

Employers' attitudes regarding the employment of persons with protected characteristics



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Recent study has been prepared by Telakka Bt. entrusted by the Equal Treatment Authority in the scope of its project called „TAMOP 5.5.5/08/1 Combating Discrimination, Shaping Societal Attitude and Strengthening the Work of the Authority”.

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Relations between Employers' Attitudes, Labour Market Employment of Employees with Protected Characteristics and Insuring Proper Working Conditions

The Aim and the Method of the Research

The aim of this study is presenting the situation and problems of employees with protected characteristics at their workplace, from both the viewpoints of employers and employees.

For this study, we made use of data analysis results of both (1) quantitative and (2) qualitative methods. For the quantitative part, questionnaires for employees, employers and trade union leaders were used, whereas for the qualitative part, focus group discussions with employers and with population groups were held.

(1) The questionnaires filled in by employers and the attached employment data sheets reflect the situation of employees with protected characteristics, as well as the active labour market tools accessed by employers. Questions regarding flexible work arrangements were assessed, on the one hand, by the employers' questionnaire (What kind of possibilities exist for flexible work?), and on the other hand, by the employees' questionnaire (Which possibilities do employees access?).

(2) Focus group analysis allows for a deeper understanding of employers' attitudes and motivations. The focus group discussions conducted with employees with young children, with middle aged employees and with university students offer insights into the situation, difficulties and problems of those groups – also seeded from the viewpoint of our research – who have either been crowded out of the labour market and are currently searching for a job, or have a job, but are meeting difficulties in insuring the work-life balance.

The main results of the study are summarized below

1. The study of measures aiming at improving the employment of disadvantaged groups: Accessing active employment policy tools

In combating the obstacles of increasing low employment level, passive and active labour market tools are highly important. Out of these two, in this study we asked about accessing the active tools, using the employment data sheet. Passive tools are all those provisions (typically financial provisions for the unemployed) which are compensating for the income decrease resulting from job loss, i.e. which are moderating the negative effects of unemployment. In contrast with these, active tools are aiming at increasing employment: we are talking about all those subventions and services which serve the goal of employment increase or workforce stimulation.

International references recommend increasing the proportion of active tools against passive ones, because passive tools decrease the willingness to work, just like all financial allocations not resulting from work. In recent years, there have been several attempts to stimulate workplace creation in Hungary, of which the most important ones are the so-called START Programs referring to four different employee groups: mothers with young children, labour market entrants, middle aged employees and those with changed working ability.

- ❖ By the time of the 2010 data collection, the tax advantage of the START cards was accessible for all three sectors involved in this research. From the normative tax advantage of the cards, most employers accessed the Start-card benefit for employing young labour market entrants. 24% of the firms in the market sector, 20% of civil organizations, 30% of institutions employing clerks and 28% of those employing civil servants have taken part in the program in the past 12 months.
- ❖ 5% of employers of the market sector, 5% of public institutions, and 8% of civil organizations have taken part in the Start-Plus Programs giving a chance to mothers with young children. About 4-13% of the institutions of our sample have taken part in the Start-Plus Programs promoting the employment of the long-term unemployed.

2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Employing People with Protected Characteristics: the Viewpoint of Employers

In the focus group discussions conducted with employers, we asked in detail about the opinions of employers regarding employees with protected characteristics.

- ❖ We assessed that the employers were most critical regarding Roma people. While they were able to identify with people with young children and with middle aged employees due to their own personal involvement, most of them were unable to interpret or at least to sense the disadvantageous labour market position.
- ❖ The decisive view on Roma – also reinforced by the statements heard in the focus group discussions conducted with different population groups – was that Roma themselves are responsible for their situation. In almost all groups, statements expressing stereotypes such as Roma people are lazy, unable to dress properly and arrive on time for work, hard to motivate and unable to integrate, were heard.
- ❖ The typical attitude, the most common explanation given to the disadvantageous situation of Roma people is that this is due to their attitude and not to their living conditions, a phenomenon called internal attribution in the psychology literature (they are responsible for their fate). In contrast, with regard to labour market entrants, middle aged employees and people with young children, the reason for their labour market disadvantages were ascribed mostly to external facts, thus in these cases we can speak of an external attribution (the reasons are, among others, the inflexibility of the labour market, the prejudices of employers).

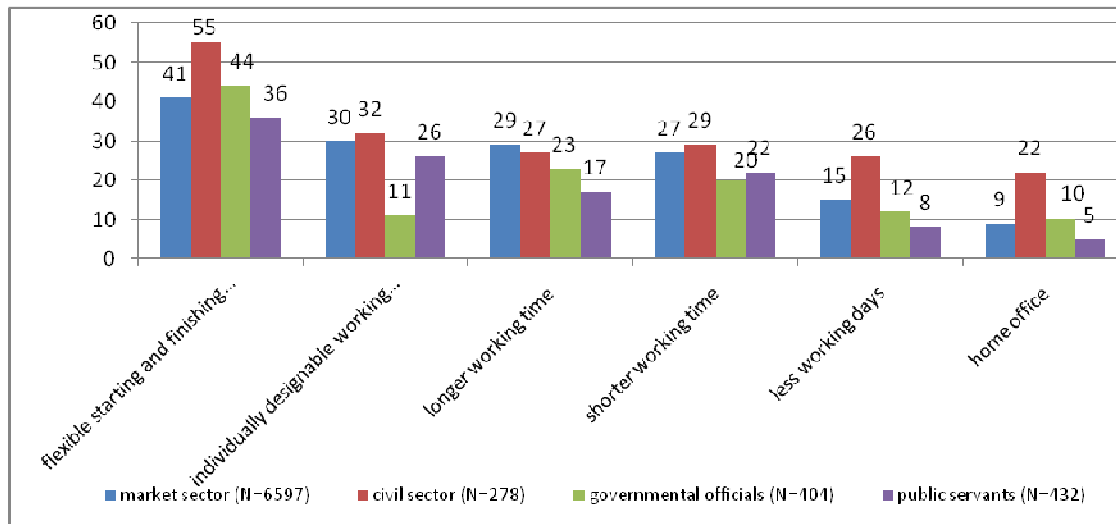
In explaining labour market success, it is precisely the opposite attribution mechanisms that work: whereas in case of Roma employees, external factors are said to play the main role (their employment is facilitated by state programs), with regard to young mothers and middle aged employees, within the reasons of success, internal reasons were emphasized (they are loyal, hard-working, eager to prove). The majority of employers consider people with disabilities are the winners of the labour market demand and supply system, thanks to the rehabilitation contribution.¹ Demand for employees with disabilities has significantly changed in recent years, and at the same time, their positive features (the eagerness to prove) also contribute to their workplace achievements.

3. Atypical work arrangements, working time and flexibility, work-life balance

Employees of the four sectors have very different possibilities with regard to flexible working time. The most flexible are with no doubt those working in civil organizations, and those working in the public sector have the less chance for flexible working hours (Diagram 1).

¹ Rehabilitation contribution: Employers with over 20 employees are paying a rehabilitation contribution aiming to promote the employment rehabilitation of people with changed working ability, provided the proportion of their own employees with disability does not reach 5% (obligatory employment level). Source: Munkaügyi Fórum, <http://www.munkaugyiforum.hu/Rehabilitacios-hozzajarulas-2011-januar-1-toi>, downloaded on March 7, 2011.

Diagram 1: The Chance of Employees in the Different Sectors for Choosing from the Possible Kinds of Flexible Working Time (percentage)



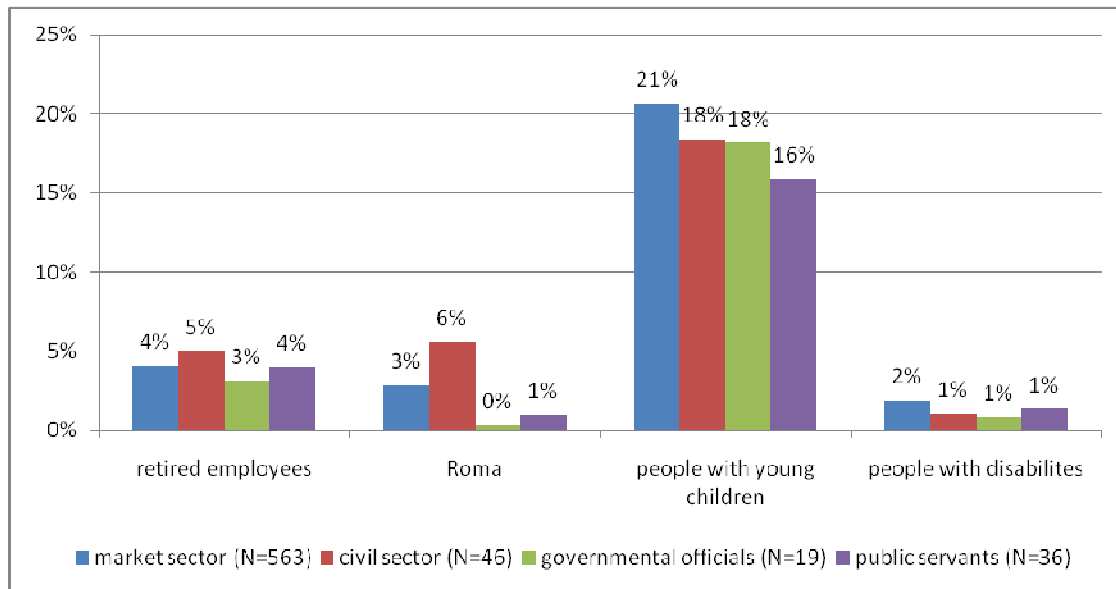
The multi-dimensional analysis of flexible working time shed light on the factors that affect the access to these possibilities. Compared to indefinite contracts, contract work and „other“ types of work arrangements increase the chance for flexible work. Women have more chance for flexible working hours, for part-time work and for longer working hours, than do men.

Being a Roma decreases the chance of accessing most of flexible work arrangements. For all cases it is true that education level increases the chance for flexible work. With regard to the household typology, we observed that older married people and those living with a partner, without children have around half as much chance for longer working time, telecommute, individual organization of working time and for less working days, than do young singles without children. People living in shire-towns have less chance for flexible, shorter or individually designabile working time, and for fewer working days, than do employees in the capital city Budapest. The bad state of health has a significant influence on all possibilities for flexible work: people suffering from some chronic disease or having a disability have a higher chance of accessing any kind of flexible work arrangement, compared to those employees not suffering of any such disadvantage. Former trade union members have a higher chance for flexible work than those employees who have never belonged to such unions.

Employment Level and Discrimination Experiences of Disadvantaged Groups

The quantitative analysis of the labour market presence of employees with protected characteristics revealed the fact that the employment level of disadvantaged people differs across the sectors. Within the group of retired employees, no big differences are traceable: their proportion is the highest in the civil sector (5% in such organizations), and the lowest (3%) among the public and government officials. As far as the Roma are concerned, we met a surprisingly high rate in civil organizations (an average of 6%), however, among public and government officials, their proportion is less than 1%. Of the three groups involved in the analysis, it is mostly people with children who are being employed. Their average rate is the highest in the market sector (21%), and the lowest among the clerks (16%). The proportion of people with disabilities is generally very low: on the average, out of all employees, they only represent 1% in the civil respectively in the public sector, and 2% in the competition sector (Diagram 2).

Diagram 2: Average Proportion of Employees with Disadvantages in the Institutions, across the Sectors (percentage)

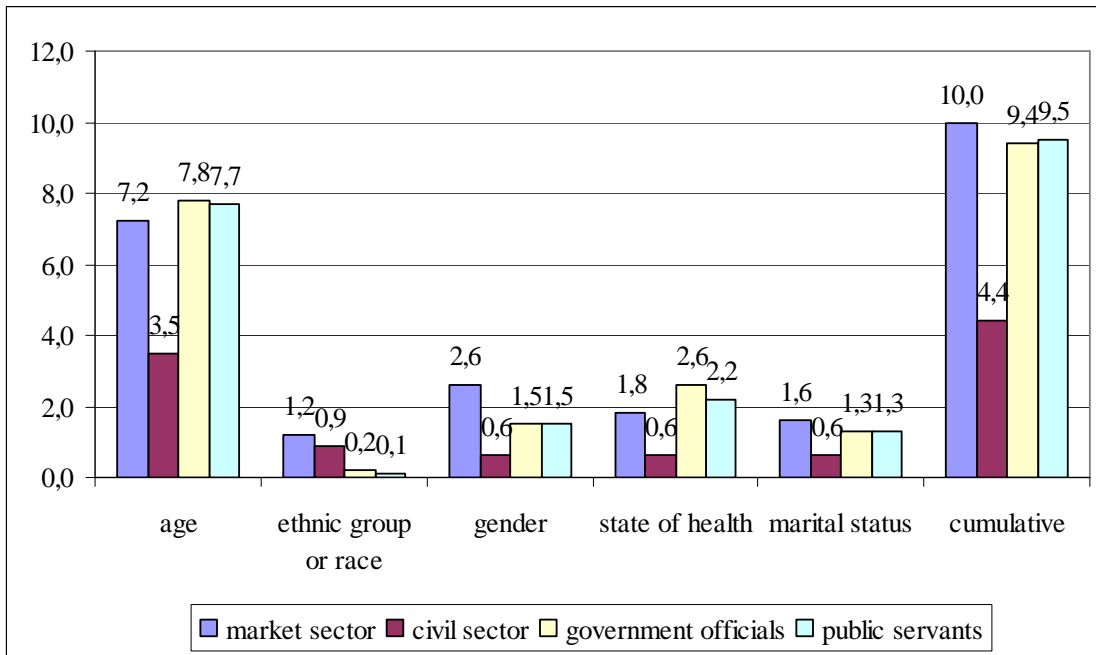


In the four sectors included in the analysis, almost 10.000 employees were asked altogether. Discrimination was assessed across five variables: age, ethnic group, gender, state of health and marital status. On basis of the data analysis it can be stated that it is employees in the civil sector who need to fear the least of discrimination at the workplace, in either promotion, working conditions or wage.

In the 12 months preceding data collection, 7% of employees in the market sector, 8% in the public sector and only 4% in the civil sector experienced discrimination due to their age. Due to gender, the highest rate of those employees discriminated against was found in the market sector (3%), the lowest number of discrimination cases was registered yet again in the civil sector. Due to their state of health, it was employees in the public and governmental sector that felt discriminated against in the highest proportion.

In the competition and public sector, the proportion of those employees who were **discriminated against** at their workplace in any respect (either wage, or working conditions, or promotion) is high, and lies between 9 and 10%. In contrast, in the civil sector, workplace discrimination is less frequent: out of 100 employees, four claimed to have experienced discrimination within one year (Diagram 3).

Diagram3: The Prevalence of Discrimination due to Age, Ethnic Group or Race, Gender, State of Health and Marital Status and cumulative, experienced by Employees in the Market sector (N=8542), in the Civil Sector (N=341), among Government Officials (N=508) and among Public servants (N=602) (percentage)



The above data validate the results assessed in this topic in the past years with other researches, which measured discrimination experience not specifically among employees but on the sample of the entire population as such (Tárki-Omnibusz, 2009.) In the twelve months preceding the data collection in 2009, 6% of the active age population had experienced discrimination, whereas discrimination experience of employees reached 9%, the majority of which consisted of wage disadvantage.