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LARGE RESEARCH GRANT FOR REDUCING DISTANCE TO LABOUR MARKET FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

🕐 Monday 4 March 2024

The University of Twente is to develop a new matching algorithm and online job platforms to reduce the distance to the labour market for people with disabilities. Science financier NWO recently awarded over 1.7 million euros within the KIC Programme Participate in the Labour Market. "The realisation of sustainable employability of employed people is central for us," says the researcher.

Increasingly more often, vulnerable workers with disabilities are being hired by employers. Yet they still often live in uncertainty especially due to short-term employment contracts. Employers and governments also want to create more than 100,000 new jobs for this target group before the end of 2026. With the help of a research grant from NWO, the University of Twente will conduct research aimed at promoting sustainable employment and inclusion of people with disabilities.

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MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

"Our research aims to realise social and technological innovations together with social partners so that people with disabilities can participate sustainably and meaningfully in the labour market," says project leader Jeroen Meijerink. Many people with disabilities move from one temporary contract to another and have jobs that do not always match their talents and needs. This means, there is often little focus on investing in the training and skills development of these workers. "Employers are responsible for that but don't really want to make that investment for someone who only stays employed for a year. All this hinders access to sustainable employment for people with disabilities."

INNOVATIVE ALGORITHMS AND ONLINE PLATFORMS

The researchers will develop new algorithms and matching platforms that will help people with a distance to the labour market find the right job. To do so, the researchers want to look at a broader pallet of employee and employer characteristics. "The current generation of algorithms mainly match the skills needed for a particular job. We want to expand that so that an algorithm also takes into account the needs and vulnerabilities of individuals with a disability," Meijerink explains.

JOB CARVING

In addition to a smart algorithm, the University of Twente is also going to investigate what an employer can do to then employ employees sustainably. "This can be done, for example, through an inclusive HRM policy where 'job carving' is central, among other things. This means that you start scraping a job to arrive at new jobs that (better) fit the talents and needs of individual employees. Tasks that do not fit an employee's needs or disability are removed from the job description and supplemented with skills and tasks from other positions within the organisation," Meijerink says. Once it is clear what provisions an employer can make, the researchers intend to use these insights to optimise the matching algorithm.

algorithm.

ONLINE HANDYMAN PLATFORMS

Finally, online handyman platforms are being researched. Meijerink explains that "these platforms bring job supply and demand together, making them a suitable organisational form to deploy our innovative matching algorithms. In particular, we will focus on cooperative platforms where employees and employers are 'in control'. As far as we are concerned, the further development of these types of platforms is an important condition to guarantee that matching algorithms contribute to the sustainable employability of peoale with a disability."

MORE INFORMATION

The research, entitled 'Don't forget the forgotten! Towards a platform-based approach for sustainable employment of workers with a disability', is an interdisciplinary collaboration. The University of Twente is collaborating in this research with, among others, the UWV, the National Council of Clients, Freshheads, Werkgever.nl, the National Network for Social Cooperative Entrepreneurship, SBCM, Randstad, the Ministry of Social Affairs & Employment, University College Dublin, Practicum Foundation, Region Twente, Alliander, 8vance and Novel T.

Dr Jeroen Meijerink is the project leader. He is an associate professor of Human Resource Management (HRM) at the Faculty of Behavioural, Management & Social Sciences (BMS). Also involved on behalf of the University of Twente are Dr Maarten Renkema, Dr Simon Schafheitle, Dr Joschka Hüllmann and Prof Tanya Bondarouk (all Faculty BMS), Dr Birna van Riemsdijk (Faculty EEMCS) and Dr Linda Pasqual-van der Landen (DE&I team).

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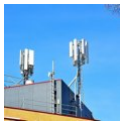
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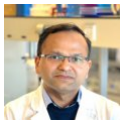**Inspiration for girls during Girls' Day: focus on science and technology** ⊙

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