

## **R168 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983**

RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT (DISABLED PERSONS)

Recommendation: R168

Place: Geneva

Session of the Conference: 69

Date of adoption=20:06:1983

Subject classification: Disabled Persons

Subject: **Employment policy and Promotion**

Display the document in: [French](#) [Spanish](#)

Status: Up-to-date instrument

The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation,

Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office and having met in its Sixty-ninth Session on 1 June 1983, and

Noting the existing international standards contained in the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955, and

Noting that since the adoption of the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955, significant developments have occurred in the understanding of rehabilitation needs, the scope and organisation of rehabilitation services, and the law and practice of many Members on the questions covered by that Recommendation, and

Considering that the year 1981 was declared by the United Nations General Assembly the International Year of Disabled Persons, with the theme full participation and equality and that a comprehensive World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons is to provide effective measures at the international and national levels for the realisation of the goals of full participation of disabled persons in social life and development, and of equality, and

Considering that these developments have made it appropriate to adopt new international standards on the subject which take account, in particular, of the need to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment to all categories of disabled persons, in both rural and urban areas, for employment and integration into the community, and

Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to vocational rehabilitation which is the fourth item on the agenda of the session, and

Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of a Recommendation supplementing the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983, and the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955,

adopts this twentieth day of June of the year one thousand nine hundred and eighty-three, the following Recommendation, which may be cited as the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983.

## I. Definitions and Scope

1. In applying this Recommendation, as well as the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955, Members should consider the term ***disabled person*** as meaning an individual whose prospects of securing, retaining and advancing in suitable employment are substantially reduced as a result of a duly recognised physical or mental impairment.
2. In applying this Recommendation, as well as the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955, Members should consider the purpose of vocational rehabilitation, as defined in the latter Recommendation, as being to enable a disabled person to secure, retain and advance in suitable employment and thereby to further such person's integration or reintegration into society.
3. The provisions of this Recommendation should be applied by Members through measures which are appropriate to national conditions and consistent with national practice.
4. Vocational rehabilitation measures should be made available to all categories of disabled persons.
5. In planning and providing services for the vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons, existing vocational guidance, vocational training, placement, employment and related services for workers generally should, wherever possible, be used with any necessary adaptations.
6. Vocational rehabilitation should be started as early as possible. For this purpose, health-care systems and other bodies responsible for medical and social rehabilitation should co-operate regularly with those responsible for vocational rehabilitation.

## II. Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Opportunities

7. Disabled persons should enjoy equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of access to, retention of and advancement in employment which, wherever possible, corresponds to their own choice and takes account of their individual suitability for such employment.
8. In providing vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance to disabled persons, the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers should be respected.

9. Special positive measures aimed at effective equality of opportunity and treatment between disabled workers and other workers should not be regarded as discriminating against other workers.
10. Measures should be taken to promote employment opportunities for disabled persons which conform to the employment and salary standards applicable to workers generally.
11. Such measures, in addition to those enumerated in Part VII of the Vocational Rehabilitation (Disabled) Recommendation, 1955, should include:
- (a) appropriate measures to create job opportunities on the open labour market, including financial incentives to employers to encourage them to provide training and subsequent employment for disabled persons, as well as to make reasonable adaptations to workplaces, job design, tools, machinery and work organisation to facilitate such training and employment;
  - (b) appropriate government support for the establishment of various types of sheltered employment for disabled persons for whom access to open employment is not practicable;
  - (c) encouragement of co-operation between sheltered and production workshops on organisation and management questions so as to improve the employment situation of their disabled workers and, wherever possible, to help prepare them for employment under normal conditions;
  - (d) appropriate government support to vocational training, vocational guidance, sheltered employment and placement services for disabled persons run by non-governmental organisations;
  - (e) encouragement of the establishment and development of co-operatives by and for disabled persons and, if appropriate, open to workers generally;
  - (f) appropriate government support for the establishment and development of small-scale industry, co-operative and other types of production workshops by and for disabled persons (and, if appropriate, open to workers generally), provided such workshops meet defined minimum standards;
  - (g) elimination, by stages if necessary, of physical, communication and architectural barriers and obstacles affecting transport and access to and free movement in premises for the training and employment of disabled persons; appropriate standards should be taken into account for new public buildings and facilities;

(h) wherever possible and appropriate, facilitation of adequate means of transport to and from the places of rehabilitation and work according to the needs of disabled persons;

(i) encouragement of the dissemination of information on examples of actual and successful instances of the integration of disabled persons in employment; (j) exemption from the levy of internal taxes or other internal charges of any kind, imposed at the time of importation or subsequently on specified articles, training materials and equipment required for rehabilitation centres, workshops, employers and disabled persons, and on specified aids and devices required to assist disabled persons in securing and retaining employment;

(k) provision of part-time employment and other job arrangements, in accordance with the capabilities of the individual disabled person for whom full-time employment is not immediately, and may not ever be, practicable;

(l) research and the possible application of its results to various types of disability in order to further the participation of disabled persons in ordinary working life;

(m) appropriate government support to eliminate the potential for exploitation within the framework of vocational training and sheltered employment and to facilitate transition to the open labour market.

12. In devising programmes for the integration or reintegration of disabled persons into working life and society, all forms of training should be taken into consideration; these should include, where necessary and appropriate, vocational preparation and training, modular training, training in activities of daily living, in literacy and in other areas relevant to vocational rehabilitation.

13. To ensure the integration or reintegration of disabled persons into ordinary working life, and thereby into society, the need for special support measures should also be taken into consideration, including the provision of aids, devices and ongoing personal services to enable disabled persons to secure, retain and advance in suitable employment.

14. Vocational rehabilitation measures for disabled persons should be followed up in order to assess the results of these measures.

### III. Community Participation

15. Vocational rehabilitation services in both urban and rural areas and in remote communities should be organised and operated with the fullest possible community participation, in particular with that of the representatives of employers', workers' and disabled persons' organisations.

16. Community participation in the organisation of vocational rehabilitation services for disabled persons should be facilitated by carefully planned public information measures with the aims of:

- (a) informing disabled persons, and if necessary their families, about their rights and opportunities in the employment field; and
- (b) overcoming prejudice, misinformation and attitudes unfavourable to the employment of disabled persons and their integration or reintegration into society.

17. Community leaders and groups, including disabled persons themselves and their organisations, should co-operate with health, social welfare, education, labour and other relevant government authorities in identifying the needs of disabled persons in the community and in ensuring that, wherever possible, disabled persons are included in activities and services available generally.

18. Vocational rehabilitation and employment services for disabled persons should be integrated into the mainstream of community development and where appropriate receive financial, material and technical support.

19. Official recognition should be given to voluntary organisations which have a particularly good record of providing vocational rehabilitation services and enabling disabled persons to be integrated or reintegrated into the worklife of the community.

#### IV. Vocational Rehabilitation in Rural Areas

20. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that vocational rehabilitation services are provided for disabled persons in rural areas and in remote communities at the same level and on the same terms as those provided for urban areas. The development of such services should be an integral part of general rural development policies.

21. To this end, measures should be taken, where appropriate, to:

- (a) designate existing rural vocational rehabilitation services or, if these do not exist, vocational rehabilitation services in urban areas as focal points to train rehabilitation staff for rural areas;
- (b) establish mobile vocational rehabilitation units to serve disabled persons in rural areas and to act as centres for the dissemination of information on rural training and employment opportunities for disabled persons;
- (c) train rural development and community development workers in vocational rehabilitation

techniques;

(d) provide loans, grants or tools and materials to help disabled persons in rural communities to establish and manage co-operatives or to work on their own account in cottage industry or in agricultural, craft or other activities; (e) incorporate assistance to disabled persons into existing or planned general rural development activities;

(f) facilitate disabled persons' access to housing within reasonable reach of the workplace.

## V. Training of Staff

22. In addition to professionally trained rehabilitation counsellors and specialists, all other persons who are involved in the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons and the development of employment opportunities should be given training or orientation in rehabilitation issues.

23. Persons engaged in vocational guidance, vocational training and placement of workers generally should have an adequate knowledge of disabilities and their limiting effects, as well as a knowledge of the support services available to facilitate a disabled person's integration into active economic and social life. Opportunities should be provided for such persons to update their knowledge and extend their experience in these fields.

24. The training, qualifications and remuneration of staff engaged in the vocational rehabilitation and training of disabled persons should be comparable to those of persons engaged in general vocational training who have similar duties and responsibilities; career opportunities should be comparable for both groups of specialists and transfers of staff between vocational rehabilitation and general vocational training should be encouraged.

25. Staff of vocational rehabilitation, sheltered and production workshops should receive, as part of their general training and as appropriate, training in workshop management as well as in production and marketing techniques.

26. Wherever sufficient numbers of fully trained rehabilitation staff are not available, measures should be considered for recruiting and training vocational rehabilitation aides and auxiliaries. The use of such aides and auxiliaries should not be resorted to as a permanent substitute for fully trained staff. Wherever possible, provision should be made for further training of such personnel in order to integrate them fully into the trained staff.

27. Where appropriate, the establishment of regional and subregional vocational rehabilitation staff training centres should be encouraged.

28. Staff engaged in vocational guidance, vocational training, placement and employment

support of disabled persons should have appropriate training and experience to recognise the motivational problems and difficulties that disabled persons may experience and, within their competence, deal with the resulting needs.

29. Where appropriate, measures should be taken to encourage disabled persons to undergo training as vocational rehabilitation personnel and to facilitate their entry into employment in the rehabilitation field.

30. Disabled persons and their organisations should be consulted in the development, provision and evaluation of training programmes for vocational rehabilitation staff.

## VI. The Contribution of Employers' and Workers' Organisations to the Development of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

31. Employers' and workers' organisations should adopt a policy for the promotion of training and suitable employment of disabled persons on an equal footing with other workers.

32. Employers' and workers' organisations, together with disabled persons and their organisations, should be able to contribute to the formulation of policies concerning the organisation and development of vocational rehabilitation services, as well as to carry out research and propose legislation in this field.

33. Wherever possible and appropriate, representatives of employers', workers' and disabled persons' organisations should be included in the membership of the boards and committees of vocational rehabilitation and training centres used by disabled persons, which make decisions on policy and technical matters, with a view to ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation programmes correspond to the requirements of the various economic sectors.

34. Wherever possible and appropriate, employers and workers' representatives in the undertaking should co-operate with appropriate specialists in considering the possibilities for vocational rehabilitation and job reallocation of disabled persons employed by that undertaking and for giving employment to other disabled persons.

35. Wherever possible and appropriate, undertakings should be encouraged to establish or maintain their own vocational rehabilitation services, including various types of sheltered employment, in close co-operation with community-based and other rehabilitation services.

36. Wherever possible and appropriate, employers' organisations should take steps to:

(a) advise their members on vocational rehabilitation services which could be made available to disabled workers;

- (b) co-operate with bodies and institutions which promote the reintegration of disabled persons into active working life by providing, for instance, information on working conditions and job requirements which disabled persons have to meet;
- (c) advise their members on adjustments which could be made for disabled workers to the essential duties or requirements of suitable jobs;
- (d) advise their members to consider the impact that reorganising production methods might have, so that disabled persons are not inadvertently displaced.

37. Wherever possible and appropriate, workers' organisations should take steps to:

- (a) promote the participation of disabled workers in discussions at the shop-floor level and in works councils or any other body representing the workers;
- (b) propose guidelines for the vocational rehabilitation and protection of workers who become disabled through sickness or accident, whether work-related or not, and have such guidelines included in collective agreements, regulations, arbitration awards or other appropriate instruments;
- (c) offer advice on shop-floor arrangements affecting disabled workers, including job adaption, special work organisation, trial training and employment and the fixing of work norms;
- (d) raise the problems of vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons at trade union meetings and inform their members, through publications and seminars, of the problems of and possibilities for the vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons.

## VII. The Contribution of Disabled Persons and Their Organisations to the Development of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

38. In addition to the participation of disabled persons, their representatives and organisations in rehabilitation activities referred to in Paragraphs 15, 17, 30, 32 and 33 of this Recommendation, measures to involve disabled persons and their organisations in the development of vocational rehabilitation services should include:

- (a) encouragement of disabled persons and their organisations to participate in the development of community activities aimed at vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons so as to further their employment and their integration or reintegration into society;
- (b) appropriate government support to promote the development of organisations of and for



disabled persons and their involvement in vocational rehabilitation and employment services, including support for the provision of training programmes in self-advocacy for disabled persons;

(c) appropriate government support to these organisations to undertake public education programmes which project a positive image of the abilities of disabled persons.

## VIII. Vocational Rehabilitation Under Social Security Schemes

39. In applying the provisions of this Recommendation, Members should also be guided by the provisions of Article 35 of the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952, of Article 26 of the Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964, and of Article 13 of the Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967, in so far as they are not bound by obligations arising out of ratification of these instruments.

40. Wherever possible and appropriate, social security schemes should provide, or contribute to the organisation, development and financing of training, placement and employment (including sheltered employment) programmes and vocational rehabilitation services for disabled persons, including rehabilitation counselling.

41. These schemes should also provide incentives to disabled persons to seek employment and measures to facilitate a gradual transition into the open labour market.

## IX. Co-Ordination

42. Measures should be taken to ensure, as far as practicable, that policies and programmes concerning vocational rehabilitation are co-ordinated with policies and programmes of social and economic development (including scientific research and advanced technology) affecting labour administration, general employment policy and promotion, vocational training, social integration, social security, cooperatives, rural development, small-scale industry and crafts, safety and health at work, adaptation of methods and organisation of work to the needs of the individual and the improvement of working conditions.

### **Cross references**

[Conventions: C159 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment \(Disabled Persons\) Convention, 1983](#)

[Recommendations: R099 Vocational Rehabilitation \(Disabled\) Recommendation, 1955](#)

[Conventions: C102 Social Security \(Minimum Standards\) Convention, 1952](#)

[Conventions: C121 Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964](#)

[Conventions: C128 Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967](#)

[ILO](#)  
[Home](#)

[NORMES](#)  
[home](#)

[ILOLEX](#)  
[home](#)

[Universal](#)  
[Query](#)

[NATLEX](#)

**For further information, please contact the International Labour Standards  
Department (NORMES)  
by email: [infonorm@ilo.org](mailto:infonorm@ilo.org)**

Copyright © 2005 International Labour Organization (ILO)

[Disclaimer](#)

[webinfo@ilo.org](mailto:webinfo@ilo.org)