

**CHALLENGES OF EMPLOYMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES  
IN ALBANIA**

**Sabina Belshaku\*, Dorina Xhani\*\***

*\*University of Elbasan, Rruga Ismail Zyma, 3001 Elbasan, Albania*

*\*\*European University of Tirana, Ruga Xhanfize Keko, 1001 Tirana, Albania*

*Corresponding Author: sabina\_belshaku@yahoo.com*

**Abstract**

Employment is one of the key elements for social inclusion and economic independence for people with disabilities of working age. Ensuring the right to employment for people with disabilities is an important objective for our country as improving the policies and employment situation of people with disabilities brings benefits not only to them, but to society as a whole. The guarantee of this right must be provided on equal terms for persons with disabilities as well as other citizens, so that this category is able to enjoy life in all its aspects. The purpose of the study is to identify the barriers (problems / challenges) that affect people with disabilities in the field of employment in Tirana. The method used to conduct the study is quantitative and the study is based on the questionnaire as the main instrument. The questionnaire consists of 30 questions. The questions used are closed. Dichotomous, like-minded and multi-alternative questions were used. Participants in the implementation of this quantitative study were 260 persons with disabilities who met the following conditions set in advance by the applicant. The method used to determine the sampling size is the statistical method. The study showed that the chances for employment of people with disabilities remain worrying. There is a lack of state intervention through public vocational training centers for the adaptation of people with disabilities in the labor market, or financial support from the state budget.

**Keywords:** *Employment, social inclusion, people with disabilities.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Employment is one of the key elements for social inclusion and economic independence for people with disabilities of working age. Ensuring the right to employment for people with disabilities is an important objective for our country as improving the policies and employment situation of people with disabilities brings benefits not only to them, but to society as a whole. The guarantee of this right must be provided on equal terms for persons with disabilities as well as other citizens, so that this category is able to enjoy life in all its aspects. Approximately 10 percent of the world's population suffers from some form of disability. One in ten Europeans has a physical, sensory or mental disability. The most important issues for the disabled remain education, employment, socialization, the possibility for the person with special abilities to receive the same treatment as all other citizens. A person with a disability may be considered as such in one society or circumstance, but not in another. In most of the world, there are negative stereotypes and deep and persistent prejudices against people who have certain conditions or changes. These attitudes define who is considered a person with a disability and further reinforce the negative image of people with disabilities. A society would be considered humane only when its members show empathy and provide support for people with disabilities, such as persons with disabilities.

People with disabilities continue to be disadvantaged in the labor market. The reasons for the disadvantages can be many. They start with education, vocational training, lack of adaptability, lack of support services, to prejudice and discrimination. A person in a wheelchair may find it difficult to get a job properly, not because of his / her conditions,

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but because there are environmental barriers, such as inaccessible buses or ramps in the workplace that are not available to him / her access there.

Employment is one of the key elements for social inclusion and economic independence for people with disabilities of working age. Ensuring the right to employment for people with disabilities should be an important objective for our country as improving policies, removing social barriers that hinder the wider integration of people with disabilities in society and improving the employment situation of people with disabilities disability brings benefits not only to them but to society as a whole.

The literature shows that people with disabilities work mainly in unprofessional, service-related and job-less positions that do not require good skills. In under developed countries many people with disabilities work in the informal sectors of the economy doing irregular work (Coleridge 2005). Their work is focused on a small number of professions. More people work part-time. People with physical and sensory disabilities are more likely to be employed than those with mental health or intellectual disabilities (Fitzgerald, 2005; Wilton, 2006).

Employment is an important dimension for everyone. Integration into the labor market gives people with disabilities the chance of a dignified and active life, without the need for significant support from the state. The inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor market is quite difficult for many reasons. Inadequacy of work environments is mentioned as one of these reasons. Inherited discrimination in the education system is another factor that makes people with disabilities less competitive in the labor market. A further factor is the mentality and attitude towards people with disabilities, which need a lot of time to change.

In Albania this issue has been addressed through several laws. The Law on Protection against Discrimination contains a special chapter on discrimination in the field of employment, addressing all stages of the employment process.

The Law on Employment Promotion sets a legal quota in favor of the employment of persons with disabilities. By law, in both the private and public sectors, 1 in 25 employees must be a person with a disability. This law also creates opportunities for people with disabilities to receive free or limited professional vocational training.

Unfortunately very little has been done to implement the employment quota for people with disabilities, not only in the private sector but also in the public one. Sanctions for non-compliance with this legal obligation have not worked. It is necessary to adapt the law so that the private sector can be offered incentives, so that employers have an interest in hiring people with disabilities.

It often happens that people with disabilities are not willing to engage in the labor market for fear of losing their disability payment. This issue can be resolved by giving them several months to test their chances of integrating into a particular job, before losing their disability payment. Another suggestion is to reduce this payment if people with disabilities are employed part-time. People with disabilities would benefit greatly from flexible working hours.

It is noticed that often employers do not have enough information about the potentials and skills of people with disabilities as potential employees. The inclusion of some young people with disabilities in the labor market has shown quite clearly their capacities, which have been noted by the employer themselves. These positive experiences need to be promoted and taken further.

The purpose of the study is to identify the barriers (problems / challenges) that affect people with disabilities in the field of employment in Tirana, and also to identify the extent to which the legislation in force is applied in the field of employment, the problem of infrastructure for employment of persons with disabilities.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

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The study aims to identify problems for the employment of people with disabilities. The method used to conduct the study is quantitative and the study is based on the questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire consists of 30 questions and the questions used are closed. Dichotomous, like-minded and multi-alternative questions were used which should have circulated only one of the alternatives. The questions are arranged in a logical order which makes this study clearer and more understandable. The questions contained in the questionnaire were carefully formulated and the language used was simple taking into account the category of the group that we have in the study. The questions are not difficult to understand as they are simple for every individual.

The questionnaire was completed in a period of 1 month. The questions are formulated to see what are the problems in the employment of people with disabilities.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections:

1. First section: includes personal data (such as: place of birth, age, gender ....) education, profession, employment
2. Section Two: Includes the category of questions that must be completed by those individuals who are employed
3. Section three: includes the category of questions that need to be completed by those individuals who have previously had work experience and who are currently unemployed for various reasons.

### INSTRUMENT PILOTING

The piloting of the questionnaire is to ensure that it would be effective in gathering the necessary information of the study and it was done through the preliminary realization of 30 questionnaires with 30 people with disabilities. Further after the pilot where the questionnaire was effective, the data collection was done.

#### *The sample of the study*

The sample of this study consists of 260 people with disabilities living in the city of Tirana, a number which is representative and comprehensive of the issues I have studied. The method used to determine the sampling size is the statistical method. In the case of the study the sample population is 800 persons. The subjects of the study from the gender point of view were 144 females and 116 males. The territorial sampling unit is the city of Tirana, because the researcher had easier access to this group in the city of Tirana. In selecting the sample, I had the assistance of officials in all three NGOs. Their selection was done deliberately, taking into account that the questionnaire was distributed to all 3 selected NGOs, always having the fulfillment of the criteria by the person who would complete the questionnaire, as for example \*should be a person with disabilities, and should be over 18 years old.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first step for the field implementation of this quantitative study would be the selection of three organizations where the questionnaire will be conducted. For this I established contacts with 1- Together Foundation, 2- ADP, 3- Association of persons who do not listen to ANAD in Tirana. The leaders of the NGO were informed on any important information for the study, on the reason and purpose of its objectives. Thanks to the contact, it received approval to continue with the study, enabling to get acquainted with the necessary contacts with people with disabilities who were part of NGOs. From the beginning of the procedure the persons who participated in the study were informed about the purpose of the study, objectives, issues of confidentiality and anonymity. So I was able to get informed consent from them to be part

of the study. Together Foundation was the intermediary association in identifying the subjects and enabled me to make contacts with the other two organizations.

The questionnaire was conducted in two ways: near the NGO premises as this environment was familiar and friendly to the subjects and also electronically. Their realization is done in a time frame of one month.

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### *Demographic and general data*

The opportunity for people in a society to be affected by different diseases is the same for both men and women.

Based on the results collected from the study conducted in three NGOs, it turns out that we have a higher percentage of women who have disabilities. From the analysis of the data it results that 55% of the respondents are female and 45% are male.

The results of the questionnaire show that we have 40% of people with disabilities in the age group of 18-28 years. The age group 29-39 turns out to be in 35% of respondents. About 20% belong to the age group 40-50 years and about 5% belong to the age group 51-60 years.

#### • *Type of disability*

Persons with hearing and speech disabilities, persons with wheelchairs or invalids and blind persons. People who are classified as disabled, mainly people in wheelchairs

From the 260 persons asked for the realization of the questionnaire, it results that in three NGOs we have persons with hearing and speech disabilities, persons with wheelchairs or invalids and blind persons. People who are classified as disabled, mainly people in wheelchairs are in the percentage of about 26%.

Some of the reasons that people mainly have this disability:

*Persons born with this disability*

*Persons have become disabled due to accidents they may have suffered during their lifetime*

*Persons may have had accidents and been injured at work (classified as working invalids).*

Most of them were congenitally disabled, respectively 30% of them. While 10% were done with people with disabilities before the age of 18 and 60% after the age of 18. This also shows their difficulty in getting a job, as people who have become disabled while they were in employment due to an accident at work or an occupational disease.

Although progress is observed in primary and secondary education, which is evident in the existence of some positive models, the same cannot be said for higher education. There are no specific provisions for students with disabilities in these institutions. Public universities are totally unsuitable in terms of construction, which makes it impossible for students with disabilities to attend them. Students with visual impairments, who have the opportunity to overcome some of the construction barriers, have difficulty in obtaining customized books as well as in passing exams, due to the lack of specific regulations in this regard. Most of these obstacles and gaps are filled by the goodwill of different individuals.

From the analysis of the data collected from the study conducted it results that the categories of persons with disabilities are educated. From the collected results it results that 10% of the interviewed persons answered that they are uneducated. These people with disabilities have never sat on school benches. This is a direct discrimination against these people with disabilities. The reasons why we have this figure and this kind of denial of right are numerous; like what:

*Discrimination against school admission by school leaders*

*The degree of illness of the disabled person*

*Lack of family economic conditions*

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*Indifference that occurs from parents.*

*People with disabilities who have attended only primary education are about 12% of the respondents.*

The reasons why these persons were expelled from school are mainly due to the fact that they did not receive proper attention from the respective teachers. Not being able to take care of these categories of people with disabilities shows that we do not have a qualified teaching staff in schools.

From the collected results it results that we have a result that 15% of the respondents have 9-year education. It turns out that we have a relatively high percentage of people with disabilities who are in secondary and higher education. The result is that 43% of the respondents have secondary education and 20% of the persons have higher education.

The reason why we have these results is based on the fact that family members have begun to remove the existing prejudices that if you have a child with disabilities you should isolate him from the social environment. Seeing that the number of people with disabilities has increased parents no longer see it as a problem that their child is disabled. As a result, the interest of the parents in the education of this category of society has increased. People with disabilities who pursue higher education are mainly those people who have a high self-esteem that even they as individuals of a society can adapt and be educated like all normal people.

Mainly persons attending higher education are:

- \* People with vision problems
- \* Deaf people
- \* Persons classified as disabled (persons in wheelchairs)

Despite their desire to be educated and to have a profession, most of them have not managed to realize this desire. 65% of the participants could not have a profession, which made them satisfied with the payment they receive for disability. While 35% of them could have a profession that could create opportunities to integrate into the labor market.

Women victims of violence do not have a profession, aggravating it even more their situation.

## CONCLUSIONS

People with disabilities face social exclusion day by day and unequal opportunities in daily life. The chances for employment of people with disabilities remain worrying, there is a lack of state intervention through public vocational training centers for the adaptation of people with disabilities in the labor market, or support with funds from the state budget. Albania after the '90s has undertaken several legal initiatives in order to guarantee the right to employment of persons with disabilities. But regardless of the legal framework, the reality is quite the opposite. Albania lacks strategies for employing individuals with disabilities, and the models are limited to some employment models created by Albanian NGOs.

- A problematic fact according to our legislation is the continuation of the conception of the individual with disabilities as a person incapable of work, only beneficiaries of disability pension or disability payment. Apart from the fact that this legislation is not complete, even those provisions that are in force are not implemented in practice.

- There is no information of this category from the responsible institutions. Many individuals with disabilities do not register with employment offices and thus cannot access employment and vocational training services.

- The Labor Code prohibits all forms of discrimination in employment and promotes the vocational training of persons with disabilities. At the same time law no. 7995, dated 20.09.1995

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"On the promotion of employment", provides and support employment, counseling and vocational training for people with disabilities. However, the obligation to employ one individual with disabilities for every 25 employees has not been implemented, neither in private business nor in state institutions. Currently, small businesses with less than 25 employees predominate in the country. There are also no sanctions and practices for the proper implementation of the law in question and so far no alternative mechanisms have been found. There has not been the necessary awareness from the tax authorities and employers for the implementation of the law.

- A database is missing which shows the level of education and vocational training of people with disabilities. A series of barriers that make it difficult to employ people with disabilities, inadequate facilities, prejudices that come from both society and colleagues within the workplace.
- There is a lack of awareness and information about the rights of people with disabilities.
- Lack of identification of the real need of people with disabilities, of all integration requirements, which serve as a starting point for policy development and improvement.

From the research results we come to some conclusions about the current employment situation of people with disabilities and the problems that this part of society faces day by day. Living for this part of the society is difficult because even though policies and initiatives have been taken to improve the living of this part of the population, their livelihood is still in danger.

- We can say that the most basic or main problem is the inadequate infrastructure that endangers the livelihood of people with disabilities. The infrastructure in Tirana is inadequate for this part of society that has a disability.

Proper signage for PWDs is missing. Road ramps and institutions are missing. Discrimination against this part of society comes from the construction of road infrastructure and official institutions, as well as palaces and apartments in the city.

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