

## EMPLOYMENT AND WORKING INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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**Abstract:** Unemployment of people with disabilities is one of the key problems in many countries, and the reasons for this situation are multiple and influenced by a number of factors. People with disabilities are often regarded as unproductive citizens, unable to carry out their duties and responsibilities so that their rights are ignored. The employment of people with disabilities in the labor market in the Republic of North Macedonia is recognized in the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and is regulated by the Law on Labor Relations, which prohibits the employer putting the candidate for employment in unequal position on the basis of his health or disability. Article 27 of the Convention deals with the work and employment of people with disabilities as the best way for their social integration. In that direction, the state is required to prohibit discrimination in respect of all aspects of employment, including conditions for candidate selection, employment, career advancement and job security. People with disabilities are under-represented in the workforce, often facing discrimination by employers, and often not served and protected effectively.

The paper presents the results of the research whose main goal is to map the situation regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia. The method of descriptive analysis is used. The research was conducted using an appropriately prepared questionnaire, attached to a sample of 327 people with different disabilities. To support the active participation of people with disabilities in society and the economy, this paper gives some recommendations for empowerment and facilitate economic independence for people with disabilities.

**Keywords:** people with disabilities, social inclusion, employment, working integration.

### Introduction

Work and the opportunity for professional affirmation are important aspects of any person's life. Developing an inclusive culture and raising the level of awareness of the population about the capabilities and abilities of people with disabilities is an important condition for achieving work integration and employment of people with disabilities. Employment of people with disabilities is a human rights issue, but also a practical contribution to companies and the state budget, as it reduces dependency on financial resources and compensation for medical and social protection. The issue of inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor market become particularly relevant in the 1990's when most countries adopted anti-discrimination law (Grabat, 2013).

A number of employment programs for people with disabilities have been implemented for reducing the barriers, with particular emphasis on providing specific benefits and support to companies and employers. However, despite the various measures, the employment rate of people with disabilities remains low.

The most common obstacles that unemployed people with disabilities face in their search for a job are: lack of appropriate education and training, prejudices for people with disabilities, communication problems, lack of infrastructure accessibility, lack of proper transportation, insufficient interest and motivation of people with disabilities.

The barriers arising from employers are focused on the distrust of the abilities and capabilities of people with disabilities. The most commonly cited fears are inefficiency in the workplace, inadequate professional competences, and insufficient acceptance by colleagues (Ericson, 2014).

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## **Methodology of the research**

### ***Goal of the research***

The main goal of the research is to map the situation regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia

### ***Research methods and techniques***

The research was conducted with using a properly designed questionnaire for examine the attitudes of person with disability about employment and working integration.

### ***Sample research***

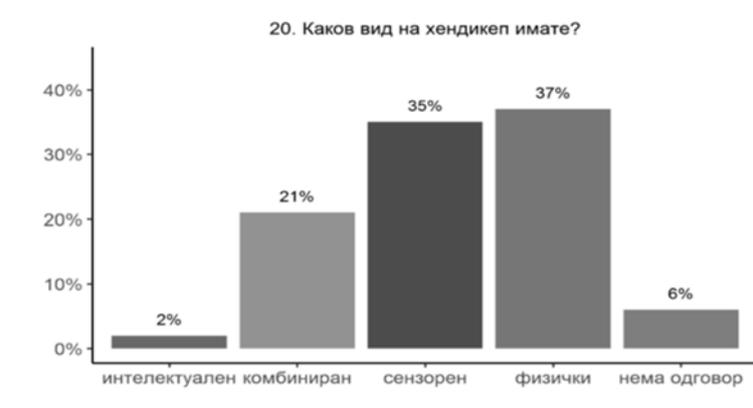
The sample of the study included 327 people aged 18 to 64 years with different type of disability. The sample included people with disabilities from different civic associations and organizations in which the sample was selected at random.

### ***Data processing***

The data were processed quantitatively and qualitatively using the EXCEL and STATISTICS computer programs. The data were grouped according to the number of matching in certain categories and then placed in tables. The data were calculated with frequencies for which a percentage was calculated. In order to popularize certain statistics, they are represented by graphs.

## **Analysis and discussion**

The sample of the study included 327 people with disability, 37% (120 people) with physical disabilities, 35% (114 people) sensory, 21% (69 people) combined, 2% (5 people) intellectual and 6% (19 people) don't respond. The results show that research include people with different types of disabilities which is important for obtaining a more objective picture of the needs and problems of people with different types of disabilities, not just a specific category of people (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Type of disability

Regarding the level of education (Figure 2), more than half of the respondents 56% (184 people) have completed secondary education, 23% (75 people) have completed primary education, 10% (34 people) have completed higher education and 10% (33 people) without education.

The results show that the majority of people with disabilities have completed formal education, and 10% have no education.

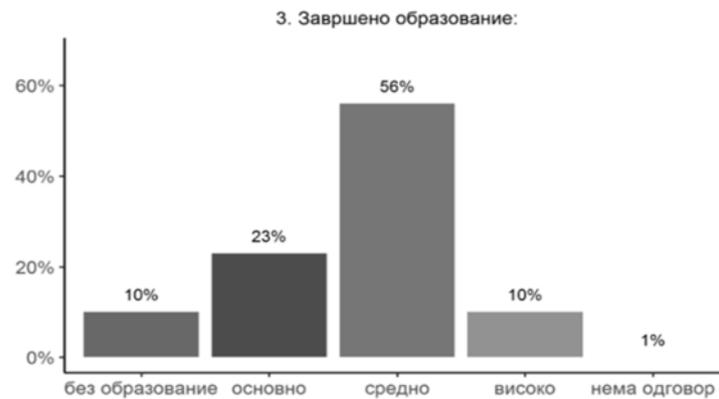


Figure 2. Degree of education

Majority of the respondents 74% (241 people) are not employed, only 24% (80 people) are employment and 2% (6 people) did not respond.

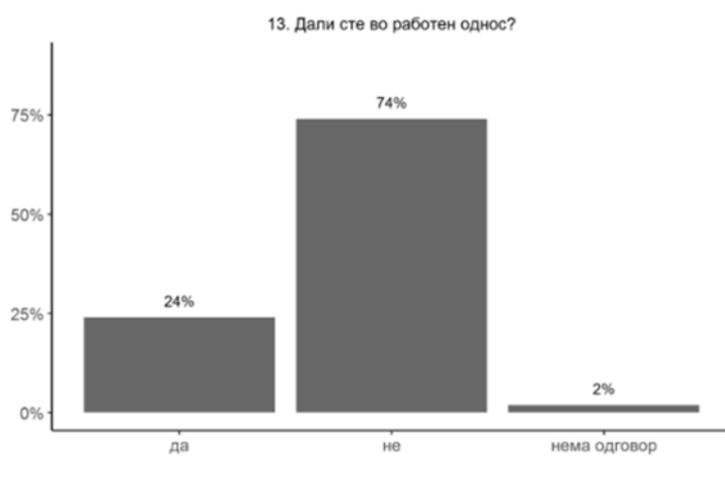


Figure 3. Working relation

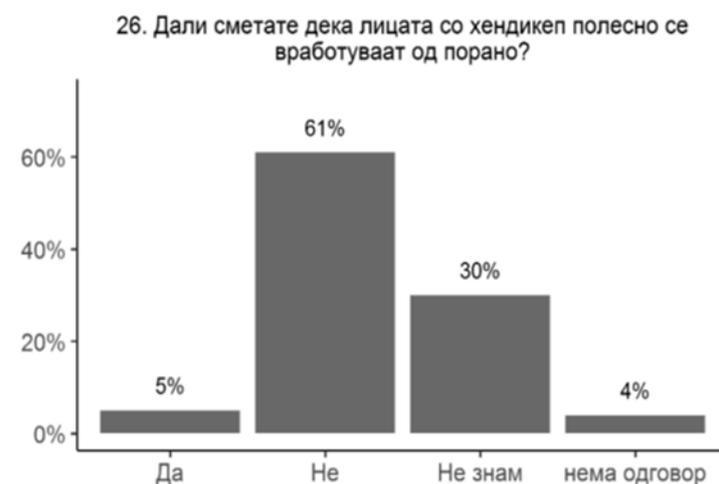


Figure 4. Are people with disabilities getting jobs easier than before?

The analysis of the results shows that employment of people with disabilities is still a major problem and from a developmental point of view this problem is still present. The majority of people with disabilities 61% (201 people) think that they are not getting jobs easier than before, 30% (97 people) said they don't know, only 5% (15 people) consider that the implemented employment measures have facilitated the employment of people with disabilities and 4% (14 people) don't answered.

On the proposal of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Program for Personal Assistance for people with disabilities in 2018. This service is being introduced for the first time in North Macedonia and is fully funded by the Budget. This program provides personal assistants only for 100 people between the ages of 18 and 64 who have severe physical disabilities or people with complete visual impairment. Personal assistants are intended to assist them in carrying out daily personal and domestic activities, visiting higher education institutions, non-formal education, vocational rehabilitation or support in the workplace. Many of the people with disabilities who had a real need for a personal assistant were not included in this program, due to the small number of assistants.

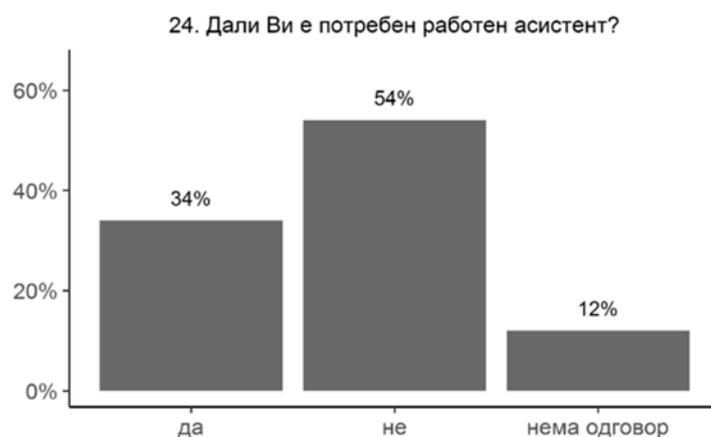


Figure 5. Need of job assistant

Respondents were asked if they needed a job assistant. More than half of the respondents 54% (176 people) answered that they do not need a job assistant, 34% (111 people) needed it and 12% (40 people) did not answer. Given that only 24% of the respondents are employed, the results are expected.

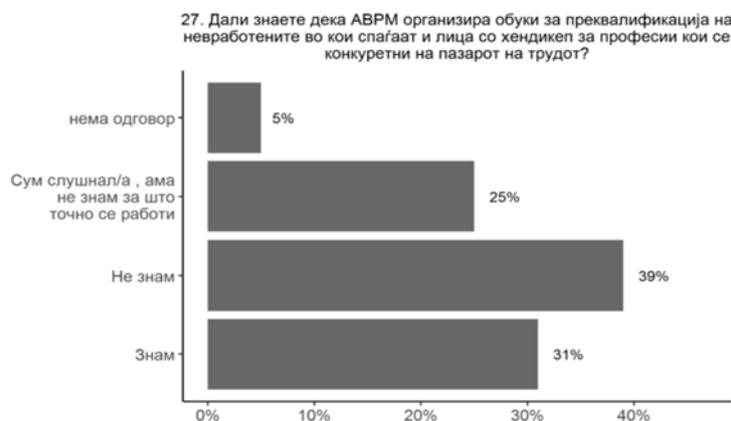


Figure 6. Training of unemployed people with disabilities for professions that are competitive in the labor market

Regarding the question whether they are aware that the Employment Service Agency is organizing trainings for unemployed people with disabilities for professions that are competitive in the labor market, there are divided opinions, so even 39% (127 people) do not know what it is, 31% (102 people) are familiar and 25% (82 people) have heard about these trainings, but don't know what exactly they are talking about. Regarding the question of the pre-qualification trainings organized by the Employment Service Agency, a small part of the respondents attended training in computer skills, communication skills, English language learning.

In addition, the Employment Agency from 2015 organizes trainings for self-employment of people with disabilities and awards grants for starting their own companies. In the period 2015-2018, according to data obtained from the Employment Agency in Bitola, only 13 people with disabilities were self-employed. According to the Employment Agency, people with disabilities who are actively seeking work, are timely informed about self-employment training and retraining implemented by Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia. However, the fact is that the percentage of employees with disabilities is very low, but also the percentage of people who have heard about such trainings is also low. The reasons for this situation are different: information is very difficult to obtain, the conditions of employment, self-employment or retraining are not favorable, poor interest in employment for people with disabilities, etc.

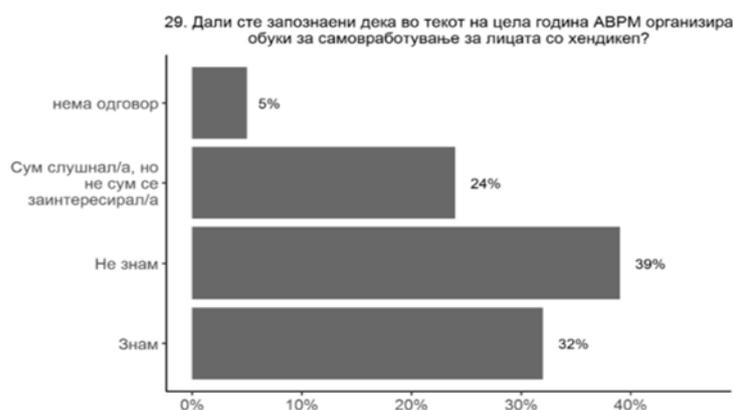


Figure 7. Trainings for self-employment

Most of the respondents 39% (127 people) don't know that the Employment Service Agency organizes trainings for self-employment, 32% (106 people) know, 24% (78 people) have heard about such trainings but are not interested and 5% (16 people) don't answers.

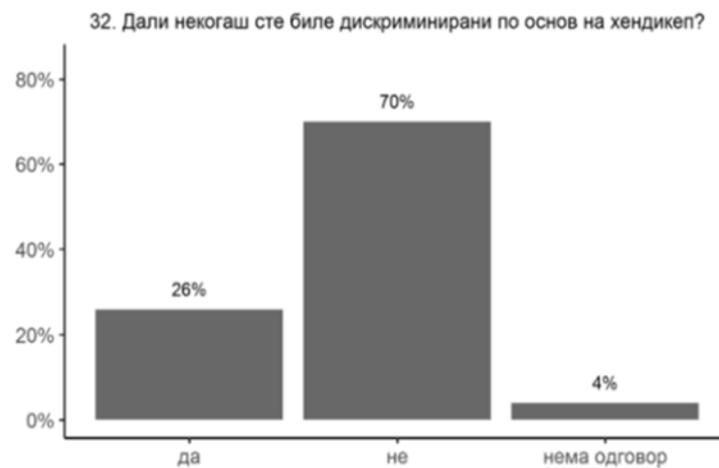
According to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities "Discrimination on the basis of disability" means making any distinction, exclusion or limitation on the basis of disability for the purpose or effect of impairing or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of equal opportunities with all human beings. rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil and other fields.

Significantly high percentage of people with disabilities 49% (159 people) are not familiar with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, 46% (151 people) are familiar with it and 5% (17 people) don't respond.

Respondents were asked if they have ever been discriminated on the basis of disability. Figure 9 shows that 70% or 229 respondents answered that they were not discriminated on the basis of disability, and 26% or 84 respondents answered yes. Comparative analysis of Figure 8 and Figure 9 raises the question of the truthfulness of the answers, given that a large percentage of respondents (49%) are unfamiliar with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and consequently may not have recognized discrimination.



**Figure 8.** Are you familiar with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities?



**Figure 9.** Have you been discriminated on the basis of disability?

To the question what needs to be done to improve the working and employment conditions of people with disabilities, various answers have been received, the most frequent of which being: improving and exercising rights, long-term benefits, early retirement, easier employment, accessibility to be improved overall, raising awareness of the whole society, providing transport vehicles for the disabled, providing personal assistant, controlling the employers receiving the benefits of employment for people with disabilities, facilitating enrollment faculty, student housing facilitation, better city infrastructure, improved working conditions in protective firms and respect for the rights of the employee, higher salaries in protective firms, the Employment agency to inform people with disabilities about training programs and connect them with firms that offer work to people with disabilities, blind computers, permanent personal assistance, including people with disabilities in making legal decisions.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The following conclusions have been reached from the analysis of the results:

- Most of the people with disabilities in the research are not employed. The most common obstacles faced by unemployed people with disabilities in their search for work are: lack of appropriate education and training, prejudices for people with disabilities, communication problems, lack of infrastructure accessibility, lack of adequate transport, need of a personal assistant etc.
- Most of the employees with disabilities work in Protective Trade Companies, and the least are self-employed through Employment agency grants. Most of the respondents didn't show interest

or are not well acquainted with the trainings for self-employment and retraining of the unemployed, including people with disabilities for professions that are competitive in the labor market.

– Despite employment measures for people with disabilities taken by the state and the Employment Agency, respondents felt that measures are insufficient and not finding employment easier than before.

– Approximately half of the respondents are not familiar with the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Not knowing the Convention, people with disabilities do not always recognize discrimination.

Based on the results and conclusions, the following recommendations emerged:

– Despite various measures to support employment of people with disabilities, the unemployment rate is still low. When designing employment policies and programs for people with disabilities, it is very important to ensure that people with disabilities are actively involved because they know their real needs best.

– States should take action to raise awareness in society of people with disabilities, their rights, potential and benefits.

– Greater engagement of state actors and institutions in the development and improvement of vocational orientation and training programs according to the specific situation of people with disabilities, finding suitable jobs and concluding contracts with employers.

– Development and implementation of vocational rehabilitation and personal assistance services for more intensive and quality integration of people with disabilities in the labor market.

– Taking measures and activities for infrastructure accessibility and providing access to assistive technology.

– Monitor the work of the companies that have employees with disabilities and take appropriate measures and prevent of possible abuses.

– Creating a Database of people with disabilities, which will assist in the process of creating policies based on accurate and relevant data on the type of services that people with disabilities really need.

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