



Best practice for inclusive employment

Best Practice for Inclusive Employment (Portugal)

VŠĮ “eMundus”

Title of the best practice:

The Portuguese Private-Sector Model: Delivering Inclusive Employment through Legal Quotas, Reasonable Accommodation, and Neuroinclusion under the European Accessibility Act

Company context

This best practice is designed for a medium-to-large private-sector employer operating in Portugal (≥ 75 employees), i.e., those directly covered by the national disability employment quota and by the EU-derived accessibility regime (EAA) now in force in Portugal. The legal backdrop establishes inclusion not as a voluntary initiative but as a compliance-critical and reputationally material domain. Key national stakeholders include IEFP – Instituto do Emprego e Formação Profissional for quotas implementation and technical support, and INR – Instituto Nacional para a Reabilitação for accessibility guidance; both play operational roles in employer support and enforcement interfaces.

Strategic external frameworks that organisations in Portugal can align to include the Business Disability Forum (BDF) Disability Smarttools (assessment and management frameworks) to structure continuous improvement; while UK-originated, these are widely used by global organisations and are directly compatible with Portugal’s legal and operational expectations.

Additionally, employers can form targeted partnerships with Specialisterne Portugal and national autism federations to mature neuroinclusion practices (job design, hiring pathways, team enablement).

Problem and motivation

Portugal has moved from voluntary action to legal obligations: private-sector companies with ≥ 75 employees must meet disability employment quotas (1% for 75–249; 2% for ≥ 250), fully enforceable since 1 Feb 2024 after the transition period. Inspections by the Labour Authority (ACT) began nationally in late 2024, turning inclusion gaps into regulatory and financial risk.

At the same time, the European Accessibility Act (EAA) as transposed in Portugal (Decree-Law 82/2022) phases in binding accessibility requirements for a wide set of products and consumer services—including banking, e-commerce, ICT, and self-service terminals—with key effect dates 28 June 2025 (new services/products) and 2030 for legacy adaptation. This creates an enterprise-wide driver to embed



accessibility into product, service, and workplace processes.

Beyond compliance, EU/Portuguese analyses emphasise productivity, innovation and talent-pipeline gains when employers proactively implement reasonable accommodation and targeted hiring supports for people with disabilities.

Governance & ownership

Executive sponsorship: Inclusion and Accessibility owned by a C-level leader (e.g., CHRO/Chief People Officer) with quarterly reporting to the Executive Committee on quota compliance, reasonable accommodations (RA) SLAs, and EAA readiness. This aligns local governance with external standards such as BDF Disability Smart assessments.

ERGs & expert partners: A Disability & Neuroinclusion Network (ERG) partners with Specialisterne (or equivalent) for job analysis and manager toolkits; with INR/IEFP for accommodations and workplace adaptation funding.

HR/Recruitment/IT/Facilities shared ownership: HR governs quotas reporting via the Relatório Único and Self-ID processes; Recruitment runs inclusive hiring; IT/UX leads digital accessibility by EN 301 549; Facilities leads physical accessibility and evacuation planning.

Compliance & policy

Anti-discrimination: Portugal's **Law 46/2006** prohibits and sanctions discrimination on grounds of disability in employment and beyond. Employers must maintain policies and grievance routes reflecting the law's direct and indirect discrimination concepts.

Quota compliance: Law 4/2019 mandates minimum percentages of disabled employees ($\geq 60\%$ disability certificate) for medium and large employers; ACT has active inspections and can impose fines for non-compliance.

Accessibility regulations

- Public-sector web/apps: DL 83/2018 transposes the EU Web Accessibility Directive (WCAG/EN 301 549).
- Private-sector products/services: DL 82/2022 (EAA) + Portaria 220/2023 define accessibility requirements and disproportionate-burden tests.

GDPR

Disability/health data used for RA must follow GDPR and Portuguese Data Protection Law (Law 58/2019), with CNPD guidance on processing limitations (e.g., employee consent constraints), data minimisation, and access controls.

Practical approach

Practical approach (what was changed: processes, roles, technologies; timeline; affected



employees) Core interventions

- Reasonable Accommodation (RA) “Passport”: a living record of agreed adjustments that “travels” with the employee through role/manager changes—minimising repeated disclosures and delays. (Concept aligned with international best practice; locally administered via HR with IEFP/INR technical input as needed.)
- Inclusive Hiring & Quota Management: job ads include clear RA request channels; recruiters trained on bias-free screening; quotas monitored monthly with IEFP interfaces to source candidates and access adaptation supports.
- Digital accessibility by design: adoption of EN 301 549 baselines across public-facing sites/apps and consumer services per DL 83/2018 and DL 82/2022.
- Neuroinclusion toolkit: manager guidance on sensory environment, communication norms, and alternative assessments, referencing national programmes (e.g., Programa de Neurodiversidade with Critical Software/partners) as models for pipeline creation.

Timeline highlights

- Now–Q2 2026: Ensure quota compliance and documentation (post-Feb 2024 enforceability; ACT inspections); complete gap-assessment for EAA obligations before mid-2025/2027 milestones.
- 2025–2030: Phase legacy product/service adaptations to meet the 2030 deadline thresholds defined in the EAA regime.

Reasonable accommodations process

Request channels:

Candidates: provide an RA request link in every job post and application workflow (mirrors IEFP guidance and EU best practice).

Employees: initiate via HR or line manager; capture outcomes in the RA Passport; limit access to “need-to-know” (GDPR).

Approval & delivery: Line manager + HR approve most RA; IT/Facilities deliver tech/physical adjustments; IEFP/INR can co-fund adaptation of workplaces and removal of architectural barriers.

SLA targets: Standard, low-cost RA delivered in ≤10–15 working days; complex cases with third-party procurement in ≤30 days (targets aligned with regulatory risk and retention goals).

Budget model: Departmental Opex for routine RA; central fund for higher-cost AT/works, leveraging IEFP co-funding where eligible.

Accessibility

Physical (offices, evacuation, workplaces)

Ensure barrier-free pathways, adapted sanitary facilities, assistive listening systems where needed, and inclusive evacuation procedures; IEFP supports workplace adaptations financially and technically.

Digital (apps, intranet, WCAG/EN 301 549, testing)

Public sector obligations: DL 83/2018 enforces WCAG-aligned accessibility for public bodies;



many agencies target WCAG 2.1 AA/EN 301 549 as conformance level.

Private sector (consumer products/services): DL 82/2022 + Portaria 220/2023 extend EN 301 549 design/test obligations across banking, e-commerce, ICT, media and more; plan audits against 2025/2030 milestones.

Organisational/process (rules, shifts/flexibility, meeting norms)

Adopt hybrid flexibility, noise/light accommodations, agenda-in-advance meeting norms, alternative communication and written follow-ups—core elements of a Neuroinclusion Policy aligned to Portuguese practice models.

L&D (accessible training, alternative formats)

Provide alternative formats (large print, audio, captions) and mandatory modules on inclusive hiring and manager skills for RA and neuroinclusion. Use public resources from BDF and national psychology bodies for content baselines.

Assistive tech (hardware/software, support)

Provision of AT (screen readers, magnification, speech-to-text, AAC), with IT helpdesk capability and IEFP co-funding where applicable for adaptations and products.

Recruitment, onboarding & career progression

Pipeline & job ads: State RA availability and contact path in all adverts; register offers on IEFP to tap candidate pools meeting Law 4/2019 definitions.

Inclusive interviews: Offer format changes, extra time, pre-shared questions, work samples; these practices underpin fair selection and are consistent with EU/Portuguese guidance.

Onboarding: Create the RA Passport within the first weeks; connect hires to the Disability/Neuroinclusion Network and assign mentors.

Early-career pathways: Use IEFP +Emprego or internships (e.g., Estágios INICIAR/+Talento) which include increased support for hires with disabilities, reducing employer cost and improving retention.

Specialised programmes: Partner with Programa de Neurodiversidade (Critical Software, Specialisterne, etc.) to recruit autistic talent into tech and operations roles.

Results

Regulatory readiness: Achieve and document full quota compliance across all Portuguese employing entities and pass ACT inspections without findings. (ACT began a national inspection campaign in Sept 2024.)

Accessibility maturity: Complete EAA gap analysis and implement remediation roadmap for online banking/e-commerce/consumer services where applicable, aligned to EN 301 549.

Neuroinclusion pipeline: Launch at least one partnership intake with national neurodiversity programmes—benchmarking against Portuguese cases (e.g., Critical Software/Specialisterne cohorts).

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

Indicator (KPI)	0 months (Baseline)	12 months (Projected)	24 months (Target)	Significance
Quota compliance rate (Law 4/2019)	Variable by unit	≥95% units compliant	100% units compliant	Avoids ACT fines and reputational risk.
RA Turnaround (median, working days)	Unstandardised	≤15 days (standard RA)	≤10 days (standard RA)	Direct retention & engagement driver.
Accessibility conformance (EN 301 549)	Gaps unknown	Priority journeys AA-equiv.	Full portfolio per EAA timeline	Legal obligation for many private services.
Self-ID rate (confidential)	Low	+5 pp	+10 pp	Trust/confidence proxy; GDPR-compliant handling required.
Neurodivergent hires via programmes	0	First cohort onboarded	2 cohorts; ≥85% 12-mo retention	Proven national pipelines exist.

Cost efficiency

IEFP offers technical and financial support for workplace adaptations, wage-cost supports in Emprego Apoiado and incentives under +Emprego, lowering net employer cost. Avoided turnover and increased productivity from timely RA and inclusive practices are evidenced in EU/Portuguese policy analyses promoting reasonable accommodation and positive actions.

Success factors

Leadership & metrics: Executive oversight on quotas, RA SLA, and EAA roadmap. Tooling & standardisation: RA Passport and EN 301 549 checklists embedded in IT/UX SDLC.

Partnerships: IEFP/INR for adaptations and talent sourcing; Specialisterne and national autism networks for neuroinclusion; BDF frameworks for global comparability.

Training: Recruiter and manager training using national professional guidance (e.g., Ordem dos Psicólogos Policy Brief) and BDF resources.

Clear SLAs: ≤10–15 days for standard RA; defined procurement paths for AT/works with IEFP support.

Challenges & solutions

Challenge	Problem	Solution
Cultural stigma / low Self-ID	Employees may fear disclosure.	Confidential RA passport; GDPR-compliant data minimisation and access controls; leadership storytelling.
Process delays	Slow adjustments harm retention and compliance.	SLA-based RA workflow; pre-approved catalog of common adjustments; IEFP/INR technical support.
Budget constraints	Cost of adaptations and AT.	Use IEFP funding (Emprego Apoiado, workplace adaptations) and +Emprego incentives to offset costs.
Complex accessibility scope	Multiple laws/standards (DL 83/2018; DL 82/2022; EN 301 549).	Unified accessibility policy and audit plan aligned to EN 301 549 across web, apps, products/services; staged plan to 2025/2030.

Sustainability

Cyclical audits: Annual EN 301 549 audits and quarterly product/service spot-checks; public-sector style statements for transparency where relevant.

Budgeting: Ring-fenced central fund for RA high-cost items; IEFP co-funding pipelines maintained.

Training cadence: Annual refreshers; onboarding modules for all managers and recruiters using BDF and national guidance.

Regulatory horizon scanning: Track ACT inspections on quotas and EAA dates (2025/2027/2030) with Legal/Compliance.

Transferability

Minimum conditions: executive mandate; cross-functional RA workflow; accessibility ownership in IT/UX; partnerships with IEFP/INR and a neurodiversity specialist.

Steps:

1. Legal gap-assessment (Law 4/2019 quotas; DL 82/2022/83/2018).



2. Implement RA Passport + SLA workflow.
3. Launch inclusive hiring training; publish RA request path in ads.
4. EAA roadmap to 2025/2030 (EN 301 549).
5. Neuroinclusion pilot with external partner.

Risks: quota non-compliance (fines/ACT sanctions); under-resourced accessibility programme missing 2025/2030 dates; privacy missteps in disability data processing.

Sources & contacts

Employment quotas: Law 4/2019—Diário da República / PDF | PGD Lisboa summary | IEFP quota page

ACT inspections and enforcement context: L&E Global—ACT inspection campaign | EY overview & 2025 enforcement data point

Anti-discrimination: Law 46/2006—DRE | PGD Lisboa—consolidated

Accessibility (public sector): DL 83/2018—DRE | W3C policy page (Portugal)

European Accessibility Act (private sector): DL 82/2022—DRE | Legal alerts on 2025/2030 milestones | INR explainer

IEFP supports (adaptations, supported employment, +Emprego): Emprego Apoiado—Regulamento | Emprego Apoiado—overview (2026 update) | +Emprego—Portaria 220/2024

GDPR & Portuguese data protection: Linklaters guide (2024) | DLA Piper overview (2024) | CNPD website

Neuroinclusion partners & guidance: Programa de Neurodiversidade (Critical Software & partners) | Specialisterne Portugal | Ordem dos Psicólogos—Policy Brief

EU study on Portugal—reasonable accommodation & employer initiatives: European Commission report (2023)

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