



► A powerful partnership to drive disability inclusion in business: ILO GBDN and the Zero Project

1. The Zero Project

[The Zero Project](#), an initiative by the Austrian non-profit [Essl Foundation](#), has the mission to achieve a world with zero barriers by finding and sharing solutions that improve the daily lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities.

[The Zero Project Conference](#) is a global platform through which innovative solutions for disability inclusion are showcased. With a focus on researching and advancing innovative solutions for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, the Zero Project through the annual Zero Project Conference, has established a global network of more than 10,000 experts, policy makers, and other changemakers to advance the implementation of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UN CRPD).



Participants at the Zero Project Conference 2024

Prior to each annual conference, there is a call to nominate innovative and scalable solutions with proven impact. These solutions are put into an extensive multi-step process that involves peer review by experts of the global Zero Project Network to determine each year's [Zero Project Awardees](#), a collection of the most promising innovations to advance the implementation of the UN CRPD. The four themes of the yearly conferences rotate between Education, Employment, Accessibility, Independent Living and Political Participation. In addition, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is addressed every year, due to its increasing significance for disability inclusion.

With the objective of overcoming language, cultural or geographical barriers, and connecting its global network with regional innovation ecosystems, the Zero Project pursues strategic partnerships in regions and countries such as Latin America, India, and Singapore.

Since 2019, [Zero Project Latin America](#) exists as a joint initiative with the Chilean NGO *Fundación Descúbreme* to increase the impact of inclusive solutions in the Spanish-speaking world. In 2023, the Zero Project joined forces with Youth4Jobs and EnAble India to create the Zero Project India, and with SG Enable to launch the Zero Project Asia Pacific.

In addition to its regional chapters, the Zero Project has developed the Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme and the Zero Project Technology Forum to support highly scalable solutions. Moreover, it has been building strategic partnerships related to Artificial Intelligence, and initiatives centred around Inclusive Arts.

2. ILO Global Business and Disability Network

Established in 2010, the [ILO Global Business and Disability Network](#) (GBDN) is a unique employers-led worldwide network of more than [40 multinational enterprises, more than 40 National Business and Disability Networks](#) (NBDN)¹, including in developing countries, as well as a few non-business associate members.

¹ NBDN provide country-level platforms for small and medium-sized enterprises, nationally or regionally operating companies as well as local branches of multinational enterprises for peer-to-peer exchange and support on disability inclusion issues, in collaboration with relevant non-business actors like local and international Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

The development, identification and dissemination of globally applicable good corporate disability inclusion practices lies at the heart of the ILO GBDN's work – with the overall goal of increasing employment rates of persons with disabilities.

In 2015, the ILO GBDN introduced its [Charter](#) which commits its company signatories to support ten disability inclusion principles.

3. Collaboration between the Zero Project and ILO GBDN



Discussants of the fireside chat on the ILO GBDN Self-Assessment Tool at the Zero Project Conference 2023

For the past few years, the annual Zero Project Conference has been a mutually beneficial point of collaboration, especially in the areas of Education, Employment, and Accessibility. For instance, the ILO GBDN partners with the Zero Project to encourage companies to nominate their good practices in the area of disability-inclusive employment.

The ILO GBDN further helps to promote the Zero Project to the general public through the ILO GBDN newsletters, social media, and website.

Before the call for submissions on good practices on employment for the 2025 Zero Project Conference, the ILO GBDN and the Zero Project held the webinar [“Disability-inclusive Employment: Corporate Nominations for #ZeroCall25”](#).

The Zero Project Conferences – global as well as regional – provide opportunities for the ILO GBDN to present latest trends and practices related to disability inclusion in business. In 2023, at the global conference, a fireside chat discussed the [“ILO GBDN's Self-Assessment Tool for companies”](#). At the Zero Project India Conference 2023, the ILO GBDN was part of the panel on “How can global collaboration on innovative solutions and technology support inclusive employment in India?”.

Further, in 2022, when the Zero Project focussed on accessibility, the ILO GBDN hosted the session [“Reaping the business benefits of accessibility”](#). In 2021, the ILO hosted the session [“An inclusive digital economy for people with disabilities”](#) and in 2018, the [“ILO Forum on Reasonable Adjustments in the Workplace”](#) took place.

The collaboration has also been beneficial to ILO GBDN members across the globe. For instance, in 2022, [Atos](#) - one of the multinational enterprise members of the ILO GBDN - won a Zero Project Award for its [Global Accessibility and Digital Inclusion Policy, Governance & Program](#).



Participants of the Zero Project India Conference 2023



2021 Zero Project award for the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network

In 2021, [Microsoft's Seeing AI](#), a talking camera app for people who are blind using AI and augmented reality, won a Zero Project Award. In the same year, the Bangladesh Business and Disability Network also emerged as one of the Zero Project Award winners in the category of innovative practices in inclusive employment.

At the regional and national levels, further collaboration occurs, including the Zero Project Conference for Latin America 2024, where the ILO GBDN co-organised and moderated the session [“Collaborative networks: An opportunity for business growth”](#) (*“Redes colaborativas: Una oportunidad para el crecimiento de las empresas”*).

4. Opportunities to strengthen collaboration and engagement

Mutual promotion of each other's work, especially in the mutual areas of interest to the ILO GBDN - Education, Employment, Accessibility - has been an ongoing collaborative effort. The ILO GBDN focuses on promoting disability-inclusive employment and sharing good corporate practices in this area, both of which are also priorities for Zero Project Conferences and related awards. A mutual collaboration to promote both the ILO GBDN global annual conferences and the Zero Project annual conferences ensures a wider reach, specifically to the members of both initiatives.

The ILO GBDN also hosts annual regional conferences. Every year, additional efforts by the ILO GBDN are put on a particular geographic region and one way to strengthen the mutual collaboration is by creating synergies between ILO GBDN regional conferences with the Zero Project's regional conferences, including by working with National Business and Disability Networks in the countries of the particular region.

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