

Position Paper

# Work means participation: Refugees with disabilities need better access to the first labour market



## NOW! Not without the We

### About us

„NOW! Not without the We“ is the self-advocacy organisation of refugees with disabilities. We are refugees ourselves and we have a disability. Since our arrival in Germany we have been facing barriers. But in our group we find solidarity and understanding. We mutually strengthen each other and work together for an inclusive society.

We ensure that refugees with disabilities and their families can live better lives in Germany.

**Access to the first labour market is difficult for refugees with disabilities. This makes the arrival process and participation also more difficult. Moreover, they face great disadvantages when applying for a permanent settlement permit (Niederlassungserlaubnis) or citizenship because the applicants must be able to successfully support themselves.**

## Reasons:

There are many reasons why access to the first labour market is difficult. Many workplaces, for example, are not fully accessible. Also, there are not sufficient integration courses for people with cognitive impairments and too few language courses for blind people. Persons with disabilities are rarely addressed in job advertisements. In the recruitment process applicants are often reduced to their disability. Many employers assume that they are often ill, that they need a lot of help and can work less. Often refugees with disabilities are also confronted with prejudice due to their country of origin. Employers can apply for therapeutic appliances, but it is very complicated. The job centres often do not sufficiently support refugees with disabilities in finding work in the first labour market.

## Consequences:

Many refugees with disabilities work in sheltered workshops for persons with disabilities. There is no minimum wage in the sheltered workshops. The time they work in workshops is not recognised either as time in which they are supporting themselves when they apply for a permanent settlement permit or citizenship. A secure job influences the residence status positively.

As a consequence, refugees with disabilities cannot fully integrate into German society. They experience exclusion and marginalisation. They are discriminated against when trying to obtain residence permits.

## Our demands:

### 1. Sheltered workshops:

- The working time in sheltered workshops must be recognised with regard to securing one's residence status. In addition, a minimum wage in workshops is necessary. At the same time, workshops should be changed into competence workshops which promote individual skills.
- There must be legal regulations on the obligation of transfer to the first labour market. To strengthen inclusion into the first labour market the compensation levy (Ausgleichsabgabe – Section 160, Book Nine of the Social Code) must be increased. There must not be any loopholes to reduce these compensation levies.
- There must be more integration and language courses for people with disabilities.

### 2. Application procedures:

- Application procedures must be transparent with no discrimination, for example by introducing legally regulated, anonymous application procedures. This must be formulated more precisely by the federal legislator.

### 3. Workplace:

- Full accessibility must be obligatory. The workplace regulations (Arbeitsstättenverordnung) must set clear rules and describe accessible workplaces.

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- There must be a regular exchange between the job centres and employers about how inclusion at the workplace can be improved (inclusion development policy). Applying for accessibility funding must be uncomplicated.
- Alternative workplaces must be provided if the workplace is not fully accessible, e. g. the option to work from home or other alternatives.
- There must be a representative body for employees with disabilities (Schwerbehindertenvertretung) in the companies.

#### **4. Experts raising awareness among stakeholders:**

- Informing employers if they have concerns about employing refugees with disabilities;
- Raising awareness in political institutions about the inclusion of refugees with disabilities into the first labour market;
- Informing refugees with disabilities and their relatives about their rights and opportunities;
- Informing about labour market inclusion in the sheltered workshops.