

MEANS OF COMBATING THE DISCRIMINATION PHENOMENON IN PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF DISABLED PERSONS

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Abstract. *This article addresses the issue of neglecting the rights of people with disabilities in their vocational training. Some solutions are indicated for the purpose of adequate professional guidance and improvement of the quality of life for people with disabilities.*

Keywords: *discrimination, vocational education, disability, social integration, employment*

*Even if you are "normal" or disabled, you still have beautiful and ugly moments,
you still have friends, you have feelings, your life has almost the same stages.
Then, if people with disabilities are alike the other ones,
why wouldn't they deserve to be treated like the others?*

Discrimination is characterized by different treatment of people in identical or comparable situations or, on the contrary, the identical treatment of people in different situations. This phenomenon is, regrettably, still present in the democratic society, being so common that it is considered normal by many people.

The last decades have marked an important global change in public policies on people with disabilities. The medical model, predominant throughout Europe until the 1980s, focused on medical recovery and passive insurance of a minimal financial income, was replaced by a paradigm based on the right to equal opportunities, non-discrimination and participation.

With the adoption of the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the Republic of Moldova, there has been a change in the optics on disability in general and in the ways to solve the problems faced by people with deficiencies especially in their social integration/ inclusion effort. The main idea set out in this important international document is to adopt a bi-valent position in ensuring the rights of people with disabilities. This idea is also interesting and important due to the fact that not only people with disabilities have to adapt to the environment, but also the environment, that is, the people who form it, need to take a strong step to-

wards meeting them. In this context, infrastructure and institutions, functioning on different social levels, are to be brought in line with the needs and requests of people with special educational needs (SEN) so that social integration, including education, is no longer seen as "an act of heroism", but a normality [3].

The implementation of state policies on the right to education of all types, provided to people with disabilities through the set of normative and legislative acts adopted at national and international level, to which the Republic of Moldova is a party, considers the unhindered access of this category of citizens to higher education, their only opportunity to acquire a profession capable of conferring full status members of society. For people with special needs, the value of vocational studies is more important than for people without disabilities, because their professional activity ensures not only their sources of existence but often the only possibility to integrate into social life, breaking down the circle of isolation and humiliating dependence on others [1, 2, 4, 5].

Discrimination against people with disabilities is still a problem in the Republic of Moldova, and the government is failing to implement laws prohibiting this.

It is worth mentioning that during the last 5 years the number of people with disabilities in-

creased by 3.8% (about 184.3 thousand people). People with disabilities represent 5.2% of the country's total population. Almost every seventh person with disabilities falls into the category of severely disabled.

Statistics from the Republic of Moldova show that a person with disabilities finds a job easier if he/she has technical or higher professional education. In developed countries, the share of students with disabilities in higher education fluctuates between 3 and 7 percent.

According to the information provided by the higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova, the number of persons with disabilities enrolled in higher education represents only 0.5% of the total number of students.

Moreover, in the Republic of Moldova, at present, there is no higher education institution endowed with everything needed to include young people with different types and degrees of disability in the process of training. For this reason, people with disabilities have to choose their faculty and institution in which to study not so much according to their preferences but taking

into account the conditions necessary for their own special educational requirements. This, in fact, indirectly leads to a serious compromise on the principle of non-obstruction of the right to education and the equal opportunities of young people with disabilities.

Ensuring equal access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities offers people with disabilities the chance to get fully involved in society and to improve their quality of life.

People with disabilities must have equal opportunities to productive work and earning gains or employment in the labor market.

At the same time, the analysis of information regarding the areas of training / specialties for which students with disabilities are currently trained, indicates the problem that may arise in future with their employment.

The most demanded specialties include Medicine, Law, Public administration, Information technologies (Figure 1). The offers suggested by the labor market for the mentioned specialties are in a small number and do not cover all the graduates' requests.

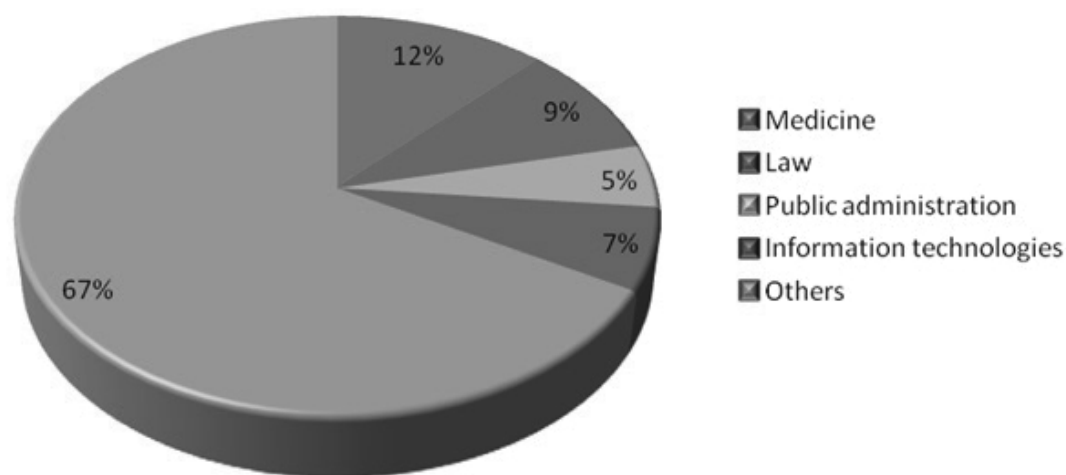


Figure 1. Specialties demanded by people with disabilities.

Some unofficial sources account for about 20 percent of the total number of disabled people who are employed in the Republic of Moldova. But according to international standards, the situation in this field is considered favorable, if about 40 per-

cent of people with disabilities have a job.

For the improvement of the situation, adequate vocational training and rehabilitation measures available for all categories of people with special needs are to be undertaken, as well

as work and employment opportunities for them are to be promoted in the open labor market both in the urban and the rural models. In this respect, it is necessary to:

- make the existing labor market tools, schemes, modalities and training programmes, as well as measures for promoting employment accessible also to people with disabilities;
- apply, to the extent it is possible, the principle of freedom of choice with regard to vocational training and employment;
- encourage the person with disabilities and, if necessary his/her family or representative, to take part in all the measures undertaken for his/her professional orientation;
- approach the vocational training in the light of market economy principles;

- establish specialized support services for the integration of people with disabilities into work;
- design legal provisions as to actively support employers hiring people with disabilities in a real and profitable way;
- establish and actively promote social dialogue with companies, trade unions, NGOs on vocational training and employment of people with disabilities.

The implementation of the mentioned actions will make the integration of young people with disabilities in the academic environment and in the labor market more efficient, ensuring **equal** rights/opportunities in the field of vocational training **equally** with other citizens.

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