



  
**signs for handshakes**



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# INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS: EMPLOYING A DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING PERSON

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## INTRODUCTION

*In the past years, Racio has been a partner in important national and international projects, with which we have helped Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons and other persons with disabilities to improve the quality of their life and work, and experience a better transition to the labour market.*

*Participation in the project EU Erasmus+ Signs for Handshakes (S4H in short) was a great challenge for our company, but in cooperation with budding young Deaf persons, we managed to complete it successfully.*

*In the project we tried to:*

- *create and maintain solid relationships with representatives of employers and the Deaf community*
- *provide employers with practical advice regarding the employment of young Deaf persons*
- *improve employment opportunities of young Deaf people on the labour market.*
- *better understand how to introduce effective methods of alternative communication in the workplace*
- *improve the use of sign languages in the workplace (elementary everyday signs)*
- *acquaint employees with the possibilities of employing young Deaf persons.*

*With our knowledge, extensive experience in working with Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons and with the help of young Deaf individuals, we have developed communication tools that help employers and young Deaf jobseekers to communicate better in the work environment.*

*We divided communication tools into:*

- *ICEBREAKERS – VIDEO DICTIONARY OF THE MOST COMMON EVERYDAY EXPRESSIONS IN SIGN LANGUAGE IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT*
- *TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH DEAF PERSONS*
- *VIDEO STORIES OF EMPLOYED DEAF ROLE MODELS*
- *VIDEO STORIES OF YOUNG DEAF STUDENTS*
- *VIDEO PROFILES OF COMPANIES THAT EMPLOY DEAF PERSONS*
- *E-BROCHURE WITH AN OVERVIEW OF COMPANIES EMPLOYING DEAF PERSONS AND STORIES OF EMPLOYED DEAF PERSONS*
- *E-BROCHURE FOR EMPLOYERS WITH IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYMENT.*

*Within the project we carried out five motivational and informational workshops for employers in different regions of Slovenia.*

*In this material you will find important information that will help with the process of decision making and employing a Deaf or hard-of-hearing person.*

You can find all the information about the project by visiting the project website [www.signsforhandshakes.com](http://www.signsforhandshakes.com) and the project's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8LtSQ75K1GhceZC8OtbZTg/featured>

## DEAFNESS AND HARD OF HEARING

Being deaf and hard of hearing are invisible disabilities. People usually don't notice them until we start to communicate with a Deaf or hard-of-hearing person. A Deaf person does not hear sounds from the environment, while a hard-of-hearing person can hear partially, depending on the level and type of hearing impairment. Deafness and being hard of hearing are not just physical deficiencies, but also include the psychological lack of hearing experience, which can have many consequences. These negative consequences are reflected in the life of the affected people and can lead to social exclusion. Due to hearing impairment, Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons have major difficulties in communicating with the environment in which they live, educate themselves, create, work or spend their leisure time. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined deafness as one of the most severe disabilities.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons can be divided into four groups:

- a) *Prelingually deaf persons* are deaf persons without psychosocial experience of the world of sounds, who lost their hearing soon after birth or by their third year of life. They have no auditive or linguistic perception, so their main perception channel is sight.
- b) *Nearly hard-of-hearing persons*; this group includes persons who have some useful remains of hearing for a partial or a more comprehensive experience of the world of sounds and the voice code.
- c) *Postlingually deaf persons* are persons whose hearing loss occurred later in life and who spontaneously, by listening, acquired sound and language communication skills before losing their hearing. They need to learn how to read a voice message from a person's lips.
- d) *Postlingually hard-of-hearing persons* – these persons have a hearing impairment of different levels which occurred after having learned sound and language communication.

## TIPS FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION

### PEOPLE WITH HEARING DEFICIENCY

People with hearing deficiency replace their hearing function by visual information and the placement of an induction coil, which improves the reception of sound. It is also possible to install infrared sound amplifiers which inhibit the intrusion of sounds from one area into another. The right to accessibility is governed by the Act on the Use of Slovene Sign Language, the general provisions of which determine the right of the Deaf to use the Slovene Sign Language and the right of the Deaf to being informed by means of adapted technologies and the scope and manner of enforcing the right to a sign language interpreter for equal inclusion of the Deaf in life and work environment.

Sign language of the Deaf is based on the use of hands, facial expressions, eyes, lips and body movements. For the Deaf this is a language of communication. It is used in procedures involving government bodies, local authorities and public services, as well as in all other life situations where deafness is an obstacle to the meeting of human needs.

When employing Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, their basic needs should be recognised. If we want to provide them with equal treatment and the feeling of acceptance in the work environment, we need to enable their cooperation, and to do so, we need to pay attention to the following:

- ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN THE VISUAL FORM
- USE OF DEVICES AND TECHNOLOGY FOR MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
- OPTIMUM ILLUMINATION OF PREMISES FOR EASIER LIP READING
- USING SHORT AND SIMPLE MESSAGES IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
- POSSIBILITY OF INVOLVING A SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER IN COMMUNICATION

#### **When working in groups, e.g. at meetings and training sessions:**

- FORM SMALL GROUPS
- MEETING AT A ROUND TABLE ENABLES LIP READING
- ENSURE A QUIET ROOM WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS
- THE SPEAKER IS SITUATED IN A SPOT THAT IS VISIBLE TO THE DEAF PERSON (speaker does not hide their mouth, does not move around the room etc.)
- ONE PERSON SPEAKING AT A TIME
- ENSURE PROPER ILLUMINATION (the speaker should not move towards a window or a background that is too light)

- SIMULTANEOUS TYPING OF THE TEXT SPOKEN DURING THE MEETING (for a Deaf person this makes it easier to follow the discussion)
- WRITTEN MATERIALS PREPARED IN ADVANCE CAN BE OF HELP
- RECORD MEETINGS SO THE VIDEOS CAN BE VIEWED AGAIN
- THE SPEAKER SHOULD CONSTANTLY CHECK IF THE DEAF PERSON UNDERSTANDS THE CONVERSATION
- IN CASE OF LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, THE TEXT SHOULD BE EXPLAINED BY MEANS OF OTHER WORDS OR USING NON-VERBAL APPROACHES

**There are several different aids available for easier telephone communication:**

- SMS MESSAGES
- WIRED AND WIRELESS TELEPHONE DEVICES FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
- TELEPHONE SOUND AMPLIFIERS
- PORTABLE TELEPHONE SOUND AMPLIFIER
- MICROPHONE WITH A SOUND AMPLIFIER FOR HEADPHONES
- WIRELESS COMMUNICATOR WITH A HEARING AID
- MOBILTEL UMTS SERVICES (video session)

**Does an employer have to ensure a Slovenian Sign Language interpreter?**

According to the Act on the Use of Slovene Sign Language, a Deaf person has the right to use an interpreter for communication. An employer must enable a Deaf person to have an interpreter available during all important events. Usually, Deaf persons ensure their own interpreter and use personal vouchers to pay for the services. During vocational rehabilitation or training, an interpreter can be provided by the concessionaire or employer and the service is paid for by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act defines vocational rehabilitation as the right of a person with disabilities. It is a collection of services used to improve the employability of a person with disabilities by training him or her for a certain type of work, help him or her become employed, keep the job or get promoted, or to change his or her professional career. Vocational rehabilitation is a right of those persons with disabilities that are not entitled to the same rehabilitation services according to other regulations, and that meet the legally defined criteria. A person with disabilities that uses vocational rehabilitation services is treated as an equal member in the process of vocational rehabilitation in order to enable loyalty, participation and co-responsibility in the rehabilitation process. Vocational rehabilitation is carried out as a public service.

### Referral to vocational rehabilitation services

Persons with disabilities are referred to vocational rehabilitation by the Employment Service of Slovenia and the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute, or they can also be referred by employers (in this case the services are paid for by the employer).

Depending on the individual's needs, persons with disabilities can use various **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES** in the process of vocational rehabilitation:

- Counselling, encouraging and motivating the person with disabilities to take an active role
- Preparation of an opinion about the level of work capabilities, skills, work habits and professional interests
- Help with accepting one's disability and informing on the possibilities of participation in training and work
- Help with selecting appropriate career goals
- Developing social skills and competencies
- Help with seeking appropriate work or employment
- Analysis of a specific workplace and work environment for a person with disabilities
- Creating a plan for the adaptation of the disabled person's workplace and work environment
- Creating a plan for the necessary equipment and resources for work
- Training at the actual workplace or in the selected profession
- Follow-up and professional help with training and education
- Follow-up of the person with disabilities in the workplace after becoming employed
- Ongoing evaluation of the success of the rehabilitation process
- Evaluation of achievement of work results by the disabled persons
- Performing other vocational rehabilitation services

After vocational rehabilitation is completed, an **employment opportunities assessment** is made.

Based on this assessment, the Employment Service of Slovenia issues an appropriate decision on supported or sheltered employment or unemployability.

**More information at <http://www.ess.gov.si> and at every office or regional unit of the Employment Service of Slovenia.**

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Supported employment is a concept of employing persons with disabilities in an integrated work environment with regular employers. It is based on ensuring and implementation of professional and technical support for the person with disabilities, work environment and employer. It is governed by the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act. Based on the employment opportunities assessment, the Employment Service of Slovenia issues a decision on employability in supported employment.

It is a particularly appropriate form of employment for Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons.

In order to have the right to supported employment **individual needs must be identified**. Support comprises informing, counselling and training, personal assistance, follow-up at work, development of personal methods of work and work performance assessment of the person with disabilities and technical support with the adaptation of the workplace. The employer and the disabled person's work environment receive professional support by means of informing and counselling.

**The need for supported employment is identified by** the Employment Service of Slovenia in the procedure of the disabled person's employability assessment.

**Individual support plan is a document** prepared by the provider of vocational rehabilitation services.

**Conditions for acquiring the right to the payment of cost of support services (Article 73 of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act):** disability status, decision on employability in supported employment, completed vocational rehabilitation, completed individual plan of support for the person with disabilities and the employer, employment contract.

**The right to reimbursement of costs in supported employment** is enforced by the employer at the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, based on an application for the enforcement of the right to the reimbursement of cost of supported employment, which must be submitted on the prescribed form, together with the necessary annexes.

**The payment of costs of services in supported employment is carried out by the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia** on a monthly basis to the account of the employer, in accordance with the price list of the services in the amount of up to 30 hours per month in the time period that depends on the period indicated in the individual support plan, but not exceeding the duration of the employment of the person with disabilities. Deaf persons can be granted up to 30 hours of support from a sign language interpreter per month.

## PROVIDERS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

### Public institute:

- Public institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Rehabilitation, Linhartova 51, 1000 Ljubljana

### Concessionaires:

- Center kontura Ljubljana, d. o. o., Linhartova 51, 1000 Ljubljana
- CRI Celje, d. o. o., Oblakova 34, 3000 Celje
- Integra inštitut, Institute for the development of human potentials, Prešernova 8, 3320 Velenje
- IP Posočje, d. o. o., Poljubinj 89 c, 5220 Tolmin
- Ozara, d. o. o., Ulica Heroja Šaranoviča 27, 2000 Maribor
- Zavod Papilot – Institute for encouragement and development of quality of life, Zasavska cesta 42, 1231 Ljubljana – Črnuče
- Racio, Human capital development company, d. o. o., Kersnikova ulica 17a, 3000 Celje
- SIJ ZIP CENTER, d.o.o., Koroška cesta 14, 2390 Ravne na Koroškem
- ŠENTPRIMA – Institute for rehabilitation and education, Železna cesta 14, 1000 Ljubljana
- Zavod Jelša – Centre for education, training and rehabilitation, Cesta železarjev 8, 4270 Jesenice
- Zavod Ruj – Centre for education, training and rehabilitation, Obrtniška ulica 17, 3331 Nazarje
- Zavod Vitis – Centre for education, training and rehabilitation, Obrtniška ulica 11, 2250 Ptuj
- Želva Ljubljana, d. o. o., Samova ulica 9, 1000 Ljubljana

The list of providers of vocational rehabilitation is published online on <http://www.mddsz.gov.si>.



## INCENTIVES FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

In case of employment of a deaf or hard-of-hearing person or other persons with disabilities, one needs to know where to acquire financial resources and in which cases we are exempt from certain charges. Below are the opportunities offered by:

- PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP, DEVELOPMENT, DISABILITY AND MAINTENANCE FUND OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
- EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OF SLOVENIA
- TAX RELIEFS
- EUROPEAN CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

### PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP, DEVELOPMENT, DISABILITY AND MAINTENANCE FUND OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

The measures taken by the Fund are legally prescribed and can be used by employers as they wish.

In the Republic of Slovenia we have a quota system. It is determined by the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act, which has been in force since January 2006 and defines the obligation of employers that employ at least 20 employees to employ a certain percentage of persons with disabilities. The percentage of the obligatory share of persons with disabilities that need to be employed is determined by the Decree Establishing the Employment Quota for Persons with Disabilities and is between 2% and 6%, depending on the type of the main field of activity that the company is registered for.

#### 1. The entity liable for fulfilling the quota can choose between:

- a) fulfilling the quota by employing persons with disabilities
- b) disability quota replacement
- c) paying a contribution for promotion of employment of persons with disabilities

#### 2. Financial incentives for employment of persons with disabilities

- a) reward for exceeding the quota
- b) exemption from payment of contributions for pension and disability insurance

The following employers are entitled to the above two incentives:

- those with a minimum of 20 employees that exceed the quota
- those with fewer than 20 employees who employ persons with disabilities
- self-employed persons with disabilities

If disability is a consequence of a work injury or a professional illness that occurred at the same employer, the employer is not entitled to a reward for exceeding the quota for such a person with disabilities. However, they can include this person in the quota. Direct users of the national budget are not entitled to a reward for exceeding the quota.

#### 3. Other financial incentives

- a) payment of costs involved in adaptation of the workplace and work resources

- b) payment of costs in supported employment
- c) salary subsidies for persons with disabilities (in supported employment, sheltered employment or in a disability company)

Persons with disabilities who do not achieve the expected work results at the relevant workplaces due to their disability are entitled to a salary subsidy. In case of supported employment the subsidy is 10, 20 or 30 per cent of the minimum wage. In disability companies, in case of sheltered employment of the person with disability (at an employment centre or at a sheltered workplace within a disability company) the subsidy is 40, 50 or 70 per cent of the minimum wage.

The tool for calculating the quota and other information on the procedures and current calls for proposals can be found on the website of the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia <http://www.jpi-sklad.si>.

## **TAX RELIEFS FOR EMPLOYERS**

### **Tax reliefs for employing persons with disabilities**

In compliance with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act (ZZRZI), the liable entity (legal entity or a private entity), employing a person with disabilities, can enforce the reduction of tax base in the amount of 50% of this person's salary, while a liable entity employing a disabled person with a 100% physical impairment or a deaf person receives a reduction of tax base in the amount of 70% of the person's salary.

A liable entity that exceeds the prescribed quota of disability employment, provided that the disability is not a consequence of work injury or a professional illness caused by the same employer, can enforce the reduction of tax base in the amount of 70% of the person's salary, according to the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act. This tax relief is not compatible with the abovementioned relief – if the liable person employs a deaf disabled person who is also the one exceeding the quota, the employer can only enforce one relief in the amount of 70% of the gross salary of the employee.

A liable person can reduce the tax base by no more than the tax base of the current tax period. An unused share of the relief may not be transferred to the next tax period.

The relief is not time-limited, so the employer can enforce it as long as they employ the person with disability. The basis for the relief is the disabled person's gross salary, not including the employer's contributions.

For legal entities, this relief is governed by Article 56 of the Corporate Income Tax Act (ZDDPO-2) and for private entities it is governed by Article 62 of the Personal Income Tax Act (Zdoh-2).

### **Private entrepreneur with a disability**

A liable person who is a person with disabilities as per Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons Act and who does not employ workers, can enforce the reduction of tax base by 30% of the average monthly salary in Slovenia, while a disabled person with a 100% physical impairment or a deaf person can receive a reduction in the amount of 60% of the average monthly salary in Slovenia.

The relief is not time-limited and can be enforced for each month of self-employment. This tax relief is prescribed by Article 63 of the Personal Income Tax Act (Zdoh-2).

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OF SLOVENIA

The Employment Service of Slovenia encourages employment of various vulnerable groups by means of active employment policy programmes. Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons can participate in all these programmes, as well as other persons with disabilities.

**The active employment policy measures currently in place are:**

Title of activity:	Manner of selection	Costs reimbursed to the employer for involving a person with disabilities
<a href="#">Javna dela 2018 / Public Works 2018</a>	Public call for proposals	Co-financing of costs of employment of people with long-term unemployment
<a href="#">Zaposli.me 2017/2019 /Employ.me 2017/2019</a>	Public call for proposals	Employment subsidy in the amount of 5,000 to 7,000 EUR, for at least 12-month employment of unemployed persons who are 30 years old or older, and match the target groups.
<a href="#">Delovni preizkus 2017/2018 / Work-based testing 2017/2018</a>	Public call for proposals	<p>Work-based testing lasts <b>from min. 100 hours to up to a month</b>. Exceptions are <b>persons with disabilities</b> whose introduction may last for more than one month.</p> <p><b>Justified cost:</b>  <b>206 EUR</b> per participant  <b>or</b>            actually incurred cost for a <b>preliminary medical examination</b> of the participant.</p> <p>The participants in work-based testing receive the reimbursement for the following <b>justified costs</b>:  <b>Commuting allowance</b> – for each day of actual participation in the work-based testing  <b>Activity bonus</b> – amounts to 3.00 EUR or 1.50 EUR for recipients of unemployment allowance for each actual hour of participation in the work-based testing.</p>
<a href="#">Usposabljanje na delovnem mestu 2017–2018 / On-the-job training 2017/2018</a>	Public call for proposals	<p>Cost of implementation of training for the participant <b>or cost of a preliminary medical examination of the participant</b>.</p> <p>Cost of <b>implementation of training</b> for the participant amounts to:  <b>370 EUR</b> for <b>two-month</b> training and  <b>493 EUR</b> for <b>three-month</b> training.</p> <p><b>Participants of the training</b> also receive the activity bonus and commuting allowance.</p>
<a href="#">Priložnost zame v nevladnih organizacijah / Opportunity for me in non-governmental</a>	Public call for proposals	Subsidy in the amount of 7,250 EUR or 9,250 EUR for employing unemployed

<b>organisations</b>		persons from the target group in non-governmental organisations for at least 15 months, with a 3-month trial period.
<b>Trajno zaposlovanje mladih / Permanent employment of youths</b>	Public call for proposals	Subsidy in the amount of 5.000 EUR for permanently employing youths under 30 years who have been registered as unemployed for at least three months.

More information at <http://www.ess.gov.si> and at every office or regional unit of the Employment Service of Slovenia.

### EUROPEAN CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

**Calls for proposals by the European Social Fund and other funds** are published on the website [www.euskladi.si](http://www.euskladi.si).

### EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

European Social Fund is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds). Since 2014 they have been operating within a joint framework. The funds are the main source of investments at the level of the European Union and they help member states with renovation and promotion of growth and promotion of economic recovery, which ensures new jobs.

The projects of the European Social Fund bring improvements for the lives of individuals and for their opportunities, open doors and help people find better employment by investing in the European human capital – its workers, young people, underprivileged groups and employment seekers.

**EU CALLS FOR PROPOSALS** are published on various websites. Usually these include websites of specific programmes, general directorates of the European Commission (e.g. employment, social affairs and equal opportunities), national contact points, Slovenian ministries (e.g. Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities), and others. European calls for proposals are also available at <http://www.welcomeurope.com>, where the current overview of published calls for proposals is available.

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