

SOCIAL STATUS OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN RUSSIA

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Abstract. The article raises questions and considers the state, problems and prospects of the system of social security and social protection of disabled people. Legislation realization of social protection for the disabled is a provocative question as the social help and support of the handicapped in a modern Russian society is not at a proper level. Disability is a complex social and medical problem, a problem of realization of human and civil rights. The system of social protection has been formed in the country, and a legal and regulatory framework has been developed as well. On the one hand, Russia has significantly expanded the range of opportunities for the disabled by transforming social practices in various areas, organizing targeted social work, creating conditions for an accessible environment, and expanding the information provision of social services. On the other hand, these measures do not make it possible to completely neutralize the social vulnerability of this category of people.

Keywords: disability; social protection; government program; social barriers; social inequality; exclusion; social status; accessible environment; employment; integration; inclusion; social legislation; social subjectivity

1. Introduction

Modern state policy is aimed at creating and ensuring the necessary conditions for education, socialization, rehabilitation, employment, the most complete social inclusion of people with disabilities. In connection with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities by Russia, the regulatory framework has substantially changed and the entire system of social protection for people with disabilities has been transformed. The aim of the work is to analyze the current system state of social protection of people with disabilities in the Russian Federation and analyze its possible prospects.

According to the Federal Law ‘Social Protection of People with Disabilities in the Russian Federation’ dated November 11th 1995 #181-Federal Law, a disabled person is a person who has a health disorder with persistent dysfunction of the

body caused by diseases, the consequences of injuries or defects, which leads to a limitation of life and needs social protection.

A citizen who has received the state service for medical and social examination (MSE) has passed the initial examination or re-examination, and received the appropriate MSE opinion and a document (or a certificate confirming the fact of disability) becomes the holder of the social and legal status of a disabled person and acquires special rights state social protection, assistance and support. At the same time, not only the procedure is legally determined, but also the conditions for recognizing a citizen as a disabled. They are as follows:

- a health disorder with persistent dysfunction of the body due to diseases, the consequences of injuries or defects;
- limitation of life;
- the need for social protection measures, including rehabilitation¹⁾.

Only a combination of two or all three of the above conditions is needed for recognizing a citizen as a disabled person, that is, it is emphasized that disability is a condition characterized by a complex of social and physical restrictions that produce the need for special care and support.

The definition that is enshrined in Russian law generally complies with that given by the World Health Organization, i.e. ‘Structural impairments ..., ... which can lead to the loss or imperfection of the skills necessary for certain types of activities (or disability), ... that under appropriate conditions will contribute to social maladaptation, unsuccessful or delayed socialization (or handicap)’²⁾. Moreover, it differs significantly from the definition given in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (adopted by resolution of the General Assembly of December 13, 2006, Russia signed the Convention in 2006 and ratified it in 2012), which emphasizes that disability is the ‘result the interaction that occurs between people with impaired health and relational and environmental barriers and which prevents their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’³⁾. On the other hand, the social legislation of Russia, in order to bring it into line with the provisions of the Convention, a federal law was adopted that defined amendments to 25 legislative acts regulating legal relations in the field of social protection of people with disabilities⁴⁾. The amendments to the framework of the Federal Law ‘Social Protection of People with Disabilities in the Russian Federation’ significantly expanded the horizons of the existing social protection of people with disabilities, and the legal framework was laid to create a barrier-free environment, conditions for the integration and inclusion of persons with disabilities, and to consider the problem of disability as a whole, which is all about social inequality and exclusion. Thus, modern Russian legislation regarding social assistance to people with disabilities is gradually approaching the laws and principles established in the world community (Avdonina &

Khamitova, 2018). There is a need to assess transformations in the system of social protection of people with disabilities, developing new strategies and prospects.

2. Materials and methods

In the research process, a number of methods were used, in particular general scientific (analysis; synthesis; integrated approach method; description; systematization; system and comparison); private-scientific (analysis of legal acts; observation; information-analytical analysis, and statistical.).

At the first stage of the work, a theoretical analysis of domestic and foreign studies was carried out; an analysis of the regulatory framework was carried out as well; the goal, objectives and research methods were identified. At the second stage, theoretical and practical conclusions are clarified; the results are generalized and systematized.

3. Results

The following aspects condition the modern social protection system of people with disabilities in the Russian Federation. First, disability is one of the components of human existence. Not a single society, at any stage of its development, has ever been completely free from the problem of disability. Almost every person during his life may experience temporary or long-term disabilities, and in old age experience significant difficulties in social functioning.

Disability is a complex phenomenon, it is not only a medical problem, but a social problem in the first place, since the restrictions imposed by disability can significantly change the life of a person with a disability and their family, and the level of disability of the population is an indicator of the country's socio-economic development and society as a whole.

According to WHO estimates, more than a billion people, or about 15% of the world's population (according to the 2010 global population estimate), live with some form of disability. This is a higher rate than the previous estimate by the World Health Organization in the 1970s at 10%. Between 110 million and 190 million people with disabilities, suffer from severe disorders. In countries where life expectancy exceeds 70 years, years related to disability account for an average of about 8 years, representing 11.5% of total life expectancy⁵). According to the UN 'Families and Disability', every four families in the world have a disability problem.

Moreover, the global trend is such that the number of people with disabilities is steadily growing. This is due to many factors, i.e. the aging of the population (the older people are the higher risk of disability), due to the wide spread of chronic and congenital diseases, a large number of road traffic accidents, natural disasters, military conflicts, substance abuse, adverse environmental conditions and other factors.

According to official statistics in Russia, 01.01.2019, there were 11,947 thousand people with disabilities (8% of the country's population)⁶. Compared to 2012, the number of people with disabilities in Russia decreased from 13189 thousand people to 11 947 thousand people (or from 92.2 to 81.4 in terms of the total number of people with disabilities per 1000 people). At the same time, the greatest reduction occurred due to a decrease in the disabled group II (from 7076 thousand people to 5356 thousand people, i.e. by 25%). However, during this period there has been a gradual increase in children with developmental disabilities and having significant health problems (from 560 thousand people in 2012 to 670 thousand people in 2019). The statistics have a certain 'social margin of error', since data on citizens with an official, confirmed status of a disabled person are taken into account. Some experts cite higher disability figures for the population of the Russian Federation than those indicated in official statistical collections, indicating the presence of citizens who fall into the category of a disabled person, but who do not know about it or have not obtained an appropriate status (for example, in connection with living in remote areas of the country, etc.).

Secondly, when analyzing the number of people with disabilities for a sufficiently long period of time (for 10, 20 years or more), it becomes obvious that the comparison data are not entirely correct, since in different years or for some periods there is no data on the number of people with disabilities (i.e. citizens recognized as disabled (MSE), and the number of recipients of social benefits, benefits or disability assistance is not the same thing. Social protection (for example, a disabled person may be entitled to a disability or old age insurance pension, and therefore, when choosing the latter, they were not taken into account as recipients of disability payments).

Thirdly, disability is a socially determined phenomenon. With the development of social legislation, the evolution of views on the problems of people with disabilities, the criteria for disability also change. So, for example, people with certain diseases and receiving the corresponding status of a disabled person in the 1990s faced with the fact that in the 2000s they were removed from the group of disabilities at their next re-examination. This can partially explain the decrease in the total number of disabled people in recent years (since 2012, the number of disabled people in Russia has decreased by 1,242,000 people).

In addition, the 'attractiveness' of the disability status may vary depending on the socio-economic context. Social protection is an essential condition for social and economic development for everyone, but especially for those living in poverty and social exclusion. Social protection programs can play a crucial role in alleviating and preventing poverty and vulnerability in order to ensure the well-being of people (Aguilar, 2017). Thus, the increase in disability can be conjugated and determined by the desire to receive social support measures.

As a rule, disability is associated with social vulnerability, which can be seen in many indicators such as the level of employment and education, cash income,

marital status, etc. People with disabilities are characterized by lower social mobility, they marry later and with less intensity, are more often tied to their parental family and relatives, disability is often associated with heredity (which is expressed in the high likelihood of a sick child being born to disabled parents), and is also a cultural consequence - psychological segregation (expressed in the high probability of both disabled spouses).

The importance of disability as a medical and social problem for modern society is due to the following aspects:

- disability is a significant criterion for assessing public health and working capacity of the population;
- disability significantly affects mortality rates (mortality rates among people with disabilities are 1.5-2 times higher), duration, quality of life;
- ‘rejuvenation’ of disability is of a particular concern and the progressive increase in the number of children with disabilities;
- disability requires special economic costs from the state for social needs.

In Russia, the right of citizens to social protection is constitutionally guaranteed and legally regulated. In the common sense, the word ‘protection’ means ‘to someone, anything; protect, secure from anything; what protects is defense’. Protection in combination with the meaning of the term “social” and “disabled person” should be understood as a set of various measures aimed at providing the necessary livelihoods to citizens with disabilities and their families, and in order to maintain their living standards, for the development of physical and spiritual abilities, including the human environment.

The Federal Law ‘Social Protection of People with Disabilities in the Russian Federation’ in Article 2 gives a clear interpretation of the term ‘social protection of people with disabilities, a system of economic, legal and social support measures guaranteed by the state that provide people with disabilities the conditions for overcoming, replacing (or compensating for) disability and aiming to create equal with other citizens of opportunities for participation in society’⁷⁾.

The main modern forms of social protection for people with disabilities are the provision of qualified and free medical care; pension provision; social support (providing for various types of payments); social assistance and self-help; social insurance; social services, social rehabilitation and social adaptation; creation of conditions for obtaining special and inclusive education; measures to organize the rational employment of people with disabilities; creating an accessible social environment and additional measures to provide housing.

4. Discussions

Generally, the analysis of regulatory acts of social protection of people with disabilities allows us to conclude that at the present time not only there is a very large number of different regulatory acts, but also that issues of social protection

of people with disabilities are reflected in almost all branches of law. Obviously, the peculiarity of the modern system is that it does not boil down to the existence of certain types of social support and assistance (tangible and intangible form), but covers practically all spheres of the life of people with disabilities, determines the conditions for their normal social functioning and protection of their legal rights and freedoms. There is also a very large number of by-laws, industry regulations that clarify, specify the mechanism for implementing individual rules of the law, the timing and forms of social protection measures and specific performers.

The modern system of social protection of people with disabilities in Russia is focused on the desire for social integration and ensuring equal effective access to various kinds of public goods (i.e. health care, education and social services). The state program 'Accessible Environment', which has been implemented in the Russian Federation since 2011, is the main interagency program for people with disabilities. The program provides a wide range of measures that allow not only to provide unhindered access to facilities and services in the priority areas of life of people with disabilities and other low-mobility groups, as well as improving the very mechanism for providing rehabilitation services, expanding social services while providing inclusive education and rational employment of people with disabilities.

To make the existing system of social protection of people with disabilities in the Russian Federation effective, a reciprocal social subjectivity growth of the disabled themselves is needed as well as their representations and organizations. Social protection should be a powerful strategy for developing human potential and promoting inclusive and effective participation (Aguilar, 2017). This is especially evident in a situation with rational employment and employment of people with disabilities. A large and multifaceted work is carried out by employment services. Among the traditional areas of work used to ensure the employment of people with disabilities, such as assisting citizens in finding suitable jobs, organizing professional orientation of citizens in order to choose the field of activity (or profession), employment, organizing vocational training and getting additional professional education, the provision of psychological support to unemployed citizens, temporary employment, as well as social adaptation of unemployed people in the labor market, developing the promotion of self-employment of the unemployed and being followed by the organization to promote employment of persons with disabilities. At the same time, there are a large number of social and psychological barriers that have not been overcome (both by disabled people and employers), which do not allow ensuring high rational employment among disabled people. On the one hand, the range of opportunities for people with disabilities has expanded significantly in Russia by transforming social practices in various fields, organizing targeted social work, creating an accessible environment, and expanding the information security of social services. On the other hand, these measures do not allow to completely

leveling the social vulnerability of these people. The organization of an accessible environment is not completed in many rural areas, which significantly narrows the range of opportunities for people with disabilities living there; the standard of living of people with disabilities, despite various forms of material support (like pensions, allowances, monthly cash payments, benefits for utility bills, drug benefits and others) is not high and their incomes, as a rule, do not cover many additional expenses related to disability. In other words, the benefits and services provided as part of social protection programs should be relevant and consistent with the right of people with disabilities to a satisfactory standard of living.

The social protection measures for people with disabilities implemented quite effectively enable people with disabilities to combat short-term poverty, but they are often insufficient or do not achieve the goal of investing in human potential to promote social inclusion and active participation and represent a missed opportunity to solve the problem of long-term poverty.

5. Conclusion

To make the modern system of social protection of the disabled in Russia to be effective, it is necessary to change the social position of the disabled themselves. In response to broad state social protectionist measures, the active position of the disabled themselves should also be shown. Social dependency and a passive social position have a place to be and often do not allow people with disabilities to realize their potential. Social practice needs work technologies that will enable people with disabilities to become active, to form an active social position, and readiness for social changes on the issue of disability at the society level. In Russia, the social-legal field for the social protection of people with disabilities has been created, its mechanisms have been developed, but significant social, psychological, communicative, administrative and environmental barriers to the integration of people with disabilities have not yet been overcome.

NOTES

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