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INCLUSION IN THE LABOR MARKET: THE PATH TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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In today's world, changes in the social and political spheres are inevitable, labor and economic relations are rapidly transforming, new forms of relations between employees and employers are emerging and spreading dynamically in society, and the system of property relations is being modified, which leads to changes in the distribution and redistribution of income and profits in favor of certain groups of the population. Under such conditions, the economy becomes increasingly dependent not only and not so much on the managerial elite, but on the involvement of the entire labor potential of society in its functioning and development, on the rational and effective use of as much of the labor potential of all economic actors as possible. In this case, inclusiveness penetrates deeper and deeper into the pores of social relations.

Inclusion in the labor market means not only ensuring equal access to jobs, but also creating an environment where the diversity of employees—in terms of gender, religion, age, physical abilities, education, disability, or membership in certain social groups—is used as a valuable advantage. Effective inclusion reduces labor shortages, increases productivity, stimulates innovation, and strengthens social cohesion. In

modern economies, the integration of different population groups into the labor market is becoming a key factor in sustainable growth.

Global experience shows that inclusion has significant benefits for the economy and society. According to international organizations, expanding the participation of different groups in economic activity leads to GDP growth and greater social justice. For example, women's participation in the labor market is increasing, employment opportunities for people with disabilities are expanding through adapted workplaces and digital tools, and barriers for young people, older people, and migrants are decreasing. In Ukraine, institutional efforts are focused on developing policies to support employment and inclusion, in particular through legislative and financial instruments, partnerships between the government, business, and civil society, as well as international assistance and adaptation to European standards. Virtual reality is a technology for creating computer environments in which users can interact with objects and scenarios as if they were real [1, p. 15].

Table 1 Basic principles of forming an inclusive labor market

Principle of inclusion	Essence and content of the principle
Equal opportunities	Ensuring equal access to employment for all categories of the population, without discrimination based on gender, age, health status, or social status
Adaptation to the needs of vulnerable groups	creating flexible working conditions, retraining, and social support to attract vulnerable groups to the labor market
Supporting professional development	providing opportunities for up skilling, training, and developing the competencies needed for successful employment
Corporate social responsibility	Encouraging companies to implement practices that promote equal employment, the development of an inclusive corporate culture, and employee support.

Source: compiled by the authors

The benefits of inclusion in the labor market cover both the economic and social spheres. Here are the main ones:

1. Expanding the labor force. Inclusion allows for the involvement of various social groups that were previously marginalized or underrepresented (people with disabilities, women, older workers, youth, ethnic minorities, etc.). This helps to make more effective use of society's available resources.

2. Increased productivity and innovation. Diverse teams are often more creative, flexible, and innovative. An inclusive work environment fosters new ideas and improves decision-making.

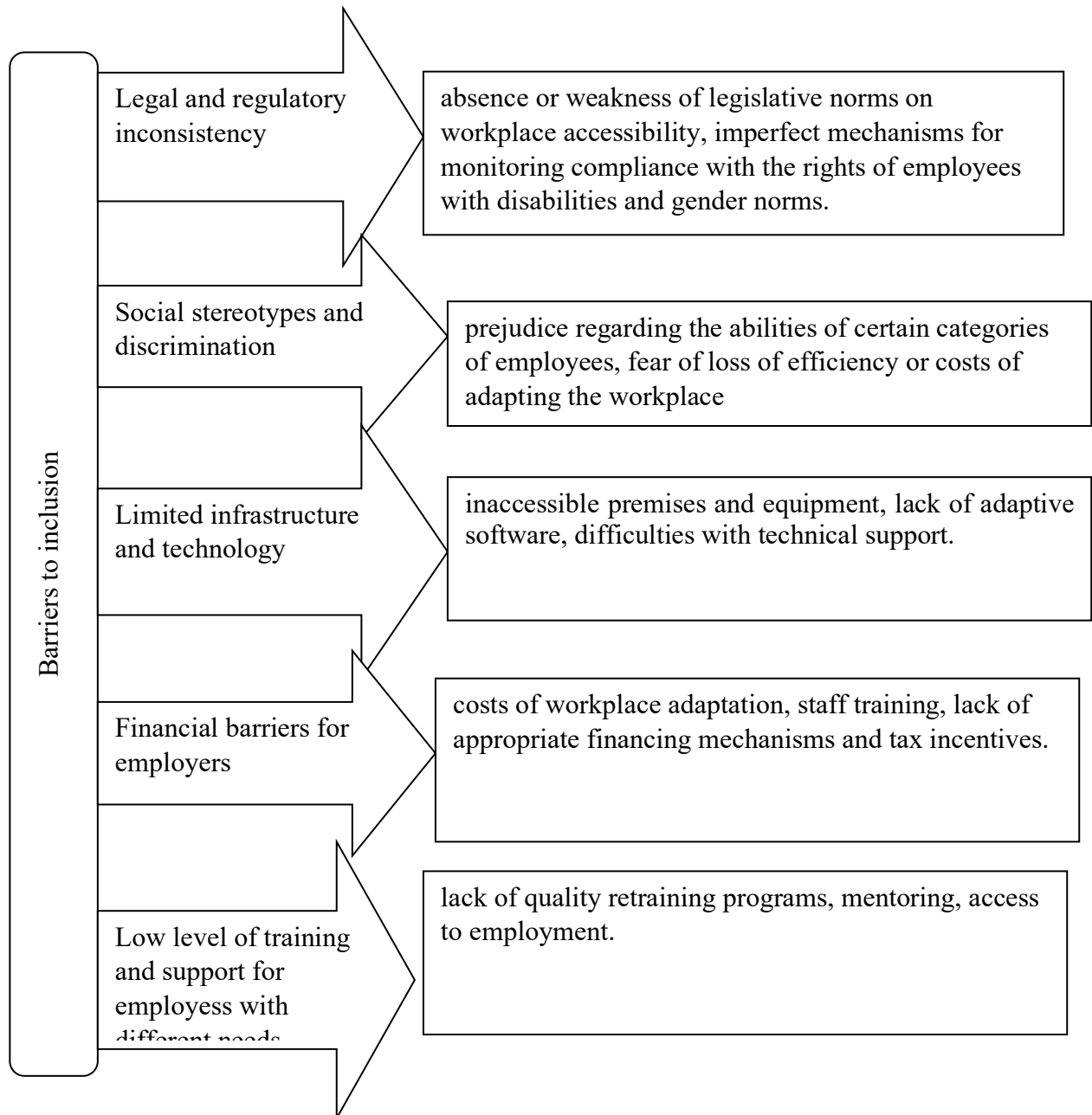
3. Social stability and cohesion. Reducing discrimination and social exclusion reduces social tension, improves trust in society, and promotes harmonious labor relations.

4. Economic growth. Increased employment and participation in the economy by broader segments of the population stimulates overall demand, GDP growth, and improves the financial situation of the state through increased tax revenues.

5. Positive business image. Companies that implement inclusive practices gain reputation advantages, increase consumer loyalty, and become more attractive to potential employees.

6. Reducing unemployment and poverty. Inclusive labor market policies aim to create equal opportunities for all workers, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity, disability, or other characteristics. They promote diversity in the workplace, which in turn increases the innovativeness and competitiveness of companies and even improves the overall state of the economy.

There are barriers to achieving inclusion in the labor market [4].



Pic.1 Barriers to inclusion

Source: compiled by the authors

From our point of view, the strategy for implementing and supporting inclusion should include the following.

On the part of employers:

1. Needs assessment and adaptation planning

- Conducting an audit of accessibility and employee needs: physical conditions of the workplace (office redesign, accessibility of facilities), technical needs (adaptive software, equipment for people with disabilities).

- Developing an adaptation plan at the departmental and company levels with a budget and deadlines.

2. Talent development and training

- Implement training programs on adaptation and development for different categories of employees: mentoring, diversity training, leadership development.

- Ensure transparent and equitable selection and promotion processes, implement objective evaluation criteria.

3. Workplaces and technology

- Ensuring a barrier-free environment: access to buildings, adapted workplaces, use of alternative communication formats.

- Implement digital solutions that expand access to work: remote employment, flexible schedules, part-time employment, and adaptive tools.

4. Corporate culture and management

- Developing a culture of respect where every employee feels supported and able to express their opinion.

- Implementation of a zero-discrimination policy and complaint handling mechanisms.

5. Partnership with the civil sector and the state

- Collaborating with NGOs, employment centers, and educational institutions to develop joint employment and retraining programs.

- Implementation of pilot projects to finance adaptation and training through government programs and international grants.

On the part of state institutions:

- Develop a comprehensive labor market inclusion policy with clear goals, timelines, and monitoring.

- Simplify and encourage the financing of workplace adaptation through tax incentives, subsidies, and grants.

- Ensure uniform accessibility standards and compliance requirements.

- Support retraining and employment programs for various groups, including young people, people with special needs, and older workers.

On the part of civil society:

- Provide information and education on the benefits of inclusion and ways to achieve it.

- Providing mentoring and coaching support for candidates from different groups.

- Monitoring compliance with rights and transparency in the work of companies and government agencies.

Inclusion in Ukraine is important for both social and economic development. Its implementation is a key factor in building a fair, democratic, and effective society [2].

Inclusive policy is the path to European integration, the realization of human rights, and the implementation of standards that comply with Ukraine's international obligations.

An inclusive labor market policy strategy should include [3].

1. Legislative framework: Ukraine has regulations on non-discrimination, accessibility, and employment support for certain population groups. However, implementation requires stronger control and practical support for employers, in particular through subsidies for workplace adaptation and the development of inclusive programs.

2. Demographic challenges: an aging population, migration, and a decline in the working-age population underscore the need to attract a wider range of workers and create conditions for their long-term employment.

3. The role of international support: trade, foreign aid, and European integration oblige the country to develop policies that ensure labor market accessibility and training.

Further actions to support and develop inclusive labor market policies should include:

- developing and implementing a national strategy for labor market inclusion with specific indicators and monitoring mechanisms;
- ensuring funding for the adaptation of workplaces and training programs for different population groups;
- expanding the accessibility and convenience of employment through flexible forms of work, remote employment, and adaptive technologies;
- strengthening cooperation between business, government, and the civil sector through joint projects and pilot programs.

Inclusion in the labor market is not just a social necessity, but an economic development strategy. It requires a systematic approach: legislative support, financial incentives for employers, institutional coordination, and cultural change in companies and society as a whole. In the context of global economic challenges and rapid technological change, inclusion allows us to unlock the full potential of the labor market, strengthen social justice, and ensure sustainable growth.

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