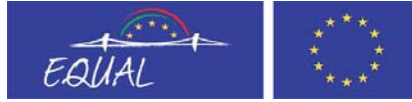




UNIÓN EUROPEA
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ESF-EQUAL II

Access²Work



Barriers



Final Documents of Access to Work Project

Final Documents of



Barriers

Introduction

The principal task of Work Package 2 of the Access to Work program is to reveal those barriers and their causes which afflict disadvantaged employees when seeking long-term employment. The Hungarian partner may contribute to the job of the Work Package by sharing the results of a complex study executed by the FACT Institute.

The FACT Institute carried out a complex study on labour market discrimination in March, April and May, 2006. The framework of the study included analysis of the specialized literature¹ as well as a research with the use of questionnaires.

The analysis of the specialized literature focusing on discrimination discusses the social psychological, sociological and legal backgrounds of discrimination in details. Distinct chapters deal with the phenomenon of discrimination against three groups of disadvantaged employees. The analysis also presents the achievements of various projects.

The target groups of the study implemented with specific questionnaires were the following:

- Disadvantaged employees:
 - ~ Roma (Gipsy) people (53 persons)
 - ~ People with a disability or decreased working abilities (100 persons)
 - ~ Women on maternity leave or seeking employment with its termination (56 persons)
- Employers: leaders and HR workers of companies located in South Trans-Danubia (100 employers)

¹The Legal Approach to Discrimination, Fact Institute, Pécs, 2007

- Workers of the organizations constituting the EQUAL TSIA partnership (178 persons)
 - ~ Baranya County Employment Centre
 - ~ Pécs Regional Training Centre
 - ~ Pécs-Baranya Chamber of Trade and Industry
 - ~ Round World Welfare Service Foundation
 - ~ Siklós and its surroundings Civil Right Representative Organization for Gypsies

The examination of the different groups of employees revealed the causes of why interviewees cannot find employment or only with a difficulty. It also observed whether they experience a negative discrimination against their group on the labour market, whether they had heard of cases of discrimination and whether they had experienced rejection or different treatment at a certain workplace solely for belonging to a particular group.

From all three groups of respondents, only those persons were selected into the sample who were either unemployed during the period of data collection or permanently could not find a job in the previous period, despite the fact that they wanted to be employed.

The research carried out within the group of employers aimed at surveying whether in their opinion there is discrimination – afflicting the Roma people, people with a decreased working abilities and women returning from maternity leave – on the labour market today in Hungary. It also examined the conditions on which employers would employ persons from these disadvantaged groups, the benefits and drawbacks that derive from their employment and the means that could be used to effectively reduce the negative discrimination, in their opinion.

In the course of the survey within partner organizations the objective was to find out whether – in the workers' opinion and experience – a negative discrimination exists and to what extent it affects the particular groups of employees. Moreover, what the causes of discrimination are and what the advantages and drawbacks are of the employment of the Roma, of people with decreased working abilities and of women returning from maternity leave.

This report will present the findings of the questionnaire survey, with a focus on the target groups of employees.

Labour market discrimination of the Roma people

The Roma's problems and situation is sharply distinguishable from the circumstances of other nationalities in Hungary, and the social problems of the Roma cannot be resolved within the scope of the Minority Act. The Roma are after all primarily afflicted by the various forms of negative discrimination in the fields of education, employment, social welfare and health care as well as in the practices of public administration and jurisdiction.²

The disadvantageous situation of the Roma population on the labour market

Compared to the total population, the proportion of unemployment is considerably higher among the Roma people. Researches carried out on this issue in Hungary trace back the bad labour market position of the Roma population of the age able to work to four basic causes:³

LOWER LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The most frequently cited cause of the high unemployment of the Roma population of an active age is the low level of education. According to the figures of the 2001 census 61% of the Roma population of age 15 or higher completed a primary school education at least as opposed to 90% of the non-Roma population. In 2003, however, 81-82% of the twenty-year-old Roma young persons completed all eight classes of the primary school.⁴

The educational disadvantage of the Roma population – compared to the members of majority society – becomes really significant with full knowledge of the circumstances of the labour market and the characteristics of labour demand, since qualification has a crucial influence on employment opportunities.

²Report on the activity of the parliamentary commissioner for the rights of national and ethnic minorities, Budapest, 1998

³Kertesi 2000; Kemény 2003; Kemény-Jankó 2003

⁴ESZCSM 2003; Zádori 2004

REGIONAL DISPERSION

Considering employment the differences are significant with regard to regions and settlement types. The regional location of the Roma people is expressly disadvantageous from the viewpoint of employment opportunities, for the Roma population has a significantly larger proportion in regions, counties, districts and settlements afflicted with high unemployment than in other areas.

SECTORAL REALIGNMENT IN THE ECONOMY

The third cause of the high-proportioned unemployment of the Roma people is that they principally worked in those industries which quickly went bankrupt during the change of regime.⁵

DISCRIMINATION, DISADVANTAGEOUS DIFFERENTIATION

One might conclude to the Roma people's social exclusion of a shocking extent from the fact that the characteristics of their employment are atypical of the employment of the group with a similarly low educational level – not higher than eight grades – within the total population. The employment rate of the latter group is nearly double of the Roma people's, and the instability of their employment is also far below (by more than 50 percent) the instability measured within the Roma population. The Roma people's exclusion from the labour market principally originates from their discrimination, the low level of qualification and the unfavourable regional dispersion of the Roma population.⁶

⁵Kertesi 2000

⁶Fazekas 2006

Discrimination affecting the Roma people

ECOLOGICALLY RATIONALE STATISTICAL DISCRIMINATION

The procedure of admission carried out with the method of the individual selection is rather costly for employers; therefore it is avoided in cases of subordinate positions requiring a lower level of qualification. It is not just a question of the employer's personal sympathy or antipathy – though sometimes it cannot be neglected – whether he/she will employ Roma workers, but the ethnic origin as a filter of admission on a group level is relatively cheap. After all „statistical” discrimination has an effect of reducing expenses, and therefore – although morally and legally should be condemned – is ecologically rationale from the employer's point of view. Even the most unprejudiced employer must consider whether it is worth to maintain a costly labour (human resource) apparatus, once he/she is able to filter the applicants in advance on the basis of externally observable indicators (e.g. sex, age, ethnic origin) with a considerable certainty. Under these circumstances it is difficult to enforce the right for an equal treatment, as the economic rationality and a fair labour practice are in conflict.⁷

In employers' statistical judgements of this kind true observations, stereotyping and prejudices blend inseparably. It is an inevitable fact that even in the case of an identical qualification, occupational experience, etc., there might be huge differences between employees. These differences relate to the career at school: presumably that person will possess worse (acquired) capabilities, less knowledge and experience who completed his/her studies over aged, repeating grades and with poor results. And it is a well-known fact that the Roma people's school career within the Hungarian educational system is characterized with such failures, therefore it may provide a sufficient ground for the formation and remaining of prejudices against the whole of the Roma people.

In regions where the local unemployment rate is low Roma and non-Roma employees have roughly identical employment opportunities. With the rise of the local unemployment rate, however, the inequality of opportunities will multiply.⁸

„The discrimination of employment is strong in those areas of the country, where there is a big competition for jobs requiring a low qualification and where the employment problems of the majority with a low qualification can be eased most easily at the expense of the Roma applicants.”⁹

⁷Kertesi 2000

⁸Kertesi-Ábrahám 1996, Kertesi 2005

⁹Kertesi 2000

OPEN DISCRIMINATION¹⁰

Open rejections of the Roma employees do occur in spite of the fact that the media frequently report on cases of discrimination and lawsuits initiated as a consequence. However, an accepting attitude does not mean either that in a „sharp” situation a Roma applicant is accepted. Because of lawsuits initiated as a consequence of hidden prejudice or open rejection, employers often refuse the assumption that the job-seeker’s Roma origin is the problem and look for another excuse. Statements such as „I don’t think this would be a problem” already refer to the fact, that belonging to the Roma minority can be a „problem”, or the possibility of a „problem” might arise.

ROMA UNEMPLOYMENT FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF BUSINESS LIFE¹¹

In the world of business it is a widespread view that the employment of Roma manpower involves more expense than benefit, which decreases the employment opportunities of the Roma people. A UN study carried out in 2005 aimed at asking the leaders of enterprises operating by the principles of the market what benefits and drawbacks of employing Roma manpower they experienced, and what factors should be changed in order to be worth employing Roma workers for the companies.

Employers mentioned the following *benefits* in connection with employing the Roma people:

– **The importance of a „broad view”: the situation must be covered**

Each country involved in the study has a significant Roma population, and their proportion within the total population is growing. Nevertheless, the majority of the Roma people is poor and their unemployment rate is high. This situation entails severe consequences for both economical and social stability. Many of the company leaders have already realised that social liability is not exclusively a governmental task, but in the long-term also serves the interests of the companies.

¹⁰Joint research of the FACT Institute and Szocio-Gráf Institute within the framework of the Phare program titled „Anti-Roma-discriminational action sequence – Establishing a society acting in unison” (2005)

¹¹A deep-interview study involving employers, who employ Roma workers, UN programme (Ernst & Young, 2005) Countries participating in the research: Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Spain.

– **Local Roma manpower supply**

In the case of companies the chief motivating force for employing the Roma workers is that they amount to a significant proportion of the labour supply and they are often available when there is a lack of manpower. The Roma workers mean cheap labour and also, companies can count on governmental subsidies from which they can cover the extra costs of training and other expenses.

– **Higher productivity, better quality**

Each of the interviewed employer remarked, that following the adequate training the productivity of Roma workers is not different from non-Roma workers'. Some of them also stressed that Roma employees are often more motivated, as they want to prove that they work just as well as the non-Roma workers. Roma employees on the other hand reported to interviewers that the limited nature of work opportunities and their fear of unemployment are important motivating forces to perform well at their workplace.

– **State support**

The state helps the Roma unemployed in various ways. (A part of the support does not expressly aim at the employment of the Roma people but the long-term unemployed.) Most employers believe however, that these state supports are not expedient, and they mentioned excessive bureaucracy as an additional problem. Several employers also pointed out that social aiding impairs the Roma population's willingness to get employment and undermines the subsidy system aiming at the employment of the Roma people. It must be mentioned though, that researchers also found a counter-example: in the case of one of the enterprises in Hungary the possibility to make use of state supports played an important role.

Besides the benefits employers listed a number of *problems* hindering the employment of Roma labour.

– **The lack of adequate education and qualification**

Each of the employers participating in the study considered the low level of education and lack of qualification the most important barrier to the employment of the Roma people. For their low level of education the training of Roma people entails extra costs, and as companies experienced, the retaining of Roma manpower also involves additional expenses. The high rate of fluctuation of the Roma labour decreases the employers' willingness to train their Roma workers, as well.

– **The lack of „work ethics” – prejudice and everyday experience**

The „work ethics” of the Roma people was a problem at most of the companies involved in the research. By „work ethics” employers meant the workers' willingness and ability of accurate and reliable work performance, and other factors related to filling the position (e.g. eight-hour working time, undertaking shifts, etc.). According to the experience of the employers Roma workers are frequently absent from work and do their job unsystematically, whereas working in shifts causes problems particularly to Roma women.

– **Prejudices**

Deeply rooted prejudices obstruct the employment of the Roma people. Prejudicing may occur not only within the firm, among superiors and colleagues but also on the side of the clients. The prejudice of colleagues and superiors may undermine the moral of the workplace and decrease productivity. The prejudice of clients may also lead to business losses. One of the Hungarian employers reported during the interview: if the clients find out that the firm is employing Roma workers, in spite of the reasonable price and guaranteed quality they often back out from signing the contract.

– **Few Roma persons apply for the jobs**

Regarding the employment of the Roma people a recurring problem is that the Roma population lives in areas with few work opportunities that is they live distant from the areas offering work opportunities in larger proportions. Geographical isolation hinders employment not just for the difficulties of transportation and reaching the workplace, but also for reasons of an „informational isolation”: job-seekers simply do not come to know about labour admissions.

– **A system of social supports**

In the employers' opinion social aiding decreases the Roma people's willingness to get employment. Since Roma employees are mostly unskilled, companies offer them jobs requiring a low level of qualification. In these positions, however, wages are also low. Low wages and expenses related to employment (e.g. travelling, day-care for the children etc.) have the common result that for many it is not worth to undertake employment.

Attitudes in connection with the Roma people

General attitudes

According to studies related to ethnic attitudes the Roma people are the most rejected ethnic minority in Hungary; it is in the case of the Roma people where the social distance is the largest between the majority society and a minority.¹²

According to research data, in 2004, 23% of the Hungarian adult population expressed an accepting attitude towards the Roma people, 53% was neutral, whereas 24% was characterized of a discriminative attitude. In 2005 – by the effect of a media campaign and a favourable social environment – the proportion of those with an accepting attitude grew and of those with a discriminative attitude decreased.¹³

¹²Hungarian Gallup Institute 2003

¹³Fact Institute – Szocio-Gráf Institute 2004, 2005

The Roma people's assumed attitudes related to work

The members of the majority society judge the Roma *principally* on the ground of their attitude towards work. And most of the characteristics believed to be typical of the Roma people considering their attitude to work, violate the fundamental interests of the majority society.¹⁴

The studies of the Fact Institute and Szocio-Gráf Institute of 2004 and 2005 also included questions related to the employment of the Roma people. Results show that those respondent who consider the presence of the Roma minority a problem, highlighted the Roma people's employment or unemployment, public security, social problems and social aiding as the principal problems. Also, among bad qualities believed to be characteristic of the Roma „work avoidance” was in the second position both in 2004 and 2005.

The majority society rejects that factors of the social environment play a crucial role in the unemployment of the Roma people. On the other hand, there is a strong agreement in connection with views stressing the role of ethnic factors. With respect to the Roma people's poverty the empathy of the majority society is significantly smaller than in the case of non-Roma poverty, as most of the majority society considers the Roma's poverty a well-deserved destiny.

¹⁴Lázár 1989

Outcome of the questionnaire survey of the EQUAL project

Problems of the labour market

Roma people

83% of the Roma people involved in the study believe that they find work with a difficulty because they are Roma persons. The second most frequently mentioned cause is the lack of workplaces. Nearly one fifth of them referred to difficulties of transportation between the workplace and the residence. A lack of necessary occupational qualification and low level of education also make their employment more difficult. Prejudices of employers were mentioned by a mere 13,2% of them.

Employers and partner organizations

According to the employers and the staff of partner organizations the main problem is the bad state of the economy, the narrowing of the labour market, in other words the scarcity of workplaces, a view in accordance with the Roma people's opinion. It is also a great problem that the structure of qualification, occupational qualification does not fit the economic circumstances. Problems of the infrastructure relevant to the labour market cause additional difficulties: poor transportation facilities, bad quality of the roads and other deficiencies in the infrastructure – also mentioned by Roma people as causes of their unemployment. Low wages and the spread of black economy make „legal“ employment difficult, as well.

Opportunities of employment, characteristics related to job-seeking

Employment, willingness to undertake work

More than half of the Roma people make an effort to find employment, but they do not trust its success. Nearly 40% of them do everything for the employment. The proportion of those people who have lost all hope is relatively low (6,5%).

It occurred to slightly more than 15% of the Roma people that he/she had the opportunity to fill a vacancy, but could not accept it for various reasons, such as an child under age, difficulties of transportation or illness.

The interviewed employers on average gave the least chance for employment to Roma employees. As for the Roma people's willingness to work the employers' opinion is rather negative. The majority believes that the Roma persons want to get an employment to maximum a medium extent, and two thirds of them have the same opinion about the Roma people's readiness to cooperate in work.

The survey carried out within the staff of partner organizations had a similar outcome. In their opinion the Roma people's opportunities for employment are very unpleasant, as the relative majority believes that they are „almost without any chance”. The causes are made principally worse by the „characteristics” of the employees, i.e. their under-educatedness, approach to work, negative experiences, unreliability, specific traditions, way of life, difficulties to fit in, etc. The second group of hindering factors involves fake beliefs, prejudices and discrimination against the Roma people.

The Roma people's willingness to get employment, similarly to the employers' view, was evaluated as of medium or lower intensity by the staff of labour market organizations. Coping at the workplace was characterized similarly.

Utilization of the assistance of partner organizations

The majority of Roma respondents made use of the services of the employment centre in the course of the last job searching. Most of them believe that the administrators are kind, helpful, and consider the staff mostly or very empathetic. At the same time 11,1% of them did not understand the information they received. Eight of them mentioned a problem in connection with the administrators, for example that their behaviour was not appropriate or in most cases that they failed to meet deadlines.

It is really remarkable that according to the experience/opinion of nearly one fifth of the respondents with experience on the subject, the Roma employees' willingness to cooperate is even „worse” than medium, and those who assessed this capacity as „good” (18,6%) or „very good” (10,7%) have a low proportion. Charging the staff with negative discrimination occurred from the part of Roma employees in the relatively largest frequency. 25,3% of the respondents have been accused at least in one occasion. (15,7%

of the respondents have been accused with negative discrimination by Roma employees several times.)

According to the Roma people it also causes difficulty in finding employment that the staff of the labour centre has very little or no possibility to take the Roma people's characteristics into account. 73% of the interviewees think that the administrators probably or definitely could have done more for their employment, for example they should have offered more work opportunities, should have provided more information and on time, etc.

28,7% of the staff of the organizations participating in the study think that to promote the employment of Roma people they „probably” or „certainly” could do more, but they also believe that the success of employment depends primarily on employers, secondly on employees.

Discrimination on the labour market

A high proportion of the Roma people involved in the research shared the view that employees from their ethnic group are negatively discriminated today in Hungary and almost 90% of them think that it occurs mostly or totally hidden. The same proportion has heard of a case when someone had been rejected for being Roma, one quarter of them has experienced negative discrimination in the course of applying for a job, 11,3% of them have been treated differently at the workplace because they were Roma persons.

According to 82% of the employers the Roma people are affected by discrimination which is mostly graded large-scale and classified concealed. A very low proportion of respondents (3%) believe that the Roma people's employment is made difficult by the employers' prejudices, while 49% believe that the cause is the previous negative experience.

61,1% of the Roma respondents reported that the discrimination does not break their spirit at all and they carry on with the job searching with the same intensity. One quarter of them lost some of the spirit because of the negative discrimination and for a period of time they will not make any effort to find employment. Only one tenth of them replied that they will give up job searching for a very long time because of the negative discrimination.

Acceptance of the Roma people by the staff of the partner organizations

In connection with him/herself everyone assumes that he/she would certainly accept Roma employees as colleagues, whereas in the case of the „others” the „certainly” response is more infrequent. The examination of the respondents’ own attitude indicates that they have no aversion or they have rare and mild aversion. It must be mentioned though that the personal involvement is the lowest in connection with the Roma people (30%).

In respondents’ opinion „other people” have the most unfavourable attitude towards the Roma people; a relative majority believes that „other people” generally have strong or very strong aversion to the members of this group. Only 1,7% of the respondents believe that others have no aversion of any kind to Roma people. Interpreting the outcome of responses „with labels” had given to the aversions to the Roma people, the relationship is „burdened with stronger than medium size aversion”.

The staff of organizations involved in the study basically agreed with the use of positive discrimination to support the employment of the Roma, if the members of the promoted group also „do a lot” in order to find employment. In other words, the precondition of actually implementing positive discrimination is that the promoted group should take efforts, too.

Positive discrimination – at least on the basis of agreement with the statements – has to be realized prior to employment, since respondents already refuse all differentiation during the employment.

Respondents are divided – and it suggests ambivalent conceptions – whether employers have a right or not to decide on the employment of Roma people. (After all, this issue is purely theoretical, since in open market economy it is hard to restrict the right of business organizations to decide on that matter.)

Views of the employers on factors promoting the employment of the Roma people

Half of the employers believe that a legal regulation would only slightly or absolutely not promote the employment of the Roma people. Considering the possibility of a training to shape the attitude of the companies’ employees, they think it would contribute only little to the employment of the Roma people. In their opinion the shaping of interest relations would have the „largest” benefit.

A quarter of the employers responded that their company could do more for the employment of the Roma people. 61% of them said their staff would accept, while 17% said that they would not accept Roma colleagues.

Regarding the general attitude to the Roma interviewees had a much more negative opinion. Half of the respondents believe that people have strong or very strong aversion to the Roma people, while 35% could not decide on the matter. 52% of the respondents have no aversion to the Roma people at all.

Conditions of the employers on the employment of the Roma people

Conditions expressed by most employers were related to the employees' physical fitness, occupational qualification, characteristics and work performance (36 responses), but in the case of various supports and „in case of necessity” more of them would employ the members of this group of labourers. Some of the respondents did not set any particular condition (18 remarks) while some other do not want to employ Roma employees at the firm on any condition (6). 17 persons could not answer the question.

The benefits of employing the Roma

Roma respondents

Regarding the benefits of employing Roma workers, a quarter of the Roma interviewees could not form an opinion, half of them; however, believe that their employment does not involve a benefit of any kind. Ten people replied that the benefit of employing the Roma people was the subsidy or reduction of contribution granted to employers, and one person thinks that to show their gratitude for the opportunity Roma workers do a good job.

Employers

To the question, what benefit the employment of Roma workers could have, the majority of respondents (62) could not think of any. Considering the advantages of employing the Roma workers, responses included financial benefits of the company (9), larger load-bearing capacity and bigger commitment (1-1). The question remained unanswered in nine cases.

Partner organizations

According to 41,6% of the staff involved in the study the employment of Roma workers did not bear a benefit of any kind for the employers. (The question about advantages related to the employment of Roma workers received 190 responses altogether.)

One group of advantages related to the employment of Roma workers, mentioned in 27,4% of the answers, involved financial benefits deriving from subsidies granted to employers, lower wages, etc. Another group of additional benefits of relatively large proportion involves abstract advantages. Such abstract advantages are for example the ensuring of living, the reduction of aversion to the Roma people, the increase of tolerance, etc. Such responses have a proportion of 17,9%. The third group of responses with a rate over 10% involves benefits deriving from the characteristics of the employees. Such benefits, according to the respondents, are for example: the Roma workers will also undertake badly paid jobs, they want to prove their abilities, they value their workplace, etc.

The drawbacks of employing the Roma people

Roma respondents

Regarding the drawbacks of employing the Roma people, one quarter of the interviewees had no opinion, but two thirds of them believe that the employment of a Roma person does not have a drawback of any kind. Four persons gave concrete replies altogether, with two-two responses referring to drawbacks that involve the employer and the employee. Considering drawbacks involving the employee one respondent mentioned prejudices and another one said that employers are stricter with Roma persons, making their situation more difficult. One respondent stated that the employment of Roma workers creates tensions at the workplace, and another one said that employers assume a negligent work performance. Respondent also added that this could be true for any employee.

Employers

The question of what disadvantages the employment of a Roma worker could have, remained unanswered in 11 cases, while other respondents made 97 remarks altogether. Employers mostly replied (54 answers), that the employment of the Roma people does not have a drawback of any kind, while 18 persons could not form an opinion. 18 people mentioned problems deriving from the employees' real or believed characteristics. Five-five respondents think that Roma employees have poor work ethics or do not have a sufficient qualification. Three people said that Roma employees are unreliable, and two other stated that they have a difficulty to fit in. One-one person replied that they are frequently absent from the workplace without any reason or there are problems related to hygiene and speaking. Seven persons mentioned drawbacks involving the employer, for example other workers have difficulties to accept Roma colleagues, the company might suffer a financial damage because of losing customers, the rate of fluctuation will grow, etc.

Partner organizations

According to 38,1% of the respondents the employment of the Roma workers does not entail a disadvantage of any kind. The question received 184 answers altogether from the staff involved in the study.

One group of the responses containing „concrete” disadvantages, with a proportion of 35,3% within all responses, refer to the disadvantageous characteristics of the Roma people as employees. Responses include among others unreliability, poor work ethics, problems with fitting in, etc. Another group of responses in connection with the disadvantages of the employment of the Roma people (with a rate of 26,6%) involves drawbacks afflicting employers. Such disadvantages might be the antipathy of other workers, workplace conflicts deriving from the employment of the Roma workers, loss of orders, decreasing turnover, rise of fluctuation, etc.

The labour market discrimination of people with decreased working abilities or disability

The group of employees with decreased working abilities is not homogeneous. The group includes people with severe physical and mental disabilities as well as those pensioned off „with a low percentage”. Even the group of people with a disability is heterogeneous, as disabilities are very different (visible or concealed, severe or mild, of one kind or several kinds, chronic or incidental, etc.). Therefore the disability might restrict the movement, comprehension, hearing, speech or vision.

The largest group of people with a disability (43,6%) is made up of the physically handicapped and those with a physical disability. 14,4% of them are blind or have an impaired vision, whereas approximately 10% are mentally disabled. The proportion of the partially deaf is 7,7%, 1,5% are deaf, deaf-mute or mute and 1,3% have a speech defect. The sex rate of people with a disability is equalized, 51% of them are women, while 49% are men.

The disadvantage of people with decreased working abilities or disability on the labour market

In Hungary the unemployment rate of the disabled is 85%¹⁵, whereas in the European Union it is 40%.

Impaired state of health

The traditional concept of disability is related to the individual, the lack of individual functions. This concept lead to the view that the disabled person is the problem him/herself, he/she is the one who cannot undertake work for his/her impaired state of health, he/she is unfit to work and so he/she must be provided a constant supply and care. However, the character and severity of the disability certainly affects the possibility of employment to a great extent. Disabled job-seekers have less severe disabilities and believe that they would be able to work even in such a difficult state of health.¹⁶

Because of the inequalities of employment the social group of the disabled and people with decreased working abilities is affected with a bigger risk by the unemployment and the changed working capacity.

¹⁵ Based on the figures of the 2001 census (EFOP 2006)

¹⁶Dézi 2004

In general those people become unemployed or lose their working abilities who – for deficiencies in their education or occupational qualification – do a hard job, work in bad, dangerous work conditions resulting in the deterioration of their state of health. The ill unemployed have a bigger chance to become long-term unemployed and the health of the long-term unemployed will further decline. The situation of people with decreased working abilities or those pensioned off is just apparently more favourable. The state of health of people on benefits or disability pension also declines which will question the possibility of their rehabilitation even on a theoretical level. The final result – from the aspect of employment – is the same in both cases: an ultimate exclusion from the labour market with all the individual and social consequences.¹⁷

Lower level of education

According to the figures of the 2001 census, the qualification of the disabled is much lower compared to the whole of the society. Nearly one third of them (31,6%) has not finished the eight classes of primary education and an additional 38,8% have completed primary school education only. 10,3% of them have a secondary school degree (without a secondary school maturity certificate) and 14,3% of them have a secondary school maturity certificate. 5% have a qualification of higher education.¹⁸ Observing the qualification of the physically handicapped the proportions are similar: the rate of those with a secondary school maturity certificate or a qualification of higher education is just slightly higher than the group average of those with a disability.

Examining the qualification of the disabled of age 15 and up, it can be stated that 60% of the mentally disabled have not acquired even a primary school qualification. Nevertheless the data indicate that the severity of mental disability can be different, too, as one third of them have completed primary school education and a small proportion has an even higher qualification. The situation of the blind is facilitated by the fact that a relatively significant proportion of them have a primary or higher qualification.¹⁹

According to the study of the target organizations nearly two thirds of the workers with decreased working capacities have completed a primary school education at most, slightly more than 20% have acquired a vocational school certificate and less than one seventh have a secondary school qualification. The proportion of those with a college or university certification is below two percent.²⁰

¹⁷Tardos 1993, 1995

¹⁸Tausz-Lakatos 2004

¹⁹Dézi 2004

²⁰Results of the survey carried out at the target organizations 2004.

Territorial dispersion

With respect to settlement types, the figures of the census indicate that people with a disability live in villages in a higher proportion, and in the capital or other cities in a lower proportion compared to the population without a disability. Thus their social disadvantages are further increased by the drawbacks deriving from settlement inequalities.²¹

System of support

The present system supporting the disabled and people with decreased working abilities concentrates on provisions in cash while rehabilitation and motivation to find employment are pushed into the background. The treatment of the problem principally occurs as a matter of health insurance, the practice of complex social treatment has not been established yet. Therefore legal regulation and the system of financing both require reconsideration and reforms.²²

Discrimination against the disabled and people with decreased working abilities

Physical and communicational barriers

„The negative discrimination of the disabled involves a barrier of some sort which appears in the material environment built by and for the healthy majority, and which confines the disabled or makes it impossible to exercise certain fundamental rights. The most obvious example is that for a lack of the appropriate facilities it is impossible for a disabled person in a wheelchair to approach and enter most public buildings unaided, which obviously restricts their freedom of movement apart from the offence of other rights (e.g. the right for human dignity) and interests (e.g. the interest to handle official matters in person).”²³

²¹Tausz-Lakatos 2004

²²Füzesi and colleagues 2004

²³Szalai 2004

Open discrimination

„The disabled may also suffer an infringement of lawful rights when – for the prejudicial behaviour of the majority – they cannot access such facilities or rights that they are entitled to, and during the exercising of which or in the course of fulfilling obligations their disability does not present itself. An example is when a physically handicapped person is rejected to fill a vacancy, although the person has the qualification necessary to perform the job and meets the requirements set by the employer in all other respects.”²⁴

Profitability of the employment

The worker employed at the right place, trained and rehabilitated can be regarded a labour of full value in his/her own field of work by all means. The right motivation to work can successfully defeat even a severe physical disability. The principle of capability for equal performance – generally accepted by the specialized literature – could be justified with an endless list of examples. According to the specialized literature their employment entails numerous secondary benefits for the employer: apart from a few very rare exceptions, their work discipline for instance exceeds the average level or they loyally stick to their company.²⁵

The presence and activity of fake beliefs hindering the employment worthy of disabled workers is common knowledge. Naturally, a great deal depends on the workplace community and healthy colleagues, too, but if they are aware of the fact, that an adequately trained disabled person with a well-established professional knowledge does not require special attention or assistance from the colleagues, there is less resistance in the course of employment.

Company leaders frequently push rehabilitated workers into the background at the job interview already, and eventually select a non-disabled person from two applicants of equal value with regard to the task. The experience of several countries proved – although employers have doubtless prejudices against disabled or injured workers, their wages remained far below the average and they had poor chances of promotion – that the employers' satisfaction was rising in proportion to the time the disabled workers spent at the company.

²⁴Szalai 2004

²⁵Lasden-Martin 1982

Attitudes to the disabled and people with decreased working abilities

It is widely accepted that the barriers deriving from the external environment (e.g. the difficulties to approach educational institutions) and from social prejudices induce much larger obstacles for the disabled to play a role in society than the actual functional restraints arising from their disability.

The study report titled „Examination of the disadvantaged” gives account of a survey carried out with deep interviews, and it reveals that many of the disabled felt that their only opportunity to find employment was teleworking. Many complained that the majority of the disabled were not provided the opportunity to do white-collar work, but their only opportunity is to do physical work for a low wage and performed at home. Nevertheless some of the disabled has the skill to perform white-collar teleworking from home (teleworking involves mostly data processing or a job requiring a similarly low qualification).²⁶

The population’s opinion on the disabled is reflected in the findings of a study carried out in 2003: 70% of the population believes that the disabled must be looked after by their family. 60% of them have never heard of the equal opportunity act, and 69% think that the disabled cannot be expected to work. Despite these negative voices, however, 60% of the respondents, as employers, would employ a disabled person.²⁷

The benefits of employing disabled people, according to a research in 2003, were typically related to available supports and the avoidance of rehabilitation contribution. Considering the drawbacks the dominant opinion was that if a certain person is fit to perform the work, the decline of his/her work capacity is not a disadvantage. 83% of the undertakings also agreed that people with decreased working abilities must be employed integrated, together with the other employees. Thus most of the companies – in theory – are tolerant, however, the research also revealed that employers often fear that disabled workers frequently will be on sick-leave and they do not trust their performance.²⁸

²⁶Melles 2001

²⁷The disabled hope for equality from the EU, 2003

²⁸Horváth-Póla-Vincze 2004

Employment opportunities of the disabled and people with decreased working abilities

In recent years numerous studies and researches were carried out in connection with the opportunities of obtaining a job and employment for the disabled and people with decreased working abilities. 58,1% of 200 companies with the largest turnover in Hungary have employed people with decreased working abilities. Those companies which employ people with changed working abilities have employed physically handicapped people in the largest proportion, while the second largest group included people with a hearing impair. People with multiple disabilities have been employed by 10% of the companies. The mentally disabled were the most peripheral group of all.

As for the employment of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled significant regional differences was revealed. However, inequalities with respect to gender were even larger: only 39% of these employees were women and 61% were men.

Most employees with decreased working abilities were employed in positions appropriate to their occupation by employers involved in the study. Employees with decreased working capacities typically did an intellectual sort of work: on average 70% did a white-collar work. Considering qualification, those with a university or college degree had low, while those with a primary qualification had high representation compared to the total number of employees.

Companies employing people with decreased working capacities mostly preferred part-time employment among the alternative forms of employment. 43,5% of the companies employing the target group provide part-time employment for employees with decreased working capacities. With regard to the rate, seasonal employment was far behind, with 9,3% of the companies, whereas teleworking was applied at 4,9% of the companies altogether.

The human resource specialists of large-scale companies saw the lack of positions as the biggest problem in connection with employing people with decreased work abilities, whereas the smallest problem was considered the workers' fear of employing disabled people. As for the advantages of employing a disabled person, loyalty was rated the primary benefit by human resource managers, followed by accurate work performance. Nevertheless, the general feeling of the majority of employees with decreased working abilities in the focus group both in and out of employment was low. The main causes for their indisposition were the fear of how long they will be able to work, the lack of work and the financial burdens. Further factors included negative experience with regard to

the colleagues' attitudes toward them and the humiliating nature of the obligatory health examination. Moreover, they felt that there was no organization to provide them assistance. Those interviewees who only worked occasionally or were unemployed, all claimed they wanted to work, mainly for material reasons but also for the sake of a useful way of passing their time. Members of the focus group reported great difficulties also during job searching and work. The participants would like to do mainly teleworking or a four- or six-hour job with lighter burden, but the range of such vacancies is extremely limited. According to elder participants age was also responsible for the failure of finding a job.²⁹

Scarcely one third of the 213 companies which participated in a study on employers in 2003 in Trans-Danubia employed a worker with decreased working abilities and 61% of them have not even considered this opportunity. The majority of companies believed that the activity of the company does not allow the employment of workers with decreased working abilities. Companies which employed such workers primarily did so because they considered the employee suitable to complete a certain task or the worker with changed working abilities had been previously employed by the company and despite the decrease of working abilities he remained able to complete his/her job.

According to 84% of the responding undertakings there are typical spheres of work where employees with decreased working capacities can be employed (e.g. office work, administration, machine operator, guarding and reception, cleaning, caretaking, maintenance, etc.). Those companies in the research which employed people with decreased working abilities employed them in these spheres of work.

In order to increase the employers' interest interviewees mostly mentioned supports and allowances.

²⁹Keszi-Komáromi-Könczei-Vicsek 2002

Rehabilitation: training and employment

There has been a rise of demands for rehabilitation in the last couple of years. The reasons are on the one hand, that the financial provisions do not ensure the living, and on the other, that there is a demand from the people who have partly lost their working abilities to be useful, too, and to know that „they are still needed”. Among the young it involves particularly grave tensions to be aware of the fact that they still have 30-40 active years and to spend that time unemployed, on low-standard (or without any) provisions is not a pleasant perspective.

According to the leaders of those organizations which employ mostly workers with decreased working abilities and receive state subsidies, on average less than one seventh of the workers with changed working abilities is suitable for open employment. With training a further one tenth can be prepared for related difficulties.³⁰ The promotion of the equality of opportunities on the labour-market for persons with decreased working abilities and the disabled is affected in the long term by the quantity and quality of trainings.

The findings of a study carried out in Heves county show that trainings are not adjusted adequately to the demands of the labour market. 47% of the interviewed people with decreased working abilities were entirely, and 26% partly unable to use what they learnt at their later workplace. Only 28% of the respondents were able to make use of the material of the training to a great extent or entirely. For many people training is not a real opportunity because of the lack of adequate transportation facilities and of financial resources necessary for regular travelling.³¹

³⁰Results of the questionnaire survey carried out at the target organizations, 2004

³¹Galambos-Estefánné-Vargáné 2002

Workplaces employing mainly persons with decreased working abilities are different as regards the use of various elements of rehabilitation.³² Skilling trainings, transfer into a higher level scope of work and the adaptation of the workplace and environment are the existing elements of rehabilitation for most organizations – applied at more than half of them. Practical training is also characteristic of over half of the organizations, whereas other elements of rehabilitation are present at less than half. However, elements of rehabilitation related to open employment are present in a particularly small proportion. The reason is that target organizations are not interested in transit employment: they do not want to part with those who perform well, whereas those with a poor performance cannot be made transit.³³

Outcome of the questionnaire survey of the EQUAL project

Problems of the labour-market

People with decreased working abilities and the disabled

77% of the respondents reported that because of their decreased working abilities or disability they find a job with difficulty. In other words – similarly to the Roma people –, their majority also contributes the difficulty of finding employment to their specific situation. The second most frequently mentioned reason for their unemployment is the lack of jobs, the low number of work opportunities. Nearly one fifth of the people with decreased working abilities mentioned the difficulties of transport between their workplace and residence. Their low level of education is another problem. The prejudices of employers as a cause of their unemployment were mentioned by 39% of them in a spontaneous way.

One tenth of the people with decreased working abilities mentioned their age, and some of them remarked that the flow of information is poor and so the employer and employee have difficulties to find each other. Only one–one respondent claimed that employers are not prepared for their special situation and that employers are not interested in their employment and the role of the state is not adequate. One-one respondent stated that the expectations of workplaces are too high, the working hours are not flexible and employees are totally defenceless.

³²Results of the questionnaire survey carried out at the target organizations, 2004

³³Horváth-Póla-Vincze 2004

Employers and partner organizations

The staff of employing and partner organizations hold the same opinion about the main cause of the unemployment of the disabled and persons with decreased working abilities: primarily the poor economic situation and the narrow labour market, secondly the anomalies of qualification/occupational qualification as well as a gap between demand and supply are responsible for the low employment of this social group. Inadequate infrastructure, low wages and the expansion of black economy were also mentioned.

Employment opportunities, characteristics related to job searching

Employment, willingness to undertake work

22,8% of the respondents with decreased working abilities commit everything in order to find employment, while 68,4% although try to find a workplace, give little chance to the success. Nearly one tenth of them considers employment hopeless and do not seek for a job at any cost.

29 respondents with decreased working abilities have turned down a job offer. 11 of them referred to difficulties of transport or said that they could not have fulfilled their duties because of their physical capacities. One-one person explained the refusal by claiming that the offered job was „black labour”, that they were asked to sign an unfavourable contract, or that „he/she could not identify with the profile of the company”. One interviewee explained the refusal by saying that he/she would have taken a big risk to renounce the disability pension, for he/she believes that persons with decreased working abilities are employed only for a few months. One respondent backed out of a job offer, because he/she „had to run a shop in the middle of a Roma minority”, and another person could not take the opportunity for the lack of accessibility to buildings.

Employers ranked the employment opportunities of people with decreased working abilities higher than the Roma people's. Considering the willingness of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled to get employment, the vast majority of the interviewees believe that the members of this group of labour want to find employment at least to a medium extent, and they are considerably or very cooperative at their workplace.

According to the relative majority of the workers of partner organizations, people with decreased working abilities and the disabled have almost no chance to find employment.

In the case of people with decreased working abilities the difficulties of employment principally derive from problems related to the labour market. Such problems include the scarcity of workplaces, the fact that other workers cannot find employment either and that the number of those companies and spheres of work which were capable of employing people with decreased working abilities has diminished to a minimum, etc. The factors of another group of problems is related to the employees, for example, their performance is inappropriate, they require more attention, and they are too often absent from work. The high costs of accessibility to buildings or the lack of accessibility were mentioned in 14,1% of the responses, discrimination and prejudice were expressed by 8,4%.

Certain factors, however, can even facilitate the employment of people with decreased working abilities. This idea is reflected in 10,3% of all the responses, which express for example that subsidies or companies specializing in the employment of people with decreased working abilities, etc. can make job searching successful.

According to the staff of partner organizations the members of this social group are characterized with a strong willingness to employment. The vast majority of the respondents with experience on the issue assessed the willingness for cooperation of the disabled and those with decreased working abilities good or very good.

Making use of the assistance of partner organizations

The vast majority of those with decreased working abilities and the disabled made use of the services of the employment centre during their last job searching. Nearly each of them found the administrators kind and they had a similar view of their helpfulness and understanding attitude. The administrator's information was incomprehensible for slightly more than 6% only. 7 of the respondents reported problems in connection with the administrators, primarily an inappropriate tone or attitude. It is in accordance with the fact that only 5,1% of the administrators have been accused of negative discrimination by people with changed working abilities at least once.

Merely 6,3% of those with decreased working abilities and the disabled believe that there is absolutely no possibility to take their characteristics into consideration, whereas 77,5% of them replied that there was little possibility. One quarter of the interviewees believe that the administrators could have done more for their employment, such as suggesting more employment opportunities. Four persons criticized administrators for not being

aware of laws and opportunities in connection with decreased working abilities. Furthermore, several respondents remarked that their difficulties with the transport were not taken into consideration to a due extent neither at the labour centre nor at labour insertion.

28,1% of the staff of organizations involved in the study believe that in order to promote the employment of the disabled and those with decreased working abilities they „probably” or „surely” could do even more. However, they also think that the success of employment primarily depends on the employers and secondly on the employees.

Labour-market discrimination

A high proportion of the disabled and people with decreased working abilities believed that employees in their social group are negatively discriminated in Hungary, and more than two thirds of them claimed that their discrimination on the labour market is rather or completely open, and nearly as many have heard of such a case. 13% of them have experienced negative discrimination in the course of applying for a job, and 3% reported a different treatment at their workplace because of their specific characteristics.

Three quarters of the employers think that people with decreased working abilities and the disabled are discriminated, but the extent of the discrimination is lower than in the case of the Roma people, and they believe that the negative discrimination is concealed. According to 21,0% of the interviewees, the employment of people with decreased working abilities is made difficult by prejudices, whereas 30,0% believe the cause is the bad experience instead.

Unlike the Roma people, a high proportion of people with decreased working abilities or disability replied that the intensity of their job searching is similar in spite of experiencing discrimination, and also a lower proportion reported to withdraw from job searching for a long time.

The acceptance of the disabled and people with decreased working abilities among the staff of partner organizations

Everyone assumes rather about him/herself (78,7%) that he/she would „certainly” accept employees with decreased working abilities and/or disability for colleagues, whereas in the case of „the others” the „certainly” response is less frequent (64,6%). The examination of the respondents’ attitude indicates that they have no aversion. Personal involvement characterized half of the respondents. In the case of people with decreased working abilities, considering „the others”, respondents believe there are „hardly any aversion” to this group of people.

Views of the employers on factors promoting the employment of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled

Likewise in the case of the Roma people, employers consider the shaping of interest relations to increase the opportunities of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled instead of the modification of legal regulations or attitude-shaping trainings.

One third of the employers think that their company could do more for the employment of the members of this social group. 71% of them said that their colleagues would accept, and a mere 4% that they would not accept people with decreased working abilities and/or disability for a colleague.

The relative majority of respondents (39,0%) cannot definitely decide on the extent of the general aversion to people with decreased working abilities. According to 45,0% of the representatives of companies included in the sample, people have maximum a slight aversion to this group of employees.

Most respondents (59,0%) have no aversion at all to people with decreased working abilities and an additional 25% of them have only slight aversion to this group of employees.

Conditions of the employers on the employment of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled

Most employers made a remark in connection with the physical suitability, occupational qualification and work performance of employees (29 remarks), but in the case of various subsidies or necessity several would employ the members of this group of labour. Some respondents did not set any particular condition (5 cases), whereas some others cannot or do not want to employ people with decreased working abilities at their company under any circumstances (13 cases). 26 persons could not reply the question.

Benefits of employing people with changed working abilities or a disability

Respondents with decreased working abilities or a disability

One quarter of the interviewees could not give a reply to the question related to the advantages of their employment, and three persons responded that it does not entail any advantage. 60,0% of the interviewees mentioned that the advantage deriving from their employment is the subsidy or contribution reduction the employer is eligible for. 11 people replied, the employee's benefit is that he/she can ensure his/her living or receives income. Six-six persons mentioned that people with decreased working abilities perform better, value their workplace more or the human values of the employer might grow as he/she may get to know a different world. Also six persons replied that the employee gains benefit from the employment by becoming the member of a community, and four persons said that the employer's benefit is that he/she has to give lower wage to workers with decreased working abilities. Moreover, their reliability and loyalty were also mentioned.

Employers

For the companies in general it is the material benefits deriving from the employment of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled which is attractive. Many believe (37 remarks) that the employment of this group of labour does not involve any sort of advantage, while bigger loyalty was mentioned by only one person. Six people did not respond to the question.

Partner organizations

According to 17% of the staff of partner organizations the employment of the disabled and people with decreased working abilities does not involve an advantage of any kind for the employers. (Those duly answering the question gave 209 responses altogether.)

With regard to the employment of people with decreased working abilities and the disabled the most frequently mentioned advantages involve material benefits to employers. 69,8% of the responses contained such remarks. A few examples from the answers of this kind: access to application grants, tax reductions, reduction of the employer's contribution, etc. The group of replies of the second largest importance includes benefits related to the employees, with a proportion of 15,3%. This group includes for instance: they value their work more, they are more loyal, diligent, motivated, reliable, etc.

Drawbacks of employing people with decreased working capacities or a disability

Respondents with decreased working abilities or a disability

One third of the interviewees could not answer to the question related to the drawbacks of their employment, while 22% of them think there is no drawback of their employment. Among the 56 relevant responses 32 remarks involved disadvantages an employee could have when he/she is being employed and only 24 remarks involved negative effects on employers. 2 respondents altogether mentioned for instance, that accessibility to buildings might entail extra costs and efforts to employers. Disadvantages to employers included that people with decreased working abilities cannot be employed full-time (7 remarks), their work performance is weaker (6 remarks), they cannot arrive at their workplace in time for difficulties of transport (1 remark), and also, that it involves extra costs of fuel to deliver the work material to their residence (1 remark). It was also mentioned, that their employment involves a great deal of administration, subsidy is not granted below a certain number of staff, and one respondent said that there are „a lot of problems” with people with decreased working abilities.

Employers

The question, what drawbacks it might involve to employ people with decreased working abilities or a disability, remained unanswered by 18 respondents, while the other interviewees made 96 remarks altogether. Half of the employers reported that the employment of this group of labour does not involve a disadvantage of any sort. 19 respondents mentioned problems deriving from the true or believed attributes and characteristics of employees with decreased working abilities. Answers included that the work performance of this group of labour is weaker, they have a smaller load-bearing capacity (9 remarks), they cannot complete every task (7 remarks), a risk of accident is involved (2 remarks) and also, that health problems might occur (1 remark). 12 remarks were recorded in connection with drawbacks on employers, for instance, they demand more attention (4 remarks), they cannot be employed full-time (3 remarks), in exchange of the subsidy the employer is compelled to employ them (2 remarks), accessibility to buildings involves extra costs and effort (1 remark) and their employment involves more administration (1 remark).

Partner organizations

According to the staff of partner organizations the employment of people with decreased working abilities involves drawbacks, too. The staff gave 181 responses in that matter.

Categorizing the respondents' views, the most significant (most frequently mentioned) disadvantages derive from problems related to the special conditions of the employees, such as frequent absence, small load-bearing capacity, weaker work performance, etc. The second group of problems expresses disadvantages afflicting employers. In the case of people with decreased working abilities such disadvantages are for example the costs of possibly necessary accessibility to buildings, the growing tasks of organization and supervision, etc. According to 38,7% of the respondents the employment of people with decreased working abilities does not involve a drawback of any kind to the employers.

The labour market discrimination of women returning from maternity leave

At the beginning of the 21st century one of the most important issues of Hungarian women remains the choice between career and/or family, and the response to the challenges of this kind. The less favourable position of women with a young child on the labour market regularly arises in connection with the analysis and interpretation of employment data, the employment programs worked out for various purposes, the changing roles of the sexes, the issues of equal opportunities between the sexes, and the programs of equal opportunities.³⁴

In Hungary of the 1970s and 80s the employment of women of the age 25-54 – an age group principally affected by the changes of the economy, childbearing and rearing – was above 80%, and in certain age groups it even exceeded 90%.³⁵ The 1990s, however, was a period when the labour market drastically narrowed and as a result of the transformation into free market economy the number of employees decreased by over a quarter, that is by nearly 1,5 million people. In 1996 the rate of employment among men was just 64,2% already, whereas among women it was 54,1%.³⁶

³⁴Zöldyné 2002

³⁵Pongrácz 2002

³⁶Spéder 2002

Equality of opportunities between the sexes on the labour market

The negative discrimination of women has unfortunately deeply rooted traditions both in the world of work and outside. „On paper” the Hungarian legal regulation is in accordance with the European practice. However, in spite the existing laws, equal opportunities between the sexes have not been realized and the introduction of policies supporting positive measures has not achieved significant results yet. The document titled State Analysis of Hungary in 2001 names five key issues which play important roles in the situation of women. They are as follows:

- horizontal and vertical segregation of women on the labour market,
- lack of family-friendly policies
- disadvantageous practice of employment and low earning capacity
- lack or inadequacy of marketable skills required by the labour market
- unsatisfying enforcement of the principle of equal opportunities between the sexes

The disadvantageous position of women is especially apparent at entering the labour market and inside the world of work. The drawback of women on the labour market is further increased by the unequal distribution of household and family obligations (what is more, this problem does not even occur in the case of women rearing their child on their own) and by the fact that in Hungary only a small proportion of women works part-time, and other opportunities of flexible work are also rare.

In Hungary, besides the opportunity disadvantages of the labour market detectable in statistical data, in the case of particular groups of women indirect discrimination can be also presented. A negative discrimination is experienced most frequently by mothers with a young child and women who want to return to employment following the child-rearing period or an absence for various reasons.

In the case of childbearing, from the women’s point of view „besides the loss of earnings it must be considered too, that the „human capital” of mothers staying at home, valued by the labour market, will devaluate as they „drop out” of their occupation, cannot participate in programmes of further trainings, that is, their professional knowledge and skills are expected to lose value.”³⁷ The problem is made

³⁷Nagy 2004

worse by the fact that employers are not keen on employing mothers with a (young) child, as employers assume that they are more frequently absent for family obligations and less flexible to adapt to unexpected situations and demands of over-time. Child-bearing therefore might also involve a barrier in future re-employment. According to statistical figures, the child-bearing willingness of women in employment has unambiguously decreased. It indicates, that under the present conditions of the labour market there are many more factors that oppose child-bearing than prior to the change of regime. The time of child-bearing is increasingly preceded by a period spent as a stable employee.³⁸ Material necessity plays an important role in women's employment. However, value-analyses prove that among women the earning role has become an internalized value, that is, the vast majority of mothers consider employment outside the household important without a material necessity, too.³⁹

Conflict between childbearing and undertaking employment

Those women, who have a young child or stand before the period of child-bearing, are in a particularly difficult position on the labour market. „Free market economy and the business sphere are eating away those benefits of the family policy which earlier provided a certain security, as in the period of childbearing and rearing women were not threatened by losing their jobs or by being discriminated because of the child. There are signs which indicate, that employers – especially in the business sphere – are finding those loopholes, which provide them opportunities to negatively discriminate the young women labour facing to start a family or having a young child without a legal sanction.“⁴⁰

The long absence because of child-rearing loosens the relationship between the employer and employee or makes it entirely formal. This process is also affected by the fact that the workplace of merely three quarters of the women in employment relationship remained in the same form during the maternity leave. This proportion is the highest among women receiving child-care benefit, it is 77,4% among women receiving child-care allowance, and in the case of those receiving child-rearing allowance it is 49%.

³⁸Spéder 2002

³⁹Pongrácz 2002

⁴⁰Pongrácz 2002

In 2002 one third of those women who did not want to return to their workplace were planning yet another child-bearing. For the other one third the main holding back power was the repulsive effects of the workplace. The most significant of these was working in shifts, but long travelling time, lack of mass transportation and infrequent numbers of bus services were also important factors. Moreover, mothers mentioned as a significant condition, that occasionally it was not worth to work because of the low wage, or the re-employment was made difficult by tasks related to arranging the life of the children. However, data show that mothers on maternity leave want to return to the labour market in a growing proportion after the expiration of the child-rearing period (69,9% in 2002). Since 1999 figures has not indicated a change that the women's intention to return to employment would decrease in proportion to the growing number of children. Moving from the capital towards the country the possibility and intension to return to the workplace is decreasing. The primary cause is the difficulty of transportation: it was accepted prior to childbearing, but with the young child it is considered unsolvable. Taking advantage of another child-care benefit is considered the only way out by many more women in villages – lacking the possibility of local employment – than in cities.⁴¹

⁴¹Frey 2005

Programs and measures aiming at the achievement of equal opportunities

Promoting the equality of opportunities through the family policy

The increasing participation of working fathers in the family life (a growing tendency) in numerous EU member states is explained by a family-, or more precisely parent-centred approach of social politics. The main point of the approach is observing the principle of equal opportunities between the sexes. The new approach is successful in the practice, because the period of the maternity leave is divided into sections, and certain sections can be used by expressly only one of the parents (either the father or the mother, except for single-parent families). In Hungary, at the same time, less than 2% of the male employees stay home on maternity leave.

Part-time employment

According to research data, nine out of ten mothers in employment with a young child would require assistance to solve problems of child-care. Part-time employment and flexible working hours are the most popular forms; their „theoretical popularity” has been shown by all surveys on similar subjects for years. In Hungary, however, the atypical forms of employment do not have a long past, therefore it is not enough to encourage the supply side for the employment, employers also must be made interested in providing the opportunity.⁴²

In Hungary the majority of employers are interested exclusively in full-time employment. Since the Hungarian labour market is characterized by over-supply, employers can easily satisfy their labour demands by employing cheap labour full-time. Consequently, they are not motivated to provide part-time employment which involves extra work organization and administration.⁴³

Besides all these, it is also an important factor, that a significant proportion of women would select part-time employment only in theory. This can be traced back to several reasons. On the one hand wages significantly lag behind the EU average even in full-time employment, which is further diminished by part-time jobs. The situation is made complete by the special circumstances which came to existence in Hungary. In certain regions the unemployment rate of women was lower than of men, and because of the high unemployment of men, women often became the breadwinners. Because of the uncertainty of employment opportunities, especially many of the families with a low

⁴²Frey 2005

⁴³Nagy 2004

total income cannot afford either parent to give up a job opportunity – not even partly. According to researches „women only work part-time when there is no opportunity of full-time employment.” Some experts claim that women’s permanent part-time employment leads to their impoverishment in the long-term.⁴⁴

However, it is an important advantage of the part-time employment that „those people who are within the labour market will continuously maintain their working capacity and if they want, sooner or later can change their part-time employment into full-time, – much easier than those who try this from outside the labour market.”⁴⁵

In Hungary the situation is worse than in the European Union not only with respect to part-time employment but also to flexible working hours. According to an EU survey carried out in 2002 the employees’ arrangement of working time is the least flexible in Hungary among the 25 EU member states. Over 90% of the employees – either women or men – work with a fixed starting and finishing time. The arrangement of working time of half of the rest of employees is the subject of a mutual agreement between the employer and employee while the other half can themselves determine when they want work.⁴⁶

Family-friendly workplaces

Family-friendly workplaces aim at creating a harmony between work and family life. Family-friendly workplaces recognised that to recruit and retain employees and to increase efficiency are easier, if the company takes the private life and families of the employees into consideration. Ensuring of a family-friendly approach on abroad is principally lead by large-scale corporations, banks, insurance companies and other sectors requiring a highly qualified labour, with the purpose to retain those colleagues who are difficult to replace.⁴⁷ In those sectors which do not demand occupational qualification the situation is much less favourable, since workers are easier to replace. Also, smaller companies and those with less capital have less material opportunity to observe family-friendly aspects.

„Companies in Hungary today supports child-rearing only in an insignificant proportion. However, one can find many positive examples too, such as the employers who were granted the „Family-friendly Workplace” award during the past years.” Ensuring of family-friendly principles, however, is more difficult in Hungary, since neither the

⁴⁴Nagy 2004

⁴⁵Frey 2005

⁴⁶Frey 2005

⁴⁷Inotai 2004

society, nor the circumstances of employment compel companies to observe such interests of their employees. When the question is asked, what makes a workplace family-friendly, the most significant viewpoint of Hungarian women is whether they will manage to take off holiday for nursing a sick child. The second important aspect is if they will be taken back to the workplace after childbearing. If these two conditions are met, Hungarian women already consider the workplace family-friendly.⁴⁸

Programs aiming at harmonizing work and family

To harmonize undertaking employment, professional career and family life places responsibility on everyone. Nonetheless, the related tasks are shifted chiefly onto women by the society. Aiming at the equality of opportunities, numerous programs were initiated in the EU. These programs promote the equal opportunities of women on the labour market by creating a more balanced share of the tasks related to family life and child-rearing and by changing the approach to gender roles.

Complex programs

Most programs aiming at the employment of women returning from maternity leave operate on a local level, but approach the problem in a complex way, offering a selection of services and opportunities – in various combinations – for mothers with a young child, e.g. legal training, legal assistance service, economical-business counselling, entrepreneurial training, personality development, job searching training, job mediation, organizing self-aid groups, organizing child-care, etc. However, apart from programs responding to local demands „global” programs are also needed.

The document titled „The situation of employment of women and activities aiming at their equal employment opportunities in the capital”⁴⁹ contains suggestions aiming at the balancing of gender inequalities of the capital’s labour market and covers several significant areas, as follows:

⁴⁸Debreceni-Komka 2004

⁴⁹Debreceni-Komka 2004

- Enforcing a Gender Mainstreaming concept in the public policy of the capital.
- Forming a family-friendly environment of work and public utility: organizing local governments and workplaces owned by governments in a family-friendly way; transforming the operation of the governments' public utility companies and institutions in a way that working parents with children should have access to them, with particular respect to the increasing spread of atypical forms of employment.
- The importance of life-long learning in the improvement of women's opportunities on the labour market.
- Campaign for a more harmonious share of parental roles. A permanent absence from the labour market devaluates earlier acquired knowledge, which affects primarily women because of the childbearing and rising. This drawback could be moderated if the utilization of child-care benefits would not be limited almost exclusively to women.
- Establishing a women labour market service centre. „Those mothers with a young child who were not in employment relationship prior to childbearing or their job ceased to exist during the maternity leave, may also enrol in a great variety of training programs or undertake work even during the validity period of child-care or child-rearing allowance with attractive conditions both for the employee and employer. The problem is that those concerned are not aware of the rights and opportunities which are meant to promote the strengthening of their labour market attachments and return into the world of work.,,

In the recent past in Hungary several provisions have been introduced in order to facilitate the harmonization of child-raising and employment (e.g. support for school-system or labour market trainings during the period of maternity leave; the introduction of „grand-parent child-care allowance” in order to liberate the parents' capacity for work; in the case of undertaking employment besides child-care allowance, child-rearing allowance or nursing benefit, contribution reduction for the employer, etc.) From the viewpoint of the employment of women with young children, however, the existence, accessibility and affordability of a system of child-care institution is also of overriding importance. „It would facilitate the coordination of family and workplace obligations, if the opening hours of child-care institutions were adjusted to the world of work.

The development of a network of child-care institutions, working out more flexible opening hours, alternative services of child-care such as family day-care or the operation of domestic child attendance facility in an affordable way would promote that less and less women with a young child should give up on employment because of the unsolved problems of child-care, and be compelled to choose the prolonging of the maternity leave.”⁵⁰

⁵⁰Frey 2005

Outcome of the questionnaire survey of the EQUAL project

Problems of the labour market

Women returning from maternity leave

82% of the respondents believe that they do not have or did not have an opportunity to work for a long time because they were on maternity leave or because they have a young child. In other words, similarly to the members of the other two unprivileged groups, most of the women explain the difficulties of job searching with their own specific situation. The second most frequently mentioned cause of their unemployment is the lack of workplaces, the scarcity of employment opportunities. The prejudices of employers as a cause of their unemployment was spontaneously mentioned by 16,1% of them.

Some of the women returning from maternity leave mentioned their age and difficulties of placing children in crèche as a reason for the difficulty of getting employment.

Employers and partner organizations

The staff of employing and partner organizations share the view with respect to the main cause of the unemployment of women returning from maternity leave: primarily it is the bad economic situation and the narrowing labour market, secondly the difference between labour demand and supply which are responsible for the low employment rate of this group of labour. Inadequate infrastructure, low wages and the spread of black economy were also mentioned.

Employment opportunities, characteristics related to job searching

Employment, willingness to undertake work

One third (30,3%) of women returning from maternity leave make every effort to find employment, whereas two thirds (63,8%) of them, although strive to find employment, do not really trust in the success and 6,1% regards the attempt to be hopeless.

16 of the women on maternity leave or wanting to get an employment after its expiration refused an employment opportunity, mostly (13 persons) because the working hours were not reconcilable with the child-care. One-one respondent mentioned that she did not accept a job for reasons of transport difficulties, lack of crèche places or a three-shift work schedule.

The employment opportunities of women returning from maternity leave – similarly to the chances of people with changed working capacities – was judged better by the employers than the Roma people's. In connection with their willingness to work two thirds of the interviewees said that women returning from maternity leave considerably or very much want to find employment and are considerably or very cooperative at workplaces.

The relative majority of the staff of partner organizations believes that women returning from maternity leave have more employment opportunities than the Roma people or people with decreased working abilities.

The difficulties of the women to return to the labour market were attributed principally to problems related to employees, such as: a professional lag, drop-out from practice during the maternity leave, problems connected to undertaking extra work, problems of readjustment, etc. Problems preventing employment are secondly attributed to the over-supply of the labour market.

Some of the respondents think that there are also certain factors which promote the employment of women returning from maternity leave. Such ideas were detected in 10,6% of the responses. Factors promoting the employment include for example: flexibility on the side of the employees, big ambitions, high level of qualification, etc.

Workers of the partner organizations believe that the members of the group are characterized by a serious willingness to work and motivation to find employment. According to the experience of the staff of partner organizations it is the women returning from maternity leave who best hold their own after their re-employment at the workplace.

Making use of the assistance of partner organizations

A mere 58,5% of women returning from maternity leave made use of the services of the employment centre for their last job searching. Their vast majority considers the administrators kind and have a similarly positive opinion about their helpfulness and understanding attitude. Only 3 of the respondents mentioned a problem in connection with administrators: one-one respondent stated that she did not manage to find a job, or that the administrators were not helpful. One respondent criticized them by saying that when she wanted to enrol in a German language course, she was told, that she could register only later, but later she was told that all the places had already been fulfilled. The responses of the interviewed staff of partner organizations reveal that they were least frequently accused of negative discrimination by women returning from maternity leave, which occurred only in one occasion.

Nearly the same proportion (40-43%) of those women who want to return from maternity leave to the world of work believes that the administrators do not have a possibility at all or have few possibilities to take their specific characteristics into account or claims that administrators could have done more for their employment, such as offering more job opportunities, providing better and more complete information and giving more up-to-date information.

28,1% of the staff of the partner organizations participating in the study believe that he/she „probably” or „certainly” could do more to promote the employment of women returning from maternity leave. However, they also think that the success of job searching primarily depends on the employers, secondly on the employees.

Discrimination on the labour market

The majority of women returning from maternity leave claims that their group of labour is discriminated in Hungary – although a lower proportion said that there is negative discrimination than in the case of the other two groups –, one tenth believe that they are not affected at all, a close one third evaluates it small-scale, whereas 56,4% of them claim that the members of this social group are afflicted with a large-scale negative discrimination. 50-50% of them think that the discrimination is entirely or rather concealed and that the discrimination is entirely or rather open. 70% have heard of a case of discrimination affecting their group and more than 40% of them have experienced negative discrimination. 5,4% replied that she had been treated differently at her workplace because of „her specific situation”.

Nearly two thirds of the employers believe that women returning from maternity leave are discriminated, but the level of discrimination is lower than in the case of the Roma and people with changed working capacities or a disability. Furthermore, they think that the negative discrimination is rather hidden. According to 22% of the respondents the employment of women is made difficult mostly by the prejudices, while 30% claim that the reason is the bad experience instead.

Similarly to people with changed working capacities or a disability, a higher rate of women answered that they seek a job with equal intensity in spite of the experience of discrimination, and also a smaller proportion reported that they will withdraw from job searching for a long period.

Acceptance of women returning from maternity leave by the staff of the partner organizations

Nearly everyone assumes about him/herself that he/she would „certainly” accept a woman returning from maternity leave as a colleague, whereas in the case of „the others” the „certainly” response is relatively less frequent. The examination of the respondents’ own attitude indicates that they have no aversion. Personal involvement characterizes a close 60% of respondents. In the case of „the others” respondents believe that there is almost no aversion at all against the members of this group of labour.

Views of the employers on factors promoting the employment of women returning from maternity leave

Likewise in the case of the other two disadvantaged groups, employers regard the shaping of interest relations as a way to increase the employment opportunities of women returning from maternity leave rather than the modifying of legal regulations or organizing attitude-shaping trainings.

One quarter of the employers think that their company could do more for the employment of the members of this group of labour. 73% think that their colleagues would accept, whereas only 5% believe that they would not accept a woman returning from maternity leave as a colleague.

Conditions of the employers on the employment of women returning from maternity leave

The majority of those respondents who expressed a condition made remarks in connection with the employees' physical fitness, occupational qualification, characteristics and work performance (12 remarks). Moreover, they also mentioned conditions related to various subsidies, working hours and children. In the case of labour demand several of them would employ the members of this group of employees (7 remarks). Some of the interviewees did not set a particular condition (15 remarks), whereas some others would not employ women returning from maternity leave at the company under any circumstances (6 remarks). 37 persons could not give a response.

The benefits of employing women returning from maternity leave

Responses of the women returning from maternity leave

One quarter of the women returning from maternity leave could not answer the question as regards the benefits of their employment, and slightly more than half of the respondents believe that it does not have a benefit to employ women returning from maternity leave. 11 people gave a concrete answer to the question altogether, providing 16 remarks. Three-three people mentioned as a benefit that they are reliable and women with children have a bigger sense of responsibility. Two-two respondents said that they value more their workplace; they can manage their time better and are more patient than other employees.

Employers

From the leaders of the companies included in the sample eight persons did not give an answer to the question related to the benefit of employing women returning from maternity leave. Many of them (60 remarks) stated that the employment of this group of labour does not entail any advantage. Other respondents mentioned the material benefits of the company (3 remarks), the diligence, experience and occupational qualification of women returning from maternity leave (3 remarks).

Partner organizations

Regarding the benefits of employing women returning from maternity leave 181 remarks were made by the staff of partner organizations altogether. According to 41,5% of these the employment of such manpower does not entail a benefit of any kind to employers. The group of responses of the second largest importance (23,2%) includes benefits of a material nature (or considered so) in favour of the employers. Such benefits involve available subsidies, the possibility of part-time employment, etc. The third group of benefits deriving from the employment of women returning from maternity leave contains advantages related to the employees. In the respondents' opinion such advantages are for example: women returning from maternity leave are more active, more diligent, more experienced, young, agile, etc. Interviewees also mentioned benefits with an importance of 11,0% that are not of material nature, but could be useful to companies. Responses included: they are loyal, eager to participate in trainings and they can be counted on long-term.

The drawbacks of employing women returning from maternity leave

Responses of the women returning from maternity leave

On the drawback of the employment of women returning from maternity leave 16,0% of the women could not take a stand, and 7% could not mention any sort of drawback. 31 people mentioned as a disadvantage that they are more often on sick-leave because of the sickness of children and five respondents mentioned that their time managing is not flexible: they cannot work overtime, at weekends or in three shifts. Three persons said that employers do not like mothers with children and another respondent mentioned that they cannot be counted on as much as the other employees.

Employers

Employers made 95 remarks altogether in connection with the question, what disadvantages the employment of women returning from maternity leave entails. 36 remarks express that their employment does not entail a disadvantage of any kind and 25 people could not take a stand on the issue. Most responses involved drawbacks afflicting the employers: 23 people remarked that women returning from maternity leave are often absent from the workplace for the sickness of the children, that is they are frequently on sick-leave. Four respondents mentioned possible conflicts related to the working hours: employees will not work overtime or at weekends and might not be able to adjust to several shifts. One person stated that they cannot be counted on. There were three additional remarks expressing that they had dropped out from practice, 2 remarks on difficulties of readjustment to the world of work, and 1 remark stating that they can be loaded less. The question remained unanswered in eight occasions.

Partner organizations

Colleagues involved in the study made 186 remarks altogether in connection with the disadvantages of employing women returning from maternity leave.

34,4% of these remarks expressed that their employment does not entail a drawback of any kind. The group of remarks of the relatively largest importance (57,0%) contains drawbacks afflicting the employers. In the respondents' opinion possible drawbacks include the high frequency of absence from work/number of days on sick-leave, the constrained nature of working time, problems of substitution, etc.

The importance of problems characterizing employees was below 10,0%. Obsolete knowledge, drop-out from practice and absent-mindedness were mentioned among others.

The relationship of employers and the labour centre

The employment of the members of the examined groups of labour is also influenced by the relationship and cooperation of employers and organizations of job mediation therefore the examination of their relationship was included in the research, too.

Half of the employers involved in the study are still in contact with the labour centre, one fifth of them, however, have already broken its connection to the institution.

Employers in general are satisfied or very satisfied with the services of the employment centre. 70% of them judged the cooperation useful. Those employers who evaluated the usefulness of the cooperation only as medium or even weaker gave the responses below.

Four of them criticized that the arranged employees finally did not accept the job, and another two that the labour centre arranged unsuitable applicants. One-one person explained – their unfavourable – assessment by claiming that the institution has a bad system of selection, that they do not provide „real” labour market services but only deal with the providing of the unemployed, that the arranged employee never turned up, did not suit the job requirements or did not actually want to work. Also, one-one person argued that despite of the mediation a work contract was not signed (reason unknown), the amount of subsidy is not equal, or that the inflexibility of the labour centre makes the cooperation difficult. Two persons could not give an explanation to their response related to the classification of the cooperation.

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