

Integrated Services for disabled people

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1. Introduction

The changing social and economic climate in Bulgaria during the years of transition has exerted considerable influence on the social status of the persons with disabilities. The unemployment rate, the structural changes in the economy, the inaccessible architectural environment, etc. have increased the social exclusion of this group of people. The limitations of the environment create considerably more hurdles to the social inclusion than the functional disabilities of the persons themselves.

The combination of low qualification, insufficient education and health problems make these people uncompetitive on the labour market. On the other side, the opportunities for employment for the unemployed persons with reduced work capacity are extremely limited. Their chances to find employment at non-subsidized jobs are minimal, particularly for persons with more than 70 % reduced work capacity.

The inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour process is a key prerequisite for their social integration and improvement of the quality of life. Due to the specifics of some types of disabilities, the process of rehabilitation poses the necessity of special programmes for training and methods, including more specific attitude and approach in their development and implementation.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Employment Agency elaborate and implement national programmes and measures for employment promotion guaranteeing equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in the labour market. The programmes and measures envisage incentives for employers who provide employment to persons with disabilities. For each job created for casual, seasonal or hourly work filled by unemployed permanently disabled persons, who are hired upon referral by the divisions of the Employment Agency, the employer shall be provided with sums according herein for the shorter of the period of employment of any such persons and six months. Employment of persons with disabilities shall be implemented through an integrated and protected working environment.

The employer or the appointing authority, as the case may be, can apply to the Agency for Persons with Disabilities for allocation of resources for projects intended to:

1. ensure access of a person with disability to the workplace;
2. adjust the workplace for a person with disability;
3. equip the workplace for a person with disability.

With regard to labour integration of disabled people the government has undertaken the following priority measures:

- Stimulating the active labour demand by bonus payment for one year for people finding independently a job;
- Supporting employers support in creating accessible and integrated working environment for persons with disabilities;
- Cooperation between the social and economic partners, institutions and other organizations of the civil society for equal opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Establishment of indicators system and statistic data base concerning the equal opportunities trends;

In the next years priority will be given to promotion of social economy by development of social enterprises, protected jobs, social services, etc.

2. Bulgarian's Experience

Different projects and programmes oriented to different disadvantaged groups keep being performed. The projects and programmes that follow further do not cover all projects and programmes implemented in this field in Bulgaria. Anyway, they represent the diversity of the policy for equal labour market opportunities for different groups at risk. The need to develop and implement the **National Programme for Employment and Vocational Training of Persons with Permanent Disabilities** derives from certain reasons, which are as follows:

- Overcoming the social exclusion of the persons with disabilities, which has occurred as a result of the economic and structural changes, the lack of established architectural environment, etc.
- Sustainable increase of the relative share of the registered unemployed persons with disabilities.
- Eliminating the obstacles for full-scale integration of the persons with disabilities.
- Providing equal chances for labour realization of the persons with disabilities.

Purpose of the Initiative

- Increasing the employability and remuneration earning by means of providing motivation and vocational training to people with permanent disabilities targeted under the Programme;
- Creating conditions of decent and independent life for the persons with disabilities;
- Establishing an accessible environment for the persons with disabilities;
- Overcoming the social exclusion and full-scale integrating of the persons with disabilities into the society;
- Creating conditions for employment for jobless people registered at the labour offices and targeted under the Programme;
- Increasing the public awareness on problems and the capacity of the persons with disabilities with the aim to change of public attitudes and removal of the existing stereotypes;
- Encouraging employers to employ jobless persons targeted under the Programme;
- Development of partnership during implementation of the Programme.

As a result of the implementation of the National Programme for Employment and Vocational Training of Persons with Permanent Disabilities, it is expected that persons with permanent disabilities, registered at the labour offices, will be involved in vocational training and will be provided with an opportunity for employment, with all relevant rights and obligations under the Labour Code. By means of the provided employment, the beneficiaries will acquire social security rights for a future period. By its implementation the Programme establishes conditions for decent and independent life of the persons with permanent disabilities.