

WORK REHABILITATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED IN SELECTED EU COUNTRIES - OVERVIEW STUDY

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Abstract: *Currently, there are large differences in unemployment among EU countries; Czech Republic (3.5%) and Germany (3.6%) have dealt with the problem very well in recent years, which is confirmed by the fact that their unemployment rates are the lowest across the EU. Countries like Finland (8.7%) and France (9.5%) are with their unemployment rate in the middle of the unemployment rate ranking, and Greece (21.0%) is among the countries with the worst unemployment rate (Eurostat, 2017).*

When working with unemployed people, it is very important to coordinate different approaches, as it is a problem of economics, but also psycho-sociology (Jurečka et al., 2013). In this study, we focus on work rehabilitation, which is one of the components of coordinated rehabilitation and in which we mainly use counselling, job mediation, and preparation for future occupations.

The aim of this overview study is to define the work rehabilitation of unemployed people both in the Czech Republic and in selected EU countries. The comparison of different methods of work rehabilitation may be useful to improve the situation of the unemployed and to increase the employment rates in many countries. This study is based on sources from professional literature, websites and professional articles from databases SCOPUS, Ebsco and Google ScholarPro. The research method is textual analysis of documents.

Keywords: *Unemployment, work rehabilitation, active unemployment policy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

An unemployed person is, by the International Labor Organization (ILO), defined as someone older than 15 years old, actively searching for a job and ready to enter a job within 14 days.

Krebs (2015) characterizes unemployment as a result of three generally valid aspects: organization and management of the employment of people in the country, the reflection of non-personal market forces that are controlled by the human factor, and the consequence of certain abilities, dispositions and attitudes of an individual. Unemployment is one of the most significant labor market failures (Keřkovský, 2004), and many countries must deal with this issue. The Czech Republic, however, is one of the countries with lowest number of unemployed people, which is confirmed by the fact that the unemployment rate in November 2017 has fallen to its historical minimum of 3.5% (Patria, 2017). The countries with highest unemployment rates in the EU are Spain and Greece, and the lowest unemployment rates are in Czech Republic, Germany and Malta.

This review article deals with work rehabilitation, which is one of the components of coordinated rehabilitation, and it is a continuous activity aimed at acquiring and maintaining suitable employment for a disabled person. It mainly includes counselling on career choice, choice of employment or other form of generating income. It also includes a training for future employment, for medi-

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ation and change of employment - both theoretical and practical (MPSV, © 2016 - 2017a). Forms of work rehabilitation include counselling, job mediation, preparation for future occupations, specialized qualification courses, preparation for work and other types of activities according to the needs of the participant (MPSV, © 2016 - 2017a). The following and additional parts of work rehabilitation are different educational courses and projects of the European Social Fund, which include the *OP Zaměstnanost 2014-2020* programme, current in this area (ESF, 2016).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Method

This overview article is based on sources from professional literature, websites and professional articles from databases SCOPUS, Ebsco and Google ScholarPro. This data helped to form the overview study, which maps the work rehabilitation of unemployed people in Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, France and Greece. These countries were selected based on the unemployment rate, which is the lowest in Czech Republic and Germany, France and Finland are in the middle and the highest unemployment rate occurs in Greece. The aim was to confirm whether the tools of work rehabilitation cohere with the unemployment rate.

The topic was searched for by using these phrases: „work rehabilitation of the unemployed”, „state employment policy”, and each keyword was connected with the selected country. In the years 2012-2018, for example, the Ebsco database showed 315 results, when entering the phrase „state employment policy”, Google Scholar showed 17,000 results to keywords such as „active employment policy in the Czech Republic”, of which only those related to active employment policy were used. A comprehensive study was prepared with the help of documents published between 2004 and 2018, but most of the literature is not older than 5 years.

3. ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT POLICY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic implements the state employment policy, which seeks to achieve a balance between supply and demand of labor. It can be generally divided into passive and active employment policy (MPSV, 2012).

Active policy according to Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on employment, is a set of measures that aim to achieve the highest employment rate. Active employment policy tools in Czech Republic include retraining, investment incentives, community work, socially meaningful jobs, bridging allowance, contribution for incorporation, contribution for the transition to a new entrepreneurial program, counselling, support of the employment of disabled people, programs which deal with employment (MPSV, 2012).

The main tasks under this policy are to create new jobs, to maximize employee stabilization, which minimizes dismissal, and to provide vocational education (Lymareva, Talanova, 2015).

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic introduces tools for individual work with the unemployed, to help those who find it difficult to find a job for a variety of reasons. These tools include a shared job, outplacement, support of short-term jobs, and individual coaching and occasional registered work (MPSV, 2013).

4. WORK REHABILITATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

As a part of the work rehabilitation of the unemployed, Czech Republic widely uses retraining, which, according to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (2016), allows the candidates to acquire a new qualification or to strengthen their existing skills, which will help to maintain an existing job. In 2017, retraining courses were mainly focused on administration, economics and accounting, information technology, trade, marketing and advertising, warehousing, security, engineering, welding, construction, wood processing, gastronomy and food industry (MPSV, 2017).

Another possible way of work rehabilitation is via Job Club, a counselling program whose main goal is to motivate and activate its members to participate in the labor market. It is focused on orientation on the labor market and teaching job search techniques. Job Club takes place in groups of 8-10 participants in the form of repeated meetings. Job Club is currently targeted at job seekers who want to improve their self-expression and want to strengthen their self-confidence and learn how to address stressful situations that are linked to unemployment. The members are recommended by a mediator from the Employment Department, based on a request. Within Job Club, clients are taught stress management, assertiveness techniques and work-related orientation. They also prepare for job interviews or learn support and relaxation methods. Job Club also provides financial consulting (dealing with debt, repayment schedule), job agencies' contacts, offers advertised in the press, current lists of vacancies registered by the Labor Office, as well as retraining courses and ESF projects (MPSV, © 2002 - 2015b).

Equally important tool of work rehabilitation is professional counselling, which, according to Plesník and Šobánová (2014), is divided into three phases. The first phase focuses on the client, in particular on his past work experience, education, skills, interests and needs. In the second phase, the labor market, the individual professions and the situation in the region are mapped. Finally, in the third phase, the first and the second phases merge in creating and implementing a specific plan to obtain a new job.

Counselling services are provided by both non-profit organizations and professional counsellors from the Labor Office, and their goal is to guide clients to make independent decisions based on the information provided, to lead clients to deal with problems and to lead them to unassisted final decision (MPSV, 2017a).

The counselling takes place during individual consultations and group programs, and is aimed to solve specific personal, social and health problems that can prevent the client from finding a suitable job. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (2018) also describes individual counselling that offers assistance to clients in difficult life situations, to clients who consider retraining, or need help with job selection and change, etc.

5. WORK REHABILITATION IN GERMANY

Germany's active employment policy that helps rehabilitate the unemployed include counselling and job mediation, support of further professional education, employment-related measures, support of employment, and support of the employment of disabled people (Bernhard et al., 2008). Counselling and employment mediation fall under the auspices of the Federal Employment Agency, which aims to optimize and accelerate the process of job placement and to provide information on the labor market (Keller, 2006). The so-called employment mediation voucher

includes the provision of a personal counsellor, who conducts deep interviews with the unemployed, by which they seek to identify and overcome or completely remove barriers to enter the labor market. Together, the client and the consultant draw up an individual plan that is binding for both parties. This voucher amounts to € 2,000 and is valid for 3 months (ANBA, 2012).

Another equally important part of counselling and job mediation is activation and occupational integration, which allows activation and orientation on the labor market, access to private employment agencies, and support of starting entrepreneurs (NVF, © 2011).

6. WORK REHABILITATION IN FRANCE

The unemployment rate in France decreased under 10% in the first quarter of 2017, the lowest level in the last five years (ČTK, 2017). This is caused, among other things, by an active unemployment policy tools, including professional education.

The most frequently used measures to increase or acquire a new qualification include professional internships (Stages de formation) and training agreements (Formation conventionnée), which provide the applicant with the means to obtain a driver's license, new language skills, or technical skills, to increase their qualifications. During this training the applicant receives a job search and training allowance (AFC, © 2018).

The most common tool to create new jobs in the private sector is to support employment contracts that are primarily intended for those disadvantaged on the labor market (Caliendo and Schmidl, 2015).

In 2016, France spent two billion euros on creating new jobs (ČTK, 2016). Other tools include, for example, direct job creation, protected jobs, or support of entrepreneurs. These tools are similar to those in the Czech Republic.

Another important element are Career Rehabilitation Centers (CRP), which are health and social services that offer qualifying training to disabled people. The aim of these centers is to train or retrain for means of integration or professional reintegration. These training courses are covered by health insurance (action-sociale, © 2009-2017).

7. WORK REHABILITATION IN FINLAND

In Finland, the high level of employment is emphasized as a means of preventing social problems, poverty and social exclusion (Jokivuori, 2009). Access to employment is, as in other Scandinavian countries, very friendly to women, which helps Finland to have constantly low long-term unemployment rate and higher economic activity than the European average (Kotrusová, Kux, 2006).

The ability to obtain information on vacancies from websites is relatively well advanced, which is confirmed by the fact that nearly 100% of jobs are on the internet (Vošahlíková, 2010). The difference from the Czech Republic is the possibility to contact the Employment Department even before the actual loss of employment, and also the possibility to take the time off to find a new job (Jokivuori, 2009).

In Finland, there are so-called Job centers, which operate on a voluntary basis. They mainly provide information on the possibilities of professional education, job and study opportunities, internet services, etc. They provide courses, seminars and counselling in different areas (creating a CV, internet usage, preparation for interview), and also organize recruiting events (Vošahlíková, 2010).

Another tool to work with the unemployed are the Labor Force Service Centers, which provide assistance to people who need special help on their way back to the labor market. The most common problems that hinder entry to the labor market are lack of work experience, housing problems, relationship problems, poor financial situation, health problems, problems with daytime rhythm, addictions, etc. In these centers, the clients are taken care of by professionals, who offer complex counselling, which means not only addressing the job issue but other issues as well. Each client has a case manager with whom they create an individual plan (Vošahlíková, 2010).

8. WORK REHABILITATION IN GREECE

In Greece, the work rehabilitation falls under the Organization for Employment of Workers (OAED), which is based on three pillars: employment support, unemployment insurance, and social protection, professional education and training. This organization directs the active labor market policy, which aims to stop unemployment, promote employment and professionally train both the unemployed and the employed citizens (OAED, © 2012).

Specific employment policy measures include employment programs, training programs and counselling (OAED, © 2012).

There are integrated learning programs that help both employed and unemployed people in adapting quickly and more effectively to the labor market. These programs include training and retraining of both employed and unemployed people, a business development program, complex counselling and training programs, gaining new work skills, supporting new forms of education (e.g. using internet and other information and communication technologies), etc. (OAED, 2012a).

Counselling services in Greece include counselling and career guidance, consultation on job search, and advice on business initiatives (OAED, © 2012b).

In this country, there is a Lifelong Career Development Portal (EOPPEP) designed for adults of all ages, which provides innovative information services on professional development and mobility (EOPPEP, 2017).

9. CONCLUSION

This overview study shows the tools of work rehabilitation that are necessary for working with the unemployed. It also shows the approach to the unemployed in selected EU countries, and how active employment policy is reflected in the overall unemployment rate of selected EU countries.

Gonçalves et al. (2017) states that there are four main active employment policy programs, the most successful of which is mentoring. These programs include counselling, which is mainly provided in the Czech Republic, in the framework of the Counselling Center for Employment,

which shows the lowest unemployment rate of the selected states. It is also used in Germany, which has a low unemployment rate as well, by applying the Employment Mediation Voucher and Activation and Occupational Inclusion. Counselling is also provided by Greece; however, Greece also has the highest unemployment rate of the selected states, which can be explained by the fact that it has only begun to deal with unemployment after the financial crisis in 2009. It is very important to note that the main tool for fighting unemployment is education.

Table 1 – Overview of tools of work rehabilitation in concrete countries

Country	Tools of work rehabilitation
Czech Republic	Retraining
	Job Club
	Counselling and mediation of suitable job
	Support of employment of disabled people
Germany	Protected jobs
	Support of additional education
	Employment related measures
	Support of employment of disabled people
	Employment supporting measures
France	Professional education
	Supported employment contracts
	Direct creation of jobs
	Support of starting entrepreneurs
	Protected jobs
Finland	Professional rehabilitation centers
	Job centers
	Service centers for workforce
	Training programs
Greece	Employment programs
	Counselling
	Integrated educational programs
	Consultations on search for employment
	Lifelong Career Development Portal

Source: Author

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