required.

Within the required competencies and knowledge in job vacancies at the level of secondary education, it is indicative that for jobs in the field of administrative, coordination and financial activities, experience in performing certain jobs is primarily required and not the specific title of the diploma. This relates to advertisements for technical secretary, head of office, finance and marketing positions. The situation is the same with occupations within the IT sector where the main focus is on experience and portfolio as proof of the practical knowledge of performing job, where a formal degree does not mean much without concrete examples of work and evidence of experience.

For industrial-technical and medical occupations, such as electrician, locksmith / welder, nurse, etc., there is a greater focus on the profession and occupation itself (diploma, licenses and certificates are sought), although work experience is desirable.

The focus of labour demand is mostly on workforece with knowledge and experience gained through practice and work. Therefore, it is important to note that, when developing curricula and planning the implementation of formal and informal training programs for PWDs, if we really want to improve their competitiveness in the labor market, it is necessary to plan for the business practice (internships) developed through cooperation with the business sector. Business sector can support PWDs with business practice during and after the completed training. That way everything is not left only to formal training as it wouldn't have a real effect-impact on employment later. Without further support and the possibility of further learning through work experience and gaining the same, it is questionable how much applications of PWDs for job vacancies with positive results would really happen.

## Procedures and standards for the adoption of publicly valid programs for the education of persons with disabilities and programs for adults intended for the training of persons with disabilities [[30]](#footnote-30)

Given that adult education has emerged as one of the leading solutions to meet the educational needs of people with disabilities, which could make positive changes in a relatively short time and take place in parallel with the slow and sluggish process of changing the regular education process and introducing inclusive education, we explored ways to adopt educational programs designed to train people with disabilities.

In Montenegro, the situation on this issue is quite clear and regulated with specific procedures. A representative of the Department of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (Center for Vocational Education of Montenegro) presented in detail the practices and procedures in Montenegro.

Students with special educational needs mostly go to regular schools and attend regular programs, which are individually adapted to them, in accordance with the requirements of the Individual Development-Education Plan for Vocational Education. Also, in every educational program there are recommendations for its adaptation to students with special educational needs. It is possible, depending on the needs and abilities of the child, that the program is adapted only technically, methodologically, and it is also possible to adapt it in terms of content. The student can attend the entire program, or part of the program and receive an adequate certificate or diploma.

There are no special programs for adult education, but programs with adapted way of performance, in which the time and manner of performance is adapted for students with certain types of disabilities. The principle is the same as for students within inclusive education, respecting the model of human rights, individualization, adaptation, adjustment, accessibility of the process.

Adult education programs are adopted by the *National Council for Education*, as are all other programs. The Law on Adult Education specifies that public valid educational programs for primary, secondary general education and vocational education are adjusted to adults in terms of scope, organization and duration, in accordance with the law.

The methodology for designing educational programs contains a chapter on the adaptation of programs, which states how educational programs can be adapted to vulnerable groups, primarily people with disabilities. The initiative for the adjustment of the education program is submitted by a natural or legal person to the Center for Vocational Education. The initiative explains in detail the need for adaptation and the detail description of target groups for which the program is being adapted.

The Center for Vocational Education gathers its expert working group, which includes experts of the appropriate profile coming from resource centers and/or centers for professional rehabilitation, adjusts the education program in terms of the number and type of learning outcomes, content, duration of the program and verification method. Programs that have a modular structure are adapted in terms of learning outcomes for each module, content, training organization, implementation methods, program duration and verification methods. Programs that do not have a modular structure are adapted in terms of content, training organization, implementation methods, program duration and verification methods.

For programs that have a modular structure, the Center for Vocational Education identifies the modules, ie learning units that make up the customized program. For programs that do not have a modular structure, the Center for Vocational Education identifies groups of jobs or skills that make up customized programs.

Customized programs include an appendix to a certificate that identifies modules or learning units or groups of jobs or skills that an individual has mastered.

The Center for Vocational Education in the process of adjusting the educational program determines special conditions for the organizers of education in terms of teaching staff, equipment and aids necessary for the successful implementation of the adapted program

Based on the assessment of the ability of the given target group by the expert commission, the education organizer develops an individual plan (IP) for each student, or a plan for the group of students with whom he implements the education program. In the development of an individual plan, ie a plan for a group of participants, the organizer of education cooperates with the Center for Vocational Education and Resource Center, ie the Center for Vocational Rehabilitation. In the individual plan, ie the plan for a group of participants, the education organizer can adjust the content of the program up to 20%. The organizer of education is also obliged to adjust the conditions (material and technical conditions, equipment and aids, teaching staff) and the manner of realization of the education program to the needs and possibilities of the given target group.

The criteria for adjusting the content are the type and degree of disability, preserved abilities and needs of the individual, as well as jobs, tasks and requirements of a specific occupation. Based on the above, the content and learning outcomes are harmonized. Learning outcomes and contents that are estimated that the participants can apply in real work situations, are adopted at the level of mastering knowledge and skills, and others only at the level of getting to be familiar with the concept – understand the concept.

The Center for Vocational Education of Montenegro keeps records of adopted adult education programs. There are several programs that are implemented in resource centers, but individualization and modularization of educational programs are constantly applied in regular schools.

Examples of adopted adult education programs:

At the request of the Association of Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities "Ray of Hope", the adjustments for the following educational programs were made:

* Education program for acquiring the professional qualification Graphic / Graphic technician / finishing technician - for performing simple prepress tasks by persons with physical and sensory disabilities, for the needs of professional training of unemployed persons with disabilities
* Education program for acquiring a part of professional qualification units Graphic / Graphic technician / printing preparation technician – adjusting working with Graphic machines and apparatus and Printing technology to the needs of persons with disabilities with physical and sensory disabilities, for the purpose of professional training of unemployed persons with disabilities

At the request of the Public Institution Daily Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities "Pljevlja", for Education program for obtaining a professional qualification the following adjustments were made:

* Accounting Technician: for Preparation and preparation of financial statements of legal entities and Financial Accounting and Financial Reporting - for persons with motor and sensory impairments, for the needs of professional training of unemployed persons with disabilities and
* Education program for acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of persons with physical and sensory disabilities, for the needs of professional training of unemployed persons with disabilities.

## Demand for skills and occupations in Albania

In Albania there are private and public job search websites.

National job search website is presenting advertisments from National Emplloyment and Skills Agency which has 12 Regional Directorates and 24 Local Employment Offices. Usually employers come to AKPA Local Employment Offices placed in different areas, announcing the vacancies, which are then published by the National Agency for Employment and Skills on its website:

* AKPA- Agjensia Kombetare e Punesimit dhe Aftesive - National Employment and Skills Agency (<http://www.shkp.gov.al/>) and (<https://puna.gov.al/>)

There are also private job search websites:

* <https://duapune.com/>
* <https://www.anegino.gen.al/>

For the purpose of this report in collaboration with project partner we have researched last month of advertisments for program areas Skoder and Lezhe.

As far as Shkodra is concerned, every month there are on average 20 or more advertisements at companies, factories, hotels. With regards to Lezha, 62 vacancies have been advertised in the last 30 days and according to areas they are mainly on tourism which are seasonal but can last till the end of the year. While processing industry, fishing industry, services and trade are permanent and vacancies are announced thorough the all year.

More advertisments are placed on public website in checking private website the most advertised positions for Skoder and Lezhe were in sales-trade. Employers are searching for merchandiser, cashier, sales officer and product managers. In some cases we had advertisment for education level VII positions (university degree) with experience like for mechanical engeneering or programmer.

Each vacancies announcement has its specific requirements but most of them require experienced candidates. Knowledge of a foreign language is an advantage, even the commitment and dedication to work as well as the work culture. Whereas for certain professions such as accountant, manager, engineer the bachelor or master graduation is required. Also, for finance, accounting, banking and other related positions persons are required to know certain financial programs and, in most cases, to have at least 1 year of experience.

More specifically, from a research conducted on the website (https://puna.gov.al/) of the National Employment and Skills Agency on the recently published jobs, throughout Albania, shows that about 36% of the jobs require middle school studies while about 37% require high school studies. In addition, about 12% of the jobs demanded having completed a professional school. As for university education, the data do not differ and the published positions require about 13% to have completed a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

When it comes to additional skills most valued are organization skills, professional etics, communication skills, reliability and integrity. In foreign language the knowled of Englis and Italian is additionaly valued. Many positions require type B patent (driving licence).

At the local market there are various educational providers that provide training for profession.

* There are 20 licensed private vocational training centers in Lezha providing courses under payment such as: hairdresser, esthetician, foreign languages, lifeguard, financial services, gardening, cook, different tourism related services, tailoring, computer skills etc.

There are five different licensed education providers in Shkoder:

1. One State Vocational Training Center that offers various courses that change from months to months such as: plumber, mechanic, electrician, cook, receptionist, hair dresser, esthetician, barber, barmen and restaurant services, carpenter, welder, tourism guide, accounting clerk, entrepreneur.
2. Private - Vocational training center "Don Bosko
3. Private- Vocational training center "Salesian sisters”
4. Private- Intermedica Gold
5. Private- Center “Kolping”

# Proposals of occupations and skills for which PWDs can be additionaly trained

## Occupation proposals for which persons with disabilities can be subsequently trained through adult educatio

When creating training programs for specific occupations for training persons with disabilities, the generalization of persons with disabilities as a unique group is ungrateful, because there are differences: in relation to the type and degree of impairment, in the field of interest and in posibilities for acquiring certain knowledge and skills.

While people with physical and sensory impairments are oriented towards new technologies and administrative occupations and do not find satisfaction in repetitive work, people with intellectual disabilities (who today make up the majority of students in educational institutions specializing in the education of people with disabilities) are more interested in activities requiring residence outdoors or find satisfaction in specific mechanical jobs and in actions that they need to master and repeat. Experts from educational institutions specializing in the education of people with disabilities who work with students with intellectual disabilities (combined or with additional other disabilities) state that all auxiliary occupations that involve mentoring are suitable for people with intellectual disabilities.

When creating curricula for PWDs, it is necessary to shift the main focus from the type of impairment that causes disability to the individual interest and needs of the labor market.

As stated in Chapter 7, in Montenegro most vacancies are created in the sectors of trade, administrative services, support and service activities, tourism and hospitality. When it come sto the level of education most often employers seek for professional vocational profiles with secondary level – III or IV education. Occupations in the field of services, tourism and hospitality are especially demanded in Montenegro, which as country relies heavily on tourism.

Employers are mostly focused on hiring staff with secondary education - up to IV level of education, but the adds emphasize the importance of previous experience or that the candidate has gone through a system of practical - vocational education or a program of obtaining additional or different qualification or specialization. When it comes to hiring highly professional staff, the focus is on experience and professional qualifications. Jobs in the field of administration, bookkeeping and business support (legal advice, registration, etc.) are also in demand in both countries. Both countries are investing more and more in digital literacy, so information technology education programs are well attended. Knowledge in the field of IT can be applied in various occupations.

Given that focus group participants often mention that they face obstacles in attitudes towards them as PWDs when it comes to expectations about their competitiveness in the labor market. Employers perceive them as less equipped to work or as someone who would not stay much at work – activites should be done on eliminating those perception obstacles. In addition to this PWDs are also ephasizing the problem of maladaptation of working conditions and space. This is particular problem in Albania. Participants believe that a positive effect on eliminating this obstacles would bring adult education programs that also offer the possibility of "freelance" engagement and work from home. These types of business have been growing significantly recently, but statistics on them are not available because they are still not adequately included in the legal framework of both countries.

Jobs in the field of information technology are particularly attractive, sought after, well paid, but also offer the opportunity to work from home and "freelance" engagement. Our research included PWDs that operate in such arrangements and are able to provide themselves with a regular income and business sustainability. In Montenegro, considerable attention is paid to the area of ​​digital development as a horizontal priority, which is presented in the *S3 Smart Specialization Strategy*. When it comes to Albania, recently gowernment *approved Business Development Strategy for 2021-2027*, where skills improvement is special focus area of ​​implementation of the Strategy. A special priority action is dedicated to e-business development where it is expected to have 300 beneficiaries, 75 e-business / e-commerce solutions adopted by beneficiaries until 2027.

By analyzing the needs of the labor market, and taking into account the growing digitalization and rapid development of technologies, the direction in which occupational development is moving in developed countries (eg the need for environmental occupations), as well as attitudes of employers, opinions of experts in education, our analysis of the data as well as the attitudes of the people with disabilities themselves have led us to single out several occupations that we consider to suit different groups of people with disabilities and give them an advantage in the labor market.

Areas for education for occupation:

1. **Digital marketer -** A person who is trained to implement and monitor the company's marketing policy on the Internet (through websites, social networks, video platforms, e-mail marketing, Adsense ads, SEO, etc.) and use digital marketing tools to improve the company's business
2. **Graphical and 3D modeler -** A person who is trained to work in 3D design programs (AutoCad / 3D Studio / AutoDesk, 3D printer management). This occupation can also satisfy the growing need for packaging design and production.
3. **Accounting officer –** Person who is skilled to perform basic accounting tasks like evidenting business transaction, understanding tax system and provide advice, preeparation of financial and accounting reports, completing Final report and understanding basiks of business law (contracting).
4. **Entreprenerur -** Person who will be skillded to run his/her own business with understanding of: how to find and analyze business ideas, how to develop product and service, marketing, finance, management as well as legal and tax issuess of runing sustainable business
5. **Maid in hospitality –** Person trained for maid will obtain capacity to distinguish types of catering facilities, perform preparatory work in accommodation facilities, acquire knowledge about the correct receipt of orders for the use of services, acquire knowledge about how to store rooms, bathrooms, balconies, hallways, salons and other rooms. Maid tasks include proper communication with guests, handling technical means for maintaining hygiene, proper use of the book of forgotten things, preparing the daily report of the maid, keeping records of receipts for damaged things and fault records.
6. **Tourism guide -** Tour guides familiarize people with the history, functions, and customs of a particular region or establishment. They also plan itineraries in accordance with weather forecasts and the length of each tour, schedule visits and purchase tickets to museums, galleries, protected parks, and other attractions ahead of time, plan alternate activities in the event that cancellations, closures, or weather prohibit you from attending scheduled events, gathering and maintaining the requisite equipment for each tour, know wery well the layout and history of the region and each establishment.
7. **Salesperson -** Person is trained to assist customers in store, greeting customers, helping them find items in the store, ringing up purchases., check for stock at other branches or order requested stock for customers, provide customers with information about items, keep track of inventory.
8. **Internal logistic staff -** A person who is trained to work in warehouses and wholesale, where it is necessary to put emphasis on knowledge in the field of business coordination and special software (ERP) used for internal logistics.
9. **Sustainable crafts – support staff in upcycling products** - A person who would be able to create new products from old discarded materials, ie participate in their production.This is very interesting in cross border area where many programs are supporting valorization of old crafts, production of traditional products that represent the location but also use sustainable production process, the use od by-products from olive trees, grape etc.

## The most demanded additional competences that will improve employability of PWDs

According to the definition of key / general / generic competences, given in the European Commission document "Education and Training 2010", key competences are a prerequisite for an adequate personal attitude in life, work and later learning. They should be transferable and therefore applicable in many situations and contexts. They should also be multifunctional, to achieve several goals with them, solve different problems, and perform different types of tasks. [[31]](#footnote-31)

The problems in socialization that have already been mentioned, and which are especially emphasized by experts from the NGOs that support persons with disabilities, significantly affect the lack of delicate skills related to the set of personality traits, attitudes, habits, manners, communication skills, work ethic and interpersonal skills. Sufficient attention should be devoted to this problem, given that socialization problems are considered by the interviewed experts to be one of the most important reasons for unemployment of persons with disabilities.

Labor market analyzes show that employers believe that job candidates lack general knowledge, as well as social and organizational skills. There is also dissatisfaction with IT skills, knowledge of foreign languages and project management. Employers emphasize and particulary value employees that know the method of work and that have ability to set priorities; that also show interest in constant professional development, training and monitoring trends. Employees constantly evidence lack of knowledge of entrepreneurship with PWDs and in Albania PWDs are not even interested in becoming selfemployed.

The most sought additional knowledge and competencies required for the job in both countires are:

* + good communication skills- business communication written and verbal, but also to eloquence and good expression in general, and negotiation skills;
  + knowledge of foreign languages, primarily knowledge of the languages of both countries of Albania and Montenegro in the border area and then: English, Russian and Italian;
  + Advanced knowledge of working on a computer is mandatory in almost all job advertisements, especially knowledge of working in the MS Office package, where MS WORD, MS EXCEL, MS OUTLOOK are most often highlighted.
  + specific skills of product sales - persuasion, working with people, motivation
  + specific computer programs such as Photoshop, Adobe software package, as well as experience in commodity finance programs.

# Conclusion, suggestions and recommendations

The conducted research confirmed that the issue of improving education for people with disabilities in order to improve their employment in the open labor market must be approached systematically. Through workshops and multisectoral groups, it is necessary to come up with action plans that would address specific areas of education, employment, vocational rehabilitation in accordance with the type of disability, the necessary infrastructure. The special focus of these programs should be on the needs of the labor market and employers because the programs must be tailored to their needs. Such programs would to some extent bridge the gap created in the process of regular education, which is primarily created due to the mismatch of knowledge and skills that people with disabilities acquire, with the needs of employers. Both countries need to train their PWD for employment and for market, shifting the focus from what is suitable based on specific difficulty of PWD towards what market needs and what are interests of PWDs in line with market needs.

In both countries analysies and interviews show that there is much to be done to support PWDs with:

* work on their motivation for employment and selfemployment,
* more adjustment in the area of adult education is needed regarding adjusting curricula to the needs and individual difficulties of PWDs and providing technical support for specific disabilitie
* skills improvement of PWDs
* training for obtaining professional qualification
* internships for PWDs so that they can gain experience needed for almost any advertised job
* work on eliminating perception obstacles from whole society and particulary from employers and co-workers
* specific training programs for specific disability group based on individual needs

Adult education, which is emerging as a possible solution for training people with disabilities and increasing their employability and employment opportunities, in both countries is still not developed and insufficiently structured regarding adaptation of program and training provider's qualifications. Some good examples exist that can be shared.

As far as employment is concerned, Montenegro has a rather stimulating situation for employers, stimulating legal solutions regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. However, the problem arises during the implementation of adopted laws, policies and strategies, which takes time, runs late leaving the participants dissatisfied and without many concrete results when it comes to this issue. Implementation depends on whether financial resources have been ensured and to what extent, whether there has been a systematic investment in infrastructure support, whether the implementation of action plans is being monitored or whether they are just "letters on paper". Good program in Montenegro were Employment Agencu Grant Shemes that provided support to projects for employment of persons with disabilites. This program supported many iniciatives coming from Civil Sector Organizations (CSOs) that were providing employment of PWDs and supported social ventures (businesses) developed by PWDs.

When comparing laws, strategies and action plans with situation on the market it should be noted that the issue of adjustment of programs to individual needs in the inclusion system is insufficiently structured and that insufficient funds are allocated for assistive devices, teaching assistants, training of teachers to work with PWD and simmilar. As a result of this lack of implementation support users PWDs are often neglected during the education process aldough there is a legal obligation to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to education.

Large number of people with disabilities do not continue their education after finishing primary school due to various obstacles in society (lack of support services, inability to provide school attendance, lack of occupation in the place of residence that would match the abilities of people with disabilities, architectural barriers, etc.). Institutions generally do not have records or take care of these persons, given that only primary education is legally required. This creates a relatively large number of people with different types of difficulties but also with potential, who are now because of those barriers completely incapable of work, have less self esteam and motivation. There is also a lack of data regarding the working status of PWD, assessment of working abilities, acquired qualifications and skills they possess, which contributes to the fact that labor market and the implementation of active employment measures are unfavorable for them.

Regarding formal education focus groups disussion suggested following impovements:

* that curriculum should be oriented on practical trainging so that obtained knowledge can be implemented and valorized in practice;
* benefites form “*distance learning''* should be used in situation where there is lack of support services (personal assistant, adequate transport etc.). Covid sitution brought benefits as there was faster shift to digital services and education that can now be attended by more PWDs
* stronger network of all stakeholders should be created to promote interest of PWDs. This group is currently not well represented in both countires because of their inactivity and social exclusion. This network should have representatives of NGO, business sector, education institutions, public sector, state and local authorities
* educational program should be adjusted to indivitual needs of groups of PWDs but it should also reflect occupations that are in demand
* curriculum should be adjusted for more attractive jobs involving digital skills and better specialization and qualifications
* carreer guidance should be organized for PWDs

All of the above leads to the conclusion that society must offer people with disabilities additional solutions for education and skills that would put this category of population in a better position in the labor market and save from additional marginalization resulting from poverty.

We propose following recommandations for improving education and employability of PWDs in upcoming period:

* Through adult education programs, offer people with disabilities the opportunity to be educated for market-desirable occupations that are in line with their individually assessed needs and thus enable people with disabilities a greater choice of occupations and acquire skills and knowledge that will enable them employment. Some of those occupations are presented in Chapter 8
* Improve the records of persons with disabilities at the state level, which would enable better analyzes of the real situation and needs, on the basis of which more adequate measures could be created to support inclusive education of persons with disabilities.
* Prepare manual that would transparently present steps to take for adjustment of esisting programs to individual needs of PWDs. Experts should be adivsed and this should be presented and available to all training institutions.
* Intensify the removal of architectural and communication barriers in secondary schools and provide support systems such as teaching assistants and personal assistants (legally regulate the difference between these two modes of support), gesture interpreters, availability of literature in audio format (or in Braille) and thus increase the number of occupations actually accessible to people with disabilities.
* Intensify the gowernment support programs for employers where they can obtain grant for workplace adaprtation for PWDs - removal of architectural and communication barriers and work. Formally this program exist in Montenegro but it is rarely implemented and supported.
* Best practices should be transfered from one country to other when it comes to legal solutions or support programs.
* Where the type and degree of disability allow it, in the curricula to insist on the modules of information literacy and foreign language learning.
* Conduct regular monitoring of the law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities as well as the programs themselves and register possible irregularities or abuses.
* Campaigns to raise awareness of employers about the opportunities and benefits offered by existing laws in Montenegro. Support employers to apply for this support programs in direct contact with them increase their capacities so that they can provide employment support to PWSs

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