



APPLYING HYBRID LEARNING METHODS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ORDER  
TO PREVENT SOCIAL EXCLUSION, POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN  
DEVELOPING ECONOMIES

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*Abstract*

*The main purpose of this research paper is to investigate complex issues based on applying hybrid learning methods of inclusive education in order to prevent social exclusion, poverty and unemployment in developing economies. The possibility of social integration in the case of vulnerable and marginalized communities is fundamental for a healthy society. Social inclusion aims to ensure that human rights are respected in a society regardless of their origin or other specific features, as well as to combat discrimination and social exclusion. Children with disabilities require different pedagogical techniques and inclusive education is a viable alternative to conventional education. A school curriculum based on inclusive education provides a complex perspective on the principle of equal access to education for all, including children with disabilities.*

*Keywords: inclusive education, social exclusion, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, developing economies, social protection;*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of social inclusion reaches numerous meanings, but the main objective converges in the same direction. Consequently, to ensure the social rights of marginalized categories requires



concerted efforts based on improving legal framework and implementation social protection programmes. In addition, inclusive education represents an innovative approach to the educational system. In other words, inclusive education implies that every child has access to knowledge and all children learn together despite the existence or absence of disabilities so there are no differences between the children in the class. Inclusive education emphasizes the use of all learning procedures by promoting the idea of flexibility in the teaching and learning process. In addition, inclusive education does not adhere to the concepts of segregation in school so children with disabilities and special needs are not marginalized to learn in separate classes or even separate schools. Inclusive education indicates that any person, regardless of the individual deficiency or difficulties, should be treated with dignity and respect.

In the dynamic context of a constantly changing world, children with special educational needs face a variety of learning difficulties, such as major language hearing problems, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADHD), sensory disorders, especially in understanding and processing the video-hearing information, spatial and temporal cognitive processing difficulties, motor (physical) and /or neuromotor disease or infirmity, mental deficiencies, and emotional and behavioral disorders. Human rights are based precisely on the idea that everyone should be treated equally, fairly and justly as an equal member of society. The life of a child with special educational needs depends on 3 main pillars, family, school and society and the teacher is the link between them. Obviously, children with disabilities require individualized pedagogical methods such that inclusive education is a sustainable alternative to conventional education. As a basic conceptual approach, social inclusion is intended to respect human rights by combating practices of social exclusion. Social inclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon which has implications in various areas such as : social protection, employment, education, health, housing, financial services, security, justice, public administration, spiritual and religious support, culture, transport, information and communication.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

DJK and Balakrishnan (2012) discussed relevant aspects regarding inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. UNESCO has provided a comprehensive definition of social inclusion, ie : "rights to housing, education, clean water and health care emphasize the role of local authorities as a welfare provider and social provision as a duty which lies within city halls and councils". Birău (2017) argued that employment discrimination involves issues related to workplace harassment and bullying. Moreover, UNICEF suggested that : "Making social protection more child-sensitive has the potential to benefit not only children, but also their families, their communities and national development as a whole". Sunardi, et al. (2011) investigated the Implementation of Inclusive education for students with special needs in Indonesia considering the fact that Indonesian government has adopted a progressive policy to implement inclusive education.

Morgado, Cortés-Vega, López-Gavira, Álvarez and Moriña (2016) have discussed interesting aspects regarding inclusive education in higher education and have provided the students' perspective on sensitive issues such as institutional barriers and aids in University. Moreover, Molina, Perera Rodríguez, Melero Aguilar, Cotán Fernández and Moriña (2016) investigated the



role of lecturers in their interaction with students with disabilities and inclusive education focusing on several fields of knowledge such as : Health Sciences, Experimental Sciences, Social Sciences, Engineering and Technology and Humanities. Birau (2018) has provided a detailed insight into implementing sustainable strategies in order to prevent and combat social exclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN).

Mukhopadhyay, Nenty and Abosi (2012) investigated the implications of inclusive education in the case of learners with disabilities in Botswana primary schools based on a qualitative case study and concluded that “students with disabilities pose challenges for teachers in the regular classroom”. Bosse (2014) has provided an interesting perspective on e-inclusion and blended learning in the case of inclusive classrooms focusing especially on “Planet School” platform. Leigh (1999) has conducted original research on inclusive education and personal development of deaf and hard-of-hearing adults and highlighted the positive and negative implications of “supportive school environments” and “nonsupportive school environments”. Hunt and Goetz (1997) provided an interesting research paper on inclusive educational programs, practices, and outcomes for students with severe disabilities.

Social exclusion is in most cases associated with the idea of poverty and low living standards, but also being perceived as a particular cause of unemployment, especially in developing economies. Spulbar and Nițoi (2014) have investigated investigate bank cost efficiency in transition economies and concluded that a higher Gross Domestic Product growth rate implies an increase in the inefficiency level. Labor market insertion of disabled individuals is a challenge for both developed and developing economies. For individuals belonging to this socially vulnerable group, access to the labor market is extremely difficult (Kardorff, Ohlbrecht, Schmidt, 2013). The 2010 OECD report on *Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers*, emphasis that the employability rates for individuals with disabilities in OECD countries were just over 40%, compared with 75% for individuals without disabilities.

Low employment rates and increased rates of unemployment and non-participation highlight the major disadvantage of disabled individuals in terms of labor market integration. A physical or mental disability leads to an increased risk of poverty and social exclusion for the affected person. Finding a job and keeping it is a major factor in reducing this risk. According to Humer, Wuellrich and Zweimuller (2007), the goal of social policy makers is precisely to help people with disabilities find suitable employment and to keep this job, which is the most effective way to improve the quality of life of these individuals. As Warren (2005) points out, labor market insertion of disabled individuals implies not only hiring them and receiving a sum of money for their work, but also integrating them into the social life of their community. Although a number of measures to improve access to the labor market for people with disabilities have been taken, the insertion into the labor market of disabled individuals is still not at the desired level by international organization. Even in a positive situation of labor market insertion of disabled individuals, they are still engaged in low-skilled jobs, receive substantially lower wages than non-disabled individuals and carry out tasks considered inferior, with low development opportunities.

In the following, we will present a synthesis of the main results focused on analysis of labor market insertion of disabled individuals. One of the first studies addressed to this topic is that of Bartel and Taubman (1979), a study that highlights the fact that the presence of a debilitating



disease leads to a reduction in the wage earnings of affected individuals and the number of weekly hours worked and the increase in probability of being out of the labor force and the probability of remaining unemployed. Burkhauser and Daly (1998) analyzed in their study the quality of life (economic well-being) of disabled men in the US and Germany; the results show that in Germany, on average, the income of households in which a disabled man lives is similar to those without disabilities. In the US, however, the situation is different; the income gap between households with and without a disabled male is about a quarter. In a recent study, Parodi and Sciulli (2008) show that, on average, households with one or more disabled members have a lower income than households in which individuals have a normal state of health. The authors' points out those households with disabled people are significantly affected if disability aid is cut off.

Kidd et al. (2000) demonstrates the existence of a significant disparity between healthy men and disabled men in terms of wages and labor market insertion in the UK. The existence of significant differences between wages and employability rates of disabled individuals, compared with individuals with a normal health condition is demonstrated by Baldwin and Johnson (1994 and 1995) too (for both men and women).

The study entitled *The employment situation of people with disabilities in the European Union*, conducted by the European Commission in 2001, prove that individuals with disabilities are generally older, low-educated and more likely to be women. Employability rates of disabled individuals are low compared to those with a normal health. Disabled individuals integrated into the labor market work fewer hours a week and receive lower wages than those with a normal health condition, which shows a clear existence of discrimination on the labor market. This study also mentions the existence of a double penalty for disabled individuals, besides their physical or mental disability, they are either women, either belong to a vulnerable group on the labor market, or are poorly educated.

Lechner and Vazques-Alvarez (2003) demonstrate that the probability of an individual with a normal health condition to work is higher with 9.6% compared to an individual with disabilities. Also, the group of individuals with a normal health status has a profit (earnings) higher by 16% than the group of disabled individuals. According to Jones (2005), disability has a significant negative effect on the labor market outcome, regardless of the data or period of time. Miranda (2003) emphasizes that the main reason for the increased incidence of non-participation in the labor market of persons with disabilities is not only a consequence of the difficulty of finding a job in accordance with their peculiarities, but also a consequence of physical barriers which still exists in society, such as access to public institutions, access to educational institutions, public transport etc.

The effects of adopting The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) were analyzed by Acemoglu and Angrist (2001). The results show that for disabled men (irrespective of the age group to which they belong) and for women under the age of 40 (under 40) the employment rate decreased significantly after the ADA regulations entered into force. Bell and Heitmuller (2005) analyze the effects of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) on the UK labor market. Similar to Acemoglu and Angrist (2001), the results show that the impact of these regulations either was inexistent or had a negative impact on the employment rates of disabled individuals. The authors conclude that low financial support, low levels of awareness of the provisions of



this Act among both disabled and employers, and limited knowledge of the true costs of these regulations are the most plausible reasons for obtaining this result. As Greve (2009) points out, greater attention should be paid to the effective implementation of these measures and their effects in the medium and long term, not just the adoption of legal anti-discrimination legislation.

To our knowledge, at national level, there is a small number of studies focused on the integration into the labor market of disabled individuals. We mention here Stănescu et al. (2013), proposing the creation and use of social enterprises for disabled individuals. The author underlines the need to use a new concept of "people with disabilities in employment" instead of classical terminology, as well as the importance of social enterprises to support them. Szekely (2012) analyzes the socio-professional discrimination of disabled individuals in Romania and stresses that Romanian employers prefer to pay state contributions to the detriment of employing individuals with disabilities. Their socio-professional development opportunities are far below those for a person with a normal health condition. Dănăcică și Cîrnu (2014) analyzes the duration of unemployment and the destinations of unemployed people registered as disabled unemployed in Romania; their results show that age, education and economic status have a significant influence on the probability of (re) employment of disabled individuals, during the analyzed period.

### **III. A CONTROVERSIAL CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM**

Social inclusion policies are very important in every areas of implementation taking into account the negative consequences of discrimination and social exclusion. For instance, a gender-equal society is an inclusive society where everyone was able to participate equally in social activities without discrimination between men and women. Moreover, an inclusive education is primarily an education for diversity. Inclusive education is beyond anything, a challenge for changing and attenuating mentalities, attitudes, prejudices, stereotyping toward stigmatized groups. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching process is essential in achieving educational performance based on inclusive education. An inclusive education is focused on the idea of acceptance and tolerance of physical, intellectual, economic, financial, social, cultural, racial, ethnical diversity. Inclusive education differs significantly from traditional education.

Essentially, a school curriculum based on inclusive education reaches an ample dimension and provides a complex perspective on the principle of equal access to education for all, including children with disabilities. In many cases, the special needs of disabled children lead to discrimination and stigmatization. The frequency of violations of human rights in the case of disabled children is a major challenge for integrated education programs. From a governmental perspective, it is very important to integrate disabled children and to provide quality education for all. In other words, children with disabilities are facing major social barriers in order to achieve equal rights to education.

Inclusive education involve a range of hybrid learning methods in order to incorporate diversity in the field of adaptive teaching. Consequently, flexibility is a key word in implementing strategies on inclusive education. Beyond any conceptual barrier, inclusive education is a dynamic process with increased possibilities to reach the set objectives. The



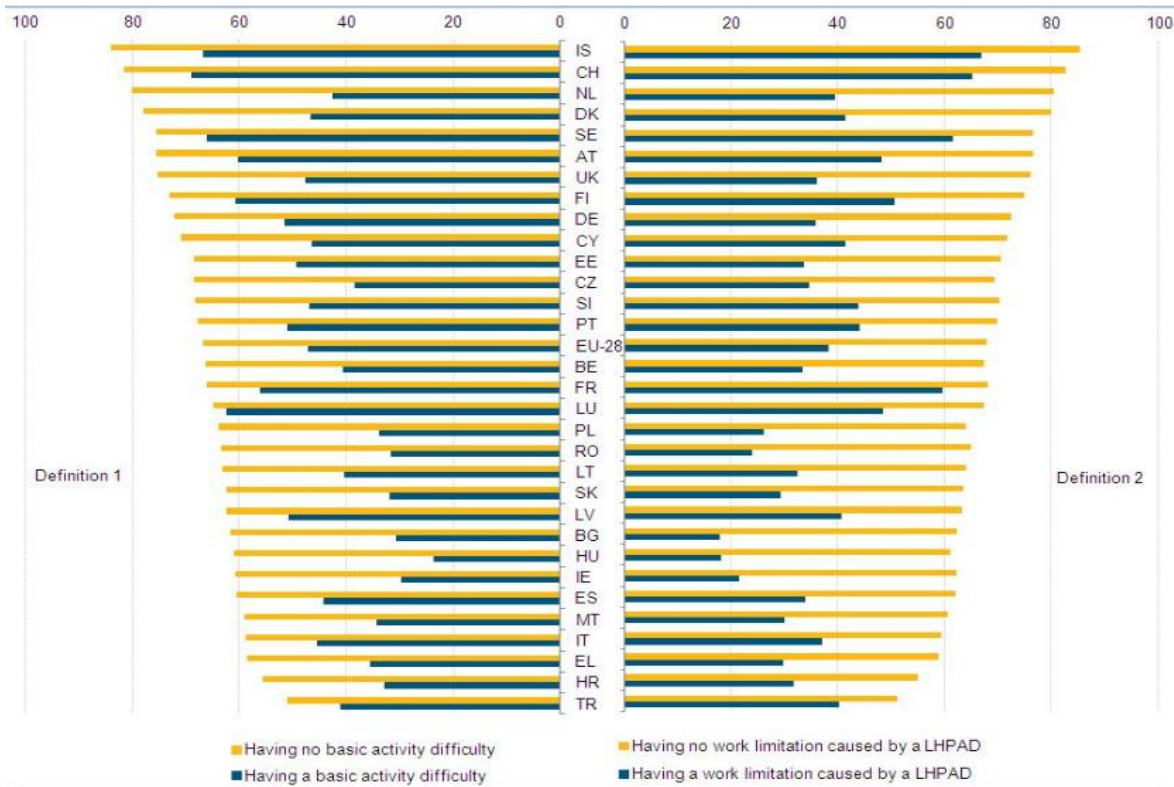
diversity of needs in terms of learning reaches a very complex dimension especially in the case of children with disabilities. The international human rights legal framework suggests that every child with special educational needs (CES) deserves an equal chance of education. However, the integration of children with special educational needs based on the same curriculum on mass education requires the sustainable implementation of an appropriate legislative framework.

Social inclusion enable all people to participate equally in society by reducing the degree of exclusion, regardless of its form of manifestation. In this respect, promoting social inclusion is an integrated approach of high current relevance. On the other hand, social exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon with significant negative implications. Taking into account that the purpose of this research article is to investigate social inclusion through sustainable inclusive education in the European Union, it's necessary a complex approach to the geographic context. In other words, every human being, regardless of personal limitations or native deficiencies, deserves to be treated as a member of the social community to which he belongs.

Combating social exclusion of children with special educational needs can be achieved by implementing sustainable strategies between school, family, and social community, as well as the allocation of financial funds by the central and local authorities in this respect. Official estimates suggest that there are at least 93 million children with disabilities in the world but it is believed that their number is significantly higher (UNICEF, n.d).

#### **IV. AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn. The European Union includes 28 member countries, ie Austria, Italy, Belgium, Latvia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Croatia, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Malta, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Estonia, Portugal, Finland, Romania, France, Slovakia, Germany, Slovenia, Greece, Spain, Hungary, Sweden, Ireland and United Kingdom (Brexit process). According to Eurostat, between 2005 and 2013, 2.7 million people were released from the burden of the risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-27, while in 2012, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU-28 peaked at more than 124 million people. Moreover, Spulbar and Nițoi (2012) suggested that population aging and increasing dependence have the potential to slow down economic growth, making it even more difficult to limit unfavorable debt developments that are currently under way. The official statistics provided by Eurostat revealed that participation in lifelong learning increased by 27.4 % between 2003 and 2014, but the weight of early school dropout from education and training has fallen steadily since 2003, reaching 11.1 % in 2014. Eurostat provided relevant information on disabled individuals in European Union (EU).



**Figure 1.** Employment rate of persons aged 15-64, by country and disability definition, 2011 (in %)

\*Source: Eurostat, Disability statistics - labour market access, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability\\_statistics\\_-\\_labour\\_market\\_access](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability_statistics_-_labour_market_access)

The descriptive statistics on disabled individuals and labour market access in European Union are based on two main definitions applied in the data results presented in figure 1, ie :

**Definition 1:** People having a basic activity difficulty (such as sight, hearing, walking, communicating);

**Definition 2:** People limited in work because of a longstanding health problem and/or a basic activity difficulty (LHPAD).

The World Bank classify countries (economies) in four main groups according to the income criterion, ie low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high based on gross national income (GNI) per capita, value calculated in the official currency of United States (dollars) by using the World Bank Atlas method. The classification of countries for the current 2019 fiscal year based on the GNI per capita level criterion for 2017 fiscal year is the following: low-income economies (\$995 or less), lower middle-income economies (greater than or equal to \$996 but less than or equal to \$3,895), upper middle-income economies (greater than or equal to \$3,896 but less than or equal to \$12,055) and high-income economies (\$12,056 or more).



The following case study is based on statistics on disabled individuals in Romania. In addition, Romania is included in the category of upper-middle-income economies (\$3,896 to \$12,055). According to statistical data provided by the National Authority for Disabled Persons (NADP) the total number of individuals with disabilities in Romania increased more than ten times in between 1992 and 2018, from 74053 individuals registered in 1992 to 805653 disabled individuals on 30 June 2018 (3.63% of the total population).

Of the total number of individuals with disabilities registered on 30 June 2018, 63300 are children, representing 7,86%, and 742353 are adults, representing 92.14%. Also, out of the total registered individuals at NADP, only 18061 individuals are institutionalized, representing only 2,53%; the differences of 787592 (95,57%) being not institutionalized. 52.97% of the total number of disabled individuals registered at NADP on June 2018 are women.

In table 1 we presented the distribution of disabled individuals by age and gender. We can notice a clear association between age of an individual and the incidence of disability. 70.73% of the registered disabled individuals are aged over 50. From data centralization by age groups of disabled adult individuals we can notice that 55.78% are individuals aged in between 18 and 64 years (414,086 persons) and 44.22% are aged over 65 (328,267 persons), (NADP statistics, p.5). For the 0-49 age group, the number of men with disabilities is higher than that of women, for the age group 0-49; after this threshold the situation is reversed.

**Table 1.** Distribution of disabled individuals by age and gender, 30 June 2018

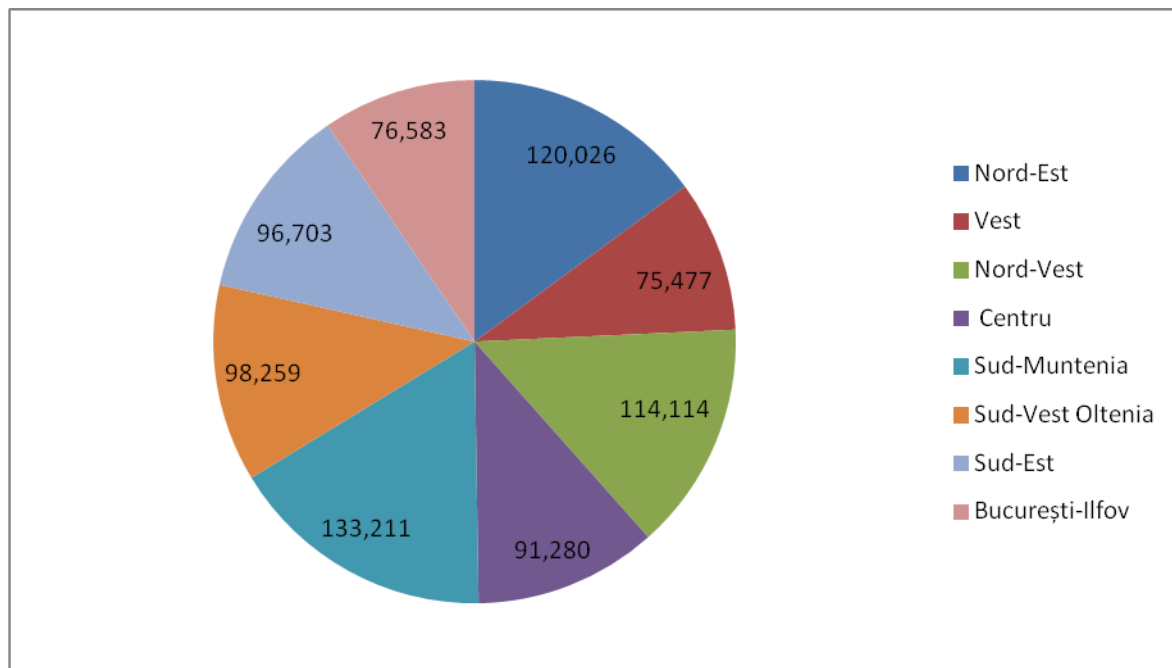
Age group (years)	Total number	Feminine	Masculine
0-4	12293	5205	7088
5-9	18130	7023	11107
10-14	21256	8630	12626
15-17	11621	4892	6729
18-19	6332	2732	3600
20-24	17416	7666	9750
25-29	27020	12337	14683
30-34	34123	15566	18557
35-39	37682	17333	20349
40-44	44361	21171	23190
45-49	50317	25047	25270
50-54	48293	24897	23396
55-59	59528	31207	28321
60-64	89014	46785	42229
65-69	89226	47406	41820
70-74	69114	38694	30420
75-79	67295	40842	26453
80-84	58210	38198	20012
85 years and over	44422	31139	13283

\*Source: ANPD statistics, <http://anpd.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ANPD-evolutii-trim-II-2018-MMJS-publicabil.pdf>





In figure 1 we presented the distribution of the total number of disabled individuals by regions, on 30 June 2018. Analyzing the figure we can notice that the highest number of disabled individuals is registered for South-Muntenia region, followed by North-East region. At the opposite, the lowest number of disabled individuals is registered in west region and Bucharest-Ilfov region. The preliminary data suggest an association between the frequencies of disability and the economical development of Romanian regions.



**Figure 2.** Distribution of disabled individuals by Romanian regions, 30 June 2018

\*Source: ANPD statistics, <http://anpd.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ANPD-evolutii-trim-II-2018-MMJS-publicabil.pdf>

According to ANPD statistics, the highest number of disabled individuals at the county level is registered for Bucharest (64650 individuals, 30 June 2018), followed by Prahova County (37191 individuals), and the lowest number is registered in Covasna County (6053 individuals).

As UN underlines, disability means a number of different functional limitations that occur within a population. According to Law no. 448/2006, the grades of disability can be serious, accentuated, mild and low. 38.53% of the total disability number registered at NADP have a serious disability and 11.19% have a medium or a low disability. Currently, in Romania the statistics about disabled individuals is divided by the following categories of disability: physical disability, somatic disability, aural disability, visual disability, psychiatric disability, associated disability, HIV/AIDS, rare diseases, deafness and blindness.

Table 2 shows the distribution of disabled individuals by disability categories, on 30 June 2018. We notice that the most common type of disability in Romania is physical, followed by somatic



diseases, mental illness and associated diseases. We stress here that the number of people affected by mental illness is probably higher, because only a few of those affected manage to overcome the social stigma still very strong in Romania.

**Table 2.** Disabled persons by type of disability, 30 June 2018

Disability type	Number of persons
Physical	199.028
Somatic	156.038
Auditive	23.525
Visual	95.889
Mental	128.410
Psychic	91.464
Associated	100.220
HIV/AIDS	7.671
Rare diseases	3.313
Deafness/blindness	95

*\*Source: ANPD statistics, <http://anpd.gov.ro/web/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ANPD-evolutii-trim-II-2018-MMJS-publicabil.pdf>*

Unfortunately, the statistics of people with disabilities in Romania do not provide data on people employed on disability, regions, activities (branches of the economy), nor on the income and wages registered by them.

According to NADP statistics, on June 30, 2016, the most recent year for which we have data, the number of adults with disabilities was 32,734, representing 4.22% of the total number of people with disabilities registered on this date. And the percent of those who manage to keep that job is even lower. Unfortunately we do not have data about disabled individuals employed in different regions of the country, or their job type and wages.

Due to their health particularities and due to the lack of job opportunities special designed for them, the population with disabilities in our country is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, disabled individuals do not have opportunities for education equal with those with a normal health condition. The incidence of literacy and early school-drop is much higher for disabled individuals compared with those with a normal health condition.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Social inclusion through sustainable inclusive education in the European Union is still a major challenge of public policy implementation, particularly in the context of globalization. Active participation and sustainable social inclusion policy in society are fundamental in combating discrimination, stigmatization and segregation of people with disabilities. Inclusive education is a dynamic, multidimensional process. In many cases, the idea of education for all is just an utopia for children with disabilities. However, inclusive education is a sustainable alternative that can cover many difficult and stringent social problems. With this approach, social inclusion principles reach a specific dimension in achieving significant positive results.



Inclusive education provides a concrete perspective for children with disabilities. With a long-term horizon, social exclusion can be reduced by applying sustainable alternatives such as inclusive education.

Social integration or social cohesion is the reverse of the concept of social exclusion. Social inclusion is an essential objective for the member countries of the European Union. Social policies are focused on eradicating the negative effects of social exclusion. However, inclusive education is an effective solution to achieving an optimal level of school integration, especially for children or young people with severe disabilities. Children with special needs are one of the most vulnerable and high-risk groups in a social community.

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