

# **UN / READINESS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS FOR THE LABOR MARKET IN SR (RESEARCH REPORT)**

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## **INTRODUCTION A PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND**

The aim of the project was to address the plight of transition of 20,157 physically disadvantaged children and young people from 809 special primary and secondary schools with integrated classes in mainstream schools (MSVVS SR, 2014) from schools on the open labor market in Slovakia. The target group was youth workers at these schools, which we want, thanks to all research activities under the auspices of the Institute of Social Studies and Therapeutic Pedagogy University in Bratislava, connect under work expertise with experts and representatives of subjects active in youth work. The main outcome of the project is to develop a concept for preparing young disabled people in the present existing situation of professional practice in schools with innovative approaches, practical training with employers in the regional labor market. This project is closely linked to the already approved project "Poverty and employment", supported by the Erasmus + (KA2), where the international scientific and technical conference will ensure the dissemination of results and expertise of both projects between the scientific community and thanks to following press conference, and medialization also among the general public.

## **Theoretical and methodological questions**

### **The research problem**

Institute of Information and Prognosis of Education in Slovakia stated in the Statistical Yearbook of special schools from 15/09/2014 for the school year 2014/2015 up to 425 special schools and 343 special classes in mainstream schools, including 194 special primary schools, 172 practical primary schools and 64 special secondary schools, in which are together 35,796 disabled children and young people (15,730 in special primary schools, 10,185 in integrated classes in regular schools, 5,516 in Special Secondary Schools). According to statistics from the Social Insurance Agency, Statistical Office and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family (2014), there is only 30% of all 240,000 of Citizens with disabilities employed in the labor market, that makes 7 out of 10 disabled citizens unemployed and at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, according to research social NGOs in cooperation with the Institute research work (MPSVR, 2014), only 5% of all the employees with disabilities have university education. These findings point to our research problem - somewhere in the educational system of special education for the disabled, and vocational training, and labor market transition is a mistake.

### **Research Methodology**

The research is a qualitative-quantitative and applied, utilizing a nomothetic, exploratory approach focusing on relationships and mutual inference variables.

### **Research Methods**

- A structured questionnaire with open and closed questions emailed in November 2014 to all 768 special schools (including integrated classes of standard primary schools) in Slovakia
- telephone interviews with representatives of all 156 high schools and vocational schools with pupils and students with disabilities in Slovakia in December 2014 and January 2015 with the aim to find out more detailed answers to selected questions on the questionnaire

### **Research question**

What factors consider the representatives of schools, that educate children and young people with disabilities, important for successful application on the labor market for their pupils and students?

Three topics:

- Education of the professional practice in schools
- Contacts of the schools with employers, and creating of workplaces in the region,
- Intersectoral collaboration with institutions focusing on youth work

### **Research objectives**

Research aims to find out the current situation and potential opportunities of more effective preparation for pupils and students with disabilities during education for their transition to the labor market.

Based on the concrete answers of those who work daily with young people with disabilities, and their suggestions and proposals for solving the problems in this area, we tried ,jointly under national and transnational cooperation already following the project "Poverty and employment" (Erasmus + , KA2), to ensure mutual discussion and expertise in working groups, which will result in proposals for legislative changes and changes in employment policy and educational process and in interdepartmental (MSVVS SR, MPSVR SR) and cross sector (public, non-profit and private sector) cooperation not only to facilitate the transition of young people with disabilities from school to work, but also with the corresponding increase in overall quality of life to these disadvantaged young people in Slovakia.

### **A method for processing of research results**

Selection of research sample meets the criteria of reliability and validity, since we contacted all schools undergoing education of children and young people with disabilities in Slovakia. Open questions in the questionnaire, we coded and subsequently underwent through SPSS Win univariate descriptive frequency analysis. In the next step of bivariate analysis, we explored nominal variables through comparison of the Pearson chi-square test. Nominal variables in comparison with ordinal variables (degrees of importance) have undergone Kruskal Wallis test at Monte Carlo significance and each two ordinal variables, within the un-parametric test of two interdependent variables were subjected to the Wilcoxon test concretely by using a bi-directional significance, with set level of significance at  $\alpha = 0,01$  (Ritomský, 2002).

### **The research sample**

Research sample of the realized quantitative research were the youth workers operating in special schools or mainstream schools with integrated classes. By e-mail we contacted all the 768 special schools and mainstream schools with integrated classes with a request to complete an online questionnaire. Then based on feedback we selected 156 primary schools with a practical component and secondary special schools and vocational schools, which were contacted by telephone.

Research has involved 77 respondents who possess relevant information to fill in the online questionnaire. Through telephone communication we have collected the remaining 79 responses from representatives of special secondary schools who refused to complete the questionnaire for the following reasons - lack the necessary information to answer our questions in the questionnaire, because they have no contact with their graduates and graduates from those with whom they have contact, they know that They are unemployed and at home with their parents or do not see the importance of this research because it considered their graduates due to severe disability as unemployable. From their verbatim answers we choose - "We have no relevant information, we have a special elementary school and our students do not leave to work and nor do we have feedback from them, where they go after attending our school (31 schools)," "After leaving school they apply for pensions and stay at home, They are unemployable, especially for their mental disability (6 schools), "or the phrase" Employment of youth with multiple disabilities is almost zero. Either they are known to be employed by family, in their companies or nothing, or they are at home, unemployed." This is about half the special secondary schools in Slovakia, which we consider alarming.

The typical respondent of this research operates in a special school (primary, secondary or practical, where students are only children and youth with disabilities), comes from the Prešov region and his working position is Director. At his school, 1-5 pupils graduates every year, while apart from the form and scale-time, only 1-20% a year are employed. The most common disabilities of the graduates, students and pupils of our respondents in the range of 1-20% are limitations to musculoskeletal, metabolic, sensory, mental disorders, further inter-organ failure and multiple combined. The most common disabilities of the graduates, students and pupils, and up to 81-100% are mental disorders. After graduation, only 1-20% of graduates attend work experience with an employer on the open labor market, in existing sheltered workshops, or to the employer with whom they performed work experience during their studies. Similarly, only 1-20% of graduates with the help of parents create their own sheltered workshops or workplaces. To continue to study in special secondary vocational school, vocational school routine or university decides 1-20% of graduates, the same amount is placed in social services facilities of the Daily type / with year-round housing, or stays at home without any social ties. Most commonly, up to 81-100% of graduates with health disabilities remain unemployed, living in the household.

The research sample consisted of 57 (out of 77) special primary, secondary and practical schools with children and young people with disabilities, 8 regular primary and secondary schools with integrated class and 12 mainstream primary and secondary schools with integrated pupils.

## Debate

In evaluating the research we have seen the facts, to which we would like to pay special attention. The schools in focus are those, that have a percentage of employment of their graduates with disabilities within a year of graduation regardless of the form and scope-time between 21-40% (8) and 41-60% (2) of all graduates in the school. We are talking about 8 special schools (United school in Rožňava, Secondary boarding vocational school for students with hearing impairments in Kremnica, the United Boarding School in Kysucké Nové Mesto, the United Boarding School in Michalovce, Apprentice boarding school in Želovce, Apprentice school in Ladce, the United Boarding School in Tornaľa, Apprentice

School in Bratislava), where students are only children and youth with disabilities, one mainstream school with integrated class (Apprentice School Ruzomberok) and one mainstream school with integrated pupils (elementary schools and kindergarten Bušince). In these schools graduate yearly, on average, 11- 20 graduates with disabilities (5 schools), 21- 50 graduates (2), 51 and more graduates (2) and 6-10 graduates (1 school), their graduates with disabilities suffer among others, the most common, mental disorders (10/10).

After graduation, the graduates apply at the open labor market (10/10), usually leave for work experience to an employer (5/10) or to existing sheltered workshops (5/10). Some continue their studies at other special secondary vocational schools (6/10), followed by universities (3/10), or attend different types of social services day centers (5/10). Of all graduates, there are unemployed graduates living at home on average of 21-40% and only 20% of them without any social ties.

Students with disabilities spend an average of 21- 40% of their time studying and 21- 40% of leisure activities with intact pupils without disabilities and special needs, the school consider this contact important for the success and acquiring skills necessary for further integration in the society. To raise this target schools know the needs of potential employers of their graduates, they communicate with them. They are also in contact with the local authorities, schools where their students continue their studies. Schools cooperate with psychologists, special education teacher or other social counseling centers, which contributes to increasing the chances of applying their graduates with disabilities in the labor market. At these schools, they specifically provided teachers for career guidance and professional practice which is led by the curriculum as a separate subject. Pupils and school students practice at the employer in the workplace, where they spend an average of 41- 60% of total practice time. To increase the chances of students and graduates from institutions to assert themselves on the labor market, schools annually (2 schools) or every five year (8 schools) change their curricula and that particularly towards widening hours of professional experience, changes fields of study, expanding the teaching of foreign languages and computer skills.

For changes and improvements in vocational training, they design better material and technical equipment of classrooms, work assistants paid by UPSVaR, raising awareness among parents about the importance and usefulness of the study of their children, the restoration of objects which have been canceled and led to the creation of habits and practical skills, performance of professional experience at the employer's workplace and material support from companies for school.

For the most common reasons of failure to placement of graduates with disabilities in the labor market are considered particularly difficult degree of disability, employers' prejudices about abilities and disabilities of graduates with disabilities. Other reasons are the uncertainties of social contact and lack of confidence, financial dependence on the family, as well as dependence on a state system, insufficient motivation of national employment policy for people with disabilities to employers and the lack of financial assistance for people with disabilities to find and remain in work . Schools considered the problem in a weaker flexibility and endurance of graduates at work, communication problems and mental instability of these people, particularly in low support for the employer in a phase of adaptation at work. The recommendations arising from European models of successful practice also tell opinions from employers, for whom the employment of young people with special needs is also important, to focus on the need for later support in work. In this aspect, it regards the interconnection of multiple systems,

respectively subjects, involved in the transfer phase of a young man from school to work, which requires both mutual cooperation relations between schools, public and private sectors as well as sufficient resources and personnel (counselors, coaches) to support not only during the transition to employment, but also for employment in order to maintain a job, with clearly defined powers and duties. This, however, binds and expertise of individual professionals connections throughout the career guidance process, their coordinated cooperation and qualifications for the creation of individual plans to respond to the needs of the pupil. Graduates often have unrealistic assessment of their own abilities, in what they sometimes are encouraged by the parents.

On the other hand, significant achievements for success in the labor market of their graduates with disabilities define these schools their personal abilities and skills such as intelligence, general social survey and proactively addressing their problems and obstacles of life. An important part is the individual efforts of parents to applying of their child, and particularly those with previous experience at employers and with graduates with disabilities in general. For the preparation of the young people is significant the experience directly from the workplace, while their findings suggest that employers can be encouraged to hire young people with different special needs, and obtaining good results and positive experience initially in cooperation with disabled young, whose requests for support at adapting to the working conditions are not so high. Great benefit they see in their vocational training within the curricula of education in schools, the subject of professional experience and cooperation with employers, educators and special employment offices. Inherent in the issue of employment of people with disabilities is the motivation of the employer through public contributions. Interdepartmental cooperation is seen also in the light of recent studies in this area as a factor which constitutes an obstacle to the transition of disabled young people into employment.

## **Conclusions and recommendations for practice**

In qualitative-quantitative research conducted at the Slovak special primary and secondary schools and schools with integrated classes and pupils, it is possible to identify both internal and external factors of success and failure of their graduates with disabilities in the labor market. Number of graduates per year varies with individual schools ranging from 5 to 50 students or more. In the current situation, based on available information, after graduating passes to the open labor market, work experience, to place in the existing sheltered workshop, or at the employer's place where pupils took professional practice, only 20% of graduates, and 20% of all graduates continue other studies (secondary school, university), the same amount is placed in a social services of daily basis / all year round living or stay at home without any social ties. An important finding is that 67 respondents from a total of 77 confirmed that the number of graduates who are within a year of graduation employed regardless of the form and scope-time, is only 20% of all graduates. Most commonly, to 81-100% of graduates with health disabilities remain unemployed, living in the household.

In the area of professional practice and training, act an important role internal factors which include personal abilities and skills of children and young people with disabilities. The reason for failure is often a heavier degree of disability. Lack of language and computer skills are evaluated as a reason for success or failure in connection with other variables, for example: intelligence and general social survey, motivation to actively approach to solving problems and obstacles of life, effort and help parents to exercise the child labor market individually, preparing for the job at their school - specific curricula,

education and training systems, adapting flexibly to new situations independently, and responsible solution of the problems, insufficient financial assistance from the state for people with disabilities to find and remain in work. External factors in this area result from the process of education and practical training in schools. The greater part of the respondents have allocated a separate school teacher / youth worker / educational counselor for career guidance and work experience in schools, smaller part of schools are now represented with its own subject of professional experience, of which only half (11 schools) sends its students with disabilities to practice, employer outside of school. As the most serious reason for the failure of their graduates however, the majority (44) respondents see precisely in the lack of practice and work experience. Important factors show the motivation of the employer by the State through State aid for the employment of people with disabilities and the time students spend with an intact population. From the arguments, that the survey sample showed, the more time they spend teaching pupils with disabilities with intact pupils without disabilities, the less they are perceived by their schools from the angle of view of heavier degree of disability (mental or psychological), being the reason for the failure of placing their graduates with disabilities in the labor market.

For the employment of young people with disabilities are essential contacts with employers and schools, creation of work experience in the region. Alarming is the fact that up to 34 schools (out of 77) is not in contact with potential employers of graduates in their region, 46 schools reported that their students do not attend all practices to an employer in the workplace, up to 61 schools said the length of time spent Students with disabilities in professional practice in companies ranges between 1-20%. External factors such as problems with transport to work or movement at all, prejudices or previous experience of employers with disabilities and motivation of the employer by the State through State aid for the employment of people with disabilities participate in the success or failure of young graduates only partially.

Intersectoral collaboration involves in terms of internal factors influence of the family and social contacts of pupils and students with disabilities, which is related to financial dependence on family, psychological dependence on their parents and the social system in the country, limited contact with the company, uncertainty in social contacts and distrust in self, dependence on personal assistant, system, and state. The external factor was assigned by a collaboration of experts (multidisciplinary access), local labor authorities and local governments. More important, according to respondents it seems that the greater gain is school cooperation with other social and special-educational facilities in the region as non-profit organizations, Social Services Institutes, other special schools and other.

An example of good practice in the current circumstances is the basis of the research findings can be identified as the schools whose results were presented in the previous section. Changes in these issues in the Slovak Republic in their judgment could lead to more state support and moral valuation of employers who enable schools to execute professional practice in the workplace, or employ people with disabilities in the open labor market. The attention to the positive experience is one of the major topics in overcoming barriers to employment for young people with disabilities. A frequent phenomenon are false assumptions of potential employers relating to how their skills and general condition. According to those statements, the perception of these prejudices are also linked to the perceived problem of young disabled graduates in terms of their social skills, so more successful appear those schools, where pupils and students have often the possibility of

contact with an intact population. Another proposal, which results from the research findings is to introduce dual education students and to increase support for sheltered workplaces or even better Introduction of transition from school to the open labor market - intermediate labor market, implement changes in state legislation policy for employment, for this, endangered population of jobseekers. Potential changes the schools see in favoring employers, not the unemployed, alignments of the social benefits and other allowances, which together do not outweigh the wages earned by the employer. Support of motivation on the part of young people with disabilities, however, should begin much earlier than at the end of education. Education linked to the needs of students and the labor market provides prospective employers of quality graduates capable to get and keep a job with the necessary support. To this goal leads pupils and students the career guidance that provide professional school staff qualified to work with youth with special needs and the practice oriented vocational subjects, providing the realistic conditions of companies and employers.

## **Summary of suggestions for practice:**

In the research area relating to the subject of practical training in schools as the most significant recommendations for practice appear as follows:

- Changes in education, including the setting of dual education establishment to teaching job skills training and an overall increase in the number of hours of practice
- Motivation to study, which is the removal of the lack of interest in further studies among children and their legal representatives and leading to improvement in school results and attendance, as well as increased interest and the actual realization on the labor market,
- Restoration of subjects that have been canceled, that led to the creation of habits and practical skills

Area of research dedicated to contact schools with employers in terms of application of their future graduates brought the following suggestions:

- Increasing the hours of practice following the changes in education
- In connection with the greater number of hours of practice to strengthen the practice at the employer in the workplace
- Increasing the motivation of employers to employ disabled young people not only from the state but also by the elimination of prejudices and raising awareness of the possibilities and abilities of people with disabilities
- Examples of good practice and recognition of employers who allow young disabled students get practice or they support employing young disabled people

In terms of cross-sectoral cooperation, which was covered by the third area of this research, it is possible to formulate the following recommendations:

- Promote legislative changes regarding the way of state funding
- Support of sheltered workshops and intermediate labor market
- State support for job creation

- Through each of those measures to increase the overall motivation of employers to employ young graduates with disabilities