



# European Employment Pact for People with Multiple Sclerosis



EUROPEAN  
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS  
PLATFORM

# European Employment Pact for People with Multiple Sclerosis

## Now is the time to act

We need to:

- Recognise the work skills and abilities of people affected by MS and other neurodegenerative diseases.
- Help people to stay in, and return to work for their personal, psychological and financial wellbeing.
- Provide sustainable employment for people with MS.

## A healthier working environment

Whether you represent a small or medium size business or are part of a larger multi-national organisation, the Pact is a step towards recognising the value and importance of policies that enhance workplace health and promote diversity. Successful businesses depend on the skills, motivation and wellbeing of their staff.

By proactively supporting this Pact, as business leaders, you are demonstrating your commitment to creating a healthy workplace for all. Good workplace policies focused on health improve an individual's quality of life while promoting better health and increasing productivity.

The benefits of a healthy work environment extend far beyond avoiding absenteeism and poor performance. Proactively creating workplace adaptation policies ensures added value and personal success for all involved.

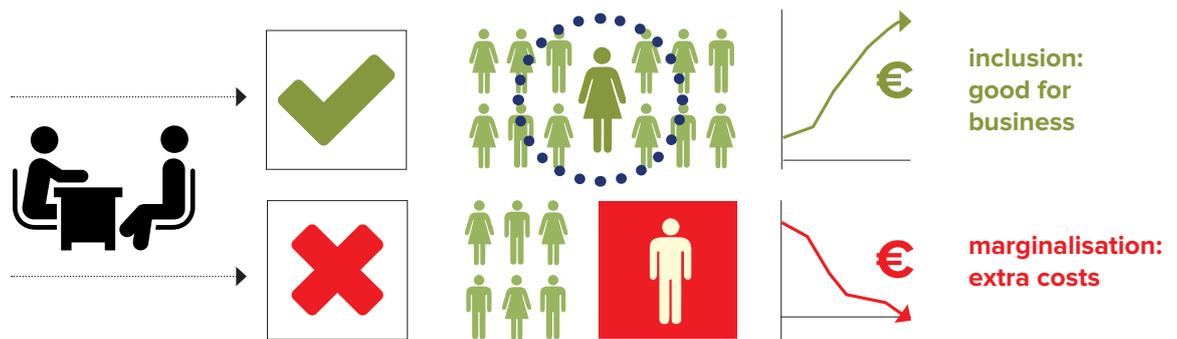
EMSP has compiled a useful checklist for businesses to use as a guide for their workplace.

“ Access to decent work through changes in policy, workplace and social education transforms lives. People can escape the vicious circle of social exclusion, marginalisation and poverty.” [ ILO, 2014 ]

# Why endorse the Pact?

We are currently facing challenging economic times throughout Europe. Unemployment rates in many European countries have reached alarming levels, impacting on the overall quality of life of people in society. Although the situation affects people at all socio-economic levels, recent consultations have shown that people with long-term or neurodegenerative diseases face even greater barriers to accessing or remaining at work. The economic crisis has had the effect of increasing those barriers. By focusing on the solutions included in the Pact, together we can significantly reduce the barriers, ensure retention of experienced and skilled staff and support people in the workplace.

## Breaking the cycle



# The Healthy Workplace

## Organisations that adopt the Pact commit to the following:

### Employment Policy

This business will ensure that its employment policies comply with national law and European disability regulations, while upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Articles 23 and 24.

### Recruitment

Recruitment procedures will be regularly reviewed to ensure that applicants from all backgrounds are aware of the employment policies of the organisation.

Although disclosure is strongly encouraged it is not a requirement as we respect and recognise individuals' rights to privacy.

### Equal opportunities and proactive employment

Staff members will be appointed based on their ability to fulfil the duties of the role, their contribution to business and their commitment to the mission of the organisation. People with suitable experience and qualifications will be considered irrespective of their medical condition.

Disclosure of a condition/disability such as multiple sclerosis or another neurological condition will not prejudice applicants.

### Training and awareness in the workforce

All staff members will receive information and diversity training on the particular challenges faced by people with disabilities and long-term conditions in the workplace.

### The Working Environment

Specific processes and practices are in place to ensure that the work environment meets the needs of staff and is in the spirit of Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We will commit to the Pact and use the checklist that provides a framework for workplace adaptations and that will help to deliver a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible. Where there is an issue requiring attention, staff members are encouraged to voice their concerns using a model of needs assessment leading to mutually agreed adaptations.

#### These may include:

- Flexible working hours and arrangements
- Accessible building and toilet facilities
- Policy and support for planned 'return to work'
- Designated rest area for staff

# Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## ARTICLE 23

1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for themselves and their family an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of their interests.

## ARTICLE 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

### Due process

We are confident that should any issue arise due to the fluctuating nature of the condition/disease, we have a 'return to work' process involving a staff committee and information to support our employees as they deal with their condition. Where we do not have the internal expertise, outside assistance will be sought.

### Flexible working conditions

This organisation adheres to national Health and Safety legislation. Where the fluctuating nature of MS and other neurological conditions is considered, the changing needs of employees will be discussed and appropriate adaptations will be made.

### Monitoring

There will be designated times for monitoring using feedback forms, staff meetings and evaluation from in-house diversity champions, followed by an annual review. The conclusions of the review will be published with recommendations for future improvements.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### ARTICLE 27

State Parties recognise the right of a person with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

# What is Multiple Sclerosis?

- **Multiple sclerosis is the leading cause of non-traumatic disability of young adults. People are usually diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40 years.**
- **700,000 people in Europe have MS with many thousands being diagnosed each year.**
- **MS is unpredictable and fluctuating, and can have a significant impact on people's quality of life.**
- **Negative attitudes to people with MS can pose a major barrier to participation.**
- **Provided with proper information and guidance in workplace practice, people with MS will be able to access better employment opportunities.**

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a neurological condition usually diagnosed during the prime working years of a person's life.

People who are highly educated and skilled are edged out of the workplace due to inadequate 'return to work' policies, a lack of understanding and prejudice.

Thousands of people are needed to make up the working number of people (6:1) to support the ageing population in the European Union. Those living with a neurodegenerative disease can be a vital part of that workforce.

EMSP's recent survey among people with MS across Europe showed that together with the symptoms of their condition, the attitude of employers and discrimination were the most common barriers to accessing work.

Through combined efforts between employers, occupational therapists, healthcare professionals and decision-makers, the majority of people willing to work can successfully keep their job or return to employment.

**The European Employment Pact for people with multiple sclerosis (the Pact) offers a way forward in tackling the barriers and challenges faced by people with MS and other neurodegenerative diseases in the workplace.**

## Human Capital

The benefits of paid work have consequences on the life of individuals and their families. Work opens up opportunities, provides financial stability and gives a sense of purpose to life.

Being part of the workforce preserves dignity and social connectivity while adding to the wealth of human capital and development.

For business leaders, employing a diverse staff goes beyond compliance. Diversity is shown to bring better performance and decision-making in business.

Integrating the Pact into a company's business model ensures outreach to a wider group of potential employees, customers and business partners.



EMSP represents the interests of people with MS and their families at European level, working with 39 national associations to achieve its goal of high quality equitable treatment and support across borders.



The European Employment Pact has been developed in the framework of the *Paving the Path to Participation* project, which has received co-funding from the European Commission under the DG Justice PROGRESS programme. It reflects only the authors' view and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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