

WE ARE AT WORK TOO

ANALYSIS OF THE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES RELATING TO THE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON THE BASIS OF THE SURVEYS CARRIED OUT BY PARTNER COUNTRIES OF THE ERASMUS+ PROJECT ENTITLED "WE ARE AT WORK, TOO".

Prepared by Tatiana Staroń, Barbara Popiel
SSW Collegium Balticum, Poland



We Are At Work Too

The Erasmus+ Project 'We are at work too' is dedicated to children with intellectual disabilities, their families and educators. The main goal of the Project is studying the relationship amongst families, students, educators and employers in order to offer them digital and innovative tools to guarantee children with intellectual disabilities **greater autonomy** and **personal success**.



In order to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, which is one of the objectives of the EU 2020, it's vitally important to obtain employment, productivity and new skills. It has been determined that the most common problems faced by students who graduated from the Department of Food and Beverage Services are personal hygiene (self-care skills), courtesy, social skills and working skills. With this project we are expected to improve these skills of students and promote their employability.



Project Partners



trend prima



Konya İl Millî Eğitim Müdürlüğü -KİM - Provincial Directorate of National Education (TURKEY)

KARATAY ÖZEL EĞİTİM MESLEK OKULU (TURKEY)

Website: www.karatayozelegitim.meb.k12.tr

Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă "Albatros" Constanța (ROMANIA)

Website: www.centrul-scolar-albatros.ro

Agrupamento Escolas Trigal Santa Maria (PORTUGAL)

Website: www.aetsm.pt/agrupamento/

Município de Torres Novas (PORTUGAL)

Website: www.cm-torresnovas.pt/

Szczecińska Szkoła Wyższa Collegium Balticum (POLAND)

Website: www.cb.szczecin.pl/

Trend Prima (SLOVENIA)

Website: www.trend-prima.com/

VITECO E-Learning Solutions (ITALY)

Website: www.vitecolearning.eu/en/

Hanta Associates Ltd (UK)

Website: www.hawpproject.eu/



CONTENTS

5	HIGHLIGHTS FROM WE ARE AT WORK TOO SURVEYS TO
6	INTRODUCTION
7	THE SURVEY AIMED AT THE EMPLOYERS
15	SURVEY AIMED AT THE TEACHERS
21	SURVEY AIMED AT THE PARENTS
25	SUMMARY OF RESEARCH RESULTS

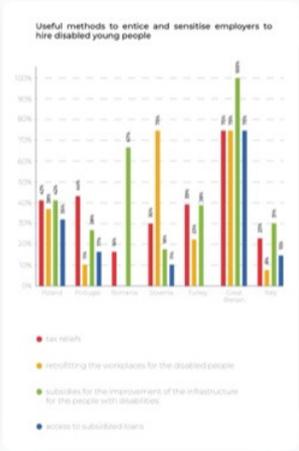
Employers Tot. respondent: 107



Sectors

- Services
- Trade
- Agriculture
- Higher education
- Food and hotel industry
- NGOs
- Public administration
- Sales and construction market
- Industry
- Technology
- Furniture
- Automotive and European projects

most of the respondents in all participant countries work in companies where there are no disabled workers



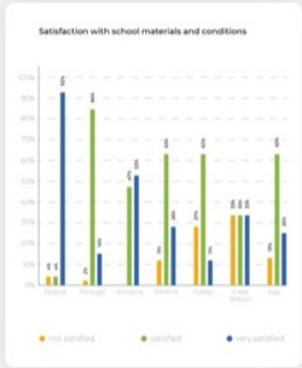
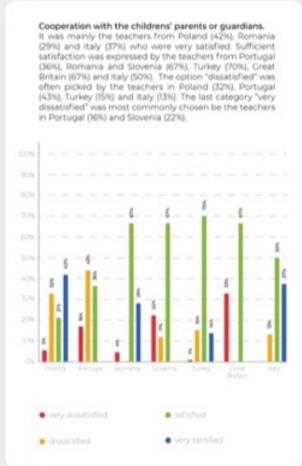
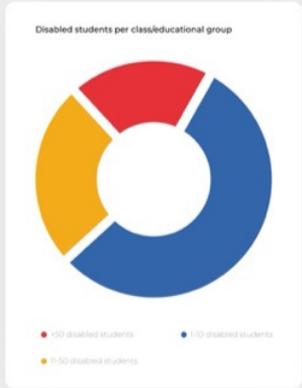
Most of the respondents of all participants countries (except for Romania) admitted having no appropriate knowledge of the law and the related opportunities related to hiring disabled people



Teachers Tot. respondent: 398

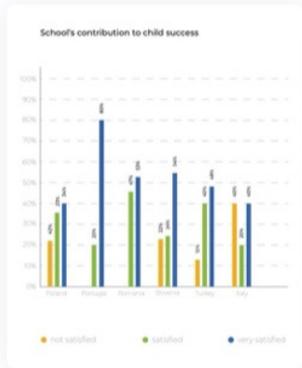
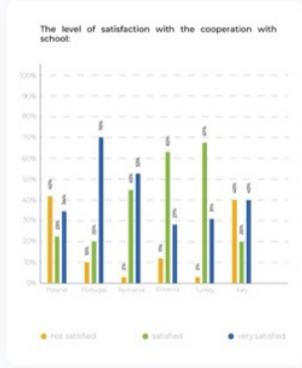


In all countries the majority of respondents were **women**



- Suggestions or recommendations to improve the conditions of cooperation between the school and parents:**
- More attention for homework given
 - Constant dialogue and collaboration between families and educators
 - Having more tools, suitable classrooms, more collaboration among teachers

Parents Tot. respondent: 281



Suggestions from parents on how to improve the conditions of cooperation with the school and teachers to improve the quality of education:

- organization of classes** (smaller classes, provision of specific teaching materials);
- the quality of contact** (respect, willingness to listen to the parent, individual treatment of the student);
- education enhancement** (courses for parents, sports and social activities, providing appropriate professional internships for students)

Suggestions on how to improve the working conditions and the employment of the people with disabilities:

- language courses,
- appropriately profiled internships,
- creation of training centres, building contacts with companies/employers,
- activities aimed at raising awareness of the employers and breaking negative social stereotypes about the people with disabilities on the labour market.



INTRODUCTION

The surveys carried out as part of the Erasmus + project entitled "We are at work, too"[1] were devoted to the professional, educational and family situation as well as the possibilities of young people with disabilities and were aimed at diagnosing the most important problems and needs, indicating good practices and searching for the new, satisfying solutions for both the potential employers and employees. Hence, three important social and professional groups in the seven partner countries were examined. These included the parents, teachers and employers from Poland Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy. While the survey results were developed by the content coordinators of each of the partners this article is a summary of the collected data and an attempt to initially analyze the information provided by the companies and institutions that have agreed to participate in the research.

The conducted research is in line with one of the three priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy, namely the development conducive to social inclusion, embracing supporting the increase in the employment level. One of the targets related to the strategy is raising the employment rate of the people aged 20 to 64 up to 75%. This strategy also takes into account the improvement of students' learning outcomes, supporting young people in entering the labour market, as well as modernizing the latter one, developing the qualifications of both the employees and the potential employees, activating a larger number of people on a professional basis, as well as matching the needs and the services offered on the labour market[2].

Owing to the fact that in this study the employers have been recognized as a particularly important group, who ultimately decides about the employment opportunities concerning the people with disabilities and also is familiar with the current market needs, we will commence our discussion by presenting the results of the surveys addressed to the employers. Next, the results of the questionnaires directed to teachers and finally the conclusions of the surveys aimed at parents will be discussed. Due to the same reason, the responses provided by the employers have been particularly thoroughly examined since they are the basis for finding the solutions which will allow the people with disabilities to become more professionally active and overcome the previously encountered difficulties in getting employment.

All the cited data comes from the conducted survey, hence the researchers refrained from constant including individual references in the footnotes. Individual questions will be discussed in detail, while the results of all the surveys from each country participating in the project will be presented in the separate annexes after the main text.

[1] Opis projektu <https://www.cb.szczecin.pl/projekty/projekty-miedzynarodowe/we-are-at-work-too/>

[2] EUROPA 2020. Strategia na rzecz inteligentnego i zrównoważonego rozwoju sprzyjającego włączeniu społecznemu, Bruksela 2010, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:PL:PDF\[23.07.2020\]](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:PL:PDF[23.07.2020]), passim.

THE SURVEY AIMED AT THE EMPLOYERS

The survey conducted among the employers was aimed at examining the readiness and the possibilities of certain companies and institutions to employ persons with disabilities, as well as collecting the suggestions put forward by the potential employers regarding further sensitizing of the society with reference to the issue of the professional work performed by the disabled persons. The answers to the individual questions provided by Polish institutions have been analyzed and compared with the responses provided by the partner countries. These comparisons made it possible to draw the conclusions that revealed both the similarities and the differences concerning the actions undertaken, as well as the good practices that are worth continuing and following.

The first question in the survey concerned the name of the company. It should be noted that the surveyed companies were reluctant to provide their data, which was probably caused by the normally anonymous character of such surveys. Moreover, it leaves us to conclude that disability in the workplace is still a taboo issue, especially on the Polish labour market.

Institutions are willing to pose as friendly towards the people with disabilities and ready to accept them for internships or apprenticeships, yet they are definitely less willing (or even reluctant) to employ such people.

Yet, the second question in the questionnaire made it possible to define the branches represented by the surveyed institutions. In the case of the research conducted in Poland, these were the following sectors: services, trade, forestry, agriculture, hotel industry, gastronomy, IT industry and higher education. In Portugal, the service sector which prevailed has been complemented by trade and industry. Romania was also characterized by a similar quantitative level of agriculture and the services for the business environment (most of the questionnaires) as well as construction and the food industry (minority of the questionnaires). Slovenia presented a varied cross-section of sectors: from NGOs, public administration, sales and construction to (representing the minority of respondents) education, accounting and production. Similarly, in the case of Turkey – the obtained responses came from the following sectors: market, industry, technology, furniture, gastronomy, automotive and agriculture. The UK provided the data from the sectors of the European projects, project management, gas and water engineering, entertainment and press industries. The surveys conducted in Italy included the furniture, agriculture, consultancy and legal services sectors.

As it can be seen from the above list, the research covered a very diverse and substantial range of professional sectors and consequently made it possible to take into account the specificity of public and private institutions, the governmental and the non-governmental ones. It also focused on various types of services as well as the educational and creative activities. As a result, it has become possible both to better understand the needs of individual sectors of the labour market and to notice the recurring problems and challenges related to the employment of the disabled people.

The third question regarding the number of employees, the participants of the research in individual countries was answered similarly. It should be added here that the institutions in Poland were also reluctant to provide this information and at the time of the preparation of the article, the consent of the Polish employers to disclose the obtained data was still being awaited. In the case of Portugal, the employment rate ranged from 1 to 10 people; half as many institutions employed between 24 and 50 people; the smallest number of institutions employed from 11 to 24 people. Half of the respondents from Romania employ between 25 and 50 people, a smaller group of employers employ from 1 to 10, while a small number of the respondents employ more than 50 people. As regards Slovenia, almost half of the respondents hire from 11 to 24 employees; employment from 1 to 10 and more than 50 people applies to a much smaller number of employers, while the range between 25 and 50 employees belongs to a definite minority of the represented employment. In Turkey, the vast majority of respondents hire from 1 to 10 employees; the number of the companies employing from 11 to 24 workers is half the number while the employment at the level of 25 to 50 employees constitutes merely a margin of employment among the surveyed participants. The respondents from Great Britain declared that they employ only 1 to 10 people, while the Italian institutions divided the employment of up to 5 people and the employment of 5 to 10 people in the 60% to 40% proportion.

The above overview of the figures draws attention to a certain regularity: the dominance of the institutions taking on a small number of employees, ranging on average from 20 to a maximum of 50, and a large group of employers hiring up to 10 people. This list, due to the voluntary participation in the survey, cannot be treated as an absolute representative for each of the surveyed countries; it should be assumed, however, that smaller teams of employees in the analyzed sectors constitute a certain trend in employment.

Collecting the data regarding the same topic, namely employing the disabled persons commenced with question four. The question: "Do people with disabilities work in your company?" yielded the responses presented below: Polish companies mostly gave negative answers; 64% of the Portuguese companies, 73% of the Slovenian ones, as many as 92% of the Turkish institutions and 100% respondents in Great Britain and Italy responded similarly. However, taking these figures into consideration, Romania seems interesting as here the answers were divided equally and 50% of the respondents stated that they employ people with disabilities. Still, most of the respondents announced that they do hire people with disabilities.

The fifth question was as follows: "If yes [if the institutions employ people with disabilities], please specify what type of disability and which disability group the disabled people you employ represent." Taking the answer to the fourth question into consideration, the respondents from Italy and Great Britain could not provide any response. The respondents in Turkey employ people with mild intellectual disabilities only. In Slovenia, three quarters of the respondents hire the people with physical disabilities, and only one quarter of them employs the people with mild intellectual disabilities. Mild disability accounts for 33% of the employees in the Romanian institutions. Here, as many as 67% of the employed disabled people are the ones with moderate disabilities.

Three quarters of institutions in Portugal employ people with mild physical disabilities and a quarter of them hire the people with mild intellectual disabilities.

When it comes to Poland, the research made it possible to determine how the number of employees is distributed depending on the sector. In the IT industry, employment of people with autism and Asperger's syndrome prevails; a smaller number of people with hearing and multiple disabilities are employed; the smallest group is represented by the people with physical disabilities. Gastronomy above all employs the people with a mild intellectual disability, while those with multiple disabilities comprise just half the number of the hired workers. The hotel industry takes on the people with mild intellectual disabilities, with multiple disabilities and also with autism and Asperger's syndrome. The trade has accepted the people with multiple disabilities as well as with mild intellectual disabilities; the universities offer employment to the people with hearing impairment, autism, Asperger's syndrome and multiple disabilities. People with mild intellectual disabilities, hearing disabilities, autism, Asperger's syndrome and multiple disabilities are employed in forestry.

Consequently, a negligible number of industries offer jobs to the people with physical disabilities, and none of the surveyed institutions employs the people with visual disabilities or those with moderate intellectual disabilities. The obtained results may indicate the difficulties which a particular type of disability may pose for a given industry, as well as the level of preparation (or rather, its lack) for the employment of a person with a given disability.

The sixth question - "Can the disabled students do internships / apprenticeships in your company?" - yielded the following responses: Poland - 100% - yes; Portugal and Romania: 67% - yes, 33% - no; Slovenia - 47% - yes, 53% - no; Great Britain - 75% - yes, 25% - no; Italy 20% - yes, 80% -no, and finally Turkey 100% - no. The responses of the last three countries highlight a disturbing regularity of the difficult access to the internships and apprenticeships for the students with disabilities, which may translate into their later problems with finding a job due to the lack of such internship/work experience of the students and what is associated with it, namely the positive experience of the potential employers resulting from working with the disabled people.

The seventh question: "If so, please mention what kind of disability and which disability group the disabled students who undergo internships/apprenticeships in your company have?" resulted in the following responses. Italian institutions offer training to the students with mild intellectual disability; in Great Britain - 33% accounts for the students with mild intellectual disability, whereas 67% refers to those with physical disability; in Romania -75% stands for the students with physical disability and rare diseases, whereas 25% for those with mild and moderate intellectual disability. In Portugal, 57% refers to the students with mild physical disability, 29% had a mild intellectual disability, and 14%, who had a moderate intellectual or physical disability, were accepted for the internships and apprenticeships. Turkish and Slovenian institutions replied: "no students with disabilities" (in the case of Turkey this is an obvious answer in the context of the previously declared lack of internship / apprenticeship having been undertaken by the people with disabilities).

Below are the responses of the Polish institutions: forestry is characterized by a prevailing number of the trainees and apprentices with mild intellectual disabilities, autism and Asperger's syndrome prevail, while there are no people with physical disabilities at all. The hotel industry reveals that the greatest number of trainees is comprised by the people with mild intellectual disability, autism and Asperger's syndrome. Gastronomy trains the people with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities. IT industry accepts the people with autism and Asperger's syndrome, as well as with visual and multiple disabilities. Trade is the branch where the people with mild intellectual disabilities and with multiple disabilities can be accepted for training, while higher education admits the ones with hearing impairment, autism and Asperger's syndrome. Hence the least numerous group in the internships and apprenticeships are the people with physical disabilities and those with moderate intellectual disabilities.

The eighth question: "If not [if the students with disabilities in a given company cannot undertake internships or apprenticeships], would you accept placement of a young disabled person in an apprenticeship / apprenticeship / would you employ him/her permanently?" resulted in the following responses from the partners. 60% of the Portuguese institutions gave the "yes" answer and 69% of positive response came from the Turkish employers. Most positively, that is declaring 100% of acceptance to the asked question was offered by the Great Britain, Slovenian and Romanian institutions. The same countries, however, gave the "no" answer to the remaining questions. In Poland, 81% of the institutions answered "yes" (the remaining 19% said: "I'm already hiring"). However, the above declarations may be questionable since it should be considered whether they express real readiness or just a preliminary declaration that will not hold a test of strength during the contact with a potential disabled employee, or whether (which in some cases may not be excluded) is only a politically correct statement devoid of practical effect.

The ninth question, "What kind of disability allows full employment in your company without creating health and safety or other key hazards due to the nature of your business?" resulted in the following responses given by the foreign partners:

- mild intellectual disability - Italy, Great Britain, Turkey, Slovenia, Romania, Portugal;
- physical disability - Italy, Great Britain, Turkey, Slovenia, Romania, Portugal;
- moderate intellectual disability - Great Britain;
- learning difficulties - Great Britain;
- rare diseases - Romania.

In Poland, the greatest number of the respondents expressed the possibility of employment of the people with mild intellectual disability as well as autism and Asperger's syndrome, taking the suggested conditions into consideration. Fewer respondents, however, indicated the readiness to hire the people with physical and multiple disabilities. The biggest problem concerning the occupational safety and health risks as well as other hazards came into sight when the employers were asked about the people with moderate intellectual disability, hearing impairment and visual impairment - here the chance of employment was indicated only by the following industries: forestry (moderate intellectual disability), gastronomy (hearing impairment) and higher education (visual impairment).



The above results constitute a valuable hint for the employers and institutions working towards the professional activation of the people with disabilities since they demonstrate which areas are in urgent necessity to further improve the workplace infrastructure and search for the new solutions to ensure the safety of the employees with disabilities.

The tenth question which was put forward was: "What position, function could such a young, disabled person hold in your company? Please list the areas / positions." Individual countries indicated their preferences as follows:

- Italy: customer greeting; harvest; production - not requiring special skills; all positions, depending on the trainee's ability and attitude;
- Great Britain: assistant in various business areas (marketing, project management); administration; office work, archiving;
- Turkey: low-skill production; accounting and customer greeting; service, including catering, warehouse assistant; accounting and administration department; cashier, customer service;
- Slovenia: office work and accounting; production; sale; simple construction work;
- Romania: pastry chef, cook; accountant; field worker; archivist; laboratory manager; as well as any function for which the individual with a disability is prepared or qualified;
- Portugal: production (no qualifications required); catering services; customer service, cashier, sales representative; cleaning.

The results obtained in Poland have been broken down into individual disability categories. The results are presented below:

- physical disability: all sectors have pointed out to the answer "help for a specialist" and "administrative worker", yet none of them has indicated a manual worker;
- mild intellectual disability: all sectors have equally indicated the answers "help for a specialist", "technical worker" and "manual worker", however none of them has chosen the answer "specialist/manager";
- moderate intellectual disability: "help for a specialist", "technical worker" and "manual worker" were the answers indicated by all sectors (although the willingness to hire people with moderate intellectual disability for these positions is, on average, half as much as in the case of the people with mild intellectual disability). Only three industries, such as trade, gastronomy and hotel industry have indicated the "administrative worker", however, as it happened in the previous case, none of the employers indicated the position of the "specialist / manager";
- visual impairment and hearing impairment: all sectors have indicated such positions as: "help for a specialist", "technician" and "administrative worker"; Only the forestry branch failed to mention the position of the "manual worker"; The "specialist / manager" position was indicated only by higher education and the IT sector;
- autism and Asperger's syndrome: all industries have equally indicated the positions of "specialist assistance", "technician" and "manual worker"; higher education, gastronomy and forestry would to the same extent be willing to hire a person with autism or Asperger's syndrome as an administrative employee or the specialist / manager (in the case of other industries this readiness is reduced by 40 percent);



- multiple disabilities: the first three positions ("specialist assistance", "technician", "manual worker") were indicated by all sectors. Still, when it comes to expressing the readiness to employ such persons in these positions, fewer institutions were prepared to do that. Employers in trade, gastronomy and hospitality branches would be willing to take on the person with multiple disabilities in the administrative position, yet no industry indicated a specialist or managerial position.

The presented results demonstrate two trends: one of them is associated with the preference for certain types of disability (this preference is repeated in almost every industry), whereas the other one – with the positions that, according to potential employers, could be occupied by the people with disabilities. In this case, the industry itself and the type of the disability play an important role - which is especially visible in the case of managerial functions and specialist positions.

The eleventh question was as follows: "Do you believe in the ability of these young people with disabilities to perform their duties during internships / apprenticeships / work?" The answer "yes" dominated or prevailed in the obtained responses: 60% - Italy, 64% - Portugal, 83% - Romania, 87% - Slovenia, 92% - Turkey, 100% - Poland and Great Britain. This is undoubtedly a positive signal which shows that employers acknowledge the professional potential of the people with disabilities.

The twelfth question concerned the characterization of the possible professional performance in these positions of an employee with disabilities. In the case of Romania, UK and Italy, the responses indicated the belief that such performance would be at least sufficient, and also good or very good. Portugal, Slovenia and Turkey expressed their concerns regarding the performance indicating that in the case of these people it would be insufficient, although some institutions in these countries stated that they expected the performance to be good, and for some interviewed from Slovenia and Turkey - very good. Polish respondents pointed to the dependence of professional performance on the degree and the type of disability as well as on the industry and position held, therefore they concluded that the proposed scale of ratings does not allow for an appropriate answer.

The thirteenth question regarded the forms of employment that are recommended for the people with disabilities. The respondents indicated the following forms:

- self-employment: 28% - Poland, 18% - Portugal, 3% Slovenia, 15% Turkey, 25% Great Britain;
- employment with an employer on normal terms: 12% - Poland, 46% - Portugal, 8% - Turkey, 20% - Italy;
- employment with an employer on special conditions for the disabled people: 24% - Poland, 27% - Portugal, 100% - Romania, 56% - Slovenia, 69% - Turkey, 75% - Great Britain, 80% - Italy;
- employment only in specific centres for the disabled persons: 36% - Poland, 9% - Portugal, 41% - Slovenia, 8% - Turkey.

Contrary to what one might expect, self-employment does not belong to the most frequently indicated forms of employment. What prevails is the proposition of employment with an employer on conditions suited for the people with disabilities. Attention is also drawn to the fact that only Poland and Slovenia expressed their support for the proposal to employ the disabled people only in the centres specially created for them.

Moreover, none of the partners indicated the answer "other", while Polish respondents stated that there are no job opportunities in their country other than the four ones mentioned above.

The fourteenth question concerned the best way possible to sensitize and persuade the entrepreneurs to accept young people with disabilities for internships or work placements. The presented proposals were assessed as follows:

- tax reliefs: 42% - Poland, 44% - Portugal, 16% - Romania, 30% - Slovenia, 39% - Turkey, 75% - Great Britain, 23% - Italy;
- retrofitting the workplaces for the disabled people: 38% - Poland, 11% - Portugal, 75% - Slovenia, 23% - Turkey, 75% - Great Britain, 8% - Italy;
- subsidies for the improvement of the infrastructure for the people with disabilities: 42% - Poland, 28% - Portugal, 67% - Romania, 18% - Slovenia, 38% - Turkey, 100% - Great Britain, 31% - Italy;
- tax cuts: 42% - Poland, 17% - Romania, 11% - Slovenia, 75% - Great Britain, 15% - Italy;
- access to subsidized loans: 35% - Poland, 17% - Portugal, 11% - Slovenia, 75% - Great Britain, 23% - Italy.

Therefore, tax breaks and subsidies for the development and improvement of the infrastructure for the people with disabilities, as well as retrofitting their workplaces, would be of particular interest to entrepreneurs.

Additionally, the respondents were asked about other possible activities in this field. Polish respondents indicated the creation of instructional and information films, integration activities such as festivals or picnics, running advisory offices for employers, creating an organization cooperating with the Voivodeship Labour Office supporting entrepreneurs who employ people with disabilities, as well as the development of business and science cooperation (joint building paths careers for the people with disabilities).

Therefore, the potential employers see various opportunities to support them in employing the disabled people, while at the same time they indicate spaces that need particularly intensive and substantive actions in this regard.

In question fifteen the respondents were asked about the knowledge of the law and the related opportunities (such as reliefs) that could be used by an employer hiring young disabled people. In most cases, the respondents admitted having no appropriate information - 55% from Portugal, about 60% from Poland, 73% from Slovenia, 75% from Great Britain and 100% from Turkey and Italy gave the answer "no". Only in Romania the positive answers prevailed since as many as 67% of those questioned came up with the "yes" answer.

In question sixteen the respondents were asked to present their own suggestions and recommendations regarding the improvement of the working conditions that would be carried out by the companies as well as the changes in the law and labour regulations, owing to which young people with disabilities will have better access to the labour market.

The proposals included: support from the ministry (Portugal); revision of the law so that the companies employing people with disabilities can get more help (Portugal); economic support offered by the companies during the implementation of the structural changes (Portugal); tax reliefs (Romania, Slovenia, Italy); legal and financial support for the employers hiring the disabled people (Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain, Italy) and for the person hired to help the disabled person (Romania); grants for the infrastructure adaptation (Romania); research on equal employment opportunities and promotion of appropriate attitudes among the employers (Romania); state support in the education and training of the disabled people (Slovenia, Italy); loans for the potential entrepreneurs who themselves are the people with disabilities (Slovenia); payment of the wages of the disabled workers and compensation of the wages by the state (Slovenia); tax exemptions for the disabled workers and greater flexibility in recruiting and dismissing (Slovenia); raising public awareness (Turkey); improvement of employees' personal hygiene skills (Turkey); improving the working conditions and making more resources available to the companies that employ people with disabilities (UK); support from labour offices (Great Britain).

In the case of Poland, the surveyed entrepreneurs did not agree to the proposed forms of "incentives" and mostly did not provide any answer. Instead, they explained the reasons for not employing the people with disabilities - the responses were dominated by the specificity of the company (which excluded the work of a disabled person), low staff turnover, and the lack of applications for work from the disabled people themselves. Additional factors hindering the employment of this group of the workers are: inadequate qualifications, lower productivity and more frequent absenteeism of the disabled people. Thus, in their own opinion, employers feel prepared to hire people with disabilities, yet they are convinced that the disabled persons are not looking for employment themselves. Moreover, the state does not help with social campaigns or information on reliefs, allowances and subsidies for entrepreneurs.

SURVEY AIMED AT THE TEACHERS

Teachers represent the social group that can most reliably and consciously support people with disabilities in developing knowledge, skills and competences that will allow them to get a job in the future. The questions asked concerned the level of students' fitness, the relationship between the teachers and the parents of the disabled people, the problems as well as the challenges encountered.

The respondents constituted a very diverse group. In all the countries, it was the women that comprised the majority of teachers: (64% (Poland), 67% (UK), 71% (Turkey), 86% (Italy), 89% (Slovenia), 93% (Portugal), 95% (Romania). In Poland, people aged between 35 and 40 and 46 to 50 prevailed; in Portugal - people aged 31 to 40 and 41 to 50; in Romania, almost half of the respondents were between 41 and 50 years old, and less, although the dominant group were the people aged 31 to 40, as well. In Slovenia and Italy, people aged 20 to 30 and over 50 belonged to a minority, while the 31 to 40 and 41 to 50 age groups prevailed. Almost half of the teachers are between 20 and 30 years old, the smaller groups were 31 to 40 and 41 to 50, while people over 50 were a marginal group. Great Britain was represented by the people aged 50 to 65.

The schools in which the respondents work were located in large cities with Poland, Romania and Italy predominantly, as well as in small towns, where most responses came from the teachers from Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey and Great Britain. On the other hand, villages belonged to an overwhelming minority in every country.

The vast majority of the respondents in all countries have higher education (at the undergraduate or graduate level). Additionally, some of the respondents completed postgraduate studies, while others obtained different qualifications. The teachers who have completed doctoral studies and / or obtained a doctoral degree represent a definite minority.

The fifth question was the first one which concerned the research topic itself, namely regarding the number of the disabled students in a given institution. In Poland, the largest number is 134 students (secondary school) and 124 students (middle high school), while the smallest number, that is 12 students, can be found at university. In Portugal, the surveyed institutions most often had from 1 to 50 disabled students. In Romania, the number of students ranged from 1 to 50, but there were also many institutions, where there were between 101 and 200 students and even more than 200 of them. In Slovenia, the number of students with disabilities was almost identical: up to 50 students, between 50 and 100 and from 101 to 250. In Turkey, schools with 51 to 101 students dominated, while the schools with more than 250 of such students represented the smallest group. In the UK, 15 students with disabilities comprised the largest group. The remaining answers mentioned the number of 5 and 6 students with disabilities. In Italy, schools with 16 to 30 students accounted for the majority of the surveyed establishments.

In question six, teachers were requested to specify how many disabled students they have in their class or educational group for which they are directly responsible. The predominant response was "from 1 to 10 students" – such answer was given by the majority of teachers in Poland, Portugal, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy and almost by half of them in Romania and Slovenia. Groups of 11 to 20 and 21 to 50 students were a minority, while the groups of more than 50 students with disabilities were significantly identified only in Slovenia (33%) and Turkey (14%). Such groups also appeared in Portugal and Romania, but they comprised only a few percent.

In the seventh question, the respondents were asked about the type of the disability of the children learning in their classes. In Poland, students with physical and mild intellectual disabilities as well as moderate intellectual disabilities comprised the majority of them, whereas the students with auditory and visual impairments represented a definite minority. In Portugal, most students had a mild disability; in Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy, students with mild intellectual disability predominated, and in Turkey, the second large group were the people with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities.

The eighth question was, "Do the students eat autonomously?" The answer "All of them are autonomous in this respect" was indicated by the vast majority of teachers in Poland, Portugal, Romania, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy, while, in Slovenia 56% of the respondents chose the answer "None of them is autonomous in this respect".

The ninth question concerned students' autonomy in taking care of their hygiene. "Everyone is autonomous in this respect" - this was what the vast majority of the teachers asked in Poland answered, more than half of those asked in Portugal, half in Italy and less than half of the questioned ones in Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and Great Britain. Partial independence prevailed in Portugal, Turkey and Great Britain. A large group of dependent students was indicated by the teachers from Portugal and Slovenia (here as much as 55%).

The tenth question concerned the free movement of the students around the city (for example: independent travel to school or knowing the address of residence). The answer "everyone is autonomous" was indicated by the majority of teachers in Poland; the independence of some students as the dominant answer was chosen by the teachers from Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy. On the other hand, the answer "no one is autonomous in this respect" was selected by the majority of teachers in Romania (44%) and the prevailing number of teachers in Slovenia (78%).

The eleventh question concerned fulfilling school duties (i.e. packing books by the students themselves, doing homework and acting in line with the teachers' instructions) but the answer "everyone is autonomous in this respect" was the one that was the least frequently chosen. The answer "not all are independent in this respect" dominated among the teachers from Poland, Portugal, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy. The answer "all of them use the help of an adult / none of the students is autonomous" was most often indicated by the teachers from Romania and Slovenia.

Questions 8 to 11 related to the students' social skills, whereas the twelfth question opened the section devoted to the cooperation with parents and employers and sounded as follows: "Is your assessment of the child's school skills different from the assessment and approach of the parents / guardians?" "Rarely" - this answer was dominant among the teachers from Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy; "Often" - among the teachers from Poland, Portugal and Slovenia; The answers "never" and "always" were chosen least frequently.

The thirteenth question: "How do you assess the contribution of the family and educational environment to the personal and learning success and satisfaction of the student?" generated various responses. "Very pleased/very good" - this answer was the least frequently chosen, whereas in Great Britain it did not occur at all. "Sufficiently satisfied /sufficient" - this answer was dominant in Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy. A large number of "dissatisfied / insufficient" responses were indicated by the teachers from Turkey and the United Kingdom, and the "very dissatisfied / weak" response featured quite prominently in the polls from Portugal, Romania, Turkey and Italy.

In question fourteen, the teachers were asked if they had been talking to students about their family situation. 100% of the teachers from Poland confirmed that they had done that, 89% of the teachers from Portugal said "often, always", 58% from Romania gave the "often, always" responses, 48% respondents from Slovenia chose the "often, always" options as well, 59% from Turkey mentioned the answer "often, always", while 67% from Great Britain used the "often" option only and 75% of the teachers from Italy indicated the "often" category.

The fifteenth question concerned the opinion about the cooperation with the child's parents or guardians. It was mainly the teachers from Poland (42%), Romania (29%) and Italy (37%) who were very satisfied. Sufficient satisfaction was expressed by the teachers from Portugal (36%), Romania and Slovenia (67%), Turkey (70%), Great Britain (67%) and Italy (50%). The option "dissatisfied" was often picked by the teachers in Poland (32%), Portugal (43%), Turkey (15%) and Italy (13%). The last category "very dissatisfied" was most commonly chosen by the teachers in Portugal (16%) and Slovenia (22%).

When asked to indicate the aspects of cooperation that should be improved, the respondents mentioned first and foremost communication, interest in the problems and the possibilities of the child, greater involvement of parents in children's therapy, parents' trust in the teachers and supporting the school in all the activities for the benefit of the students.

The sixteenth question was connected with the frequency of the teacher's contacts with the parents or guardians of the student. "Every day" - this answer was dominant among the respondents from Romania (67%) and Turkey (48%); "Once a month" - was most often mentioned by the teachers from Poland (65%), Slovenia (70%), and very often by the teachers from Turkey (40%), Great Britain (33%) and Italy (37%). The teachers from Great Britain (33%) contacted their students' parents once a semester, while the teachers from Portugal (57%), Great Britain (33%) and Italy (63%) mainly did that several times during the school years.

The seventeenth question was as follows: "Do you take into account the advice and opinions of parents / guardians of the students with disabilities?"

"Never" - this answer was never indicated by the teachers from Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy, whereas it appeared to a small extent in the responses of the Romanian teachers (2%). The option "rarely" was indicated by a large group of teachers from Turkey (16%). The answer "often" predominated among the teachers from Portugal (66%), Romania (56%), Turkey (40%), Great Britain (67%) and Italy (62%), it was also quite numerous among the teachers from Poland (24%). The answer "always" was indicated as the dominant one by the teachers from Poland (72%), and quite frequently - from Portugal (30%), Romania (42%), Turkey (44%), Great Britain (33%) and Italy (38%).

The eighteenth question was related to the ways of maintaining contacts with the parents or guardians of the students with disabilities. The following forms were dominant in Poland: participation in the meetings and school talks, written notes, teacher-initiated meetings, while the telephone conversations were also frequently indicated. The Portuguese teachers have also chosen phone calls and teacher-initiated meetings as the most frequent forms of contact. The teachers from Romania pointed out mainly participation in the meetings, school talks and telephone calls. In Slovenia, participation in school meetings and talks is by far the dominant form as well as the written notes. In Turkey, participation in the meetings, school talks, telephone calls and the meetings initiated by the teachers turned out to be the most popular ones. In Great Britain, participation in school meetings and talks was indicated as the most frequent way of keeping in touch with the parents and guardians, while in Italy it was participation in meetings, school talks and telephone calls.

Question nineteen concerned the problems related to working with the students with disabilities. Among the Polish teachers, the most common problems mentioned related to the students' health and conflicts between the students themselves. The Portuguese teachers emphasized the problems related to the lack of teaching materials. In Romania, most problems were related to the health of students, the lack of teaching materials and the family life of the students. In Slovenia and Turkey, the most common problems were connected with the subject taught and the health of the pupils. In Great Britain the teachers were concerned with absenteeism, and in Italy - with the subject taught and the lack of teaching materials.

In question twenty the surveyed were asked: "To what extent are you successful in engaging students in the classroom?" "Never" - this answer appeared as a marginal one in the responses of the teachers from Poland. "Rarely" - was the answer provided by a few teachers from Portugal (9%) and Romania (4%). "Sometimes" - this answer was predominant among the Portuguese teachers (66%) and was also common among the Slovenian teachers (45%). "Often" was most frequently chosen by the teachers from Romania (54%), Slovenia (48%), Turkey (40%), Great Britain (100%) and also by Italy (71%). "Always" - was the dominant answer among the teachers in Poland (52%) and Turkey (57%), and slightly less often chosen by the respondents from Italy (29%) and Slovenia (7%).

The twenty-first question concerned satisfaction with the school material conditions necessary to conduct the classes. The following responses dominated among the teachers: "very satisfied" - Poland 92%, Romania 53%; "sufficiently satisfied/satisfied" - Portugal 73%, Romania 42%, Turkey 60%, Italy 63%; "satisfied" - Slovenia 37%; "dissatisfied" - this answer appeared only among the teachers from Portugal (2%), Turkey (3%) and Slovenia (11%). In the case of Great Britain, the responses of "very satisfied", "satisfied" and "satisfied" were spread evenly, at 33% each.

The twenty-second question was: "To what extent are you satisfied with the cooperation with employers hiring/accepting the students with disabilities for apprenticeships/internships?" In Poland, with a fairly large group of the very and sufficiently satisfied teachers (25% and 27%), still the dissatisfied group of the respondents (35%) dominated. The answer "dissatisfied" was also indicated by the teachers from Great Britain (67%). "Very pleased" - this answer dominated in the polls among the teachers from Slovenia (56%) and Turkey (45%). The answer "satisfied" was chosen by 70% of the respondents in Portugal, 58% in Romania and 63% in Great Britain.

In question twenty three the respondents were asked: "As a teacher/educator/ pedagogue, please provide your suggestions or recommendations to improve the conditions of cooperation between the school and parents/guardians of the persons with disabilities in order to achieve better educational outcomes and student autonomy." The teachers indicated above all: greater involvement of parents in cooperation and contact with teachers, greater interest of parents in their children and the future of these children, more frequent meetings of parents and teachers, providing support for parents in the form of training, while the entire families should be offered therapeutic activities. Finally the improvement of the didactic base was also recommended.

Two additional questions were included in the questionnaires addressed to the Polish teachers. When asked about the professional satisfaction derived from working with children with special educational needs, 93% of the Polish teachers answered: "very satisfied". Next, the following request was put forward to them: "Provide your own suggestions or recommendations regarding the possibilities of improving the working conditions and employment of the disabled people. Also specify what changes should be introduced in the labour law and the regulations so that young people with the disabilities have greater access to job offers and thus to a guarantee of personal and professional success." Here the teachers mentioned the low level of social trust as the main problem and an element shaping in a negative way the possibility of activation as well as professional and social integration of the disabled people. However, it was emphasized that people with disabilities are not always viewed negatively by the labour market as employers notice their advantages, such as high motivation to work, flexibility in performing tasks, reliability and accuracy.

Financial support is an additional advantage that the employers hiring people with disabilities can count on since it is a vital asset in refinancing part of the costs of employment or job preparation, coming from the national and the co-financed programs as well as the projects from the EU funds. This issue, as emphasized by the respondents, is too rarely mentioned in the public discourse and too little effort is put into making the representatives of the labour market aware of this aspect.



It should be mentioned that the limitations of the possibility of professional and social activation of the disabled people are confirmed by the statistical data, which show that the economic activity rate of the disabled people aged 20–64 in Poland is much lower than in other European Union countries. The teachers participating in the conducted research are convinced that this is a tendency that should be changed.

SURVEY AIMED AT THE PARENTS

Parents constitute a special group: they are the first ones to affect the development of their children, because they have the strongest influence on the child with a disability from the moment of his/her birth until the moment when the child enters the sphere of the institutionalized education. The questions that parents were asked concerned the child's level of independence in particular daily activities and in terms of his/her functioning at school. On the other hand, the last few questions raised the issue of parents' relations and contacts with the teachers.

The age of the surveyed parents from different countries was as follows: in Poland, people aged 46 to 50 and over 50 were dominant; in Portugal, half of the respondents were between 36 and 45 years old. The age range from 36 to 45 was also indicated by Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and the United Kingdom as the dominant age category, while among the Italian respondents, the age category between 18 and 35 was the most often indicated.

The vast majority of the respondents in all countries were women - mothers or babysitters. Most of them (in the case of Great Britain and Italy - the division was equal) were married people; the second largest category was represented by divorced persons, followed by the single ones. Widowers and widows as well as people staying in informal relationships were among the minorities.

The largest group of the surveyed parents are the residents of large cities, a smaller group came from small towns, and few people indicated the village as their place of residence.

As regards education, the results of the research were as follows: secondary education dominated among the respondents from Poland and Romania; secondary and higher education was the dominant one among Italian parents; higher education prevailed among parents from Slovenia and Great Britain, and primary education - in Portugal and Turkey.

The fifth question opened the part of the study devoted to children with disabilities and concerned the number of children in the family. The following responses dominated in Poland: 2 children (48%) and 1 child (29%); in Portugal - 2 children (70%); in Romania - 1 child (41%) and 2 children (34%); in Slovenia - 2 children (45%); in Turkey - 3 children (38%) and 2 children (31%); in Great Britain - 1 child (100%); in Italy - 1 child and 2 children (40% in each case). A very small percentage of the respondents indicated the answer "over 5 children".

The maximum number of children with disabilities in a given family was as follows: 1 child (79% - Poland, 9% - Portugal, 78% - Romania, 100% - Slovenia, Great Britain and Italy, 86% - Turkey). A much smaller number of responses concerned having two children, while almost none of the respondents indicated a group of three or more children with disabilities in one family.

The participants of the research have also indicated different types of the child's disability. In Poland, the following impairments were dominant: mild intellectual disability and physical disability; in Portugal, Turkey and Great Britain - mild intellectual disability; in Slovenia, the majority was

represented by very young children with autism and Asperger's syndrome, and in Italy - intellectual disability at a level corresponding to the communication with a person with moderate and severe disability.

In question nine, the respondents were asked to provide the information of the present level of education of their children. In the case of the respondents from Poland, all levels of education were listed, namely from nurseries to universities. In Portugal and Turkey, primary and secondary schools were indicated, additionally, a small percentage of the respondents indicated the answer "does not attend school". In Romania, the overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated secondary/post-secondary education, while the rest - kindergarten, primary school and junior high school; in Slovenia - primary (most of the respondents) and secondary school. In Great Britain, only primary school is indicated, while in Italy - the primary and secondary school.

The tenth question opened the part of the research devoted to the social skills of a disabled child and concerned the child's eating skills. Most of the respondents in Poland stated that their child eats autonomously. Similarly, parents from Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey (almost all asked here) and Italy, and half of the respondents from Great Britain have come up with such answers. When asked about self-care for personal hygiene (question 11) and getting dressed by themselves (question 12), the answer "the child is autonomous" was chosen by most parents from all the countries except Great Britain - in both cases the child needed help from the adults.

In question thirteen: "Does the child help with the household chores?" the proportions have changed. The answer "yes" was provided by the majority of the respondents from Portugal and Turkey, slightly more than half from Poland, while the respondents from Romania, Slovenia, Great Britain and Italy in most cases stated that the child needs help from the adults.

Similarly, the necessity to get help from an adult person (question fourteenth) was indicated by the majority of parents from Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and all parents from Great Britain and Italy. Only in the case of Portugal, the responses were split evenly, while in Turkey, the majority of respondents stated that the child is doing well on his/her own.

The overwhelming majority of parents from Poland, the majority of parents from Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey and Italy declared their children's almost complete independence in terms of leading social life. On the other hand, in the responses obtained from parents from Romania and Great Britain, the need for help from adults prevailed.

Question sixteen regarded fulfilling school duties (packing books, doing homework, going to school). Slightly more than half of the respondents from Portugal, Italy and Turkey stated that in this respect the child needs the help of an adult person. This answer was also given by slightly less than half of the respondents from Poland and Slovenia, while the majority of parents from Romania and all from the United Kingdom stated that the child needs the help of an adult person here.

The part devoted to the cooperation with the school began with question seventeen. As regards the difference in the assessment of a child's school skills, a large number of parents from Poland and half the number from Great Britain stated that their opinion was often different from that of the teacher's.

On the other hand, the answers “rarely” were provided by the majority of the respondents from Portugal, Slovenia, Turkey, half from Great Britain, and slightly less than half of those from Romania and Italy.

In question eighteen, which concerned the assessment of the school's contribution to the child's success and parents' satisfaction, the answers "very satisfied" or "satisfied" were given by the majority of parents from Poland, Slovenia, Turkey and Italy, all parents from Great Britain and Portugal, and by slightly less than half of the respondents from Romania.

Question nineteen: "Do you talk to your child about school every day?" resulted in the answers “yes” given by all parents from Poland, Slovenia, Great Britain and Italy. It was also indicated by the majority of parents from Portugal, Romania and Turkey as an activity which was always or frequently undertaken.

Question twenty raised the question of assessing the level of satisfaction with the cooperation with school. More than half of the parents from Poland, the majority from Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and Italy, and all the respondents from the UK, declared satisfaction. It should be noted, however, that in the case of Poland and Italy, a large proportion of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the mentioned cooperation.

Question twenty one: "How often do you get in touch with your child's school to talk to the tutor /teacher / educator?" generated similar responses. Parents from Poland and Slovenia most often mentioned the contacts once a month; the same was indicated by everyone from Great Britain, while the respondents from Portugal pointed out that it was mainly several times during the school years. The parents from Romania, however, mentioned the contacts held primarily every day. In the case of Turkey and Italy, a similar number of responses were obtained with the answers "once a month" and "several times during the school years".

Question twenty two referred to parents' consideration regarding the teachers' opinion with reference to their child and whether they followed their subsequent advice. In Poland, the statements "always" and "rarely" received almost the same number of responses, while in Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey, Great Britain and Italy, the "always" response dominated.

The twenty-third question raised the issue of how to maintain contacts with a teacher, educator, and psychologist at school. In Poland, telephone calls were most frequently indicated. In Portugal, Romania and Italy participation in school meetings and talks were the most prevalent forms of contact. Both of these forms were also indicated by the parents from Great Britain, whereas the teacher-initiated meetings predominated in Slovenia. In Turkey, the meetings initiated by both teachers and parents have proved to be almost as popular in addition to participation in meetings and telephone conversations. In most cases, the last possibility, that is written notes, turned out to be not attractive enough or completely unattractive for the respondents.

Question twenty four was as follows: "Do you think you devote enough time and attention to your child's school matters and problems?" Almost all parents from Poland answered affirmatively; similarly the parents from Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Turkey and all parents from Italy. However, in Great Britain the “yes” and “no” answers were divided equally.

Question twenty five was a request for suggestions from parents or guardians on how to improve the conditions of cooperation with the school and teachers in order to effectively improve the quality of education and training. Among the answers received from all the respondents, one can point out the remarks concerning the ways the classes are organized (smaller classes, provision of teaching materials), the quality of contact (respect, willingness to listen to the parent, individual treatment of the student), care for the level of education (courses for parents, sports and social activities, providing appropriate professional internships for students).

The last question, the twenty-sixth, was as follows: "As a parent/guardian, please make your own suggestions or recommendations on how to improve the working conditions and employment of the people with disabilities". Among the activities proposed by the surveyed persons there were, in particular: language courses, appropriately profiled internships, creation of training centres, building contacts with companies – potential employers, activities aimed at raising awareness of the employers and breaking negative social stereotypes about the people with disabilities on the labour market.



SUMMARY OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Due to the ongoing pandemic COVID-19 SSW Collegium Balticum experienced difficulties in getting access to the meetings with parents, teachers and employers. However, owing to the extensive cooperation of the university with the educational community and employers, it was possible to collect 94 surveys among parents, 42 surveys among 80 employers and 100 surveys among teachers. Thanks to such cooperation and the participation of teachers in the survey process, the school situation and the social skills of the children with disabilities as well as the school's relationship with parents were examined. It also made it possible to characterize the way in which the cooperation between parents and educational institutions is arranged. The teachers, on the other hand, told about working in various educational entities, from nurseries to universities. The collected data concerns the information on 386 children of various ages with different disabilities, including 220 students from secondary schools.

Thanks to the cooperation of parents in the survey process, the school situation and the social skills of the children were examined, as well as the cooperation of the parents with the educational institutions. The surveyed parents presented their observations regarding the difficulties that the disabled persons face on the labour market. Among other things the following problems were mentioned:

- social isolation as a consequence of lack of independence and the need to provide continuous assistance of other people, especially the family members of the disabled persons;
- mental barriers in the immediate environment of the disabled people, resulting in their withdrawal from the social and professional activity;
- problems related to keeping the obtained job, which is also connected with insufficient possibilities of improving professional qualifications. On the other hand, among the barriers on the part of the employer the parents listed:
 - negative perception of the people with disabilities by the representatives of many public institutions and entrepreneurs;
 - lack of preparation of the employers operating on the open labour market to hire the people with disabilities;
 - stereotypes and prejudices of employers related to the perception of the disabled people as less productive, burdened with the risk of frequent sick leave, higher risk of accidents.

Among other factors influencing the problems related to the situation of the people with disabilities in the labour market, parents mentioned:

- the existence of numerous functional barriers, including, above all, architectural, transport, technical and communication barriers that make it difficult for the people with disabilities to access most of the entities operating on the open labour market;

- difficulties in reaching schools and other educational institutions, especially in rural areas.

Parents also mentioned educational initiatives that could be implemented by the state and education:

- promoting the mobility of pupils, students and teachers;
- cooperation between schools and universities;
- greater emphasis on learning languages;
- recognition of academic titles, vocational training and specialist education, competences and qualifications throughout the European Union;
- development of open education and distance learning;
- actions addressed to young people, including Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus and similar programmes.

According to the teachers, the consequence of the greatest problems in achieving professional independence by the people with disabilities, as well as the factor shaping the possibility of professional and social activation and integration of these people, is a low level of social trust. It was emphasized, however, that people with disabilities are not always perceived negatively on the labour market, as they are characterized by certain advantages as employees. At this point, the teachers mentioned, among others: high motivation to work, flexibility in the performance of work, as well as reliability and accuracy. In addition, teachers point to the large compensation opportunities that employers receive for the employment of the analyzed social category.

It was also important to note that there are too few information campaigns to encourage employers to hire the people with disabilities, and there is too little information in the social space about the benefits that can be obtained by institutions that cooperate with the people with impairments. This concerns potential financial sources supporting the employment of the people with disabilities – the sources were very diverse (for example: refinancing part of the employment costs or preparing a workplace, national programmes and projects and the ones co-financed by the EU funds).

The limitations of the possibilities of professional and social activation of the people with disabilities are confirmed by statistical data, which show that the economic activity rate of the disabled people aged 20 to 64 in Poland is much lower than in other European Union countries. The surveyed teachers are of the opinion that this tendency should be changed.

As it has been mentioned, the surveyed companies were reluctant to provide their data, which may have resulted from the fact that such surveys are rather anonymous. During the research, it was also noticed that disability in the workplace is a taboo subject - hence the blockade against showing a company that admittedly accepts the disabled people for internships and apprenticeships, but is very reluctant to employ the same people. The employers, justifying the avoidance of employing people

with disabilities, indicated, among others, the following arguments:

- the specificity of the company which excludes employing this group of people;
- lack of applications for work of the disabled persons themselves;
- low rotation of positions in a given enterprises.

Among the factors hindering the employment of the people with disabilities, the companies surveyed also indicated the three most frequently recurring factors:

- inadequate qualifications of the disabled people;
- lower productivity of the people with disabilities as workers;
- frequent absence of the disabled employees.

According to the surveyed employers themselves, workplaces are well adapted to employing the persons with disability certificates. So, the problem is not about:

- the excessive rights of the people with disabilities (participation in the rehabilitation camps, which takes place within the framework of dismissal from work while maintaining remuneration);
- lack of acceptance of the disabled persons by other employees as expressed towards the disabled workers;
- inadequate infrastructure and the architectural barriers.

On the basis of the above information, it can be concluded that employers feel prepared to work with people with disabilities, but the latter themselves are not looking for employment.

The state does not help in social campaigns and informing entrepreneurs about the possibilities of applying for discounts, allowances and subsidies. At this point, the issue of social information campaigns, mentioned in question fifteen, is repeated. The surveyed employers referred to various forms of activities aimed at deepening and consolidating the knowledge about the people with disabilities on the labour market, including:

- distribution of the information leaflets;
- instructional and informative videos;
- organization of festivals, picnics integrating the environment of both the fit and the disabled persons, the potential employees and the prospective employers;
- creation of advisory offices for the employers wishing to hire the people with disabilities;
- maintaining constant contact with Voivodship Labour Offices – establishing an organization supporting entrepreneurs who employ the disabled people;
- business-science cooperation with industry and higher schools educating people with disabilities, joint building of career paths for the people with the disabilities and the production, service and agricultural companies;
- social events integrating both environments.

It should be emphasized that the commitment and honest responses from the employers, parents and teachers helped the researchers participating in the project to prepare the results of the questionnaires and draw the conclusions about becoming independent in the social and professional self-empowerment of young people with a disability certificate. This has made it possible to determine how young people with the disabilities cope on the labour market in different countries, as well as to characterize the employers' attitude to internships and apprenticeships for the disabled

students, and to assess in what way cooperation with educational institutions affects the future success of a young person with disabilities in the recruitment process and his/her efforts to retain the job.

The differences in the educational and upbringing system of schools and care facilities as well as in the process of education and apprenticeship of the people with the disabilities indicated the strengths and weaknesses of each of the surveyed countries, and at the same time allowed the identification of good practices which the respondents can learn from each other.

The conducted research is a starting point for further analysis of the situation of the people with disabilities on the labour market and designing and implementing the measures for the professional activation of the people with various disabilities, as well as expanding the social awareness in this area, overcoming stereotypes and encouraging the employers to take on the people with disabilities, as well as supporting parents and teachers of the disabled students in the educational process, which is aimed at preparing pupils for independent, effective and satisfactory functioning on the labour market. The authors of the research hope that the information obtained under the project and presented in this article will become a valuable contribution to these efforts.