



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



3RD NEWSLETTER

June 2021

Vol. 3

BRIDGES - BROADENING POSITIVE REFLECTIONS ON THE ISSUE OF
DISABILITY, GENERATING EMPOWERMENT FOR STAKEHOLDERS
N.2019-1-PT01-KA204-061388



The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with a disability

Author: Christie Scott Hands - Asociación Caminos (ES)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an important effect on every society worldwide in practically every area of life: health, work, culture, family, social networks, etc. No matter the personal characteristics of an individual, no-one has escaped the influence or the changes that this situation has caused.

Nonetheless, many people from different vulnerable collective have suffered its effects in a much more pronounced way: migrant, people from a lower economical level, elderly people in residential care centres, people with disability and many more.

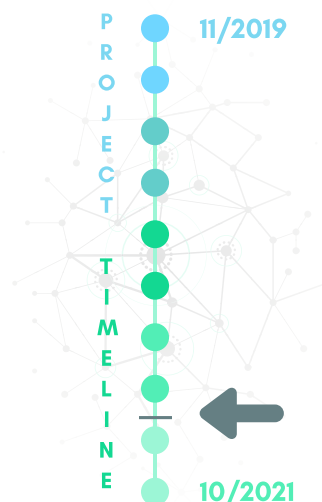
In the case of persons with disabilities, they have faced additional difficulties of many kinds, many of which have led a more important level of social exclusion. The lockdown measures that many countries of Europe have taken during the pandemic have limited the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in a significant way, limiting their communication, their access to health care and pharmacies and the postponement or cancellation of health care appointments or rehabilitation sessions.

The use of facemasks and social distance has created additional difficulties for people with hearing loss to lip read or for people with visual impairment that use guide dogs to follow the rules. In the case of people with a mental disability, isolation and fear have been specially debilitating on them, though the effects of the pandemic have had repercussions on the mental health of many people and collectives.

UPDATES:

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with a disability

What can we do to help?



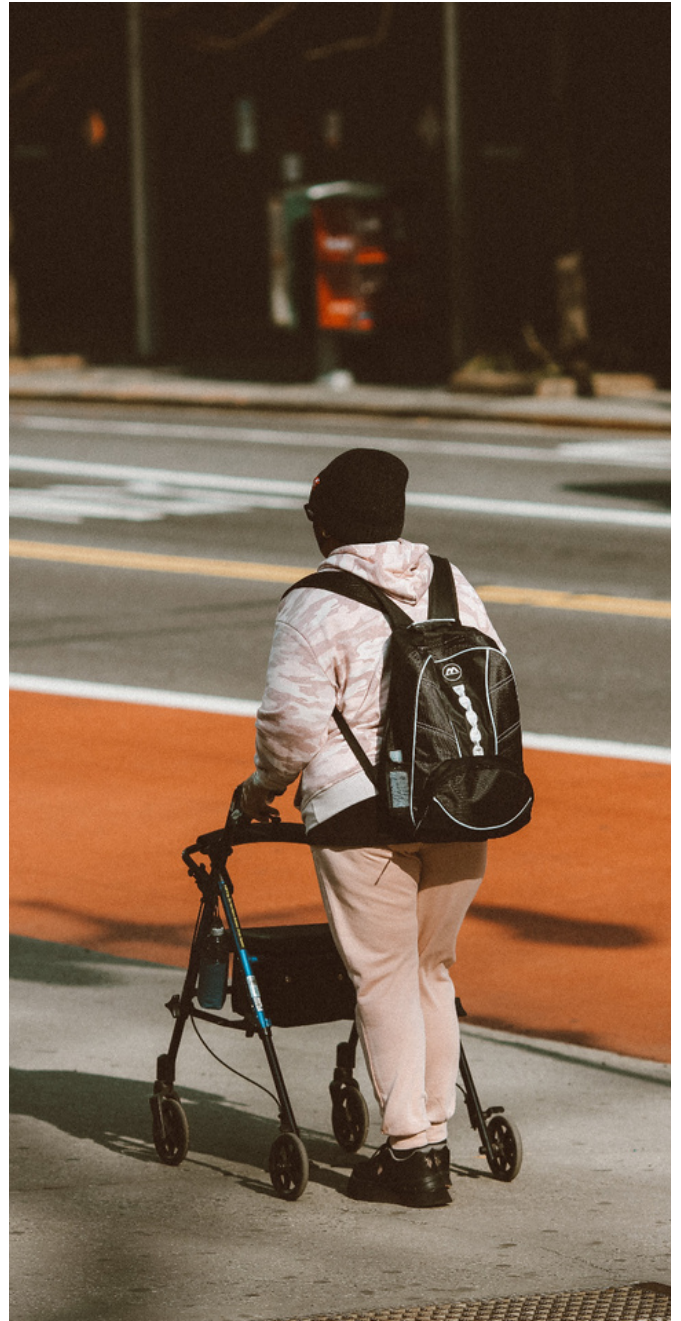
The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on persons with a disability

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The article *Triple jeopardy: disabled people and the COVID-19 pandemic (2021)* highlighted three important risk factors for disabled people regarding the pandemic: an increased risk of poverty, reduced access to health care and rehabilitation and an adverse social impact. Also, the risk of death from COVID-19 was 3 to 1 times greater for persons with disabilities.

In October 2020, the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities indicated many important barriers regarding inclusion effect on their life have been highlighted:

- Failure to ensure safety of people with disabilities in congregate living or health facilities
- Failure to ensure access for people with disabilities to food deliveries, internet, COVID-19 testing, etc
- Failure to give relevant people with disabilities, their families or support workers evidence-based priority for COVID-19 vaccination or treatment
- Lack of or inadequate support for people with disabilities living alone or where family members or support workers are self-isolating.
- Unclear public health messaging or lack of accessible messaging.
- Postponement of required medical treatment, including rehabilitation.
- Failure to collect data on disability to allow disaggregation





What can we do to help?

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Finding an adequate job is almost impossible for people with disabilities. The EU project BRIDGES aims to train people who take care of this group as job coaches. People who have difficulty hearing or seeing, are dependent on a wheelchair or have neurological limitations are usually able to do a job just as well as any other person. But when it comes to applying for a job, the answer tends to be: No, thank you very much!

People with disabilities have suffered this disadvantage in a significant way during the pandemic. If we take into account the measures and restrictions that many European countries used to face the situation (lockdowns, curfews, social distancing, staff reduction, etc) and how it affected work in general, we can only begin to imagine how it could affect someone with a psychological disability (like an anxiety disorder) or a motor impairment (for example, requiring crutches to walk).

BRIDGES - Broadening positive Reflections on the Issue of Disability, Generating Empowerment for Stakeholders has the aim of implementing efficient and effective actions towards the people with disabilities participation in society through the recruitment and reinforcement of specific supporters in job activation, mentoring in their employment and acting as suitable and appropriate channels.

To reach this goal, the partnership of BRIDGES has created a free online training that consists of seven modules that include topics like job coaching, awareness, active listening and pedagogical approaches; topics that are of prime importance when working towards social inclusion. The modules will be available in English, Portuguese, Greek, Spanish, Italian and German to all professionals who are interested in gaining new skills for the better inclusion of persons with disability in the labour market and in society in general.

For more information, stay tuned!

**For more information please contact
the national representative:**

<https://www.uatlantica.pt/index.php/bridges-consortium/>

PROJECT BRIDGES PLATFORM:

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