



Best practice for inclusive employment

(NASOR)

Title of the best practice

Agency for Social Development “Vision”

Company context

Agency for Social Development “Vision” (ASD Vision) is a well-established non-governmental organization in the public and social sector, founded in 1997, based in Bulgaria, employing around 250 staff across its head office and regional branches. The organization has become a recognized example of inclusive employment, demonstrating how people with various disabilities can be successfully integrated into meaningful and productive work.

Diversity and inclusion are embedded in the organization’s culture and operational practices. While diversity in management is still developing, the Human Resources department leads efforts to ensure that employees with physical, sensory, or intellectual limitations are provided with the support they need to thrive. This includes accessible workplaces, flexible schedules, mentoring, and the possibility to work remotely when required. Internal policies on anti-discrimination, health and safety, data protection, and accessibility guide these practices and ensure that inclusion is systematic rather than temporary.

ASD Vision’s approach is strengthened through a wide partner network. The organization collaborates with public institutions, social service providers, employers, and professional experts, as well as participating in national and international forums and projects focused on accessibility and inclusive employment. These partnerships not only provide guidance and resources but also help to share and scale the organization’s good practices beyond its own operations. As a result, ASD Vision has established itself as a model institution, showing that with structured support, clear policies, and a committed culture, employees with disabilities can contribute effectively, feel valued, and develop professionally.

Problem and motivation

ASD Vision observed a growing need for inclusive employment practices, as many qualified individuals with disabilities faced barriers to entering or remaining in the workforce. Signals for this need came both from within the organization, through employee feedback highlighting challenges in accessibility and support, and from the wider community, where



clients and partner organizations emphasized the importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce.

The motivation for change was grounded in the organization's mission to serve people with disabilities. As a provider of social and support services, ASD Vision recognized the importance of leading by example, demonstrating that individuals with physical, sensory, or intellectual limitations can contribute meaningfully in professional roles when given appropriate support. This drove the implementation of structured inclusive practices, including accessible workplaces, flexible schedules, mentoring, and tailored professional development, ensuring that inclusion became a standard, sustainable part of organizational operations rather than a temporary measure.

Governance & ownership

At ASD Vision, inclusive employment practices are led and coordinated by the Human Resources department, which serves as the executive sponsor for diversity and inclusion initiatives within the organization. While the organization does not yet have a formal diversity committee, responsibility for inclusive practices is distributed across HR, line managers, and mentors, ensuring that policies and accommodations are consistently applied. HR oversees the implementation of accessibility measures, training, and flexible work arrangements, while managers provide day-to-day support and guidance to employees with disabilities. Mentors and volunteer colleagues play a crucial role in onboarding, coaching, and monitoring employees' progress, creating a collaborative system of shared ownership that reinforces a culture of inclusion throughout the organization.

Compliance & policy

ASD Vision operates under a comprehensive framework of internal policies and procedures that ensure full compliance with national legislation and international standards, with a particular focus on anti-discrimination, health and safety, accessibility, and data protection (GDPR). The organization is committed to fostering an inclusive work environment where employees with disabilities are treated equitably and have full access to professional opportunities. Anti-discrimination policies are applied throughout all organizational processes, including recruitment, onboarding, career progression, allocation of tasks, and participation in projects and training activities. These policies ensure that no employee is excluded or disadvantaged on the basis of disability, and that reasonable accommodations are systematically provided according to individual needs.

In practice, these policies are implemented through multiple concrete measures. Accessible workspaces, adapted equipment, flexible working hours, remote work options, and mentor support are provided to employees with physical, sensory, or intellectual disabilities. The



organization also conducts regular training sessions for managers and staff to reinforce awareness of anti-discrimination principles and to ensure that inclusive practices are consistently applied.

Data protection and GDPR compliance are integral to the management of sensitive employee information. Health-related data, personal development records, and accommodation requests are stored securely and accessed only by authorized personnel, including HR, line managers, and mentors. This ensures confidentiality while allowing the necessary monitoring and support of employees with disabilities.

Furthermore, ASD Vision monitors the effectiveness of these policies through regular audits, feedback mechanisms, and consultation with employees and partners. By combining formal compliance with active implementation, the organization ensures that inclusion is not merely a regulatory requirement, but a central and operationally embedded part of its organizational culture. This structured approach allows ASD Vision to serve as a model for inclusive employment in the social and public sector.

Practical approach

ASD Vision implemented a comprehensive set of practical changes to create an inclusive, supportive, and sustainable working environment for employees with disabilities. These changes encompassed organizational processes, roles, technologies, and support structures, all carefully coordinated to ensure that employees could fully participate in professional activities and develop their careers.

On the process level, the organization introduced structured procedures for requesting accommodations, including flexible working hours, remote work options, and access to mentors who provide guidance and ongoing support. The onboarding process was adapted to include gradual workload integration, buddy systems, and accessible training modules, ensuring that employees with disabilities could transition smoothly into their roles. Standardized procedures were also applied for monitoring employee progress, engagement, and satisfaction, linking feedback to continuous improvement of support measures.

In terms of roles, responsibility for inclusive practices was distributed across Human Resources, line managers, and mentors. HR served as the executive sponsor, coordinating policy implementation, overseeing accessibility measures, and ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination and GDPR regulations. Line managers provided day-to-day supervision, guidance, and adaptation of work tasks, while mentors and volunteer colleagues supported employees in skill development, workplace integration, and problem-solving.

Technologies and tools were introduced or adapted to ensure accessibility. This included accessible office equipment, communication support such as FM systems for those with partial hearing loss, accessible digital platforms and intranet. These technologies were



combined with alternative formats for training, ensuring that employees with varying types of disabilities could fully participate in professional development opportunities.

The timeline for these changes was gradual and iterative, with structured implementation over several years. Individual accommodations, such as flexible schedules or assistive technologies, were typically implemented within 7–14 days of request, while broader organizational changes, including process revisions and training programs, were developed and refined continuously based on feedback and monitoring outcomes.

The impact of these changes has been significant. Approximately 20 employees with diverse disabilities, including mobility impairments, sensory limitations, intellectual disabilities, and health-related conditions such as oncology diagnoses, have benefited from the inclusive practices. Practical effects observed include increased engagement, improved productivity, higher motivation, enhanced confidence, and a greater sense of security in the workplace. Employees have been able to participate meaningfully in both individual and collaborative tasks, with several achieving professional recognition and successfully advancing in their careers, demonstrating the effectiveness of the integrated approach.

Through these coordinated measures, ASD Vision has established a replicable model of inclusive employment, demonstrating how a structured, well-supported approach can transform organizational culture and create equitable opportunities for employees with disabilities.

Reasonable accommodations process

At ASD Vision, the process for providing reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities is formalized, structured, and designed to be responsive to individual needs. Employees who require accommodations submit a request through the Human Resources department, specifying the type of support or adjustment needed, such as flexible working hours, remote work, adapted equipment, or mentoring.

Each request is reviewed and approved jointly by HR and the employee's line manager to ensure that it meets the operational requirements of the role while fully addressing the employee's specific needs. Mentors or other colleagues may also be consulted to assess the practical implications of the accommodation and provide guidance for implementation.

Once approved, accommodations are implemented promptly, typically within 7 to 14 days, ensuring that employees can continue their work without interruption. Terms and conditions for each accommodation are clearly defined, including any agreed-upon adjustments to tasks, schedules, or support mechanisms, and are monitored regularly to assess effectiveness and make improvements if necessary.

Budgeting for accommodations is centralized within HR/DEI, allowing the organization to manage costs efficiently while ensuring that all necessary resources—ranging from physical



equipment to assistive technologies and training—are provided. While the average cost per accommodation ranges from €501 to €2,000, the investment is considered cost-effective, as it supports employee engagement, retention, productivity, and overall inclusion in the workplace.

Through this structured process, ASD Vision ensures that accommodations are not temporary, but systematically integrated into organizational practice, providing consistent support to employees with disabilities while maintaining operational efficiency and compliance with anti-discrimination regulations.

Accessibility

ASD Vision ensures that accessibility is embedded across all aspects of the organization, encompassing physical, digital, organizational, and learning environments, as well as assistive technologies.

- Physical accessibility is provided through fully accessible offices, including adapted workstations, accessible toilets, and evacuation plans that take into account employees with mobility or sensory limitations. Workspaces are designed to allow safe and independent movement, while emergency procedures are tailored to ensure that all employees can evacuate safely.
- Digital accessibility is applied across internal and external applications, intranet platforms, and digital learning materials. The organization adheres to international accessibility standards, conducts regular testing to ensure that content, software, and internal tools are usable by employees with visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments. Videos, documents, and training resources are provided in accessible formats, including captions, transcripts, and alternative text where required.
- Organizational and process-related accessibility includes flexible work schedules, remote and hybrid work options, adapted meeting norms, and procedural adjustments that accommodate employees' specific needs. Rules, shifts, and task allocation are designed to be inclusive, ensuring that employees with disabilities can participate fully in all work processes without barriers.
- Learning and development opportunities are fully accessible. All training programs are offered in multiple formats, such as in-person, online, and via video conferencing with accessible materials. Trainers provide guidance and support to ensure that employees with disabilities can engage with and benefit from professional development opportunities.
- The primary assistive technology currently provided to employees is an FM system, supporting those with partial hearing impairments. Since the organization has not employed individuals with complete hearing loss, this system effectively addresses current needs while ensuring clear communication in the workplace. In line with the



organization's commitment to continuous improvement, ASD Vision is actively exploring the development and implementation of additional assistive technologies and methods for the future, aiming to further enhance accessibility, independence, and inclusion for all employees with disabilities.

Recruitment, onboarding & career progression

ASD Vision applies a structured and inclusive approach to recruitment, onboarding, and career progression to ensure that employees with disabilities can fully participate in the workforce and develop professionally. Inclusive job advertisements are published to encourage applications from people with various types of disabilities, emphasizing the organization's commitment to equal opportunities. The recruitment process includes structured interviews designed to accommodate different needs, ensuring that candidates can demonstrate their skills without facing unnecessary barriers.

During onboarding, new employees with disabilities receive tailored support through mentors, gradual workload integration, and accessible onboarding materials. Mentors and colleagues provide guidance on organizational procedures, day-to-day tasks, and workplace culture, ensuring smooth integration into the team. The organization also offers interest-based activities and coaching to strengthen professional skills and social inclusion.

Career progression is supported through clear criteria for performance and development, accessible training opportunities, and ongoing guidance from line managers and mentors. Internships or apprenticeship opportunities are offered where applicable, enabling employees to gain hands-on experience and develop competencies in a supported environment. By combining structured recruitment, personalized onboarding, and continuous professional development, ASD Vision ensures that employees with disabilities are empowered to achieve their full potential while contributing meaningfully to the organization.

Results

The inclusive employment practices at ASD Vision have produced tangible and measurable results across the organization. Approximately 20 employees with various disabilities—including mobility impairments, intellectual disabilities, hearing or vision limitations, and health conditions such as oncology diagnoses—have benefited from structured accommodations, mentorship, and tailored support.

One example is an IT specialist with a severe physical disability who joined the agency in the year of 2000. After initial training with an instructor and subsequent self-directed learning, he now works remotely, maintains websites for multiple organizations, and delivers his own IT courses. Another example is a facilities assistant with epilepsy and mild intellectual



disability, who, supported by mentors and flexible working arrangements, successfully performs her duties, develops professionally, and integrates fully into the team.

As a result of these inclusive measures, employees report increased engagement, motivation, and satisfaction with their work. Productivity has improved, absenteeism has decreased, and employees feel safe and supported in their roles. Mentorship and structured onboarding have strengthened teamwork, while inclusive practices have fostered greater tolerance and understanding among all staff members. Employees have successfully completed professional tasks, participated in internal projects, and in some cases achieved professional recognition, demonstrating the effectiveness of ASD Vision's inclusive employment model.

Outcome indicators (0, 6, 12, 24 months)

ASD Vision tracks a range of outcome indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of its inclusive employment practices over time. These indicators include hiring rate, time-to-hire, offer acceptance, accommodation turnaround, retention, career progression and promotions, employee engagement, and absenteeism.

Retention measures the proportion of employees with disabilities who remain with the organization over time, while absenteeism tracks the frequency and duration of unplanned absences, providing insights into employee well-being and workplace satisfaction. Career progression and promotions are monitored to ensure that employees with disabilities have equal opportunities for professional growth, while engagement is assessed through regular surveys and feedback to capture employees' motivation and satisfaction levels.

Accommodation turnaround is recorded to evaluate the efficiency of the process in responding to individual needs, typically measured from request to implementation. Hiring rate, time-to-hire, and offer acceptance help assess the inclusivity of recruitment practices and the attractiveness of the organization to candidates with disabilities.

Monitoring and documentation of all indicators are managed jointly by Human Resources, line managers, and the accounting department. Data is stored securely, in compliance with GDPR regulations, without including personal health information. The collected information is regularly reviewed and analyzed to refine policies, improve processes, and ensure that ASD Vision continues to provide an inclusive and supportive work environment for all employees.

Cost efficiency

The inclusive employment practices at ASD Vision are considered cost-efficient to some extent, reflecting both the direct and indirect value generated for the organization and its



employees. The organization provides reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, with the average cost per adaptation ranging from €501 to €2,000, depending on the specific needs and type of support required. These adaptations include flexible working hours, tailored mentoring, accessible onboarding materials, and other personalized measures that enable employees to perform their roles effectively.

Although formal assessments of savings from reduced sick leave, lower staff turnover, or other operational efficiencies have not been conducted, the qualitative outcomes strongly indicate the positive impact of these investments. Employees with disabilities are more engaged, motivated, and productive, which indirectly contributes to organizational stability, team cohesion, and overall workplace efficiency. By providing a supportive environment, ASD Vision reduces potential disruptions and fosters a sense of belonging and commitment among employees, which is essential for retention and long-term performance.

From a return-on-investment perspective, the organization emphasizes the intangible yet significant benefits of setting a strong example in inclusive employment. The leadership and staff view the success of their inclusive practices as a demonstration of organizational values, showcasing ASD Vision as a model for other employers in Bulgaria and beyond. Satisfaction with the example set, both internally among employees and externally in the broader community, is considered a key indicator of return, reinforcing the organization's commitment to sustainability, social responsibility, and long-term value creation.

Overall, the combination of reasonable financial investment, targeted support measures, and demonstrated improvements in employee engagement and professional growth makes the inclusive employment practices at ASD Vision both effective and cost-conscious, providing a replicable model for other organizations seeking to integrate people with disabilities into meaningful employment.

Success factors

The success of ASD Vision's inclusive employment practices is built on a combination of strategic leadership, skilled staff, strong partnerships, and structured processes. Leadership plays a central role, providing a clear mandate and demonstrating commitment to inclusion across all levels of the organization. This top-down support ensures that diversity and accessibility remain organizational priorities and that resources are allocated effectively to implement accommodations and support measures.

Training and professional development of staff are key to success, equipping managers, mentors, and colleagues with the skills and confidence to work effectively alongside employees with disabilities. Continuous learning ensures that inclusive practices are applied consistently and adapted to evolving needs.



Partnerships with external organizations, including NGOs, industry networks, and social service providers, strengthen the support system available to employees with disabilities, providing additional expertise, mentoring, and resources that complement internal efforts.

Structured processes and tooling also contribute to success. Clear service-level agreements (SLAs) define expectations for response times, accommodation implementation, and employee support, ensuring that requests are handled efficiently and consistently. Mentorship programs, accessible onboarding materials, and defined career progression pathways provide employees with guidance and opportunities for professional growth, while formalized monitoring of indicators such as retention, engagement, and absenteeism allows the organization to evaluate and refine practices over time.

The combination of leadership support, staff training, strong partnerships, and well-defined processes has created a sustainable and effective model for integrating employees with disabilities into the workforce, fostering both personal development for employees and organizational benefits.

Challenges & solutions

In implementing inclusive employment practices at ASD Vision, the organization encountered several key challenges that required strategic responses. One significant challenge was related to attitudes, including existing stereotypes and misconceptions about the abilities of people with disabilities. To overcome this, ASD Vision invested in awareness-raising initiatives, staff training, and mentoring, creating a culture of respect, understanding, and collaboration across all teams. Employees learned to recognize the value of inclusion and to actively support colleagues with diverse needs.

Logistics and operational processes also presented challenges, including adapting workstations, schedules, and workflows to accommodate employees with different physical, cognitive, or health-related needs. These challenges were addressed through flexible working hours, tailored mentoring, individualized onboarding, and close coordination between Human Resources, line managers, and mentors to ensure smooth integration into the workplace.

Budget limitations were another factor, as providing personalized accommodations and support requires careful financial planning. ASD Vision approached this by prioritizing interventions that offered the highest impact, efficiently allocating resources, and collaborating with external partners such as NGOs to complement internal capacity.

Procedural challenges included formalizing the accommodations request process, ensuring timely implementation, and maintaining consistency across departments. The organization established clear procedures, defined responsibilities, and implemented service-level agreements (SLAs) to streamline workflows and guarantee equitable support for all employees.



Finally, data protection represented an important challenge, particularly in handling sensitive information about employees' health and accommodations. ASD Vision strictly adheres to GDPR regulations, securely collecting and storing data to ensure confidentiality while allowing effective monitoring of outcomes such as retention, engagement, absenteeism, and overall satisfaction.

Through these comprehensive measures—addressing attitudes, logistics, budget, procedures, and data protection—ASD Vision successfully transformed potential obstacles into opportunities for improvement, creating a sustainable, inclusive, and supportive work environment that benefits both employees and the organization as a whole.

Sustainability

The inclusive employment practices at ASD Vision are maintained through a combination of structured planning, dedicated resources, and continuous monitoring, ensuring that the benefits for employees with disabilities are sustainable over the long term. Financially, the organization allocates a dedicated annual budget to support accommodations, mentorship programs, and inclusive initiatives, allowing consistent implementation of policies and resources without disruption.

Training plays a crucial role in sustainability. Regular professional development and awareness programs for HR staff, line managers, mentors, and colleagues ensure that all employees understand inclusion principles, can effectively support colleagues with disabilities, and remain up to date with evolving best practices. This ongoing education reinforces a workplace culture that values accessibility, respect, and collaboration.

Monitoring and evaluation are conducted systematically. Key performance indicators, such as retention, engagement, absenteeism, and career progression, are tracked at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of inclusive practices and identify areas for improvement. These insights allow ASD Vision to adjust processes, improve accommodations, and respond proactively to employee needs.

In addition, annual accessibility audits review the physical and digital work environment, ensuring that offices, workstations, and digital platforms remain accessible and aligned with recognized standards. The audits, combined with employee feedback and regular policy reviews, guarantee that the organization maintains a safe, inclusive, and supportive workplace over time.

Overall, the sustainability of ASD Vision's inclusive employment practices is achieved through the combination of financial investment, ongoing staff training, systematic monitoring, and proactive maintenance of accessibility measures, creating a reliable and long-lasting model for inclusive employment.



Transferability

The inclusive employment practices developed by ASD Vision can be transferred to other organizations, provided certain minimum conditions are met. At a basic level, potential adopters must ensure that candidates meet the requirements for the respective job positions and that the organization has qualified mentors available to provide guidance and support. Without these foundational elements, successful replication may be limited.

The key steps for transfer include opening inclusive job positions, establishing a formal process for requesting and approving accommodations, assigning mentors to support employees with disabilities, and providing training for managers and staff on inclusion and accessibility principles. In parallel, organizations should set up monitoring systems to track outcome indicators such as retention, engagement, absenteeism, and career progression, allowing them to assess the effectiveness of implemented measures.

Resources required for replication include financial allocation for reasonable accommodations, time investment from HR staff and mentors, training materials, and partnerships with external organizations or NGOs where appropriate. Structured procedures and clear roles within the organization are also essential to ensure consistency, efficiency, and accountability.

Potential risks to monitor include uncertainty in the retention of newly hired employees, variability in performance outcomes, and possible initial resistance or lack of understanding among colleagues. Proactive measures, such as awareness campaigns, mentoring, and gradual integration processes, are recommended to mitigate these risks.

By ensuring the necessary conditions, following defined steps, and carefully managing resources and potential risks, other organizations can replicate ASD Vision's model, creating inclusive, supportive, and sustainable employment practices for people with disabilities.

Sources & contacts

<https://vision-bg.com/>

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