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**HUNGARIAN MODELS FOR EMPLOYING
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Two cases in the end of the '90s³

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1 The legal framework

1.1 The Constitution of the Republic of Hungary

It declares the right to work and the equal opportunities of workers. According to its *Article 70/B*:

“(1) In the Republic of Hungary everyone has the right to work and to freely choose his job and profession.

(2) Everyone has the right to equal compensation for equal work, without any discrimination whatsoever.

(3) All persons who work have the right to an income that corresponds to the amount and quality of work they carry out”.

1.2 Further Bills

1.2.1 *Act on the Labor Code*

The Section No. 5 of Act on the Labor Code that is in force since 1st of July, 1992 forbids any discrimination of workers:

“(1) In connection with an employment relationship, no discrimination shall be practiced against employees on the basis of gender, age, race, national origin, religion, political views or membership in employee interest representation organizations or activities connected therewith, as well as any other circumstances not related to employment. Any differentiation clearly and directly required by the character or nature of the work shall not be construed as discrimination.

(2) In the event of any dispute related to a violation of the prohibition on discrimination, the employer shall be required to prove that his actions did not violate the provisions of Subsection (1).

(3) Employers shall provide the opportunity to employees for advancement to higher positions without discrimination and solely on the basis of the length of employment, professional skills, experience and performance.

(4) In respect of a specific group of employees the obligation of priority may be prescribed in employment-related regulations, in connection with an employment relationship and under the same conditions.”

According to 85 Section (3): „Employers shall continue to employ employees who have become partially disabled in the course of employment, as per the provisions of separate legal regulations, in positions suitable for their condition.”

1.2.2. The joint decree No. 8/1983

Based on the authorization by the Labor Code, the joint decree No. 8/1983. (VI. 21.) EüM-PM of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance provides employment, engagement, and social provision for employees with disabilities. This decree specifies regulations partly differing from the Labor Code. The decree defines the circle of employees with disabilities, the employer’s tasks and the system of interest in connection with their employment, as well as the tasks of the municipalities, the rehabilitation procedure, the protection by labor law of the employees with disabilities, as well as their social protection.

The support of the employment of employees with disabilities is included partly in the Act on Employment and on the Provision of the Unemployed, and partly in the joint decree No. 8/1983. (VI. 21.) EüM-PM – see above.

The system of supporting the creation of special jobs for the circle of employees concerned is ensured by a source regulated in the Act on Employment and on the Provision of the Unemployed, i.e. the rehabilitation part of the Labor Market Fund.

The Act on Employment and on the Provision of the Unemployed makes the direction of the vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities unemployed the task of the labor market organization as from 1st January, 1998.

The county (metropolitan) labor- and labor safety supervisions, which are parts of the labor organization, control the observance of the rules of law related to the employment of employees with disabilities – based on Act LXXV of 1996 on Labor Control.

1.2.3 The Act No. XXVI. of 1998

Act No. XXVI. of 1998 on provision of the rights of persons living with disabilities and their equality of opportunity⁴ in its section No. 15 declares:

“(1) Person living with disability are entitled to integrated employment or, in the absence of such employment, to sheltered employment.

(2) The employer providing employment must ensure the workplace environment to the extent required to perform the work, in particular ensuring the suitable modification of tools and equipment. Applications can be made to the central budget for support to cover the costs of such modifications.”

⁴ The act was passed by Parliament at its session – last day – on 16 March 1998. (The votes: 309 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

Under the title: “*Protection of the rights to which persons living with disability are entitled, responsibility for the tasks arising from the act*”⁵ in Section 27 it underlines: “Any person suffering an unlawful disadvantage because of his or her disability shall be entitled to all the rights which apply in the case of violation of individual rights.”

1.3 The quota-levy system

The employment of employees with disabilities is regulated by quota-levy system. It is mainly supported by means of taxation. In spite of the support of their employment, the employed staff did not exceed 30 thousand. At the same time the share of normal employment is around 25% during the last three years.

The quota is 5% of the average statistical staff number. The enterprises employing at least 20 persons and subject to the Corporation Tax Act, as well as the social employment organizations are obliged to apply the quota, as opposed to the budgetary organs. On the difference between the actually employed staff number and the staff according to the quota the employers concerned are obliged to pay a rehabilitation contribution amounting to 8,000 HUF per year. The extent of the rehabilitation contribution keeps increasing year by year, but it is still very low. It does not reach 45% of the monthly amount of the minimum wage.

To offset the additional charges of vocational rehabilitation, the employers may claim for a grant from the state budget on the staff number of people with disabilities employed over the quota. The extent of this grant is 45 to 150 per cent of the wages paid to the employee with a disability, but not more than 45 to 150 per cent of the minimum wages and it is 50 to 150 per cent in the case of social employment organizations.

Support takes place by way of self-assessment, in the form of tax-reclaim. A picture of the practicability of use can be gained only by targeted examinations. The support could be claimed on the employment of all people with disabilities until the end of 1995. In this manner the economic units employing people with disabilities could pay the quota from the claimed grant – even if they did not reach the compulsory employment level. As from 1st January, 1996 a grant can be claimed only on employment over the quota, but the amount of contribution determined as a sanction still cannot be regarded as stimulating actual vocational rehabilitation.

⁵ This is the non-discrimination paragraph. The para. refers to the Civil Code. The 76 § of the Civil Code prohibits any kind of – negative – discrimination on the ground of sex, race, nationality or religion. (But it does not mention disability, this is why it was necessary to refer to it in the law.)

The 84 § of the Civil Code says that in the case of violation of any individual rights, the aggrieved party may bring the question before the court in order to let the court decided the infringement etc.

1.4. Supported Employment

Employment data of people with disabilities show clearly the total lack of interest in the normal sphere. Therefore, the existence of protected working places employing people with disabilities in considerable proportions have a special significance.

Their task is to employ people with disabilities, who cannot be employed and rehabilitated in the normal economic sphere. These – so called – *target organizations* definitely established for this purpose or subsequently qualified as such receive a support differing from the usual one: until 1996 they received a grant in proportion to wages based on individual judgement, the rate of which could even reach 500 per cent. From 1996 onwards their support has become normative, to which the organizations accommodated themselves with difficulties, which can involve the danger of the decrease of employment.

At present the *target organizations* meant for the special employment of people with disabilities both employ – and equally support – people who can, and those who cannot be employed under normal circumstances. Now there are about 50 *target organizations* with 16 thousand employees, 12 thousand of whom having a disability, and 6000 are severely disabled. The costs of supporting these *target organizations* account for the majority of the costs spent on the employment of people with disabilities. In the present situation their role is to fill a gap, and their significance is inevitably overestimated, due to the slight share of normal vocational rehabilitation.

2 Two models

2.1 The ‘Synergy’ (Összefogás) Industrial Co-operative

2.1.1 *The history of the Co-operative*

Credit for the establishment of the Co-operative goes to its founder, the current Chairwoman of the company. Back in 1986, perhaps nobody else was keen on creating complex services designed to provide lodging, living, and a financial background for people with disabilities. The Chairwoman herself is afflicted as a parent – she is the mother of a child with severe mental disability. A lot in Csömör – a village assimilated into the agglomerations of the capital – was selected to accommodate the community; the construction of the facility, a combination of business buildings and private homes has been completed by now.

The Co-operative was established in 1986 by 15 original members resolute to implement the project. Three futile years followed, then in 1989, a grant was won by competition from the Rehabilitation Fund. This was invested to start the building of the facility in Csömör; a village assimilated into the agglomerations of the capital. The principal client of the Co-operative was operating from Budapest. The regional authority of the competent outskirts district donated the Co-operative an abandoned nursery building. Increasing business activities soon required expansion. A shop had been opened in Gödöllő, then the first subsidiary was established in Kunszentmiklós. The latter was initiated by afflicted individuals and their parents. At first, the regional authority refused to support the foundation of the workshop, but eventually, contributed the premises – a small lot with a building on it. The local farmers' collective helped by restoring the building. The members of the Co-operative and their parents had a substantial share in this accomplishment through successful canvassing and the submission of petitions.

Insufficient workspace was a problem from the beginning and therefore, production had to be organized in alternating shifts. Both facilities – at Kunszentmiklós and Budapest – produced strip carpets. Concomitantly, training courses in weaving and sewing had begun for other members and employees of the Co-operative. This education prepared people with disabilities for participation in the manufacturing process. Activities essential for socialization and maintaining employment (travel to work and perform tasks) were taught along with the techniques of weaving. People with severe or multiple disabilities can be found among the employees of Co-operative from the outset. *The essential principle applied during recruitment was to find the treatment and opportunities best matching the specific needs and capabilities of people with disabilities.*

Production efforts were governed by orders from business partners and accordingly, tailoring job tasks to specific capabilities was difficult. Nevertheless, the management of the Co-operative strove to create the work environment and circumstances best suited to assist individual employees in completing their tasks. The utmost goal of individualized assignment of production-related tasks was not to reject anybody – to provide an opportunity notwithstanding apparent peculiarity or potential incapability. For example, a basic course in finger-language was organized after the employment of an individual with multiple disabilities (mental disability and hearing loss). Having realized that every employee needs individualized treatment, the management takes pains to meet this requirement. The needs, personality, and potential for development of individuals are assessed carefully and the work environment is fashioned to provide motivation and satisfaction. An atmosphere that facilitates open communication of work-related and other problems is maintained. As a rule, all difficulties and problems are dealt with collectively. The experience obtained during case-management determined the range of auxiliary services related to manufacturing activities, established the need for building residential facilities, identified suitable business projects, and prompted the Co-operative to enter the open labor-market.

Winning that grant in 1989 and successful implementation of original ideas have lent impetus to the exponential growth of facilities and staff. Currently, the Co-operative employs approximately 500 people with disabilities and owns premises in Kunszentmárton, Csepel, Ózd, Bakonykúti, Bátorfaterenye, Serényfalva, Székesfehérvár, Biatorbágy, Csömör,

Gödöllő, Dunaharaszti, Dunaalmás, and Ecséd. The administrative headquarters of the Co-operative invariably operates from the Csömör facility.

2.1.2 *Recruitment techniques*

Obstacles have been removed from all facilities, which are thus fully accessible by wheelchair. The new building of the Co-operative has been designed and constructed in full compliance with this requirement. The upper floor will be accessible by a lift, which is not yet ready – this is a temporary impediment for members with restricted mobility. Courses in finger-language are organized for persons with impaired communication skills to provide means for exchanging views with others.

The individual needs and capabilities of every applicant are assessed carefully. The results of this assessment determine job assignments and identify the range of auxiliary services necessary to assist the employee in everyday living. The most important services involve education, particularly vocational training; the majority of such courses are organized internally. When necessary, accommodation in residential facilities of the Co-operative is offered along with employment and income. Employment by external companies is arranged for individuals with sufficient ability and the most capable are introduced to the open labor-market.

2.1.3 *Integration into the work environment*

Applicants are assessed in an interview administered by the chairwoman and the competent foreman of the Co-operative. Available jobs and employment options are reviewed and then, the most suitable assignment is decided upon by mutual agreement. Furthermore, individual needs, capabilities and motivating factors are identified to guarantee a long-term employment for the person with disabilities.

“On one occasion, an unmarried mother wishing to leave the foster-home applied for employment. Along with her job assignment, she received accommodation in a residential facility of the Co-operative; daytime care of her child was arranged; and the range of supportive services available to her in her spare-time was agreed upon.”

(Excerpt from an interview)

Independent living is nevertheless encouraged and applicants are motivated to use supportive services only when this is inevitable to compensate for impaired capabilities or to overcome difficulties. For example, employees accommodated by the residential homes usually cook for themselves; however, they are free to order meals from the catering service of the Co-operative. In order to arrange for the daytime care of employees' children, the management is negotiating with a nursery that meets the parents' expectations. This is an important step as – according to their age-old routine –, child-welfare authorities recommend

people with disabilities to relinquish the right to rear their children and shift this duty to foster-homes.

Job assignments are tailored to individual demands and capabilities of employees; compliance with working hours is treated considerately. This is possible because the Co-operative undertakes simple and easy-to-perform jobs or enters into agreement with business partners offering such assignments. Employees are free to choose from straightforward tasks, such as sewing, carpet weaving, and others. Equipment and tools are adapted to the capabilities of employees with disabilities. (Considering the simplicity of these jobs, only uncomplicated modifications are necessary.)

Similar to other public-welfare organizations in Hungary, the Co-operative enjoys endowment from welfare authorities; however, it is obliged to produce matching returns from its business activities. Supervision of manufacturing and the quality control of finished products are performed according to requirements stipulated by the business partners. Work performance is appraised individually, with due respect to the diverse capabilities of employees.

Regulations to be observed in employment matters and labor safety are set out in applicable Hungarian law. No significant amendment to these regulations have been made – often, this is due to the reluctance of supervisory authorities to consider the needs and circumstances of people with disabilities.

2.1.4 Employment-related advantages, benefits, and limitations for employees

The operating protocols of the Co-operative contain no clearly defined rules establishing the range of preferences as regards lifestyle, health behavior, and disability. Work-assignments and working hours are determined during the interview with the applicant before employment. The Co-operative has developed several supportive services, including bed and board for employees with disabilities, as well as nursery care for the children of residents. Internal training courses are organized to prepare employees for production activities and to assist them in seeking employment on the open labor-market. Services implemented to facilitate the communication between mentally disabled individuals or people with hearing loss also belong to the range of supportive services.

Although most of the annual vacation is granted during the summer. Nevertheless, many of the employees on leave stay in the residential homes owing to financial reasons and difficulties in securing lodgings for their holiday. Having realized this problem, the Co-operative organizes group recreation for residents.

There are no trade unions within the Co-operative. The operating protocol enables all employees to participate on the general assembly – the forum that makes the decisions in issues related to business strategy, long-term goals, and the activities of the community. Only 15 of the 500 employees are holders of full membership status.

2.1.5 *Methods for maintaining employment*

No administrative incentives guarantee any level of advantage for economic organizations of this sort. In theory, endowment granted by welfare authorities is the only resource to finance services rendered for employees. Consequently, if the Co-operative employs individuals with severe disabilities, the expenses of essential auxiliary services must be covered from this endowment. In other words, employers are virtually ‘discouraged’ to render supportive services for employees with disabilities – the ‘Synergy’ Industrial Co-operative is no exception. However, essential principles and ultimate goals of this organization prescribe the provision of such services designed to assist the integration of people with disabilities into the society. Assiduous monitoring and supervision of such goals and efforts are uncharacteristic of welfare authorities.

There are no rigid protocols for the supervision of production and case management. Problem handling is a common responsibility of all foremen and executives. The chairwoman of the Co-operative does a substantial share of this work too. Whenever a problem occurs, it is analyzed thoroughly and the difficulties met by the employee with disability are identified along with possible solutions. Problem cases are investigated in a rational, unemotional way. For example, when potential employees or their parents requested establishing a subsidiary of the Co-operative, the chairwoman, and her staff reviewed personal conditions systematically. The request was granted only if creating a working environment compliant to the essential principles cherished by the organization was deemed feasible.

All complaints are taken seriously and followed up thoroughly – this policy is a good substitute for a controlling system. Importantly, always the underlying causes are identified and dealt with.

The establishment of residential homes is an important factor for maintaining employment. The first homes were built in 1992. Initially, the Co-operative hired flats for its employees – this practice was illegal and had to be concealed for a long time. Then, the amendment to the Act on Social Services in 1993 introduced the legal framework that enabled the Co-operative to establish residential homes. Financial support to accomplish this goal was first procured in 1994. During the first two years, all expenses related to the residential homes were paid by the Co-operative. Separate accounting of operating costs and expenditures on residential homes became possible in 1998 only. The internal regulations governing the life in these institutions were developed parallel to the construction of the facilities and the rules of normalization had been studied during this period. Social workers, assistants, aides, and helpers looking after the residents were trained in compliance with the principles and guidelines thus mastered. Nowadays, the Co-operative maintains 22 residential homes housing 156 employees.

2.1.6 *Return to work techniques*

Prompted by the needs of people with disabilities the Co-operative has started examining the possibilities of obtaining employment for capable residents by external business clients several years ago. Local undertakers have acknowledged the efforts of the Co-operative and the need for employing people with disabilities. A deal of this sort was first made, when a resident had no liking for the jobs available within the Co-operative, but showed a great interest towards bakery. Thus, a local baker was approached to employ the man with disabilities. The protracted negotiations were successful, the baker conceded to employ the individual on probation and arrange for his training. The management of the Co-operative reviewed all the tasks and activities where their protégé presumably needed help to perform successfully (e.g. escorting him to the bakery, creating the conditions for safe training in his future tasks, etc.). Eventually, the baker assented to guarantee permanent employment for the person with disabilities.

This success stimulated developing a policy for reintroducing people with disabilities to the open labor-market. Essential components of the protocol include escorting the individual to work, acquainting him with his future working environment, making the latter suitable for the employee with disability, training in job tasks, handling of conflicts, and follow up of the individual's progress. Employment by external business companies is thus arranged for 8 to 10 persons each year – their number was no less than 26 in 1998. These accomplishments result both from the growing esteem towards the Co-operative and the public acknowledgement of the performance of employees with disabilities.

Introduction to the open labor-market is usually initiated by the foreman, but often, business companies themselves offer employment. Occasionally, the person with disabilities finds a suitable job for him-/herself. In the majority of cases, employment by an external company is in full compliance with pertinent regulations. Sometimes, people with disabilities do not find their account in being employed by an independent firm; should this occur, they are free to return to the Co-operative. According to several years' experience, the failure rate is approximately 30 per cent; that is, introducing people with disabilities to the labor-market is successful in 70 per cent of cases.

2.1.7 *Grievance and Dispute Resolution Techniques*

Workshop foremen and the management of the Co-operative make joint efforts to resolve conflicts with due respect to the needs and demands of people with disabilities.

No rigid schedules for re-training or continuing education have been issued; the assessment of the need for such activities also belongs to the responsibilities of the management and foremen. Similarly, no written policy exists as regards the adjustment of standard procedures to the needs of people with disabilities. No lawsuits to redress employer-employee conflicts have hitherto been filed.

2.2 The ‘Humanity’ (Humanitás) Co-operative

2.2.1 *The history of the Co-operative*

The predecessor of the Co-operative was established by the Elementary School and Dormitory for the Rehabilitation of Children with Motion Abnormalities to provide employment and vocational training for pupils who had finished the elementary school. At that time, there were no other options open for pupils with disabilities – actually, the institutional solution to this problem is still missing. The first chairman of the Youth Co-operative was afflicted by physical disability himself.

The Co-operative was established in 1972 to undertake gardening. Subsequently, its profile had changed and the organization metamorphosed into an industrial Co-operative that adopted the name ‘*Humanity*’. The ‘new’ Co-operative had 100 to 200 employees and produced gloves, mailbags, and moneybags all made of leather.

The obligation to employ people with disabilities was entered into the Articles of Association in 1972. Owing to the lack of other legal options to employ such persons, the chairman and the majority of the management considered the incorporation of this clause important as the sole means for establishing the formal grounds of this practice. Subsequently, this clause determined the principles behind the selection of staff members, foremen, and employees with disabilities. According to the financial regulations effective at that time, a clause prescribing the employment of people with disabilities in the Articles of Association was a definite advantage. Organizations fulfilling this criterion were exempted from contributing to social security funds as well as from paying settlement development tax. Although both exemptions were curtailed later, relief from such taxation was still substantial (for example, the prescribed social security contribution was low, 10 per cent only). Furthermore, a development fund was available to secure resources, purchase equipment, etc.

The establishment of the Oliver Halasi Sports Club in joint effort with the Elementary School and Dormitory for the Rehabilitation of Children with Motion Abnormalities demonstrates the commitment of the Co-operative to serve the interests of people with disabilities. Subsequently, the Co-operative provided sponsorship for the Club proportional to its financial potential. Furthermore, the journal ‘*Humanity*’ was launched in 1981, the first year of the “International Decade of the Disabled”. In 1982, the Co-operative devolved the rights for publishing the paper on the newly established National Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities.

The ‘Humanity’ Co-operative was granted the *target organization* status in 1982. It was the sixth in the row of such organizations and the status was not granted upon application; the management was positively surprised to read the declaration of appointment in the official bulletin. Initially, endowment thereby obtained from the welfare authorities amounted to 30-40 per cent of the salary of employees with disabilities. Subsequently, this was increased to 80 per cent; then a new system was introduced, where the Ministry of Finances determined the rate of endowment for each *target organization* individually. The ‘Humanity’ Co-

operative received a 180- to 210-per-cent endowment; the possible range at that time was 150 to 410 per cent. The Co-operative was famous of meticulous book-keeping – expenditures on the salaries of employees with disabilities were accurately shown along with the percentage of investments made from revenues produced by non-disabled employees to maintain the employment of the former.

Adoption to the category of *target organizations* enabled the ‘Humanity’ Co-operative to obtain resources from the rehabilitation fund for purchasing a workshop, machines, and other equipment.

The advantages associated with *target organization’s* status improved the situation of the Co-operative substantially. The endowment from welfare authorities stabilized its economic position. Increasing the proportion of employees with disabilities – termed as ‘people with altered working capabilities’ by contemporary and current terminology of labor policy makers – to 60 per cent was a precondition to receiving endowment.

The Co-operative accomplished a sales turnover of HUF 113 million in 1998. Most of this income was produced jointly by workers with normal working capabilities as well as the employees with disabilities of the wire-winder workshop. Furthermore, sales of products manufactured by employees with mental disabilities provided earnings of approximately HUF 4 million.

The proportion of people with ‘altered working capabilities’ is 78 per cent currently.

2.2.2 Recruitment techniques

Following the ascension to *target organization* status, the Co-operative had to recruit skilled workers in numbers to produce revenues sufficient for financing the employment of more people with disabilities. This did not generate any conflicts, as the majority of skilled workers were aware of the nature of their future job. They were willing to work with people with disabilities and acknowledged the goals of the Co-operative. Naturally, the piecework system of payment also enhanced their motivation.

The Co-operative has always been keen on providing employment for people with disabilities capable and willing to work. ‘Outside’ work is offered to people confined to their homes or for whom daily transportation to their jobs would be too difficult. In some facilities of the Co-operative, ordinary employees and people with disabilities are working together, whereas other workshops are staffed by the latter and their aides only. In addition to ‘outside’ work, the Co-operative maintains a special workshop at Baba street for poliomyelitis victims living in ‘iron lungs’, i.e. respirators. This facility was established upon request from the management of the hospital to provide these patients with a job and income. Unfortunately, only 6 of the original 23 patients are still alive.

The Co-operative also employs mentally disabled or physically disabled persons as well as people with hearing loss. The largest group of its employees with disabilities comprises individuals with mental disability. The number of people with multiple disabilities is also substantial. New applicants or their parents are interviewed by the rehabilitation officer of

the Co-operative. If the applicant likes any of the offered jobs, the interviewer escorts him/her to the appropriate workshop or arranges an appointment with the foreman.

The duration of training provided for new recruits is often longer than the 3-month period required by applicable law.

The majority of workplaces are accessible by wheelchair; the only exception is the central office. Whenever a new facility had been purchased or rented, it was refitted gradually by changing the doors and windows, as well as by reconstructing restrooms and other premises to make them accessible by wheelchair.

Courses in finger-language have not been organized for people with hearing loss. Communication with these employees is arranged by using the person most adept in lip-reading and familiar with the finger-language as an interpreter. According to experience, the majority of people with hearing loss can master lip-reading skills within a reasonable time. The wire-winder workshop has been successfully cleared of obstacles; however, the storeroom is too small to be entered with a wheelchair.

2.2.3 Integration into the work environment

Foremen are responsible for identifying activities or tasks within the manufacturing process that befit the capabilities and preferences of the employees. Production-related activities are distributed among the staff preferentially; that is, people with lesser disabilities are assigned to difficult tasks, whereas the simpler ones are reserved for the more severely disabled. Usually, the modification of machines and equipment is not necessary because most of these are easy to use and employees with serious mental disability are not allowed to operate machines. In the wire-winder workshop, production has been organized to relieve wheelchair users from moving between their desks and the storeroom. The foreman sees to that all necessary materials are retrieved for them. Shifting positions in the production line is possible if wished by the employees. In such cases, the involved persons discuss the options with the foreman. When the change involves whole groups, the rehabilitation officer is competent to redistribute the assignments. The preferred standards for workplaces, the tailoring of activities and the shifting of tasks are not set out in written regulations.

Payment, however, is effected according to internal rules. The Co-operative maintains 'guaranteed salary', i.e. a predetermined payment due in addition to the reimbursement of piecework. This system has been designed to reduce the handicap afflicting many employees who would otherwise receive a meagre only wage after their performance impaired by disability. The rate of this benefit, that is, the amount of guaranteed salary is determined by the chairman on proposals from the foreman.

Several attempts have been made to refresh the range of activities available for employees with disabilities. In particular, metalworking and woodcrafts (e.g. by turning-lathe) were contemplated. The management had to realize, however, that neither of these jobs would be safe enough for the employees with disabilities.

2.2.4 Employment-related advantages, benefits, and limitations for employees

The rules governing lifestyle and health behavior are identical to those adopted by other employers. The Co-operative observes all requirements and regulations pertinent to employers in general. Jobs involving the processing or handling of materials potentially deleterious to human health are rejected.

The Co-operative does not offer supportive services.

The policy for granting vacations is similar to those administered by other business companies. The Co-operative reduces the expenses of employees by arranging summer holidays for them. Furthermore, bus tours are organized on several occasions each year along with Christmas festivities.

No trade unions are or have ever been active within the Co-operative – their functions are assumed by the Co-operative Committee. The interests of employees with disabilities are represented by the rehabilitation officer. The open atmosphere prevailing within the Co-operative is a tribute to the praiseworthy conduct of chairman and management, as well as to their cherished principles. People with disabilities are accepted as they are; no conflicts have ever occurred between them and their unscathed colleagues.

2.2.5 Methods for maintaining employment

Production and job activities are organized to benefit the capabilities and needs of employees with disabilities as much as possible. Work-related conflicts are handled by the foreman or – if reconciliation is unsuccessful – the rehabilitation officer.

The primary responsibilities of the management include securing orders from business partners to keep the staff employed as well as to prepare the workers for the fulfillment of tasks through appropriate training. Courses to instruct managers, foremen, and aides in leadership skills are not organized by the Co-operative. The internal supervising system ascertains product quality only; preserving competitiveness by fulfilling apparent requirements of the market is considered important.

2.2.6 Techniques facilitating the return to work

The wheelchair-confined workmen of the wire-winding facility stand comparison with the staff of any other company. Despite their disability, these people have a good chance for employment by external firms; unfortunately however, demand for this type of job has been extremely low. The management of the Co-operative is convinced that ‘normal’ employees are biased against people with disabilities.

Three classes of 2-year vocational training in leather-works have been organized. Two of the students from the Co-operative had completed the course set for the certifying examination. Both of them failed, but this did not imperil their job at the Co-operative.

2.1.7 Grievance and Dispute Resolution Techniques

No internal code for case management and resolving conflicts has been adopted. Work-related conflicts are handled by foremen, or – if reconciliation is unsuccessful – by the rehabilitation officer. The latter has full knowledge of all facilities and premises owned by the Co-operative. Furthermore, the rehabilitation officer is equally familiar with employees since the time of the interview administered on application for a job.