



Workshop 3:

Ensuring reasonable accommodation at work

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CITY OF
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Ministry of Social Cohesion
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ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
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και Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης

Assistive Technology: Addressing Challenges, Unlocking Opportunities, and Enhancing Employees Retention

Evert Jan Hoogerwerf, AIAS Bologna, Italy



About Reasonable Accommodation

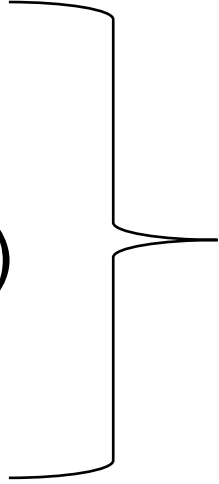
Reasonable accommodation is any change to a job role or work environment that is needed to enable an employee with a disability to perform their job.

Reasonable accommodation are the necessary and appropriate changes and adaptations, which employers are required to adopt according to function of the needs of the concrete situations and which do not impose a disproportionate or excessive burden.

Sources: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A32000L0078>;
<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2003/08/13/003G0240/sg>

Five methods of reasonable accommodations

- 1) Providing assistive technology
- 2) Personal assistance
- 3) Adjusting workspace (including teleworking)
- 4) Flexible working hours
- 5) Flexible task arrangements



Most of the time we need them all

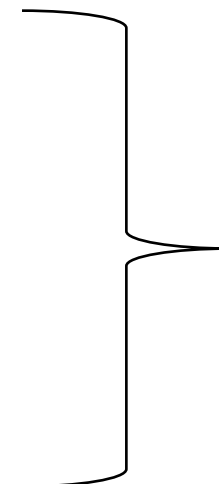
Source: European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *Reasonable accommodation at work – Guidelines and good practices*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/359088>

Assistive Technology (AT)

An umbrella term indicating any product or technology-based service that enables people of all ages with activity limitations in their daily life, education, work or leisure.

(The Association for the Advancement of Assistive Technology in Europe)

- Specially designed products and services
- +
- Accessible mainstream products and services
- +
- Human intervention and support (if needed)



**Assistive
solutions**

Andrich, R., Mathiassen, N. E., Hoogerwerf, E. J., & Gelderblom, G. J. (2013). Service delivery systems for assistive technology in Europe: An AAATE/EASTIN position paper. *Technology and Disability*, 25(3), 127-146.

AIAS Bologna Assistive Technology Team

Building bridges, empowering individuals, developing capacity at system level

The Regional Centre for Assistive Technology in Bologna, Italy
Regional Public Health System & AIAS Bologna (*Private non for profit NGO*)



Service delivery guiding principles

- Person-centred approach
- Life project approach (focus participation & inclusion)
- Independent advice - no direct provision (only loans)
- Multidisciplinary team work
- Integration with other services significant to the individual (rehabilitation, education, day care, employment, etc.)
- Inter-institutional collaboration



Core features of AT

AT increases independence

AT is a rapidly developing field

AT must be appropriate for its user

Access to AT is a human right

AT is fundamental as increased or maintained autonomy allows for more choice to live the life one would like to live.

However

AT doesn't come easy....

especially not in employment

Factors for success in assistive technology

Person-centredness (considering needs, ambitions, preferences)

Information and awareness (for all involved)

Support in finding the right solutions (multidisciplinary expert advice)

Starting as early as possible (school age or earlier)

Timely intervention (catering for changing needs)

Monitoring outcomes and impact (periodic review of solutions)

Holistic assessment approach driven by the end user

Some examples of AT in employment

Alternative input devices



Alternative pointing devices (trackballs)



Mouth-controlled mouse



Eyegaze

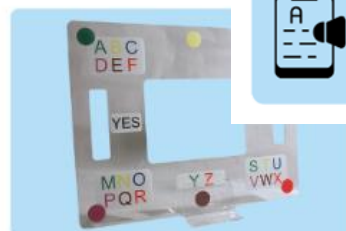


Switches

AAC Systems



Direct Access



E-Tran



Partner Assisted Scanning

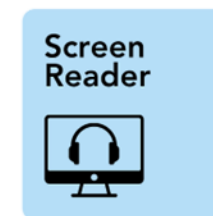


Electronic (or 'high-tech') communication aids

AT for Vision



Screen magnifier



Screen Reader



Text-to-Speech



Optical Character Recognition



Voice recognition

But also solutions for cognition, (organisation, task planning, etc.)

Methodological considerations

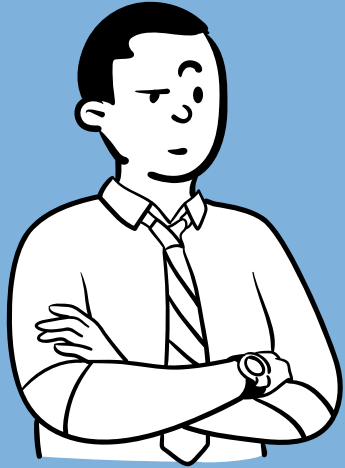
Assistive technology use, or potential of an individual with AT, should be included in the matching person-skills-tasks assessment, applying a bio-psycho-social-tech model of human functioning.

For the job and on the job training should be provided taking previous experience with technology into account.

AT assessment “on the job” should include environmental factors and necessary adaptations.

AT use should be regularly reviewed to keep people “in the job”.

ETTORE



AGE.....54
Diagnosis.....ALS

LIFE WORLD

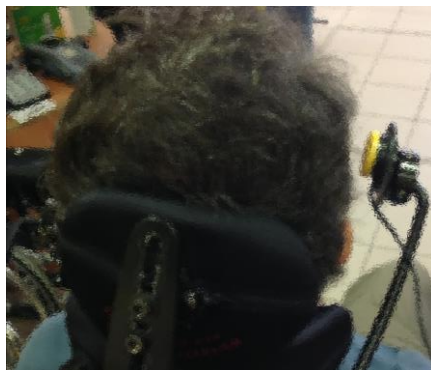
- Lives with wife and two children
- Works as a researcher for a research centre
- Has lived and worked abroad
- Extended knowledge of technology for the work environment
- Motivated to reach the highest level of independence in all realms of life



Solutions for accessing devices and promoting communication in person and remotely



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2018
Well understandable speech
Good lower limb mobility
Upper limb fatigue

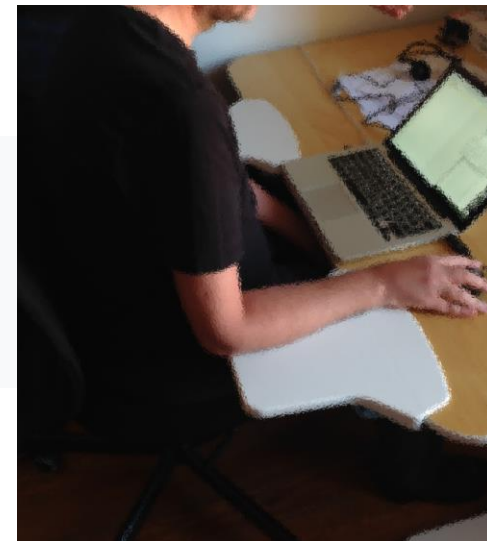
2021.now
Loss of mobility in all body areas
Unintelligible speech



2020
Total loss of mobility in the lower limbs
Loss of strength and mobility in the upper limbs
Speech difficult to understand - hypophonia

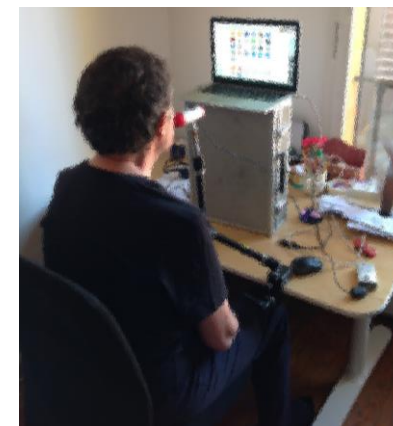
2019
Worsening of lower limb mobility
Worsening and tremors in the upper limbs
Head fatigue
Speech not always understandable

Adaptations for accessing the PC
Solutions and strategies for daily life



Solutions for PC use both at home and at work
Elec. wheelch. assessment

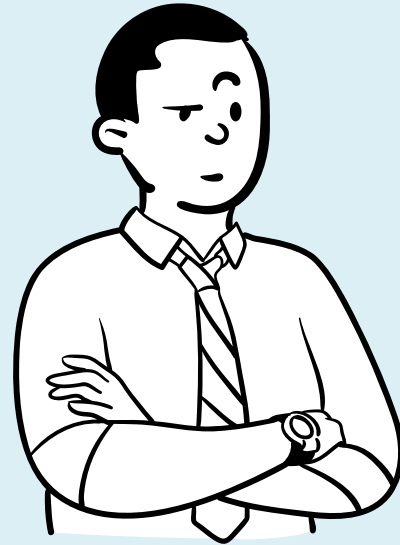
Solutions for PC access and suitable workstation
Aids to support communication



INTERVENTIONS NEEDED

Evaluation and customization of tools suited for different needs

Training in use with continuous technical-methodological support



Short-medium term loans of the solutions identified

Networking
Family-Caregiver
Specialist services
Territorial services

Job Coaches as Key Enablers of Reasonable Accommodations in the Workplace

Noemi Marchiotto, AIAS Bologna, Italy



2nd Method: PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

Personal assistance services may be useful for people with disabilities to help them understand, organise and perform their tasks at workplace. This may include accompanying the person with a disability to work or conducting a personalised assessment to adapt an employment process, training or work tasks. Personalised assessments focus on the strengths and needs of the individual employee experiencing difficulties.

The role of the Personal Assistance is to be a bridge or intermediary to connect PWDs and companies by providing support for both throughout the process of employment.

Source: European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, *Reasonable accommodation at work – Guidelines and good practices*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/359088>

Job Coach: role and tasks

- facilitates the match between the needs of the employee with a disability, the employer and the context (physical and beyond)
- spreads awareness about inclusion in the work context and the necessary adaptations such as Reasonable Accommodations;
- provides personalised on-the-job support and training to the worker with disability, ensuring the achievement of more autonomy
- facilitates the relationship and communication with colleagues, where necessary with the use of visual strategies and aids.

Outcomes

The job coach can provide customised assessments to the employer, which focus on

- 1) areas of strengths and weaknesses in the job performances of the employee with a disability
- 2) the workplace, identifying changes to be introduced to facilitate the design of an inclusive environment for each person.



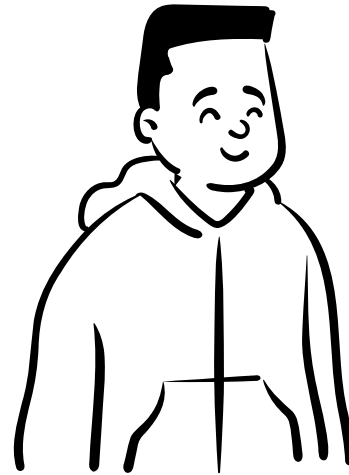
From “just enabling PWDs to work” to “providing continuous support to both PWDs and employers with the aim of stable employment”

Process

Job coach

Outside the company

Employment, social and health services; centres with expertise in assistive technology and aids; professionals such as occupational therapists; transport services; trade unions...



Inside the company

Human resources; Diversity&Disability Manager; Doctor; Safety officer; Prevention and Protection Service Manager; employer...

**In general, the whole company,
including colleagues!**

A good practice



LAVORARE IN RETE



- ❑ Giulia, 26y, diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome and psychiatric disorders
- ❑ Lives independently, adjacent to his grandparents and with an educator for support a few hours a week
- ❑ Moves around independently using the bus
- ❑ Various work experiences, of short duration in many contexts (sales assistant, data entry, school assistant)

Reason for taking charge as service providers: job search

The path to employment

Oct 23-
Feb 24

- Objective to observe and evaluate Giulia's competences and skills
- Inclusion in activities preparatory to employment within a non-profit association, support by a job coach. The tasks assigned were setting up and restoring spaces, restocking materials and inventory.

Feb 24 –
Jun 24

- Internship in a pastry shop, with an allowance
- Support by job coach → 7 hours/week
- During the summer, finding another work context that Giulia rejected

Sept 24 -
ongoing

- Internship in the same pastry shop, with an allowance → **Increase in working hours (from 16 to 30 hours/week)**
- Decrease of the job coach's support → 2 hours/week
- **Recruitment perspective for 2025**

The reasonable accommodations adopted

- ❑ Preparation of a notebook with visual sequence sheets on recipe preparation or instrument cleaning procedures
- ❑ Use of noise-cancelling headphones to reduce noise pollution from laboratory machines - later, use was agreed upon at certain times (e.g. long and repetitive tasks)
- ❑ With the support of the employer, placement tools and food to facilitate Giulia's visual-spatial orientation
- ❑ **Currently, our team is evaluating the setting up of a tablet with visual sequences to be used with voice input prompts during pastry preparations**



Open questions

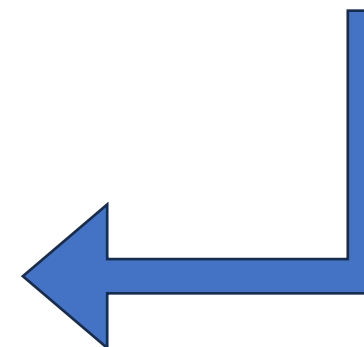
How can the costs of the job coach be covered?

What skills are needed?

How to impact on national and international policy development?

In Italy, the figure of the job coach is not regulated and financed by the government, although there are some local experiments that bear the cost. E.g. AIAS experience was made possible through a large regional fund where we experienced the positive effects of intensive and continuous job coach support.

However, Italian legislation on R.A. has recently been updated (Law No. 227/2021 and subsequent implementing decrees 2024) establishing a public procedure for requesting Reasonable Accommodations, identifying criteria for assessing “reasonableness” with respect to the individual case.





Thank you!

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