**GTB’s response to Draft General Comment on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in relation to the discussion on Article 27 to the UNCRPD.**

**Introduction**

GTB is VDAB's (Public Employment Service of Flanders/Belgium) structural partner organisation to mediate people with disabilities towards and during (self) employment. GTB is established in 2008. On a yearly basis, 11,000 people are supported by GTB. 1,100 of them have severe difficulties finding their way on the job market due to very complex medical, mental, psychological and/or psychiatric problems. GTB also offers support to employers to realise inclusive workplaces.

As founder and member of SUEM.BE, the national umbrella organisation for supported employment in Belgium, GTB strongly supports the principles, values and model of supported employment.

The Supported Employment model is internationally recognised and aligns/fits well within UNCRPD, Article 27 Right to Work and Employment.

**Definition of Supported Employment is** the provision of support to people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups to **secure** and **maintain paid employment** in the **open labour market**.

GTB fully supports UNCRDP Article 27 Right to Work and Employment however recognises that disabled people are still significantly underrepresented in the open labour market, do not receive the same employment rights and conditions, have no legal protection and are not working in inclusive workplaces. Furthermore, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on the health and wellbeing of disabled workers and jobseekers.

GTB welcomes and strongly supports the rationale and recommendations in the Draft General Comment on Article 27 on the Rights of person with disabilities to work and employment. To put an end to the situation of exclusion from the labour market of persons with disabilities and to tackle their persistent situation of unemployment, immediate action must be undertaken.

The Draft General Comment on Article 27 on the Rights of persons with disabilities to work and employment has included many of the recommendation put forward by GTB.

In response to the Draft General Comment on Article 27, GTB would highlight the following areas for consideration:

* People with complex disabilities are at the most at risk of unemployment, discrimination, exploitation and segregation. State parties must ensure that people with complex disabilities should be treated on an equal basis as all disabled people and specific consideration must be given regarding legislation, policy and practice.
* Supported Employment model, as stated above, provides support to disabled people, employers and family/carers, and should be considered as a pathway to inclusive open employment.
* State parties should register the Supported Employment model in their legislation or at least set up projects to be able to develop supported employment in accordance with its methodology and principles. To ensure that every person with a disability or other vulnerable person is entitled to a paid job with the personalised support needed for as much and as long as this person and his/her work environment need it.
* State parties should ensure that there is high quality in delivery of programmes (i.e. vocational training, internships, apprenticeships etc) for disable people. High quality programmes and services will drive increase employment outcomes. An example of quality standards model is the Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF). For further information on SEQF [click here](https://euse.org/news/se-quality-framework-seqf).
* State parties should define and implement national occupational standards for supported employment coaches in order to deliver high quality in service provision on an individual level. For further information on possible standards [click here](https://app.akov.be/pls/pakov/f?p=VLAAMSE_KWALIFICATIESTRUCTUUR:BEROEPSKWALIFICATIE:::NO:1020:P1020_BK_DOSSIER_ID,P1020_HEEFT_DEELKWALIFICATIES:4661,NEE).
* State parties needs to implement social benefits systems without thresholds to employment. Job income and wages can be combined so that a good quality of living is guarantheed.

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