

# Profile on economic inclusion for people with disabilities and older workers: Kazakhstan

**Purpose and scope:** This profile responds to the three pillars of the EBRD's *Economic Inclusion Strategy* (access to employment and skills, finance and entrepreneurship, and services) and aims to provide targeted support to the efforts of the EBRD and its partners to better understand the needs of people with disabilities (PWD) and older workers. It is not intended to be an exhaustive overview of all issues affecting people with disabilities and older workers in this country. It was prepared for the EBRD using publicly available sources.

<p><b>Country context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population:</b> Kazakhstan's population of 18.6 million comprises over 100 ethnic groups, including Kazakhs (67 per cent) and ethnic Russians (21 per cent) (Committee on Statistics, <a href="#">2020</a>; Government of Kazakhstan, <a href="#">2017</a>). Some 41 per cent of the population live in rural areas (Committee on Statistics, <a href="#">2020</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Economy:</b> Kazakhstan is classified as an upper-middle-income country, with a GDP of US\$ 180 billion in 2019 and GDP per capita of US\$ 9,731, yet characterised by high income inequalities (World Bank, <a href="#">2020</a>). Key sectors are trade (17 per cent of GDP in 2018), mining (16 per cent) including oil and gas (13 per cent), and manufacturing (13 per cent) including oil refining (2 per cent) (Deloitte, <a href="#">2019</a>). Economic growth has recently slowed due to the fall in oil prices and the Covid-19 crisis. From January to August 2020, the economy contracted by 3 per cent and registered unemployment rose from 26,000 to 219,000 (World Bank, <a href="#">2020</a>; Informburo.kz, <a href="#">2020</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Prevalence/responses to Covid-19:</b> Over 108,000 cases of Covid-19 have been reported as of October 2020 (coronavirus2020.kz, <a href="#">2020</a>). The government has boosted spending on social assistance to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>People with disabilities (PWD)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An estimated 705,500 people in Kazakhstan live with disabilities in 2020, of whom 430,400 (61 per cent) are of working age. However, only around 25 per cent are employed – a figure that the government hopes to increase to 30 per cent by 2025 (Zakon.kz, <a href="#">2020</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Employment and skills:</b> Employment discrimination on the grounds of disability is prohibited by the <a href="#">Labour Code</a> (Art 6) and employment quotas for people with disabilities (PWD) are established by local authorities, amounting to 2 to 4 per cent of all jobs (<a href="#">Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities</a>, Art 31). PWD benefit from additional labour protections, such as reduced working hours, and have a priority right to “social” jobs where their wages are subsidised by the state (<a href="#">Law on Employment</a>, Art 20). Costs incurred by employers in adapting the workplace to the needs of employees with disabilities are subsidised (<a href="#">LoE</a>, Art 28). PWD have a priority right to vocational training, and inclusive education is currently being introduced (<a href="#">LoE</a>, Art 19). There are no targeted employment services but PWD are among the priority beneficiaries of the “<a href="#">Employment Road Map 2020</a>” programme and are entitled to receive technical and vocational education free of charge under the <a href="#">Enbek Programme for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship 2017-2021</a>.</li> <li>• In practice, PWD face several issues in accessing employment, including inaccessible workplaces (and limited reasonable workplace adjustments on the part of employers) and discriminatory attitudes of employers (Zhiger PA et al., <a href="#">2020</a>). Job quotas have reportedly been ineffective in increasing access to employment for PWD and policy measures have overlooked persons with mental disabilities (Astana Times, <a href="#">2018</a>; Zhiger PA et al., <a href="#">2020</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Finance and entrepreneurship:</b> PWD have a priority right to state support for entrepreneurship (for example business training, micro loans) and enterprises established by civil society associations of PWD are given preference in the public procurement of goods and services (<a href="#">LoE</a>, Art 23). PWD who take part in free entrepreneurship skills training under the “<a href="#">Employment Road Map 2020</a>” are eligible for additional business assistance such as marketing, legal and accounting support in the first year of their project. However, banks are reportedly reluctant to lend to entrepreneurs with disabilities (viewed as high-risk borrowers) and financial services are often inaccessible to people with a visual impairment (inbusiness.kz, <a href="#">2020</a>; Zhiger PA et al., <a href="#">2020</a>). Micro credit and skills training for business are also available under the “<a href="#">Business Road Map 2025</a>” programme and the <a href="#">Enbek Programme for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship 2017-2021</a>, although these are not specifically targeted at PWD.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Services:</b> Local authorities and businesses must ensure PWD have unimpeded access to social and transport infrastructure and/or measures are implemented that take into account the needs of PWD (<a href="#">LSPPD</a>, Art 25). Making Kazakhstan “barrier-free” for PWD is among the goals of the Government’s Concept for Social Development up to 2030. National building and construction standards have been amended to include reasonable accommodation and universal design, and the <a href="#">Law on Public Services</a> requires that service providers ensure public services are accessible (Art 5). PWD are also provided with free assistive devices and mobility aids as part of individual rehabilitation programmes, and persons with severe (category I) mobility impairments benefit from personal assistant services. Reduced public transport fares for PWD have been introduced in most regions. Access to transport and ICT has improved in recent years, but many public buildings do not meet accessibility requirements in practice and access to services for PWD remains limited in rural areas (Inclusive Kazakhstan Network, <a href="#">2020</a>; Zhiger PA et al., <a href="#">2020</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Covid-19:</b> There is no express focus on PWD in government policy to mitigate the economic impacts of the crisis. The impact of Covid-19 on the economic participation of PWD in Kazakhstan is not yet clear.</li> </ul>
<p>Older workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons aged 55-64 account for 13 per cent (1.6 million) of the population and 11 per cent of the workforce. Around 5 per cent of this age group were unemployed in 2019, in line with the overall unemployment rate across age groups. However, the share of older workers (particularly women) outside the labour force is high compared with younger cohorts, with 40 per cent of older people economically inactive (Committee on Statistics, <a href="#">2019</a>). The number of older people is expected to increase in the next 30 years, growing particularly quickly in the next decade (UNFPA, <a href="#">2019</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Employment and skills:</b> Discrimination on the grounds of age in labour relations is explicitly prohibited (LC, Art 6). Employers wishing to dismiss employees who are less than two years away from retirement age (63 for men and 59.5 for women, as of 2020) require authorisation from a joint employer-employee committee (<a href="#">LC</a>, Arts 52-53). Employers are permitted to dismiss older workers once they reach retirement age (<a href="#">LC</a>, Art 52). There are no targeted public employment services but workers over 50 are among the priority beneficiaries of the “<a href="#">Employment Road Map 2020</a>” programme, which aims to promote access to employment and vocational training opportunities. Unemployed workers less than two years away from pensionable age also have a priority right to employment in “social” jobs where their wages are subsidised by the state (<a href="#">LoE</a>, Art 20). In practice, older workers may experience discrimination in recruitment and the share of older workers among beneficiaries of training and re-training programmes is low, in part due to employers’ reluctance to expend training resources on workers nearing the end of their working lives (Adilgazy, <a href="#">2019</a>).</li> <li>• <b>Finance and entrepreneurship:</b> Individuals over 50 but below pensionable age have priority to receive state support for entrepreneurship (<a href="#">LoE</a>, Art 23). Micro credit and skills training for business are available under the “<a href="#">Business Road Map 2025</a>” programme and the <a href="#">Enbek Programme for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship 2017-2021</a>, although these are not specifically targeted at older entrepreneurs. Older workers who take part in free entrepreneurship skills training under the “<a href="#">Employment Road Map 2020</a>” are eligible for additional business assistance such as marketing, legal and accounting support in the first year of their project. However, there is little information on older workers’ access to finance and entrepreneurship in practice.</li> <li>• <b>Services:</b> Improving the quality of life of older persons and making Kazakhstan “barrier-free” are among the priority areas of the Concept for Social Development up to 2030 (KAZISS, <a href="#">2020</a>). Specialised sociological studies have been carried out to identify the key challenges facing older persons across the country, and a national study of older persons’ access to services is under way, with results due by the end of 2020.</li> <li>• <b>Covid-19:</b> There is no express focus on older workers in government policy to mitigate the economic impacts of the crisis. However, extraordinary public health measures aimed specifically at older people may affect access to employment for older workers.</li> </ul>

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