

Employment politics while employing people with health handicaps in the Czech Republic

Política de emprego, empregando pessoas com deficiências de saúde na República Tcheca

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Abstract

Nowadays significant topic is the employment of people with handicaps, not only for HR. Even though, the state is visibly supporting and motivating employers to offer jobs to people with handicaps, this group of job seekers is still at significant risk due to their health handicaps and unequal changes in the job market. The main aim of this article is to collect the views of employees and to understand their opinions on the employment of people with a handicap. Primarily, we are interested in the opinions of HR employees. In training for HR, workers participated 252 HR workers presented to 172 companies. Based on the answers about company politics towards employment of people with health handicaps we can formulate the hypothesis that people with health handicaps are more likely to employ companies which have employment of these people of the mission, vision, or culture of the company.

Keywords: barriers; employment; job market; person with a handicap.

Resumo

Atualmente, um tema significativo é o emprego de pessoas com deficiências, não apenas para RH. Mesmo que o Estado esteja visivelmente apoiando e motivando empregadores a oferecer empregos a pessoas com deficiências, este grupo de pessoas em busca de emprego ainda corre um risco significativo devido a suas deficiências de saúde e mudanças desiguais no mercado de trabalho. O principal objetivo deste artigo é recolher as opiniões dos funcionários e compreender suas opiniões sobre o emprego de pessoas com deficiência. Principalmente, estamos interessados nas opiniões dos funcionários de RH. No treinamento para RH, os trabalhadores participaram de 252 trabalhadores de RH apresentados a 172 empresas. Com base nas respostas sobre a política da empresa em relação ao emprego de pessoas com deficiências de saúde, podemos formular a hipótese de que as pessoas com deficiências de saúde são mais propensas a empregar empresas que tenham emprego dessas pessoas da missão, visão ou cultura da empresa.

Palavras-chave: barreiras; emprego; mercado de trabalho; pessoa com deficiência.

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Introduction

The economic active habitats are made of two main groups. The first group are employed people; thus, they are working to receive some award, payoff, wage, or salary, or they are self-employed. In contrast, the second group are unemployed people, people who are able and willing to work, but do not have a job and they are actively seeking it (Brožová, 2003). Employment is an important condition of human existence. It secures material needs and it provides to one self-satisfaction, self-realization, and creation of social contacts. Therefore, job loss is a crucial disruption of one's life and it is connected to economic destabilization, and in the case of long-term unemployment loss of working habits, or negative social, psychological, and health consequences.

However, the ability to cope with the demands of the job market is influenced by several factors such as health, education, personal characteristics, age, and others. These factors exclude some groups of people, and they can negatively improve the risk of job loss. Into these groups, we include young people under 30 years, older people, women, people with lower achieved education or qualification, gipsy people, and people with health handicaps (Buchtová, Šmajš & Boleloucký, 2013). People with health handicaps are facing a higher risk of social exclusion due to their physical, and economical barriers, and due to employers' attitudes towards these groups of people in the job market. Employment politics is helping people from risk groups to succeed in the job market. It aims to lower the imbalance in the job market, which is made of an imbalance between demands and offers at the job market. Also, it helps to effectively use the human recourses offered in the job market. In the case of supporting employment of people with a handicap, it is characterized by active and non-active politics. It uses its tools to create work positions for people with handicaps, and it urges employers to employ people with health handicaps, for example, their offering financial support (Krebs, 2015).

The description of current employers' view on employing people with health handicaps

In the Czech Republic are currently 303 thousand employers with at least one employee. The biggest proportion of employers is in the capital city Prague – 80 thousand which is one-quarter of employers in the country. The smallest number of employers is in Karlovy vary region around 7100 employers. The small number of employers needs to be interpreted concerning the small number of inhabitants of this region. With regards to statistics, the number of employers in Karlovy vary region around 21-25 employers on 1000 people, which is similar to other regions. The population density is not too diverse between regions in the Czech Republic (Government of Czech Republic, 2020). Most employers are small businesses which do not have a legal duty to employ people with health handicaps. This duty is to employ people with health handicaps, and have businesses with 25 and more employees. The position in the job market for people with health handicaps is complicated with is reflected by legislation. People with health handicaps fit in the group of people with higher security in the job market (§ 67, paragraph. 1 law no. 435/2004 Sb., about employment), and to job seekers who due to

their health condition, age, care of a child, or from other diverse reasons needs higher care while job offers (§ 33, paragraph 1 law no. 435/2004 Sb., about employment).

The duty to employ a person with a handicap is according to the Czech Statistical Office (2020) referring to 25 thousand employers (8 %), this includes around 18 thousand commercial employers (6 %). The commercial employers' biggest part of them is in private holding. Only 13 % of subjects have an international or foreign owner (the combination of domestic and foreign owners). Even though the number of domestic ownerships is bigger, international and foreign companies are several employees bigger than domestic companies. In research conducted by the Czech Chamber of Commerce (2020) 65% of asked employers were employing people with health handicaps. Similarly, in research designed by Czech Government (2020) 77 % of asked companies were employing people with health handicaps. However, the legislation's 4 % of employees with health handicaps met not even the whole quarter. This result indicates that even the companies willing to employ a person with a health handicap can hardly meet the legislative 4 %. On the other hand, the presented results cannot be taken as adequate as both types of research do not meet the requirement of presentability. The research was focused on the subjects (companies) which are interested in problematics. Thus, researchers did not investigate the real number of companies and institutions employing people with health handicaps.

Better data can be presented by the Czech Employment Office which has in databases 2695 subjects which receive funding for the employment of people with health handicaps. These subjects/companies must prove that they are employing people with health handicaps (The Czech Statistical Office, 2018). The percentage of commercial companies in databases is 87 %.

More interesting is a comparison based on the numbers of companies who receive funding in diverse regions of the Czech Republic. Whether we compare the number of employers who receive the mentioned funding with regards to the total number of employees, we can say the largest number is in the South Bohemia region (18,2 receiving from 1000 employers in the region). The second is the Ústi region and Liberec region with almost 15 receivers, followed by the Vysočina region (13,5) and Hradec Králové region (12). In contrast, the lowest number of receiving companies has the capital city Prague which has only 4 receivers on 1000 employers. The reasons why employers in the Southern Czech Republic (South Bohemia region) are using the funding the most we can only argue as there is a need for more research in this area. Without doubts, the research should focus on the characteristics of employers in the south Bohemia region (The Czech Statistical Office, 2018).

Another research conducted by Czech Government (2020) identified that employers hardly find the right person for the created job position. 40 % of participating companies said that they are not able to find enough educated people for the job position. The lack of enough educated people with health handicaps is often mentioned in other resources (Social Agency this was not mentioned at all, 2018). The National Pedagogical Institution of the Czech Republic (2021) claims that the most frequent barriers are related to the economy, the character of production, the crucial role plays the chosen subject of study, the level of achieved education, level of abilities and skills.

The lower qualification is related to the lower achieved education which is frequent within this group. The position in the job market is harder for all job seekers with lower achieved education whether they have health handicaps or not. Research conducted by the

National Pedagogical Institute of Czech Republic (2021) focused on absolvents of practical schools who have health handicaps and their employers pointed out that they are not independent workers, and they are not able to understand their working tasks.

On the other hand, companies rather adjust working facilities for their older worker who has health issues or who might become invalid, than hire a new worker with a health handicap. Companies prefer to adapt working conditions for their tested worker, they even create new job positions so their tested worker can still work for them (National Pedagogical Institute of Czech Republic, 2021). Similar findings have a study conducted by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (2021). This research finds out that whether a worker stays in the company after gaining a handicap is based on the age of the worker. The older the worker gains a handicap the higher the possibility of staying with their employer is. Nevertheless, we cannot claim that younger people with health handicaps have harder positions in the job market. The uneasy combination of age and health handicap is highlighted in many resources. For example, a study was carried out by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs about long-term unemployment. Employers are worried about worsening health and frequent inability to work in case of hiring young workers with health handicaps (Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021). Issues which companies must face when they are employing someone with health handicap – as mentioned above – issue with inadequate qualifications. The second most frequent issue is the needed adaptation of the working environment so it fits for specific needs of a worker with a health handicap (this indicates that employers might be not informed enough about the possibility to receive extra funding for these changes). The next frequent issue is legislative requirements, only 35 % of employers have not had any problems with the law.

We cannot forget to mention personal issues such as timidity. According to Löffelmann and Sokolovský (2014), there might be issues for a worker with a health handicap to communicate with co-workers, their integration process could be complicated, and sometimes co-workers get jealous because of wage and state funding which a worker with health handicap receives.

According to Blažková (2011), there are three factors which motivate companies to hire workers with health handicaps. The factors are – discount on taxes – meaning funding which they receive if they are employing someone with a handicap, the social responsibility, and duty which is given by the law. However, the duty to employ someone with a health handicap given by legislation brings questions as it is negative motivation and thus it can employers discourage to employ someone with a health handicap. In contrast, discounts on taxes are the most effective reinforcer, in research carried out by the Czech Chamber of Commerce (2020), the discount on taxes was chosen as the most important factor to employ a worker with a health handicap. Also, employers would appreciate easier administration for the assertion of this discount. This is related to other findings from research conducted by the Czech Chamber of Commerce, companies would welcome whether they would be more informed about possible financial and other types of support while hiring people with health handicaps.

Even though, the level of employers' knowledge about the employment of people with health handicap is little (Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, 2021), the interest in free education about employing people with health handicap have shown less than 30 % who participated in research by the Czech Chamber of Commerce (2020). Therefore, the information

deficit is not only in the area of hiring mechanisms for these people but in the area of reasoning why companies should employ people with health handicaps.

Results and discussion

The structure and characteristics of respondents

In training for HR, workers participated 252 HR workers presented to 172 companies. Overall, there took place 28 trainings which happen from March 2021 till March 2022. All meetings happened in person, there was no model for online training. We offered training in 7 regional cities in the Czech Republic. Specifically, it was Prague (there happened 10 pieces of training with 87 trained people); Brno (there happened 7 pieces of training with 76 trained people); Hradec Kralove (there happened 5 pieces of training with 45 trained people); Ostrava (there happened 2 pieces of training with 24 trained people); Liberec (there happened 2 training with 15 trained people); Plzen (there happened 1 training with 5 trained people). Thus, pieces of training happened across the whole Czech Republic, and it was not focused on one area. The capacity was adequate, and we were able to train all interested people.

The structure of the employer can be drawn only from participants' answers in the evaluation questionnaire which answered participants from 127 companies from 172 participating companies (73 %). So, information about the structure of participating companies is not securely descriptive. HR workers and managers were from diverse disciplines of businesses – mainly there were diverse services, businesses in security, and production businesses (for details see table 1).

Table 1 – Disciplines of companies' businesses participating in pieces of training

Major of businesses	Total
Others	14
General services and others	14
Security, personal security, health, and estate	11
Other specialized production	9
Textile, clothes, shoes, and leather	7
Chemistry, plastics, and rubber	6
IT technologies	6
Commerce, auction, and hire	6
Profession services and sale services	5
Personal services	5
Health and rescue services	5
Machines, tools, devices, and facilities	3
Electricity, gas, water, waste	2
Estates	2
Science, research, and education	2
Metal and metal production	1
Minerals and raw material (mining, and treatment of materials)	1
Grocery stores	1
Building industry and crafts	1
Publication, audio-visual creations, nowcasts	1
Without answers	25
Total	127

Based on the answers we can say that the participants were from a diverse spectrum of companies from a year's income from 100 thousand CZK up to 50 milliard CZK per year. Based on our evaluation 90% of participating companies in our training are employing people with health handicaps. 29% of companies are employing 5 people with health handicaps. The next quarter employs 6-20 people with health handicaps, and 18% of companies employ 21-50 people with health handicaps. 4% of participating companies employ a higher number of people with health handicaps (to be concrete more than 700 people/employees).

Topical part – employers’ politics towards employing people with health handicaps and their experiences with employing these people

For 54% of trained people employing people with health handicaps companies, another 35% declare that they are willing to employ people with health handicaps as anybody else. For these employers and mainly 10% who are employing no one with health handicaps could the training be beneficial as it could bring them crucial information about employment of people with health handicaps? Table 2 presents how the attitude towards employment of people with health handicaps influences the number of workers with health handicaps. 54% of participants said that the employment of people with health handicaps is the mission of their company, and these companies investigated in our research employ 74% of people with health handicaps. Companies claiming, they are willing to employ a worker with a health handicap are in our research presented by 35 companies (30% of these already employ someone with a health handicap), and 10 companies do not employ anyone with a health handicap. Companies that are willing to employ a person with a health handicap, already employ 744 people with a health handicap (14%). 12% of people with health handicaps are employed in companies whose HR workers or managers did not answer questions about their employers’ politics towards employment of people with health handicaps.

Even though, we know participants cannot present their employers completely in the Czech Republic. Based on the answers about company politics towards employment of people with health handicaps we can formulate the hypothesis that people with health handicaps are more likely to employ companies which have employment of these people of the mission, vision, or culture of the company. Therefore, it can be assumed that employing a person with a health handicap as anyone else is not that frequent. So, people with health handicaps have a bigger chance to find a job within a company which is focused on support of people with health handicaps.

Table 2 - What is like attitude in your company towards the employment of people with health handicaps?

Politics towards people with health handicap	Does your company employ someone with health handicap?				
	No	Yes	% from Yes	Number of employees with health handicap	%
It is part of our company	0	69	60%	4007	74%
We are willing to employ people with health handicap as anyone else who is able to cope with amount of workload	10	35	30%	744	14%
We have no duty to employ someone with health handicap, thus we do not have this politics.	1	1	1%	2	0%
We are not for employment of people with health handicap. So, we use other options as paying higher taxes or extra payment to state economy.	0	1	1%	5	0%
No answer	1	9	8%	649	12%
Total	12	115	100%	5407	100%

Table 3 more concretely presents the numbers of employees with health handicaps in companies according to their politics towards employment of people with health handicaps and the size of companies.

Table 3. – Companies' politics towards employment of people with health handicaps based on the size of the company – the numbers of companies and numbers of employees with health handicaps who are employed with these companies

Size of company (total number of employees)	1-24		25-49		50-99		100-199		200+		No answer		Total	
	companies	Employees with health handicaps	companies	Employees with health handicaps	companies	Employees with health handicaps	companies	Employees with health handicaps	companies	Employees with health handicaps	companies	Employees with health handicaps	companies	Employees with health handicaps
It is part of our mission.	26	220	8	242	11	625	5	351	8	200	11	567	69	400
We are willing to employ people with health handicap as anyone else who is able to cope with amount of workload.	9	47	2	57	5	151	5	121	11	347	3	21	35	744
We have no duty to employ someone with health handicap, thus we do not have this politics.											1	2	1	2
We are not for employment of people with health handicap. So, we use other options as paying higher taxes or extra payment to state economy.											1	5	1	5
No answer											7	649	7	649
Total	35	267	10	299	16	776	10	472	19	234	23	124	11	540
										9	4	3	7	

The next question we asked was about concrete reasons to employ a person with a health handicap. The companies agreed with offered answers and they could choose more than one answer. This option is harder to evaluate but it shows that there are more reasons to employ

someone with a health handicap because respondents have chosen a reason with which they agree and agree. The most frequent answer was that the reason for the employment of a person with a health handicap is the possibility to receive funding for an employed person from the Labour Office of the Czech Republic. The next reason is the fact that the person with a health handicap already worked there before gaining the handicap and that the employee is loyal. The companies more agreed with the fact that the person is loyal. More than 70% of companies agreed with the reason that they are only meeting the legislative requirement (in the context of legislative duty concerning employer and state). Overall, 67% employ a person with a health handicap because they do not see any difference between a “normal” person and a person with a health handicap.

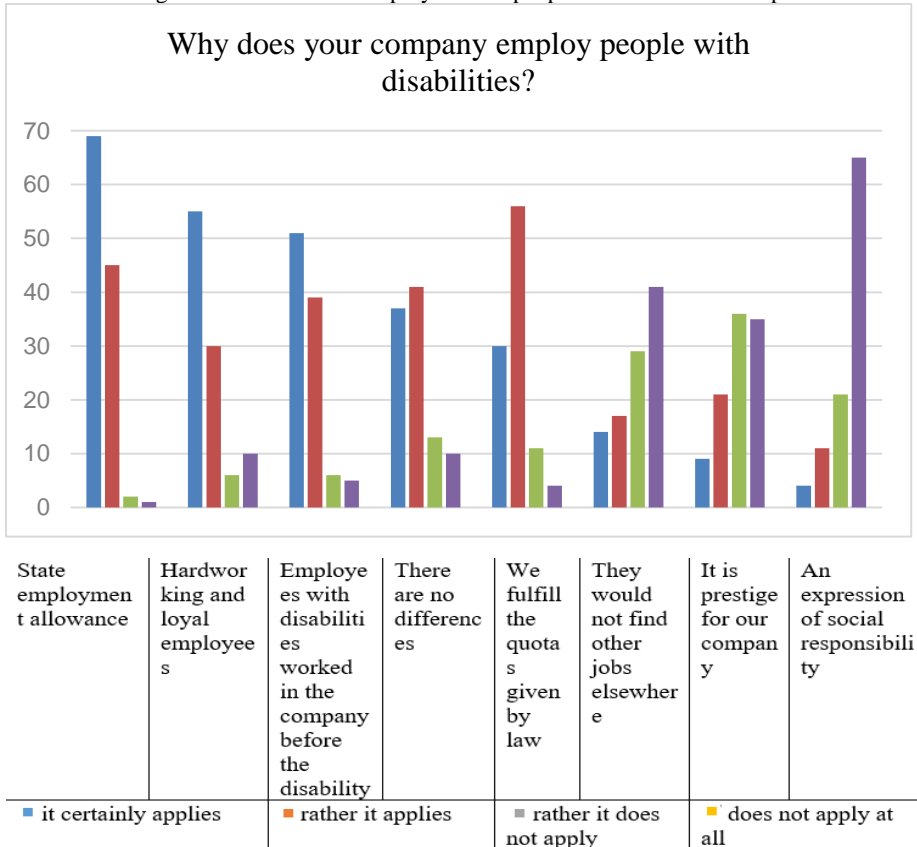
In contrast, respondents did not agree with statements that they employ someone with health handicap because of social responsibility (agree only 12% of respondents), that they employ workers with health handicaps because they would not find any other job position, and that they employ someone with health handicap because it is the prestige of the company.

A more detailed overview is provided in table 4 and figure 1.

Table 4. – reasons for the employment of people with health handicaps in companies who employ people with health handicaps

Answer	Definitely applicable	Applicable	Not applicable	Definitely not applicable	% agreement
Possibility to gain state funding for employers for employing people with health handicaps	59%	38%	2%	1%	97%
People with health handicaps are loyal and hardworking	47%	26%	5%	9%	73%
People with health handicap worked there before they gained health handicap	44%	33%	5%	4%	77%
We do not see any difference between people with handicap and people without handicap	32%	35%	11%	9%	67%
We are fulfilling legislative duty	26%	48%	9%	3%	74%
Because no one else would employ them	12%	15%	25%	35%	26%
It is prestige of the company	8%	18%	31%	30%	26%
It is prove of social responsibility	3%	9%	18%	56%	13%

Figure 1 – Reasons for employment of people with health handicap



Within the question related to companies' experience with employing a person with a health handicap, the most frequent answer was that companies have some issues (72% of respondents agree with this statement) and similarly they agreed that they had some issues within ending the working relation (59% respondents). Next to this experience is a statement that workers with health handicap work similarly to workers without handicaps (66% of respondents agree or agree) and 61% declare experience of a better working climate due to employment of someone with health handicaps.

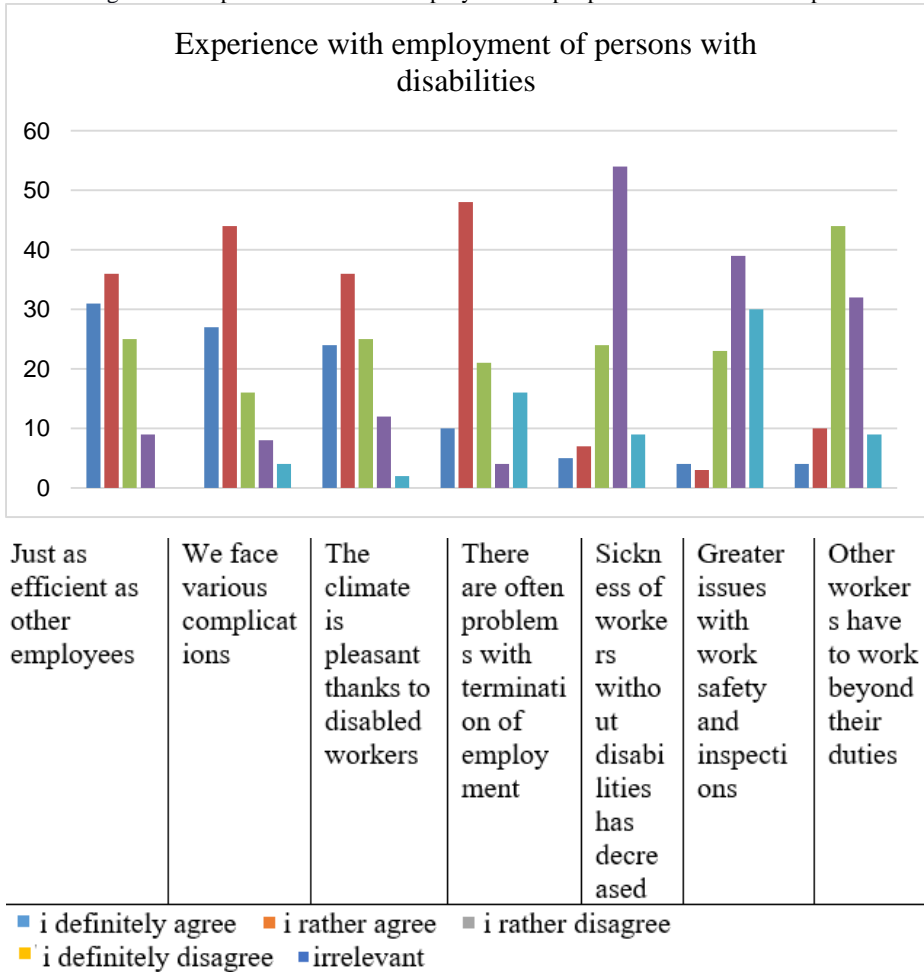
Significant disagreement showed HR workers with the statement that with a higher number of workers with health handicaps the sickness rate of workers without health handicaps is lower (79% disagreement). Further, they do not agree with the statement that other workers must work harder due to the employment of a person with a health handicap. Plus, they disagree with the statement that employment of a person with a health handicap would complicate routine controls – this statement 30% of respondents consider to be irrelevant as their experience does not allow them to answer.

A more detailed overview is provided in table 5 and figure 2.

Table 5 – Experiences with the employment of people with health handicaps – level of agreement with the following statements

Experiences with the employment of people with health handicaps.	Definitely yes	More likely yes	More likely no	Definitely no	Irrelevant	% Agreement
Employees with health handicap in our company are working similarly as workers without handicap.	31%	36%	25%	9%	0%	66%
While employing people with health handicaps we have to deal with diverse complication.	27%	44%	16%	8%	4%	72%
Thanks to workers with health handicaps there is better working climate in our company.	24%	36%	25%	12%	2%	61%
With employees with health handicaps it is hard to end the working relation.	10%	48%	21%	4%	16%	59%
With the higher number of people with health handicap in our company the number of sickness within workers without health handicap is lower.	5%	7%	24%	55%	9%	12%
Employment of people with health handicap brings bigger issues with work safety and controls.	4%	3%	23%	39%	30%	7%
Other workers must work harder because of workers with health handicaps.	4%	10%	44%	32%	9%	14%

Figure 2 - Experiences with the employment of people with health handicaps



Overall, the training was evaluated positively. According to the majority of participants, the training met what they expected (71 % of participants were definitely satisfied, 26 % satisfied). Whether the training offered what they needed negatively answered by only 5 people. Similarly, the participants answered about their expectations. 74 % of training participants said the course has definitely met their expectations, and 24 % said it has more likely met their expectations. Only 2 % said that the course more likely has not met their expectations. The questionnaire investigated whether the knowledge of participants has improved. Most respondents agreed that their knowledge has improved mainly in the area of legislative information about the employment of people with health handicaps. On the other hand, some negative answers (11) appeared within these areas as well. This could be related to the fact that 14 participants said they would welcome more information in this area. In contrast, the lowest number of improvements was noticed in the area of “diversity management”.

However, in this area, only one participant said they would appreciate more information. 32 % of participants in training said they would like to know more about at least one area of employment for people with health handicaps. Not only about the already mentioned legislative duty to employ a person with a health handicap but about the creation of supported job positions. Further, participants stated they would like to know more about specific groups of people with diverse handicaps such as the employment of deaf people and employment of people with epilepsy. Regarding the question about whether the companies plan to employ more people with health handicaps 65 % answered definitely yes, 30 % said more likely, yes, and only 5 % said more likely not. No respondent said they are not planning to employ someone with a health handicap.

Conclusion

Nowadays, not only the Czech Republic but the whole of Europe is facing several changes which are reflected in attitude toward people with health handicaps. It is assumed that the number of people with health handicaps will grow. Therefore, it is crucial to subsume people with health handicaps in the employment process and allow them to be part of an economically active society. There is no doubt that it is needed to create the best possible conditions for social interaction. Society is facing to growing aspiration of people with handicaps to fit in society, so it is more than crucial to create an adequate environment for them to fit into society. Due to the pressure created on organs active in this area new forms of integration are created for people with health handicaps.

Without any doubt, we can say that having a job is a condition which secures dignity in one's life. Job is not only for securing material needs but it provides a feeling of self-fulfilment, social interaction, and social belonging as well.

There is 10,2 % of people with health handicaps in the Czech Republic the total number of inhabitants, and almost all of them are economically passive. Even though, there is a strong initiative to include people with health handicaps in economically active groups mainly removing barriers which stop this group from becoming economically active needed results have not been met yet and there is a long-term issue within the employment of people with health handicaps. The support system would benefit from a clearer definition of funding support for people with health handicaps and a better definition of positions for people with handicaps in the job market. The primary aim of the support system should be to place people with a handicap in non-supported job markets. In the Czech Republic was created a system of employment support for people with health handicaps that operates with similar tools as foreign job markets. From this point of view, it is not needed to create new supporting tools, but it should be found how effectively use current tools. As the crucial supporting mechanism of employment of people with health handicaps can be considered their will to be employed, employers' attitude towards employment of people with health handicaps, informational and counselling system for employers, cooperation of several services (i.e., employer, charity, the Office of Labour), the duty of employer with more than 25 employees to hire someone with health handicap in the share of 4 % from the total number of employees, the financial stimulus for employers in the open or supported job market, acknowledge of disability, disabled pension, and attitude of society towards a disabled person. International experiences prove that

cooperation of several factors such as whole society and its attitude towards people with disabilities, level of support systems and counselling system, and cooperation of regional institutes and a person with health handicap have a significant influence on the inclusion of disabled person into the working process.

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