

REPORT FROM THE SERIES

SAY YES TO DISABILITY

**Reasonable accommodations for people
with disabilities in the workplace**



TAKpełnosprawni

2024

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Equal Doesn't Mean the Same

The sentence above is the leitmotif of our publication.

When considering equality in the workplace, some employers assume that to treat everyone identically – by providing equal rights, resources, and opportunities – is enough. This approach worked back in the day when the labour market was dominated by healthy individuals without caregiver duties and responsibilities.

In the world today when diversity (also in the workplace) has become a reality, treating everyone the same falls short of levelling the playing field. Therefore, let's replace "**equality**" with "**equity**", making sure everyone gets what they need to fully release one's potential. This is where reasonable accommodations come in handy – a concept that in the Polish legal system applies solely to people with disabilities, but in our view can also encompass other groups of employees.

Based on our research and daily observations, we see that the **concept of reasonable accommodations is little-known in Poland**, among employers and people with disabilities alike. With this report, we intend to disrupt the status quo. We show that there are companies in Poland that care about their teams that are diverse in terms of abilities, but at the same time achieve their business goals. Through the testimonies of employees with disabilities from various companies, we present good practices of reasonable accommodations implementation as well as the benefits for both parties.

We want to inspire employers to be more flexible and creative, and to adapt companies to the abilities and needs of diverse teams. This is a necessary and common-sense move in light of an ageing society, a growing number of people with disabilities, and those taking on caregiver roles on the labour market.

With this report, we want to prove that implementing reasonable accommodations – and thus creating a truly inclusive workplace – begins with changing our approach to equality.



I believe that this publication will provide you not only with a solid foundation, but above all else with many practical tips and inspiring examples. Join the ranks of Employers who say YES to disability!

Enjoy our report.

Agata Robińska, President of the Board
TAKpełnosprawni Foundation

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all our Partners for their invaluable support in creating and promoting this report. We are grateful for your commitment to building a more diverse and inclusive labour market for people with disabilities. You are Partners who say YES to disability.

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The Study

Study Objective

To evaluate the knowledge on reasonable accommodation among Polish employers and employees with disabilities.

Research Methodology

Computer-Assisted Web Interview (CAWI) – online surveys.

Study Timeline

Q1 2024

Study Implementation

TAKpełnosprawni Foundation, with substantive support of SW Research.

Research Sample

124 employers who employ people with disabilities and 449 individuals with disabilities, of which 374 were employed and 75 were unemployed, but planning to seek employment. Among employers, 47.6% were large companies, 31.5% medium-sized enterprises, 12.9% small, and 8.1% micro. Among individuals with disabilities, 61.8% had a moderate degree of disability, 25.8% a significant degree, and 12.4% a mild degree.

1. Reasonable Accommodations – the Basics

This chapter will explore:

- What are reasonable accommodations?
- How the Polish law regulates reasonable accommodations?
- What are the criteria for evaluating reasonable accommodations?



Background Information

According to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, ratified by Poland in 2012, people with disabilities are those who have **long-term impairments** of a physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory nature which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Therefore, the challenge lies not in the **disability itself**, but in **environmental barriers**. It is these barriers that we should focus on in order to empower people with disabilities to work and make use of their potential on an equal footing with others. **Thus, disability is a social challenge, not just an issue of the individual experiencing it.**

Physical barriers are the most visible. For people with mobility disability, this may mean the lack of elevators or ramps. However, there are many **invisible barriers** that may pose challenges, for example, for people with psychological disabilities.

Before we start taking steps to build an inclusive team, it is important to be aware of the fact **how different people with disabilities are from one another and what challenges** they may face. It is also crucial to familiarise oneself with the key term of this publication – **reasonable accommodations**.

Reasonable accommodations, by definition, **are necessary modifications and adjustments**, requested by persons with disabilities in a specific situation, to ensure that they can **perform their duties on an equal basis with others**. They are related to the needs of persons with disabilities, including employees, job applicants, trainees, or interns, and should not impose a disproportionate or undue burden on their employer.



Reasonable accommodations are fundamental to building diverse teams. However, our **"Say YES to disability"** study reveals that among employers who have experience working with people with disabilities, as many as 53.2% are unfamiliar with the term "reasonable accommodations". Furthermore, among employees with disabilities, a staggering 71.7% have never encountered this term. This indicates that both sides of the labour market require appropriate education to foster more effective collaboration.

EMPLOYER SURVEY

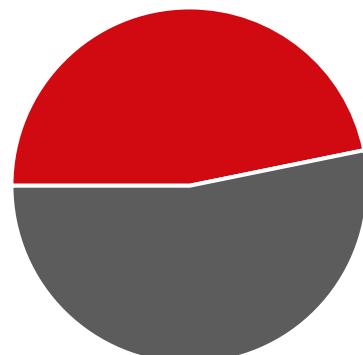
Were you previously familiar with the term "reasonable accommodations"?

124 respondents

- Yes - 46,8%
- No - 53,2%

46,8%

53,2%



EMPLOYEE SURVEY

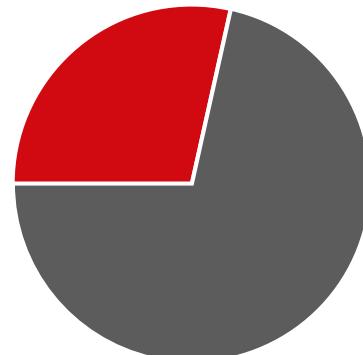
Were you previously familiar with the term "reasonable accommodations"?

374 respondents*

- Yes - 28,3%
- No - 71,7%

28,3%

71,7%



* Question directed to respondents who were or are currently professionally active

Importantly, reasonable accommodations should be requested by the person with a disability. According to the Polish Labour Code (Article 183a § 2-5) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, failure to provide necessary reasonable accommodations constitutes **a violation of the principle of equal treatment**. This can therefore be considered a form of discrimination.

However, it is worth creating an inclusive organisational culture, not only due to legal regulations, but also for business benefits. Adapting the workplace to diverse needs directly translates into higher **team productivity**, lower **employee turnover**, and broader access to new **talent**.

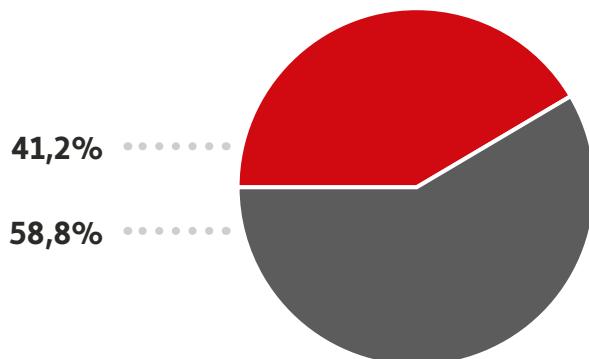
Our research shows that in Poland, still too **few employees request reasonable accommodations**, primarily due to **a lack of awareness** and **fear of negative reactions from others**.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Have you ever asked your employer for any accommodations at work?

374 respondents

- Yes - 41,2%
- No - 58,8%

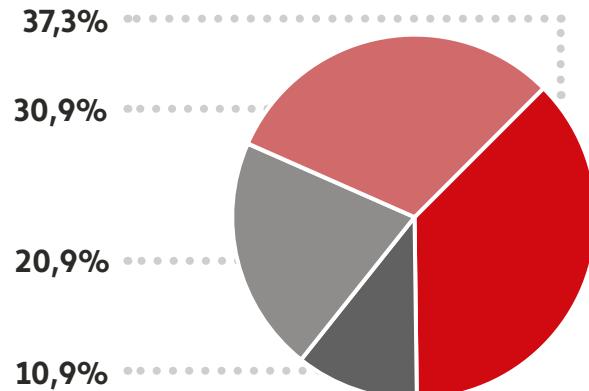


EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Why haven't you asked your employer for any accommodations?

220 respondents

- I don't need any accommodations - 37,3%
- I was afraid of the reaction - 30,9%
- I didn't know I could ask - 20,9%
- Other reasons - 10,9%



Reasonable accommodations include:

- **Adapting the physical environment:** This involves removing architectural barriers such as a lack of elevators and ramps or inaccessible restrooms.
- **Providing appropriate equipment:** This refers to equipment that facilitates task completion, such as voice-controlled office equipment (for people with visual disabilities) or the use of alternative communication methods (e.g. video interpreting services for the deaf).
- **Organising work:** This involves finding new ways to perform tasks, such as part-time work, flexible schedules, online meetings, or applications that help organise work.

A comprehensive list of examples of reasonable accommodations can be found in Chapter 6, page 48.

Evaluation Criteria for Reasonable Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations must be proportionate. This means they should enable a person with a disability to perform their duties at work, but also be adjusted to the capabilities of the employer. Ideally, **both parties should benefit** from the implementation of reasonable accommodations.

Example

A recruitment specialist requested an ergonomic chair to alleviate the pain associated with their mobility impairment and continue working for the company. The cost of such a chair comes up to approx. PLN 2,000. When evaluating the merits of this request, the company should consider not only the employee's comfort, but also the potential costs of their absence without the appropriate equipment as well as the costs of a new recruitment. In this context, purchasing the chair for the specialist and retaining them within the company is the optimal solution.

Two criteria help to maintain this proportionality in **evaluating reasonable accommodations**: reasonableness and effectiveness of the measures.

Reasonableness

As the name suggests, reasonableness is the core element of reasonable accommodations. Employers may not be able to fulfil every request made by persons with disabilities. Sometimes a request is inappropriate for the situation, or its implementation would place too much of a burden on the company.

Example

For an employer, renovating a building and installing an elevator may be an unattainable investment. However, they could set up a ground-floor workstation for a person with a mobility disability, eliminating the architectural barrier (while also ensuring an accessible restroom). Another solution would be to ensure a remote work arrangement.



However, the mere fact that an accommodation may be challenging for an employer is no sufficient reason to reject a request. The final decision on what is reasonable takes into account all the circumstances of a given situation.

Some of the factors to be considered when determining whether a reasonable accommodation would impose an undue burden include:

- The cost of implementing the accommodation,
- The possibility of public funding (such as the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People or other sources) that could cover or partially reimburse the employer for the cost of the accommodation,
- The size of the group of employees (including those without disabilities) who would benefit from the accommodation, t ekonomiczny przedsiębiorstwa,
- The company's operations, size, and economic turnover,
- Occupational safety and health requirements,
- The expected duration of employment of the employee requesting the accommodation.

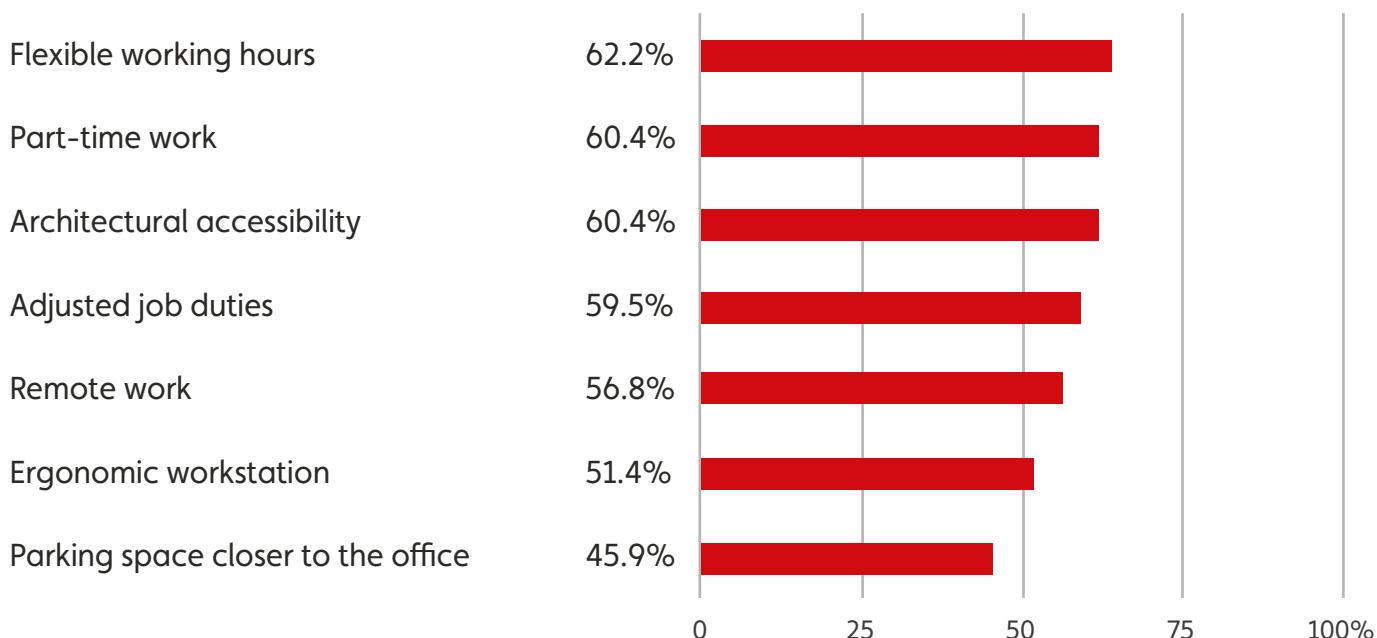
Most accommodations **do not involve significant costs** as confirmed by our research.

The most common accommodations implemented by employers include flexible working hours, part-time work, adjusted job duties, which are primarily associated with organisational changes. Architectural accessibility, on the other hand, is an investment for the future.

EMPLOYER SURVEY

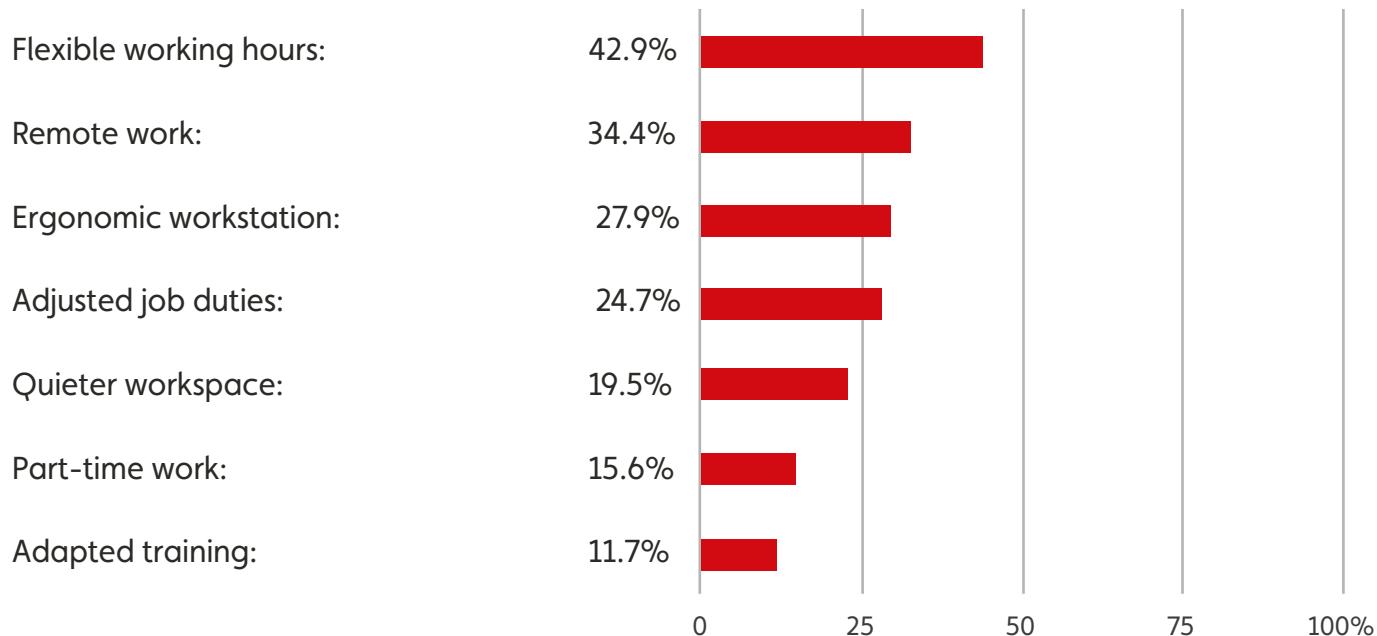
Which of the following accommodations have you implemented?

111 respondents (multiple choice question, 7 most frequent answers)



Surveyed employees with disabilities also **most frequently indicated organisational accommodations** such as flexible working hours, remote work, ergonomic workstations, and quieter workspaces.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

What accommodations have you asked your employer for?**154 respondents (multiple choice question, 7 most frequent answers)**

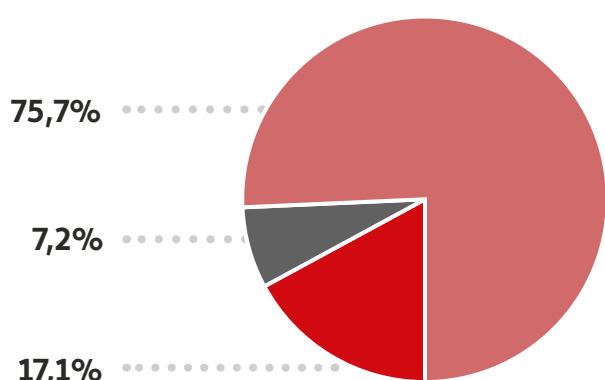
If they need to be incurred, **costs do not have to be significant**. The employer has the opportunity to obtain funds, for example, to equip a workstation or adapt it to the needs of a person with a disability. According to the law, PFRON (Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych; official English name of this Polish institution: State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People) transfers these funds to local governments. It is in the local employment office or district family support centre that an employer can obtain information about the offered support.

Applications are reviewed **twice a year**: in the spring and in the fourth quarter. However, funds are quite limited (due to the so-called algorithm) and heavily regulated. Our research shows that only **28.1% of employers** who implemented reasonable accommodations requiring financial investment for people with disabilities took advantage of them.

EMPLOYER SURVEY

Did the implemented accommodations require financial expenditure?**111 respondents**

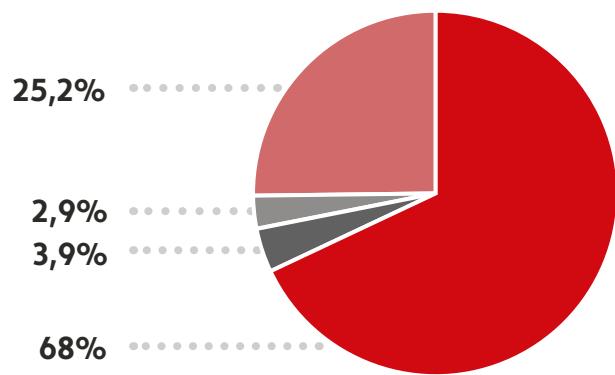
- Yes, all or most required financial expenditure – 17.1%
- Yes, but only some of them required financial expenditure – 75.7%
- No, they required no financial expenditure – 7.2%



EMPLOYER SURVEY

How have you financed accommodation-related expenses so far?**103 respondents**

- Own funds – 68%
- Own funds and PFRON – 25.2%
- Funds obtained from PFRON – 2.9%
- Other sources – 3.9%



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Matylda Piątkowska
Press Spokesperson, PFRON

Employers can be reimbursed for the costs of adapting a workplace to the needs of a person with a disability. An application for support is submitted to the district employment agency. The reimbursement covers costs such as adapting work premises, adapting or purchasing equipment to facilitate work, or purchasing or authorising software for the use of a team member with a disability. Support can also be obtained for the purchase of assistive devices and technologies adapted to the needs of a person with a disability.

We recommend planning **in advance** all costs related to providing reasonable accommodations and creating a **centrally managed budget** for these expenses. If expenses are incurred on an ad-hoc basis and covered by the specific department where the person with a disability is performing their duties, this may lead to resistance to requests. In particular, a local department manager may believe that the cost of reasonable accommodations has a negative impact on the department's budget.

Planning and a pre-established budget will help avoid situations where individual departments in the company are disproportionately affected by the costs resulting from requests for reasonable accommodations. A central budget will also help the company evaluate the validity of requests.

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Marta Pszczoła
Director of Culture and Talent Management,
Santander Bank Polska



At Santander Bank Polska, we are building a diverse and inclusive workplace. We focus on open communication and direct contact with each employee who has submitted a disability certificate. We conduct a personal interview each time to understand the needs in terms of creating reasonable accommodations in the workplace. In most cases, current job positions meet all the requirements of employees with disabilities and no changes are necessary. If there is a need to implement reasonable accommodations, we have a dedicated central budget for this purpose. This way, we ensure that the cost of employing a person with a disability constitutes no burden for any unit's budget.

Legal Counsel Anna Pałecka-Błaszczyk
“ONLEX” Law Firm

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The list of reasonable accommodations is open-ended, and filling this concept with specific content depends on the individual situation and needs of a given person with a disability. In many cases, the essence of the matter is not to find a complex or expensive solution. Each case should be analysed individually in terms of the actual needs of the person with a disability, but also the proportionality of the employer's expenses. According to the provisions of the law, the burden is proportional if it can be sufficiently compensated from public funds.



“

Krzysztof Hilt

Regional Occupational Medicine Consultant

Disability certificates, in addition to the disability code, often contain recommendations for accommodations for a given person with a disability. We often encounter such entries as "work in a protected environment" or "total incapacity for work". In practice, these designations have no real significance, as no disability is a contraindication to work. Under the right conditions, work on the open market is possible and even advisable. Therefore, we do not disqualify people on this basis. We suggest conducting an assessment by a competent person from an occupational health facility.

Effectiveness of measures

Effective measures are those solutions that empower people with disabilities **to perform their main tasks** in a given position. They eliminate or sufficiently mitigate the obstacles that people with disabilities encounter in performing their most important duties. These key tasks can be otherwise called **essential job functions**.

Example

An essential task for an executive assistant may be to diligently maintain a meeting calendar. Desired qualities for a person in this position also include excellent time management, initiative, and communication skills. An insignificant element of the job may be serving coffee or tea during meetings, which may be a challenge for a person with a mobility disability, for example. This means that a person who meets these essential elements will be able to work in this position, despite a mobility disability.



Distinguishing between **essential and non-essential job functions** is crucial as it can provide a solid basis for assessing and responding to a request for reasonable accommodation.

As a rule, an employer is not expected to hire or retain someone in a position who, even after the implementation of reasonable accommodation, will not be able to perform their primary duties.

Example

If making phone calls is an essential part of a job in a contact centre, then a deaf or hard-of-hearing person, or someone who prefers less intensive social interactions will not be able to take up employment in this position. However, they may successfully perform tasks, for example, in the accounting department where a phone call is only a secondary duty that can be performed by someone else. It is also worth remembering that there are other forms of communication (such as internal chat or e-mail) that will enable communication, for example, for deaf people who know Polish.



Reasonable accommodations and occupational

People with disabilities can and want to take up employment. Apart from the "Act on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities", which sets the framework for the employment of people with disabilities, the applicable provisions of occupational safety and health should also be taken into account. The employer's role is then to adapt the working environment to the needs of people with disabilities, including the implementation of reasonable accommodations in the field of occupational safety and health. In practice, close cooperation with people with disabilities is also important, as well as educating employees and management to increase awareness and understanding of the needs of this group of employees. It is also important to promote an atmosphere of acceptance and respect for the differences that make each of us unique.

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Joanna Dziobiak
Employee Relations Director,
Orange Polska

At Orange Polska, we approach each employee with a disability individually, rather than assuming upfront that they cannot work in a particular position. Such an approach can be harmful and reduce self-esteem. A good example is the employment of a person with epilepsy, who can work, for example, in an office and effectively perform their professional duties after appropriate adaptation of the work environment and safety procedures, such as regular breaks, avoiding triggers for seizures and increasing the awareness of co-workers about how to act in the case of a seizure. Support from the employer provides people with disabilities with comfort and security, which translates into an effective and satisfying professional career.

Reasonable Accommodations and Accessibility

Accessibility has gained popularity as a concept originating from law, including **the Act on ensuring accessibility for people with diverse needs** of 19th July 2019. It refers to an approach aimed at **providing an environment, products, programmes, and services that are useful to everyone**, not just people with disabilities. Therefore, we encourage companies to think about accessibility in a strategic way, which means planning it in advance and constantly developing it.

Reasonable accommodation, on the other hand, refers to a **personalised modification** of the work environment in response to the individual needs of a given person.

HOW DOES AN EMPLOYER WHO SAYS YES TO DISABILITY OPERATE?



An excellent candidate for an HR specialist position applies to you. She has a visual disability. Unfortunately, the platform provided by an external supplier is not digitally accessible, for instance, it does not have a zoom-in function, and therefore the candidate will not be able to perform her tasks in this position. What do you do?



Employer who says NO to disability:

Unfortunately, you have no influence over this, you can't do anything, and in this recruitment process, you only consider people without visual disabilities.



Employer who says YES to disability:

You contact the platform supplier, tell them about the situation, and ask them to ensure digital accessibility in the near future. In the future, you will add a criterion regarding accessibility when selecting a supplier and in tender procedures. Remember, by improving accessibility for people with disabilities, you make the world more accessible for all of us.

Accessibility is for this reason a concept that is **significantly broader** and encompasses reasonable accommodations. Both terms are important, but they cannot be considered identical. This is perfectly summarised by the statement of our report partner and an anonymous comment from one of the employers participating in our study.

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Neil Milliken
VP – Global Head of Accessibility, Atos

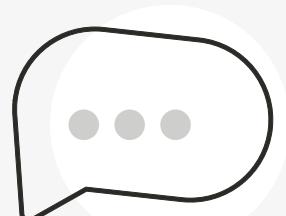


Atos is committed to providing a secure and protected digital environment. We strive to ensure that everyone has the necessary support and opportunities, especially with the increasing prevalence of remote work. To achieve this goal, we focus on enhancing experiences for as many people as possible. We base our actions on three areas of impact: direct, indirect, and in the value chain, which ensures full technological accessibility, which contributes to reducing the negative effects of exclusion. Accessibility and Digital Inclusion are part of Atos values, embedded in its statement of purpose by which Atos aims to enable people “to live, work and develop sustainably, in a safe and secure digital space”. We encourage other companies and organisations to adopt a similar approach. Building a world accessible to all of us is our shared responsibility.

**Anonymous statement from an employer
in our survey**

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The improvements that we call accommodations for people with disabilities actually serve a larger group of people. Workspaces adapted to the needs of people with limited mobility are more comfortable for everyone, as are those adapted to the needs of neurodiverse people. It is much more comfortable to work in a world where spaces are not optimised for efficiency, but serve real people in their daily professional lives.



2. Benefits of Reasonable Accommodations

Everything you will find out from this chapter:

- What are the benefits of reasonable accommodations for employers?
- What are the benefits of reasonable accommodations for employees?
- What role do reasonable accommodations play in business?



Benefits of Reasonable Accommodations for Employers

Implementing reasonable accommodations provides employers with a number of business benefits. These include, amongst others:

- **Expansion of the pool of candidates** by being more open to diverse teams.
- **Retention of current employees** who, as they age, may need additional tools to continue performing their tasks.
- **Cost reduction associated with absenteeism at work and employee turnover**, increased team loyalty.
- **Faster and smoother return to work** after periods of absence due to illness or acquisition of disability.
- **Reimbursement of costs associated with workplace adaptation** for employees with a disability (from PFRON – Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych; official English name of this Polish institution: State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People).

Benefits of Reasonable Accommodations for Employees

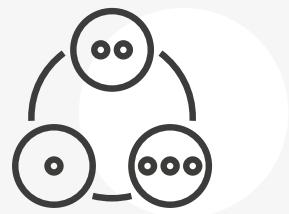
Every person with a disability who decides to request a reasonable accommodation from their employer benefits from it too. These are some of the benefits:

- **Maximising their potential** by tailoring the workplace to their individual situation.
- **Increased efficiency** and as a result increased motivation at work.
- **Reduction of stress** resulting from the lack of necessary tools while performing daily duties.
- **Opportunities** for development and promotion.

3. Reasonable accommodations in the employment cycle

From this chapter, you will learn the following:

- What are the phases of the employment cycle?
- How to use reasonable accommodations in each and every one of them?
- What good practices in this area are applied by Polish companies?



Phases of the Employment Cycle

Regardless of whether we are talking about people with or without disabilities, we can distinguish at least four phases of their cooperation with a company

- **Recruitment** – the first contact with an employer.
- **Training** – understood as regular development within the organisation's structure.
- **Promotion** – both vertical to a higher position and horizontal, understood as a transfer to another department or an expansion of competencies.
- **Maintaining employment, returning to work** – returning to duties and maintaining a position after a longer absence due to illness or acquired disability.

Not every person goes through all of the mentioned phases. However, the need for reasonable accommodations may arise at each of these stages, and employers should be prepared for this possibility. In the following sections, we will discuss each of the stages, taking into account actions that will help increase the diversity and stability of the team.

recruitment

training

promotion

job retention and
return to work

Recruitment Process

The process of starting and maintaining cooperation between an employee and an organisation is of a mutual nature. Companies and candidates choose each other. Even at the recruitment stage, **the need for reasonable accommodations** may arise to smoothly pass through this stage.

Both sides bear responsibility in this area: the candidate – for communicating the need, and the employer – for fulfilling it. Candidates should remember that if they **do not report the necessary reasonable accommodations before the job interview**, the employer will not guess them. This applies both to the meeting itself and to further employment.

In turn, the employer should understand that **a person with a disability has the right from the beginning of cooperation to indicate what they will need** to participate in the recruitment process or perform duties in a given position.

Considering the recruitment itself, mutuality is also manifested in **mutual respect** for the rights to recognise and understand what the other side expects from cooperation and what it can offer.

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Marta Pigla
HR Consultant,
TAKpełnosprawni Foundation



In the recruitment process, the candidate decides whether to inform the company about their needs in terms of reasonable accommodations. However, recruiters (recruitment staff, managers) can play a key role in creating conditions conducive to the free expression of their needs. This can be done through activities such as clearly signalling openness to employing people with disabilities and creating an empathetic atmosphere by meeting simple needs (for instance, adjusting the time of an online meeting). It is also worth emphasising the equality of roles (of candidates and recruiters alike) during recruitment, expressing it, for example, by encouraging candidates to ask additional questions about the job. This is a crucial step towards building someone's readiness to communicate their needs.

''

Agnieszka Staręga
Senior HR Manager Poznań,
Amazon Fulfilment Poland



We prepared ourselves strategically to hire deaf employees, analysing the entire process step by step. The most important experts were the people with this disability themselves, who shared their ideas for accommodations to increase their safety at work. Before launching the "MigaMY" programme, only a few managers admitted that they had had the opportunity to work with a deaf or hard-of-hearing person. Therefore, we also focused on cultural training. Following the training in 2020, most of us communicated using basic sign language phrases. We are incredibly proud of the progress of the entire team over the past three years. Our managerial staff not only effectively manage the team, but have also been inspired to learn sign language on a regular basis. Managers sometimes decide to lead a meeting at the beginning of a shift or have a conversation with an employee without the assistance of an interpreter, even though it is not required. "MigaMY" employees are encouraged to report their own matters independently through a mobile application, where they can apply for leave, contact the HR department, or ask their supervisor a question.

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Elżbieta Trzeciak

Manager for Personal Affairs,
Develey Polska

We currently employ over 20 people with disabilities, including 15 people from the "Otwarte Drzwi Association" with intellectual disabilities. They work in storerooms, production facilities, the clothing warehouse, or at the company's cafeteria. We use the support of a job coach on a daily basis and, if necessary, a psychologist. The job coach has been with us from the stage of searching for potential candidates, through recruitment, onboarding, work supervision in a specific position, and throughout the entire period of employment of people with disabilities. We are very pleased with their work, as they are very committed, conscientious, and well-mannered employees who perform their assigned tasks with particular care. They are full-fledged employees. Of course, like everyone else, they may have difficulties adapting to a new workplace, a drop in motivation, or other problems. Then they can always count on the support, presence, advice, or a helpful hand from a job coach and psychologist.



Examples of good practices that matter throughout the entire recruitment process (not just during the job interview):

- Job postings published on digitally **accessible websites** or job boards. This ensures that individuals with disabilities can easily find an ad and apply for the position.
- **Job descriptions** focused on essential job functions that are clearly defined and separated from non-essential functions. This helps to avoid unintentional exclusion of people with disabilities.
- A job advertisement that includes **a statement and encouragement** for people with disabilities to share their needs. (e.g., "We are an equal opportunity employer. We want our processes to be adapted to the needs of people with disabilities and to enable them to participate in the recruitment process. If there is anything we can do for you, such as provide you with accommodations in the context of employment or the interview, please let us know.")
- Flexible interview arrangements, including **location and timing** (e.g., remote interviews, interviews in accessible locations, and scheduling interviews at times that accommodate the needs of people with disabilities).
- Accessible formats for all **assessments or tests** conducted as part of the recruitment process, as well as a company policy that supports this (e.g., assessments based on skills and qualifications without any assumptions about disability, regular review of the effectiveness of these processes).
- Highlighting **flexibility and openness** in the job posting, such as the possibility of flexible work hours (e.g., offering flexible start times between 7-9 AM, which may be important for some persons due to medication schedules).

HOW DOES AN EMPLOYER WHO SAYS YES TO DISABILITY OPERATE?

You are recruiting for an accounting specialist position. A candidate who has the appropriate qualifications and experience applies. However, she also requests a Polish Sign Language (PSL) interpreter. What do you do?



Employer who says NO to disability:

Unfortunately, you do not have a sign language interpreter in your company, so you do not consider this candidate in the recruitment process.



Employer who says YES to disability:

You contact an organisation that provides online translation services. You then schedule a video conference and conduct an interview with the candidate with the support of a remote interpreter. During the interview, you ask her about her future needs and how she communicated in her previous workplace. You make no assumptions. You consult with the IT department about the technical possibilities and together you look for optimal solutions to support cooperation with people with various disabilities in the future.

Training

Throughout the employment lifecycle, individuals participate in various training programs: introductory, periodic, or developmental, tailored to meet specific personal needs. Regardless of the industry or company size, this phase is essential as it's linked to the growth and acquisition of necessary competencies by team members.

Klaudia Malisz

HR Director, Job Impulse Poland

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During the pandemic, we hired an intern with a mental disability whose primary responsibilities involved tasks related to personnel documentation. We understood the need to adjust the workload, task complexity, work hours, and communication methods. Therefore, we assigned a dedicated mentor to this employee and invested significant time in on-the-job training. This proved to be the best decision, as the employee's reliability, meticulousness, and aptitude for repetitive tasks perfectly aligned with the job requirements.

However, corporate communication presented a challenge due to the employee's difficulties with computers and correspondence. The solution involved a comeback of more traditional methods: crucial emails were printed in larger fonts, and updates were communicated verbally. When electronic tasks were necessary, the supervisor or fellow team member provided direct assistance.



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Anna Stopel

**Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,
Sodexo Poland**



At Sodexo Poland, for over 16 years, we have been actively employing people with various disabilities, including intellectual disabilities. Besides building awareness and competencies within the team, it is very important for us to ensure that no one is excluded from the company's life. We organise onboarding training with content prepared in an appropriately accessible language and conduct regular training on diversity and inclusion. We cooperate on an ongoing basis with non-governmental organisations that support people with disabilities in the assisted employment model. We use the help of career counsellors and job coaches in the recruitment process and when onboarding employees in a given position. Job coaches also accompany employees to periodic examinations and during health and safety training.

Examples of reasonable accommodations when organising training:

- Live training is conducted **remotely** or in a **hybrid** format.
- A **database of training recordings** that can be played back at any time and place.
- Providing **additional technologies** such as live captions or a sign language interpreter.
- Adjusting **training hours** to the needs of people with disabilities and caregivers.
- Extending the **onboarding period** for individuals who have not worked before or persons with disabilities who require a longer acclimatisation period.
- Organising training in **architecturally accessible rooms**.

When choosing an external training company, it is worth taking care of the issues listed above, because **the mere fact of conducting training by a person from outside the organisation does not relieve the employer of the obligation to provide reasonable accommodations**.

It is also important for companies to provide **appropriate training for people involved in the process of reviewing reasonable accommodations**. This means educating team members who decide which reasonable accommodations to implement in specific situations. For example, a person who has been promoted to a managerial position will have different responsibilities than

before and, as a result, different needs. The team deciding on reasonable accommodations must be fully aware of this.

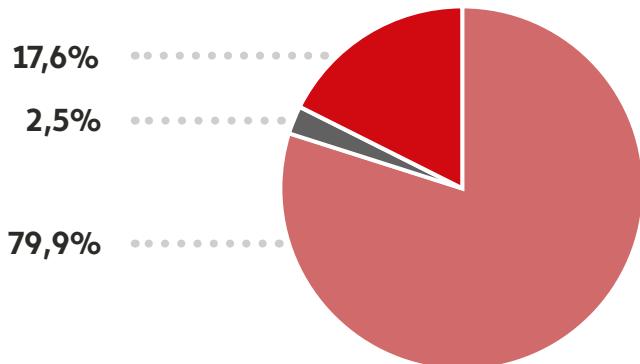
Furthermore, it is worth investing in training and implementing **regular educational initiatives** that foster a culture of openness and diversity within the company. Our research indicates that a substantial portion of employers have incorporated these initiatives into their development strategies, yet people with disabilities who have professional experience rarely encounter such a culture of education.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Has any of your employers ever conducted educational activities, such as training employees on etiquette when interacting with people with disabilities?

374 respondents

- Yes - 17,6%
- No - 79,9%
- Other - 2,5%

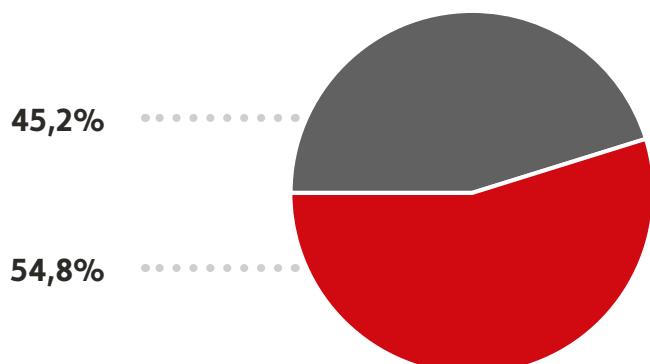


EMPLOYER SURVEY

Have you conducted educational activities, such as training employees on etiquette when interacting with people with disabilities or training managers on managing diverse teams?

124 respondents

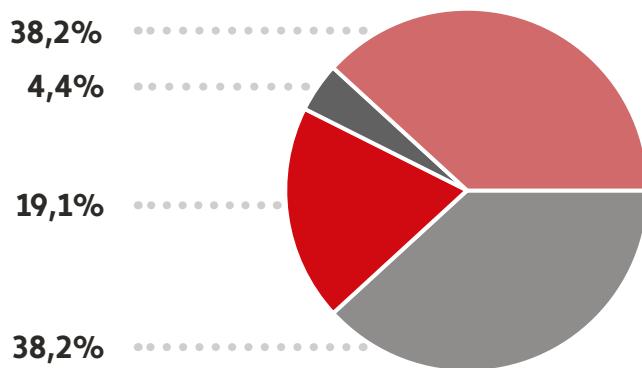
- Yes - 54,8%
- No - 45,2%



EMPLOYER SURVEY

How often do you conduct educational activities?**68 respondents**

- Once a year – 19.1%
- Several times a year – 38.2%
- On average once a quarter – 4.4%
- As needed – 38.2%

**HOW DOES AN EMPLOYER WHO SAYS YES TO DISABILITY OPERATE?**

An external provider has presented you with a training offer. It just so happens that one of the participants is visually disabled. The organiser has informed you that the training cannot be adapted for people with visual disabilities as they do not have the knowledge or experience in this area. What do you do?

**Employer who says NO to disability:**

Unfortunately, you have no influence over this and you regretfully inform the visually impaired person that they will not be able to participate in the training.

**Employer who says YES to disability:**

First, you ask the visually impaired person about their needs. Most often, it is sufficient to verbally describe what is on the slides and to read aloud the comments that appear in the chat. Then you contact the training provider and ask them to implement improvements during the training, and even offer to provide a short training in this area. If the provider is unwilling to ensure accessibility, you look for another provider who offers training adapted to the needs of people with visual disabilities. You also train your internal team of trainers on the fundamentals of ensuring digital accessibility during webinars or stationary training.

Promotion

Every organisation should have **clear and transparent criteria** for promotion.

Promotion opportunities should be available to all individuals who develop their competencies, regardless of any potential or actual need for accommodation.

Promotions are often associated with increased responsibility, longer working hours, additional duties, managing personnel and resources, travelling, or possible relocation.

As long as an individual has the appropriate qualifications and experience necessary for a given position (and can therefore compete for promotion), the need for reasonable accommodations should be considered.

HOW DOES AN EMPLOYER WHO SAYS YES TO DISABILITY OPERATE?



You are looking for a team coordinator for your contact centre. An internal candidate applies. She is a specialist currently working in customer service. As a person with a disability, she exercises her rights, such as working 7 hours a day, having an additional break, and taking additional leave. What do you do?



Employer who says NO to disability:

You do not consider this candidate, because you are afraid that due to her disability and reduced working hours, she will not be able to cope in a more responsible position.



Employer who says YES to disability:

You invite the candidate to the process, evaluate her predispositions, and present in detail what the work in this position entails. If she is the best candidate for this position, you consider her and offer her support in developing leadership competencies

Job Retention & Return to Work

To begin with, one should note that a temporary absence of a team member doesn't necessarily mean a disability. Reasons for a prolonged absence can include not only an illness or accidents, but also, for example, parental leave. Therefore, ensuring that the employee can **retain their position and return smoothly to their duties after an absence** should be an important HR strategy in every company.

In situations like these, companies may face various challenges, such as:

- An employee may return to work, but in a different physical or mental state than before. They may therefore need reasonable accommodations.
- Employees who have acquired family responsibilities (related to raising children, but also caring for elderly relatives) may also need reasonable accommodations, such as changes in working hours and arrangements.
- In some cases, an employee returning to work after a break may not be able to perform basic duties in their previous position, even with reasonable accommodations.

”

Marcin Wenzel
**Deputy Director of the Department
of Sponsorship, Promotion and Brand
Management, Enea Capital Group**



Adapting our workplace to make sure Dariusz, an electrician and wireman who lost a leg due to illness, could return to us was something natural for his colleagues and the parent company operating within our group. Darek is a valuable, experienced employee who possesses both know-how and skills. At the same time, he is a person full of positive energy, always happy to help, despite the difficulties and challenges he faces himself. That's why we quickly helped him purchase a prosthesis and then contacted the Poland Business Run Foundation, which Enea has been sponsoring for years. Darek received rehabilitation, and his unit introduced additional accommodations. In the case of urgent, off-site operations where work at heights is necessary, there is always a team member accompanying Darek who has the appropriate qualifications and can perform these tasks. That's all. It was enough. Sometimes a small accommodation completely transforms the situation. However, to find a solution, you need to be aware of it, learn from good practices, such as those in this report, and be open to other people and their needs. Why not start with a conversation?

Stories of people **returning to work** after a longer absence can vary significantly, but we assume that a programme for job retention and returning to work should include three elements:

- flexibility of time
- flexibility of location
- flexibility of tasks

How to implement such a programme? Here are some tips for management teams dealing with employees returning to work after an extended break:

- If an employee clearly states their readiness to return to work, find a way for them to return as soon as possible. Retaining talented, trained, and experienced individuals is one of the most important factors in a company's success.
- Before returning to work, meet with the employee and prepare a plan for their reintegration into the team in the near future. This way, the returning person will immediately feel part of the organisation again. Make the first few weeks back at work as stress-free as possible.
- Discuss with the returning person if there are any tasks, duties, or relationships that make them uneasy and would make it difficult to return to work. If so, consider temporary changes in these areas to help them cope with difficult situations.
- Approach the topic of returning to work and providing accommodations with an open mind. Don't assume anything. Explain any recent changes that affect the role, responsibilities, and work practices of the returning individual.
- Consider a gradual return to work if the situation requires it, for instance, part-time work.
- Choose someone from the team to help the returning employee find their way back into the work environment, for example, by taking breaks together or having lunch and supporting them in communicating changes in processes that have occurred in the company during their absence and that are important from their perspective.
- Promote a positive team spirit. Ensure that caring for the emotions and comfort of the person returning to work is important. Often we are uncertain whether to ask such a person about their well-being, but most people appreciate such small gestures.
- Maintain regular contact with the returning employee, and ask what they need.
- Implement a system for monitoring tasks to know if the person who has returned is coping well with current responsibilities.

HOW DOES AN EMPLOYER WHO SAYS YES TO DISABILITY OPERATE?

Due to an accident, a production worker loses the ability to walk. His job involved assembling small parts while standing at the production line. After the accident, performing work at this post is impossible due to the height of the production line. What do you do?



Employer who says NO to disability:

You part ways with the employee due to their inability to work in the given position.



Employer who says YES to disability:

You explore the possibility of transferring them to another position. In such a situation, it may be necessary to provide reasonable accommodations within the alternative role. If, despite your efforts, it is not possible to transfer the employee to another position within the company, you offer support in finding employment outside the structures of the company. For the future, you consider greater accessibility of all existing positions and enabling work, for example, in a sitting/standing position. This will facilitate work for people with musculoskeletal issues, including the elderly, who will be increasingly present in our organisations due to demographic changes.

4. Reasonable Accommodation

Request Process

You will find out the following from this chapter:



- How does the process of requesting reasonable accommodations work in practice?
- How should you respond if your team is unhappy with accommodations made for people with disabilities?
- What are some of the best practices Polish companies make use of in this area?

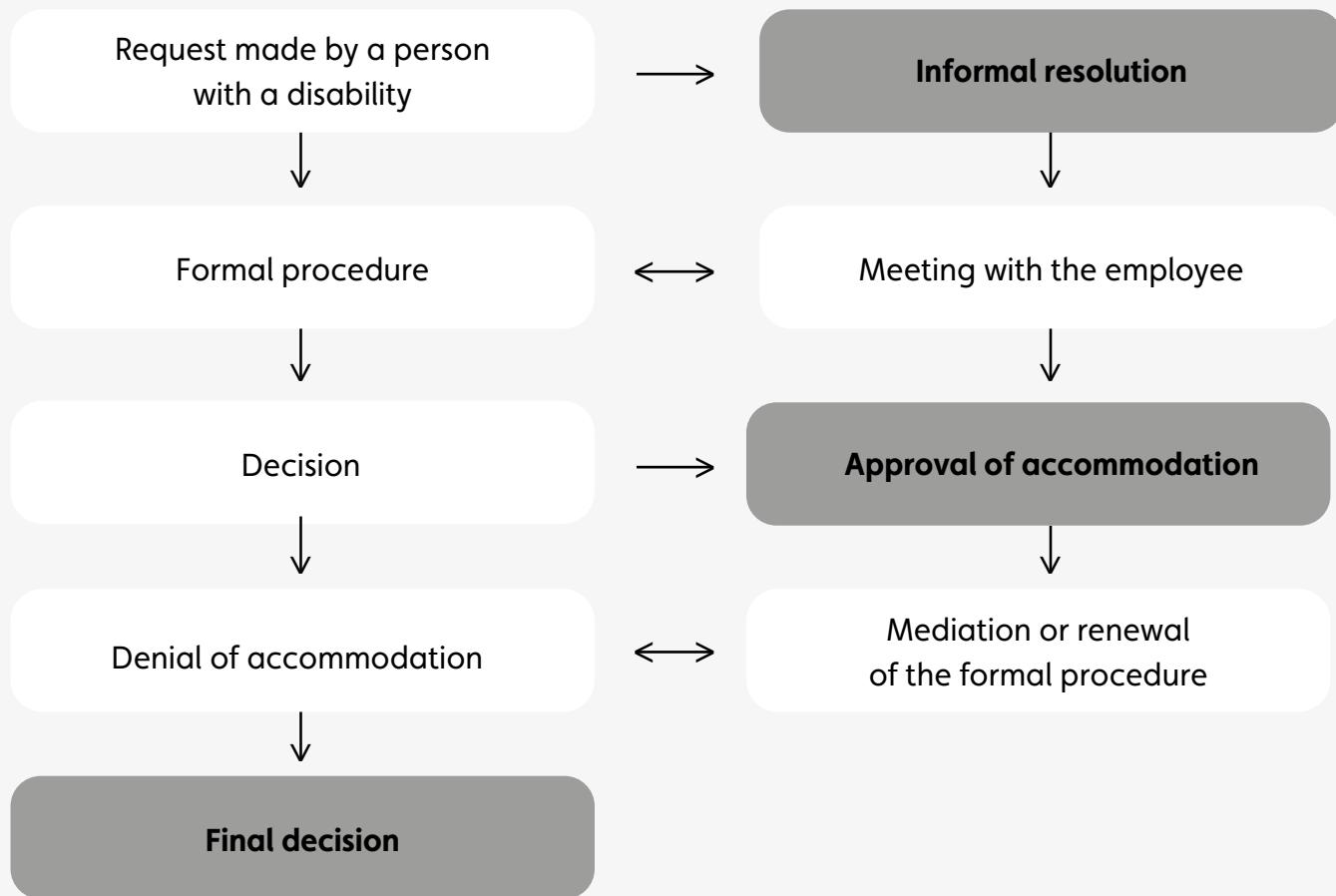
Stages of a Reasonable Accommodation Request

In this chapter, we present an outline that illustrates a possible process for requesting reasonable accommodations. These are general guidelines that can be adapted to fit the size and structure of your organisation.

Possible elements of this process include:

- ensuring confidentiality,
- developing a team responsible for approving reasonable accommodations,
- formal and informal procedures,
- resolving potential disputes,
- communicating with the team.

In practice, these stages can vary greatly depending on the specific characteristics of each company. However, we can simplify the process and represent it with the following example.



When a person with a disability **requests a reasonable accommodation**, there are typically two paths to follow: an informal resolution and a formal procedure.

Informal Resolution: In an informal resolution, the decision to approve the accommodation, along with any related documentation (such as email correspondence), is retained by both the employee and their manager.

Formal Procedure: For a formal procedure, the request is reviewed by the company's accommodations coordinator or a manager. A meeting is then scheduled with the employee, their supervisor, and anyone else involved in the process. If necessary, a medical opinion from an occupational health professional may be sought. The request can be either approved or denied.

If approved, a decision is made regarding the allocation of funds or implementation of alternative solutions. The reasonable accommodation is then approved and subject to periodic review.

If denied, the employee has the right to appeal to a higher-level manager. If both parties are willing, mediation or conciliation can be pursued to resolve the dispute. If these efforts fail, the formal procedure will be restarted.

The process concludes with a **final decision** on whether to approve or deny the request for a reasonable accommodation.

Ensuring Confidentiality

The process of approving reasonable accommodations typically begins with a request from a person with a disability. This person is an active participant in the process at this stage.

A common point of uncertainty for both parties is the extent of documentation that an employer can request from a person with a disability at this stage. It's important to note that **the employer does not need to be informed about the specific medical diagnosis of a person with a disability**. This is where confidentiality comes into play. The employer should focus on asking questions about the accommodations needed, rather than the underlying causes of the disability.

Regarding requests for reasonable accommodations, the only information an employer can require is:

- identification of the **challenges faced** by the person with a disability.
- **expected steps** that can be undertaken to remove or reduce them.

Example

An employee has functional limitations due to a weakened immune system. As a result, they may need accommodations such as a dedicated workstation with their own IT equipment to minimise exposure to infections. The employer, when considering the employee's request for accommodations, does not need to know the specific cause of the employee's weakened immune system. This maintains the confidentiality of the employee's medical information, which they may not feel comfortable sharing openly.



If employees are forced to disclose information about their medical conditions, they may be **less likely to ask for accommodations**. This outcome is detrimental to the employer's interests. If people with disabilities do not request reasonable accommodations due to fear of negative consequences, employers may ultimately face reduced team efficiency due to absenteeism and decreased productivity.

“

Krzysztof Hilt

Regional Occupational Health Consultant

Employees are not required to disclose the specifics of their medical condition to their employer, which is fundamental to maintaining confidentiality within the organisation. Medical record analysis is the responsibility of the doctor, not the employing company. To ensure that the requested equipment, such as an adjustable height ergonomic desk, will genuinely benefit the individual and that the expense is justified, it is advisable to refer the requesting individual for an assessment. This can be done based on paragraph 6, point 1 of the "Regulation of the Minister of Health on medical examinations of employees". An occupational health physician will then assess that person's health condition and approach the accommodation request from a medical perspective. If they cannot find a medical justification for the expense, they may reject the request.

Developing a Team for Approving Reasonable Accommodations

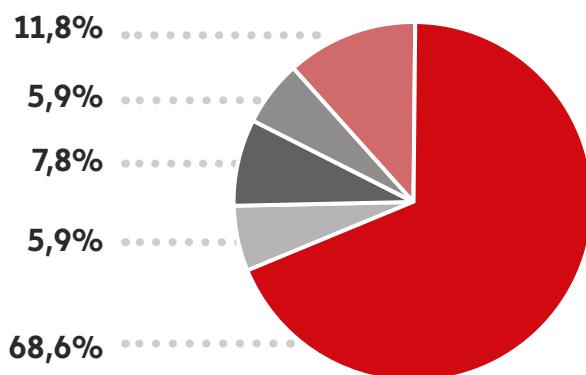
A crucial aspect of the reasonable accommodation process is **designating a team (or a specific person)** to review requests. In small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), this may be the employee's direct supervisor. Our research and experience confirm that in most cases, this is the first point of contact for reasonable accommodation requests. In larger companies, we recommend assigning this responsibility to a specific department (for example, Human Resources).

EMPLOYER SURVEY

Employees initially reported their need for accommodations to:

51 respondents:

- Direct supervisor - 68.6%
- HR department - 11.8%
- Occupational health and safety department - 7.8%
- Management - 5.9%
- Other - 5.9%



Zalety wyznaczenia zespołu lub konkretnej osoby:

- **Quick response** to requests for reasonable accommodations means faster implementation of adjustments and as a result **increased team efficiency**.
- Knowledge about reasonable accommodations in a specific unit in the organisation. As a result, people consciously involved in this process can have **up-to-date information** on, among other things, additional sources of financing, and good relations with suppliers of specialist equipment or furniture.
- Consistency and **repeatability of action**. Thanks to this, we shorten the time of the review process whether to approve reasonable accommodations.
- Direct contact with an employee who can conduct **initial negotiations** with a person with a disability or **consult their needs**.

People receiving a request for a reasonable accommodation may be unprepared and lack the knowledge how to respond to the request. Equipping them with the necessary skills will make employees with disabilities feel less reluctant to request reasonable accommodations. Trained management will feel more effective. Team proficiency in policies and procedures protects the employee from discrimination and the employer from the consequences resulting from it.

We also recommend that the team reviewing requests for reasonable accommodations manage **a central budget for this purpose**. This is particularly true for companies with multiple branches or subsidiaries, as discussed in the first chapter

Formal and Informal Procedures

When an employee initially requests an accommodation, it's advisable to verify whether **it can be reviewed informally**. This speeds up the process and allows the employee to reach their full potential more quickly.

Even for informal accommodations, a simple written record (for example, an email or a statement) should be kept for future reference. This is valuable to both parties in case of any possible future disputes.

In practice, the informal procedure applies to simple situations that do not involve a lengthy decision-making process. This could be, for example, a request to go to the doctor or flexible working hours.

If the request for reasonable accommodation is **more complex**, the company should have **a formal procedure** for reviewing such documents.

In the case of smaller employers, reasonable accommodations can be part of a separate process that involves the team reporting their new needs (for example, IT or office equipment needs).

For companies that go beyond the SME sector, we strongly recommend a separate, **written procedure on how to formally ask for reasonable accommodations**. This will be useful if the company is large or has several branches or locations.

Resolving Potential Disputes

Occasionally, employers may find it difficult to reach an agreement with employees regarding what constitutes a reasonable accommodation or what steps the employer should take in response to a specific request.

Examples of expectations:

- A candidate with a mobility disability informs the employer during the interview that they will need assistance with tasks such as eating and using the restroom.
- A remote worker requests a custom-built desk to create a comfortable home office.
- An employee requests equipment that costs EUR 5,000.
- A hybrid worker asks for the same equipment provided in the office.
- A blind employee wants to bring an assistance dog to the office, but some colleagues have allergies.

These are real-life examples.

An employer may refuse to meet such requests if they impose a **disproportionate burden**. However, in our experience, it's always worth discussing the request before rejecting it. Often, a compromise can be reached that satisfies both parties and allows the employee with a disability to work effectively. While this isn't always possible, it's worth giving it a try.

Let's consider some alternatives. Instead of assistance from colleagues, perhaps an assistant a few times a week and/or a hybrid or remote work arrangement would be suitable. Instead of a custom-built desk, a standard adjustable-height desk could be considered. Instead of expensive equipment, the IT department could search for a more affordable option or apply for funding. Instead of identical equipment for home office purposes, cost-effective solutions could be found. For the blind employee, a hybrid work arrangement with a rotating schedule or a reorganisation of the office space could be considered.

These are just a few examples of potential solutions. **An “Employer who says YES to disability always chooses dialogue.**

Resolving Disputes Through Mediation

A legal process is often costly and time-consuming for all parties involved. Therefore, in the event of a dispute, we recommend that employers first make an effort to resolve the matter, for example, through mediation.

In the first step, internal experts can act as mediators. These could be employees from the Employee or Associate Relations departments or anti-harassment committees. Subsequently, it is worth considering external support. A lawyer can take on the role of such a mediator. In practice, **it is easier for people outside the organisation to maintain distance from the situation.**

Mediators are tasked with helping to reach an agreement that is **acceptable for both parties** in the dispute without imposing ready-made solutions. Individuals supporting the resolution of a dispute must therefore have knowledge of all regulations concerning reasonable accommodations, labour law, and the company's policy on reasonable accommodations.

Reasonable Accommodations in Different Countries

If a company operates internationally, it is worth finding out how the law of a given country views reasonable accommodations. In many legal systems, including Poland, **failure to provide reasonable accommodation may be considered unlawful.** This could lead to legal proceedings for employers, even for those who are unaware of the requirement.

Communication with the Team

Providing reasonable accommodations to a specific employee can have an impact on **the entire team.** Additional questions or discussions will be raised, for example, by transferring certain tasks or functions to other employees, in a situation where a person with a disability is unable to perform them.

Examples of questions we often hear in such situations:

- Why does Anna only work from home and part-time?
- Why did Paul get a different chair than everyone else?
- Why doesn't Chris participate in team-building trips?

The employer **may not be able to answer these questions** precisely due to the aforementioned obligation of confidentiality. The content of such answers should first be discussed with the person with a disability who has received the accommodation. In practice, we see that in some cases, they want to explain to the team themselves why certain changes have occurred. However, the employer cannot pressure the employee to disclose this information. nevertheless, they can **create circumstances conducive to such openness.**

Here are some possible explanations for the questions asked above:

- Anna is a single mother caring for a child with a disability. She is unable to return to full-time work due to her childcare responsibilities.
- Paul suffered a spinal injury following an accident and has no objection to his colleagues knowing why he has a new chair
- Chris is unable to participate in team-building trips because he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and such a trip would be too stressful for him.

A **planned educational strategy** is an effective way to address potential resentment or misunderstandings among employees. This strategy will ensure that all employees are aware of and understand the company's policies on reasonable accommodations and its commitment to employing people with disabilities.

We recommend that training on reasonable accommodation policies be provided during the onboarding process. This way, everyone who starts working for the organisation will immediately understand why certain accommodations are necessary for some team members.

The benefits of a high-quality training programme include:

- **resolving potential misunderstandings and tensions within the team,**
- raising awareness that **reasonable accommodations benefit all employees**, because everyone may experience a temporary or permanent loss of ability due to an accident, injury, illness, or ageing. Moreover, we may need greater flexibility at work, even without a disability certificate.
- providing knowledge about the employer's obligations regarding the employment of people with disabilities and reasonable accommodations.

Be mindful of invisible disabilities

Many people with invisible disabilities **do not declare their disability** and therefore do not request reasonable accommodations. These people often fear a **negative reaction or lack of understanding** from their supervisors. Management should be aware of this.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A "MANAGER WHO SAYS YES TO DISABILITY" IN CASES OF INVISIBLE DISABILITIES:



Understand the issue

In cases of physical disabilities, it's easier to understand what reasonable accommodations might look like. However, invisible disabilities, such as those related to the circulatory system, mental health or neurological conditions, can be more complex.



Don't generalise

Every person's experience with disability is unique. Your role as a leader is to listen with the intent of understanding the specific needs of the employee with an invisible disability. If you lack knowledge about a particular disability, ask an organisation that specialises in that area or our Foundation. You can also deepen your knowledge by using reliable online resources.



Adapt your support

No company policy or regulation is perfect. Strive for an individual approach to meet the needs of your employees. You can ask the team what accommodations would be helpful. Consider what you, as a manager, can do to support people with disabilities in achieving their best results.



Initiate change

Many people with disabilities don't feel like they belong. Even as a middle manager, you can influence change and create an inclusive culture for everyone. One way to do this is to share with your supervisor what you've learnt from working with people with disabilities on your team.

5. Reasonable Accommodations Policy

From this chapter, you will find out the following:

- What is a reasonable accommodations policy?
- What can such a document look like?
- What is important to remember while formulating it?



Benefits of a Reasonable Accommodations Policy

A reasonable accommodations policy is a set of principles that serves as a roadmap for how a given company approaches this issue. It is **one of the documents regulating anti-discrimination actions within the organisation**. Especially in the case of large enterprises, we encourage this policy to be an addition to other regulations on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), rather than their only element.

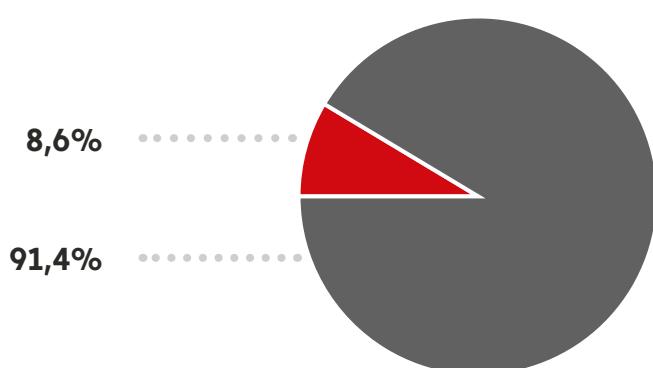
Our research has shown that only 8.6% of employers who employ people with disabilities have a reasonable accommodations policy. This shows how much more we have to do in this area.

EMPLOYER SURVEY

Do you have a reasonable accommodations policy?

58 respondents

- Yes - 8,6%
- No - 91,4%



A key component of a successful policy of reasonable accommodations is **a clear and ongoing commitment** from senior management to uphold it. Larger organisations should consider having the policy approved by the executive team responsible for its implementation.

The policy should be developed in cooperation with representatives from key internal departments, including labour unions. If the company has relevant employee networks (for example, networks for employees with disabilities or neurodiverse individuals), it is beneficial to include them in the process of creating internal regulations.

”

Jürgen Menze
Disability Inclusion Officer,
ILO Global Business and Disability Network



We all have different needs, inside and outside the workplace. Employees with disabilities are not different and might require reasonable adjustments at work based on their individual needs, so they and their employers can harness their full professional potential. It is simply a matter of efficiencies.

A Sample Reasonable Accommodations Policy

The following is a sample reasonable accommodations policy that can serve as a foundation for creating a similar document tailored to your organisation.

This template assumes that reasonable accommodations should **be accessible to all employees**. However, your organisation may choose to restrict accommodations to people with disabilities.

When making such a decision, companies should consider their commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace, as well as any relevant legal and societal obligations that may apply.

While the example below primarily focuses on the needs of current employees, it's important to remember that reasonable accommodations can also be extended to job applicants.

Reasonable Accommodations Policy (TEMPLATE)

Declaration

We, the leaders of [Insert Company Name], commit to:

- ensuring equality for all people in the workplace;
- respecting the diversity of all employees;
- fostering a company culture characterised by inclusivity and respect for fundamental rights and dignity;
- adhering to a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination;
- creating and maintaining a discrimination-free work environment, which is unlawful and prohibited by company policy.

[Insert Company Name], hereinafter referred to as the "Company," recognises that it should provide reasonable accommodations to employees (insert based on the company's strategic decision: individuals with disabilities or other groups, or all employees) who require workplace adjustments to perform their job duties on an equal basis with others.

The Company recognises that, based on the law, the denial of reasonable accommodations is a form of discrimination. Therefore, [Insert Company Name] is obligated to provide individual employees with reasonable accommodations when it is both justified and necessary, and recognises that reasonable accommodations should be provided when they do not impose a disproportionate burden on the company.

Definitions

Reasonable Accommodations

Necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments that do not impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. These serve to ensure that [insert based on the strategic decision of the company: individuals with disabilities, additionally other groups, or simply all employees] have equal access to employment, promotion, and work in a particular profession.

Disproportionate Burden

When determining the appropriateness of implementing a reasonable accommodation, the company should consider such factors as: financial and other costs, company resources, the company's organisational situation, the possibility of obtaining public funding, the potential benefits of the accommodation for persons other than the applicant, the company's safety and health obligations to the applicant and any other person affected by the accommodation, and the rights and freedoms of others.

Qualifications for Essential Job Functions

This means that an individual meets the requirements for education, skills, experience, licences, or other qualifying standards. As a result, they are able to perform the tasks necessary for a given position, with the potential support of reasonable accommodations.

Essential Job Functions

The fundamental duties or requirements of a specific position. These cannot be eliminated, as the position would cease to exist within the company's structure.

Recipients of Reasonable Accommodations

An employee may request an accommodation at any point in their employment (including upon promotion to other positions within the company). The company is committed to providing reasonable accommodations when a team member needs adjustments to:

- a. perform the essential functions of their job;
- b. enjoy equal access to all elements of employment, including, for example, participating in internal events (team-building activities, training, team meetings).

Responsibility for reviewing requests for reasonable accommodations rests with the [insert name of appropriate role/position within the company], hereinafter referred to as the "Accommodations Coordinator".

Accommodations Coordinator

The role of the Accommodations Coordinator is to handle all requests for reasonable accommodations from employees. Currently, the Accommodations Coordinator is:

- a. [insert name]
- b. [insert email]
- c. [insert phone number]
- d. [insert address of their office]

The Accommodations Coordinator reviews all requests for reasonable accommodations, but consults individual requests with the employee's supervisor, managers, and other relevant parties.

Reasonable Accommodations Process

1. An employee should inform the company that they require an accommodation as soon as they identify such a need.
2. An employee may request a reasonable accommodation at any time, either verbally or in writing.
3. The employee should participate constructively in the accommodation process by communicating their needs in a timely manner, providing necessary documentation, and participating in any meetings that may be necessary to discuss the request.
4. An employee may be accompanied by another team member or representative, including a union representative.
5. The employee may initially submit the request informally to their supervisor. This allows the request to be considered more quickly and simply. Even in this process, there must be a written record of all steps taken by both the applicant and the employer.
6. If an employee has previously received a reasonable accommodation or been denied one, this should not prevent them from submitting another request at a later date if their situation has changed. This may also be a request for a different type of accommodation.
7. The Accommodations Coordinator may refuse to consider a request if there is convincing evidence that it is a disproportionate burden and/or an abuse of the reasonable accommodation process.

Process of Approving a Reasonable Accommodation

1. Upon receipt of a request, the Accommodations Coordinator will meet with the employee as soon as possible, but no later than 10 business days.
2. During the initial meeting, the Accommodations Coordinator will review the accommodation request to better understand the circumstances and identify whether the accommodation is justified.
3. The Accommodations Coordinator may then consult with the employee's direct supervisor, other employees, or external experts to make an appropriate decision on approving the accommodation. Company employees who participate in the assessment of feasibility should respond to all such requests in a timely manner, as soon as possible.
4. The Accommodations Coordinator may request additional information to substantiate the request, but it should always relate to functional limitations, not medical data.

Based on the information gathered, the Accommodations Coordinator will decide whether to approve the accommodation in a timely and efficient manner. The employee will be notified in writing. Any denial should clearly state the specific reasons for such a decision.

6. Next, the Accommodations Coordinator oversees the implementation of the reasonable accommodation. The employee's manager should provide the Coordinator with information regarding the effectiveness of the accommodation after it has been implemented.
7. If, after the accommodation has been implemented, the employee is still unable to perform the essential functions of their job, the company should consider transferring them to another position that matches their current qualifications and experience.
8. Finally, the Accommodations Coordinator should monitor how the accommodation is working in practice and whether it has increased equality and efficiency in the team. Reviews of reasonable accommodations should consider both the employee's and the company's perspectives.

Confidentiality Requirements

Information obtained in the reasonable accommodation process should be treated as confidential. If this information involves particularly sensitive personal data (e.g., medical information), access to it should be strictly limited. The applicant should be informed of the confidentiality arrangements that apply to their request.

Dispute Resolution

If an employee is dissatisfied with the decision made regarding their request for a reasonable accommodation, in accordance with this policy, the company and the employee may use other methods of resolving disputes, including but not limited to, mediation, conciliation, and other appropriate practices within the company.

If dialogue does not resolve the dispute, the employee may appeal the decision to higher-level management. The appeals process should be conducted promptly and efficiently.

Reasonable Accommodation Training

All company employees should be trained on this policy and it should be made available to them in digital formats. This training should be conducted upon commencement of employment and repeated as periodic training to refresh and update knowledge.

In the case of promotion to a managerial position, training on the obligations arising from this policy should be provided. This training may be conducted along with other types of workplace training, such as during initial onboarding training.

Review of the Reasonable Accommodations Policy

This policy should be regularly updated in consultation with employee representatives, including unions and any employee networks that are particularly affected by this policy (for example, employees with disabilities). The review should take place every [insert number] year(s).

To facilitate the review of this policy's functioning, data on reasonable accommodations should be collected regularly. This data should include elements such as: the number of people applying for reasonable accommodations, the time taken to process requests, the outcome of requests, and the costs and benefits associated with the accommodations provided.

[City, Date]

[Name]

[Position]

6. List of Reasonable Accommodations

To inspire both employers to be open to implementing reasonable accommodations and people with disabilities to request them, we have prepared **a list of reasonable accommodations** divided into **clear categories**.



These are examples that we most often observe in Polish companies. It is important to remember, however, that the catalogue of accommodations is **not a closed list**.

Reasonable accommodations can be **very diverse indeed** and should primarily be a response to the real needs of employees. We also encourage you to expand the list with your own ideas for building a diverse and

List of Reasonable Accommodations for People with Disabilities

1. Working Hours:

- flexible working hours
- part-time work
- modified breaks
- additional breaks
- additional days off

2. Workplace:

- a quieter workplace without too many stimuli
- a more private workspace, instead of an open space type of office.
- a separate place to rest
- a designated quiet zone
- more natural light in the workplace
- an area for active regeneration
- active seating – balls, stools, steppers
- modified equipment (for example, an ergonomic chair or desk)
- architectural accessibility (construction of a ramp, adaptation of toilets etc.)
- assistive technologies (specialised software, screen readers, alternative computer mice etc.)

- noise and hum-cancelling devices (for example, for white noise or headphones)
- workstations with the possibility of working in a sitting or standing position
- providing a parking space closer to the employee's workstation

3. Workplace Communication:

- provision of alternative forms of communication (for example, a sign language interpreter)
- instructions and training materials in accessible formats (for example, large print, electronic formats compatible with screen readers)
- video conferences and company meetings with captions, transcription or hearing aids (such as an induction loop)
- digitally accessible online documents, applications, and software
- pictures, photos or videos showing how to perform an important task
- easy-to-read content (ETR)
- changes in the type or frequency of feedback
- alternative ways of presenting tasks and responsibilities (written or verbal)
- changes in the way of communication (for example, more frequent written communication)
- concise, brief messages
- clear and precise definition of expectations

4. Work Organisation:

- remote work possibility
- hybrid work possibility
- task-based work
- work in smaller teams
- modified job duties
- exchange of tasks and duties with coworkers
- reduction of stressors
- slower pace of work
- breaking down large tasks into smaller ones
- support in setting priorities
- consistent work and task schedule
- diverse, varied tasks
- permission to perform tasks in different ways
- extended onboarding period
- additional training
- tailored training program
- flexible approach to workload considering poor well-being
- modification of company policies or procedures (for example, dress code, eating and drinking at work, evacuation plan for people with disabilities)
- no or limited business travel

- inclusive team-building events and activities tailored to the needs of diverse individuals
- permission to be absent from company events or team meetings
- support from a job coach or mentor
- support from another team member
- support from a professional advisor (coach or mentor)

5. Other:

- gradual return to work after an illness or acquiring a disability
- change of job position after an illness or acquiring a disability
- access to an expanded health benefits package
- access to professional mental health support
- team training (for example, supporting a person with epilepsy or another disability)
- training on etiquette towards people with disabilities
- team training on culture and communication with deaf people
- permission to have a support animal in the workplace

7. People with Disabilities on Reasonable Accommodations

From this chapter, you will find the following:

- What do people with disabilities say about reasonable accommodations?
- What accommodations have they received at work?
- How to tailor reasonable accommodations to the type of disability?



Best practices

In this chapter, we give a voice to people with various disabilities who use reasonable accommodations in their daily work. We want to show that the practices described in the previous chapters are being implemented in Polish companies.

We would like to thank all the people who have dared to share their stories under their own names. We would like to express our special thanks to people whose disabilities are not visible. They are often perceived as "healthy", but in reality, they face various challenges and need different types of adjustments in the workplace.

We also appreciate all companies and organisations that build diverse teams and give people with disabilities a chance to pursue their careers. We congratulate you on your openness and initiatives worthy of Employers who say YES to disability!

People with mobility disabilities

Reasonable accommodations for individuals with mobility challenges **go beyond accessible buildings** and adapted bathrooms. Many people with mobility disabilities **don't use wheelchairs**, yet this doesn't diminish the importance of architectural accessibility. Amenities like elevators and ramps benefit a wide range of people, including couriers, the elderly and caregivers.

Some individuals may require adjustable desks, ergonomic chairs, specialised computer equipment, or the assistance of a support person. Employees facing mobility challenges also **appreciate employer flexibility**, remote or hybrid work options, a positive work environment, and training that challenges harmful stereotypes and fosters inclusivity.

“

Anna Maria Kołodziejczyk
Lobby/Service Employee
AmRest, KFC



I have a moderate physical condition that affects my ability to move. I experience muscle loss and frequent back and knee pain. My body needs constant stimulation and movement, which prevented me from pursuing a career in graphic design. After a long search, I found a job in the food industry. The beginnings were tough, and I was hesitant to open up to others. The person responsible for my onboarding was a great help. They introduced me to the team, gave me a tour of the restaurant, explained my role, and tailored the training to my specific needs. Currently, I work in two roles: the lobby, where I maintain cleanliness, and the service area, where I prepare food like fries. My tasks have been adjusted to accommodate my physical condition. I'm constantly on the move, which is good for my muscles, and I have a flexible schedule. The structured nature of my work makes it easier to complete my tasks. I can always rely on my team and supervisors for support. Despite my physical condition, no one treats me "differently". Working at KFC has transformed me completely, and I'm a totally new person now.

''

Julia Zakrocka

Graphic Designer, Kinaole



kinaole.

Entering the job market as a person with a significant mobility disability was challenging. It required proving that my skills were just as good as those of able-bodied individuals and that I could handle the same tasks. The most important thing was finding an employer who understood my abilities and limitations, and who would allow me to work remotely with flexible hours. In my case, these key adjustments prevent burnout and fatigue. The integration of our team, openness to diversity, and understanding the need for accommodations for a person with a disability, for example, during business trips, is also important. This safe space allows me to develop my skills and carry out assigned tasks, while at the same time having a real impact on the development and culture of Kinaole.

''

Marta Marciniuk

Specialist in Supporting People with Disabilities, Wedel

Wedel implemented a comprehensive support programme for people with disabilities called "CzekoSprawni" that enabled me to work remotely, which is the best form of employment for me. I was also recruited and introduced to new responsibilities remotely. What struck me was the onboarding process, which was tailored to my abilities from day one. An important element was the support of Ewa, a colleague from the team, who was my "buddy". She gradually assigned me tasks, at a pace and in a form adapted to my capabilities. She also monitored my progress, creating a comfort zone for me and reducing the stress associated with a new work environment. At Wedel, I really appreciate the opportunity to fill in competency gaps, for example, in using Microsoft Excel or PowerPoint. I can also develop thanks to additional training "tailored" to the needs of the participants of the CzekoSprawni programme. This is important because people with disabilities entering the job market often have lower competencies, but also a lot of potential that is not being used. Thanks to a comprehensive approach within the program, I feel like part of our organisation.



“

Piotr Borgulat

Knowledge Manager, Capgemini Poland



Capgemini

I've been living with a mobility disability since birth. However, this didn't stop me from getting an education and finding a job, even though finding the right employer wasn't easy. It wasn't until my third attempt that I found a company that was flexible with my needs. At Capgemini Poland, all my requests for accommodations were met. They allowed me to work remotely with flexible hours, allowing me to fulfill myself professionally without neglecting my rehabilitation. My colleagues and supervisors are very empathetic and helpful. They made sure I could participate in integration events by providing me with assistance and choosing accessible venues. I also appreciate regular meetings with my supervisor and feedback, as well as openness to help. All of this motivates me to work harder and encourages me to reciprocate the trust placed in me when I was hired.

”

Mikołaj Tkaczyk

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Intern,

IKEA Retail

I joined IKEA as an intern in a programme for people with disabilities. After over 1.5 years of work, I am dedicated to levelling the playing field for people from this social group. I identify as a person with a disability and have a significant disability certificate. The exclusion of people with disabilities from the Polish job market is a problem that manifests itself everywhere, including in relationships with other employees. However, I have the privilege and good fortune to have never experienced this - I work in a company whose actual values align with its declared ones. From the first day, I have only encountered openness, kindness, and respect at every step. Important elements that level my opportunities in the organisation include: architectural accessibility for a wheelchair, desk adjustments, and the ability to work remotely. Without them, it would be impossible to realise my potential.



“

Agnieszka Zielińska
Administrative Assistant,
Maco Productions Polonia

I was diagnosed with cerebral palsy affecting all four limbs at birth. I have a significant mobility disability, and my electric wheelchair is my primary mode of transportation. Despite this, I have been professionally active since 2004 and currently work in administration. Initially, I worked on-site, but since the outbreak of the pandemic, I have been working remotely, which is the most important accommodation provided by my employer. As part of my remote work, I have been provided with a laptop and a company phone. I work 7 hours a day and have 10 additional days of vacation, which I use for rehabilitation. I use a certified electronic signature provided by my employer to sign electronic documents. At work, I feel needed and accepted for who I am. For example, I can freely ask my colleagues to donate 1.5% of their taxes to cover the costs of my rehabilitation. At Maco Productions Polonia is where my professional and social rehabilitation take place.



People with Hearing Disabilities

Deaf people often identify more as members of a distinct culture than as people with a disability. This requires organisations to adopt an approach similar to hiring employees from different cultures, emphasising the need to understand and respect the unique elements of deaf culture, such as sign language.

If you value efficiency, loyalty, and focus in your employees, consider hiring people with hearing disability, who often demonstrate a strong ability to adapt quickly. Preparing a workplace for employees in this group primarily involves **adjusting communication**, such as through written correspondence, providing a sign language interpreter or assistive technology (like induction loops for people with hearing loss). Non-governmental organisations, such as the GEST Association, offer comprehensive technical and substantive advice on creating safe and accessible workplaces for people with hearing impairments. Their experience working with international corporations demonstrates the effectiveness of such solutions.

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Sylwester Milewski

Tire Verifier, Michelin



Starting my job at Michelin as a tire verifier, I knew I would have to deal with barriers that only deaf people know. However, I didn't expect my instructor to learn sign language for me. Additionally, she prepared the training to be more understandable for deaf people. Few people know that we have difficulty reading Polish, because our first language is sign language. The training included many difficult words that would have been a problem even for hearing people not associated with the industry. The instructor specifically changed difficult names to simpler vocabulary, and also shortened and simplified complex instructions to make them easier to learn. All of this positively surprised me. I am one of seven deaf people in the factory, and we communicate with the hearing part of the team using universal gestures. Nonetheless, hearing people have learnt a few phrases in sign language, which was very nice.

“

Eliza Kończak
Warehouse Worker,
POZ1 Amazon Fulfillment Poland



At Amazon, there's no room for discrimination. We are all treated with respect and are valued regardless of our differences. It's a truly supportive environment where everyone can feel accepted. We have access to a translator, which makes it much easier for us to communicate and work on an equal footing with the rest of the team. This allows us to focus on our work and professional development. It's also important that we value diversity in our team. We understand that we all have unique skills and experiences that can contribute to the company's success. Amazon focuses on integrating all employees, regardless of whether they are deaf or hearing. Together we work towards achieving our goals and creating a friendly work environment.

Paweł Janulek
Accountant, ISS

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After 3.5 years of working at ISS, I can say that transformation of communication was the key to success. Informing others that I cannot hear no longer causes as much emotion as it did at the beginning of my career. Communication facilities in the form of written text allow me to communicate in various ways - through paper, text messages, company chat or email. This is a solid foundation for effectively engaging in the life of a large organisation. Many people with hearing disabilities do not communicate verbally as well as I do, but most are fluent in written Polish. In such cases, it is worth treating a deaf person like a foreigner with limited knowledge of the language, rather than a person with a hearing disability. Following such a hint, hearing team members became more open and even gestured more. Meetings can be stressful, but we use Teams, and built-in live transcription allows me to join the discussion. It is also important that there is a smooth flow of communication about changes in the company because gossip often doesn't reach me. It has always been important to me not to be dependent on the actions or pity of other people. Working here, I feel independent in spite of my disability.



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Maria Olejniczak-Dardzińska**Development Specialist, Truvant Europe**
 **TRUVANT**

I am a person with profound hearing loss and have been working at Truvant for about five years. I started as an HR Assistant and am now a Development Specialist. The company has made several accommodations for me, for which I am grateful. My previous position required telephone contact with the team, which was impossible as I read lips. My supervisor asked everyone to contact me personally, by email or text messages. Currently, during remote meetings, colleagues turn on their cameras so that I can read their lips. The transcription in the Teams application also supports my understanding of speech. During face-to-face meetings, everyone turns towards me and makes sure I can see their lips, and my desk is placed facing the door. Everyone on the team knows that if they want to tell me something, it's best to wave in my direction. When they are unsure how to behave, they ask what would make it easier for me. My employer has also allowed me to work remotely if I need to focus, and my supervisor makes sure I feel comfortable. Working at Truvant gives me satisfaction and the opportunity to develop.

Maria Dolińska**Warehouse Worker,****POZ1 Amazon Fulfillment Poland**

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There is order in the workplace, which allows for efficient task completion and achievement of goals. This gives self-confidence and allows you to focus on what really matters. An important issue is the possibility of professional development in various areas.

Everyone has the opportunity to expand their skills and gain new experiences. Additionally, there is the possibility of training as an instructor, which allows for professional development and also supports the development of other deaf people. This is really important for our community. The atmosphere at Amazon is great, there is kindness, acceptance, and respect for all team members. Other employees always ask how we feel, and what's going on in our lives. Deaf people are treated here without any prejudice or exclusion. This is a really significant step in building equality.




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Weronika Merecik**Runner service employee,
AmRest Poland, KFC**

I have a moderate hearing disability. In my previous job, I didn't feel comfortable. I felt like I didn't fit in and it was difficult for me to understand my hearing colleagues, which had a negative impact on my mood and performance. That changed when I started at KFC, mainly through adapting communication to suit me. I work in the service area and prepare sandwiches. Orders are displayed on a monitor, which is a great help, and each sandwich has a visual and I am trained in its preparation. I always know what to do and what my supervisors expect. I help team members in other positions, for instance at the cash register, which has been adapted for me - I do not contact guests, I only pack orders displayed on the monitor. My employer cares about my comfort, because I completed my safety and health training under the supervision of a deaf person, who showed me step-by-step how to work, and I received all materials in writing. Older people and foreigners have also joined us. In the team, I don't feel discriminated against or isolated - I am part of it, and the atmosphere is much better than in my previous job.



People with visual disability

Reasonable accommodations for people who are blind or visually disabled include a wide range of measures, from assistive technology to changes in the organisation of the workspace and training for teams aimed at raising awareness and debunking myths about disability.

One myth is the belief that blind people are unable to effectively perform computer work.

Thanks to access to assistive technologies such as screen readers: NVDA, Jaws, Narrator (Windows), VoiceOver (MacOS/iOS) and Talkback (Android), they can find a place for themselves in various industries, including those requiring higher education and specialised skills.

We don't necessarily have to label our office with Braille plates. It is often enough to **take a blind employee around the office** and describe all the rooms verbally in detail. For people with low vision, contrasting markings of the space may be useful, facilitating safe movement. Hiring people with visual disabilities brings unique perspectives to teams. **Each of us** can facilitate access to information for blind people by using alternative text describing graphics or photos on social media and installing the Be My Eyes app on our smartphones.

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Magda Chełmicka
Communication Specialist,
State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People
PFRON



 Państwowy Fundusz
Rehabilitacji Osób
Niepełnosprawnych

Losing my sight at the age of 27 caused radical changes in my private and professional life. Coming to terms with what fate had brought me, I changed my place of residence and job. Currently, as a blind person, I work at PFRON as a Communication Specialist. The employer adapted the position to my needs - my laptop and work phone have a screen reader, which allows me to hear everything that is on it. I can work in a hybrid model, I have reduced working hours, a longer break and the possibility of making a doctor's appointment during working hours. A wonderful team that accepted my disability from the beginning contributed to my quick adaptation to work. It was important to learn the topography of the building in order to move around independently. Colleagues make sure that this space is in constant order. This understanding and support positively influence my performance. The employer focuses on people, development, openness, accessibility and cooperation, which creates a friendly atmosphere.

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Joanna Patalas

Training and Development Specialist, Rekeep Polska



rekeep
Polska

When I found out I was losing my sight, I dropped everything to save it, my prospects, my career... Returning to professional life was stressful, because in the background there was this fear that at the end of therapy, the disease would return with redoubled strength. I have been working at Rekeep Polska for six years now, because they allowed me to work in a hybrid model. Working from home allows me to focus and stay calm. Fewer stimuli have a calming effect on me. I also have flexible and reduced working hours. Thanks to this, I work at times when there is the most daylight and my eyes get less tired. The workload takes into account the times when I'm feeling less well. I also received a company laptop with a large screen, so I can adjust the resolution and fonts. At the company headquarters, I use a laptop stand and an ergonomic desk, so I can work standing or sitting, depending on how I feel. Thanks to funding from ZFRON (Company Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled), I have used the possibility to participate in a rehabilitation programme twice already. My employer also co-financed two postgraduate studies for me. I also received a partial reimbursement of the costs of medication and treatments at a key moment in ophthalmic therapy. I can put no value on the amenities, help, and support I have received.

Joanna Pachnowska

Chief Accountant in the Outsourcing Department, Grant Thornton

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Since childhood, I have been struggling with significant nearsightedness. Wearing contact lenses improved my daily comfort, but many hours in front of the computer significantly worsened my eyesight. My request to reduce my working hours and increase my vacation time was met with understanding. My employer also understands that sometimes I have to give my eyes a rest and step away from the computer for a while. I feel like a full member of the team and have never felt that my disability is a burden in any way.



 **GrantThornton**

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Krystyna Włodarek
Fundraising Specialist,
Ważka Social Cooperative,
Vice President of the Regiment Foundation



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After losing my sight, I was afraid that work would become impossible, or that I only could work as a masseuse. The job market proved to be difficult. I got a job at ZAZ, but it wasn't the place for me. It offered unambitious, repetitive, and unoriginal tasks, while I wanted more. Despite the difficulties, I founded my own foundation, where I could develop professionally. A key improvement was to add sound commands to equipment such as a phone and laptop. This simple adjustment opened up new communication and organisational possibilities for me. I started my new job at Ważka Social Cooperative by using headphones so as not to disturb my co-workers. Transferring paper correspondence to electronic form allowed me to fully participate in daily duties. It was crucial to learn the topography of the building with information for the team, so they wouldn't leave anything in the corridors or paths that I use.

Iraida Charytoniuk
Supervising Associate Talent Team, EY Poland

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Living with a visual disability, I experience some ailments and require constant medical care. The challenges associated with surgeries and rehabilitation after a childhood accident didn't impact my professional experience negatively. I don't hide my disability, I communicate it from the moment of recruitment. At work, I use such accommodations as flexible working hours, which allows me to manage rest, and a hybrid work model with access to a properly equipped office. Educational initiatives are also important to me, thanks to which I can share my experience and help my colleagues understand the individual needs of people with disabilities. In all this, the key role was played by support and upbringing, because those were my loved ones who taught me how to value myself despite my limitations. This has built in me a sense of agency and a desire to share my story.

Building a better
working world

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Paweł Jaworski
Specialist in the Prevention
of Financial Fraud,
Worldline Financial Services (Europe)

**WORLDLINE** 

As a visually disabled person, I have never considered my disability as an obstacle to achieving my professional goals. I believe that I can work normally, I just need a few elements that will make my work easier and more efficient. At Worldline Polska, I openly talked about my needs from the beginning, which was met with understanding and kindness. My workstation was equipped with a monitor arm, and IT specialists configured the computer so that the font and cursor were suitable for me. Improvement works both ways because it is also important to understand the perspective of able-bodied people. If they make a mistake, it is worth explaining everything with a smile to avoid such a situation in the future. At work, the most important thing is dialogue and if you do not know how to behave towards a person with a disability, just ask.



People with intellectual disabilities

People with intellectual disabilities can be **valuable team members** when they find work that matches their skills and preferences. They do best with routine tasks that require a systematic approach. It is crucial to provide them with clear instructions, more time for tasks, team support, and a positive atmosphere.

Cooperation can be facilitated by **a job coach** who helps in achieving independence and advises employers. Supported employment agencies, such as the DZWONI Centre run by the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, offer specialised and professional support.

It is worth remembering that some people with intellectual disabilities **are able to work not only in an auxiliary position, but also in a specific profession** requiring specific qualifications. Especially if they have a mild degree of disability and appropriate vocational education.

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Bartosz Miernik

**Employee at McDonald's in Żary,
run by franchisee Jadwiga Wieczorek**



I have a moderate disability. I started my first days of work with training in frying. Over time, I was hired on a permanent contract. My beginnings were difficult and stressful. Every day I was afraid that something would go wrong. Gradually, thanks to the support of the team, I gained experience and self-confidence. I found out about the job at McDonald's at a job fair. A few days later, with the help of therapists from occupational therapy workshops, I had a job interview with the restaurant manager and was accepted. After four years of work, I became an Instructor. I met many wonderful people with whom I still work today. We motivate each other and confide in each other about our problems. We also keep in touch outside of work. I love my job. Every day for seven years I have tried to put my heart and soul into what I do. I am grateful to McDonald's for independence and autonomy. What do I like best? Of course, a good McWrap and coffee.

''

Anna Lewandowska
Restaurant Worker,
Sodexo Poland



I have been working at Sodexo as a restaurant worker in Gdańsk for six years. I take care of the cleanliness on a daily basis and work on dishwasher duty. I began as an intern, and then I was hired permanently. I had not worked anywhere permanently before and had trouble finding a job. The beginnings were difficult, but I quickly started to cope thanks to the support of the team and job coaches, who spend a whole day with us every week or two. The coach motivates me and listens to my problems. I like my job and put my heart and soul into it. I have wonderful colleagues. And delicious food. And thanks to a stable job at Sodexo, I am more independent and self-reliant. I moved from a supported apartment to an independent apartment.

''

Ryszard Sikora
Warehouse Worker,
Develey Poland

I have been working at Develey Poland for almost 14 years and I am one of the first people with disabilities to be employed there. I started as a cleaner and now I work in the warehouse. I like my job because I feel needed. Every two weeks, I take part in meetings with a job coach, a manager, and a person from HR. Our strengths and weaknesses are discussed. We talk about what needs to be improved and in which direction to develop. I am glad to work here because we produce the best ketchup and sauces for every occasion. My favourite is our hot dog sauce :)



People with invisible disabilities

It is estimated that people with invisible disabilities account for at least **70-80% of all people with disabilities**. Due to the lack of visible symptoms, they often face difficulties in proving their needs to others, including in the context of work.

This group includes people with mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder or depression, chronic illnesses such as diabetes or epilepsy, as well as neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis. Disability can also be associated with circulatory problems, cancer, and many other diseases.

The diversity of needs of people with invisible disabilities translates into **a variety of dedicated accommodations**. These can include flexible working arrangements, reduction of sensory stimuli, mental health support, and clear communication (regular meetings, detailed instructions, openness to dialogue).

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Kacper Ufa
Systems and Cloud
Solutions Engineer, Intel



intel[®]

My disability stems from type 1 diabetes. It is not a type of disability that is visible at first glance, but in some respects it carries limitations. I have to constantly monitor my blood sugar levels. If it is too high, it leads to acidosis and feeling unwell. A level that is too low, on the other hand, poses a risk of convulsions and even death if I don't get help. In my company, I was met with a very positive welcome. Team members themselves asked what to do in case of my hypoglycemia. This allows me to stay calm, knowing that if my sugar suddenly drops, someone in the office will be able to help me. If I feel worse, there is no problem for me to work from home. The role of my manager is also important. She took the initiative and presented the legal accommodations to which I am entitled, such as reduced working hours or additional leave. Additionally, she participates in trainings on the needs and rights of employees with disabilities, to be aware of both my needs and rights. I have her full support. All this allows me to have physical and mental comfort, because I know that I don't have to neglect my health for the sake of work.

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Agnieszka Hoppe-Munir

Export Administrator, Wedel



My disability, mitral valve prolapse and epilepsy, came on suddenly when I was 20. It's invisible, so employers didn't notice it, and I functioned in the job market as a "healthy person". It was difficult to hide my disability at work just to be perceived well. By declaring my disability to a conscious employer, I received accommodations that helped me better fulfil my duties. The possibility of remote or hybrid work and a shorter working time is essential. At Wedel, support in implementation by a person supporting people with disabilities was helpful. The ability to ask about anything gave me confidence. The team is aware of my disability and sees me as a full-fledged work partner which is also important. Training for employees in a team with a person with a disability is valuable for mutual understanding. The most important thing is that Wedel is an organisation open to employing people with disabilities and that consciously approaches their functioning in the workplace.

Łukasz Najgebaur

Project Coordinator, TAKpełnosprawni Foundation

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My disability excluded me from work for four years. It literally swept me off the board that is called life. The limitations acquired in bipolar affective disorder made it impossible for me to return to the role of an entrepreneur. To a small extent, I could use my 15 years of experience in sales and marketing. I decided that with my mental fitness, I could only work in production or security. However, joining an inclusive organisation and obtaining reasonable accommodations allowed me to return "behind a desk". For me, the possibility of remote work is key, as it promotes mood stabilisation and concentration. Task-based work increases efficiency, as I have difficulty with multitasking and decision-making. Reducing phone calls in favour of email is much less stressful and exhausting. More frequent feedback on completed tasks increases my sense of control and effectiveness. An extended onboarding period was also helpful, as I learn more slowly. However, the most important improvement is an employer who is "efficient" in implementing them, open to diversity and including people with disabilities.



TAKpełnosprawni

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Karolina Jankowska

Job Outsourcing Team Coordinator, Job Impulse Poland



job impulse

At 14, I was diagnosed with a joint disease. At 22, I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Because of my disability, I had to give up my previous life, and my dream studies. For three years, I focused on fighting the disease. During remission, I returned to studying and wanted to work. Unfortunately, I had no experience, and the job offers I found were not adapted to my limitations. I was afraid I wouldn't cope. In the end, I managed to find an employer who is open to people with disabilities. At Job Impulse Poland, I was shown that, despite my limitations, I am important and valuable to the organisation. Thanks to modifications in my schedule, I can eat every two hours, and additional breaks allow me to rest when I feel worse. Thanks to this, I am more productive. I also have one day a month for medical examinations as well as access to a medical package and meetings with a psychologist. My workplace is in a separate room, which is less stressful and helps me focus. Apart from that, when I feel unwell, my manager flexibly assigns me tasks. I also have the support of the team, who have undergone training in etiquette towards people with disabilities.

Magdalena Wiśniewska

Junior HR&Pay Administrator, BPiON

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I have had a mental disability for a long time, but for the past four years, it has prevented me from growing professionally. Difficulties with concentration, multitasking, and direct communication made it impossible for me to return to work as a financial officer. Fortunately, I found a job as an assistant in the HR department, which required retraining, but working with documents and simple tasks is much less stressful. I appreciate the weekly meetings with my supervisor and mutual feedback. Everyone is treated with respect, and supervisors often praise us, which makes me feel like a full-fledged employee. Thanks to good management, a friendly atmosphere, and a high culture of the managerial staff, BPiON is a place where every person with a disability can feel safe and develop.



BPiON
BUSINESS PROCESS INNOVATION

''

Mariusz Sprus

Buyer Category Expert, Atos

**Atos**

My disability is complex, resulting from a necrotic hip joint, rheumatoid arthritis, and respiratory problems, including asthma. Despite these challenges, over the past seven years of my career, I have progressed from an intern to an independent Indirect procurement specialist in Poland. Importantly, during the job interview, the employer emphasised that my disability did not affect the recruitment result, as my competencies were what mattered. The company adapted my workplace, reimbursing the purchase of an electrically adjustable desk, a specialised chair, a footrest, and mounts and monitors. Global VP Head of Accessibility, Neil Milliken, saw potential in me for local adaptation of workplaces and facilities for people with disabilities. As a result, thanks to my ideas, people with a disability certificate as of 1st May receive an unlimited physiotherapy package. It is a small step, but of great significance for the Accessibility Department in Poland, which I am currently developing as an Accessibility Champion. I am proud of our achievements and want to continue working to improve working conditions for people with disabilities at Atos.



People with acquired disabilities returning to work

Returning to work after acquiring a disability is a process that requires commitment from **both the person with a disability and the employer**. Appropriate accommodations and support can facilitate this process and enable a return to performing professional duties - in the current or new position in the same company.

Openness on both sides and an objective assessment of the capabilities of the person who has acquired a disability are important here. It may happen that even after implementing reasonable accommodations, maintaining the current position will not be possible. In this case, the main challenge is to find new tasks tailored to the current state of health and the competencies and experience of such a person.

”

Małgorzata Broniarz
Development Expert,
Santander Bank Polska



 **Santander**

Santander Bank Polska is a place where support can be felt at every step. During my illness, I could focus on myself and treatment, because I had an assurance from my employer that they would wait for me and as soon as I was ready, I could return to work at any time. It was important and reassuring because I knew I had a place to come back to. During treatment, I had to take a necessary and expensive medication that was unfortunately not reimbursed. The employer and the foundation established by it organised a fundraiser on short notice, which helped me purchase the medication. After treatment, I was affected by the side effects of the disease and I am a person with an invisible disability. That is why I appreciate the opportunity to use additional benefits from the employer. For example, a financial benefit that, as a person with a disability, I can use for health purposes. I also appreciate the support of my colleagues. We all treat each other equally and we are all the same - regardless of whether we have a disability or not.

''

Marta Wilary
Recruitment Specialist,
Vision Express



Acquiring a disability forced me to give up my dream studies, as partial vision loss wouldn't allow me to pursue my chosen profession. I also had to quit my part-time job. After many months, I found a job at Vision Express that didn't collide with my disability and became the beginning of a brighter future. The possibility of remote work, a stress-free environment, flexible working hours, employer support, and an understanding of the needs of people with disabilities are the amenities that allow me to develop professionally. Although I work from home, I don't feel alone, as there are regular online meetings that integrate the team, whose help I can always count on. My disability requires frequent doctor's appointments, and in such cases, I am provided with days off and a replacement. If I feel worse, I can call my employer before starting work without hesitation and inform them that I need to rest today. This is important because I have experienced in many places a lack of understanding for such situations.

''

Magdalena Giza
Deputy Manager,
McDonald's restaurant in Żary
run by franchisee Jadwiga Wieczorek

I have been working at McDonald's since 2018, and a year later, I was promoted to the position of Deputy Manager. In the same year, I was diagnosed with an illness, and from the beginning, I felt the support of the entire company. After a few months of absence, I returned to work and with the help of my colleagues, I gradually returned to my duties. Working in a well-coordinated and supportive team was especially crucial to me at that time. Flexible working hours and an adapted schedule are very important to me, as I still require monthly hospital visits. I appreciate the fact that I can work in a restaurant that is open to people with disabilities, where everyone can feel important and find their place.



“

Jarosław Wielgat
Business Solutions Manager
Orange Polska



My disability is a result of a severe case of COVID-19. After a two-month stay on a respirator, everything fell apart. The consequences of prolonged immobilisation are still with me today, and I use a wheelchair or crutches. The break from work due to difficult and lengthy rehabilitation lasted almost 1.5 years. I needed to return to work to regain at least part of my "old" reality. I wanted to feel needed. Orange treated me very favourably. Due to the dominance of remote work, I received a full set of home office equipment. An electric desk allows me to work standing up, which is a form of back exercise, and an ergonomic chair relieves it when I sit. Both improvements make my work very comfortable and, most importantly, contribute to strengthening my back. The equipment I had received improved my condition, which is confirmed by physiotherapists.

Dariusz Ptak

**Wireman and Electrician,
Enea Capital Group**

”



I have been working as an electrician at Enea for 36 years. Due to an illness, I lost a leg. I was afraid that I would not be able to perform my previous job, as it is physical work, and in emergencies also at heights. My employer visited me in the hospital, assuring me that my job was waiting for me. Thanks to accommodations, such as teaming me up with someone with a certificate to work at heights, I could remain in the company in my current position.



Relatives and loved ones with disabilities

Disability can affect not only ourselves but also our loved ones. Sometimes we have to suddenly face the need to care for others, including people with disabilities - a child, parents, relatives or partners. Demographic data confirm that **practically everyone will face such a challenge**. Therefore, employers should already be adapting to these needs.

Often, the necessary adjustments that will allow a caregiver to maintain a valuable position, and the employer to maintain the quality of the tasks performed, are **simple organisational matters**. These will include, for example, flexible working hours, breaks during the day for care or rehabilitation, remote or hybrid work, and part-time work.

“

Paula Kandzia
EB Specialist,
VML Enterprise Solutions



Flexible working hours, the possibility to work remotely, an individual approach to employees, a culture focused on well-being and inclusion - these features of the workplace allow me to balance my work and parental duties. It allows me to balance all aspects of my life: as an employee, a mother of a person on the autism spectrum, and a woman on the spectrum. After my child's diagnosis (soon after which I myself was diagnosed), I had the support of my superiors and the organisation. Importantly, it was not a one-time help. A particularly difficult moment for me was when my teenager suddenly stopped talking for many months. I received appropriate support from the company to consult with specialists. During work, I also have the opportunity to take care of our special needs. I feel that my and my family's needs are seen by the organisation.

“

Justyna Pater-Bachniak
Personal Affairs Specialist,
IBM BTO Business Consulting Services



During the pandemic, I experienced a difficult time - my son was diagnosed with a disorder in the autism spectrum. I decided to be honest with my supervisors, who were very supportive and ensured that I had a flexible working schedule to allow my son to participate in numerous therapies. The diagnosis and therapies were costly, and my employer enabled me to obtain financial assistance. There are no words to describe my fear, so I appreciate that the company provided me with quick psychological support. Diversity & Inclusion is one of the key areas in IBM's strategy. In the available materials, I found a lot of information about the spectrum, and there are also webinars and a channel dedicated to knowledge about neurodiversity.



Neuroatypical individuals

The concept of **neurodiversity** in the workplace has gained significant momentum globally. It includes, among others, modifications to recruitment processes, team management, flexible working hours, and adapting the architectural space to the needs of neurodiverse people, such as those on the autism spectrum, with ADHD, dyslexia, or high sensory sensitivity.

In practice, these adaptations **do not have to be associated with high costs** (for example, reducing lighting and noise, clear communication of tasks, and predictable daily organisation), but they can significantly increase the productivity and innovation of the organization, while providing employees with comfortable working conditions tailored to their needs.

Introducing neurodiversity contributes to the creation of new organisational cultures that enable the **use of the creative potential** stemming from diverse perspectives and the unconventional thinking characteristic of atypical individuals. Organisations such as the Atypika Foundation, which created the first postgraduate studies in Poland under the title "Neurodiversity in the Workplace - Inclusive Recruitment and Management" at SWPS University, as well as the "Neuro-inclusive Common Space" course at the School of Form, help in these activities. The Foundation also conducts training and auditing activities.

“

Paula Kandzia
EB Specialist,
VML Enterprise Solutions



As a late-diagnosed person on the spectrum, a single mother of a person on the spectrum, and a full-time employee, I attach great importance to the organisational culture in the workplace. I feel supported and accepted by the team, which is a consequence of VML Enterprise Solutions acting in the spirit of diversity. Mature organisations are aware that nurturing this spirit has a significant impact on the development of the company. A diverse team is a diverse talent pool. Tests and workshops such as FRIS or Clifton Strengths, which were conducted in the team, were particularly strengthening for my sense of professional usefulness and belonging. I do not hide the fact that some of the traits shown by these tests coincided with areas of my neurodiversity. I then felt that my way of thinking and skills were not deficits, but could be perceived as talents. On a daily basis, I also take advantage of the possibility of remote work or a sensory-free space available in the office.

“

Łukasz Rolnicki
Senior Engineer, Motorola Solutions

Shortly after receiving my ADHD diagnosis, my direct superior was replaced. I immediately told him about my challenges associated with ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and depression. I also mentioned my strengths: spontaneous creativity, an unconventional approach to solving complex problems, and the ability to notice details that others miss. I was given a great deal of trust and the opportunity to use many accommodations whenever I needed them. This was possible thanks to the ability to use flexible working hours, having my own desk, noise-cancelling headphones, and access to quiet rooms. The employer provides access to mental health counselling and a coaching programme led by certified coaches (ICF) - exceptionally helpful for people with ADHD. I also received support in setting up a Neurodiversity Hub - an employee network operating within Motorola Solutions, providing an opportunity for dialogue with the employer on the topic of neurodiversity. As a result, we are creating better working conditions for neurodiverse teams and an opportunity to make unrestricted use of the potential of neurodiverse employees.



8. Employers who say YES to disability – Examples of Inclusive Actions

From this chapter, you will find out the following:

- What actions do Orange Polska and Santander Bank Polska, the main partners of this report, take to employ people with disabilities?
- What do their programmes for employees and customers with disabilities involve?
- What results do they achieve through these programmes?



Employers who say YES to disability in Practice

It is no coincidence that we chose Orange Polska and Santander Bank Polska as the main partners of our report "Say YES to disability".

These are organisations that have been employing and integrating people with disabilities into their teams for years, as well as ensuring the accessibility of their services for customers with diverse needs.

The programmes implemented by both companies show that caring for inclusivity brings mutual benefits which we have already mentioned in this publication.

In this chapter, you will find information about four projects: "YES for Health" and "Orange without Barriers" implemented by Orange Polska, and "Różnosprawni" and "Barrier-Free Service" introduced by Santander Bank Polska. Their common strength is the very high need for education in the field of employing people with disabilities and working with them.

Be inspired by these good examples and see how you can develop your business in practice by including different groups of employees and customers in this process.

Orange Polska

YES for Health

The "YES for Health" programme was launched in 2013 to foster **an open and inclusive work environment**, particularly for employees with disabilities. Before its launch, an extensive dialogue had been conducted with employees, and the company also inquired about the needs of people with disabilities.

Under the programme, employees with disabilities can benefit from:

- financial support (adaptation package),
- a package of additional medical services,
- additional equipment in the workplace,
- a designated parking space.

An important element of the programme comes in the form of **informational and educational** activities aimed at raising awareness among managers and team members concerning cooperation and the rights of people with disabilities.

The company also implemented training and developed an information package for managers and recruiters. **Solutions for managerial staff** were introduced to partially compensate for the shorter working hours of people with disabilities and their potentially longer absences (rehabilitation sessions, sick leave). An **internal expert team** was also created to provide employees and managers with consultations and support in managing teams that are diverse in terms of abilities.

The "YES for Health" programme is also a **knowledge base** dedicated to working with people with disabilities. The programme's intranet page includes:

- information on the rights of people with disabilities arising from provisions of the law,
- the possible scope of employer support,
- tips on how to obtain a disability certificate,
- suggestions on how to behave when interacting with people with disabilities,
- advice on how to effectively help employees with disabilities.

The company constantly develops the programme in response to employee feedback. In 2022, a broader survey was conducted to adapt the project's assumptions to a hybrid work model. In response to the needs of employees with disabilities, among other things:

- the amount of the adaptation package was increased,
- employees were provided with permanent workstations,
- new needs in terms of workplace adaptation were taken into account,
- new educational elements were introduced, such as the "Inclusive Manager" training.

The "YES for Health" programme is recognised by 99% of employees with disabilities, and **93% of them make use of its services.**

What are the results of this project?

- an increase in the number of individuals with disabilities – they now make up 2% of the workforce,
- heightened awareness among managers regarding the presence of employees with disabilities, their rights and needs,
- development of an inclusive organisational culture that embraces diversity – fostering greater awareness and sensitivity among employees.

Orange without Barriers

One of Orange's primary goals in **digital integration and preventing digital exclusion** is to meet the needs of customers with disabilities. Approximately 20% of our Orange Stores have been **adapted to accommodate the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities**. These locations can be found in every district town and city where Orange is present.

In our Orange Stores, we provide:

- barrier-free access: ensuring easy entry for everyone,
- trained consultants: offering specialised assistance to customers with disabilities,
- accessible documents: providing documents in large print or electronic format,
- information about available accommodations: informing customers with disabilities about the various services and support options available to them.

In every Orange Stores, customers can:

- request invoices and important documents: in large print, Braille or electronic format,
- choose accessible devices: select phones with features designed for people with disabilities,
- get expert advice: receive assistance from a consultant to set up their device,
- access a sign language interpreter: make use of the company's online sign language interpreting service from Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. This service is also available on the company's hotline

On the Orange Expert YouTube channel, the company provides instructional videos about its offer and services with subtitles and sign language interpretation. They are also working to make their website digitally accessible to customers with disabilities.

Orange is committed to working with social partners, such as the Widzialni Foundation, Integracja Foundation, and Polska Bez Barier Foundation, to promote accessibility for people with disabilities.

Santander Bank Polska

Różnosprawni

In 2017, Santander Bank Polska launched the "Różnosprawni" initiative aimed at promoting the employment of people with disabilities. A key component of this initiative is to **provide education on disabilities** to employees and managers.

The programme offers workshops, webinars, and meetings with external experts. The bank also implements initiatives to mark international days for people with disabilities and creates educational videos featuring disabled employees. A prime example is the **recruitment and branding campaign "Barrier or Career"** starring employees with disabilities sharing their personal stories.

The objectives of these initiatives are as follows:

- to raise awareness about the rights and needs of people with disabilities,
- to break down barriers to employment for individuals with diverse needs,
- to showcase the benefits of working in such teams,
- to create a safe working environment and encourage employees to disclose their disabilities.

In addition to its educational part, the programme also offers important advice on the **organisation of work for people with disabilities**. It allows people with disabilities to make use of:

- financial incentives,
- additional days off for health-related purposes (for individuals with mild disabilities),
- a fully remote work model if the tasks and type of work allow it.

The bank is committed to ensuring that all employees feel comfortable and safe in their work environment. To achieve this, the bank **conducts interviews with employees who have disclosed their disabilities** to understand their specific needs for workplace accommodations.

These accommodations may include the following:

- customised workstation equipment, such as height-adjustable desks, noise-cancelling headphones, footrests, vertical mice, or screen reader/zooming software,
- adaptations to common areas such as kitchens and restrooms,
- designated parking spaces,
- evacuation chairs for individuals with disabilities in case of emergencies.

The bank also offers the **Różnosprawni network** (an internal employee network for people with disabilities) which brings together a community that wishes to engage in educational activities for people with disabilities or simply expand their knowledge in this area. Moreover, employees have access to the Różnosprawni suggestion box to submit initiatives related to disability.

Barrier-Free Service

"Barrier-Free Service" is a programme designed to ensure that clients with diverse needs, including people with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women, have full access to the bank's products and services. The bank is continuously improving accessibility by means of modern technological solutions and by modifying the operations of traditional bank branches.

In select branches and partner locations, the bank has been implementing changes to enhance the use of space and services. These improvements include the following:

- manoeuvring areas for wheelchair users and easy access to exits,
- increased contrast in areas that serve different functions and support communication (walls, floors, doors, furniture, switches),
- light switches and card readers placed at a maximum height of 110 cm,
- markers and signs (Totupoint, Braille) to help visually disabled people navigate more easily,
- mini-magnifiers and frames to assist visually impaired individuals or the elderly in signing documents. Customers who are unable to read or write can seek assistance from an advisor to certify their will,
- hearing induction loops,
- priority service counters,
- online advisor support, allowing deaf people to communicate in Polish Sign Language (PSL),
- talking ATMs, the ability to switch the screen to high-contrast mode, and Braille labelling,
- cards with a special notch for visually disabled and blind people to empower them when withdrawing cash from an ATM (known as a "blind notch").

The bank is a founding member of the Business Accessibility Forum (BAF). The forum aims to promote solutions that increase service accessibility and to develop a common position among its members regarding the implementation of the EU directive on the accessibility requirements for products and services into Polish law.

Report Summary:

10 Key Findings

1.

Reasonable accommodations are not a whim of people with disabilities. They are specific needs resulting from disability. Their implementation has a real impact on **equalising opportunities on the labour market**.

2.

Although the concept of reasonable accommodation exists in Polish law, it remains **relatively unknown**. Our study showed that 53.2% of employers and 71.7% of people with disabilities who are currently employed or have previously worked were unfamiliar with it.

3.

According to our study, **the majority of expected reasonable accommodations are cost-free** and mainly concern organisational changes. People with disabilities most often indicated the need for flexible working hours, remote work, an adapted scope of duties or a quieter place to work.

4.

In the process of implementing reasonable accommodations, **the role of management** is crucial. People with disabilities most often submit their requests directly to them. Whether people with disabilities, especially invisible ones, communicate their needs depends on the approach and openness of managers.

5.

Let's assume that **people with disabilities have good intentions** when requesting reasonable accommodations. Let's view these requests as an opportunity to increase the team's overall efficiency. Let's offer support and empathy, and encourage them to express their needs. In this matter, let's treat people with disabilities as the best experts in the field. This is an opportunity to make them feel more involved and to find the most beneficial solutions.

6.

It is worth having a **dedicated budget** for reasonable accommodations. This way, we do not burden the resources of a particular department or branch, allowing us to support specific employees with disabilities regardless of their role or position in the organisation. As a result, the implementation of approved reasonable accommodations has secured funding in advance and proceeds without delay.

7.

Reviewing and implementing reasonable accommodations **does not require in-depth knowledge of disabilities**. Let's remember to assume good intentions and build trust to create a safe space, especially for employees with invisible disabilities, encouraging them to disclose their disabilities. If there are any doubts, we can always involve, for example, an occupational health physician.

8.

It is beneficial to implement **a policy for reasonable accommodations within a company** as it provides a roadmap for our approach and streamlines the process. It is a visible declaration of our commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion regarding abilities. Our research shows that only 8.6% of employers who employ people with disabilities have a policy for reasonable accommodations.

9.

Increasing accessibility is crucial as the usability of environments, products, programmes, and services benefits everyone, not just people with disabilities. By implementing reasonable accommodations, we also increase accessibility, but instead of focusing on general needs, we focus on personalised solutions that meet the specific needs of an individual and others like them in the future.

10.

Reasonable accommodations should also **involve other groups**, such as seniors, caregivers and, ideally, all employees on the labour market. **Reasonable accommodations offer numerous benefits**, including fostering a more inclusive company culture, levelling the playing field for self-fulfilment, allowing employees to make the best use of their potential, and increasing work efficiency.



Partners who say YES to disability

Main Partners



Orange Polska is one of the leading telecommunications providers in Poland. It boasts the largest infrastructure in Poland, enabling it to offer services using the most advanced technologies, including fibre-optic internet with speeds of up to 8 Gb/s and 5G mobile services. It provides comprehensive solutions for businesses, offering services in the areas of IoT, ICT and cybersecurity.

Since 2013, Orange Polska has been running an internal programme called "YES to Health", through which the company has increased employment of people with disabilities. The initiative aims to build an open and friendly working environment, in particular for people with disabilities.

Orange Polska is also the author of the "Orange without Barriers" project. In its essence, it aims to increase the accessibility of Sales Points and services, including through the absence of architectural barriers, digitally accessible documents, and access to a sign language interpreter.



Santander Bank Polska is one of the largest financial groups and the largest privately-owned bank in Poland. It offers modern financial solutions for private persons, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as Polish and international corporations. The bank is one of the market leaders in the use of modern technologies in banking services and has one of the largest networks of branches and partner locations.

Since 2017, Santander Bank Polska has been running the "Różnosprawni" programme, which includes educational initiatives for employees and managers, an employee network, and offers supportive benefits for people with disabilities.

Santander Bank Polska has also implemented the "Barrier-Free Service" programme, which aims to ensure access to banking services and products for customers with diverse needs. Moreover, it is a founding member of the Business Accessibility Forum (BAF).

Digital Accessibility Partner



Atos is a global leader in digital transformation, employing over 90,000 people worldwide. The company specializes in cybersecurity, cloud and high-performance computing, providing solutions for various market sectors in 69 countries. Atos is a pioneer in decarbonization, offering secure and decarbonized digital solutions. The company serves as a global IT partner for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and is the official technological partner of the UEFA National Team. In addition, Atos is dedicated to ensuring full digital ecosystem accessibility, striving to reduce the negative external effects of exclusion through cumulative improvements across all areas of operation.

Honorary Partner



The "Disability Icebreakers" project, implemented by the TAKpełnosprawni Foundation with the support of the US Embassy, contributed to the creation of this report. The goals of this initiative were to challenge stereotypes, increase the presence of people with disabilities on the labour market and equalise opportunities for them. We achieved these goals through a series of educational initiatives carried out in Polish companies and among people with disabilities.

Content Partner



The ILO Global Business and Disability Network is an international forum bringing together companies and organisations working to increase the presence of people with disabilities on the open labour market. The organisation's main activities include the exchange of knowledge and best practices as well as the initiation of cooperation between its members. This report uses excerpts from a publication on reasonable accommodations available on the website: businessanddisability.org.

Supporting Partners

ABSL Association of Business Service Leaders

Diversity Charter, coordinated by the Responsible Business Forum

Polish Confederation Lewiatan

Polish Association of Sign Language Interpreters and Lecturers GEST

State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People PFRON

Atypika Foundation for Neuroculture

Poland Business Run Foundation

ONLEX Law Firm Anna Pałecka-Błaszczyk

Polish HR Forum

Job Impulse Poland

Diversity Hub

Flexi.pl

Media Partners

My Company Polska

Polish Press Agency PAP

HR na Szpilkach

BRIEF

TAKpełnosprawni Foundation

We promote the employment and inclusion of people with disabilities on the open labour market, convincing others that: "There is no diversity without disability".

On a daily basis, we help companies create inclusive cultures and build diverse teams in terms of abilities. We educate employers and highlight best practices according to international standards, being the only Polish representative of the global ILO Global Business and Disability Network.

We dispel stereotypes and myths about disability on the labour market. We inspire people with disabilities to grow as professionals and to develop their careers. We show how to benefit from diversity, utilise the potential of each individual in the workplace, and make the world more inclusive, including for ourselves.

We say YES to disability! Do you?

Our Values

We believe that regardless of the level of ability, we have our strengths and great career opportunities. In every person, we can discover potential and give them a chance to develop by working in a diverse team.

We trust that the measure of success lies in well-planned and long-term educational activities on diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities into any organisation's structures.

We understand that people with disabilities face physical and mental barriers to employment. At the same time, we know the concerns and challenges of employers.

We create a space for dialogue, understanding and achieving mutual benefits. We know that according to the WHO, there are at least 1.3 billion people with disabilities in the world, and with age, every person can acquire a disability.

We strive for a more accessible and inclusive labour market for everyone, including ourselves. We notice that there are many people who, despite their disabilities, want to develop professionally.

We help them acquire qualifications, advise them on how to build a career and point them to inclusive employers.

We remember that the driving forces behind significant changes are market leaders. By helping large companies to include people with disabilities, we also inspire other employers to embrace diversity.

Come and join us!

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August 2024

TAKpełnosprawni