

THE ROLE OF ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING LABOUR MARKET SERVICES IN LABOUR RELATIONSHIP

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Abstract

Labour relations encompass the totality of official and unofficial relationships between employees, employers and their representative authorities. In the case of organizations employing disabled people and those with reduced work capacity the situation is specific. Both two and three sided relationships can be further complemented by the members of organizations providing alternative labour market services.

There are one million reduced capacity and handicapped people in Hungary, their active employment rate is really low. As a result of the raised rehabilitation funding from 1 January 2010 a growing number of organizations want to employ disabled people. Among others, organizations providing alternative labour market services give assistance in these kind of situations and, with this, they not only support organizations providing working opportunities but the orientation of disabled people and those with reduced capabilities.

Keywords: labour relationship, employer, handicapped and reduced capacity labour employment, trade union, human resource management

Introduction

Human resource management is a new scientific field, the content of which only developed in the last decades of the 21st Century. In a short period it evolved spectacularly. Specific knowledge, typical approaches and methods appeared, it has its research field and distinct scientific trends, schools. A different orientation may appear towards new, special areas in the 21st Century. A typical, prospective trend may be the field of handicapped and reduced capacity labour employment and its human resource management.

A few years ago the significance of the employment of disabled people and those with changed working abilities was irrelevant but their role has become stronger both in the aspect of government programmes and legislation. Governments aim at motivating employers to employ people with reduced capacity to work. The Hungarian Government, in line with the international and EU trends, has defined a growing number of obligations and provides allowances to enhance the employment of people with reduced capabilities.

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To support the rehabilitation of persons with reduced capacity to work the employer is obligated to pay rehabilitation contribution if the number of employees exceeds 20 and within this the number of persons employed with changed working abilities does not reach the defined level of employment, which is 5% of the total number of employees. The rehabilitation contribution was set out in Act IV of 1991 on the promotion of Employment and Benefits to the Unemployed. Until 31 December 2009 the amount of this contribution was 177,600 HUF /head/year. From 1 January 2010 this amount was raised to 964,500 HUF/head/year which led to the increased demand for the employment of disabled people.

In Hungary, however, experience has shown the majority of managers still avoid the employment of disabled people and persons with reduced capacity to work. The cause of this might be the fact that employers are not aware of the advantages or disadvantages of employing these people. Typical questions about persons with reduced capacity to work and the employment of those include the following: in what extent will they be able to perform their tasks, in what extent will they be able to take responsibility, how often they get sick and how will they be able to fit in with the “healthy” ones (Fedor et al., 2007).

The advantages of employing persons with reduced capacity to work can be that they change jobs less often if the work they perform suits their abilities and with this, fluctuation decreases. Good reputation of enterprises may also be enhanced by the application of the principles of equal opportunities (Szabó – Berde, 2007). Contributions and subsidies received for the employment of persons with reduced capabilities are to be perceived as further advantages which are to compensate the costs of employment. The employee’s performance on different fields of competencies, such as effective problem solving skills, can also be considered as financial advantages (Veress – Kovács, 2007). However, stereotypes and negative attitudes which, most of the time, root from ignorance, the lack of information and experience about disability and the fear from the unknown can hinder the employment of persons with changed working abilities (Csízik – Schmotzer, 2006).

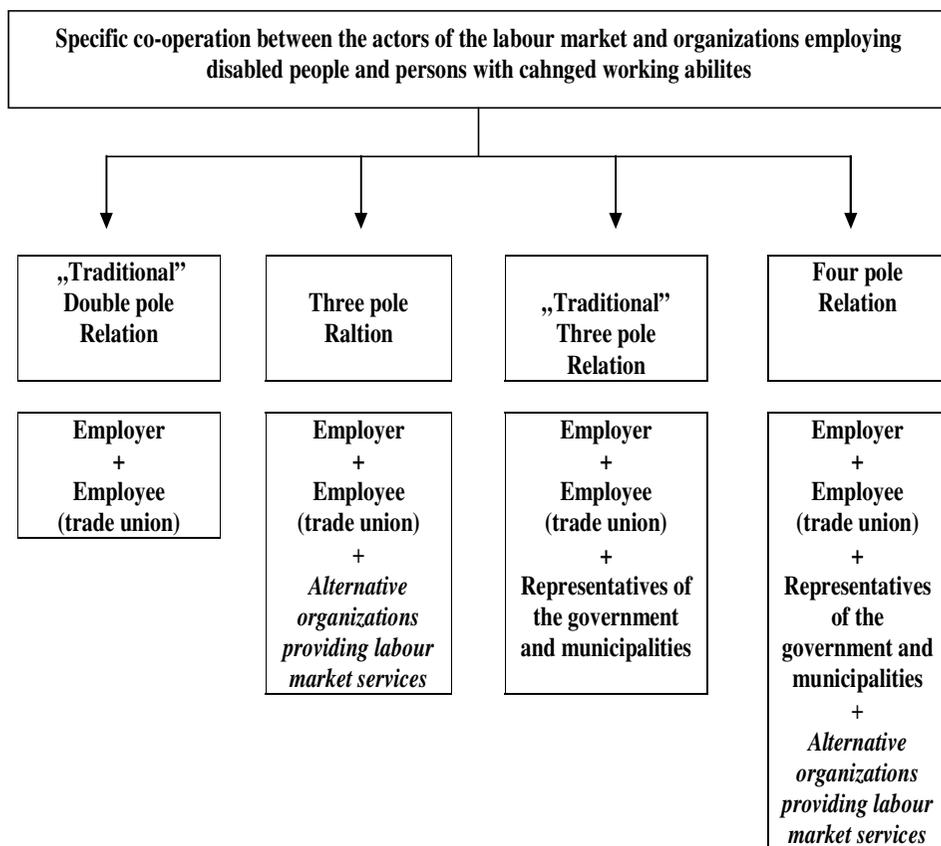
The essence of labour relations

The origin of labour relations stems back to the industrial revolution. Its establishment cannot be separated from certain social, political and economic conditions and the conditions relating to the cooperation between the actors of labour relations. After the democratic change in Hungary, labour relations have become different, the relationship between employers and employees has gained new content, the government itself has transformed and its system of duties have also changed (Berki, 1998). Labour relations encompass the totality of official and unofficial relationships between employees, employers and their representative authorities (Tóthné, 2000). Interests of the two actors of the labour market, the employer and the employee, fundamentally differ. Priority aims of the employer are to realize profit, to gain market share and to grow while for the employee salary, safety, appropriate working conditions, success etc are the most important factors. Both of them aim to utilize and realize their own resources, their capital, and working power the best way they can. The system of labour relations was designed to avoid or resolve any emerging conflicts by taking into consideration the interests of both sides based on mutual agreements and joint performances of self-interests without any kind of social or financial loss (László, 2001a). Within labour relations collective negotiations have the most significant history. Collective negotiations are a significant institution for agreement-based wage policy developed in market economies. They have three main scopes: the elements of allowance, labour relations

and conditions and the relationships between the representatives of employees and the employers (Tóthné, 2000).

Labour relations, in the traditional meaning, can be set up along several dimensions in different forms. Basically it means a two-sided (bilateral, two-party) relation between the employer / employers and the employee (and its representatives). Examination of the public and economic aspects of labour market is also important, because due to the intent to put through government aims or to alter government decisions, members of the government or municipality representatives can further be integrated to this system of relationships to establish a three-sided (trilateral, three-party) conciliation of interests (László, 2001b).

Figure 1. The Specific System of Labour Relations



Source: Self edited

From my point of view, in the case of organizations employing disabled persons and people with reduced capacity to work, this relationship is specific (Figure 1.). Both bilateral and trilateral relationships can be complemented with further actors that are the alternative labour market services. These organizations are foundations or other associations for interest protection that exist independently from the employer's organization and, among others,

provide help for those employers who do not undertake the employment of disabled people or persons with reduced capacity to work due to bureaucracy, great amount of administration, lack of information or even stereotypes. These alternative organizations undertake the procedure of employment for the employers and by doing so not only support organizations that provide work, but also disabled people and persons with reduced capabilities in their struggle to find a job. If we consider the appearance of these organizations reasonable in the market, traditional two-party relations become three-party, and three-party relations become four-party in order to assure equality of interests.

According to the Methodological Handbook of the Labour Market Support Service, organizations that are the most able (or can become able) to provide labour market support services are the representatives of the non-profit sector. Non-profit organizations function as the framework of social self-organization and self-interest, providing opportunity to develop and maintain services that suit the specific demands of different social groups and to handle non-profit oriented reforms and certain social problems. The non-profit sector involves several kinds of organizations. According to their roles they can be divided into the following categories: associations, organizations that provide services, foundations (organizations that receive donations and donate), voluntary self-help associations, club-like organizations (associations) that foster social relations. One determining type of organizations is service organization, which includes those that support employment. A number of these organizations, in accordance with their missions and duties, support the work of labour market services and improves the chances of employment for the disadvantaged unemployed such as fresh graduates, permanently unemployed, people with reduced capacity to work or roma people. Other organizations such as associations for interest protection provide employment promoting services as complementary activities (Szellő, 2003). Juhász and Bertalan also confirm that Hungarian non-profit organizations have a significant role today in increasing the amount of collective assets, enhancing social welfare and indirectly improving the performance of the government and the market. Based on Dienesné – Bodó (2007) labour market supporting services provide variable services and act as an intermediary between clients and employers. In the past few years their legal basis has been established. Legal framework for labour market services and their subsidizing process has been laid down in Decree 30/2000 (IX.15.). Non-profit organizations perform mostly complex supportive activities. Supportive services cover labour market services and other human services as well. Organizations providing alternative labour market services usually work with pre-determined target groups. Each organization providing supportive services perform different activities based on its client's demands, however, by the regulating function of Decree 30/2000 (IX.15.) they form a stable unit. The more complex a labour market programme performed by a supportive organization is the better the results they reach.

In bigger organizations, in order to protect the interests of employees, protective associations were formed to individually strengthen employees' weak negotiating positions and, by doing so, to provide, reach and lobby more favourable conditions for them. Eventually this will lead to the establishment of a balance of power, partner relationship, mutual respect, tolerance, negotiating skills and, as long as all of these already exist, the creation of consensus.

Organizations that protect employees are mostly trade unions. Trade unions were established to represent and protect the interests of employees and to shape and influence internal and external events of the labour market in a way that suits employees the most. In the case of disabled people and persons with reduced capacity to work these unions were formed to make them known and accepted by the society.

Attitude shaping is essential for trade unions to effectively take actions against the bodies of the government in order to exercise legally ensured rights. Notable organizations founded to protect the interests of disabled people are (recently called) MVGYOSZ (Hungarian Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted) established in 1918, MEOSZ (National Federation of Disabled Persons' Associations, note: reduced mobility) operating since the 1980's, SINOSZ (Hungarian Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing), AOSZ (Hungarian Autistic Society) founded in 1988 and the ÉFOÉSZ - Hungarian Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability.

Common tasks of the above mentioned organizations are as follows:

1. Representation and protection of interest;
2. Providing educational, cultural, sport and leisure services and activities to promote the rehabilitation of disabled people;
3. Providing services that help and support employment opportunities;
4. Social attitude shaping and development.

Within the framework of their representative activities, trade unions mostly perform the following tasks:

1. Expressing opinion on laws and government measures by the request of the Ministry;
2. Participation in the National Council on Disability;
3. Mapping emerging problems and suggesting possible ways of solutions to national authorities.

Protection of interest is formal most of the times because drafts of legislations have to be evaluated in such a short time that there is no opportunity to perform substantive work and suggestions are usually not taken into consideration by Ministries. The situation is the same in the case of initiations or proposals that are meant to tackle problems affecting most of the membership. This is one of the main reasons why the intensity of interest protecting activities of associations is significantly low. In most of the cases the principle of 'Nothing about us without us' does not prevail in today's Hungary.

In the framework of FESZT – Board of Associations for the Disabled from 2004, tasks of the above mentioned associations cover:

1. Expressing opinion on laws and government measures for request;
2. Contributing to the work of the National Council on Disability;
3. Discovering problems affecting the membership;
4. Drafting proposals for national authorities;
5. Applying the principle of 'Nothing about us without us' on each level and for every decision-maker;
6. Besides information and decision support, participation in all levels and areas of processes affecting disabled people and persons with reduced capacity to work;
7. Continuously developing the level of management and representative activities;
8. Establishing common lines in order to protect the interests of the disabled;
9. Based on common interests, resolving the conflicts of interests of members;
10. Establishing and operating common programmes;
11. Common representation in international organizations, programmes and relations;
12. Harmonizing activities for social communication and lobby;
13. Developing and applying common strategies to promote the inclusion of disabled persons by the society

14. Representing and applying the interests of the disabled for the society and the government within the framework of civil conversation.

Emphasized by the Madrid Declaration, each and every measure has to be taken by communicating and cooperating with the representative organizations of the disabled. Their involvement cannot be limited to orientation and support of decisions: governments have to establish and promote supportive mechanisms for conciliation and communication at each level of decision making. This would enable disabled people, through their representative organizations, to take part in the preparation, realization, tracking and evaluation processes of all measures. Active cooperation between governments and representative organizations for the disabled is the basic requirement to promote equal opportunities and social involvement the most effectively. In order to support this process, capacity building of representative organizations for the disabled has to be realised by increased resources in order to improve their campaign techniques. This also means that interest protection organizations for the disabled have to continuously improve the level of management and representation (Dajnoki – Szabó, 2007).

Precedents and applied methods

According to statistical data, there are almost 600,000 registered disabled persons living in Hungary. However, if people on disability pension and ones with reduced capabilities are also taken into account, the number of disabled people and persons with reduced capacity to work, whose employment rate is low, is around a million in Hungary today. Active employment of this human resource is going to become a significant economic issue in the next years or decades.

Researches were launched under my coordination by the University of Debrecen, Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Department of Management and Labour Sciences in the framework of a project financed by 'Chances for People with Disabilities' Public Foundation in 2006. The research objective of the dedicated „Equal Employment Opportunity Human Resource Management” is to reveal employment and management tasks, characteristics, processes, methods. Examinations enabled us to insert literature and theoretical knowledge into the management of the handicapped, and it was tested by a pilot education program. Prospective trends, aspects were corrected by participants' experiences, opinions and expectations. As a sequence, a private research program enabled us to carry out questionnaire interviews among managers and human resource experts of organizations employing handicapped and changed capacity labour.

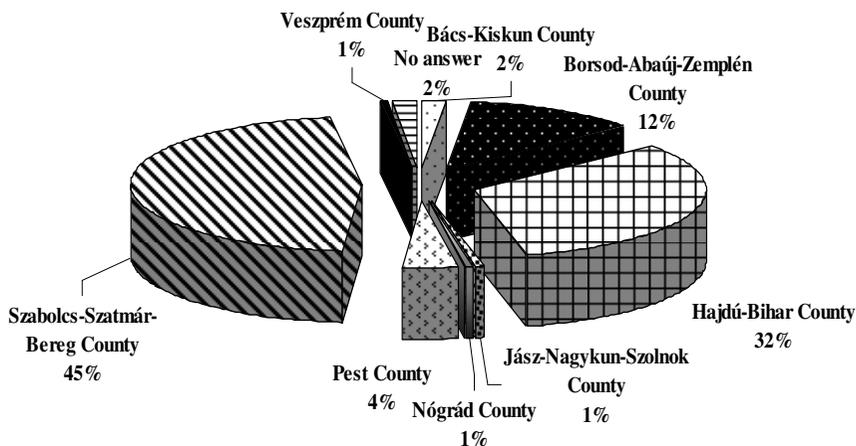
The first version of the 4 EM questionnaires contained twelve questions which we considered important in equal opportunities human resources management, then, in 2007, further four questions were added to the list and with this, the questionnaire covered all fields of human resources management. After finishing the programme, questionnaire surveys and manager interviews are still going on.

Following the right filtration and selection, results revealed in the article represent the data of 179 questionnaires that has been processed so far which is the evaluation of managers at different levels, experts of human politics and rehabilitation from 51 organizations. Questionnaires were filled out by experts of organizations operating in 23 different settlements. According to their qualifications, experts questioned were mainly ones with diplomas.

Division of respondent organizations by County is represented in Figure 2. The most questionnaires, that is 83, represented in the sample were filled out by organizations located in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. This is followed by Hajdú-Bihar County with 58

questionnaires and then comes Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén at the third place. Organizations from Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Nógrád and Veszprém County only forwarded an insignificant amount of questionnaires.

Figure 2. Division of respondents by County



Source: own examinations, n =179

Besides identifier data, I also asked questions from the respondents about their experiences with disabled people and persons with working disabilities. Almost one quarter of the respondents had been in connection with disabled people and persons with reduced capacity to work for more than 10 years. 28 % of respondents, which is 51 persons has 6-10 years of experiences and only 11 persons indicated a less than one year experience with persons with reduced capabilities. The causes of this included that the respondent had not been long at the organization or the organization started to employ persons with reduced capacity to work only due to the changes in the amount of the rehabilitation contribution consequently they had relatively few experiences in this kind of employment.

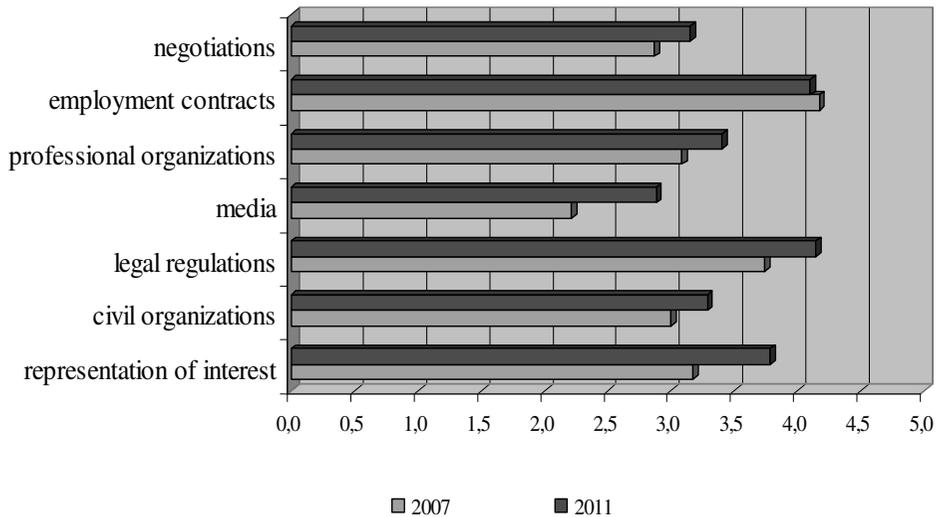
Main results

Question No. 15 of the questionnaire dealt with labour relations. The following factors were analyzed in relation with labour relations of the disabled: *negotiations, employment contracts, professional organizations, media, legal regulations, non-governmental organizations and representation of interest*. Factors were analyzed collectively and separately based on different criteria (position, age and level of management). Results of the latter showed only insignificant differences in the order of factors examined so in this article I review distinctions between the cumulative result of 2007 and 2011 (Figure 3.).

Based on the cumulative result it can be stated that the role of factors listed has reevaluated in the past few years. The highest qualification was given to *legal regulation* due to its particularly important role in hiring persons with disabilities. After this, based on the results, *employment contracts* and *representation of interest* have relevant impacts on the relationship between the employer and disabled people and persons with reduced work capacity.

The role of the latter mentioned organizations has changed in the second largest extent in relation to data from 2007 but the presence of civil organizations have also strengthened probably thanks to the increased amount of rehabilitation contribution.

Figure 3. Assessment of factors concerning the labour relations of the disabled between 2007 and 2011



Source: own examinations, n =179

According to the results, the role of the media shows the greatest improvement, however, this factor represents the lowest average value in both years. The cause of this might be that there is still an insignificant amount of time spent on the issues of employment of the disabled or people with reduced capacity to work and because of this media has a little effect on labour relationships while the cause of low employment rate of affected groups is the lack of information. That is why the amount of media representation should be increased. To provide enough information managers of examined organizations strive to keep up a continuous relationship with the media. Most organizations frequently inform the public on their developments, investments and community programmes in the local media but this is not the case in national TV.

Manager of an Eastern Hungarian family business employing around 100 employees also confirms the importance of professional organizations in the process of the dissemination of information. The organization was founded 30 years ago and produces plastic tools, components, processes metal and provides design and engineering services. The respondent manager is a member and funder of several professional organizations, clusters. He joined professional organizations with professional consideration so he does not necessarily want to cooperate with rehabilitation organizations.

The director got in touch with a local human resources service 20-25 years ago which helped him find disabled workforce. At that time he employed 20-25 people disabled in mobility. The employment lasted for 2 or 3 years. Since then workforce has been provided through internal sources. In the case of the examined organization, labour relations are basically bilateral, which means the presence of the employer and the employee. The business is not looking for disabled workforce on purpose, it just simply considers them the

most suitable workforce to perform the work and until now no subsidies have been requested for this. Unfortunately the past few years' unfavorable economic events have had a negative effect on them as well. According to the manager, probably they will have to look for financial support to employ people with disabilities.

Proper labour relations are ensured by the manager's attitude towards his employees since, despite of the current economic situation, instead of discharging employees he considers preserving jobs more important. For this reason, except for managers and foremen, everyone works in a reduced amount of time, 6 hours a day in a so called overlapping shift work which means that one shift works from 6 am to 12 am and the other from 8 am to 14 pm. Though call for proposals has been published lately by the government for preserving jobs, this is not always a solution – says the manager. In his opinion the biggest problem with government funded projects is that employers have to keep up the headcount even 5 years after the finalization of the project so they are too risky to undertake in such an unpredictable economic situation.

The importance of alternative labour market organizations is emphasized in an interview by the experiences of the manager of a public company who came into contact with disabled persons as potential employees through a foundation. This foundation supports disabled people who check in and strive to find them jobs. This foundation visited the company to introduce two mentally disabled persons with the purpose of integrating them into labour market. Their question was whether it was possible to find an appropriate position for them. The foundation offered to provide mentors who would stay with the two employees all day long. The manager realised that it was worth trying because the cooperation could turn out to be advantageous for both parties. He consulted with the representative of the foundation and then they agreed to terminate the employment in case the new colleagues were not able to fit in or perform their tasks. After this, they took in the new employees and their mentors from the Szimbiózis Foundation. The manager informed the foreman about his decision and agreed in the employment. He explained that from the following week the company would have two more employees who would be first accompanied by their mentors. They agreed that if any problem should occur on the first one or two weeks they would not decide immediately about finishing the employment. They also agreed that the mentors would help the disabled employees for one year.

Now one year has passed and it seems that now they are able to attend work on time and be independent from their mentors as well as perform their tasks individually so the company will employ them in the future. Of course the economic aspect of this decision has to be mentioned as well because when they decided about further employment of the new colleagues they made no economic consideration since it was completely obvious for them to keep the employees.

In the production director's opinion, all factors that support the company's role to help employees fit in is advantageous for them. They do not consider themselves experts or professionals in this field and they do not even have time to become one. They just had the opportunity to let two mentally disabled people try themselves on the labour market and took part in an initiative that is usually refused by employers due to stereotypes.

There are further examples for the case when it is not the alternative labour market service organization that visits the employer. The managers of a family business decided to employ a disabled person so they consulted a foundation about this matter. The examined business, along with its existing activities, planned to establish a foundation that provides human resources outsourcing services. They wanted to provide labour market services by outsourcing workforce with reduced capabilities to other companies and businesses. The manager pointed out that „it is a social problem that civil organizations do not reach the business sector”. Since the examined organization represents both parties (employer and employee) it can work as a mediator and can easily outsource employees. The organization

has 1,500 active clients at the moment. The manager states that when he shares his opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of hiring employees with reduced capacity to work people tend to accept what he explains. He also points out that „it is acceptable to employ disabled people to avoid rehabilitation contribution since eventually employers will realize that it is not only the money that matters and their attitude will change as well.”

Conclusion

Because of social beliefs and stereotypes as well as discrimination are present in the labour market employers have a false picture about people with reduced capacities to work. For their successful employment it is necessary to take into account the kind of disability one has and find the suitable job that the employee desires and is able to perform.

Since the disabled and persons with reduced capabilities form a special group of employees, their specifics and needs probably differ from the ones of an average person. Because of this, employers taking part in the hiring process have to be prepared for special problems and their possible solutions and the proper way of treatment towards these people. Along these factors, those features of human resource management that promote the acceptance, permanent employment and performance of persons with reduced capabilities can be established.

Based on the results of the questionnaire analysis it can be concluded that within the labour relations of disabled people and persons with reduced capacity to work the role of professional organizations and services has strengthened but in the meanwhile there is an increased need for the involvement of the media for the disabled to gain more attention and, by doing so, help their integration to the society. This form of information would lessen stereotypes since commonly consumed media products have a significant attitude forming effect.

Besides these, employers should become acquainted with information and solutions regarding the employment of the concerned which would encourage them to take steps towards the frequent employment of persons with reduced capacity to work.

Experiences of the manager interviews confirm the results of the questionnaire analysis. They claimed that in the case of disabled people and persons with changed working abilities it is not only the labour relations that are specific but all areas of human resources management should be rearranged. These modifications do not mean impossible requirements. Sometimes it refers to the reconsideration of management roles, sometimes certain systems have to be altered. Successful introduction of modifications in the organization depends on whether the members are able to express solidarity towards the disabled or persons with reduced capabilities. Without proper attitude, these changes are hard to realize.

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AZ ALTERNATÍV MUNKAERŐ-PIACI SZOLGÁLTATÓ SZERVEZETEK SZEREPE A MUNKAÜGYI KAPCSOLATOK RENDSZERÉBEN

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Összefoglaló

Munkaügyi kapcsolatok alatt a munkavállalók és a munkáltatók, illetve ezek érdekképviselői szervezetei között fennálló hivatalos és nem hivatalos kapcsolatainak összességét értjük. A fogyatékos, illetve megváltozott munkaképességű embereket foglalkoztató szervezetek esetében ez a kapcsolatrendszer sajátos. Mind a kétoldalú, mind a háromoldalú kapcsolatrendszer kiegészülhet egy további szereplővel, az alternatív munkaerő-piaci szolgáltató szervezetekkel.

Magyarországon közel egymillió megváltozott munkaképességű és fogyatékos ember él, akiknek az aktív foglalkoztatása elenyésző, ugyanakkor a 2010. január 1.-től megemelt rehabilitációs hozzájárulás összeg következtében egyre több szervezet kíván megváltozott munkaképességű munkavállalót alkalmazni. Az alternatív munkaerő-piaci szolgáltató szervezetek többek között ebben is segítséget nyújtanak és ezáltal nemcsak a munkát biztosító szervezetet támogatják, hanem segítik a fogyatékos, illetve megváltozott munkaképességű munkavállalókat is az elhelyezkedésben.

Kulcsszavak: munkaügyi kapcsolat, munkáltató, fogyatékos és megváltozott munkaképességű munkavállaló, érdekképviselő, emberi erőforrás menedzsment

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