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Faculty of Sociology and Social Work
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PhD Thesis

**The Discrimination of Individuals with Disabilities in Romania at the Socio-
Professional Level**

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Justification for the Choice of Topic

The reasons for my decision to study the issue of the discrimination of individuals with disabilities in Romania at the socio-professional level were the following, in no particular order:

The specialized literature on the subject of the socio-professional integration of individuals with disabilities is very scarce.

The lack of clear, updated and, moreover, true statistical data about persons with disabilities who are employed.

The false concern with the issue of the employment of persons with disabilities from Romania manifested by frequent legislative changes in favour of the employers who would not recruit individuals with disabilities and by European projects funding that hardly changes the high percentage of socio-economic inactivity of these persons.

The false involvement and concern of state institutions with increasing the number of persons with disabilities who are active socially and economically.

Finally, my personal circumstances allowed me to use the participant observation method and to analyze with increased attention and interest aspects which would have otherwise been easy to overlook.

DOCTORATE THESIS TABLE OF CONTENTS:

SUMMARY----6

I. Introduction----8

II. Conceptual clarifications----10

II.1. The definition of discrimination and of related concepts----10

II.1.1. Stereotype, prejudice and discrimination----10

II.1.2. Stereotypes----11

II.1.3. Prejudices----12

II.1.4. Discrimination----13

II.2. Theoretical positions on discrimination----15

II.3. Defining disability----17

II.3.1. Theoretical models in order to define disability----18

II.3.2. The definition of disability from the point of view of discrimination on the labor market. functional limitation and disability----22

III. Institutional and legislative initiatives against the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market----23

III.1. European Union initiatives against discrimination and to support the integration of individuals with disabilities ----23

III.2. Organizational and institutional initiatives ----27

III.3. Corporatist Government initiatives to promote social responsibility ----29

III.3.1. Corporatist Government----29

III.3.2. Initiatives for the Promotion of Corporative Social Responsibility--30

III.4. Legislative initiatives ----33

III.4.1. Legislative History of Fighting Against Discrimination: General Aspects----33

III.4.2. Legislative History of Protecting Individuals with Disability and Their Socio-Professional Integration: General Aspects----35

III.4.3. Analysis of Romanian legislation regarding the protection and work integration of individuals with disabilities ----37

III.4.4. Conclusions----45

IV. The socio-professional orientation of individuals with mobility and sensory disabilities in Romania----47

IV.1. Introduction ----47

IV.2. Conceptuale clarifications ----48

IV.2.1. School Orientation and School Counselling----	48
IV.2.2. School Orientation and Professional Orientation----	49
IV.2.3. Professional Orientation and Socio-Professional Orientation----	49
IV.2.4. Career Orientattion and Career Guidance----	49
IV.2.5. Career Education----	50
IV.2.6. Career Counselling----	50
IV.2.7. Concepts' Comparison----	51
IV.3. Stages of the socio-professional orientation process ----	53
IV.4. The role and contribution of schools and specialists in the socio-professional orientation----	55
IV.5. The role of informal relationships in the process of socio-professional orientation ----	61
IV.5.1. The Role of the School in Professional Orientation at an Informal Level----	61
IV.5.2. The role of the Family in Professional Orientation----	62
IV.5.3. The role of Society in Professional Orientation----	64
IV.6. Professional orientation using modern equipment ----	64
IV.6.1. Professional Orientation and the Mass-Media----	64
IV.6.2. Professional Orientation and Information Technology ----	65
The correlation between the professional orientation and the labor market ----	69
V. Studies concerning the socio-professional orientation of young people with disabilities From Romania ----	72
V.1. Qualitative study concerning the socio-professional orientation of individuals with disabilities from Romania----	72
V.1.1. Research methodology----	72
V.1.2. Study results----	75
V.1.3. Conclusions----	79
Quantitative study concerning the socio-professional orientation of young people with sensory deficiencies from Romania ----	83
V.2.1. Research methodology ----	83
V.2.2. Research results Concerning the Socio-Professional Orientation of Young People with Sensory Disabilities----	87
V.2.3. Conclusions----	101
VI. The response to disability at the socio-professional level----	102
VI.1. The state of individuals with disabilities on the labor market ----	103
VI.1.1. Statistical data about the position of individuals with disabilities--	104

VI.1.2. The state of individuals with visual disabilities----	106
VI.1.3. The state of individuals with hearing disabilities ----	107
VI.2. The discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market----	108
VI.2.1. The materialist (economic) point of view----	108
VI.2.2. Economic theories ----	109
VI.2.3. Discrimination caused by employers' preconceptions ----	109
VI.2.4. Discrimination cause by employers' poor information----	110
VI.2.5. Discrimination cause by the attempt to exploit a minority group which has weak powers of negotiation within the labor Market ----	111
VI.3. Theoretical models concerning disability ----	111
VI.3.1. The medical model on disability----	112
VI.3.2. The social model of disability----	114
VI.3.3. The bio-psycho-social model of disability----	119
VI.3.4. The relational northern model concerning disability----	120
VI.3.5. Postmodernist points of view regarding disability----	120
VI.3.6. The medico-sociologic model of approaching Disability specific behaviours in relation to the ability to Work ----	120
VI.4. Emotional responses and paternalism– causes of discrimination ----	124
VI.4.1. Emotional Responses----	124
VI.4.2. Paternalism----	127
VI.5. Current barriers in the way of employing individuals with disabilities--	128
VI.5.1. Environment barriers ----	129
VI.5.2. Societal barriers----	129
VI.5.3. Personal barriers----	130
VI.5.4. Surpassing social barriers ----	132
VI.6. The social response to disability ----	133
VI.6.1. Attitudinal and behavioural towards individuals with disabilities--	137
VI.6.2. Social stereotypes----	137
VI.6.3. Distancing----	138
VI.6.4. Wrong identification ----	138
VI.6.5. Discomfort----	139
VI.6.6. Anxiety----	139
VI.6.7. Communicational disfunctions----	140
VI.6.8. Pity----	140

VI.6.9. The transformation of the individual with disabilities into a hero--	141
VI.6.10. Blame----	141
VI.6.11. Labelling----	141
VI.7. Instead of conclusions. Measures to increase the degree of integration of individuals with disabilities on the labor market ----	143
VII. Studies concerning the discrimination of individuals with disabilities from Romania on the labor market----	144
VII.1. Preliminary study----	144
VII.2. Qualitative study regarding romanian employers' opinions and attitudes towards candidates with disabilities ----	145
VII.2.1. Research methodology----	145
VII.2.2. Qualitative research results----	149
VII.2.3. Comparison of the two focus groups----	155
VII.2.4. Conclusions----	156
VII.3. Quantitative study concerning the discrimination of individuals with disabilities from Romania on the labor market. methodological aspects ----	157
VII.4. The study of employers' opinions on the discrimination of individuals with disabilities from Romania on the labor market----	157
VII.4.1. Research planning----	160
VII.4.2. Research results----	267
VII.4.3. Results analysis and confirmation of hypotheses----	208
The study of employees' and job seekers' opinions concerning the discrimination of individuals with disabilities from Romania on the labor market----	211
VII.5.1. Research planning----	211
VII.5.2. Research results----	215
VII.5.3. Results analysis and confirmation of hypotheses----	252
VII.6. The comparison of opinions of the employers and of employees or job seekers--	255
VII.7. Research limits----	257
VIII. General conclusions----	258
Bibliography----	260
Annexes----	268

SUMMARY

The present paper centers on studying the issue of individuals with disabilities that face discrimination on the Romanian labor market and is structured along 8 chapters.

The paper comprises two research stages focused on the problem of the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market along two directions:

A first stage of research attempts to capture the experiences of some individuals with disabilities concerning socio-professional orientation and the way in which sensory impaired graduates feel prepared to choose a profession and enter the labor market.

A second stage of research attempts to capture the way in which the labor market is prepared to receive these persons.

Key words:

handicap, deficiency, disability, discrimination, campaigns, demarches, legislation, socioprofessional orientation, employment, employers,

The first chapter offers a short introduction to the issue of discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market.

The evolution of the term discrimination is mentioned here, as well as the differences between deficiency, disability, and handicap.

Although handicap is not caused by the condition itself, but by the interaction between the individual and society, the deficiency/disability is the aspect that matters most, whereas the candidates' knowledge and experience achieve little influence on employers' opinions and decisions in the recruitment process.

Consequently, the most severe forms of discrimination can be felt in the field of work, which is governed by competition and selectivity in the process of hiring and recompense. Most of the time this competition system makes the fight against discrimination truly impossible. The persons with disabilities are confronted with the most difficult situations. These can be described by the demand to be as good as possible. They cannot be perfect, in order to be the sort of candidates that would gain employers' interest.

Thus, through discrimination at the socio-professional level, individuals with disabilities cannot fulfill a normal role in society, that of securing their own source of income

for themselves.

II. The second chapter is dedicated to conceptual clarifications.

□ The first subchapter defines the concept of discrimination, as well as the terms connected to discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices receiving special attention.

The presentation of these concepts in the context of the discussion on discrimination is necessary because of the determinist connection that exists between them. Stereotypical beliefs, once formed or taken over, consciously or unconsciously generate prejudices and discrimination. Nevertheless, it is difficult to foretell which are those circumstances or combinations of factors with a trigger effect – that determine the application of stereotypes at the level of attitudes and behaviours (in other words, the apparition of prejudices and discriminatory manifestations). Still within the first subchapter, discrimination is also defined from a theoretical point of view.

□ In the second subchapter, titled "Theoretical Positions on Discrimination", various approaches and perspectives are offered. Among them, the most important would be: the structural-functionalist perspective, the conflict perspective and the symbolic interactionism perspective.

□ In the third subchapter, named "Defining Disability", a few theoretical models are offered for defining disability. The most important of them for the present paper are the approaches proposed by the authors Aarts and DeJong (1992) who identify the existence of three types of approaches to the concept of disability: clinical, behavioural and legal, reclaiming the absence of an economic approach. The present paper has an increased importance because it focuses on the latter.

The economic approach deals with the aspect of employing/reemploying workers with disabilities (Aarts and DeJong, 1992). This approach introduces the aspect of non-employment as a distinct characteristic of persons with disabilities, pinpointing to the interconnection between unemployment and disability. Also, this approach highlights the role of employers in transforming affections into disability.

Finally, the subchapter also offers definitions for the terms of affection, functional limitation and disability, from the perspective of discrimination on the labor market. It describes the International Classification of Functionability, Disability and Health proposed by the World Health Organization.

III. The third chapter focuses on the discussion of institutional and legislative initiative, taken

both nationally and at international level to fight against the discrimination of persons with disabilities on the labor market.

The chapter comprises:

□ The initiatives taken at the level of the European Union; this is a subchapter which describes the European Year of Persons with Disabilities (2003) and the European Year of Equality of Chances (2007), but also the results of these campaigns, making reference to different studies made at the level of the European Union.

□ Organizational and institutional initiatives; is a subchapter that draws out the main interests of organizations to fight against the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market and the initiatives at the institutional level, which in our country have been reduced to creating, dismantling sau renaming commission, councils, committees, authorities and departments. This will be further demonstrated in the legislative analysis in the following subchapter. Increased attention was also given to the absorption of European funds, by means of drawing up projects with too easy to reach objectives that once again prove a false concern for the problem of the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market. None of these initiatives managed to increase the percentage of individuals with disabilities who are active from a socio-economic point of view.

□ The initiatives of corporatist governments from Romania; this is a subchapter that analyzes the social responsibility campaigns of large corporations. It could be said that these campaigns have actually fulfilled two great objectives in two different directions. Firstly, they served to the reputation as a strategic marketing instrument capable of allowing the winning over of a market niche or to ensure a very good reputation that will subsequently be rewarded. On the other hand, the permissive Romanian legislation in general and the multitude of instructions and ordinances, in particular, allowed for these social responsibility campaigns to aim for another objective, that of a se sustrage de la paying the penalizations established by law, for the situations in which employers would not recruit persons with disabilities. This fact was still permitted after the legislative change from 2006, when the apparition of law 448 did not eliminate these abuses from the system. Only in the republished edition of the same law from the year 2008 do the clarifications necessary appear in this sense. Until the apparition of these legislative changes, a series of campaigns has been broadcast in Romania that have gravely damaged the image of persons with disabilities, actually demonstrating by the ensuing results, that individuals with disabilities were incapable, without any state institution referring this matter to itself and intervening to demand explanations from these corporations.

□ "Legislative initiatives"; this is the fourth subchapter that reviews legislative progress at the international and national level concerning the fight against the discrimination on the labor market of individuals with disabilities and their protection.

□ "Analysis of Romanian legislation regarding the protection and work integration of individuals with disabilities"; envisages all Romanian legislative acts regarding the protection of individuals with disabilities and the provisions for their integration on the labor market.

The conclusions of this legislative analysis are:

For almost two decades, through the multitude of laws, ordinances and decisions, Romanian legislation has first of all developed in the direction of tax collection from employers who would not hire persons with a handicap. The number of employers that have to pay this contribution has risen in the context where to those with minimum 250 employees have been added those who have at least 50 employees. The latter, however, can opt for the alternatives offered by the law.

As to the especially created protected firms and units, the law has reduced the minimum ratio of persons with disabilities from at least 70%, respectively 50% in the case of blind persons, to 30% from the total number of employees prescribed by the law in vigore.

During the last 20 years an impressive number of commissions, committees and councils have successfully been created. Extremely important attributions were placed from one's agenda to the obligation of the other. The Romanian legislation is rich in interdictions without foreseeing penalizations as well, in cases where the provisions are broken. This is why most legislative acts manage to remain at the level of recommendations. There is a lack of reglementations concerning penalizations, organisms that would control and apply penalizations, methods and institutions to which employers must demonstrate that they tried to hire persons with handicap and that they did not find persons who could perform the requested activities. Only afterwards should they be given the payment alternatives of a penalty tax. Therefore, if the acting legislation foresees so called obligations, which are not accompanied by penalizations, the respective provisions have no imperative and no sustainance for a good applicability. They serve as mere recommendations that are not even respected by state institutions, the most în măsură to employ persons with handicap, as a way of promoting the capabilities and efficiency of the latter.

Lacking solutions for better performing policies through which it could compensate the expenses of firms and institutions on the accessibilization of work places, lacking clear eligibility criteria, that are even more difficult to establish, the state continues to limit itself to financial services in order to assist persons with disabilities. This makes it so that, the

recruitment of a person with disabilities keeps on being seen by employers as an investment very unlikely to bring back desired outcomes, and it keeps on making persons with disabilities to be perceived merely as persons who receive financial assistance.

Even of Romanian legislation is based on the same principles are the one of developed countris, no country has managed, for the time being, to compel a considerable number of employers to accept persons with a handicap. Neither society nor our generation can be changed by decree or by penalizing discriminatory behaviours. They must be changed through a joint multilateral effort with legislative, attitude and behavioral implications.

Legislation against discrimination plays an essential role in the protection of rights, but it does not suffice: discrimination manifests itself in various forms and types, and a more effective change in this sense could be achieved in time, by educating society and raising its awareness.

The Socio-Professional Orientation of Individuals with Motor and Sensory Disabilities From Romania.

□ A brief introduction is followed by conceptual clarifications, subchapter where the following concepts are defined and explained:

school orientation and school counselling;

school orientation and professional orientation;

professional orientation and socio-professional orientation;

career orientation and career guidance;

career education;

career counselling.

The subchapter ends with a comparison of concepts and a statement of differences between orientation and conselling, and respectively, profession and career.

□ The subchapter entitled: "Stages of the Socio-Professional Orientation Process", traces the stages of this activity, questioning stages and classical theories of socio-professional orientation.

□ "The Role and Contribution of Schools and Specialists to the Socio-Professional Orientation" is the subchapter which marks the educational differences between public schools and schools for pupils with sensory deficiencies. It criticizes these schools for not reaching their goal of integrating their graduates within society, not managing to prove themselves special enough or special at all because of their failure to adjust to the specifics of pupils with disabilities. This aspect can be observed and measured as well by the low ration of

persons with disabilities who are active from a socio-economic point of view. This outcome is due to the level of preparation offered by the educational system, the teaching institutions, on the one hand, and by the discrimination acts manifested by society, on the other hand.

□ The Role of Informal Relationships in the Socio-Professional Orientation Process; is the subchapter which gives increased attention to the role that school, family, and society, can have, the influence that these systems can deploy on the socio-professional orientation.

□ The Professional Orientation Using Modern Equipment; this is another subchapter which discusses the necessity of modernizing activities to this purpose and recommend the usage of modern equipment. It advocates for the role of the mass-media and of informational technology in the socio-professional orientation and provides a set of advantages and disadvantages of using the computer for this activity.

□ "The Correlation between the Professional Orientation and the Labor Market", is the final subchapter. Here discussed are the discrepancies between demand and supply on the labor market, the poor match between practical demands and the theoretical knowledge of young people, as well as the causes that underly the professional lack of success in the case of individuals with disabilities.

V. Chapter 5 is structured in two parts. The first part offers a qualitative study which had the goal of identifying the role of the professional orientation in the professional success or lack of success of young people with motor and sensory disabilities from Romania.

The Qualitative Research Methodology

The social problem about to be researched is the socio-professional orientation of persons who suffer from a motor or sensory disability, as a cause of very high socio-economic inactivity within their ranks.

As it was shown previously, the majority of theories and orientation models towards a profession do not represent a priority for the orientation of these persons. In their case, the most important aspect is their disability and what it allows them or does not allow them to do. Only after that can other criteria of professional orientation intervene, such as: abilities, interests, knowledge, etc.

Options, preferences can be taken into consideration first of all by keeping count of the possibilities imposed by the type and degree of disability, of what society allows and accepts for a person with disability to do.

The present research focuses on identifying what those activities are, on identifying which are the information, discussions, and means of support that should have helped persons

with disabilities in their professional orientation or that have actually managed to do so.

Research Objectives:

identifying the types of discussions and information at a formal and informal level, which contributed to the choice of profession,
identifying the support from which individuals with disabilities benefitted in schools, with the purpose of professional orientation,
identifying eventual differences in the socio-professional orientation of young people whose parents also suffer from a disability and those whose parents have no deficiencies
determining the way in which young people reoriented after being confronted with a professional failure as a consequence of an unfit choice during school years.

The following subjects were established in order to reach the objectives:

the pieces of information and discussions that contributed to the choice of profession;
the support offered by the school for the professional orientation;
the support offered by the family for the professional orientation;
the usefulness of information and abilities accumulated in school;
the way in which the eventual professional reorientation and requalification have been achieved;

Research Items:

the informal discussions that contributed to the choice of profession;
the formal discussions that helped making a choice of profession;
the persons who were engaged in the discussion and who helped making a choice of profession;
the quality of information they received coming from the school and its teachers, but also the information they asked for individually;
the teachers who offered their support in choosing a profession;
the type of support offered by school teachers in view of the professional orientation;
the frequency of the professional orientation support they received from the school;
the professional orientation support they received from their family;
the influence their family had upon their choice making;
the quality of information they received from their family in order to choose a profession;
the usefulness of subject matters and study hours during school years in fulfilling their

occupation;
the connection between professional formation and the demands of an occupation;
the way in which the professional reorientation or requalification was achieved;
the quality of information they benefitted from during the process of
reorientation/requalification;

Research Method and Technique:

This is a qualitative research, using the technique of the individual semi-structured interview, with the interview guide as an instrument of research.

Research Subjects

The research was conducted on a sample of 18 subjects, more exactly: 6 interviewees with a visual deficiency, 6 with hearing impairment, and 6 interviewees with mobility deficiencies.

Interviews were conducted for each category, 3 women and 3 men being included. Also, the researched the integration in the sample of persons who have done well in the profession they chose ever since their schools years, as well as young people who have had to reorient. Additionally, the interviews included young people whose parents shared their disability, as well as young people whose parents have no disability.

The sampling was conducted by means the snowball method.

In the attempt to gather information regarding the professional orientation received by persons with severe disabilities, the following criteria of selection were taken into account: the affection had to be a severe congenital one; they suffered from no associated disabilities; they were 30-35 years of age; they were employed; they maintained closed relations with their family during their school years, even if they lived in a boarding school; the obtained results had to be relevant for the researched population sample, represented by all persons with a severe, mobility or sensory disability from Romania, who are at the moment professionally integrated, even if they had to reorientate after graduation.

The reduced number of interviewed subjects is due to the fact that identifying and contacting persons with severe affections that worked in different domains entailed a series of difficulties in order to respect all selection criteria.

Considering the extremely low percentage of persons with disabilities who are active from a socio-economic point of view, in order to interview a considerable number of subjects it would have been necessary to contact all persons with mobility and sensory disabilities

whose affection is severe and who are employed, which is impossible without the support of the authorized institutions and of their associations.

Qualitative Research Results

□ Regarding the Information and Discussions that Contributed to the Choice of Profession

At an informal level, young people with sensory and mobility disabilities have informed themselves and have consulted older friends, parents of classmates who shared their deficiency and had similar professional experiences to those which they estimated to go through in the future.

From the replies of the interviewees it came out that they did not receive any information about domains that could be accessible to them from teachers, or the information received had no relevance for their situation.

The interviewees declared that they felt the lack of specialists who could provide the necessary information about what sort of work they could perform, about what they could do to become more independent.

The reform of the educational system should also include the formation of specialists in socio-professional orientation, who would occupy themselves with the enlargement of work possibilities, the accessibilization and adaptation of work places for these persons.

The dilemma that should concern the professional orientation specialists of young people in general and of those with disabilities in particular, is exactly the same that oscillates between providing information to young people about possible professions or allowing young people to explore the professions of interest for them to gain the information they need.

□ Regarding the Professional Orientation Support offered by the School;

The main means of school and professional orientation support that the interviewees received from school consisted of files compiled by form teachers or of the committee reunion before graduating a study cycle. These had a formal character only and the students and their family did not have to take the received recommendations into account. The educational institutions did not have the right to refuse young people in the case where the orientation was not made in their direction and the young people changed their options or had made a different choice already.

There are at least 3 important observations to be made here:

Firstly, there has been no significant differentiation in favor of students with disabilities

between the way of compiling school and professional orientation files by form teachers and the orientation activity performed by committees.

Secondly, taking into account the declarations of the interviewees that stated the fact that both their choices and the options recommended by form teachers and committee members were made according to the few schools for students with disabilities and the professions which are normally practiced by those who have a similar condition, one can consider that the preparation for a desired profession and the avoidance of situations where teenagers choose the following study cycle based on their chances of admission is continually a frequent inversion and impossible to avoid, as shown by authors Zamfir and Vlăsceanu (1998).

Thirdly, it has to be said that for the orientation made by committees at the end of a study cycle they relied solely on the students' academic results. This proves that, in the orientation of these young people, the evaluation of knowledge and abilities was not considered. Instead, students were pushed towards a profession for which there is no other guarantee of success.

Thus, students has their professional options further restricted. These forced options later resulted in the necessity for professional reorientation.

The study results also show that, in the professional orientation of individuals with disabilities, medical counterindications that could aggravate their affections were not taken into consideration.

The educational system thus proved too little adapted to the needs of individuals with disabilities and too focus on the general curriculum of study, having the goal of education persons with deficiencies in the domains where they have a chance to study in special schools and find a job, regardless of what they want, what is recommended for them according to the affection they suffer from.

□ Regarding the Professional Orientation Support offered by the Family

The present study highlights that the family plays an important part in the professional orientation and parents are the ones who have a strong influence on the decisions of children and young people, especially in the case of those who suffer from mobility deficiencies and study at home. For those with sensory disabilities the family represents a support to a greater extent, after graduation and while working, when they are asked by the unsighted to accompany them and by those with hearing impairment and/or speech impairment to be intermediaries in their communication with others.

The families of those with sensory deficiencies have not been very involved in the relationship with the schools, where the interviewees were boarded during their studies.

□ Regarding the Usefulness of Information and Abilities accumulated in School

Only a part of those interviewed considered special education as absolutely necessary and that it was a support for persons with disabilities. Among the things acquired in the purpose of increasing their degree of independence, the only classes that were mentioned were the orientation classes for the unsighted, the sign language and alphabet language classes for the persons with a hearing and/or speech impairment. Very few of them stated that there were a few subjects studied during vocational or post-secondary school that were useful in their professional activity.

Although the education for those with disabilities should ensure equality and accessibility especially for those children with severe affections, there have been interviewees who recounted school years experiences when they felt strongly disadvantaged compared to their school mates who had much easier access to materials and information. It can be inferred that the differences signalled by the interviewees confirm in the case of schools for students with disabilities the theory of conflict in the sociology of education by Bourdieu (1984). For them too, school proved to be "the instance of social control that replicates social inequalities", even if in their case it was all about other types of differences and inequalities.

□ Regarding the Way in Which the Eventual Professional Reorientation and Requalification was Achieved

The results of this study show that, even professional reorientation was achieved almost the same as the initial orientation during the final years of study, when young people obtained information from older friends, school mates whose parents share their disability etc. The difference resides in the absence of formalities and the files compiled by school teachers are replaced by gathering of information by means of the computer and the connection to the internet.

The opinion of most of those interviewed expressed that persons with disabilities from Romania, even if they succeed in showing tenacity and perseverance by choosing and studying a profession where society is not used to find them, often end up working in the same few fields where persons with the same deficiency.

The second part of this chapter provides a quantitative research concerning the socio-

professional orientation of young people with sensory deficiencies from Romania.

The Methodology of Quantitative Research

The present research attempts to capture the way in which graduates with sensory disabilities feel prepared to enter the labor market.

Hypotheses:

1. Does the role of the family for the school and professional options increase the trust of individuals with sensory disabilities in the continuation of studies as a condition for success?
2. Does knowing foreign languages and using a computer significantly increase the trust of graduates with sensory disabilities in the fact that they will be able to handle professional demands?
3. Is the choice of specialization that graduates with sensory disabilities will follow after high school strongly influenced by the school orientation and professional orientation programmes they benefitted from?

Objectives:

Identifying their own estimated knowledge by graduates with disabilities and which correspond to the current demand on the labor market.

The analysis of the relationship with the family, its support or lack of support, which can inform the good socio-professional orientation for young people with disabilities.

The role that special schools could have for a better socio-professional orientation of students with sensory disabilities,

The importance of school orientation and professional orientation in the choices made by graduates with disabilities.

Discriminated people from Romania

The Method, Technique and Instrument of Research:

The present quantitative study concerning the socio-professional orientation of young people with disabilities from Romania made use of the method of sociological investigation, the technique of questionnaire administration and had the questionnaire as instrument of research.

The questionnaires were applied in the period March-May 2011.

In the case of graduates with visual deficiencies the filling in was made by self-

administration, or with the help from a teacher. For those with hearing and/or speech deficiencies, at the recommendation of the highschool management, the support of a sign language specialist was asked for, in order to explain aspects that could have lead to ambiguities.

The Research Population and the Investigated Sample:

The research population is represented by all young 12th grade graduates from Romania who suffer from a visual, hearing and/or speech disability and have graduated highschool in an educational institution specialized on sensory deficiencies.

The investigated sample is represented by a total of 52 graduates of the 12th grade, as follows:

12 graduates from the Highschool for the Hearing Impaired from Cluj-Napoca,

21 graduates from the Highschool for the Visually Impaired from Cluj-Napoca,

11 graduates from the Highschool for the Visually Impaired from Buzău,

8 graduates from the Highschool for the Visually Impaired from Timișoara.

Bearing in mind the reduced number of subjects, this sample cannot be considered a probabilistic one, but it is a sample which is theoretically representative. This means that it is representative in relation to the issue being studied.

Although the present paper is focused on the discrimination of individuals with disabilities from Romania in general and on that of the individuals with mobility and sensory disabilities in particular, for this stage of research it was not possible to include graduates with mobility deficiencies because the instrument of research was a standardized one and cannot be applied to those persons who study at home with the help of itinerant teachers.

The questionnaire includes as well questions which aim at identifying the types of support that young people benefitted from in schools for those who have disabilities and from the staff of these institutions.

In an ulterior stage, a micro research will be elaborated for interviewing graduates with mobility disabilities, and that research will have as goal the study of the same aspects that are shared by persons with disabilities and are important for their socio-professional orientation.

Quantitative Research Results:

Family involvement in the choices made by the graduates who were questioned had a

positive influence on their trust in the continuation of their studies. This fact recommends a greater continuous involvement of the family in students' choices and their support with other difficulties and inaccessibilities as well.

Even if both sets of knowledge (those of computer usage and a foreign language at least at conversational level) still prove to be amongst the most requested by employers upon recruitment, computer usage knowledge increases the trust of young people with disabilities that they will be able to comply with the demands of a profession to a greater extent than foreign language knowledge.

The results of the quantitative study also highlighted the importance of school orientation and professional orientation programmes that helped graduates with disabilities to choose the specialization they will follow after highschool.

Most of the graduates declared that to a large extent they were supported by their form teachers and pedagogues in their professional orientation.

In reference to whom should be more involved in the professional orientation of young people, the majority of graduates replied that it was family to a great extent and almost half of them declared that school should play a bigger role in this activity as well.

Only approximately half of the graduates declared that they trusted to some extent the services offered to discriminated persons from Romania.

VI. Chapter 6 is entitled "The Social Response to Disability" and it is focused on the discussion of the forms of discrimination that can be encountered in social life in general and at the socio-professional level in particular.

□ "The State of Individuals with Disabilities on the Labor Market", is the subchapter which brings arguments and statistical data that reflect the existent situation on the labor market and the extremely low percentage of those belonging to this category who have a job.

□ "The Discrimination on the Labor Market of Individuals with Disabilities", is a subchapter that tackles the following aspects:

the materialist (economic) point of view,

economic theories,

discrimination caused by employers' preconceptions,

discrimination caused by employers' poor information,

discrimination caused by the attempt to exploit a minority group with weak negotiation power on the labor market.

□ The subchapter entitled "Theoretical Models Concerning Disability" discusses the

following models: the medical model on disability, the social model of disability, the bio-psycho-social model of disability, the northern relational model regarding disability, the medico-sociological model of approaching the behavior specific to disability as far as work capacity is concerned, as well as the postmodernist perspectives on disability,

□ "Emotional responses and paternalism, - factors which cause discrimination", is the title of the subchapter that discusses emotional responses and paternalism, as causes of discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities.

□ "Current Barriers in the Way of Employment for Individuals with Disabilities", is the subchapter which discusses about environmental barriers, social barriers, and personal ones, and in the end it suggests ways in which social barriers can be removed.

□ "The Social Response to Disability", is a subchapter that discusses all the attitudes, behaviours and manifestations which underly the discrimination of persons with disabilities. These attitudinal and behavioral manifestations would be: social stereotypes, detachment, erroneous identification, discomfort, anxiety, communicational disfunctions, pity, the transformation of the person with disability into a hero, blaming and labelling.

□ The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations that envisage measures for increasing the degree of inclusion on the labor market of persons with disabilities:

According to the studies that were conducted, although at present the efforts made towards the increase of the employment rate of individuals with disabilities have intensified, de facto, the desired improvements have not been achieved.

The authors of the study – M.N. Ozawa and Y.H. Yeo (2006) – recommend, both to those who issue social policies and to the general public, two necessary interventions at the level of social policy:

- 1) raising the education level;
- 2) increasing the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Also, another important objective is identifying the most productive way in which persons with disabilities could gain the capacity to enter, stay on and return to the labor market (Ozawa and Yeo, 2006).

A current trend in this respect resides in a change of perspective: from the evaluation of a person's disability to the evaluation of that person's still available abilities to work, that could be used productively on the labor market (Sickness, Disability and Work: Improving Social and Labour-Market Integration of People with Disability, 2010). Such a change involves a shift of focus: from support and resources to rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities that would facilitate they stay or return to the labor market, with flexible

work schedules, rather than encouraging and supporting them to remain outside the labor market. Bearing in mind the fact that the necessary evaluations in order to establish their remaining functional abilities also change character – from centering predominantly on medical aspects to an interdisciplinary approach, that would also take social and labor market aspects into account, there will also be a change at the level of the distribution of responsibilities between authorities.

The end goal is the taking of measure that would facilitate, for the individuals with disabilities, the achievement of a level of superior quality of life, which, in the perspective of authors I. Brown and R.I. Brown (2004, p. 19) means “having a life that is full of meaning for individuals and that puts resources at their disposal”.

VII. The 7th chapter comprises 4 studies, out of which the first two are qualitative and the two last ones are quantitative.

The first two stages of research use qualitative methods and analyze in depth the opinions and attitudes of employers towards candidates with disabilities, having in view the identification of elements that can influence recruitment and selection within their category.

1. The first subchapter provides an explorative study using the method of participant observation.

Within the interval October 2009 – April 2010, I have taken part to 24 recruitment interviews using the method of participant observation.

The aim of this investigation was that of carefully observing the content of the dialogue with the employers and their attitude throughout the interviews. Additionally, I purposefully planned for a conversation with employers at the end of each interview, in order to capture their opinions regarding two important aspects of recruiting persons with disabilities:

What could motivate them to recruit individuals with disabilities as well?

What it was that disturbed them most in this matter and what would they like to happen differently?

During the interviews I would notice that employers were primarily interested in meeting me personally, being impressed with my CV, this also being the reason for them asking me to come for an interview. These meetings ended in a very formal and official atmosphere, with the expression of their regret that they could not offer me a work place and with messages of sympathy, admiration and so on, but without any connection to the

recruitment goal.

On average, for the conversations after the interview, employers awarded 5 minutes during which I could ask questions.

That was the moment in which I told them that my taking part in the interview was part of a study for which I would like to ask a few questions.

All employers declared that they were disturbed the most by the rigid and impossible legislation that forced them to hire individuals with disabilities or, if they did not want to do so, it forced them to opt for the legal alternatives, which, in their turn, incur significant costs.

Many of them declared, very frustrated, the fact that the very institutions that deal with the problems of people with disabilities do not recruit them, but they forced this on the private sector.

Employers found it very difficult to say what could motivate them to recruit individuals with disabilities. 19 of those who contacted me for an interview declared that they would prefer it if the state or non-profit organizations dealt with these persons, by creating work places and firms especially for them.

These answers prove that employers have limited knowledge about individuals with disabilities, that they are very reluctant about recruiting them, or, if possible, they would prefer not to be involved at all in this matter.

2. The 2-nd subchapter is consacrated to a qualitative study that observes the opinions and attitudes of employers from Romania towards candidates with disabilities.

Research Methodology:

Subsequent to participant observation consisting of 24 interviews that took place between October 2009 and april 2010, the following research questions have been formulated:

how do employers perceive disabled job candidates?

in what way does the candidate's disability influence the recruitment process?

what are the elements that influence the employer's decision making?

do employers required by law to offer jobs to disabled persons show more empathy and altruism towards those involved compared to those that do not feel obliged by law to make such employments?

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this research envisaged the identification of factors, perceptions, and

experiences that can influence taking a positive attitude towards disabled persons looking for employment.

In order to reach the objectives 3 thematic units have been established:

employers' experiences and perceptions concerning disabled persons

selection based on costs and benefits

employers' expectations of disabled persons

Research Method and Technique:

The present study was based on the qualitative research method and the use of group focus technique.

The reason for choosing the qualitative method was a need to obtain details about the employment process for disabled persons and identifying the causes that underlie the refusal to recruit such persons, because the scarce studies conducted to sum up this problem in Romania only offered quantitative data about the effect of this category's very high unemployment rates and no research had as goal identifying the causes for this. This is the novelty provided by the present research.

There have been at least two deviations from the discussion in absolutely all interviews using the participant observation method:

employers insisted on expressing for much too long a time their appreciation, compassion, admiration, and respect towards persons facing any sort of problems and graduates of higher education.

another type of deviation from discussions was the description of experiences employers had with such persons, absolutely impertinent for the subject of the discussion or the goal of the interviews.

alternatively, employers often wanted to explain their reasons for not yet employing disabled persons, making various statements to excuse or explain themselves.

These are the reasons for choosing the focus group technique and a discussion centred on this issue. Furthermore, this method and research technique offer the possibility of picking up facial expressions, gestures, reactions, subjects' glances, details that are extremely important for the theme at hand, which involves a high level of social desirability.

The focus groups took place at the beginning of May 2010.

Research Subjects:

A number of 14 Romanian employers took part in the two focus groups, with premises and

activity conducted in the locality of Cluj-Napoca and that can offer jobs accessible to disabled persons. 7 employers were selected from those who are required by law to employ disabled people and 7 employers did not have this legal obligation.

The ones selected to take part in the focus group were either managers or part of HR departments and were responsible for recruitment within the company or institution they represented.

In the case of those required by law to employ people with disabilities, absolutely all of them took part in the previous research, and from the latter group only three employers participated in the study that used the participant observation method. The focus groups were conducted separately.

Eighteen employers from the private sector were invited to join the first focus group, those having less than fifty employees and therefore, who do not have the obligation to recruit disabled persons.

15 private companies and eight state institutions were invited to join the second focus group, all of them employers who have the obligation of recruiting disabled persons.

All state employers for whom it is mandatory to have 4% of staff disabled persons could not be identified and it was impossible to invite more employers from this category to participate in the present research.

Thus, in this group only 2 employers from the public system could be included. Often replies indicated that territorial departments that had fewer than fifty employees were subordinated to a ministry, to a superior institution from the capital, and that it was impossible to invite the person responsible for the employment process to a focus group. The personnel of each institution that was contacted revealed some discomfort coupled with a tendency of avoiding answers that would provide details about job vacancies, specifications, the number of employees of the institution, etc.

Few and insignificant pieces of information were given a few times, but presented as being very important with the request to be kept secret.

Since almost all participants asked for maximum confidentiality and demanded that the name of their institution/company not be made public, the following will strictly refer to job specifications and work places identified as accessible to disabled persons.

Research Instrument:

Within the present study the instrument used was the interview guide, comprising 10 questions.

Questions were formulated in view of obtaining as much information and details as possible about employers' knowledge and opinions regarding the following aspects:

- what type of work can disabled persons perform, for what position in their company/institutions they thought they could employ a person with mobility, visual or hearing disabilities;
- costs and benefits they estimated they could gain following such recruitment;
- the general opinion of employees, partners, collaborators and how much it would weigh when making employment decisions;
- employer's preference for persons with a certain type and degree of disability;
- the last question was aimed at identifying the things that could motivate employers to recruit disabled persons too.

Conclusions:

Employers' perceptions of disabled people vary according to their previous experience dealing with them. Knowledge about access technology, possibilities of the disabled to learn and work also depends on previous experience and understanding.

All participants to the two focus groups avoided specifying for what position they thought a disabled person could be employed, but they manifested their openness and interest in knowing more about what sort of work these persons were able to perform.

The degree of disability can increase or decrease the most the chances of a person to be employed. Thereafter, the type of disability influences the employer's choice, but to a lesser extent.

Continuous state support coupled with the offer of tax incentives and financial support for the accessibilisation of work places were mentioned as things that could motivate employers to recruit disabled persons too.

The fear for moral prestige, seen as a negative opinion of employees, partners and collaborators alike, appeared to be the most negative and discouraging element to inhibit the recruitment of persons from the disabled category.

Employers who have the legal obligation to offer jobs to the disabled were more involved than those who do not feel compelled by the law to carry out such employments, but they have also manifested a higher degree of concern and uneasiness due to the costs that, in their opinion, are entailed by the accessibilisation of a work place.

3. The 3rd subchapter describes the methodology of quantitative research that studies

the opinions of employers regarding the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market, on a sample group made out of 1072 employers. Moreover, the opinions of persons employed or looking for work are being studied on a sample group that consists of 1310 respondents.

For the study of opinions and experiences of both sample groups I used a common methodology.

The Methodology of Quantitative Research:

In order to achieve objectives and reach my goal I chose the method of quantitative research and the technique of the indirect sociological investigation.

Among the advantages of the chosen technique I would like to mention the following: I estimated that for a topic with a high degree of social desirability, such as the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market, through direct interaction and communication with the subjects, their answers would have been strongly influenced by the presence of an operator.

Even if, in theory, it is possible for just a certain type of manager to be using a computer, have an email, know how to use the internet, I considered the number of those who do not have these possibilities or preferences to be very reduced, considering the development of networks that have been offering for years now the possibility of to connect to the internet even in rural areas.

The webpage that hosted the questionnaire during the research period was created in the simplest manner possible. The questionnaire's input procedure was designed to be as simple as possible, both for advanced users and for those who have a certain age and are not used to computers.

The numbers of companies that are not connected to the internet is very low. Therefore, the collection of distorted data due to the exclusion/ neglect of a category that may not fit in here, is reduced to a minimum.

Regarding the role of the computer in sociological investigations, specialized literature combined two means in the case of the phone investigation using the computer. The latter could be used to ask the questions that appeared in succession on the screen. By checking off the answers, one could rapidly obtain and process the results (Rotariu and Iluț, 1997, p. 58).

Today when computer users are probably as many as phone users, such a combination would only entail higher costs for collecting data and, in the case of the present research, discomfort towards certain questions of a higher sensitivity or sincerity.

However, the phone number whereby the subject can be reached is part of the category of identification data. Because of this, the warranty of anonymity can no longer stand.

Using this type of questionnaire, I guaranteed anonymity for those who may have been afraid of the risks some of the questions might have entailed and I offered time for reflection for the questions that demanded it or time for documentation for others.

Moreover, I took the risk of receiving very few answers, in the case of the final questions. I asked employers how they "envisaged the issue for the future" and I asked them to share any opinion or experience that was not included in the questionnaire. There were very few answers indeed.

Regarding the reduction of possible lack of answers, I refused to use a format that would prompt the user, when sending the questionnaire, to go back to the unanswered questions and answer them in order to complete the questionnaire.

Unlike the questionnaires managed by mail, using the classical technique, the email technique offers solutions for these situations as well.

The reason why I chose not to use this possibility is that, using this way of obtaining answers, I could make the subjects quit the questionnaire. They could have rightly considered they were being forced and made to answer even when they did not wish to do so.

There are some disadvantages of the technique, namely:
Indirect investigation does not allow the observation of a few reactions, etc.
I thus gave up the possibility of noticing important aspects of the organizational culture of the company/institution and assumed the possibility of collecting a high number of non-answers.

The Instrument of Research: the questionnaire was used as instrument of research.

My focus in designing the questionnaire was on general aspects, but also on those that are noticeable and measurable on the topic of discrimination of persons with disabilities on the labor market. The essence was concentrated in the choices of answers, and the questions formulated so as to enforce the choosing of the most important, strongest aspect.

I opted for this way instead of one in which I could have established a scale of intensity for each choice of answer. All answer variants are possible most of the time, in most cases, but I focused my interest onto identifying those opinions that are strongest, because they are those which influence the making of decisions in general and those that belong to the recruitment process in particular.

During the recruitment process, discrimination is on the one hand obvious and on the

other hand existent or nonexistent. And the decision to hire a candidate or not is made based on the strongest impression or opinion.

In the case of recruitments there is no option of hiring a person more or less, and the decision of recruiting someone is made under the influence of dominant opinions.

There are only a few situations where someone is hired only for a part time, for a smaller wage, but the discriminatory behavior in this case has to be studied and demonstrated.

Because it is well-known that the answer rate to mail questionnaires is very low and that the text from the preamble of the questionnaire does not always manage to be sufficiently convincing, the preamble contains the usual assurances of keeping the respondents' anonymity and the fact that the questions included do not contain identification data or the invitation to fill-in the questionnaire, formulated as an commendation, as a possibility by which they have the opportunity to express their opinions, dissatisfactions and experiences on the topic of research.

In the attempt of increasing the representative value of results, I ensured all those questioned of the fact that based on the answers I would receive, suggestions will be made and propositions will be formulated for the improvement of legislation in this field.

In the same attempt of increasing the results' representative value, I asked employers who received the direct email to forward it to their partners and collaborators. The persons employed or looking for employment were asked to forward the message to their friends and colleagues.

So as not to discourage respondents, the link that was clicked in order to open the questionnaire page had the text: "answer a few questions". The choice of day for sending the direct email was deliberately not for the first nor the last working day of the week, estimating that the answer ratio would lower even more. Thus, the day of 18 05 2011, when the email was sent to all those invited to take part in this study, was a day in the middle of the week, more precisely a Wednesday. The questionnaire was displayed for 14 days (in the interval 18 05 2011 - 01 06 2011), and it was filled in by a total of 1072 employers and 1310 employees or job seekers.

4. The 4th chapter comprises the study of employers' opinions with regards to the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market in Romania.

Research Planning

Hypotheses:

1. Does the interaction with persons with disabilities influence employers' opinion in a positive manner regarding the way in which they relate to these persons?
2. Do Romanian employers manifest a preference for persons with a particular type of disability when they have to recruit from this category?
3. Employers have a good opinion and manifest sympathy for persons with disabilities, but are they willing to get involved, to the remotest extent, in their professional integration?
4. Are Romanian employers' decision to recruit persons with disabilities influenced by the fear of financial costs and by the general opinion of employees and partners that can occur in such circumstances?

Objectives:

identifying the factors which influence employers' opinions of candidates with disabilities: their previous experiences of them, the way they perceive these persons and the area of life where employers believe those with disabilities encounter the biggest difficulties;

identifying the type of costs and benefits employers could have as a consequence of recruiting persons with mobility deficiencies, visual, hearing and/or speech impairment;

identifying employers' opinion concerning the reasons that could explain the low percentage of persons with disabilities on the labor market;

capturing the main types of discrimination that occur in the process of hiring individuals with disabilities (focusing on identifying the number of employees with disability, their prior intentions to recruit such persons, the type of disability accepted by the employers);

identifying the knowledge and interests of employers regarding the provisions of current legislation concerning the recruitment of individuals with disabilities and tax facilities offered to employers by the legislation in force;

Research Items:

The results of a previous qualitative research and other research initiatives on the same topic were taken into account when drawing up the research items and their variables.

Thus, on the basis of the qualitative research results, the following items were set: The existence and oftenness of employers' prior experiences of persons with disabilities; Employers' perceptions regarding persons with disabilities; the conversations with employers who took part in the two focus groups highlighted the fact that their perceptions of individuals with disabilities varied according to their previous experiences of this category.

Employees' general opinion in the case of the recruitment of an individual with disabilities;
Partners / collaborators general opinion in the case of the recruitment of an individual with disabilities;

During the discussions held throughout the focus groups, employers who have to offer work places to persons with disabilities by law have manifested a greater concern for the reactions of other employees and partners / collaborators in the advent of hiring a person with any type of disability.

Most participants to the focus group admitted that the idea of hiring a person with disabilities was a delicate one and that they would not have the courage to openly discuss the matter, not even with their employees and least of all their partners.

The fear for moral prestige, seen as a negative opinion of both other employees and partners and collaborators, appeared to be the most negative and discouraging element for recruiting from the category of people with disabilities too.

The type and nature of the costs estimated by employers as a result of recruiting persons with disabilities;

The type and nature of benefits estimated by employers as a result of recruiting persons with disabilities;

All participants to the focus group considered that hiring persons with disabilities would entail a high cost in relation to the foreseen benefit, even if a lot of times the underestimated expectations of employers are not justified. Almost all concluded that these very high costs are merely exempted from tax, and the investment is made by the employer only, without any concrete support from the state.

In this respect, the idea that all participants agreed to was that, most of the time, it is preferable for employers not to count on investments of this type, where the state assumes only a symbolic part.

At the same time, almost none of those who were interviewed could mention a benefit they could have as a result of hiring a person with disabilities.

the means by which employers choose to support or not the professional integration of persons with disabilities;

estimating the degree of support the state needs to provide in finding a work place for persons with disabilities;

Seen as the participants to the focus group mentioned the necessity of a higher involvement from the state several times and, at the same time, reproached the fact that not even the state would hire people with disabilities, leaving their recruitment entirely up to the

private sector.

aspects that could motivate managers to hire people with disabilities as well; constant support from the state coupled with the provision of tax facilities and of financial support for the accessibilization of work places, were mentioned by the participants to the focus group as things that could motivate them to recruit persons with disabilities too.

The answers envisaged a greater involvement of the state, financial support residing in at least the deduction of all costs incurred to achieve the accessibilization of a work place. estimating the reasons why persons with disabilities have a low percentage of employment; an employers who participated to the focus group admit that persons who suffer from a disability create the belief that they are less capable because of some dysfunctions, even if, most of the times, their incapacity does not intersect with their job specifications.

the existence of employees with disabilities in the company;

the number of persons with disabilities in a company;

employers' prior intentions to offer jobs to persons with disabilities;

the recruitment method that was used;

the type of deficiency of those called for recruitment;

managers' preference for hiring persons with a certain type of disability: it is known that the degree of disability can increase or decrease to the greatest extent the chances of a person to be hired. All employers are oriented towards finding the perfect person for the work needed (hence the importance of job interviews). The type of disability is also a factor that influences employers' decision, fact equally admitted by all participants to the focus group.

employers' knowledge regarding tax facilities in the case of hiring persons with disabilities;

interest for free consultancy regarding tax facilities in the case of hiring persons with disabilities;

contacting state institutions authorized to inform or penalize companies that do not have employees with disabilities;

the type of legal alternatives chosen by employers in the case when they do not have employees with disabilities;

These items play an important role because, for those employers who do not wish to recruit persons with disabilities, but have more than 50 employees and the legal obligation to recruit from this category as well, the last legislative act still in force, Law 448 from 2006 republished in 2008, is reduced to two possibilities:

1. a monthly payment to the state budget of a sum representing 50% of the minimum base gross salary multiplied with the number of jobs where persons with a handicap are not

employed;

2. buying products or services from authorized protected units, based on partnerships, for a price equivalent to the sum owed to the state budget under the conditions provided by law (Law 448 republished in 2008, Art. 78, paragraphs 1, 2).

Areas of life where persons with disabilities can encounter the biggest difficulties;

The following question was also included in order to check the method of distancing, recognition or non recognition of the issue of professional integration of persons with disabilities:

"When you think about persons with mobility deficiencies, visual or hearing impairment, in which of the following areas do you think they would encounter the biggest difficulties?"

Learning, finding a job and forming a family were chosen as answer variants, because most of the studies related to socio-professional integration in general remark upon the important role that family has in the chances for professional success.

The Deservingness Concept

The study conducted by Oorschot in 2006 endeavored to answer the question "who deserves to benefit from other people's solidarity?". The author analyzes the degree of informal solidarity in 23 European countries towards 4 categories of persons.

The categories that the author focuses his attention on are: persons who are ill and persons with disabilities, the unemployed, immigrants and old people. (Oorschot, 2006)

One could criticize the study for the fact that its author established a single category for persons that have quite different circumstances, ill persons and persons with disabilities. For this reason, separate answer variants were set for ill persons and for persons with disabilities.

For the independent variables, the following research items were set:

The field of activity of the company/institution;

The total number of employees in the company/institution;

The majority capital of the company;

The county where the company has its headquarters/main office;

The type of position held by the person who filled in the questionnaire;

The age of the person who filled in the questionnaire;

The gender of the person who filled in the questionnaire.

The Research Population and the Representative Sample Investigated:

My goal was to have the possibility of selecting and contacting subjects by means of

an interactive functional data base, which was possible only with the help of a company activating in the field of human resources, a company interested in permanently keeping in touch with its own clients.

In order to increase the rate of answers, but moreover, in order to reduce the chances of sending a direct email to addresses that were no longer valid, I targeted an active data base, an interactive one even. By that, I mean that those who monitor this data base permanently or very often communicate with those who were to be included in the representative sample.

To be able to achieve this, I contacted the two main Romanian companies that mediate online jobs for employers and employees, companies that dispose of such a data base and that keep in touch with their clients, who, in our case, are the employers.

The selection of the representative sample of subjects was made in two stages. In the first stage several companies active in the field of human resources were contacted, companies that have job information and mediation activities on the internet. A favorable reply was received from a company whose web page is the most visited, out of the Romanian companies with this activity, according to the site site.traffic.ro, that keeps count of the number of visitors of Romanian web pages.

2. In the second stage, subjects were selected according to the following criteria: the field of activity of the company/institution had to be accessible to at least one category of persons with disabilities included in the research (persons with mobility, visual, hearing and/or speech disabilities). Thus, the direct email, with the preamble of the questionnaire and the link to the questionnaire page was sent to a total of 10.000 managers in Romania, selected from the following fields of activity:

Administration,
Audit/ Consultancy,
Banking,
Research/ Studies,
Customer / Client Service,
Education / Training / Culture,
Finances / Accounting,
Foundations / Associations / NGOs,
Government / Policy Making,
Human Resources,
Textile Industry / Design,
Internet / eCommerce,

IT Software,
Legal / Lawyer s/ Notaries Public,
Marketing / Marketing Research,
Mass-Media / Journalism,
Alternative Medicine / Reflexo- therapy / Massage,
Music,
Wood Processing,
Work Safety,
Secretariat,
Statistics / Mathematics,
Telecommunications,
Typography / Publishing Houses,
Translations
and a category called Other Departments / Others.

The investigated sample group is represented by 1072 subjects, out of whom approximately 88% are employers, those who replied to the invitation to participate in this study. The remaining approximately 12% are their partners or collaborators and they filled in the questionnaire after having received the direct email forwarded by the employers who received the link. In other words, 12% of the sample group are partners and collaborators of those who replied to the invitation after they having been selected.

Therefore, the investigated representative sample is formed of 1072 respondents, employers from the aforementioned sectors of activity, as well as their collaborators and partners. This sample group is theoretically representative. That is, it is representative in relation to the issue being under research. Although respondents selected themselves (some responded, some did not), still, the data base has a balanced distribution according to key social-demographic variables (gender, age).

The research population can be represented by all Romanian employers who are active in the sectors of activity from which the subjects of the sample group were selected.

Results Analysis and Confirmation of Hypotheses:

Experiences with persons with disabilities influence the most employers' opinions as to which category of persons should be supported the most and the way in which these persons are appreciated by those who should recruit them. Thus, employers who frequently

interacted with persons with disabilities mostly consider them as being "different and ordinary" persons. As to which category of persons should be helped more, it is still the ones who frequently interact with those suffering from a disability who consider that they would deserve the greatest support, in comparison to those who did not even meet such a person and in whose opinion children should be helped the most.

The interaction with individuals with disability also has a strong influence on the opinions regarding the main reason why these persons have a low employment rate. In other words, there are twice as many people who never met persons with disabilities and who consider that access difficulties represent the main reason for the high rate of social inactivity for this category of persons. In comparison, those who frequently interact with persons with disabilities have more diversified opinions. They consider to an equal extent that the approval from other employees and of partners are just as important reasons that could explain these problems.

Consequently, interacting with persons with disabilities positively influences employers' opinions concerning the way in which these relate to these persons.

As to employers' preference for individuals with a certain type of disability, those who expressed their options in this respect declared they would be more willing to recruit persons with mobility deficiencies, compared to persons who have visual, hearing and/or speech deficiencies and would be preferred in symbolic percentages.

These differences also remain valid concerning the type of disability had by the persons who were called for a job interview.

As such, employers are not indifferent to the type of disability a candidate might have. If they had to, they would prefer recruiting someone with a mobility deficiency.

As a distancing technique from the issue of hiring persons with disabilities, employers seem to mostly prefer state contributions and supporting non-profit organizations that would deal with these persons. The percentage of employers who declared they did not agree with supporting the employment of persons with disabilities varied between 12% and 19% amongst those who have this obligation. Regardless of their past experiences with persons with disabilities or the existence of such persons amongst their employees, employers seem to declare that they would be motivated the most to recruit from this category, should they benefit from financial help from the state. This on the one hand proves the importance of the cost-benefits ratio for those who need to make these decisions and the desire to obtain a deduction of costs in certain situations, or otherwise a reward for their gesture, which is explained by losses, expense that cannot be made when profit is the main goal. Despite the

fact that the percentage of those who declare nothing could motivate them to recruit from this category is of just 8.1%, it is interesting that they are at the same time the employers who declared they frequently interacted with persons with disabilities and 7.7% of those who state the same already have persons with disabilities among their employees.

Only 14% of the questioned employers declared that they had employees with disabilities. Out of these, most have a single employee with a disability or 4 at most. The exception are two employers who declared they had 12, and respectively, 23 employees with disabilities. However, considering the high number of employees with disabilities, these companies are either protected companies or protected units within companies.

Out of the employers who have not yet recruited persons with disabilities, only 8% declared that they had tried to make arrangements to this purpose. Almost all those who have to recruit from the category of persons with disabilities claim not to have been yet contacted by any state institution and asked to do so and there is also a high percentage concerning the lack of penalizations in the cases where this legal obligation has not yet been respected. More than half of the employers for whom it is mandatory to offer jobs to persons with disabilities declared they did not know about the tax facilities they could benefit from in such circumstances.

Therefore, employers avoid hiring persons with disabilities and only a very low percentage of those questioned have already hired such persons. With regards to how they agreed to support the socio-professional integration of persons with disabilities, more than half stated they would rather pay tax or contributions instead of hiring them.

Answers that envisage the costs and benefits indicate as well the estimation of financial costs as being the highest in such a situation. Regarding the type of costs estimated by employers, most of them, over 40% consider these costs to be of several types, and about 30% of those are considered to be financial, both by employers who have and by employers who do not have employees with disabilities.

With regards to the type of benefits employers think they could have in the event they recruited persons with disabilities, close to 25% declare they would be financial. If more than 40% of employers agree about costs and declare they would be of several types, in the case of benefits less than 30% share the same opinion. Out of the employers who believe they would have no benefit from such recruitment, 19.3% have persons with disabilities as employees which can make us believe their opinion comes from experience. Approximately two thirds of employers questioned declared that the general opinion of their employees and partners as well would be a positive one, whereas one third considers that their opinion would

be a negative one.

One cannot neglect either that there is no significant difference among the employers who have already recruited persons with disabilities and have most likely experienced this aspect already.

Aspects almost all employers questioned seemed to agree to were those concerning the area where those who suffer from a disability could encounter the biggest difficulties. More precisely, over 80% of the employers questioned who frequently interact with these persons consider that persons with disabilities have the biggest difficulty in finding a job. And the percentage of those who share the same opinion is over 96% among those who never even met such persons.

Almost all employers questioned also consider that the state does not support persons with disabilities in finding a job. The percentage of those who do not yet have persons with disabilities amongst their employees is 5% higher than of those who did not yet recruit from this category and share the same opinion.

5. The fifth sub-chapter is a study of the opinions of employees and job seekers regarding the discrimination of individuals with disabilities on the labor market in Romania.

Research Planning

Hypotheses:

1. Does interacting with persons with disabilities positively influence the respondents' opinions regarding the way in which they relate to these persons?
2. Does the presence of persons with disabilities amongst their work colleagues positively influence respondents' opinions concerning the reasons why these persons have a low employment rate and their tendency of distancing themselves from these persons' problem?
3. Does the type of disability of the persons they interacted with positively influence respondents' opinions?

Objectives:

- Identifying the factors which influence respondents' opinions of persons with disabilities;
- Identifying the way in which the type of disability the persons they interacted with influenced respondents' opinions;

- Identifying the types of costs and benefits respondents estimate employers would have as a result of recruiting persons with mobility, visual, hearing and/or speech disabilities;
- Identifying respondents' opinions of the reasons that could explain the low percentage of persons with disabilities on the labor market;
- Identifying respondents' opinions regarding the places where children with mobility, visual, hearing and/or speech deficiencies should be learning;
- Identifying the social systems respondents consider as providing the most support to persons with disabilities;
- Identifying the social systems respondents consider should be providing the most support to persons with disabilities;
- Identifying the way in which respondents consider people with disabilities are represented in the mass-media;

Research Items:

- The existence and oftenness of respondents' prior experiences with persons that have disabilities;
- The type of deficiency had by the persons with disabilities whom the respondents met and interacted with;
- The category of persons that respondents consider would most deserve to be helped;
- The area that entails the biggest difficulties for persons with disabilities;
- Respondents' opinion regarding disability;
- The reason why respondents think some persons with disabilities manage to lead a successful life;
- The statement which, in respondents' opinion, applies the most to persons with disabilities;
- The general opinion among colleagues in the event of recruiting a person with disabilities;
- The costs that the respondents estimate hiring a person with disabilities could entail;
- The benefits that the respondents estimate hiring a person with disabilities could bring;
- The existence of persons with disabilities among co-workers;
- Respondents' preference in having a co-worker with a particular deficiency;
- The approach considered correct for the socio-professional integration of people with disabilities;
- The main reason why persons with disabilities have a low rate of employment;

- The social systems that support persons with disabilities the most;
- The social systems that should support persons with disabilities the most;
- The way in which persons with disabilities are presented in the mass-media;
- The institutions where children with mobility deficiencies should be learning;
- The institutions where children with visual impairment should be learning;
- The institutions where children with hearing and/or speech impairment should be learning;
- The appropriate response from parents in the event where their children should learn together with children that have disabilities.

The following items of research were established for the independent variables: age, gender, educational level, family status, nationality, religion, respondents' county of residence, the socio-professional status, and monthly income.

The Research Population and the Investigated Sample Group:

The Investigated Sample Group:

For this sample group as well, I aimed at having the chance to select and contact the subjects by means of an active functional data base, which was possible by the mediation of a human resources company who was interested in constantly keeping in touch with its own clients. This time, the clients of the company are the job seekers or those who follow the job offers on the web.

Thus, in the first stage, the same company used for making up the sample group that contained employers was again contacted. The company's response to the invitation to collaborate was positive and 14.000 persons were selected. These persons received an email with the invitation to participate in the study and the link to the page that hosted the questionnaire.

In the selection of subjects the following aspects were taken into account: the field of activity of the company/ institution has to be accessible to at least one of the categories of persons with disabilities included in the research (persons with mobility, visual, hearing and/or speech disabilities). Thus, the direct email, with the preamble of the questionnaire and the link to the questionnaire page was sent to a total of 14.000 persons employed or seeking employment from Romania, selected from the following sectors:

Administration,
Audit / Consultancy,

Banking,
Research / Studies,
Customer / Client Service,
Education / Training / Culture,
Finances / Accounting,
Foundations / Associations / NGOs,
Government / Policy Making,
Human Resources,
Textile Industry / Design,
Internet / eCommerce,
IT Software,
Legal / Lawyers / Notaries Public,
Marketing / Marketing Research,
Mass-Media / Journalism,
Alternative Medicine / Reflexo therapy / Massage,
Music,
Wood Processing,
Work Safety,
Secretariat,
Statistics / Mathematics,
Telecommunications,
Typographis / Publishing Houses,
Translations
and a category called Other Departments / Others.

The questionnaire was filled in by 1310 subjects, out of which approximately 78% of persons are employed or seeking employment and they answered to the invitation to participate in the study, and a percentage of approximately 22% is made up of friends and colleagues of these person, who have been forwarded the questionnaire link.

It has to be told that, in this case as well, respondents were self-selected (some answered, some did not), and consequently this time again, the data base has a balanced distribution according to the majority of key socio-demographic variables (age, education, etc).

Therefore, the investigated sample group has is theoretically representative. This means that it is representative in relation to the issue under research.

The research population can be represented by all Romanian employees and job seekers who are active in the fields from which the subjects of the investigated sample group were selected.

Results Analysis and Confirmation of Hypotheses

The results of this study show the fact that experiences with persons who have disabilities influence the most the opinions of those questioned about the category of persons that should be helped most.

Experiences with persons who have disabilities also seem to strongly influence respondents' opinions with regards to what helps some of the persons with disabilities to succeed in life. More than half of those who did not even meet persons with disabilities consider that their strong will is the main reason why some people with disabilities succeed in life, whereas out of those who frequently interact with such persons, 57% consider that the success of persons with disabilities is due to the support offered by those around them.

It is still the past experiences with persons that have disabilities that seem to greatly influence what the questioned consider to be disability, because only those who frequently interact with these persons think that "disability" is a problem caused by barriers created by society. The way persons with disabilities are perceived is also influenced by experiences with them. Those who had known such persons but did not interact with them and those who frequently interact with persons who have disabilities consider them in a higher percentage as being ordinary persons who are different.

With regards to the general opinion among co-workers, most of those questioned claim that it is a negative one in the case of hiring persons with disabilities. And for this opinion experiences with such persons seem to matter a lot, because two thirds of those who share this opinion did not even meet such persons.

What about the way in which the presence of persons with disabilities among co-workers influenced the opinions of those questioned? If the percentage of those who consider that persons with disabilities are not sufficiently prepared is insignificant and not one of those who have such persons as colleagues shares this opinion, over 40% of those who have these persons as colleagues consider that access difficulties represent the cause for their low employment rate.

Concerning the tendency to distance themselves from the problem of recruiting persons with disabilities as well, it has to be said that the presence of persons from this

category among their colleagues significantly influences the opinions of those questioned.

Half of those who have persons with disabilities among their colleagues consider they should be hired normally and paid according to performances and just 8% declare that they do not agree with supporting the socio-professional integration of these persons.

More than a double percentage of respondents declare that employers should support non-profit organizations, compared with the percentage of those who declare that it would be better suited that employers should pay a state contribution, and the authorized institutions should deal with creating jobs for those who have disabilities. This fact shows that the trust in non-profit organizations is much higher than in state institutions in finding solutions to this problem.

With relation to the reaction parents whose children are taught together with those children who have disabilities should have as a distancing technique, the study highlights the following aspects:

Most of respondents declare in percentages close to 60% that in such a situation, parents should encourage their children to pay attention to the needs of their classmates with disabilities. In percentages that vary between 11% and 20%, respondents consider that parents should ask for explanations from the head of the educational institution, and in percentages varying from 11% to 19% , those questioned say that parents should act as if nothing had happened.

It is surprising that, out of those who frequently interact with persons who have disabilities, 4.7% of respondents feel that in such a situation parents should pull their children out from that educational unit.

About the influence the type of disability can have of the opinions of those questioned:

Most of those questioned declare that it would not matter what disability a colleague had if they had to work together. It is interesting that most of those who share this opinion, 92% are the respondents who met and interacted with persons who have mental deficiencies.

Respondents' experience with persons who have a particular type of disability does not necessarily make them want a colleague with the same deficiency.

Thus, only 9.6% of those who interacted with persons with a locomotor handicap would prefer a colleague with this deficiency. Of those who met persons with visual impairment, only 4.5% would want, in the event where they had a colleague with a disability, for that to be a sight problem. And out of those who interacted with persons who have visual and/or speech impairment, 12.9% would prefer a colleague with this type of disability.

Regarding the places where children with disabilities should be learning, it is interesting that only those with mobility deficiencies could, in respondents' opinions, attend public schools, compared to children with visual, hearing and/or speech impairment who, in the respondents' opinions should not attend public schools at all or, in any case, those with hearing and/or speech problems should attend in an insignificant number.

First of all, this data point out the fact that the lack of special schools for children with mobility problems makes their presence in public schools to be more common or a better accepted learning option, compared to the habit of having a relatively important number of schools for children with sensory deficiencies, that help in strengthening convictions according to which these latter children should study in schools especially created for them or in integrational classes with a support teacher.

Experience with persons who have a certain type of disability does not greatly influence these opinions. In these circumstances, a much greater influence can be people's habit of seeing children with mobility disabilities in public schools.

The ideas upon which almost all respondents seemed to agree related to finding a job. In most people's opinion this can entail the biggest difficulties for persons with disabilities.

About the costs and benefits estimated by respondents in the event where they hired persons with disabilities:

In most people's opinion, hiring persons with disabilities can entail several types of benefits, but also several types of costs. There are some respondents who consider in a very small percentage, but not a negligible one, that recruiting people who have disabilities would bring no benefit to employers.

The chapter ends with a comparison between the opinions of employers and the opinions of employees and job seekers.

The comparison highlights the aspects upon the two categories of respondents had different opinions, but it also highlights the aspects upon which there existed the greatest difference of opinions.

VIII. The last chapter comprises the general conclusions. It provides answers to the main questions and propositions for future research.

National and international initiatives proved to be too realistic and simplistic in establishing the final goal and objectives. They were all reached, reported and published, and the extremely low percentage of persons with disabilities on the labor market remained

unchanged, despite costly informing and awareness campaigns.

Legislation regarding the protection of persons with disabilities from Romania has focused on collecting taxes from as many employers as possible who had at least 50 employees and refused to hire persons with disabilities.

Another initiative that is difficult to explain as far as legislation is concerned, was that of creating, renaming and dismantling a series of committees, councils and commissions, whose task was to analyze the problems of persons with a handicap. There is almost no law or ordinance that comprises a single provision in this respect.

Despite evolutions, progresses, modernizations of the educational system, students with deficiencies rely to a great extent on information and support from parents, friends and acquaintances.

School has managed to support them to a rather reduced extent in their socio-professional orientation, should we consider the declarations of graduates with sensory deficiencies who stated that it was their form teacher and their pedagogue who offered them support in their professional orientation.

Employers keep on preferring to pay their contribution to the state instead of hiring persons with disabilities. Even purchasing products and services from protected units is an option preferred by few.

Few employers are willing to recruit persons with disabilities. They are positively influenced to a very little extent by very few aspects.

It is interesting that, although very many of the respondents of the two categories included in the quantitative research declared that persons with disabilities were "different" or "ordinary", they did not provide answers that would leave to understand that they supported their integration.

Thus, only a very small number of employers would be willing to offer them jobs and an even smaller percentage would agree to pay them according to their performances.

In the case of employees or job seekers, there are few of those who think that persons with disabilities should be employed, that pupils with disabilities should learn in public schools etc.

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** Declarația Universală a drepturilor omului, adoptată și proclamată de Adunarea Generală a Organizației Națiunilor Unite în 10 decembrie 1948

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** Declarația drepturilor persoanelor cu handicap, proclamată de Adunarea Generală a ONU în 9 decembrie 1975;

** Instrucțiunea nr. 220 din 12/05/2003, publicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 364 din 29/05/2003 privind aplicarea art. 43 alin. (2) din Ordonanța de urgență a Guvernului nr. 102/1999 privind protecția specială și încadrarea în muncă a persoanelor cu handicap, aprobată cu modificări și completări prin Legea nr. 519/2002;

- ** Legea nr. 53(1992) privind protecția specială a persoanelor handicapate (publicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 119 din 4 iunie 1992);
- ** Legea nr. 57 din 9 iunie 1992 privind încadrarea în muncă a persoanelor handicapate, publicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 131 din 12 iunie 1992;
- ** Legea nr. 343 din 15 iulie 2004, pentru modificarea și completarea Ordonanței de Urgență a Guvernului nr. 102/1999 privind protecția specială și încadrarea în muncă a persoanelor cu handicap, publicată în Monitorul Oficial, Partea I nr. 641 din 15 iulie 2004;
- ** Lege nr. 448 din 06/12/2006, privind protecția și promovarea drepturilor persoanelor cu handicap, publicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 1006 - 8/12/2006, republicată în monitorul oficial nr. 1 - 03/01/2008;
- ** Ordonanța de urgență nr. 102/1999 privind protecția specială și încadrarea în muncă a persoanelor cu handicap, din 29/06/1999, publicată în Monitorul Oficial, Partea I nr. 310 din 30/06/1999;
- ** Ordonanța nr. 137 din 31 august 2000 privind prevenirea și sancționarea tuturor formelor de discriminare, publicată în Monitorul Oficial al României, Partea I, nr. 431 din 2 septembrie 2000 și republicată în Monitorul Oficial nr. 99 din 8 februarie 2007;