

PRESS RELEASE

**MARCH FOR DISABLED WOMEN - IV.
“REHABILITATION IN MOVING” CONFERENCE
and
“THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR WOMEN 2009” AWARD CEREMONY**

**as part of the Open Day
of the National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour**

**Venue: Hungarian Parliament, Hunting Hall
Date and Time: 31 March between 11:00 am. – 16.00 pm.**

Organizers:

**National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour
Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour**

**Language of the conference: Hungarian and English
(Simultaneous translation will be provided)**

Objective of the conference:

The Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary (AWCDH) has launched a series of conferences in 2006 to direct public and political attention to women with disabilities as a group especially exposed to discrimination and social exclusion.

We aim to provide information on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to demonstrate Hungary's engagement in their implementation as well as to present international best practices in this field.

The event will serve as a forum with all stakeholders to introduce and debate the new national conception of promoting the employment of persons with disabilities and reduced work capacity.

PROGRAM

10:00 – 11:00 ***Registration and reception of the guests***

11:00 – 11:10 ***Greeting:***

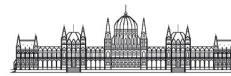
Andrea Ferenczi, President of AWCDH (Chair)

Gyöngyi Dani, member of the Hungarian Paralympic Team, AWCDH-expert on employment of persons with disabilities

Speeches

11:10 – 11:25 István Vécsi, Chairman, National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour, Sub-Committee on Rehabilitation

“Plans and reality from the legislative perspective”



11:25 – 11:40 HE Greg Dorey, British Ambassador to Hungary
“Equal Opportunities policy and institution of the British Government”

11:40 – 12:00 György Könczei, Professor of Eötvös Lorand University, Bárczi Gusztáv Faculty for Special Education, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
“The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Women”

12:00 – 12:15 Dr. Péter Juhász, chief advisor, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Department of Disability and Rehabilitation
„Accessibility from women’s perspective”

12:15 – 13:15 Panel Discussion

Moderator: István Váczi, journalist of the weekly Figyelő

Objective: a dialogue to promote the employment of persons with disabilities

Participants:

Kitti Dobi, Business Partnering & Resourcing Group Manager, Vodafone Operations Centre, Hungary

Dr. Valéria Molnár Farkas, chief adviser, National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour

Béla Kocsy, director of Hotel Panda

Dr. Ferenc Lelik, representative of the “Hátrányok dacára” (“Against the Odds”) Foundation

Sándor Szép, Head of Support Services, Office of the Rector, University of Pécs

13:15 – 13:25 Éva Vári inventor’s presentation about the disabled access device for use on stairs, awarded the Grand Prize of the Seoul International Invention Fair for Women in 2008

13:25 – 13:30 Closing remarks

13:30 – 14:00 Refreshments

14:00 – 16:00 “The Best Workplace For Women 2009” Award Ceremony

The *March for Disabled Women* conference, organized for the fourth time since 2007 by the **Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary** (AWCDH), this year was called „*Rehabilitation in Moving*” due to the fact that the event, as part of the *Open Day of the National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour*, focused mainly on current issues related to the employment opportunities of the disabled.

The president of AWCDH, **Andrea Ferenczi**, expressed gratitude in her opening remarks to **Józsefné Gellai** and **Gyöngyi Dani**, two AWCDH experts on disability issues and policies, have been helping to advance the Association's work in the field of disability employment. ‘Whenever we meet a disabled person there is no point in crying. On the contrary, our duty is to enable them to enjoy all the joys of life’, Andrea Ferenczi summed up the mission of the Conference and of AWCDH with regard to the disabled. In this spirit, Gyöngyi Dani, a paralympic champion, has already organized integrated sports days three times with the aim to show everyone concerned and interested which sports it is possible to pursue and with which tools as a disabled person. After Andrea Ferenczi's opening remarks, Gyöngyi Dani also greeted the Conference's participants in person, expressing hope that the *March for Disabled Women* conference will result in valuable discussion, cooperation as well as an exchange of knowledge, experiences and ideas, just like it did in the previous years, thereby strengthening the employment opportunities of the disabled.

Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Rehabilitation of the National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour **István Vécsi**, called it a national economic interest from the point of view of every single European country to promote the creation of job opportunities for all social groups, including, of course, disabled women, who are multiply disadvantaged. There is still a lot of work ahead despite the fact that the Parliament passed the disability law more than ten years ago, since the various laws take different approaches in interpreting the term ‘disabled’, which hinders the provision of precise statistics regarding the number of disabled people in Hungary. During the last census, 5.8% of the population claimed to be disabled, while in 2002 already 11% of the population indicated major health problems lasting for more than 6 months. Even though in 2008 the government spent 2.9% of the GDP on subsidies for the disabled, this amount should now be increased due to the economic recession, said István Vécsi. With regard to the current state of employment opportunities for people with disabilities, the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Rehabilitation said that they are intent on securing the continuity of the current system by means of budget regroupings, an aspect of which is that institutions employing disabled people are provided access to salary and other supplementary grants. István Vécsi highlighted the rehabilitation endowment introduced in 2007 from among the supporting measures so far, which is calculated on the basis of the extent of health damage and not on the basis of the extent to which the person's ability to work is impaired. The ultimate goal is to think together in terms of complex

rehabilitation and to achieve it with the help of each and every stakeholder, including education and health services, while at the same time fostering social solidarity, announced István Vécsei.

Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Hungary **Greg Dorey** gave an account of his country's equal opportunity policies and laws, asserting that although an anti-discrimination law was passed in 1975, it would be an exaggeration to consider the problem nonexistent today. In recognition of this, the British Parliament passed a supplementary regulation in 2006 that stresses the importance of equality between men and women, also making it mandatory for every public institution to put forward an equal opportunities strategy, which has to be revised every 3 years. Another regulation passed recently makes it obligatory for every public institution employing more than 150 people and for private companies employing more than 250 people to publish information regarding the gap between the salaries of men and women. In order to further promote equal opportunities for all, a Minister and a Deputy Minister on Women and Equality have been appointed in the UK; there are annual public debates on equality issues in the Houses of Parliament on International Women's Day; and there are regular consultations with the National Council of Women, an independent body advising governmental decision-makers during the lawmaking process. Women's rights are constantly on the agenda in the UK's foreign policy as well. Being a member state of the UN Security Council and of the EU, the UK supports every international regulation aiming to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women. Some of the most remarkable achievements so far in the field of equal opportunities mentioned by Ambassador Dorey are the increase by millions in the number of employed women over the last two decades, the childcare endowment provided to low-income families, as well as the growing proportion of women in political decision-making. (The proportion of women representatives in the British Parliament is 20%, 35% in the Scottish Parliament, and 15% in the Northern-Irish Parliament).

Professor at the Bárczi Gusztáv Faculty for Special Education of Eötvös Loránd University and Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities **György Könczei** gave a speech on some of the relevant aspects of disability studies as a relatively new discipline as well as on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Women. According to one approach in disability studies promoted by Iris Marion Young, we may distinguish five faces of oppression. Out of these, György Könczei expanded on exploitation, one of whose forms is the tendency of women receiving lower salaries than men all over the world; cultural imperialism, meaning that the discourse agenda is defined by professionals and not by everyday 'users' and stakeholders; and dichotomy, referring to the phenomenon by which from every pair of values the positive and advantageous category is always identified with masculinity. Professor Könczei then spoke about the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Women, whose main achievement is the deconstruction of the notion of disability: the picture of a disabled person emerging from the articles of the Convention is not a picture of a weak, clumsy and isolated individual but of an active and powerful one. Some of the

Convention's articles, such as Article 12, mention women with mental or psychosocial disabilities, acknowledging their multiple disadvantaged status. György Könczei pointed out that critical thinking regarding our own prejudices is every citizen's duty, and said it was desirable that narratives of disabled women should be given more attention at events similar to the *March for Disabled Women* conference.

Leading consultant of the Department of Disability and Rehabilitation Issues of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour **Dr. Péter Juhász** gave a briefing on the significance and the different interpretations of equal access. Provision of access may mean, on the one hand, physical access by way of ramps, the availability of guide-dogs or appropriately shaped interiors, and on the other hand, it may also mean access through information and communication technologies for people with sensory disabilities, for instance, through sign languages, photos or websites developed especially for blind people and people with weak eyesight. All these taken together are referred to as comprehensive access provision and equal access, which is an invaluable and indispensable help not only to people with disabilities but to other social groups as well, such as the elderly and parents on childcare leave. The comprehensive access provision is now the standard approach required in the case of tenders submitted to the European Union. The most important aspects and requirements in the field of equal access from the women's perspective that are also acknowledged by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour are the following: more women's than men's restrooms should be built in public institutions; rooms with changing tables and smaller built-in changing tables should be a part of building facilities; separate playing areas for children; safe babysitting custody for children; family parking lots; family-friendly workplaces. As a final remark, Dr. Péter Juhász highlighted the need for a horizontal mainstreaming approach as a prerequisite of comprehensive access provision in general on every level of decision making, planning and execution.

A **panel discussion** with the participation of experts on issues related to the employment opportunities of disabled people followed the individual briefings. The discussion also focused on the new law ratified in the beginning of January this year that mandates that every company with more than 20 employees should include among their employees 5% disabled people. Should such companies not be able to meet this requirement, a rehabilitation benefit amounting to almost one million HUF has to be paid, which is a major increase compared to the amount of rehabilitation benefit required before. A thought-provoking article titled *Advantage Arising from a Disadvantage* published in *Figyelő* and written by the panel's moderator, journalist **István Váczi**, inspired the topic of the discussion.

Chief adviser of the National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour **Dr. Valéria Molnár Farkas** considers the new law a good initiative for employers on the part of lawmakers since in her opinion, efficient steps should be taken in order for the approximately 250-300 thousand disabled people living in Hungary, among whom only 17% were actually born with a disability, to be able to find employment. Business Partnering & Resourcing Group Manager at Vodafone Operations Centre Hungary



Kitti Dobi expressed concerns with respect to the extent to which employers may or may not be prepared to comply with this new legal requirement due to its ratification in such a short time frame, raising a question about the types of jobs that may be offered at present for people with disabilities. Head of Support Services at the Office of the Rector of the University of Pécs **Sándor Szép** said companies might have the feeling for the time being that an initiative of this type is an imposition on them because of its ratification on such short notice. Director of Hotel Panda **Béla Kocsy** claimed, on the other hand, that the lack of skilled resources among people with disabilities is also a problem to be addressed. Representative of the “Against the Odds” (“Hátrányok dacára”) Foundation **Dr. Ferenc Lelik**, in agreement with **Béla Kocsy**’s view, drew attention to the necessity of involving disabled people in training courses of various kinds, and to the possibility that the rehabilitation benefit paid by companies might even be used for this purpose. The responsibility of institutions of higher education in providing students with competitive knowledge was stressed by **Dr. Valéria Molnár Farkas**, who stated that this would directly contribute to the realization of the long-term goal of securing employment opportunities for the disabled that they find suitable and agreeable. **Béla Kocsy** emphasized that this is a shared responsibility of universities and employers, the latter being obliged to arrange for the necessary workplace trainings for their current and prospective employees, thereby demonstrating the company’s recognition of their talent and potential.

The experts of the panel discussion unanimously agreed that it is not reasonable to make a distinction between disabled women and disabled men since they share the same needs concerning the labour market and other aspects of life, which often coincide with the needs of other social groups as well. Therefore, it makes more sense to consider and treat them as a complex, but unified group. A consensus was reached also with respect to the need to put on the general agenda and generate a public discussion about the lack of presence of the disabled in public spaces in Hungary, which tendency should be eliminated as soon as possible. To this end, all the necessary conditions would have to be met, first and foremost, the provision of physical access in public transportation, which is one of the top priorities.

Another topic addressed during the panel discussion was the physical and mental obstacles blocking the social integration of the disabled. As for mental obstacles, **Kitti Dobi** and **Sándor Szép** pointed out that integrated education starting already in primary school is highly desirable, which makes it viable for non-disabled children to gradually get rid of any potential prejudiceness during the early years of schooling, at the same time getting prepared for future integrated work environments. **Béla Kocsy** added that company directors can have a strong positive influence on their employees if they show the right attitude towards disabled colleagues, making it likely that most or all of them will follow suit.

At the end of the „*Rehabilitation in Moving*” conference, an insightful presentation was given by Grand Prize Awardee of the first Seoul International Invention Fair for Women, inventor **Éva Vári**, who described how the mobile ramp designed by her and made of prefabricated elements works. The mobile

ramp can be set up within an hour and placed on any outdoor flight of stairs. The uniqueness of the invention is due to it's being simple and made of recycled materials, which also makes it environmentally-friendly. In addition, no machines are needed to make it work. Furthermore, Éva Vári shared the news with us that another similar invention of hers is currently being assessed by the patent committee, which is designed for use on elevators.

Best Workplace for Women 2009 – Award Ceremony

The **Award Ceremony of the Best Workplace for Women Competition** organized by the **Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary** (AWCDH) for the third time also formed part of the events during the *Open Day of the National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour*. 'This competition, too, is among our various initiatives through which AWCDH as a prestigious non-governmental organization and think-tank can function as an expert partner to decision makers, lawmakers and institutions in the private sector in the field of equality', said AWCDH president **Andrea Ferenczi** during her opening remarks. Andrea Ferenczi then thanked all the participating companies for their interest in the competition, which despite the recession turned out to be more popular this year than in the previous years. 'To be a good workplace from the point of view of women nowadays means fame and prestige for a company', claimed the president of AWCDH, 'which has obviously been recognized by the winning companies since they conduct employee satisfaction surveys on a regular basis; the feedback from which they then build into their HR strategies'.

The winning companies were first greeted by Chairwoman of the Equal Treatment Authority (ETA) and Chairwoman of the Evaluation Committee of the Best Workplace for Women Award **Dr. Judit Demeter**, who took the opportunity to congratulate the companies on their child-friendly and equal opportunity policies, which stand in sharp contrast to the unfavorable trends witnessed daily by ETA that attest to the continuing existence of discrimination against women, both in the form of lower salaries and because of childcare duties and commitments.

Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour **Edit Rauh** expressed her appreciation to AWCDH for their efforts as a non-governmental organization to encourage companies through different initiatives to establish workplace conditions that advance equality of women and men. Additionally, she raised attention to the necessity of promoting the CSR practices of companies by various means and methods, and of strengthening corresponding social norms.

Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Rehabilitation of the National Assembly Committee on Employment and Labour **István Vécsi** called the winning companies excellent examples of joint thinking and acting, whose exemplary equality policies and practices should be taken up by other companies.



Vice-Chairwoman of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the European Parliament **Dr. Zita Gurmai**'s message to the awarded companies was conveyed by her Cabinet Chief **Attila Benedek**, in which she first welcomed the Best Workplace for Women initiative as a competition based on the idea of solidarity, and also congratulated the companies winning the first three prizes on showing how successfully good legal policies may be implemented in practice.

On behalf of Vice-Chairwoman of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament **Lívía Járóka**, **Oszkár Ökrös** emphasized the paramount importance of civic organizations like AWCDH in the elimination of the various layers of discrimination and in creating opportunities for showcasing best practices, such as the *Best Workplace for Women* competition itself.

Award winners of the Best Workplace for Women 2009 competition:

First category: companies with more than 250 employees

I. Microsoft Magyarország Kft.

II. Fővárosi Gázművek Zrt.

II. MAVIR Zrt.

Second category: companies with 30-250 employees

I. S Modell Kereskedelmi Zrt.

exclusive franchise partner of MARKS & SPENCER in Hungary

II. Quintiles Magyarország Kft.

III. Kulcs-Soft Számítástechnika Nyrt.

Special Prize winners of the Best Workplace for Women 2009 competition:

Winner of the Special Prize offered by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour: Móra-Vital Kft.

Winner of the Special Prize offered by Figyelő magazine: Hotel Panda Kft.

Winner of the Special Prize offered by Világgazdaság: M.E. Trial Masters Egészségügyi Szolgáltató Kft.

A brief overview of the award winners of the Best Workplace for Women 2009 competition and some of their prominent equality policies:

Microsoft Magyarország Kft.

- The satisfaction of women employees is a business issue, which is at the same time strongly related to and mirrors user demographics, since most customers are women
- There are 5 women in the 11-member top management, and the proportion of women at this level is expected to rise in the coming years.
- Women employees are encouraged to take advantage of international career opportunities.



- The company takes pride in participating in the annual best workplace contest.
- A great emphasis is put on attracting talented women candidates during processes of recruitment and talent initiatives.
- It is the company's mission to help increase the proportion of women working in the field of IT.
- Data gained from annual employee satisfaction surveys are analysed systematically.
- Women-friendly initiatives: flexible work hours and work-from-home opportunities, also available during outstanding life-cycle events.

S Modell Kereskedelmi Zrt.

- 159 employees out of 170 are women.
- Availability of flexible work hours during and after maternal leave (part-time job opportunities with 4 or 6 working hours a day).
- Employee preferences regarding workplace location are taken into consideration.
- On-the-spot trainings during the workday paid by the company.
- Flexible working hours and promotion initiatives for elderly employees aiming at keeping their loyalty.

Fővárosi Gázművek Zrt.

- The company is 154 years old.
- 70% of their 504 employees are women.
- The proportion of women in the company management is 51%.
- Fifty new women employees over 40 years of age have been hired in the past 5 years.
- Precise and clear communication of requirements, evaluation criteria and promotion opportunities towards employees is a top priority.
- Many job vacancies attract mostly women, such as positions in the customer service and finance departments.
- Internal rotation and flexible working hours.
- Training initiatives for employees on maternity leave.
- Promotion of free-time and regeneration activities, such as the women's fitness club available every day after work.
- Family resorts.
- Complementary health services and examinations.
- Free massage for office employees.
- Biannual employee satisfaction surveys.



Quintiles Magyarország Kft.

- Out of 150 employees 110 are women, which is rare in the field of medical services.
- There are partner offices all over the country, whereby the company also fosters employment of women in rural areas.
- The four platforms of the company's ultimate mission to create an attractive workplace are:
 - Health preservation: gymnastics, stress management program, massage, non-smoking workplace, 'fruit day' twice a week.
 - The possibility to choose remote, work-from-home and part-time working structures, and the provision of ICT equipment to employees choosing flexible working hours.
 - Equality, which is respected at every level, including the management: 10 top managers out of 16 are women.
 - Paying attention to work-life balance: regular family and child programs to enable families to spend more time together.

MAVIR Zrt.

- The company is 60 years old.
- The goal is to contribute to the general well-being of employees and to create a friendly work environment.
- A constant endeavor to preserve employees' loyalty and keep them on board, whose success is proven by low fluctuation numbers.
- Flexible working hours for those returning from maternity leave.

Kulcs-Soft Számítástechnika Nyrt.

- One-third of the 60-70 employees are women.
- Motto: „Equality in work, even more equality in the corridors”, which refers to the importance of kind everyday gestures.
- Paying attention to the special needs of the mostly young workforce, especially to the needs of those before maternity leave; in such cases, a one-on-one consultation is set up with the employee, during which an agreement is made regarding when and how the employee would like to join the company again her maternity leave.
- Keeping regular contact with employees on maternity leave and inviting them to company events to keep them engaged with company affairs.
- For those returning from maternity leave: defining the position to be filled in jointly with the management along with the availability of on-the-job training.