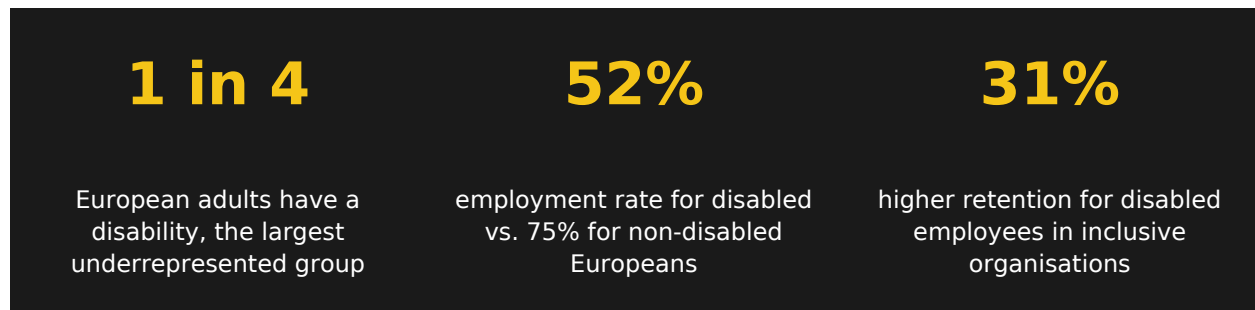


HR RESEARCH SERIES 2026 - REPORT R15 OF 10 (EXTENDED)

# Disability Inclusion in Hiring 2026

Evidence-based practices for attracting, assessing, and retaining disabled talent in European organisations.

Disability is the most prevalent and most underaddressed dimension of workforce diversity. One in four European adults has a disability, the largest single underrepresented group in the labour market. The 52% vs. 75% employment gap represents the greatest single untapped talent pool available to European employers.



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The barriers to disability inclusion in hiring are predominantly process-based, not candidate-based. Most disabled candidates have the capability to do the job, what they lack is access to a hiring process that doesn't systematically screen them out through inaccessible technology, irrelevant assessment requirements, and undisclosed adjustment processes.

## The business case for disability inclusion

Business dimension	Evidence	Financial implication
Talent pool size	15M disabled people of working age in EU27 actively seeking work	Reduces recruitment difficulty for accessible companies
Retention advantage	31% higher retention for disabled employees	Saves EUR 8,400+ per retained employee
Productivity equivalence	No productivity gap in equivalent roles	No performance cost to inclusion
Customer connection	Disabled employees better serve 135M EU disabled customers	Commercial advantage in accessible markets
Regulatory compliance	EU Disability Employment Strategy + national legislation	Fines and reputation risk increasing

## Accessibility audit, where hiring processes fail

Process stage	Failure rate	Common issue	Fix
Online job application	42% fail WCAG 2.1 AA	Screen reader incompatibility	ATS accessibility audit, WCAG compliance
Assessment tools	61% not accessible	Timed tests disadvantage some disabilities	Adjustable time limits, alternative formats
Video interviewing	38% no captioning	Deaf / hard of hearing excluded	Auto-captions standard, transcripts available
Physical interview location	29% accessibility issues	No step-free access, poor acoustics	Venue accessibility checklist, remote options
Job ad language	54% exclude disability mentions	No adjustment offer, no welcome signal	Add disability inclusion statement and adjustment offer

## The adjustment framework, what to offer and how

- **Assessment adjustments**, extended time (+25-50%), alternative formats, separate room for interviews if needed.
- **Communication adjustments**, sign language interpreter, written instructions, large print materials.
- **Location adjustments**, remote interview as default, accessible venue requirement, parking provision.
- **Process transparency**, proactively inform all candidates that adjustments are available and how to request them.
- **Post-offer workplace adjustments**, clear process for equipment, software, working pattern, dedicated point of contact.

## Disclosure and psychological safety

80% of disabilities are non-visible, most disabled candidates choose not to disclose because they fear disadvantage. Callback rates do drop when disability is disclosed on CVs, the fear is empirically justified.

**Add a specific, welcoming disability disclosure statement to job ads, not generic 'equal opportunities employer' boilerplate, with a named contact and a specific commitment to adjustments. Companies that do this see a 48% increase in disabled applications compared to generic statements.**

## Technology and accessibility

Technology layer	Standard	Testing method	Cost of remediation
Job application form	WCAG 2.1 AA minimum	Automated scan + disabled user testing	Low if caught early, high if retroactive
ATS candidate portal	WCAG 2.1 AA minimum	Screen reader + keyboard navigation	Depends on platform
Video interview platform	Auto-captions + transcript	Test with hearing-impaired user	Usually a setting, low cost
Assessment platforms	Time adjustment capability	Test adjustable time limits	Platform feature, check before buying
Email communications	Plain text alternative	Check with screen reader	Zero cost, format change only

## Measuring disability inclusion

- **Voluntary diversity monitoring survey**, anonymous post-application, 30%+ response rate achievable.
- **Adjustment request rate**, low rates suggest accessibility barriers or low trust.
- **Accessibility audit findings**, annual WCAG compliance check of all candidate-facing tech.
- **Employee ERG data**, disability ERG participation and self-identification (voluntary).
- **Disability employment benchmarking**, compare against national average and industry peers.

## Forward outlook 2026-2030

EU AI Act Annex III compliance accelerates accessibility auditing in 2026, WCAG 3.0 standards arrive in 2027, AI-generated accessible assessments become standard by 2028, and the disability employment gap closes below 10pp in the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany by 2030.

### **Built for what's next.**

tenperzent.com is the AI-native ATS designed for European hiring in 2026 - GDPR by default, EU AI Act compliant, free to start, €79/month to scale.

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