



# OPPORTUNITIES 4 **AUTISM**



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**“A spectrum of opportunities: training field professionals on how to recruit and support individuals with autism at the workplace”**

# **BOOKLET OF PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS**



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

This guide is part of the opportunities 4 autism project for the training and promotion of employment and the adaptability of jobs for the Support of People with Autism funded by European funds from erasmus plus projects. A spectrum of opportunities: training field professionals on how to recruit and support individuals with autism at the workplace is a twoyears project co-financed by the Erasmus+ Programme of European Union under KA2 KA202 – Strategic Partnerships for VE.

The partners involved come from non-governmental organizations that promote the labour insertion of people at risk of exclusion, with disability within the educational, clinical and professional training adapted to the needs of the recipients.

The main objective of this work is to promote the training of companies and the adaptation of jobs under specific trainings creating concepts about what autism is, how a person with autism works and how we should communicate and enhance their skills for employment.

Employment has to be seen as an integral opportunity between the different social components such as; (workers, employers, customers of services, community services, professionals...) these models must be given by modifying attitudes and creating new networks of personal interrelationships for people with Autism is a challenge, since we are generating a life plan and quality.

In order for companies to be able to train and apply a supported employment model, it has a plus for a quality of employment adapted to the person with Autism.

The success of these contents created by several entities will give the opportunity to meet people with autism in the ordinary labour market. The elaboration of this guide and the experiences that are being developed with the various companies are a sign of the commitment that gives us the needs of the collective and for a full inclusion of life.



The purpose of this guide is to provide useful information and ideas for companies to train and equip themselves to employ people with autism and adapt their Jobs.

## 2. TARGET GROUPS

Reaching out to business leaders, line managers, HR/ recruiting managers, SME's and larger corporates, VET trainers, diversity and inclusion professionals, ASD/SEN organisations, individuals with ASD, their families and caregivers, government officials and policymakers.

## 3. OPPORTUNITIES 4 AUTISM PROJECT

A spectrum of opportunities: training field professionals on how to recruit and support individuals with autism at the workplace "OPPORTUNITIES 4 AUTISM" in order to promote employment and training of employees and companies to meet the work needs of people with autism in their work environment. Beginning in September 2020 until September 2022, this 24month project is funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme.

## 4. PARTNERS

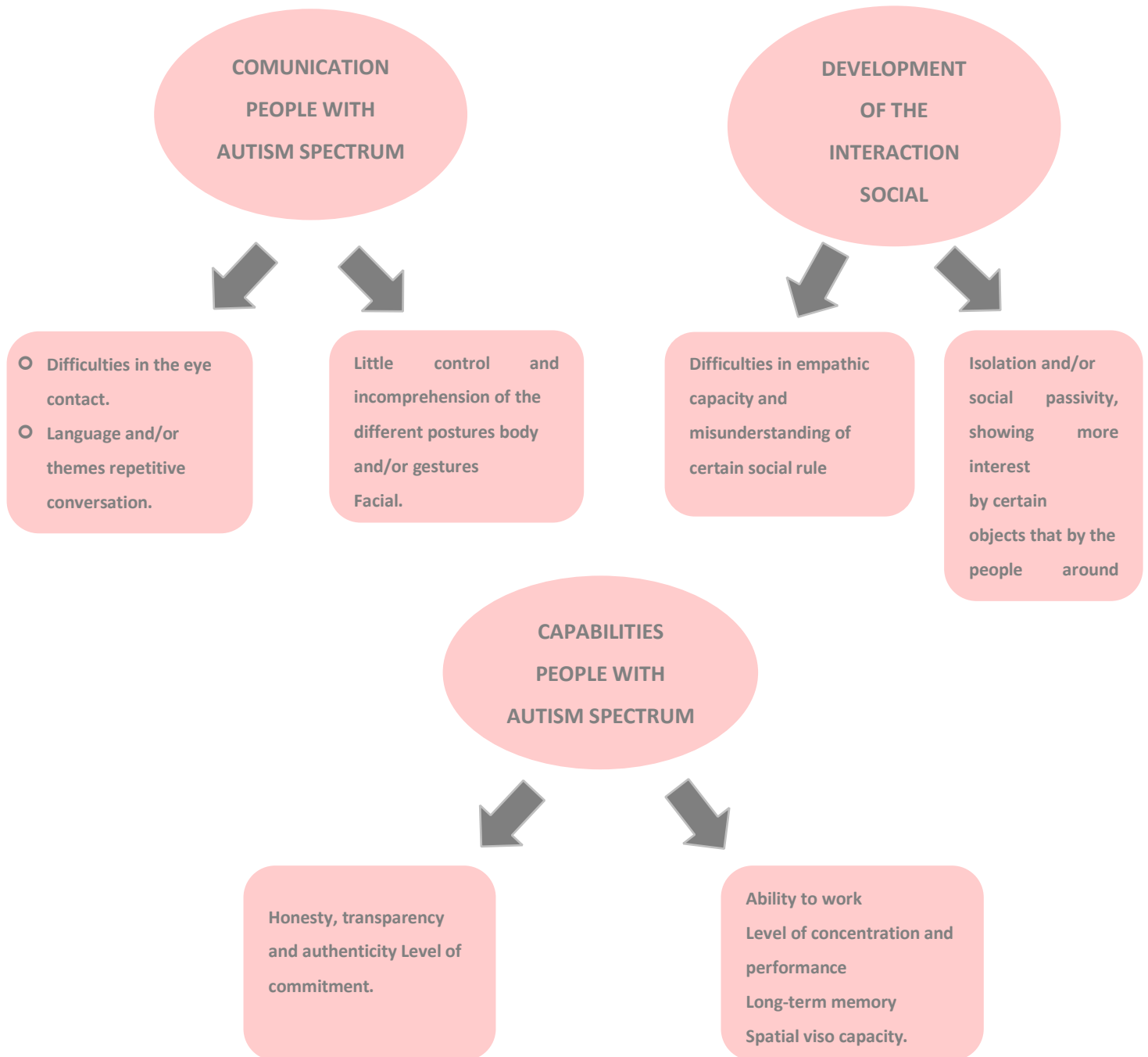
The Opportunities 4 Autism partners come from five EU member states – entities specialized in training and education, entities specialized in mental health and autism spectrum.

### Partners entities:

- **CESIE (ITALY)**
- **FUNDACION INTRAS (SPAIN)**
- **FONDACIJA HILJADU ZELJA (SERBIA)**
- **STANDO LTD (CYPRUS)**
- **ASOCIACION MI HIJO Y YO, PSICOLOGAS EN EL HOGAR PARA LAS FAMILIAS CONTGD (SPAIN)**

## 5. COMMUNICATION AND SKILLS IN PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

People with autism present to a greater or lesser extent, difficulties in communication, social interaction, imagination and the field of interests. social interaction, imagination and the field of interests.



## 6. MODULES

Next, the modules of the guide will be presented through questions and answers that will be very useful for those who are being trained in the field of autism and employment.

## 6.1 MODULE 1. THE MEANING OF AUTISM.

### **1. A young man with autism who I'm training for the job never looks me in the eyes. Does he feel uncomfortable looking at me and should I insist on that?**

People with autism often have poor eye contact. One of the most common reasons is insufficient recognition of information on the face of the conversational partner. It sometimes happens that individuals with high-functioning autism consciously try to make eye contact as long as possible, so their behavior is as similar as possible to the behavior of typical peers. Also, many programs prepare people with autism for a job interview; they are trained to make eye contact. However, they usually feel uncomfortable because of that, and they often make a great mental effort to adapt themselves to the environment.

## MODULE 1

### **2. A worker with autism is often hand flapping and tapping certain objects. Does this behaviour make any sense and should we draw his attention not to do that?**

Hopping, flapping, rocking from side to side, touching objects or body parts are relatively common motor stereotypes in people with autism. Although looking from the outside in, they represent meaningless activities, these motor mannerisms have a significant function for a person with autism. They most often represent the way for an individual to comfort and cope with stress or to achieve appropriate sensory regulation. Observe how stimuli in the working environment affect the emergence and intensification of stereotypes and, if necessary, adapt the environment following the sensory needs of workers with autism. Stereotypes should not be suppressed, but if they endanger a person with autism and people around, contact an expert who will give you advice on how to act in a specific situation.

### **3. I watched a movie on television about a young man with autism who has an exceptional memory and can perform complex arithmetic operations by heart. Is it just fiction or do all people with autism have some special abilities?**

People with autism can have special talents and, if they are appropriately directed, they can use them to perform some professional activity. Such people are called autistic savants and, besides the exceptional mechanical memory, they can have other skills (calculating calendars,

exceptional ability to visualize, draw, play musical instruments, learn foreign languages, etc.). However, this phenomenon is very rare, so most likely, you will never be in a position to work with autistic savants.

**4. I said to an autistic worker to take some goods to the warehouse, but he returned them immediately. How to explain that behaviour?**

People with autism usually have deficits in the theory of mind, i.e. in the ability to understand other people's mental states. One of the ways to manifest this deficit is a lack of understanding of the conversational-partner intentions. The worker with autism appeared to have understood what you told him, but not why you told him that. You wanted him to take the goods away and leave it there, but you didn't say that, assuming he understood your notions. Try to be more precise when giving assignments.

**5. A worker with autism is well trained to perform all phases of the job, but spends too much time on one phase (e.g., cleaning the table) and seems to lose the objective of the job he is doing. How can I help him not to stall on insignificant details for too long?**

Most people with autism tend visually process information, which is a good solution to present each of the stages of work with picture cards. Picture cards can be fastened with hook-and-loop fasteners and arranged from left to right or from top to bottom. Teach the worker to recognize the meaning of the first picture card, to take it off after the first step is done, put the picture card in the intended place. The same process is done in all other stages of the activity. It would be good for the worker to have a picture or a model of the finished product in front of him so that he can be reminded at any time what is expected of him. But if he stays on one activity for too long, you can use a timer to teach him to visually monitor how much time is provided for the realization of one stage of work.

**6. Why is it recommended to use video modeling in training people with autism to perform various tasks? What are the main guidelines I should follow if I decide to implement video modeling?**

Video modeling is identified as an effective intervention for adults with autism, as an intervention that can contribute to the successful gaining, maintenance, and generalization of working skills. In addition, video modeling is considered to be economically cost-effective, does not require big investments, easily is integrated into the context in which job training is provided, and contributes to the independence of the trainees.

**Here are some useful guidelines in implementing video modeling:**



- Step 1: Select the worker whom you want to implement video modeling;
- Step 2: Choose and define the skills you want to work on;
- Step 3: Inform parents that you will use video modeling in teaching their child and make sure they agree with that;
- Step 4: Analyze the tasks, make a list of all individual steps for each wanted skill;
- Step 5: Set criteria for mastering individual steps;
- Step 6: Create and edit videos (you can use different programs, free programs are usually recommended, for example iMovie);
- Step 7: Define the time and place where you will start implementing video modeling;
- Step 8: Implement video modeling with the worker (explain to the worker that he will watch the video, and after watching, the worker will repeat what he saw in the video);
- Step 9: Provide opportunities for generalization and maintenance of acquired skills (the ultimate goal is to teach the worker to complete the task without watching the video first. When the worker masters certain tasks with the help of video modeling, allow him to try to perform the same skills outside the usual surroundings, without the video).

#### **7. Can I teach a worker who has never used a visual schedule before to use it? And how?**

Yes, visual schedules can be implemented at any time, regardless of the person's age.

It is important when you create a schedule, to put it at a visible place for your employee. Your employee should be able to see the schedule before starting the first scheduled activity. When the time comes for a scheduled activity to start, indicate that to the employee with a short, verbal instruction. For example, say "Check the schedule". This helps your employee to pay attention to the beginning of the next activity. In the beginning, you may have to physically guide the worker to check the schedule (e.g., gently touch him on the shoulders and encourage him to approach the schedule or to point the next activity on the schedule). You can gradually reduce the physical prompt so that your employee can start using this visual reminder on his own. When the task is completed, tell the worker to check the schedule again, using the procedure described above, and go on to the next activity. Pictures of completed activities can be taken off the schedule and stored, or in the case of a digital schedule, you can simply go on to the next step by clicking on the picture.

#### **8. Can an adolescent or adult be taught to demand wanted activity with the help of a communicator?**

The communicator can be introduced at any age. The appearance and number of pictures, as well as the content of recorded messages, can vary depending on the age and cognitive potential of individual with autism. It usually starts with just one picture on the screen that represents a wanted object or activity, and the person is taught to request it by pressing the picture on the screen. During the learning process, the person is provided with the necessary stimuli (complete and partial physical prompting, gestural and visual – for example, a lamp that directs red rays to the place that the user needs to press can be used), which decreases and disappears over time, preventing a person from becoming dependent to stimuli.

**9. People with high-functioning autism can be taught certain work activities. However, if a person is non-verbal and has low intelligence, cannot be employed, right?**

Non-verbal people with autism of low intellectual abilities can still be trained for a whole range of work activities. It is only necessary to divide each activity into a series of small and easy steps and to train the future worker with the chaining technique. This technique is encouraging to perform the first step of the activity and supports a successfully performed step. In the beginning, these prompts can be physical (we take the hand of the worker in our hand and perform activities together). Over time, we try to change the type of prompting (pointing the finger, modeling, i.e. showing how an activity is performed, verbal prompting, etc.). When the worker manages to perform the first step of the activity without prompting, we move on to the next step and train the same way.

**10. Is it true that workers with autism, like computer jobs? What attracts them so much to work on a computer?**

Since the autism spectrum is very heterogeneous, it cannot be said that all people with autism have the ability and affinity to pursue occupations within the IT industry. However, it can be said that computer jobs are really attractive to many people with autism, especially those who are highly functional. Working on a computer does not require complex social skills and communication is easier (for example, when you send an e-mail, no one pays attention to non-verbal communication and you have more time to think about what message you are sending). Numerous activities on the computer are based on the application of certain algorithms, which provide predictability and reduce stress. Besides, the content on the

Internet is mostly visual, which matches the dominant way of processing information in most people with autism.

## MODULE 1

### 6.2 MODULE 2. DIFFICULTIES OF PEOPLE WITH ASD IN THE WORKPLACE.

#### 1. Do I need to make reasonable adjustments for all employees with disabilities?

To answer that you need to think:

- About the way you do things
- About the physical features of your workplace
- If there is any auxiliary aid or service

## MODULE 2

Taking all that into account, consider whether a disabled worker or job applicant is out at a substantial disadvantage compared with a person who is not disabled. Anything that is more than minor or trivial is a substantial disadvantage.

If a substantial disadvantage does exist, then you must make reasonable adjustments with the aim of removing or reducing those disadvantages.

But you only have to make adjustments that are reasonable for you to make.

### 2. What do we mean by “reasonable”?

There is no set definition of ‘reasonable’. An occupational health assessment gives the employer a clear guideline of what may be considered reasonable. Various factors influence whether a particular adjustment is considered reasonable. It is mainly an objective test and not simply a matter of what you may personally think is reasonable. Your overall aim should be, as far as possible, to remove or reduce any disadvantage faced by a disabled worker.

Things to consider when deciding whether an adjustment is “reasonable”:

- **How effective the change will be in avoiding the disadvantage the disabled worker would otherwise experience:** The adjustment must be effective in helping to remove or reduce any disadvantage the disabled worker is facing. If it doesn't have any impact then there is no point. In reality it may take several different adjustments to deal with that disadvantage but each change must contribute towards this.
- **Its practicality:** You can consider whether an adjustment is practical. The easier an adjustment is, the more likely it is to be reasonable. However, just because something

is difficult doesn't mean it can't also be reasonable. You need to balance this against other factors.

- **The cost:** If an adjustment cost little or nothing and is not disruptive, it would be reasonable unless some other factor (such as impracticality or lack of effectiveness) made it unreasonable.
- **Your organization's resources and size:** Your size and resources are another factor. If an adjustment costs a significant amount, it is more likely to be reasonable for you to make it if you have substantial financial resources. Your resources must be looked at across your whole organization, not just for the branch or section where the disabled person is or would be working. This is an issue which you have to balance against the other factors.

## MODULE 2

- **The availability of financial or other support:** If advice or support is available, for example, from Access to Work or from another organization (sometimes charities will help with costs of adjustments), then this is more likely to make the adjustment reasonable.

What is reasonable in one situation may be different from what is reasonable in another situation, such as where someone is already working for you and faces losing their job without an adjustment, or where someone is a job applicant. Where someone is already working for you, or about to start a long-term job with you, you would probably be expected to make more permanent changes (and, if necessary, spend more money) than you would to make adjustments for someone who is attending a job interview for an hour.

In changing policies, criteria or practices, you do not have to change the basic nature of the job, where this would go beyond what is reasonable.

If there is a disagreement about whether an adjustment is reasonable or not, in the end, only an Employment Tribunal can decide this.

### **3. What are the main type of reasonable adjustments at the workplace, and how do I know which ones will work for my employees?**

According to the most common needs a person with autism or other neurodevelopmental disabilities might have (social, physical, cognitive, sensory, mental health, skills and experience) and based on the DARE Report on Adjustments (see it here: <https://dareuk.org/dare-adjustments-toolkit>) we can divide adjustments into 3 main categories:

- Adjustments to job role and management processes (including communication).
- Adjustments to physical space and equipment.
- Adjustments to social/cultural practices within the organization.

In order to be able to identify the most suitable adjustments, an employer first needs to understand the possible support needs of their employees, and also understand the different types of support needs and the respective strengths of different adjustments in addressing those needs. Needless to say, that each individual will have different needs. Therefore, ensuring good communication between employer and employee will help identify those needs.

Arrange to speak with a new staff member as soon as they accept a job offer to explore what adjustments they may need and agree a plan



Placing the burden of responsibility of identifying adjustments upon neurodivergent individuals is not a good idea because they might lack the communication skills required to introspect or speak up about concerns.

#### **4. Can you give me some examples of reasonable adjustments?**

##### **Physical adjustments**

Making adjustments to premises

###### **For example:**

Widening a doorway, providing a ramp; relocating light switches, door handles, or shelves; lowering desks, using natural daylight bulbs.

Acquiring or modifying equipment:

###### **For example:**

An employer might have to provide special equipment (such as an adapted keyboard, a chair or a desk).

Providing information in an alternative format

###### **For example:**

###### **For example:**

Permitting part-time working, or different working hours to avoid the need to travel in the rush hour. A phased return to work with a gradual build-up of hours might also be appropriate in some circumstances.

###### **For example:**

All workers are trained in the use of a particular machine but an employer provides slightly different or longer training for an employee.

The employer provides and allows time off for the disabled person to see a mentor

##### **Adjustments to social/cultural practices**

Training staff on neurodiversity and specific needs

###### **For example:**

## MODULE 2

Organization's documents could be available on audio CD. Instructions for people with learning disabilities might need to be conveyed orally with individual demonstration or in Easy Read.

Allowing the worker to be absent during working or training hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment.

### **For example:**

An employer allows a disabled to have more time off work than would be allowed to non-disabled, if they need occasional treatment.

### **Job role and management adjustments**

Altering the worker's hours of working or training:

Ensuring all team members understand and respect adjustments in absence of manager

Colleagues are conscious about sensory sensitivities (i.e are conscious about wearing strong perfumes, eating lunch away from desks due to potential sensory discomfort from smell, quieter lunchtime conversations are encouraged)

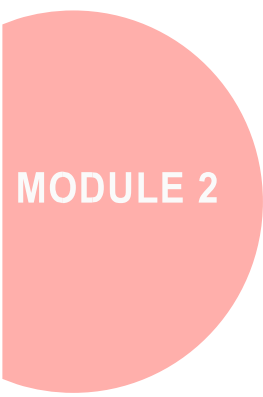
### **5. How do I make sure an adjustment is effective?**

Sometimes several adjustments are required in order to remove or reduce a range of disadvantages and sometimes these will not be obvious to you. So, you should work, as much as possible, with the neurodivergent person to identify the kind of disadvantages or problems that they face and also the potential solutions in terms of adjustments.

It is important to review agreed adjustments periodically to ensure they are still appropriate and identify and agree any further reasonable adjustments required.

But even if the disabled worker does not know what to suggest, you must still consider what adjustments may be needed. Establishing interaction protocols where both employee and employer can discuss and evaluate adjustments will also help to ensure sustainability.

In some situations, a reasonable adjustment will not work without the co-operation of other workers. Your other staff may therefore have an important role in helping make sure that a reasonable adjustment is carried out in practice. You must make sure that this happens by providing proper training to all your staff and changing the organization's policies.



## 6. What resources will be needed to make those adjustments?

Most adjustments are low cost and easy to implement.

However, sometimes, adjustments will require resources.

Resource considerations commonly reported include:

- Time (from management and HR to identify and implement an adjustment)
- Effort (from management and HR to identify and implement an adjustment)
- Financial cost (the employer must pay for any adjustments (e.g., if adjustment involves new equipment, or funds to invest in neurodiversity training)
- Space constraints (e.g., setting up a quiet room may not always be possible)

## 7. I want to make reasonable adjustments at the workplace, how do I start?

- a) **Identify the need** by discussing with your employee
- b) **Prepare** by consulting professionals, doing your own research and discussing with your employee
- c) Once again managers should **meet** with staff to **explore** the reasonable adjustments required from the beginning of and during employment
- d) It's time to **act!** Keep a record of your discussions with your employee and the adjustments you **agreed** on and prepare a plan showing what adjustments will be made and by when (include when the plan will be reviewed). At this point consider training and coaching, both for you and your team!
- e) It is important to **review** agreed adjustments periodically to ensure they are still appropriate and identify and agree any further reasonable adjustments requi

## MODULE 3

### 6.3 MODULE 3. DEVELOPING AND MANAGING THE COMPETENCES OF EMPLOYEES WITH ASD. STRENGTHS OF PEOPLE WITH ASD AS EMPLOYEES

#### 1. What are the strengths of people with ASD?

Strengths of people with ASD as employees include:

- High level of technical skills (e.g., excellent skills in IT).
- Meticulous completion of tasks.
- Attention to detail.
- High concentration during routine activities and repetitive movements.
- Memory for facts and figures (helpful e.g. In finance and accounting).
- Logical and unemotional approach to tasks.
- Manual dexterity.
- Reliability (honesty of speech).
- Strict adherence to procedures.
- Excellent interpersonal skills in structured teams with an established personnel hierarchy, clear division of responsibilities and actions determined to be correct or not.

#### 2. What activities and responsibilities can a person with ASD be given at work?

The most effective activities for people with ASD are:

- Entering data into databases.
- Word processing.

- Research work.
- Filling out forms.
- Copying, scanning, sorting, distributing information.
- Incoming and outgoing mail handling.
- Filing.
- Working in a library.
- It industry - especially working with software.
- Folding, packaging, stacking, filing, and other repetitive tasks in a fast-paced manufacturing process.

### **3. Where does the public opinion come from that it is not worth hiring people with ASD? Is it true?**

"The employment of people with autism is increasingly a matter of public discussion. These individuals have one of the lowest employment rates among workers with disabilities , between 76% and 90% of them were unemployed in Europe in 2014. Most people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) want and have the ability to work , with published examples of successful careers. People with autism have long been in specialized institutions, most of them dependent on their families. Adults with autism are forced into part-time employment and generally have access to low-skilled, sporadic and part-time jobs in a "sheltered" environment without regard for their wishes and aspirations. The most closed perspectives relate to non-verbal people with behavioural problems.

A wide range of careers and positions are potentially available, although positions requiring little human interaction are notoriously privileged and associated with greater success. Sectors such as intelligence and information processing in the military , hospitality and catering , translation, information technology , arts, crafts , mechanics or still life, agriculture and farming are more sought after as well as adaptable.

The problems encountered in accessing employment and employment have several explanations. Usually related to poor communication between employers and employees with autism, they are mainly due to the difficulties encountered by people with autism in understanding social relationships and coping with sensory hypersensitivity , and to the intolerance of employers towards these particular characteristics, although more so than intellectual disability . Frequent discrimination in employment blocks access to the labor market for people with autism, who are often victims of inadequate work organization. Various measures can be taken to address these difficulties, in particular employment support and the



adaptation of working conditions in terms of sensitivity and schedules. Some companies use positive discrimination, particularly in IT, an area where people with autism who are said to be

'high functioning' are considered a competitive advantage" -

Quote: [https://pl.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Emploi\\_des\\_personnes\\_autistes](https://pl.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Emploi_des_personnes_autistes).

## MODULE 3

### 4. How can an employer support the development of skills and abilities of people with

**ASD?** It is important to prepare for working with an employee with ASD. For example, making sure that the employee has been introduced to (and understands)

- The organization of the company, its mission and goals,
- Your colleagues/team with whom you will be working, the structure and relationships in the company,
- Work rules: regulations and procedures,
- The workplace: the place and responsibility for this place, tasks, duties and safety rules.
- It seems crucial to get to know the employee, his/her interests, skills, competencies, abilities, needs and to establish:
- Who is he, what is he like, what are his interests, what are his skills, competencies, what type of personality does this employee with ASD represent? (you can conduct personality, competence and social role tests)
- What motivates this particular worker? What is his/her value system?
- Conducting an interview to establish the terms and conditions of cooperation, i.e., how does the employee prefer to communicate in order not to violate their personal space and at the same time to establish a relationship and achieve the best possible working relationship?

It seems important to pay attention to whether the company is present:

- Shaping HR policies - ways to retain talented employees with ASD in the company,
- Building a motivational atmosphere that encourages development and strengthens identification with the company among employees with ASD.
- Planning career paths and preparing staff development strategies (including for employees with ASD).

### 5. What are the selective benefits of employing individuals with ASD?

There are selective benefits associated with the disabilities of adults with autism in performing certain tasks, especially those requiring visual abilities, which translates into higher productivity.

There is a "large body of evidence" on the potential benefits companies would have from hiring people with autism for tasks that mobilize their strengths, such as problem solving, attention to detail, accuracy, memory. , Technical or factual abilities, and detailed knowledge in specialized fields. However, the prevailing view in employment is based on the medical model of autism , which treats it as the sum of deficits: "This prevalence of a medical model or one based on interventions designed solely to compensate for deficits leads to an unbalanced view of autism that would be like the sum of deficits that must be compensated for in order to access employment. This paradigm prevents us from seeing the skills developed by individuals with autism."- Melissa Scott et al.

Adults with autism often have an intense and sustained interest in a specialized area. These areas of interest can be varied, knowledge is most often self-taught . Computer and language learning are two common interests among adults in the stream, as well as a wide range of activities in areas such as psychology , in music , in accounting , in drawing , in geography , right side , background , in cooking , or math . Adults with autism make and have made many contributions to the economy , but these contributions are not very visible because they are generally made discreetly and anonymously.

Stephen M. Shore , Ph.D., emphasizes the tendency toward routine as an advantage resulting in better adherence to schedules and less absenteeism due to illness. Some studies note less absenteeism among people with autism , as well as a general tendency for employers to recognize the qualities of confidence and reliability in autistic workers, especially in tasks that require high concentration and repetition. The qualities of seriousness, perfectionism, punctuality and meeting deadlines are also recognized in autistic workers .

Situations of loneliness and social isolation are generally not experienced as stressful by adults with autism, unlike their non-autistic peers. The lack of interest in socializing can also be an advantage in the company; the autistic employee does not waste work time socializing or discussing with colleagues." Quote:

[https://pl.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Emploi\\_des\\_personnes\\_autistes#Avantages\\_s%C3%A9lectifs](https://pl.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Emploi_des_personnes_autistes#Avantages_s%C3%A9lectifs)

**6. How to prepare for work with an employee with ASD, what methods of integration to use?** The success of successful integration into the company depends on both the educational efforts of employees with autism and the adaptation of working conditions. Various measures are being tested, taking into account difficulties such as interviewing , autonomy and workstation adaptation. UK employers are encouraged to take into account the profiles of people with autism, for example not asking for communication skills if the job does not require them, and avoiding assessing candidates for their social interactions during the interview, hiring, in order to promote job integration. In Germany (2012), there is a website that connects employers looking

for specific skills or profiles that people with autism can respond to. In the Netherlands, a similar program has been created so that job seekers with autism can create an online profile and receive support by acknowledging their strengths. Josef Schovanec believes that people with autism need job coaching (employment support) and training on the difficulties that accompany working life. In addition, Temple Grandin emphasizes that support from his teachers and those who taught him social skills was crucial for him.

### **7. What are some ways to motivate and support an employee with ASD, what measures are better not to use?**

It seems that increasing autonomy through workplace coaching (a kind of "occupational therapy") is very beneficial. Team/work group emulation (discussion groups between adults with autism or between people with autism and non-autism) can also provide effective support. The role of the coach is specifically to teach the autistic employee to adapt to the company's rules and culture. It is possible to hire a social worker or mentor in the workplace. On-the-job training is more effective than simulation. However, virtual training for an interview (with IT support) appears to be effective; the use of video models to teach answering the phone, etc., could also be explored.

Numerous testimonies report the harmful use of pseudoscientific methods or sectarian drift vectors in the field of business coaching, such as divination tarot , neuro-linguistic programming and transactional analysis . Particularly with regard to the obligation of regular meetings, which generates stress and violation of rights. Opinions on parallel systems specializing in autism, both in France, England and Israel , are more positive. In India, people with autism benefit from employment support measures in the disability sector.

The integration of people with autism in the workplace can be based on human resource management, whose role has evolved greatly to support the personal development of employees. Source -

[https://pl.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Emploi\\_des\\_personnes\\_autistes#Avantages\\_s%C3%A9lectifs](https://pl.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Emploi_des_personnes_autistes#Avantages_s%C3%A9lectifs)

### **8. How can I help an employee with ASD adapt to the workplace?**

There are many ideas and areas of help. It is usually sufficient to technically/physically adapt the workplace to the sensory hypersensitivity of the person with ASD, usually requiring really minor adjustments. It is possible to use noise-canceling headphones , muffle penetrating bells and neon lights, and engage in more written communication. A common request for accommodation is email communication rather than phone communication . The Malakoff Médéric Foundation cites raising awareness among teams, adjusting work schedules, and incorporating sensory aspects as three elements necessary for successful integration. In the case of visual sensitivity,

glasses with tinted lenses seem to be effective. Sensory aspects are taken into account in some countries (such as Denmark, where Specialisterne places computer scientists with autism in individual offices with brightness adjustments), but not in others, especially France. In the United States, there are many items specifically designed to help with sensory management, such as jackets that apply elastic pressure to specific parts of the body. Mutual understanding is easier if the tasks required are predictable, organized, and clearly defined. The use of visual aids can be very beneficial. Various solutions (relaxation, medication) are possible to cope with anxiety. Anxiety and hypersensitivity are often related. Dealing with emotions can be challenging, especially dealing with anger . In addition, many employment difficulties are resolved by good quality and quantity of sleep. A number of workplace adaptations are beneficial in situations with disabilities other than autism, particularly in the adoption of assistance dogs , which also applies to visual impairment . Adaptations to work conditions can have positive bilateral benefits. For example, some people with autism, unlike most people without autism, prefer to work at night and are therefore more productive.

#### **9. What techniques and tools can the employer use to support the development of an employee with ASD?**

It is worthwhile for the HR department to develop and prepare tools to diagnose and support the development of competencies and abilities of employees with ASD:

- Observation
- Interview/conversation
- Workshop/Training/Occupational Training
- Coaching
- Feedback
- Process monitoring
- Courses
- Trainings
- Diagnostic tests: personality type, competences or team roles.

#### **10. What are the benefits to an employer of preparing to hire a person with ASD?**

"Hiring adults with autism spectrum disorders can seem problematic for many employers. These individuals face many barriers during the hiring process. These include lack of vocational support, employer attitudes toward employees with disorders, and beliefs about the higher costs associated with hiring such an individual.

A study by Australian researchers from the School of Occupational Therapy and Social Work examined the benefits and costs of employing individuals with autism spectrum disorders from the perspective of employers.

For the study, an online survey was sent to approximately 250 Australian organizations. Fifty-nine employers of adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) were considered. In the study sample, 19% of employees with ASD were employed in micro organizations (<5 employees) 23% from small organizations (5-19 employees) while 57% from medium (20199 employees) and large organizations (over 200 employees).

The places of employment of employees with ASD in the study were mainly in the areas of health care and social assistance, retail, education, training, food services, media, administration, manufacturing, real estate and security.

Organizations employing people with ASD recruited employees both through organized employment services for people with disabilities and through independent recruitment.

#### Survey results

Over 50% of employers found the relationships of employees with ASD to the rest of the workforce to be friendly, both on and off the job. One-fifth of employees on the autism spectrum interacted with only a few co-workers. About 10% had conversations with co-workers only about work or were limited to daily greetings.

Overall, having an employee on the autism spectrum was rated as positive. Among the benefits, employers reported creative thinking and specific skills of employees with ASD. Impact on workplace morale and promoting a culture of inclusion were also reported as benefits. Among the negative impacts, employers reported the need for increased supervision of the employee, misunderstandings, and conflicts with co-workers. None of the employers reported decreased productivity as a result of employing a person with ASD.

- The vast majority of employers responded that they would recommend hiring an employee with ASD to other employers, and over 50% of employers would hire another employee with ASD if the current employee resigned.

When comparing employees with ASD to others, employers indicated greater attention to detail, ethics, and quality of work for the group with ASD. However, employers indicated that these workers had less flexibility and poorer adherence to instructions.

Hourly wage calculations were performed using data on 112 workers with ASD with a breakdown between full-time and part-time workers. No significant differences were found in the weekly cost of supervision, and costs associated with employee on-the-job training.

The results of the study suggest that employing an adult with ASD does not generate additional costs for the employer. Nor does an employee with ASD pose a threat to organizational productivity or employee integration. The study also identified benefits to the employer of hiring



an employee with ASD such as increased attention to detail or work ethic, which may directly translate into a competitive advantage for companies that hire these individuals. There is a need for further research into the attitudes towards employment of people with spectrum disorders and the actual benefits and costs to better support these individuals in the labour market".

Source: Scott M. et al. Employers' perception of the costs and the benefits of hiring individuals with autism spectrum disorder in open employment in Australia. PLoS ONE 12(5): e0177607. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0177607>.

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## 6.4 MODULE 4. EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH ASD IN AN INTERNATIONAL, EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL CONTEXT

### 1. Is the international legal framework binding on States?

According to the UN Division for Social Policy and Development, international legal framework admits two types of instruments:

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**Multilateral treaties** are **binding** but only to those which have consented to be so bound, by signing and ratifying or acceding to them.

Some universal instruments, such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, and some specific provisions, such as the **principle of non-discrimination**, have become part of customary international law and are considered **binding on all States**, even those that have not ratified a human rights treaty that embodies norms of customary law.

**International instruments** such as declarations, resolutions, principles, guidelines and rules, are **not technically legally binding**. They express generally-accepted principles and represent a moral and political commitment by States. They also can be used as guidelines for States in enacting legislation and formulating policies concerning persons with disabilities.

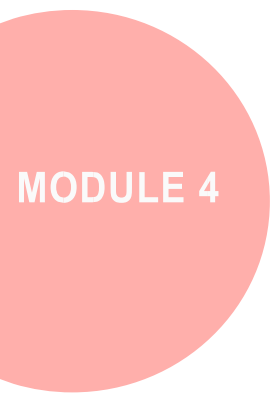
States are primarily responsible for transforming legislative, administrative and judicial practices, to empower persons with disabilities to exercise their rights. States that have become Parties to an international convention are legally bound to implement the provisions contained in the convention in their domestic jurisdiction. International law leaves it to States to adopt such legislative and other measures, consistent with their constitutional processes, to give effect to the obligations.

### **2. Which is the most important international instrument concerning the rights of persons with disabilities and what are its provisions?**

The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (UNCRPD) is the first international, legally binding instrument setting minimum standards for rights of people with disabilities, and the first human rights convention to which the EU has become a party. The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. The **article 27** is devoted to the right to work and employment. The basic rules for the States parties in the implementation of the employment rights of persons with disabilities are as follows:

**1.- Non-discrimination** should cover all aspects of employment, including the full recruitment processes, the hiring standards and everything related to terms and conditions of employment.

**2.- Accessibility:** States are required to take steps towards ensuring a fully accessible workplace: This obligation is crucial for removing the various barriers—physical, attitudinal, information-, communication- or transport-related that prevent persons with disabilities from seeking.



**3.- Reasonable accommodations:** refers to necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (art. 2 CRPD). According to the CRPD the denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes a discrimination on the basis of disability and leads to perpetuating inequality

**4.- Positive measures:** States shall promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities

### **3. How Europe promotes the employment of disabled people?**

Positive actions on behalf of people with disabilities have a long history in most Member States in the European Union. They are measures aimed at promoting access to employment for disabled people, to the same extent as members of other categories. The most significant are:

**The quota system:** seeks to achieve disabled people's employment by means of an obligation to employ a proportion of disabled people. Quota systems for private and/or public enterprises or institutions exist in the majority of EU countries. Their target is to stimulate labor demand by committing employers to employ a certain share of employees with disabilities. Typically, the stipulated share ranges between 2% and 7% of the workforce. In most countries the degree of fulfilment ranges between 30% and 70%. According to available empirical data, quota systems only lead to small net employment gains.

**Supported employment:** is defined as individualized guidance and accompaniment actions in the workplace, provided by specialized labor trainers, which aim to facilitate the social and labor adaptation of workers with disabilities with special difficulties of labor insertion in companies of the ordinary labor market.

**Sheltered employment:** was created for "those people who, due to their disability, are not able to get or keep a conventional job, assisted or unassisted". They can take various forms, such as day care centers where people with disabilities participate in occupational therapy programs that involve producing goods and services or non-profit purposes, or where people with disabilities participate in employment activities from which they receive an income.

### **4. What competences does the EU have regarding the legal regulation of the employment of people with disabilities?**

The European Union only has the competences conferred by the Treaties. Competences not conferred on the EU through Treaties correspond to the EU countries. The Lisbon Treaty, which

entered into force at the end of 2009, clarifies the division of competences between the EU and the EU countries. These competencies are divided into three main categories

- **Exclusive** competences of the EU: customs, monetary, common fisheries, common commercial policies, conclusion of international agreements or instructions on the operation of the common internal market.
- **Shared** competences in which the EU and EU countries have the capacity to legislate and adopt legally binding acts. Such as, environment, social policy, transport, energy, consumer protection, security and justice, development cooperation and humanitarian aid, research, public health, agriculture and fisheries, cohesion and social policy and trans-European networks
- **Support** competences in which the EU can only intervene to support, coordinate or complement the action of EU countries. Where the protection and improvement of health, industry, culture, tourism, education and sports, civil protection and administrative cooperation are included. Thus, the EU has competences with relation to disability rights only in those areas in which the Treaties have conferred competences. For instance, EU has competences to legislate in the area of employment; however, it does not have the permission to legislate in the area of education and training.

The main European initiatives on employment and disability are:

- **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** (arts. 153, 10, 19), setting minimum standards.
- **2000/78/EC Employment Equality Directive TFEU, 2012 (art. 5)** that establishes that employers are obliged to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability.
- **Commission Regulation 651/2014 (arts. 31,34)**: Training aid and additional costs in employment of workers with disabilities.
- **General Block Exemption Regulation, 2014**: defines the conditions of the aid granted to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities

## 5.- What does EU for employing people with disabilities?

In March 2021, the European Commission adopted the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030.

The objective of this Strategy is to progress towards ensuring that all persons with disabilities in Europe, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation.

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This new and strengthened Strategy takes account of the diversity of disability comprising longterm physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments (in line with Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), which are often invisible. Addressing the risks of multiple disadvantage faced by women, children, older persons, refugees with disabilities, and those with socioeconomic difficulties, it promotes an intersectional perspective in line with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The new strategy therefore contains an ambitious set of actions and flagship initiatives in various domains and has numerous priorities, such as:

- accessibility: being able to move and reside freely but also to participate in the democratic process
- having a decent quality of life and to live independently as it focuses notably on the de-institutionalisation process, social protection and non-discrimination at work
- equal participation as it aims to effectively protect persons with disabilities from any form of discrimination and violence, to ensure equal opportunities in and access to justice, education, culture, sport and tourism, but also equal access to all health services
- the role of the EU to lead by example
- the EU's intention to deliver on that strategy promoting the rights of persons with disabilities globally

The Commission will support Member States in shaping their national strategies and action plans to further implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the EU legislation in the field.

## **6.- What is the European Social Fund?**

The European Social Fund is the main financial instrument of the European Union to promote employment in the Member States and promote greater economic and social cohesion.

In addition to facilitating access to employment for millions of people, the ESF has been involved in the reintegration of disadvantaged people into society.

The three key principles guiding the ESF are:

- Collaboration.
- Shared management.
- Co-financing.



ESF funds a rich variety of projects that improve people's employment prospects and the jobs they do. EU funding is available for any size of enterprise in any sector including entrepreneurs, start-ups, micro companies, small and medium-sized enterprises, and larger businesses.

You may apply for a grant or participate in a procurement procedure if you run a business or a related organisation (business associations, business support providers, consultants, etc.) that runs projects that further the interests of the EU, or if you contribute to the implementation of an EU programme or policy.

Furthermore, a wide range of financing is available for companies: business loans, microfinance, guarantees and venture capital.

### **7.- Is there a specific labor legislation for people with ASD?**

*This is a Spanish overview. To expand the information, it is necessary to study case by case. At the national level, each country has the competence to develop legislation that is always more permissive than the preceding administrative level.*

The legislation applicable to people with ASD in Spain is the general legislation regarding people with disabilities. As regards specific employment conditions, it is regulated in the Workers' Statute and in the rest of the labor regulations.

The recent Spanish Strategy for Active Support to Employment 2021-2024 (approved in December 2021) specifically recognizes autism spectrum disorder in reference to people with disabilities and for the first time, dissociating it from intellectual disability. One of the strategic objectives of this new text is to achieve an approach centered on people and companies, accompanying job seekers in a personalized way and providing an individualized service to employers.

It is a step forward for the Spanish Government in terms of promoting access to the labor market for people with ASD.

### **8.- Are the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights binding?**

The principles are not binding international law. Nevertheless, they are the most authoritative international statement to date regarding the responsibilities of business with respect to human rights.

### **9. - How can I promote disability inclusion in the workplace?**

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Hiring of people with disabilities reinforces the Diversity policy of the companies, resulting in an open corporate culture, without prejudice, in tune with society and, therefore, more competitive. Based on the rights protected by the Convention and the procedure established by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights corporate responsibility towards people with disabilities can be strengthened by establishing the following steps:

**Step 1 : Make a commitment** : a formal commitment of the company with the disability.

**Step 2 : Identify possible negative impacts** on the rights of people with disabilities in the company's area of influence. Prioritize impacts (severity / remediability / incidence / connection) in order to consider corrective measures to take.

**Step 3 : Establish the procedures and those responsible** for preventing, mitigating and repairing possible impacts, as well as communicating the progress made.

- Assignment of managers and resources
- Assignment of managers and resources
- Assignment of managers and resources
- Assignment of managers and resources

**Step 4: Contribute to the SDGs** related to disability, promoting certain actions that aim to enhance the role of people with disabilities in society from the 2030 Agenda and the Goals in objectives 4, 8, 10, 11 and 17.

**10.- Do I have an obligation as a company to adapt the working conditions of a disabled employee?**

*This is an example for the Spanish Country Case. The requirements of the workers and companies will depend on the existing national regulation.*

In general, different conditions for people with disabilities are not established in the Workers' Statute. There is no legal basis that regulates special working conditions due to the disability itself.

However, it would be possible to urge a modification of the conditions by application of the general principle of the right to physical integrity and an adequate safety and hygiene policy.

The Workers' Statute establishes that, among the obligations of the companies, is to protect the physical integrity of the worker. Therefore, if the worker provides the relevant documentation

that justifies the modification of his working conditions, and the employer voluntarily does not carry it out, he would be facing a serious breach of his obligations.

**11.- What do I have to take into account regarding contracts to benefit from the advantages of hiring a person with a disability?**

*This is an example for the Spanish Country Case. The requirements of the workers and companies will depend on the existing national regulation and company's agreements.*

**Indefinite-term** employment contract:

- The degree of disability of the worker and that it is duly recognized by the competent body.
- That he is unemployed and enrolled in the public employment service
- That complies with the requirements of prior contracting deadlines and type of contract
- Companies may apply for these benefits
- Beneficiary companies are obliged to maintain the stability of these workers for a minimum period of 3 years

**Temporary contract** for the promotion of employment:

- The degree of disability of the worker and that it is duly recognized by the competent body
- That he is unemployed and enrolled in the public employment service
- That complies with the requirements of prior contracting deadlines and type of contract
- Employers must hire workers through the Public Employment Service (full time or part time)
- The contract will have a duration between 12 months and 3 years.

**Interim contract** to substitute people with disabilities:

- The degree of disability of the worker and that it is duly recognized by the competent body
- That he is unemployed
- The trial period must not exceed of 6 months.

Employment contract for **training**:

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- The degree of disability of the worker and that it is duly recognized by the competent body
- In the case of hiring disabled workers there is no age limit;
- Not having the necessary qualifications to formalize an internship contract.
- The contract must expressly state the trade or occupational level of the apprenticeship, the time dedicated to training and its hourly distribution (min.15% theoretical training), the worker's remuneration (not less than the minimum interprofessional wage) the duration of the contract (between 6 months and 2 years) and the name and professional qualification of the person designated as tutor
- The working conditions will include the same contingencies and protections as those of any other contracted person.

### 12.- What incentives in hiring people with disabilities can I find?

*The advantages and benefits listed are merely indicative, and may be subject to modification and even deletion by the State or other administrative divisions. This is an example for the Spanish Country Case. The grants will depend on the existing calls at any given time and will not always be applied in all territories.*

In relation **to contracts**:

**Indefinite-term** employment contract:

- 1.- Subsidy for permanent hiring
- 2.- Bonuses in business contributions to Social Security
- 3.- Subsidy for job adaptation **Temporary**

contract:

- 1.- Bonuses in business contributions to Social Security
- 2.- Subsidy for job adaptation
- 3.- Subsidy when transformation into permanent contracts

**Interim** hiring to substitute people with disabilities

- 1.- 100% discount on business Social Security contributions.

**Training** contracts

- 1.- Reductions in Social Security contributions
- 2.- Subsidy for job adaptation

In relation **to supported employment**:

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They will be able to promote supported employment projects, and be beneficiaries of the corresponding grants:

- a) Associations, foundations and other non-profit entities.
- b) Special Employment Centers.
- c) Companies in the ordinary labor market.
  - 1. Subsidies for hiring.
  - 2. Bonuses

3. Aid for the financing of the costs derived from the hiring of labor trainers.

In relation **to corporation tax**, the amount of:

- Subsidy for each person/year of increase in the average workforce of workers with disabilities by an equal **degree or greater than 33% and less than 65%**, contracted by the taxpayer, experienced during the tax period, with respect to the average workforce of workers of the same nature in the immediately preceding period.
- Subsidy for each person / year of increase in the average workforce of workers with disabilities by one **degree equal to or greater than 65%**, hired by the taxpayer, experienced during the tax period, with respect to the workforce average number of workers of the same nature in the immediately preceding period.

### 6.5 MODULE 5. RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH ASD. CREATING AN AUTISTIC-FRIENDLY RECRUITMENT PROCESS

#### 1. How to get to know the strengths of the candidates/employees with ASD?

First, by gaining an understanding of autism. Then by paying close attention to the recruitment and selection process, asking the right questions. And by giving autistic team members opportunities to share their ideas.

#### 2. If people with ASD struggle with social communication and interaction, how should we support their integration?

People with autism may be disturbed by close proximity to other workers, and stressed by the expectation to socialize.

- → On this account, the awareness raising among the team members and managers seems necessary to ensure that the needs of the employee with ASD are understood and respected.

- → To facilitate communication with the employee with ASD, clear, concrete and complete language should be preferred, avoiding double senses, irony, metaphors or unnecessary gestures.
- → A tutor acting as an intermediary between the autistic person and their collaborators can strongly support the communication and promote the appreciation of diversity in the workplace.

### **3. How to cope with the employee's stress?**

The employer should provide as much flexibility and autonomy in work planning as possible. The employer should avoid as much as possible unexpected tasks, multiple tasks and variations in work priorities.

### **4. Should I planify regular meetings with the employee with ASD?**

Plan regular meetings:

- It is indeed necessary to check that she/he has understood and applied the instructions by going to see her/him because she/he will not ask for help.
- Value their successes and explain their mistakes in a logic of improvement.

### **5. My company hasn't developed an autism-friendly strategy yet, could we hire people with ASD?**

It's a great starting point to learn more about autism at work and search for information.

Awareness is the first step of growth. After completing the Opportunities4autism training (6 modules), employers (HR managers, directors, recruiters and other key staff) should be able to set the company processes and practices in order to build an autism-friendly environment.

Even though the company hasn't developed an autism-friendly strategy yet, communication to the potential candidates that you are open to welcome people with special needs is extremely important.

### **6. How if the candidate with ASD doesn't have work experience?**

Consider that there may be reasons behind the inconsistent work history and lack of education that has nothing to do with the autistic person's ability and intellect and everything to do with barriers and insufficient support they have experienced.

### **7. What are the qualities in the job description that could discourage people with ASD to apply?**

Qualities such as 'excellent communication skills' or 'good team player' will probably discourage many autistic people from applying for jobs.

Try to be really objective about what abilities and experiences are genuinely necessary for the job, and leave out any that are not.

#### **8. How to encourage people with ASD to apply?**

In the job ad, make sure you're sending the right message welcoming neurodiversity. You can specify that the working environment is calm or that the employer can make adjustments to the work environment, provide flexible working hours or smart working options.

Inform applicants of their right to request reasonable accommodation to ensure full access to the interview. Invite them to contact the recruiter in case of need for support.

#### **9. How should the interview venue be?**

Choose a suitable quiet space free from distractions. Seat the candidate at a spot from where he/she can have a good overview of the space, get rid of visual distractions such as blinking lights, noisy air conditioning or strong air fresheners. Asking about specific sensory hypersensitivity in advance may help you set the venue accordingly and avoid distractions hindering the candidate's performance.

#### **10. How to make the candidate comfortable while inviting experts who can support the recruiter to the interview?**

You may prefer to involve other people in the preparatory process or invite them to participate in later stages of the selection in order to not make the first contact overwhelming. Allow the candidate to bring a supporter to their interview.

#### **11. I am used to counting on the first impression, how should I change it?**

Don't count so much on the first impression in case of a job interview with candidates with autism. Autism affects the ability of social communication and interaction, and people suffering from ASD may have difficulties to understand non-verbal communication and adapt to new social situations.

It is necessary to be trained to read and decode non-verbal communication and to "read between the lines" when interviewing job applicants. Use your non-verbal reading skill to empathize with the candidate, and provide support to facilitate the interview process.

## **12. Could you give us examples of behavior-oriented questions?**

"Give me an example of a time you faced a central Wi-Fi failure. How did you handle that?"

"Tell me about a time you were developing a new client database?"

"Describe a time when you saw a problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it."

## **13. How should I talk about autism and related challenges with the candidate?**

As an employer, you can make it much easier for applicants to open up about their condition by making it clear that your company appreciates diversity and is willing to welcome neurodiverse members to their team.

Many autistic people prefer to be open about their condition. If the candidate is comfortable with talking about their condition, don't be afraid to ask about the specific needs, adjustments and reasonable accommodations (e.g. adjustment of the job environment, organization of work, home office etc.)

Unacceptable: Do you have any disabilities?

Acceptable: Can you perform the duties of the job you are applying for ?

Never ask directly. (Firstly, it's rude. Secondly, it's against the law.)

## **14. What can I and cannot ask at a job interview about mental health? (legally)** Generally, it is not legal to ask employees about their mental health during a job interview.

You have to do further research on the national law concerning mental health in a job place.

## **15. What are unintentional discriminations ?**

Unintentional discrimination can occur when employers' policies adversely affect employees based on race, color, gender, age, pregnancy, or any other protected classification. These policies can seem like they are neutral, but end up having an outcome that negatively impacts members of different protected classes. Even if the employer did not mean to discriminate intentionally, they can still be held liable for policies that have a "disparate impact" or "adverse impact".

## **16. If it's difficult for people with ASD to be social, how will they integrate in the workplace?**



Many adults with autism can learn to understand the social norms, improve their social skills and manage the challenges, allowing them to integrate successfully into the workplace. But it's important to focus on professional expertise and skills.

**17. Should the employee with ASD have a specific schedule ?**

Not necessary but you should provide the employee with a timetable and schedules mentioned with precision for the week or the month to which she/he can refer. It is important to clearly specify the time he has to complete a task and to make sure that she/he respects the meridian breaks and leaves at the same time as the others.

Changes to the schedule must be prepared and explained well in advance in order to that the employee manages it.

**18. How to make sure an employee with ASD understood her/his tasks ?**

Do not hesitate to ask her/him to reformulate the task to be sure that they are understood.

**19. Is it possible for an employee with ASD to work in a team ?**

Yes but it needs to be structured. To work as a team, we need to know who does what, when, how... It's more true for people with ASD who need a very structured environment.

They may have relevant ideas without knowing how to share them. When a colleague stays silent in a meeting, it is not necessarily because she/he has nothing to say. She/he may simply wait to be asked to speak on the subject. Do not hesitate to request her/his opinion or schedule a time of expression for everyone at the end of the meeting.

**20. What are the platforms/organizations that can help our organization in the recruitment process ?**

Each country has few organizations that can help in your recruitment process and after. [find the organizations in your country].

## 6.5 MODULE 6. ADAPTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES FOR ASD EMPLOYEES. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKPLACE.

### 1. What do we understand by Recruitment?

Equipo Vértice (2007) defines recruitment as an action to attract intellectual capital to companies. The company not only demands a series of characteristics of the candidate, but also offers its competitive advantages, in order to assess the benefits that may affect the candidate's affiliation to the company.

The objective of recruiting is to supply the "selection" of its basic raw material, that is, candidates. But it must supply the selection process not only in quantity, but also in quality. The effectiveness of the procedure will depend on these two elements.

In the job vacancies published by the company, the company's commitment to equal opportunities for male and female candidates, with or without disabilities, could be included.

- Try to receive as many applications as possible from qualified people with disabilities. For this, the job offer could be disseminated through organizations of people with disabilities, universities, etc. These offers must be disseminated in a format that is accessible to all.
- Description of the characteristics of the jobs offered, the functions to be performed, as well as the educational level, knowledge, experience, skills and aptitudes required.
- Upon finding a candidate with a disability who meets the requirements for the position, the company should be able to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace, in order to maximize the capabilities of the person. (Antezana and Linkimer, 2015).

What we understand by Personnel Selection in general:

Chiavenato (1999) defines personnel selection as the choice of the most appropriate candidates to carry out jobs in the company, trying to preserve or improve the efficiency and productivity of the rest of their personnel. The selection of personnel aims to achieve two objectives:

- Adjusting the person to the job.
- And that person is effective in the position.

## **2. How to Adapt the Personnel Selection Tests with Autism Spectrum Disorder?**

Frequently standard tests are used that are not difficult to adapt and to make accessible. There is a wide variety of tests on the market, so as the one that suits best can be used in each case.

The selection tests to filter candidates with disabilities must be flexible, since they are groups with organic or psychological dysfunctions, which may have some limitation to be able to perform effectively in some standardized tests. You must choose which is the most appropriate test for each person, based on the disability they have.

### **¿How do we define the selection criteria?**

The selection criteria will be determined by the information we have about the position to be filled. The selection process must also provide for people's ability to learn and to perform a task. A selection process is basically the development of a comparison and decision-making because, on the one hand, there is the analysis and specifications of the position and, on the other, the applicants for it, who are totally different from each other.

### **¿How are the phases of the selection?**

Following the Claver, Gascó and Llopis (2001):

1. Study of the curriculum or job application letter: this stage is intended to determine if the candidate meets the requirements to be interviewed, quickly eliminating applicants lacking skills. In the case of people with ASD in this Phase 1 we would have to take into account: "The Job Profile assesses job preferences, skills, and aptitudes. This profile is aimed at identifying jobs that suit the strengths and preferences of the person" .
2. Preliminary interview: to immediately eliminate candidates who are not suitable for the position, having passed the initial phase. At this stage, which is normally carried out by a

specialist from the personnel department, the habits of the applicant should be observed, as well as other personal characteristics that may influence performance, but avoiding that the damages of the interviewer influence the decision. The Cognitive Profile focuses on the three most relevant areas in ASD: Social interaction and communication skills, Flexibility and organization, and Sensory profile. It is aimed at identifying possible needs for adaptations and supportiveness in the workplace.

3. Suitability tests: in order to evaluate the level of compatibility between applicants and the requirements of the position. These tests can be exams or exercises that simulate working conditions. However, not all vacancies are recommended to use these tests; for instance.

4. Checking of background and references: these claims will be verified by people who know the candidate well, whether they are professors, co-workers or superiors. These inquiries have two objectives: on the one hand, to verify the information presented in the application, regarding studies, work experience, etc and, on the other, to get the opinion of someone who knows the candidate well.

The Complete Profile combines the two previous profiles and is aimed at supporting job placement programs. The profiles shorten the process of identifying strengths and supports since they offer a preliminary evaluation that indicates the areas that require an in-depth evaluation to make decisions about the individualized Support Plan.

5. Final interview: this is one of the fundamental steps of the selection process. Interviews are regularly used in all selection processes. Among the reasons that encourage its use, its flexible and adaptive nature can be highlighted, especially in the case of people with autism spectrum disorder. In their case, it is essential to know what type of person we have in front of us, because we will take into account if they lack a rather mechanized fluent language, little eye contact, which is ideal to present exercises that encourage face-to-face interviews, or to look for audiovisual alternatives where they feel more comfortable. We can also get help from external support organizations, tutors who provide data of interest in the profile in the interview and be able to adapt it. This will require training prior to the interview so the person with ASD can train in advance to promote their success. Here we are talking about anticipation processes: people with ASD need this support because this will reduce their level of anxiety and stress during this type of interview, in addition to enhancing their abilities and skills.

6. Medical examination: according to Olleros (2005) in quite a few companies and some of certain specific sectors -due to legal requirements- medical examination is also attended, carried

out by the same services of the company or private or public health organizations. It allows to know what are the physical and physiological possibilities of the candidates, for a good performance in their job. In the case of people with ASD, the request for a diagnosis will be essential to have access to the percentage of the degree in minimum disability, 33% will be recognized by the public health services (Mental Health); As well as, psychological evaluations based on data protection and the principle of confidentiality can be requested to specify if you receive drug treatment or psychological sessions that can support employment in order to have a good general functioning in your job position.

### **3. What Aspects should we take into account with the transmission of information and awareness in the Work Units?**

Integration is born from information, so the lack of information in the work environment leads to the development of fears, prejudice and a distorted vision of the work potential of people with disabilities, which can spoil the effort carried out throughout the selection process to achieve the best position-person fit.

In most companies, from the General Management and HR, the reconciliation and motivation are usually adequate. However, this changes in the middle managers, the heads of departments or the rest of the organization's staff, where the integration philosophy very often encounters insurmountable barriers.

This line of action can be established in two parallel tracks: one aimed at those who will be the coworkers of the new incorporation (in the case of people with ASD) awareness campaigns can be carried out in companies with employees through organizations specialized in ASD and another to the supervisors or coordinators, for the same purposes.

These initiatives will eliminate unfounded fears and facilitate the adoption of an appropriate attitude so that employees know how to work with people with Autism, how they should address them and what actions they should take together: not overprotecting the person because they have a disability, but also not ignoring it, providing a normalized and equal treatment, demanding the same professionalism, the same level of performance and the same objectives.

### **4. What Tools can we use as Support for the Adaptation of employees with ASD?**

The adaptation of the job for people with disabilities can represent an important competitive advantage in the process of companies to promote labor inclusion. The adaptation of jobs involves various areas, such as flexible hours, the removal of architectural barriers or the adaptation of furniture. In all cases, jobs must be adapted to workers with disabilities, and not

the other way around, with the aim of making jobs accessible and allowing the development of skills and abilities of workers with disabilities.

The adaptation of jobs must be approached taking into account three aspects:

1st the worker

2nd the tasks to be performed

3rd The job

Adaptation is a term that supposes a set of prior adjustments that are closely related to: the principle of cognitive accessibility, individualized methodological adjustments, anticipating, creating and using visual aids and the use of augmentative systems for generalized communication in all contexts. A good adaptation during a process of adaptation to a job of people with ASD cannot be really inclusive, effective and functional if we do not start from these work bases.

Here are some strategies companies should follow to create accommodations:

- a) Make adaptations of the contents according to their level of curricular competence or need for access.
- b) Use manageable and easy-to-use materials.
- c) Anticipate, each day, the tasks to be carried out. It is very important that, if or when you want to modify the functions of the worker, the person in charge must inform the employee with TEA of these changes in advance.
- d) Employ predictable and meaningful methodologies.
- e) Use detailed instructions to carry out tasks.
- f) If the job position is changing, the company must ensure that the employee knows his or her functions. Nothing should be left to chance.
- g) It should be taken into account that teamwork can sometimes be a challenge. For this, it is necessary to train the rest of the co-workers so that they have knowledge of how to treat a person with autism, and how to face certain circumstances that they could experience at work.
- h) Manages adaptations in all common spaces, leisure activities and special or thematic events. Not only the place where work functions take place, but the entire surrounding

environment must be adapted. Cognitive accessibility must be generalized throughout the center.

## 5. What are the phases that companies must follow to follow a Model of Adaptation to the Workplace for people with ASD?

The tools that companies should use to support the employee with ASD in their job:

**1. Workplace instructions:** In the first place, they must prepare a thorough analysis of the workplace, to anticipate the new employees all the circumstances that they will face in their workplace. In this analysis, the activity of the company, the existing jobs, the number of employees, etc., must be exposed. Anticipation is one of the main characteristics for treating people with autism and making their adaptation at work effective.

**2. On-the-job training:** Human resources workers or those responsible employees in the company, must carry out a little training to the person with ASD before proceeding to the coaching. In this training, they must explain everything necessary about the job position and the functions to be performed, so that the new employee can perform his job in a proper way. The basic points to be dealt with in the training should be: functions to be performed, tools to be handled, execution times, ways of carrying out the work, etc. The use of visual presentations is recommended where real situations that can occur in the workplace are presented. It is necessary for companies to use tools that help translate verbal information into visual information, such as pictograms, photographs, real images, drawings, diagrams, concept maps, schedules, visual agendas, colour codes, tangible references, the use of written word, etc. Regarding adaptations with visual aids, it is important not to fall into redundancy since making an environment accessible does not mean filling it with pictograms arbitrarily, but rather using visual aids when really necessary, in an orderly and functional manner.

**3. Coaching:** In this phase, the company must appoint a mediator/coach to carry out the training process in the specific job, making the necessary adaptations so that the person with autism can perform the activity in the best possible way. The role of mediator-coach is essential throughout the process. He is conceived as a mediator between the person with autism and the context where the work activity will take place, preparing that context to make it predictable, simple and understandable, in addition to taking charge of the training of the person with autism who is going to be employed. The profile and role of the employment mediator can be briefly summarized as: knowledge of autism and of the specific person in all settings and situations; ability to prevent/intervene in behaviour

problems, communication skills, empathy, negotiation skills and assertiveness, flexibility; knowledge of training resources and strategies for employment integration; and knowledge about employment relationship.

**4. Process monitoring:** during this process, the work activity performed by the person with ASD and the suitability of the adaptations established for this purpose will be monitored. This involves, among other things, an evaluation of performance, work environment and established supports. It is essential to assess the results of the worker in matters of particular interest to the company, such as productivity and quality of work. Likewise, the planned withdrawal of support is evaluated. In the event that this may result in unsatisfactory, formal supports are implemented again. This is done by mutual agreement between the person with ASD and/or her representative, the labour mediator, the coordinating technician and the company itself.

An important aspect is the evaluation of the program itself, of the quality of the service provided. For this, we recommend the “Information Brochure and Quality Model of the European Union for Supported Employment” (European Union for Supported Employment, 2005) which, in addition to the description of the Supported Employment Process, includes a Code of Ethics for Employment Professionals and a Framework of Quality Standards for Supported Employment Services.

#### **6. What are the areas to take into account in the Adaptation of the job, and what suggestions can we propose to you to serve as a guide?**

In this unit the following points will be highlighted:

1. Introducing the employee of the company's organization, its mission and goals.
2. Introducing the employee to colleagues/team with whom he will work, marking the structure and dependencies in the company.
3. Presentation of the principle of work: regulations and procedures.
4. Presentation to the employee of the workplace: place and responsibility for this place, tasks, duties, safety rules.
5. The trainer prepares role play with the participants, and diagrams of various types of conversations introducing the employee to the above-mentioned topics, with particular emphasis on the communication needs of people with ASD.



6. During the workshop, the trainer points out to the participants the importance of the adaptation process and adaptation procedures - together with the group design the process, develop procedures and tools such as:

- ✦ Adaptation of new employees - goals, rules and stages.
- ✦ Practical steps of employee adaptation.
- ✦ Implementation scope.
- ✦ Elements facilitating adaptation.
- ✦ The scope of information packages that an employee with ASD should receive and their form.
- ✦ A form of summary and evaluation of the implementation (it is worth reflecting on the effectiveness of such implementation, finding strengths (experience and good practices for the future) and weaknesses (by highlighting mistakes made at the stage of implementation, we can avoid making them in the future and ensure clarification and correct communication in case the person with ASD does not understand the UNITS or does not do his/her job properly as a result of incorrect training/introduction).

#### **7. How do we describe the talent and weaknesses that people with Autism have?**

Personnel policy in this section, awareness of the will to retain talented employees with ASD and awareness of a high level of turnover due to specific communication difficulties and, sometimes, limited opportunities derived from employee dysfunction will be addressed.

Policy to be followed in your company for people with Autism:

Defend the rights of people with ASD and their employment opportunities. For this reason, it is essential that your company participates proactively in regulatory developments, generating strategic alliances with other organizations of the Third Sector of social action, with the Public Administration, political parties and private entities.

Social Incidence as a company that covers people with Autism in their workplace and adapts them: It is understood that as a company we influence society and are key agents in the processes of transition to adulthood and autonomous life of people with Autism and their families. Therefore, we promote through actions of sensitization and awareness raising in order to promote a real and positive image of people with ASD in their workplace and we will base

ourselves on their abilities as well as their weaknesses so that they adapt and we all adapt within the company.

It should be noted that within the characteristics of ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) we cannot only speak of difficulties, but they are also associated with a series of capacities in the people who are part of this group that we want to highlight and it is very important for them to companies and employees have a broader vision of them.

- **We highlight:** Due to the inflexibility of thought and behavior, people with ASD often feel comfortable respecting and firmly adhering to established rules. Ideal to take into account the norms and rules of the company, of the spaces, etc. and accompany the possibilities of the same with examples. Having a limited repertoire of interests, for their part, predisposes them to generate a great curiosity about very specific topics, which translates into a very specialized and exhaustive knowledge about the topics that interest them.
- **Communication difficulties:** related for example to understanding non-literal language, double meanings, metaphors or ironies. People with ASD tend to be very logical and literal and have difficulties understanding, highlighting that employee take this type of relationship into account by enhancing their understanding. For this reason, they do not lie or manipulate, but are sincere and honest and can make decisions based on objective criteria and not on prejudices or intuitions that can lead to errors.

#### 8. What social expectations will we encounter with these instructions?

We've put together a list of things recruiters and companies should consider and know about people with autism and their value in the job market:

- **Talent and potential:** People with severe autism and other disabilities are thought to have less potential and talent, seen as someone to employ to fill the disabled quota. However, one must understand the complexity of ASD.
- **Creativity when carrying out aid programs to find talent:** It may occur that, by taking the traditional surveys to find your talent, the potential of the person is lost or overlooked. The person will likely have specific qualities in a particular niche, but these are overlooked if you simply limit yourself to giving talks about career opportunities and career checklists.

- Ability to think “outside the box” : Traditional job search assistance programs sometimes focus more on the offer of courses and studies available rather than on the qualities and needs of the person, and on identifying what the person has an interest in doing. Due to the rigidity of routines and restricted focus of some people with autism, it is sometimes assumed that there are no employability options. Some employment agencies may quickly conclude that the person is not employable, some employment agencies may quickly conclude that the person is not employable, rather than looking for a job that matches the person's talents and abilities. It should not be assumed that the person with autism will have difficulties in all areas, it may be a challenge for him to understand social norms, but he can be very good in some other area.
- Take into account sensory problems: These sensory dysregulations often limit the productivity of the person with autism if they are not addressed or ignored. The perception and ability to tolerate sounds / lights / other typical conditions of the work environment can be very different from other co-workers. However, solving them will make a difference and ensure the well-being of the person, allowing him to function correctly.
- Work from skills: Perhaps in people with autism it may be less obvious what their qualities are. The ideal is to identify them and work on them, instead of focusing on improving the deficit ones, which are usually, after all, the ones that least interest the person.
- Communication does not necessarily mean a long talk: Few words are usually better than a long talk. People have a tendency to talk too fast and too much to people with autism, regardless of whether the person is verbal or not, and their level of understanding. It is quickly assumed that the person who is verbally communicates in the same way that others do, when it does not have to be that way. The person may be able to speak and use language in a common way but have difficulty understanding. There should be no problem in using more written language or shorter sentences to communicate the work to be done. It is worth informing about the written and unwritten rules of the work area. Finally, it should be noted that many people with autism have trouble understanding sarcasm, irony, and double meaning in language. Thus, it would greatly facilitate a clear and direct language about what is expected and confusion would be avoided.

**SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS REQUIRE INSTRUCTION:** Unwritten and taken-for-granted rules are the most confusing and problematic for people with autism. Don't assume that the person will "read" the social environment and adjust. That will not happen. Instead, help the person by telling them how they are expected to behave, and in case the person “messes up”, tell them calmly but directly. Suggesting things in a subtle way will only create more confusion. In the end, with small modifications, we are all equally valid to enter the labor market. It just requires a little bit of interest from businesses. A shame because a lot of talent is lost by not doing it.

### **9. What are the main characteristics of people with autism that employers should take into account?**

The people with autism have the following Capabilities:

- Meticulousness
- Curiosity for very specific topics
- Specialized knowledge on topics of your interest
- Sincerity
- Honesty
- Respect and compliance with the established rules
- Attention to detail
- Good adaptation and follow-up of routine
- Good skills in mechanical and repetitive tasks
- Tendency to be very logical
- Ability to listen without prejudice

**The Facilitators:** There are a series of specific skills that frequently appear innately in people with ASD, providing them with an important talent to face tasks and objectives in the workplace. These capacities are the result of the characteristics that define the TEA and among them, we can highlight:

In the person with ASD:

- Meticulousness
- Curiosity about very specific topics
- Specialized knowledge on the topics that are of interest to them and to you as an employer
- Respect and compliance with the established rules
- Attention to detail and the ability to process the parts of a whole in exceptional detail.
- Good adaptation and follow-up of routines
- Competencies in mechanical and repetitive tasks
- The tendency to be very logical
- The ability to listen without prejudice
- Sincerity and honesty