

Design for Government, Aalto University

# Strategy for **hiring people with disabilities** in governmental institutions based on the Personal Budgeting Model

Transition to a Thriving and Inclusive Society



Aalto University

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# Introduction

This project is a part of the Design for Government course (DfG) at Aalto University. DfG is a project-based course, in which projects, formulated as briefs, are proposed by governmental stakeholders. Over the course of 12-weeks, interdisciplinary student teams address these challenges of the government and public sector through design (Design for Government, 2021).

The brief of this project was represented by members of THL, Kela, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, and sponsored by the ORSI project.

## The Brief

In conjunction with the broader social and healthcare reform in Finland, and following the current Government agenda, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a pilot project on the **personal budgeting model for people with disabilities** (Henkilökohtainen budjetti) (Design for Government, 2021).

The model aims at providing a more inclusive and flexible choice of services to better respond to the persons with disabilities' individual goals and needs while taking sustainability (and the carbon neutrality target of 2035) into account. However, this model requires a transformative change – from sharing, integrating, accessing resources, but most importantly, including the citizens' participation in the planning and

co-development of services (Design for Government, 2021).

For this, the teams were instructed to identify deficiencies within current disability services that could benefit from more flexibility, novel modes of support, or cost and resource-effective solutions, and then to investigate how the personal budgeting model could help to overcome these deficiencies. Most importantly, the final proposal should strengthen the social participation and equality of persons with disabilities. Getting there involves finding ways to connect relevant stakeholders for collaborative purposes (Design for Government, 2021).

# Our Approach

For the project, the team decided to take an empathic and human-centered approach, to ensure that our proposal is designed with the end users' point of view in mind. In our case, this meant that throughout the whole project, we analyzed the system and the experiences especially from the people with disabilities point of view.

The 12-week project followed roughly the double diamond process developed by the British Design Council (2007). The project was therefore divided into 4 main stages: research, problem definition, solution design, and validation.

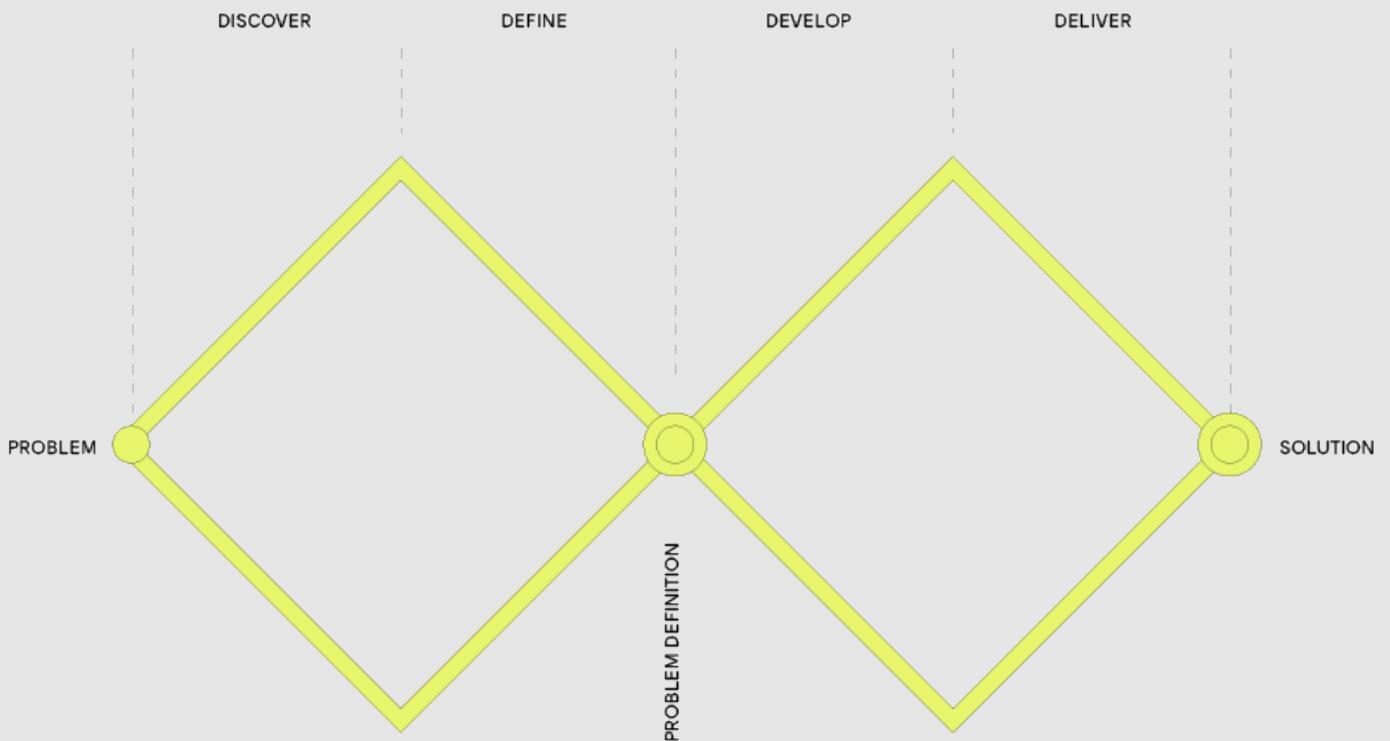


Figure 1. “The Double-Diamond Process of our Design Project”. Based on British Design Council (2007) Author: Ruta Jumite

Research

# Desktop Research

We started the research stage with desktop research, to get an overview of the topic from existing resources, clarifying the scope and complexity of the topic.

Among other materials, we explored relevant research papers and documents from THL, Kela, and other main stakeholders, UN reports, and case studies from other countries.

## **The current world (including Finland) is not designed for everybody.**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, n.d.), over one billion people in the world live with some kind of disability, and almost everyone will be either temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in their life. However, despite the magnitude, disability still remains a human rights issue, as disabled people often experience inequalities – ranging from access to health care and education to increased risk of poverty (WHO, 2011).

In Finland, disability policy has been developed to ensure the equality, participation, and support of people with disabilities (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, n.d.). In practice, this means that people with disabilities get social assistance from the Finnish social security institution Kela through a social allowance, together with the services provided by municipalities (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, n.d.).

However, research suggests that while the Finnish social security system is appreciated, it also often does not meet the actual needs of people with disabilities (Luetjens, 2016).

From our research we found that the complex system of benefits and services is hard to understand, so people with disabilities or their family members often end up in unenviable situations, where they need to figure out what kind of benefits they need and how and when to apply for them (Luetjens, 2016). Furthermore, as the “types of disabilities” as well as people with disabilities are very diverse, their needs vary greatly and the current allowance system limits their freedom of choice as well as the control they have over their life (WHO, 2011). Thus, even though Finland has a strong social security system, it is clear that the inclusiveness of Finnish society needs to be developed.

## Personal budgeting model in Finland and abroad

Based on the government program of prime minister Sanna Marin, the personal budgeting model project was launched for 2020-2021 with the goal to strengthen the self-determination, participation, and the possibility for choices of people with disabilities (THL, 2020). The aim is to provide persons with disabilities an access to an integrated offering of private and public services, while also becoming more mindful of natural resource use (Design for Government, 2021).

In order to support the preparation of the Finnish personal budgeting model, the Department of Health and Welfare (Terveyden ja Hyvinvoinnin Laitos, 2020) conducted the study: Personal Budgeting Pilot Project - Disability Service. In the study, information was collected on models from Scotland, England, Ireland, and Australia - countries that are pioneers in personal budgeting and thus, good reference countries.

Shortly, the basis of all of these personal budgeting models is to enable a better life for an individual. These models are based entirely on new legislation emphasizing personalization and self-reg-

ulation principles. They allow people to act inside of a certain framework rather than deny doing things (Terveyden ja Hyvinvoinnin Laitos, 2020). All of these mentioned models served as an inspiration for us during those projects, as they allow people with disabilities to influence and make choices about individual support measures in all areas of their lives, to enjoy independent living, and to take an active part in the activities of their community. They all include an aspect of providing more options of service providers to people with disabilities, although the methods of how the support is provided may vary.

The Finnish personal budgeting model project is directed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, which formulates the required policies for the government, and advised by Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), who piloted the personal budgeting model project. Selected municipalities have been part of the pilot project, while Kela is a collaborator.

# Roundtable and Interviews

To gain an even deeper and more human-centered understanding of the topic, the desktop research was accompanied by a roundtable and interviews with the stakeholders such as THL, Kela, municipalities, disabilities associations, the end-users — people with disabilities — and their family members.

As a supergroup consisting of three groups working with the personal budgeting model, we started the primary research with a roundtable discussion with representatives from THL, Kela, Espoo City, the ORSI project, and Aalto University. After the roundtable discussion, we conducted 7 individual or group interviews with a total of 11 participants together with another team from our supergroup.

## **We interviewed:**

- 3 civil servants (Kela, THL)
- 2 social workers
- 2 people with disabilities (one also representing an NGO)
- 2 family members of a person with a disability
- 1 personal caretaker (and an entrepreneur related to disabilities)
- 1 representative of a disability foundation

The interview participants varied from people with disabilities to governmental actors. We conducted more interviews with the people with disabilities and their close ones compared to the governmental actors since we wanted to deeply understand end-users everyday life and challenges.

However, we made sure that we understand the design process for the personal budgeting model comprehensively with the interviews of the public servants.

The interviews were semi-structured and took place online on Zoom or Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions. The online environment allowed us to interview people from geographically comprehensive areas. The questions were prepared individually for each interview based on the background and role of the participants. However, similar topics such as the disability service system in Finland, the personal budgeting model, and communication and cooperation were the key themes in every interview. The length of the interviews varied from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

By gathering diverse perspectives and experiences, we were able to gain a systemic perspective of the disability services and the development of the personal budgeting model. Interviews played a key role in creating knowledge about the disability service system and a deep understanding of the main challenges.

# Analysis and Problem Definition

# Affinity Diagramming and Systems Map

We gathered all the information from the primary and secondary research as notes to a Miro board (an online collaborative tool) and used the Affinity Diagram tool to cluster the data into bigger groups (Hanington & Martin, 2019). This allowed us to identify the overarching themes, which later facilitated our systems thinking (Hanington & Martin, 2019).

Furthermore, based on the gathered knowledge, we constructed and refined a systems map as a way to have an overview of the whole system and to understand the role and relationship between the stakeholders of the personal budgeting model.

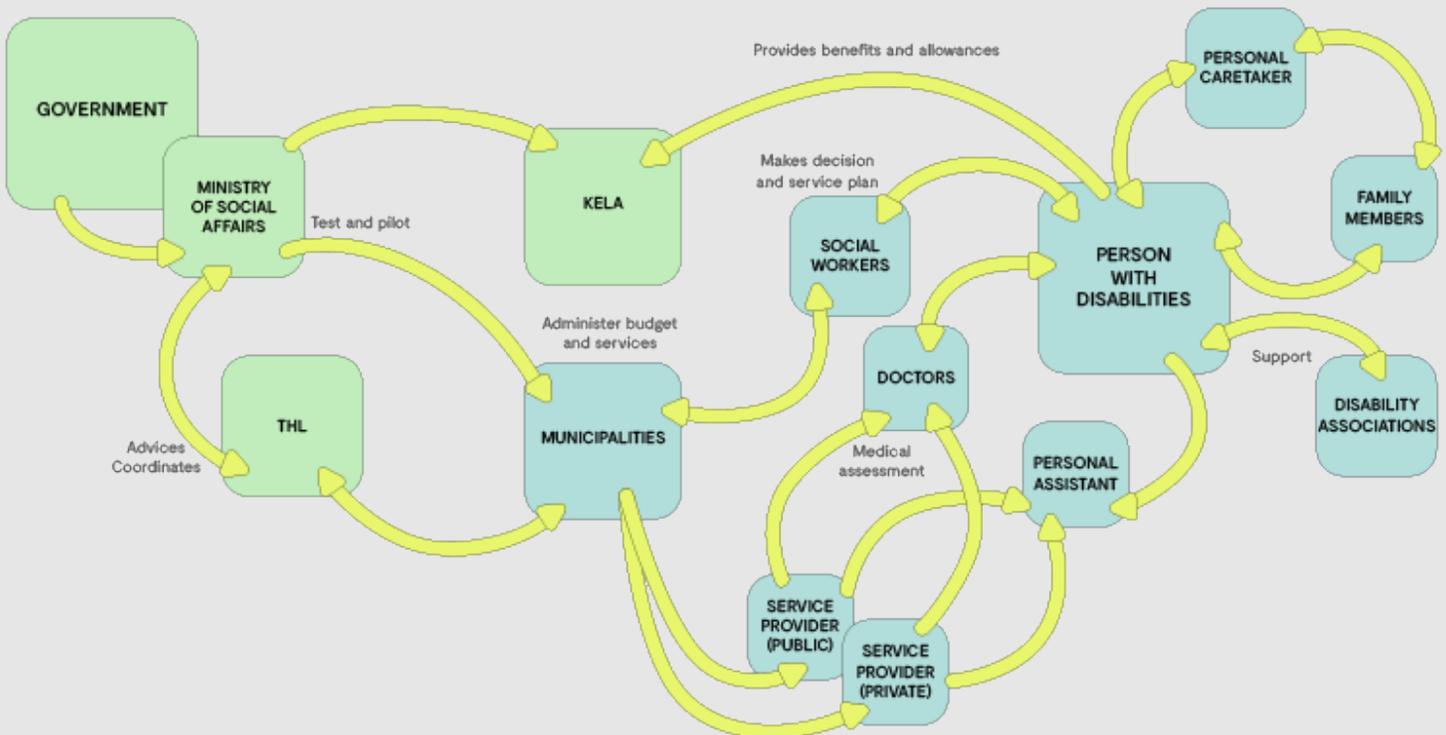


Figure 2. "Systems map". Author: Lucía Llerena

# Iceberg Model

While analyzing the existing system we came across many important challenges. To understand the relations, levels, and underlying reasons for these challenges we used the systems thinking tool called Iceberg Model.

Shortly, the idea in the Iceberg model is that for any event there are also issues under the surface that explain why something happens and why it happens as it does (Goodman, 2002).

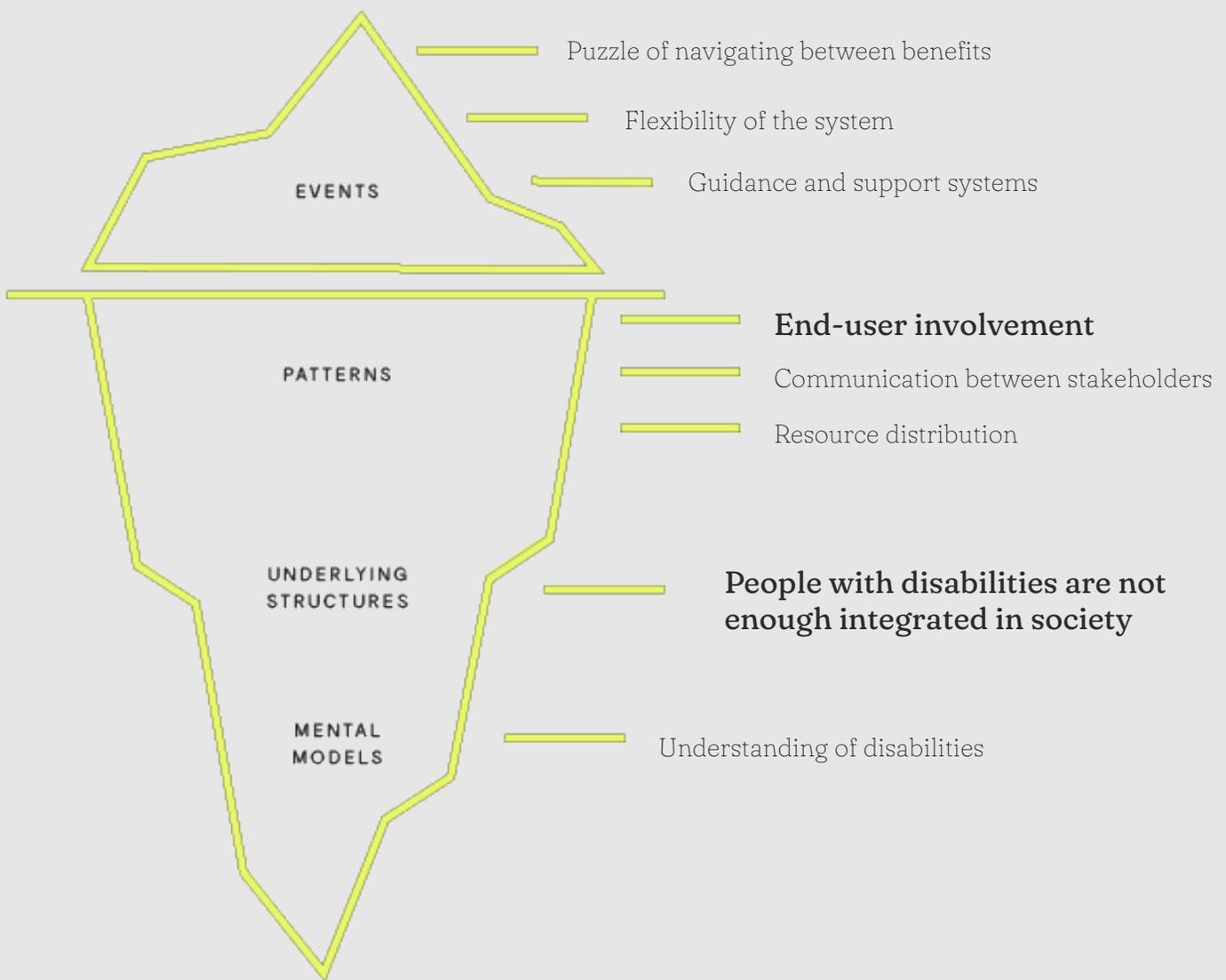


Figure 3. "Recognised challenges within the system". Author: Ruta Jumite

There are four different layers in the Iceberg Model. The most visible layer, events, tells what is happening right now (Goodman, 2002). Through the analysis of interviews and desktop research, we recognized three events level challenges in the current disability support system. The first challenge, the puzzle of navigating between benefits, means that the one applying for benefits is expected to know what kind of services they need, and from where – even though in many cases they don't.

The second one, the flexibility of the system, means that our current system is quite siloed and stiff. The system does not support life changes and it assumes that one's needs land to some siloed sector of the system. The third challenge is related to guidance and support systems. In theory, social workers are obligated to provide the needed help and guidance for people with disabilities, but often they can not provide needed help for example due to lack of resources. Therefore some clients are rather trying to navigate themselves.

*“My hair is gray because of the Finnish system!”*

*- Emma (a pseudonym), a person with disabilities*

Under the surface, there are patterns, which show what has been happening over time and what are the current trends (Goodman, 2002). On the pattern level, the first challenge is end-user involvement. Currently, people with disabilities are not participating in policy design enough. However, only people with disabilities understand the challenges of the systems and therefore, the design and development should not take place without them. Since this is not yet the case the people with disabilities have mistrust towards

the system. This also creates a risk for future co-creation.

The second challenge, communication between stakeholders, might also create obstacles for co-creation. Currently, the interaction between different stakeholders is not as fluent as it could be. Therefore, there are information delays and the service processes last more than they should. The third pattern level challenge is resource distribution. The resources for disability services are scarce in municipalities and overall.

Therefore, the interpretation of the law is done strictly. In the every-day-life of people with disabilities, this is seen for example as long processes and limited help.

Generally, services cover basic needs but not all sides so that person could flourish and implement themselves. In the worst case, this might decrease one's ability to function and their self-determination.

*“When Isabella lived at home she walked journeys of a kilometer or two (..) Nowadays in a service home a physiotherapist visits her twice a week and otherwise she is kept a lot in a wheelchair because it is easy (..) Currently Isabella walks a meter or two at a time. Her muscles are not strong enough.”*

*— Sophie & Silvia (all pseudonyms),  
family members of a person with disabilities*

Deeper down one can find underlying structures which tell what are influencing the patterns and where the connections between the different patterns are (Goodman, 2002). From analyzing our research we were able to recognize the underlying structures to which all upper-level challenges are related. The most significant ingrained behavior is that people with disabilities are

consistently not integrated into society. Instead of integrating people with disabilities into society by empowering them as experts in their own lives, they are often treated as customers of the system, or even as a “burden”. In other words, society functions in a way that people with disabilities are only in the role of help-seekers, and their potential as equal citizens is not recognized.

*“Many times, I think, disabled people are also told ever since we are little, that there is something wrong with us. That we should just shut up, and be quiet, and be happy about the services we get because we are wasting the society’s money...”*

*- Liisa (a pseudonym), person with disabilities, and an expert from a disability organization*



Image 1. Illustration by Ruta Jumite

At the deepest level, there are mental models which are our values, beliefs, and assumptions, which actually shape the whole system (Goodman, 2002). The behavior of not integrating people with disabilities in society is caused by the mental models, learned subconsciously from society.

We found out that the deepest level challenge is that the understanding of disabilities is inadequate. Currently, disability is often seen as only a medical condition. Furthermore, when we asked about the biggest challenge our informant has in her daily work for a disability NGO, she said it is the attitude:

*“In a society, disabled people are not seen as an active part of the society and .. disability issues are not necessarily seen as human rights issues, but as a social problem.”*

*- Liisa (a pseudonym), person with disabilities,  
and an expert from a disability organization*

Our research helped us to understand that instead of only a medical condition, disability can be seen as a result of the interaction between people with disabilities and the social and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. It can be that the obstacles in society make a disability reality more so than one's impairment.

Using the Iceberg Model helped us to see that all of the challenges are related and that each of the subsequent levels is caused by the one below. This means that the events that we perceive are

rooted in the deepest level, and trace back to the understanding of disabilities prevalent in the society that interventions in deeper levels might have a broader influence.

Thus, the Iceberg Model helped us to frame the core challenges. However, it is known that the deepest leverage points are the hardest to address by design because they are rooted so deeply in the mental models and paradigms of society (Goodman, 2002). Nevertheless, we decided to focus on those levels since they have power to change the whole system. (Meadows 2009.)

# Key Insights

Through the analysis of the system, we identified two main insights, which we found particularly critical.

**People with disabilities are not seen as active members of society, and as a result, they feel rather as a burden to society and thus, are not recognizing or advocating their own capabilities.**

One of the key findings, gained through the analysis, is that people with disabilities are stuck in a vicious cycle. People with disabilities are seen as static in their lifestyles and they are not considered active members of society. They are often treated as customers of the system rather than experts in their own lives. Therefore, people with disabilities tend to grow up with the feeling that they are a burden to society, which might be amplified by other people's comments of the kind. As a result, they do not recognize nor advocate their own needs or capabilities. This, in turn, actually hinders them to become active members of society who could design better systems themselves.

When taking into account the current prejudice around people with disabilities, the challenge with the personal budgeting model was to figure out: How might we empower people with disabilities and change the stigma around disability while designing the personal budgeting model?

People with disabilities are not seen as active members of society



they feel rather as a burden to society

and thus, are not recognising or advocating their own capabilities.

Image 2. "The Vicious Cycle". Illustration: Ruta Jumite

**The disability services are rather seen as a mandatory hand-out, and people with disabilities aren't seen as active citizens who could design better systems for themselves.**

**As a result, the current services are designed without involving them enough.**

Currently, the disability services are rather seen as a mandatory hand-out, where people with disabilities are seen rather as receivers, not doers. As a result, the current services are designed and run without involving them enough because they aren't seen as active citizens who could design systems for themselves.

With regards to making the system more end-user-centered, the question would be: How might we involve people with disabilities in relevant institutions so the overall system would be created and run by the end-users?

*“If there is a service for people with disabilities but there are no people with disabilities themselves planning the services, or making the decisions about the services, then the change is never going to happen.”*

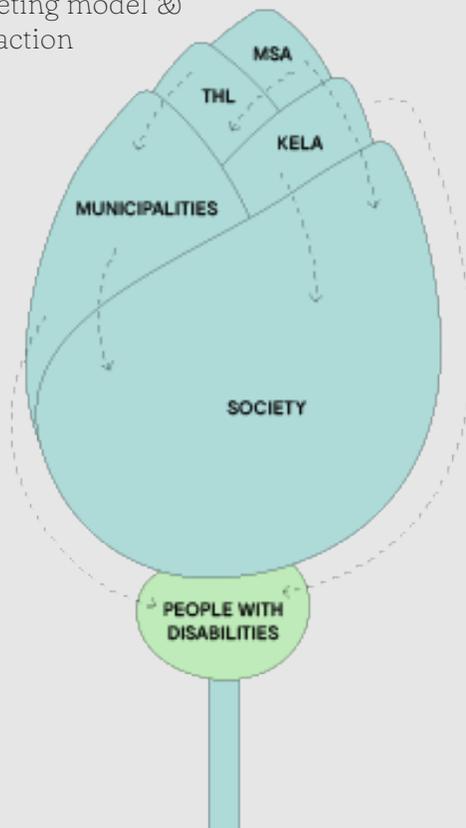
*- Liisa (a pseudonym), person with disabilities,  
and an expert from a disability organization*

# The Current Design Process

Taking the insights to the context of the personal budgeting model, we visualized our understanding of the current state of the design process and the relationships between the main stakeholders with the help of an illustrated flower.

The closed flower reflects the current design process for the personal budgeting model and the relevant stakeholders are placed in petals of the flower. The flower is tightly closed since the disability services are planned mainly by governmental stakeholders.

Institutions related to the Personal Budgeting model & end-user interaction



The Personal Budgeting Model is currently designed by governmental actors, leaving people with disabilities are only receivers

Figure 4. “The Current Design Process of the Personal Budgeting Model”. Author: Ruta Jumite

The arrows demonstrate the top-down approach which means that the personal budgeting model is designed by the governmental actors and people with disabilities are only receivers. As arrows visualize, the information flows mainly in one direction, and especially the valuable knowledge of people with disabilities is not reaching the governmental actors as it should.

People with disabilities are pictured as a separate entity outside the flower since they are not involved in the design process enough. In practice, this means that instead of integrating people with disabilities in the design process by empowering them as the experts of their own lives, they are treated as customers of the system who receive the service once it has been designed and implemented.

After receiving feedback from the stakeholders and careful consideration, our team decided to focus on thinking about how we could empower people with disabilities by involving them in relevant institutions.

By this, it would be ensured that the service system and personal budgeting model would be designed and created by the end-users themselves. Overall, we believe that it is the only way to create a functioning personal budgeting model which answers to the diverse needs and situations of the end-users.

# Solution Development

# Design Drivers

Moving into the solution development stage, we defined a list of the core principles that the solution should involve in order to make the flower bloom, i.e. to open up the design process. The following goals and features for the proposal helped us to envision the outcome of the project and set the boundaries within which the ideation took place.

## **Goals for the project:**

- Involve people with disabilities in designing processes, power structures, and relevant institutions as active participants and decision-makers.
- Provide people with disabilities a way to act, participate and raise their opinions.
- Design a concept for the government to empower people with disabilities and inform policy change.

## **Aspects that proposal needs to include:**

- Taking the range of complexities of disabilities into account.
- Supporting sustainability (societal and ecological).
- Ensuring active interaction between different stakeholders.
- Making sure that the strategy does not activate only the people with disabilities who are already active.



# Transition Design

After gathering and analyzing a large amount of research data and defining the key insights and problems within the personal budgeting model system, we wanted to think of a design intervention that would create a long-lasting systemic change. To not limit ourselves to existing world paradigms, we chose Transition Design / Future Visioning methods.

Like all design processes, transition design requires defining the problem.

The second step of the transition design method, however, aims to develop a vision for a distant future that envisions the best possible future, an utopia. Third, it includes the backcasting method to define the strategic steps needed to achieve the vision. Fourth, it helps to define the first specific design interventions that would start the systematic transition towards the preferred future. (Leppänen, 2019)

We will now describe how we worked through those steps.

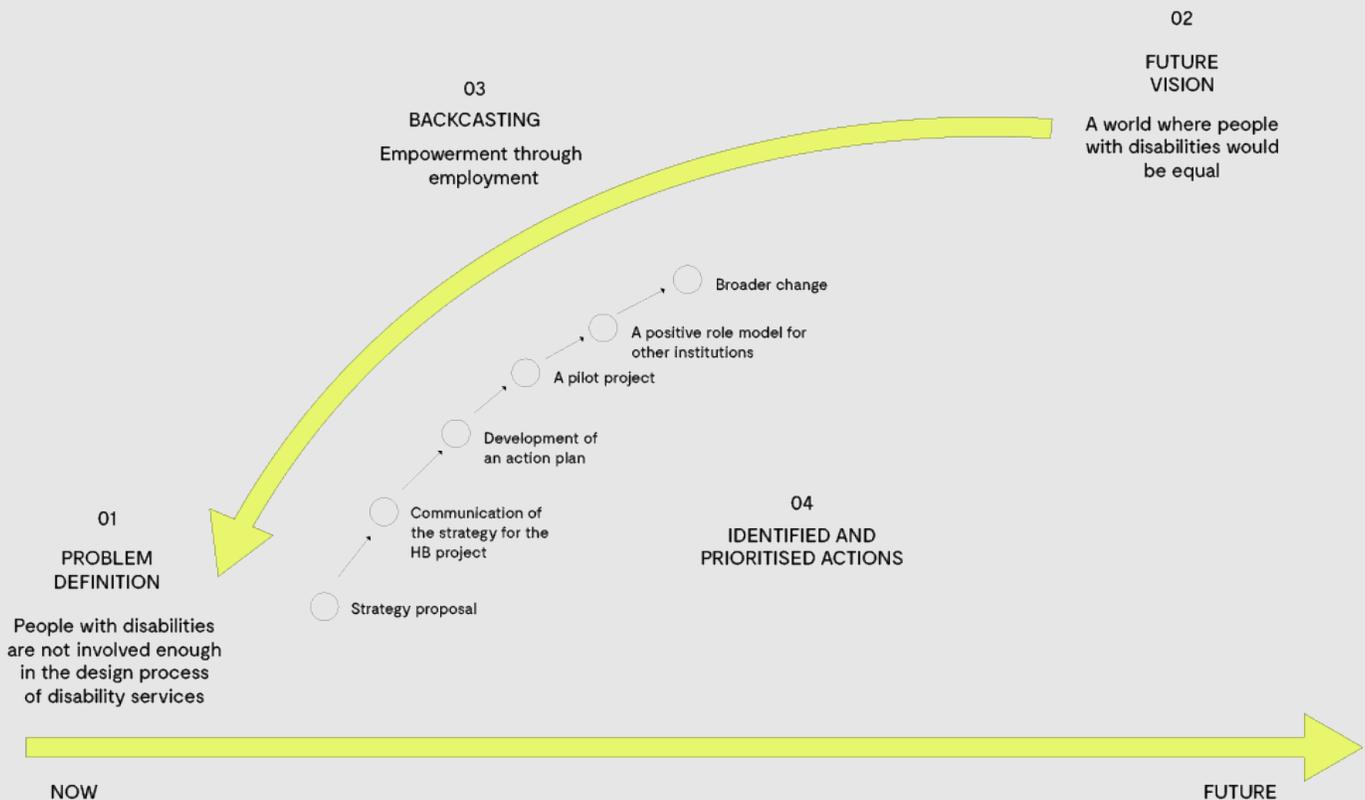


Figure 5. "Transition Design method applied to our project brief." Based on Leppänen (2019) Medium post. Author: Ruta Jumite

## Developing a future vision: A Utopia

After exploring the brief and defining the problems through analysis, we continued our transition design process with two sessions of future visioning. In the first session, we brainstormed the vision together with our team members. We imagined a utopia: a future where there would not be a division between people with disabilities and others, a future where people with disabilities would be equal.

We further explored that in order to be an involved part of society, meaningful work plays a key role, so we decided to further research the topic. Additionally, to not be biased by our perception and to validate our ideation, we decided to hold a second future envisioning workshop together with relevant stakeholders.



Image 3. “Transition Design Workshop”. Source: Personal Collection.



## **Backcasting: Empowerment through employment**

To understand the current necessary steps for achieving the imagined future, we used backcasting. We confirmed that involvement is an essential part if the aim is to get people with disabilities to be equal actors of the system, and that in terms of involvement, especially meaningful employment plays a key role in one's identity, sense of belonging, and happiness (f.e. Jackson, 2009). Therefore, we understood that including people with disabilities only in the co-design workshops as a form of involvement is not enough, as in the co-design workshops, the decision-making and the power are still in the hands of others rather than the end-users of the services.

People with disabilities themselves are the only ones who understand their actual needs. Therefore, the only way to reach a functioning personal budgeting model would happen through employing them to be the designers, creators, and developers of the model. Also, this would make the people with disabilities trust the system and the society more since they would ensure that their needs are heard in the design process of the disability services.

Work plays a major role in the membership of current societies and therefore, employment would also be a valuable way to integrate people with disabilities into society (Pohlan 2019). Employment would empower people with disabilities to be the leaders of their own lives, creators of the disability services, and active members of society overall. This might also empower them to make a change in other sectors of life. However, the integration that we aim to achieve does not mean that people with disabilities should adapt to the current system. It means that as designers of the systems they would be involved in creating the social system that meets the needs of everyone.

Referring back to our illustration of the current system, we believe that employment would make the closed flower bloom. In other words, empowerment through employment would create a transition to a thriving & inclusive institution where the personal budgeting model would be created by the end-users. The arrows on the right side of the illustration demonstrate the cooperation and the information flow between the stakeholders, who share knowledge together as equal participants. This would ensure that the personal budgeting model and disability services function at their best.

**Empowerment through employment** creates a transition to a thriving & inclusive institutions

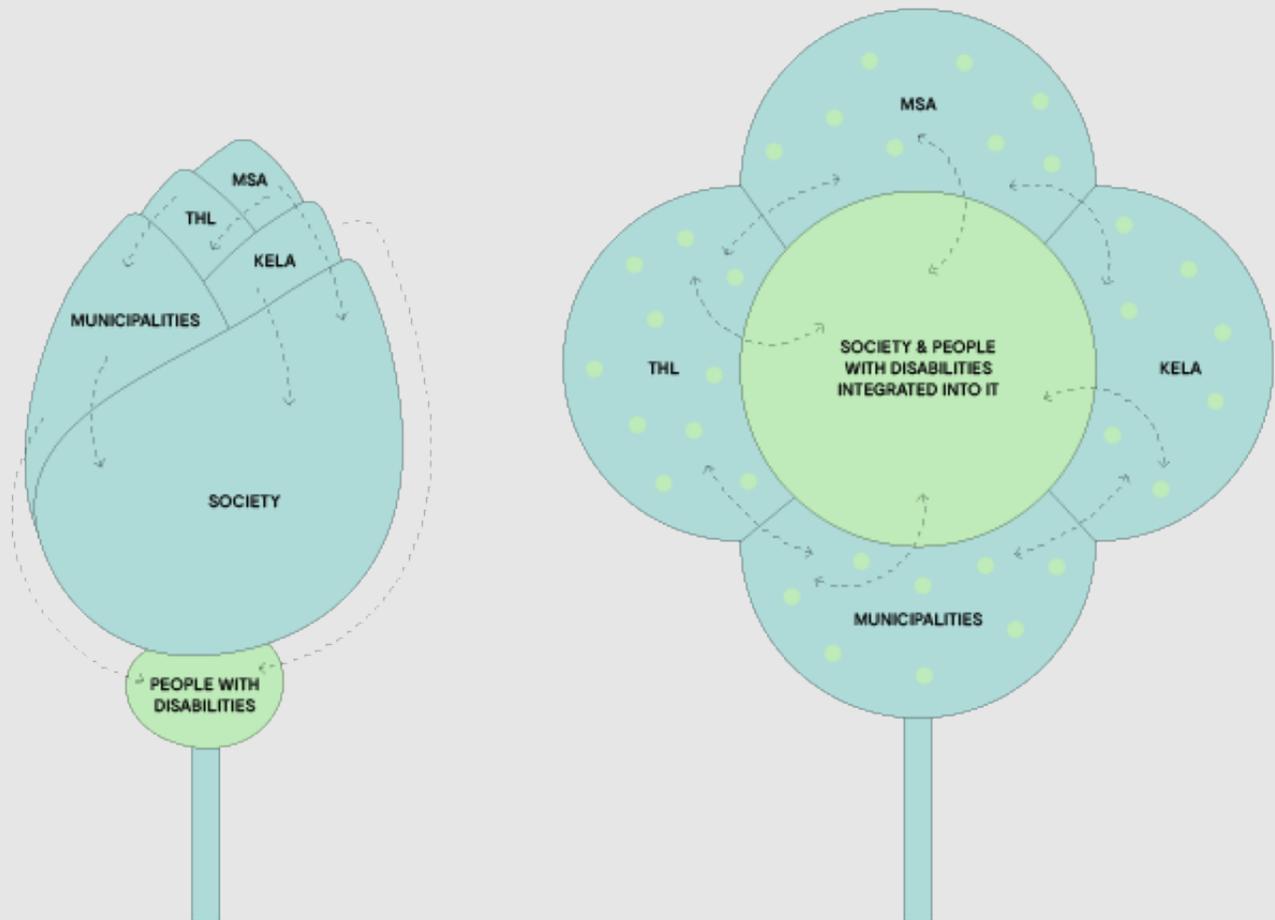


Figure 7. “The Design Process of the Personal Budgeting Model with Involvement”. Author: Ruta Jumite

# Intervention Development: Strategy

To develop the intervention, we thought about the means that would make the empowerment through employment to happen. As a result of two brainstorming sessions, we had a wide set of different actions, tools and ways which might help in achieving the wanted outcome. The ideas varied from small effort tasks to ones that needed more resources and time. As we started to evaluate the different options, we kept two questions in our minds: 1.) Which solutions would have the most impact? 2.) Which solutions would help the government to guide our society towards the goals of the project?

However, before choosing the idea we wanted to make sure that it fits the government's actions. We used a Policy Lab's Government as a system toolkit to understand what kind of governmental act would be the best possible solution (Siodmok, 2020). Firstly, we decided to focus on creating a solution which as a governmental act would be a combination of partnering and planning. When we compared our ideas to these actions we realized that none of them would alone create the systemic change that we wanted to achieve.

Therefore, we decided to set a **strategy** which would include many different ideas which would all together lead us to one main goal: hiring people with disabilities in governmental institutions.

Design process for the strategy was not linear. We brainstormed, evaluated and modified ideas firstly between the team and then with relevant stakeholders in a co-design workshops. However, after careful consideration we set two main goals for the strategy and started to categorize suitable ideas and actions under the two goals. We also understood that if the strategy is not communicated effectively it will be put into practice less likely. Therefore, we came up with the idea of a flower as an illustration of the strategy and tied the flower into all parts of it.

Finally, through interviews and workshops, we validated the solution together with the main stakeholders. With this, we were able to understand the impact and implications of running these proposals.

Proposal:  
Strategy for Hiring People  
with Disabilities

Based on the Personal Budgeting Model

As our vision is a systemic change, our solution proposal is a Strategy for hiring people with disabilities in governmental institutions based on the personal budgeting model.

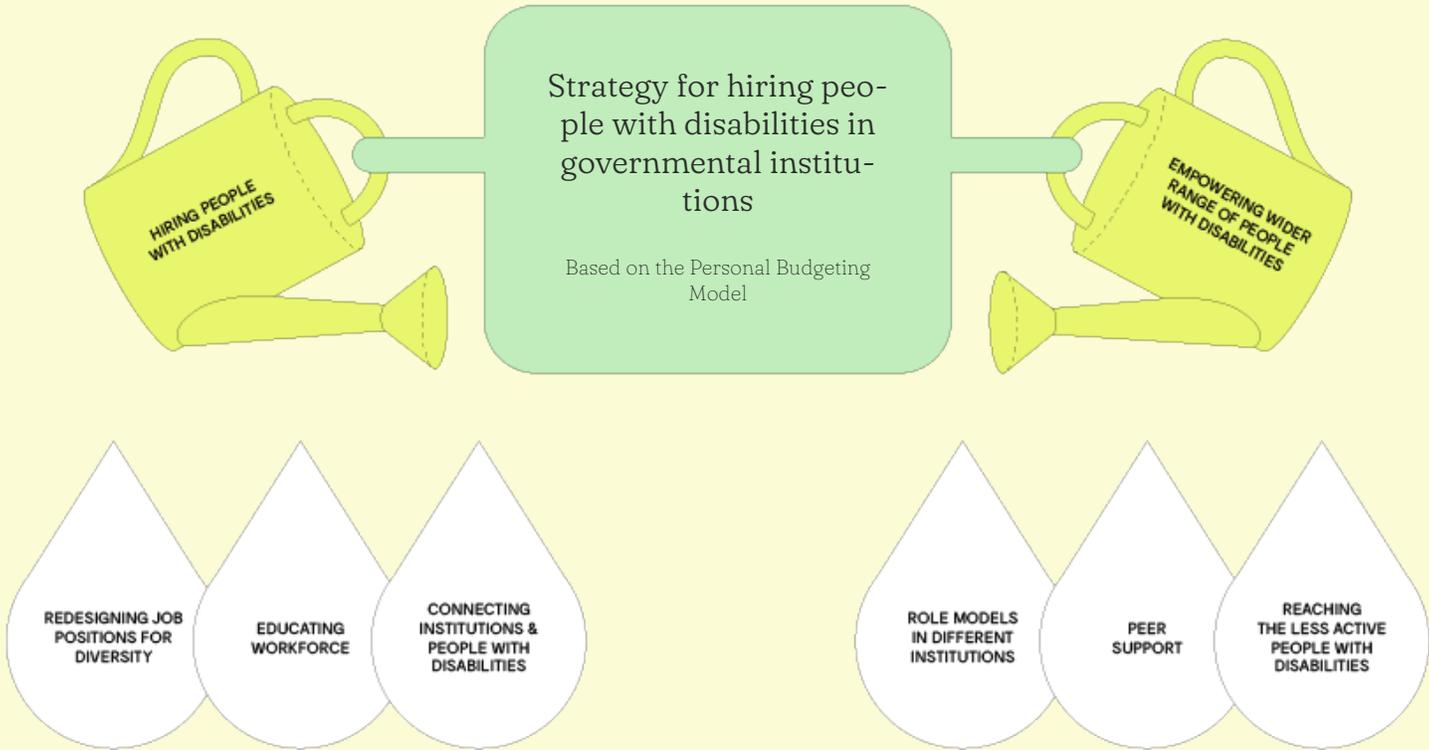


Figure 8. Illustration of the “Strategy for hiring people with disabilities in governmental institutions”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

As our goal is a transition to a thriving society, where the currently closed design process of personal budgeting would open up, we illustrated the strategy as a watering-fertilizing process. The watering cans represent the 2 complementary main goals, which hold within the nurturing water, which in our case are the 6 subgoals.

### **Goal 1: Hiring people with disabilities**

Subgoal 1.1: Redesigning job positions,

Subgoal 1.2: Educating the workforce

Subgoal 1.3: Connecting institutions and people with disabilities

### **Goal 2: Empowering a wider range of people with disabilities**

Subgoal 2.1: Role models in different institutions

Subgoal 2.2: Peer support

Subgoal 2.3: Reaching the less active people with disabilities.

# Hiring People with Disabilities

We set the first goal to be **hiring people with disabilities** since they are the only ones who understand their actual needs and therefore, can design, implement, assess and develop fully functioning disability services and personal budgeting model. We argue that participation through workshops is not enough and the most impactful way for involvement is employment.

To facilitate employment, the following subgoals should be achieved.



Experts of their lives, and thus, should be the ones who design

Figure 9. Illustration of the “Strategy for hiring people with disabilities”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

## Redesigning job positions

Currently, there are many barriers to the employment of people with disabilities. However, institutions can erase those barriers by redesigning and shaping job positions to make them suitable for diversity. Due to the variety and complexity of disabilities, redesigning positions should be done with the help of experts. At the same time, those experts could train the institutions, so that they would become more knowledgeable on how to do it themselves too.

In practice, the reshaping could mean, for example, more flexible working hours to fit diverse situations, or separating some operational tasks that would be suitable for people with cognitive disabilities.

Furthermore, the job positions should be made accessible in 3 layers:

First, the physical environment needs to be accessible for the variety of disabilities.

Second, the tools used for working should be chosen with keeping the whole range of disabilities in mind. This also means providing the possibility to work digitally, as a way to reduce one's carbon footprint.

Third, mental accessibility, that is, psychological safety needs to be ensured in the workplace.

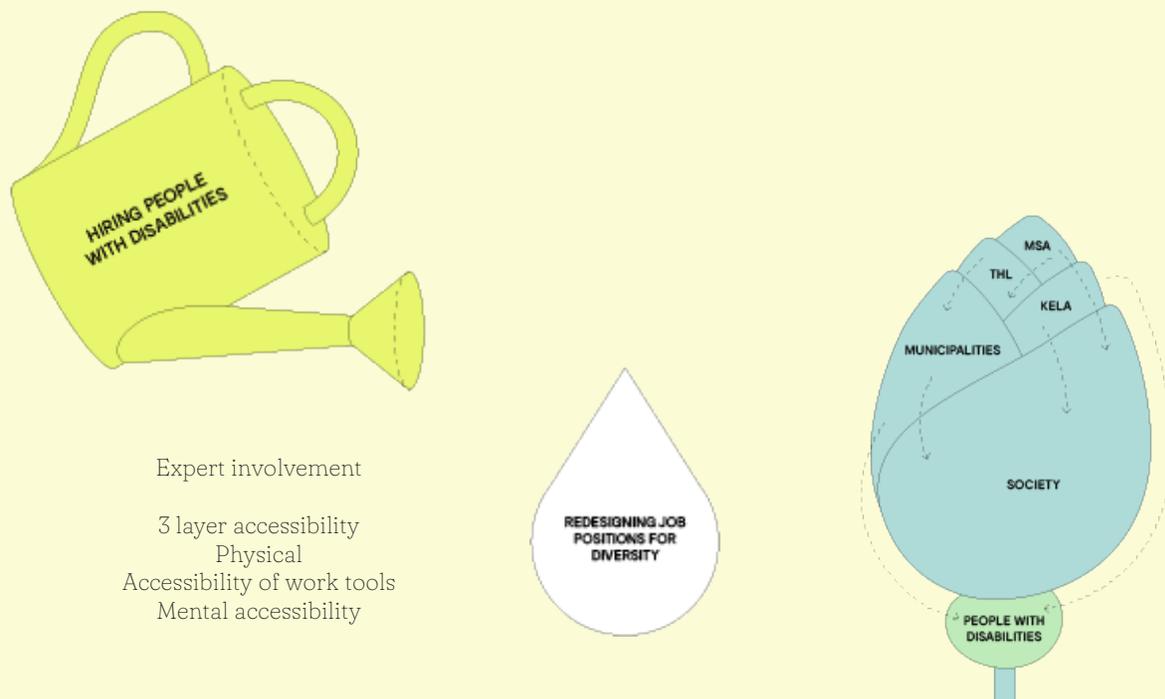
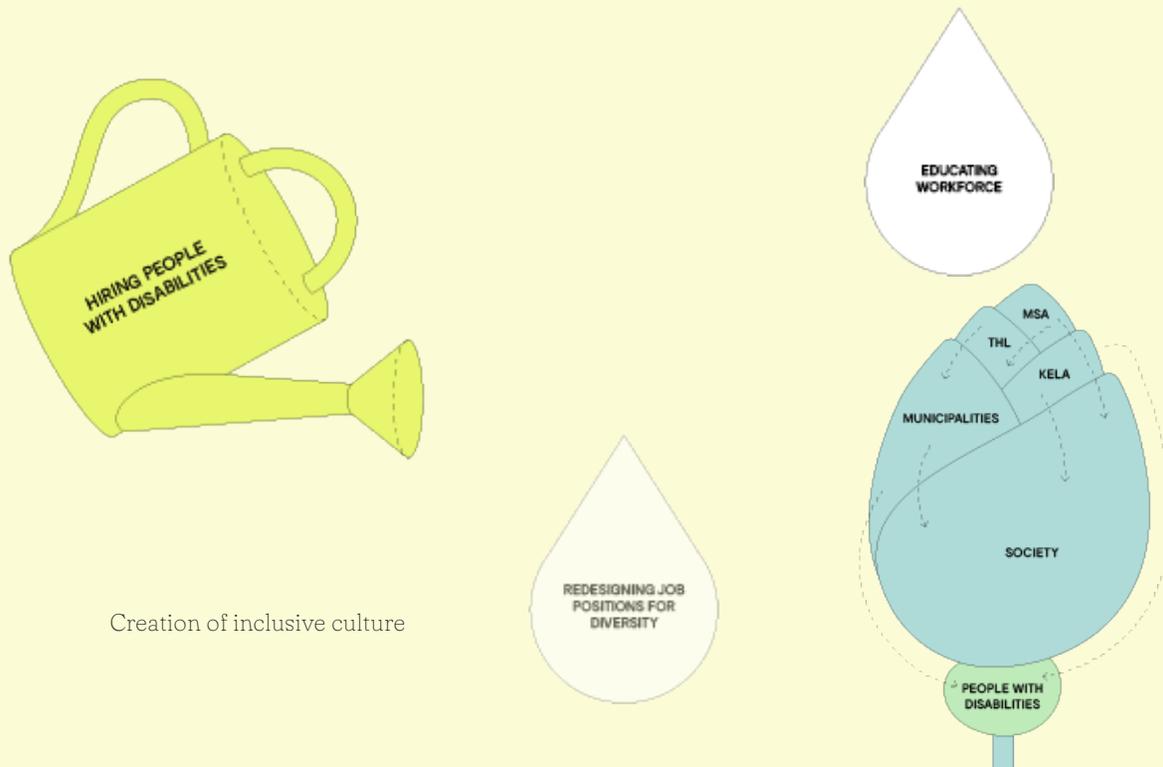


Figure 10. Illustration of the “Redesigning job positions for diversity”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

## Educate the workforce

To achieve psychological safety at a workplace, educating the workforce is crucial. From our workshops, we found that currently, people with disabilities often need to educate the co-workers themselves - both the employers on how to employ them as well as their colleagues to avoid negative attitudes.

However, this should not be their extra responsibility, but something that should be tackled by, again, hiring an expert and addressing the topic through regular and ongoing training. Educating the workforce will allow employers and employees to improve their understanding of disabilities, create a culture of inclusion, encourage an open dialog and develop diverse teams. Furthermore, this would encourage employers to employ more diverse people.



Creation of inclusive culture

Figure 11. Illustration of the “Educating workforce”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

## Connecting institutions @ people with disabilities

Once the position has been developed, institutions need to find a way to connect with people with disabilities. In practice, this means that organizations have to find touchpoints to communicate their positions, for example, through different NGOs.

Furthermore, it is also important that the job application process becomes more accessible, by having job ads with less bureaucratic ways of communication and training the HR specialists for arranging the interviews.

We suggest that the personal budgeting model should also include job counseling services, through which people with disabilities could find and prepare themselves for the positions.

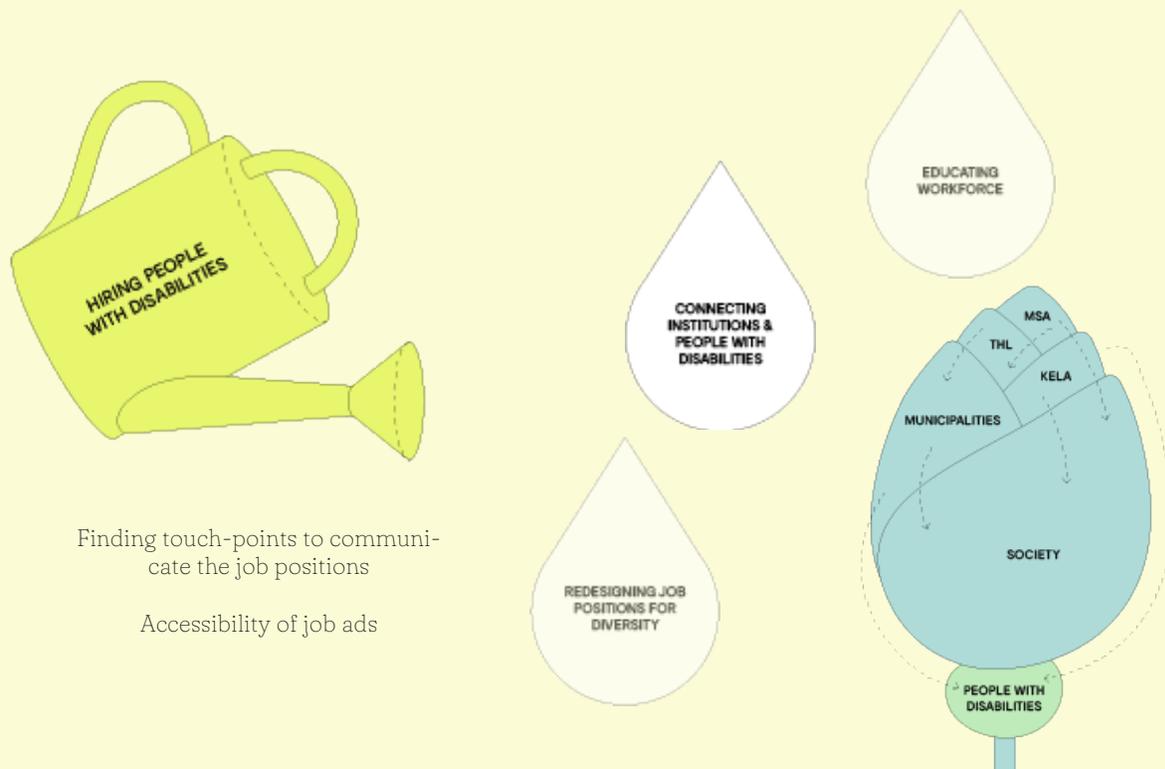


Figure 12. Illustration of the “Connecting institutions @ people with disabilities”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

# Empowering a Wider Range of People with Disabilities

Due to the paradigm in society, people with disabilities often do not recognize their own abilities. As one of our workshop participants described it: “People have skills and lots of potential which is not seen... Whatever is their passion, they can take it and make it a job for themselves. But it is not easy if you do not have someone coaching, supporting, or helping you..”

Thus, in addition to creating opportunities for people with disabilities to get hired, the second main goal of the strategy is empowering a wider range of people with disabilities, for which the following subgoals should be achieved.

“People have skills and lots of potential  
which is not seen..  
Whatever is their passion, they can take it  
and make it a job for themselves.  
But it is not easy if you do not have someone  
coaching, supporting or helping you..”



Figure 13. Illustration of the “Strategy for empowering wider range of people with disabilities”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

## Role models in different institutions

One way to make people believe in their abilities, rights, and opportunities is through positive role models. For this, the media, for example, can be a powerful tool for drawing awareness and making people with disabilities dream bigger.

By featuring people with disabilities who are already working with the personal budgeting model, these role models have the potential to influence and motivate others to strive to uncover their true potential.

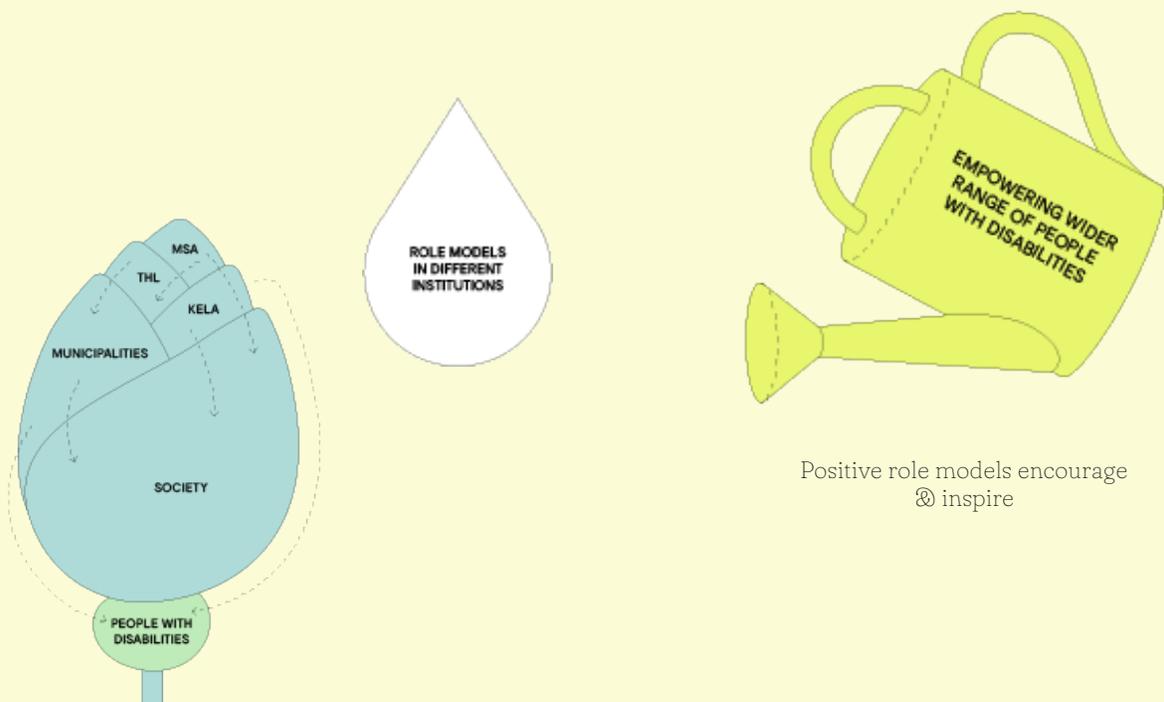


Figure 14. Illustration of the “Role Models in different institutions”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

## Connecting institutions @ people with disabilities

Getting peer support from people with disabilities who have already been employed in governmental institutions can offer the needed encouragement and facilitate the employment process. However, our informants emphasized that this can be demanding and thus, the employed peers might not have the

time for it. Currently, this expertise is used without any compensation. However, a paid peer mentoring program should be developed, where more experienced people with disabilities can share their knowledge on being employed.

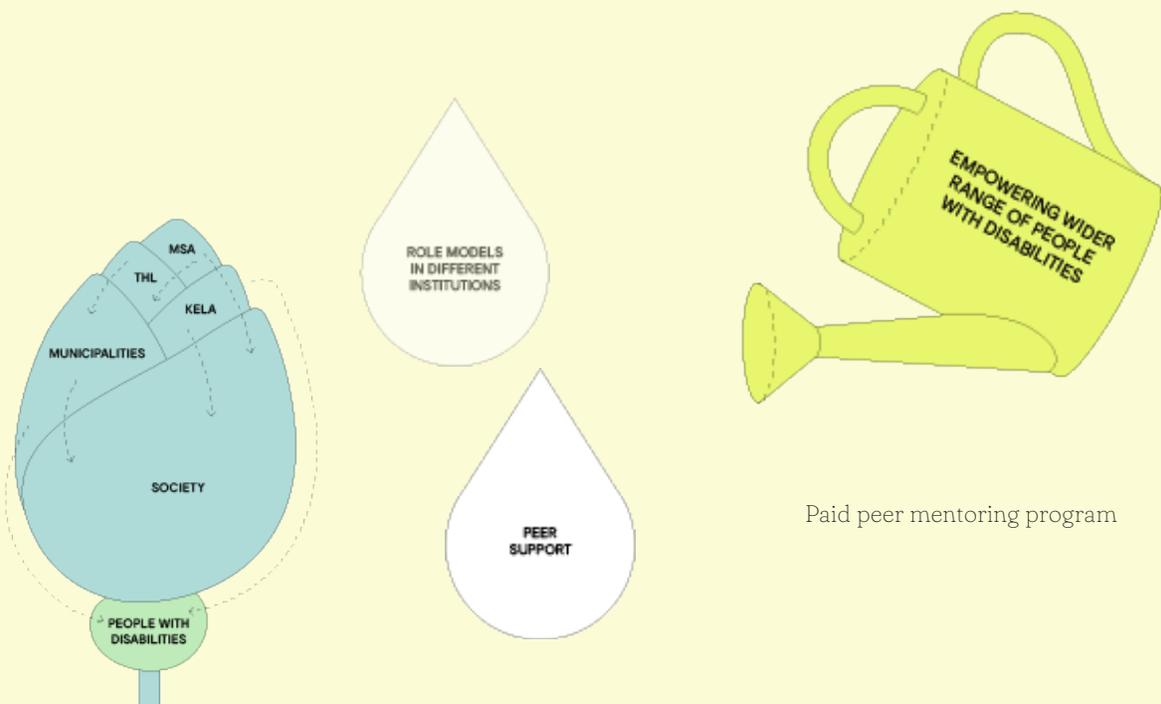


Figure 15. Illustration of the “Peer support”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

## Reaching the less active people with disabilities

It is important that this strategy does not only reach the active people with disabilities but also activates the ones who are currently less involved in society. To achieve a fully flourishing society, that hidden potential needs to be released by creating ways to reach less active people with disabilities so they can feel capable and willing to take part

in the creation of the disability services. Furthermore, engaging them through employment could also encourage these groups to be more active in other aspects, such as taking environmental action.

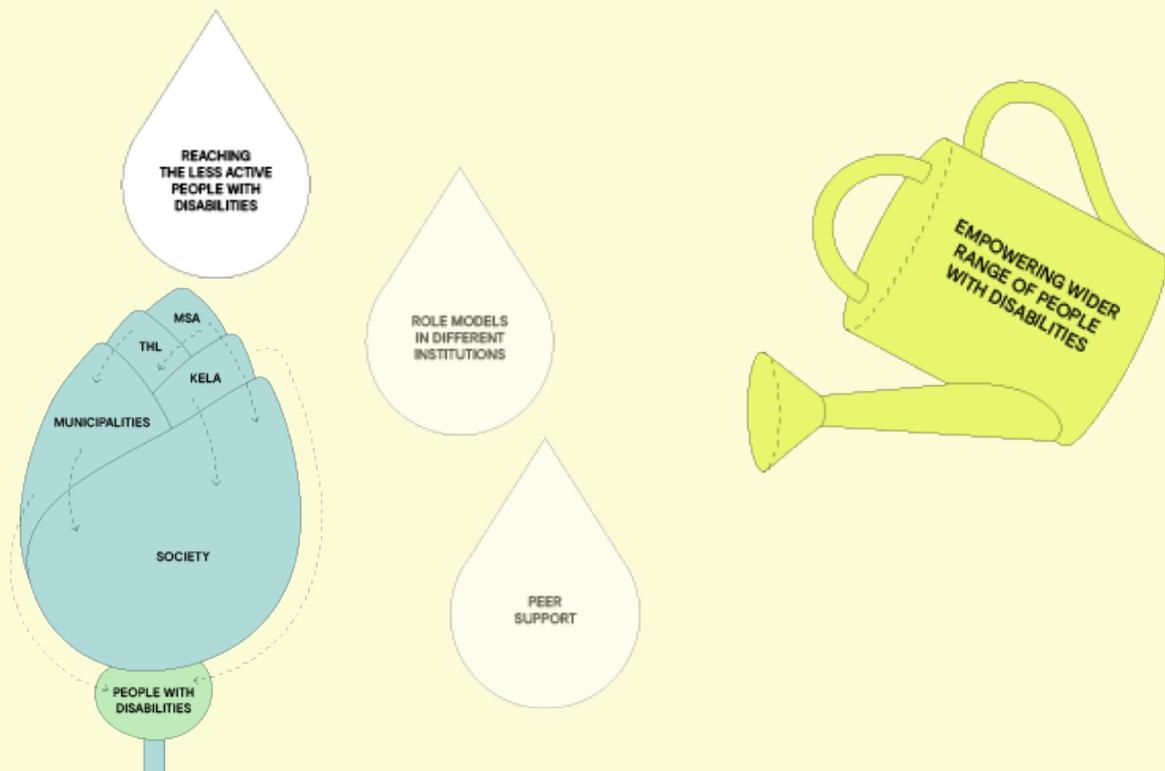


Figure 16. Illustration of the “Reaching the less active people with disabilities”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

# Transition to a thriving & inclusive society

Strategy for hiring people with disabilities in governmental institutions based on the Personal Budgeting Model

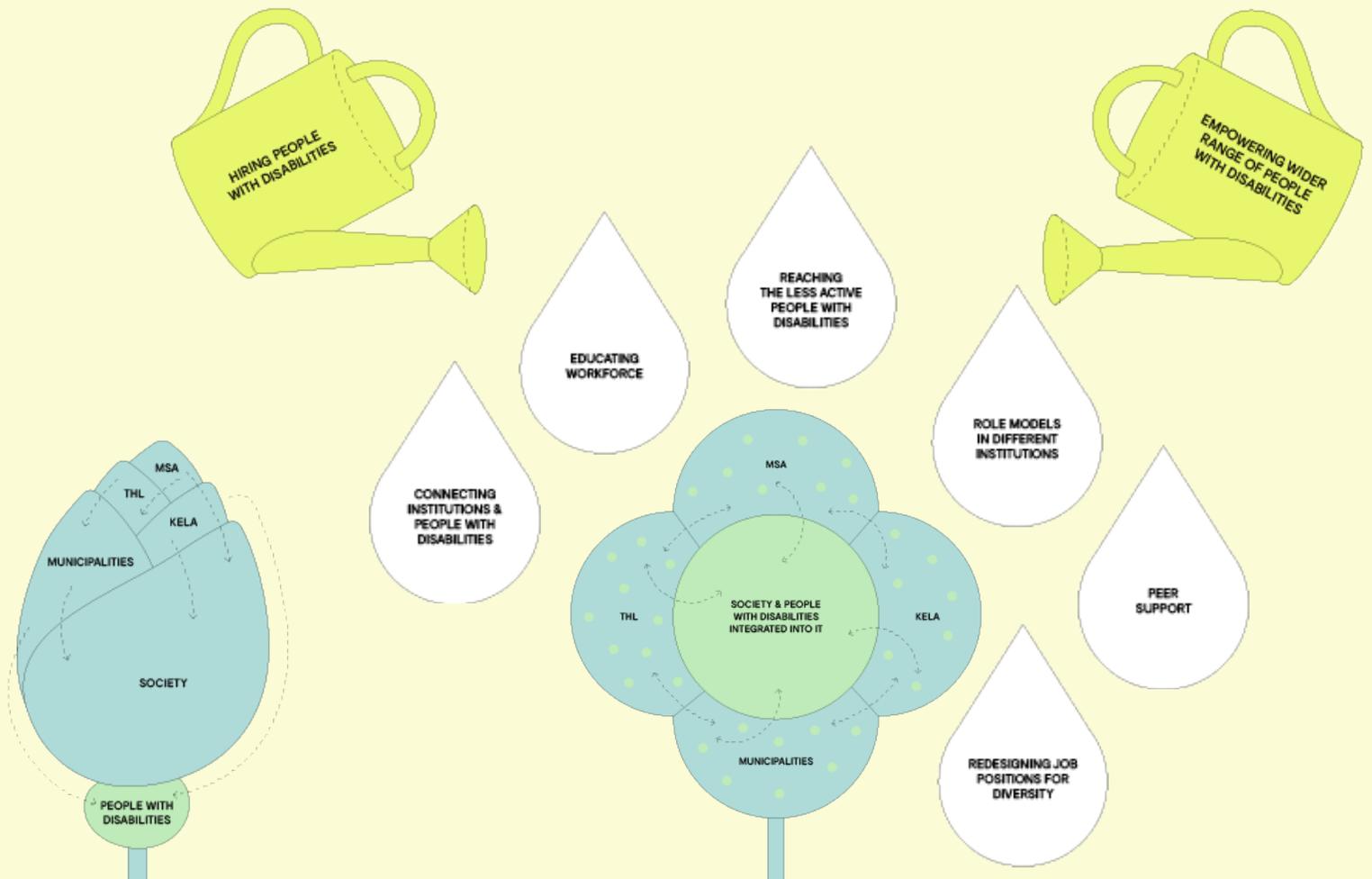


Figure 17. “Transition to a Thriving and Inclusive Society”. Author: Ruta Jumite.

# Systemic Impact

As we have argued throughout the report, challenges related to disability services are systemic. While the world can not change overnight to a completely inclusive society without discrimination, there are ways to catalyze, change from niche initiatives. Therefore, we see that the implementation of the strategy in the personal budgeting model first can also create a wider impact.

Successful employment of people with disabilities in personal budgeting model-related institutions should be followed by wide communication activities, campaigns, role model initiatives, mentoring programs, etc. The successful employment pilot project can be positioned and marketed as a benchmarking case to inspire and put positive pressure on other organizations. Also, the strategy can be used widely and applied to different contexts.

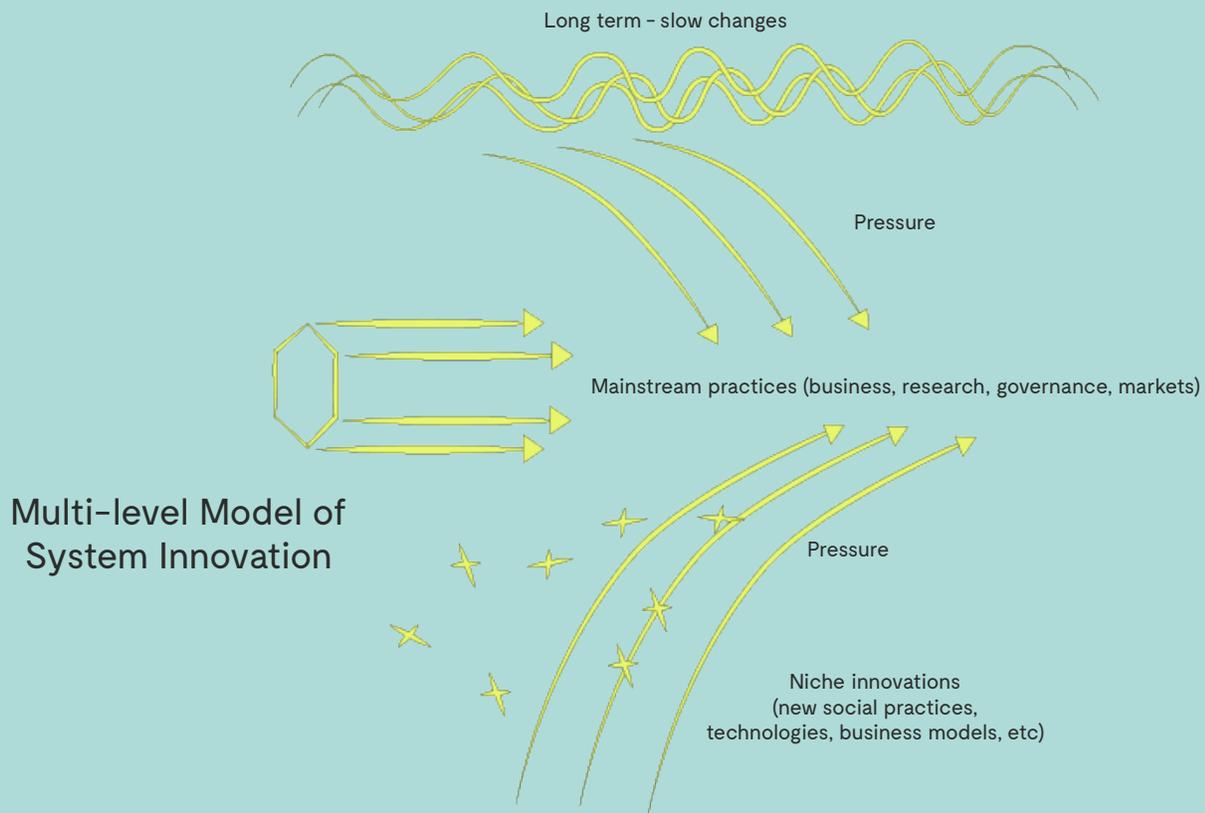


Figure 18. "Multi-level Model of System Innovation." Based on Geels & Schot (2007). Author: Lucía Llerena

As described in the illustration from Geels & Schot (2007) describing sociotechnical transition, while more and more niche initiatives would commit to the strategy they will have the ability to influence the mainstream practices and

eventually make a paradigm shift to a more inclusive society and different working practices. However, it requires a long-term commitment from the organizations to inclusivity and diversity goals.

## **Sustainability**

During this project, we are addressing social sustainability at most. Employment may not only reduce the income gaps between people with and without disabilities but also reduce the gaps in social and psychological measures (Schur, 2002). Most jobs involve interactions with co-workers or members of the public, which can help decrease social isolation and build social capital.

By advocating for diversity, social equity and active citizenship, we believe that we can transition to a thriving and inclusive society. Employment often increases civic skills and exposure to political recruitment and has other resource and psychological effects that can increase the likelihood of social participation (Schlozman et al. 1999). Thus, we believe that the people that are active with society, can take more action with environmental sustainability (Schlozman et al. 1999).

By this strategy, we are also implying a big transition for the Finnish work culture and this transition can be a big catalyst for a new, sustainable transformation. As it was mentioned earlier in this report, there are several points where environmental sustainability issues can be addressed. Like when re-designing the new job positions to be suitable for diversity, sustainability experts could also be hired in a way to develop solutions that mitigate emissions. One of these solutions we propose is to allow remote work in a way that carbon emissions due to commuting are reduced. Furthermore, in the re-designing process, sustainability expert positions for people with disabilities could be created, as this offers an opportunity for the expert to have a new, and a holistic view of sustainability.

Next Steps

The strategy will guide us to a thriving and inclusive society only if it is put into practice. As a result of this course, we are handing over the strategy proposal. However, the next steps are the ones that matter.

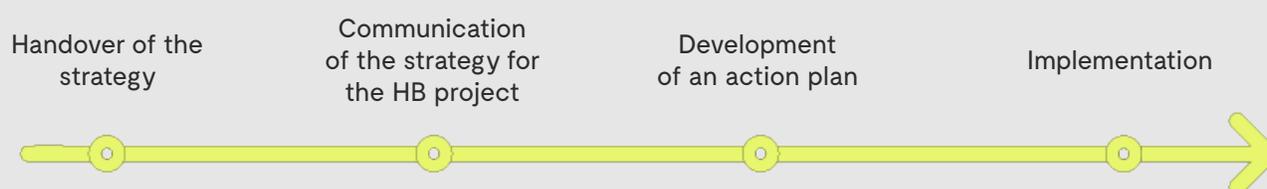


Figure 19. “Next Steps of the Project”. Author: Ruta Jumite

Firstly, the strategy should be introduced in the institutions that are involved in the development of the personal budgeting model. Each stakeholder must be aware of the strategy and reasons why taking it forward would be important (Griffin & Otter 2014).

Secondly, relevant institutions should co-create an action plan to bring the strategy to life. The action plan shows in a written form how the strategy will be put into practice and it is crucial for the success of the project (Griffin & Otter

2014). People with disabilities, disability employment experts, and sustainability experts must be already part of this phase.

Thirdly, after the action plan is created, the strategy should be implemented as the action plan suggests.

Fourthly, the outcomes of the implementation of the strategy should be evaluated. Especially the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact should be evaluated (Griffin & Otter 2014).

We understand that the implementation of the strategy needs the commitment of many stakeholders and also willingness to rethink our current systems and for example the form of work. These kinds of transitions take time and therefore, we did not want to settle any strict time frame for the next steps. However, we believe that inside the personal budgeting model, these next steps should be taken as soon as possible, as the personal budgeting model could be seen as a pilot for implementing this strategy. Especially the first step, introduction to relevant institutions, is something that can take place during the next months already.

A successful implementation of the strategy would ensure a functioning personal budgeting model, where the real needs of the end-users are met. This way, people with disabilities would not be shaped by the system but the system would be shaped by them. Furthermore, the successful implementation of the strategy in the personal budgeting model could become a benchmark to accelerate wider impact and to inspire other organizations and businesses to become diverse and inclusive too.

We believe that, eventually, this could lead to a thriving and inclusive society, where every person with disabilities would be an active citizen who can flourish at meaningful work, design the disability services for themselves, and be an integrated part of society.

# Critical Reflection

The deep research process and analysis of the personal budgeting model brought us to the conclusion that the needed changes are rather systemic, not merely focused on the personal budgeting model. Nevertheless, we believe that the governmental institutions have the right tools to intervene, starting from the personal budgeting model itself.

However, as designers, we took a challenging route, as we chose an approach that addresses a deeper leverage point – a strategy, which might be seen from several perspectives. From one perspective, a strategy, if implemented successfully, might create a long-lasting impact and catalyze a broader transition towards a more inclusive society. From another perspective, a strategy requires long-term commitment and more extensive resources than product, digital product, or service design solutions. Handing over the strategy proposal might be challenging since its meaning is more up for interpretation and requires further development to be communicated within the relevant organizations even before developing an action plan. In addition to the strate-

gy proposal, a more elaborate plan and timeframe of the following steps would ensure easier handover.

In addition, critically reflecting on our design process, we see that there could be opportunities for improvement. Firstly, in our strategy proposal, we are claiming that the co-design workshops are not enough to achieve inclusive and just disability service design processes. However, due to the time and resource constraints that the course holds, our ability to go beyond co-design workshops with people with disabilities were limited.

Furthermore, due to the constraints of the current Covid-19 times, we had to work online, which might have limited our insights from people with various disabilities, such as cognitive disabilities. However, on the other hand, it also made us acknowledge the possible challenges that employing people with disabilities might hold - i.e. how to use digital tools with those groups.

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# Strategy for **hiring people with disabilities** in governmental institutions based on the Personal Budgeting Model

Transition to a Thriving and Inclusive Society



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