



**Problems of Employment for physically disabled people in  
Astana**

**prepared for the NGO “Shyrak”**

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## **Abstract**

The problem of low employment rate of physically disabled people (PWDs) is present in Kazakhstan, particularly in Astana, and requires changes. Despite the existing national and international legislations, the level of employment of PWDs is low. Consequently, the problem requires considerable attention in order to analyze the existing barriers. The given policy analysis exercise (PAE) will try to address this issue through a primary research. Interviews with PWDs, state institutions, NGOs and telephone surveys with employers were conducted to understand the barriers in employment of PWDs in Astana. The lack of education was identified as the main barrier impeding employment of PWDs in Astana with other factors such as access to infrastructure and discrimination also contributing to the low employment rate. The PAE will conclude with the recommendations based on the analysis of legislation and the information obtained from above-mentioned stakeholders.

## **Glossary**

**Disability** – physical impairment that limits the person in a major life activity.

**Persons with physical disability (PWDs)** – individuals who have persistent health impairments of body functions, resulting from diseases, trauma and its consequences, or defects that lead to disability and the necessity of social protection;

**First group of disability** - persistent, significant, or pronounced impairment of the body's functions, conditioned by diseases, consequences of injuries or defects, leading to a sharply expressed restriction of one of the following categories of life activity or a combination thereof: education, communication, orientation, control over behavior, movement, self-service, participation in labor activity;

**Second group of disability** - a persistent pronounced impairment of the body's functions, conditioned by diseases, the consequences of injuries or defects, leading to a severe restriction of one of the following categories of life activity or a combination thereof: education, communication, orientation, control over behavior, movement, self-service, participation in labor activity;

**Third group of disability** - a persistent moderately pronounced impairment of the body's functions due to diseases, consequences of injuries or defects, leading to a moderately restrictive restriction of one of the following categories of life activity or a combination thereof: education, communication, orientation, control over behavior, movement, self-service, participation in labor activity;

**Medical and social expertise** – definition of needs of person being inspected in social protection measures based on the assessment of the limitations of life activity caused by persistent disorders of the body's functions;

**Employment** – a set of organizational, economic, and legal measures designed to promote employment of the population;

**Employment Center** - a state institution created by the local executive body of the district, cities of regional and republican importance for the purpose of implementing active measures to promote employment, organization of social protection against unemployment and other measures to promote employment;

**Quota system** - creation and/or allocation (reservation) of workplaces by employers for the employment of disabled persons in accordance with the quota established by local executive bodies;

**Subsidy** – financial support provided by the state for employers who assist in employment of persons with disabilities through creation of special workplaces;

**Social workplaces** – workplaces where the PWDs' wages are partly financed by the government.

**Special workplaces** - workplaces that are equipped in accordance with needs of persons with disabilities;

**IPR** - a document that determines specific amounts, types and timing of rehabilitation measures, as well as the types of social assistance, which is considered to be mandatory for execution by relevant state bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations, and methods of management.

## 1. Introduction

PWDs are present around the world but their social, economic and political integration varies across countries. There are 1 billion people, or about 15 % of the world's population who are disabled, representing the largest minority group (UNDP, 2018). The World Bank estimates that 20 % of the world's poorest people are disabled. According to the statistics of the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2017), 386 million people out of the total working-age population in the world are disabled.

Inalienable right of any person, including a disabled one, is the right to work. Labor activity is one of the most important means of integrating a disabled person into social and public life. It strengthens self-affirmation of the individual, which lessens the psychological barrier between them and healthy able-bodied people. The problem of employment of PWDs is in the forefront of many states' agendas. In some countries, unemployment among PWDs reaches 80 % (UN, 2017). Consequently, active state policy is needed to promote the employment of disabled people. In practice, potential of PWDs remains underutilized, leading to their unreasonably low employment. The employment of PWDs is a complex, multifaceted process with many obstacles in its way.

The given study aims to identify the policy gap between the existing legislation and low levels of employment of the physically disabled people in Astana. Three hypotheses will be tested: 1) the presence of quality education/qualifications increases the chance for PWDs to be employed; 2) infrastructural barriers outside and inside buildings pose considerable problems for people with motor and visual impairments; 3) discrimination from the employers' side is related to low employment levels of PWDs in Astana. Based on the results obtained via interviews with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of RK, NGOs, employers and PWDs, recommendations will be provided. The research will have the following structure: section 2 will address the problem of low employment of PWDs in Astana, section 3 will introduce national and international legislation and current policies related to employment of PWDs, section 4 will provide conceptual model and hypotheses, section 5 will overview the existing literature, section 6 will describe the research methods used, section 7 will focus on the findings from stakeholder analysis and section 8 describes the limitations of the study; and sections 8-9 will provide conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. Problem statement

The official data of the Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy of Republic of Kazakhstan (CoS) states that in 2016 651,924 PWDs were registered across the country, including 79,662 children under the age of 18. PWDs comprise approximately 4% of the total population of Kazakhstan. However, experts claim that this number is highly underestimated. To compare, in the EU PWDs comprise around 14% of the total population (OECD,2017). The largest amount of PWDs resides in Astana, 21,946 including 4072 children under the age of 18. According to the official statistics offered by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection(MLSP) (2016), approximately 2.5% of disabled people out of 405,896 of working age population are employed. MLSP reports that 13,780 disabled people were employed in 2016 across the country and 17,963 persons in 2017. These numbers may not be representative because disabled people are not monitored after the employment. Consequently, these numbers only indicate the fact that PWDs became employed. For Astana, the numbers are 547 individuals in 2016 and 608 in 2017, respectively. The low employment level represents an acute problem because disabled people do not experience equal opportunities for social integration and financial independence.

During the Soviet Union, when disabled people were mostly hidden and not integrated into the society, a stigma about the incapability of PWDs to work existed. The official policy in the USSR towards PWDs was directed at ensuring their social welfare but not social rehabilitation and adaptation. The concept of "disability" was legislatively tied to the concept of "inability to work", and the amount of social payments depended on the severity of a disability. A PWD was assigned a certain category of disability. This category determined if they were allowed or not allowed to work. For instance, a PWD of the 'First group of disability' was considered to be incapable of working. The 'Second group' was divided into "working" and "non-working". A PWD of the 'Third group' was allowed work.

In order to solve the issue of low employment of disabled people, a whole range of issues, such as the creation of an accessible infrastructure within and outside of the buildings, vocational education for PWDs, increasing awareness about PWDs among the public, needs to be addressed. Despite the existing national and international legislations (e.g., Labor code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Law of RK "On employment of the population" and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities), PWDs cannot fully exercise their legal rights in our country. Particularly, the employment of PWDs in Kazakhstan, as well as in many

other post-Soviet countries, is complicated by the above-mentioned obstacles that need to be addressed by the state and public-private enterprises.

### **3. Legislation and current policies on employment**

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, every citizen has the right to work, including PWDs. A person within any disability group can work and has the same rights as a healthy person does. In addition, paragraph 2 of Article 6 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 414-V of November 23, 2015 (amended on 01.01.2017) states that no one can be discriminated against exercising his/her labor rights on the basis of disability. The process of accepting and registering employees with disabilities does not differ from the employment of people without disabilities, but it is necessary to request the following documents that prove disability: certificate of disability and Individual Program of Rehabilitation (IPR).

#### **Terms of employment**

In order to get employed PWDs have to undergo a medical-social examination. All the documents required for the examination and re-examination of the disability condition are listed under Amendment 44 dated 30 January 2015 “On the approval of the rules of medical and social expertise” (Ministry of Justice of RK, 2016). Paragraph 3 of Article 69 of the Labor Code of RK states that workers with the first and second groups of disability have reduced working hours, which constitute no more than 36 hours per week. The duration of the work day for PWDs of the first and second groups cannot exceed seven hours. Moreover, they are granted an additional six days annual paid leave.

#### **Vocational rehabilitation**

PWDs have the right to obtain, free of charge, training and retraining through Employment Centers. Moreover, they receive a scholarship during the time of training.

In accordance with paragraph 1 of Article 30 of the Law on the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities, professional rehabilitation of disabled persons includes:

- professional orientation;
- professional education; and
- employment.

Article 31 of the Law on the Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities states that local executive bodies must ensure employment of disabled people by:

1) the establishment of quotas for disabled people of 2-4% of the total number of employees, excluding the work with harmful, dangerous working conditions;



- 2) the creation of additional jobs for PWDs through the development of individual entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized businesses;
- 3) the creation of special and social workplaces for the employment of disabled persons;
- 4) the organization of vocational training for PWDs.

### **Quota system**

To implement this provision of the law, the Order of the Ministry of Healthcare of June 13, 2016 No. 498 approved the Rules for allocating jobs for disabled people. Under the quota system the employer is obliged to:

- create or designate jobs;
- create working conditions for employees with disabilities according to their IPR;
- provide timely information to the Employment Center on the implementation of the quota.

Also, the rules and conditions for subsidizing employers for equipping special job places for disabled people were approved by the order No 228 of the former Minister of Labor and Social Protection in August 2017. The given order is effective from January, 2018. These rules were developed in accordance with the article 7.12 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On employment of the population". Subsidies are provided from the state budget to reimburse spending on the purchase and installation of necessary equipment for PWDs. The following conditions must be met by the employer: compliance of the created workplaces with the Standards approved by the Ministry of Healthcare; employment of disabled people and retention for a period of not less than a year; absence of debt of assessed taxes, fees and other mandatory payments to the budget; timely provision of wage payments.

### **The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**

Kazakhstan signed the Convention in 2006 and ratified it in 2015, demonstrating its readiness to follow the basic principles of international policy on disabled people. The UN Convention imposes on the state a number of obligations to ensure the realization of the rights of PWDs in the spheres of education, health care, labor market, social protection, culture, etc. The Convention covers all areas of interaction between PWDs and society, and states that have ratified the Convention commit themselves to ensuring accessibility and equality for disabled people. The main goal of the government after the ratification of the Convention was to bring the legislation closer to international standards.

## **Current policies for the employment of PWDs**

### *National Plan and Employment Road Map 2020.*

Since 2012, the National Plan for Ensuring the Rights and Improving the Quality of Life of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2012-2018 has been implemented in stages. Under this program a number of measures for enhancing the rights of PWDs were implemented.

In the framework of the National Plan the “Employment Road Map 2020” (ERM 2020) was launched in 2013. The Program focuses on the following areas: ensuring employment through the development of infrastructure, housing and communal services; stimulation of entrepreneurial initiative; assistance in employment through training and resettlement within the needs of the employer. Disabled people were identified as a priority group under the program. In 2016, 6200 disabled people without medical contraindications for employment participated in the “ERM 2020”. Particularly, 5900 disabled people were employed including: 4600 in permanent positions, 1300 with temporary jobs. Within the framework of the roadmap, in order to enhance competitiveness of PWDs on the labor market, 311 PWDs underwent professional training, of which 280 completed their studies, and 83% (232 people) were employed, including 229 people hired on permanent jobs (Report on National Plan, 2018). In order to engage PWDs into entrepreneurial activity, 180 people were taught the basics of entrepreneurship, 491 people with disabilities received micro credits (156 opened their own businesses) (ibid).

Inventory (certification) of existing public facilities and transport infrastructure was launched in 2011 under the first phase of the National Plan. This measure aimed to determine the proportion of facilities which are subject for adaptation for PWDs. Approved regional plans for inventory and adaptation of facilities to ensure the accessibility for PWDs are posted annually on the website of the MLSP in the section "Social protection of disabled people" ([http://convention.enbek.gov.kz/en/adaptation\\_maps](http://convention.enbek.gov.kz/en/adaptation_maps)). Figures on certification and adaptation of infrastructure for Astana are provided in the Appendix.

### *Project of “Nur Otan” party - Future Without Barriers (Келерсіз Келешек)*

The project is aimed for improving the quality of life of PWDs, promotion of their employment, involvement into active social life and the establishment of a favorable legal framework. The main dimensions of the project are the following:

- 1) Employment of the PWDs - regular job fairs are held, advocacy work among on preventing unjustified dismissal of PWDs is conducted.
- 2) Creation of a barrier-free environment for PWDs. In the framework of the project a 100% barrier-free environment is planned by 2020.
- 3) Development of inclusive education. The monitoring of accessibility of educational facilities and the training of qualified teachers are carried out.
- 4) Addressing gaps in legislation. Providing recommendations for improving the legal framework and the technical specifications of public transport.

#### *Invataxi*

In accordance with subparagraph 23 of the Article 13 of the Law of the RK of July 4, 2003 "On Road Transport" and the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 13, 2005 "On Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan" the rules for the provision of services for the carriage of disabled people by road transport were approved by the Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 1, 2013 (amended on September 29, 2017).

«Invataxi» service is provided for PWDs based on recommendations from the medical consultative board issued for the period of disability. The «Invataxi» services are provided by NGOs or private organizations that win the tender. 21 of "Invataxi" cars operate in Astana, 7 of them for wheelchair users, 8 for disabled children, and 6 for people with vision impairments. A list of facilities and destinations, when «Invataxi» service can be used, is in the Appendix.

#### 4. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

The aim of the conceptual framework for the given PAE theme “Problems with the employment of physically disabled people in Astana” is to identify the relation between the dependent variable “low employment levels of PWDs” and independent variables such as “the level of education”, “access to infrastructure”, “presence/absence of discrimination from employers’ side” and “unwillingness to work by the PWDs themselves”. However, there are other control variables that affect the causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Those are “quality of education”, “unawareness of PWDs about the legal rights regarding the employment”, “the effect of quota system, fines and the amount of government support on the employer’s decision to hire or not to hire”. In the context of Kazakhstan, where the quality of higher education (especially in state institutions) is low, the mere presence of a diploma is not going to increase the likelihood of being employed.

Consequently, the given research question was formulated: **“To what extent barriers such as low education/qualification level, poor access to infrastructure and discrimination affect the employment rate of PWDs in Astana?”**

The aim of this qualitative work is to test the following **3 hypotheses**:

- 1) The presence of quality education/qualifications increases the chance for PWDs to be employed.
- 2) Infrastructural barriers outside and inside buildings pose considerable problems for people with motor and visual impairments.
- 3) Discrimination from the employers’ side is related to low employment levels of PWDs in Astana

The given hypotheses will be tested through interviews with PWDs, NGOs, and state organizations such as the Employment Center, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection as well as telephone surveys of employers in Astana.

## **5. Research Methods and Data**

### **People with physical disability**

PWDs in Astana were selected using the snowballing method. In total 18 people with 3 types of disability such as motor, visual, hearing impairments were interviewed. In total: 9 males, 9 females. The consideration of the needs of people with various types of disability is important in offering recommendation at the end of this research. 13 out of 18 PWDs are working. Only 3 people are working in the regular job market. Moreover, it is worth considering that the snowballing method that was used to generate the list of disabled people is biased because our respondents represent the most active members among PWDs. Thus, those PWDs who are still hidden in their homes due to psychological barriers are not included in this research. The questions asked to PWDs were related to the awareness regarding their legal rights on employment, their personal experience in looking for a job, including channels of information, and problems encountered during the job search and working process.

### **Representatives of NGOs**

NGOs were selected based on the information obtained from the Internet. The NGOs that deal with the issues related to PWDs, including the employment were chosen. The representatives from the following organizations were interviewed: the Confederation of Disabled People, the Kazakh Society of Blind People, the Kazakh Society of Deaf People, the Fund for Social Innovation Projects, the Youth Association of Disabled, the Silent World (Безмолвный Мир) and the Center “ECOR” that provides infrastructure services for creating accessible environment. The given NGOs were interviewed regarding the effectiveness of quota system, presence/absence of changes after the ratification of the UN Convention in 2015, the main barriers in employment, the assessment of the services provided by the Employment Center and the involvement of PWDs in actual policy making process.

### **State organizations**

The MLSP, the Employment Center in Astana, the Employment and Social Protection Department and political party Nur Otan were interviewed. Consideration of perspective of the state bodies on the same questions asked for the NGOs would give a clear picture in identifying the policy gap between the state and the NGOs that work for the promotion of the rights of PWDs. The first three organization represent immediate stakeholders in employment process of PWDs. The representative of Nur Otan party who works with the state program “Future

Without Barriers” (Кедергісіз Келешек) was interviewed to get insight about the activities that were carried out throughout the program.

### **Employers**

20 organizations were surveyed via telephone, particularly each HR departments. Those organizations represent the following sectors: construction, education, healthcare, media and public provision services. The survey was anonymous to encourage them to answer the questions. The questions about awareness and fulfillment of the quota system and the existing barriers in employing PWDs were asked.

The questions for each of the stakeholder group are provided in the Appendix.

## 6. Literature Review

Low employment rates of PWDs is considered to be a universal problem, but the amount of unemployed disabled people varies from country to country. Tupi and West (2012), Naukenova (2015), Shabunova and Fakhradova (2016), Alayev (2016) identify various factors that affect low employment level of disabled people such as the level of education and social awareness, presence of qualification and willingness to work, and access to infrastructure. The severity of disability also affects the probability of being employed. The given literature review will look at the existing research that analyzed the abovementioned barriers in employment of PWDs, relationship between hiring PWDs and productivity, the role of social employment and the quota system.

If the problem of low employment rates of PWDs will be addressed, the economy of Kazakhstan can benefit from hiring disabled people. In particular, many international experts from OECD, UN, WHO emphasize that investments both in education and employment of PWDs are cost effective measures. Furthermore, investments will be returned in the form of income taxes into the state's budget. Shabunova and Fakhradova (2016) found that taxes coming from PWDs have a return on investment in the long term. According to Omarbekova, the president of Confederation of Disabled People in Kazakhstan, more than 100 000 of PWDs of working age in Kazakhstan are not employed. She states that in case of their employment, the state budget could receive more than 7 billion KZT per year.

Shabunova, Fakhradova (2016) note that similar barriers exist in the neighboring Russian Federation such as poor infrastructure, low vocational skills, discrimination from employers and existing stereotypes in regard to disabled people. During the Soviet Union, disabled people, known as “invalids”, were mainly hidden in their home and were not socially or economically integrated. Consequently, it can be seen that Soviet legacy is still present in Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet countries where disabled people are perceived as incapable of doing the same work as ordinary people do. Moreover, Tupi and West (2012), Seitenova and Baker (2008), and Omarbekova (2014) mentioned that one of the principal barriers that prevent PWDs from employment in Kazakhstan is overprotective law which limits their opportunities and make them dependant on state benefits and services. This is clearly reflected in the law *"On Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan"* which defines a disabled person as “the one who has a health impairment with persistent significant impairments of body functions, resulting from diseases, trauma and its consequences, or defects, and that leads to disability and necessity of social protection”. For comparison, the definition in CRPD is

different: "persons with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." The issue of overprotection in national legislation was described in detail in legislation section.

PWDs also face environmental obstacles (ramps, transport) that create physical barriers to employment (Roberts, Babinard,2004). Physical barriers create obstacles for attending job interviews as well as accessing the actual workplace (ILO, 2006). These statements can be backed up by the evidence from the report of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics from 2012. According to the report, employed PWDs were more likely to request a change in their workplace to do their job better than those without disability (12.5% and 8.4%, respectively). These changes were related to requests for new or modified equipment, physical and policy changes as well as work specificity, job structure, and schedule (USDOL,2013).

There are always two main actors in the labor market: a job seeker who is in this case a person with disability, and an employer. Many authors recognize discrimination by the employer as one of the main barriers for disabled people. Ameri et al. (2018) investigated potential discrimination against PWDs through conducting an experiment. Job applications were sent to 6016 available positions where applicants' disabilities did not affect negatively the productivity. Two-third of the applications disclosed that applicants have disability, and one-third did not mention disability. The applications with information on disability received 26% less of employer interest. The authors concluded that even for positions where disability type did not influence the ability to work, employers were still reluctant to hire PWDs. Ravaud et al. (1992) and Baert (2016) performed similar studies where they found that reluctance to hire PWDs was the impeding factor rather than decreased productivity or accommodation problems. Alayev (2016) also argues that according to NGOs, employers do not hire PWDs due to their disability (71%), low qualification (50%), low awareness of employers themselves in dealing with this category of people (46%), prejudices regarding the ability of work by PWDs (42%), the necessity to create special working conditions (33%) and unwillingness of the colleagues to work with PWDs (25%).

Earlier Zharikov (2013) in his report "Disabled people in the labor market and management of their employment in the region" referred to the findings of the survey conducted by the employees of the Center for Leisure and Creativity of Youth in Moscow in 2012. This survey aimed to understand employers' position and attitudes towards disabled people in the labor market and find out the main reasons of refusal in hiring PWDs. The sample consisted of 127 companies. Employers that did not have any experience with employing

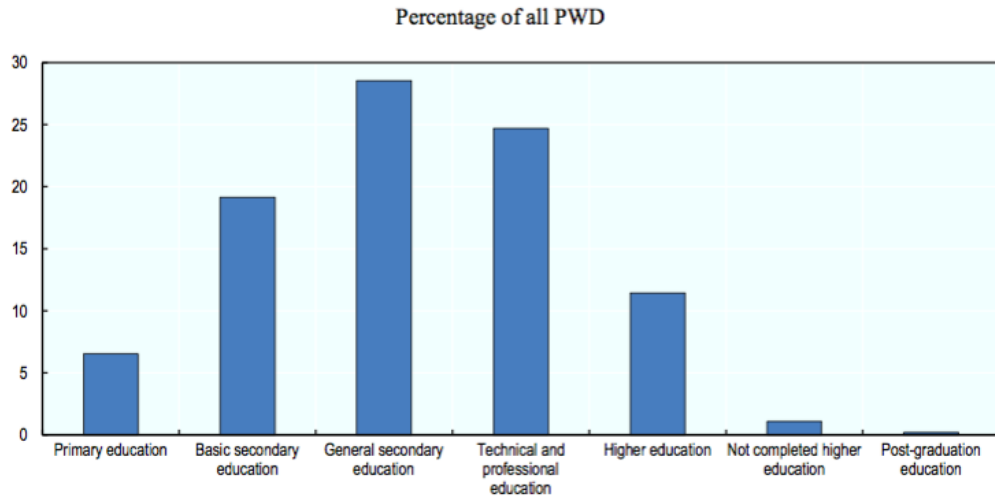


disabled people mentioned the following barriers such as inadequate qualification (54 %) and absence of specially equipped places for disabled persons (49%). Among those who dealt with disabled people 41 % never refused in employment, the rest refused because of above mentioned reasons. 67% employers consider that government should incentive them to hire disabled people by cutting tax burden and financing workplace equipment. Overprotective legislation may also add to the reluctance of employers to hire in a way that labor codes mandate shorter working days, greater leaves of absence, longer paid leave and etc. (World Report on Disability, 2011). Consequently, it may demotivate employers to hire PWDs because the former might view the latter less productive and at the same time costlier in hiring.

Mori, Sakamoto (2017) found negative relationship between hiring disabled person in manufacturing industry and productivity/profit after conducting statistical regression. The authors claim that the given negative relationship from OLS regression can be compensated by employing disabled people in suitable posts. For instance, in manufacturing assembly lines, the productivity with hearing disorders may be as high as of non-handicapped people. Moreover, they note that decreasing profits may only appear when the wage of disabled worker is greater than the amount of work they produce. It is worth noting that the average wage of disabled workers in many countries has been lower than of the non-handicapped citizens. This could arise due to the existing discrimination against workers with disability (ibid).

Many scholars argue that the level of education is important in being employed. Many children and adults with disabilities historically have not been given equal opportunities for obtaining education (WHO, 2011). OECD (2017) claim that PWDs in general have lower level of education in comparison to non-handicapped citizens. For instance, only 11.4% of PWDs have higher education and 18% have secondary education (refer to *Graph 1*). Only 0.1% of PWDs out of the total students were studying in higher education institutions (Committee of Statistics, 2016). It is not surprising that PWDs are offered low-paying and low-skilled jobs.

*Graph 1: Educational attainment of people with disabilities, 2014*



*Source:* Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

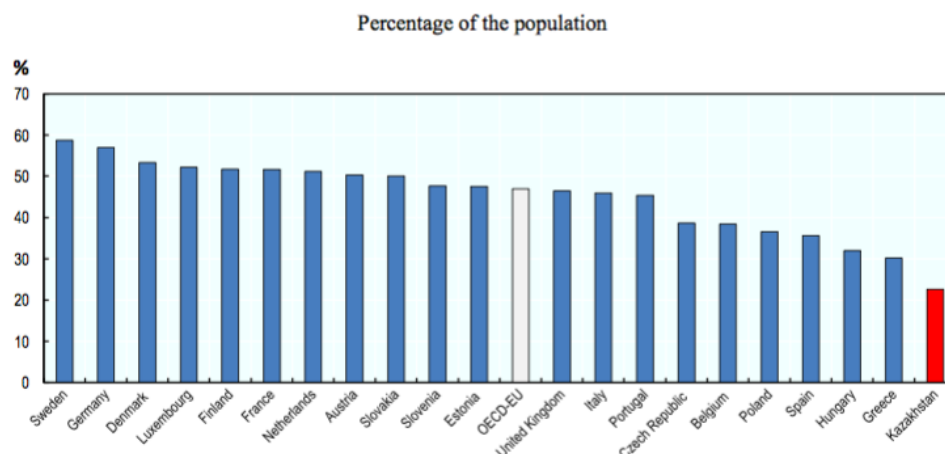
Moreover, Omarbekova (2014) notes that there is a shortage of specialized trainers in educational system, medical institutions, employment centers who assist disabled people with their integration into the workforce. Global Status Report on Disability and Development (2015) also emphasizes that developing countries lack adequate services that support the employment of PWDs. Brock et al (2016), Kwon and Lee (2016) emphasize that post-employment assistance in the form of job coaches is required in order to oversee the integration of the disabled persons at the new working place. Job coaches help to identify and provide information on available job vacancies; assess the skills of PWDs and employers' preferences; and provide overall career guidance. Matching skills with jobs through training is essential especially in the absence of education. Kwon and Lee (2016) claim that especially in developing countries having on-site job coach will be costly. Consequently, they claim that introduction of 'serious games' (i.e strategies such as repetition, context-based teaching and learning, immediate feedback) will minimize cost, training time, enhance skills and maximize safety for people with developmental impairments.

Some authors emphasize that social payments lead to free-riding behavior and some PWDs are not willing to work themselves. For instance, Alayev (2016) referred to the survey results of the NGO "Namis" in Almaty, which states that 30% of PWDs are not willing to work, 10% cannot work due to medical reasons. Out of those who are willing to work 60% can be employed in non-labor-intensive jobs such as watchman, seamstress and so on; 20% are ready to work after undergoing vocational trainings; 20% are ready to study in higher education institutions and later on work according to the received specialty. Interesting results have been revealed, however the sample size is unclear. The research undertaken by OECD in 2017

regarding the dependency problem, notes that Kazakhstan should move from permanent to temporary social payment (6 months-1 year) to encourage disabled people to look for jobs. This suggestion may have been applicable if the amount of social payment was enough to cover the basic living conditions such as food, shelter. The amount of social payment for different groups vary: I group – 54306 KZT, II group – 43275 KZT, III group – 29416 KZT, disabled people from birth of II category receive – 44972 KZT and of III group – 33941 KZT (Informburo.kz, 2018). The given social payment does not lead to overreliance and demotivation to work because it is not large enough to sustain a decent life. Moreover, the severity of the disability affects the employment outcomes, implying that mostly people with II-III group are employed (OECD, 2017).

A quota system is used in many countries to promote the employment of PWDs. Nesporova and Koulaeva (2014) examined the employment situation of PWDs in four countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Russian Federation and analyzed the quota/levy system in these countries. In Armenia, jobs for PWDs are guaranteed by state, consequently, the quota system was introduced but it was withdrawn because it didn't work. In the other three countries, it was observed that after the implementation of quota systems the number of employed PWDs declined. This fact can be also supported by the study conducted in South Korea in by Nazarov et al. (2016). They observed that after an increase of penalties for nonfulfillment of quotas and increase of rewards for compliance, there was only positive impact on the employment of PWDs. Alayev (2016) argues that the quota system in Kazakhstan is not effective. Moreover, he notes that 4 of 7 enterprises that were surveyed do not work in cooperation with the Employment Center in Almaty. However, from the Graph 2 it can be seen the quota system works relatively well in some EU and constituting around 60% (OECD/Europäisches Zentrum 2003, 193; OECD 2010, 143).

*Graph 2: Employment rate of disabled people in Kazakhstan and OECD-EU countries, 2011*



1. Data for 2011 OECD-EU; Data for 2013 Kazakhstan.

Source: Grammenos, S. (2014), "European Comparative Data on Europe 2020 & People with Disabilities", Academic Network of European Disability Experts, available at <http://www.disability-europe.net/theme/comparative-data/reports-comparative-data>, accessed 29 June 2015; Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

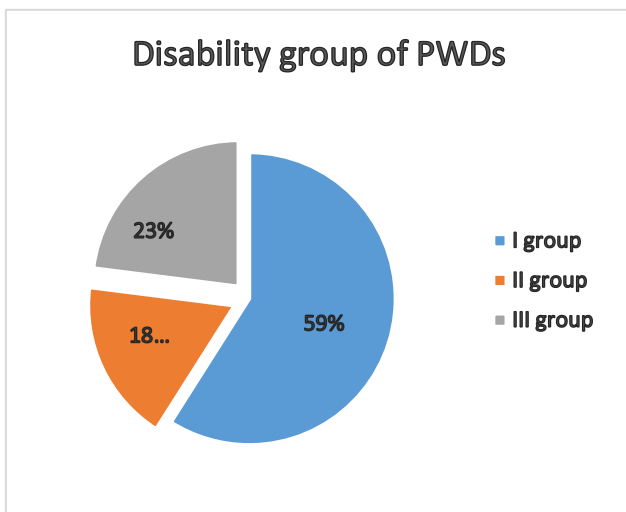
For instance, quota system in Japan had positive effects for the manufacturing industry (Mori, Sakamoto, 2017). In contrast, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries never adopted a quota system and only relied on anti-discrimination law. Eichhorst et al. (2010), and Greve (2009) note that quota systems and anti-discrimination legislation are considered as opposite approaches in the employment of PWDs. Moreover, Fuchs (2014) claims that quota system emphasizes the concept of "limitation of abilities" and rather than "capability".

To conclude, barriers identified in the existing literature such as low educational level, poor access to infrastructure, discrimination from the employers' side are also present in Kazakhstan. The effectiveness of quota system is dependent on a case by case basis, mainly being effective in developed countries. The work of Alayev (2016) on "Peculiarities in attracting PWDs to work in Kazakhstan (case study Almaty and Almaty region)" is similar to this research. However, the value added of this research lies in consideration of all stakeholders involved in the process of employment of PWDs including PWDs themselves, NGOs, government institutions and employers. By taking comprehensive approach the existing barriers in the employment can be revealed and recommendations can be offered.

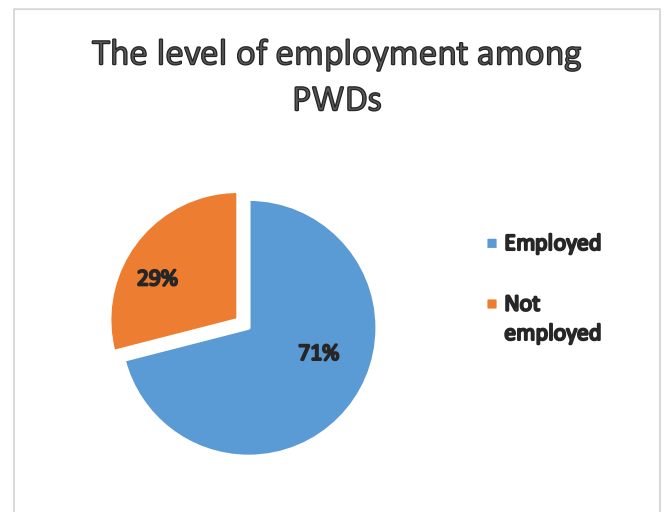
## 7. Discussion

### Findings from the interviews with PWDs

17 interviews were conducted with PWDs. 10 of the respondents have the first group of disability; three have the second; and four have the third (*Graph 3*). The present variety of disability groups is important in analyzing the employment rate across the categories and later for providing policy recommendations. 10 of the participants are disabled from birth or early childhood, the rest became disabled during their adulthood. This factor is important to consider because it directly affects the level of education and skills obtained. The level of education is crucial in the employment (*Graph 4*). 12 of the respondents are employed and 5 are not. Interviews revealed that the main barrier in employment of PWDs in Kazakhstan is the lack of education. The accessibility of infrastructure represented the second barrier and the least occurring obstacle was discrimination from the employers' side.



Graph 3



Graph

4

### *Proper Naming/Labelling of Disabled Persons*

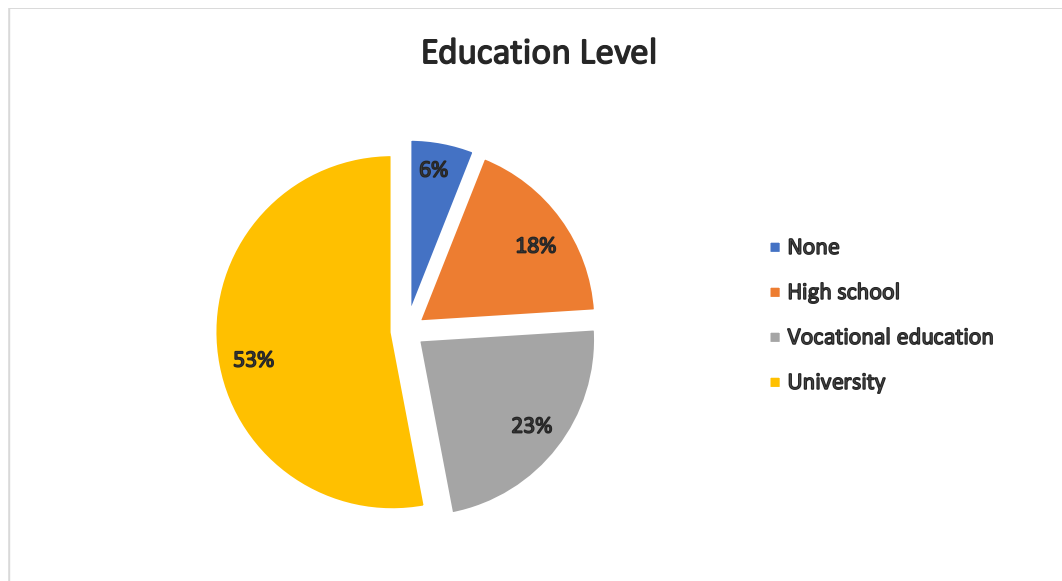
The first question that we asked was about the way participants preferred to be addressed taken their disability. This question is important for our study in framing the non-discriminative definition of the people with disabilities mentioned in the literature review. The responses differed in a way that few didn't care how they were referred to, while the majority considered the word "invalid" to be offensive and would prefer to be named as a person with special needs or with disability (человек с ограниченными возможностями здоровья). However, they mentioned that this definition is long and inconvenient in conversations.

### ***Education and discrimination issues***

Nine respondents have university degree, including Masters, four - vocational education degree, three – high school diploma and one – do not have education. It is worth noting that the presence of university diploma increases the likelihood of being employed. However, four of the respondents with university diploma faced direct discrimination from the employers' side during the interview stage. For example, two of respondents who graduated from KIMEP and had competitive GPA along with wide range of extra-curricular activities, met the requirements of the hiring firms. However, they did not indicate the fact that they were disabled in their resumes and were invited for an interview. When employers found out that our respondents were physically disabled, they refused to hire them without stating the reason and moreover, asking inappropriate questions such as *“how did you graduate from KIMEP if you are blind and how did you work before?”* This fact is an indicator of existing prejudices inherited from the Soviet Union where those people were mainly hidden in their homes and did not work. Another case of discrimination was mentioned by another respondent who is blind, a graduate of Art University “Shabit” in Astana when she applied for the position of music teacher. The employer directly said, *“how the parents of the kids will react, what if they will complain that their kids have such a teacher?”*. Also, some of the respondents mention that PWDs sometimes use their disability in obtaining easy grades or the professors themselves do not require much from them because of the disability. Consequently, such graduates are not competitive in the regular job market.

Three of the respondents who got their disability during the adulthood mention that the education/qualification obtained before they got disability was no longer applicable. For example, one of the interviewees was educated as tractor-driver, which is no longer suitable for him now due to his disability. Consequently, PWDs with adopted disability face problems with finding suitable jobs. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents mentioned that the range of choice of vocational trainings offered by the Employment Center in Astana is limited. Those trainings are especially important for those who do not have applicable profession or even education. Moreover, those trainings are not conducted on constant basis because they are provided through the tender.

Graph 5



Discrimination is prohibited by the law of the RK and the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability. Consequently, we also aimed to find out the awareness about the legal rights of our interviewees. The majority knew about the national and international legislation but not in detail. Also, it is worth noting that only those who work in NGOs and who are socially active are aware of the UN Convention.

#### ***Workplace Access and other Infrastructure Issues***

Another important factor to consider is infrastructure, transport and work place accommodation. Even though many buildings are considered to be accessible for PWDs under the framework of Nur Otan project “Kedergisiz Keleshek” (Future without barriers), our respondents mention that they face problems in getting to work or any other places. It is important to note that the project “Kedergisiz Keleshek” oversees only public buildings such as banks, schools, universities, malls, hospitals, while the percentage of inspected living blocks is small. Moreover, old buildings that do not have elevators pose a great challenge for motor-disabled people to get out of their apartments and go to work, shop and etc. Also, ramps do not meet the requirements for accessibility or even are absent. One of our respondents stated that she requested from the apartment owner’s cooperative to place ramps. Three of our interviewees have a remote work because of the infrastructural barriers in getting to work.

Transport was mentioned as one of the impeding factors in getting to the workplace. Interviewees stated that some of the buses are not equipped with rams, only the newer ones do. Some of the drivers and conductors do not know how to use rams or are reluctant to put them down. Also, there is a service of Invataxi provided by the Kazakhstan Confederation of

Disabled People that is available 8 times a month, which is not sufficient to cover the needs of PWDs. However, those who are employed can request Invataxi on everyday basis to take them to and from the job. Only seven cars are available for service, which also makes it not accessible for all. Also, three of our respondents were provided by the car from the employer.

Work accommodation should be tailored to the disability type. For example, for the people with visual impairments special software is required to enable them to read the documents and perform their work responsibilities. Two respondents with visual impairments claimed that required software programs, particularly in Kazakh, were not in place. Later, after 1-1.5 years the necessary software was installed. Another obstacle that was mentioned was the accessibility of infrastructure within the building (no elevators).

### ***Employment area***

Also, another finding from the interviews was that 50% (8 out of 17) are employed in NGOs or organizations that promote PWDs' rights and contribute to their well-being. Those who work in regular job market were invited via their network or initiated these job positions themselves. This fact proves that not many PWDs are employed in regular job market nor are socially integrated. The employers of the given organizations are disabled themselves and are aware of the special needs that are required by some of PWDs. Also, one of the respondents who is disabled himself and is active in promoting the rights of disabled people, stated that organizations benefit from nominally hiring, which implies employing PWDs who receives salary without performing the assigned work. In the given case, the employer does not have to provide special accommodation and individual approach, while the disabled person is also happy to receive a salary without facing infrastructure barriers. One of our respondents is in similar situation.

### ***Government Social Support***

Experts claim that social payment provided on constant basis demotivates PWDs to work and promotes dependency. However, during our interviews 100% said that the amount of social payment is not enough to cover the basic needs in Astana. Consequently, in the context of Kazakhstan, the given social payment is not preventing PWDs from getting employed. Dependency problem was not identified from our interviews but many of our respondents mentioned that some PWDs are satisfied with their social payment and are not willing to face infrastructure and psychological barriers.

To conclude, low employment level of PWDs is a complex interrelation of various factors such as the willingness to work, the level and quality of education received, availability of



proper infrastructure outside and inside the buildings and accessibility of transport. Discrimination is present despite the available higher education diploma. However, many stated that they did not encounter problems with colleagues or employers. But it is worth noting that they were either invited to work or were working in organization promoting the rights of PWDs. The problem with infrastructure is considered to be the second barrier, but respondents note that improvements have been made after the ratification of the UN Convention in 2015.

### **Findings with representative of NGOs and state bodies**

The issues that we were interested to know from the representatives of NGOs, Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman and state institutions were the following: efficiency of the current quota system, changes after the ratification of the UN Convention in 2015, the main barriers in the employment of PWDs and availability of accessible infrastructure. The same questions were asked to the state bodies in order to analyze different perspectives of the state representatives and NGOs on the same issues. Interviews with the main government institutions responsible for the employment of PWDs in Astana such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, the Employment Center and Nur Otan Party that oversees the “Future Without Barriers” project were conducted. The position of these state institutions is important to consider because they represent the main decision-making bodies in forming the legislation regarding the employment of PWDs in Kazakhstan.

#### ***Quota System***

One of the tools to ensure the employment of disabled people in Kazakhstan is established 2-4% quota system. However, all representatives of NGOs and Ombudsmen office claim that the quota system is not working properly. They consider the quota system as a good tool to increase the employment of PWDs only when employers’ compliance is monitored.

#### ***NGO “Shyrak”***

*“Quota system did not work and is not working. ... Employers just ignore it. The amount of the fine is very small and it is easier for the employer to pay it. ... Prejudices regarding employing disabled people exist such as greater leave of absences, extensive social packages and inability to dismiss based on moral reasons and the labor code requirements.”*

#### ***Kazakh Society of Deaf People (Казакское Общество Глухих)***

*“The quota system is not effective because employers are from private companies and the state cannot pressure them to employ disabled people.”*

#### ***Kazakh Society of Blind People (Казакское Общество Слепых)***

*“The quota system is declarative in nature. Many employers are afraid of responsibilities in regard to creation of special working conditions, providing access within and outside of the buildings.”*

According to the Code of Administrative Offenses, the Article 98, paragraph 1.4 and 2 the amount of the fine varies from 5-10 Monthly Calculation Index (MCI) depending on the size of the organization. MCI is estimated at 2405 KZT (Tax Code of RK). As it can be seen, the amount is very small and it is easier for the employers to pay the fine.

#### ***Representative of ECOR***

*“The quota system – is a measure of last-choice. The law is written well; however, it does not work in practice. The law should be reconsidered and specified.”*

#### ***The UN Convention***

One of the stepping stones in the improvement of lives of PWDs in Kazakhstan was ratification of the UN Convention in 2015. Consequently, we were interested in finding out about the changes that took place after the ratification. Interviews indicate that there is a positive trend towards the improvement of the conditions of PWDs; however, the changes are not substantive.

#### ***The Kazakhstan Confederation of Disabled People***

*“After the ratification, technical assistance for rehabilitation was increased and improved. ... The quota system was revisited from 3% to 2-4%. The standards for the workplace accommodation depending on the type of disability (visual, hearing and motor impairments). Also, housing issues were reconsidered. Before PWDs were provided with flats on random floors, but now flats are strictly given on the first and second floors. ... However, she notes that the peak of activities is declining.”*

#### ***The Kazakh Society of Deaf People***

*“Ratification did not affect the employment problems of the disabled people.”*

### ***The representative of ECOR***

*“According to the Article 33 of the UN Convention, there should be an autonomous monitoring body that will oversee the its implementation in Kazakhstan. Currently, the Coordinating Council is created within the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of RK. This is wrong in itself because the Ministry oversees its own work.”*

### ***The Kazakh Society of Blind People***

*“After the ratification the President of RK, Parliament, deputies started to be concerned with the problems of disabled people and they try to provide sufficient conditions for PWDs.”*

### ***The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman***

*“After the ratification of the UN Convention the situation has changed: state’s liabilities are put under the supervision by the international standards.”*

### ***The representative of the Employment Center***

*“After the ratification of the UN Convention there is a big progress and more attention is being paid to PWDs.”*

### **Barriers to Employment**

PWDs and representatives of NGOs share similar vision in terms of the low employment level of PWDs and state that it is a result of interrelated barriers. They indicated the following barriers: 1) lack of education; 2) discrimination as result of existing prejudices towards PWDs; 3) low awareness about the proper ways to interact with PWDs; 4) poor access to infrastructure.

### ***The NGO “Shyrak”***

*“There is a lack of qualified specialists among PWDs, only those who became disabled in the adulthood have education. ... In the beginning of my career as an employer (she is disabled herself), I hired everyone who desired to work and were willing to change their lives for the better. However, now I am working on state projects, I do not have time to prepare specialists, therefore I only employ qualified disabled people.”*

### ***The Kazakhstan Confederation of Disabled People***

*“First of all, the environment is not accessible, infrastructure is not tailored to the needs of PWDs. Taken the fact of Astana being the capital, the government tries to buy new buses, but the drivers and conductors do not know how to communicate and serve PWDs. Society does not know how to approach them either.”*

It is worth noting that interaction is a two-way process that requires mutual understanding of the society, employers as well as PWDs themselves. Communication is crucial for decent work performance of the disabled employee.

#### ***The NGO “Shyrak”***

*“Classic scenario: the first month, the disabled person is over-supported by the colleagues, because they are not sure how to treat such people. However, later the employer demands equal job performance from PWDs and disabled person takes employer’s note as a personal offense based on the disability.”*

*“The system of social protection contributes to dependency. Disabled people are passive. Moreover, they are not confident in themselves because they are not socially integrated and have low self-expectations.”*

#### ***The representative of Nur Otan Party***

*“There are many barriers. It is hard to name all employers as socially responsible because business is mainly profit oriented and the creation of special working conditions for PWDs will require additional funding. Moreover, not all PWDs would like to work not because of their incapability to work but because they are perceived as incapable by the society. Infrastructure barriers are also present and need to be fixed.”*

#### ***The representative of the Employment Center***

*“Education is considered to be the main barrier. Only 20% of PWDs have higher education, 60% are community college (колледж) graduates....Moreover we cannot ask the reason of dismissal of PWDs because we cannot interfere in work affairs of the companies.”*

#### ***The NGO “Bezmolvnyi Mir”***

*“Some of the disabled people can be aggressive or take criticism personally. ... Employer does not know how to communicate with them. It requires understanding.”*

### ***The representative of ECOR***

*“Education is the main barrier in employment. For instance, I know one guy, who underwent 3 various courses of vocational education provided by the Employment Center but is unemployed.”*

*“Overprotective legislation i.e. shortened working hours and extended vacations, is one of the reason for employers to not hire PWDs”.*

### ***The Employment Center***

The main mediator between the employer and PWDs in employment process is the Employment Center. Therefore, we tried to analyze the performance of the Employment Center in assisting PWDs in being employed. The answers varied among the respondents.

### ***The representative of Nur Otan Party***

*“I would like to point out the effectiveness of systemic work of the Employment Center in Astana in engaging all interested parties and providing working places for PWDs.”*

### ***The representative of ECOR***

*“The employment system via the Employment Center in Kazakhstan is not effective.”*

### ***The Kazakhstan Confederation of Disabled People***

*“The Employment Center tries to do its best: they organize trainings and invite guest speakers. But the employment process does not have individual approach: they rarely ask about the job preferences and hobbies. ... First of all, disabled people should acquire necessary skills for the available vacancy. ... The Employment Center cannot force employer to hire more disabled people. They rather say thank you for those PWDs who are already employed.”*

### ***The NGO “Shyrak”***

*“The Employment Center is doing a good job. However, they only employ but do not monitor work progress and integration of PWDs. Consequently, disabled people leave their jobs after 1.5-2 months”*

### **The extent of participation of PWDs in policy making**

The involvement of PWDs in policy making is essential in creating well-formulated legislation because they know their needs. In Kazakhstan, Ministers, city mayors, the Employment Center and other entities have personal advisers among PWDs. The effectiveness of the given advisers is questionable because PWDs' contribution in decision making is hard to evaluate. It is worth noting that there are 35 deputies, 37 advisers to regional and city mayors among PWDs. Moreover, coordination councils working for ensuring social protection of PWDs have been established in cities and regions.

***The representative of Nur Otan Party***

*“The institute of advisers under the Ministries and city mayors has been functioning in Astana for many years. For instance, Dina Islamovna, the director of the NGO “Independent life “DOS””, was the adviser of Astana city mayor for considerable time period and contributed to the legislation on social protection of PWDs.”*

***The representative of ECOR***

*“The advisers were appointed from the existing social activists and not elected by the public. Mainly, advisers are appointed as a formality.”*

***The representative of the Fund for Social Innovation Projects***

*“There is no representative from PWDs in the Parliament, which is the direct violation of the UN Convention. How the existing laws can be properly designed if they were developed without involvement of PWDs?”*

***The Kazakhstan Confederation of Disabled People***

*“After the ratification of UN Convention, active PWDs were invited to take part in discussions of legislation regarding PWDs.”*

***The Youth Association of Disabled People***

*“I am the first adviser of the city mayor of Astana among PWDs who was for the first time elected in 2017.”*

***The representative of the Department of Social Protection***

The given representative only answered questions regarding the IPR because she stated that she is not qualified to answer all interview questions. Department of Social Protection is

responsible for issuing IPRs, particularly on social and professional rehabilitation. For individuals of the 'first group of disability', IPR is given for the lifetime. She argued that IPR is given in 10-15 minutes.

To conclude, representatives of the NGOs argued that the quota system is not an effective measure to increase employment levels of PWDs in Astana. In regard to the impact of the UN Convention, changes in legislation, infrastructure are noticeable but not substantive. The work of the Employment Center is viewed as positive, but there is a need to provide vocational training with subsequent employment. Also, education was indicated as the main barrier in existing low employment rates of PWDs.

### **Findings from surveys with employers**

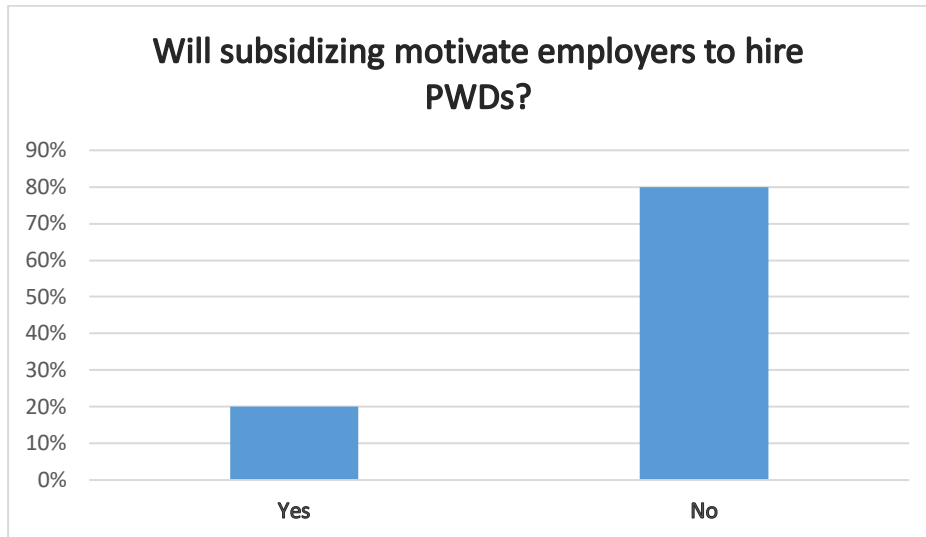
The employers represent an essential player in the employment process. Consequently, we were interested in actual numbers of PWDs being employed. Moreover, questions about employers' position in hiring PWDs, the awareness about the quota system, its fulfillment and any problems they encountered while hiring the PWDs. In total 30 companies were contacted and 20 companies provided their responses.

90% of employers know about the quota system. The given number shows high awareness of the employers regarding the quota system. It is important to consider that 40% of the interviewed organizations are working with the Employment Center that provided us with contacts of those organizations. Due to this, the results may be biased. The rest of the organizations were chosen through other sources of information.

All the companies claim that they hire disabled people, but 6 out 15 did not answer the question regarding the numbers of PWDs working in their organizations. Even those who specified the numbers of PWDs, do not fulfil the quota. Only 4 organizations fulfilled the quota.

We were interested if organizations encounter any problems when hiring PWDs. Only 2 organizations mentioned about high costs of workplace accommodation. The following reasons were mentioned as impeding employment process: work specificity, qualification and one employer, who hires 95% PWDs, mentioned low motivation to work and self-esteem. HR from one organization mentioned that harmful working conditions prevent from employing PWDs based on regulations provided by law. Particularly, she referred to the X-ray service room where PWDs are not allowed to work. She emphasized that the work in the X-ray service room cannot be compared to the harmful work environments in a mine.

One of the measures to increase the rate of employment among PWDs is subsidizing the employer's expenditures on work place accommodation. Therefore, we asked employers if they would be willing to hire PWDs through subsidies. Surprisingly, only 4 companies claimed that subsidies will encourage them to hire PWDs. While the rest said that this measure is not a determining factor in employing PWDs. They claimed that qualification matters the most.



To summarize, employers are aware of the quota system, but only 6 fulfil the quota. Subsidizing was not influential in hiring a greater number of PWDs because qualifications were the determining factor.



## 8. Limitations

The given research has revealed the main barriers in employment of PWDs in Astana. However, it is worth pointing out the existing limitations of the given research. The first limitation of the study was its scope in regard to the territorial choice. Focus was made on Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, where the situation of PWDs is better compared to other cities and regions. Individuals with mental disabilities were not included in the given research due to the limitation of the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University. However, the given group of people experience more severe problems in employment in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the sample size of PWDs was only 18, which is not representative of the whole population of PWDs. Also, the majority of interviewed disabled people were socially active representatives of this category of people, which might create more positive perspective on the issues of PWDs in Astana. Those disabled people who do not work and are not socially and economically integrated are omitted from this research. This is a substantial shortcoming of the research.

Regarding the respondents from employers' side, it is worth noting that half of the contacts were provided from the Employment Center, meaning that they were obviously aware of the quota system and had some experience in hiring PWDs. Also, it is important to consider the fact that HR managers of the organizations were contacted for the telephone surveys, but not CEOs. This means that HR managers might not be in a position to answer the question regarding the effectiveness of subsidizing.

During the interviews with each group of stakeholders, respondents did not answer all the stated questions due to the various factors. For instance, in some interviews, particularly with state officials it was not possible to follow the questionnaire because of their time constraints. Therefore, some questions were not included into the analysis of the study. Some employers were reluctant to answer the question regarding the number of employed PWDs in their companies. Moreover, the question clarifying the disability type of the employed PWDs in these organization was not asked. Thus, it was not possible to analyze the employment ratio across disability groups.

## 9. Conclusion

According to the Committee on Statistics of RK (2017), Astana has the largest amount of PWDs, which is 21,946 out of 651,924. But the overall numbers of PWDs across Kazakhstan, constituting around 4% of the total population is very low in comparison to the one in Europe, which is 14%. Thus, experts from the NGOs and some PWDs claimed that this number of PWDs in Kazakhstan is not realistic and needs to be corrected. Moreover, the data of employed PWDs via national program “Employment Roadmap” and the Employment Center in Astana, creates a positive picture. However, this data is only indicative on the numbers of employed, but it does not take into the account many PWDs who quit their job for various reasons.

National legislation and the UN Convention set the legal basis of non-discriminative nature of PWDs and their social, economic and political integration into the society. The rules and the quota system were designed to promote the rights of PWDs, but unfortunately, they do not work properly in practice. Moreover, despite the presence of PWDs among deputies and advisers to high ranking officers, they are not represented in parliament or civil service. This fact causes doubts regarding the actual involvement of PWDs in policy making process and not only considering their participation during the discussion stage. No universal solution for the problem of low employment of PWDs exists because it involves interrelation of factors that impede the employment process. Those barriers are low levels of education, difficulties in ensuring access to infrastructure and discrimination as a result of low awareness of the public regarding PWDs and stereotypes about their ability to work.

The given PAE has revealed that the main barrier in the employment of PWDs in Astana is the low level of education and qualification. While 53% of our respondents hold university degrees, this is not indicative of the whole category of PWDs in Astana because they represent the most active members of this group. Moreover, in the context of Kazakhstan, the mere diploma of higher education is not a guarantee of professionalism of PWDs because the system is corrupted and even sometimes some disabled people use their condition by asking to ease some requirements for their studies.

Access to infrastructure and transport were identified as the second barrier impeding the employment of PWDs in Astana. With the introduction of the initiative “Future without Barriers” and ratification of the UN Convention, improvements in making infrastructure accessible in Astana has been made. However, based on the statistics, around 80% of the infrastructure in Astana is viewed as accessible, which the expert from “ECOR” claims to be

overestimated. But it is worth mentioning that environment within and outside of the building is the most accessible in Astana in comparison to other cities in Kazakhstan because it is the capital of the country. Regarding the transport accessibility, the situation is improving especially with the introduction of new buses that have ramps for PWDs. However, bus drivers and conductors do not know how to assist PWDs and communicate with them.

Discrimination was determined as the least affecting factor in low employment levels of PWDs. However, some clarifications have to be made. There were two respondents among PWDs with high quality education who experienced discrimination based on their disability during the interview process. While others did not indicate any discriminative attitude either from colleagues or the employer. But it is worth to point out that 50% of the respondents work in NGOs or companies that work for the promotion of rights of PWDs. Moreover, changes in the attitudes of people in Astana regarding PWDs are present but still the awareness of the public, including employers needs to be improved.

Motivating employers is seen as one of the effective tools especially in the context of Astana due to the low levels of education and qualification. It was mentioned by several NGO representatives and state officials that private businesses are mainly profit oriented. Thus, they are interested in high qualified specialists among PWDs who will be able to perform assigned tasks. Moreover, they do not want to bare high costs of providing accommodation for PWDs. The new law dated January 2018 on workplace accommodation may change the situation of low employment rates of PWDs. The effect of this law will be clear in upcoming years. Subsidizing employers in order to hire PWDs was not seen to be effective from our interviews with HR representatives of the companies and some NGO officials. This result may not be representative due to the small sample size.

## 10. Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1: Provide accurate data**

Provide actual numbers of the overall amount of PWDs in Kazakhstan and the ones who have been employed via constant monitoring of working progress of PWDs. The fact of mere employment is not indicative on the numbers of PWDs who remain to work.

### **Recommendation 2: Ensure access to education & vocational trainings**

One of the principal barriers in the employment of PWDs in Astana is low level of education. Consequently, the given problem requires significant support from the government side in providing scholarships on competitive basis for PWDs. Competition during the scholarship application process as well as the studies will motivate PWDs for academic and personal development.

In regard to the vocational trainings provided by the Employment Center, changes have to be made in terms of their consistency, available range of choice and focused direction based on the demand of employers. For instance, light industry could be developed in Astana, which will create additional workplaces for PWDs.

Also, for those individuals who got the disability in adulthood, sometimes re-qualification is required because they are not able to work as tractor drivers, auto mechanics and etc. Moreover, one of the main disadvantages of the Employment Center is that its representatives do not oversee and monitor the adaption of PWDs in their workplaces. This leads to many PWDs quitting their jobs very soon due to misunderstandings between them and employers. Thus, the position of job coaches need to be introduced at the Employment Center, which could improve the integration of PWDs at their jobs.

### **Recommendation 3: Provide access to infrastructure & public transport**

Access to infrastructure within and outside buildings was seen as the second impeding factor in the employment of PWDs in Astana. Experts claim that the data stating 80% accessibility of public places is overestimated. Consequently, attraction of specialists from the third parties in assessing the level of accessibility of public places is required.

In regard to public transport accessibility, awareness of bus drivers and conductors needs to be increased through conducting trainings on communication ethics and assistance of PWDs.

### **Recommendation 4: Continue increasing the awareness level about PWDs**

Raising awareness of employers of private and public enterprises as well as the citizens needs to be carried out in order to eliminate discrimination towards PWDs. Shift of the

paradigm, from perceiving PWDs as incapable of working to perceiving them as the ordinary citizens who are also able to work, needs to happen.

**Recommendation 5: Provide incentives for employers**

It is required to incentivize employers to hire PWDs especially in the presence of low level of education/qualification obtained among PWDs in Astana. Moreover, employers do not want to bare the high costs of accommodation for PWDs. It is worth to point out that employer may not understand correctly the term “reasonable accommodation”. For some PWDs only minor arrangements to the working place has to be made, while for motor disabled substantial changes have to be made in terms of elevators, water closets and etc. Thus, the better explanation of the term “reasonable accommodation” to the employers is required. Another incentive to hire PWDs could be subsidizing the companies through tax cuts, low interest rate loans for the private companies.

**Recommendation 6: Create independent monitoring body**

In the absence of autonomous regulatory body that oversees the realization of the UN Convention, the need to create one is urgent. This in turn will lead to greater check and balances for the MLSP.

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## Appendix

**1 . Professional part of an individual rehabilitation program for a disabled person  
№ \_\_\_\_ IPR cards from " \_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_  
to the certificate of medical and social expertise No. \_\_\_\_ from " \_\_\_\_ " \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.**

- 1.Full name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.Address, home phone \_\_\_\_\_
3. IPR was developed for the first time, reissued (formation, correction)
4. Disability category (group, reason) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.Diagnosis \_\_\_\_\_
- 6.Disability is assigned for a period up to \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_
7. Education \_\_\_\_\_
- 8.Profession (specialty) \_\_\_\_\_

	Rehabilitation measure	Implementation period	Date of fulfillment	Performer	Justification of the reason for not performing
		The specialist of the territorial unit	The specialist responsible for implementation of IPR		
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Psychological and remedial assistance for disabled children under 18.				
2.	Vocational training and primary, secondary, higher, postgraduate education through the organization of social protection of the population				
3.	Employment				
4.	Employment terms				
	4.1. Work pattern (full time or shortened working day)				
	4.2. Elimination of the adverse impact of production factors.				
	4.3. Provision of special workplace accommodation				
5.	Other				

FULL NAME. \_\_\_\_\_  
chief specialist of territorial the unit that developed the IRP (signature)

FULL NAME. \_\_\_\_\_  
Head of the territorial unit (signature)

Stamp of a territorial unit

9. Date of implementation of the professional part of the IRP \_\_\_\_\_

FULL NAME. \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief- manager (signature)

10. Evaluation of the results of the implementation of the professional part of rehabilitation (underline): restoration of impaired functions (complete or partial), compensation of impaired functions (full or partial), absence of positive result.

FULL NAME. \_\_\_\_\_  
Head of the territorial unit (signature)

Stamp of a territorial unit

Retrieved from: <https://www.zakon.kz/>

## 2. Report on certification and adaptation for Astana city

In total from January 1, 2012 to April 1, 2017					
Total					
Total number of social and transport infrastructure facilities	certification		adaptation		The share of facilities provided with accessibility for disabled persons from the total number of certified social and transport infrastructure facilities. %
	are subject to	carried out	are subject to	carried out	
3000	3000	2385	1666	669	58,2

Retrieved from: <http://convention.enbek.gov.kz/>

## 3. The list of facilities and destinations for the provision of the «Invataxi» service:

- 1) workplace;
- 2) educational institutions;
- 3) local representative and executive bodies;

- 4) the court, the prosecutor's office;
- 5) public places;
- 6) legal advice office;
- 7) notary;
- 8) medical institutions (except for cases of emergency (urgent) medical assistance);
- 9) airports, railway stations, bus stations, sea and river ports;
- 10) organizations that provide special social services.

#### **4. Questionnaire**

##### **1. Interview questions for PWDs:**

- 1) What is your year of birth?**
- 2) What is your marital status?**
  - a) Married
  - b) Widowed
  - c) Single-divorced
  - d) Single-never married
  - e) prefer not to tell
- 3) What is your highest level of education completed?**
  - a) None
  - b) High school
  - c) Vocational training (college)
  - d) University/Institute
  - e) Prefer not to tell
- 4) Is your disability connected to:**
  - a) Hands/arms
  - b) Leg/feet
  - c) Spine
  - d) Eyes
  - e) Ears
  - f) Speech apparatus
  - g) Other (please specify)
- 5) At what age did you get your disability (if you were born with it, please identify 0)**
  - a) 0 (1)
  - b) 1-10
  - c) 11-20
  - d) 21-30
  - e) 31-40
  - f) 41-50
  - g) 51-60
  - h) 60 and above
  - i) Prefer not to tell
- 6) What is your disability category?**

- a) I group (having severe difficulties in performing daily activities, in need of constant care by another person)
  - b) II group (having severe difficulties in performing daily activities, but not in need of constant care by another person)
  - c) III group (having noticeable difficulties in performing daily activities)
  - d) Prefer not to tell
- 7) Do you consider the social payment you receive from the government of Kazakhstan based on your disability category to be enough to maintain your living?**
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) I do not receive social payment
- 8) Do you have a job?**
- a) Yes
  - b) No (Would you like to work?)
- 9) If no, did you have a job before or did you tried to find a job?**
- 10) Whom did you contact to find a job?**
- 11) Did you approach the employment center? Was it helpful? Did anyone supervise you during the employment process and after?**
- 12) What kind of problems do/did you encounter when looking for a job? (lack of qualification/education, employer reluctance to hire, lack of information regarding job vacancies).**
- 13) What difficulties do/did you encounter at work? (getting to work, accommodation, relationship with employer and co-workers)**
- 14) How long did you work? What was the reason for dismissal?**
- 15) Do you know about your rights regarding employment?**
- 16) Have you heard about UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities?**

## **2. Interview questions for NGO, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection/ Akimat, Employment Center**

- 1) Is the quota system effective in Kazakhstan? How it is monitored?
- 2) How the ratification of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities in 2015 changed the employment situation of the disabled people?
- 3) What do you consider to be the main barrier for the employment in Kazakhstan for the people with disabilities?
- 4) How would you rate the performance of the Employment Center in assisting the employment of the disabled people? (NB: this question will be asked to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and Akimat).
- 5) What do you consider to be the main barriers from the side of the employers in hiring people with disabilities?
- 6) Do you consider that the legislation with regard of disabled people in Kazakhstan being overprotective and limiting their opportunities? (working hours, extended vacations, pensions)
- 7) Are disabled people in Kazakhstan active jobseekers? Do they show interest to work themselves?
- 8) To what extent people with disabilities are involved in policy making?

## **3. Survey for employers:**

- 1) Do you know about quota system of hiring disabled persons?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  
- 2) Do you have a disabled person working in your company?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- 3) If yes, how many?
- 4) Would you like to hire a disabled person?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  
- 5) Why you do not hire a disabled person in your company?
  - a) They do not apply for a job
  - b) They are less productive
  - c) They are more likely to leave
  - d) They take more sick leave
  - e) They do not have qualification
  - f) It is costly to organize special work accommodation
  - g) Prefer not to tell
  
- 6) Will you hire a disabled person if you company will be subsidized by the government?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No