



People With Disabilities – Perception and Labour Market Opportunities

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Abstract: The number of people with disabilities is ever increasing. However, even if the majority of them is capable of working in various jobs and positions, most companies are not willing to employ them. Although, since 2012, employers in Hungary with more than 25 employees must pay a fee/fine called rehabilitation contribution when not providing work for people with disabilities, the labour market opportunities for those living with disabilities have not improved drastically. Present paper endeavours to look into the social and cultural factors behind the lack of compliance on the employers side. The attitude towards those living with disabilities has been explored through an online questionnaire and some positive counter-examples are also explored with the help of interviewees who already have worked with co-workers with disabilities.

Keywords: people with disabilities, PWD, attitude, mainstreaming

1 Introduction

Individuals with physical and/or mental limitations, therefore with a factual loss, or malfunction of a body part are impaired. Disability, on the other hand, is the society's reaction to impairment; a social reaction, a stigma, that is created by the society's attitudes, physical environment, institutional and legal barriers.

The number of people with disabilities is ever increasing. According to WHO data (WHO, 2011) the 15,6 % of the world's 15+ population lives with a disability. (Some statistics place this number above a billion (Taormina-Weiss, 2011).) That means 785 million people. 110 million of them are incapable of catering for their own needs or living an independent life. However, the majority would be not only capable, but also willing to do so, if they would be provided an opportunity and the circumstances would be supportive.

Of this hundreds of millions of people, over 70% is of working age. This means, excluding disabled persons from the world of work has not only personal costs, such as decreased self-esteem and family level costs such as increased the number of dependent family members, but has its effects on a national level as well. According to ILO estimates this exclusion may cost countries between 1 to 7 % of GDP. (Murray, 2011) In accordance with a World Bank study in 2000, the annual loss in global GNP due to the large number of unemployed disabled persons is estimated to be between 1.37 and 1.95 billion U.S. dollars (deAlwis, 2013)

Contrarily to the developing countries, such as India or black Africa, the composition of people with disabilities in Europe has changed significantly in the past decades. The number of children born with disabilities is decreasing and the increasing ratio of those living with disabilities to the total population is due to an increase in the number of those with acquired disabilities. According to ILO data (Buckup, 2009) in countries with life expectancies over 70 years of age, people spend 11.5 per cent of their life span, living with disabilities, so the issue of (living with) disabilities is of main interest of the ageing societies.

This might be the reason behind the ever changing policies concerning people with disabilities. Previously, the topic has been addressed from a health-care, at best rehabilitational point of view, and the aim was to fight, or at least diminish discrimination of those with disabilities. The European Union, however has decided to dedicate effort as well as resources to the positive discrimination and social integration of people with disabilities (EIM, 2001). Disabled people should no longer be dependent on caregivers, but must be (deemed) capable of making their own decisions for life.

2 People with disabilities in Hungary

According to the data of the census in 2011, 4.6% of the Hungarian population lives with a disability. In average 100 citizens with a disabilities enlisted 123 disabilities, so at times more than one type of disability for one person.

People with disabilities	Percentage of total population
Autistic individuals	0.05
Individuals with speech impediment, speech-impaired	0.26
Individuals with intellectual disabilities	0.43
Individuals with serious internal organ disabilities	0.47
Mentally challenged individuals	0.47
Deaf and hardly hearing individuals	0.72
Poorly and barely sighted, blind individuals	0.83
Physically disabled individuals	2.34

Source: KSH, 2012

Table 1

Census data on the percentage of the occurrence of various disabilities in the ratio of the total population

However, the numbers above might be misleading, since an additional 16.6% of the population lives with a permanent illness. Given that the census in Hungary is made on a self report basis, those with acquired disabilities, such as sight or hearing impairment or physical handicaps might have reported their situation as that of a permanent illness due to old age. (70% of people with disabilities and more than 77% of those with permanent illnesses are older than 50 years (KSH, 2012).)

The data - 4.6 % of the Hungarian population living with disabilities - is in line with the EU 14's data, where the ratio of those with severe disabilities to total population was 4.5%, however, depending on the definition of disability, this number would be tripled in some countries (Eurostat, 2001).

Country	people with severe disability as a % of total population	people with moderate disability as a % of total population	people with disability as a % of total population
Belgium	4,6	8,3	12,9
Denmark	4,7	12,7	17,4
Germany	4,6	12,7	17,3
Greece	3,3	4,9	8,2
Spain	3,3	6,6	9,9
France	6,0	9,3	15,3
Ireland	2,5	8,4	10,9
Italy	2,3	5,5	7,8
Luxemburg	4,3	12,1	16,4
Netherlands	5,8	12,7	18,5
Austria	3,2	9,3	12,5
Portugal	7,5	10,9	18,4
Finland	6,2	16,7	22,9
United Kingdom	5,7	13,2	18,9
EU14	4,5	10	14,5

Source: Eurostat, 2001

Table 2

Data on the percentage of people with severe and moderate disability in relation to the total population in the EU 14 countries

It is a widely known fact, that more than 25% of the Hungarians with disabilities live in the capital (Budapest) and in the county surrounding it (Pest). According to a never before investigated/tested reason this is owing to the relatively better educational, developmental and labour opportunities. However, on the basis of the 2011 census data, this statement could not be verified (Table 2).

County	Number of people with disabilities	Number of inhabitants	Ratio of those living with disabilities to the total population	Average net income (HUF) per capita in 2013
Győr-Moson-Sopron	16034	449000	3.57	154 029
Budapest	66394	1737000	3.82	192 118
Vas	10046	258000	3.89	131 575
Pest	49150	1223000	4.02	139 938
Komárom-Esztergom	12593	306000	4.12	148 923
Veszprém	14657	354000	4.14	128 693
Fejér	17913	428000	4.19	144 821
Zala	12143	283000	4.29	118 130
Hajdu-Bihar	24718	549000	4.50	124 055
Somogy	15262	318000	4.80	121 404
Csongrád	20116	418000	4.81	125 604
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	27119	562000	4.83	109 650
Bács-Kiskun	25785	521000	4.95	121 766
Baranya	20235	388000	5.22	124 356
Heves	16363	311000	5.26	140 087
Tolna	12197	231000	5.28	136 505
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	37744	691000	5.46	117 681
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	23164	389000	5.95	117 769
Békés	22261	362000	6.15	110 052
Nógrád	12944	204000	6.35	111 672
Total*, Average**	456838*	9982000*	4.78**	130 941**

Source: KSH, 2012, 2014

Table 3
Geographical distribution of people with disabilities in Hungary

The absolute number of those living with disabilities is strongly correlated with the number of the region's total inhabitants (Pearson correlation: 0.974, Sig.: 0.000). So, although in absolute numbers the capital and its immediate surrounding has the most people with disabilities on a territorial basis, if we regard the ratio of those living with disabilities in proportion to the total population of the given area, the capital and its surrounding county are the second and fourth least dense territories. So either the individuals with disabilities (or their families) are not mobile enough to move to the heart of the country for better educational or work opportunities, or the opportunities in the capital and in other regions are not perceived that differently by them.

On the other hand, if we also take into consideration the per capita income of each county (region) we can conclude that a real significant correlation - namely that of per capita income and density of people with disabilities - occurs (Pearson correlation: -0.636, Sig.: 0.003). The correlation indicates a negative relation of relative number of

people with disabilities and the per capita income. The "richer" the county is, the less (in proportion) is the number of inhabitants with disabilities. The causality of this connection, - whether the relatively high rate of unemployment (34.5%; Laki, 2013) is to be blamed for the lower per capita income or the other way around, the not so good financial situation, and the worse working conditions to go with it are to blame for the higher disability ratio - is to be researched later.

Accordingly, territories with lower per capita income have relatively more people with disabilities, than "richer" counties. This in itself might generate a downward spiral of the local economic situation, since people with disabilities are more probable to be unemployed, and even if they succeed in finding a job, their average salary is significantly lower than that of those without any impairment. In 2011, only 12704 individuals with disabilities were employed, which means an over 40% unemployment ratio, and their average salary was only 62% of the national average and surpassed the wage minimum only by 9% (KSH, 2013). One possible reason lays in the sectoral distribution of employed people with disabilities. The majority of them (85%) is employed in the civil sector, working for non profit business organisations or for NGOs, where even the average wages are lower than that of the national average by more than 20% (KSH, 2011).

In order to change this unfavourable situation, the Hungarian government initiated various financial measures. Since 2011, employers in Hungary with more than 25 employees must pay a fee/fine called rehabilitation contribution when not providing work for people with disabilities. In addition to this, since 2012 employers do not have to pay the social contribution tax for employees with disabilities. Thanks to these decisions, the number of employed people with disabilities "sponsored" by the Hungarian State has increased to 55000. However, this is still an insignificant minority compared to those unsuccessfully searching for jobs.

In the following chapter a research will be introduced, which endeavoured to look into the notion of disability from the societal perception's standpoint. The basic hypothesis was that - in order to initiate a change of greater impact - not only the legislations, but also the reception of people with disabilities has to undergo major changes. Since to many people, a person with an impairment is in some way abnormal or wrong. They fear the otherness, the unknown, because they do not know how to handle such people, or situations including them. Accordingly, disability is not due to a deficiency of the people with an impairment, but is a result of the society's incapability to address the needs of people with an impairment, and treat them as equals. My second hypothesis was that the situation is not significantly better in the capital and its immediate surrounding than anywhere in the country.

3 Research on the social perception of people with disabilities

In order to test the existence of attitudinal barriers towards impairment, a research has been made through an online, anonym and voluntary questionnaire, which, next to collecting demographic data was able to measure attitudes by open ended questions and factual knowledge with the help of multiple choice questions. Since the questionnaire has started form the Óbuda University's students and was disseminated in a snowball way, the sample, although being of significant size (N=419), is not representative of the Hungarian population. In accordance with this, the findings provide no proof for the hypotheses either, however, they strongly support it.

In the duration of 2 months 419 respondents have filled out the questionnaire, among whom 242 were female and 177 were male. The difference of response rates might be caused by pure coincidence owing to the random effect of the chosen sampling methodology, however might also signal the more intense interest of females for the topic of people with disabilities.

The average age of the respondents was 25.928 years, allowing females' average age to be significantly higher (27.793) than the age of male respondents (23.378). Along this line the ratio of those with completed secondary and tertiary education is also different by gender. 35.5 % of the female respondents had tertiary education, while this rate for male respondents has only been 20.3%.

Almost 40% of the respondents were living in Budapest, and an additional 10% in the 20 km radius of the Hungarian capital. Since one of the "urban legends" on people with disabilities in Hungary is that they tend to migrate into the capital because of the difference in reception, the distribution of the sample is very suitable for verifying or falsifying this theory and along with it my second hypothesis.

16.7%, altogether 70 respondents were claiming to have a disability (1%), to have a family member with a disability (14.8%), or have a disability and have a family member with a disability as well (1%). The responses of these people were analysed separately from those who had no direct family connection with people with disabilities.

31.5%, altogether 132 respondents have already worked with co-workers with disabilities, out of whom more than 70% have no family connections with people with disabilities, and neither are impaired themselves (N=97). Since this ratio is also not representative of the total Hungarian population, the high representation rate of those, who already have first hand experience with working with people with disabilities is supposed to be due to their more intense motivation in answering a questionnaire connected to this topic. Their data is also analyzed separately form those with no relation (family ties, or work experience) with people with disabilities.

The basic demographic data of the groups created on the basis of their relation to people with disabilities are displayed in Table 3.

		Relation to people with disabilities					
		family ties	work relation	no relation	family ties	work relation	no relation
		Count	Count	Count	%	%	%
Gender	female	51	51	140	73	53	56
	male	19	46	112	27	47	44
Highest completed education	secondary	38	58	201	54	60	80
	tertiary	32	39	51	46	40	20
Age	18-24	27	59	220	39	61	87
	25-35	13	15	24	19	15	10
	36-50	20	17	7	29	18	3
	51-	10	6	1	14	6	0
	average	34.243	28.536	22.615	-	-	-
Residency	Budapest	30	41	92	43	42	37
	Budapest + 20km	4	13	25	6	13	10
	Budapest + 20-50km	8	10	21	11	10	8
	Budapest + 50-100km	10	10	27	14	10	11
	Budapest + 100- km	17	23	82	24	24	33
	abroad	1	0	5	1	0	2
Total		70	97	252	100	100	100

Table 4

Basic demographic data of the groups created on the basis of their relation to people with disabilities

Besides demographic questions respondents were asked to answer yes or no and multiple choice questions in connection with the meaning and definition of impairment and disabilities, or living with disabilities. The ratio of positive, or correct answers are summarised in the table below.

	Relation to people with disabilities		
	family ties	work relation	no relation
	%	%	%
Do You know the meaning of the phrase people with disabilities? - yes	82.9	94.8	81.7
What do You think impairment is? - a state of body and mind	78.6	79.4	63.1
What is the definition of people with disabilities? - official definition of the UN (2006)	92.9	95.9	97.6

Table 5

The ratio of positive, or correct answers of the groups created on the basis of their relation to people with disabilities

According to the data presented in Table 5 people with first hand work experience with people with disabilities were much more clear, than the members of the other two groups, about what the phrase people with disabilities entails, and were also the best in choosing a correct answer on the meaning of "impairment" as well. However, as it is displayed in the table above, most respondent were quite knowledgeable about the official phrases connected to impairment and what they mean. This implies that lack of knowledge is not the most significant or most prevalent factor obstructing the mainstreaming, or social inclusion of people with disabilities.

In the last part of the questionnaire, with two simple yes or no questions and two open ended questions the respondents' attitudes were tested. The results are presented in Table 6.

	%	Relation to people with disabilities		
		family ties %	work relation %	no relation %
Do You regard impairment as a deviancy? - no it is not a deviancy	56.8	71.4	69.1	48.0
Would You mind working with people with disabilities? - not at all	64.2	90.0	74.2	53.2
What do You think about the situation of people with disabilities (PWD) in Hungary?				
It is adequate	3.1	1.5	4.8	3.0
Everyone is having it hard	1.1			2.0
It is improving	18.6	12.3	18.1	20.8
It is dire	32	38.5	31.3	30.2
The society's attitude is not appropriate	18.3	23.1	21.7	15.3
It is not only the society's, but the PWDs' responsibility to change the situation	1.7	6.2		1.0
They are marginalised	5.4	6.2	6.0	5.0
They are being feared	0.3			0.5
Getting employment is (almost) impossible for them	12.3	12.3	13.3	11.9
Society doesn't need PWDs	0.3			0.5
I do not know any PWDs	5.7			11.9

	%	Relation to people with disabilities		
		family ties %	work relation %	no relation %
Why do You think it is hard for people with disabilities to find employment?				
There is no such problem	8.9	2.9	11.3	9.5
Unemployment is a general problem	0.2	1.4		
It is an outcome of social disclosure	56.9	63.8	55.7	55.6
Due to lack of adequate infrastructure	27.8	27.5	32.0	26.2
Due to lack of sufficient language skills	0.5			0.8
Due to lack of appropriate level of education	4.5	4.3	1.0	6.0
Because they do not perform well in work	1.2			2.0

Table 6

The attitude toward people with disabilities of the groups created on the basis of their relation to people with disabilities

Despite the fact that the majority of respondents possessed sufficient amount of knowledge on the topic, their attitudes are not this reassuring. A significant minority (43,2%) of the respondents still regard impairment as a deviancy, something that is

deliberately different from the normal. Those with no contact with people with disabilities were even far more negative, than the average. The situation is the same in case of the question of working with people with disabilities. Only 53.2% are willing, although those, who already have first hand experience are more eager. This means, that providing an opportunity to work with people with disabilities creates more understanding, acceptance and willingness.

The first open-ended question tried to find out the respondents' beliefs on why it is hard for people with disabilities to find employment. Although the question was loaded, almost 10% of the respondents made remarks about people with disabilities not having it extremely hard. On the other hand 55% of all respondents blame the society's attitude, the social disclosure for the suboptimal labour market opportunities of people with disabilities. The lack of adequate infrastructure is also a significant obstructive factor (according to 27.8% of the respondents). However, insufficient language skills and suboptimal performance are only reasons provided by respondents with no connections to people with disabilities.

To the question on the general situation of people with disabilities around one fourth of the respondents gave a positive (it is adequate, or improving) or a non case sensitive answer (life is hard for everyone). However, 32% of the respondents think that the situation is terrible and almost 20%, that the situation is bad owing to the society's inappropriate response to impairment. 12% thinks that it is near to impossible for someone with a disability to get a job. People with disabilities being feared of, or marginalised is the opinion of another additional 5%. All things considered, the situation of people with disability is indeed dire. The interesting thing about the answers is that respondents with no connections to people with disabilities tendentiously underestimated the hardships of those with disabilities. 5.7% of the respondents did not even know anybody with disabilities. There were even respondents who expressed their opinion of the society not necessitating any people with disabilities. Accordingly, I see my first hypothesis verified. The attitude of the society creates an obstacle resembling the glass ceiling of female employees (Szekeres, 2006, 2010) in case of people with impairment and turns them into disabled. In order for the situation of people with disabilities to change drastically, mainstreaming of disabilities and social inclusion of those with impairment is necessary.

In order to test my second hypothesis, I compared the thoughts of respondents from the capital and its immediate surrounding (within a 20 km radius) with those living further from the capital. (The responses of those living abroad were not included in the analysis this time.) The outcome of the comparison is displayed in Table 7.

	%	Relation to people with disabilities	
		In/near the capital (%)	Far from the capital (5)
Why do You think it is hard for people with disabilities to find employment?			
There is no such problem	8.9	8.3	9.1
Unemployment is a general problem	0.2	0	0.5
It is an outcome of social disclosure	56.9	55.4	58.2
Due to lack of adequate infrastructure	27.8	27	28.8
Due to lack of sufficient language skills	0.5	1	
Due to lack of appropriate level of education	4.5	5.9	3.4
Because they do not perform well in work	1.2	2.5	
What do You think about the situation of people with disabilities (PWD) in Hungary?			
It is adequate	3.1	3.7	2.5
Everyone is having it hard	1.1	1.6	0.6
It is improving	18.6	17.1	20.8
It is dire	32	32.1	31.4
The society's attitude is not appropriate	18.3	18.7	17.6
It is not only the society's, but the PWDs' responsibility to change the situation	1.7	2.1	1.3
They are marginalised	5.4	4.3	6.9
They are being feared	0.3	0.5	
Getting employment is (almost) impossible for them	12.3	11.2	13.8
Society doesn't need PWDs	0.3	0.5	
I do not know any PWDs	6.9	8	5
	%	Relation to people with disabilities	
		In/near the capital %	Far from the capital %
Do You regard impairment as a deviancy? - no it is not a deviancy	56.8	57.6	56.7
Would You mind working with people with disabilities? - not at all	64.2	65.9	62.5

Table 7

The attitude towards people with disabilities of the respondents in/near the capital and further from it

According to the research data, Hungarians living in or near the capital are more willing to work with people with disabilities, and consider them less deviant. The infrastructure, the employment opportunities and the attitude of the society are also perceived to be better by them, however they are more demanding concerning the language skills or the level of education, and 2.5% of them even thinks that people with disabilities are not able to perform well in work. They were also the ones to express fear, or vote for the society to totally neglect people with disabilities. What is more, 8 % of them doesn't

seem to recall knowing anyone with a disability, although 25% of the Hungarians with disabilities live in their neighbourhood. All in all, the attitude of those living in or near the capital is different, but not better from those living in other regions. They consider the opportunities of people with disabilities to be dependent on their attitude and skills more than those, who live in other regions. However, since people with impairments, physical and/or mental limitations, are not deviant but definitely different their egalitarian standing point might be counterproductive in the quest for better labour market opportunities for people with disabilities.

4 Conclusion

Social inclusion or mainstreaming helps decrease attitudinal barriers against impairment by celebrating human diversity, of which impairment is but one aspect. After all, it is society that has to adapt to impairment, not the individual to society. According to research data presented in this paper, Hungarian people are sufficiently knowledgeable about the meaning and definition of impairment or people with disabilities - even those, who have no family ties or previous work experience with people with disabilities. On the other hand, their attitudes toward people with disabilities are pretty ambivalent. Those, who have some experience in living/working with people with disabilities are far more understanding, accepting and willing to engage in interactions, than those, who do not have such first hand experience. What is more, those with no connection to people with disabilities underestimate the hardships those impaired are facing, and with it verify my hypothesis that the societal reception of people with disabilities has to undergo major changes. According to the research data, there is no significant positive discrepancy in the attitude of those living in and around the capital from those living in other regions. The infrastructural situation and employment possibilities in the capital might indeed be better (and provide an actual basis for the "urban legend"), however their attitude is rather focused on equal demand from, than on equal opportunities to people with disabilities. As a result, the reception of people with disabilities is not better in the capital. The attitudinal barrier is even stronger there, than it is in other regions. Hence I see my second hypothesis verified - the attitude of the society has to undergo major changes in and around the capital as well as in other regions in order for the people with disabilities to get better chances for living their life to its fullest.

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