

A man with a beard is sitting in a wheelchair, looking down at a tablet computer he is holding. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong light source from the left illuminating his face and the wheelchair. The background is dark. The entire image is framed by a blue border with rounded corners.

**Do you employ  
people with  
disabilities?**

**Then you don't just  
talk about diversity,  
you live it!**



**NORDIC CHAMBER**  
OF COMMERCE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

## Dear Members of the Nordic Chamber of Commerce,

Diversity in the workplace and the attendant issue of flexible working is a topic that has been much discussed in the media and on professional networking platforms. The current state of the labour market and the extremely low unemployment rate, in addition to the themes of diversity and flexibility, are openly debated. In the Nordic countries, equal access to jobs, working conditions and opportunities are a natural part of our culture and values. Supporting these values and sharing our experiences is therefore a core part of what the Nordic Chamber of Commerce does. The theme of diversity is incredibly broad. It concerns gender equality, mothers re-entering the workforce after maternity leave, equal access to jobs irrespective of age, employment of people with disabilities, support for the LGBT community, etc. These and many other groups are now supported by a wide range of projects.

As a pilot initiative, the Nordic Chamber of Commerce is offering its members an introduction to the issue of employment of people with disabilities. It is a specific field where companies are regulated by legislation, which was amended at the beginning of 2018. We want to guide you through the topic, give you all the necessary information in one package and show you the benefits of employing people with disabilities. I believe this guide, prepared together with the expert team at Revenium, z.s., will ease the process of finding a way to properly harness the potential of employing people with disabilities. Society is not divided up into women and men, healthy and handicapped, young and old. Society when viewed as a whole becomes balanced and well functioning and greater than the sum of its parts.

*Nils Jebens / President  
Nordic Chamber of Commerce*

## A potentially advant-ageous obligation: Legislation, Myths and False Beliefs

There is a common misconception about what constitutes a person with a disability. Most people will instantly imagine a blind person, or someone in a wheelchair. Many companies cannot provide barrier-free access or the necessary safety features to accommodate these disabilities; however, there is a much broader spectrum of Persons with Disabilities (PwD), including people with allergies, asthma, cancer survivors, coeliac disease, or psoriasis. Firms see only complications when it comes to employing PwD; they fear the arduous process of persuading management, prejudice amongst staff members, the need for building modifications, etc. Nevertheless, this reluctance to „complicate life“ can lose your business money.

### **Obligations of the Employer**

Any entity on the free labour market, be it a commercial company, state-owned, or a non-pro-fit organisation with more than 25 employees – must ensure 4% of its personnel are Persons with Disabilities (PwD). Employing a person with a 3rd-degree disability is equivalent to hiring three employees with a lesser disability.

### **If a company does not employ PwD, it makes up for this by:**

- making contributions to the state budget amounting to 2.5 times the average wage in the relevant year for each PwD it fails to employ.
- purchasing products or services from companies where PwD comprise more than 50% of the total workforce at a rate of seven times the average wage in the relevant year for each missing PwD (so-called "substitute performance").

### **Sheltered Employment**

In sheltered workshops, more than 50% of the staff are disabled. These enterprises have a written agreement with the Employment Office recognising their status and can provide goods and services for so-called substitute performance.



## Myths and False Beliefs

It is impossible to fire a disabled colleague.

The Labour Code has for many years offered no special protection of PwD. The same rules apply to both regular and disabled workers.

People with disabilities are more likely to fall ill.

Statistics do not show this. In actuality, labour market experience shows that companies which employ disabled workers enjoy higher staff morale, this resulting in less sick leave taken.

An employee with a disability is less resistant to stress and more likely to struggle with their workload.

This applies only in isolated cases and a more rigorous recruitment process could eliminate issues further down the line.

It is necessary to expect poorer and inconsistent performance from a handicapped employee.

If a person with a disability is in an appropriate working environment and suitable team, the impact of their disability can be mitigated to such a level that has no discernible influence on the operations of the company.

Workplaces with disabled workers will have more problems with health and safety risk management.

This is an unconfirmed prejudice.

The employment of disabled people is associated with higher administrative costs.

This applies only if the employer makes use of certain contributions and instruments of the Employment Act.

## Who is a Person with Disabilities (PwD)?

Professional and legal definitions delineate this as a person who has a limited ability to work due to illness, injury or a congenital disorder.

A person with a 3rd-degree disability (e.g. a physically handicapped person or PH), often has a visible disability, or has recently undergone treatment for a serious illness.

A person with a 1st-degree disability - often not visible to others - includes diagnoses such as psoriasis or thyroid disorders, etc.

A person with a 2nd-degree disability may have asthma, multiple sclerosis, or have undergone cancer treatment.

A physically challenged person does not receive an invalidity pension but has a health impairment; for example, coeliac disease, allergies, or visual and hearing problems.

# What kind of diagnoses can a PwD have?

## Psychological Disorders

Psychological disorders include a wide range of mental issues such as: personality disorders, mood disorders, neurotic disorders and schizophrenia. Psychological disorders are characterised by behavioural and communication problems and issues with social interaction, but not with impaired intellect. People with psychological disorders can pursue any profession for which they have an aptitude or have been trained in. However, due to their fluctuating symptoms, this group of people tends to have a problem with completing set tasks and achieving defined goals, especially in stressful situations.

## Visual Disability

It is classified as a sensory disability. Visually impaired people present different types and degrees of visual impairment. Impaired vision affects everyday activities and nor-

mal optical correction is no longer sufficient. Fundamental problems include spatial awareness, independent movement and literacy. Blindness is now one of the world's most serious problems. According to the World Health Organisation, the number of blind person in the world is around 45 million, and 135 million are visually impaired. People in developing countries have 5 to 10 times greater risk of blindness than those from industrialised nations. This is mainly due to poor living conditions and lack of medical care.

## Hearing impairment

The term hearing impairment includes three basic categories: deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing. In the Czech Republic, according to Act No. 155/1998 Coll., on communication systems of the deaf and blind persons, as amended by Act No. 384/2008 Coll., (full text

under Act No. 423/2008 Coll.), the term “deaf person” can be used for someone who has congenital or prelingual hearing loss; or those with complete or practical deafness with postlingual hearing loss. Additionally, it encompasses those who are very hard-of-hearing, where the extent and nature of their hearing impairment precludes full understanding of spoken language.

### **Physical disability**

A physical disability is usually confined to problems with locomotor function, which includes bones, joints, muscles, etc; or damage to the nerve tract. The main characteristic of a physical disability is the total or partial limitation of movement, which causes major difficulties during normal activities. It is a long-term or permanent condition that has an impact on social interaction, gaining further experience, areas of cognitive, emotional and spiritual well-being, amongst others.

### **Internal and immunological diseases**

This covers disabilities and diseases of the internal organs or adverse reactions in the body. The most common are cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, digestive tract disorders, chronic infections or post-transplant complications, etc. Immune system diseases are mostly serious diseases requiring long-term, sometimes lifelong treatment and a specific regimen and approach. Examples include psoriasis, anaemia, thyroid disorders, diabetes mellitus, allergies, asthma, and rheumatoid arthritis.



## **Oncological Diseases**

Cancer or tumour disorders are a diverse group of diseases. There is a distinction depending on whether a neoplasm is malignant or benign, and whether the surgical removal of the tumour impacts other bodily functions. Amputations or resections (stoma) can also occur as a result of cancer.

## **Neurological diseases**

Diseases that interfere with the central, peripheral or autonomic nervous system. May affect cognitive, motor and sensory functions. Examples include migraines, multiple sclerosis, stroke, epilepsy, and Parkinson's disease.



## Is it worth it? What will the employment of a PwD bring?

Around one million people with disabilities live in the Czech Republic. About 700 thousand are of working age. According to experts, there are roughly half a million people who are afraid to publicly admit that they have a handicap. Most admit they fear misunderstandings by employers and colleagues, or even losing their jobs. Another reason may be that they do not want to receive special treatment, because they know they can do their job as well as anybody else. A company with such employees would do better to convince existing and well-proven employees to register as a PwD at a Labour Office, rather than create new roles for PwD. What motivates staff depends on each company. Some may be motivated by the fact that they 'know' the company, so they need not feel guilty every time they go to the doctor's or take sick

leave, and are not perceived by colleagues as being 'slackers.' Money can also be a motivation. By employing a disabled person, the employer can get an income tax credit of up to 60 000 CZK, as well as saving tens of thousands by fulfilling their legal obligation to employ a PwD. If the company is legally obliged to employ one person with a disability, the contribution to the state budget will be 72 000 CZK per year. Or the company can buy commodities from a sheltered workshop for CZK 201 000, excluding VAT per year. However, please that note, if a company employs a PwD, not only do they not have to deal with any of the above, but the company can claim an income tax credit and apply for a contribution towards office equipment of up to 50 000 CZK. All in all, employing someone with a disability can save you up to 300 000 CZK per year!

## Other benefits in terms of a corporate brand

### Benefits to society

A disabled person who is dependent on social benefits is a burden for the whole of society. However that person has a job, society benefits.

### Social benefits

If you employ a PwD, you are helping those with disabilities to maintain their mental health, gain a sense of self-reliance and their value to society, but also to gain expertise. An improvement in their health can be objectively linked to the reinforcement of self-esteem and psychological well-being. In addition, you gain hardworking and loyal employees. Thanks to staff diversity, it is possible to reduce stress in the workplace, strengthen company morale, and reduce staff turnover.

### Competitive Advantage

According to the latest research, we are increasingly buying goods from manufacturers that invest in corporate social responsibility. The same applies to employees. Even here, surveys show a clear increase in the number who prefer a responsible employer and feel greater loyalty to one.

## Where to start: aka good preparation will save you time

A very important step before deciding to employ people with disabilities is to make a thorough assessment of the company.

The following questions can help you in determining whether your company is ready to employ PwD, or where its weaknesses lie:

- Who supports the employment of PwDs in the company: the management or personnel department?
- Do you have any managers who are disabled (with a thyroid disorder, for example)?
- Is there prejudice against PwDs amongst staff?
- Do you have the option of job-sharing or part-time employment in your company?
- Do you have a positive experience with diversity and a flexible approach to work?

- Do you offer PwDs any benefits?
- Have there been other instances and situations where you have succeeded in changing attitudes and approaches? In what ways?

Try to focus on these points and reply to the following questions:

- Why do you want to employ PwDs?
- How does this goal fit into the overall strategy of your organisation?
- How do you expect to benefit?
- To what extent are you willing and able to accommodate the special conditions which are sometimes necessary when employing PwDs?
- If you are a large company, specify how you will motivate your recruiters to give a PwDs a chance..

- In your view, pinpoint, as accurately as possible, the job or jobs you are willing to employ a PwD for, including the candidate's qualifications and personal skills, as well as a basic idea of what type and degree of disability would allow any future employee to work as unhindered as possible.
- be prepared to change or modify your ideas according to the specific options and abilities of your employee (adjustments to the workplace and working hours, type of contract, remote working, etc.).
- the job description should cover only the basic parameters of the role (if possible). You will fill in further details as the specific health limitations of the prospective employee become apparent.

### Operational Audit

The first real step that should be done by any company that has no experience of employing PwDs is

an audit of the offices, work-places and relevant jobs. Where appropriate, an internal survey should be carried out to gauge staff opinion. The office audit will tell you who you can employ and specifically what type of disability your workplace can handle.

Example: A dusty warehouse is not suitable for allergy sufferers and asthmatics, but it is not a problem for someone with impaired hearing.

The audit also shows what specific adjustments would need to be made and how demanding (even financially) it would be.

Example: for wheelchair users you would need to build a barrier-free entrance; remove door thresholds; purchase ramps; build disabled toilets; and modify the kitchen so that a wheelchair user can be self-sufficient. For people using crutches, equip the workplace with non-slip carpet, etc.

## **So you have decided to employ a PwD - What more do you need to consider when defining suitable job positions?**

- Can the employee benefit from some form of alternative job contract (working from home, part-time, flexible working hours, the option of dividing their work hours or job-sharing)?
- Will the employer adapt the job and way of working to the individual needs of the disabled worker?
- Is the job suited to a particular disability (barrier-free access, lighting, size of workspace, necessary technological equipment)?
- Is the position appropriate for specific types of disability (some situations may be impossible for a PwD; e.g. a lot of stress, carrying heavy objects, no opportunity to rest, speaking on the telephone, working with internal IT systems, etc.)?
- Will there be a stand-in cover (due to a possible increase in sick leave, doctor's visits)?

The type and severity of a disability often does not have as much influence as it would seem at first glance. The acceptance and successfully integrated employment of people with disabilities must be a shared task for the whole company, including senior management. It cannot solely be entrusted to HR, line managers or other specialists. PwD are good and reliable employees, and are often more responsible and loyal than others. You can find good all-rounders and those with more specific talents with great development potential. Integrating these people into regular workplaces can have a positive influence on the behaviour, motivation and social intelligence of other colleagues, in turn, cultivating corporate culture.

## Let's get recruiting!

### Company Training

If a company decides to employ a PwD, it is necessary to comprehensively train recruiters and HR on any likely issues, such as communication, related legislation, the specifics of recruitment, and employment.

If a company creates a job, that is suitable for a PwD, it must not forget to inform employees, especially colleagues of the disabled person. It is advisable to organise training or workshops for those who will come into contact with the PwD. It is good to prepare them in advance for any situations that may arise, and to eliminate any personal prejudices and barriers.

Example: Someone with epilepsy is a „normal“ person who does not require special treatment. It is just good to know how to react if a colleague has an epileptic seizure while at work.

Example: Communicating with a deaf person is very straightforward, so long as they can read our lips. Shouting or gesticulating is useless. It is important to respect that the conversation starts only when our deaf colleague can see us. We do not speak to the side of them or from behind.

The employment of disabled people has its specifics with which it is good to get acquainted in advance and prepare for. Much of the responsibility for the success or failure of the PwD employee the company falls on the line manager; it is therefore necessary to pay due attention to the training of managers.

## Where and how to look for a suitable PwD /how to address them?

To find suitable candidates, companies can use the following channels:

- internal recruitment - tell existing employees about job openings available to the PwD, and to motivate them to recommend people they know.
- advertise the job offer on the intranet or company career site. The clearer the job spec, the better.
- regular job ads, but with the following qualification: „Position is suitable for a PwD.“
- advertise on free websites catering exclusively to employers searching for employees with a modified working capability
- cooperate with universities. Each university has an educational department for students with specific disabilities. Through them you can find and develop great colleagues!
- non-profit organisations aimed at supporting disabled workers
- offer internships to PwD work placements allow you to get an idea of the professional and personality requirements of the position and the disabled intern will see what it is like to work for the company!
- take advantage of supported employment services. These provide both disabled people and employers with comprehensive services, including advice or work assistance.
- cooperate with the local Labour Offices (each department has a specialist to advise on PwD).



## How to select a suitable candidate?

In addition to discussing the necessary knowledge and professional competencies of the applicant at the interview, please keep the following in the mind:

- demonstrate and test the job  
Discuss if any additional office equipment or potential remodelling is needed to meet the specific needs of the candidate;
- information about working hours, length of breaks required and opportunities to work remotely;
- visits to all areas of the workplace where the employee could or should move around; and
- arrange meetings with colleagues who may be working closely with the applicant, or their potential stand-in cover (meeting the rest of the staff can wait until later).

## Be aware that:

- it is advisable to allocate a longer time for the interview;
- the candidate may attend the interview with an assistant or other chaperone (communicate with the applicant, do not use the assistant as an intermediary);
- the candidate may have problems articulating their answers clearly during the interview; and
- the candidate may be increasingly or overly nervous or agitated.

## Discuss with the candidate:

- if they are able to work under time pressure (mental illness);
- if they need more rest breaks (physical disability);
- if they need to set longer work intervals (mental illness);
- if they can carry heavy things (physical disability);
- if they have problems working in open-plan offices (mental illness);

- if they are bothered by the heat or cold (physical disability);
- if they can work in a dusty environment (asthma, epilepsy); and
- what type of employment contract would be most suited to the candidate's health condition.

### Evaluating the Interview

Follow the same process as with other candidates, therefore assessing:

- the candidate's expertise,
- communication skills,
- special skills, and
- foreign language skills.

In the event you intend to turn down a person with disabilities, whether based on their CV or interview, candidate feedback is very valuable. Inform them as honestly as possible as to why they were rejected, as people often feel that they were rejected because of their disability. Obviously this is neither good for their self-esteem nor for your firm's reputation.



# The legal framework: What you need to know

## The employment of PwD is enshrined by several laws:

- The Constitution of the CR;
- Act 435/2004 Coll.; on employment;
- Labour Code 262/2006 Coll.;;
- Decree Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 518/2004 Coll.;;
- Act 155/1995 Coll. on pension insurance (definition of invalidity criteria);
- Act 586/1992 Coll. on income taxes;
- Law on equal treatment, the so-called anti-discrimination law; and
- Act No. 117/1995 Coll. on state social support.

The Constitution and the Labour Code put disabled and healthy workers on a level playing field! By employing a PwD, you avoid further administrative duties.

## What the employer is entitled to:

- Income tax credit of 18 000 CZK for a PwD with a 1st- or 2nd- degree a disability, and 60 000 CZK for a PwD with a 3rd-degree disability;
- Contribution for socially progressive jobs (up to 24 months salary contribution);
- Contribution for creating jobs for disabled people;
- Contribution to cover the operating costs incurred when employing a disabled person; and
- Contribution for preparing a PwD for work.

ATTENTION - You are still required to submit a form to the Labour Office by February 15th, detailing your employment of a PwD, or for the purchase of goods or services from a sheltered workshop for the previous year.

## Substitute performance

Since October 2017, you must electrinely register all invoices for products or services that are purchased through substitute performance. After the supplier from the sheltered workshop has logged information about the product, service or order, the buyer will receive an automatically generated email asking them to confirm the transaction details. Logging received goods, services or orders in the substitute performance register on the supplier's side is not a guarantee to the buyer that they were delivered under the substitution performance scheme.

Where it concerns substitute performance, it is the buyer's responsibility that the procurement of goods, services or orders is carried out in accordance with the conditions stated in the Employment Act.



## AUTOŘI PROJEKTU



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THANKS TO ALL, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE BROCHURE  
AND PROMOTE THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



phone: +420 774 123 370

e-mail: [info@nordicchamber.cz](mailto:info@nordicchamber.cz)

[www.nordicchamber.cz](http://www.nordicchamber.cz)

Václavské náměstí 51, 110 00 Prague 1