

Employment of Parents with Disabled Children in Russia

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Over the last 20 years the number of children with disabilities has increased in Russia by 12 times and reached about half a million. High growth rates in the number of this population category bring about most unfavourable consequences. Disabled children, irrespective of age, usually need permanent attention, care and treatment. Therefore, parents have to give up working. These circumstances deteriorate social and economic well-being of families. Most of these families are poor.

Social policy concerning families with disabled children in Russia envisages rendering various kinds of assistance, and first of all – benefits and privileges. Nevertheless, the amount of funding social programmes and benefits is not sufficient for bringing them out of poverty.

Examination of the socio-economic characteristics of families with disabled children shows a low employment rate among mothers. When children are born or become invalids, most of mothers break (40%) their labour force participation or change (13%) their place of work. Mass involvement of mothers in caring for children is caused by insufficient development of the sphere of social services for people with disabilities, among them provision of personal services, nursing and teaching at home, special education for the disabled. Treatment, care, education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities require direct participation of relatives and much time. The obtained data show, that in every second family the time spent on unpaid work of mothers caring for children with disabilities is equal to the average working day in gainful employment (from 5 to 10 hours).

Among the most significant factors determining the forced withdrawal of mothers with disabled children from the labour market is lack of mechanisms for implementation of the legal norms, regulating the rights of workers with disabled children. Special labour rights (flexible regime of work, paid sick leaves and unpaid leaves to care for children) are used by less than 15% of these workers, since employers are not interested in such arrangements that imply additional troubles and loss of profits.

In the absence of adequate federal and regional social support for parents with disabled children, staying out of labour force, the dependency ratio in such families is increasing. Particularly difficult is position of incomplete families. 70% of them are poor. The problems facing families with disabled children, including poverty, are negatively affecting the decisions concerning birth of following children. Over half of these families have only one child, which is disabled.

In view of this, keeping up labour force participation and economic activity of parents with disabled children (both men and women equally) could be an important resource and precondition for alleviating poverty among these families, for their successful economic adaptation.