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LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION OF THE DISABLED: POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN EUROPE

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Abstract

This article presents the main findings of a multi-country comparative study of the labour market participation of a specific group: the disabled. European policies and practices to help these persons to find and hold down satisfying jobs are mapped out. An overview of the available instruments and facilities to support the integration of these 'outsiders' is then provided. The article discusses the expenditure on and performance of national systems regarding the participation of disabled persons. It concludes that financial resources are not sufficient to convince employers to offer them a job. In all selected countries employers appear to be hesitant to hire disabled persons. The article ends with an assessment of the lessons that can be learned from national good practices.

Keywords: activating the (young) disabled; employment security; flexicurity; labour market segmentation; labour market policy; participation

1. INTRODUCTION

Combining flexibility with employment security and reducing labour market segmentation with due regard for the role of social partners, are at the core of current European employment policies (Commission of the European Communities 2007). The

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key part of flexicurity policies is to provide employment security to European citizens, which is put forward as 'the new protection' in the labour market. What remains unclear is what employment security precisely is and how it can be achieved. There is no clear consensus about its meaning and measurement. In recent years, various definitions have been used in the literature. In the late nineteen nineties, employment security generally referred to protection against unfair or unjustified dismissal. For example, in 1994 the ILO reported that '[e]mployment security means that workers have protection against arbitrary and short-notice dismissal from employment, as well as long-term contracts of employment, and employment relations that avoid casualisation' (Dasgupta 2001). Subsequently, the term was used not only for people who already participate in the labour market ('insiders'), but also made a reference to people at the margin of the labour market ('outsiders'). A clear illustration for this is the employment security definition of the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). In 2007 the WRR defined employment security in a report for the Dutch government as follows¹ (WRR 2007):

- Employment security means that individuals have the confidence, based on their experience, that if necessary they will be able to continue their employment career, either in another job with their current employer or in another job with another employer.
- Furthermore, employment security means that people currently (temporarily) outside the labour force can have the confidence of being able to enter or return to the labour market.

Thus, employment security differs from job security. Hence, the definition of employment security could be best described as:

The possibility for unemployed or inactive persons to make the transition from unemployment to employment (through reintegration/activation) and the possibility for workers to remain employed, although not necessarily in the same job with the same employer (job to job transitions).

This article focuses on the integration and activation of a specific group, namely the disabled. It is about getting them to participate more in the labour market and highlights European policies and practices for helping disabled persons to find and hold down satisfying jobs. The number of young disabled persons claiming a disability benefit² in the Netherlands is growing rapidly (see Table 1 below). These are persons

¹ In this report, the WRR translates the Dutch word for employment security (*werkzekerheid*) as 'job-security'.

² This special benefit is known, in Dutch, as '*de Wajong-uitkering*'. The *Wajong* scheme came into force in January 1998 after national Disability Insurance was abolished. This national disability benefit protected citizens against the risk of disability, but when it was abolished, the government deemed it necessary to uphold a minimum benefit for persons who had not been able to work before

who are disabled from birth or who became fully or partially disabled before they reach adulthood. It also means that older disabled persons may fit within the target definition of: 'young disabled'. The term should, therefore, not be associated only with young people. This specific group can be considered as outsiders in the labour market. They have many characteristics in common with non-disabled young persons, such as the lack of work experience. On top of that the working capacities and opportunities of the young disabled are affected by their handicap.

Table 1. Long-range estimate of Dutch *Wajong* claimants (1000's)

	2002	2006	2007	2008	2010	2020	2030	2040
Inflow	7.0	13.6	15.3	16.1	16.2	16.2	14.7	15.2
Ended	3.7	4.9	4.4	4.6	5.5	6.6	8.5	9.3
Number of <i>Wajong</i> claimants	130.6	155.9	166.8	178.3	200.1	294.6	367.3	425.4

Source: UWV, Institute for Employee Benefit Scheme.

This sharp rise in the number of *Wajong* claimants is caused by an increase in (1) the intake of young disabled from secondary special education and practice-based education, (2) the inflow from the Dutch Work and Social Assistance scheme and (3) the inflow of young disabled with autism (Berendsen 2008). It means that this group will require particular attention from policies targeted at young persons to help them enter the labour market. Without such policies most of these young people will never find a job and will experience life-long unemployment. This would be a waste of talent, which would be very unfortunate in light of current employment strategies, such as the European Employment Strategy, which aim to raise the level of participation in work. Young disabled persons should not be excluded from this policy as they can often undertake suitable work, if this is adjusted to their capacities.

One question that this raises is whether there are differences in European approaches to the integration and retention of work for the young disabled. A research project was designed in which policies and experiences in seven Member States³ were collected and analysed. This study (Borghouts and Pennings 2008) aimed to describe, understand and compare national systems with respect to the integration of young disabled people into the labour market, with an eye on policy learning.

they became disabled. These disabled people (or their parents) were not able to insure themselves against the risk of disability (employees' insurance) and this is the reason why the *Wajong* scheme was introduced.

³ The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland and the Czech Republic.

2. METHODOLOGY

All European countries pursue high employment but the legal and market environments in which interventions are made are quite different. The local conditions in a country may vary even more. From a scientific perspective this makes it difficult to disentangle the causal factors when one tries to analyse and assess the different institutional settings and policy measures aimed at supporting young disabled people to find work. Because the article does not intend to propose a single (re)-integration system, the systems are compared in a pragmatic way.

The research methods that were employed were a literature review and qualitative interviews. Experts from each of the selected countries were involved in the project. Each expert wrote a national report using an elaborated format. The Dutch researchers analysed and compiled all the information in a Dutch synthesis report entitled *Arbeidsparticipatie van jonggehandicapten* (Borghouts and Pennings 2008). In addition, the national experts were asked to identify good practices regarding the integration of young disabled people. In each country two or three good practices were selected⁴ and, based on interviews with coordinators from the projects or programmes, were described. The factors conducive to success were also listed.

Employers, employees, the disabled, the government and other institutional actors play an important role in the process of formulating and implementing activation policies for this specific group of 'outsiders'. In theory each actor should try to contribute to the transition from inactivity to work. The behaviour of each actor is determined by (1) attitudinal/motivational aspects; (2) situational context, barriers, and opportunities; (3) (personal) capabilities and awareness; and (4) habits and routines. Crucial factors that play an important role for employees making transitions from job to job and for the unemployed and inactive persons from inactivity to work are: capacities, motivation and opportunities.⁵ For example: a person will tend to perform a certain behaviour (in this case the transition from inactivity to work) if he has both the capacity (e.g. skills, qualities and instruments at his disposal) and the will to work. Another condition that has to be satisfied is that the disabled person should have the opportunity to engage in the transition from inactivity to work. Circumstances beyond the control of the disabled person can favour or hinder the transition (Melissen 2005, Poiesz 1999).

⁴ For a summarised description of good practices and the selection criteria, see: www.tilburguniversity.nl/faculties/law/research/reflect/publications/publicationsgroup/2008/goodpractices.pdf.

⁵ Based on the Triad model by Poiesz (1999).

3. LAW, LEGISLATION, POLICY APPROACHES AND INSTRUMENTS PROMOTING THE PARTICIPATION OF THE DISABLED

The study (Borghouts and Pennings 2008) revealed that only the Netherlands has a special scheme (*Wajong*) for persons who were already disabled before they came of age. The Dutch *Wajong* provides an income for these persons until pensionable age if they remain disabled, and is a unique scheme in Europe. The young disabled are encouraged to take up work but this is not without difficulties. An advantage of a specific scheme is that particular policies can be outlined for this special group. On the other hand a specific scheme for a special targeted group can lead to the stigmatisation of the persons involved and this could result in problems with integration into work. On 21 April 2009, the Dutch government agreed to change the *Wajong* legislation. The new legislation, which came into force on 1 January 2010, focuses on the abilities of the young disabled person instead of their disability. In other selected countries, there are no schemes that are comparable to the Dutch *Wajong* and young people with disabilities are therefore not labelled as 'young disabled' in the administrative process. Young disabled people in these countries can apply for an incapacity benefit, an unemployment benefit, a social assistance (welfare) benefit or an early retirement benefit. The United Kingdom does have 'incapacity in youth rules'. However, this is not a special scheme for the young disabled but is, rather, a separate set of Incapacity Benefit rules for people aged 16 – 25 years.

The other selected countries do not distinguish between people who are disabled from birth or before they reach adulthood and people who became disabled after reaching adulthood in their disability-related employment programmes, activities or social insurance schemes. In general the instruments and support provided are not specifically introduced for young disabled people but for disabled persons as a whole. However, young disabled people can make use of them.

The article continues with a description of policies and supports that are generally available for disabled people, including the young disabled. Table 2 presents the relevant national laws and legislation for the disabled in the selected countries.

The study focuses on different pathways to work for those who are disabled and not on income support. In the literature, different policy types are distinguished (OECD 2003, Van Hoessel, Leeuw and Mevissen 2005). Such a classification can also be applied to policies for promoting the integration of the disabled into the labour market.

Table 2. The legal framework with regard to participation of disabled persons

Country	Relevant law and legislation for (young) disabled
The Netherlands	Incapacity scheme for young disabled Law on Equal Treatment of Disabled and Chronically Ill People
Germany	Book 9 of the Social Code – Rehabilitation and Participation of Disabled Persons Equal Opportunities for Disabled People Act Reform Rehabilitation Law in 2001
Belgium	Federal law to conquer discrimination Flemish decree regarding equal treatment and proportional participation on the labour market
United Kingdom	Disabled Persons (Employment) Act Disability Discrimination Act Incapacity Benefit under the Incapacity in Youth rules
Ireland	Disability Act (supported by sectoral plans adopted by a number of key Ministries) Code of Practice for the Employment of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service
Denmark	Law on active labour market activities Law on Social Services Law on Active Social Policy Law on compensation for the disabled in work
Czech Republic	Act on Employment Act on Social Services

Source: Borghouts and Pennings (2008).

3.1. A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The first policy approach is *rights-based*. The core of this approach is anti-discrimination legislation which prohibits discrimination against disabled people in all aspects of employment and the employment process. European guidelines and regulations have urged member states to take measures to combat discrimination against the disabled by implementing their own national legislation focusing on equal opportunities and equal treatment. The United Kingdom was one of the first countries to implement strong anti-discrimination legislation. In 1995 the Disability Discrimination Act came into force. This was long before the introduction of European guidelines and regulations which urged or obliged Member States to take legal measures to combat discrimination against people with disabilities. Subsequently, EU Member States have implemented the European Equal Treatment Guidelines in anti-discrimination laws. In most countries, these national laws focus on preventing unequal treatment and are not introduced to promote policies concerned with the reintegration of the disabled. Belgium has a federal anti-discrimination law. Besides disability, twelve other grounds for discrimination are mentioned, among them race, age and sexual

orientation. Denmark is committed to equalising chances and opportunities for disabled people but has not regulated this by law. The main reason is that legislation could lead to individualisation that would undermine the principle of solidarity, which is a feature of policy in Denmark. In Denmark, a disabled person is entitled to priority in applying for a public sector job and has a legal right to be interviewed for such a job. The public employer has to explain why they have not employed a disabled person who has been interviewed for that job. A key aspect of Danish disability policy is what is called 'sector responsibility'. This implies that 'the authority, organisation or company responsible for the supply of services or aids to citizens in general has the same responsibility to ensure and finance these services for people with a disability' (Danish Disability Council 2006).

3.2. AN OBLIGATIONS-BASED APPROACH

The second policy approach is *obligations-based*. Policies for employment promotion for the disabled can be shaped by obligations. Germany is a country in which employers have to deal with a great deal of compulsion as a result of the requirements of its anti-discrimination legislation. For instance, in Germany employers are obliged to review vacant jobs in order to determine whether they are suitable for disabled persons (section 81 of Book 9 of the Social Code). Another illustration is the German mandatory employment quota that exists for both private and public employers. Companies with more than twenty employees are obliged to employ severely disabled people in five per cent of their workforce. Employers who do not achieve the quota have to pay a monthly compensatory levy. This ear-marked tax is used to finance employment opportunities for disabled people and public support for their employers. German companies are also required to adjust their workplaces and working schedules and to improve access for the disabled. Belgium, Ireland and the Czech Republic also have mandatory employment quotas. However, the elaboration of these quota schemes differs in these countries. For example, in the Czech Republic companies with more than 25 employees are obliged to have four per cent of disabled people among their workforce. Employers who cannot meet these criteria have to pay a certain amount to the government. An alternative is to purchase goods from employers with a proportion of 50 per cent or more of disabled people among their workforce. In Belgium and Ireland, the quota relates to only the public sector. The Netherlands and Denmark do not have quota systems and in the United Kingdom the quota scheme introduced by the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 was abolished in 1996. The imposition of sanctions against those who refuse to participate in programmes is an important aspect of an obligation-based approach. The participation of the disabled in specific programmes may be required before a disability benefit is granted and the benefit may be reduced in a series of steps if the claimant does not fulfil agreed responsibilities. This is, for example, the case in the United Kingdom.

3.3. AN INCENTIVE-BASED APPROACH

The third policy approach is *incentives-based*. Incentives are positive measures to stimulate the integration of the disabled. The positive incentive-based approach is most explicit in Denmark and is more residual elsewhere. For example, in Denmark a mentor helps the disabled person who enters the labour market to feel secure at the workplace. Denmark also has personal assistants who can be hired to assist with practical occupational functions. The personal assistant has the task of doing part of the work that the disabled person is not able to do. This can be collecting goods, carrying heavy things, interpreting for a deaf person, functioning as a secretary, etc. This kind of supported employment also exists in Ireland, where the Assisted Living Services provide the services of a personal assistant to individuals with a physical or sensory disability and thereby facilitate employment, and in the UK. Furthermore, in Ireland a job coach is available for persons who are 'job ready', meaning that the disabled person is able to work a minimum of 18 hours per week and has his own means of transport. A job coach supports both the individual and the employer.⁶ In the Netherlands job coaches are also involved in supporting young disabled people to gain access to and to retain employment.

There was a plethora of instruments, facilities and subsidies available to employers in the selected countries to assist them in employing and retaining workers with a disability. Most countries provide subsidies to employers or to the disabled person for making adjustments to the workplace. For example, in Ireland the employer can apply for a grant towards the costs of adapting premises or equipment. This grant is known as the Workplace Equipment Adaptation grant. The Access to Work programme in the United Kingdom aims to remove practical barriers that disabled people face in obtaining or retaining work by providing support such as help with travel costs, special equipment or adaptations. The Job Introduction Scheme in the United Kingdom pays a weekly grant to an employer towards wages or other employment costs, such as additional training during the first six weeks that a disabled person is employed. The job can be full-time or part-time, but must be expected to last for at least six months. A wage subsidy is an incentive to encourage an employer to hire a disabled person. A new wage subsidy system has been recently announced in Belgium. During the first year of employment, the Flemish support subsidy⁷ will be 30 per cent of the total wage cost, with the possibility of additions if the employer can show that the productivity gap is larger than this. In this way the subsidy can increase to a maximum of 60 per cent of wage costs. Another illustration is the Danish 'ice-breaker' support. Seriously disabled persons with an education can be hired with a wage subsidy of 50 per cent for up to six months, and in special cases for up to nine months (Bengtsson 2008). Another instrument that has a positive effect on reintegration is the Danish

⁶ Under the FÁS (Training and Employment Authority) Supported Employment Programme.

⁷ Called VOP, Vlaamse Ondersteuningspremie.

'flex-job', which aims to create jobs for those who have a permanent lack in their working ability. Offering a 'flex-job' is only possible when all other types of activation have already been tried out. In the Netherlands, employers have to continue to pay the salary of an employee who becomes ill for the first two years of sickness. This can be an obstacle to hiring a disabled person who may have a higher risk of being absent due to sickness. A no risk insurance policy has been introduced for the young disabled. This means that Dutch employers are not obliged to continue paying the salary when a young disabled person gets ill. In that case the young disabled person receives a benefit from the UWV.⁸

Some countries have so called 'work trials'. For example, Dutch employers can try out young disabled people before deciding whether or not to hire them permanently. During this trial period, which lasts three months, the young disabled person receives the *Wajong* benefit. A comparable incentive measure exists in the United Kingdom, although the period is limited to 15 days. Some countries attempt to stimulate the integration of the disabled by providing information both to public and private employers. In Ireland this information is given through one-to-one support, websites, conferences, information packs, etc. This information is acknowledged as being extremely useful in itself, but the overall sense is that there is no centralised support mechanism to turn to for help. In the Czech Republic, employers have the right to request and receive any information they need to create employment for disabled and handicapped persons. The labour offices should provide this information. In addition, in the Netherlands and Ireland, awards are presented for best practice regarding the employment and inclusion of people with disabilities. Examining all aspects of employment, the awards recognise progressive attitudes in those organisations that see disability and diversity as a corporate asset and key to success. The examples described above are illustrative of the positive incentives that countries can provide to employers and (young) disabled people for enhancing their labour market participation.

Incentives can also be 'negative' measures to discourage activities that reduce labour market participation. The United Kingdom takes the view that work is the best route out of poverty for most people including the disabled and the UK Government has introduced policies that can be described as mixing 'sticks' (the threat of benefit sanctions for those who do not participate) and 'carrots' (a range of financial and other support mechanisms to help people move into work). In the United Kingdom several programmes, e.g. the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), 'Pathways to Work', WORKSTEP, the Work Preparation Scheme, and the 'Access to Work' programme, have been introduced to assist disabled people to enter the labour market:

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), which was introduced in 1998, is a voluntary programme, providing a Job Broker/Personal Advisor to help disabled

⁸ The Dutch UWV is the Institute for Employee Benefit Schemes. It is a public organisation and is responsible for granting the *Wajong* benefit.

people enter or remain in work (Stafford with others 2007). The services provided include:

- matching skills and abilities to the needs of employers;
- identifying training needs and working with local training providers;
- helping with job applications;
- financial and other support during the first six months in work.

Until the roll out of 'Pathways to Work', the New Deal programmes provided the major strand in the strategy of encouraging and helping disabled people into mainstream work. 'Pathways to Work' was introduced as a pilot scheme in 2003 and, as announced in the 2006 Green Paper, *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering people to work* (DWP 2006), the national rollout was completed in early 2008. As a result of the low take up of the voluntary arrangements under NDDP, new incapacity benefit claimants will be required to have a work focused interview unless they have a severe disability or are likely to make a claim for only a short time. The key elements of Pathways to Work are:

- a series of mandatory work focused interviews starting eight weeks after a new claim for incapacity related benefits;
- new specialist advisers known as Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers;
- coordinating timing of medical assessments with work focused interviews;
- interventions, known as the 'Choices' package, to support a return to work, which includes the 'Condition Management Programme' (developed by Jobcentre Plus and local National Health Service providers) and many of the existing programmes to support incapacity benefit claimants into work, including the New Deal for Disabled People.

In 2001, three years after the introduction of the NDDP, the United Kingdom Government reformed the specialist disability-related employment programmes to support people with the most complex problems in finding, entering or staying in work, with the reformed Supported Employment Programme being renamed WORKSTEP, and the Industrial Rehabilitation Units (which had been renamed Vocational Rehabilitation in 1991) becoming the Work Preparation programme.

Vocational rehabilitation and training is in many cases essential for achieving or retaining employment. European countries have different approaches when it comes to providing rehabilitation and vocational training. In some countries, including Denmark, a benefit claim is automatically treated as a request for vocational rehabilitation. Danish people are supported in achieving the right qualification level for entering the labour market. An educational plan with a pathway towards the labour market needs to be established. The plan should take into account the work abilities of the individual and (expected) job-openings in the labour market. In August

2007, a special three year education for 'weak' young persons, including persons with physical disabilities and cognitive impairments, was started. The municipalities are formally responsible for this new, more targeted type of special education. It includes some ordinary teaching subjects (like Danish, Maths and Social Science), but it also contains education on how to live (including cleaning and cooking), how to get a job (including norms and rules of behaviour in the labour market and training in a subject) and leisure time activities. This education aims at achieving an independent life. In Germany, vocational rehabilitation and training is also (semi) compulsory and plays a key role in the employment system. It is conceived of as the backbone of professional education. Where suitable conditions exist, both disabled and non-disabled persons should receive the same training or work with employers. A joint professional qualification in vocational training for both disabled and non-disabled persons creates opportunities for effective and lasting participation of disabled persons in the general labour market, since it enables the disabled to get accustomed to the demands of everyday work life. Training is contracted out to private providers. In other countries, vocational rehabilitation and training is provided on a voluntary basis and subsidies can be provided for job training. For example, in the Czech Republic the Labour Office may reimburse the costs to an employer who provides job training for disabled employees. Another example is the 'Condition Management Programme' in the United Kingdom, a work-focused rehabilitation programme that emphasises self-management, which is delivered as part of the Pathways to Work 'Choices' programme in partnership with Jobcentre Plus' Personal Advisors. In the Netherlands subsidies are available to support education and integration into the labour market.

All the selected countries have sheltered workplaces in case the above mentioned instruments and facilities are not sufficient. Moreover, some of the countries have integrated companies or workplaces. Integrated workplaces exist in Ireland, Belgium ('*invoegbedrijven*') and Germany ('*Integrationsfirmen*'). The Irish enterprises have a workforce that is made up of approximately 50 per cent people with a disability and 50 per cent non-disabled personnel. The aim is that the enterprise should be commercially viable while also affording each individual the support and adaptations needed for carrying out the work at hand. The Rehab Enterprise group runs such workplaces in Ireland. Belgian enterprises that create jobs for the low skilled unemployed can be qualified as '*invoegonderneming*'. Disabled persons who are inactive for at least six months can be eligible for the status of 'invoeg' employees. Nowadays, companies can decide how many 'invoeg' employees they want to hire and a subsidy is then granted for four years. The German '*Integrationsfirmen*' employ a minimum of 25 per cent and a maximum of 50 per cent severely disabled persons. At first glance, these companies appear to work like normal enterprises – they are fully integrated into the market and can barely be distinguished from 'ordinary' companies in that they follow the general principles of competition in the market. However, '*Integrationsfirmen*' are under the control of public administration. People whose disability is too severe to work in an integrated company can get help from '*Werkstätte für behinderten Menschen*'

(WfbM). In the United Kingdom, people facing the most significant barriers to work, including the young disabled, can gain employment from 'Social Firms'. These are market-led businesses and at least 50 per cent of their income should be received from trade. The rest of their income will be from other sources, e.g. from annual grants from a charity or local authority or from WORKSTEP contracts. There is a national umbrella for 'Social Firms' in the United Kingdom called 'Social Firms UK'. The Czech Republic is starting to develop social firms and is taking the UK social firms as an example of good practice. Social firms exist in the Netherlands too but they resemble sheltered workshops because 80 per cent of employees are severely disabled. The main difference is that the Dutch social firms are private initiatives without support from the government (Smit, Genabeek, and Klerkx 2008).

4. THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS, INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The disabled person and the employer are jointly responsible for successful transitions from inactivity to work and from job to job. It is clear that most young disabled people cannot enter the labour market without support and without adjustments to the workplace. These supports and adjustments provide the disabled person with the *capacities* and *opportunities* to work. Employers should have the right competencies (knowledge, attitude and skills) to be able to help the disabled person to make the transition from inactivity to work. An interesting question to address is whether employers are willing to offer jobs to disabled persons. Despite all the instruments available, in all the selected countries employers appear to be hesitant to offer a job to the disabled (Bollens *et al.* 2008). Denmark is a country which embraces 'corporate social responsibility' as a principle. Despite the debate on 'corporate social responsibility', research indicates that 57 per cent of Danish companies have negative feelings in relation to offering jobs to disabled people (Business dk 2007). Danish employers have no legal obligations other than conforming with the law of non-discrimination. It seems that Danish companies accept their responsibility towards employees who are already employed by the company and are faced with a disability or illness (insiders), but not towards disabled people that are not already working for the company (outsiders) (Greve 2008).

The strict dismissal-protection legislation in Germany is an important obstacle to German employers offering young disabled people a job (Litz, Eichenhofer and Jenak 2008). The government tries to encourage German employers to hire young disabled people by providing public subsidies and, as mentioned before, by operating a mandatory workforce quota.

Two thirds of Dutch managers indicate that disabled applicants have less chance of being employed than equally-qualified candidates with no disabilities (Petersen, Vonk and Bouwmeester 2004). In a recent piece of research, Dutch companies who had not

previously employed a young disabled person were asked if they were open to hiring a young disabled person. 42 per cent of the companies confirmed that they were, 45 per cent said explicitly that they were not, while 13 per cent gave the answer 'don't know' (Lierop 2009). The extra attention and extra time that a company has to invest in a young disabled employee are the main considerations that hamper employers from employing a young disabled people. Research carried out in the United Kingdom for the Department for Work and Pensions found that while nearly all employers (94 per cent) stated that their workplace always sought to recruit the best person for the job regardless of any disability, many felt that taking on a disabled person was a major risk for the employer (33 per cent) and that their workplace would find it difficult to retain an employee who became disabled (47 per cent) (Roberts *et al.* 2004, Roberts 2008). Workplaces that have in the past employed or currently employ disabled people were more likely to say that it was easy to employ a person with a disability. Employers were more likely to hire persons with a physical disability than people with a mental disability. Often employers did not know how to cope with mentally disabled persons in work situations.

Other institutional actors and service providers can be called in when the transition from inactivity to work does not occur with the sole involvement of the disabled person and the employer. In the Netherlands, there is a clear division between the private and public domain with regard to the reintegration of young disabled persons. The Dutch UWV is a public organisation which is responsible for granting the *Wajong* benefit. Private reintegration services offer so-called reintegration trajectories. Employment-related services for disabled people in the United Kingdom are provided by a mix of the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. The Department for Work and Pensions contracts providers from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors to deliver the programmes. Remploy is a Non-Departmental Public Body which is run as a private company. It is also available for disabled people who are not able to work in the mainstream labour market. Remploy is the largest employer of disabled people in the United Kingdom and delivers several programmes, e.g. WORKSTEP, New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) and Work Preparation.

In Germany, the rehabilitation funds of various insurance organisations play a crucial role in the integration of the disabled. In public administration, three organisations exist to deal with the integration of disabled and handicapped persons: the integration office (*InTEGRATIONSÄMTER*), the Federal Agency of Employment (*BUNDESAGENTUR FÜR ARBEIT*) and the special integration services (*INTEGRATIONSFACHDIENSTE*). The integration office is responsible for the workplace-related problems of disabled persons and collects and distributes the quota compensation levy for the severely disabled. The Federal Agency of Employment, and its regional and local divisions, is a central organisation that provides services to both employed and unemployed persons. For disabled persons the Federal Agency of Employment provides career advice and vocational support. The local agencies are also responsible for determining the degree of disability. The special integration

service is a special agency for disabled workers. Its traditional responsibility lay in the supervision of the employers' obligation to employ severely disabled people. Nowadays this public organisation specialises in the integration of disabled persons at the local level. Integrated companies (*Integrationsfirmen*) are private companies and are established to assist the severely disabled to participate in the regular labour market. The *Werkstätte für behinderten Menschen* (WfbM) are private non profit organisations that receive public financial support.

In general, the organisation of support for the disabled in the other selected countries is conducted by public organisations, sometimes with help from private parties, volunteers and/or churches. In the Flemish part of Belgium, a disabled person who is looking for a job will universally follow the same route that other jobseekers have to follow. Persons with an employment disability can get specialised support in obtaining work. The public employment services in Belgium and Denmark have local jobcentres/workshops that provide help to jobseekers. The main responsibility for disabled persons entering the labour market is in the hands of local job-centres. The Danish Job Centre *Vejde* has been given the special role of ensuring consistent support and knowledge in helping young disabled persons. This specialised jobcentre gives advice to consultants working in the other job centres indicating that specialised support is needed to help young disabled people to enter the labour market. A high level of knowledge is necessary in order to provide the best support for disabled people and those who employ them.

In the Czech Republic, the local public labour offices are responsible for the integration of disabled persons. There is no cooperation between the public labour offices and local self-governing authorities (municipalities). Municipalities are not involved in employment policies at all in the Czech Republic.

5. EXPENDITURE AND PERFORMANCE

Table 3 provides an overview of expenditure on the integration of the disabled (European Commission 2005). An interesting detail is the relatively low spending in the United Kingdom, while the employment rate of the disabled is one of the highest (54.6 per cent, see Table 4). Only the Netherlands has a higher percentage (58 per cent) of disabled people who are employed, but total expenditure on the integration of the disabled as a proportion of total labour market expenditure is also highest in the Netherlands. Denmark appears to be the biggest spender on measures to support activation of the disabled in relation to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Table 3. LMP expenditure on integration of the disabled (in million Euros), as a percentage of total LMP and as a percentage of GDP (2003 data)

	BE	CZ	DK	DE	IE	NL	UK	EU15
Total expenditure on the integration of the disabled, millions Euro	310.7	n.a.	981.5	3,310.8	50.8	2,150.8	323.6	10,728.4
Expenditure on the integration of the disabled as a percentage of the total LMP expenditures in a country	3.3	n.a.	12.1	n.a.	n.a.	16.7	2.8	n.a.
Expenditure on integration of the disabled as a percentage of GDP	0.115	n.a.	0.524	0.153	0.038	0.473	0.020	0.114

Source: Eurostat.

The programmes, instruments and supports offered to the disabled are hardly monitored in the selected countries. This study shows that there are various instruments and support designed to help disabled people to participate in the labour market, but it remains unclear what the take-up rates are and whether or not these interventions are effective. There are hardly any recent figures available in the selected countries regarding the participation and re-integration of the young disabled. An explanation for this is that other countries do not have special schemes for the young disabled. Thus, young disabled people are difficult to trace in the administrative data files because they are not labelled as young disabled. However, the European Labour Force Survey (LFS) was consulted in order to gain some insight into the number of disabled people in the selected countries. In order to provide data for the European Year of People with Disabilities (2003), the 2002 LFS contained an *ad hoc* module about the employment of disabled people. Persons aged 16–64 years living in private households were asked to complete a questionnaire – disabled persons were persons who stated that they had had a longstanding health problem or disability (LSHPD) for six months or more or which they expected to last six months or more. Although the LFS definition of 'disabled' does not fit completely with the definition of 'young disabled', it does provide some comparable information about the numbers of disabled people in the selected countries.

Table 4 shows that, in all selected countries, disabled people are less likely to be employed than non disabled persons. The percentage of disabled people working in 2002 varied from 40.5 per cent in Ireland to 58 per cent in the Netherlands.

Table 4. Proportion of employed, unemployed and inactive persons, 2002 (as a percentage of the total population aged 16–64)

	BE	CZ	DK	DE	IE	NL	UK	EU25
Employed								
Total percentage	60.7	66.7	77.0	66.5	66.5	74.5	72.9	65.0
Disabled persons ⁹	42.6	47.9	52.8	43.3	40.5	58.0	54.6	49.6
Persons without a disability	64.3	71.5	83.1	69.4	69.5	80.2	79.8	68.0
Unemployed								
Total percentage	4.5	5.1	3.5	6.2	3.0	2.0	3.9	5.5
Disabled persons	5.5	7.1	3.5	8.7	2.8	2.5	4.0	5.4
Persons without a disability	4.3	4.5	3.5	5.9	3.0	1.8	3.8	5.5
Inactive								
Total percentage	34.8	28.2	19.5	27.3	30.5	23.5	23.2	29.5
Disabled persons	51.9	45.0	43.8	48.0	56.7	39.5	41.4	45.0
Persons without a disability	31.3	24.0	13.5	24.7	27.5	18.0	16.4	26.6

Source: Eurostat, Labor Force Survey.

The Netherlands had the highest employment rate of disabled persons in 2002 (58.0 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom (54.6 per cent) and Denmark (52.8 per cent). Table 5 also indicates that, compared to the other selected countries, the Netherlands has the highest percentage of disabled people aged 16–24 in employment (67.8 per cent). In the other countries, this rate varies from 32.1 per cent in the Czech Republic to 61.8 per cent in Denmark. We may provisionally conclude that the Dutch special scheme for the young disabled contributes to this relatively favourable figure. The relatively high expenditure on the integration of the disabled as a share of total Dutch labour market policy (LMP) expenditure may also have had an impact on this rate.

Due to the special *Wajong* scheme more information is available in the Netherlands about the *young* disabled. A quarter of the young disabled that recently applied¹⁰ for a *Wajong* benefit participated in wage-based work in 2007: 19 per cent in mainstream employment and six per cent in a sheltered workshop (Berendsen 2008). Furthermore, nine per cent participated in a trajectory aimed at finding mainstream employment and ten per cent did voluntary work or daily activities in a centre.

⁹ These are persons who indicate that they suffer a long standing health problem or disability (LSHPD) for 6 months or more or expected to last 6 months or more.

¹⁰ This concerns the inflow of young disabled people into the *Wajong* scheme during the period 2002–2006.

Table 5. Proportion of employed, unemployed and inactive persons by age, 2002 (percentage of the total population with a disability aged 16–64)

	BE	CZ	DK	DE	IE	NL	UK	EU25
Employed								
Total	42.6	47.9	52.8	43.3	40.5	58.0	54.6	49.6
16–24	33.2	32.1	61.8	48.9	39.5	67.8	54.8	45.2
25–34	61.0	60.7	68.2	65.8	55.6	73.5	63.5	64.4
35–44	57.3	68.1	63.1	59.8	50.2	68.0	63.5	63.1
45–54	47.0	62.8	53.1	53.8	41.7	62.4	61.1	57.3
55–64	18.6	26.2	35.8	24.4	27.0	32.1	39.0	29.8
Unemployed								
Total	5.5	7.1	3.5	8.7	2.8	2.5	4.0	5.4
16–24	8.3	9.2	6.8	9.0	6.6 u	4.2	10.4	9.6
25–34	11.8	10.8	4.2	11.4	5.3 u	3.5	5.8	8.0
35–44	6.8	10.5	4.5	12.2	2.7 u	3.8	4.5	6.9
45–54	4.5	9.4	2.3	11.3	2.0 u	1.8	2.9	5.5
55–64	1.6	2.2	2.5	5.1	1.0 u	1.0	1.6	2.4
Inactive								
Total	51.9	45.0	43.8	48.0	56.7	39.5	41.4	45.0
16–24	58.6	58.7	31.4	42.1	53.9	28.0	34.8	45.2
25–34	27.2	28.5	27.6	22.8	39.1	23.0	30.7	27.6
35–44	35.8	21.4	32.4	28.0	47.1	28.2	32.0	30.0
45–54	48.5	27.8	44.5	34.9	56.3	35.9	36.1	37.2
55–64	79.8	71.6	61.7	70.6	71.9	66.9	59.3	67.8

Source: Eurostat.

Abbreviation: u= unreliable.

6. LESSONS LEARNED FROM NATIONAL GOOD PRACTICES

In the previous sections, different policy pathways and instruments for integrating disabled persons into employment were described. In this section, we highlight national good practices. The aim of the study was to investigate whether or not individual countries could learn from good practices elsewhere. The case studies were based on face to face interviews and reviews of documentary material carried out by the national experts. They interviewed the coordinators and managers of several projects and relevant organisations, representatives from the Ministry, Jobcentres and other non departmental public bodies. The success factors that were mentioned in the

interviews and documents are linked to the three crucial factors of the Triad Model: Motivation, Capacities and Opportunities.

Table 6. Actual participation status of recent inflow of young disabled into the Dutch Wajong scheme (inflow years 2002 – 2006, status in 2006)

	Total (percentage)
Mainstream/regular job	19
Trajectory aimed at working in a mainstream job/job-seeker	9
Sheltered Workshop	6
Be on a waiting list for a Sheltered Workshop place	3
Voluntary work/ daily activities in a centre	10
(Temporary) no participation capabilities/opportunities	28
Education	14
Wajong benefit ended	6
At home, no participation	1
Possibilities are further investigated	1
Unknown	2
Total	100

Source: UWV.

6.1. MOTIVATION

The interviews indicated that, in order to successfully enter the labour market, both the employer and the (young) disabled person needed to be motivated and committed to re-integration. Unpaid participation in an integration pathway to work seems to be a good indicator of the motivation and the commitment of the disabled. Positive feedback from employers about performance in the workplace increases the motivation and self-esteem of (young) disabled people. Work that is as regular as possible also stimulates self-esteem. Furthermore, prior to placement, the expectations of the disabled person, the employer and colleagues should be clear. Another success factor for programmes that promote work for the disabled is the moral and financial commitment of all parties involved in the project.

6.2. CAPACITIES

The capacities of disabled persons and employers can be tested when a disabled person gains work experience in several workplaces. The workload should be adapted to the capacities of the disabled person, and employers (and colleagues) should accept lower productivity. Employers are often more willing to offer a disabled person a job when they are not confronted with extra costs. Knowledge of the available support

and facilities is needed. Furthermore, colleagues should agree to the hiring of a disabled person and they should be given the correct information about the worker's disability and what they can expect from him/her on the work floor. Employers and institutional providers should have a thorough knowledge of the target group. For that reason, a good assessment is needed to obtain information about what the disabled person needs and what the pitfalls are. In practice, employers and colleagues often do not know how to cope with the worker's disability. Supplying information about the disability and how to cope with it can be helpful.

6.3. OPPORTUNITIES

When a disabled person is motivated and has the right capacities but there are no jobs available, the transition from inactivity to work cannot take place. In other words, the disabled person should have a real opportunity of entering the labour market. This means providing support in organising the disabled person's personal life. The most effective and efficient way for institutional providers to find suitable work for (young) disabled people is to focus on:

- connections from the network of employers;
- employers who already hire (young) disabled persons;
- companies with vacancies which are difficult to fill or who are short of qualified staff;
- municipalities that are starting new projects
- small and medium sized employers (they appear to be more flexible than larger ones).

Additionally, a trial period provides the employer and the employee with an opportunity to find out whether or not the job is suitable for the (young) disabled person.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Employment security is a relatively new concept and is used rather loosely in discussions of policy as well as in academic circles. Several definitions of employment security are used in the literature. The concept of 'employment security' should be further elaborated by connecting it to other theoretical concepts. The definition of employment security that is proposed in this article is '[t]he possibility for unemployed or inactive persons to make the transition from unemployment to employment (by means of activation and/or reintegration) and the possibility for workers to remain employed, although not necessarily in the same job or with the same employer (as a result of job to job transitions)'. This definition covers not only insiders, but also

outsiders. Policymakers should have an eye on those two 'streams' and combine measures appropriate to each of them as much as possible.

The aims of this article were to understand and describe national systems, policies and practices regarding the integration of young disabled persons into the labour market, with an eye on policy learning. Perhaps the most interesting overall conclusion that can be drawn from it is that the Dutch 'Wajong' scheme for persons who are disabled from birth or who became fully or partially disabled before they reach adulthood, is unique in Europe. In the other selected countries there are no similar schemes for young disabled persons. The young disabled in these countries can apply for an incapacity benefit, an unemployment benefit, a social security benefit (welfare) or an early retirement benefit. Specific policies for targeting groups have the advantage that they try to find solutions for the specific problems of the young disabled. A disadvantage of a specific regulation is that it could lead to stigmatisation. More generic policies create unity, but ignore the specific problems of the young disabled and, in the end, fail to provide a solution for them.

Due to the special *Wajong* scheme, more information about young disabled people is available in the Netherlands than in the other selected countries. As a result, new developments regarding this group can be pointed out more quickly and it ought to be easier to formulate new policies. Any possible negative effects, such as stigmatisation and exclusion from the labour market, also appear in the other countries and need to be combated through effective integration policies. In the selected countries hardly any information is available about the effectiveness of integration measures and other policy measures regarding the young disabled.

The study shows that different legislation, instruments and supports exist in the selected countries to help disabled people enter the labour market. An interesting question to be addressed is the effectiveness of the different policies, instruments and programmes. Unfortunately, this study revealed that there is little monitoring of the programmes and instruments. The only labour market participation figures available are from the European Labour Force Survey, which included an *ad hoc* module regarding the employment of disabled people. In 2002, the participation of disabled persons was the highest in the Netherlands (58.0 per cent), followed by the United Kingdom (54.6 per cent) and Denmark (52.8 per cent). We can provisionally conclude that distinctions between the different policy approaches (rights based, obligations based or incentive based) make little difference to employment rates. Compared to other countries, the Netherlands had the highest percentage (67.8 per cent) of disabled people aged 16–24 who were employed in 2002, followed by Denmark (61.8 per cent) and the United Kingdom (54.8 per cent). We conclude that the relatively favourable employment figure for disabled young people in the Netherlands may be a result of the Dutch special scheme for the young disabled and the relatively high expenditure on integrating the disabled as a proportion of the total labour market policy (LMP) expenditure. Yet, an interesting detail is that, despite the relatively low expenditure in the United Kingdom on the integration of the disabled, the labour

market employment rate of the disabled as a whole is the second highest (54.6 per cent) after the Netherlands. What makes the United Kingdom so successful if they – compared to other countries – spend so little? Denmark appears to be the highest spender on measures to support the activation of the disabled in relation to Gross Domestic Product, but why is the employment rate of disabled persons lower than that in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom? These questions cannot easily be answered on the basis of the present study. Further research is necessary to provide explanations for these observations.

It is important that integration instruments work well, not only on paper. Integration policies for the disabled should be implemented in full and the instruments should be used. New jobs should be created or existing jobs should be adjusted to integrate more disabled persons into the labour market. Financial incentives are clearly not enough to convince employers to employ young disabled people. In all the selected countries, employers appear to be hesitant to hire disabled people. Three factors are crucial to successfully integrating young disabled people into the labour market: Motivation, Capacities and Opportunities. The challenge lies in connecting actors in a system from the perspective that each party has his own motives, capacities and opportunities to do their best to make the transition from inactivity to activity succeed.

Finally, every country has its own culture and approach when it comes to offering support to the disabled in helping them to find a suitable job. By looking at experiences in other countries, lessons can be learned, but it is not possible to take what may be successful in one country and simply transplant it into another. The often long-standing relationship between the different forms of coordination and regulation in any given country cannot easily be undone.

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