I am a woman with disability who have been employed by the UN. Below are some of my thoughts about the right to work of persons with disabilities.

Everybody needs to have adequate amount of money and activity to fully participate in society, including people with disabilities, who are less likely to be included in the labour force. Women with disabilities face a double disadvantage because of their gender and disability. People with mental illness, migrants, LGTB, black and other ethnic groups, old and young people with disabilities have compounded obstacles.

Employing persons with disabilities can be straightforward, employers just need to do it by learning more about disability, by trusting, by focusing on the ability rather than disability, and by overcoming their fears. Training to hiring managers and staff members about disability make mind-sets evolve and also reduce discrimination.

Besides their studies and work experience, the life experience of people with disabilities can be a real asset for a company and organization, especially jobs related to accessibility, inclusion, disability, discrimination and many other areas. By employing persons with disabilities, companies can diversify their workforce, leverage on the willingness and strengths of this diverse group and empower to do their best.

It is simple, but still complex, as employment is connected to many different areas. Employment also depends on the level of access to health services, medical devices, rehabilitation, adapted education, accessibility to go to school and work, just to mention some in eachcountry. The more other sectors develops, the more people with disabilities will be included in society and employed.

As disability is diverse, tailor made reasonable accommodation, like flexible working arrangements or adapted devices will often be needed, but the small investment will reap a large return. Other staff members may be granted with different accommodations like flexible hours, standing desk, however it is not called reasonable accommodation.

If people with disabilities are well understood and helped, the advantage of employing them is greater than any disadvantages people might think.

The more we see empowering stories in media and in communities about and with people with disabilities, the more this vulnerable group of people will be accepted, included in turn the fear lifted. There are successful sportspeople, politicians, actors, doctors among people with disabilities; they should be more visible and acknowledged.

Giving incentives to hire people with disabilities is a good practice.

To reduce the fear of employing people with disabilities as well as to inspire trust recruiting them as internships, volunteers or temporary workers is a start.

Some counties, organizations and companies offer disability benefits but it is withdrawn when a person with disability is employed or the person’s partner with disabilities is employed. A partial disability benefit should be kept for many extra cost and efforts linked to disability.

More disaggregated data would lead to better tailored made employment policies.

Persons with disabilities are great problem solvers, that’s what their life is about, learning to live in a world of able bodied people which is often not adapted to them, to us. This soft skill is an asset to all companies.

Rózsa Illés-Valette

“In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” – Albert Einstein