

The Research on the employment and self-employment of persons with disabilities in Serbia

EXTRACT – SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The significant steps towards the improvement of the life and work conditions for the persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia during 2006

In the last 6 years (2000 – 2006), the interest for the problems the persons with disabilities in Serbia face has been increased, primarily thanks to the opening of the cooperation with the international community in all segments as well as to intensifying the activities of disabled people's organizations, which have resulted in the rejection of the dominant medical approach to persons with disabilities and the adoption of the social model.

- The adoption of the *Law on the prevention of the discrimination against persons with disabilities* which was put into force in April 25th, 2006. This Law regulates the general regime of the prohibition against disability based discrimination, the special cases of discrimination against persons with disabilities, the act of protection of discriminated persons and the measures undertaken to encourage equality and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- The Strategy for the improvement of the status of the persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia, which was adopted in December 28th, 2006 by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, represents a middle-term plan of the activities of all stakeholders in the Republic of Serbia, aimed at the improvement of the status of persons with disabilities. The Strategy goals have been set for the period between 2007 and 2015, along with the action plans which should be adopted for a two-year period.
- Finalizing and adopting a comprehensive and integral International UN Convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities which represents a significant contribution to the efforts for the reduction of the social inconveniences persons with disabilities are exposed to and the aim of which is promoting their participation in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres of life with equal possibilities in the developed countries and the countries in development as well as in the averagely developed countries such is the Republic of Serbia.
- The intensive work on the draft of the *Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities*, which represents a logical continuation of the above-mentioned initiatives and activities.

Methodology – the Research on the employment and self-employment of persons with disabilities in Serbia

In the first phase, a random national sample of 1000 interviewees, who were persons with disabilities in this concrete case, was created in 27 Municipalities of the Republic of Serbia without Kosovo. A field part of the research, i.e. gathering the data for analysis, was conducted by the persons with disabilities trained for surveyors. We gained a twofold effect in this way:

1. part-time employment of persons with disabilities and

2. the establishment of a more open contact between the surveyors and interviewees because the experiences have shown that persons with disabilities talk more easily and freely about their problems to the surveyors who also have disabilities.

The survey was filled in by 998 persons with disabilities in 27 Municipalities in which the research was conducted.

The basic socio-demographic interviewees' characteristics taken into consideration were: sex, age, education of both interviewees and their parents, the average monthly income of that specific person and his/her household, marital status and the number of his/her family members.

The total number of interviewees was:

- 587 male interviewees (59%)
- 411 female interviewees (41% out of the total number).

Due to the fact that the research was conducted with the aim of giving recommendations for improving the possibilities of the employment and self-employment, the sample mostly covered younger and middle-aged interviewees. In other words, 70% of them were the persons with disabilities up to 44 years of age.

It was ensured that the interviewees had different level of education in order to get the results which would show whether education determines the attitudes towards employment as well as the employment possibilities.

In the second (qualitative) phase, 10 focus groups were realized in 10 Municipalities of Serbia.

The focus groups participants (102) were the representatives of the:

- Employers (17)
- Local self-governments (23)
- Local celebrities (11)
- National employment service branch-offices (14)
- Centres for social work (10) and
- Local organizations of persons with disabilities (27)

The starting data for the research:

- As estimated by the World Health Organization, at least 10% of every population are persons with disabilities
- According to the research made in 2001 and published in the Study "Persons with disabilities and the environment" (editor: Professor Viktorija Cucic, MD) in 2001, 87% of persons with disabilities are unemployed
- The precise data on the number of persons with disabilities or agreement about the definition of persons with disabilities do not exist in the Republic of Serbia
- 25,744 persons with disabilities were registered in the National employment service of the Republic of Serbia during 2006

Since the data were contradictory, the research team decided to choose a random sample (1000 interviewees). We considered that the most relevant data were the ones of the World Health Organization i.e. the fact that 10% of every population, regardless of a state, region, county or Municipality, are persons with disabilities.

The attitudes towards education

- 60% of the interviewees consider that persons with disabilities should be enabled to study by regular school curriculum and 16% of them consider that this suggestion is not good
- 38% of the interviewees consider that persons with disabilities should be educated in the special classes at regular schools and 37% of them consider this suggestion as bad
- 44% of the interviewees consider that persons with disabilities should be educated at special schools in which the curriculum is adjusted to persons with different types of disabilities
- 33% of the interviewees consider that education should be organized at the schools specialized for persons with one type of disability

This leads to a conclusion that there are the interviewees who cannot decide which type of education would be the best for persons with disabilities, which is expected due to the fact that there are different types of disabilities, thus it is difficult to choose one solution which would be the best for all persons with disabilities.

It is possible that such answers are a consequence of the attitude that persons with disabilities should be provided with as many choices of schools as possible which would be a timely attitude because our education is in the process of reform. On the other hand, it is also possible that such answers point to the fact that persons with disabilities do not have a clearly expressed attitude towards education.

Most of the interviewees (86%) agreed with the statement that the relation between education and the labour market should be better in order for them to find employment after they finish school.

The attitude towards the causes of the unemployment of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia

The persons with disabilities who were the interviewees or the focus groups participants believe that unemployment is a consequence of: the fact that persons with disabilities fear from losing their social welfare rights and/or that they are lack self-confidence because of their family's negative attitude to employment, the existence of prejudice that employers and colleagues have against persons with disabilities and vice versa, every third interviewee sees the causes for unemployment in the non-existence of working habits among persons with disabilities, 62% of the interviewees accept the fact that employers apply different rules when employing persons with disabilities as true and that they fear this because it would influence a company image.

More than 70% of the interviewees see employers' unwillingness to adjust the premises as a cause of unemployment.

Part of the causes refers to the jobs available to persons with disabilities.

- A half of the interviewees accept the statement that the nature of the jobs is such that persons with disabilities cannot perform them
- 44% of the interviewees consider that persons with disabilities are not knowledgeable and experienced enough to perform a job
- 78% of the interviewees consider that persons with disabilities do not have accessible information on possible jobs

In the end, a large number of the interviewees see the attitude of the state to this issue as the causes of unemployment.

- 2/3 of the interviewees say that the state do not provide enough benefits for the employers employing persons with disabilities
- 87% of the interviewees believe that the causes of unemployment are the lack of jobs as well as the fact that persons with disabilities do not have the organized transportation to work.

After summarizing the attitudes, it has been concluded that the interviewees support positive discrimination which would give advantage to persons with disabilities when finding employment. In most of the interviewees' opinion, it is necessary to conduct the quota system as well as to establish special services for providing the assistance with employment.

PICTURE

It is possible that the number of employed persons with disabilities has really increased (in relation to 2001 when there were 87% of unemployed persons) but it is also possible that this is a consequence of the structure of interviewees in this research which has been projected with the aim of improving the status when finding employment with adequate recommendations. Therefore, the sample is created to include a greater percentage of young interviewees. In addition to this, it is necessary to emphasize that the data on the percentage of the employed persons with disabilities are provided by the above-mentioned research realized by the Centre for studying the alternatives and Handicap International but it included only persons with physical disabilities, contrary to this one, which also included the groups of blind and partially sighted people as well as deaf and hard of hearing persons.

The attitudes towards self–employment

One of the ways of self–employment which is especially emphasized is work at home due to the fact that it is estimated that it suits the needs of persons with disabilities by its characteristics and demands.

The interviewees declared themselves about the work they would choose if they would be in the situation to start their own business. The answers were very similar:

- one third of the interviewees would choose trade,
- every fifth interviewee would choose some kind of services,
- every tenth interviewee would choose a craftwork,
- and about 6% of the interviewees would choose production.

Self–estimations of readiness

The data on readiness of persons with disabilities to find employment and be active in the actions for improving the status of persons with disabilities have been gained by calculating an average of the self–estimation of persons with disabilities.

As far as their readiness to participate in the activities for improving the possibilities for the employment of persons with disabilities is concerned, based on the average of self-estimation, the results show that the interviewees from: Pancevo, Negotin, Sremska Mitrovica, Vrsac, Merosin, Leskovac, Pozega, Zajecar, Bogatic and Novi Beograd are more ready for this than the interviewees from other places covered by this research. A similar result is also gained as far as the readiness for promoting the improvement of the possibilities of self–employment. The identical attitudes were expressed at focus groups too.

Do persons with disabilities want to work?

It is interesting that the data show that the smallest percentage of the interviewees who live alone want to work (62%), while the largest percentage of the interviewees who live in the families of three and four members want to find employment (97%). In addition to this, the data show that widowers and widows are not interested in working (49%). Differences were not determined among the interviewees living in the families with a different number of the employed.

The analysis determined that a larger percentage of persons with disabilities who did not realize any type of rights to social protection (MOP¹ and similar) wanted to work than it was the case with the persons who did realize the rights to social protection. It was also determined that the persons with smaller monthly incomes were more motivated to get employment.

Based on the presented data, it could be said that there is a need to improve the status of persons with disabilities as regards the issue of a possibility of employment because the majority of persons with disabilities, regardless of a disability category, really want to work.

Expectations

The expectations from the state

By analyzing the results of the research in both research phases, through the questionnaire and focus groups, it has been identified that, according to the opinion of the interviewees and the focus groups participants, the people expect the most from the state:

- A fundamental turn from the medical to the inclusive disability model
- A need for more active cooperation of state institutions. The Policy of stimulating persons with disabilities not to work, i.e. their rapid removal from the open labour market quickly after they finish their education or by the Regulations on a right to disability pension, only dispirit the processes leading to the activation of this largest minority group
- A two-way exchange of information
- Persons with disabilities have a need for the creation of the unique database of persons with disabilities in the state
- The reform of the Centres for social work and the National employment service by organizing additional education for the employees
- Prejudice will be reduced by creating the possibilities for including persons with disabilities in all the aspects of society beginning from the youngest age. It is necessary for the state to support inclusive education.
- It is necessary to pass the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

The expectations from local self-government

The expectations from the Municipality are also great after the adoption of the new Law on local self-government which prescribes that Municipalities would handle considerably greater means than before. Thus, there is a warning that part of the means should be (re)directed to persons with disabilities too.

The expectations from employers

The relationship without prejudice and positive discrimination as far as employing the persons with disabilities is concerned.

¹ MOP – materijalno obezbedjenje porodice – material family provision

Personal expectations

It is necessary to motivate persons with disabilities to be included in all social streams.

The expectations from the media

Greater distribution of information to the public on the legal acts, rights and potentials for the employment of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

- The National Assembly of Serbia should adopt the Law on professional rehabilitation and the employment of persons with disabilities which will contain quotas for the employment of persons with disabilities prescribed for employers.
- The facts that the Government must be a role-model and that it should take measures for making the quota system successful go without saying.
- The Government of the Republic of Serbia is recommended to take actions comprised by the Strategy of the improvement of the status of persons with disabilities in the Republic of Serbia, adopted on December 28th, 2006.
- It would be significant for the Government of the Republic of Serbia to enable the creation of the unique database of the persons with disabilities who live on the territory of the Republic of Serbia.
- The Government of the Republic of Serbia, i.e. the competent ministries, should introduce inclusive education into all preschool and school institutions.
- The Ministry of work and social policy should develop mechanisms and measures to monitor and control the application of the Law on professional rehabilitation and employment with persons of disabilities immediately after its adoption.
- In addition to this, the Ministry of work and social policy in cooperation with the competent ministries should monitor and help the application of the Law on prevention of discrimination against persons with disabilities.
- Local self-governments should encourage and help the establishment of the Councils for persons with disabilities at a local level and support the exchange of information between persons with disabilities and employers at a local level.
- This research has made a recommendation to the Councils for persons with disabilities in local self-governments on the establishment, with the help of their Municipality, a special service which would provide necessary employment information and suggestions to the people who are interested in it. Those people could be persons with disabilities but potential employers too.
- Additional education of the employees in the Centres for social work and the National employment service about new regulations and attitudes towards persons with disabilities, all are in compliance with the social disability model.
- Better cooperation between the local management, the Centres for social work and the National employment service.
- The National employment service and the Pension-disability insurance (PIO) should establish the Centres for working capacities evaluation.
- Focus on the open job market.
- More open approach of employers.
- Spreading information in the public about persons with disabilities and for them (an informative and marketing campaign).