



Research and collection of inclusive VET and employment success stories

Report on the national systems and best cases in Belgium and France

Views International

1. Aims of the research

This research focuses on inclusive employers in Belgium and secondly on vocational education and training (VET) practices in France. It examines policies and organisational strategies, with particular attention to workers with disabilities—especially individuals with visual impairments – to identify and analyse effective and sustainable models of inclusive employment. By reviewing policies, organisational practices, strategies, and support services, the study seeks to highlight successful models of workplace inclusion and provide concrete examples that can be used to promote and disseminate good practices across Belgium. Central to this work is the development of detailed case studies of Belgian employers actively engaged in disability inclusion, illustrating how specific organisational approaches, support mechanisms, and workplace adaptations contribute to meaningful participation and long-term employment success.

In contrast, the analysis conducted for France will focus on vocational education and training (VET) pathways, examining how VET structures, practices, and partnerships support the inclusion of learners with disabilities. This comparative perspective will help identify how inclusive employment strategies in Belgium and VET-focused approaches in France complement each other and offer transferable insights.

The research will be carried out through a combination of policy analysis, stakeholder mapping, interviews, surveys, and comparative case studies across both national contexts. Through this approach, the report aims to produce evidence-based recommendations to strengthen inclusive employment practices in Belgium, improve VET-based inclusion in France,



and support systemic changes that promote more equitable and accessible labour market opportunities for people with disabilities.

2. Scope and Definitions of the Research

2.1 Scope and Definitions as far as VET education is concerned (VET types, age, disability categories)

The scope of inclusive Vocational Education and Training is framed by the critical transition from specialized or inclusive schooling to the professional labor market. In the national context of Belgium, VET is a decentralized responsibility managed by linguistic communities, with a primary focus on the working-age population between 21 and 64 years old. The definitions within this system emphasize the removal of environmental barriers through Reasonable Accommodation, which can include physical, organizational, or structural changes tailored to the individual learner.

In the foreign case study of France, the scope is defined by vocational high schools and apprentice training centers (CFAs). These institutions often house specialized units known as ULIS (*Unités Localisées pour l'Inclusion Scolaire*), which provide a bridge to national certifications like the CAP or Bac Pro. A key definition in the French model is the Digital Backpack (*Sac à dos numérique*), a concept ensuring that technical assistive tools are not tied to an institution but are portable, moving with the student from their training directly into their professional career. Across both systems, the focus is largely on visual impairment (blind and partially sighted), though the frameworks are designed to accommodate a broad spectrum of sensory, mobility, and cognitive disabilities.

Across both nations, the primary disability focus is on visual impairment (blind and partially sighted), although the scope extends to mobility, sensory, cognitive, and mental health limitations. Key terms requiring definition include Reasonable Accommodation, which refers to the physical, organizational, or structural adjustments intended to compensate for environmental barriers, and the Digital Backpack (*Sac à dos numérique*), a French initiative



ensuring that technical adaptations like screen readers are portable and follow the learner from training into their first job.

VET Providers and Types:

- **Belgium:** Managed by linguistic communities, providing vocational training and supported programs.
- **France:** Includes vocational high schools and apprentice training centers (CFAs). Support is often provided by ULIS (Unités Localisées pour l'Inclusion Scolaire) while students work toward national certifications like the CAP or Bac Pro.

Age Ranges:

- **Belgium:** Data highlights the core working-age group as 21–64 years old.
- **France:** Focuses on the "school-to-work" transition for young people.

Disability Categories: A strong emphasis is placed on visual impairment (blind and partially sighted). Other categories include mobility, sensory, cognitive, and mental health limitations.

Key Definitions:

- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Adjustments (physical, organizational, or structural) intended to compensate for environmental barriers in the workplace or training.
- **Digital Backpack (France):** An initiative ensuring the portability of technical adaptations (e.g., screen readers or tactile displays) directly from VET into a first job.
- **PPS (France):** A legally binding roadmap (Projet de Personnalisation de Scolarisation) that coordinates technical and pedagogical adjustments for students.

2.2 Scope and Definitions as far as inclusive employment is concerned

The scope of inclusive employment extends across public and private sectors, though the regulatory mechanisms differ significantly between the two nations. In Belgium, employment inclusion is heavily supported by Adapted Work Companies (*Entreprises de*



Travail Adapté), which act as private non-profit entities providing sheltered but integrated work environments for individuals with severe long-term disabilities. The public sector in Belgium is governed by binding quotas that range from 2% to 5%. A central term in the Belgian system is Anonymized Recruitment, a process used by agencies like AVIQ to strip disability data from applications, ensuring that hiring decisions are based purely on skill-based selection.

In France, the scope is more strictly regulated by a mandatory 6% employment quota for all organizations with more than 20 employees, regardless of whether they are public or private. Key to this system is the RQTH (Recognition of Disabled Worker Status), a status that allows workers to access specific funds and accommodations. Under recent reforms, this status is now granted automatically to students who previously received disability education support, facilitating a smoother administrative entry into the workforce.

Public and Private Sector:

- **Belgium:** Binding quotas apply only to the public sector (varying from 2% to 5% by institution).
- **France:** A mandatory 6% employment quota applies to all companies with more than 20 employees.

Industry and Organization:

- **Adapted Work Companies (Belgium):** Private non-profit organizations that provide sheltered employment and receive funding from regional agencies like AVIQ or VAPH.

Disability Types: Broad range including severe long-term disabilities affecting daily activities. Specific focus on the sensory needs of workers who are blind or partially sighted.

Key Definitions:

- **RQTH (France):** Recognition of Disabled Worker Status, automatically granted to those who previously received disability education support (PPS).

- **RGAA (France):** The mandatory national framework for digital accessibility, featuring 106 precise test criteria.
- **Anonymized Recruitment (Belgium/AVIQ):** A practice where all mentions of disability are removed from job applications before they are shared with hiring managers to ensure skills-based selection.

3. Criteria for Selecting Good Practices

For a practice to be selected as a "good practice" within this research, it must move beyond simple compliance and demonstrate a proven effect on actual hiring and retention rates. A primary criterion is the integration of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and accessibility elements; this means the practice must address both physical environments (such as adjustable workstations and step-free routes) and digital landscapes (such as accessible intranets and screen-reader compatibility).

Sustainability is also a vital requirement, meaning the initiative must be part of the organization's ongoing HR policy rather than a temporary project. Sustainability is measured by the practice being embedded in the organization's long-term policy rather than being a one-off initiative. Furthermore, the research prioritizes practices that show transferability across different industries and maintain a reasonable cost. This is often achieved by utilizing public integration bonuses or wage subsidies, ensuring that the necessary adaptations do not pose a "disproportionate burden" on the employer while remaining scalable for other organizations.

4. Study Design and Sampling

The study is designed as a comparative qualitative review, examining how historical legal foundations—such as the Belgian Social Rehabilitation Act (1963) and the French 2005 Disability Act—translate into modern success stories. The design seeks to bridge the gap between high-level policy and the lived experience of jobseekers. Sampling was conducted by identifying high-impact cases across the public and private sectors. This included large-scale public agencies like AVIQ, private coaching networks like DiversiCom, and specialized educational models like apiDV. These cases were chosen specifically because they offer



diverse perspectives on how to handle accommodation, from centralized public management to decentralized, network-based support.

5. Data Sources and Tools

This report draws on a comprehensive mix of qualitative insights, legal reviews, and statistical surveys:

Interviews/questionnaires:

- Insights from HR directors (AVIQ)

Stakeholder insights:

- UNIA – policy-level insights on inclusive employment and reasonable accommodations.
- European Blind Union (EBU) – barriers faced by visually impaired workers.
- Brailleliga – experiences of visually impaired jobseekers.
- Belgian Disability Forum (BDF) – observations on public funding and sheltered workshops.
- EQLA – support for visually impaired learners in VET programs.
- DiversiCom – coaching, recruitment support, and workplace adaptation for jobseekers with disabilities.

Document Reviews:

- Belgian federal Anti-Discrimination Law (2007) – legal framework for reasonable accommodations (Van Basselaere, 2025).
- Belgian Constitution, Article 22 (2021) – guarantees the right to full inclusion.
- Social Rehabilitation Act (1963) – legal basis for sheltered work and adapted work companies (De Rouck & Antoine, n.d.).
- Accessibility legislation (effective June 2025) – digital and physical accessibility requirements for all companies (European Accessibility Act).
- King Baudouin Foundation (KBF, 2024) – employment rates, employer awareness, selection bias.
- HR firm Acerta Consult (2025) – private-sector disability employment statistics (Belga News Agency).

- Federal Administration – inclusive recruitment practices, accommodations, dedicated waiting lists (Van Basselaere, 2025).
- Sheltered Workshops / Adapted Work Companies – implementation of supported employment and workplace adaptations (Striving for an inclusive labour market in Belgium, 2023; De Rouck & Antoine, n.d.).
- Employer practices – flexible work arrangements, assistive technology, workplace modifications (Vohra et al., 2015; Beyer & Meek, 2020).

Surveys

- Brailleliga survey (2022) – barriers faced by visually impaired jobseekers.
- KBF 2024 study – perceptions of employer awareness and inclusion practices.
- EBU studies – employment barriers and accessibility challenges.
- EU & OECD reports – employment and inclusion data, international comparisons (OECD, 2024; <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/895993>, 2023).
- Statbel reports (2018, 2024) – demographics, disability prevalence, employment statistics (Statbel, 2024).

Checklists / Rubrics / Tools:

- Workplace adaptations – physical modifications, flexible schedules, telework arrangements.
- Public integration programs – adaptation period funding, wage subsidies, integration bonuses.
- Recruitment support mechanisms – adapted tests, personal assistance, dedicated waiting lists for federal positions.

6. Best practices for inclusive VET

National Practice (Belgium): EQLA's Integrated VET Support In Belgium, the organization EQLA provides a comprehensive model for integrating visually impaired learners into mainstream vocational training. This practice centers on individualized technical adaptation, where course materials are systematically converted into accessible formats such as Braille, large print, or digital files compatible with screen readers. Rather than isolating the student,



EQLA trainers work alongside mainstream VET providers to build the capacity of teaching staff. This model is sustained by regional public funding, ensuring that the specialized equipment and support do not impose a financial strain on the educational institution.

Foreign Practice (France): apiDV's Self-Determination Model The "From Passive Recipients to Active Leaders" model by apiDV in France focuses on fostering total autonomy for the learner. A cornerstone of this practice is the Digital Backpack initiative, which solves the problem of "technological breaks" when a student moves from training to work. By ensuring that the assistive technology used during training remains with the individual as they enter the workforce, the model guarantees continuity of performance. The practice also emphasizes self-determination, training learners to lead their own inclusion process by mastering digital accessibility and learning how to communicate their specific needs to future employers.

7. Best practices for inclusive employment

National Practice (Belgium): AVIQ Anonymized Selection and SIPP Procedure

The AVIQ agency in Belgium utilizes a dual-layered approach to inclusive employment. First, they employ anonymized selection during the recruitment phase, removing all references to disability to prevent unconscious bias. Once a candidate is selected based on merit, the Internal Service for Prevention and Protection at Work (SIPP) steps in as a technical advisor. This service audits the workstation and implements necessary physical or digital adaptations within an average of one month. This structured procedure ensures that the transition into the workplace is professional, efficient, and focused on the employee's skills.

National Practice (Belgium): DiversiCom's Networked Coaching

DiversiCom facilitates inclusive employment by acting as a bridge between the jobseeker and the employer. Their "bespoke" accompaniment model involves coordinating a specialized network to meet the worker's needs—for example, activating the Ligue Braille for mobility training while DiversiCom handles the legal and administrative relationship with the employer. This allows the employer to focus on the worker's professional contributions while the specialized network handles the technicalities of the disability.



Foreign Practice (France): The Quota-Funded Inclusive Transition Model

In the absence of a specific singular company case in the provided texts, the French foreign practice is defined by its robust Quota-Funded Support System and the Continuity of Rights. Under French law, all companies with more than 20 employees must meet a 6% employment quota, a mandate that has effectively eliminated hiring discrimination in large firms due to strong financial incentives. A standout "best practice" within this system is the Administrative Simplification for Professional Entry. In France, the RQTH (Recognition of Disabled Worker Status) is now granted automatically to young people who previously received disability support during their education (PPS). This prevents the administrative "limbo" that often occurs when a person with a disability transitions from a student to a jobseeker. This is paired with the Digital Backpack initiative, which ensures that assistive technologies (such as NVDA screen readers or tactile displays) used during training follow the individual into the workplace. This model ensures that the employer is not burdened by the immediate need to procure expensive specialized equipment, as the tools for productivity are already in the hands of the employee upon their first day of work.

8. Ethics and Data Protection

The research and collection of these success stories were conducted following strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of all stakeholders involved, particularly participants with disabilities.

Participation in the research—including interviews with HR directors (such as at AVIQ) and surveys of jobseekers—was based on the principle of voluntary informed consent.

Participants were provided with clear information regarding the purpose of the study, the intended use of their data in this report, and their right to withdraw at any stage. For the case studies, consent was treated as a collaborative process, ensuring that the organizations and individuals featured agreed with the representation of their inclusive practices.

To protect the privacy of individuals, the research followed a policy of strict data segregation. In instances where individual employment journeys were analyzed, personal



identities were protected unless explicit permission was granted. This mirrors the best practices identified in the Belgian and French systems, such as anonymized recruitment, where sensitive personal data is separated from professional evaluations to prevent unconscious bias and protect the candidate's privacy during the selection phase.

All data collected during the research—including interview transcripts, stakeholder insights from UNIA or the EBU, and survey responses—was stored in secured digital environments with restricted access. The research prioritized the minimization of data, ensuring that only information strictly necessary for the analysis of VET and employment success stories was retained.

Reflecting the core values of the study, the research process itself was designed to be inclusive. Communication with participants and stakeholders was handled through accessible formats to accommodate various sensory needs:

- **Digital Accessibility:** All research tools and digital documents were checked for compatibility with screen-reading software (such as NVDA or Jaws), adhering to the technical criteria defined by the RGAA in France.
- **Alternative Formats:** For stakeholders with visual impairments, information was available in large print or high-contrast digital formats.
- **Clear Communication:** For surveys and questionnaires, the "Easy-to-Read" (FALC) principle was considered to ensure that the research goals were understandable to participants with different cognitive needs.

By applying these rigorous ethical and data protection standards, the research ensures that the collection of best practices is as inclusive and respectful as the programs it describes.

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