Title

"Role of Social Entrepreneurship in Promoting Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities : Comparative Case Study of Latvia and Belgium"

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Abstract

This research investigates the employment creation role of social enterprises for disabled youth in Latvia and Belgium. People with disabilities face substantial barriers to employment despite the progress made in social welfare and inclusion policies. This qualitative research investigates social enterprise operations in these two European settings to determine effective practices and obstacles and successful strategies for workforce integration. Social enterprises function as essential drivers of inclusive employment yet their activities remain limited by funding restrictions and policy deficiencies and social prejudice. The research demonstrates that social enterprises drive inclusive employment but their effectiveness depends on funding constraints and policy shortcomings and societal prejudices. The research demonstrates why multiple stakeholders need to work together with enduring policy structures to maximize social enterprise impact. The research delivers practical suggestions to policymakers and social entrepreneurs and advocacy groups for better employment opportunities for youth with disabilities.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, People with Disabilities, Inclusive Employment,

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The chapter follows a structured format which consists of six sections. The study begins with background information and rationale which establishes the research context through an analysis of youth disability barriers to employment and the developing social entrepreneurship solution for these challenges. The problem statement defines the essential issues which require this research investigation. The study's purpose and objectives receive explicit definition which functions as research direction throughout the investigation. The research questions section defines the main questions that this thesis aims to investigate. The chapter finishes by discussing the study's importance while highlighting its value for social work and inclusive development and policy innovation across European and global regions.

1.1. Background and Rationale

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that about 1.3 billion people or 16% of global population live with substantial disabilities while many face persistent employment barriers (World Bank, 2023). Global international labor frameworks work to promote inclusivity yet disparities continue to persist in deep and enduring ways. People with disabilities face substantial barriers to employment participation together with limited educational opportunities and training access and increased poverty rates. According to Eurostat (2023) the European Union reports that people with disabilities face a poverty risk of 28.8% while those without disabilities stand at 18%. The structural causes of labor market exclusion from employment persist despite social transfers and benefits which provide limited support.

The recorded statistics indicate a fundamental issue which needs innovative and inclusive employment approaches to solve. Employment opportunities for disabled individuals exist within a complex network of social obstacles, economic limitations and policy restrictions. The employment opportunities for marginalized populations have received increased attention through social entrepreneurship because it represents an adaptable method for their economic engagement. Social enterprises distinguish themselves through their mission-driven approach which combines social impact with community empowerment and sustainable inclusion strategies that match the requirements of people with disabilities (Cardella et al., 2021). Social entrepreneurship works directly with local situations to develop solutions which focus on the real needs of people who traditional employment systems normally exclude.

Social entrepreneurship operates with certain constraints despite its potential benefits. The entrepreneurial journey of people with disabilities becomes challenging because they encounter restricted funding opportunities and scarce mentorship support as well as insufficient specialized business education (Muñoz et al., 2019). The research confirms that entrepreneurship serves as an economic independence

pathway yet financial capital and inclusive education for entrepreneurship remain significant obstacles (Harris et al., 2013).

This research examines social entrepreneurship's diverse impact on job creation for disabled people through a comparative study of Belgium and Latvia which demonstrate different EU member state approaches to their social structures and policy systems. The welfare and employment support systems of Belgium operate in contrast to Latvia's developing market-based social infrastructure. The dual framework analysis allows researchers to discover social entrepreneurship's adaptation strategies for various national systems which generate inclusive labor markets. The research analyzes effective methods and organizational obstacles together with local creative solutions to develop practical recommendations for expanding disability-friendly employment across large areas.

1.2. Problem Statement

People with disabilities encounter ongoing employment obstacles despite the existence of laws that promote equality and inclusion. The barriers to employment for people with disabilities stem from physical and structural obstacles and they also result from social prejudice and unfavorable employer perspectives as well as insufficient policy execution (Mavindidze et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020). The lack of employment opportunities and underemployment affects people with disabilities to the extent that they experience poverty while facing social isolation. (Bezyak et al., 2021; Strindlund et al., 2018).

People's work opportunities become even more limited because welfare systems frequently establish restrictions that prevent employment. The disability benefits eligibility system poses a policy challenge since job seekers fear losing their financial support during their attempt to work or launch their own businesses (McHale et al., 2020; Sabariego et al., 2018). The current situation reveals an opposition between protective social policies and the empowerment goals of inclusive employment. (Chui et al., 2021; Morant et al., 2021).

Kordsmeyer et al. (2020) state that the process of workforce integration for people with disabilities extends beyond individual capability and motivation assessments. Workforce integration needs systemic coordinated approaches that unite employer support with inclusive workplace environments and specialized training programs. The current employment support systems show fragmentation because they fail to recognize the different requirements and life circumstances of people with disabilities. Current employment systems lack sufficient resources to meet the diverse requirements of people with disabilities (Calderón-Milán et al., 2021; Smrčka et al., 2022; Buhariwala et al., 2015). Research indicates that customized training approaches together with development pathways lead to better employment

possibilities for this demographic group (Sinclair et al., 2018; Thoresen et al., 2018; Jansen et al., 2021; McDowell et al., 2021).

The existing disparities have led social entrepreneurship to emerge as an inclusive alternative path which unites economic activities with social justice objectives (Kart & Kart, 2021; Hutchinson et al., 2024; Uršič, 2022). Social entrepreneurs challenge traditional employment markets by placing empowerment and participation and localised solutions at the forefront of their work (Morwane et al., 2021; Lauer & Houtenville, 2018). The research indicates a need for more empirical investigation to understand operational dynamics and contextual elements which affect social entrepreneurship effectiveness in various cultural environments (Golubović & Muhi, 2019; May‑Simera, 2018).

The research examines the way social entrepreneurship can create better employment outcomes for people with impairments in Belgium and Latvia through critical analysis. This study will address obstacles alongside enabling factors through a combination of existing research and field-based examinations to develop employment strategies which adapt to specific contexts. This research aims to advance knowledge about socially-driven business models that actively celebrate and sustain difference rather than just accommodating it thus challenging existing inequalities in the labor market.

1.3. Aims

The research aims to study how social entrepreneurship generates lasting employment opportunities for people with disabilities while analyzing both the obstacles and facilitators that affect their workforce inclusion.

1.4. Objectives

- ❖ The research aims to study how social enterprises in Latvia and Belgium use youth with disabilities
- ❖ The research investigates the viewpoints of social entrepreneurs together with policymakers and job coaches and youth with disabilities regarding social entrepreneurship opportunities and challenges for inclusive employment.
- ❖ The research delivers strategic and policy recommendations to integrate social entrepreneurship into national employment systems which promote disability labor inclusion.

1.5. Research Questions

❖ What challenges do social enterprises and people with disabilities face in creating and sustaining employment opportunities, and how do these challenges affect the experiences of PWD in the workplace?

❖ How do the lived experiences of people with disabilities working in social enterprises inform the effectiveness of these enterprises in promoting inclusive employment, and what recommendations can be made to improve policies and practices for PWD employment?

❖ What role do various stakeholders (e.g., government, NGOs, private sector, local communities) play in supporting social enterprises focused on people with disabilities?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study of social entrepreneurship is vital for understanding the critical role of ethical business practices in fostering social change, which is consistent with social work's core objectives. Social workers can work with community stakeholders by interacting with social entrepreneurs to create and carry out initiatives giving inclusive and accessible top priority. Policies that support the rights of people with disabilities and provide customised employment solutions might thus arise from this evolution of policies Social workers can assist social entrepreneurs create tailored job roles that fit the talents of disabled people, therefore guaranteeing that their employment not only fits their requirements but also improves their social integration and self-esteem (Ebuenyi et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the study emphasises the requirement of evidence-based strategies for intervention, which define social work practice fundamentally. Studies combining assisted employment with social entrepreneurship have demonstrated that programs help persons with impairments greatly increase their job results (Smith et al., 2017). Equipped with this information, social workers are positioned to advocate for and apply evidence-based solutions that enable persons with disabilities—especially young people—to acquire sustained employment. This covers focused treatments meant to remove obstacles including stigmas, lack of finances, and inadequate support systems. Understanding these difficulties can help social workers create more successful solutions that guarantee disabled people have access to jobs suitable for their aptitudes and goals (Linder et al., 2019).

Particularly those dealing with young people with disabilities, social workers play a key role in helping individuals go from school to employment. The insights of this study can guide the design of transitional programs bridging the gap between education and employment, therefore arming young people with the skills and confidence to effectively negotiate the job market (Engelbrecht et al., 2017). Social workers can campaign for laws and initiatives empowering young people with disabilities so they are not deprived of

the financial possibilities accessible to others. This also relates to the application of inclusive economic growth policies, in which social workers are essential to guarantee that young people with disabilities are involved in these plans and not excluded (Lund, 2020).

Including social entrepreneurship within social work practice can also help to further more general social justice objectives. The job differences experienced by persons with disabilities affect people's general health and well-being, so they are social justice concerns rather than only financial ones. Through the prism of social entrepreneurship, social workers can advocate inclusive employment policies, therefore fostering economic empowerment and social inclusion—two fundamental principles of social justice (McHale et al., 2020). The study emphasises that general health and social involvement are mostly determined by employment, so by lowering the obstacles to employment, social entrepreneurs can help underprivileged groups to flourish. Therefore, social workers are quite important in promoting change by supporting inclusive policies that lower obstacles and improve chances for persons with disabilities.

Apart from supporting social work practice, this study offers practical analysis for policy formation. Social workers can lobby for the execution of policy changes that reward corporations to adopt inclusive employment practices, including tax exemptions for companies that hire persons with disabilities or subsidies for social entrepreneurs that concentrate on disability inclusion. Moreover, the research implies that governments should provide financial assistance and make infrastructural investments for social entrepreneurs so guaranteeing their sustainability. These initiatives will help to build a more inclusive workforce, therefore allowing persons with disabilities more economic freedom and meaningful contribution to society.

At last, the study emphasises the need of more investigation to completely grasp the long-term consequences of social entrepreneurship on persons with disabilities. Future research might look at employment retention rates, career development, and the financial effects of hiring persons with disabilities for social entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it is necessary to evaluate the affordability of inclusive employment policies and investigate how these ideas may be modified to fit various country situations. This data can be used by social workers to support improved financing, resources, and legislative reforms ensuring that social entrepreneurs keep flourishing and help to guarantee inclusive labour markets.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The research bases its theoretical framework on a comprehensive evaluation of relevant concepts which forms the content of this chapter. The research divides into three main sections. The first section of Understanding Disability examines disability discourses through critical analysis of Historical, Social and Minority Models of Disability to understand their effects on societal attitudes and policy development.

The second part of Social Entrepreneurship: Key Concepts defines social entrepreneurship while focusing on Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISE) before examining social entrepreneurship implementation across different nations including Latvia and Belgium and connecting it to Human Capital Theory to demonstrate the social and financial value of disability inclusion for young people.

The final section integrates the Social Model of Disability (SMD) with the Minority Model of Disability (MMD) and Human Capital Theory to establish the analytical framework for this research. The framework establishes the base for studying how social businesses create employment opportunities for young disabled people through their inclusive and capability-building approaches.

2.1. Understanding Disability

Before delving into the role of social entrepreneurship in inclusive employment, it is critical to first understand how disability is conceptualised. Whether viewed as a medical illness, a social construct, or a marginalised identity, the way disability is understood impacts the policies, practices, and attitudes that affect labour market participation for persons with disabilities. This chapter will therefore begin by reviewing the primary theoretical theories of disability: the medical model, the social model, and the minority group model. These models offer a critical lens through which one may view the systematic barriers and facilitators influencing the employment of young people with disabilities. After this theoretical background, the chapter will investigate literature on social entrepreneurship, inclusive employment initiatives, and the part key stakeholders play in enabling sustainable opportunities for employment in Belgium and Latvia.

2.1.1. The Medical Model of Disability: A Historical Perspective

The medical model of disability concentrates on individual rehabilitation through workforce integration but fails to address structural barriers that prevent employment participation. The way this perspective shapes disability knowledge affects employment accessibility thus influencing research on inclusive employment.

Numerous research studies demonstrate that people with disabilities face multiple barriers to employment which stem from both social prejudices and institutional challenges rather than their disability status. According to (Abed et al., 2024) disability employment in Saudi Arabia depends heavily on cultural values which value inclusiveness and diversity thus creating better job opportunities. According to (Bialik & Mhiri, 2022) people with intellectual disabilities face unique barriers that need specialized disability-specific laws for recognition. Research findings demonstrate that the medical model hides social barriers that prevent people with disabilities from finding employment.

Employment practices from previous times adopted the medical model by focusing on individual disabilities instead of developing adaptable work environments and practices to accommodate different requirements. Kiesel et al. (2019) pointed out that analyzing job requirements through a social model framework reveals that most barriers stem from social structures which means organizations need to implement internal structural changes to achieve disability inclusion. According to Ruhindwa et al. (2016) inclusive practices together with interventions that support individual ownership and involvement choices in their work journey should be implemented.

Research shows that production-related stigma together with incorrect assumptions about disability remain as major barriers in the literature. According to Jammaers et al. (2016) productivity narratives in businesses work to reduce the inclusion of disabled workers by limiting them to resource status instead of acknowledging their complete value to the organization. The medical model leads to this reductionist viewpoint which makes businesses discount potential candidates based on their perceived abilities thus perpetuating exclusion cycles (Jacob et al., 2023).

Research supports models that focus on inclusive employment practices which challenge the limitations imposed by the medical paradigm. According to Schmidt et al. (2019) self-advocacy education programs are essential because they enable disabled individuals to pursue meaningful career opportunities. Educational empowerment through this approach helps people develop agency while improving employability by shifting the focus from personal shortcomings to personal strengths. Through systematic advocacy (Benshoff et al., 2014) showed that India's NCPEDP uses a comprehensive approach to tackle both labor market barriers and social conditions that affect disabled people.

The medical model of disability produces extensive effects on research methods and practice approaches for inclusive employment of people with impairments. The literature demonstrates a shift toward disability definitions which combine individual abilities with institutional barriers that need to be overcome to achieve meaningful employment. The approach promotes an expanded workplace that values

diverse backgrounds and abilities beyond absence of disability thus creating a unified employment system which benefits both personal growth and social progress.

2.1.2. The Social Model of Disability: Reframing Disability as a Social Issue

The Social Model of Disability (SMD) represents a significant transformation in disability understanding by viewing restrictions as institutional barriers rather than personal limitations. The SMD presents a different understanding of disability from the medical model because it identifies environmental factors alongside cultural and political and attitudinal barriers as the primary obstacles to full social inclusion (Mbazzi et al., 2024; Alsaman & Lee, 2016). The approach demands the removal of all inclusive systems that marginalize PWD within infrastructure, laws and cultural standards (Carter et al., 2020).

The core principle of the SMD demonstrates that social barriers create disability instead of the disability existing within individuals. PWD face significant barriers to their daily activities because of discriminatory policies along with negative social attitudes and prejudicial beliefs (Garcia et al., 2015). Disability rights advocates now push for policy frameworks that recognize disability rights as fundamental human rights to establish equal access and justice throughout social, educational and financial domains (McBee‑Black & Ha‑Brookshire, 2018).

The SMD has gained wider acceptance but the medical model continues to dominate medical and rehabilitation settings. The situation has led to calls for developing a biopsychosocial method which recognizes both social structures leading to exclusion and physical characteristics of disabilities (Hästbacka et al., 2016). A combination of models respects individual experiences while pursuing systemic transformations.

The SMD distinguishes between impairment which refers to physical or sensory or cognitive conditions and disability which represents the societal limitations created by structure and attitudes through which Designing treatments that address not only personal support but also group barriers depends on an awareness of this difference. According to Chiu et al. (2023) PWD empowerment alongside their societal value growth depends heavily on obstacles removal through advocacy efforts.

The emerging positive model of SMD adds additional depth to this discussion. These viewpoints go beyond inclusivity by emphasizing that individuals with disabilities possess intrinsic worth together with their personal characteristics and abilities (Shields & Synnot, 2016). These approaches challenge dominant societal beliefs which equate disability with lack of ability (Parey & Sinanan, 2021) and instead present disability as an aspect of human diversity without using barrier-focused perspectives.

This evolving knowledge supports the essential role of the SMD in constructing inclusive policies together with inclusive environments. Academic researchers now widely agree that fixing people is not the solution to equity because it requires collective action to eliminate disabling environments (Abou‑Hanna et al., 2020). The sustainable inclusion of PWD in employment requires essential legislative changes together with employer training and accessible design and community-based inclusion strategies for employment rights.

The employment context application of SMD demonstrates that organizational restrictions play a more significant role than employee limitations in determining job opportunities for disabled workers. In addition to physical barriers the labour market excludes PWD because of both institutional rules and social biases that exist within the employment system (Goldiner, 2022; Bogart et al., 2019).

Organizational leadership dedication along with proactive policies prove to be essential factors that influence successful inclusive employment outcomes according to empirical evidence. Chan et al. (2020) discovered that eleven inclusive human resource practices which include disability-friendly recruitment and management engagement lead to higher employment rates for PWD in the post-COVID-19 economy. Employment and workplace practices develop systemic prejudice that requires specific policy interventions to prevent its formation.

Employer impressions play a crucial role in determining workplace inclusion. Iwanaga et al. (2024) indicate that Fortune 500 organizations demonstrate persistent incorrect beliefs about disability hiring costs along with employee productivity. Ju et al. (2013) discovered that negative beliefs about social abilities and work performance serve as obstacles during the hiring process. Different issues exist in evidence but these represent deep-seated prejudices.Corporate training initiatives for disability confidence development present evidence of successful workplace perception transformations. According to Hemphill and Kulik (2015) disability capability education reduces stigma but Lindsay et al. (2019) demonstrate that awareness-building programs enhance recruitment methods. Anti-stigma training developed by Bezyak et al. (2024) reveals that HR professionals should transform from gatekeepers to inclusion enablers as the main focus of the program.

A wider systemic approach becomes essential for the solution. The 2019 Khayatzadeh-Mahani team indicates that overcoming individual skill development is necessary to tackle social and environmental problems. The SMD's focus on structural reforms and its understanding that employment exclusion stems from social design flaws instead of personal failure aligns with this comprehensive perspective.

Community-based initiatives demonstrate the most promising potential in this context. The successful programs of Mauro et al. (2014) promoting mental health and vocational rehabilitation achieve both stigma reduction and employment accessibility for people with psychosocial disabilities through community integration-based approaches. These models deliver benefits to people while simultaneously transforming public perceptions and institutional responses.

Social model values become institutionalized through legal and policy systems. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (Blanck, 2020, 2022) serves as a legal requirement which mandates structural obstacle elimination while offering legal backing for inclusive work practices. The laws reinforce the requirement of concessions and affirmative action and non-discrimination practices to achieve fairness for PWD in employment.

The Social Model of Disability provides essential understanding and solutions to address employment inequalities that affect people with impairments. This approach surpasses personal views by focusing on how societal institutions and corporate attitudes and regulatory contexts impact work accessibility. The field of literature supports that sustainable dignified employment requires systematic reforms through inclusive policies and employer training and community-based interventions. The SMD serves scholars and practitioners focused on inclusive labour markets as both a diagnostic approach and practical implementation method to drive change.

2.1.3. The Minority Model of Disability: Disability as a Marginalized Identity

This model considers disability to be a health challenge affecting personal lives but also creates social and political matters which unite disabled persons together. According to this model cultural settings determine how people with disabilities live their lives so it backs social recognition of their rights and identities. Research conducted recently has revealed different elements of this model and its effects on political systems and social and educational domains.

To establish a more inclusive learning space Bogart et al. (2019) suggest that institutions need to resolve the difference between curricular approaches and actual student impairment experiences. The addition of social models to educational programs results in better disability awareness knowledge and capability development that benefits both disabled and non-disabled students (Rosa et al., 2015).

Badran et al. (2023) demonstrate that underprivileged Arab women in Israel experience increased obstacles because of multiple identity factors. Social prejudices of the society unite with cultural attitudes to create unstable situations for people with disabilities according to their personal experiences. According to (Artiles et al., 2016) research requires diverse viewpoints to achieve its goals. These

perspectives demonstrate how disability relates to race and ethnicity while establishing an understanding of cultural differences in disability interpretation.

The work of Dunn and Andrews (2015) exemplifies the growing movement which demands the examination of disability as a natural element of human diversity. The language change seeks to eliminate stigma around disability while demonstrating its social worth. The minority model emphasizes that disability functions as a bonding agent for building community because it reveals the intricate experiences of its members. The study by Lam et al. (2022) demonstrates how societal support systems together with parental perspectives about disability's social-emotional aspects shape their understanding across different cultural environments.

The current research demonstrates that there exists a definitive pattern which supports the need for disability-friendly policies that embrace diversity throughout the disability community. According to Ignagni et al. (2021) disability arts serve as vital spaces for self-expression and advocacy which help build inclusive environments. Disability art proves to be an effective instrument for dismantling standard deficit-focused disability narratives while presenting multifaceted representations of disabled life.

Research has investigated the institutional modifications needed to create inclusive environments throughout various sectors such as employment. Employers are discovering that disabled employees bring fresh creative perspectives and work effectively which challenges outdated stereotypes (Lindsay et al., 2019). Employers face obstacles because their opinions reflect both discomfort and incorrect interpretations of disability (Levine & Breshears, 2019). Further studies must fight these discriminatory beliefs by studying how participation would modify perceptions into positive ones. Through this research framework the MMD directs an analysis of how social entrepreneurs perceive and value disability when building diverse workforces instead of treating it as an issue to resolve. The research aims to interview disabled youth to understand their inclusion experiences through both job access and their experiences of dignity and identity confirmation and representation. Through solidarity actions and increased visibility and self-determination the model enables a transformation from supporting vulnerable groups to empowering marginalized communities.

The combination of social and minority disability models provides essential theoretical understanding of work environment approaches to disability identification and treatment and resistance against them. The models shape both social attitudes and legal frameworks while directing organizational policies for social entrepreneurs as well as general business practices. This paper uses the established theoretical base to examine how social entrepreneurship can help young people with disabilities access sustainable and

inclusive employment. The analysis examines how institutional barriers and facilitators shape these initiatives within real-world contexts.

2.1.4. Rethinking Human Capital in Disability-Inclusive Employment

Originally proposed by Schultz in 1961 and subsequently enlarged by Becker in 1993, Human Capital Theory (HCT) holds that personal talents, knowledge, and abilities are valuable kinds of capital that can raise work opportunities and productivity (Fix, 2018). Emphasising the need of investing in health, training, and education as fundamental for generating economic advantages for the person as well as the society, (Fix, 2018) stresses. This idea has been criticised, meantime, for failing to specifically address the particular difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities—especially young people. Among the several obstacles this group encounters in the system are exclusion from educational possibilities, lack of easily available training courses, job discrimination, and restriction of developing transferable skills (Mbazzi et al., 2024). Emphasising the need of customised support to address the gap in human capital development, they note that young persons with disabilities are excluded from education and employment compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

HCT usually stresses personal potential for economic contributions, but when applied to young people with disabilities, it has to take institutional constraints seriously that greatly limit their capability to accumulate human capital. For these people, efforts to provide job possibilities in areas with high unemployment may fall short, as Alsaman and Lee (2016) illustrate. Furthermore underlined by (Carter et al., 2020) are the need for interagency cooperation and community involvement in improving transition supports since transition services are essential in preparing kids for job engagement. Effective solutions that support job outcomes by means of communication among several stakeholders—which is vital in overcoming obstacles for young people with disabilities—are shown by frameworks such as the CIRCLES model (Carter et al., 2020; Awsumb et al., 2022).

Moreover, combining disability studies with HCT enables the reframing of disability not only as a deficiency but also as a possible source of great contributions given enough support (Mbazzi et al., 2024). This is consistent with strengths-based approaches that value the potential of people with disabilities and say that focused investments in inclusive education, vocational training, and assistive technologies are absolutely essential for enabling young people with disabilities to properly develop their human capital (Mbazzi et al., 2024). Such expenditures not only improve personal results but also result in society benefits in terms of economic output and workforce diversity.

When HCT stresses personal responsibility while ignoring systematic inequities that hinder results for people with disabilities, its limits are clearly shown (Fix, 2018). Given entrenched structural inequalities are typically overlooked, this solitary focus could unintentionally increase the pressure on people to "overcome" obstacles. By means of a more complete integration of the Social Model of Disability with HCT, institutional, environmental, and social elements may be shown how they must change to promote real inclusion and equity (Fix, 2018).

The intersectional approach not only improves our knowledge of the obstacles faced but also guides how entities like social entrepreneurs could properly increase employability for young people with disabilities (Mbazzi et al., 2024). Social entrepreneurs act as accelerators for the development of human capital in underprivileged areas by removing obstacles and offering customised training and job possibilities.

2.2. Social Entrepreneurship: Key Concepts

The section examines basic principles and limitations together with environmental elements which affect social entrepreneurship's ability to address labour market exclusion for people with disabilities. Social entrepreneurship through mission-driven creative businesses has gained increasing recognition as a promising solution for enduring social problems. These businesses target excluded groups through their combination of social objectives with entrepreneurial methods.

The discussion begins with an evaluation of social entrepreneurship opportunities and challenges within neoliberal frameworks. The research focuses on social entrepreneurs to examine their dual role in creating inclusive opportunities and facing institutional barriers while creating employment for disabled people. The third section explains that effective inclusion requires supportive environments by describing the European policy framework that supports various national initiatives. The final section presents a detailed comparative analysis of Latvia and Belgium to connect theoretical concepts with practical policy insights through their different legal and social and institutional frameworks. The combined sections establish a conceptual framework to understand how social entrepreneurship supports inclusive labor markets and direct future empirical research.

2.2.1. Social Entrepreneurship: Promise and Tension

Social entrepreneurship represents an innovative method which encourages resolution of difficult social issues that affect marginalized communities. Entrepreneurial approaches enable social good results through methods that focus on empowerment along with involvement and long-term sustainability. According to Ijiwole (2019) Bornstein and Davis describe social entrepreneurship as an institutional development process which transforms people or organizations to address persistent social issues like

inequality and unemployment and exclusion. Social entrepreneurship differs from conventional businesses because its goal-oriented approach defines its framework.

The idealized depiction sometimes fails to account for the complete institutional and ideological environment where social entrepreneurs operate. Dey and Steyaert (2010) argue that social entrepreneurship developed through neoliberal governance principles which emphasized privatization and deregulation and state withdrawal from public responsibilities. The neoliberal model requires social entrepreneurs to function as "gap-fillers" who deliver public value yet receive minimal institutional backing. These methods possess the ability to empower but simultaneously risk transforming structural problems into individualized issues that uphold market-based definitions of value and success.

2.2.2. Social Enterprises and Disability Employment

Social entrepreneurs create more than employment opportunities because they establish supportive environments which enable young people with disabilities to develop their technical abilities alongside interpersonal skills and self-assurance (Jones, 2021). The settings challenge traditional views which depict people with disabilities as passive recipients of care or incapable of economic contribution. The acceptance of market-based strategies according to critical disability academics may lead to neoliberal logics that base inclusion on economic performance (Goodley, 2017; Ebuenyi et al., 2019).

The majority of social entrepreneurs pursue inclusive objectives yet some experts believe their initiatives might inadvertently create separate labor markets. According to Nicholls (2010) and Mauksch and Dey (2023), some disability-focused businesses risk developing separate economic systems instead of achieving authentic integration with the general employment sector. The dependence on temporary grants and charity funding creates additional obstacles for these projects which raises doubts about their sustainable future (Smith & Brown, 2019; Macaulay et al., 2016).

Social entrepreneurs play an essential role in transforming societal perspectives and business practices. The practice of tailoring job positions and modifying workplace environments according to individual requirements enables these organizations to establish more inclusive employment markets (Riesen et al., 2015). Through their efforts they fight discrimination while fostering acceptance of different work opportunities which drives cultural transformation (Kiesel et al., 2019).

2.2.3. Ecosystems Supporting Inclusive Employment

The European Union has been dedicated to integrating disadvantaged populations into employment since its inception including those with impairments. The European Pillar of Social Rights (European Commission, 2017) is a pillar of this dedication since it emphasizes active labor market policies with

respect to fair working conditions, enough social protection, and equal chances. These ideas directly relate to the goal of social entrepreneurs, who create business plans meant to remove obstacles faced by underprivileged groups.

The European Pillar of Social Rights (2017) advocates for everyone's access to employment independent of background or aptitudes. By means of financial support, activation strategies, and services catered to underprivileged groups, it offers a framework for member states to establish inclusive labour policies and fosters integration. These policy directions directly address the first and third research objectives of this study: knowing the supportive roles performed by institutional stakeholders at the supranational level and identifying best practices in job integration for PWD.

2.2.4. Country Contexts: Social Enterprises in Latvia and Belgium

Promoting labour market participation for underprivileged groups—including young people with disabilities—along Europe has become mostly dependent on Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs). WISEs provide employment possibilities alongside skill development and social support services to those overcoming major obstacles to employment, therefore combining business activities with a social mission (Krupa et al., 2019; Lysaght et al., 2012). This part examines the development, legislative frameworks, and operational difficulties of WISEs in Belgium and Latvia, so clarifying their contribution to create equitable labour markets.

❖ WISEs in Latvia

Mostly driven by national legislation and international commitments including those resulting from the European Union and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the legal frameworks for the employment of people with disabilities in Latvia have changed significantly. These models seek to remove obstacles in access to employment so that people with disabilities may be included in the workforce, therefore promoting conditions that help them to participate.

The general legal framework offered by the UNCRPD, which advances the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others, is an essential beginning point (Shaw et al., 2022). National law adopted in Latvia to conform with these global norms has helped to build a structure that promotes employment of people with disabilities. Particularly, Oborenko and Rivža underline how several policies and programs have been developed to help impaired people enter the workforce despite ongoing difficulties in terms of appropriate application (Oborenko & Rivža, 2018). This covers the need of improving local municipal duties towards the employment of disabled people and of strengthening cooperation among state authorities.

Moreover, there still are significant obstacles in the useful implementation of these legal clauses. Still hindering their prospects of finding work are stigma and discrimination directed at people with impairments. Employer-based stigma, according to Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al. (2019), often results in negative presumptions about the skills of persons with disabilities, therefore undermining the efficacy of rights-based legislation meant to support employment. Likewise, it is acknowledged that even with legal systems in place, enforcement and pragmatic encouragement of hiring policies are sometimes absent (Ebuenyi et al., 2019). This disparity in application mirrors the larger worldwide trend whereby laws do not necessarily result into significant job prospects (Iwanaga et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the evolution of fair accommodation rules is absolutely vital. This need forces companies to modify their environments to be reachable for persons with disabilities, thereby immediately improving their employability (Blanck, 2020). Changing work procedures or surroundings to enable employees with disabilities to fulfil their roles effectively would be among such accommodations, in line with the conclusions of Bezyak et al., who underline the need of strong disability inclusion policies to improve employment outcomes (Bezyak et al., 2020). Still, there are difficulties with employers in Latvia's knowledge and application of such accommodations—which are essential for creating inclusive workplaces—(Pransky et al., 2016)

These difficulties have prompted several projects meant to change the work scene for people with impairments in Latvia. Initiatives range from raising awareness and training for companies on disability concerns to the support of social entrepreneurs especially targeted at generating career possibilities for impaired people (Oborenko et al., 2020). The momentum created by the COVID-19 epidemic has also provided new opportunities for remote work, which might reasonably accommodate people with disabilities (Schur et al., 2020). Nonetheless, depending on continuous legislative dedication and efficient policy execution, these advancements either result in sustainable changes in employment rates for persons with disabilities or else.

❖ *WISEs in Belgium*

The employment rights for people with disabilities in Belgium follow the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that Belgium adopted in 2009. According to the UNCRPD States must promote employment rights for disabled persons by providing equal job access alongside workplace accessibility and suitable work environment accommodations (Heymann et al., 2021).

The Belgian legal system implements various regulations which support inclusive workforce opportunities. The Disability Law of 2010 requires the elimination of discrimination against persons with impairments and their full integration into the workforce (Heymann et al., 2021). The law requires employers to establish workable accommodations for disabled personnel to ensure complete participation at work while making hiring discrimination against them unlawful. The law supports its implementation by having specific job integration programs which provide training and assistance programs for persons with disabilities.

Belgium's three provinces—Flanders and Wallonia together with Brussels—have established distinct policies which enhance employment opportunities for people with impairments. The "Disability Employment Act" from 2016 in Flanders provides support to businesses that hire people with disabilities by offering subsidies together with financial incentives. Through financial assistance and technical assistance the regional policy creates inclusive workplace environments which inspire businesses to hire disabled employees (Heymann et al., 2021).

The implementation of these legal systems faces substantial challenges. The presence of numerous policies has not eliminated social discrimination against people with disabilities or business reluctance to hire them thus resulting in low workforce participation rates of disabled persons in the labor market (Pinilla‑Roncancio & Caicedo, 2022). Companies cite three main barriers to hiring which include expense concerns and misconceptions about disabled staff capabilities and insufficient knowledge of adaptation implementation (Nagtegaal et al., 2023).

Belgian NGOs alongside advocacy groups actively follow disability rights execution while actively supporting workforce inclusion of disabled employees. The groups serve as essential forces behind legislative advancements by providing both companies and disabled job applicants with educational materials and training programs (Meyers, 2016).

The social enterprise environment in Belgium presents a distinctive yet valuable case study for WISE development. The absence of a national federal law specifically governing WISEs in Belgium does not limit social entrepreneurs because they can use the diverse regional frameworks and sectoral rules that exist particularly in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels (Cooney et al., 2016). The distributed employment system enables flexible approaches to work structures and impairment inclusion strategies which allow businesses to create personalized social enterprise management methods.

The Belgian employment model supports underprivileged populations through vocational training combined with job coaching and on-the-job support which creates sustainable employment opportunities

(Hartley et al., 2019). The Belgian social entrepreneurs maintain connections with disability services and workforce development programs which allow them to create customized employment solutions through multi-stakeholder partnerships (Morita et al., 2023). The Belgian research (Hartley et al., 2019; Morita et al., 2023) demonstrates that WISE employment provides psychological benefits which include better self-esteem together with improved mental health and social connectedness.

The Belgian WISEs confront financial sustainability problems alongside labor market integration issues that mirror those found in Latvia. The combination of strong cooperation networks with regional autonomy in Belgium enables innovative employment approaches that improve disability employment outcomes (Krupa et al., 2019; Lysaght et al., 2024).

2.2.5. Comparative Overview: Latvia and Belgium

The employment market for disadvantaged groups shows how WISEs function as agents of change according to the examples of Latvia and Belgium. The Social Enterprise Law provides essential legislative backing for Latvia but the practical execution of employee integration faces multiple challenges (Līcīte-Ķurbe, 2022). The Belgian approach enables customized support and sustainable business practices within WISEs through its dynamic framework which provides multiple employment assistance to job seekers (Krupa et al., 2019; Lysaght et al., 2024). The combined narratives demonstrate how WISEs can establish inclusive spaces which enable people with significant employment challenges to gain empowerment.

The following table presents a comparative evaluation of key policy elements between Latvia and Belgium to understand social entrepreneurship implementation for young people with disabilities employment support. The analysis focuses on national laws together with international standards and regional management structures and additional organizational factors which impact social entrepreneurs' performance.

Table 1. Comparative Overview: Latvia and Belgium

Category	Latvia	Belgium
National Legislation	UNCRPD ratified; alignment with EU directives Law on Social Enterprises (2018); -legal provisions support disability employment with partial access to funding and state support. -Operational burdens for compliance may disincentivize smaller actors.	UNCRPD ratified; aligned with EU human rights standards Disability Law (2010); national anti-discrimination legislation supports equal access to employment - Support is embedded within regional and sectoral frameworks

		- Decentralized approach allows for greater flexibility but can result in variability in implementation
Regional Implementation	Centralized governance; limited regional autonomy or policy differentiation	Strong regional policies (e.g., Flemish Disability Employment Act); devolved governance allows region-specific strategies
Employer Incentives	Primarily short-term, project-based funding; limited structural incentives for long-term inclusion	Structured subsidies, job coaching, and tax benefits make inclusive hiring more viable for employers
Reasonable Accommodation	Mandated in legislation but inconsistently applied; employer awareness and implementation capacity vary	Mandated and generally well-integrated into HR processes; supported by regional agencies with technical guidance
Main Barriers	Employer stigma; weak inter-agency coordination - Limited funding and workforce instability - Balancing social impact and economic sustainability - Difficulties in recruiting individuals with disabilities due to educational and motivational barriers, especially in rural areas	Employer misconceptions; complexity of systems; uneven uptake despite better support structure - Limited funding for initiatives - Workforce instability in some regions - Tension between the social mission and economic viability - Regional variability in the implementation of support programs
Implementation Gap	laws often not enforced effectively; fragmentation between policy and practice	Progressive laws in place with better regional enforcement and systemic support

As the table shows, the degree of regional implementation and systemic support differs greatly even if both nations have adopted national laws and accepted international accords. Particularly in Flanders, Belgium's autonomous government makes more specialised, well-funded actions possible. By contrast, Latvia suffers notable implementation gaps despite a centralised legal structure because of poor coordination and employer involvement. In the next chapters, these differences are also covered in connection to field interviews and case study results.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

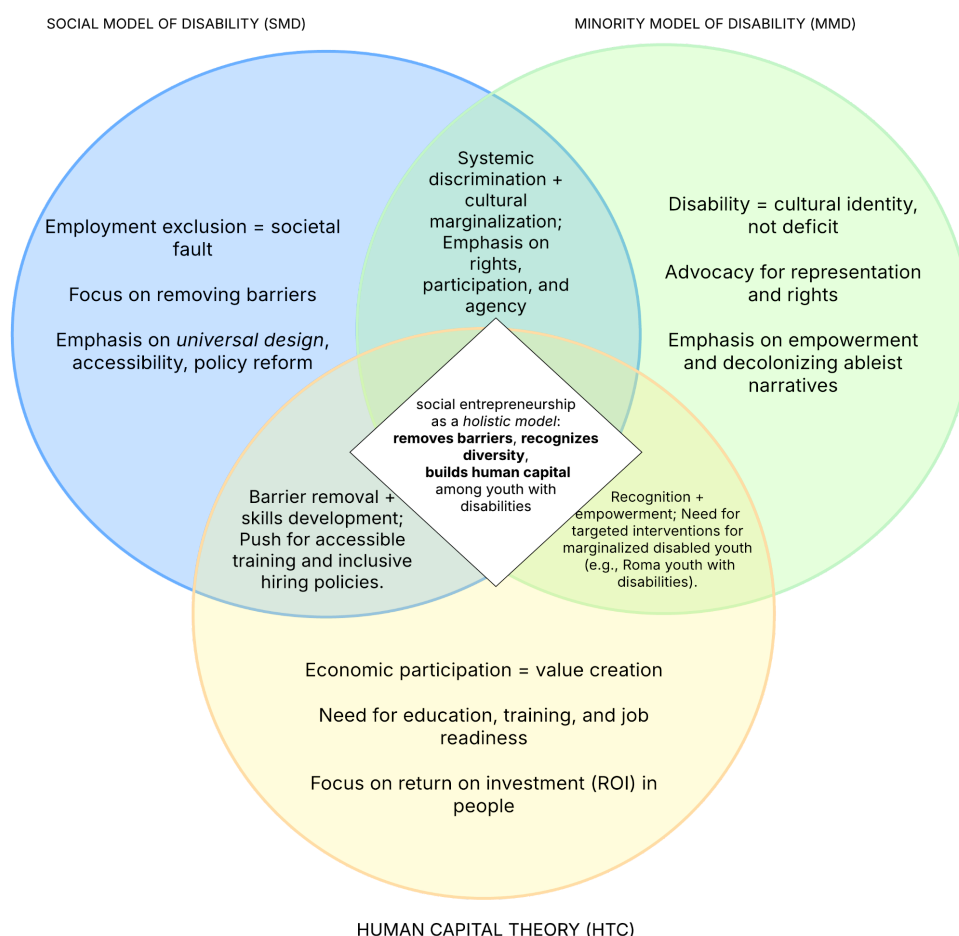The research framework for this study uses the Social Model of Disability (SMD) and Human Capital Theory (HCT) and Minority Model of Disability (MMD) to analyze persons with disabilities and their employment access through social entrepreneurship. This framework enables researchers to understand how structural barriers and identity-based marginalization and individual capability investments interact

to shape employment experiences of young people with disabilities in Latvian and Belgian social enterprises.

The research framework consists of three parts which enable advanced investigations that both analyze discriminatory social systems and explore empowerment strategies through skill development and cultural awareness and institutional changes. The models focus on social economic and cultural aspects of disability which directs result interpretation and shapes study questions.

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Employment via Social Enterprise*

SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY (SMD)   MINORITY MODEL OF DISABILITY (MMD)

Employment exclusion = societal fault

Focus on removing barriers

Emphasis on *universal design*, accessibility, policy reform

Systemic discrimination + cultural marginalization; Emphasis on rights, participation, and agency

Disability = cultural identity, not deficit

Advocacy for representation and rights

Emphasis on empowerment and decolonizing ableist narratives

social entrepreneurship as a *holistic model*: **removes barriers**, **recognizes diversity**, **builds human capital** among youth with disabilities

Barrier removal + skills development; Push for accessible training and inclusive hiring policies.

Recognition + empowerment; Need for targeted interventions for marginalized disabled youth (e.g., Roma youth with disabilities).

Economic participation = value creation

Need for education, training, and job readiness

Focus on return on investment (ROI) in people

HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY (HTC)

This framework demonstrates how social entrepreneurship operates as a connecting force between different theoretical perspectives regarding disability and work. The Minority Model of Disability serves as the foundation for this paradigm which unites Human Capital Theory's emphasis on skill deficits and training needs with the Social Model of Disability's focus on social barriers. Social entrepreneurship tackles both structural barriers to inclusion and individual capacity development simultaneously which connects these concepts.

Social entrepreneurship functions as effective agents who establish inclusive employment opportunities and promote skill advancement for people with disabilities. The dual approach of social entrepreneurship

challenges established beliefs while fostering empowerment which proves the value of human capacity development and drives comprehensive societal change. The feedback loop demonstrates how successful inclusive employment outcomes create a positive impact on business operations and societal attitudes.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative study design used to investigate how social entrepreneurship enhances job prospects for young people with disabilities in Latvia and Belgium. It details the choice of participants—both professionals and young people with disabilities—and clarifies data collecting techniques including interviews, workshops, and document analysis, therefore outlining the justification for using a comparative case study approach. The chapter also covers ethical issues and describes the thematic analysis technique applied in interpretation of the results.

4.1. Overview of Research Design

This research employs a qualitative comparative case study approach to study how social entrepreneurship generates employment opportunities for young disabled people in Belgium and Latvia. The qualitative method enables researchers to study how social entrepreneurs experience their context and how they implement organizational strategies and sociopolitical processes that exist within their activities. The study selected RB Café in Latvia and Werkburo in Belgium because these social entrepreneurs lead the field in their commitment to inclusive employment practices while matching the research objectives.

The case study method would be an appropriate choice for this study because it enables detailed examination of complex social phenomena within specific systems (Coombs, 2022). The case study method enables researchers to study contemporary subjects in their natural context by collecting multiple data sources to develop comprehensive knowledge beyond basic narratives or illustrations (Coombs, 2022; Hyett, 2014). Ellinger and McWhorter (2016) emphasize that this research approach delivers essential empirical knowledge and theoretical progress especially when studying dynamic social environments such as social businesses.

The CCS method developed by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) serves as a foundation to study both internal case specifics and external case differences which reveal how practice and policy interact across different contexts and scales and time periods. The research stages recommended by Crowe et al. (2011) for case study research align with this critical multi-layered perspective which includes case identification and selection and data collection and outcome evaluation and interpretation and final publication.

The research design serves both comparative purposes for understanding and for gaining new knowledge through its analysis of complex relationships between context and action while generating theoretical insights from real-world stories and environments.

4.1.2. Justification for Case Study Approach

The literature on social work and disability features numerous qualitative case studies which investigate disability employment practices. The Open Mind program at Telenor became the focus of Kalef et al. (2014) research which demonstrated the successful implementation of inclusive corporate policies. Taubner et al. (2021) conducted a longitudinal qualitative case study which demonstrated that supportive workplace environments and continuous training are essential for both RB Café and Werkburo to achieve sustainable employment of people with intellectual disabilities.

The research method described by Coombs (2022) involves case study research as a technique that seeks to gain in-depth understanding of real-life events within a specific limited context including workplaces, organizations or social businesses. The research method grants freedom to use various qualitative data sources which include document analysis and interviews for better understanding of challenging social issues (Hyett, 2014, Guetterman, T. and Fetters, M. 2018). The research bases its analysis primarily on semi-structured interviews but incorporates freely available policy papers as contextual information.

The research design fits perfectly with this study's goals since it aims to understand how social entrepreneurs establish employment opportunities for disabled young people across various European locations. The research benefits from selecting RB Café in Latvia and Werkburo in Belgium because this approach enables meaningful analysis of inclusive employment policies in various social and cultural and legislative environments. The narratives reveal how national welfare regimes and organisational structures and stakeholder responsibilities influence inclusive employment practices while showing how to implement inclusive employment practices.

The research method reveals hidden barriers and enablers which Sundar et al. (2018) would describe as subtle impediments and enablers that large-scale or quantitative research might miss. The detailed real-world data obtained through case studies serves to improve both practical applications and policy development as well as theoretical advancements in social work and disability studies.

The case study approach provides the most precise and suitable framework to address the research questions of this thesis. The research method enables the investigation of personal experiences together with systemic problems that exist within defined social entrepreneurship contexts. The detailed findings

from this research method will serve as the foundation for both cross-case analysis and broader theoretical exploration in the subsequent chapters.

4.1.3. Case Selection

The research focuses on Latvia and Belgium as EU member states to analyze the role of social entrepreneurs in creating employment opportunities for young people with disabilities. The EU framework on social welfare and disability rights guides both nations yet their unique socioeconomic and legal and cultural environments shape social entrepreneurship activities and disability employment solutions. The comparative research approach provides better understanding of social entrepreneurs' operations across different national contexts and their applicable lessons. The research focuses on Latvia and Belgium because their social entrepreneurship environments and disability employment systems present both matching and opposing characteristics.

The research selected RB Café in Latvia and Werkburo in Belgium because they met essential CCS criteria which guided case selection according to the Comparative Case Study (CCS) approach (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). The CCS framework matrix shows that each case meets the criteria across horizontal vertical and transversal axes.

Table 2. Case Selection Criteria

CCS Selection Criteria	RB Café (Latvia)	Werkburo (Belgium)
Phenomenon-Focused	Focuses on inclusive employment for PWD via a socially driven café business	Provides tailored work support and integration services for PWD through job coaching
Contextually Diverse (Horizontal Axis)	Operates in a post-Soviet, emerging welfare state context with limited funding	Embedded in a well-developed welfare regime with more established supports
Multi-Scalar Embeddedness (Vertical)	Influenced by local NGOs, municipal support, and EU inclusion agendas	Intersects with regional employment policies, social protection laws, and EU funding
Temporal Depth	Evolved from a small initiative to a well-known café; adapted to shifting policies	Long Standing structure within a broader social economy network; refined over time
Theoretical Contribution Potential	Highlights entrepreneurship as social activism in under-resourced environments	Illustrates complex interaction between formal supports and grassroots practices

These cases, as seen above, provide analytical similarities as well as contextual contrast, thereby offering a comprehensive, comparative knowledge of how social entrepreneurs support employment among young

people with disabilities in different European environments. This method supports Coombs's (2022) notion that case study research should aim for theory generating through thorough contextual immersion and is in line with the CCS emphasis on tracking policy-practice dynamics across time, size, and geography (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017).

4.2. Data Collection Method

To fully address the research aims, this study used two primary data gathering methods within a case study framework: semi-structured, in-depth interviews and policy document analysis. These methods were chosen to capture both the personal experiences of those engaging in inclusive employment initiatives and the larger institutional and policy contexts in which these practices exist.

4.2.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

The research used semi-structured interviews as its main data collection method because these interviews allow researchers to obtain detailed and context-specific narratives. The research method enabled essential theme exploration while allowing participants to share unexpected ideas according to Bryman (2012) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). The interview guide presented in Appendix A maintained consistency across all interviews yet open-ended questions allowed participants to share personal stories and examples and thoughts.

The research used purposive sampling to select various stakeholders from Latvia and Belgium including social workers and social entrepreneurs and job coaches and policymakers and disabled children. The research team conducted 11 interviews across both countries. The selection process for participants focused on individuals who directly experienced social enterprises and inclusive employment practices. The research team recorded all interviews before transcribing them for thematic analysis to identify patterns and contrasts and contextual details.

The research approach delivered extensive and adaptable results yet created certain constraints during the study. The research team implemented reflexive practices together with iterative question refinement and accessible inclusive language to address potential limitations such as interviewer bias and language obstacles and power dynamics when working with marginalized adolescents.

4.2.2. Participant Selection Criteria

The research included 6-7 participants from each nation to achieve balanced opinions from all stakeholder groups. The research involved 11 participants in total. The study included participants who directly worked at selected social enterprises or had knowledge about their inclusive employment practices. The

participants had worked at the social enterprise for at least six months which provided them with practical experience to form their opinions. (Appendix C.)

The research selected participants from two organizations which operated in Latvia and Belgium. The selection of businesses focused on their proven dedication to youth disability inclusion through employment and their position in different national contexts for comparative analysis. The research employed purposive sampling to select participants who would provide deep and diverse insights about the research topic (Patton, 2015). The selection of participants included various categories to ensure diverse perspectives about the topic.

❖ People with disabilities working for social enterprises: These participants shared firsthand stories of their experiences, obstacles, and triumphs in obtaining and retaining employment in the social enterprise sector.

❖ Social entrepreneurs, or managers of social enterprises: Social entrepreneurs shaped the career opportunities available to young people with impairments. Their opinions showed organisational strategies, practices, and issues related to inclusive employment.

❖ Job coaches and support staff: These participants provided information on the specific techniques and interventions utilised to assist people with disabilities in the workplace, such as mentoring, training, and accommodations.

❖ Stakeholders from governmental and non-governmental organisations: These participants, including policymakers, advocates, and representatives from disability inclusion organisations, were invited to investigate the external environment that supports or hinders social enterprises' efforts to provide inclusive employment.

4.2.3. Interview Process

The interviews took place either face-to-face or through digital platforms like Zoom based on participant preferences and schedules. The choice of interview format depended on both the participants' physical location and their ability to participate.

The participants gave their consent before the audio recording of all interviews began. The recording process enabled accurate transcription while allowing the researcher to focus on active listening during the interview. The research team employed experienced translators to work with participants who had limited English proficiency in order to prevent language barriers from affecting data quality.

4.3. Analytical Approach and Coding Strategy

The research team conducted thematic analysis through Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase methodology to analyze qualitative data from WISE participants and staff members and policy

stakeholders through semi-structured interviews. The six-stage process of data familiarization followed by initial coding and topic development and theme review and theme definition and reporting provided researchers with a flexible yet rigorous framework to interpret meanings.

The researchers applied mixed coding to operationalize their theoretical framework while maintaining focus on participant life experiences. The research method combined theory-based deductive coding which followed the study questions and conceptual framework with data-based inductive coding to reveal new patterns directly from the data. The combined coding method allowed researchers to conduct a detailed and complex analysis of data through the integration of theoretical expectations with participant-provided diverse facts. The research design allowed for efficient data organization and cross-site comparisons and systematic theme and code development across the two case study sites RB Café and Werkburo which operated in different national and policy contexts.

4.3.1. Deductive Coding: Applying Theoretical Constructs

Deductive codes were created before the formal coding procedure and were directly informed by the research problem and theoretical frameworks. These codes were improved and presented using participant statements to better indicate how their experiences aligned with the theories. For example, when describing systemic hurdles such as "inaccessible technology," a participant's statement, "I couldn't access the software needed for my tasks, and that made me feel left out of the team," clearly demonstrates the real-world impact of such barriers. This remark brings the theoretical subject into focus through personal experience. Based on the social model of disability, the following codes were developed:

- Systemic barriers (e.g., inflexible job design, inaccessibility of public transport, employer prejudice)
- Policy fragmentation (e.g., lack of coordination between employment and disability services)
- Attitudinal stigma (e.g., low expectations from supervisors or co-workers)
- Inadequate accommodations (e.g., inaccessible technology or lack of job coaching)

These codes allowed the researcher to identify and track situations in which structural and institutional constraints harmed equal employment. Similarly, Drawing on human capital theory, the following codes were applied:

- Skill-building (e.g., development of hard and soft skills)
- Training opportunities (e.g., job-specific training, shadowing, mentoring)
- Workplace readiness (e.g., punctuality, task completion, confidence)
- Pathways to open employment (e.g., transitions into mainstream work environments)

These codes helped in determining the extent to which SEs serve as developmental spaces for young people with disabilities, preparing them for greater labour market engagement. Participants' responses,

such as *"I learnt time management and how to work in a team—skills I never had before,"* exemplified the transforming influence of these growth opportunities.

4.3.2. Inductive Coding: Capturing Lived Experience

Alongside deductive coding, inductive coding was used to ensure that the analysis remained responsive to the richness of participants' narratives and to identify themes not fully captured by existing theories. This phase involved repeated readings of transcripts and open coding that emphasized descriptive, interpretive, and affective dimensions of the data. Key emergent themes included:

- Emotional safety: Participants often spoke about needing psychologically safe workplaces where they felt accepted and not judged for their disability status.
- Belonging and community: Many participants described their workplace as a "second family," emphasizing peer support and social connectedness.
- Symbolic visibility: Some participants highlighted how being employed challenged societal perceptions of their capabilities and allowed them to "be seen" in public life.

These inductively derived themes provided critical insights into the symbolic, emotional, and social value of inclusive employment, expanding the analysis beyond functional outcomes to include the role of identity, dignity, and self-recognition.

4.3.3. Open Coding: Breaking Down Data into Meaningful Segments

The coding procedure began with open coding, the first stage of theme analysis, which involved breaking down the material into smaller, more understandable chunks. These segments were characterised as units of meaning, which may be full phrases, sentences, or small paragraphs, depending on the context and content. The goal was to discover underlying thoughts and ideas in the data that were pertinent to the study objectives.

For example:

- When a participant mentioned, *"The lack of accessible transport makes it harder for me to get to work,"* this would be coded as "inaccessible transport".
- Another statement such as, *"My colleagues help me feel like part of the team," this would be coded as* "peer support".

During this stage, each chunk of data was given a code that encapsulated its main idea. As participants evaluated the problems and rewards of their job experiences, codes such as "lack of accessibility", "emotional safety", and "feeling of belonging" emerged. This initial coding process helped to lay the groundwork for the analysis by identifying a wide range of subjects and significant concepts that were then developed into bigger themes.

By using open coding, all essential data was considered, and no important concepts were neglected during the research. This part of data analysis was crucial for better understanding the different and multifaceted experiences of youth with disabilities in inclusive employment environments.

4.3.4. Axial Coding: Identifying Relationships and Grouping Codes

Following open coding, the research moved on to the axial coding step, which involves grouping previously recognised codes into larger groups. This technique helped to organise the data by discovering correlations and patterns between the codes, resulting in a more systematic understanding of the challenges that participants encountered. Axial coding enabled the discovery of core concepts and revealed how different themes were related.

Codes such as "confidence-building", "peer relationships", and "individualised support" were put together under the category of organisational enablers. These codes highlighted the ways by which Social Enterprises foster a supportive and empowering environment that promotes skill development and social inclusion. Similarly, classifications such as "inadequate accommodations," "policy fragmentation," and "discriminatory attitudes" were classified as systemic barriers, highlighting the larger structural challenges that youth with disabilities face in the workplace.

Axial coding enabled data synthesis into more cohesive categories and the identification of correlations between various aspects of participants' employment experiences. This process produced a more nuanced knowledge of how organisational and structural issues affect the job chances of youth with disabilities.

4.3.5. Within-Case and Cross-Case Analysis

The research followed two stages of analysis which combined within-case examination with cross-case evaluation to study both individual case characteristics and common patterns between cases. The researcher studied each case separately to identify unique themes and findings that emerged from its specific environment. The research on RB Café analyzed how the organization's operational model together with external policy frameworks shaped the workplace experiences of Latvian youth with disabilities. The evaluation of Werkburo took place within its Dutch environment by considering local socioeconomic factors and political and cultural elements that shaped its inclusive employment opportunities.

4.3.6. Theme Refinement: Synthesis into Core Themes

The researcher conducted multiple rounds of code simplification and case comparison and theme improvement after using open and axial coding methods. The researcher evaluated the explanatory value of grouped codes in relation to study topics after they were sorted based on conceptual similarity.

Theme development emerged as the final step of the coding process. The study team refined broad categories into specific sub-themes through multiple rounds of analysis and iterative data comparisons. The sub-themes were merged into three main themes which accurately represented the study's primary findings.

The theme development process included a thorough evaluation to ensure that the connections between categories and sub-themes accurately represented the most significant aspects of participant experiences. The team evaluated theoretical implications of each subject during this phase to ensure their connection to the social model of disability and human capital theory and factual evidence. The study team developed central analytical themes through multiple iterative improvement cycles (Appendix D)

4.4. Researcher Reflexivity and Positionality

Research methods require researchers to interact closely with their positionality because researchers' backgrounds together with their assumptions and values construct knowledge through their interactions. I entered this research with a complete dedication to disability inclusion and youth empowerment as well as social justice through my academic training and professional work experience between Nepal and Europe as a second-year student of the European Joint Master's Program in Social Work with Children and Youth. Under the direction of Prof. Dr. Lolita Vilka of Rīga Stradiņš University guided the study process which deepened the critical reflection needed for research completion.

Throughout the study I maintained a reflexive approach because my role as a Global South young woman and social worker practitioner and future social entrepreneur naturally influenced my responses to research questions as well as my interactions with participants and data analysis. My supervisor and I conducted regular debriefs and maintained consistent positionality statements and memoranda to help me operationalize reflexivity. These methods enabled me to recognize epistemological assumptions together with cultural perspectives and power dynamics that could impact research findings.

My professional experience across social work and community development and disability advocacy provided me with essential understanding for data analysis. Great attention was necessary to avoid supporting current narratives and enforcing expected norms. I avoided interpreting participant

achievement through only economic or productivity lenses even though Human Capital Theory provided useful insights into employability and skill investment. The process of reflection allowed researchers to prevent the simplification of personal narratives into policy-oriented findings.

I avoided letting my focus on systematic critique overpower my recognition of participants' personal solutions and their resilience and goals when using the Social Model of Disability. Through reflexive participation researchers gained an improved perspective that integrated both individual self-determination and institutional constraints.

This reflective practice maintained both ethical and methodological and relational dimensions. The research approach aimed to present genuine and respectful representations of young people with disabilities and their working professionals in ways that would both advance academic understanding and create meaningful practical improvements.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

The researcher devoted extensive attention to ethical considerations throughout their study duration. The research followed social research ethical standards by ensuring participants received complete information about research objectives and their roles and withdrawal rights without facing any negative effects. The researcher obtained informed permission from all participants through the document found in Appendix B before starting the interviews. The participants received promises about data protection through pseudonyms which served to protect their identities.

The participants received promises that their responses would remain confidential until they gave permission for disclosure and that the data would serve research purposes only. The ethical issues became more important because of the possible weaknesses of the participants especially those with disabilities. The researcher paid close attention to create a non-judgmental supportive environment during interviews to enable participants to freely share their experiences.

The participants received coded IDs based on their job role and home country to protect their anonymity. The research team assigned "P" followed by a number to professional participants and "PWD" with a number to participants with disabilities. The suffixes "LV" and "BE" indicate participants from Latvia and Belgium respectively. The participants are listed in Table 4 (See Appendices).

The contributors share their unique insights about social business operational practices and inclusive employment challenges and workplace adaptation experiences for people with disabilities. Social business perspectives from professional actors and people with lived experiences provide a

comprehensive analysis of inclusive employment practices and policies and facilitators within this framework.

4.6. Challenges and Limitations

The research encountered multiple obstacles primarily because of accessibility issues and language differences and limited case study availability. The search for disabled people in professional environments proved to be the most significant difficulty. The research required extensive collaboration with organizations that support people with disabilities. These organizations played an essential role in making interview spaces accessible and in finding participants. The study likely excluded individuals with complex communication or assistance requirements which resulted in reduced diversity of experiences.

Language differences created obstacles during the research process especially since Dutch and French are spoken in Belgium. The research team used interpreters as needed to facilitate clear communication. The participants' involvement through interpretation worked to enhance mutual understanding but translation might still miss some subtle details or cultural backgrounds. The research focused on two specific companies operating in Belgium and Latvia. The study's limited scope restricts the ability to generalize findings about all social entrepreneurs operating in these countries. The research used in-depth case studies to deliver detailed insights about specific organizational practices and challenges and successful elements that support inclusive employment in real-world settings. The research findings contain relevant lessons which can be applied to similar situations.

As a researcher without disability experience I recognize that my perspective might have influenced my interpretation of data. I maintained awareness of potential bias throughout the research process by performing participant check-ins to ensure accurate and respectful perspective representation and consulting with local support organizations.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

This chapter implements Bartlett and Vavrus's (2017) Comparative Case Study (CCS) approach to analyze social entrepreneurs Werkburo in Belgium and RB Café in Latvia. The research consists of three essential components. The first part includes within-case examinations of Werkburo in Belgium and RB Café in Latvia. The research investigates all aspects of organizational strategy and employment policies and support systems for young people with disabilities in each social enterprise.

The chapter proceeds to a cross-case analysis which identifies similarities and differences between the two case studies through major theme lines. The chapter concludes with a transversal study that combines findings from both cases to establish general insights and identify patterns which transcend individual contexts thus improving understanding of social entrepreneurs' role in creating employment for young people with disabilities across European settings.

5.1. With-in Case Analysis (Horizontal)

The analysis of two social enterprises RB Café in Latvia and Werkburo in Belgium forms the basis of this section. The inside-case lens of Bartlett and Vavrus's (2017) Comparative Case Study (CCS) enables researchers to study the distinct contextual, institutional and organisational aspects of each case. The goal here is to document the actual experiences and operational approaches and obstacles and support elements of any limited system.

The analysis of multiple factors in Latvia and Belgium enables social entrepreneurs to understand their approaches to different governmental environments and social attitudes and internal cultures. The analysis of each case reveals both organizational strategy at the meso-level and employee experience at the micro-level.

5.2. Case Study I: RB Café (Latvia)

Latvia achieved progress in disability employment through the combination of national reforms with international standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The legislation supporting reasonable accommodation and anti-discrimination exists (Shaw et al., 2022; Oborenko & Rivža, 2018) but their application remains inconsistent. The lack of practical skills among companies to support impaired employees properly hinders progress because of stigma and poor employer awareness and inadequate enforcement (Khayatzadeh‑Mahani et al., 2019; Ebuenyi et al., 2019). Social entrepreneurs together with other initiatives have emerged to bridge these gaps by transforming public attitudes and developing tailored job opportunities (Oborenko et al., 2020).

RB Café represents an innovative initiative among such efforts. The establishment of RB Café in Riga served to create meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities through an inclusive public space. The organization established its mission to address social justice needs while meeting practical requirements because traditional employment opportunities were limited. This research examines how RB Café handled Latvia's policy framework while building its operational structure to eliminate deep-seated barriers for inclusion before facing financial and systemic challenges that led to its demise.

5.2.1. Overview of RB Cafe

RB Café established its operations in Riga Latvia during 2018 as a work integration social enterprise (WISE) which demonstrates how social entrepreneurship addresses employment challenges for people with disabilities.

The establishment of the café aimed to bridge the significant gap between vocational education and actual employment opportunities for disabled individuals in the job market. People with disabilities remained outside mainstream employment after completing vocational training because of institutional barriers which included discrimination and inaccessible workplaces and resistant employers.

The establishment of RB Café aimed to create employment opportunities while proving that disabled people can actively participate in professional settings. The café promotes social justice and dignity and employment inclusion and barrier reduction in society through its real-world hospitality sector job opportunities.

5.2.2. Organizational Model: A Social Enterprise with a Human-Centered Mission

The Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) status of RB Café enabled the organization to conduct business operations while pursuing social inclusion goals. The organization treated employment as a tool for social justice instead of economic purposes while making dignity and independence and visibility essential components.

RB Café established public-facing positions which allowed disabled workers to interact with the general public through its service delivery model. The public display of impaired workers challenged traditional beliefs about their abilities. The café operated with a non-hierarchical participatory management system which allowed staff members to take part in team coordination and make daily decisions. The organization's inclusive governance approach allowed people to participate while developing their sense of responsibility for their workplace.

The organization focused on transforming narratives instead of focusing solely on service delivery methods. The approach of RB Café demonstrated both symbolic power in transforming disability and productivity standards and economic focus in its operations.

5.2.3. Support Structures: Inter-Organizational Collaboration and Holistic Support

RB Café established partnerships with local disability organizations which proved essential for its early success. The alliances served three essential functions by providing psychosocial support while helping with recruitment and delivering specialized guidance about job adaptation and accessibility.

The NGOs functioned as unofficial advocacy groups to promote the café's objectives while organizing community backing. The groups maintained employee care continuity while providing wraparound services including counseling and career coaching and transportation assistance to complete the ecosystem.

The cooperative structure created an employment environment which extended beyond the immediate workplace. The system demonstrated relational assistance by showing that inclusion requires a broader network of social and emotional and logistical support instead of just employment placement.

5.2.4. Findings from RB Café

Through RB Café the researcher examines various barriers and advantages that social entrepreneurship presents as a disability employment solution for Latvian youth with disabilities. The thematic analysis yielded six fundamental themes which include employment paths and organizational model and support structures and systemic barriers and enabling elements and post-closure outcomes. The following section discusses each of these themes in detail.

The main goal of this project involved studying social entrepreneurship methods for sustainable youth disability employment in different European locations. The Latvian Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) model at RB Café demonstrates how to bridge the employment gap between vocational education and labor market entry which persists in numerous EU member states despite UNCRPD policy alignment.

A. From training to employment: A Supported transition

The disability employment gap in Latvia which persists between education training and work entry received its solution through RB Café. Young people with disabilities complete their official vocational training but face barriers to employment entry because companies refuse to hire them and work environments fail to accommodate their needs and ableist biases prevent disability-inclusive hiring.

The organization provided work-based learning along with contextualized support which led to meaningful employment opportunities. The café operated as a fully functional establishment in a public setting which established an authentic hospitality environment to employ and train young people with disabilities immediately. The organization operated as an inclusive employer while developing skills which served as a transitional bridge between school and regular employment.

"The training at this institution taught me both coffee preparation skills and self-assurance for workplace success. I've never had that before." (PWD2-LV)

The café served as a primary work environment for employees to practice their learned abilities while developing their interpersonal abilities and workplace self-assurance and professional understanding.

Before RB Café I finished my training but no one would hire me. The employer stated that I lacked experience while ignoring my disability status. The establishment provided me with training for people management along with time management skills and stress management techniques during peak periods. This experience built up my determination to pursue alternative employment opportunities. (PWD1-LV)

The experience of being treated as a capable worker—not through sheltered tasks, but in customer-facing roles—had a transformative effect. The employees received instruction in hospitality skills along with active participation in team planning and peer teamwork. Staff members received training in technical hospitality skills and team participation in daily operations and decision-making processes and peer collaboration.

"At first, I was scared to talk to customers, but my coach helped me practice. After a few weeks, I started enjoying it. I felt proud wearing the uniform—it meant I was part of something. People saw me differently." (PWD2-LV)

The management at RB Café explicitly stated that the establishment served as a transitional facility rather than a permanent employment destination. The model operated with a clear purpose of being transitional. The main goal was to build employee confidence and work experience while developing valuable abilities that would lead to broader employment opportunities. The program structure demonstrates a move from conventional welfare-to-work programs toward capabilities-based assistance which helps individuals achieve their potential in actual work settings.

The transitional character of the café operation created multiple obstacles for the organization. Some participants failed to smoothly transition to new employment after their departure from the café.

"I prepared to begin a new opportunity following my café experience yet the jobs I pursued lacked similar backing systems. One place said they couldn't accommodate me. That was disappointing." (PWD1-LV)

The study demonstrates that RB Café presented a good micro-model of supported employment but the system presented significant barriers to the broader labor market. The main challenge to job transition outside the café resulted from a lack of infrastructure access at regular workplaces for some individuals.

The socially creative business model of RB Café demonstrates successful employment transition practices which deliver technical workforce solutions and psychosocial care and visibility for young people with disabilities. Real inclusion requires training and ongoing scaffolding along with system-wide openness and labor market culture transformation.

B. Inclusion Beyond the Paycheck

The quantitative measures commonly used to evaluate employment success at RB Café demonstrate that the organization should be recognized for its essential qualitative and relational and experiential aspects of work. Workers received more than job placement because the community acknowledged their presence and honored their dignity and their value to the workplace. Traditional welfare-to-work programs focus on workforce development rather than person-centered inclusion in residual welfare states including Latvia as described by Esping-Andersen (1990).

The workplace culture at RB Café emphasized equal respect for employees and active participation while providing them with visible roles in its daily operations. Employees worked directly with customers while sharing task responsibilities and made team decisions.

One participant described his emotional response to this experience by stating that working at RB Café differed from charity since it delivered a real job environment with equal treatment. "*..People didn't talk down to us. The expectation for work performance at the café created an atmosphere which made me understand that I belonged to the workplace."* (PWD1-LV)

The employees' sense of belonging strengthened through their involvement in task-based activities as well as the symbolic value of being seen in public by the community. Staff members described their

uniforms as a source of pride because serving customers and attending team briefings demonstrated their professional capabilities to both customers and colleagues.

The employee explained their experience at work by stating: *"People saw me. Customers viewed me as both a barista alongside my disability status. I felt proud to share my workplace with others for the first time since starting there. (PWD2-LV)*

The WISE model depends on dignity-based employment which creates an opposite experience from traditional vocational rehabilitation programs and sheltered work facilities. Participants in these systems work at repetitive tasks with limited skill requirements within isolated environments which creates dependency while excluding them from society. The employees at RB Café gained agency through work while building their self-confidence and establishing professional connections with colleagues.

The café maintained its focus on building interpersonal relationships at work. The workplace operations included emotional security measures with transparent communication and adaptable solutions for sensory and cognitive needs. Working at the café provided me with the ability to ask for help when I needed it because my manager actively listened. (PWD2-LV)

The stakeholders who managed the café confirmed that inclusion functions as both a practical approach and fundamental principle. The organization pursued more than job creation because they wanted to demonstrate that all people bring valuable contributions.

"*Our experience showed that proper environmental conditions enable people to succeed in their work. The solution requires changing the physical environment instead of attempting to transform the individual. (P4-LV)*"

This approach supports social justice employment principles by emphasizing personal autonomy together with pride and personhood which traditional labor market statistics fail to capture yet matter profoundly to those who experience them. RB Café demonstrates through its model that inclusion requires more than contractual protections for employees. Daily practices based on respect along with empowerment and mutual recognition bring about this achievement. The establishment functioned as a dual-purpose workplace and small model of the inclusive society it wished to demonstrate through its practice of seeing people beyond their disabilities to recognize their abilities and goals and value their work.

C. Systemic Barriers: Sustainability Challenges

The social enterprise model demonstrated by RB Café exposed fundamental structural weaknesses that such programs face but still proved its capability to provide employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. The primary challenge facing RB Café was achieving financial sustainability. The café struggled to perform both its commercial business operations and its social mission objectives simultaneously. The café pursued profitability as a business goal but needed to provide necessary training and support alongside accommodations which required substantial financial resources. A business with social goals must invest substantial financial resources especially when delivering inclusive employment programs.

A participant emphasized the high cost of operating a café while providing appropriate training and social services to employees: *"The reality of running a café while ensuring that the people we employ are properly supported in terms of training and social services is expensive… We simply couldn't make the numbers work in the long run." (P4-LV)*

RB Café along with other social entrepreneurs face the dual challenge of maintaining economic sustainability while pursuing social goals which include tailoring training programs and disability accommodations. Grants along with community-based funding provided the café with limited financial support that typically lasted only for specific projects. The café faced occasional financial instability because of its minimal funding support. The business needed consistent long-term financial resources to secure stability for expansion and sustainable growth.

RB Café faced persistent financial challenges that revealed an inadequate policy framework for inclusive employment projects in Latvia. Despite Latvia's dedication to disability inclusion which matches the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), there exists a significant difference between disability-focused policies and actual institutional commitment. The Social Enterprise Law (2018) granted the café legal status but failed to provide financial assistance needed to sustain its business model. State-level financial instability revealed the unstable nature of these programs that function in a market-oriented economic system.

The dependence on short-term financing created a significant obstacle for RB Café because it blocked the company from developing lasting success strategies. The financial approach of the café depended on grants or project-based funding to support its social mission yet this method often generated financial instability.

The employee noted: *"We operated on thin financial resources with no future security in place. The situation felt like we operated on the edge of financial collapse every time funding disappeared."* (P2-LV)

The combination of social stigma presents itself as a significant barrier that hinders both financial stability and institutional transformation. The café made dedicated efforts to shift public views about disability and work yet the deep-seated biases toward disabled people's capabilities and dependability persisted. Such prejudices existed throughout societal norms which determined production values and economic worth as well as business attitudes.

RB Café faced cultural prejudices directly through its social entrepreneurship model which prevented the company from achieving scalability. The café successfully transformed local perceptions about disability but inclusive employment needed to expand beyond the local area to encounter broader social barriers.
A former employee at RB Café stated that the organization felt important in their small space yet external locations revealed widespread resistance to hiring people with disabilities. *"The external world showed little interest in our situation."* (PWD1-LV) The cultural inertia eliminates the long-term effects of RB Café's goal according to this quote. The cafe introduced an original concept yet social resistance prevented its wider growth. The company encountered insurmountable barriers in achieving maximum reach because of social resistance alongside limited financial resources.

The systematic challenges faced by social entrepreneurs led to the closure of RB Café in 2021 instead of financial mismanagement issues alone. The   café experience demonstrates why policy changes are essential to reduce the gap between inclusive language and financial support. The success of the café demonstrates that long-term commitment to inclusive employment models is essential for underprivileged groups including people with disabilities. Social entrepreneurs who achieve RB Café's level of impact face continuous risks for their extended influence because of these missing developments that prevent overall society from reaching inclusive employment reform.

D. Legislative Support as a Symbolic but Limited Enabler

Socially driven entrepreneurship received major policy support from the adoption of Latvia's Social Enterprise Law during 2018. The legislative framework enabled RB Café through formal recognition which provided access to state and EU-level funding streams. Through its legislation the law provided institutional backing which established the café as part of the national movement toward inclusive employment practices.
The new status provided by this recognition brought us visibility which we lacked previously as it established our official name and category and acquired legitimacy we previously did not possess. The

recognition received from this effort does not equal actual support. *"The law enabled   some new opportunities yet these openings did not sustain themselves. The funding we required to match the law's scope never materialized." (P2-LV)*

This perspective illustrates the role of legal frameworks in social innovation by reducing status ambiguity while validating mission-driven approaches and building inter-sector partnerships. The viewpoint supports the third research objective to understand how supporting environments can scale inclusive employment programs.

The case of RB Café demonstrates that symbolic policy assistance remains ineffective when there is no dedicated financial support. The statute provided official validation while it failed to ensure sustainable operation or long-term funding. The business closure demonstrates a widespread issue in developing social economies and post-socialist environments where institutional support for social enterprise remains underdeveloped because recognition and funding fail to align consistently. The story demonstrates how laws create essential foundational changes yet dependable long-term funding systems alongside capacity-building support are needed to create lasting sustainable outcomes from inclusive policy rhetoric.

E. Post-Closure Impact

RB Café permanently closed in 2021 because of financial issues alongside COVID-19 pandemic effects yet its effects extend past its operational period. The cafe made enduring effects on its team members as well as the broader Latvian social entrepreneurship community while establishing socially inclusive employment practices.

The closure demonstrated   RB Café's success at teaching employees valuable skills that led to new employment opportunities. The staff members experienced   different levels of inclusive working conditions after the café closed its doors.

A former autism employee described their experience at RB Café as fortunate because they obtained employment after the café ceased operations. The workplace environment is peaceful and the colleagues are friendly thus creating a supportive environment. The majority of former café employees failed to secure new employment opportunities after the business closed. The employees continue their job search but their unemployment status creates feelings of distress.

"RB Café was special. This place stood alone because it accepted me for who I truly am without any need for secrecy. The staff at my workplace understood my need for both specific instructions   and time-off when the environment became overwhelming. Most workplaces lack this practice. I miss the

routine and the people. I experienced safety at that workplace because everything followed a predictable pattern. The current situation makes me feel uncertain about everything." (PWD1-LV)

The specific assistance and organized structure of RB Café brought valuable benefits to all staff members particularly those with intellectual disabilities. The organization reveals the current challenges and discrimination that people with disabilities face while trying to find work. The staff gained valuable abilities from their work but the mainstream workforce maintained different levels of acceptance than RB Café provided.

The closing of the café led to important insights for local disability and social entrepreneurship communities because they understood how such models need ongoing institutional backing to survive.According to the RB Café owner: *"The café closure represented one of the most difficult choices I have ever faced." The business functioned as a community alongside being a safe space while making statements about proper inclusion practices. The team demonstrated its capability and dedication during the time we provided appropriate conditions. Current workforce struggles of some employees demonstrate that the current employment system remains unprepared despite having capable job seekers. The initiative failed because society did not offer lasting support for programs like ours."*

The owner stresses that RB Café operated as a community hub which provided essential stability and dignity for its workers beyond its role as an employment site. RB Café functioned as a pioneer to demonstrate inclusive work opportunities yet faced institutional barriers that made its long-term sustainability impossible. The businessman attributes the failure to the absence of consistent institutional backing for such projects rather than the individuals or the approach. The café successfully improved its neighborhood through positive changes yet insufficient financial backing alongside inadequate policy structures limited its full achievement.

The public discussion about inclusive employment and employee empowerment as well as the future of social entrepreneurs in Latvia continues to evolve because of RB Café. The cafe closure demonstrated how essential it is for lawmakers to establish permanent supportive legislation which would enable inclusive models like RB Café to thrive. The café's shutdown demonstrates the broader organizational challenges which social entrepreneurs face when they want to integrate underprivileged populations into the workforce beyond commercial failure. The discussions RB Café initiated about dignity and employment inclusion and disability rights continue to matter for its former staff members along with social entrepreneurs and activists who assess its impact. The social entrepreneurs' scene in Latvia along with its staff members continue to experience the effects of the café's community-based inclusive employment model. The initiative demonstrates that structural changes are needed to achieve genuine access and opportunities for young people with disabilities.

5.3. Case Study II: Werkburo (Belgium)

The implementation difference persists even though progressive legislation has been passed. The workforce participation remains restricted because of social discrimination and employer reluctance and insufficient accommodation protocols (Pinilla‑Roncancio & Caicedo, 2022; Nagtegaal et al., 2023). The implementation of policy monitoring and employer training by NGOs and advocacy groups helps to reduce these gaps (Meyers, 2016) but systematic problems still exist.

Werkburo operates within a very welcoming environment. Werkburo functions as a partnership organization in Belgium which uses policy alignment and public money to provide young people with disabilities specific employment opportunities. Werkburo benefits from its support systems which include job coaching and employer mediation and close relationship with area employment agencies whereas RB Café relies mostly on grassroots efforts. The research examines how Werkburo achieves sustainable employment outcomes through its combination of institutional backing and professional connections and individualized empowerment strategies.

5.3.1. Overview of Werkburo

The cooperative network Werkburo operates in Flanders and Brussels Belgium through its more than 25 partner organizations. The organization provides a Supported Employment model (Begeleid Werken) to assist people with impairments in their pursuit of regular labour market voluntary roles. Werkburo provides individualized work coaching that connects people to jobs based on their personal interests and abilities instead of traditional employment programs. The company's method enables disabled persons to work as active employees which leads to their social inclusion and economic self-sufficiency.

5.3.2. Organizational Model: Structure, Governance, and Delivery Mechanism

Werkburo functions as a decentralized collaborative organizational network which unites multiple Flemish and Brussels area players to deliver a unified community-based assisted employment model. The Werkburo operates as a coordinating center within a multi-organizational partnership framework to provide placement services and support and advocacy for persons with disabilities instead of functioning as a standalone entity. The service delivery at each regional office and partner organization operates independently yet remains connected through a shared mission and values that emphasize inclusion and empowerment and customized support.

The framework maintains person-centred consistency while adapting to local labour market conditions and cultural elements and institutional capabilities. The organization maintains coordination through

regular inter-organizational meetings and shared databases and collaborative strategy development sessions. "Every region brings something different to the table, and that's a strength. Our coordination approach respects that while keeping us aligned around the needs of the participants." – (P6-BE, Coordinator)

5.3.4. Delivery Model: Supported Employment Pathways

Based on international models, Werkburo's Supported Employment concept follows a five-phase, ordered road map. Every phase combines particular tools, records, and evaluation systems to guarantee traceability, flexibility, and client response to changing demands.

Figure 2: Werkburo's Supported Employment Delivery Model

The five-phase ordered road map of Werkburo's Supported Employment concept exists. The five-phase model integrates specific tools with documentation methods and evaluation systems to ensure traceability and flexibility and customer response to changing requirements. The approach provides valuable assistance to public organizations and businesses and social entrepreneurs who want to integrate people with disabilities into their workforce. The model enables sustained employment placements through its evidence-based approach which supports individualized interventions. The
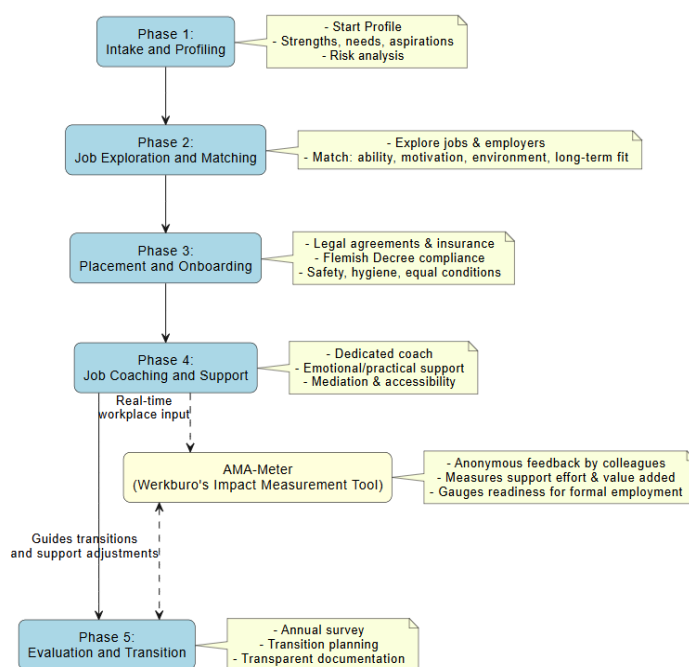
methodical approach enables organizations to transition from random inclusion initiatives toward purposeful scalable measurable inclusive employment practices.

5.3.6. Cross-Sectoral Collaboration: A Whole-Person Approach

Werkburo understands that employment cannot be separated from broader life contexts. Therefore, it works through cross-sectoral partnerships to address the full spectrum of support needs.

Job coaches and coordinators regularly collaborate with:
- Mental health services (GGZ),

- Housing providers,
- Education and vocational institutions,
- Social services (OCMW),
- Government labor services (VDAB),
- Family networks and informal caregivers.

These partnerships are essential for ensuring continuity of care, particularly when clients face housing instability, mental health issues, or financial insecurity. Werkburo's model embraces a holistic approach, where employment support is seen as one piece of a broader life puzzle. *"We're not just about jobs—we look at the person as a whole. Our partners help us support that bigger picture."* – (P6-BE)

5.3.7. Findings from Werkburo (Within Case - Vertical Analysis)

A. *Volunteerism as a Bridge to the Labor Market*

Werkburo approaches labour inclusion strategically using a volunteerism framework, unlike RB Café's paid employment model. This strategy presents participants with great chances for development by offering volunteer positions inside normal working conditions. These assignments are meant to be scaffolded experiences where people with disabilities could grow confidence, create social capital, and pick up transferable skills rather than replace paid employment. Empowerment—helping members to recognise their strengths and progressively enter the workforce on their own terms—is the main focus.

Werkburo recognises that meaningful inclusion entails developing a sense of self-worth and belonging, hence it provides these volunteer possibilities acknowledging that it goes beyond just getting a payback. This strategy fits the capabilities framework, which stresses helping people to realise their potential in ways that reflect their particular objectives rather than fit them into predefined roles.

One participant asked: *"I used to feel like my disability would always hold me back, but now I work in a local store, and I've learned so much. I feel proud to be part of the team." (PWD3-BE)* This quote highlights the psychosocial benefits of inclusive employment, which extend far beyond financial compensation. For many of the participants, the sense of accomplishment and belonging in the job is also, if not more, vital. Here the concept of self-development—a fundamental principle of the capabilities approach—is clear-cut as the person gains pride in their contribution and acknowledges their rising self-efficacy. This is consistent with Objective 1 since employment inclusion is about much more than just job entry and retention. It is about boosting self-esteem, developing confidence, and overcoming psychological obstacles causing long-term exclusion.

Crucially, volunteerism in this context is not only about returning; it's also a vital first step for people to land paid employment. By means of these encounters, people acquire the necessary skills, contacts, and confidence to pursue compensated full-time employment. These postings' slow, scaffolded character provides a low-pressure environment where people may adapt to the demands of the profession while still getting the required support and direction.

B. Collaborative Infrastructure and Cross-Sector Networks

Werkburo's cooperative success stems from its network of more than 25 partner companies spread around Flanders and Brussels, including a wide range of service providers, businesses, and governmental agencies. This network is meant to be a continuous ecosystem of support, offering not only jobs but also access to necessary services including healthcare, social inclusion initiatives, and vocational training.

A key partner from a local social services organization shared: *"We work closely with Werkburo because we believe in their integrated approach. It's not just about finding someone a job; it's about making sure they have all the support they need to thrive in that job, including mental health services, social skills training, and even family support when needed." (P7-BE)*This quote highlights the holistic nature of Werkburo's model, where different sectors of support collaborate to ensure long-term success for participants. Integrated support addresses a broad spectrum of obstacles experienced by persons with disabilities, so helping them to not only find but also keep employment long term instead of offering individual services.

A local employer who regularly hires participants through Werkburo's program added:*"The collaboration with Werkburo is invaluable. They don't just send us people looking for work—they send us individuals who are ready, trained, and supported. This kind of partnership makes it much easier for us to integrate these workers into our teams." (P6-BE)* This quote underscores how local employers benefit from Werkburo's model. The organization's preparation and ongoing support of participants mean that employers don't face the same challenges they might with other candidates, such as needing to provide extra training or support. The partnerships between Werkburo and employers are mutually beneficial, creating a sustainable model for both employers and participants.

A representative from the regional government remarked:*"Werkburo has been a critical partner in our efforts to integrate people with disabilities into the workforce. The government alone can't provide everything—it's the partnerships with organizations like Werkburo that really drive systemic change."(P6-BE)* This statement reflects the important role that the government plays in the success of social enterprises like Werkburo. While government funding and policy frameworks are essential,

cross-sector collaboration with social organizations, employers, and other service providers enhances the impact and reach of inclusive employment programs.

One of Werkburo's participants, reflecting on the support they received, shared:*"The way Werkburo worked with all these different organizations made me feel like I wasn't just part of one program, I was part of a whole network. I always had someone to turn to, whether it was for career advice or just to talk about how things were going at work." (PWD4-BE)* This testimonial captures the relational nature of Werkburo's work. It highlights the emotional and practical support participants receive throughout their employment journey, which is critical in ensuring that they feel supported, valued, and empowered at every stage.

Another participant from a vocational training organization, who works closely with Werkburo, added: *"What's unique about Werkburo is that they see the potential in people. Instead of just providing a generic program, they tailor everything to the individual. It's not just about preparing them for a job—it's about preparing them for a life in the workforce." (P5-BE)* This quote emphasizes the individualized approach that is central to Werkburo's success. By tailoring interventions and support to each participant's specific needs, strengths, and aspirations, Werkburo ensures that each individual is not just prepared for employment, but is also given the confidence and skills needed to succeed in the long term.

The sustainability of this model is also underscored by a partner in social inclusion services, who noted:*"The beauty of Werkburo is that they have built long-term relationships with both service providers and employers. This consistency means participants aren't bouncing from one program to another, and they don't lose momentum. They have a clear path and the support they need to follow it."(P5-BE)* This quote underscores the long-term continuity and predictability that Werkburo's collaborative model provides. Consistent relationships with both service providers and employers mean that participants have stability, which is critical for building confidence and career longevity.

C. *Embedded Policy Frameworks and Institutional Legitimacy*

Long-standing social economic investment by Belgium has produced a favourable policy climate for companies like Werkburo. By means of government and EU subsidies, Werkburo is able to maintain its job coaching and outreach programs, therefore guaranteeing that people with disabilities have access to real career prospects. Furthermore, the Begeleid Werken (Supported Employment) structure gives Werkburo institutional and legal support for its operations, therefore laying a strong basis for them. This policy structure enhances Werkburo's validity in the larger job environment and helps people with disabilities to be included into the workforce.

An official from government who knew Werkburo's approach thought: *"The policy infrastructure here is supportive in many ways. It's not perfect, but Werkburo benefits from a framework that helps legitimize its work and ensure that the people it serves have access to the resources they need." (P6-BE)*

Key to Werkburo's stability and profitability is its legitimacy within Belgium's larger social economy, which this quotation shows. It highlights the part policy infrastructure plays in helping businesses that prioritise social inclusion get institutional legitimacy that would help them be more credible and effective. Still, there are constraints even in the generally positive surroundings. Sometimes regional fragmentation—especially between Flanders and Wallonia—creates bureaucratic delays or discrepancies in service access.

These variations in regional policy approaches can make Werkburo's capacity to provide all people in need flawless, national services more difficult. One of the partner companies clarified: *"In Flanders, the system works pretty smoothly, but in Wallonia, there are more delays in securing funding or setting up the appropriate support. Regional differences can cause real challenges in terms of consistency of service provision." (P7-BE)*

This regional difference exposes structural obstacles that can restrict the efficiency and efficacy of social entrepreneurs even in developed welfare systems. Organisations like Werkburo find it challenging to guarantee that their services are universally available across the nation due to the disjointed policy scene, which could lead to inequities for people with disabilities.

Werkburo keeps making major progress in spite of these obstacles. Still, financial sustainability is a continual issue as the above passage from a Werkburo professional emphasises: *"We've had a lot of success with our model, but there's always pressure to maintain funding. We have to keep exploring new ways to generate income while staying true to our mission." (P5-BE)* This captures the financial precarity experienced by even seasoned social entrepreneurs under robust welfare regimes. Werkburo is always looking for other income sources to guarantee that its goal is long-term sustainable even with government and EU funds assistance.

Getting long-term financial backing highlights the discrepancy between institutional acceptance and consistent financing. Werkburo gains from a good policy environment, but the financial difficulties it encounters highlight the fragility of social entrepreneurs in preserving their activities.
An expert in policy who has worked with Belgian social entrepreneurs explained: *"In theory, Belgium has a robust framework for social enterprises, but the reality is that these models still rely too much on short-term funding. What's needed are more predictable, long-term policy instruments*

*that can provide stable financial support, particularly for initiatives that address labor market exclusion." (P6-BE)*This viewpoint emphasises the gap between governmental assistance and the financial reality of social entrepreneurs, therefore complementing Objective 3. Lack of long-term funding sources is a structural problem that prevents companies like Werkburo from growing and keeping their work over time.

Therefore, even if Werkburo gains from Belgium's institutional legitimacy, the ongoing difficulties of financial sustainability remind us that even in well-established welfare systems social entrepreneurs need thorough, long-term policy instruments to keep encouraging employment inclusion for underprivileged populations.

5.4. Cross-Case Analysis (Vertical)

This chapter offers a cross-case thematic synthesis to identify convergent and divergent patterns in how inclusive employment practices are conceptualised, operationalised, and experienced across two different European contexts following the detailed within-case analyses of RB Café (Latvia) and Werkburo (Belgium). Aligned with Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) multi-scalar Comparative Case Study (CCS) approach, this vertical comparison helps one to better grasp the interaction between organisational practice and the larger socio-political and economic surroundings in which these companies operate.

While also stressing important contextual differences, the cross-case study exposed numerous general features spanning national and organisational boundaries. Strong inter-organizational cooperation, embedded support systems (like job coaching), and a continuous emphasis on employee empowerment comprised shared enabling elements. But both situations also dealt with structural issues that limited scalability and long-term impact most notably fragmented service provision, short-term funding cycles, and the lack of lasting legislative support.

By placing this cross-national comparison on the rich within-case data, the study emphasises how institutional ecosystems—e.g., legal frameworks, funding sources—shape the opportunities and constraints faced by Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs), cultural norms—e.g., public attitudes towards disability—and market logics. Although RB Café ran in a more unstable and underfunded Latvian environment—despite its creative hybrid model and great local impact—Werkburo benefited from Belgium's extensive social economy infrastructure and multi-actor policy alliances.

This comparative lens highlights not just what inclusive businesses do but also how and why their models change in reaction to internal commitments and outside pressure. These results are distilled in five primary subject areas: structural obstacles to employment, human capital development, stakeholder

involvement, financial sustainability, and the symbolic significance of work. These issues taken together provide a complex, multi-dimensional picture of the circumstances under which inclusive employment models thrive or fail—and what this implies for future policy and practice in Europe.

5.4.1. Barriers to Employment

The obstacles to employment noted by interviewees include structural as well as attitudinal issues reflecting ingrained systematic exclusion. These comprised scattered policies, inadequate infrastructure, poor employer understanding, and widespread attitudinal discrimination. One participant related, *"I applied to over thirty jobs, and after they found out I had autism, I never heard back. They seemed to have seen my disability before they noticed my abilities.* This comment emphasises how, regardless of candidates' credentials, bias and lack of adaptation are sometimes ingrained in employment procedures.

The results reflect the worries expressed by Burchardt (2004), who contended that disability is sometimes misinterpreted in terms of personal shortcomings rather than the social isolation persons with disabilities experience. These obstacles are exacerbated even further by inadequate support networks inside official job institutions. One Werkburo member pointed out, *"Even the job centre didn't know how to support me."* Pointing out the gap between policy frameworks and personal needs, they simply continued directing me to broad programs that didn's meet my needs.

These institutional obstacles impede career advancement in addition to limiting workforce entrance. This emphasises the need of a change in employment policy away from deficit-based approaches that concentrate on "fixing individuals" and towards structural changes that give access, equity, and attitudinal transformation top priority (Oliver, 2013; Stevens, 2008). Beyond infrastructure and policies, private sector behaviour and market dynamics help to define exclusion. The contribution of the corporate sector to create disability-inclusive employment is not only important but also vital. Far more than legislative rhetoric alone, market forces and corporate practices define the reality of inclusion.

Although rights-based models such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) have established a strong normative basis, execution usually suffers when faced with the pragmatic decisions of profit-driven companies. Many still view lodging as liabilities—that which is "too expensive," "too time-consuming," or "too risky." These ideas support ableist narratives that exclude people with disabilities even with protective legal systems in place. As forcefully argued by Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al. 2019, one of the most important obstacles to work still is stigma, particularly for those with developmental disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities are not hired due of stigma, so this cycle of exclusion is self-perpetuating: their continuous absence from the workplace supports discriminatory attitudes. Legal obligations and market behaviour are not in line, which compromises the efficacy of rights-based policies and points to the need of more thorough, structural changes.

By contrast, Werkburo presents a striking illustration of what employer involvement may look like when inclusion is given top priority with deliberate and careful attention. Werkburo aggressively contacts, raises awareness, and fosters a change in attitude instead than waiting for companies to change on their own. Their strategy shows a great awareness that altering mindsets starts the process of inclusion, not the job offer. This strategy is reflected in (Antonopoulos et al. 2024), who underline how real employer involvement—especially via awareness campaigns and sensitisation activities—can destroy prejudices and change hiring policies. Focussing on structural change, Werkburo operates solidly within the Social Model of Disability, therefore shifting the emphasis from "fixing the individual" to changing the systems and perceptions excluding them.

Still, RB Café's experience shows how challenging it is to stay this sort of involved without consistent institutional and financial support. RB Café battled to scale its employment engagement initiatives despite its inclusive goal, finally collapsing under the weight of disjointed policies and inadequate support. This result exposes a painful reality: good intentions by themselves are insufficient. Legal systems, commercial incentives, and inclusive values must all line up if inclusive models are to survive and flourish. Addressing these structural gaps and guaranteeing long-term impact depend on trust and cooperation between the business sector and social entrepreneurs, as (Goodman et al. 2024) contend.

Another great obstacle still is widespread employer misunderstandings. Studies by (Gewurtz et al. 2016) revealed that companies frequently avoid hiring people with impairments out of concerns about cost and efficiency. These actively contribute to structural exclusion, not only cause benign misunderstandings. Worse still, some businesses interact with disability inclusion only to improve their image, viewing it as a performative gesture rather than a sincere commitment to equity as Antonopoulos et al. 2024 note. This superficiality reinforces rather than disturbs prejudice, therefore doing more damage than benefit.

What is desperately needed is a comprehensive and transforming strategy that combines inclusion into the very core of corporate culture instead of merely "add on." This entails putting in place significant disability policies in line with strong programs for staff members and companies. As emphasised by (Jupille et al. 2025) and Wendelborg et al. (2022), these approaches are vital in arming businesses with the tools, confidence, and knowledge to hire and assist staff members with disabilities in actual, long-lasting ways.

Moreover, matching private sector hiring with inclusive principles is strategically wise as well as morally right. Inclusive hiring policies improve workplace diversity and culture, therefore benefiting whole companies, claims Blanck and Adya (2017). Still, reaching this alignment calls for subtlety. There is no one-size-fits-all solution; companies vary and so are the needs of people with disabilities. Hafsteinsdóttir and Hardonk (2023), along with Janssens et al. 2021, stress focused interventions—strategies that consider the particular dynamics of every company while centring the views and experiences of impaired employees.

5.4.2. Building Human Capital in Inclusive Contexts

Unlike structural exclusion, the results underline the transforming possibilities of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) in developing human capital among young people with disabilities. WISEs were considered as settings that give chances for more general employability, confidence-building, and skill development. "Working here gave me a chance to learn things I never thought I could do—like managing stock, talking with customers, even just showing up on time," one participant said. These encounters fit Human Capital Theory, which holds that investments in education, training, and experience raise a person's productivity and economic potential (Schultz, 1961).

One Werkburo member said, *"I used to be afraid of interviews. But after all the help and practice here, I at last feel confident entering a room and discussing my skills."* This quotation emphasises the transforming power of customised coaching in developing not only technical job-seeking skills but also self-confidence and self-efficacy— fundamental elements of human capital development and psychological emancipation. It shows how young people with disabilities could overcome internalised obstacles and actively engage in the labour market with a fresh feeling of agency with consistent support. This helps Maâlaoui et al. (2023), who underlined the need of human capital in enhancing social and economic results, to do.

Furthermore, WISEs promoted personal development and identity transformation, therefore transcending mere technical proficiency. *"It's not only a job,"* one participant said. Here is where they believe in you enough to equip you for training and support your personal development. This contemplation captures the twin function of social entrepreneurs in promoting emotional as well as professional development. It fits Uršič's (2022) thesis that social entrepreneurs are transforming environments that foster skill development, self-worth, and social inclusion—ultimately helping to build human and social capital—not only places but also workplaces.

In all case studies, digital competency became clear as a key component of human capital development. Young people with impairments entering the workforce now find their capacity to negotiate digital settings not just a benefit but also a requirement. Still, digital inclusion differs depending on the setting.

Digital skill-building is included into the onboarding and coaching process at Werkburo, Belgium. (P2-BE)shared, *"We help each person learn tools like digital time trackers or how to use communication apps at work, step-by-by-step, based on what they can handle".* This reflects a national environment whereby digital infrastructure is greater and 34% of PWD report basic digital capabilities (Eurostat, 2023).

By comparison, RB Café (Latvia) works in an environment with less institutional backing. With (P1-LV) admitting, *"Most of our staff rely on verbal instructions—we haven't built a digital learning process yet,"* digital training is informal and inconsistent. This reflects national statistics, where just 29% of PWD have basic digital abilities (Appendix II), underlining the necessity of more inclusive digital capacity-building methods.

These results imply that digital inclusion goes beyond infrastructure to include easily available, customised capacity-building within the workplace. Though their efforts are impacted by more general national readiness, social entrepreneurs are quite important.

5.4.3. Stakeholders and Systemic Enablers

Although social enterprises are important means of inclusive employment, results show that a constellation of outside players greatly affects their efficiency. The relational dynamics of social entrepreneurs, state institutions, and local networks in co-producing paths to employment for young people with disabilities is examined in this section.

Professional participants in both situations noted a startling discrepancy between legislation and lived experience. "There are rules that state they have to recruit individuals like me, but nobody really checks if they actually do." This draws attention to the flaw in compliance-based models devoid of appropriate enforcement—a criticism levelled against Rios et al. (2023) and Jena (2022).

Administrative inefficiencies also limit access: *"I had to complete many.. many.. separate forms merely to acquire help for a job coach. The post had gone by the time it was approved.'* This captures the pressing need to simplify administrative procedures and guarantee that disability policies are carried out in reality rather than only in theory.

Positive results were also shown, though, when governments teamed with social entrepreneurs to offer career coaching subsidies and workplace adjustments. Although participants still underlined the gap between policy making and their own experiences, these alliances helped get customised support. "Sometimes it feels like the policies are made without talking to people who really live with disabilities," one participant said. This emphasises the need of integrating disabled people in policy making to guarantee that laws are not only passed but also successfully remove the obstacles disabled people run against in the employment market (Rolle et al., 2020).

Belgium's social economic model helps Werkburo since it encourages cooperation among government, civil society, and companies. This multifarious actor model improves access and enforcement. RB Café, on the other hand, ran inside a fractured Latvian policy framework devoid of coherent enforcement or financial incentives. These structural flaws limited its scale-ability and finally helped it to close.

Dealing with this disparity calls for grassroots involvement in policy development. One participant considered, *"Sometimes it feels like the policies are made without talking to people who actually live with disabilities."* This emphasises the need of include disabled persons organisations (DPOs), carers, and young people themselves in policy creation, execution, and evaluation. Participatory governance systems, co-design seminars, and civic engagement courses help to increase democratic legitimacy and pragmatic efficiency.

The results highlight how urgently a cross-sectoral policy approach including disability inclusion into more general labour market and social protection plans is needed. Legal systems run the danger of failing to bring about transforming change without this integration and of keeping symbolic activities instead of concrete results (Jasiyah & Suriadi, 2024; Uršič, 2022).

5.4.4. *Financial Sustainability of Inclusive Businesses*

Ensuring the longevity and large impact of their actions depends on the financial sustainability of businesses like RB Café that concentrate on inclusiveness. The financial restrictions of RB Café draw attention to the need of inclusive businesses investigating creative financing solutions, such mixed finance and social impact bonds. These models could provide complete plans for sustainable investment in human capital, therefore helping businesses to not only survive but also flourish in the competitive environment of today.

Studies point to effective financing systems helping programs targeted at young people with impairments run as well. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, for instance, forging partnerships across several sectors is essential for raising job possibilities and developing sustainable initiatives

(Taylor et al. 2021). Such alliances can help to improve resource mobilisation and provide access to other funding sources, therefore enabling the growth of businesses such as RB Café.

Including corporate partnerships and social impact bonds might greatly change the financing scene for inclusive businesses. These models underline common risks and rewards, which helps companies to fulfil their social objectives and guarantee financial sustainability. The work of (Nurmala et al., 2017) which addresses how business collaborations could improve logistical capacity for humanitarian projects, underlines even more the relevance of partnership dynamics. By creating more strong support mechanisms for sustainable operations, this strategic alignment could help companies concentrating on the employment of people with disabilities.

Programs targeted especially at young people with disabilities can also help to diversify income sources and build resilience. Programs that address financial literacy and entrepreneurship are especially helpful as, according to King et al., 2022 explores the need of life skills and personal development in supporting independence among young people. These initiatives empower young people by including financial literacy into the course, therefore arming them with the tools they need to start and run their own businesses.

Moreover, including mentoring initiatives into these businesses can help to transmit information and promote teamwork, which is essential for acquiring useful skills improving employability among young people with disabilities. Hughes's research highlights how cooperative successful systems change techniques in employment policy and suggests that customised support mechanisms can greatly improve job preparedness and chances for young people with disabilities (Hughes, 2017).

By investigating new funding mechanisms and extending enterprise development programs catered to the requirements of handicapped young, inclusive businesses like RB Café can ultimately greatly increase their durability and influence. These companies can construct an inclusive and sustainable business model that generates social as well as financial gains by using alliances, financial plans, and focused skill-building projects.

5.4.5. Symbolic and Emotional Value of Work

Beyond revenue and output, research participants often stressed the emotional and symbolic aspects of their jobs. Employment was said to provide social validation, dignity, and identity. As one participant said, "Before this job, I felt invisible... now I have a purpose and people know my name." This comment captures the claim made by Swain, Griffiths, and Heyman (2003) that employment helps to validate social recognition and identity, so essential for well-being.

Employment was routinely cited as a source of dignity, purpose, and social belonging in addition to being financially rewarding. I felt invisible before this work. Now people know my name and I have a goal. These thoughts coincide with Fraser's (2021) philosophy of recognition and justice, which underlines the need of respecting people's identities and contributions to society. For young people with disabilities, inclusive employment serves as an emancipatory practice promoting civic involvement and emotional well-being, transcending simple economic recovery. As observed by (Carter et al. 2020), the importance of work for these people consists in the restoration of dignity, social position, and a feeling of belonging.

One participant described *"it's more than money—it's about being part of something, having somewhere to go, and feeling respected."* In Werkburo, where participants felt noticed, supported, and socially connected, these emotional gains were very great. Saying "I'm working" changed the way family and communities saw participants as well.

Still, experiences of dignity and inclusion are rarely quite consistent. An intersectional lens shows how socio-economic level, gender, and ethnicity interact to produce these results. Young women with disabilities, for example, could experience compound discrimination, therefore limiting their access to front-line or leadership roles. Likewise, linguistic minorities or immigrants may run more difficulties getting acceptance and attention. Future programming ought to include gender-aware, culturally sensitive ideas to guarantee really inclusive employment.

 RB Café created a supportive environment as well, but its brief operational lifetime reduced its capacity to regularly provide these symbolic and psychological advantages. After it closed, participants talked of lost possibilities and grief.

The results support the opinions voiced by Kruger and David (2020), who contend that entrepreneurial ecosystems for persons with disabilities not only help the individual but also the larger society by challenging conventional employment standards. This helps to contribute to the more general debate on inclusive entrepreneurship and employment.

5.5. Transversal Analysis: Highlighting Dynamic Processes Over Time

This part offers a transversal study tracking over time the changing paths of the two chosen social enterprises—RB Café in Latvia and Werkburo in Belgium. Complementing Bartlett and Vavrus's (2017) Comparative Case Study (CCS) approach, this dimension emphasises temporal changes in practices,

perceptions, and impacts. It addresses not only the activities of every company but also the reasons behind the changes in these policies in response to internal reflections and outside circumstances.

5.5.1 Evolution of Organizational Practices

The way RB Café and Werkburo handle inclusive employment has changed significantly. Driven mostly by personal moral inspiration, RB Café started with casual employment policies and assigned simple duties to people with impairments. But with time—especially in reaction to national-level policy changes and increasing local municipality cooperation—its inclusion strategy evolved into a more ordered, policy-aligned framework. Today, inclusive employment is ingrained in organisational DNA rather than as a project.

Werkburo developed similarly from a customised, small-scale matching approach to a disciplined system including labour agreements, expert job coaches, and regional alliances. Originally concentrating on a small group, it now acts as a major actor shaping policy by means of cross-sector cooperation. Its steady increase reflects Belgium's better institutional assistance and quite solid disability employment policies.

5.5.2 Policy Adaptation and Systemic Embedding

The ever-changing policy settings in both countries have been among the most important catalysts in the development of the businesses. RB Café was prompted to adopt monitoring systems, receive governmental subsidies, and professionalise its activities in Latvia as a result of the passage of the Law on Social Enterprises in the year 2018. According to the testimony of one of the participants, *"Before the law, we were doing this from the heart." We were required to learn how to make reports, justify the impact, and think about the long term once the law was passed"* (p2-LV)

The evolution of Werkburo displays a more proactive engagement with policy via its history. Instead than adjusting to changes that are implemented from the top down, Werkburo takes part in the process of developing local employment programs for individuals with disabilities. This demonstrates that there is a two-way link between policy and practice, which is an essential component of transversal analysis. In this relationship, the enterprise is not only influenced by the system; rather, it is actively reshaping it.

5.5.3 Shifting Public and Stakeholder Perceptions

Although the change has been slow, both situations demonstrate that public and stakeholder views towards the inclusion of people with disabilities have shifted. As a result of RB Café's prominence in the media and in metropolitan centres in Latvia, popular prejudices were challenged, and the presence of people with disabilities in service professions became more normalised. *"In the beginning, consumers*

were interested or even reluctant, according to a manager who made the observation. Now, many people come specifically because they are aware that we are welcoming to all." (P1-LV)

Both Werkburo's ties with regional agencies and its reputation for successful placement outcomes have contributed to an increase in the level of trust that employers have in the organisation in Belgium. A larger cultural shift has occurred as a result of its long-term existence, which has contributed to the perception that employing individuals with disabilities is becoming more possible and advantageous, rather than being considered as a philanthropic act.

5.5.4 Growth Trajectories of Employees with Disabilities

It is possible that the transversal analysis exposes individual-level modifications among employees with disabilities, which is perhaps the most powerful finding. In the course of their personal development, participants from both businesses indicated a progression that began with early fear and progressed to rising confidence and the acquisition of skills. An employee from Latvia offered their thoughts, saying, *"At initially, I didn't talk much. There was a fear that I would make errors. At this time, I am training new employees. It's as if I find myself at home here."* (PWD2-LV)

Participants from Belgium who were interviewed discussed their experiences with more autonomy, expanded positions, and transitions into mainstream employment. These accomplishments were made possible by the long-term support mechanisms, which included various forms of coaching and follow-up. The experiences presented here highlight the vital necessity of time in the process of constructing employment ecosystems that are both inclusive and uplifting.

 In conclusion, our transversal approach sheds light on the fact that inclusive employment is not a singular intervention but rather a dynamic and ever-evolving process that is moulded by the conditions of institutions, the discourse of the public, and the actions of individuals. It is evident, through the process of tracing changes over time, that both RB Café and Werkburo are not only adjusting to changes in the external environment, but are also actively constructing more inclusive futures for young people who have impairments.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarises the study's results and insights, providing practical recommendations as well as concluding remarks on the research's broader implications. Drawing on the ideas covered in the

preceding chapter, we will describe major recommendations for enhancing disability employment practices and closing the gap between policies and persons with disabilities' lived experiences in the workplace.

The conclusion will discuss the study's contributions to the field, summarising major findings and emphasising the need of creating an inclusive workforce for persons with disabilities. This chapter will provide a path for establishing a more fair and accessible work environment, ensuring that persons with disabilities have the opportunity and support they require to thrive in the modern workforce.

Finally, the recommendations will focus on tangible initiatives for legislators, employers, and support organisations, emphasising the importance of systemic change, more inclusive workplace cultures, and increased investment in individuals with disabilities' professional development. In addition, this chapter will discuss potential areas for future research, noting gaps in our understanding of disability employment and offering approaches to advance inclusive employment practices.

6.1. Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the employment prospects of disabled young individuals through a comparative study between Werkburo in Belgium and RB Café in Latvia. The study draws from empirical data combined with stakeholder perspectives and theoretical understanding to demonstrate both the transformative capabilities and ongoing difficulties that Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) face in creating inclusive labor markets.

Social entrepreneurs offer employment opportunities alongside dignity and meaning alongside feelings of belonging to those who typically face marginalization in traditional labor systems thus they drive social innovation forward. The effectiveness of these firms depends heavily on the policy framework together with institutional support and multi-stakeholder engagement. The official recognition together with consistent funding and integrated support systems of Werkburo demonstrated its value as part of a well-developed ecosystem. RB Café demonstrated the disadvantages of operating independently from institutions despite its excellent grassroots initiatives. Systematic rather than symbolic inclusion becomes essential because these differences reveal its importance.

The research findings demonstrate that employment opportunities for disabled people including younger generations extend beyond monetary value. The initiative promotes human rights and social engagement

and empowerment for all individuals. Young people with disabilities require active support to become entrepreneurs and inventors instead of being confined to traditional employee roles. Similarly, the policy recommendations outline a roadmap which shows stakeholders how to transition from fragmented approaches to unified strategies that are scalable and sustainable. Disability inclusion needs to become an integral part of all life domains while society should harness the complete range of talent and innovation and leadership potential that young people with disabilities offer to society.

My intellectual exploration has been accompanied by a deeply personal transformation during my academic journey. Social entrepreneurs along with legislators and especially young disabled people transformed my understanding of what truly means to have inclusive employment. Recognition together with agency and belonging define work integration better than simply generating cash according to my new understanding. Social entrepreneurs' core individuals shared their direct experiences which revealed both existing challenges alongside small daily innovations that challenged them.

The thesis will enrich academic discussions while providing practical value to individuals who work toward building societies based on fairness and compassion and full employment opportunities for everyone.

6.2. Policy Recommendations

The research findings demonstrate how social entrepreneurs drive transformative change to create inclusive job opportunities for young people with disabilities. The success of these organizations depends heavily on the broader institutional and policy framework which guides their operations. The case studies from Belgium and Latvia demonstrate promising approaches yet reveal essential weaknesses in legal recognition and financial sustainability and systematic cooperation and overall support. The path toward scalable sustainable impact requires specific policy interventions.

The recommendations target national and local government officials together with public employment agencies and vocational training authorities and European Union institutions and international development organisations and social entrepreneurs networks and disability advocacy groups and corporate actors. Every stakeholder plays a crucial role in shaping inclusive employment ecosystems through their actions in policy design and service delivery and budget allocation and cooperation promotion.

The following five interconnected recommendations aim to boost Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) while integrating disability inclusion into national employment and youth agendas. The observed evidence from Belgium and Latvia guides the development of structural conditions which

support inclusive employment programs through innovative approaches and practical institutional backing and visionary planning.

6.2.1. Formal Recognition and Support for Social Enterprises

The creation of specific legal status for WISEs serves to enable their dual social and economic objectives. The formal recognition process will boost their operational legitimacy while granting them access to vital support mechanisms including long-term financing. The research demonstrates that structured social impacts including social impact bonds represent essential tools for WISEs expansion because they have proven effective in supporting sustainable growth in comparable sectors (Bezyak et al., 2020).

Public procurement processes that prioritize WISEs align with research which shows that specific economic policies create employment opportunities for marginalized groups (Phillips et al., 2015). The Belgian legal framework serves as an important example which shows how recognition can strengthen the operational strength of social enterprises (Schutz & Carter, 2022).

Governments must establish official legal recognition for Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) and establish them as integral components of national employment and social inclusion frameworks to achieve long-term sustainability and scalability.

To ensure long-term viability and scalability, governments should provide formal legal recognition to Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) and embed them within national employment and social inclusion frameworks.

Key Actions:
- ❖ Create a unique legal position for WISEs that recognises their social and economic missions.
- ❖ To encourage sustainability, implement long-term financing structures such as social impact bonds, grants, and tax incentives.
- ❖ Prioritise WISEs in public procurement, especially those who employ marginalised communities, such as youngsters with disability.

Example: Werkburo's integration into the Flemish supported employment system demonstrates how legal recognition can bolster institutional legitimacy, enhance sustainability, and expand operational scale.

6.2.2. Promote Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The success rate of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) will increase through active multi-stakeholder cooperation. The development of inclusive employment requires strategic partnerships between public employment agencies and suppliers of vocational training and the business sector and civil society organizations (Awsumb et al., 2020). CIRCLES represents a model that stands for Communicating Interagency Relationships and Collaborative Linkages for Exceptional Students. The evidence-based framework CIRCLES was developed by University of North Carolina at Charlotte researchers to enhance interagency collaboration in youth disability transition planning. The three collaborative levels of the framework include the Community-Level Team and the School-Level Team and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team which work together to establish a unified support network for students during their school-to-post-school transition (Carter et al., 2020). The OECD emphasizes that disability inclusion policies should be integrated into all policies to reduce employment disparities among youth with disabilities according to Shogren and Shaw (2016).

Key Actions:

- ❖ Encourage alliances among public employment agencies, commercial sector players, vocational training providers, and civil society groups.
- ❖ Establish cross-sector coordination systems to distribute resources and knowledge, thereby guaranteeing that inclusive employment becomes a regular institutional norm.

For instance, RB Café's limited operational resilience resulting from its isolated strategy emphasises the need of a cooperative ecosystem to support and increase effect.

6.2.3. Institutionalize Job Coaching and Holistic Support Systems

The successful workforce integration of youth with disabilities depends on establishing job coaching programs and complete support systems within institutions. The placement outcomes for youth with disabilities improve substantially when job coaching programs receive stable funding and job coaches receive specialized training and when holistic wraparound services include counseling and life skills training (Rumrill et al., 2017). The OECD has established that early intervention combined with complete support systems plays a crucial role in helping young people with disabilities transition smoothly into the labor market (Pletzen et al., 2021). Research supports the need for personalized assistance because ongoing support and focused coaching leads to better job maintenance and achievement results for this population (Hartman et al., 2019). The achievement of inclusive employment demands more than job accessibility because it needs sustained personalized assistance.

Key Actions:
- ❖ Provide stable funding for job coaching programs within social enterprises.

- ❖ Offer training for job coaches, social workers, and employers on inclusive practices and disability awareness.
- ❖ Ensure the availability of wraparound services, such as counseling, housing support, and life skills training.

Werkburo's integrated support approach significantly enhanced both job retention and the personal development of employees with disabilities, demonstrating the value of holistic models.

6.2.4. Mainstream Disability Inclusion in National Youth Employment Policies

National youth employment policy requires disability inclusion as a fundamental element to achieve lasting impact. The development of an equitable employment framework depends on setting measurable inclusion targets and making public efforts accessible through specific criteria (Iwanaga et al., 2024). The OECD supports the need for detailed data systems that track employment results through disability status breakdowns because this enables effective monitoring and assessment. Systematic approaches will help eliminate the workplace barriers that young people with disabilities face. Disability inclusion needs to become a permanent part of mainstream policy to achieve lasting impact instead of being confined to short-term or special programs. The implementation of measurable inclusion targets for youth with disabilities should be established within national employment initiatives.

Key Actions:
- ❖ All publicly supported job and training initiatives must meet accessibility criteria and incorporate universal design.
- ❖ Creating strong data systems that break down employment results by disability status.

This mainstreamed, intersectional approach recognises the different realities of adolescents and promotes broader policy impact. People with disabilities must be viewed as entrepreneurs, inventors, and change makers, as well as employment beneficiaries. Inclusive entrepreneurial education and incubation programs for kids with impairments.

6.2.5. Facilitating International Knowledge Exchange and Model Adaptation

International knowledge sharing enables youth with disabilities to develop innovative solutions. The tested model Werkburo demonstrates how best practices adapted to specific contexts succeed in various socio economic environments (Mbazzi et al., 2024). The comparison of different areas reveals valuable successful strategies which WISEs can use to learn from each other before applying these lessons in their local settings (Carlson et al., 2020). Pilot projects together with cooperative funding programs create

opportunities for these interactions which build a worldwide community dedicated to inclusive employment promotion (Iwanaga et al., 2018).

These recommendations collectively promote a fundamental shift in the current approach to inclusive employment for young people with disabilities. The establishment of significant job performance pathways depends on supportive frameworks and policy commitment to diversity and teamwork promotion. Regional and international institutions (e.g., the European Union, development agencies)—should focus on

Key Actions:
- ❖ Support pilot initiatives that modify tested concepts, like Werkburo, to fit different socioeconomic and cultural settings.
- ❖ Turn on peer sharing among international social entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Fund comparative research to find and spread context-sensitive best practices.

The exchange of knowledge between different nations helps reduce duplicate efforts while speeding up the adoption of successful models across international borders. These concepts demonstrate a movement from project-based inclusion toward systemic long-term transformation. The implementation of inclusive youth employment for people with disabilities requires a unified strategy which unites visionary leadership with institutional backing and cooperative governance. Social companies that receive both moral and structural support can transform into strong drivers of dignity and economic resilience and equity.

6.2.6. Mainstreaming Digital Literacy in National Youth Employment Policies

The growing importance of digital skills in modern labor markets requires immediate implementation of digital literacy programs for young people with disabilities to establish inclusive job opportunities for the future. Young people with disabilities encounter significant barriers to digital access and participation because digital technologies affect almost every business operation. Specialized digital literacy programs designed for their needs enable individuals to navigate the changing workforce better while improving their employability and independence and inclusion.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how essential digital tools and platforms have become for communication and remote work and skill development which makes digital inclusion essential for employment policies (Goggin & Newell, 2021). Digital literacy mainstreaming provides young people with disabilities with better career prospects while ensuring their readiness to join the broader digital economy. National youth employment policies that incorporate digital literacy

education will create digital opportunities for young people to enter e-commerce and digital content development and coding and customer service and other fields.

Key Actions:

- ❖ The development of specialized digital literacy training programs for young people with disabilities should focus on teaching essential skills including coding and digital communication and online work tools and cybersecurity.
- ❖ The integration of digital literacy with vocational education and employment programs will enhance general skill-building initiatives through digital literacy inclusion. The development of inclusive integrated learning paths requires collaboration between vocational trainers and digital literacy providers.
- ❖ The development of training materials and tools with accessibility features for different disabilities (e.g., captioned films for the hearing impaired, screen readers for the visually impaired) will ensure digital accessibility.
- ❖ Young people with disabilities should receive digital mentoring along with tools that support their digital learning journey and must have access to ongoing support after training.

Examples of Successful Models:

- ❖ Be My Eyes: The software enables video conversations to unite people with visual impairments and blindness with volunteers who help them with their daily needs. The models demonstrate the need to create accessible technologies which deliver practical solutions to people with impairments.
- ❖ The Project Search: The program trains young people with disabilities to work in corporate settings while teaching them digital skills. The program's success in adding digital tools to training curricula for young people with disabilities demonstrates how current digital technology initiatives can be expanded.

National youth employment policies should include digital literacy training to prepare youth with disabilities for success in the modern digital environment. The implementation of this approach will establish fair and accessible opportunities which aligns with the dual objectives of decreasing disability employment disparities and building a skilled and competitive workforce.

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Appendix A:
Interview Guide Template

Introductory Statement:

Hello, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is Bishakha and I am conducting research for my thesis as part of my Master's program in Social Work. The aim of this research is to explore how social enterprises can create employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. Your insights are incredibly valuable and will help provide a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this field.

Disclaimers & Ethical Information

1. Informed Consent

Before we begin, I would like to make sure you understand the nature of this interview and your rights as a participant. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can choose to stop at any time without any consequences. You also have the option not to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with.

2. Confidentiality

All the information you share during this interview will remain confidential. Your personal details will not be shared with anyone outside of this research. Any quotes used in the final thesis will be anonymized, and your name will not be mentioned. I will use a coding system to protect your identity, and I will not disclose anything that could personally identify you.

3. Audio Recording

I would like to audio-record this interview to ensure that I capture everything you say accurately. However, please know that the recording will only be used for this research, and it will be kept secure. If you prefer not to be recorded, please let me know, and I can take notes instead.

4. Consent to Proceed

Do you consent to participate in this interview under these conditions? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Socio-demographic Information (not for recording):

Country: _____

Profession: _____

Education: _____

Place of work: _____

Years of experience: _____

Table 4: Construction of Interview Guide

A. FOR PROFESSIONAL PARTICIPANTS	
Research Questions	**Guiding Questions**
How do social enterprises address the barriers that limit the employability of youth with disabilities, such as lack of education, accessibility, or discrimination?	1. What are the main barriers that youth with disabilities face when trying to enter the workforce? 2. What strategies does your social enterprise implement to overcome these barriers? 3. Could you describe any specific changes you've made to your business model to make it more inclusive of youth with disabilities?
What are the key factors contributing to the success or failure of social enterprises in employing youth with disabilities?	1. What factors have contributed to the success of your enterprise in employing youth with disabilities? 2. Have you faced any challenges in employing youth with disabilities? How did you overcome these challenges? 3. What role does leadership within your enterprise play in promoting inclusion?
What role do various stakeholders (e.g., government, NGOs, private sector, local communities) play in supporting social enterprises focused on youth with disabilities?	1. What role do external stakeholders (e.g., government, NGOs, private sector, local communities) play in supporting your enterprise? 2. Are there any partnerships that have been particularly helpful in advancing your mission? 3. What kind of support do you think is still lacking from external stakeholders?
What strategies and policies can be implemented to strengthen the role of social enterprises in enhancing the employability of youth with disabilities in Latvia and Nepal?	1. What strategies or policies do you believe should be implemented to strengthen the role of social enterprises in promoting the employability of youth with disabilities in Latvia ? 2. How do you think social enterprises can influence policy changes to improve employment opportunities for youth with disabilities? 3. What recommendations would you give to other social enterprises or policymakers to improve the employability of youth with disabilities?

Socio-demographic Information (not for recording):

Country: _____

Profession: _____

Education: _____

Place of work: _____

Years of experience: _____

B. FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES	
Section	**Guiding Questions**
I. Background Information	1. Can you tell me a little about yourself? 2. How long have you been working here and what is your role?
II. Pathways to Employment	3. How did you first hear about this enterprise? 4. What motivated you to apply for a job here? 5. Did you receive any support or training before starting this job? 6. What helped you the most to get this job?
III. Experiences in the Workplace	7. Can you describe what a typical workday looks like for you? 8. What do you enjoy most about working here? 9. What are some challenges you face in this job? 10. Do you feel supported by colleagues and supervisors? 11. Are there any adjustments or accommodations made to help you work better?
IV. Skill Development and Growth	12. Have you learned any new skills since working here? 13. Do you feel you are growing professionally? 14. Have you had opportunities for training or workshops?
V. Social and Personal Impact	15. Has working here changed your life in any way? 16. How do you feel about being part of this workplace community? 17. Has this job affected how others treat you (family, friends, society)?
VI. Future Aspirations and Suggestions	18. What are your future goals for work or career? 19. Do you think this enterprise is helping you move toward these goals? 20. What suggestions do you have to make this workplace better for people with disabilities? 21. What advice would you give to other young people with disabilities looking for a job?
Conclusion	22. Is there anything else you would like to share about your work or experiences that we haven't talked about?

Dear Participant,

My name is Bishakha Chand, and I am a Master's student in the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Program "Social Work with Children and Youth (ESWOCHY)". This study aims to explore how social enterprises promote employment opportunities for youth with disabilities in Latvia and Belgium.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. All information will be kept confidential, and your identity will be anonymous in the study results. Only I, the researcher, will have access to the data.

Please provide honest responses, as your input is important for the validity of this research. Thank you for your participation!

Statement of Informed Consent:

I understand the purpose of this study and agree to participate.

Date: …………/……………/…………….

Signature: …………………………….

Table 5: Participant Overview

A. Professional Participants					
Code	**Country**	**Job Title**	**Organization Type**	**Focus Area**	**Interview length**
P1-LV	Latvia	Social Worker	NGO	Advocacy and support for individuals with intellectual disabilities	42 mins
P2-LV	Latvia	Government Official	Government	Policy development and program implementation for individuals with disabilities	38 mins
P3-LV	Latvia	Owner	Social Enterprise (Hospitality Sector)	Inclusive employment practices for integrating individuals with disabilities in restaurant settings	58 mins
P4-LV	Latvia	Director	Social Entrepreneurship Advocacy Organization	Promoting growth and sustainability of social entrepreneurship initiatives in Latvia	30 mins
P5-BE	Belgium	Social Worker/Coordinator	Organization for Supported Work for People with Disabilities	Coordinating supported employment and integration efforts for people with disabilities	64 mins
P6-BE	Belgium	Government Official	Department of Work, Economy, Science, Innovation & Social Economy (WEWIS)	Policy support for social enterprises and work integration for marginalized groups	56 mins
P7-BE	Belgium	Job Coach	Werkburo	providing individual tailored support to working people with disabilities	48 mins
B. Participants with Disabilities (PWD)					
Code	**Country**	**Job title**	**Organization Type**	**Type of Disability**	**Interview length**
PWD1-LV	Latvia	Janitor	Day Care Centre	Intellectual Disability	34 mins
PWD2-LV	Latvia	Previously worked as a server	Social Enterprise (Hospitality Sector)	Intellectual Disability	30 mins
PWD3-BE	Belgium	Floor Manager	Preschool	Mild Autism	28 mins
PWD4-BE	Belgium	Gardener	Flower Store	Fragile X Syndrome	40 mins

Appendix D:

Table 6: Summary of Theme Refinement with Illustrative Quotes

Core Theme	Sub-Themes	Summary Description	Theoretical Alignment	Illustrative Quotes
Barriers to Employment	Systemic Barriers Attitudinal Barriers Legal and Policy Gaps	Structural and institutional obstacles preventing youth with disabilities from accessing and advancing in employment.	SMD	*"Even when I had the qualifications, they didn't hire me once they saw my wheelchair."* *"Policies exist on paper, but they don't talk to each other — I get support in one place and none in another."*
Building Human Capital in Inclusive Contexts	Employer Support Workplace Inclusivity Mentorship and Peer Support Skill Development (Digital Skills)	How WISEs enhance participants' employability through skills training, mentorship, and inclusive work environments.	HTC	*"I never thought I could speak in front of people. Now I run team meetings."* *"They didn't just give me a job—they helped me grow into the role."*
Stakeholders and Systemic Enablers	Government Support for Disability Employment Workplace Accommodations and Rights Policy Fragmentation	Examines the role and effectiveness of legal and policy measures in promoting or hindering inclusive employment.	SMD	*"The law says they have to accommodate, but nobody checks if they actually do."* *"Support from the municipality helped us hire two more people with disabilities."*
The Symbolic and Emotional Value of Work	Dignity and Self-Worth Sense of Belonging Psychosocial Benefits	Highlights the non-material value of work for youth with disabilities, such as identity, self-esteem, and social inclusion.	SMD	*"For the first time, I feel like I matter."* *"I go home proud now—my family sees me differently."*

Table 3: Comparative Insights

Themes	Werkburo (Belgium)	RB Café (Latvia)	Comparative Insight
Barriers to Employment	Tackles structural and attitudinal barriers via individualized job coaching and employer sensitization. Decentralized model ensures tailored support.	Faced systemic barriers such as policy fragmentation, financial instability, and limited institutional support. Ultimately closed.	Werkburo's tailored, network-based approach proves more resilient; RB Café's closure highlights vulnerability without structural backing.
Human Capital Development	Strong focus on developing hard and soft skills through long-term coaching, confidence-building, and practical work. Enhances employability and personal growth.	Offering skill-building and social inclusion, but unsustainable funding limited long-term development.	Both aimed at capacity-building, but Werkburo's continued support enabled deeper and sustained human capital investment.
Policy and Legal Framework	Operates within a coherent social economy framework; benefits from collaboration among local authorities, NGOs, and employers.	Struggled with fragmented policies and weak enforcement mechanisms; lacked systemic support and funding incentives.	Effective policy alignment in Belgium strengthens Werkburo; Latvia's policy gaps contributed to RB Café's instability.
Symbolic and Emotional Value of Work	Provides meaningful work, enhancing participants' self-worth, purpose, and community belonging. Sustained support nurtures psychosocial well-being.	Aspired to foster dignity and inclusion, but operational limitations hindered continuity of symbolic benefits.	Both acknowledged the non-economic value of work, but only Werkburo achieved sustained impact due to structural continuity.
Sustainability and Structural Support	Embedded in a multi-stakeholder, decentralized ecosystem; enjoys long-term viability through diversified partnerships.	Depended on limited funding and policy goodwill; lack of sustainable model led to closure.	Sustainability is crucial—Werkburo's model is structurally integrated, while RB Café's model was too fragile.
Approach to Inclusion	Person-centered, adaptable support rooted in collaboration; promotes empowerment and autonomy.	Mission-driven and empathetic, but lacked systemic scaffolding to scale or stabilize its inclusive approach.	Person-centered intentions shared by both, but effective implementation and support distinguish Werkburo's success.

| Impact Scope | Wide reach through partnerships with public and private actors; participants report long-term employment and personal development. | Localized impact, short-lived; closure disrupted participant progress and affected credibility of inclusive efforts. | Broader, more sustainable impact achieved by Werkburo due to policy integration and long-term operations. |

Although Werkburo and RB Café both aimed for inclusive employment, their paths crossed differently because of structural support, policy alignment, and financial viability. Werkburo's success comes from its person-centred approaches, fit within Belgium's social economic structure, and capacity to provide continuous emotional and developmental assistance. On the other hand, RB Café's closing exposes the dangers social driven businesses running without consistent support run. These results draw attention to the need of comprehensive and systematic support in allowing inclusive employment models to thrive.

Table 7: Comparison of Digital Skills of PWD in Belgium and Latvia

Aspect	Belgium	Latvia
Internet Access (PWD)	18% of individuals with severe limitations lack home internet access (Statbel, 2020).	Data on PWD-specific internet access is limited; 90% of the general population uses the internet (2022).
General Digital Skills (16–74)	59% have at least basic digital skills (Statbel, 2023).	51% have at least basic digital skills (Digital Skills EU, 2023).
Digital Vulnerability	40% of the population is digitally vulnerable; 35% have low digital skills (digitall.be, 2023).	No specific percentage, but skills improvement is a national focus (Latvia's Digital Strategy).
Online Activity Patterns (PWD)	PWD engage less in leisure-related online activities, slightly more in health-related ones.	Specific PWD engagement patterns not reported.
Digital Accessibility of Websites	Only 6% of Belgian websites are accessible to PWD (Belga News, 2023).	No specific data on accessibility; focus is more on skill-building than web accessibility.
Government Initiatives	Some efforts exist, but accessibility remains poor; digital divide still visible.	Digital Transformation Guidelines (2021–2027) aim for 70% digital literacy by 2027.
Targeted Programs for PWD	Limited evidence of widespread PWD-specific digital training initiatives.	Includes programs like *Women4IT* and *Riga Tech Girls* promoting inclusivity.

Appendix F

Non-plagiarism declaration

Submitted to the Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme in Social Work with Children and Youth:

- Has not been submitted to any other Institute/University/College
- Contains proper references and citations for other scholarly work
- Contains proper citation and references from my own prior scholarly work
- Has listed all citations in a list of references.

I am aware that violation of this code of conduct is regarded as an attempt to plagiarize and will result in a failing grade in the programme.

Date: May 17th, 2025
Signature: Bishakha Chand
Name: Bishakha Chand