GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

How to ease the access of the vulnerable people and refugees to get a job

2024

INTRODUCTION

This research was realized during the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme, KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training project "INCLUDE" with ID number 2023-1-RO01-KA220-VET-000160043, together with all the partner organizations from four EU countries: Romania, Italy, Spain and Ireland.

The project main objectives were to help vulnerable people to get employed by:

- Raising employers' awareness of the existing problems of vulnerable people such as NEETS and Ukrainian refugees in terms of the employment process

- Developing the organizational capacity of VET providers to prepare vulnerable people such as NEETS and Ukrainian refugees for integration into the modern labor market

- Increasing the degree of adaptation of vulnerable categories of employees such as NEETS and refugees to the rapid changes of the labor market.

This guide was developed in response to the growing challenges faced by employers and jobseekers in the European labour market. Across partner countries, significant social and economic changes—such as the increase in NEETs, migration flows, and the arrival of refugees, particularly from Ukraine—have intensified the need for more inclusive, flexible, and informed employment practices.

Many vulnerable people face multiple barriers to employment, including low or outdated qualifications, limited digital skills, language difficulties, lack of work experience, and social discrimination.

At the same time, employers, especially in the service sector, often report labor shortages but feel insufficiently prepared to recruit, integrate, and retain workers from vulnerable backgrounds. This mismatch highlights the need for practical tools that support both sides of the employment process.

This guide aims to support employers, HR staff, SMEs, and managers by offering clear, practical, and accessible guidance on how to better understand vulnerable jobseekers and create inclusive recruitment and workplace practices. It is based on transnational research, direct experience exchanges, employer training, and collaboration between VET providers, NGOs, and businesses from Romania, Italy, Spain, and Ireland.

The guide focuses on:

- understanding who vulnerable people and refugees are and what challenges they face;

- identifying the skills and potential these candidates bring to the workplace;

- adapting recruitment, onboarding, and workplace practices to be more inclusive;

- promoting mutual benefits for employers and employees through diversity, social responsibility, and sustainable employment.

Developed in Romanian, Italian, Spanish, and English, this guide is designed to be practical, transferable, and easy to use. It can be applied by employers in different sectors and adapted to various national and local contexts. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute to fairer access to employment, stronger organizations, and more inclusive European labor markets.

Chapter 1

Understanding Vulnerable People on the Labour Market

Access to employment is one of the key conditions for social inclusion, autonomy, and long-term integration. However, for many people across Europe, entering and remaining on the labour market remains extremely difficult due to a combination of social, economic, educational, and cultural barriers. This chapter aims to provide employers with a clear understanding of **who vulnerable people are**, **why they face difficulties in employment**, and **why their inclusion is both a social responsibility and an opportunity**.

1.1 Who are vulnerable people?

In the context of this guide and the INCLUDE project, *vulnerable people* refers to individuals who face an increased risk of social exclusion and unemployment. Across partner countries, the main categories identified include:

- **NEETs** (young people Not in Education, Employment or Training);

- **Refugees and migrants**, including people displaced by conflict (e.g. Ukrainian refugees);

- **Long-term unemployed adults** with outdated or limited qualifications;

- **Roma people and other ethnic minorities** exposed to discrimination;

- **Women facing multiple barriers**, such as care responsibilities, migration background, or lack of formal work experience;

- **Low-skilled adults** with limited digital, language, or vocational competences.

Although these groups differ in background and life experience, they share common challenges related to labour market access.

1.2 Common barriers to employment

Vulnerable people often encounter multiple and interconnected barriers when searching for a job:

- **Low or obsolete qualifications** that do not match current labour market requirements;

- **Lack of digital skills**, making it difficult to search for jobs, prepare CVs, or communicate with employers;

- **Language barriers**, especially for refugees and migrants;

- **Limited work experience or informal employment history**, often not recognised by employers;

- **Low self-confidence and fear of rejection**, caused by repeated unemployment or discrimination;

- **Social and cultural misunderstandings** between employers and candidates;

- **Legal or administrative obstacles**, such as recognition of qualifications or residence-related issues.

These barriers do not reflect a lack of motivation or willingness to work, but rather a lack of adapted support and opportunities.

1.3 Why employers play a key role

Employers are essential actors in reducing labour market exclusion. In many regions, especially in the **service sector**, companies face labour shortages while vulnerable people remain unemployed. By understanding the realities of vulnerable jobseekers, employers can:

- access a **motivated and loyal workforce**;

- reduce staff turnover by investing in inclusive practices;

- contribute to **social cohesion and diversity** in the workplace;

- improve their company's social responsibility profile;

- benefit from support mechanisms offered by VET providers, NGOs, and public institutions.

Inclusive employment is not charity—it is a **mutually beneficial partnership** between employers and jobseekers.

1.4. Why Inclusive Employment Matters Today

Inclusive employment has become a critical priority in today's labour market due to profound social, economic, and demographic changes. Across Europe, employers face labour shortages in key sectors, while at the same time large groups of people—such as NEETs, refugees, migrants, long-term unemployed persons, people with low qualifications, and ethnic minorities—remain excluded from stable employment. This paradox highlights structural barriers rather than a lack of human potential.

Inclusive employment addresses these challenges by promoting equal access to work opportunities, fair treatment, and supportive working environments for all individuals, regardless of background or personal circumstances. It recognises that vulnerable people often face obstacles such as limited formal education, language barriers, discrimination, lack of digital skills, or reduced self-confidence. By actively adapting recruitment, onboarding, and workplace practices, employers can transform diversity into a strength rather than a challenge.

Benefits for Employers, Employees, and Society

Benefits for Employers

Employers who adopt inclusive employment practices gain access to a wider talent pool at a time when many sectors struggle to recruit staff. Inclusive workplaces often experience improved employee loyalty, lower turnover, and higher motivation, as workers feel valued and supported. Diverse teams also foster creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving, which are crucial in competitive and customer-oriented sectors such as services. In addition, inclusive employers enhance their public image and corporate social responsibility profile, strengthening trust with customers, partners, and local communities.

Benefits for Employees

For vulnerable people, inclusive employment provides more than a job—it offers dignity, stability, and a pathway to personal development. Employment increases self-confidence, independence, and social inclusion, helping individuals rebuild their lives after periods of exclusion or displacement. Supportive workplaces enable employees to develop professional, digital, and social skills, improving their long-term employability and career prospects.

Benefits for Society

At societal level, inclusive employment contributes to reduced unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. It strengthens social cohesion by encouraging interaction between different social and cultural groups and reducing stereotypes and discrimination. Economically, it increases productivity, broadens the tax base, and reduces public expenditure on social support.

Inclusive employment therefore plays a key role in building more equitable, resilient, and sustainable societies.

1.5. Myths and realities about employing vulnerable people

A common barrier to inclusive employment is the persistence of myths surrounding vulnerable people, such as refugees, NEETs, long-term unemployed persons, Roma communities, or people with low qualifications. Employers may assume that these individuals are unreliable, lack motivation, have insufficient skills, or will require excessive support. In reality, project experience and European labour market studies show that most vulnerable jobseekers demonstrate **high motivation, loyalty, and commitment**, especially when given a fair opportunity and basic guidance. Many barriers they face—such as limited work experience, language difficulties, or lack of confidence—are not indicators of low potential, but rather the result of social exclusion and limited access to opportunities.

Practical experience from employers involved in the project confirms that, with **clear expectations, mentoring, and inclusive workplace practices**, vulnerable employees can perform at the same level as other workers and often show greater stability and retention. Addressing myths through accurate information, real examples, and direct interaction helps employers make evidence-based decisions and reduces fear or resistance to inclusive recruitment.

1.6. Diversity as a strength in the workplace

Workplace diversity is not a challenge to be managed, but a **strategic asset** that strengthens organisations. Teams composed of people from different backgrounds bring varied perspectives, problem-solving approaches, and interpersonal skills. Employing vulnerable people contributes to a more adaptable, empathetic, and socially responsible organisational culture. In service sectors especially, diverse teams are better equipped to understand and respond to the needs of a diverse customer base.

From an organisational perspective, diversity enhances **innovation, staff engagement, and company reputation**, while also supporting compliance with ethical and legal standards. Inclusive workplaces tend to experience lower staff turnover and stronger team cohesion when diversity is actively supported through respectful communication, equal treatment, and clear internal policies. By valuing diversity, employers do not lower standards; instead, they expand their talent pool and build resilient, future-oriented organisations.

10 Benefits of Workplace Diversity!

Workplace Diversity

PERSPECTIVES 1. Variety of different perspectives from employees with diverse backgrounds.

INCREASED CREATIVITY 2. Your company becomes a melting pot of new fresh ideas.

MORE INNOVATIONS 3. Different backgrounds and ideas spark innovation.

INCREASED PROFITS 4. Creative diverse workforce brings financial benefits.

HIGHER ENGAGEMENT 5. Employees who feel appreciated become more engaged workforce.

BETTER DECISION MAKING 6. More potential solutions increase decision making within the team.

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER 7. By having employees feeling accepted and valued, you will decrease turnover.

BETTER REPUTATION 8. Good, human and socially responsible companies build stronger reputation.

HIRING RESULTS 9. Strong reputation and employer brand turns company into desirable place to work.

PROBLEM SOLVING 10. Diverse solutions can bring the best results faster.

TalentLyft

1.5 Purpose of this chapter

This chapter lays the foundation for the rest of the guide by helping employers:

- recognise the diversity and potential of vulnerable candidates;

- better understand the obstacles they face;

- approach recruitment and integration with realism, empathy, and professionalism.

Chapter 2

Legal and Ethical Framework

Inclusive employment is not only a social responsibility but also a **legal and ethical obligation** for employers across the European Union. Creating fair, safe, and respectful workplaces for vulnerable people—including NEETs, refugees, migrants, Roma communities, and other disadvantaged groups—requires a clear understanding of the legal framework and a strong commitment to ethical values.

2.1 Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination Principles

At European and national levels, the principle of **equal treatment in employment** is fundamental. Employers must ensure that no individual is discriminated against on grounds such as gender, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, or social background.

Inclusive employment means:

- equal access to recruitment, training, promotion, and working conditions;

- fair and transparent selection criteria based on skills and competences, not stereotypes;

- reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities or specific needs;

- proactive measures to counteract indirect discrimination and exclusion.

Promoting equal opportunities contributes to a more diverse workforce, improves organisational culture, and enhances innovation and productivity.

2.2 Employers' Responsibilities at National and EU Level

Employers operate within a **multi-level legal framework** that includes EU directives and national labour legislation. Key responsibilities include:

- complying with labour laws related to contracts, wages, working hours, and health and safety;

- respecting EU regulations on non-discrimination, equal pay, and social protection;

- ensuring that migrant workers and refugees have the legal right to work and access to the same employment conditions as other employees;

- cooperating with public authorities, employment services, and social partners when integrating vulnerable workers.

Employers are encouraged not only to meet minimum legal requirements but also to adopt **inclusive internal policies** that go beyond compliance and support long-term integration.

2.3 Ethical Recruitment and Fair Treatment

Ethical recruitment is essential when working with vulnerable groups. Employers should:

- use clear, accessible job descriptions and transparent recruitment procedures;

- avoid exploitative practices, unpaid work, or informal employment;

- provide accurate information about job roles, rights, duties, and working conditions;

- ensure fair remuneration and equal treatment from the first day of employment.

Fair treatment also involves continuous support, constructive feedback, and equal access to training and career development opportunities. Ethical employment practices build trust, reduce staff turnover, and strengthen the employer's reputation.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) at Organizations

Welcoming and representation of different dimension of diversity

Feeling accepted as members of a group, valued, and connected with the company

Ensuring that all individuals have access to the same opportunities and that they are treated fairly

Building a work environment where everyone's thoughts, ideas, and perspectives matter

Be accountable — DEI is the base to build on — Focus on purpose — Accept that your company isn't for everybody — Make it a concious effort — Lead by example — Truly include your gig workers

Diversity — Belonging — Equity — Inclusion

AIHR | ACADEMY TO INNOVATE HR

2.4 Creating a Safe and Respectful Working Environment

A safe and respectful workplace is a prerequisite for inclusion. Employers should actively:

- prevent harassment, bullying, and discriminatory behaviour;
- promote mutual respect, cultural awareness, and teamwork;
- establish clear internal rules and procedures for addressing conflicts and complaints;
- ensure occupational health and safety standards are applied to all employees without exception.

Special attention should be given to employees who may face additional vulnerabilities, such as language barriers, trauma, or lack of prior work experience. Mentoring, clear communication, and supportive supervision are effective tools for fostering inclusion.

Chapter 3

Preparing the Company for Inclusive Employment

Creating an inclusive workplace is not a one-time action, but a **continuous organisational process** that requires commitment, planning, and cooperation. Before recruiting vulnerable people—such as NEETs, refugees, migrants, or other disadvantaged groups—companies need to prepare internally to ensure successful integration, retention, and mutual benefit.

Creating an Inclusive Workplace Culture

An inclusive workplace culture is based on **respect, openness, and equal opportunities**. Employers should promote values such as tolerance, diversity, and fairness through clear internal policies and daily practices. Inclusion should be reflected in company mission statements, codes of conduct, and leadership behaviour. When employees feel respected and valued regardless of their background, motivation and productivity increase, and conflicts are reduced.

Sensitising Staff and Management

Managers and employees play a key role in the successful integration of vulnerable workers. Sensitisation activities—such as short trainings, workshops, or information sessions—help staff understand the specific challenges vulnerable people may face (language barriers, cultural differences, lack of confidence, trauma, or limited work experience). Raising awareness reduces stereotypes and fears, encourages empathy, and builds a supportive working environment where diversity is seen as an asset rather than a risk.

Adapting Internal Procedures (Communication, Mentoring, Supervision)

Companies may need to **adapt internal procedures** to better support vulnerable employees. This can include:

- using clear and simple communication, especially during onboarding;

- appointing a mentor or buddy to support the new employee in the first months;

- offering flexible supervision and regular feedback;

- allowing gradual learning and adjustment periods.

These adaptations do not lower standards, but instead help employees reach expected performance levels more effectively.
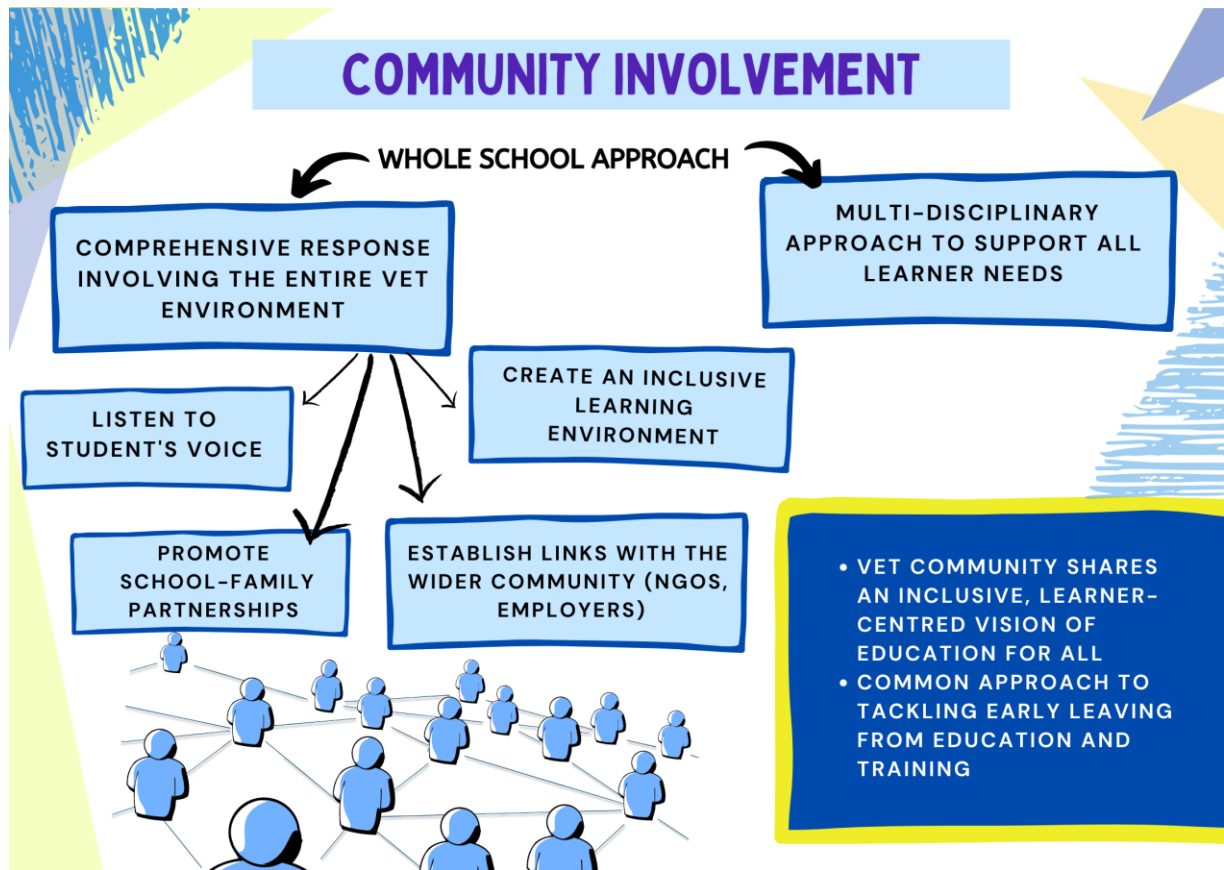

Cooperation with NGOs, VET Providers, and Public Services

Inclusive employment is most successful when companies **do not act alone**. Cooperation with NGOs, VET providers, employment agencies, and public services allows employers to:

- identify suitable candidates;

- receive support with training, counselling, and mediation;

- access guidance on legal, social, and integration aspects;

- solve difficulties that may arise during employment.

Such partnerships reduce risks for employers and create sustainable pathways for vulnerable people to enter and remain in the labour market.

By preparing the company internally and building strong external partnerships, employers lay the foundation for **successful, inclusive, and long-term employment**, benefiting both the organisation and society as a whole.

Chapter 4

Recruitment Strategies for Vulnerable People

Inclusive recruitment requires employers to rethink traditional hiring practices and focus on **potential, motivation, and transferable skills**, rather than formal qualifications alone. Vulnerable people—such as NEETs, refugees, Roma, long-term unemployed, or migrants—often face barriers that prevent them from competing fairly in standard recruitment processes, despite having valuable abilities and a strong willingness to work.

Adapting Job Offers and Requirements

Employers are encouraged to review job descriptions to ensure they are **clear, realistic, and accessible**. Requirements should be limited to what is strictly necessary for the role. Overly complex language, excessive qualification demands, or unnecessary experience criteria may exclude suitable candidates. Tasks and expectations should be described in simple terms, focusing on what the person will actually do at work.

Inclusive Recruitment Channels

To reach vulnerable candidates, employers should diversify recruitment channels beyond traditional online platforms. Effective approaches include cooperation with **NGOs, VET providers, social services, employment agencies, community organisations**, and local initiatives working directly with vulnerable groups. These intermediaries can support candidate preparation and ensure better matching between employer needs and individual profiles.

Simple and Accessible Selection Processes

Recruitment procedures should be transparent and user-friendly. Simplifying application forms, accepting oral applications or assisted CV preparation, and allowing flexibility in documentation help reduce exclusion. Clear communication about each step of the process builds trust and encourages participation.

Skills-Based Recruitment Instead of Qualification-Based Recruitment

Many vulnerable candidates possess practical, informal, or life-acquired skills that are not reflected in diplomas. Employers are encouraged to assess **skills, attitudes, and learning potential**, such as reliability, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, or manual abilities. Trial days, practical tests, or short work-based assessments can be more effective than formal interviews.

Interview Tips for Working with Vulnerable Candidates

During interviews, employers should create a **safe and respectful atmosphere**. Using clear language, avoiding technical jargon, allowing more time for answers, and being aware of cultural or language barriers are essential. Interviews should focus on understanding the candidate's motivation, strengths, and support needs rather than highlighting gaps or weaknesses.

By adopting inclusive recruitment strategies, employers not only widen their talent pool but also contribute to social inclusion, workforce diversity, and long-term organisational sustainability.

Chapter 5

Onboarding and Integration at the Workplace

Successful onboarding is a **critical stage** in ensuring that vulnerable people—such as NEETs, refugees, migrants, or members of marginalized communities—can integrate sustainably into the workplace. A well-structured, supportive onboarding process reduces early drop-out, builds confidence, and increases long-term retention.

5.1 First Days at Work: What Matters Most

The first days at work are decisive for vulnerable employees. Clear orientation, a welcoming atmosphere, and realistic expectations help reduce anxiety and uncertainty. Employers should:

- explain workplace rules, schedules, and roles in **simple and clear language**;

- introduce colleagues and clarify who does what;

- ensure that the employee feels **respected and safe** from the very beginning.

A positive first impression strengthens motivation and trust.

5.2 Assigning a Mentor or Tutor

Assigning a **mentor or workplace tutor** is one of the most effective integration measures. The mentor:

- supports the new employee in understanding tasks and routines;

- answers practical questions without fear of judgment;

- helps mediate cultural or communication misunderstandings.

Mentorship should be based on empathy, patience, and regular informal check-ins.

5.3 Clear Communication of Tasks and Expectations

Vulnerable employees often struggle not with motivation, but with unclear instructions. Employers should:

- give step-by-step explanations;

- use demonstrations rather than only verbal instructions;

- repeat information when needed and check understanding.

Clear communication prevents mistakes, frustration, and loss of confidence.

5.4 Supporting Language and Cultural Adaptation

Language and cultural differences can create barriers if not addressed proactively. Employers can support adaptation by:

- using simple vocabulary and visual aids;

- encouraging colleagues to communicate respectfully and patiently;

- allowing time for adjustment without pressure.

Cultural awareness within the team helps avoid misunderstandings and promotes mutual respect.

© Yellow

5.5 Preventing Early Drop-Out

Early drop-out is often linked to stress, isolation, or lack of support. To prevent this, employers should:

- maintain regular feedback discussions;

- recognize progress, even small achievements;

- cooperate with NGOs or VET providers for additional counselling or mediation.

A supportive onboarding process transforms employment into a **learning and empowerment pathway**, benefiting both the employee and the company.

Key message:

Inclusive onboarding is not an extra burden—it is an investment in people, stability, and sustainable workforce development.
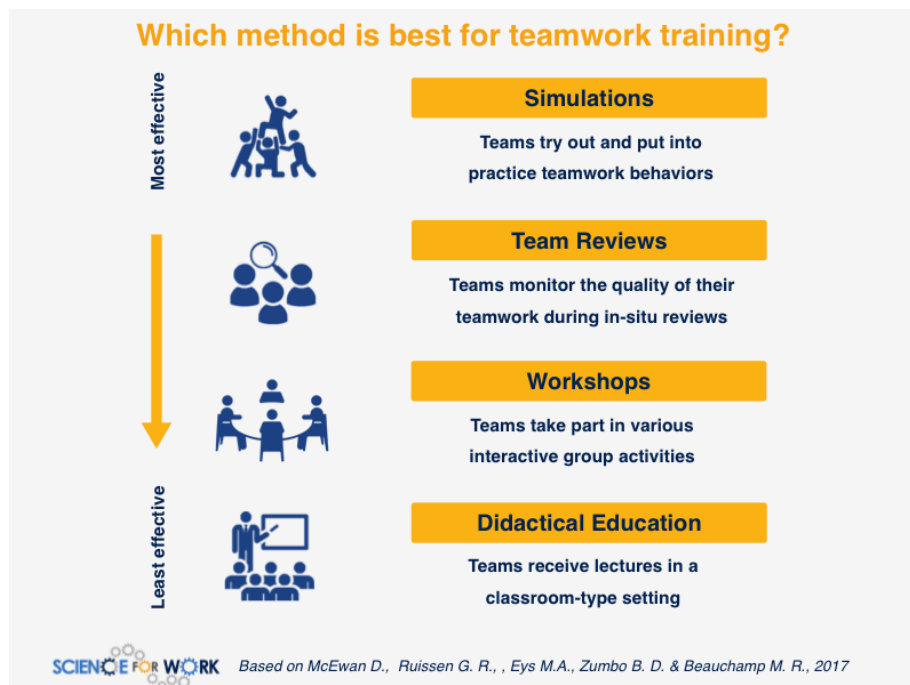
Chapter 6

Training and Skills Development

Training and skills development play a crucial role in ensuring the **long-term integration and retention of vulnerable people** in the labour market. For many NEETs, refugees, Roma people, or long-term unemployed adults, previous learning experiences may have been interrupted, informal, or negatively perceived. Therefore, employers need to adopt **flexible, practical, and supportive training approaches** that respond to real workplace needs.

Importance of on-the-job training

On-the-job training is one of the most effective methods for vulnerable employees, as it allows learning to take place directly in a real working environment. This approach reduces anxiety, builds confidence, and helps participants understand job tasks through observation and practice. Learning by doing is particularly effective for low-qualified workers and those with limited formal education.

Which method is best for teamwork training?

Most effective

Simulations
Teams try out and put into practice teamwork behaviors

Team Reviews
Teams monitor the quality of their teamwork during in-situ reviews

Workshops
Teams take part in various interactive group activities

Least effective

Didactical Education
Teams receive lectures in a classroom-type setting

SCIENCE FOR WORK   Based on McEwan D., Ruissen G. R., , Eys M.A., Zumbo B. D. & Beauchamp M. R., 2017
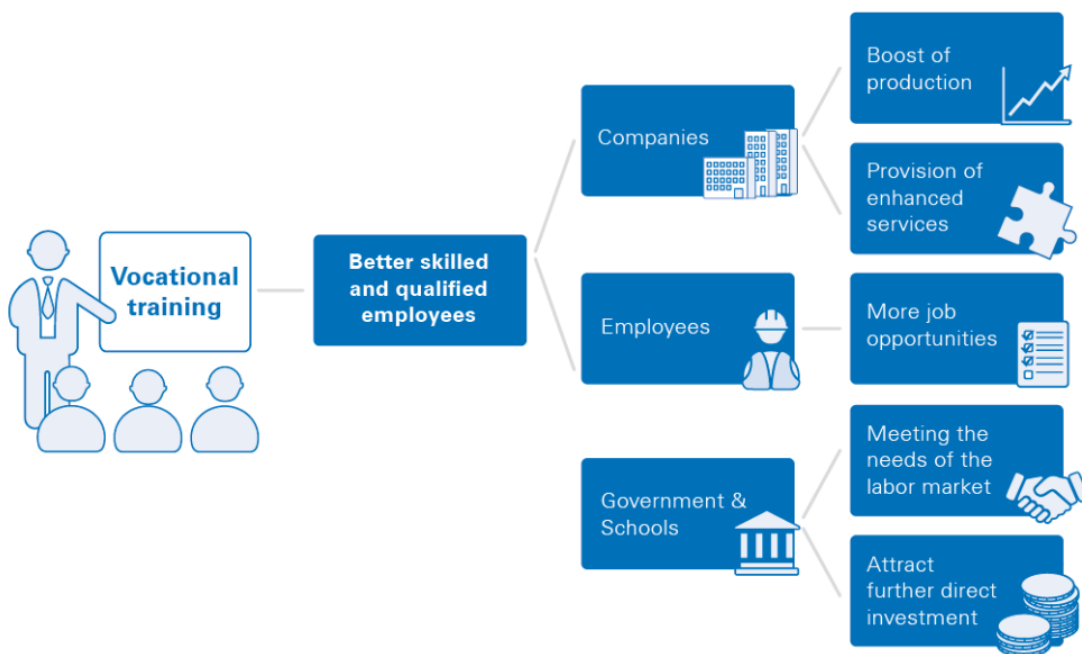
Short, practical learning modules

Training activities should be structured into **short, clear, and practical modules**, focusing on specific tasks or skills. Step-by-step instructions, demonstrations, and repetition help employees gradually acquire competence without feeling overwhelmed. This modular approach allows employers to adapt training pace to individual needs.

Developing transversal skills

In addition to technical skills, vulnerable employees often need support in developing **transversal (soft) skills**, such as communication, teamwork, time management, problem-solving, and responsibility. These skills are essential for workplace integration and are best developed through guided practice, feedback, and teamwork activities.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING: BENEFITS OF QUALIFIED EMPLOYEES

Vocational training → Better skilled and qualified employees

Companies
- Boost of production
- Provision of enhanced services

Employees
- More job opportunities

Government & Schools
- Meeting the needs of the labor market
- Attract further direct investment

TÜVRheinland®
Precisely Right.

Supporting digital skills development

Basic digital competences are increasingly required even in service-sector jobs. Employers can support digital inclusion by offering simple training in using smartphones, online schedules, communication apps, digital forms, or job-related platforms. Digital skills training increases autonomy and improves access to information and opportunities.

Cooperation with training providers

Employers are encouraged to cooperate with **VET providers, NGOs, and adult education organisations** to complement workplace training. External providers can offer tailored courses, counselling, and certification, while employers ensure practical application. Such cooperation strengthens inclusion pathways and ensures continuous skills development beyond initial employment.

By investing in inclusive training and skills development, employers not only enhance productivity but also contribute to **social inclusion, employee loyalty, and sustainable workforce development**, benefiting both the company and society as a whole.

Chapter 7

Retention and Long-Term Employment

Ensuring the **retention and long-term employment** of vulnerable employees is a key element of inclusive labour market integration. Recruitment and onboarding are only the first steps; sustainable employment requires continuous support, mutual trust, and clear development opportunities. Employers play a central role in creating stable conditions that allow vulnerable employees to remain, grow, and contribute effectively to the workplace.

Building trust and motivation

Trust is built through consistency, fairness, and respectful communication. Vulnerable employees often come from backgrounds marked by instability, discrimination, or repeated professional failure. Employers who provide clear rules, predictable schedules, and supportive supervision help restore confidence and motivation. Regular check-ins, open dialogue, and encouragement foster a sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation.

Recognising progress and achievements

Recognition is a powerful retention tool. Acknowledging small achievements—such as improved punctuality, skill acquisition, or positive teamwork—reinforces self-esteem and engagement. Recognition does not need to be financial; verbal appreciation, certificates, or opportunities for increased responsibility can significantly increase job satisfaction and loyalty.

Flexible working arrangements when possible

Flexibility can be essential for vulnerable employees facing health, family, or integration-related challenges. When operationally feasible, flexible working hours, gradual workload increases, or adapted schedules help employees balance personal constraints with professional responsibilities. Such measures reduce stress and prevent premature job loss while maintaining productivity.

Common flexible working arrangements

1 Flextime

2 Part-time position

3 Remote work

4 Compressed workweek
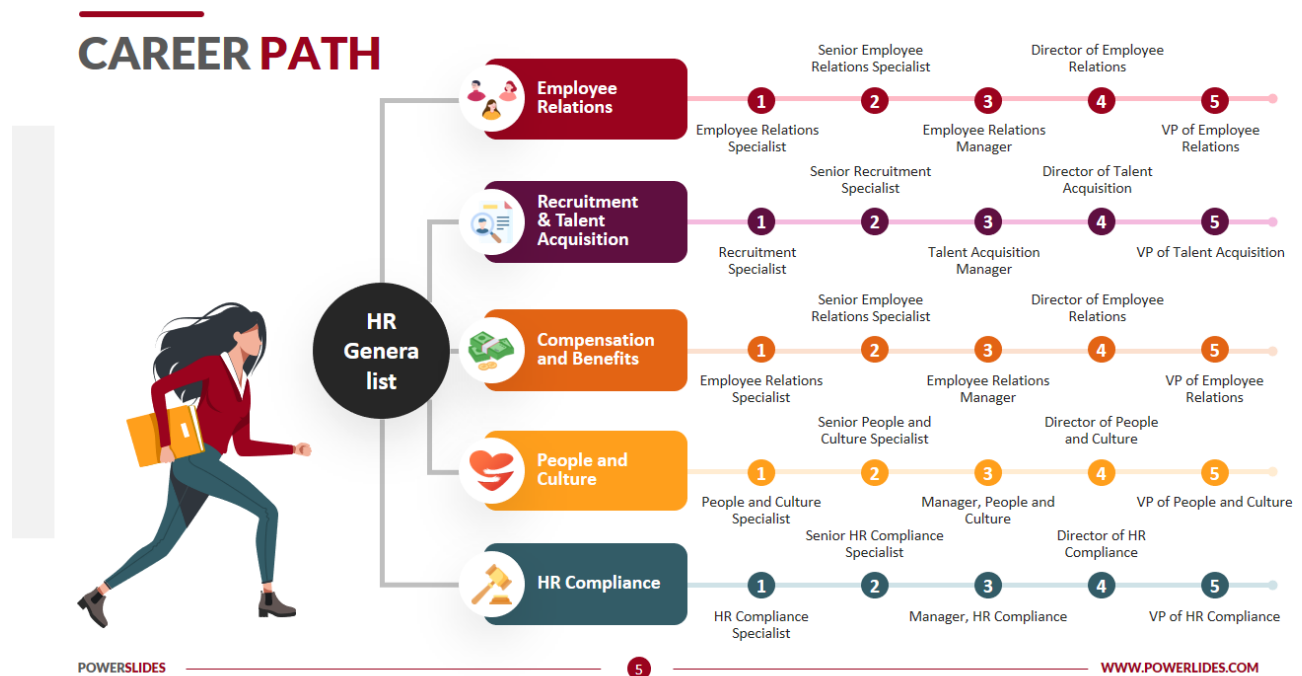
5 Shift work

6 Job-sharing

upwork

Conflict prevention and resolution

Diverse workplaces may face misunderstandings related to culture, communication styles, or expectations. Employers should promote a proactive approach to conflict prevention through clear rules, mediation mechanisms, and designated contact persons (mentors or supervisors). Addressing conflicts early, fairly, and constructively protects both employees and the organisation.

7 TIPS TO
RESOLVE WORKPLACE CONFLICT

Find Common Ground
Highlight shared goals or interests as a basis for constructive dialogue, acknowledging varied paths to the same end.

Brainstorm Solutions
Facilitate a brainstorming session, encouraging non-judgmental idea sharing and collaborative pros/cons discussion.

Investigate The Situation
Engage with stakeholders, identify unmet needs, determine if mediation is needed, and understand both viewpoints to pinpoint conflict origins.

Agree On A Solution
Through negotiation, aim for a resolution that's fair, realistic, and resonates with the previously identified common ground.

Follow Up
Maintain open communication, ensuring adherence to agreements and checking on employee well-being, showcasing organizational commitment.

Document The Incident
Record details like involved parties, conflict nature, resolution, and commitments for clarity and future reference.

Establish Roles
Clearly outline responsibilities to shift from blame to teamwork, ensuring everyone understands their contribution to the resolution.

Wellable

Career development pathways for vulnerable employees

Long-term retention is strengthened when employees see prospects for growth. Employers are encouraged to define **simple career pathways**, such as progression to more complex tasks, new responsibilities, or further training opportunities. Cooperation with VET providers and NGOs can support upskilling and certification, enabling vulnerable employees to build sustainable careers rather than remain in precarious positions.

By investing in retention strategies, employers not only reduce staff turnover and recruitment costs but also contribute to social inclusion, workforce stability, and a more resilient and diverse labour market.

Chapter 8

Legal, Ethical and Practical Aspects

Basic legal considerations when employing refugees and migrants

Employers must ensure compliance with **national labour legislation** and relevant **EU regulations** when hiring refugees and migrants. This includes verifying the legal right to work, respecting residence and work permit conditions, and ensuring that employment contracts clearly define rights and obligations. Transparent contractual arrangements help protect both employer and employee and prevent informal or exploitative practices. Cooperation with public employment services and migration authorities can support employers in navigating administrative procedures efficiently.

Equality, non-discrimination and ethical employment

Inclusive employment is grounded in the principles of **equal opportunities and non-discrimination**, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or social background. Ethical employment requires fair recruitment processes, equal pay for equal work, and equal access to training and career development. Employers should actively prevent discriminatory behaviour and promote a culture based on respect, dignity, and fairness. Ethical practices not only comply with legal standards but also enhance organisational reputation and employee commitment.

Health and safety considerations

Employers have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure a **safe and healthy working environment** for all employees, including vulnerable workers. This involves providing clear information on workplace rules, health and safety procedures, and risk prevention measures, using accessible language and visual aids when

necessary. Special attention should be paid to workers unfamiliar with local regulations or with limited language skills, ensuring proper induction and ongoing supervision.

Working with public institutions and support schemes

Effective inclusion is strengthened through cooperation with **public institutions**, such as employment agencies, social services, and local authorities, as well as with NGOs and training providers. These stakeholders can offer support schemes, wage subsidies, mentoring programmes, language courses, and mediation services. By engaging with existing support mechanisms, employers reduce risks, improve retention, and contribute to sustainable labour market integration of vulnerable people.
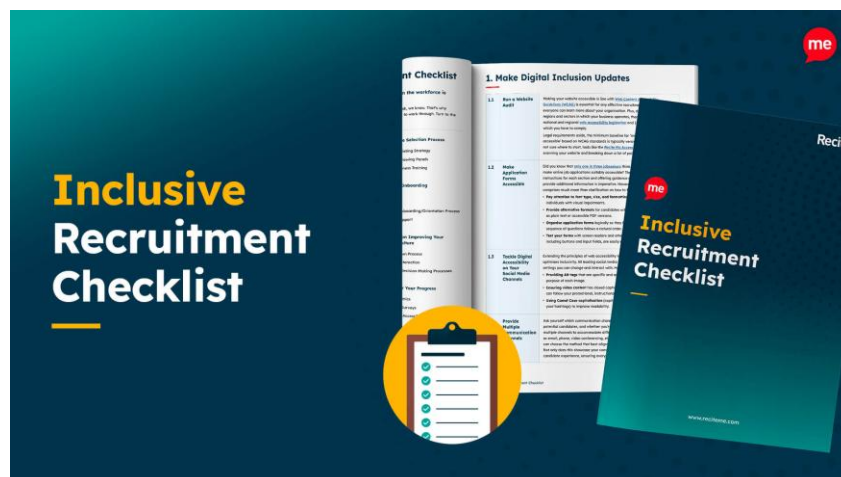
Chapter 9

Practical Tools for Employers

This chapter provides **simple, concrete, and ready-to-use tools** to support employers in implementing inclusive employment practices for vulnerable people and refugees. The tools are designed to be flexible and adaptable to different company sizes and sectors, especially in services.

9.1 Checklist for Inclusive Recruitment

A short checklist can help employers ensure that recruitment processes are fair, accessible, and inclusive:

- ☐ Job offers use **simple and clear language**
- ☐ Requirements focus on **skills and motivation**, not only diplomas
- ☐ No discriminatory criteria related to age, gender, origin, disability, or background
- ☐ Recruitment channels reach vulnerable groups (NGOs, VET providers, community centres)
- ☐ Interview process is transparent and supportive

This checklist helps employers reduce unconscious bias and widen access to job opportunities.

22 Item Onboarding Checklist

✓ Close recruitment items	✓ Group passwords
✓ Archive employee agreement	✓ Payroll
✓ Background check	✓ Benefits
✓ Employee email	✓ Meeting invites
✓ Welcome email	✓ Schedule one-on-ones
✓ HR documents	✓ Company policies
✓ Any other documents	✓ Office tour
✓ Company Handbook	✓ Expectations of role
✓ Desk space or work area	✓ Announce new hire
✓ Equipment	✓ Stakeholder one-on-ones
✓ Individual logins	✓ First Project

Created by *fyi* usefyi.com

9.2 Simple Onboarding Plan Template

A structured onboarding process increases retention and confidence:

Week 1

- Welcome and introduction to the team
- Explanation of basic rules, schedule, and safety procedures
- Assignment of a mentor

First Month

- Step-by-step task learning
- Regular short feedback moments
- Clarification of expectations

A simple onboarding plan supports adaptation and prevents early drop-out.

9.3 Mentor Role Description

The mentor plays a key role in integration:

Main responsibilities:

- Explain daily tasks and routines
- Offer practical support and encouragement
- Act as a communication bridge between employee and management
- Identify early difficulties and propose solutions

Mentoring strengthens trust, learning, and workplace cohesion.

9.4 Examples of Adapted Job Descriptions

Inclusive job descriptions:

- Use **clear tasks instead of complex requirements**
- Emphasise training provided at the workplace
- Avoid unnecessary formal qualifications
- Highlight teamwork and learning opportunities

Example:

Instead of *"Minimum 3 years of experience required"*, use *"Basic skills welcomed – training will be provided"*.

9.5 Useful Contacts and Support Organisations

Employers are encouraged to cooperate with:

- NGOs working with refugees and vulnerable people
- VET providers and training centres
- Public employment services
- Local authorities and social services

These partnerships provide support in recruitment, training, mediation, and funding opportunities.

You should apply if

- You have a good knowledge of JavaScript or TypeScript, and React in particular.
- You want to build an interesting product that delights its users and genuinely serves their needs.
- You know, or are happy to learn Go and use it to contribute to codebases outside your immediate area of expertise.
- You enjoy working in a collaborative, open and creative environment

Right now we're only considering mid to senior level candidates, if you're interested in joining the Geckoboard team but earlier in your career, head to www.geckoboard.com/careers and get in touch. We'll be hiring at different levels throughout the year, so we'd love to hear from you and chat about future jobs!

Conclusion

Using practical tools makes inclusive employment **manageable, effective, and sustainable**. Small adjustments can create significant positive impact for employers, employees, and the wider community.

Chapter 10

Case Studies and Good Practices

This chapter presents practical examples and good practices developed and tested during the project in Romania (Berbești – Vâlcea and Râmnicu Vâlcea), Italy (Molise Region), Spain (Valencia), and Ireland (Athlone). These case studies illustrate how inclusive employment strategies can be applied in different socio-economic contexts and sectors, offering **transferable lessons for employers across Europe**.

10.1 Romania – Berbești (Vâlcea County): NGO-led Integration in a Post-Industrial Area

In **Berbești**, a former mining town facing long-term unemployment, the coordinator NGO **Asociatia Socio-Culturala "Sfantul Ioan Botezatorul" Berbesti** worked with unemployed adults, NEETs, and people with obsolete skills.

Good practices identified:

- individual counselling and confidence-building sessions before job placement;

- basic digital and job-search skills training adapted to low-skilled adults;

- mediation between vulnerable jobseekers and local employers.

Lessons learned:

In areas affected by industrial decline, **personalised support and step-by-step reintegration** are essential. Employers are more open when NGOs act as trusted intermediaries.

10.2 Romania – Râmnicu Vâlcea: Skills Adaptation in the Beauty Services Sector

In **Râmnicu Vâlcea**, the SME **MAKING ART SRL** demonstrated how vulnerable people can be integrated into the **beauty and personal care sector**.

Good practices identified:

- skills-based recruitment focusing on motivation rather than formal qualifications;

- short practical internships combined with mentoring;

- gradual task allocation and continuous feedback.

Lessons learned:

SMEs can successfully integrate NEETs and long-term unemployed people when training is **practical, flexible, and closely linked to real work tasks**.

10.3 Italy – Molise Region: Employer Training and Structured Inclusion

In the **Molise Region**, **CO.GE.M.** coordinated employer training and experience exchanges, working with SMEs and organisations supporting migrants and refugees.

Good practices identified:

- training employers on legal, ethical, and organisational aspects of inclusion;

- cooperation with local institutions (Caritas, Red Cross, training centres);

- structured onboarding plans for vulnerable workers.

Lessons learned:

Employer awareness and preparation are key. **Inclusive employment works best when companies are supported by a local ecosystem** of NGOs and public services.

10.4 Spain – Valencia: Migrant and Refugee Integration through Community Support

In **Valencia**, **Asociación de las mujeres de Europa** focused on migrant women and refugees.

Good practices identified:

- combining employment support with language and cultural orientation;

- empowering beneficiaries through peer support and mentoring;

- strong links with local employers open to diversity.

Lessons learned:

Employment integration is more sustainable when combined with **social inclusion, language support, and community engagement**, especially for migrant women.

10.5 Ireland – Athlone: Workplace Integration in the Hospitality Sector

In **Athlone**, the SME **DANNYS PIZZERIA, RESTAURANT & TAKEAWAY LIMITED** provided practical stages for vulnerable people, including Roma participants.

Good practices identified:

- learning by doing in a real hospitality environment;

- assigning experienced staff as informal mentors;

- fostering a respectful, multicultural team culture.

Lessons learned:

Small hospitality businesses can be powerful drivers of inclusion when they focus on **team cohesion, clear communication, and practical learning**.

10.6 Overall Lessons Learned from the Project

Across all countries, the project highlighted that:

- inclusive employment is **feasible and beneficial** for both employers and vulnerable people;

- cooperation between **NGOs, VET providers, SMEs, and public institutions** is essential;

- focusing on **skills, motivation, and support**, rather than deficits, leads to better outcomes.

These case studies confirm that inclusive practices are **transferable across sectors and regions**, contributing to sustainable employment and social cohesion.

Conclusion

Key messages for employers

Inclusive employment is not an act of charity, but a **strategic and sustainable business choice**. Employers who open their workplaces to vulnerable people—such as NEETs, refugees, Roma communities, long-term unemployed or low-qualified adults—gain access to a motivated workforce, reduce staff shortages, and strengthen team cohesion. Experiences from **Berbești (Vâlcea)**, **Râmnicu Vâlcea**, **Molise**, **Valencia**, and **Athlone** show that with the right support, vulnerable employees can become reliable, loyal, and skilled workers in the service sector.

Encouragement to take action

Employers are encouraged to start with **small, realistic steps**: adapt job requirements, cooperate with NGOs and VET providers, offer mentoring, and focus on skills rather than formal qualifications. The tools, strategies, and examples presented in this guide demonstrate that inclusive employment is achievable in companies of all sizes. By working together with organisations such as VET providers, social NGOs, and training centres, employers can successfully integrate vulnerable people while receiving guidance and support throughout the process.

Inclusion as a long-term investment

Inclusion should be seen as a **long-term investment** in people, communities, and businesses. Companies that embrace diversity are better prepared for labour market changes, social challenges, and future workforce needs. Inclusive practices contribute to economic resilience, social cohesion, and local development. By choosing inclusive employment, employers become active contributors to a fairer society—while building stronger, more adaptable, and more competitive organisations for the future.

Annexes

1. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Vulnerable people** – individuals facing barriers to employment (e.g. NEETs, refugees, Roma people, long-term unemployed).
- **NEETs** – young people *Not in Education, Employment or Training.*
- **Inclusive employment** – employment practices that ensure equal access, fair treatment, and support for diverse workers.
- **Onboarding** – the process of integrating a new employee into the workplace.
- **Mentor/Tutor** – a colleague assigned to support a new employee during adaptation.

2. Links to Useful Platforms and Resources

- European employment and learning opportunities: https://europa.eu
- Public employment services (national level)
- Local NGOs and VET providers supporting vulnerable groups
- Digital tools for CV creation and job search (e.g. Europass CV platform)

3. Contact Details of Partner Organisations

- **Romania (Berbești, Vâlcea)** – Asociatia Socio-Culturala „Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul"
- **Romania (Râmnicu Vâlcea)** – MAKING ART SRL
- **Italy (Molise Region)** – CO.GE.M.
- **Spain (Valencia)** – Asociación de las Mujeres de Europa
- **Ireland (Athlone)** – DANNYS PIZZERIA, Restaurant & Takeaway Limited

These organisations can provide **guidance, mediation, training support, and practical assistance** for employers interested in inclusive recruitment and workforce integration.