

EXPANDED ABSTRACT

Social Economy and disability. Enablers and obstacles in the integration of workers with disabilities in the Social Economy entities

Effective and full integration of people with disability into society is deeply related to their integration into the labour market. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006 triggered a change in the conception of disability towards a social approach, especially in terms of their human rights and their integration in society. One of the key elements of this integration is the participation of persons with disabilities in the different spheres of society with equal opportunities. In particular, their integration in the labour market is a mayor challenge not only from the personal development perspective, but also in terms of their autonomy and independence.

Irrespective of the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of the different strategies aimed at integrating persons with disability into the labour market, further research is necessary on the factors that encourage that integration and highlight entry into an ordinary labour market, which should be the ultimate objective of integration policies for persons with a disability.

The values shared by Social Economy enterprises generate a differentiated behaviour in relation to their staff composition, the work conditions, their productive specialisation and their geographical location. This differentiated behaviour constitutes, at the same time, an important contribution to social and territorial cohesion. In particular, the contribution to social cohesion comprises the occupation of groups with difficulties of access to employment, employment quality, improvement in equal opportunities and the offer of social services.

The goal of this work is twofold. Firstly, to analyze the contribution of Social Economy to social cohesion in terms of the employment of people with disabilities and in particular the compliance with the quota requirement. Secondly, to detect the enablers and barriers to work in the design of labour policies for higher and better integration in workplaces. This paper contributes to the literature by analyzing the key aspects related to the perceptions, behaviour and culture of Social Economy entities in relation to the integration of workers with disabilities in their staffs, adding useful and relevant information for the design and implementation of active labour policies.

In order to achieve these objectives, an ad-hoc survey has been designed to analyze the compliance of quota legislation for people with disabilities and conducted among Medium and Large Social Economy entities (50 employees or more) in Spain. Quota legislation in Spain establishes an obli-

gation for companies with more than a certain number of employees (50 or more) to employ a minimum percentage of people with disabilities (2%). The technical characteristics of the survey are as follows:

- i. The Universe of the survey is composed of all Social Economy entities (except Special Employment Centres), located in Spain, from all economic sectors with 50 or more employees. Universe size (according to the National Statistics Institute of Spain and Social Economy statistics) is composed by, approximately, 3.000 entities.
- ii. Sampling used in this research is proportional, stratified by economic sector, region and company size. Selection of interviewee units is random. Sampling size is composed of 329 units, distributed to assure representativeness by geographical region, sector and business size. Sampling error is $\pm 5\%$. (Confidence level 95.5% and probability $p=q=0.5 - 2$ sigma).
- iii. Content of the survey refers to several topics such as: identification data, business size, economic sector, employment size, annual turnover; data about presence and job position of workers with disabilities and information about integration process: how diversity, especially related to people with disabilities, is incorporated into the selection, hiring and promotion policies of the company.

Main results of the analyses show that the majority of Social Economy entities are in compliance with the quota requirement (84.1%). However, there are some remarkable differences attending companies' characteristics. Thus, the percentage of Social Economy entities complying with the quota requirement is higher among large companies, companies in social services and dependency sectors and, by geographical area, among companies located in Andalusia or Catalonia. On the other hand, medium-sized companies, industrial ones and Social Economy entities located in Navarra or Basque Country show lower percentages of compliance with the quota requirement.

This survey offers as well some qualitative information, divided into two different sections. Firstly, the analysis is focused on some aspects related to the perceptions, behaviour and culture of Social Economy entities in relation to the integration of workers with disabilities in their staffs. The aim of this section is to identify potential differences between companies who are in compliance with the quota requirement and those who do not. Some of the main results of this section are:

- i. Legal obligation and fiscal benefits are the main reason to hire people with disabilities for both, companies that do and do not comply with the quota requirement.
- ii. Companies who comply with the quota requirement recruit personnel by using employment agencies, acquaintances and relatives and online job portals more frequently than those who do not comply with the quota requirement.
- iii. Companies or entities who integrate inclusion and diversity (gender, cultural, racial, socio-economic, etc.) in their programmes, policies and regulations are those with a higher percentage of people with disabilities in their staff.

- iv. Previous experiences related to the presence of workers with disabilities seem to be the main and more important boost for Social Economy entities and companies.
- v. The appointment of a colleague as a support-buddy is the most important intervention to facilitate the integration of the worker with disability in the company
- vi. The majority of Social Economy entities do not find any difficulty related to the integration process. However, companies in compliance with the quota find more obstacles than those who do not. Among those who have faced any obstacle, main barriers are related to the adaptation to the job; emotional barriers and physical space/accommodations obstacles.

Secondly, the analysis focuses on the main reasons and obstacles found by those companies and entities that do not have any employees with disabilities in their staff, aiming to get to know their reasons to not hire this collective. The main two reasons why these companies declare that they do not have any person with disability in their staff are the lack of candidates with disabilities and the lack of matching between the candidates and job positions available.

Thus, results from this research highlight some key aspects that are important to bear in mind. Firstly, values shared by Social Economy entities do generate a differentiated behavior in relation to their staff composition that contributes to the social cohesion. Secondly, the implementation of instruments and active policies have a positive impact over the integration of persons with disabilities in the ordinary labour market; quota policies and fiscal incentives are named as the main facilitators. In this sense, compliance with quota legislation is not a dichotomous decision for Social Economy entities but a gradual and continuous process that starts when hiring the first worker with disability in their staffs. Thus, previous experiences related to the presence of workers with disabilities seem to be the main boost for Social Economy entities and companies. In third term, an inclusive business culture that appreciates and accepts diversity (not only related to disabilities) displays characteristics of general awareness and inclusion of workers with disabilities in Social Economy entities. The inclusion of specific measures related to disability in the diversity policies is a challenge that firms, including Social Economy ones, still has to confront.

Finally, the study and dissemination of best practices among employers is also important to surpass stereotypes and prejudices, contributing to the integration of people with disabilities into the ordinary labour market. As we have seen through this study, Social Economy companies and entities that have hired people with disabilities would recommend it to other ones. And this does not only have a positive effect in terms of equity and ethical reasons, but it can also have a great impact on the image connected to the Corporate Social Responsibility of the Social Economy, also in terms of benefits related to more diverse workplaces.

Further research is needed in terms of the design of policies to foster deeper integration of persons with disabilities into ordinary labour market. As observed in the results, the matching process between candidates and job positions shows some weaknesses and the existence of workers with

disabilities is one of the main facilitator to increase the number of these workers in firms. Besides design and implementation of active policies towards the integration of workers with disabilities, especial attention must be given to the business culture regarding disability. The study of enablers and obstacles in all kind of firms might show different results from the ones obtained in this paper as it would include small firms, which have no quota requirements, and entities outside Social Economy, in which social cohesion might not be among their principles.

KEYWORDS: Employment, Social Economy, disability management, quotas.

