EUROPEAN
MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS
PLATFORM

Brain Health (including Neurodiversity) and the Issues associated with work – Example of Multiple Sclerosis

23rd September 2026

International Forum on Disability Management Conference

WE REPRESENT + 1.2 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING WITH MS IN EUROPE

EMSP

+30 years, leading the voice in Europe advocating for people living with MS.

40 members in 35 countries,

Network of partners, and people living with MS across the region Europe

Key priorities:

high-quality, equitable treatment, care, and resources for people affected by MS, access to education, employment and inclusion in society at large

VISION

A world without MS, achieved in partnership with people living with MS, their communities across Europe, and their allies.

MISSION

Bring together the unique expertise of our members and partners in Europe

Drive critical, state-of-the-art research and advance MS-relevant policies and access to treatments and possible cure.

Offer our members, EU decision-makers and opinion-leaders, the wider MS community valuable evidence-based resources and tools to improve the lives of every individual living with MS.

Brain Health Agenda in Europe



- Good brain health is fundamental to education, employment, productivity, social inclusion, and quality of life.

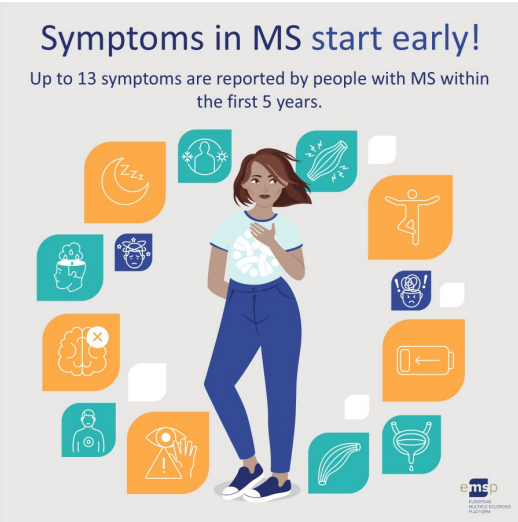
- Yet millions of Europeans living with neurological and neuroimmunological conditions face barriers to entering, remaining in, and progressing within the workforce.

What is Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

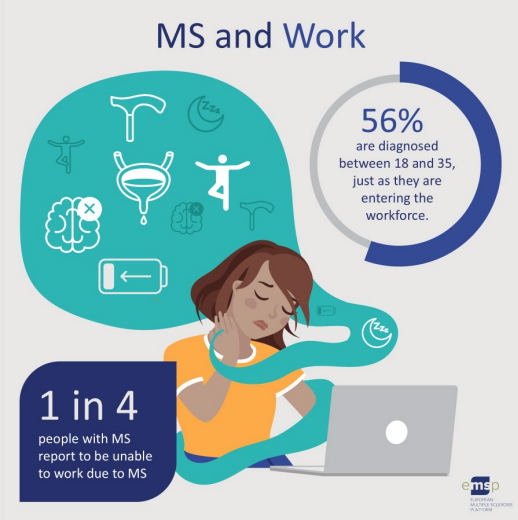
- A complex neurological condition for which currently there is no cure.
- One of the most common long-term conditions affecting the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) and the main cause of non-traumatic disability in young adults.
- MS is associated with loss of myelin - which is a sheath that forms around the nerves – leading to disruptions in the transmission of electrical impulses to and from the brain, causing MS symptoms.
- Most frequently diagnosed in people aged 20–40 years.

Multiple Sclerosis as a compelling example









IMSS

Why Employment matters?

Employment is not only a source of income…

It is closely linked to:

- Independence and financial security
- Social participation and inclusion
- Mental wellbeing and self-esteem
- Retention of skills and productivity
- Reduced long-term societal and healthcare costs



For people living with brain health conditions, remaining in work is often a key determinant of quality of life and social participation..

Scale of the Challenges



...inspired by a World Health Organisation vision

The new MS Barometer assesses not only health care but also social care systems...

MS BAROMETER

The MS Barometer assesses 5 indicators of health and social care including...

1. Health care service delivery
2. Health information
3. Access to treatments and therapies
4. Governance, leadership and health financing
5. Participation in society

> "All people have equal access to quality health services; services meet life course needs, services are coordinated across the continuum of care, carers operate in a supportive environment."

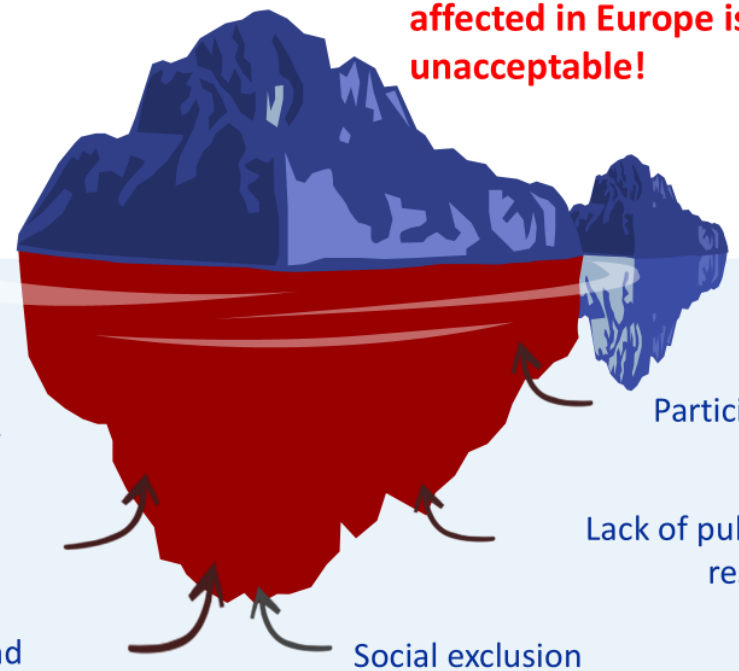


The **Reality:**

Europe must prioritise better management of MS.

What we see

Huge disparities across Europe:
Living conditions of people affected in Europe is unacceptable!



Participation in workforce
discriminatio

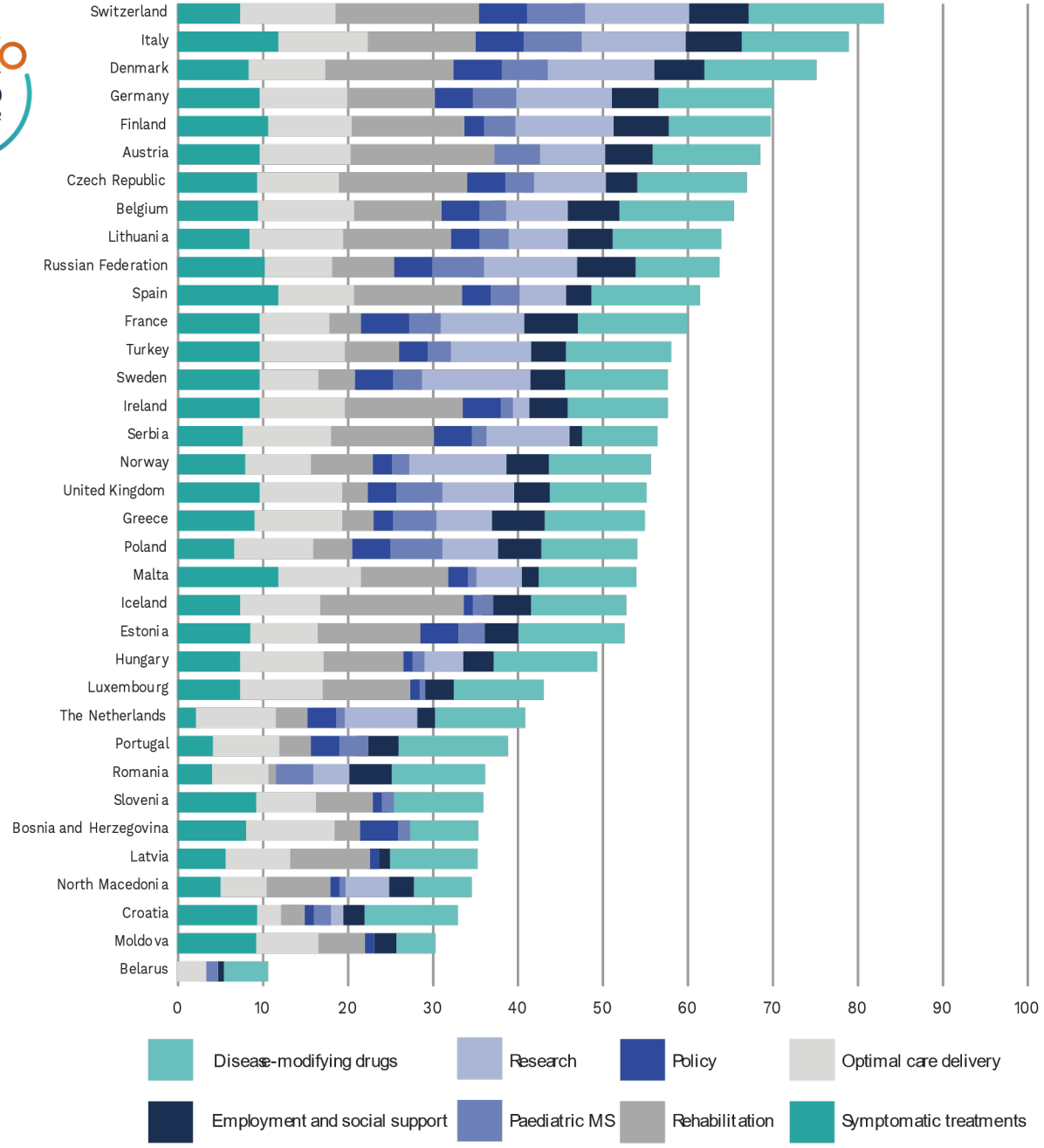
Lack of public funding for research for cure

Social exclusion

What's the real problem

Barriers in terms of access to treatments and therapies within countries

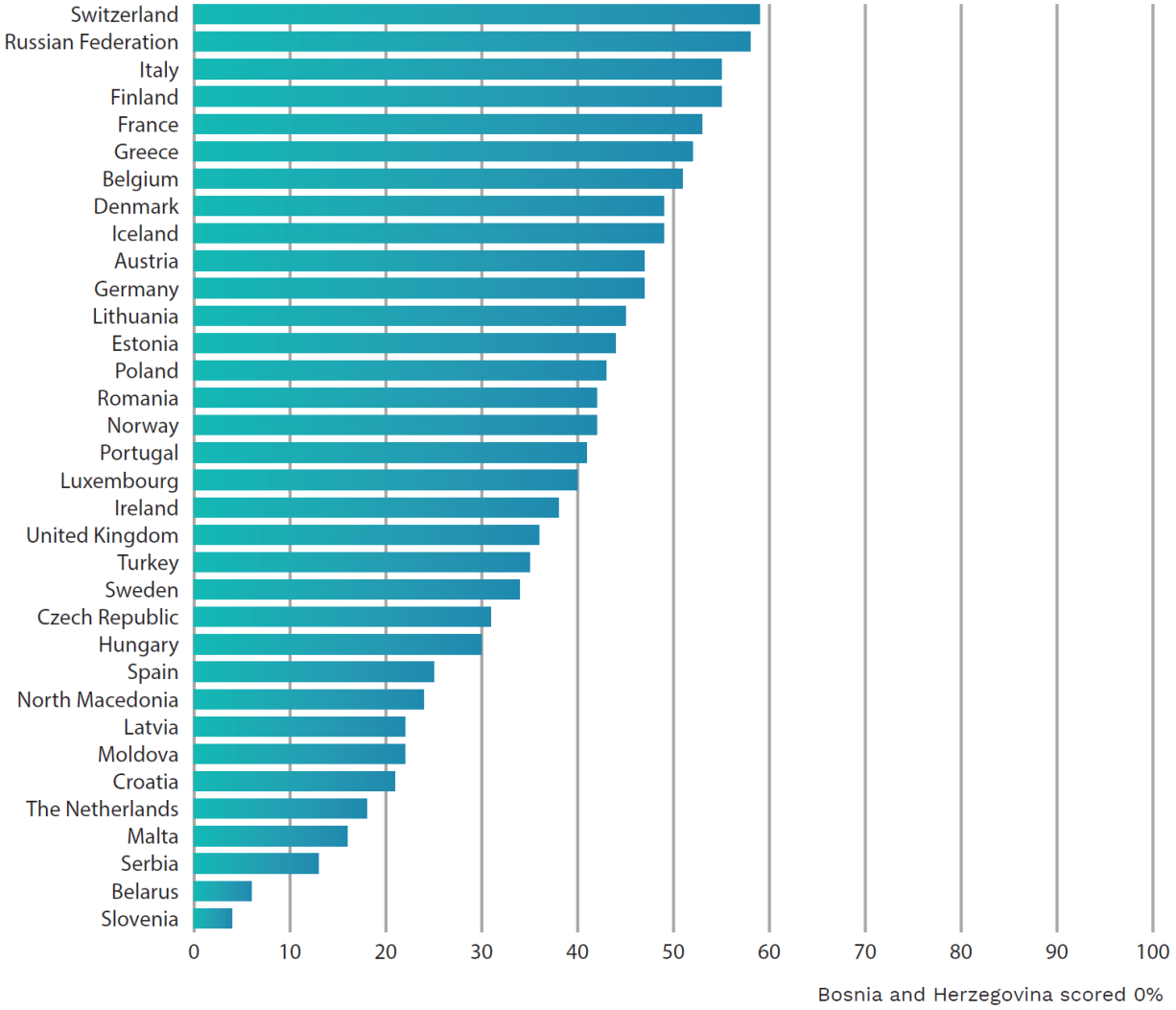
Availability of health care and health services



Total scores for the 35 countries participating in the 2020 MS Barometer survey

Inadequate standards of care cannot and will not be accepted!

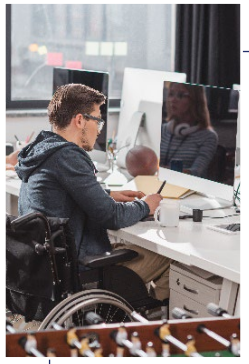
National Scores on Employment & Social Support



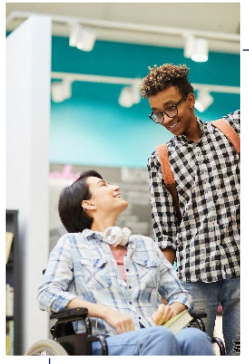
- Among the 15 countries that reported data, only 48% of people with MS are in full-time or part-time employment
- 21 countries provide no support for young people with MS to complete their education
- In at least 7 countries, people with MS are not legally protected from unfair dismissal from work

Employment and social support

Towards sustainable ecosystems: cost efficient and respectful of the Rights of people with disabilities



Access to employment: gaps in employment and social support persist across Europe; only 7 countries reported at least 50% of people with MS are in employment: Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and Turkey



Access to Education: **governments and civil society must intervene early in a person's disease course to ensure that they have sufficient support to complete any education and vocational training.** Less than half of countries responding to the survey offer this crucial support.

People with MS face barriers to joining and staying in the workplace:

UNPROTECTED IN **7** COUNTRIES

In at least 7 countries, people with MS are not legally protected from dismissal due to their disease.

ONLY **48%** OF PEOPLE WITH MS ARE EMPLOYED

Among responding countries, only 48% of people with MS are in employment.

From Disease Management to Workplace Inclusion and Talent retention

The challenge is not simply a healthcare issue. It is a workplace, social protection, and human rights issue.

Supporting people with MS and other neurological or neurodiverse conditions requires:

- Early intervention and symptom management
- Flexible working arrangements
- Reasonable accommodations
- Inclusive workplace cultures
- Occupational rehabilitation services
- Strong anti-discrimination protections
- Policies that support retention rather than premature exit from the workforce

From Disease Management to Workplace Inclusion and Talent retention

Systemic barriers:

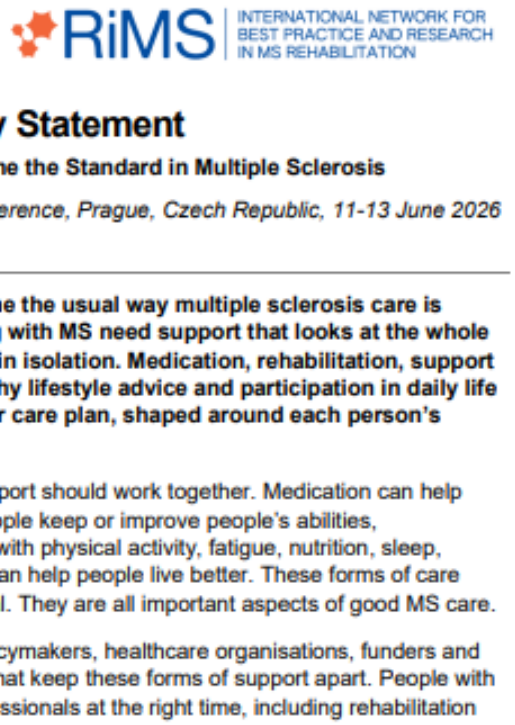
1. Invisible symptoms are poorly understood
2. Systems are built around disability exit rather than work retention (shift investment)
3. Fragmentation between stakeholders at national/local level
4. Lack of Manager Confidence /Trainings
5. Brain health is not yet seen as an employment issue
6. Short-term thinking

Employability vs. Workability

Four pillars where the workability could be improved:

- **Work-focused nature of conversations between clinicians and people with MS;**
- **The challenges faced by people living with MS who wish to work**
- **The quality of the jobs available to people with MS and the practical steps which employers can take to create fulfilling work;**
- **The ‘workability’ status which includes economic, clinical and social benefits for wider society**

From Rehabilitation to Workability



RiMS INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR BEST PRACTICE AND RESEARCH IN MS REHABILITATION

Policy Statement

Integrated Care Must Become the Standard in Multiple Sclerosis

For launch at the 31st Annual RiMS Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, 11-13 June 2026

RiMS calls for integrated care to become the usual way multiple sclerosis care is organised across Europe. People living with MS need support that looks at the whole person, not separate services working in isolation. Medication, rehabilitation, support for symptoms, mental well-being, healthy lifestyle advice and participation in daily life should be brought together in one clear care plan, shaped around each person's needs and goals.

Medication, rehabilitation and lifestyle support should work together. Medication can help manage MS, while rehabilitation helps people keep or improve people's abilities, independence and quality of life. Support with physical activity, fatigue, nutrition, sleep, mental well-being and self-management can help people live better. These forms of care should not be seen as separate or optional. They are all important aspects of good MS care.

RiMS urges healthcare professionals, policymakers, healthcare organisations, funders and MS organisations to remove the barriers that keep these forms of support apart. People with MS should be able to reach the right professionals at the right time, including rehabilitation

Such an approach would provide a framework for:

- Early identification of work related challenges by the care team
- Integrated vocational support. However need to incl. work goals, workplace accommodations, energy management strategies, cognitive compensation techniques
- More education and awareness towards Employers on simple adjustments to retain skilled employees

Brain Health, Neurodiversity and Employment: Why Work Matters for People Living with Multiple Sclerosis and Other Neurological Conditions ?

Employment should not be viewed as an outcome lost because of a brain health condition,

but as an outcome that can be preserved through timely healthcare, supportive policies, workplace adaptation, and an inclusive society.

Time for Action is now…

By 2030, neurological and brain health conditions will affect well over 180 million Europeans, with the burden expected to grow substantially as the population ages. This will have profound implications for labour market participation, workplace adaptation, productivity, retention, and social inclusion.

Thank you for your attention!

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