

People with Epilepsy are Less Likely to Find a Job in the EU, according to a recent study

HELSINKI, FINLAND, June 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Unemployment and underemployment are more common among people with epilepsy in Europe, despite good seizure control, according to work that will be presented on Sunday, 30 June at EAN 2024, the [10th Congress of the European Academy of Neurology \(EAN\)](#) in Helsinki, Finland.



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Flavia Narducci

International researchers made a systematic review of epilepsy and employment, selecting 55 articles from 1958 to 2023 in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Ireland and Italy.

Authors found that unemployment rates ranged from being similar to the general population, to being up to two or three times higher than the general population. Above all factors, seizure control and employers' attitudes contributed the most to unemployment, according to

Flavia Narducci, a neurologist and PhD student at Bio-Medico Campus University of Rome, Italy, a co-author of the study.

“The most important reasons are external,” she said. “Employers’ attitudes and unsupportive family environment are determinant in whether an individual can find a job or not.”

There is a widespread misconception towards epilepsy, she added. “The literature shows that employers think that absenteeism and accident rates are higher in people with epilepsy, which just is not true,” she said. “We find similar rates of incidents and accidents not related to seizures between people with epilepsy and without epilepsy.”

Unemployment rates in people with epilepsy (PwE) were 7.9% in Italy, 6.7% in Ireland, 8.5% in France, 15% in Germany, and 9% in Bulgaria. Fully employed PwE represented 42.9% of PwE with a job in Italy. This rate was higher in Ireland (53%) and Bulgaria (47.9%), and lower in France (31.7%) and Germany (40%).

A significant number of people with epilepsy chose not to reveal their condition, probably due to existing stigma. Narducci identified regional differences in the disclosure rate.

“In Italy, 24.2% of people with epilepsy did not disclose their condition, whereas in Bulgaria

48.5% did not, so almost double," she noted.

Boosting the Inclusion of People with Epilepsy

Awareness in the workplace about epilepsy and management or prevention seizures tends to be low. Narducci's study also asked higher education institutions about their knowledge and attitudes about the condition. Although most individuals correctly defined epilepsy as a neurological disorder that is treatable in most cases, most respondents said they did not know how to give first aid.

There are simple things employers can do to help make the workplace a seizure-free environment, she explained.

"Today you can live with no seizures with the appropriate treatment, and sometimes it is just a matter of accommodation," she said. "For example, you can adjust triggering factors, such as flickering lights that could provoke a seizure. Employers could very easily fix triggering factors so that staff with epilepsy do not get seizures."

Employers could also accommodate work schedules in order to prevent seizures, by, for instance, avoiding night shift work, as sleep deprivation is a well-known triggering factor.

The study is part of a wider European project, called EpilepsyPOWER, that aims to improve workplace inclusion of PwE, notably by establishing a certification that employers can obtain to show they are inclusive.

The team will be developing learning modules both for people with epilepsy—to help them prepare for a job interview and boost their application—and institutions, to help them improve their knowledge of epilepsy and social aspects of the disease.

"We want to help spread a culture of inclusion and fight marginalisation of these people in the workplace, allowing them to attain appropriate employment," she concluded.

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Notes to Editors:

This press release is about the Oral Presentation 'EpilepsyPOWER a project to favor inclusion of People with Epilepsy in workplaces' presented at EAN 2024 (

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