Good Practices
in Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities
Italy – Poland – Greece
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Edited by:
Daskalopoulos Apostolos
Kornelia Czerwińska
Jadwiga Kuczyńska-Kwapisz

Academy of Special Education Press 2007
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Comparative Study for the Exchange of Models, Methodologies, Tools and Practices

Italy-Poland-Greece

edited by
Daskalopoulos Apostolos
Introduction

The European Union program of “EQUAL” was drawn with a view to strengthen the European strategy for the employment and is mainly addressed to teams of population that face particular difficulties and obstacles in professional and social integration.

The Community initiative, “EQUAL”, as all the action and programs that have been decided as well as the financing by the European Union to concretisation, shows particularly the need that member states have to collaborate. Via collaboration member states can exchange information and knowledge. It is explicit that we follow the same frames for the development of the comparative study/guide “Structures of Professional Training and Promotion in the Employment of Disable People”.

In the development process of the comparative study/guide, three partners representing the countries that participate in the program Greece, Italy and Poland, had participated. The individuals with disabilities are an important category of population, which faces frequent problems of social exclusion, stigmatization, indifference and unequal treatment from their social environment. The biases are the main reason for the previously mentioned treatments. The decision to publicise a comparative study/guide and the briefing it provides round the operation of supporting structures for promoting the employment to the disabled, contribute considerably to their consultation. In addition, institutions for the disabled would be able to be informed and thus shape more effective treatment and configuration of claims. The Institutions” political claim and intervention for the promotion of solutions in the various problems that the disabled face would become more effective. We believe that the different economic and social conditions that prevail in our countries have their reflection in the way that our countries have dealt with the problems of disabled people. Particularly important of course is to examine the reflection of political statements about the rights of disabled people in the current social conditions.

The development of a comparative study/guide and the prospect to compare methods and practices of professional training and re-establishment
across different countries provide big utility in institutions so that they can draw and claim the professional future of the disabled. Also the study/guide strengthens the self-confidence of the disabled. They realise that they can make it in the currently high competitive society.

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is essential to underline the need for confrontation from all sides and the promotion of solutions examining all the parameters related to the modern educational and professional preparation of young persons and specifically persons with disabilities. Individual actions can guarantee only temporary solutions in the problems that are faced by disabled people.

At this point we have to mention that despite all the difficulties we faced in the co-ordination of involved institutions and individuals, we accomplished to ensure the common place for the structure and the content of comparative study/guide. We also agreed that materials that are not included in the content of the study/guide because of its thematic content, can be included as annex in cases that contain useful information about disabled people.

Thus all the partners agreed and undertook the responsibility to develop a section of work based on the conditions of the country they represent. The agreed sectors are listed below:

1. Occupation of people with disabilities in Italy, Poland and Greece.
2. Legal framework for employment in Italy, Poland and Greece.
3. Implementation of policies in Italy, Poland and Greece.
4. Structure and Organizations that supporting the employment of disable people in Italy, Poland and Greece.
5. Conclusion.

Daskalopoulos Apostolos
1. Occupation of people with disabilities

1.1. Italy | Giorgio Masciocchi, Pier Paolo Visione

The overall population in Italy is of 58,462,375\(^1\) people. Of which, people with disabilities are about 2,600,000, equal to about 4.8% of the over six-year-old population living at home\(^2\). Considering also the 190,134 people resident at national health centres, we reach a total of a little less than 2,800,000 thousand people.

That survey is based on a very restrictive disability criterion\(^3\), according to which only those people who reported a total lack of autonomy for at least one essential function of daily life are considered disabled. In broader terms, if we include also those people showing a remarkable difficulty in carrying out one or more of these functions, the survey rises to 6millions 980 thousand people, equal to 13% of the over six-year-old population, datum in line with that detected in the main industrialised countries.

The number of disabled people in working age, that is in the age class between 15 and 64 years, would amount to about 526,000 units, according to what results out of the third report on the implementation state of law n. 68 of 1999\(^4\) (“Regulations for the right to work of disabled people”), presented every two years to the Parliament by the Ministry of Employment.

From a gender point of view, it stands out that while the Italian share of women in working age is of 47.5%, that regarding female disability stops at 44.1%. With reference to the territorial extent, a high demographic density is registered in the South, where 36.6% of the 526,000 disabled in working age live.

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\(^2\) The main source of data used to estimate the number of people with disabilities in Italy is the ISTAT survey on Health conditions and the recourse to health services in 2004-2005. It is yet partial, and must therefore be integrated to reach a global estimate.

\(^3\) Istat adopts the definition of disability proposed by the World Health Organisation in the International Classification of Deficiencies, Disabilities and Handicaps (1980).

\(^4\) The paper refers to the period 2004/2005 and it is the result of a survey carried out with the support of ISFOL and the General Direction of the Ministry Labour Market.
1. Occupation of people with disabilities

Tab. 1. Italian working-age population and disabled people, classified according to geographical area. Absolute values in thousands – Year 2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Working-age population</th>
<th>Working-age population with disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>9,324</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>6,655</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6,585</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and Islands</td>
<td>12,215</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>34,779</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The age percentage distribution of disabled population is different from that of the rest of the population. Disabled population is distributed in a directly proportional way to the different age groups. The result is that only 6.1% of disabled people is between 15 and 29 years old, given that the percentage reaches 59.5% among the over 50.


Chart 1. Italian population and disabled people. % age-class distribution – Year 2005.

The employed disabled are 38.1% compared to 63.4% of the overall Italian population as shown in the following table.
Tab. 2. Italian working-age population and share of employed people, classified according to geographical area. Details about disabled people – Year 2005 (absolute values in thousands – Year 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Italian population</th>
<th>Population with disabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
<td>% employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>9,324</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>6,655</td>
<td>71.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6,585</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and Islands</td>
<td>12,215</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>34,779</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The biggest crisis is recorded in the South, where the presence of the highest share of disabled people in working age (36.6%), of which only a third declares to be employed, is a record of the lowest values in the entire country. The second area with the highest number of disabled people is the North-West, with 144,000 people, equal to 27.4% of the national total, and with an employed people percentage over 41%. The North-East represents the area with the highest percentage values of employed disabled (41.9%).

As regards the employment and unemployment condition of the disabled, it stands out that the percentage of those who declare themselves to be unemployed (17.1%) is almost double compared that regarding the Country’s population (9.7%).

Tab. 3. Employed people in Italy and disabled people. Classification by subordinate employment/self employment – Year 2005 (absolute values in thousands).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Employed People</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Disabled Employed People</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate employee</td>
<td>16,066</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed worker</td>
<td>5,994</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22,060</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Occupation of people with disabilities

With reference to contractual typology, people with disabilities declaring to work for somebody are over 157,000, equal to 78.1% of employed people, and those recognising their position in the self-employment field are 44,000. Moreover, a greater protection for the disabled employment, regulated by a specific set of rules, explains the higher number of disabled employees.

![Chart 2. Employed people and disabled people in Italy. Percentage distribution by activity sector. Year 2005.](chart2)

The occupation sectors representing the most frequent job prospect are, at the first place, the Civil Service with a percentage value of 29.1%, followed by Education and Health with 25.4%, Industry (22.2%) and Trade (20.4%). The Trade and Industry sectors employ respectively 17.7% and 16.1%.

With regard to the employment condition of disabled population, it is interesting to examine which course was taken up to reach the employable condition. The ways and times of job search represent a widespread cultural aspect in the Country, conditioned by the work policies in force (graph 1.4). Four main search channels can be identified: two formal channels, such as public and private employment services, an informal channel – friends, relatives, acquaintances -, and a big bloc composed of ads on the press, autonominations, state competitive examinations and contacts provided by schools and vocational training institutes.
As regards the current condition of employed people, the most successful search channel for people with disabilities appears to be the spontaneous sending of curricula, the answer to ads on the press and state competitive examinations (50% against 61.4% of the Italian population). The channel of informal relations (kinship, friendship) follows, chosen by 35.6% 34.1% of Italian workers and the disabled portion respectively.

Only 2.2% of the people interviewed declares to have become part of the working world through the public employment service. However higher, also the datum detected on disabled people is low (11%). The enrollment to the employment centre is indeed compulsory in order to get benefits (pensions or disability allowances for disabled people).

The data sources are:
- “Survey on workers using the rules and regulations on compulsory employment” (Ministry of employment, 1996-2000) for the section regarding compulsory employment,
- “Quarterly survey on manpower” (ISTAT, 2002) for the section regarding compulsory employment,
- “Survey on Social Cooperatives” (ISTAT, 2001) for the section regarding social cooperatives involved in the introduction to employment of people with disabilities,
1. Occupation of people with disabilities

- “Monitoring of Employment Services” (ISFOL, 2003, 2004), Sample survey on the functioning of Employment Centres (ISFOL, 2005) for the data regarding targeted employment services and users,
- III Survey to the Parliament on the state of implementation of the Law 12 March 1999, n. 68 “Provisions for the right to work of people with disabilities”.

1.2. Poland | Kamila Miler, Academy of Special Education

The data presented below comes from an all-Poland representative study of the health condition of the Polish population which was carried out by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) in 2004. The study included 14,500 households in which 42,991 people were examined. The results were generalized for the population living in Poland permanently according to the situation in December 2004.

Tab. 1. The number of people in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16-24 years of age</th>
<th>25-49 years of age</th>
<th>50 years of age and more</th>
<th>The whole of society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5,766,989</td>
<td>13,779,810</td>
<td>11,590,506</td>
<td>38,180,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,828,481</td>
<td>2,938,508</td>
<td>6,854,498</td>
<td>6,925312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,583965</td>
<td>5,006,541</td>
<td>19,701,881</td>
<td>18,478,368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

W- women, M- men
The source: the GUS data from 2004, Table 2. Population according to sex and age, the situation on 30 June 2004.
The data presented above shows that as far as the structure of the Polish population according to age is concerned, the youngest people (0-14 years old) constitute almost 17% of the whole population. People aged 20-39 constitute quite a large group – 29.9%, as well as older people who are professionally active (aged 40-59) – 28.5%. People older than 59 constitute more than 17% of the population. The analysis of sex and age distribution shows that women outnumber men with age, particularly in case of people who are older than 50.

Tab. 2. The number of disabled people in the country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Disability</th>
<th>Total disabled population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind and visually impaired people</td>
<td>1,053.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf and hard of hearing people</td>
<td>410.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented above shows that approximately six million disabled people lived in Poland in 2004. Incidence of disability increases with age, rapidly in people older than 50 years old. Every seventh person is disabled in the group of people in their forties, almost every third person in the group of people in their fifties, and every second person and more in the group of people in their seventies and older. The data also shows that a general disability rate is higher in women than in men. However, there are more disabled males than females in each peer group.
1. Occupation of people with disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of disability</th>
<th>Total disabled population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically disabled people</td>
<td>1,575.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectually disabled people</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentally ill people</td>
<td>255.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

W – women, M- men

The source: the GUS data from 2004, Report on the health condition of the Polish population in 2004 (in thousands). Table 7/12 Disabled people aged 15 and older according to diseases, p. 252 (the respondents to the survey could enumerate several diseases they suffered from).

Cardiovascular diseases occur most frequently in the group of disabled people (in 49% of the whole adult disabled population), then motor impairments and conditions (46%), visual impairments and conditions (almost 30%), hearing impairments and conditions (14%), neurological conditions (29%) and mental diseases (10%). (The respondents to the survey could enumerate several diseases they suffered from, therefore the total does not come to 100%).

Tab. 4. The number of disable people – education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Total disabled population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary education</td>
<td>1,358.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocational secondary education</td>
<td>545.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>secondary education</td>
<td>872.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>181.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

W – women, M- men

* data in the primary education column refers to the total of people with primary and junior high education

1.2. Poland

The data presented above shows that the educational level of disabled adults is relatively lower than non-disabled ones: as much as 44% of disabled people have primary education (it is 18% among non-disabled people). Few disabled people have higher education (it is every fifteenth adult, and every sixth adult among non-disabled people). In general, disabled adult women are not as well educated as their disabled male peers.

Tab. 5. The number of disable people – education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>W</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of disabled people who are employed (total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of disabled people who are employed on the labor market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of disabled people who are unemployed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

W – women, M- men

The source: GUS BAEL The number of legally disabled people aged 15 and older according to professional activity (in thousands), data from 2005.

About six million disabled people live in Poland. This number is rising every year. A straight majority of the disabled (about 84%) mainly live off social security payments: disability pensions, old-age pensions and benefits. Work is the main source of income for 8% of the disabled population. Disabled people are usually employed in sheltered workshops. (200 000 people in the first half year 2004, down to 190 000 in the second half year.)

In the last several years, there has been a significant increase of interest seen in the open market employers (the number of applications rose from about 2000-3000 employers at the beginning of 2004 up to about 4400 employers in June 2005). The increase results form the fact that salaries of disabled employees at working age have been partially funded each month since January 2004.

The source: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, [online:] www.mpips.gov.pl.
1. Occupation of people with disabilities

1.3. Greece  | Daskalopoulos Apostolos

The main problem at this part of the study/guide is the non existence of statistical elements and data for the disabled people in Greece. As a result this chapter provides a description of the problems that disabled people face. Disabled persons are in a difficult position compared to the other citizens. The reasons for this situation are described and analysed in another part of the study/guide.

It is known that the rates of unemployment of people with disabilities are higher in other teams of the population. It is calculated that the rate of unemployment in disabled people is double than that rest of the citizens (20% and 10% respectively).

Empirically people with disabilities possess high percentages in the long-lasting unemployment. In addition, in the population of disabled women the percentage of long-lasting unemployment is increased.
2. Legal framework for employment

2.1. Italy  
Giorgio Masciocchi, Pier Paolo Visione

The employment of disabled people in Italy is governed by the law n. 68 of 1999 “Regulations for the disabled right to work”. The deep changes of the labour market and the new needs in terms of flexibility of juridical and organizational forms of employment have emphasized the need of a higher protection of the market's weakest sectors. The law 68/99, which in fact became actually effective only since 2000, recognises disabled people dignity and social value in the first place, through their effective introduction in the labour market. The disabled worker is considered from the point of view of promotion and development of human capital in view of a real social integration.

The new law, in line with the principles already into force for some time in the European Union countries, introduces the principle of targeted employment, linked to the concrete working ability of the single disabled person, getting over the strictly impositive logic of ‘obligatory’ employment provided for by the old law 482/68.

The new concept of ‘targeted’ introduction is understood as “that series of technical and support instruments which allow to adequately value disabled people working abilities and to introduce them in the right workplace, through workplaces analysis, support forms, positive actions and solutions to the problems connected to the different environments, instruments and interpersonal relationships on daily working and social places” (art. 2 L. 68/99). In the same article, that law also recommends the instruments to use within a territorial net to implement the targeted introduction, such as “workplaces analysis, support forms, positive actions and solutions to the problems connected to the different environments, instruments and interpersonal relationships on daily working and social places”.

In order to achieve that, personalized courses and an adequate training must be provided for. Employment services, in strict cooperation with territorial social, health, educational and training services, must provide for the “planning, implementation, checking of the interventions aiming at fostering not only the insertion of the subjects of the present law but also
working training, lists keeping, authorizations, exemptions and territorial compensations granting, agreements drawing up and implementation of targeted employment” (art. 6 L. 68/99).

The law 68/99 provides for a close connection between employment services and the promotion of conventions for targeted working introduction with employers, who may also have recourse to cooperatives and social firms, established with the law 104 of 1992 also with the objective of fostering the introduction of disabled people to the working world.

In Italy, hiring a disabled person is, besides a law obligation, a common sense choice aiming at an ethic quality, which each firm should have. Hiring a disabled person is no more a stock gesture, but an opportunity towards a fairer and unprejudiced society.

The main innovations of the law 68/99, can be synthesized as follows:

- Introduction of the ‘targeted employment’ concept (art. 2),
- Concessions and contributions in favour of employers hiring seriously disabled people (art. 13),
- Reduction of the reserve percentage for firms employing over 50 employees (art. 3),
- Extension of compulsory hiring to firms employing over 15 employees (the former provisions made hiring compulsory for firms employing over 35 employees),
- Possibility of employment until the pensionable age (the former law limited the right until 55 years old),
- Constitution of an only list of unemployed assignees no more divided into single categories according to the disabling cause (consistent with the principle of targeted employment),
- Adjustment of the bodies deputed to employment on the basis of the decentralization of the functions delegated to local authorities according to the law by decree 469/97,
- Identification of conventions as the main instrument for a project of targeted introduction,
- Adjustment and embitterment of sanctions to employers who do not obey laws.

Finally the law provides for a specific sanctions system, through inspections and checks by the offices concerned with employment services.

The law for the employment of disabled people is implemented through a series of decrees and policy circular letters, which clarify, among other things, the functional and operational relationship between the employment
of disabled people and employment services, with particular reference to the role of job centres.

The main decrees and circulars are:
- the circular of the Employment General Direction n. 76 of 24 November 1999 which intervenes on lists, classifications, authorization activity, conventions and appeals;
- the circular of the Employment General Direction n. 77 of 24 November 1999 which establishes the criteria for the coming into effect, the definition of addressees, exclusion regulations and state competitive examinations;
- the DPCM 13 January 2000, which provides for the policy act and coordination in the matter of the disabled compulsory employment, establishing the commission function of testing working ability, the disability condition testing criteria, the disabled person's socio working profile, the ASL activity and its relationship with employment services; enclosed in the decree, there is a file for the definition of abilities useful to carry out working activities;
- the circular of the Employment General Direction of 17 January 2000 which provides indications to manage the transition phase, giving references on addressees, calculation basis, reserve quota, obligations suspension, territorial compensations, partial exemptions, lists and training, as well as indications on the procedures for conventions for professional training, compulsory certifications and temporary provisions on certifications validity;
- the work DM. 7 July 2000 n. 357 that regulates the proceedings regarding partial exemptions from compulsory employment provided for by the law 12 March 1999 n. 68;
- the work DM. 12 July 2001 on the distribution among regions of the financial resources of the Disabled Right to Work Fund, established by the art. 13 paragraph 4 of the law 12 March 1999, n. 68;
- the circular n. 10/2003 of the Ministry of Employment on the compliance certifications to take part in competition announcements and public contracts;
- the decree 21 July 2003 on the distribution of the Disabled Right to Work Fund for the year 2003 (for a total amount of 60 billions lire).

The employment of disabled people is a part of the wider discipline of the labour market, regulated by the Law by decree of 10 September 2003, n. 276, effective decree of the Law made under delegate powers of 14 February 2003,
n. 30 “Delegation to the government in matter of employment and labour market”, and subsequent effective decrees, which introduced, among other things, at least two important innovations directly involving workers with disabilities: art. 14 and art. 54.

In the article 14 of the Decree, dedicated to social Cooperatives and employment of disadvantaged workers, the drawing up of framework conventions is regulated on a territorial basis, aiming at the conferring of job orders to the same social cooperatives by associated or adherent concerns.

Moving on to a second institution, in the article 54 of the same Decree 276/03 the employment contract is provided for also for people acknowledged as suffering from a serious physical, mental or psychic handicap. These people can thus be hired on the basis of an individual project of adjustment of the worker professional competence to a specific working contest, lasting no less than nine months and no more than eighteen (in case of the disabled, the maximum duration can be extended to thirty-six months).

Not less noteworthy is the law n. 4 of 9 January 2004, presenting provisions to foster the access of disabled people to computer science instruments. Through that law, the legislator meant to comply with the equality principle expressed in the art. 3 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, protecting in particular the right of access to Civil Service computer science and computerized services and to public utility services on the part of people with disabilities.

The main aspects of the law 68/99¹ are reported in the following pages.

**Beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries of the law (art. 1 and 18) are unemployed people listed as follows, particularly people suffering from physical, mental or intellelctive handicaps with a reduction of working ability higher than 45%; people disabled at work with a disability degree higher than 33%; blind people (struck by total blindness or having a visual remainder not higher than a tenth for both eyes, with possible correction) or deaf (struck by deafness from birth or before learning spoken language); people disabled in a war, both civilians and servicemen; widows, orphans, refugees and people considered as orphans, as well as people identified by the Law 407 of 1998 (victims of terrorism and of organised crime).

¹ Source: Ministry of Work and Social Security.
2.1. Italy

**Fig. 1. The virtuous circle of L. 68/99.**

**Employers and reserve quotas**

The hiring compulsory quota for public and private concerns is spread according to the number of employees; the compulsory quota is lowered (from 15% to 7%) compared to the former legislation, by extending it to a higher number of employers (compulsory hiring starts from 15 employees instead of 35 as in the former legislation).
The reserve quotas are modulated from the art. 3 of the law n. 68/99 according to the dimensional entity of the employer, to which it must be added the quota due to orphans, widows and widowers and to equalized categories, as identified by the art. 18 paragraph 2 of the law, at least temporarily awaiting a reform of the matter. In short:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Compulsory hiring quota</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-35 employees</td>
<td>A disabled worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50 employees</td>
<td>Two disabled workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50 employees</td>
<td>7% of disabled workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1% widows, orphans and refugees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For private employers having from 15 to 35 employees, compulsory hiring applies only in case of new hiring. In that case, employers have got twelve month time to comply with compulsory hiring, starting from the date in which the above-mentioned hiring is carried out.

Private employers can be authorised, on their justified request, to hire in a production unit a number of workers entitled to compulsory employment higher than the one prescribed, bringing surplus to compensate for the lower number of workers hired in other units.

The participation (art. 17), on the part of public and private concerns, to calls for tenders or to convention or concession employment in the Civil Service is subordinated to the declaration of fulfilment of the regulations, which control the disabled right to work. The concerns interested to the call for tenders or to conventions or concessions must present, during their participation, relevant certification issued by the competent provincial Services showing the compliance with the regulations of the present law, on pain of exclusion from the call, convention or concession itself.

**Hiring conditions**

To be able to enjoy the benefits of the law n. 68 of 1999 people with disabilities holding the unemployment status must enrol in the relevant list kept by the competent compulsory employment centres, so to be entered in an only classification on the basis of the points resulting by the elements and criteria established by regions and provinces.

Employers must present to the competent centres the hiring request within 60 days since the moment of the disabled people compulsory hiring (art. 9). Employers proceed with the hiring requests through numerical calls and nominative calls (art. 7).
The law provides that the obliged concerns can make different types of call during the hiring according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns</th>
<th>Nominative call</th>
<th>Numerical call</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 15 to 35 employees</td>
<td>1 disabled worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 36 to 50 employees</td>
<td>1 disabled worker</td>
<td>1 disabled worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50 employees</td>
<td>60% of disabled workers</td>
<td>40% of disabled employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides, in case the worker needed a particular support course to employment, concerns can require to provincial compulsory employment centres to draw up special conventions. In that case, the concern requires hiring through nominative call. The convention procedure allows to enjoy the concessions provided for by the law. For psychic disabled workers the hiring request is always nominative and is always regulated by a convention.

**Conventions**

The increase in value of the negotiating moment between the employer and the competent offices is represented by the instrument of convention, studied to implement the effective employment of people with disabilities. To foster the link between the concerns demands and those of disabled workers there are specific conventions (articles 11 and 12 and programmatic lines to draw up conventions of 2/3/2001). Through conventions, subscribed by the interested parties (workers, employers, provincial centres for the employment of disabled workers and bodies fostering the employment integration), it is possible to define a personalized programme of interventions, to overcome the obstacles met during the introduction to the workplace in the most effective way. Conventions pursue the prior aim to ensure as much as possible the stabilization, though progressive, of employment. A convention establishes the hiring times and conditions, the possibility of nominative choice, the carrying out of formative and vocational guidance trainings, the hiring with time contracts, longer trial periods compared to those provided for by collective labour agreement (art. 11 L.68/99). A particular kind of convention is that of employment integration, regarding agreements for the implementation of targeted individual courses to employ those workers having particular characteristics and difficulties of introduction in the working cycle. Within that convention, there must be provided support, consulting and tutoring forms by specific structures (art.14, par. 4).
There is then another typology of conventions, that is those that employment services draw up with private employers and social cooperatives, according to the law 8 November 1991 n. 381 and with disabled independent professional people with whom the worker is temporarily seconded (art. 12). These conventions are meant to facilitate the disabled person future employment by the employer through the implementation of a special personalized training course. The law sets very definite limits to that kind of conventions; it sets indeed their duration (12 months, extendible to 12 more by the competent service) and decrees their unrepeatableness for the same person (unless a different judgement by the Technical Committee). Basic requirements for the agreement: the concomitant regular hiring of the disabled person by the employer and job orders by the employer to the above-mentioned people.

The convention institution is moreover a necessary condition to benefit from the facilitations provided for those concerns hiring people with disabilities (art. 13).

The interventions provided for refer to:
- total exemption from payment, for eight years maximum, when hiring workers having an over 79% disability or an intellectual and psychic handicap, regardless of the disability percentage,
- partial exemption from payment, for five years maximum, when hiring workers having a disability in between 67% and 79%,
- fixed refund of the expenses necessary to transform the workplace, adjusting it according to the disabled worker (that is with an over 50% disability) needs, for telework technologies or to remove obstacles to the disabled,
- Inail and R.C. insurance contributions regarding training costs.

**Employment relation**

To the workers hired in accordance with the law 68/99 (art. 10) it is applied the economic and normative treatment provided for collective labour laws and agreements, as for all other workers.

The employer cannot ask the disabled person a performance that is incompatible with its handicap.

In case of a worsening of its health conditions or of significant variations in the work organisation, the disabled person can ask to check the compatibility of the tasks it was given with its own health condition. In the same situations, the employer can ask to check the disabled person health conditions to verify
if it can continue to be employed for the firm, in spite of its handicaps. The disabled person has the right to an unpaid stoppage of the work relation until the incompatibility persists, should it prove a worsening condition being incompatible with the carrying on of the working activity, or should that incompatibility be assessed with reference to the variation in work organisation. During that period the worker can be employed in a formative training. The check request and the time necessary for its achievement are not a cause of work relation stoppage. The work relation can be rescinded in case, still carrying out possible adjustments to work organisation, the above-mentioned commission assessed the definite impossibility to reinstate the disabled person within the firm.

The withdrawal in the article 4, paragraph 9, of the law 23 July 1991, n. 223, namely the dismissal for staff reduction or for objective cause of workers which were compulsory employed, can be annulled if, at the time of the relation cessation, the number of the remnant compulsory employed workers is inferior to the reserve quota provided for by the article 3 of the present law. In case of annulment of the work relation, the employer must inform the competent offices within ten days, in order to replace the worker with another one entitled to compulsory professional training.

**National and regional fund**

The Ministry of Employment and Social Security established the Disabled Right to Work Fund (art. 13), yearly financed through the State budget. The law 68/99 establishes the Disabled Right to Work Fund (art. 13 par. 4), whose functioning is regulated according to criteria and conditions indicated in the ministerial decree 13 January 2000, n. 91. To implement those provisions, a distribution of the Regions Fund is provided for every year by the 1st of March. The allocation of those resources takes place according to a statement of accounts system by regions, which must send the Ministry a yearly report by the 30 November on the state of the initiatives taken up in favour of the disabled employment, with reference to the activity carried out by territorially competent employment services with regard to the selection of targeted employment programmes presented by employers and aiming at obtaining the facilities provided by the above-mentioned art. 13 of the law 68/99.

Since 2000 directorial distribution decrees have been predisposed.

In 2003, the decree 21 July 2003 allocated a total of 60 billions lire (equal to 30,987,414.00 euro) to distribute to the Regions, according to the provisions of the art. 13, paragraph 6 of the law 68 of 1999.
With the decree of the 8 July 2005, published on the Official Gazette on the 4 October 2005, the Ministry of Welfare distributed a sum of 30,987,414.00 euro for the year 2005 to the autonomous Regions and Provinces.

**Sanctions**

Firms with over 15 employees are bound to send a yearly recapitulatory prospectus on the employment situation of their production structure: defaulters are subject to an administrative sanction of 516 euro for delayed sending, increased of 26 euro for each day of further delay.

Penal, administrative and disciplinary sanctions provided for by the regulations on public employment apply to the personnel of civil services responsible of non-fulfilment. After sixty days since the date in which disabled workers must be compulsory hired, the employer must pay the sum of 52 euro for each day in which the compulsory quota turns out to be uncovered and for each unemployed disabled worker. In case of total or partial omission of contributions payment tied to the employment partial exemption (art. 5), the sum due can be increased, as an administrative sanction, from 5 per cent to 24 per cent on a yearly basis.

Should the firm refuse the disabled worker hiring, the provincial employment direction draws up the minutes and sends them to the competent offices and to the judicial authority.

The participation, on the part of public and private concerns, to calls for tenders or to convention or concession employment in the Civil Service is subordinated to the declaration of fulfilment of the regulations which control the disabled right to work, as well as to relevant certification issued by competent offices showing the compliance with the regulations of the present law, on pain of exclusion from the call itself (art. 17).
Vocational training of disabled students

Legal basis
The education system guarantees the disabled and socially disadvantaged youth possibility of studying in any type of school depending on individual developmental and educational needs as well as predisposition. (Art. 1, point 5 of the Education System Act of 7 September 1991 – Journal of Laws Dz. U. from 2004 No. 256 item 2572 with amendments).

The executive regulation issued by The Minister of National Education and Sport on 31 January 2002 amending the executive regulation concerning general outlines for public schools statutes (Journal of Laws Dz. U. from 2002 No 10, item. 96) formed the basis for education of the disabled students (from 1 September 2002) in the following types of secondary schools:

- specialized secondary school,
- technical secondary school,
- vocational secondary school.

The outlined statutes of these schools allow to educate the disabled students in mainstream, integrative or special departments. Since 1 September 2004 students with moderate or severe mental disability and students with multiple disability have been able to attend three-year special schools preparing them to work and whose completion allows to obtain a certification of preparation for work r. (the act from 27 June 2003 amending the National Education Act and several other acts – Journal of Laws Dz. U. No. 137, item 1304).

Regulations of vocational training in special schools:
The following groups of disabled children and teenagers are provided with special education:

1) with mild mental disability,
2) with moderate and severe mental disability,
3) deaf,
4) with hearing impairments,
5) blind,
6) with sight impairments,
7) physically disabled,
8) with chronic disease,
9) with mental disorders,
10) with multiple disability and autism,
11) socially disadvantaged, at the risk from addiction, with behavior disorder.

The number of students in a special school department should amount to:
1) for students with mild mental disability – from 10 to 16,
2) for students with moderate and severe mental disability – from 6 to 8,
3) for blind and sight impaired students – from 8 to 10,
4) for blind and hearing impaired students – from 6 to 8,
5) for students with chronic disease – from 10 to 16,
6) for students with mental disorders – from 6 to 8,
7) for students with multiple disability and autism – from 2 to 4,
8) for physically disabled students – from 8 to 12,
9) for students who are socially disadvantaged, at the risk from addiction, with behavior disorder – from 10 to 16.

The number of students in integration department should amount from 15 to 20 (including 2 to 5 students with disabilities).

According to art. 39 section 5 of the Education System Act from 7 September 1991, the head teacher of the school offering vocational training decides about the professions in which the school will train the students. This decision is taken in agreement with the official authority superior to the school and after obtaining the opinion from chief education officer and the opinion from either the province or district council of employment. This regulation applies also to special schools conducting vocational education. While deciding about the professions within which the school will train the students, the head teacher takes into consideration the local and national labor market needs applying the professions classification in vocational education. The classification defines the professions and school types in which the students can be educated as well as the periods of training in vocational secondary schools and the appropriate ministers at the request of whom the professions have been introduced. Although a separate classification for special vocational education does not exist, three types of professions are reserved, as far as school education is concerned, only for the specific group of people with disabilities. Massage technician and qualified office worker are the professions within which only blind and partially sighted students can be educated. The education within the profession of support employee in hotel services is directed only at students with mild mental disability (the
executive regulation issued by The Minister of National Education and Sport on 8 May 2004 about classification of professions for vocational education – Journal of Laws Dz. U. No. 114, item. 1195 with amendments.)

Professional associations, organizations of economic self-government as well as other economic organizations are authorized to apply to appropriate minister with the request concerning creation of new professions within vocational training. The initiative of introducing a new profession into the classification of professions for vocational education belongs only to the minister in charge of the branch of government administration with which the specific profession is connected. The minister presents the minister of education with a motion containing the description of the profession with enumeration of adequate vocational skills.

Practical training within specific profession in special schools is organized according to the executive regulation issued by The Minister of National Education and Sport on 1 July 2002 about practical skills training. (Journal of Laws Dz. U. from 2002 No. 113, item 988). This kind of training can be organized in school workshops or outside the school premises, on the basis of the agreement concluded between the vocational secondary school head teacher and the principal of school conducting vocational training, practical education center, education and professional training center or employer.

**Financing education of disabled students**

According to the regulations in the Education System Act the district (powiat) is a unit of territorial self-government obliged to supervise secondary schools. Only the schools with transregional objectives may be managed by provincial self-government.

The executive regulation issued by The Minister of National Education and Sport on 21 December 2006 about the distribution of the part of general educational subvention among the units of territorial self-government in year 2004 (Journal of Laws Dz. U. No. 246, item 1799) introduced the following additional balances for the education of the disabled students:

\[
P_2 = 1.38 \quad \text{– for students with mild mental disability, socially disadvantaged, at the risk from addiction, with behavior disorder, at the risk from social disadvantage, with chronic diseases – requiring specific organization and methods of teaching and studying (on the basis of certificates from psychological clinic including specialist clinic),}
\]

\[
P_3 = 2.90 \quad \text{– for blind and sight impaired students, for students with motor disorders, with mental disorders – requiring specific organization}
\]
and methods of teaching and studying (on the basis of certificates from psychological clinic including specialist clinic),

\[ P_4 = -3.60 \] for deaf and hearing impaired students, with moderate and severe mental disability (on the basis of certificates from psychological clinic including specialist clinic),

\[ P_5 = -9.50 \] for students with severe mental disability accomplishing the compulsory school attendance or compulsory education through participation in revalidation-educational classes organized in elementary schools and junior highs (gimnazjum) for students with multiple disability and autism (on the basis of certificates from psychological clinic including specialist clinic),

\[ P_6 = 0.80 \] – additionally for disabled students in integrative departments of elementary, junior highs and secondary schools (on the basis of certificates from psychological clinic including specialist clinic).

Due to the abovementioned facts the units of territorial self-government receive appropriately increased subvention independently from the form of education in which the disabled students participate (in mainstream, integrative school, in a school with integrative departments, special departments or special school as well as studying individually).

**Examinations certifying professional qualifications**

The executive regulation issued by The Minister of National Education on 21 March 2001 about the conditions and methods of assessment, classification and promotion of students and organizing examinations and tests in public schools (Journal of Laws Dz. U. No. 29, item 323 with amendments) takes into account the needs of disabled and socially disadvantaged students. Standard requirements and procedures concerning examinations certifying professional qualifications have been set. The Central Examination Board has appointed a team of experts adapting the examinations to the needs of disabled people.

The authorities have issued informative brochures about examinations with information concerning disabled students. The adaptation of the examinations to the specific educational requirements of disabled students means:

- introducing differentiated types of papers for different groups of students: the blind (written in Braille), sight impaired (written in bold letters),
- support from supervising team,
- extending of examination time,
- possibility to use specialist equipment,
• possibility to use necessary medications and medical equipment,
• specialists in special education participating in examination boards.

Disabled students in vocational secondary schools in school year 2005/2006

a) secondary school with defined profile and mainstream technical secondary school:
   • number of disabled students in mainstream departments – 3118 in 1918 departments,
   • number of disabled students in integrative departments – 326 in 73 departments,
   • number of disabled students in special departments – 23 in 4 departments,
   • number of individually taught students – 774;

b) special secondary school with defined profile:
   • number of schools – 24,
   • number of students – 827;

c) special technical secondary school:
   • number of schools – 43,
   • number of students – 1021.

d) mainstream vocational secondary school:
   • number of disabled students in mainstream departments – 1073 in 555 departments,
   • number of disabled students in special departments – 291 in 32 departments,
   • number of disabled students in integrative departments – 268 in 65 departments,

e) special vocational secondary school:
   • number of schools – 403,
   • number of students – 21 135.

f) vocational training school:
   • number of schools – 294,
   • number of departments – 709,
   • number of students – 5 223.

The disabled students constitute 2.53% of the general number of students in Polish vocational schools.
Bibliography


Summary

The regulations guarantee the disabled students access to any type of vocational schools. They can acquire knowledge through participation in many different forms of education. A person with impairments may attend a mainstream or integrative school, one with integrative departments, a special one or study individually. The students with moderate or mild mental disability and with multiple impairments have the possibility to studying one of newly created schools offering vocational training. Graduating from them enables the students to obtain certification of vocational training. The number of students in a department of a special school has been decreased in relation to the kind of disability of students. The number of students in an integrative department amounts at 15 to 20 students (including 3 to 5 disabled ones). Territorial self-government units receive appropriately increased educational subvention for the purpose of education of disabled students independently from the form of education they participate in. The exams certifying professional qualifications have been adapted to the specific educational requirements of disabled students.
The employment of people with disabilities constitutes an important ring in the chain of problems that they are called to face in their effort for a decent living. The State in various time periods and proportionally the fabricated arguments that prevailed at the given time, promote policies of economic aid to disabled individuals and their families, in order to ensure their prosperous existence.

This intervention of aid, which guarantees minimal income for disabled people, is judged as a positive correspondence of the State’s bodies in the needs of an important part of our society.

The question however that should occupy us, is if this economic aid is enough for the dulling of our social conscience, in order to say whether we are obliged to deal with the problems of a special part of the society with particular problems. Our answer in this question is of course negative.

From the moment where as a society we have conquered the ideological perception and as an economy the possibility of guaranteeing the minimal income of human existence, we now create the starting point of an effort for the creation of equivalent terms of participation of the disabled in all the events of the social and economic development.

From the early nineties until nowadays there is a shift concerning the interest for disabled people as well as for their institutions, from the economic claim, without abandoning it, on issues and sectors of wider interest.

The reformation and modernization of the education system is highly needed for disable people. This need continues to be considered as an essential condition for the achievement of an important objective that is not other than the conquest of modern knowledge and the continuously higher education.

At the same time the usefulness of professional training is recognized as an important parameter in the objective of disabled persons to ensure a place of work.

Thus, a network of structures, initiatives and programs has been created aiming at the benefit of professional training in objects that were prohibited between now and then, as the information technology and the traditional professions that are practiced up to today. This experience that existed stood as a useful assistant in the political decision-making and finally it constituted the base for the creation of a public and private professional training center with the form that they have today.
Disabled people and their representative institutions agreed that the progress made in the direction of upgrading the State services, was extremely important. However, the real educational needs can be only spotted when the disabled person seeks his chance in the free job market where there is a hard competition for a place to work.

The State policies for the fighting of unemployment and social exclusion have become tremendously important when they are related to disable persons.

The exclusion of disabled people from the job market has received in the past few year explosive dimensions.

According to estimates of the Organism of Employment of Workforce (O.A.E.D.) the rate of unemployment is 80%, while the average in the countries of European Union – 15 oscillates in 50%.

Concisely the main causes of unemployment and social exclusion for disabled people are:

A. The social bias and racism that as mentality continues constitute the structural characteristics of our society.
B. The lack of the State to create a completed central planning that would combine the needs of disabled persons with the education, the professional training and the professional orientation.
C. The need for the creation of supporting structures. Disabled people are unable to adopt the changes that take place in the job market, the entrance of new technologies and the economic environment in general.
D. The lack of infrastructures of access for disabled people. There is a need for infrastructure in buildings, transports and safeguarding for their appropriate operations.

For the integration of disabled persons in the job market, our country was drawn up mainly with the model of obligatory placement in places of work.

In 1998 the law 2643/98 was established which is related to the employment of persons from special categories of the population. In these categories belong: a) parents with four children or more, one child of families with many children (four or more) or the single parent of three underage children, b) the individuals with rate of disability at least 50%, registered in the Organization for the Occupation of the Work Force, and people that have children or brother or spouse (husband or wife) with rate of disability 67% and more, g) people who fought in the National Resistance (Second World War), d) the people that became disabled or injured during wars or their army obligation, also the children and the surviving spouse of persons that were murdered or disappeared in the war of Cyprus during the years 1964, 1967 and 1974.
According to this law, enterprises or organizations, Greek or foreign that function in Greece with any form, when they occupy personnel above 50 individuals they are compelled to engage protected persons equal to 8% of their total work force. In addition, except the previously mentioned percentage of protected persons, the organisms of common utility, the banks and the institutions of public sector are compelled now to engage the 80% of empty work places of operators of domestic telephone centres, blinds or graduates of faculties of education of blind operators. Also, in the \( \frac{1}{5} \) of empty work places of ushers, night-guards, cleaners – three, doorkeepers, gardeners and waiters, should engage victims of war, disabled persons of martial or peaceful period and people that became disabled during wars.

However, the phenomenon of social discriminations against disabled employees from enterprises of the Public and Private sector is usual.

The axes of the actions that the State should follow are:

1. Central planning of the State for the employment of disabled people. That planning should forecast the trends in the job market, examining at the same time the possibilities of re-establishment of disable people in traditional and recent professions.
2. Creation of special law on the employment of disable people.
3. Sufficient professional education and training, exploitation of tools for professional orientation.
4. Appointment of faculties for disabled people as professionals, with parallel creation of essential supporting structures.
5. Combination of the model of obligatory employment with other alternative forms of work placement, through continuous briefing of employers and institutions.
6. Sufficient briefing of disabled people on the employment process, the law and their rights.
7. Sensitization of society about the capabilities of disable people, in order to fight the discriminations (Proposal in inter-parties committee of Parliament of Greeks for the confrontation of problems that occupies the disable people, 16 of March 2006).

In addition, with the efforts for a new system of employment in the Public and Private sector the State should take care of those from the disabled people that wish to create their own enterprise.

Nowadays, the Organisation for the Occupation of the Work Force (O.A.E.D.) applies Programs of Subsidy of New Places of Work and New Free Professionals of Individuals with Disabilities, Detoxified, Ex-prisoners,
Young Infringing Individuals or Young Individuals who are in social danger. Furthermore, the Program of Subsidy of Ergonomic Regulation of working place of individuals with infirmity promotes the creation of infrastructures for disabled people in their working environment. The employees with disabilities should be between 18 to 64 years old. Regarding the subsidy of new places of work for disabled people, the duration of subsidy is 36 months, with the obligation of the employer to continue occupying disabled people for other 12 months, without subsidy. The amount of each subsidy for engaged is 25 € per day. This amount is increased by 1,50 € if the individual is a woman over 50 years old. People who are engaged should be registered in the registrations of unemployed of O.A.E.D..

Regarding the subsidy of young persons of free professionals of these categories, the subsidy lasts 24 months and is determined in the 16,000 € (10,800 € for the first time and 5,800 € for the 2nd time). The sum is increased by 1,500 €, if the individual is a woman or over 50 years old. For the subsidy of ergonomic regulation of working place for disabled people the amount reaches up to 2,500 € and it covers up to 90% of total cost of required expense for each one from the ergonomic regulations that are judged of being essential.
3. Implementation of policies

3.1. Italy | Giorgio Masciocchi, Pier Paolo Visione

The implementation of policies intended to foster the development of employment and employment introduction of disadvantaged sectors takes place both on the direct impulse of the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies and on the initiative of provincial administrations with reference to their own territory.

The Ministry of Employment and Social Policies in accordance with the intervention strategies decreed by the European Union has promoted a series of planning actions and informative and formative interventions aiming at fostering the disabled people employment, under the coordination of its technical operational agency Italia Lavoro S.p.A.. Their aim is to develop in the labour market a culture considering as “normal” that a disabled person could fully live its life social aspects and could therefore obtain a job meeting its expectations, its professional competences and functional abilities and at the same time meet the production requirements of the employer. The strategy of Italia Lavoro meets the aims of the legislator who structured the regulations which with the law n. 68/1999 aim at fostering a series of behaviours and actions having the purpose to place “the right person at the right post”, through the diffusion of the ‘targeted employment’ innovative concept.

The first relevant action is represented by the project “ICF and Employment policies” which fostered the diffusion of the new International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, (ICF) of the World Health Organisation in the employment policies sector, through awareness interventions, training, experimentation in the field and communication. The project aim was on the one hand to improve the employment introduction conditions through the diffusion of a more careful disability assessment method, aimed at detecting personal abilities, also in relation to the different social and environmental conditions; on the other hand, to experiment the use of this classification in a specific field and to give ideas and hints, both on a national and international level, for possible future actions, even in different sectors.
3. Implementation of policies

The ICF is, indeed, able to assess performance and abilities and to develop people with disabilities personal abilities by measuring the impact of the environment where the disabled person lives. In particular, in the employment policies field, the global approach to the evaluation of the environment and of personal abilities and potentialities guarantees everyone’s identity as to employment. However, in the EEC, both in the approved papers dedicated to disability themes and in the European employment strategy, the exclusion of people with disabilities from the labour market is indicated among the most serious conditions to oppose, also through the comprehension of the rights, needs and potentialities of disabled people, and a better knowledge of disability themes.

With the start of this experimental project, Italy and in particular the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies set itself the goal to develop new and more effective methods and procedures to assess disability and value its impact on the social inclusion processes, starting with the procedures provided for by the Italian regulations to assess disability in order to employ disabled people. The project involved 11 institutional partners in the Ministry Coordination Group (Ministry, Italia Lavoro, DIN, Regions Coordination, UPI, ANCI, FISH, FAND, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Italian Institute of Social Medicine), 17 regions and 78 provinces. Twenty-one were the training courses all over Italy, with 895 participants to the basic course and 552 to the advanced one and to training after three months, with a final test. The training phase reached two relevant goals: the diffusion of knowledge on the characteristics and application methods of ICF to the employment policies specific sector, and especially the awareness growing of the about 1000 targeted employment operators involved to have a method and some instruments at their disposal to offer more opportunities of social and working inclusion to people with disabilities. 4 experimentations in the field and 4 informative seminars were carried out with 140 targeted employment operators. The experimentation phase opened with the setting-up of an employment checklist translated in ICF codes. Together with provincial services, 176 disabled people were involved in total (of which 92 physical ones, 34 mental ones, 28 intellective ones, 22 sensorial ones). The ICF classification provides a universal language that focuses on the disabled person quality of life emphasizing in which way it is possible to improve it. Moreover ICF proposes itself as an instrument to monitor the person’s progresses and as a method to improve relations with the other actors of targeted employment.
3.1. Italy

Another relevant action is represented by the project LINCS “Territorial Development and Social Inclusion”.

The project management was entrusted to Italia Lavoro (technical agency of the Ministry) and its coordination to a specific piloting group formed by the representatives of the institutions, bodies, associations and other organisations involved in the initiative1.

It aims at promoting and fostering the employment of people with disabilities, even the most serious ones, through the application of the art. 14 of the law by decree 276/03. This experimental project has the aim to monitor the implementation course of the article 14, also in connection with the normative contest defined by the Law 68/1999 on disabled people targeted employment, through the identification and implementation of management procedures and practices to realize a functional model of intervention on the labour market segment regarding the employment of disabled people and other disadvantaged people; moreover, the project aims at promoting the development of actions at a territorial level, as well as verifying the success or critical conditions concerning the application of normative provisions.

The planning action aims at identifying innovative methods to develop and draw up the frame-conventions - among the various parties involved on the territory (Spi, social parties, social cooperatives and their unions) - provided for in the provisions, as well as at their more effective implementation, at giving job orders on the part of firms and at the employment of people with disabilities by the social cooperatives which must meet those orders.

During the months preceding the installation of the coordination group, a thorough analysis on the territorial contexts was carried out in order to identify and check the existence in the different areas of the country of the development conditions to implement the provisions, which allowed the definition of a series of criteria to select the areas in which the experimentation was carried out.

Among these criteria there are: the activation and functioning level of targeted employment organs; the experiences made within employment active policies; the development of territorial nets; the definition of territorial agreements for the implementation of art. 14; supply and demand conditions

1 Participants of the coordination group are the representatives of the Regions, of UPI and ANCI, of CNEL and ISFOL, besides the representatives of the Ministry and of Italia Lavoro, of trade-unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL), employers associations (Confindustria, Confapi, Concommercio, Concooperative, Lega Cooperative, AGCI), social cooperation associations, of FISH and FAND.
3. Implementation of policies

in the disability context; the development of social cooperation. Taking part
to the coordination group there are, apart from the representatives of the
Ministry and of Italia Lavoro, the representatives of the Regions, of UPI
and ANCI, of CNEL and ISFOL as well as of trade-unions associations
(CGIL, CISL, UIL) of employers associations (Confindustria, Confapi,
Confcommercio, Confcooperative, Lega Cooperative, AGCI), of social
cooperation associations, of FISH and FAND.

Moreover, for the success of experimentations in the different territorial
areas, the project provided for the promotion of some support actions
(preliminary and context analysis, training packages, and so on) which
might represent good practices to be subsequently applied and repeated all
over the national territory.

The entire project is constituted by four main phases:
▫ Research, development and systems constructions

This phase regards the analysis of territorial contexts in order to identify
and verify the existence of the experimentation development conditions
in the different territories. Apart from the selection of ten areas in which
carrying out the experimental actions, the job done took to the drawing up
of a series of papers regarding the application state of the art. 14 and the
guidance for the drawing up and implementation of frame-conventions.
▫ Training

The training phase saw the planning and implementation of a formative and
informative package, addressed to local actors, and, from the provisions point
of view, the procedures and advantages of the disabled employment instru-
ment introduced by the article 14. In order to provide the operators with all
the necessary cognitive instruments to carry out these activities, training inter-
ventions were realized in a coordinate way with the experimentation phases.
▫ Technical assistance for the experimentations

The technical assistance for the experimentations employed a specific
team of Italia Lavoro in the planning of territorial executive projects,
in involving local actors, in the assistance for the development of frame-
contracts, in promoting the giving of job orders to social cooperatives,
in developing methods and instruments and in all of the activities identified
within the future cooperation relations with the provincial territories centres
of experimentation.
▫ Communication and information

The project provided a series of activities aimed at communicating and
promoting the results achieved through the organisation of informative and
3.1. Italy

discussion meetings, the implementation of the project website, the promotion of professional communities among the people involved in the drawing up and managing of the conventions and employment introductions.

The project tested in fact the possibility for the firms to perform the compulsory employment of people with disabilities through giving job orders to social cooperatives, thus implementing a series of “induced” goals: the disabled employment, with a “protected” introduction to more favourable environments such as cooperatives; the double “convenience” for the firms meeting a law obligation and at the same time obtaining a series of services for the cooperatives; the advantage, for the cooperatives themselves, inherent the increase of job orders.

Through the art. 14, 130 employments have been implemented in total, a small number in itself, but highly significant if we consider that they regarded people with very serious disabilities. The provinces joining the experimentation were ten, some with an already drawn up frame-convention (Belluno, Treviso, Genova, Milano, Lecco), others without convention (Cuneo, Chieti, Sassari, Lecce, Roma). The signing of the convention was the fruit of an articulated planning job, involving, apart from Italia Lavoro S.p.A., also provincial administrations, entrepreneurial associations, trade-unions and social cooperation organizations. A case of “successful” planning was that of the Sassari Province which brought to the signing of the convention by the Industrialists Association, Confcooperatives, Legcooperatives, CGIL, CISL, UIL, apart from the Province itself. According to this convention, it is the Province disabled targeted employment service to identify people with disabilities to employ through the application of the art. 14, after the firm's request, among the people enrolled in the Province disabled employment lists. The cooperative is bound to classify the employed worker at a level corresponding to the tasks actually carried out. The agreement duration is correlated to the value of the job order, which must be of at least 12 months during the experimentation period. Conditions, times and employment mediation instruments are identified in the “project of targeted employment” agreed on among the Province Targeted Employment Service, technical committee social cooperative, taking into account the worker’s professionalism and the possible competences to acquire in expectations of the tasks the worker will be given. As far as the Province is concerned, it supports the disabled worker employment, gives the social cooperative a contribution to cover the employment expenses, within the resources given the Province by the regional fund for the employment of disabled people.
3. Implementation of policies

3.2. Poland

Kamila Miler, Academy of Special Education

Disabled people on the labor market – case studies

According to the Polish education system, disabled people have the possibility to receive their education in all types of schools. The choice of schooling (special, integrated, general or individual education) depends on individual predispositions and educational abilities of individual people, and sometimes it is dictated by location of certain schools across the country. Higher education is provided within general education.

Regardless of the chosen education system, disabled people can take up work on the open market. The professions they practice are often the same as non-disabled people’s professions. Jolanta Kaufman – a partially sighted singer, Józef Mendruń – a deafblind one-handed president of the Polish Association of the Blind (PZN), and Stanisław Jakubowski – a blind doctor of computer science are all examples.

Jolanta Kaufman, partially sighted singer

Jolanta Kaufman, a partially sighted soprano, gives concerts all over the world today and is a success. She is an example of a person who despite her visual impairment, and thanks to her strong personality, temperament and hard work broke down the barrier of partial sight.

Jolanta Kaufman was born in Sopot in 1956. She was diagnosed with retinopathy of prematurity (retrolental fibroplasias) several months after her birth. When she started her schooling, special education was particularly popularized among disabled people. Integrated education was not very well-known. The most appropriate school for blind and partially sighted children was a childcare learning center. There were several such centers in Poland. The choice of a center was a top-down decision as at that time it was obligatory to choose a school within whose catchment area students resided.

Jolanta was away from home since preschool through almost all her school years, as the childcare learning centers where she received her education were far away from her place of residence.

The choice of the first school was preceded with a struggle of Jolanta’s parents against the educational authorities. Their daughter was sent to a
preschool for blind children in Owińska near Poznań, although they wanted her to start learning at the Center for Blind Children in Laski. The struggle to send Jolanta to Laski took a year and finally it ended up successfully.

Ms Kaufman received knowledge and education she needed in the special center in Laski through primary and secondary school. The school provided appropriate conditions, special aids and contact with visually impaired people, which facilitated her learning. The schooling in the Childcare Learning Center in Laski had a big impact on the singer’s later interests. It was there where her vocal talent was noticed and developed. Apart from obligatory classes, Jolanta had an opportunity to learn to play the piano and to be a member of a theater club.

Laski became a place of the first real musical meetings for her. It was there where she met two very important people in her career: her first singing teacher Stefania Skibówna and sister Blanka Wasalanka who was responsible for the theater club and the choir. They discovered Jolanta’s extraordinary talent and influenced her further musical choices.

Her high school years were full of solo performances both in Laski and outside the center. At that time, she also had her first musical success: an award at the Sacro Song religious song festival in Toruń.

In her last year of studying at the center in Laski, Jolanta Kaufman made a decision to continue her education at an academy of music. She started preparing for the entrance exams by taking extra music classes and individual solo singing classes. Unfortunately, her first entrance exams to the Vocal Department of the Academy of Music in Gdańsk ended in failure. However, it was not because Ms Kaufman was not appropriately prepared but because the school authorities feared difficulties that could arise while teaching a visually impaired person. Jolanta did not lose heart and together with sister Blanka looked for a chance to continue her singing education in a different school.

The search was rewarded with success, and she was enrolled in the first year at the Vocal Department of the Academy of Music in Poznań in October 1978. The school suggested an individual education plan. It was not very different from what other students had but it was certain facilitation. Her visual impairment often made studying difficult but the teachers adapted their teaching methods in such a way that they were accessible to the visually impaired student. Thanks to her hard work, perseverance, but also thanks to the school authorities’ favor, Jolanta Kaufman graduated from the Academy of Music in Poznań in 1984, was awarded her Master’s degree and was recognized with an honorable mention.
At present, Jolanta Kaufman cooperates with many choirs, mainly with Warsaw Metropolitan Cathedral Choir. Her records are the result of this cooperation. The soprano has performed in many countries: the United States, Canada, Australia, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and England.

Jolanta Kaufman can be heard in the Royal Castle’s Ballroom in Warsaw, in St. Martin’s Church and in many other churches in Warsaw, as well as in different cathedrals all over Europe, mainly in Germany during annual Summer Organ Concerts, and also in the National Museum and the National Theater. The soprano’s achievements include performances on television (the studio in Brisbane, Australia) and in the radio in W. Lutosławski Concert Studio.

The partially sighted soprano is an example of a person whose talent and skills turned out to be more important than her visual disability, which did not turn out to pose a barrier to being an artist by profession.

**Józef Mendruń, deafblind president**

As a child, Józef Mendruń could see, and his only medical problem was frequent otitis which influenced his later hearing problems. An accident (unexploded bomb) changed significantly his health situation. He lost his fingers and a part of his left hand in this accident. His visual problems started then too. Józef was forced to stop his education at a local primary school due to frequent hospitalization, several surgeries and vision deterioration. He did not go to any school for seven years, and his only schooling was helping his sister with her homework.

Józef Mendruń’s parents made numerous attempts to find an appropriate school for their son. Unfortunately, the centers in Wrocław and Bydgoszcz refused to enroll Józef due to his complex health problems. The center in Laski near Warsaw decided to accept “such a complicated case.” Mr Mendruń studied for five years there: two years at primary school (he was enrolled in the sixth grade) and three years at vocational school. Before graduating from vocational school, he started making efforts to be enrolled in a general education high school.

He passed his entrance exams successfully and studied part-time in a high school in Warsaw. And he worked in the “Nowa Praca Niewidomych” Cooperative from the morning till 3.00 pm.
After he passed his school-leaving exams in 1963, he started his efforts to take university entrance exams. He dreamed about studying psychology at Warsaw University. He ran up against stiff opposition of university teachers, however, who advised him against choosing this field of study. Nevertheless, he managed to convince the school authorities and they let him take the psychology entrance exams. They made a condition, however, that if he did not do well during the first year, he would have to change the school.

Józef Mendruń passed the entrance exams without any problems. When he was at university he meet new people, and also a new system of teaching. He often used his friends’ notes, but recording the lectures on a tape was the major facilitation for him. The studies passed without serious problems with learning, and Józef was awarded his master’s degree in psychology in 1968.

After he graduated, Józef Mendruń started a fruitful professional career. He accepted the offer to work as a rehabilitation teacher in the Polish Association of the Blind (PZN) right after his master’s defense. He became the director of the PZN’s Warsaw District at the age of 31, a year after he started working there. At that time, his hearing problems developed (Józef perforated his eardrum, had severe otitis). His hearing kept deteriorating, which made his career very difficult.

Taking up the position of head of the newly created Typhlological Department in the PZN was the next step in Józef Mendruń’s career. The task he was entrusted with was very difficult as this department was something very new and it was necessary to create its whole structure, to find people willing to work there and to prepare appropriate programs. He hold this managerial position for four years, then he was entrusted with the function of the rehabilitation director. It was partly thanks to his initiative that small blind children and their families were taken care of and that first rehabilitation camps for children were organized. In 1981, he established the Association for the Welfare of the Deafblind together with his coworkers. He took up the position of the PZN’s president in 2000 and held it till 2005. He was awarded many awards and medals during his over thirty-year-long career, the most important of them being among others the Silver Cross of Merit and the Knight’s Cross of the Order of the Rebirth of Poland. In July 2000, he was awarded a very prestigious international medal – the Ann Sullivan Medal, which is awarded for outstanding achievements in developing education and rehabilitation for deafblind people.
Józef Mendruń has devoted his whole life to working for the welfare of blind and partially sighted people. He is an example of a person who despite many health problems achieved professional success. In spite of numerous health problems (he is blind, hard of hearing and suffers from cardiac problems), he still works and devotes himself with total commitment to social issues.

**Stanisław Jakubowski, blind IT specialist**

Stanisław Jakubowski lost vision when he was a small child as a result of a “medical mistake.” His father died young, he had many brothers and sisters, and his mother was not able to raise them, that is why he spent his preschool years in a children’s home. He started his school education in the Childcare Learning Center for Blind Children in Cracow; it was there where he learnt basic Braille reading and writing techniques. The school also provided opportunities for musical development, teaching students to play different instruments.

Then he continued his education in a general education high school. He was the only blind student in school at that time. He had tried to make his mom warm to this idea for a very long time as was very worried about the conditions in the new school. He did not have any difficulty studying, he was the best student in his class. After passing his school-leaving exams, he started preparing for university entrance exams. He started studying economics at the Higher Economic School in Cracow, and after his first year, he passed econometrics entrance exams in Warsaw. When Stanisław was at university, his non-disabled friends’ help was great facilitation for him; they would often record books and lecture notes for him.

After his master’s defense, Stanisław Jakubowski was given an extraordinary opportunity to test the Optacon device (a device for reading designed specially for visually impaired people). When he accepted this offer, he became an employee of the Institute of Computer Science at the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). At that time, he started frequent trips abroad and training. He broadened his knowledge of foreign languages thanks to those experiences: now he speaks English, Russian and German fluently, he also speaks Spanish and French.

He defended his doctoral thesis in 1981, won a scholarship and went for several months to the United States. When he returned, he started working at the office of the Plenipotentiary for Disabled People. After working in the ministry for a year, he transferred to the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled
People (PFRON). He was still the Polish Academy of Sciences’ employee.

In 1994, at the school authorities’ prompting, he started cooperation with the University of Podlasie in Siedlce. He has been dealing there with issues connected with the use of computer science in teaching blind people. At present, he conducts a two-way activity: he is a civil servant and an academic teacher at the same time.

Stanisław Jakubowski, a blind doctor of computer science, is totally committed to his teaching work and also to serving other people. Apart from computer science, his interests include history, music, and linguistics above all else. He still deals with issues connected with the use of computer science in disabled people’s education, and he is a highly regarded expert in this field.

Summary

The biographies presented above show how diversified the group of visually impaired people is in terms of their needs and educational abilities. The choice of a particular school at different levels of education is mainly dictated by individual preferences.

Integrated education has been increasingly promoted in the last few years in Poland, but not all visually impaired people choose this system. A large part still benefits form special childcare learning centers. This situation clearly shows that the one best system of education for visually impaired people does not exist.

The stories presented above prove that choosing a special school or a general education school does not determine the possibility of receiving education at universities. Both systems prepare equally well for this stage of schooling. One of the problems that may occur is disapproval of school authorities. Both Jolanta Kaufman and Józef Mendruń had problems with enrolling in their dream fields of study. It is necessary to remember, however, that at the time when they wanted to take their university entrance exams, disabled people studying at universities were rare. The school authorities did not know what consequences are involved in accepting visually disabled people among their students. Today this situation has improved a lot. Universities are willing to enroll disabled students and they attempt to create the best educational conditions possible. Thanks to such a stance, disabled people who hold a degree have better chances to find employment on the open labor market.
Bibliography


3.3. Greece  |  Daskalopoulos Apostolos

The right in the work constitutes a fundamental right of all citizens of EU. However, not all individuals have the same opportunities for access in the employment. Even, the starting point for getting a job is differentiated amongst citizens of the same geographic and cultural entity (neighbourhood, municipality, region, state, etc). Citizens do not have the same initial supplies with regard to the economic occasion, the cultural background, the bodily force or the sharpness. As precisely they do not have the same preferences.

More specifically the supply with all the available knowledge and faculties to disabled people constitute a fundamental element for the improvement of their access in the employment, the fighting of exclusion and the improvement of social cohesion. This is extended from the basic education to the life learning and the professional education.

Between the education and the work exists a powerful connection: with the absence of access of the disabled people in the suitable professional education, there does not exist any essential access in the work. This lack of access creates long-lasting dependence, social isolation and strengthens the stigmatization toward the infirmity.
As a result there a lot of difficulties that disabled people have to face from their integration in the job market. The role of the continuous professional training and education is catalytic in order for the disabled people to overcome the lack of access in the job market.

According to conclusions of researches that were held in 2001 in level of EU, 14.5% of population of Fifteen Member states (with the exception of Sweden) in age of work (16 until 64 years) presented some form of infirmity. With regard to the ten new adhering countries, this percentage amounted in the 25%.

It is also observed that only the 42% of disable people are employed (against the almost 65% of individuals without disabilities) and the 52% are inactive (against the 28% of individuals without disabilities). In conclusion, these elements prove that, persons with disabilities constitute an unexploited working force potential with regard to the economic enlargement.

On the other hand, European statistics support that the persons with disabilities (blind, deaf, kinetic invalid) are in a disadvantageous position in the job market, not because of their infirmity, but because of decreased possibility of access in the professional education and the training (67% of disable peoples are absolutely capable of work).

In Greece, even if theoretically students with disabilities appear to have the same educational choices with the other students, in reality the proposed programs of education and training that the State provides is not always according to the interests and their needs. Also very often the professional education is not effective, mainly because is not connected with the requirements of job market.

The legal frames related to the issues of access in the working place, in most cases are non-existent or inflexible.

All these factors impend the access of young persons with disabilities to the education and the training in the employment. For the purpose of successful process of passage, obligatory education free of charge, the prohibited discriminations in the employment, the creation of special places of quartering and places in buses or even places of work are in the right direction but are not enough.

It is an imperative need for the educational institutions to help the young persons with disabilities so that they become active in an economic point of view, providing for them dexterities that are required in their daily life, offering qualitative services of education for training in dexterities that correspond in the social and communication requirements, as well as in the expectations of adult life.
It is a fact that in Greece there is an absence of faculties of professional training-education in sectors and professions that are in the interest of individuals with disabilities, but also they correspond in the requirements of job market in the public and private sector.

As an example, in Greece there is only one public faculty called “TEIRESIAS” which is training blind individuals as telephone operators, in order to find a job in the public or private sector. With regard to the hearing impaired, exists only one public technical professional faculty, which is called “TESEA’.

The professional training and re-establishment of deaf people is the most serious problem.

Special faculty of professional education of deaf individuals in a permanent base does not exist in Greece. With this subject deal, occasionally various programs of professional training, the National Institution of Protection of Hearing Impaired (E.I.P.K), the National Institution of Disable (E.I.A), the Organism of Employment of Workforce (O.A.E.D), the “KEESE” of the Municipality of Argyroypolis and private centers of professional training (K.E.K.), such as “K.E.K. MIT” that resides in Athens and has annexes in Thessalonica and in Patra.

The ministry of National Education and Religions, according to law 1566/85, is exclusive body for the special professional education of disable people. However, the ministry does not deal with the problems of hearing impaired, it is only operates units of special training.

The professional education of disable people and more generally the persons with special needs in Greece is substantially non-existent. For the tens thousands disable children of school age exist only a public professional faculty in Kallithea (Athens) and three faculties of Organization for the Occupation of the Work Force (O.A.E.D.) in Athens, Thessalonica and Larissa. The faculties of “O.A.E.D” provide degrees, that creating moreover obstacles in the professional education and re-establishment of alumnus disable individuals. The degrees of “O.A.E.D’, does not provide the alumnus with professional rights.

The faculties of Thessalonica and Larissa are not satisfactorily staffed, while in Athens there are 230 students, in the faculty which was created for 90 students.

Consequently the starting point for the planning of programs of training should be the financing and the creation of foundations from the State. Those foundations should provide suitable professional education and
appropriate type of services, so that they help the individuals with disabilities to find their place in the job market and deterring the exclusion and their marginalization.

Therefore the young disabled persons need to develop objectives and determine the role that they want to have in the society. This however requires the awareness of occasions and restrictions that exist around them, as well as to determine their dexterities and potential. In this frame, the school teachers, the instructors, and the personnel advisors should play a very important role by providing advice and suitable guidance to the students with disabilities. The students would develop the knowledge and the support that is provided to them by the instructors and the advisers, in order to achieve a professional re-establishment.

Consequently it is very important to provide the essential resources in the professional educational institutions in order to ensure this collaboration.

Nowadays, all around Europe, non-governmental organisms have begun piloting programs that offer supported work to disabled people, providing help, as advisers of work, specialized professional education and individual monitoring. However, such types of programs still have not been adopted by the State policy, as a result a number of participants is limited.

Moreover, with the Plan of Action for Disabilities 2006-2007 that was voted by the Session of European Parliament on 30 November 2006, the Parliament asks from the Committee and the States-member, in the frame of their corresponding competences, to promote the active attendance of persons with disabilities in the education, the professional training, the electronic learning, the life learning and it asks the aid of attendance to students with disabilities in the new multi annual Community programs of education and professional training.

At the same time, all this interval, have been worked out and materialized programs sponsored by the EU and the Greek State, for the professional training and the education of persons with disabilities. However it does not appear until today that these programs have contributed in their main objective that is the reduction of unemployment.

The outcome of the sponsored professional training programs was insufficient. The lack of appropriate selected indicators in order to evaluate the quality and the effectiveness of the training programs had as a consequence the wastefulness of resources. The absence of professional orientation from the programs of professional training and from the actions of institutions that has the responsibility for the re-establishment of disabled persons has
as a result the lack of essential qualitative elements and the insufficiency of training that would not correspond in the needs of job market.

It essentially becomes understandable that disabilities can hesitate the movements, the learning, the concentration, the sentimental relations, the relations with the fellowman etc. but it does not hesitate in any case the action.

In each type of disability there is a margin for autonomous undertaking of action and decisions. As a French painter points out “A person with multiple disabilities is completely invalid. A person with multiple disabilities is simultaneously a completely different person”.

The Branch of Special Education of the Central Service of Ministry of National Education and Religions (YPEPTH) is responsible for subjects that concern the special educational needs of disabled people. It is also monitoring all the school units of special education (SMEA) with students between 4 and 22 years old.

The Branch of Special Education is helped by the Official Council of Special Educational Personnel (YSEEP) that handles subjects related to the educational personnel. In addition, the Department of Special Education of Pedagogic Institute is the responsible recommendatory body for the total subjects of Special Education.

The Branch develop the educational policy of YPEPTH for the persons with special needs, on one side via the advisers of Special Education and the Centers of Diagnosis, Evaluation and Support (KDAY) for subjects of briefing, advisory, and planning of educational programs, and via the Branch of Education for subjects of organization and crewing of School Units of Special Education (SMEA).

The special education in the deaf and hard of hearing people is provided free of charge by the special schools of hearing impaired, the special departments or teams that function in the common schools of Ministry of National Education and Religions.

Also special education of first degree is provided by special schools of the National Institution of Protection of Deaf mutes (EIPK) and its’ annexes in Thessalonica, Patras, Serres and in Kasteli of Chania. The EIPK, which founded with the law 726/37, is the first institution that deals systematically and exclusively with the special education, the professional education and as generally speaking the protection of deaf children in Greece. From the schools of EIPK have passed and graduated thousands deaf people, that have been included in the social total as scientists or professionals with success.
After graduating special schools, the disabled persons can study in the Special Technical Professional Faculties of the Territory that are the following:

1. TESEA Deaf-Hard of hearing in Agia Paraskeyi,
2. TESEA in the National Institution of Re-establishment of Disable persons (EIAA),
3. TESEA (for adults with N.K.) in Kallithea,
4. TESEA of Deaf – Hard of hearing in Thessalonica:

The school functioned for the first time in the period of 1992-93, it was called “TESEA DEAF and HARD OF HEARING” with two specialties, silversmith’s trade and textile. In 1994 stopped the operation of department of textile. In 1996 began for first time the operation of specialties of Computer operators and Electricians. In 1999 stops the department of Silversmith’s trade and the name of school changes in “T.E.E DEAF and HARD OF HEARING’. From the period 1999-2000 and up today the school provides education with the sectors of Information Technology-Network of Computers and Electricians. I the period of 2004-2005 the name of school changes in “T.E.E of SPECIAL EDUCATION B’ of RUNG A’ AND B’ of CIRCLE” (N.2817/2000) because the students that study are not only deaf or hard of hearing but also individuals with kinetic and training difficulties. In addition, the operation of the “T.E.E. of SPECIAL EDUCATION A’ of RUNG” began, which functions provisionally under the same address.

It is the first type of public technical professional faculty in Greece, began with eight students and today the number of students is forty-six. The students that can study in the T. E.E. are not only from Thessalonica and the around regions but from various neighboring cities and geographic apartments of Greece, as Macedonia, the Thessaly, the Epirus, the Sterea Hellas, the Thrace etc.

For the blinds, there is the “Center of Education and Re-establishment of Blinds (KEAT)’, which is a legal person of public right, overseen from the Ministry of Health, and its role is the training and the re-establishment of persons with sight problems in the society.

The center of Education and Re-establishment of Blinds, in collaboration with other institutions, materializes and participates in programs of research, prevention and training. Such programs aim for the improvement of the provided services, the briefing of parents and children as well as the growth of new opportunities for persons with problems of sight.
3. Implementation of policies

In October 2003 the KEAT in collaboration with the OEEK (Organism of Professional Education and Training – Y.P.E.P.TH.) began the operation of I.E.K. “TEIRESIAS” whose objective was the training in the specialty, with public certification from the Ministry of National Education and Religions. The training in “TEIRESIAS” in the specialty “Persons with problems of sight – operators of telephone centre in the customer care service’ exploiting the possibilities of information technology for access of individuals with problems of sight in informative systems and applications, aspires to provide the job market with persons with knowledge of new tendencies in the area of marketing and customers care service, which might watch the most rapid developments in the information society.

The graduates I.E.K. “TEIRESIAS” have all the technical knowledge, the dexterities and the professional qualifications that make them capable to provide all kind of information and service in the customers of a company or organism (public or private), as operators in the telephone center. Graduates are capable to provide information in short time and with the biggest possible effectiveness, using specialized computational CRM.

The first students of specialty have already been certified from the O.E.E.K.

The project “Training as Vehicle to Employment” (TVE) concerns in the collaboration with the governments’ institutions across European countries, in order to ensure that their programs of training are also open to persons with disabilities that they fill the required qualifications. The team of partners that participate in the inquiring work “Training: Means for the Employment” is constituted by the Independent Living Institute in Sweden (general coordinator), the Centres of Independent Existence in Bad Kreuznach (Germany), in Dublin and in Helsinki, the Disability NOW in Thessalonica, Iniciativas y Estudios Sociales in Spain, Integracja in Poland, and Apeirons in Latvia.

The centers of Education of Social Support and Training of Persons with Special Needs (KEKYKAMEA) focus their services on the education; social support and training of disable people. The centers helped by the Ministry of Health and serve the people with disabilities.

The KEKYKAMEA aiming to:

a) The convenient diagnosis, the advisory support and confrontation of bio-psychological needs of disabled people and their families.

b) The benefit of services and programs for the social support of disabled people as well as a complete and equivalent social integration in various levels of daily life (employment, autonomous existence, exercising, etc.).
3.3. Greece

c) The training of disabled people, their functional re-establishment and the support for integration in the society.
d) The valid information and briefing of disable people and their families in subjects that are connected with the disability.
e) The briefing and sensitization of local society on subjects concerning the disabled people.
f) The reference of disabled people in specialized services in local or regional level.
g) The growth of methods and techniques that help in the resolution of subjects of disable persons.
h) The research for growth of policies and programs for the disabled people.

The KEKYKAMEA are staffed with specialized personnel as: psychologists, doctors with specialization in children psychiatry, educators of Special Education, nurses, physiotherapists, social functionalism, health visitors, experts in the professional orientation, etc. In certain areas KEKYKAMEA provides hostels of hospitality for disabled people from other places which may be placed in a long distance from the KEKYKAMEA.

According to the N. 2646/1998, article 13, paragraph. 1.b, the KEKYKAMEA are services of National Organism of Social Care (NPDD). KEKYKAMEA exist in Agrinio, Argolida, Thebes, Rhodes, Ebros, Chalcis Tower, Veria, Kavala, Karditsa, Argostoli, Syra, Mitilini, Kalamata, Xanthi, Edessa, Preveza, Retimo, Komotini, Samos, Florina, Lamia, and Chalkidiki.

The Organization for the Protection of Spastikon provides: “Programs of Training for individuals with heavy kinetic and/or multiple disabilities” from the Specialised Centre of the Organization for the Protection of Spastikon.

The Specialised Centre of the Organization of the Protection of Spastikon in the frames of above mention program develop from October 2006 until December 2007 two projects:

- FOCUS: thematic object Catering, 250 hours of training, 8 worked out
- DATALINE: thematic object Information Technology, 300 hours of training, 6 worked out.

The aim of program was the training, the supporting services and the energies of promotion the employment in the individuals with heavy kinetic and/or multiple disabilities, and profited was adults of 16 years and over, with heavy kinetic and/or multiple infirmities, registered in the Registrations of Unemployed of O.A.E.D.

In addition, in the region of Thessaly will organized a “Complete Program of Intervention of Mountainous/Unfavorable regions” for the increase of
employment and the fighting of the social and labor exclusion of special demographic teams and individuals with disabilities. The aim will be to withholding of population and particularly the dynamic ages, the reinforcement of economic activity and the exploitation of local resources that includes a combination of action, which includes also concretization from certified K.E.K. of training programs for 120 individuals. The actions of the program will be completely until the end of 2008.

In the remainder regions of Greece exist the following centers of professional training-education:

1) Centre of Re-establishment of Disable People, Serres, Organization of Privele Law (N.P.I.D.),
2) Centre of Special Education of Disable People “Aristeys’, Larissa, N.P.I.D.,
3) Roof of Special therapeutic and Professional Education of Disable People, Trikalas, N.P.I.D.,
4) Center of Professional Education for Disable People, Corfu N.P.I.D.,
5) Laboratories of Training for Disable People of social company, Psychiatric and Mental Health, Lamia, N.P.I.D.,
6) Center of Professional training of Disable People “ARGO’, Faliron, N.P.I.D., 7) Unit of Education of Individuals with problems of sight and additional Special Needs, Boyliagmeni N.P.I.D.,
8) Service of Professional Education and Re-establishment of Deaf and Hard of hearing in Computers, Aigaleo N.P.I.D.,
9) Institution of Providence-education Deaf and Hard of hearing Greece, Ekali, N.P.I.D.,
10) Institution of Providence-education Deaf and Hard of hearing Greece, Drosia, N.P.I.D.

In conclusion, beyond the 4 Special Technical Professional Faculties, the KEAT, the public I.E.K. “TEIRESIAS’, the KEKYKAMEA and the occasional programs of professional education for disabled people, the State has not created Centers of Professional Training for the Disable People.

The majority of Laboratories and Centers of Professional Education-training, have been created and founded by parents and friends of disabled people, as well as from sensitized citizens. This is the reason that the legal form of those centers is Ltds (N.P.I.D.). All the above prove that the voluntary initiative is greater than the State intervention concerning the area of professional education of a disabled person, which aims at the integration and the incorporation in the job market.
4. Structures and organizations for supporting the employment of disabled people

4.1. Italy | Giorgio Masciocchi, Pier Paolo Visione

The labour market reform started by the Italian legislator with the law by decree 469/97 brought to a general new plan of the reference background both in terms of actors and of competences division. The government monopoly system, decreed by a law dating back to 1949 (264/49) has been overcome in a logic of new forms of cooperation/competition between public and private sectors. According to the reform, both competences of the disabled compulsory employment and of the employment service in general, have been transferred from the Ministry of Employment to the Regions and Provinces (D.Lgs.469/97). Subsequently the effective decrees of the law 30/2003 (Law Biagi) modified radically the employment services system. In that sense, besides the Employment centres, which are the structures through which Provinces manage all of the services for the labour market, from vocational guidance to the meeting of demand-offer, private or social organs have developed and have been authorized to carry out the same services according to the requirements by the law.

Regions are competent on employment active policy and in particular on:

a) planning and coordination of initiatives aimed at increasing employment and at boosting the meeting of job demands and offers also with reference to female employment,

b) cooperation to develop plans regarding drug-addicts and ex-convicts employment,

c) planning and coordination of initiatives aimed at fostering the occupation of people enrolled in employment lists with particular reference to people on reserve as in the article 25 of the law 23 July 1991, n. 223,

d) planning and coordination of initiatives aimed at re-employing mobility workers and at the employment of people belonging to disadvantaged categories,

e) policy, planning and checking of formative and vocational trainings and employment grants,
f) policy, planning and checking of socially useful jobs under the provisions of the law,
g) drawing up and managing of a worker mobility list, previous technical analysis.

On a regional level, even through regional employment commissions, Regions define and coordinate the policies to foster employment growth, also of disabled workers, by appointing special sub-commissions competent on targeted employment.

The competence on employment was entrusted to provinces.

The provincial employment services make use of a provincial office for the employment of disabled workers, which is a point of reference for special technical services named “technical committees” (one or more “technical committees” according to the resources and needs of the single provinces).

Technical committees are composed of officers and experts in the social, medical and legal sectors, assisted by a tripartite commission formed by trade-unions and associations of disabled people; they operate on the basis of a socio-working profile and functional analysis worked out by the assessment commission of the Law 104/92 at the ASL (art. 1 and DPCM of 13-01-2000), and in accordance with territorial services, to update useful information in order to define an individualized project for each person enrolled in the provincial employment lists. Within those activities the Committee has to interact with other institutional subjects in charge of managing decisive stages of the integration process. The main one among these subjects is the Assessment Commission\(^1\) who has to make a functional analysis of the disabled person, aiming at identifying its global ability for employment. The information exchange between these two organs guarantees the efficacy and relevance of the actions aimed at assuring the right placement of the disabled person in the workplace, during all of the employment introduction project.

The technical committee:

a) values the abilities and working potentialities of disabled workers, also on the basis of appropriate assessments,
b) defines the instruments suitable for employment introduction and targeted employment,
c) predisposes a support and tutoring plan for employment introduction, in accordance with competent services,

\(^1\) Medical commissions ex art. 4 L. 5/2/92 n°104 established by the AUSL.
d) guides disabled workers towards useful trainings or refresher courses;

e) guides employers on opportunities and methods to introduce disabled workers to firm work,

f) predisposes, in accordance with the Assessment Commission, as in the DPCM 13-01-2000, inspections on workplaces on the progress of working introductions according to the aims of targeted employment, to verify the permanence of the disabling state and of the abilities already assessed, as well as the validity of support and targeted employment services,

g) cooperates to gather information to draw up the socio-working profile of the Assessment Commission as in the DPCM 13-01-2000,

h) cooperates to draw up professional training and retraining programmes for disabled people.

Besides initiatives and projects implemented together with the institutions, Employment Centres answer every aspect of Law 68 for its better execution by firms.

In the specific case, the activities carried out regard:

- meeting of job demands and offers, where the disabled person abilities, professional profile and relation-building skills are examined,

- consultancy on proficiencies, contractual typologies, incentives, trainings,

- tutoring in a firm to support the firm as to the task carried out by the disabled person and to foster its integration in the workplace.

For the working introduction of people with disabilities, Employment Services can use social cooperatives. The same social cooperatives, or their unions, can act not only as employers of disabled people but also – as it already happens in some situations – as managers of targeted employment, in agreement with Employment Centres. The relation between Employment Services and social cooperatives should thus be marked by cooperation and integration of abilities/functions, in a systemic perspective with the territory’s other services.

In particular, law 68/99, whose aim is fostering the employment introduction and integration of disabled people in the working world, through support and targeted employment services enhancing their professional competence, their skills and psychophysical abilities, provides at a regional and provincial level for the institution of services for disabled workers targeted employment, which, in accordance with the territory’s social, health, educational and training services provide for the planning, implementation, checking of the interventions aimed at fostering the employment of the people beneficiaries of the law 68/99.
Structures and organizations for supporting the employment of disabled people

The services for the employment of disabled workers take care of working training, keeping of lists of beneficiaries of the law 68/99, the issue of authorisations concerning partial exemptions and territorial compensations, conventions drawing up and implementation of targeted employment.

The carrying out of the complex managerial and implementing functions of targeted employment requires the participation of the different territorial levels of command for employment active policies. That services net is characterised according to the social and administrative situations existing in Italy at a local level. The tendency noticed in recent years saw a growing participation of Employment Centres, aimed in any case at mainly specialized contributions and conditioned by those functions related to the territory’s command. On the one hand, the national tendency towards a centralized management has been consolidated as to provincial offices for those typically administrative, political and control activities, on the other hand, the outline appears more heterogeneous, with reference to those functions aimed at a direct contact with users, who are gaining more and more importance, within the targeted employment reform, in virtue of the individual centrality in the development of projects of working introductions by operators.

4.2. Poland | Ewa Wapiennik, Academy of Special Education

People with disabilities in Poland as well as all Polish citizens are entitled to use the services and instruments of labour market – among other things: career counselling and work service. These tasks are fulfilled mainly by labour market institutions on the grounds of the Act of 20 April 2004 on Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market (later referred to as: Act on Promotion of Employment). The activities enumerated there are largely financed from the Labour Fund, which is a state special fund. The incomes of the Labour Fund come mainly from the obligatory contributions paid by employers. Among labour market institutions there
are: public employment services, non-governmental employment agencies operating within the area of work service, career counselling, personnel consultancy and temporary work, training institutions and councils of employment. Public employment services create employment organs. On state level it is a minister competent for employment issues, on province level – provincial governors and marshals, on county level – county governors. Most duties of provinces and counties concerning labour market policy are performed by province and county labour offices. The system contains also organs called councils of employment assisting a minister competent for employment issues, provincial marshals and county governors. These are consultative and counselling bodies operating in the field of labour market policy, respectively: Chief Council of Employment, province councils of employment and county councils of employment. The councils consist of representatives of: trade unions organizations and employers organizations, territorial self-governments units, non-governmental organizations acting, according to their statutory regulations, within the area of labour market issues and finally scholar environments.

The Act on Promotion of Employment is a regulation of general and public character applying to all citizens. It also indicates additional activities applied to people who are in a specific situation on labour market, among others people with disabilities who have a status of an unemployed person. The following activities are included in these additional operations: trainings, internships with employers, interventional works. These services and instruments can be used also by the disabled people who are registered in a county labour office as ready to take employment and not employed1.

Apart from general activities enumerated in the Act on Promotion of Employment there are numerous other solutions in Poland of a specific character aiming at promotion of disabled persons employment and directed only at this social group. These activities are regulated by the act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (later referred to as: act on rehabilitation).

The fulfilment of tasks enumerated in the act on rehabilitation is supervised by Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People who is a secretary of state in the ministry competent for social security. The Plenipotentiary is obliged among other things to: create and comment on law regulations

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concerning employment and rehabilitation of people with disabilities. The consultancy body of the Plenipotentiary is called National Consultative Council for People with Disabilities (later referred to as: the Council). It is a cooperative forum of government administration organs, self-government and non-governmental organizations acting for the disabled persons. The Council expresses its opinion about the guidelines of employment policy, professional and social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and proposals (bills) of legal acts influencing or possibly influencing disabled people situation.

The tasks enumerated in the act on rehabilitation are financed mainly from the reserves of State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (later referred to as: the State Fund). It is a special state fund whose incomes consist of employers’ payments in cases if they do not employ the required number of disabled persons. In Poland the support for the people with disabilities bases mainly on quota system – the employers employing at least 25 workers are obliged to make certain payments to the State Fund, unless they employ 6% disabled people in their workforce. While achieving its goals the State Fund cooperates tightly with province and county self-governments. The self-governments obtain funds from the Fund. The funds are allocated on the basis of a special algorithm. Such funds are also transferred to other institutions completing tasks enumerated in the act on rehabilitation. The State Fund subsidizes also monthly salaries of disabled workers employed on the sheltered labour market and, with few exceptions, on the open labour market. The State Fund allocates also some reserves for the realization of programs financed by UE founds for disabled persons support.

Similarly to the Act on Promotion of Employment, which obliges self-governments to act in the field of labour market policy, the act on rehabilitation obliges self-governments to act within the area of vocational rehabilitation and employment of people with disabilities. Self-government of a province is obliged among other things to: create and accomplish province support programs in the fulfilment of activating the employment of persons with disabilities, aid sheltered workplaces enterprises for disabled persons and subsidize the costs of professional activation units (enterprises) creation and operation. Provincial social councils for people with disabilities are created to accompany province marshals. These are consultative and counselling bodies. The councils operating on the level of a province consist of representatives of respectively: non-governmental organizations operating within the area of the province, foundations, province governor and territorial self-government
units (counties and municipalities). They are obliged to inspire undertakings aiming at vocational and social integration of the people with disabilities. The tasks of counties connected with disabled people support and financed from reserves obtained from the State Fund are fulfilled mainly by county family support centres and county labour offices. The county labour offices accomplish the obligatory tasks of each county through: creation and implementation of county activity programs for the persons with disabilities within the area of vocational rehabilitation and their employment as well as adherence to the rights of disabled persons, work service and career counselling for the people with disabilities, their training and retraining. The county family support centres accomplish the obligatory tasks of each county through: subsidizing the costs of occupational therapy workshops creation and functioning. On the level of counties special consultative and counselling bodies are created in the form of county social councils for people with disabilities. They consist of representatives of respectively: county non-governmental organizations, founds and self-government units (county and municipalities). The county councils are obliged among other things to: inspire undertakings aiming at vocational and social integration of the people with disabilities.

A person with disability may find employment either on open or sheltered labour market. A disabled person in possession of a certificate stating their total incapacity to work may also be employed on the open labour market, on condition that their workstation has been positively approved of by the National Labour Inspectorate. The National Labour Inspectorate also supervises and controls if the employers act according to labour law regulations\(^2\). In Poland there are also two types of enterprises offering employment to the persons with disabilities: sheltered workplaces enterprises and occupational workshops. Enterprises with sheltered workplaces employ disabled people regardless of the disability degree and the employer who wants to be granted a status of sheltered workplaces enterprise has to reach a certain level of disabled persons employment amounting at 30 to 40% depending on the disability degree\(^3\). Occupational workshops aim at employing persons with severe disability. They also have to reach a much higher rate of disabled workers employment in comparison with sheltered workplaces enterprises\(^4\).

\(^2\) The Act on National Labour Inspectorate, 6 March 1981.
\(^3\) Act on Rehabilitation.
\(^4\) Ibid.
It is relatively modern form of sheltered employment in Poland – the first enterprise of this type was created in 2000. People with disability may also take part in vocational rehabilitation in the form of occupational therapy workshops. Their activities aim at gaining or restoring the capacity to be employed to people with disabilities.

In Poland there are also many non-governmental organizations accomplishing tasks within the area of employment promotion and vocational activation of people with disabilities, among which there are so called umbrella organizations. An example of such organization is Polish Disability Forum which is a member of European Disability Forum. This body is open to Polish associations and unions of associations of people with disabilities. Among its members one may find: Polish Association of the Deaf, Polish Association of the Blind, Polish Association for People with Mental Retardation, Polish Federation of Organizations of Persons with Physical Disability, which support with their activities several hundred thousand persons with disabilities. Within each province there are also organizations called provincial councils of people with disabilities which constitute union of associations acting for people with disabilities, aiming at, among other things, representation of the interest of the disabled persons. A good example of such council acting for promotion of disabled people employment is the Wrocław Council of People with Disabilities, the author of supported employment program for people with disabilities, called the Job Coach Project, operating in Wrocław since 2000.

Organizations associating disabled people’s employers also play an important role in this respect. A good example of such association is Polish Organization of Employers of Disabled Persons which is the greatest association of disabled people employers with over 600 members. Apart from undertaking steps for the employers the organization supports also directly the people with disabilities.

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6 Act on Rehabilitation.
7 Information from the website of Polish Disability Forum, [online: ] www.pfon.org.pl.
9 Information from the website of Polish Organization of Employers of Disabled Persons, [online: ] www.popon.pl.
4.2. Poland

*Dark-colored are organizations of general character applying to all citizens while the others are organizations of specific character aiming at promotion of people with disabilities employment. The dashed lines represent some of the ways of financing from the Labor Fund and State Rehabilitation Fund.

Fig. 1. Structure and selected organizations supporting the employment of people with disabilities in Poland*.
Cooperation with non-governmental organizations acting to support the people with disabilities is one of the duties of the following organs: Government Plenipotentiary, Board of the State Fund for Rehabilitation, province and county self-governments. Non-governmental organizations may also conduct the services of labour market which are commissioned to them by province and county self-governments or establish employment agencies. A good example of this kind of activity are Centres of Career Counselling and Support for Persons with Intellectual Disability run by Polish Association for People with Mental Handicap. These are training institutions and employment agencies operating within the area of work service, personnel consultancy and career counselling. Non-governmental organizations also accomplish tasks connected with vocational rehabilitation commissioned by the State Fund. They often run enterprises with sheltered workplaces, occupational workshops and occupational therapy workshops.

Finally, it is important to mention the role of the courts in relation to the introduction to Polish legal system anti-discriminating regulations basing on 2000/78/WE Council Directive of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. People with disabilities, aggrieved as a result of employer’s breech of equal treatment rules, are entitled to pursue their rights in a labour courts. Cases connected with discrimination at work can also be directed to the Commissioner for Civil Rights Protection.

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10 Act on Rehabilitation.
11 Act on Promotion of Employment.
13 Act on Rehabilitation.
15 Ibid.
The main information resources for the disabled people are the Organization for the Occupation of the Work force (O.A.E.D.), the media (television, newspapers and radio) and in the past few years in smaller percentage the Internet.

The services of O.A.E.D. function and cover all the geographic apartments of country with at least one annex.

The services of Organization of the Occupation of the Work force (O.A.E.D.) aim to record the unemployed and publicise the decisions on the payment of benefit of unemployment, but also the discovery of new places of work for the unemployed.

For this aim function the frames of O.A.E.D. services the Centers of Promotion of Employment, which with their labor advisers deal with the trends in the job market and shape the professional profiles of candidates in order to meet those trends.

The Organization for the Occupation of the Work force is responsible for the application of law 2643/1998 which regulates subjects of employment of various frail teams of population as well as disabled people, in the public and private sector. For the confrontations of this important activity but also all subjects that concern the employment of disabled people has created a special secretariat department.

O.A.E.D. is also responsible for the planning and application of programs of professional training that will correspond in the modern requirements of job market, but also in the faculties of disable people.

The services of O.A.E.D. characterized by the lack of accurate and up to date information concerning the disable persons.

The opportunities of employment that are provided to disabled people via the O.A.E.D. should be publicized with an accessible and friendly way to the all categories of disable people.

As it is pointed out in special report of Advocate of Citizen (June 2005) a big number of unemployed with disabilities do not have sufficient briefing on the supporting documents that are required for their employment, with result a lot of applications are rejected, because of lack of essential supporting documents.

Aiming the upgrade of briefing that offered to disable people, the Report to the Parliament of Greeks of inter-parties Committee, “on the confrontation of problems that occupies the individuals with infirmity”, proposes:
Aid of Services of Briefing of O.A.E.D. to the disabled persons with regard to their offered possibilities of employment.

With regard to the briefing that provides the means of mass briefing and particularly the television we would mark below:

It is observed that most television stations do not provide accessible programs to the television viewers with serious problems of hearing and sight (e.g. programs with the use of notional language, use of subtitles) trampling the right of this particular category of citizens in the briefing and entertainment.

In Greece the citizens with disabilities are often faced as patients and persons that need alms. The fundamental cause of these stereotyped and negative biases, in most cases, is that been mistaken briefing of citizen, as well as the insufficient sensitization of common opinion, with regard to the invalid subjects and with the particular needs of individuals with disabilities.

The ignorance creates fears and bias while the right briefing on the real situation of disabilities can strengthen a culture of acceptance.

The sensitization and briefing of school community, via the educational process, can contribute decisive in the configuration of culture of acceptance, in the frames of which, the citizens with disabilities will be faced as equivalent citizens and no as patients and objects of pity.

The Inter-parties Committee of Parliament of Greeks realized previous described situation and in the report ‘on the confrontation of problems of individuals with infirmity’ proposes:

1. Connections of awarding of vacations of mass media with the degree of access of disable people to their programs.
2. The introduction of a course in schools, which will deal with, the particular needs of disable people.

The publication of handbook of cadets and unidiomatic terms, provides an important tool for the training of journalists.

This effort can contribute in the rejection of the presentation of disable people in negative roles as well as the report of disabilities, with terms, that strengthen the negative biases.

The professional orientation that take place in the schools provides adapted briefing on subjects that concern the choice of profession in combination with the cognitive faculties of each individual.

During the last years we became witnesses of spectacular changes in most sectors of human activity that inevitably influence education and professional training but also the school and professional orientation.
The growth of information and communication technology has led to the globalization and internationalization of processes of production and disposal of consuming goods.

The replacement of human work by automated systems of production, limits more and more the demand and the employment in traditional sectors of work.

Those changes have as result the increase of unemployment with first victims the frail teams of population and mainly the disable people.

It is now obvious that the professional life will not begin and finish with the same job for a continuously increasing percentage of workers.

It is calculated that in the USA the current young person of age of 20 years will change roughly 7 times professional activity in his life (Kassotakis, Inspection Advisory and Orientation Publications, Greek Letters 1995).

Naturally corresponding tendencies will be also developed in the European countries and at extension and in our country.

The consequences these changes in the education and the professional orientation, described bellow:

First of all, the education and the training cannot finish with the acquisition of a degree or a diploma.

The continuing education and the permanent training or re-training are implacable necessity that leads to the radical revision of orientation of educational system.

Taking into consideration the above difficulties the supply of workers with professional knowledge and corresponding dexterities will be in the future affair of a flexible professional training system, capable to adapt fast the changes in the job market.

The conditions for the smooth operation of such system are:

- The training system should be connected with the job market and the world of enterprises.
- The training system should provide the individuals with general education in order to give them the elements that are essential for the completion of their personality, their active attendance in sociopolitical and cultural events. In addition, the growth of cognitive conditions will be the foundation of later specializations and professional reorientations. Particularly in the persons with disabilities the effects of the globalization are more violent and impose the better possible professional preparation.

Is imposed the specialization of advices of professional orientation and preparation.
4. Structures and organizations for supporting the employment of disabled people

Thus the adviser that will work with the disable people should be know:
1. The legislations and policies for the disable people,
2. The characteristics of the various types of disabilities and their consequences in the labour behavior of persons that suffers from them,
3. The opportunities of the job market,
4. The consequences of social stereotypes in self-esteem of disable people,
5. The different models of professional orientation for persons with disabilities from their birth or disabilities from accident and illness.

The access in technologies of information and communications (TPE) is an important factor for the improvement of the quality of life of the disabled. Simultaneously however, if disabled persons do not have equal occasions of access in technologies (TPE), it is very likely they are led to social exclusion.

More and more it becomes comprehensible, that the steps marked in the sector of TPE should cover the needs of all members of society and particularly the teams that are more prone to social exclusion.

The access of individuals with disabilities in the information is their uncontradictable right. People with disabilities, constitute the 10-12% of the population of EU and have the same rights with all the other persons regarding the access in products and services, including the products and services of TPE. It should be marked that the individuals with disabilities, the individuals with provisional disabilities and the old people correspond together the 40% of the European Union population.

On average, the rate of attendance of individuals with disabilities in the workforce of the EU is under 35% compared to 70% for the workers that do not suffer from any kind of disabilities. Also, the Committee estimates that roughly 2 to 3, 5 millions individuals with disabilities can include themselves in workforce, if suitable measures are taken for the lifting of obstacles which crash into their integration. Consequently, with the economic integration disabled people will profit the society and the economy of Europe in general. This situation will raise the dependence of many individuals with disabilities.

People with disabilities should overcome the barriers and the technical difficulties that they face. This effort constitutes in a wider significance of electronic social integration and concerns other type obstacles, especially economical, geographical and educational.

For this reason, the European Committee has proposed specific policies in order to support the electronic access of the disabled. All member states and the interested institutions are responsible to support the wider distribution in Europe of accessible products and services (TPE).
More concretely, in 1999 the European Committee announced the initiative “eEurope- An Information Society for all” which placed as a central concern the guarantee that the profits that arise from the program are accessible in the all-European citizens. As a result the equivalent attendance in such programs becomes a fundamental objective.

In addition, 10 fundamental axes of priority were created that covered a wide spectrum from the education and the transports, up to the health and the disabled people. The axis of priority 7 delimited with clarity that the technologies of information technology and telecommunications should be used for the disable people at such way, so that they improve the quality of life and their occasion in the work.

In this frame of European Strategy for electronic access, the member states committed to improve the access to public web sites, particularly for the disable people, according to the international Governing Directives for Internet Access.

In addition, the European Committee approved a parallel activity called eAccessibility, aiming at the promotion of access of disable people in information technology and telecommunications, via the establishment of programs of study and policies that will intervene in the sectors of standardization and legislation.

In order to ensure the creation, collaboration and networking of national centers of distinction in the sector of catholic planning, and its’ proposes programs of study, in June 2002 it was recommended the European Network European Design for all eAccessibility Network and in this frame, it was recommended as member of European Network the Greek National Network GR-DeAN.

On the bases of institutional frame of European Union the growth of the Society of Information in Greece requires the following steps:
1) Concretization of concrete work with visibly in each one result, which will offer in the citizen essential information via the content of “information streets”.
2) The society of Information it is essential to acquire and to comprehend the significance of “Informed Society”, so the telematics services in the sectors of health, public administration and the culture to become accessible in all.
3) Growth of telecommunications infrastructure that with the technologies of information technology will support the offer of telematics of services in the all residents of Greece.
Thus, Greece aims at the promotion of the Information Society (KtP) with a completed and cohesive way. The country approved to us and materializes a separate Operational Program (EP) for the Information Society (KtP) in the frame of Third Community Support Framework (KPS).

The Operation Program has a horizontal and innovative character, penetrating different government owned services. It also keeps in pace, with the initiative eEurope and the conclusions of Summit of Europe that were realized in Lisbon in March 2000.

However, it can become easily perceptible, that the promotion of disable people in the job market, and their structures of briefing, is unbreakably connected with the briefing that they have from the Media, with the wider relation-access in them, as well as with the degree at which the Media deal with the subjects that occupy the disable people.

Although important steps have been made up to today, Greece has not accomplished to reach the desirable levels of absorption from the Operation Program of the Information Society, so there are delays in the concretization of objectives. In a recent report of UN the progress that has made our country to a Society of Information is characterized as mot satisfactory.

More concretely, with the indicator NRI which calculates the “degree of nation or society to participate in Information Society and to take advantage of the developments in the sector of information technology and telecommunications”, it is realized that Greece, in year 2006, possesses the 66th place between 115 countries in the electronic attendance and electronic government owned readiness.

With regard to the indicator “Use of Electronic Public Services from Citizens”, Greek observatory for the Society of Information estimates that the percentage of population that uses the Internet for transactions with public services, amounts hardly in the 8% for year 2006, and it is distributed as follows:

- Information from web pages of public services 6%,
- Download of official forms and applications 4%,
- Submission of official applications and forms 3%.

Also, the services of electronic transactions are minimal and very often lack functionality. Services that belong in this category are offered by certain institutions as the Ministry of Finance (electronic statement of VAT) and the Institution of Social Insurance (electronic applications and statements), while the majority that use those services are experienced accountants.
In the media sector, the private channels do not include in their program any briefing related to the subjects that concern the disabled people, such as employment, new programs, new technologies etc.

The only contribution of private television channels is the translation of the noon news in the language that is understandable from deaf people.

The government owned channels provide all the news in the language that is understandable from deaf persons. From 16 of January 2006, the digital platform of Greek Nation Television (ERT) contains three pilot channels. The channel “Prisma+” is intended and concerns about disable people. The administration of ERT announced that people with disabilities and institutions that are activated in the area can receive the equipment for the reception of the digital signal of channel free of charge.

The “PRISMA+” is a pilot program with content exclusively made for disabled people that give the opportunity in individuals with problems in hearing, sight, kinetic disabilities etc. to watch short news, recreational and informative programs.

The primary program, because of the lack of proportional infrastructure in the ERT, will be produced by a specialized private company. ERT is responsible for the control and monitoring of the production.

With regard to the briefing of disabled people, the magazine “DISABILITY NOW” has been published. The majority of people that produce the magazine are unsalaried volunteers. Despite his voluntary character of “DISABILITY NOW” the initiatives that are developed are in a professional level and extremely innovative.

The magazine INFIRMITY NOW is constituted by 116 pages and is dispatched postal in 8,500 subscribers in Greece and Cyprus. The magazine “DISABILITY NOW” is a tool of briefing, information and communication. In places where disabled people live, study, work and keep fit, an issue of that magazine can be found. For blind people, all the issues of the magazine are online.

The www.disabled.gr is the digital form of “DISABILITY NOW”. It is the biggest and most popular site that concerns the disabled people and has more than 75,000 visitors per month. It was created in 1985 and from then it took advanced of all the available technologies. Its current form is the result of that process. In www.disabled.gr the user can find the biggest Greek digital library, which includes thousands titles of books and articles on disabilities, special education, re-establishment etc. Most of the titles are first publications in Greeks.
In addition in the category of digital library there is “The Guide for the Citizens with Disabilities”, which is the most completed and organized collection of laws and case law for disable people.

The www.disabled.gr has the biggest digital community of disable people in Greece, with hundreds members in which posting daily the all news and articles for disabilities. The source of the news and the articles is the daily Greek and foreign press. In addition, forums, chat rooms and organized list of digital contacts are some of the tools that the users have in order to communicate with each other.

Moreover, www.disabled.gr send electronic newsletter (3 to 4 electronic newletters per weekl) in thousand Greek disable people around the globe.

In conclusion, in the area of the briefing of disable peopled, especially in the sector of job market, the progress that has been made from the State all these years was not satisfactory. The main resources that disabled people can use in order to find information about the subject they are interested in are only accessible from institutions and organizations that are created by volunteers with the same problems. Popular web sites and specialized magazines are used by disabled persons in order to find information about subjects that occupy them.
5. Conclusion

The aim of the Comparative study/guide between the three Partners (Greece, Italy, Poland) in the frame of our inter-country is described precisely by its title: compare the existing professional situation and the policies that are adopted for the improvement of this. Common and different elements are used in order to compose the comparative picture of these three countries.

Proportionally with their population the bigger percentage of individuals with disabilities was in Poland of (roughly 15% of population), Greece of (roughly 10% of population) and Italy of (roughly 4.8% of population over 6 years old). A common figure in the three countries is that the biggest number of individuals with disabilities is over 50 years old. The reason for this situation is probably the fact that individuals of bigger age face more often serious illnesses or accidents that lead to some form of disability.

In addition, in the three countries this demographic team of disabled people, although it is numerous, it is affected by a bigger degree of unemployment compared to the remaining population and respectively has a lower level of education. A big percentage of people with disabilities is maintained economically by benefits of social providence. Consequently, the existence of common access difficulties for disabled persons from the three countries in the education and the work are apparent.

The children that have a certain disability can study at a common school, at a school of integration or at special school. At the end of the school years, they are given opportunities for professional education, mainly of secondary level. However, in Greece and Poland the technical faculties provide limited opportunities regarding the number of specialities. In Greece the system via which are regulated the issues of professional specialties resemble inflexible and solidified, while in Poland the import of new specialities is presented easier, because the regulation system is more flexible, the responsible ministry takes the decisions in collaboration with each school, taking into consideration the needs of the local and national job market.

The legislative regulation for the educational and professional rights of individuals with disabilities does not present cohesion between the three countries. The reason for this lack of law cohesion is the difficulties of
Structures and organizations for supporting the employment of disabled people

adjustment with the Directives of European Union. The European Union provides common, explicit and strict Directives to member states regarding disabilities issues. However, each member states tries to incorporate E.U. guidelines based on its economic and professional reality. This leads to the existence of different approaches of Greece, Italy and Poland regarding the issues and problems of disable people.

Poland takes the effort of the decentralisation in the decision-making and detachment of education that the individual receives in general, but also the individual with disability from his professional career. In Greece the legislative arms of individuals with disability toward the discreet behaviour that they might face in their works, are the laws N. 3304/05 and N. 2643/98. The law N.3304/05 clarifies the issues related to the application of equal treatment independently of the racial or nationality origin, religious or other convictions, disability, age or sexual orientation (according to the Directives 2000/43/EK and 2000/78/EK). The law N. 2643/98 is described on chapter C, Greek DP. On the other hand, their application has a central character and not a regional or local one, with accent in the obligatory placement and in the foresight confrontation of disabled people.

Italy is taking actions in order to exceeded the strict choice of imposition of “obligatory” employment that forecasted old law 482/68. The new legislative tendency promotes the ‘targeted engagement’ (art. 2 L. 68/99). According to this legislation there are technical and supporting bodies provided, which are evaluated sufficiently with the professional faculties of disabled people and imports them in the right labour environment, via analysis of professional spaces, support forms, positive action and solutions in the problems that are connected with different environments, tools and interpersonal relations in daily professional and social spaces.

In Italy the employment of an individual with disability exceeds the law and it constitutes a common logic aiming at moral quality, which each company should allocate. The rate of the required disability for an individual, in order to have beneficial provisions is smaller in the Italian legislation, compared to Polish and Greek legislation. As a result, the number of disabled people protected by the law is bigger in Italy. The Italian legislation protects individuals with disabilities, even in the case that their disability is not very serious.

Between the three countries it appears, consequently, that Italy is this country that has approached the adoption of culture in the labour environment, where the employment of individuals with disabilities is considered normal, when the worker corresponds satisfactorily to his duties.
5. Conclusions

On the subject of the Structures of support for the individuals with disabilities, in Greece the main support is provided by organizations and associations of disabled people, which have been organised very satisfactorily and with their own force and insistence they accomplished to support their members and fight for their rights. Nowadays, the supporting associations and organizations are taking actions in order to promote electronic information and networking of disabled people. It appears that they have already made very good steps for the disabled people. However, the lack of sufficient economic resources complicates this effort. Unfortunately, the actions of the Greek state in the sector of professional orientation for the disabled people, were seasonal, fragmentary and without the appropriate resources and coordination. The result was the creation of a gap in the sector of professional orientation of disabled people.

In Poland, apart from the responsible organisms and associations, there is a large extensive structure of institutions that deals with the subject of employment for the disabled people and not only, in governmental and not governmental level, central and regional administration. This structure is enough complexed, but simultaneously comprehensive, it includes institutions of financing, centres of advisory and centres of support for the families of disable people. In Italy, the governmental monopolistic system tends to become limited and is given more space in the collaboration of public and private institutions. In addition, actions of administrative decentralisation have been taken, with movement of competences from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the regions.

It is also obvious that the three countries are trying to apply the Directives of European Union and are there are in the right direction regarding the pre-existing professional situation for the individuals with disabilities. However, the cultural and economical differentiations of each county, lead to different rhythm and approaches of application of directives.

Probably this is the reason that each one of the examined countries is in different progress stage by referring to the improvement of professional situation of disabled people and their equal integration in the job market.

This Comparative study/guide can be the starting point for reflection and exchange of good practices between the three countries via the partners of Inter-country Collaboration. The aim of the Comparative study/guide is not to distinguish the best country, but to spot weaknesses that should be avoided or improved. Additionally, the Comparative study/guide is identifying good examples that need aid and deserve to be followed. Common and different points are useful and can lead to positive results if they are developed.
Education and Rehabilitation System for Visually Impaired People in Poland

edited by
Kornelia Czerwińska, Jadwiga Kuczyńska-Kwapisz
Introduction

People with visual impairments – the blind and partially sighted – constitute a special group of people with disabilities who are at risk of encountering difficulties in access to education and employment in the open market. The project called "Per linguas mundi ad laborem", which is now being carried out in Poland within the EQUAL Community Initiative funded by the European Social Fund, is one of the initiatives which are to facilitate people with this kind of disabilities entering the open labor market. The project mainly aims at working out the solutions which will enable blind and partially sighted people to integrate into the work environment on a permanent basis by providing them with English language training during which up-to-date information technologies and appropriately adapted teaching aids will be used. The following institutions are involved in order to achieve this objective: the Academy of Special Education, the University of Warsaw, the Catholic University of Lublin, the Polish Association of the Blind, and the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons.

On account of the special nature of the actions undertaken by the Polish partners within the "Per linguas mundi ad laborem" project, it has been suggested to expand the present paper with materials showing the system solutions developed in the area of rehabilitation and education of people with visual impairments in Poland. The second part of the publication contains seven articles written mainly by the academic teachers of the Academy of Special Education in Warsaw and the employees of the institutions which are taking part in the project, i.e. the University of Warsaw and the Polish Association of the Blind. The editors of this part intend to introduce the foreign reader to the legal basis and organizational solutions applied in the present education and rehabilitation system for people with visual impairments from birth to the beginning of their professional activity. The articles, which contain both theoretical analyses and reports on the research, show not only the good practices developed in the area, but also the present problems and possible strategies to solve them.

Kornelia Czerwińska
When a visually impaired baby is born, it dictates the need to look for possibilities and methods of alleviating the multidimensional effects of this disability in the area of physical skills, mental skills and social skills. Loss of vision or its severe impairment poses a threat to the development of the child who will have significant difficulties adapting to the limitations resulting from the disability if he/she is not provided with an appropriate, properly planned and implemented intervention. It is particularly important to start rehabilitation of the child as soon as possible, that is at the point when the first symptoms indicating abnormal development are detected.

Importance of early intervention

Both the theory and the practice of special education prove that the sooner rehabilitation starts the more efficient it is, which is particularly important in the case of small children with disabilities as the first years of life are the period of the most intensive and dynamic developmental changes connected with gradual maturation of the nervous system. The plasticity of the brain at that time, together with appropriate stimulation, permits provoking positive developmental changes, compensating for the observed disorders and preventing the disability from progressing. Effectiveness of rehabilitation in small partially sighted children is an example of the fundamental importance of early intervention, which is discussed by B. Cytowska (2006, p. 24): “(…) intensive visual stimulation in babies and toddlers can contribute to a significant improvement of visual functions through the use of the brain’s plasticity. In practice, it is estimated that totally blind people are not seen today. They are taught to take advantage of their visual experiences and they perform a kind of individual self-stimulation, while modern equipment helps them in their life and professional activity.” The importance of early rehabilitation is also
confirmed by the results of the scientific research (inter alia: Sonksen, 1991, after: Kulakowska 2003; Walkiewicz, 1999; Żernicki, Burnat, 2005), which prove that visual stimulation in visually impaired children aged 0-6 provokes positive changes in the development of their vision.

Early diagnosis of any abnormalities and comprehensive, multi-specialist support provided for the visually impaired child give him/her an opportunity to achieve the highest level of psychosocial functioning possible, and in consequence – optimal independence later in life.

The authors in the literature on the subject (inter alia: Gresnigt, 1995; Walczak, 2000; Łobacz, 2005; Cytowska, 2006; Gladyszewska-Cylulko, 2006; Czerwińska, 2007) unanimously emphasize the need to involve all family members in early rehabilitation, and especially the parents, for whom early intervention becomes an opportunity to understand their child’s needs and his/her developmental potential better, to activate their own skills in supporting his/her development, to improve relationships between them, to enhance their sense of parental competence, and thus to adapt better to the new situation resulting from the fact of having a blind or partially sighted child in the family.

**Early intervention centers**

At present, an increasing number of institutions and organizations are dealing with problems of early intervention for visually impaired children. According to the data of the Ministry of National Education, the majority of special childcare and learning centers for blind and partially sighted children have interdisciplinary teams and consulting units which provide comprehensive support for small children and their families wherever possible. Moreover, some associations and foundations connected with visually impaired people also take care of early intervention for children aged 0-6. However, it is necessary to stress that there is no present data on early intervention centers, or information which would permit precise determination of the need for this type of support in different regions of Poland; the data of the Ministry of National Education, as well as the data of the Polish Association of the Blind, is approximate and it is often not adequate to the actual situation.

The most important institutions which specialize in providing support for visually impaired infants and toddlers are:
• The Clinic of Comprehensive Diagnosis, Early Education, Therapy and Rehabilitation at “Rainbow” Association of Parents and Friends of Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Warsaw. Since 1993, it has been providing support for blind and partially sighted children, usually with multiple disabilities, who live in the Mazovian Province and in the neighboring provinces (inter alia: Podlaskie Province, Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province, and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province), and also for those who live in these regions where there are not enough specialist institutions taking care of intervention for children with such complex disabilities. The clinic’s activities are based on teamwork; each child and his/her family receive support from an interdisciplinary team of specialists (consultant doctors: an ophthalmologist, a neurologist, a pediatrician, an orthopedist, and also a psychologist, a vision therapist, a physical therapist, a sensory integration therapist, and a speech therapist) who cooperate with each other on a regular basis while making diagnosis, and developing and implementing individual rehabilitation programs. At present, there are two therapeutic teams: a home support team which implements rehabilitation programs in the form of home visits for children who live in Warsaw and near Warsaw, and a consulting support team which provides control visits in the clinic’s seat for children who do not live in Warsaw. The clinic is taking part in a pilot governmental project now which is presented in a later part of this article.

• The Specialist Clinic of Early Rehabilitation in Chorzów, which was established by the Regional Foundation “Blind Aid” in 1997 based on a German model of mobile intervention which consists in systematic work with families at home. The interdisciplinary team includes doctors: an ophthalmologist and a neurologist, a clinical psychologist, a speech therapist, physical therapists, a vision teacher, a family educator, educators, and hippotherapists1. The clinic has been cooperating with the Institute for the Blind in Würzburg since its beginning.

• The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind Children in Bydgoszcz has a consulting and therapeutic unit for children aged 0-6 and their families who live in Bydgoszcz and in the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province which provides the following rehabilitation services: vision

therapy, orientation and mobility, speech therapy, physical therapy, basic rehabilitation, and family therapy. This center is particularly experienced in work with deafblind children.

- The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Dąbrowa Górnicza has been providing early intervention services since 1999. They are provided by a team of teachers who specialize in this area of rehabilitation.

- The Center of Early Psychological Support in Cracow was established in 1991. It provides specialist services for small visually impaired children, often with multiple disabilities, such as motor rehabilitation, speech therapy, small-group activities for preschoolers, individual rehabilitation, and rehabilitation camps.

- The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Partially Sighted People in Łódź has been providing early intervention services since 1996; at present, the team consists of: an ophthalmologist, three vision teachers, an educator and a speech therapist who cooperate with a physical therapist and an orientation and mobility specialist. In the school year of 2005/06, the team provided services for 70 children from Łódź and around Łódź, both in the form of consulting visits in the center, and home visits. The therapists cooperate with the Polish Mother's Memorial Hospital on a regular basis.

- The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind Children in Owińska near Poznań provides early intervention based on work of an interdisciplinary team whose members visit the children at home, and also provide consultation in the center.

- The Rehabilitation Clinic for Blind and Partially Sighted People in Poznań provides services for small visually impaired children, also with multiple disabilities, e.g. with hearing impairments.

- The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind People in Wrocław has been providing early intervention services with its team of specialists since the nineties. They provide individual home support for the youngest children (not older than 4), and group activities at school for older children.

Early intervention services have been also provided in the center in Cracow for many years, and recently, they have been developing dynamically in the educational centers in Warsaw: in the special center for partially sighted people in Koźmińska Street and in the special preschool for blind children in Laski.
New system solutions in the field of early intervention

In spite of the importance of early intervention for the visually impaired child’s development and for his/her family functioning, which is confirmed both by research results and therapeutic practice, it has not been possible to work out any system solutions in Poland which would guarantee that all those who need it would have access to essential rehabilitation services. As there are not any appropriate formal and legal regulation, the range of services provided in different early intervention centers is significantly diversified and it depends largely on current staff, financial and organizational potential of a given institution, which often changes. Due to an insufficient number of specialist centers and their clear regionalization (mainly large cities and towns with special childcare and learning centers for blind and partially sighted people), not all visually impaired children receive necessary rehabilitation support, and their families are often forced to overcome many barriers of formal, financial or organizational nature, such us expensive trips to faraway centers and receiving support in the form of rare consultation instead of regular and coordinated therapy at home. The present division of the government departments (health, education, and social policy departments) as well as organizational divisions hinder effective functioning of the institutions and centers which specialize in providing support for visually impaired infants and toddlers. The most serious consequences of the lack of system solutions in early intervention are: late detection of disabilities or disability risk, late diagnosis, lack of or difficult access to professionals, rehabilitation services that are insufficient or delivered too late, lack of or limited access to information, lack of broadly defined support for families.

In 2005, two important legal acts were issued which can contribute largely to the improvement of the early intervention service quality. The Ombudsman put forward a proposal to design a pilot governmental project as part of the cooperation between the government departments (the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy) and the non-governmental organizations which represent the project’s beneficiaries (the Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap, “Rainbow” Association of Parents and Friends of Blind and Partially Sighted Children, the Polish Committee of Audiophonology, the Association for the Welfare of Children and People with Disabilities in Milice, “Ray of Sun” Foundation). This project is defined as Early, multi-specialist, comprehensive, coordinated and continual support for children at
risk of disabilities or with disabilities and their families (WWKSC) and it is being implemented in 2005-07. The necessity to undertake the pilot actions was justified by:

- implementing and testing an organizational concept of interdepartmental nature and a method of financing early intervention,
- developing an effective model of these actions,
- improving the state of health, development and social functioning of small children included in the project, preparing them for further education and social interactions,
- limiting the number of children, and in the future – the number of adults with disabilities who are completely passive, dependant on their caregivers or on institutional support,
- limiting social exclusion,
- developing standards in the area of multi-specialist services, staff qualifications, work organization and financing,
- developing standards of cooperation with health service institutions for infants, babies and children up to three years old, and with educational institutions for children aged 3-6,
- testing a voucher system in financing and organizing support on the basis of an interdepartmental agreement.

The fundamental aim of the above actions is to provide each child with the highest level of rehabilitation regardless of his/her place of residence or his/her social status.

It is particularly important to emphasize that for the first time, such a document pays special attention to the importance of the family in early intervention, and the specific problems and consequent needs of small disabled children's parents were taken into consideration in a broad scope while planning this support project. According to the adapted standards, cooperation between professionals and parents is a fundamental prerequisite for a proper course of therapy, and psychological support for families should include first of all:

- providing detailed instruction in the form of workshops where parents participate actively in model situations referring to the child's development, to proper nursing and solving childcare problems,
- choosing support which is appropriate for individual needs of a given family: psychoeducation, individual psychological therapy, couple therapy, family therapy, group therapy, parent-child interaction therapy, and educational skills training.
Other forms of support for families include providing rehabilitation equipment, and therapeutic aids and toys for hire, as well as providing short-term substitution in taking care of the child.

Analyzing the governmental project, B. Cytowska (2006, p. 19) shows some features of the suggested services for the child and his/her family which, according to the project’s authors, are to guarantee its functionality and usefulness, i.e.:

- starting rehabilitation as soon as possible,
- constant monitoring of the child’s development from the moment the disability or the risk of disability is diagnosed to the point when he/she starts compulsory education by the same interdisciplinary team (diagnosis, development of a rehabilitation program, its implementation and evaluation),
- coordinating comprehensive diagnostic and therapeutic actions,
- multi-discipline approach guaranteed by the team of closely cooperating professionals (depending on the need: various consultant doctors, a psychologist, a physical therapist, a speech therapist, an occupational therapist, an educator, a social worker); the tasks of this interdisciplinary team and of its particular professionals were specified in the project in detail.

Apart from the substantive guidelines, this document also contains organizational and financial solutions presented accurately, as well as the criteria for assessment of the project’s implementation by public and non-public institutions which take part in it.

**Model actions within the WWKSC**

The pilot project is being carried out at present, perhaps the conclusions drawn from its evaluation will contribute to the development of effective standards for diagnosis and therapy of small children with disabilities, including blind and partially sighted children.
The second document specifying the conditions for early intervention in Poland is the Executive Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of April 4, 2005, which among other things shows the aim and place for early intervention, the qualifications required from the professionals and the forms of cooperation with families. The basic responsibilities of the early intervention team are:

- determining, on the basis of the statement of early intervention needs, the direction and schedule of actions which shall be undertaken as part of early intervention and support for the child’s family,
Education and Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired Children Aged 0-6 in Poland

- establishing cooperation with a healthcare institution or a social welfare center in order to provide the child with rehabilitation, therapy and other forms of support depending on his/her needs,
- developing and carrying out with the child and his/her family an individual therapeutic program, and the actions which support the child's family in the area of the program's implementation, coordination of the actions performed by the professionals who conduct activities with the child and assessment of the child’s developmental progress,
- analyzing the efficiency of the support the child and his/her family are provided with,
- introducing changes to the individual early intervention program appropriately to the child's and his/her family's needs, and planning further therapeutic actions (after T. Serafin, 2005, p. 205; J. Kuczyńska-Kwapisz, 2007, p. 15).

A comparative analysis of these two fundamental documents, which currently provide an organizational framework for early rehabilitation support shows some specific, quite significant differences in reference to the form and the temporal basis of therapeutic services for the child. Pursuant to the executive regulation of April 4, 2005, the activities within early intervention amount to 4-8 hours a month depending on the psychophysical abilities of the child and his/her needs, which seems to be insufficient according to some professionals. They also assess critically the therapeutic team’s composition adopted in the executive regulation, which shows a predominance of pedagogical and psychological actions and a lack of various consultant doctors as regular team members – the necessity to establish cooperation with an outside healthcare institution is provided for. According to B. Cytowska (2006, p. 23): “Undoubtedly, such an approach does not favor comprehensiveness and interdisciplinary nature of services for children who require special treatment as part of their support. The dispersal of professionals exposes the child and his/her family to the hardship of traveling and adapting to the requirements of a given institution. The quality of the cooperation in the professionals’ team can also be at risk in this situation.”

Despite certain divergences, the solutions suggested in both documents discussed above can certainly become a basis of a nationwide system which shall efficiently regulate the functioning and financing of early intervention centers.
Conclusions

Early detection, diagnosis, and intervention constitute an important factor which increases the visually impaired children’s chances to continue their education in general education settings or integrated education settings. The system solutions in the area of early intervention which are being developed currently will undoubtedly become one of the most important stages of equalization of educational opportunities of visually impaired people.

Summary

The article depicts the present situation in the area of rehabilitation and education of blind and partially sighted children aged 0-6. At the beginning, the author underlines the importance of early intervention in reference to both the visually impaired child and his/her family. Then, the author enumerates and briefly describes the early intervention centers which are most experienced in therapeutic work with visually impaired children. She points out the current lack of system solutions which would determine the standards for early intervention services and guarantee equal access to these services regardless of the child’s place of residence or his/her social status. In the final part, the author presents the newest legal regulations which specify the conditions for early intervention services: the pilot governmental project defined as “Early, multi-specialist, comprehensive, coordinated and continual support for children at risk of disabilities or with disabilities and their families (WWKSC)” and the Executive Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of April 4, 2005.

Bibliography


Executive Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of April 4, 2005, on Early Intervention. On the basis of art. 71b. sec. 7 subparagraph 1 of the Education System Act of September 7, 1991 [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2004, No. 256, item 2572, No. 273, item 2703, No. 281, item 2781, and from 2005, No. 17, item 141].


Education and Rehabilitation System for Visually Impaired People Aged 6 to 24 – Special, Integrated and General Education

We shall present the education and rehabilitation system for blind and partially sighted students compared to the schooling of disabled children and youth as the educational policy and organizational solutions are the same for these groups.

Blind and partially sighted children and youth are educated in special primary schools, lower secondary schools, secondary schools, vocational schools and post-secondary schools, as well as in general education settings, including special classes and integrated classes, and in the form of individual home education. The choice of school depends largely on the student and his/her parents, but also on the psychological and pedagogical clinic, which issues a statement of special educational needs. The statement of special educational needs issued by the psychological and pedagogical clinic is not always accepted by disabled children’s parents. They think that their child is thus negatively set apart or even stigmatized. The pain which appeared after the blind daughter’s or blind son’s birth revives during this procedure. However, competently and tactfully performed adjudication process is necessary as it multiplies the amount of the educational subvention which is granted to the authority superior to the school where the disabled person is studying. It also impacts the methodological recommendations and instructions given to the teachers and the headmaster, which enables them to work out an appropriate pedagogical strategy.

1.1. Legal basis of the education for students with disabilities

The education system for disabled students constitutes an integral part of the general education system. The most important principles referring to education in Poland including education of people with disabilities are
regulated by the Education System Act of 7 September 1991. Some of the principles refer to all students, including disabled ones, and some of them refer only to students with disabilities.

According to the fundamental principles of the Act, the education system should ensure:

- each student the conditions necessary for his/her development,
- implementation of the right of the Polish Republic’s citizen to education, and the right of children and youth to education and care which are appropriate for their age and their level of development,
- adaptation of the content, methods and organization of teaching to psychophysical abilities of students, and also the possibility to take advantage of psychological and pedagogical support, and of special forms of teaching and learning,
- the possibility to receive education in all types of schools by children and youth with disabilities and socially maladjusted ones, according to their individual developmental and educational needs, and their predispositions,
- care of students with severe and multiple disabilities by providing them with individualized education, forms of teaching and curricula, and rehabilitation activities,
- care of students whose financial situation and situation in life are difficult,
- safe conditions and hygiene standards at schools and institutions.

Subsequent amendments to this Act introduced new regulations defining and organizing education of students with disabilities. A new school system, referring also to special education, was introduced by the Act of 8 January 1999 Regulations Introducing School System Reform (with later amendments).

List of executive regulations whose legal basis is constituted by the Education System Act:

- within the scope of psychological and pedagogical support and adjudicating on the need for special education:
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 7 January 2003 on principles of providing and organizing psychological and pedagogical support in public preschools, schools and institutions [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 11, item 114];
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 11 December 2002 on detailed principles referring to activities of public psychological and pedagogical clinics, including specialist public clinics [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) 2003, No. 5, item 46];
the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 11 December 2002 on general status of public psychological and pedagogical clinics, including specialist public clinics [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) 2002, No. 223, item 1869];

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of February 12, 2001 on adjudicating on the need for special education or individual education for children and youth, and on detailed rules concerning referral to special education or individual education [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 13, item 114 with amendments];

in the scope of early intervention for children:

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 4 April 2005 on organizing early intervention for children [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 68, item 587];

in the scope of school documentation, enrollment at schools, education plans, general statuses of preschools and schools:

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 19 February 2002 enumerating the methods of carrying out documentation of schooling history, and education and care activities by public preschools, schools and institutions, as well as the types of such documentation [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 23, item 225 with amendments];

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 20 February 2004 on conditions and procedures for enrolling students at public schools and transferring them from one type of school to another [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2004, No. 26, item 232];

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 12 February 2002, on general outlines for education plans in public schools [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 15, item 142 with later amendments];

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 21 May 2001 on general outlines for statutes of public preschools and schools [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 61, item 624 with later amendments];

in the scope of schooling in general education schools and in integrated schools:

the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 18 January 2005 on conditions for organizing education and care for disabled and socially maladjusted children and youth in
general education or integrated preschools, schools and classes [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2005, No. 19, item 167];

- in the scope of education in special preschools, schools and centers:
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 18 January 2005 on conditions for organizing education and care for disabled and socially maladjusted children and youth in special preschools, schools and classes or centers [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2005, No. 19, item 166];

- in the scope of individual education:
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 29 January 2003 on methods and procedures for organizing individual education for children and youth [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2003, No. 23, item 193];

- in the scope of special schools established within health care institutions and social support units:
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 27 February 2003 on education, conditions and forms of special educational care actions to be carried out in special schools established within health care institutions and social support units [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2003, No. 51, item 446];

- in the scope of special education institutions:
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 7 March 2005 specifying the types of public institutions and detailed rules referring to their functions, the conditions for children's and youth's stay in these institutions, as well as the amounts and rules for payments made by parents for their children's stay in these institutions [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws), No. 52, item 467 with later amendments];
  - the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 7 March 2005 on general outlines for statuses of public institutions [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2005, No.52, item 466];

The Act and the executive regulation on rehabilitation of children and youth with severe mental disabilities:
  - The Act of 19 August 1994 on Mental Health Protection [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws), No.111, item 535 with later amendments], on the strength of which the Minister of National Education was obliged to provide rehabilitation and education for children and youth with severe mental disabilities;
the executive regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 20 January 1997 specifying the rules for organizing rehabilitation and education activities for children and youth with severe mental disabilities [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws), No. 14, item 76].

1.2. Organization of special education services

Special education is provided for disabled and socially maladjusted children and youth who require special organization of education and teaching methods. Such schooling can be provided in general education schools, in integrated schools or classes, and in special schools or classes.

The following groups of children and youth with disabilities are included in special education programs:

1) with mild mental disabilities,
2) with moderate to severe mental disabilities,
3) with profound mental disabilities,
4) deaf,
5) hard of hearing,
6) blind,
7) partially sighted,
8) with motor disabilities,
9) with chronic disease,
10) with mental disorders,
11) with multiple disabilities,
12) with autism,
13) socially maladjusted, at risk of addiction,
14) with behavior disorders.

1.3. Special schooling

A special school or a special class is respectively a school or a class for students who have a statement of special educational needs, or established within health care institutions or spa treatment facilities.

Depending on special educational needs of children and youth and on the type and degree of their disabilities, the following special institutions can be established and run:

1) preschools (for children aged 3 till they start primary school but no longer than till they turn 10),
2) six-year primary schools (students can attend these schools till they turn 17),
3) three-year lower secondary schools (students can attend these schools till they turn 21),
4) basic vocational schools where schooling lasts at least two years but no longer than three years (students can attend these schools until they turn 24),
5) specialized secondary schools, general secondary schools, technical secondary schools (students can attend these schools till they turn 24),
6) post-secondary schools where schooling lasts no longer than 2.5 years,
7) three-year upper secondary job-training schools for students with moderate to severe mental disabilities, and for students with multiple disabilities, graduation from which enables them to receive a job-training certificate.

Special childcare learning centers and educational centers are established for disabled children and youth who receive compulsory education in a town which is away from their place of residence.

In addition, youth education centers and sociotherapy centers are established for socially maladjusted children and youth.

The number of students in a school class should amount to:
1) for students with mild mental disabilities – from 10 to 16 students,
2) for students with moderate to severe mental disabilities – from 6 to 8 students,
3) for blind and partially sighted students – from 8 to 10 students,
4) for deaf and hard of hearing students – from 6 to 8 students,
5) for students with chronic diseases – from 10 to 16 students,
6) for students with mental disorders – from 6 to 8 students,
7) for students with autism and multiple disabilities – from 2 to 4 students,
8) for students with motor disabilities – from 8 to 12 students,
9) for students who are socially maladjusted, at risk of addiction, or with behavior disorders – from 10 to 16 students.

There may exist public and non-public schools and institutions. District authorities are responsible for establishing and running special public preschools, whereas county authorities are responsible for establishing and running special public schools, special childcare and learning centers, special educational centers, youth education centers and sociotherapy centers. Students are entitled to psychological and pedagogical support. This
support enhances psychophysical development and effectiveness of learning through correction of differences from the norm, remediation and correction of gaps in learning the curriculum content, and elimination of reasons and manifestations of disorders, including behavior disorders. In preschools, this support takes the form of specialist therapeutic activities. In schools and centers, this support can be provided in the form of instructional and remedial activities as well as specialist activities (sociotherapy and others of therapeutic nature). Special classes are established within public preschools and schools. Special preschool classes can use preschool curricula designed in a given preschool or preschool curricula chosen form the set of the curricula authorized by the Minister of National Education. Special classes in schools use the curricula which are appropriate for a given type of special school. The curricula can by drawn up at a given school or they can be selected from the set of the general curricula authorized by the Minister of National Education. Special classes established for children and youth with moderate to severe mental disabilities use the curricula designed in consideration of a separate core curriculum. The number of students in such classes should correspond to the number of students in classes in corresponding special schools.

1.4. Integrated schooling

An integrated school (preschool) or an integrated class is respectively a school or a class whose students have a statement of special educational needs and study together with other students. Schools (preschools) are considered integrated if the majority of their classes are integrated. The number of students in an integrated class should amount to between 15 and 20, including between 3 and 5 disabled students. Integration of disabled children and youth together with non-disabled children and youth in general preschools and schools and in integrated schools aims at instruction in a peer group as close to their place of residence as possible. In such conditions, non-disabled students can be taught tolerance for individuality of another person and the principles of solidarity and democracy in reference to their disabled classmates. In integrated classes, only the children with moderate to severe mental disabilities learn the curriculum drawn up in consideration of a separate core curriculum. Including individual disabled students in general education classes in preschools and schools constitutes another form of integrated schooling.
2. Vocational education of students with disabilities

2.1. Legal basis

The education system guarantees disabled and socially maladjusted youth the possibility of receiving education in all types of schools depending on their individual developmental and educational needs as well as their predisposition. [Art. 1, subparagraph 5 of the Education System Act of 7 September 1991 – Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 1996, No. 67 with amendments]. The executive regulation issued by the Minister of National Education and Sport on 31 January 2002 amending the executive regulation concerning the general outlines for statuses of public preschools and schools [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2002, No. 10, item 96] formed the basis for education of students with disabilities in the following types of upper-secondary schools (from 1 September 2002):

- specialized secondary schools,
- technical secondary schools,
- basic vocational schools.

The general outlines for statuses of these schools provide for education of disabled students in general, integrated or special classes. Since 1 September 2004, students with moderate to severe mental disabilities and students with multiple disabilities have been able to attend special three-year upper secondary job-training schools, graduation from which enables them to receive a job-training certificate.

2.2. Regulations on vocational education in special schools

According to art. 39 section 5 of the Education System Act of 7 September 1991, the Head teacher of the school offering vocational training decides on the professions in which the school will train the students. This decision is taken in agreement with an official authority superior to the school and after obtaining the opinion from the chief education officer and either a province or county council of employment. This regulation also applies to special schools which provide vocational education. While deciding on the professions in which the school will train the students, the head teacher takes into consideration the local and national labor market needs, and applies the vocational education classification of occupations. The classification defines the professions and school types in which students can be trained, as well as the length of training in basic vocational schools, and the appropriate ministers at the request of whom the professions have been introduced. The regulations do not provide
for a separate classification of professions for special vocational education. Professional associations, organizations of economic self-governments as well as other economic organizations are authorized to apply to appropriate ministers with the request to create new occupations within vocational training. The initiative to introduce a new profession into the vocational education classification of occupations belongs only to the minister who is in charge of an appropriate government administration department the specific profession is connected with. This minister presents the minister of education with a motion containing the description of the profession along with the enumeration of adequate vocational skills.

Vocational training practice in special schools is organized according to the executive regulation issued by the Minister of National Education and Sport on 1 July 2002, on vocational training practice. [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2002, No. 113, item 988].

In special job-training classes for students with moderate to severe disabilities, the job-training curriculum is designed by the teacher with consideration to selected content included in the core curriculum for training in a specific trade. This kind of job training can be provided at school or outside its premises, on the basis of an agreement concluded by the basic vocational school’s head teacher with a school providing vocational training, a center for practical training, a vocational training and development center, or an employer.

2.3. Financing education of students with disabilities

The executive regulation issued by the Minister of National Education and Sport on 22 December 2005, on the allocation of a part of the general educational subvention to units of territorial self-government in the year 2006 [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) from 2005, No. 226, item 2231] introduced the following additional balances:

\[ P_2 = 1.40 \] – for students with mild mental disabilities, socially maladjusted, with behavior disorders, at risk of addiction, at risk of social maladjustment, with chronic diseases – requiring specific organization and methods of teaching and learning (on the basis of the statements specified in the art. 71b section 3 of the Education System Act),

\[ P_3 = 2.90 \] – for blind and partially sighted students, for students with motor impairments, and with mental disorders – requiring specific organization and methods of teaching and learning (on the basis of the statements specified in the art. 71b section 3 of the Education System Act),
\[ P_4 = 3.60 \] – for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, with moderate to severe mental disabilities (on the basis of the statements specified in the art. 71b section 3 of the Education System Act),

\[ P_5 = 9.50 \] – for students with profound mental disabilities who are in compulsory education through participation in rehabilitation and education activities provided in primary schools and lower secondary schools, for students with multiple disabilities, and with autism (on the basis of the statements specified in the art. 71b section 3 of the Education System Act),

\[ P_6 = 0.80 \] – additionally for disabled students in integrated classes in primary schools, lower secondary schools, upper-secondary schools and post-primary schools,

\[ P_{22} = 1.00 \] – for students of schools, regardless of their type, established within health care institutions or spa treatment facilities,

\[ P_{23} = 1.84 \] – for students of after-school educational activities conducted in primary schools, lower-secondary schools and upper-secondary schools established within health care institutions, including spa treatment facilities,

\[ P_{26} = 4.00 \] – for disabled students of preschools and preschool classes in primary schools (on the basis of the statements specified in the art. 71b section 3 of the Education System Act),

\[ P_{28} = 0.5 \] – additionally for students of residential programs who are students of special schools,

\[ P_{31} = 6.0 \] – for students of residential programs in special childcare and learning centers, special education centers and youth sociotherapy centers.

Due to the abovementioned facts, territorial self-government units receive an appropriately increased subvention for disabled students of preschools and preschool classes in primary schools, and for disabled students in schools where they receive their education (in general education schools, in integrated schools, schools with integrated classes, with special classes, or in special schools).

**2.4. Test and examinations**

The executive regulation issued by the Minister of National Education on 21 March 2001 specifying the conditions and methods of assessment, classification and promotion of students and conducting examinations and tests in public schools [Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) No. 29, item 323 with
amendments] also takes into account the needs of disabled and socially maladjusted students. Standard requirements and procedures concerning the test and examinations (lower-secondary examination, secondary-school examination and examinations certifying vocational qualifications) were set. Disabled students are obliged to take the test in primary school and the examination in lower secondary school together with other students. Only the students with moderate to severe mental disabilities or with multiple disabilities are exempted from this requirement. The Central Examination Board in Warsaw appointed a team of experts who adapt the examinations to the needs of disabled people. The authorities issued informative brochures about the examinations with information concerning disabled students. Adapting the examinations to the specific educational needs of disabled students consists in:

- introducing differentiated types of sheets for different groups of students: blind students (in Braille), partially sighted students (in enlarged print), students with hearing impairments, and students with mild mental disabilities (text adapted to their abilities),
- noting dyslexia on the sheet if it was diagnosed in the statement of special educational needs given by the psychological and pedagogical center,
- support from a supervising team,
- extending the examination time,
- possibility to use specialist equipment,
- possibility to use necessary medications and medical equipment,
- specialists in special education participating in examination boards.

3. Special Childcare and Learning Centers, preschools and vocational training centers

Róża Czacka Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind Children in Laski near Warsaw provides the following types of schooling: preschool for children within the intellectual norm and children with mild mental disabilities; primary schools and special primary school for children with mild mental disabilities; lower secondary school and special lower secondary school for children with mild mental disabilities; 1st and 2nd degree musical school, secondary vocational school – electronic installer training, a class with extended curriculum of foreign languages; technical secondary school – therapeutic massage; basic vocational
school; special basic vocational school – locksmith training, bookbinder training, wicker weaver training, brushmaker training, machine knitter training; training and vocational rehabilitation workshops provide the following: multimedia and foreign languages workshop, IT and small business workshop, telephone workshop, sound and record direction workshop, bookbinding and printing workshop, frame-making workshop, and wicker workshop. It is the only Center of a distinct catholic scope.

L. Braille Special Childcare and Learning Center in Bydgoszcz provides the following types of schooling: a preschool class for blind and partially sighted children; special classes for deafblind children and youth; primary school; lower secondary school; basic vocational school – electrical engineer training, mechanic-installer training, salesman training, farmer training – specialization: household; four-year general secondary school; three-year general secondary school for graduates of vocational school for adults.

Józef Buczkowski Rehabilitation and Training Center of the Polish Association of the Blind in Bydgoszcz provides part-time education for adults who are blind in the two-and-a-half-year Therapeutic Massage Post-Secondary School. It provides vocational courses (computer training), and rehabilitation courses of: basic rehabilitation, post-hospital rehabilitation, Braille, orientation and mobility, and other specialized courses as well as courses for instructors.

The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Dąbrowa Górnicza provides the following types of schooling: early intervention, a preschool class, kindergarten, primary school, lower secondary school and general secondary school.

The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Cracow provides: early intervention, primary school, lower secondary school and general secondary school specialized in administration and office work; vocational secondary school: musical instrument tuner training, sound operator training, administration and office worker training; 1st degree musical school – children and youth department; part-time post-secondary school – musical instrument tuner training, sound operator training; full-time post-secondary school – gardener-technician training; new office techniques.

The Medical Post-Secondary School of Therapeutic Massage in Cracow provides two-year massage technician training.
The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Lublin provides the following types of schooling: preschool, primary school, lower secondary school, and general secondary school. The Complex of Vocational Schools in Lublin provides vocational training for partially sighted students in the trades of a tailor and a leather worker. The Medical Vocational Post-Secondary School in Lublin has the Massage Department for the Blind and Partially Sighted. The 1st Special Preschool in Łódź has a class for partially sighted children with mental disabilities. The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Łódź provides early rehabilitation and the following types of schooling: primary school; lower secondary school; general secondary school; technical secondary school of therapeutic massage. Synów Pułku Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind Children in Owińska near Poznań provides the following types of schooling: primary school; lower secondary school, basic vocational school, general secondary school, general secondary school for adults who are the graduates of the basic vocational school. The 81st State Preschool in Poznań provides the following types of schooling: an integrated class for blind and partially sighted children within the intellectual norm; special classes: for blind and partially sighted children with infantile cerebral palsy, for disabled children; from 3 to 10 years old. The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Radom provides the following types of schooling: kindergarten for blind children with moderate to severe disabilities; school of life for children with physical disabilities of different degrees; lower secondary school for children with disabilities. The Basic Vocational School for Partially Sighted People in Sopot provides the following types of training: leather worker training, upholsterer training, cook training, baker training, carpenter training, gardener training, salesman training, and tailor training. The 2nd Municipal Preschool in Toruń has a class for children who are blind and partially sighted. The Small Blind Children's Home in Warsaw run by the Association for Care of Blind People. The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Partially Sighted Children in Warsaw provides early intervention and the following types of schooling: primary school, lower secondary school, and general secondary school.
The Complex of Centers for Partially Sighted Children with Multiple Disabilities in Warsaw; the center in Kopińska Street provides the following services: early intervention for children aged 0 to 3; special preschool for children aged 3 to 12; the center in Warsaw in Leonardo Street provides the following services: rehabilitation for children older than 12 and special primary school.

The Special Childcare and Learning Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Children in Wrocław provides the following types of schooling: primary school, lower secondary school, basic vocational school – knitter training, electrical engineer training, locksmith training; vocational secondary school – therapeutic massage, and administration and office work.

4. Statistical data

4.1. Students with disabilities in primary schools in the school year of 2004/2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students in primary schools</th>
<th>in general primary schools</th>
<th>in special primary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blind</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partially sighted</td>
<td>2,141</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deaf</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard of hearing</td>
<td>2,685</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mild mental disabilities</td>
<td>17,977</td>
<td>15,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with moderate to severe mental</td>
<td>3,058</td>
<td>7,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with profound mental disabilities</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>2,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with diagnosed autism</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with chronic diseases</td>
<td>4,084</td>
<td>808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mental disorders</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with motor disabilities</td>
<td>4,711</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with multiple disabilities</td>
<td>3,594</td>
<td>3,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socially maladjusted</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with behavior disorders</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of addiction</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of social maladjustment</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 45,284 33,209
Special primary schools:
- Number of schools: 772
- Number of classes: 3,528
- Number of students: 33,209

The number of classes in primary schools where disabled students are studying (except special schools):
- Special: 201
- Integrated: 3,275
- General: 12,156

The number of all the students in general primary schools: 2,568,811 (without special schools).

The number of students with disabilities in general primary schools in the following types of classes:
- Special: 1,450
- Integrated: 13,578
- General: 28,315

The number of students with disabilities who are transported to primary schools – 6,045.

4.2. Students with disabilities in lower secondary schools in the school year of 2004/2005

Special lower secondary schools:
- Number of schools: 806
- Number of classes: 3,458
- Number of students: 35,649

The number of classes in general lower secondary schools where disabled students are studying:
- Special: 180
- Integrated: 1,174
- General: 8,759

The number of all the students in general lower secondary schools: 1,561,132 (without special schools).

The number of students with disabilities in general lower secondary schools in the following types of classes:
- Special: 1,813
- Integrated: 5,225
- General: 21,388
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disabled students in lower secondary schools</th>
<th>in general lower secondary schools</th>
<th>in special lower secondary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blind</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partially sighted</td>
<td>1,153</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deaf</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard of hearing</td>
<td>1,522</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mild mental disabilities</td>
<td>13,765</td>
<td>22,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with moderate to severe mental disabilities</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>3,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with profound mental disabilities</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with diagnosed autism</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with chronic diseases</td>
<td>2,726</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mental disorders</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with motor disabilities</td>
<td>2,509</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with multiple disabilities</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>1,852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socially maladjusted</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>2,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with behavior disorders</td>
<td>1,958</td>
<td>1,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of addiction</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of social maladjustment</td>
<td>1,609</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,770</strong></td>
<td><strong>35,649</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of students with disabilities who are transported to lower secondary schools: 5,686.

4.3. **Students with disabilities in upper secondary schools in the school year of 2004/2005**

4.3.1. General secondary schools:
- Number of disabled students: 4,713
- Number of integrated classes: 208
- Number of disabled students in integrated classes: 814

4.3.1.a. Special secondary schools:
- Number of schools: 43
- Number of classes: 119
- Number of students: 1,159
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students in secondary schools</th>
<th>in general secondary schools</th>
<th>in special secondary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blind</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partially sighted</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deaf</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard of hearing</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with chronic diseases</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mental disorders</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with motor disabilities</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with multiple disabilities</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socially maladjusted</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with behavior disorders</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of addiction</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of social maladjustment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,713</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,159</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2. Special vocational schools and specialized secondary schools:

- Number of schools: 470
- Number of classes: 2,040
- Number of students: 24,388

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disabled students in vocational schools and in specialized secondary schools</th>
<th>in general schools</th>
<th>in special schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blind</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partially sighted</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deaf</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard of hearing</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mild mental disabilities</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>17,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with moderate to severe mental disabilities</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with autism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with chronic diseases</td>
<td>1,383</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with mental disorders</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with motor disabilities</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with multiple disabilities</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>socially maladjusted</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with behavior disorders</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of addiction</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at risk of social maladjustment</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,099</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,388</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3. Special post-secondary schools:
- Number of schools: 12
- Number of classes: 35
- Number of students: 434

4.4. Students with disabilities in different types of educational settings – quantitative changes

The number of students with disabilities in primary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Special schools</th>
<th>General schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated classes</td>
<td>General classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>59397</td>
<td>5033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>52020</td>
<td>6897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>42424</td>
<td>8305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>39873</td>
<td>9120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>37733</td>
<td>10933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td>35052</td>
<td>12641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>33209</td>
<td>13578</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of students with disabilities in lower secondary schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Special schools</th>
<th>General schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrated classes</td>
<td>General classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>14948</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001</td>
<td>30367</td>
<td>1109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/2002</td>
<td>39776</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>39896</td>
<td>2531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>38794</td>
<td>3479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td>37140</td>
<td>4434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>35649</td>
<td>5225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, the central principle of the changes in the education system is the conviction that general schools should accept all children regardless of their physical abilities, intellectual abilities, social abilities, emotional abilities or others. However, it is not possible to meet this demand immediately, and it is not possible, and at the same time it is not appropriate, to close down all special schools.
Summary

The system of education and rehabilitation of blind and partially sighted children was presented in comparison with education of children and youth with other special educational needs as the education policy and the organizational solutions refer to all types of disabilities.

Education of children and youth who are blind or partially sighted is provided in special primary schools, lower secondary schools, secondary schools, vocational and post-secondary schools, as well as in general schools, including special classes, integrated classes, and as individual home education. The choice of a given type of school depends largely on the student and his/her parents, but also on the psychological and pedagogical center, which issues a statement of special educational needs. The educational policy shows a tendency to support education of visually impaired students in general schools whenever it is possible, and parallel to it – in special schools, when it is necessary.

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Media in education of people who are blind

Media have become one of the integral elements of modern times. They accompany people in each area of life, using both traditional and up-to-date technologies. For people with visual impairment they have become a specific kind of ticket to the world reserved so far for the non-disabled people. Media have entered the field of medicine, early intervention, diagnosis and educational therapy, work and entertainment. Access to information and services has become much easier thanks to the existence of media. The areas of communication, spatial orientation, movement and everyday life have also undergone substantial improvements. Due to the independence of visually impaired people has improved and there have been more possibilities of their participation in social life.

Although recent years have brought positive changes within the field of blurring the lines between the people who are visually disabled and the ones who are not, we still cannot claim that the pace of these changes is satisfactory. Many questions arise together with the hope appearing with media development and concerning the normalization of live of people with sight impairments. There are questions about being prepared to use the new opportuninties, individual preferences (resulting from the moment when vision impairment occurred and the degree of it) connected with their application as well as the ones concerning the obstacles or results of overcoming them. It is not simple to answer most of them. Determining the place of media in education of people with sight impairments may become a precious clue to understand them. The research “Media in education of people who are blind” became a step towards the answers to the abovementioned questions.

Media in education of blind youth in the light of my own research

Information about place of media in the education of blind students of secondary schools comes from the research “Media in education of blind
people” (project 5 H01F 049 20 from 2001 subsidized by State Committee for Scientific Research – KBN). It was an attempt to look at the education of visually impaired young people from the angle of media (the press, books, the radio, film and TV, computers and the Internet) and their role in organized education.

The research was conducted just before the reform of vocational training in Poland. The education reform, apart from curriculum changes introduced also new types of schools. The following stages of the reform resulted in creation of: a six-year elementary school, three-year junior high, secondary education: three-year specialized secondary school, four-year technical secondary school, a two-, three-year vocational secondary school and two-year supplementary secondary school and three-year technical supplementary secondary school. The two latter types of schools offer education to the graduates from a vocational secondary school. In the transition period junior highs and secondary schools functioned parallelly. Data from 12 secondary schools was analyzed (6 general secondary schools, 3 specialized secondary schools and 3 technical secondary schools). During the research blind students constituted 10% out of 766 visually impaired students in grades I-IV. This means that all students who are blind and study in special schools were included in the researched group (blind students from integrative and general education schools and the ones who undergo individual education do not appear in the group). The students were chosen by school principals or physiotherapists. The basis for qualifying a student to the target group was a pedagogical definition of blindness. According to this definition a person who is blind cannot use the conventional flat print (black letters) but only Braille while gaining the ability to read and write. Due to the fact that the types of media used for educational purposes and the manner of using them does not depend only on the students, the target group of the research included also the schools principals and teachers.

Scientific inquiry of the exploratory-diagnostic character covered 149 respondents in total. After formal and subject control of the gathered material finally in 8 education centers (situated in Bydgoszcz, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Kraków, Laski near Warsaw, Lublin, Łódź, Owińska near Poznań and Wrocław) a group of 130 persons, including 78 students, 44 teachers and 8 principals was selected.

Concentrating on one type of environment allowed to create a group constituting not too numerous but a definite self-contained whole. Thanks to three-dimensional approach (students-teachers-directors) it was possible
to find the answers to the following questions: 1. How well are secondary schools educating students who are blind equipped in media? 2. How are media used in blind students education? 3. What do students and teachers expect as far as access to media and the use of them are concerned?

The results of the research were presented in publications by Szymko (2002a, b, c), Kuczyńska-Kwapisz (2004) and Gorajewska (2004a, b, c and 2005). For the purposes of this article the author has acquired the form presenting the place of media in education of people who are blind in the light of separated areas of transformation.

Media in education of blind persons – from the motive to the means of acquiring

The material gathered during the research shows that each person in charge of a school while planning purchases for the school obtained information about media from the teachers. Another source of information consisted of publications, messages and data bases focused on teaching materials. Finally students and methodological advisor were asked as well as media suppliers and parents. Most students perceived negatively the ability of co-deciding about media purchases. More than 50% of teachers claimed the opposite. They believed that they do participate in taking decisions about the purchase of necessary teaching materials.

Among the sources of financing the purchases sponsors were the dominating ones. The centers obtained from them financial support (rather than non-cash) usually a few times a year. The principals also claimed that special subventions from the National Fund of the Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON) influenced the purchase of required materials.

While describing the manner of obtaining media by the schools the principals usually indicated individual preparation of materials by the teachers and students. Teachers, who supported this opinion, talked about texts and tests in Braille as well as tactile graphics, diagrams, scales and maps. Among the answers one could also find searching for information in the Internet, preparing educational games and project papers. The most rare answers indicated creation of individual computer programs. If the answer concerning tape recordings was picked it was usually supplemented with information that the recordings are mostly copied, rather than individually created.
Media in education of blind persons – from gathering to making available

The schools under research gathered all – printed (the press and books in Braille and black letters), sound (audio books, music and the radio forms), audio-visual (films) and computer media (programs, games). The materials from the Internet were not collected in schools according to the principles. All centers participating in the research were equipped in a TV-set, a video recorder, a tape recorder or a tape recorder with a radio and Braille machines. Most of them had also a Braille printer. Braille copier was in possession of only one of the schools.

Each school had at its disposal a computer classroom, out of which only ¼ were equipped in more than 20 work places. The rest consisted of classrooms with 5-10 computers. The research found minor percentage of computers with specialist equipment for blind students. Most computers were adapted to the needs of partially sighted students. Most centers had computerized administration department, a few also a computerized library. Two principals work with computers in their offices.

All school had access to the Internet. Both students and teachers could use it, according to the opinions of most respondents. Majority of principals claimed that the school had its own website created in 50% of cases by IT specialists. In one school the IT specialist’s work was supported by the principal. Teachers and students were the website authors in three cases.

More than 50% of students said that they could only use media during lessons. According to 50% of the principals and over 50% of the teachers the students had access to media at all times if necessary. Only one student claimed that they could use media after class. None of the students confirmed the possibility to use media during breaks. The teachers agreed that frequently after class access to education materials is limited by time possibilities of the person in charge of the supplies. The use of equipment such as computers, TV-sets or video recorders requires the presence of a teacher who would take care of student’s safety and equipment protection. Students could use only several types of materials without supervision (books, the press, tape recordings, texts in Braille). Due to this fact the person of a teacher was often identified with access to school media infrastructure. Some teachers shared also the opinion that the access to media depends on particular student using the equipment. Students of good reputation can be trusted more and use the equipment more freely. The survey showed that only 2 out of 78
students confirmed that they could independently access all kinds of school materials. Majority of the research participants declared the possibility of free use of media infrastructure of the school.

One of the centers offered the possibility to create spoken or electronic materials. It was done by the librarian at student’s request.

Students claimed that out of all materials it was the hardest to gain access to the press. The following positions were taken by the Internet, computers and books. The the radio and radio forms, similarly to film and TV took 4th position.

Most students believed that their school did not possess a catalogue of educational materials which could be of help to them. The results also proved that the fact of possessing media did not mean that students could use them freely. Additionally, most collections of books in libraries were catalogued only traditionally (in over 50% of schools the libraries had computers at their disposal).

More than the half of total number of students claimed that the time within which they are allowed to use media is inadequate to their needs. The most popular equipment, as far as the needs of students were concerned, involved mostly IT tools. There was also a proposal to facilitate the access to school library (e.g. opening hour extension and collection enlargement).

**Media in education of blind persons – from perception to utilization**

The research showed the activities the respondents attributed to media. The process of studying was connected by the visually impaired students mainly with the use of computer; extending the scope of knowledge with the press and the Internet. Entertainment meant the radio, TV and books. For teachers extending knowledge meant using the press, books, the Internet and computers, entertainment – the radio and TV. The principals indicated the radio as a source of relaxation, TV, the Internet and the press as the tools to extend knowledge. They identified the process of teaching-studying with computers usage and preparation to lessons with reading books.

Both teachers and students claimed that introducing a new topic meant that the teachers would use firstly their own voice and then books/textbooks. Only a few students shared the opinion that, apart from verbal means, the new topic was presented with the use of the press or IT technologies (computer and the Internet) by the teacher. Only a few teachers mentioned
the usage of TV, the press, the radio or IT tools. The results derived from the principals’ answers showed a different image. According to them, the mostly used media while introducing a topic were books/textbooks, teacher’s voice and TV, then the press, the radio, computers and the Internet.

According to students’ opinions the attractiveness of classes depended on the manner of lesson conduction: motivating, activating, alerting intellectually, practical, exemplary, interesting, linguistically accessible, well-aimed, imaginative, full of partnership, carefree. Next the students indicated factors connected with the teachers themselves (their good preparation, experience, voice, personality, attitude to the students and the subject) and the students (their interests and health condition). What also mattered was the topic, its validity and relevance as well as usefulness in everyday life. Media used during the classes were indicated in further positions.

Among the teachers and principals the category “well-prepared teacher” played the key role just before the option “applied teaching materials”. The teachers additionally supplemented the list with well organized and relevant course of the class, methods of students’ activation, the subject connected with their interests and the matter of their willingness to cooperate.

Vast majority of the respondents had a positive attitude to the validity and relevance of teaching methods used in schools. According to all of them these were the methods basing on teachers passing on the information. The use of these methods was described with the following adverbs of frequency: “often” and “always”. The following positions were taken by problem, practical and valorizing methods.

Most respondents believed that media present at school were rather up-to-date in relation to curricular needs. Only a few people were convinced that the educational materials could be described as “modern”. None of the teachers shared this view. Moreover, the participants of the research more willingly and positively expressed the views concerning the equipment in the whole school rather than separate classrooms. According to the opinion of most students and principals the media infrastructure of schools during the survey conduction was good. There appeared several opinions that the equipment at school’s disposal was in bad or very bad condition, especially in comparison with other centers. Most respondents assessed positively the technical condition of the equipment. The group of people having a negative opinion about the extent to which the educational materials were used out consisted mainly of students and principals. Teachers indicated the neutral category (“difficult to say”).

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All groups of respondents claimed that the school library was the best equipped in media place. Additionally the principals believed that classrooms were equally well equipped. Both students and teachers classified it on the second position. Only few respondents indicated their home or boarding house as a place well equipped in media. Among the answers there were also: a computer room, anatomic laboratory, physical therapy room and public library. Teachers expressed the opinion that while striving to modernize the school the principals forgot to update the collections of traditional media (black letters books and audio books). This opinion could be easily proved by the assessment outcomes concerning the school library. Although it was generally believed to be a place best equipped in media, most respondents did not have a high opinion of its collections (e.g. recorded materials were nothing more than audio books and the press or books items were rarely more than was required by curriculum). Thus, students used the school library mainly to do their homework there and teachers with principals usually admitted that they visited the library occasionally. Vast majority of all the respondents claimed that the classes never took place in the library due to media accessibility. The students stressed that if it ever happened, it was not because of the media accessibility but because the teacher was absent or, especially during the beginning period of studying, to familiarize with the library collection.

**Media in education of blind persons – from frequency to efficiency**

While assessing the frequency of using individual materials during lessons the teachers and principals indicated books as dominating aid – used a few times a week. The same frequency was attributed by the principals to films and TV. The teachers seemed not to support the view and claimed that visual media were introduced not more than a few times a term. The schools undergoing the research were dominated by the word followed by a book/textbook. Introducing new technologies was a rare practice as far as subjects other than computer studies are concerned. Only a few respondents mentioned also application of other media during classes (TV, the press and the radio).

The research proves that, according to the opinion of most respondents, there were no such media which should not be used in the education of the people who are blind (all should be used). Among the types of media which the students would like to use more frequently during lessons the
Internet took dominant position. It was followed (according to what students indicated) by books, films, TV, computers, the radio and the press. Only a small number of students believed that the radio, due to its low effectiveness, should not be used during classes. In case of the Internet they supplemented the low effectiveness by their unwillingness. Students also claimed that the press was not attractive enough, there were too few books in Braille, computers with no connection to the net were less useful and that TV often became a substitute of a lesson, not aid (“I can watch a film at home and teachers wriggle out of conducting lessons using films”).

While assessing the usefulness of different kinds of teaching aids in the teaching-studying process, most respondents indicated a book as an essential aid. The remaining media (respectively TV, the press, the radio, computer and the Internet) were usually perceived as useful. It was characteristic that many opinions claiming that a certain thing is not useful while studying were justified with the lack of ability to use it (e.g. computers or the Internet) or limited access or lack of experience connected with using the media during classes (e.g. the press, the radio). The teenagers who had not experienced using a certain educative aid before treated introducing it as a form of external compulsion.

Most respondents claimed that books were the most effective teaching and studying materials. Next were computers, the radio, the Internet, TV, the press in different orders depending on which group expressed their opinion. The students named the following: books, the Internet, computers and the radio. The teachers: books, computers, the radio, the Internet, TV and the press. Principals’ answers were dominated by the following order: books, the radio, TV and the Internet.

**Media in education of blind persons – from preferences to expectations**

Most respondents positively perceived school’s contribution to teaching students how to use media. The majority of teachers claimed that they had a positive and most principals – very positive – attitude towards new technologies. Only two teachers expressed their unwillingness to use electronic media. Many principals used computers in the process of school management. Moreover, the vast majority of school managers claimed that while employing a new person they very often paid special attention to applicant’s media abilities. Only one principal very rarely made use of
this kind of information while taking a decision concerning new staff employment. Over 50% of the youth undergoing the research had negative opinion of their own abilities to use a computer and vast majority of them did not perceive the experience of surfing in the net as positive.

Among the internet services – websites aroused the greatest interest of the respondents. The following positions were taken by e-mail, on-line press, magazines and radio and finally “other types of services” (IRC, chat, MP3).

The favorite school medium, dominating within three respondents groups, were books. On the following positions the students situated respectively: the Internet, the radio, computers, films, TV and the press. Teachers pointed out films and TV, computers, the press and the Internet; the principals: computers, films and TV.

The students who are blind assessed their reading preferences usually positively or very positively. Only a few percent of them claimed that they were not at all into reading. The research enabled to find the reason for such preferences. Among the arguments justifying students’ unwillingness towards reading one may find difficulties connected with the specificity of tactile reading, the unwillingness of the respondent, lack of time and difficult access to interesting audio or Braille materials. Although the youth declared that they read the press with pleasure, they claimed to be basing mainly on radio or TV news. Students’ justification of their reluctant attitude towards the press was connected with the fact that using the press (mainly black print) requires help of others, the access to it is difficult, it does not contain interesting information, may be replaced with other sources with no damage to the content, is written in a difficult style.

Among four possible version choices (Braille, audio, black print and electronic) the students who were blind used mostly audio books and then in Braille. Only a few of them chose black print. Only one student favored the electronic version of books. Students who turned to magazines and newspapers usually used black print versions. The next position was taken by the press in Braille and electronic titles, they both were assessed similarly. The electronic version was indicated by many more students than in the case of books.

More than half of the total number of students liked watching TV (sometimes very much). Only a few of them opposed the medium absolutely. While justifying their critical attitude to TV students usually claimed that they had difficulties in visual content perception, preferred other sources (the radio, cinema) were not interested in the boring content proposed by TV or inaccessible hours of broadcasting valuable programs.
Vast majority of the students found listening to the radio (very) pleasant. Only one of them indicated the option “rather not” asked about his/her attitude towards the radio justifying this with: “because I only like music and not news or commercials”.

The conducted research enabled the respondents to propose changes within the area of media accessibility. The youth who were blind expected the school to: improve the access to media (especially computers, the Internet and the library) through modifying the way they are made available (including information about available materials and prolonging the time in which they can be used); increasing the number of access hours in relation to IT tools (including creation of Internet access not only in computer room); organizing after-class meetings for blind students (not only partially sighted); more trust with students as far as their access to media is concerned; employing well qualified teachers (who are able to operate specialist equipment, with preparation within the area of visually impaired students education and willingness to self-educate); correcting curricula; updating the capabilities. Blind students talked also about the necessity to catalogue all teaching aids at school's disposal, purchase of new media and creation of well-equipped classrooms. The latter ones were identified by the students with rooms equipped with computers with necessary appliances enabling blind students to work.

Among the media which should be purchased the students indicated audio and Braille books (textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries), computers with Internet access and specialist equipment for the blind, reading appliances (e.g. Audio Lektor), aids in mathematics and physics studying, Braille machines (in each classroom), equipment in music classroom, maps, the press (scientific journals), the machine to create tactile drawings. A few students expected the school to purchase “more effective materials” not mentioning anything specific and to update the aids possessed by the school.

A few students indicated the category „it is hard to say” claiming that “there is no way to change anything and the present state will remain as it is” or “I do not expect anything as far as media accessibility is concerned because I know that there will be no change anyway”.

Vast majority of teachers claimed that there was a necessity to conduct trainings concerning the possibilities to use media in education of people who are blind. They also noticed the need to create standards of equipping schools with teaching aids, purchase of new media, creating model classrooms in Poland and in the Internet and updating school’s software.
According to what the teachers said these were the duties of the managing organs in education.

The principals mentioned the need to purchase new media, organize training in media use for educational purposes in teaching the people who are blind, create standards of equipping schools with teaching aids, which should be done by managing organs in education.

There were also opinions like: "each student should be equipped with a notebook and special software". The following problems were also significant for this group of respondents: "transferring financial funds for the needs of special education centers" and creating model classrooms in the Internet.

Generally the respondents shared the dominating opinion that each classroom, thanks to better media equipment, would unquestionably facilitate the teaching and learning process. However it is a difficult task to develop school’s media infrastructure with the humble financial funds at school’s disposal. All the respondents hoped that the education system and equipment availability would improve.

Media in education of blind persons – from needs to possibilities

More than half of the respondents claimed that there was a need to create places where it would be possible to exchange experience and information concerning media and the possibilities to use them, to create a textbook as a support while using media in teaching-learning process and to introduce to schools classes focused on training students within the area of media operation.

According to all opinions the best place to exchange the views was school. The teachers and their students claiming that the Internet could also serve such purpose stressed above all the speed of information exchange and its international character. Moreover, the principals proposed organizing conferences, and the teachers staff meetings for the employees of education centers for the visually impaired youth.

The people filling in the questionnaire noticed the possibilities which media provide for the people who are blind. The majority of respondents shared the opinion that “thanks to media the students are not bored at school and are able to do learn more in shorter time” and “having the ability to use different types of media the students will always manage at school and in adult life”. The answers were also dominated by the view that “skillful use of media helps the youth to start university education and find a good job".
Additionally, media were perceived as a factor integrating with the world of the non-disabled people. The opinion that teaching methods would become better due to the use of media was indicated at the last position.

Only two students claimed that “because of the teaching aids the lessons become boring and it is harder to get by at school” and one student pointed out that “learning how to use media means wasting time and these skills will be of no use in future”.

Vast majority of respondents shared the view that excluding teaching aids from school infrastructure would become a burden. This opinion was shared by all teachers, principals and most students. None of the respondents would be satisfied finding out that all media are to be removed from school. There were also few people indicating the sentence: “nothing special would happen”. The students who claimed so justified their indifference with the fact that they did not use them anyway.

Media in education of blind persons – from information source to multimedia information center

The results of the research show that the teacher was the main source of information about media and the ways to use them. According to teachers’ and principals’ answers the library worker was the next person to provide this kind of information. Students preferred to gain this knowledge from their peers. Other persons most commonly indicated by all three groups were: sales representatives of the companies selling educative aids, teachers in the boarding houses, university workers, the principal and the students and finally publications of different type. Not more than 20% of students claimed that nobody could become a source of information about media.

Rare indications of sources recommended to people searching for information about media proved that the respondents had little knowledge of media market. The Internet dominated among all the answers, although none of the respondents could name a specific place in the net. Moreover, the students, although they did not usually use the Internet, often stressed that it is associated with plentiful resources of any knowledge kind.

Within the category „other sources” the principals wrote abort teachers, the staff recommended their colleagues, the principal, the school library, TV and radio programs, sales representatives of the companies selling educative aids, the Internet, the press and government publications. The students
proposed the press, the radio, Polish Association of the Blind in Warsaw, educative aids department in Laski and equipment producers.

The respondents proposed also creation of special departments within each education center informing about support and possibilities to use teaching aids. What is more, the answers proved the need to make the school library a multimedia information center equipped with different materials available and useful for visually disabled people. Thanks to this media backup – gathering, storing and popularizing information could become the everyday tool at work for teachers and students.

**Media in education of blind persons – from proposals to demands**

Although the disabled youth attended school with pleasure and expressed their positive attitude towards this place, they treated school more as a place of social life and escape from thoughts about disability than as a place to acquire knowledge.

The school of future, according to students’ and teachers’ opinions is a “small family visited with pleasure everyday”, as it is well equipped, modern, professional, with solid backgrounds adapted to the needs of labor market, basing on activating teaching methods, educative, safe and secure, friendly, not stressful, individualized and preparing for life in the society.

The respondents believed that modern schools are not the ones which devote a lot of time to educate students within the obligatory subjects. Nowadays the preparation enabling students to find jobs in attractive professions seems more important. What also seems significant is teaching students how to continue education through self-education and how to perceive media in a critical way so that active and skillful use of them was possible.

According to the conclusions drawn from the research the school educating young people who are blind demanded improvements within the area of media equipment. It concerned both – supplementing and updating media base, creating a standard for special school equipping, purchasing additional aids recommended by managing organs in education which would inform about media availability to people with visual disabilities – and creating new aids adapted to the specificity of their reception. Moreover the results revealed the necessity to train all groups of respondents (including teachers at the level of their education) within the area of methods and forms of teaching based on using media in the process of teaching-studying especially the
aids which are adapted to the specificity of reception by a disabled student. According to many opinions another significant matter was organization of places where it would be possible to exchange information and experience connected with media application in education process (shows, conferences, trainings, etc.) for both teachers and students.

The research proved that the teenagers who are blind may influence their education if they are creative, with a questing mind and if they indicated the possibilities of adapting media to their needs, if they are willing to cooperate with the teachers and exchange information about the methods of media adaptation to perception abilities of the people who are visually impaired.

Among the demands directed to the teachers there were: creating the opportunities for students to express their opinions about the materials used during lessons, animating students’ contacts with all kinds of media, showing them educational dimensions of teaching aids, propagating reading, creating with students media messages, forming the habit of critical media perception. The necessity to search for methods of adapting media to the needs of disabled students was also visible, just like the need to exchange experience gained during media application in education.

Principals’ proposals aimed usually at the necessity to catalogue the media infrastructure of schools, verifying the extent to which it is used and adapting it to the specificity of blind youth reception (e.g. through equipping computer rooms in specialist equipment and software). The answers also pointed out the necessity to support teachers in developing their professional qualifications with special attention paid to using media at work with blind students, taking care of giving equal opportunities in access to media infrastructure, propagating methods of active teaching among the teachers, avoiding excessive verbalism and developing school libraries into multimedia centers of information rich in all kinds of aids accessible to the specificity of blind students’ perception.

Presented inquires allowed to determine specific demands directed at pedagogic universities. According to these motions the universities should create a system of teachers training in order to popularize effective use of media in disabled people education and undertake steps aiming at preparation of future students to designing, creating and assessing educative materials constituting a multimedia frame of each lesson. It was also shown that it is important to encourage students to active cooperation in creation of media accessible to the specificity of blind students’ perception (e.g. in the form of credits for classes in different subjects). There was also not a minor
role of popularization of the knowledge about the opportunities of using media in blind people education as well as conducting regular research into the media and their role in disabled people education.

The managing institutions in the education system faced the necessity to: develop the system of schools support, improvement in quality of the equipment (supplementing and modernizing media base) and creating standards for special school equipping. The respondents also expected creation of user-friendly media base for the needs of the disabled students and creation of a system with information about the base. Moreover, the respondents demanded taking care of teachers, their workspace and education.

The demands directed at the creators of tools and media message concerned mainly the interest in the needs of a disabled user through adapting media to their requirements and the specificity of perception, cooperation with schools and universities while creating educative aids and well-organized and easily found access to information about the new solutions applications.

**Summary**

Education of people with visual disability has undergone a lot of changes since the moment of creation of the first school for the blind in Poland. Although, undoubtedly, many of them were really positive, the statistics still show a low level of education in the groups of partially sighted and blind people. Media have the possibility and should play important role in creating equal educative opportunities for the people who are visually disabled. Undoubtedly, it is inevitable to create standards enhancing media effectiveness in education. Thanks to this it will be possible to stop treating media as antidote for all education barriers and start searching for the ways of using the potential hidden in technological developments, which would be friendly for the perception of partially sighted and blind people.

The discussion presented in his article concerning media in visually impaired people education does not exhaust the whole subject. It passes over e.g. mass education, integrative schools or individual teaching. What is more, the conducted research concerned only the students who are blind. The results prove, however, that as far as the challenges for visually impaired people education are concerned, there are some common recommendations. What seems extremely important for education of visually impaired students
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is aiming at creation of regular research basing on explaining the neglected issues like: media frame of schools and separate subjects with: expectations of teachers and students concerning equipping the schools in media, their accessibility to the specificity of blind students’ perception, reception and effectiveness of media – traditional and modern ones, training teachers conducted by high schools to use media while working with visually disabled students, influence of media application on the attitude of the students towards their school, teacher and subjects or influence of time and degree of vision impairment on media preferences of the students. Legal regulations are also important in this respect (e.g. concerning black print texts scanning) as well as organizational and technical (e.g. creating standards of producing electronic texts or in Braille). Media should not only support modern education but also create a people-friendly world.

Summary

Media have accompanied people in all aspects of life. Thanks to them the independence of visually disabled people has grown together with the possibilities to gain education and to participate in social life. The article aims at introducing the role of media in visually impaired persons education. The background for the discussion were the results of research “Media in education of people who are blind”. This allowed to understand the issues connected with media equipment in Polish secondary schools educating blind people, the ways media are used in their education and expectations as far as school media infrastructure is concerned.

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Blind and partially sighted students in Polish system of university

Seeing a student with severe disability, e.g. with a white cane or a guide dog 15 years ago was an unusual thing in Polish academic environments. During communist rules there were very few people (in comparison to developed countries) who were blind or partially sighted and studied in high schools. These few persons started studies and managed to graduate from universities only due to selfless support of numerous kind people, family, friends, other students and scientific and academic workers of these high schools. It was a result of specific policy of the state basing on isolation and segregation of the people with disabilities in both educative and professional areas. Additionally they could not expect the creation of basic conditions enabling them to participate in social, cultural life etc. In relation to high schools it was visible in the lack of any activities aiming at equaling the chances of students with disability. Universities did not provide any kind of support to these students within the fields connected with academic activities, in which they had to overcome difficulties due to their disability.

In the 90s the Polish education system introduced the idea of integrative teaching. On the lower levels of education there were introduced system solutions basing on a special rate including disabled students to the division of educational subvention algorithm. This enabled to cover the increased costs of education generated by the employment of special teachers in integrative classes. In result of these undertakings a great number of blind and partially sighted students started their education in general and integrative schools and the special education system educates more and more often the students who have multiple disabilities apart from visual impairment.

The process of opening of Polish high schools to students with disabilities started in mid-90s, almost within the same period of time in several universities. It must be stressed that in each case these were initiatives of specific schools, their authorities and workers. Having all this in consideration it should be pointed out that Polish legal system has not yet regulated the
issues connected with gaining higher education by persons with disabilities. So far the mechanisms of financing the increased costs of disabled students' studies have not been created and implemented. All these costs are covered by the high schools offering support to students with disabilities. All activities undertaken by universities base directly on the regulations of Polish Constitution which indicate the obligation to treat all citizens equally also in the area of education accessibility. Due to the lack of appropriate regulations and system solutions there are slight differences between specific high schools as far as defining the notion of equal opportunities is concerned. This influences the scope of support. At present only few Polish high schools (e.g. Jagiellonian University, Warsaw University, University of Podlasie) offer system and regular services to students with disabilities. This is connected with employing specialists supporting the students in different areas, e.g. preparing entrance examinations in Braille or enlarged print for the candidates with visual impairment or preparing teaching aids in alternative forms, and with incurring by the university additional costs.

Many high schools have in recent years appointed representatives of rectors for persons with disabilities. In some of them these are people employed specifically to support students with impairments but in most cases these are additional functions of academic workers of the universities. In the latter cases the aid offered to students with disabilities means simply reacting to difficult situations faced by students rather than offering help in everyday academic activities. It is also worth mentioning that for the last years during the assessment of high schools for the purposes of obtaining accreditation it has been verified whether the university employed a person acting formally for disabled students support. In many cases this results in creation of such a post but most often it does not mean that such a person is equipped with specific tools and regulations enabling them to organize system and regular support for students with disabilities and academic workers who are to teach these students.

Another effect of long-term negligence within the area of making education available to people with disabilities (among other things also providing equal educational opportunities in high schools) is a very low ratio of disabled persons education. Approximately 10% of Poles have academic education and in the population of people who are disabled this

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1 In 2 April 2007 Minister of Science and High Education issued Decree which included students with disabilities to the division of educational subvention algorithm.
ratio amounts at 4%. Polish Association of the Blind does not gather data concerning higher education among its members. Nevertheless, it is easy to assume that out of 66 thousand members registered at the end of 2005 only 4% have higher education. The abovementioned facts need to be considered while analyzing the situation of students with disabilities, including the visually impaired ones at Polish universities.

Current programs and projects for partially sighted and blind students supported by state authorities

Despite the lack of the system of university activities financing within the area of providing equal opportunities for students with disabilities, the state provides individual support to students with sight impairments. This is accomplished mainly through:

- special grant for people with disabilities,
- special programs of National Rehabilitation Fund for the Disabled (PFRON): “Computer for Homer 2003” and “Student”.

Special grants described in art. 180 of the act of 27 July 2005 on higher education are material aid for students with disabilities, who have a certified degree of disability. Generally they are supposed to cover the increased costs of studying incurred by the persons with disabilities due to the mere fact of being disabled. According to art. 186 of the abovementioned act each high school introduces its own regulations describing in detail the criteria and procedures of granting financial aid. For example – at Warsaw University the special grants for the disabled people are distributed on the basis of the certified degree of disability and amount at (in academic year 2006/2007) respectively 260 zl a month for severely students with disabilities, 180 zl for students with moderate disability and 100 zl for students with mild disability. The grants are paid for 10 months during a year.

The program of PFRON called “Computer for Homer 2003” aims at supporting blind and partially sighted students in purchase of computer hardware. One of the groups at which it is directed are students with the certificate of severe or moderate degree of visual disability. The program in its present form has been functioning since 2003. The term of its closing has not been indicated in program documents. The program enables students to obtain every five years funds for purchase of basic and specialist computer hardware, electronic equipment and software and purchase of specialist Braille
Blind and partially sighted students in Polish system of university

equipment and reading appliances. Additionally the funds of this program subsidize trainings connected with operating the purchased equipment. The amount of granted funds depends on the applicant’s income gross and the smallest level of the applicant’s own contribution amounts at 2% to 7% (depending on the type of equipment) of the equipment purchase price.

PFRON’s program “Student” is directed to students of doctoral studies of first, second or third degree and uniform studies, who possess the certificate of severe or moderate degree of visual disability. Additionally this support is available to post-secondary schools students, foreign universities students and students serving their internship abroad within UE programs. PFRON did not differentiate between the students of day and other kinds of studies. The program will be finished in 2008. Obtaining the subvention is conditioned by not exceeding certain levels of monthly incomes gross (at present it is almost 1,100 zl per person in a common household and about 1,350 zl for people living in a one-person household). The subvention may cover among other things: education fee, accommodation, commuting, purchase of materials facilitating studying. The amount of the subvention is determined on the basis of the financial situation of each student, the degree of disability and the sum of fee paid for studying. The maximum subvention amount cannot exceed fivefold of the lowest salary (determined in appropriate regulations) which today results in the total sum of about 4,450.00 zl.

System of high school support for blind/ partially sighted students with the example of Warsaw University

First specific steps undertaken by the University of Warsaw to support people with disabilities date back to the beginning of the 1990s. In 1991 the authorities opened UW Computer Center for Blind and Partially Sighted Students allowing people with visual impairment to gain access to specialist computer equipment. It was the first Polish undertaking of this type and for many years it played key role not only for students but also for other blind and partially sighted people all over the country. The following years brought adaptation works for the need of people with disabilities done in 3 university buildings. Although the state policy of this time concerning equal access to education was not undergoing any substantial changes, the University authorities started forming their official stand on the issues connected with
people with disabilities. At first the authorities focused on providing all students with equal access to classes and academic activities. Due to this a complex and long-term program called “University for all” aiming at opening the university for people with disabilities was created. The program was approved of by the rector authorities on 5 May 1999. Basing on this project PFRON created a special program named “Subsidizing the accomplishment of Warsaw University program – University for all” whose primary assumption was to verify the proposed solutions. The special program was carried out in 1999-2003. During this period 15.7 mln zł was spent on integrated university adaptation to the needs of different groups of people with disabilities. 48% of the funds were paid by PFRON, 33% was amount allocated by the university and the remaining funds were raised from other sources (e.g. from Warsaw municipal authorities). This financial support enabled the high school to fulfill significant and expensive tasks, such as: opening a rental center of portable equipment for the students who had difficulties with taking notes during classes and in libraries, creation of digital library, creating and gathering collections in forms available to blind and partially sighted people, adaptation for the needs of persons with disabilities of numerous buildings or starting university transportation base for wheelchairs students.

Although at first the solutions of UW introduced within the special program were supposed to have a pilot character, apart from University of Podlasie none of the high schools in Poland received any significant support from state budget. As a result, none of the other universities offers so complex and wide support for disabled students, especially for the ones with sight impairment. All activities performed nowadays in the form of services for students who are disabled are financed with the funds of the University.

The approach to students with disabilities formed and present at UW treats as overriding the matter of providing everyone with equal opportunities. Hence, the introduced solutions aim at undertaking practical actions to provide students with disabilities with equal chances within the areas where functional consequences of being disabled make the studies curriculum realization difficult. The principle of equal opportunities creation – contrary to creation of system of concessions and privileges – is a basic rule applied at the University during the selection and provision of any kind of service for a student with disability. Introduction of interactive model of disability perception was an equally important factor influencing UW policy towards employers and students with disabilities. This interactive model is in opposition to the medical one. (Chart 1)
### Medical model
- Disability is a deficiency or abnormality
- Being disabled is negative
- Disability is situated in the person
- The solution for disability-related problems is treatment of the person or adapting them to the norm
- Only a professional can be a prime mover of any change.

### Interactive model (social)
- Disability is a difference
- Being disabled, in itself, is neutral
- Disability is in the relationship between the person and society
- The solution for disability-related problems is changing the relationship between the person and society
- The prime mover of any change can be:
  - the person
  - an advocate (another person or institution)
  - anyone who changes the social relationship between the person and the society


**Chart 1. Two contrary models of disability perception.**

The disability treated as a negative feature placed in the person itself – and characteristic of the medical model – is deeply rooted in common perception of the issue. This view is limited and simplified, prone to stereotypes that a person with disability requires constant medical care and rehabilitation and is unable to live independently and take decisions concerning their life. This image of disability has been created both by media and state public institutions, accenting the areas of social care, charity actions and constant rehabilitation as the basic direction of social undertakings focused on supporting this group of citizens. In result of this we face numerous mechanisms excluding people who are disabled from social life, placing them in the position of passive recipients of social support. The opposite -interactive (social) model of disability perception indicates that pejorative consequences of disability result from common interactions between a disabled person and the environment in which this person functions. Removing these consequences
is based on common relations and a person with disability is a legitimate and decisive participant of this process possessing all the rights but also all the duties. Bearing all this in mind it is believed that a student with disability is first of all a student, and in result of this he/she is subject to the same rights and duties as all the other students. All services, principles and changes introduced by the high school concerning the students who are disabled are aiming at creating equal opportunities but with an assumption that they cannot lower the educative demands faced by students within a specific faculty and planned curriculum.

Nowadays in academic year 2006/2007 UW Office for Persons with Disability registered 902 students who are disabled.

All aspects of supporting disabled students by UW have been outlined in detail in three documents resulting from 10-year experience of creating equal chances for people with disabilities. The first one is a resolution no. 156 of Warsaw University Senate of 12 December 2003 on conditions and provisions of persons with disabilities studying at the University of Warsaw. On 8 March 2005 UW Rector issued a directive no. 5 determining precise procedures of executing the abovementioned UW Senate resolution. Additionally on 30 June 2005 the Vice-Rector for Student Affairs: issued a decision on implementation and application of alternative solutions for students with disabilities.

### Services for blind and partially sighted students

Blind and partially sighted students have been constituting a significant group of all UW students since mid-1990s. At present 19 students who are blind and 78 partially sighted obtain the support of the UW Office for Persons with Disabilities. There are two types of offered aid: permanent, realized within current services and individualized activities. Sight impairment, as far as functioning in academic environment is concerned, results in difficulties faced by students in two areas: access to information – written texts and special orientation. Hence the basic services offered to students with visual dysfunction concentrate on barriers elimination within these two areas. Among standard services for blind and partially sighted students there are: materials adaptation to alternative forms, office renting portable computer equipment, language classes of English conducted with alternative methods and different forms of exams adaptation.
Materials adaptation to alternative forms

The notion – alternative forms – describes above all the print in Braille, enlarged print, audio recording, video recording and electronic record. A student with vision dysfunction is entitled to obtain educative aids in alternative forms, adequate to functional capacity and possessed supportive equipment. In order to meet these demands the university offers the following services:

- Printed materials recording (books, publications etc.)

Materials recording takes place in two recording studios of Digital Book Library, and although it is a part of the UW Office for Persons with Disabilities it is situated in the University Library. Thanks to the fact that University Library is a public institution all persons with certified degree of visual disability can benefit from the access to its collection. The orders for recording can be placed only by the blind and partially sighted students and employees of UW. Readers – volunteers create the recordings in digital system in the original Libra software. The recipients have the possibility to listen to the recording on a computer equipped in sound board – together with the book they receive a special reading program allowing to choose a specific page or chapter. Additionally the reader can use the option of reading text with or without footnotes. The authorities are planning to change soon the target form of storing and lending books into DAISY form, due to its ever increasing popularity. The work of the recent 8 years resulted in 310 positions, out of which 160 are recorded in digital form. It is worth mentioning that most of the collection consists of scientific and educative materials.

- Electronic recording of materials

Electronic recording of a book or any other educative material enables a blind person to use it through reading it on a computer with the use of screen reading equipment and speech synthesizer or Braille screen or printer. The fast advancing technologies enable their blind users to more and more often read documents which so far have been recorded in totally inaccessible forms like PDF or spreadsheets. Electronic recording of material can also be very useful for a partially sighted student as it can be read with the use of different kinds of system enlargements installed in the computer, e.g. a system magnifier, individual colors, contrast and screen picture settings. It is also possible to print the text in any type and size of font. Nowadays in order to obtain a text file it is possible to use scanners and text reading programs, so called OCR (e.g. Finereader, Recognita). It is worth mentioning that the
text after scanning needs additional proofreading. There is a relationship between scanning material quality and time devoted to its processing. The worse quality of materials used for scanning (poor contrast between the print and the background, poor quality of the print itself, fold marks, multiple elements in the print) the more time must be devoted to proofread it. Students with sight impairment very rarely use this option, ordering usually materials necessary to prepare for classes or made available by the teachers. Also academic teachers who have in their classes blind students can more often use this kind of service and order materials either in electronic form or printed in Braille or with enlarged font.

- Preparation and printing materials in Braille
  Despite the common opinion that Braille print is becoming a thing of the past, many students who are blind use materials prepared in this form. Certainly the fact that Braille machines are much more expensive than the equipment using speech synthesis affects their decreasing popularity. However, it must be stressed that there are certain areas in which application of this form seems irreplaceable, like studying foreign languages or mathematical or physical sciences. Additional argument for using Braille is the fact that blind people reading and writing in Braille make far fewer spelling and punctuation mistakes. The possibility to create a printout in Braille is conditioned by the previous existence of the material in text form. Such file undergoes conversion to Braille and is printed on special Braille printers. Modern printers allow to combine in one printout elements of tactile graphics and text. Due to the specificity of work with text in Braille in case of exams or credits the printout is preceded with additional processing and adaptation of the material.

- Preparation and print of materials with enlarged font size
  There is the common opinion concerning partially sighted people that it is enough to enlarge a text twice or three times. But if we want to obtain the most effective record form it is important to take into account sometimes huge individual differences among the partially sighted students. Two students with the same type of disease or impairment might function visually in two completely different ways and need materials which underwent two different adaptation ways. The most important issue while adapting texts for partially sighted people is maintaining the best possible contrast between the print and the background as well as clear graphic layout of the text. Significant factors that can be modified are above all size and type of the font and graphic layout of the text e.g. applied interlines.
Thanks to the popularity of word processors preparing material taking into account individual preferences of students is a simple and not consuming too much time activity. The experience shows that people who are partially sighted usually choose one-element fonts like Arial, Tahoma or Verdana, preferably bolded with the interline of 1,5 p. The preferable font size ranges from 12 to even 20 p. It is worth stressing that such a big enlargement proves ineffective in work with text (there is enough space for only 1 or 2 words in a line). Additionally, present tendencies aim at developing techniques of work with more or less standard text, assuming use of optical and magnifying appliances. The applied alternative forms concerning changes in print size take these assumptions into account.

- Audio recording
  If a student, due to their disability, is not capable of taking notes unassisted, they may gain approval to use sound registering appliances. In these situation the student is obliged to sign a declaration concerning copyright protection and use the recorded material only for their private purposes. It is significant that the mere fact of vision impairment is not sufficient to be granted the authorization to classes recording. Blind and partially sighted students can most often take notes independently with the use of technical appliances.

**Preparation of materials for classes**
Students who are visually impaired are entitled to obtain alternative forms of materials used during classes. In order to ensure adaptation of the material to the form required by their students, teachers are obliged to submit the materials not later than 3 working days before the date of the classes during which it is to be used. Similar terms are obligatory in case of preparation of exams in alternative forms.

**Computer rooms**
Until the time of computer technology development blind people’s access to written word was generally limited to texts written in Braille. Making work with a computer available to the people who are blind was a great revolution and significantly altered the situation of this group of people. Creation of screen reading programs, thanks to which blind people using either speech synthesizers or Braille screens gained access to written information, was a significant step in limiting one of the basic results of blindness. In the Computer Center for Students with Disabilities visually impaired persons may obtain aid with formatting black print documents. This department is
not only open for the students of UW but also for other students who are blind or partially sighted and live in Warsaw. People with vision dysfunction who are not students or employers of the University may use computer workplaces of the University Library in Warsaw which are adapted for the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

**Office renting portable equipment**

Students facing difficulties in taking their notes independently can rent computer equipment or other electronic tools. The equipment is usually rented for an academic year on the basis of a rental agreement. The equipment is insured against most occurrences, e.g. theft or unintentional damage of the equipment due to inappropriate usage.

The following equipment is at students’ disposal at present:
- notebooks,
- sound producing/screen reading programs (Window-Eyes, Jaws),
- speech synthesizers (program and Apollo),
- magnifying programs (ZoomText, Lunar),
- Braille notebooks (BrailleLite 40. PacMate, Braille Sense),
- speaking notebooks (Kajetek, Braille’n Speak),
- Braille rulers (Focus 40),
- portable scanners.

At the beginning of each academic year the persons applying for equipment renting needs to submit appropriate form. It is also worth mentioning here that in recent years due to accomplishment the special program of PFRON “Computer for Homer” many students with visual impairment, especially the ones of the last years of studies, have and use their own equipment.

**Support in searching library collections**

Very often students who are to prepare credit projects, reports or write their MA thesis need to analyze multiple materials gathered in special collections of libraries. The students who are blind and partially sighted are offered support of assistants who look through the materials with them. Basing on this the student may decide which article or book chapter is significant enough to be prepared in alternative form.

**Spatial orientation**

Blind and partially sighted students should have gained the ability to move independently during earlier stages of education. The university provides new
students with special course conducted by orientation instructors aiming at getting to know the area of the university and public transport routes from the place of accommodation to the places where classes are held. During the first weeks of studies blind students are offered the support of assistants while moving, if this is necessary and possible to be organized. If a student has not been trained within orientation and does not know techniques of unassisted moving, the UW Office for Persons with Disabilities supports the student in attending a course conducted by external institutions, e.g. Polish Association of the Blind. Hereby it is worth mentioning that there exists a group of blind students who, due to certain brain damage, are not able to gain the ability of unassisted moving. In these cases individual solutions must be introduced.

**Architectural adaptations**

University buildings undergoing modernization are also adapted to the requirements of students who are blind or partially sighted. A special system of signs is introduced in the university buildings. At present almost half of 50 buildings where classes are held have signs with room numbers written in Braille.

**Classes of English**

For several years Warsaw University has been offering foreign language classes to students with sight impairment. They are conducted with non-visual methods in small groups. The teachers and students work with adapted educative materials taking into account the specificity of work with Braille text or with the use of magnifying and optical equipment.

**Changes in examinations forms**

The scope of modifications of exams which can be prepared at UW is determined in UW Rector’s directive no. 5 of 8 March 2005. In relation to people with visual dysfunction the most broadly applied solutions are:

- using technical equipment during examinations e.g. a notebook with speech synthesis and electronic form of record,
- alternative forms of record, e.g. Braille record or enlarged print,
- extending examination time by 50%.

**Other individual changes in the course of studies**

In each situation when disability or health state of students influences the difficulties in studies continuation they can count on support. Each
situation of this kind is investigated individually and applied solutions are also individualized. Nevertheless, the most often applied solutions mean changes in deadlines of examination sessions and short- or long-term sick leaves. Usually during this kind of leave students retain the right to take exams in several, previously chosen subjects.

**Support for candidates with vision impairment**

People who are blind or partially sighted and who would like to start studies at Warsaw University are provided with detailed information concerning different faculties and the scope of support of the university. Additionally applicants with secondary final exams of old type may obtain entrance tests from previous years prepared in alternative forms. During entrance examinations for the people with secondary final exams of old type it is possible to use modified forms of exams, similarly to the case of exams for blind and partially sighted students.

**Summary**

*The article depicts present situation of including people with disabilities into higher education system in Poland. The author stresses the lack of system solutions supporting both financially and substantially high schools educating students who are disabled. Despite this, the process of high schools opening educative possibilities to persons with impairments started in Poland at the beginning of the ’90s and nowadays more and more universities notice the necessity to create equal opportunities for students with disabilities. Unfortunately in most cases it still does not mean the organization of regular services for students but only appointing rector’s representative for persons with disabilities. Students with certified degree of disability due to sight impairments may count on government support of two special PFRON programs: “Student” and “Computer for Homer”. Moreover they are also entitled to obtain a special grant paid from material aid funds to students of different high schools. The other part of the article describes a model of including students who are disabled in the academic society of Warsaw University, basing on the principle of creating equal opportunities and not introducing privileges due to the disability. The article also presents specific solutions aiming at elimination of barriers in access to information and within the area of spatial orientation and moving as an example of a complex system of support offered to students who are blind and partially sighted.*
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Resolution no. 156 of Warsaw University Senate of December 17th, 2003 on conditions and provisions of persons with disabilities studying at the University of Warsaw.


Directive no. 5 of the Rector of Warsaw University of 8 March 2005 on the conditions of persons with disabilities studying at the University of Warsaw.
Employment of blind and partially sighted people in Poland

The Act of 27 August 1997 on Professional and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities [Dziennik Ustaw (Journal of Laws) No. 123 with later amendments] constitutes the basic legal act which regulates employment of disabled people in Poland. Pursuant to the provisions of this act, regular workplaces are obliged to:

• Employ 6% disabled people in their workforce as long as they employ at least 25 employees. It is called a quota system,
• Provide workstations equipped with basic social facilities and appropriate adaptations which permit employing workers who lost their capability to work in their previous jobs and are considered disabled due to an accident at work or occupational disease.

If they do not fulfill these obligations, they have to make appropriate payments for the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People for each post indicated by the index where such a person was not employed. An enterprise which employs disabled people who are referred there by county employment agencies can receive from the Fund the following:

• Subsidies to salaries of disabled workers due to their lower work output,
• Reimbursement of higher employment costs of disabled workers,
• Reimbursement of costs resulting from adapting the workplace and the workstation to disabled workers’ needs,
• Reimbursement of training costs for disabled workers,
• Partial reimbursement of social insurance contributions (ZUS).

These regulations also apply to employment of blind and partially sighted people.

In addition, the Act mentioned above provides a legal framework for running special enterprises, i.e. sheltered workshops and vocational activity workplaces. A sheltered workshop is a workplace which employs at least 20 workers and where the disabled employment rate amounts to:
• Disabled workers – at least 40%, including people with severe or moderate disabilities – at least 10%.
• Blind workers, mentally ill workers or workers with severe or moderate intellectual disabilities – at least 30%.

At the end of 2005, there were 2,393 sheltered workshops in Poland. Cooperatives of the disabled and cooperatives of the blind also have the status of sheltered workshops. The latter are specially oriented to employ blind and partially sighted people.

Vocational activity workplaces are workplaces for severely disabled people with low work output. Their task is to provide these people with vocational activity and employment opportunities adapted to their real abilities as well as with opportunities to adapt themselves to a relatively independent life in the community. At present, there are 36 vocational activity workplaces in Poland, three of which specialize in employing visually impaired people.

Polish sheltered workshops and vocational activity workplaces also receive appropriate financial support to conduct their activities from the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON).

Poland, as a Member State of the European Union, attempts to implement and obey all the regulations enacted by the European Commonwealth which refer to disabled people's employment. The most important regulations are:

1. Equality of all citizens. It guarantees all disabled people, also those severely disabled ones, the right to work.
2. Lack of discrimination in employment against disabled people. Any types of discrimination on the part of employers are illegal and appropriately punishable.
3. Professional integration, i.e. employing disabled people in regular workplaces in the first place. Only if this is not possible for different reasons – in special workplaces (in sheltered workshops or vocational activity workplaces).
4. Equalization of disabled people's opportunities to take on and pursue their careers by removing the following barriers: social, legal, transport, architectural and urban barriers. In this area, it is crucial to adapt the workplace and the workstation to their needs so that they could do their work as normally as possible and in comfortable and safe conditions.
5. Supporting disabled people’s employment by establishing a system of financial benefits for employers.
6. Cooperation with nongovernmental organizations and other institutions which act for their welfare in order to find a solution to the problem of unemployment among disabled people.

Blind and partially sighted workers

The above mentioned Act of 27 August 1997 on Professional and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities distinguishes three degrees of disability in general, i.e.: severe, moderate and mild disability. As far as visually impaired people are concerned, these are:

- Blind people and people with residual vision with visual acuity of up to 0.05 are considered severely disabled.
- Partially sighted people with visual acuity of from 0.06 to 0.1 are considered moderately disabled.
- Partially sighted people with acuity of more than 0.1 up to 0.25 are considered mildly disabled.

For employment purposes, however, a different criterion for division of visually disabled people is used. This criterion is constituted by the way they function in work-related situations, i.e. while performing work-related tasks and duties, and while doing different activities at workplace. In this case, blind workers and partially sighted workers are distinguished.

Employment of blind and partially sighted people in Poland during political transformations

In the nineties of the last century, a great social and economic transformation started in our country which consisted in transition from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy. This change has had a significant influence on employment of visually impaired people. It has provoked important changes, both quantitative and qualitative ones, in their employment. As far as the quantitative changes are concerned, they are shown in Table 1.
At the end of 1988, 14,844 blind and partially sighted people were employed. Unfortunately, since then there has been a gradual slump in this area. Table 1 shows two fundamental problems resulting from the political transformation in our country, i.e. a sharp decrease in the number of workers, and the changes in the type of employment for blind and partially sighted people.

As far as the decrease in employment is concerned, it was particularly significant between 1989 and 1996. It amounted to over 50% then and the number dropped from 14,762 workers down to 7,092 workers. Over the next six years, the number of blind and partially sighted workers dropped by another 25% from 7,092 workers in 1997 down to 5,290 workers in 2002. Recently, this decrease has been stopped, and even a slight improvement in the employment situation of visually impaired people is seen – there were 5,396 workers at the end of 2005.

The social and economic changes affected particularly the cooperatives of the blind, where the employment rate dropped by more than 85%. They used to be the main workplace for the blind and partially sighted before. In that new situation, they had many difficulties adapting to the free market and dealing with the need to compete with many new private enterprises. This decrease was less significant in the case of blind and partially sighted people employed on the open market.

The abrupt drop in the number of blind and partially sighted farmers resulted form the fact that many of them made over their farms to their
children or to the state in exchange for incapacity to work pensions. It was possible thanks to the changes in the pension regulations.

Table 1 also shows the changes in the type of employment for blind and partially sighted people. Sheltered workshops with different forms of ownership were established. First of all, the cooperatives of the blind lost their dominant position in vocational activation of visually impaired people. Apart from cooperative ones, also private sheltered workshops were established where a lot of blind and partially sighted people found employment. Many of them were also employed in private enterprises, partnerships, state institutions, self-government institutions, and the like.

Self-employment, i.e. establishing a business activity in one’s own name by blind and partially sighted people, deserves to be particularly emphasized. This type of employment did not almost exist in the previous economic system. Only 61 blind and partially sighted people were self-employed in 1989, whereas at the end of 2005 – there were 379 of them.

The present employment situation of blind and partially sighted people

As it was already mentioned, 5,369 blind and partially sighted people were employed at the end of 2005 in Poland. However, this number covers only the people who are considered severely and moderately disabled due to vision impairment. Apart from them, there is a large number of partially sighted people considered mildly disabled due to vision impairment (visual acuity of above 0.1 up to 0.25) who are employed. There is not any more precise data referring to this group. Many of them work on the open market and they observe the rules of competition just like people without visual impairments do, so they are not included in the statistics on employment of disabled people.

Recently, there have been significant qualitative changes seen in employment of blind and partially sighted people. More and more frequently, these people are finding work beyond the sheltered labor market. In 1989, as many as 11,263 people out of 14,762 employees worked in the cooperatives of the blind or of the disabled, that is in special workplaces. They constituted 76% of all workers. This rate amounted to no more than 38% (2,317:5,396 people) at the end of 2005. The increase in employment on the open labor market – in regular workplaces – resulted in the fact that blind people started working in new professions and holding new posts.
Table 2 shows trades and professions along with the number of blind and partially sighted people doing these jobs at the end of 2005.

**Table 2. Trades and professions practiced by blind and partially sighted people.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trades and professions</th>
<th>Number of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massage therapists and physical therapists</td>
<td>803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrotechnicians</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration workers</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brushmakers</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce workers</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalworkers</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath service workers (excluding massage therapists)</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation specialists</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knitters</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone operators</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT specialists</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural promotion workers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific workers</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weavers</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests and clerics</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organists</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicians other than organists</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social assistants</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano tuners</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translators</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acoustician, sound operators</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other trades/professions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5396</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 shows, blind and partially sighted people work in many various trades and professions in Poland. The most popular and most frequently practiced trades are still massage therapist and physical therapist. They have kept the first place for many years and the political changes did not have any serious negative consequences in this area. The credit for this situation goes to the **Blind Massage Therapists and Physical Therapists Section** which was established many years ago, and since then has been attempting to promote this trade among visually impaired people, to help in finding and staying at
work, and to take care of improving professional qualifications by organizing training courses for blind massage therapists and physical therapists.

The appearance of several new trades and professions, and a significant increase in the number of blind and partially sighted people doing intellectual work is a positive phenomenon. These professions are: IT specialists, culture workers, rehabilitation specialists, organists, clerics, social assistants and the like. It results from the fact that more and more blind and partially sighted people are going to college today and are getting higher education. It permits them to hold various positions and to perform increasingly responsible work-related tasks. It is a direction which is strongly promoted nowadays. Similarly, the service sector, and commerce in particular, has provided employment for relatively many blind and partially sighted people. The fact that a lot of blind and partially sighted brushmakers, knitters and weavers remain on the labor market is also a characteristic phenomenon as these trades are considered to be dying out today. However, the future for this work is not optimistic as industry is taking over this kind of production. Telephone operators are also at risk as this trade will probably vanish in the future.

Summing up, it is necessary to state that it is true that the number of blind and partially sighted employees has significantly decreased, however, positive qualitative changes have occurred too. Many of these people have started working on the open labor market and practicing professions of a higher social status. Despite a significant decrease, blind and partially sighted people are still employed on the sheltered labor market in sheltered workshops and in vocational activity workplaces. It is an optimistic phenomenon from the perspective of visually impaired people with multiple disabilities and chronic conditions. For many of them, employment in this type of workplaces is usually the only possible form of vocational activation. In spite of the tendency toward professional integration, the sheltered labor market will still be needed here for many years to come as the open labor market will not be able to absorb all visually impaired people capable of working and willing to take up work.

Unemployment among blind and partially sighted people

The Polish Association of the Blind (PZN) has about seventy thousand blind and partially sighted members who are considered severely or moderately disabled due to visual impairment. Moreover, the Association has above
Employment of blind and partially sighted people in Poland

six thousand charges. These numbers are not complete. It is roughly estimated that this group consists of over eighty thousand people. Taking into consideration the fact that only about 50% of them are at working age (18-60/65), then the number of 5,396 blind and partially sighted employees constitutes only 13%. This means that about 87% of these people are professionally passive.

Unemployment among blind and partially sighted people started to increase already at the beginning of the nineties owing to numerous lay-offs and collapses of some cooperatives of the blind. For example, the number of people looking for a job amounted to 2,312 at the end of 1997, and it increased up to 2,396 people at the end of 2002. However, these are not actual numbers as a lot of blind and partially sighted people who are willing to work and are looking for a job do not register as unemployed in employment agencies because they do not see any prospects for finding work. Thus the number of blind and partially sighted people who are unemployed and are looking for a job should be estimated as much higher today – amounting even to several thousand people.

What are the reasons for unemployment among blind and partially sighted people in Poland? Both employers and visually impaired people are responsible for this situation.

As far as employers are concerned, the reasons are both mental and emotional.

1. Mental reasons refer to the way employers perceive professional abilities of blind and partially sighted people and the problem of their employment. They lack a solid knowledge of possibilities and experience of employing such workers. There are stereotypes which have been ingrained in our society for a long time.

2. Emotional reasons refer to anxieties and fears which accompany the process of making the decision on taking on a blind or partially sighted worker by an employer. The employer is afraid that a blind or partially sighted employee will be less efficient and will cause more trouble and difficulties, and will put him/her at risk of extra costs resulting from this employment.

As far as blind and partially sighted people are concerned, they are not always adequately prepared to work in a regular workplace. It refers both to the way they function and behave in a natural work environment. As a result, they prefer to work in sheltered workshops where the whole process and working conditions are adapted to their needs and abilities. The lack
of appropriate professional qualifications constitutes, however, a more significant barrier. Blind and partially sighted people do not always have the qualifications which are needed on the labor market at the moment.

**Prospects for the future**

The prospects for employment of blind and partially sighted people in the future are not very bright either. The labor market undergoes constant changes which will still take place. In consequence, it will demand new and more complex professional skills from workers as a result of implementing new and increasingly sophisticated production technologies and increasingly complex services for people. Therefore, it will be necessary to permanently improve one's professional qualifications by continual education. Blind and partially sighted people will also face this challenge.

The globalization of production and the replacement of humans with machines controlled automatically by computers are being introduced fast and this constitutes another problem which may influence vocational activation of blind and partially sighted people in the future. There is a decreasing demand for workforce, especially for low-skilled workforce, in big enterprises and factories. Thus the possibilities to find work on the open market for blind and partially sighted people who do not have high professional skills also decrease. The fact that a lot of production is automated may also have specific consequences for sheltered workshops, particularly for those which cooperate with large production enterprises. In consequence, blind and partially sighted people may also gradually lose the possibility of employment on the sheltered labor market.

All these changes will pose a particular threat to people who will not be able to adapt to them easily, i.e. to acquire professional skills and to change or improve them systematically as the need arises. Unfortunately, there may be few people who can meet these challenges among blind and partially sighted people. According to the statistical data, the number of blind and partially sighted people with multiple disabilities with a low intellectual level is large and is still growing. They are the ones who certainly will not be able to keep up with the changes and demands of the labor market which should be anticipated to come in the future, especially in the face of increasing competitiveness.
Summary

The article presents the legal acts which constitute the base of the system of disabled people’s employment in Poland, taking into particular consideration the situation of blind and partially sighted workers. Analyzing the situation of visually impaired people on the labor market between 1989 and 2005, the author considers two fundamental problems resulting from the political transformation: a sharp decrease in the number of workers, and changes in the type of employment for blind and partially sighted people. The description of the present employment situation of visually impaired people is enriched with a list of trades and professions practiced most frequently by this group of people. The article also comprises some statistical data on unemployment along with the analysis of the reasons for this situation. The final part of the article attempts to assess future risks and opportunities in the area of employment for visually impaired people.

Bibliography

Cooperative movement of visually impaired people in Poland

The Polish Association of the Blind (PZN) had over 72,000 blind ordinary members at all age groups at the end of 2003 (people who turned 16 and were considered severely or moderately disabled due to loss of vision). 40,000 of them are at working age (16-64 years old)\(^1\). According to the cited source, the number of employed people amounted to 5,674 employees. Blind workers constituted about 14% of the total population of the blind at working age\(^2\). The majority of visually impaired people were employed in cooperatives of the blind (1,331 people). Other sheltered workshops took the second place (1,093 people), then state and self-government institutions (1,064 people), private companies and partnerships which were not sheltered workshops (700 people) and agriculture (547 people)\(^3\). The blind at working age who were not interested in taking up work (18,321 people) usually lived off their disability pensions, old-age pensions, unemployment benefit or they were supported by their families. The situation did not look better in the case of the total disabled population. According to the surveys conducted by the Central Statistical Office (GUS), professional activity of those people was about three times lower than professional activity of non-disabled people (it amounted to 25.7% in 2002).

Why do so few disabled people at working age take up work? The main reasons for this state of affairs are an advanced age and an education level which is still too low in comparison with non-disabled people. Employers’ reluctance to take on disabled people is another reason.

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\(^1\) Report on the year 2003, Polish Association for the Blind, May 2004, (statistical part) Table 1, Table 6.

\(^2\) Ibid. p. 19.

\(^3\) Ibid. (statistical part) Table 9.
Meanwhile, limiting the state’s expenditure on social support for disabled people in favor of increasing and streamlining expenditure on their social and professional activation should be a fundamental goal in creating a new system of social and professional activation.

**Disabled person – Blind Person – Disability Degree – Vocational Rehabilitation System**

The discussion on professional activity of visually disabled people in cooperatives should be started by defining the following notions – a disabled person, a blind person, a partially sighted person, a disability degree, and rehabilitation – and outlining the vocational rehabilitation system used in Poland, which includes work cooperatives of the blind that function as sheltered workshops.

According to the Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, a disabled person is an individual whose physical, psychological or mental condition permanently or temporarily hinders, limits or prevents him/her from fulfilling his/her social roles, and in particular, it limits his/her abilities to perform work, if he/she has obtained a statement:

1) saying that he/she has been assigned one of the three degrees of disability by the adjudication bodies (…),

2) of total or partial incapacity to work – on the basis of separate regulations, or

3) of disability before turning age sixteen (…)\(^5\)

Due to total or partial loss of vision, blind and partially sighted people are disabled according to the above definition. The degree and the range of visual impairment in those people are described with the use of medical and functional definitions. Taking into consideration the topic of the study, I shall focus only on functional definitions from the perspective of professional activity of the group being described. **Blind people are the individuals who use non-visual or alternative techniques based on other senses**


(touch, hearing, kinesthetics, smell) in order to perform their work\textsuperscript{6}. Partially sighted people, on the other hand, despite significantly lowered visual acuity or visual field loss, use their vision to orient, manage and control the course of work (...). However, they may have specific difficulties perceiving small objects, objects which are located at a greater distance, while working in poor lighting or inappropriate color combinations\textsuperscript{7}.

According to the Act (27 August 1997), the statement of incapacity for work, which classifies an individual among people with disabilities, has to be issued by a specific body adjudicating on the disability degree – severe, moderate or mild disability. E. Brozyna and J. Lach\textsuperscript{8} provide the following description:

- **severe disability** – includes individuals who have a physical and/or mental impairment, are incapable of working or capable of working only in sheltered work conditions and who demand permanent or long-term care and support from other people in order to fulfills their social roles because of their incapacity to live independently,
- **moderate disability** – includes individuals who have a physical and/or mental impairment, are incapable of working or capable of working only in sheltered work conditions, or who demand temporary or partial support from other people in order to fulfill their social roles,
- **mild disability** – includes individuals who have a physical and/or mental impairment which affects significantly their capability to work in comparison to the capability of an individual with similar professional qualifications who does not have any physical and/or mental impairments, or who have limitations in fulfilling their social roles which can be compensated for with the use of orthopedic equipment, support or technical aids.

The statement of disability forms the basis for benefiting from various forms of rehabilitation, it also permits taking advantage of appropriate rights. The decision on the degree of disability is taken by panels for adjudication on the degree of disability. Adjudication is a two-instance process – county adjudication and province adjudication.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid. p. 18.
Additionally, for the needs of the regulations referring to social security issues, on the strength of the Act of 17 December 1998 on Old-Age Pensions and Disability Pensions from the Social Insurance Fund, the following categories of disabled people were introduced: *individuals who are incapable of working, individuals who are totally incapable of working, individuals who are partially incapable of working and individuals who are incapable of living independently.* The assessment of incapacity for work and for independent life is carried out by adjudicating doctors of the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS). Their decisions condition granting social security payments. The statements of total and partial incapacity for work are equivalent to the statements of severe and moderate disability issued by the panels for adjudication on the degree of disability.

When an individual is classified as disabled, it signals the need to start rehabilitation with his/her participation. According to the quoted Act, rehabilitation of disabled people refers to a set of actions, in particular organizational, therapeutic, psychological, technical, training, educational and social actions aiming at achieving, with active participation of these individuals, the highest possible level of their functioning, quality of life and social integration\(^9\). Depending on the needs that result from the type of disability, the disabled individual can be provided with the following: *therapeutic rehabilitation, psychological rehabilitation, social rehabilitation or vocational rehabilitation\(^10\).* The latter one aims at facilitating their finding and keeping employment in which they will be able to fulfill themselves through professional advancement. Rehabilitation should provide the following: vocational training, assessment of capability for work, career counseling, employment agency, choice of an appropriate trade or profession and a workplace, and equipping it appropriately depending on the disabled person's needs. Vocational rehabilitation does not consist only in providing the disabled person with work and financial independence. Professional activity is a therapy which improves the disabled person's self-esteem and a sense of social usefulness.

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The listed types of rehabilitation overlap. This process should be a multi-faceted action as a result of which the disabled person returns to a life in society as its competent member. Such a state of affairs depends on a comprehensive social security system. Due to the political, economic and social change dynamics in Poland, the discussion on a proper social security system and rehabilitation of disabled people is still in progress.

Fig. 1. Outline of the Polish vocational rehabilitation system according to A. Barczyński (2001, p. 59).

According to A. Barczyński\textsuperscript{11}, the merging of the following elements can constitute an ideal model of a vocational rehabilitation system for people with disabilities for these days:

- **SUBJECT** – professionally active disabled people,
- **ORIGINATOR** – authorities which shape and control implementation of the vocational policy for professionally active disabled people,
- **CONSUMER** – economically active disabled people,
- **IMPLEMENTER** – sheltered workshops (including work cooperatives of the blind), vocational activity workplaces, occupational therapy workshops, rehabilitation camps, companies on the open labor market,
- **TOOL** – economic self-government organizations, employer organizations, labor union organizations, non-governmental organizations,
- **REPRESENTATIVE** – state fund for rehabilitation of disabled people PFRON, county family support centers, county employment agencies, province and county panels for adjudication on the degree of disability,
- **PARTNERS** – parliament, government, ministry of labor and social policy, government plenipotentiary for disabled people, province self-governments and county self-governments.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p. 58 - 60.
TOOLS – institutions which serve legislative bodies (that make up the ORIGINATOR) and which constitute their executive element, IMPLEMENTER – workplaces and companies which create the present of vocational rehabilitation by actually employing disabled people, REPRESENTATIVE – entities representing disabled workers’ and their employers’ interests before institutions which create legal instruments and implement them.

Outline of the history of the cooperative movement of the blind

Cooperatives of the blind were special workplaces – they were socioeconomic units, and not only economic units. They operated according to the cooperative principles. They consisted in disabled people forming voluntarily an association in order to carry out business activity in the form of a cooperative self-government body. They thus belonged to the cooperative members and they were run by them. The social nature of cooperatives manifested itself in providing the people with disabilities who were employed there not only with work but also with various services, according to their needs, such as treatment, rehabilitation, social and cultural services\(^\text{12}\). The first cooperative of the disabled was established in Poland in 1919, but a particularly rapid development of the cooperative movement took place after the World War Two. At the beginning, cooperatives operated within a general system of the work cooperative movement, but they united under the Central Union of the Work Cooperative Movement in 1949. The main goal of the Union was to provide jobs for those disabled people who could not find employment on the open market. In 1957, the Union of the Cooperatives of the Disabled (ZSI) emerged from the Central Union, but it became a completely separate organization only in 1980 when it assumed the name of the Central Union of the Cooperatives of the Disabled (CZSI). With time, the organization established its regional and provincial branches which were in charge of developing cooperatives of the disabled in their areas.

The Union of the Cooperatives of the Blind (ZSN) was established in 1957 as part of the ZSI, and it was responsible for taking care of rehabilitation and employment affairs of visually impaired people. The ZSN was established

thanks to the contribution of the Polish Association of the Blind (PZN) and the activists of the cooperatives of the blind which existed at that time and which developed from the union workshops for the blind operating after the war. The ZSN had three presidents in its history. Modest Sękowski was the first one. The objectives of the Union of the Cooperatives of the Blind included providing support for cooperatives of the blind in their further development and in conducting rehabilitation and economic activity, as well as establishing new cooperatives. In 1980, the ZSN separated from the Union of the Cooperatives of the Disabled and became an independent organization called the Central Union of the Cooperatives of the Blind, which operated till 1990.

When the ZSN was established, it had 17 members — the cooperatives of the blind, where 3,326 people worked, including 1,949 blind people. (...) Till 1967, the number of the members grew to 24 (10,078 workers, including 5,609 blind ones). (...) In 1986, there were 32 members (in 1988, the cooperatives employed 18,500 workers, including 10,304 blind ones) and this number did not change till 1990, that is when the ZSN was closed down. The numbers prove a systematic development of cooperatives of the blind. They usually employed several hundred workers and had their branches in different cities and towns across the country. Some provinces had several cooperatives of the blind within their borders. There were about 48% of non-disabled people, partially sighted people or people with other disabilities among the cooperatives’ workers. A lot of blind people worked in the outwork system.

At the beginning, the business activity of cooperatives of the blind focused on brushmaking, knitting and weaving. However, the market forced the creation of new trades such as: metalwork, electrotechnical industry, timber industry and chemical industry (plastic products). Cooperatives of the blind were single-trade workplaces with brushmaking being dominant until 1967. In the seventies, multi-trade cooperatives dominated with the main producer status for certain products. The problem of competition with regular workplaces was thus solved. An increasing number of cooperatives also engaged in cooperative production with big enterprises, thus guaranteeing themselves permanent contracts without the need to compete for the sale of the output.

When the Union of the Cooperatives of the Disabled passed a resolution on the establishment of sheltered workshops in 1962, it was decided that 14

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14 Ibid. p. 6.
out of the 24 cooperatives of the blind operating at that time (17 cooperatives in 1967) met the conditions to obtain the sheltered workshop status, i.e. they provided appropriate working conditions for people with severe disabilities. The cooperatives meeting the requirements of sheltered workshops had to be much larger than regular cooperatives and to have better medical and rehabilitation facilities.

People employed in cooperatives of the blind usually needed thorough vocational training which was conducted on-site. They also needed rehabilitation, therefore apart from vocational training, cooperatives provided elements of basic rehabilitation. It aimed at providing the blind worker with maximum independence in different areas of life, with social welfare services, educational and cultural services, as well as with an opportunity to supplement their primary education. Another type of rehabilitation was therapeutic rehabilitation which included establishing on-site and inter-company rehabilitation clinics where medical specialists, nurses, social assistants and psychologists were employed. Cooperatives also provided additional services, such as therapeutic and recreational gymnastics for workers which was conducted by physical education instructors, summer and winter rehabilitation camps, sanatorium treatment as well as vacation in the country and abroad. These services were provided by the Rehabilitation and Social Services Unit established by the ZSN Board in 1984. The workers were financially supported by the social and rehabilitation fund whose money came from the tax benefits for cooperatives.

The cooperatives also kept developing and supplementing their broken-down machines thanks to innovatory work of the Construction and Technological Workshop (1964), which was transformed into the Machine and Equipment Building Plant in 1975. Blind workers supplemented their qualifications in the National Educational Center for the Blind in Bydgoszcz. Blind Cooperative Member was a union magazine published in Braille and in print since 1962.

When the transition from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy started in Poland in 1989, the cooperative system could not meet the new requirements. There were two fundamental reasons for this:

- **lifting the restrictions on conducting business activity (the Act of 23 December 1988 on Business Activity)** – lifting the possibility to conduct business activity in the scope which was reserved only for cooperatives of the disabled before,
• closing down central unions of cooperatives (the Act of 20 January 1990 on Changes in Organization and Activities of Cooperatives)\(^{15}\).

In response to this crisis, the Sejm (translator’s note: the lower chamber of the Polish parliament) passed the Act of 9 May 1991 on Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities. This legal document restored meaning to the cooperatives’ existence and it saved the majority of them from bankruptcy. As a result of the Act’s implementation, also other enterprises of various organizational and legal forms (natural persons conducting business activity, civil law partnerships, commercial companies and partnerships) obtaining the status of sheltered workshops took over the previous role of the cooperatives of the disabled\(^{16}\). The National Alliance of the Cooperatives of the Disabled, which was established in 1991 in Katowice, replaced the cooperative unions, and in 1993, the National Economic-Rehabilitation Chamber (KIG-R) was established. It has 500 members which are sheltered workshops of different ownership forms. Apart from the KIG-R, there are several non-governmental organizations in Poland which promote disabled people employment, e.g.: the National Inspectorate for the Cooperatives of the Disabled and the Cooperatives of the Blind (KZRSIISN), the National Federation of Sheltered Workshops, and the Polish Organization of Disabled Persons’ Employers (POPOP). There does not exist, therefore, a central organization which could lobby for the disabled people’s right to work in our country.

Cooperative movement of the blind – the present and the prospects (author’s own research)

A sheltered workshop can operate as a cooperative. The Act of 16 September 1982 on Cooperative Law, which has been amended thirty times over the years (the last amendment was adopted on June 3, 2005), is a legal act which regulates the issues connected with cooperatives since the moment they are established till they are closed down. It contains the information on the


\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 71.
definition of the cooperative, its statute, and the procedure for establishing and registering cooperatives. It refers to the cooperative's members, their rights and responsibilities as well as to the authorities that manage the cooperative's property. It raises the issues of inspection, merger and division of the cooperative, and its bankruptcy or liquidation. It discusses in detail the regulations referring to work cooperatives. It also presents the regulations on cooperative unions and the National Cooperative Council. According to the Act, a cooperative constitutes a voluntary association of an unlimited number of people with changeable composition and a changeable shareholder fund which conducts joint economic activity in the interests of its members\(^7\).

Vocational and social rehabilitation of disabled and blind people through work in a jointly run enterprise constitutes the scope of the activity in cooperatives of the disabled and cooperatives of the blind\(^8\). In order to conduct their professional and social activity, cooperatives which employ disabled people have right to benefit from the state's and the local authorities' support as well as from exemptions and deductions from public liabilities. The cooperative's member has to be its worker who is employed according to his/her vocational qualifications and to the present economic potential of the cooperative.

I conducted my own study on the cooperative movement of the blind as part of a research project which was carried out in the Academy of Special Education in Warsaw on Education and rehabilitation of blind and partially sighted people in activities of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations of the Third Republic of Poland. I conducted a diagnostic survey of thirty cooperatives employing visually impaired people which were present in the PZN’s records by means of a questionnaire. I started collecting the research material on 1 June 2006, and on 11 October 2006, I had: 19 filled-in questionnaire forms, one form was in the process of being filled in by a cooperative, I found that seven cooperatives had closed down (I established this fact by consulting “Nowa Praca Niewidomych” Cooperative of Craftwork Products, two cooperatives refused to provide information, and one cooperative turned out to be private. Thus, the survey response rate amounted to 63%. Each cooperative received a single questionnaire form which was usually filled in by a chosen person sitting on the cooperative’s


\(^8\) Ibid. p. 70.
board or by an assistant president together with an employee of the personnel department and the accounting department. Not all the questionnaire forms were complete. The missing information usually concerned personnel and financial issues.

The cooperatives which were surveyed have their seats all across the country, mainly in large towns and cities such as Białystok, Bielsko-Biała, Bierutów, Biłgoraj, Bydgoszcz, Bytom Odrzański, Elbląg, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Cracow, Lublin, Poznań, Przemyśl, Słupsk, Sosnowiec, Warsaw (3 cooperatives) and Wrocław. All of them were established between 1946 and 1985. The oldest one is M. Sękowski Cooperative of the Blind (1946), and the youngest one – “Biersin” Cooperative of the Blind in Bierutów (1985). The majority of these enterprises were established in the sixties. At present, each of them is a sheltered workshop.

89% of the cooperatives conduct their activities all over the country. Few of them (32% – 6 cooperatives) conduct their activities abroad, too. “Biersin” Cooperative of the Blind in Bierutów is the only one that has its branch, the rest of them focus their activities in their head offices. Also, very few of them take efforts to conduct an occupational therapy workshop (22% – 4 cooperatives) or a vocational activity workplace (6% – one cooperative, “Elsin” Cooperative of the Blind in Elbląg). “Promet” Cooperative of the

Fig. 2. Territorial distribution of the surveyed cooperatives.
Blind (Sosnowiec) is the only one which employs workers in the outwork system. The surveyed cooperatives are not members of any organizations which, among other things, lobby for the interests of disabled workers. Only “Start” Cooperative of the Blind and E. Wagner Cooperative of the Blind are members of the KIG-R, the KZRSII and the SN.

Tab. 1. When the cooperatives were established.

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of the cooperatives which were established</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the trade scope of the surveyed enterprises? The cooperatives of the blind can be definitely called ‘multi-trade enterprises’ as they deal with several types of production or service activity. The most diversified cooperatives in this regard are: “Bielsin” Cooperative of the Blind (Bielsko-Biała), which produces metals and processed metal goods, it makes electrical and optical devices, paper and paper goods, rubber and plastic goods, and it deals with retail and wholesale trade; M. Sękowski Cooperative of the Blind (Lublin), which produces metals and processed metal goods, rubber and plastic goods, it is engaged in brushmaking, it provides catering services, makes car accessories and electrotechnical products; “DOLSIN” Lower Silesian Cooperative of the Blind (Wrocław), which produces metals and processed metal goods, makes electrical and optical devices, rubber and plastic goods, provides brushmaking and toolmaking services, and it rents rooms. Five cooperatives (28%) focus on only one trade, eight cooperatives (42%) focus on two or three trades, and six cooperatives (32%) focus on four to six trades. The most common trades are: production of metal and processed metal products (9 cooperatives – 47%), production of rubber and plastic products (9 cooperatives – 47%), brushmaking (9 cooperatives – 47%), production of electrical and optical devices (7 cooperatives – 37%), wholesale and retail trade (5 cooperatives – 26%), production of wood and wooden products (2 cooperatives – 11%), production of electrotechnical products (2 cooperatives – 11%), and renting rooms (2 cooperatives – 11%).
Tab. 2. Types of trades in the surveyed cooperatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Number of the cooperatives</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>production of metal and processed metal products</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of rubber and plastic products</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brushmaking</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of electrical and optical devices</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wholesale trade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of wood and wooden products</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>renting of rooms</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fabric production</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of electrotechnical products</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of paper and paper products</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catering services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refining of products</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>packaging services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of car accessories</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toolmaking services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>production of electronic devices</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>telemarketing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I also asked in the survey if the cooperatives cooperated with other enterprises. 58% of them (11 cooperatives) answered affirmatively, and 42% (8 cooperatives) answered negatively. The best-known partners of such cooperation are the following companies: AMICA, WHIRLPOOL, POLAR, INDESIT, 3M POLAND, PARKER HANNIFIN POLAND, FIAT, POLARIS, OPTIMUS IC, GENERIK and BITRON. One cooperative did not say which companies it cooperated with in the questionnaire. Among those which revealed their partners, the following boasted the largest number of business partners: M. Sękowski Cooperative of the Blind (Lublin) – six companies, “Nadodrze” Cooperative of the Blind (Bytom Odrzański) – four companies, “Promet” Cooperative of the Blind (Sosnowiec) – four companies, “Sinema”
Cooperative movement of visually impaired people in Poland

Cooperative of the Blind (Gdynia) – three companies, and “DOLSIN” Lower Silesian Cooperative of the Blind (Wrocław) – three companies. The rest, i.e. “BIERSIN” Cooperative of the Blind (Bierutow), “GRYF” Cooperative of the Blind (Bydgoszcz), “SANEL” Cooperative of the Blind (Cracow), “START” Cooperative of the Blind (Przemyśl), and “ELSN” Cooperative of the Blind (Elbląg) enumerated one or two partners. The cooperation was mainly based on production of intermediate products for large enterprises (9 cooperatives – 56%). More interesting forms of cooperation which were mentioned in a few cases included: joint marketing activity, assembly and toolmaking services, caretaking and cleaning services.

The cooperatives (15 workplaces – 79%) supplied several customers (two to five) with their manufactured products, and these were: small trade companies in Poland (33%), individual clients (19%), large production plants in Poland (17%), small trade companies abroad (15%), and large production plants abroad (4%). In several cases, budget institutions (e.g. hospitals) or financial institutions were mentioned. 95% of the cooperatives tried to increase the level of sales which was not satisfactory on their own.

Thanks to the survey, it was also possible to have a look at personnel issues in surveyed the cooperatives. More than 100 workers were employed full time in 58% of the cooperatives (11 workplaces). Between 70 and 100 workers were employed full time in four cooperatives (21%). Only four cooperatives had between 30 and 70 workers. All the cooperatives said they employed more than 30 disabled people: with sever disabilities (74% – 14 workplaces) and with moderate disabilities (26% – 5 workplaces). The disability was due to motor and spine conditions and eye conditions in 28% of the workers, only to eye conditions in 20% of the workers, to hearing and eye conditions in 18% of the workers, to intellectual disability and eye conditions in 15% of the workers, and epilepsy and eye conditions in 15% of the workers. That means that the majority of the cooperatives’ workers are people whose loss of vision or severe visual impairments are only one of their multiple disabilities.

The average age of the workers in 83% of the cooperatives amounted to 41-50. Only one cooperative employed the workers whose average age was 31-40. There were also very few workers older than 50 (11% – 2 cooperatives). Men (74%) were definitely employed more frequently than women (21%) in the cooperatives. They usually had vocational education (89%), very rarely – vocational secondary education or general secondary education. Most often, they did physical work such as assembling or
processing specific components (74%), which involved manual work or operating specific equipment. Some workers were responsible for checking the quality of the manufactured products, their labeling and packaging (23%). Others took care of office administration – sales, logistics and accounts (32%). Some workers were responsible for property security and caretaking (16%). In-house training for new workers was not conducted in 89% of the cooperatives.

The average salary amounted to PLN 1,000-1,500 in 53% of the cooperatives. It was PLN 500-1,000 in four cooperatives (21%) and PLN 1,500-2,000 in another four cooperatives (21%).

Last year’s tendency was positive in terms of employment of new workers in the cooperatives of the blind as 115 people were hired while 75 workers left.

![Changes over the last year](image)

**Fig. 3.** *New workers versus workers who left.*

The majority of the surveyed reported that reaching retirement age was the main reason for leaving work (84%). Another reasons were: deterioration in health condition (26%), personal reasons (21%), intention to change the workplace for a different one (11%), death (11%), notice given by the employer (5%), and contract for a specified time (5%). None of the cooperatives gave notice to their workers because of a temporarily bad financial situation of the cooperative or lack of work.
Fig. 4. Reasons for leaving work.

Sheltered workshops’ workers can count on specific forms of support thanks to the special character of these workplaces. All the cooperatives have the Company Funds for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (ZFRON). 90% of the profit earned on tax exemptions which are guaranteed by law is collected there. The cooperatives allot this money for their own rehabilitation activity and for insurance of the disabled workers. Also the income from bequests and donations, from interest on the means collected in the rehabilitation fund’s account, and from the means received from the sale of the durables bought with the fund’s means go to the ZFRON. The cooperatives collect funds for the ZFRON mainly thanks to tax on natural persons exemptions and property tax exemptions (79%), they also receive the PFRON’s support (63%), they benefit from partial reimbursement of social insurance contributions for their workers (63%), and 26% of the cooperatives earn profit thanks to exemption from payment for the Guaranteed Employee Benefits Fund (FGSP). Some cooperatives reap a profit for their workers from income tax exemptions or special programs (government or EU programs). Thus, cooperatives support their workers mainly through social funds. 63% of the cooperatives considered their ZFRON as fairly satisfactory, 21% – as large. Last year, “Promet” Cooperative of the Blind (in Sosnowiec, electrical and optical device production) had the largest ZFRON fund – PLN 1,669,475. “Tanew” Cooperative of the Blind (in Biłgoraj, brushmaking) had the smallest
fund – PLN 56,185. The ZFRON fund amounted to over PLN 1 million only in 17% of the cooperatives, to between PLN 900,000 and 400,000 – in 39% of the cooperatives, and to between PLN 300,000 and 100,000 – in 22% of the cooperatives. Four cooperatives did not provide detailed amounts. In total, the means collected in all the surveyed cooperatives’ ZFRON funds over the last year amounted to approximately PLN 9,360,000. The ZFRON means are allotted to individual support in 95% of the cooperatives, to medical care and rehabilitation (79%), to adaptation of workplaces (58%), to worker training (42%), development of rehabilitation facilities and worker transport (21% on each expense). Some cooperatives subsidize: individual rehabilitation programs and extra wages, cultural and educational programs or rehabilitation and vocational counseling.

Fig. 5. Expenditure of the ZFRON means according to their purpose.

What does the economic condition of the surveyed cooperatives look like? According to 74% of the respondents, their enterprises do not bring profits. 58% of the respondents consider their enterprises’ economic condition as average, 26% of them consider it as bad, and 16% of them consider it as good. 68% of the cooperatives do not have any available investment funds, and checking
accounts in banks (53%) as well as fixed-term deposit accounts (53%) are the most common ways of saving up. In three of the cooperatives it is: investing in investment funds, in real estate or in production and renovation projects. Their real estate constitutes the financial base for 100% of the surveyed cooperatives, their production machines, production materials and means of transport – for 26% of them each, and the plant's equipment – for 11% of them. The average wealth of all the surveyed cooperatives was estimated at about four million zlotys. The cooperatives whose property is in the 6-10 million zloty range are: “Warsen” Cooperative of Blind Workers (Warsaw), M. Sękowski Cooperative of the Blind (Lublin), “Promet” Cooperative of the Blind (Sosnowiec), and “Nadodrzé” Cooperative of the Blind (Bytom Odrzański). The property of 3-5 million zlotys belongs to the following: “Sinema” Cooperative of the Blind (Gdynia), E. Wagner Cooperative of the Blind (Slupsk), “Bielsin” Cooperative of the Blind (Bielsko-Biała), “Sanel” Cooperative of the Blind (Cracow), and “Sinpo” Cooperative of the Blind (Poznań). The property of six remaining cooperatives ranges between 1 to 2 million zlotys. Four cooperatives did not answer this question in the questionnaire.

![Graph showing property and funds comparison](image)

**Fig. 6.** Surveyed cooperatives’ property in comparison with funds for the ZFRON.
Fig. 7. Difficulties conducting cooperative activity reported in the survey.

The cooperatives enumerated the following problems in conducting their cooperative activity most frequently: competition on the market (33%), instability of the state’s support for sheltered workshops (20%), instability of regulations – acts and directives (20%), difficulties recovering debts form debtors (13%), worn out machines (7%), difficulties finding new markets (7%), and lack of permanent job security for disabled people (7%).

Conclusions

• The sheltered labor market, including the network of cooperatives of the blind, constitutes the fundamental element of the vocational rehabilitation of blind and partially sighted people in Poland.
• Cooperatives, as a form of ownership and employment for blind people, were a very valuable idea which stimulated the environment of blind workers, giving them control over and responsibility for their own professional activity in society. This idea was conceived by the Reverend Professor Stefan Wyszyński (later Primate of Poland). The main idea of this conception was ruined under the rule of the Polish People’s Republic,
which, indeed, developed cooperatives, but it incapacitated the workers, who would get a job in the cooperatives without any creative effort, as well as their monthly wages and due rehabilitation. The manufactured products were sold because their sale was guaranteed by the state.

- Today, cooperatives operate according to the principles of the free market and competition, which they are not very well prepared to. Their production conditions are sometimes obsolete, their products are often unattractive, few of them attempt to start cooperation with serious partners. The main problems they contend with are competition and difficulties selling their products, and in their impotence, they demand constant and guaranteed support from the state and Polish entrepreneurs like in the past. Is this what vocational rehabilitation and inclusion of the blind in the mainstream of social life is to consist in?

- Probably not all blind or partially sighted people will be able to take up work on the open labor market or even on the sheltered labor market. Some of these people, for different reasons, will have to live off their disability pensions, old-age pensions or be supported only by their families. The state's role is to secure a vocational rehabilitation system that would work harmoniously and provide each person willing to be professionally active with a suitable place on the labor market. Poland is trying to work out such a system, although an outside observer may sometimes have an impression that normal disabled workers are least important in the ongoing discussion, and the cooperatives of the blind have become just small elements in the political game like many others.

Summary

The present article attempts at an initial analysis of the results of a diagnostic survey which the author conducted between June and September 2006 as part of her own research on the cooperative movement of blind people in Poland (the title of the research: Education and rehabilitation of blind and partially sighted people in activities of governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations of the Third Republic of Poland). It also includes a historical outline of the cooperative movement development in the fifties and the sixties, and its rapid transformation after 1989. The article also introduces briefly the terminology and reality of the vocational rehabilitation system for disabled people in Poland.
Bibliography


Michał Żejmis | Polish Association of the Blind (PZN)

Social campaigns for sight impaired people in Poland

The beginning of social campaigns in Poland dates back much farther and is connected with the period called by political scientists, economists and journalists – political transformation. Organized attempts to influence the attitudes and behavior of the society or particular groups of people, in the meaning adapted for the purpose of his article, is connected with promotion of socially desired attitudes or behaviors in within the integrated marketing process. Taking into account the dissimilarity of social and political conditions and differences in terminology we could acknowledge that during communist rules the authorities undertook certain actions which should be called social campaigns in the light of further discussion.

The subject of our discussion is limited only to the social campaigns focusing on the disabled people with sight impairments. Due to this we need to pass over all propaganda actions organized in Poland before 1989. The campaigns on which this chapter is focusing concerned above all health education of

1 A social campaign may be defined as activity directed to a certain group of recipients, aiming at passing certain information with the use of different media techniques in order to modify attitudes and/or behaviors of the destination group. The definition by Fundacja Edukacji dla Demokracji. See: [online:] www.edudemo.org.pl.


3 The scope of notion of modern social advertising as persuasive message overlaps with the scope of notion of “propaganda”. This has been noticed by professor Jerzy Bralczyk: “Here we have the word social, but in a different meaning. Just like the word social (community) worker/volunteer or social (community) work, which means kind of work for which we do not take money. Social action was undertaken for the community, not for private purposes. And in this meaning the word social is used here. I think it could be perceived as propaganda. But with this word some other idea has already been described. We could talk about persuasion, but it is very general.” Cit. from: “Reklama na stronie”, Agata Stafiej talks to Jerzy Bralczyk, [in:] ibidem, p. 49.
the society and they did not consider the problem of social conscience in relation to the difficulties faced by disabled people including the people with sight impairments.

The example of the persuasive message of the time concerning visual disability is a picture of a blind man (his disability is shown through dark glasses and dark background of the picture) who is unfit (too thin and too pale). The caption written in big letters says: “Moonshine (liquor) the reason for blindness”.

The contemporary persuasive messages aimed above all at warning the society. The speaker meant the socialistic authorities or social organizations controlled by the state.

After 1989 Poland became a scene of political and social life pluralism, which influenced also the newborn advertising market, which at first was almost entirely commercial but from mid-1990s also social. But still social campaigns for the people with disabilities were not organized.

The necessary condition to create a social campaign is a well prepared media and other types of strategies. This cannot have been achieved by small, unable to synchronize their activities, non-governmental organizations and other organizations were not particularly interested in discussing the problem of disability within the context of social debate. For a long time blind and partially sighted people could not count on introducing notable changes into social consciousness.

**Integration**

At the end of the 1990s specialist third sector organizations grew stronger and initiated social campaigns for disabled people.

The first Polish national campaign in January 2000 was initiated by the Friends of the Integration Association (“Integracja”) in cooperation with the agency Upstairs Young & Rubicam. The leitmotiv of the campaign, symbolized by the picture of three damaged sculptures and three people with disabilities, was a sentence from a poem by the priest Jan Twardowski: “Not to see, not to hear, not to touch”.

"Pioneering” social campaigns at the turn of the centuries did not increase the public debate concerning disability. It only happened three years later in

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4 The campaign “The disabled – usual matter”, lasted until June 2000. The main communication channels of the campaign were billboards (1000 pieces) and press releases. See [online:]www.integracja.org (31.10.2006).
the context of the events connected with the European Year of People with Disabilities. After the year 2000 we observed a breakthrough in organizing social campaigns for people with disabilities, although still little was done in this respect for people with sight impairments. The following 5 years did not bring any significant national campaign for this group of people, except for the activities of “Rainbow” association, described below.

Dysfunctions of the sight organ in media messages have been treated for several years as one of the four main types of disability. It was proved by the attitude of the authors of so far not more than a few national social campaigns organized after the year 2000.

The most extensive social campaign organized during the European Year of People with Disabilities was also held by the association Integracja. The basis for the media strategy of the campaign formed contents divided into three parallel messages (commercial spots) with the participation of people with sight, hearing and motor dysfunctions.

The important element of the campaign was the participation of Polish national TV (TVP), which for 12 months broadcast marketing materials prepared by Integracja and outsourced advertising agency Leo Burnett. Apart from national TV and radio channels and the press the message of the campaign “Are we really different?” became known thanks to 1100 billboards and citylights all over Poland.

The main character of the three spots broadcast on TV was a middle-aged man. 30-second film starts with the scene in which the man is bathing his little son. The child is playing with a toy duck and seems very cheerful. The man finishes the child’s adventure with the bath with sure, caring moves of a towel. In the 15th second of the spot we move to the bedroom. The child is peacefully falling asleep, in the background the viewer can hear the voice of the main character reading a popular fairy tale about an ugly duckling. When the camera is directed from above the man’s shoulder at the book in his hands, the recipient of the message notices in about 24th second of the film that the man is reading a book written in Braille. The sender formed the message in such a way that the recipient believes as long as possible that the main character is a non-disabled person, achieving this way the aim of the campaign – creating an image of disabled people going through normal everyday situations in a similar way to the ones who are not disabled.

\[5\] Ibid.
In 2005 Friends of the Integration Association with the Office of the Governmental Representative for Disabled People and the National Fund of the Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON) organized a promoting campaign “Not disabled at work” aiming at: creating a positive image of employees with disabilities, promoting their employment among the employers, motivating the disabled people to become active on the labor market. One of the main tools of the campaign in media (next to Captain's Hook CV and Quasimodo's covering letter in the press and Peter having not even the slightest chance to be employed despite his perfect qualifications) was a TV spot showing a blind girl – Ania, working at the reception desk. The viewer sees a young, cheerful girl working at a modern reception desk. Although she is totally blind, she perfectly recognizes approaching people listening to the sound of their steps. According to the campaign message this spot passes the information to the recipients that blind people are able to work in the places where healthy people work, fulfilling the same tasks without any obstacles.

Over the last five years Integracja was the only organization which held several national campaigns for people with impairments. Their advertising strategies covered partly the people with sight impairments.

According to data gathered in National Court Register there are about 6000 non-governmental organizations operating for the disabled people. The fragment of this sector is characterized with functional chaos. Structures coordinating the activities of these entities do not function properly. This is easily noticeable in the area of social communication. There are many small organizations active in the field called by themselves information or social campaigns. Usually this means low-cost activities like issuing a leaflet. This, however, does not mean too much for a person with sight impairment, which probably is the reason for the fact that the activeness of such small entities within this area is lower if it concerns people who are blind in comparison to people with other types of impairments.

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6 “Social campaigns serve debunking stereotypes, drawing society’s attention to the issues which are often marginalized, teaching people how to think differently and showing that 2+2 does not always equal 4...” quotation from: “Not disabled at work – launching of social campaign”, [online:]www.niepelnosprawni.info (31.10.2006).

7 From: M. Rydzewski (director of Social Communication Department of PFRON), talk from 10 November 2006.
Rainbow (Tęcza)

The Association of Parents and Friends of Blind and Partially Sighted Children “Rainbow” was registered in 1990 although the informal group of its founders and members acted already in the 1980s. The organization offers professional, multi-level aid to blind and partially sighted children by diagnosing as well as drawing up and realizing individual therapeutic and rehabilitation programs. At present the association has over 160 members and more than 350 children and teenagers under supervision.

There is no doubt that the motivation to raise additional funds derived from substantial problems with maintaining two rehabilitation centers and one counseling center for children run by the association. These were: center for blind and partially sighted children with multiple disability, center for blind and partially sighted youth with multiple disability and counseling center offering complex diagnosis, early education, therapy and rehabilitation for newborn babies and young children with sight impairments. Searching for sponsors, short-term actions: auctions, concerts, fairs and contests did not bring the desired effects. The reform of healthcare system still did not create framework solid enough to enable the association to maintain the centers and temporary fund raising and actions organized by political environments could not substantially influence the situation. The idea of the Rainbow Association to initiate a social campaign for blind children was driven by two major goals identical for any following campaign: raising funds for the statutory activity and promoting self-image and the problems of blind children and youth with multiple disabilities. The other of these goals was connected with the important aspect of identifying the specific character of the association’s activity.

The campaigns supported by a team of professionals from Santa Clause Association were held between 2000 and 2002. Each lasted for about a

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8 Since 15 March 2005 the association has been acting as Public Benefit Organization, [online:] www.tecza.org (12.10.2006)
10 “It is important that we are seen and that the society is able to differentiate between our activities and for example Laski’s operations. A blind person brings to mind generally the image of Laski, as far as education, bringing up are concerned. We wanted to draw society’s attention to the fact that not only Laski, but also, that we are mainly involved in acting for the sake of children with multiple impairments.” Cit. K. Waksberg – president of The Association of Parents and Friends of Blind and Partially Sighted Children “Rainbow”, talk from 15 October 2006.
Social campaigns for sight impaired people in Poland

month. The association did not use services of any professional advertising agency. The guidelines and the strategy of the campaign were prepared on charity basis.

Different communication channels were used in the campaigns – mass media: national press (newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines), national TV and radio stations (state and commercial); means of advertising: billboards, spot-lights, advertisements placed in banks and post offices. The media campaign was received with enthusiasm and highly appraised by marketing specialists, although the authors of the advertisement message had doubts connected with the clarity of the message. The campaign seemed noticeable on TV screens. The following TV stations participated in the project: Polonia1, Super1, RTL7, TV Polonia, TVN, Wizja TV and WOT as well as main national state-owned channels

The strategy on which both first campaigns based concentrated the attention of the message recipients on a blind child. The motto of the campaigns was “See blind children”. The third campaign was focused more on other impairments within the group of presented there blind children. There are objective difficulties to show multiple impairments in a short commercial spot or a billboard. “What is a sack full of misery? […] This cannot be explained” – wondered the professionals from Santa Clause Association engaged in the campaign

The organizers of all Rainbow’s campaigns used a similar visual message – a black-and-white picture of a tiny, lost and confused girl with a white stick, disorientated in a gloomy space of a closed room.

The image of the child was full of sadness never met in the later advertising images of people with sight impairments. Father of one of the children under the care of the association described the poster in the following way: “This girl is our daughter when we die. Lost in the huge, strange and unfriendly world. Where nobody needs her anymore.”

12 Apart from sight impairments the children in care of “Rainbow” association have: cerebral palsy, epilepsy, retardations of mental and motor development, mental disability, behavioral and emotional disorders, autism, hearing impairments, deafness, central nervous system damages, genetic diseases, other chronic diseases, e.g. cancer. See [online:] www.tecza.org.
14 From: Klich, A. op. cit.
None of the three campaigns initiated by the association brought the expected outcome – financial results from the campaign itself or increase in the global inflow of funds. The financial fiasco of the campaigns resulted in the withdrawal of sponsors. It had been expected that each should generate income exceeding 100,000 zł and the final balance showed the income not exceeding 80,000 zł. Although before the campaigns were started nobody measured the level of attitudes and perception of the organization or a group of Rainbow’s children, the workers of the association claimed to have noticed the improvement of the organization image and the increase in recognizability. This has been proved by increase in the number of supervised children, especially in the group of early intervention. The number of the newly accepted is estimated at more than ten people registered during or immediately after closing each campaign.\(^{15}\)

**Give Children the Sun (Podaruj Dzieciom Słońce)**

According to the opinion of several social activists the notion of advertising should not be used in relation to social campaigns as it is too strongly associated with financial profit. Similar reservations of axiological nature appear in relation to socially responsible business. The opponents of such form of pro-social activities argue that it is improper to allow commercial companies to base the increase in their products sales and to build the image of the brand on social problems. For others this problem is not a significant one, as they believe that the only important matter is the benefit gained in the context of achieving required social goal and the financial profit of the commercial company engaged in the campaign is meaningless.

For eight years the greatest Polish social campaign based on socially engaged marketing rules has been the action “Give Children the Sun” run by Polsat Foundation together with the concern Procter & Gamble. The organizers of this campaign used the results of opinion polls conducted by Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) which clearly showed that the Poles are not willing to involve in organized aid for the sake of pathology groups – alcoholics, drug addicts, but commonly express permanent need to help the children in need.\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) K. Wagsberg, president of the Association..., talk from 15 October 2006.

\(^{16}\) According to research by CBOS 61% of adult Poles declare the will to support financially ill or disabled children, Spychalski, M. Czysty zysk. [In:] D. Maison, P. Wasilewski (ed.), *Propaganda dobrych serc...*, op. cit., p. 129.
Since 1999 the main goal of the campaign “Give Children the Sun” has been raising financial means for the purchase of specialist equipment necessary to save life and protect health of sick children. Throughout seven following editions the campaign was focused on different needs of children: awaiting transplantation, operation and treatment (1999); requiring care or treatment in result of burns (2000); suffering from spine curvature (2001); premature babies (2002); victims of accidents (2003); suffering from cancer (2004 and 2005).

In 2006 the campaign focused on children with sight impairments. It was the first time when a group of children with a certain type of disability was distinguished and offered help. The organizers plan purchases of equipment for diagnostic, rehabilitation, educational and motor development purposes of little blind children. The organizers of the venture determined the scale of the needs basing on statistical data from Polish Association of the Blind and also thanks to contacts and cooperation with special child care and learning center for blind and visually impaired children. There are 13 such centers in Poland. The stages of the campaign realized so far were always successful ones. Only during the first stage (year 1999) 4.8 mln zł was collected – 20% more than previously expected. In total all seven editions Polsat Foundation raised ca. 31.5 mln zł for the purpose of supporting children.

Apart from gathering the money for purchase of necessary medical and rehabilitation equipment Polsat Foundation undertook also educational steps. Raising funds for creation of the first in Poland specialist center for burned children in Kraków (2000) became a good occasion to run in public schools national educational campaign “Live safely” in cooperation with Fire Brigades.

The campaign “Give Children the Sun” was not the first and the only social campaign organized in Poland using the mechanisms of socially engaged marketing. However, for many years it has been the only undertaking of such kind held so widely and the only donating all the income to support rehabilitation of people with visual impairments. The mechanism of the campaign has remained unchanged for many years – certain products of Procter & Gamble are marked with a characteristic yellow sun – these are detergents and other kinds of products. Each buyer paying for them in any shop becomes a donor. This year the eight products marked with the symbol of sun were supported by two new brands – connected with popular shaving

accessories and unbreakable dishes. 2% of the sales price of each product marked with the sun is the amount donated to aid. The donors can also transfer funds directly to the foundation’s bank account18. Simultaneously the foundation runs a campaign in media basing mainly on TV advertising spots presenting children’s problems. The important element of campaigns organized in previous editions was free of charge participation of Polsat TV (as well as other TV stations, including state-owned channels). Apart from broadcasting marketing messages and advertising spots the TV also prepared free of charge short presentations in which celebrities encouraged viewers to purchase products with the sun label.

The whole action covers the triangular system of benefits exchange: Polsat Foundation raises funds to organize significant and socially desirable goal – helping children (in 2006 the blind ones); the company Procter & Gamble improves the brand images of its products and increases its global sales and consumers get involved in supporting children in an easy way, not requiring additional steps to transfer the money as it is enough to pay the bill for the products at the cash desk of a supermarket.

Apart from bringing material results each campaign may also influence the level of social awareness concerning the lives and problems of people with sight impairments. The information on websites and in the press focuses on the problem of shortages of didactic materials for children with vision impairments. Usually the additional benefit of this kind of activities using marketing tools for great scale is the increase in the level of social knowledge not only concerning the existing difficulties but also the methods of solving them. For the first time the problems of blind people in Poland were included in the long-term strategy of positioning brands of a commercial company’s products basing on a national social campaign19.

The disabled – not disabled at work

The possibility of participation in and absorption of EU structural funds by Polish state institutions, commercial and social entities opened a new perspective of activities in the field of social communication, showing the idea which motivated the message senders. The idea was to create an image of a disabled person not as a “normal” one any more, but as a “working” street vendor, a factory worker, a lawyer, or a teacher.

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19 Maison, D., Maliszewski N., Cause Related Marketing – marketing zaangażowany społecznie. [In:] D. Maison, P. Wasilewski (ed.), Propaganda dobrych serc..., op.cit., p. 120-127.
one. The change was mainly driven by the aims and priorities of European Social Fund. Moreover the institutional horizon of the initiated actions and campaigns became also broadened and crossed the borders of non-governmental sector.

The National Fund of the Rehabilitation of Disabled People (PFRON) was created in 1991. For many years it has been the major institutional and financial instrument of the state policy regarding the rehabilitation of the disabled people. The fund aims mainly at supporting the creation, maintenance and protection of work places for the disabled. Influencing social attitudes was for many years a task from outside the area of the fund main goals. PFRON is currently running several programs concerning education, operating of information centers for people with impairments, supporting non-governmental organizations, balancing the differences among the regions, providing the disabled with computer equipment, limiting the results of disability. None of the abovementioned programs includes a social campaign held directly by PFRON. This fund’s main scope of activity is connected with financial support of the employers employing the disabled people, subsidizing new workplaces and finally the tasks imposed by governmental and self-governmental programs for people with impairments, supporting the workshops of occupational therapy, financing development and modernization of rehabilitation buildings and since not long ago co-financing ESF projects.

Social communication within the area of the disabled people integration remained almost entirely the subject of interest of non-governmental organizations. The fund concentrated on financing initiatives of other organizations or its own initiatives or programs financed partly from European funds.

The fact that for many years the area of activities connected with social communication was not organized resulted from a very low level of fulfillment of the basic social needs. This also concerns the people with sight

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20 Apart from financial aids of structural funds, non-governmental organizations may receive support of projects covering – promotion of professional and social achievements of the people with disabilities (especially in the form of contests, exhibitions, festivals etc.) – and cultural events of different scope, which enables arranging and organizing social campaigns for different groups of disabled people. The extensive range of community organizations activities, which constitute third sector, operating within the area situated between government administration and a person who is disabled, is believed to have become significant subjects contributing to civil society creation”. See Program Partner 2006 [online:] www.pfron.org.pl.
impairments as a group separated out of all the disabled people. Within the context of programming social changes the problem of providing people with sight impairments with modern computer technologies seemed more important (as it was one of essential rehabilitation factors in developing society realized through the program “Computer for Homer”) than organizing media campaigns focused on altering social consciousness.

The situation underwent changes around 2003 when Poland, still waiting for accession, became involved in the activities connected with the International Year of Disabled Persons. All over the country new initiatives were appearing due to this fact. However, these were the undertakings focused on the disabled in general. Apart from few minor projects of local scope (usually within the smallest unit of administrative division – gmina) no separate initiatives for blind people were within that period subsidized by PFRON. Hence, it is hard to talk about initiatives which could be called campaigns for people with visual impairment.

The first social campaign run independently by PFRON called “Work for each disabled person” was undertaken between the 1 March and 30 November 2006 within the project “The disabled – not disabled at work” and financed from the funds of Operational Sector Program of Human Resource Development (Activity 1.4 “professional and social integration of disabled people”). The main goal of the project is to draw the employers’ attention to the benefits of employing disabled people and to change positively in this respect the attitudes of potential employers and colleagues. The project prepared by PFRON based on a developed media campaign planned in details and realized by a professional, outsourced marketing agency.

The guidelines of the marketing strategy of this campaign indicated four types of impairments connected with malfunctioning of the following: hearing, vision, motor organs and also mental disability. The impairments were the basic scope of the message, which was directed at the whole society, as the target group consisted of potential employers and co-employees of the disabled people. The organizers decided to base on general mess media as main communication channels.

The media campaign constituting the most significant factor of the project, run simultaneously with local and national meetings with employers, based on module advertisements published in newspapers and weekly magazines with the highest national circulation, radio and TV spots broadcast by channels with the national auditory and street billboards. Each concerned only one of the four separated types of disabilities. The authors of the project
Social campaigns for sight impaired people in Poland

identified four main barriers faced by people with impairments while contacting potential employers and their employees: the stereotype of perceiving a disabled person as a “different” one, fear and aversion to the otherness, lack of knowledge about the ways to approach a disabled person, perceiving such a person as an ineffective employee, belief that employing a person with disability results in additional costs, unawareness of the benefits connected with employing a disabled person and finally lack of knowledge about legal and system solutions supporting a disabled person employment.21

The applied persuasive information encouraging the employers to change their attitude towards the employment of visually impaired people does not contain negative elements, this kind of aversion contents often present in social advertisement concerning disability. The 34-second film entitled “Christopher” shows a young 30-year-old cheerful masseur, being in clearly positive relations with his colleagues. His superior presents him as one of the best professionals employed by the company, a person who “… has a uniquely positive influence on the patients’ state”. Gratifying character of the message is stressed by the final text informing the recipient about unknown, additional benefits: “Do you know what you can gain by employing a disabled person?”22 The promise is straight and clear.

Both on TV and in the radio spots positioning of the product was applied by making the recipients (employers) believe that they are not forced to take any action but that the required by the sender change in attitude towards the blind people simply pays. Additionally the message is not supported by numerous instances of rational information – it is an emotional message. While listening to the 21-second radio spot the would-be employer finds out that “The blind can work if only you give them the chance…”, which is supported by the voices of authentic blind employees of a university, a call center, a school and of a masseur. The spots do not inform about the determinants of the previous attitude or the reasons of employment problems within the group of visually impaired people. The sender informs the recipient that further information can be found on the website but stressing the fact that the information concerns already signaled gratification.23

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21 The campaign was supported by PFRON website and accessible in the “Profesjonalny Tygodnik Służb Kadrowych”. Project website contained a wide scope of information about the conditions of disabled workers employment. See [online:] www.pelnosprawniwprowcy.pl.

22 Film “Krzysztof” 30″, Stage II, 24/02/06, project “Not disabled at work” financed by ESF. PFRON marketing material.

23 Radio advert “The blind”, project “Not disabled at work” financed by ESF. PFRON marketing material.
Being an institution responsible for functioning of the system connected with subsidizing workplaces for people with disabilities in the abovementioned media messages PFRON appears to be a really trustworthy message sender informing of the benefits following employment of a blind person. It is also worth mentioning that all campaign is focused only on blind people. The advertisements do not show people who are partially sighted which is connected with the image-like character of the campaign.24

The approach to the problem of disabilities characterized by the belief that it is a matter involving a general social group with no need to separate particular types of impairments and presenting them together within marketing activities is criticized by some of the non-governmental organizations.

European Social Fund

Since mid-1990s, when non-commercial medial campaigns were started in Polish social life, there have been no desirable for the purposes of pro-social goals achievement additional elements complementing marketing instruments. This is easily noticeable in case of campaigns for people with disabilities including the blind ones. The project “The disabled – not disabled at work” is run independently by a state institution without any cooperation with third sector organizations. After all, as mentioned above, in the past 15 years these were the non-governmental entities that mostly initiated social campaigns for people with impairments.

Social campaigns in Poland have never been well coordinated. This turned out to be clear in the summer 1999 while running two completely independent campaigns connected with the road safety. At present the problem is noticeable with projects concerning visually disabled people at labor market. In recent months several tens of social projects were started all over Poland. All of them include elements of promoting the disabled on labor market and they are financed by ESF funds implemented by PFRON (Activity 1.4). Most of these projects join different types of impairments.

Only two of the aforementioned projects involving informative and promoting campaigns concern exclusively people with sight impairments (both run by Polish Association of the Blind) – “Smithy. The workshops of social and

24 The authors of the campaign aimed at informing the receivers of the advertisements about different types of disability, excluding the issues concerning the gradation. According to the opinion of Beata Daniszewska-Bocian (PFRON): “It was not possible to focus and pass more information concerning the division of disability types. There are also multiple disabilities. It is always possible to go a bit further.”, cit. talk from 10th November 2006.
professional integration of blind creators and artists” (numerous integrative cultural events supported by press seminars) and “Point of information and employment promotion for people with visual impairments”.

Informative and promotion campaigns involving elements of social marketing are not the exclusive subject of any of PZN’s projects and belong to a wider scope of planned activities. The message of the campaign “Point of information and employment promotion for people with visual impairments” is targeted at the employers who are the potential recipients of the film produced by PZN entitled “We all like to feel needed”. The message of this is integrated with the main goal of the campaign – increasing employment level on the open labor market within the group of people with sight impairments. The film is different from described above advertising spots also due to a different way of distribution. The characters of this 30-minute film are 19 blind and severely sight impaired people undertaking different forms of activities, not only professional.

Among the project concentrated not merely on visually impaired people, whose main or the only component is social campaign for people with different types of disabilities, there is one which deserves attention. This is a multimedia campaign “You can” (“Potrafisz”) realized by Fuga Mundi Foundation, often introducing in the presented messages blind people (e.g. a short film “Wedding” showing a wedding ceremony of a blind person and a person who is a wheelchair user, also a short film about a blind person with a passion for sport). The project assumes lasting cooperation with local media (TVP3 Lublin, Kurier Lubelski, Radio Lublin). The idea of this campaign is to present weekly one radio audition, one TV program and one article in the local newspaper with the aim to “change the distorted image of a disabled person”. Systematic media presentation of private and public life.

25 It is worth mentioning that funds of which PFRON is in charge within Priority 1: Active Policy of Labor Market Professional and Social Integration / Activity 1.4: Professional and Social Integration of Disabled People is not the only source of ESF funds supporting social campaigns for blind people. The Foundation Regional Development Institute (Fundacja Instytut Rozwoju Regionalnego) within project IW Equal “Partnership for extending availability of labor market to blind people” See [online:] www.firr.org.pl also www.pzn.org.pl.

26 Apart from visually impaired people (lawyer, German philologist, IT specialist, parents of little children, sportsmen/sportswoman, president of blind people’s cooperative, confectioner, two massagers, sworn translator, chemistry professor, food processing technician, telemarketing deputy manager, psychologist, jazz musician, organs player, piano tuner, TV presenter), the film shows four non-disabled persons supporting the message. Film “We all like to feel needed”, PZN marketing material.
of disabled people brought the increase in the level of social awareness about actual problems and abilities of people with impairments. The comments by well-known people invited to the program build a positive image of the disabled – also the people who are blind27.

The situation of the general image of problems encountered by people with visual impairments is changing in a clearly positive way. Still the lack of significant social campaigns for people with sight impairments is clearly visible.

**Summary**

The article presents historical outline of Polish social campaigns for people with visual impairments defining the subject of the study as activities aimed at a certain group of recipients and focused on presenting them certain information with the use of different media techniques. Another goal of these activities is modification of attitudes and/or behaviors of the target group. Starting at terminology matters the author structures in the subsections stages of the defined undertakings development. Early social advertisements appeared in Poland in mid-1990s, however it did not concern the people with sight impairments. The first nationwide campaign aimed at breaking the stereotypes connected with disability was run in 2000 by Friends of the Integration Association. In the same year the Association of Parents and Friends of Blind and Partially Sighted Children “Rainbow” organized the first in Poland national campaign for blind and partially sighted people (children with multiple disabilities). The years 2000-2005 were characterized by the increase in the activeness of non-governmental organizations within the area of social communication connected with promoting positive attitudes and behaviors towards the disabled. In 2006 PFRON initiates a social campaign for people with impairments. The conditions of subsidizing social projects with the funds of European Social Fund and other European funds influenced the promotion of entering the open labor market by blind and sight impaired people.

27 “Disabled people – do what you are to do. The fact that something is missing or that there is something you can’t do, only the non-disabled think there are some things you cannot do – you can do everything,” quotation: Kabaret Ani Mru Mru, during one of the programs broadcast by Fuga Mundi Foundation.
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