**Occupational Therapy Europe comments on the**

**Outline for the preparation of a General Comment o Article 27 of the CRPD (the right to work and employment)**

Occupational Therapy Europe Foundation is the umbrella-organisation of Occupational Therapy education, practice and research, creating one strong voice in Europe in making our profession visible, valued, available and accessible for all citizens in Europe. We are pleased to provide some comments, supported by our registered experts, on the outline:

The first paragraph of the introduction underlines the stigma and discrimination of people with disabilities (p.2). Besides, we consider it would be essential to recognise and explicitly highlight vulnerable populations. Together with women, migrant, refugees, we observe the people with substance use disorders and people with homelessness experiences are shifted from the labour market due to lack of opportunities to proper vocational training, return-to-work, and re-employment facilities or having precarious work. Many particular individuals that have those problems might be not recognised as having a "disability".

This is a notable concern when considered in the light of the statement on p.4 of employers having 'limited awareness and knowledge of the capabilities and value [of] (a missing word?) persons with disabilities in the workplace, and the need to augment H&S issues to accommodate individual/collective need to be inclusive’.

As a consequence of this concern, we suggest an addition to p. 6, **(vi)** that people with disabilities should be included in Unions **and** be employed across all levels and branches **of the workplace and** in Government to be inclusive and empower meaningful application and change.

The lack of vocational training to enable persons with disabilities to gain employment access is also a notable point (p. 6 **vii**) - and is a huge vacuum in terms of progressing forward. The barrier here is the lack of interest of successive governments (at least in UK context) to address this. This lack of interest, and the now very present excuse of lack of funding as per the Covid-19 crises, will prevent any meaningful action in terms of addressing this. Unless this is legislated for in a really proactive way, the idea that labour markets will ever be indeed 'inclusive and accessible' (pg 9) remains liminal.

We would suggest defining "reasonable accommodation" because, although qualified (pg. 13-14), it remains open to interpretation and must be 'negotiated' (p. 13); thus, its application in terms of what is 'reasonable' in practice is likely to a variable. The point re-provision of funding for this is excellent (p. 13). However, we suggest pointing out where the funding will come from and how it will be accessed in a just and equitable way.

The lack of investment in terms of financial and human resources to support and/or maintain access to the workplace for people with disabilities has been an ongoing issue over time. It is an underlying problem in all of the points raised in the document. This issue also underpins the inaccessibility of the 'physical environment of workplaces' (p 15) and the problem of having 'to opt between accessing a benefit and accessing employment. This is a huge barrier to equitable access when work is limited to lower-paid occupations and/or hours of paid work are limited. It is a sad indictment of the world wherein, in some situations, you are better off claiming benefits than actually working because the payment received is so insufficient.

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