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# The Power of Public Works Programme in Peripheral Areas on the Example of a Dead-end Village



## ABSTRACT

The most important aim of the public works programme, is to integrate or re-integrate the participants into the primary labour market through work-socialization. But its success or failure cannot be evaluated solely by the statistics, because the peripheral areas struggling with significant job shortage and in the absence of other options, some members of local governments give possibilities of the participation in public works programme as a privilege, thus they exploit the lack of information and labour market vulnerability of deprived people caused by their dependent positions in local power hierarchies. Consequently, the representatives consider their personal advantages and benefits more important than the the improvements of underprivileged people's interests and possibilities.

## KEYWORDS

public works programme, employment of underprivileged people, vulnerability, peripheral area

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## INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian government, after the amendment of social law, introduced the “*Road to world of work*” programme in 2009, which interprets the unemployed people as a homogeneous group. Its purpose to lead as many people back into the primary labour market as possible (SZABÓ 2013). The efficiency of the public works program is contradictory; one group of the researchers considers it successful, while others see it unsuccessful. The essence of the programme is that unemployed people can get a public works job, thus they get payment for performing the tasks organized by the state and the local government. Henceforward, these people are not entitled for social aid, thus the long-term aid recipients can be moved out from their situation and they can be gradually introduced into the world of work. But this kind of job is rather degrading than useful for many people with professional qualification, because these works do not help them to get back into professional sector due to the nature of public works.

In practice, the situation of all of unemployed people are examined by the local government, who then will be classified based on defined criteria. These people will no longer receive social aid, but availability support (RÁT), which is 28,500 HUF (92 EUR). This is around the half of the amount of the maximum aid. But when they do work in the programme, they can get even 71,000 HUF (229 EUR) instead of the amount of maximum aid. It means that the wage of the public works programme is higher than the amount of the employment substitution support, so it can slightly reduce the poverty, but if somebody refuses the public work offer, they have to face consequences; for the first time, this person will not get any benefit for one month, but after the second refuse, they will not be entitled to get any support for two years. So the purpose of the public works programme is to help the adaptation to the world of work, however it hinders the return into the primary labour market, and some local governments of rural and peripheral areas operate the public works programme as a “*semi-feudal*” system due to the labour market vulnerability of the people living there.

### 1. THE AIMS, THE TARGET AREA AND THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The research is based on a survey among the participants of public work programmes. The research focused on those rural and villager features of the public works programme, which could give opportunities of misuses for rural local governments as a result of the vulnerability of locals caused by labour shortages in countryside. Therefore, the survey was conducted in such a peripheral area; a dead-end village of 2000 people has been selected, which is situated in a disadvantaged subregion in Northern Great Plain Region in Hungary.

The survey focused on the entry processes of the public works programme, the nature and frequency of work, and the working conditions of the programme. Additionally, the research focused on experiences related to the programme, the satisfaction of working and the hypothetic distinctions and misuses. Besides the circumstances, the research has also investigated the personal and family effects of the public works programme and the possibilities for entry into primary labour market.

The quantitative research data were collected with standard structured questionnaire, which were supplemented by the qualitative information of unstructured interviews formed during the survey.

The most important factor of the compilation of research sampling was that its cumulative characteristics look closely to the features of the whole population of the village. Therefore, in order to ensure the representativity of questionnaire data collection, a probability sampling

has been worked out, with which applied method every household had the same chance to get into the research sample. Thus, the survey used a probability, territorially proportionate, systematic sampling, prepared based on the layout of the village. Every fourth element of the settlement's housing stock – instead of the previously planned every sixth real estate, owing to the formed *coverage error*<sup>1</sup> which was a result of consideration of the reported data of *térképem.hu* website – has been chosen into the sample.

Thus, the *sampling interval*<sup>2</sup> has been 4, and the *selection rate*<sup>3</sup> of the sample shown 1/4. The respondents have been chosen from people of members in active age of the achieved households, where one person answered the questions per household.

In order to the appropriate territorial distribution, the sampling was prepared for every street of the village. The research used supplementary sample elements to keep the originally specified sample size, which were applied in case of the loss of main sample elements. The supplementary elements were mostly used because of no existing addresses caused by coverage error, in fewer cases due to refusals of response, when the neighbouring household – next to the main address, in ascending numeric order – has inquired.

103 underprivileged households were included in the research sample. Bearing in mind the measure of relevance of gotten information, the research sought to query a member in working age in every included household, who provided information about the rest of household members. Therefore, the data collecting was conducting after the end of working hours from 4.30 PM in weekdays, and from 2 PM in weekends, generally in Sundays. Thus, the survey gained data about labour market situation of 576 villagers.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

According to Zsuzsa Ferge, the poverty, as deficiency means multiple deprivation, because it does not only affect to material, earnings and wealth goods, so possessions which connected to economic capital, but it has an impact on the knowledge, skills and abilities and the accessibility to the educational opportunities. Besides these, the poverty effects on the culture, the entertainment, the human services and the suitable school, so it touches the goods, which are connected to the cultural capital. Additionally, the poverty means the lack of rights, relationships and social maintainer forces, so the lack of goods connected to the social capital (FERGE ET AL. 2006).

Because the social integration of people living in poverty indicates a lower level of it, therefore these people do not have the adequate amounts of relationship with the middle class

<sup>1</sup> Coverage error: in case of mark of the sample elements such an address has been picked into the sample, which does not exist (Hunyadi 2001).

The research primarily took into account the 634 houses indicated by *térképem.hu*, but during the first field work has already seemed that the database used by *térképem.hu* is obsolete, because so many houses have been demolished or they became uninhabitable because of the flood. Therefore, in order to reach the sufficient number of sample sizes the sampling interval reduced from 6 to 4.

So a significant part of the houses displayed by *térképem.hu* does not exist. Its primary cause is the flood in 2000, which significantly reduced the number of housing stock of the village, but simultaneously many of houses have been destroyed by their owners regardless of the flood, but referring to it, because the state gave subsidy to rebuild the demolished houses (NAGY – BOROS 2012, 2015). Many of villagers moved away from there and they bought or built new houses in the surrounding cities or the county town from the state aid for flood damage.

<sup>2</sup> Sampling rate: item number of the population/item number of sample (BABBIE 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Selection rate: item number of sample/item number of population (BABBIE 2003).

segment of the society. According to Castel, the poor groups' exclusion from the society happens in two dimensions: on the one hand, the lack of financial resources pushes these people into dependency situation, on the other hand, besides the decrease of financial resources, insofar these people's network connections (family relationships, work connections, personal relationships) reduce as well, they will be increasingly excluded from the society. So Castel says, that primarily those groups will be excluded, which besides that they became poor, even their network connections weaken too. So the poverty is a result of decline of relationships (CASTEL 1993).

### 3. LABOUR MARKET SITUATION AND OPPORTUNITIES OF PERIPHERAL RURAL VILLAGES

The size of settlements shows significant correlation with job opportunities, unemployment and indicators of poverty. These inequalities are easily noticeable in the context of livelihood opportunities, income level and access to services in territorial and settlement differences (VIRÁG 2009).

The poverty rate is the biggest in small settlements and the extent of public work programme also the highest here (26%); almost half of the people living in the most disadvantaged subregions (46,6%) have less income than 60% of the median income.

7,6% of the total population of Hungary live in settlements with less than 1000 inhabitants and 20% of the people living in the most disadvantaged subregions dwell in small settlements or tiny villages with 100–500 inhabitants.

About 60% of those people who maintained themselves from regular social assistance before the public works programme live in disadvantaged circumstances, 60,5% of registered unemployed people living in most disadvantaged subregions have not found job for more than one year, 47% of them for more than two years, but 15% of them never had a job (BASS 2010). According to the results of László Bass, 10,4% of the people who live in villages with 1–2000 inhabitants in disadvantaged subregions have been unemployed for more than three wears, 17,6% of them live in relative poverty, so they maintain themselves from less than 60% of the median income (OECD1) and the poverty rate grows in parallel with the number of children of families. In Hungary, 7,6% of the total population live in villages with less than 1000 dwellers, while 20% of the people living in most disadvantaged subregions dwell in small settlements, tiny villages (BASS 2010a). The employment indicators of families with children are extremely low, because just every third people in active age have labour income, consequently the unemployment rate exceeds the national average.

The degree of impoverishment and segregation is huge in rural areas (KOÓS 2015). The results of common spatial effect of the poverty and exclusion are such of rules, norms and practices which are totally different from the values of majority society (VIRÁG 2009).

Because the settlements in disadvantaged subregions are the most affected with lack of jobs, most people living this kind of areas sustain themselves and their families from social supports and different *transfer incomes*<sup>4</sup>, which allow them a living standards below the poverty line. According to the opinion of some researchers, the participation in public works programme cannot improve significantly on financial situation of these families, moreover, it hinders them to the return to the primary labour market (BASS 2010).

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<sup>4</sup> During the original income distribution, a part of the proceeds is given for others because of different reasons. The public power takes one part of it and give it for others or for the same group, but with different title. These incomes – earned during the secondary distribution – are named transfer incomes (ZOMBORI 1997).

The livelihood strategies of permanently unemployed people who living in poverty are occluded, in which played an important role, that the unemployment management became the task of local governments (VÁRADI 2010). Besides the casual works and opportunities provided by local governments, people can get extra money from collecting crops of plants, which can be supplemented by casual works in distant towns and proceeds from collecting wood and iron (SOLT 2009).

According to the researches of households of families with children in disadvantaged subregions based on representative sample led by László Bass, 51% of the families living in most disadvantaged subregions get their income from primary labour market, which could be supplemented with maternity benefit (GYES), pension and occasionally with aid. They form the “*market type*”. The people belong to the “*alternative type*” (24%) excluded from the primary labour market, but taking advantage of the opportunities casual work and black labour, supplement their income with social benefits and elements of family support system, thus they can take care of their families. The people of “*aided type*” (13%) can not get income from the primary labour market, neither the alternative labour market. Besides these groups, there is the type of people “*standing on two legs*”, who supplement their income from primary labour market with proceeds from legal work or black labour, but in lower proportion they also participate in the public works programme or they could receive social benefits or transfer incomes as well (BASS 2010b).

Because the underprivileged families cannot sustain themselves from social benefits and transfer incomes, they get money from the secondary labour market, where beside the casual work and black labour, it appears the opportunity of the public works programme (BASS 2010a).

#### 4. THE ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME AND ITS EFFECTS IN PERIPHERAL AREAS

The poverty became the own problem of communities and individuals owing to the decentralization of state support, because the distribution of social benefits and public works programme’s opportunities belongs to the decision of local governments and mayors. Thus, most mayors use the withdrawal of social benefits or postponing its payment as a kind of ‘*educational*’ tool. The aim of supported secondary labour market – which is a part of the public works programme – the reduction of social tensions and providing of everyday living (BASS 2010b).

The public works programme became an alternative of the primary labour market instead of its role of labour market reintegration (VÁRADI 2016a). The local governments try to organize the public works programme adjusted with local needs and because too many people would like to get into the programme, but its sources are scarce, thus in order to employ as many people as possible, the decision makers ‘*rotate*’ the applicants. As a result, a labourer can work generally at most four or five months a year in daily six hours’ part time job, which reduce their wage.

Public works programme base salary (gross)	79,155 HUF
Skilled public worker guaranteed wage (gross)	101,450 HUF
Work leader’s salary in public works programme (gross)	87,090 HUF
Work leader’s guaranteed salary in public works programme (gross)	111,660 HUF

**TABLE 1** Salaries of the public works programme in case of full time job, without family benefits, 2016 (Source: Hungarian Journal 2014. No.189.)

So the rotation principle increases the numbers of involved people, but decrease the size of payment. This works in real, so that if someone works just three months a year, daily six hours with at most primary education, their monthly income increases from the amount of 28,500 HUF (92 EUR) of availability support (RÁT) to monthly 32,000 HUF (103 EUR) of salary (BASS 2010 b).

The public works programme mostly offers opportunities for people with worst labour market characteristics, which contributes to conservation their situation (SZABÓ 2013; MESSING 2012; FIRLE – SZABÓ 2007). According to the research leded by László Bass, the chances for get in or return to the primary labour market are much higher for groups with more favourable labour market skills, because while 4–5% of undereducated-, gypsy- or long-term unemployed poor people have gotten permanent job, the employment chances for better educated, not gypsy and not poor people show the value of 20%.

Between 2007 and 2010, exactly 10% of the people working in public works programme have gotten job in the primary labour market, but in the same period, 24% of those unemployed who did not participate in public works programme have gotten permanent job. Among the employees of public works programme are in higher proportion the long-term unemployed people, but based on the period of unemployment, they have returned to the primary labour market more difficulty.

Interestingly, according to the results of some research, the people who work casually or do black labour, they have higher chance to get a job in primary labour market, then the people who participate the public works programme (BASS 2010b; FIRLE ET AL., 2007). Of course, its reason could be that a priori just those people take a public works job, who see just a little chance to get a job in the open labour market.

The local governments struggling with lack of resources, which were forced to downsize their institutional headcount, they often replace their personnel needs by public works programme employees, often with their former public services labourer: In the current operation conditions, it is more profitable to employ a worker as a participant of public works programme than take them into the institutional personnel. In small towns the mayors take part in the distribution of working tasks and the supervision of employees as well, which shows, besides the public works programme is an appropriate tool for reduce the social tensions, it stabilizes and strengthens the current power relations (VIRÁG 2009).

The EU programmes, which were intended to lead back the unskilled, long-term unemployed people to the primary labour market, were not successful, because the majority of the unemployed live in those areas, where the labour market can not employ significant size of labour and the most of trainings offered by these EU programmes gave professions which provide opportunities in just a few segments of primary labour market. So because of the lack of local and regional labour market possibilities or the accessibility of workplaces and the under-qualification of long-term unemployed people and as a result of their low level of working ability, after the end of programmes, many of the training participants became social aided again, or they utilize their acquired qualification in the secondary labour market, e.g. in the public works programme (VIRÁG 2009).

Naturally, the trainings for at most few months are not suitable to replace the knowledge and competences, which are missing due to the unfinished primary or secondary education and these cause labour market drawbacks (VÁRADI 2004). Therefore, the task of employment of people with no job left to the local governments, thus they employ them in the public works programme, hence the local governments became the biggest employers of the settlement or even the area.

According to some researches, the participation in the public works programme reduces the chance to get a job in primary labour market; its reason that the tasks of the public works can be simply and easily solved, thus these do not improve the competences of employees.

The employment centre (government office) generally transmits to the public works programme those people, whose chances for employment considered low by the centre. It is known by the employers as well, therefore they are less willing to give job for people who participate in the public works programme, because they link to them lower productivity (SCHARLE 2012).

So the public works programme can not realize its re-integrational aim, because it does not develop the employment opportunities of the participants (KÖLLÖ – SCHARLE 2011; FAZEKAS – SCHARLE 2012), but the participation reduces the time for job search and decreases the job search willingness too, because alternately with the social benefits, it provides a low level, but predictable income (SCHARLE 2012).

The system which devolved the employment of long-term unemployed people to the local governments, closes the most disadvantaged people into the trap of social aid and unemployment (VÁRADI 2010), because the public works programme conserves the situation of unemployed people and the lifestyles based on social benefits and casual works (HAN 2014). According to the research of the HAN<sup>5</sup>, 62% of the public workers live under the poverty line and 91% of them live below the subsistence level, and in case of the families with children these proportions are 15% and 37%. Despite that 40% of the public workers said, it is getting harder to get in the programme, one fifth of the families can not provide the necessary conditions of appropriate childcare and healthcare for their children, one third of the respondents did not experience any change in their life, but one fifth of them felt positive, one tenth of them perceived negative changes due to the programme (HAN 2014).

As I mentioned earlier, the local governments probably for cost saving reasons, have some kind of tasks done with public workers, what formerly were done by the employees of local governments as public servant (MESSING 2012; CSOBA – NAGY – SZABÓ 2012). According to the research, 20% of them do the same work with no qualification needed as public worker for less money, what they did as public servant. Thusly the local governments, thanks to the 90–95% state support, can solve the obligatory local governmental tasks with significant cost reduction (HAN 2014). Of course, it does not pass the legal framework, but it reduces the prestige of concerned professions, thus these jobs gradually devaluate from social viewpoint, moreover because of the less income, the motivation level for working will be lower as well, therefore it implies the decrease of quality of work.

Consequently, the public works programmes may have a harmful effect, since the public workers squeeze out the underqualified workforce from the primary labour market. The respondents of the research mentioned as disadvantages of the programme that it is a short-term job with poor working conditions. Of course, the public workers are more satisfied that the unemployed people, but less than the people working in primary labour market. Most of the public workers live below the subsistence level, which hinder the reproduction of ability to work, caused by the health of public workers getting worse in short term, because they can not pay the needed medicines (HAN 2014).

The aim of the public works programme that leads the participants back to the primary labour market is remains an illusion, not just because in the disadvantaged subregions the capacities of the primary labour market are in low rate (VÁRADI 2016a, VÁRADI 2016b), but the public works programmes does not incite for efficient performance, thusly it does not motivate the public workers for 'real' work, therefore it is not prepare them for the circumstances of primary labour market (VÁRADI 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network

## 5. THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

### 5.1. Demography of the participants of the public works programme

The labour market situation of the villagers and the disadvantaged employees<sup>6</sup> opportunities in the primary labour market are well illustrated by the data, which shows that just 43.2% of the people of working age (between 15 and 64 years of age) living in the village worked in the public works programme at the time of the research (N = 354). However, according to the regulation of programme, youth under 25 years of age can participate in with permission of the local government<sup>7</sup>; therefore if we examine exclusively just the age, which is conventionally considered by the public works programme, this proportion is already 60.4% (N = 212).

The average age of the participants is 35.4 years, while the youngest public worker – despite the regulation – is 17 years old, the oldest public worker in the village is 62 years old. The proportion of men and women working in the public works programme is balanced in gender perspective, the proportion of women (52.3%) only slightly exceeds the proportion of men (47.7%) in the village.

The education level of the public workers is very low, while 19% of them did not finished the elementary school, most of them (69%) obtained primary educational certificate, and just 12% of the public workers have professional qualification, of which 8% obtained certificate of skilled workers training school, 2% of them vocational school certificate, and 1-1% of them acquired graduation certificate and vocational qualification based on graduation (*Figure 1*).

### 5.2. The entry possibilities of the public works programme

Naturally, considering the whole process, there are no – and it can not be – differentiation among the application and employment methods of seekers, so every public worker has gotten into the public works programme through the subregional employment centre, but significant differences can be experienced with its frequency and duration in the village. Many of villagers work in the public works programme since the municipal election in 2014, but there are dwellers who can participate continuously for four to five years, while others have to wait six to seven months for a workplace in public works programme. According to a general view of the villagers, a good acquaintanceship

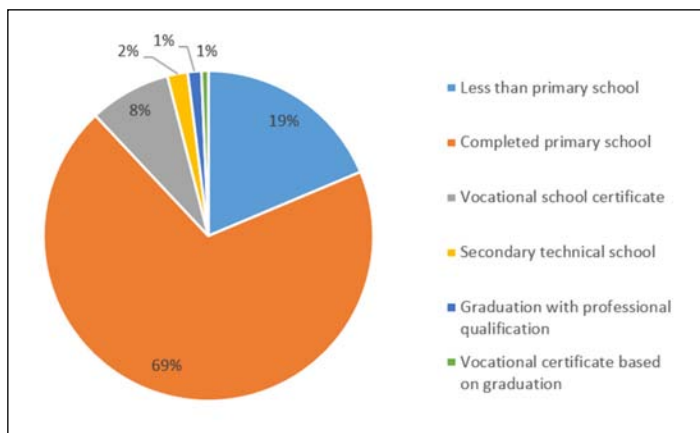
<sup>6</sup> The Committee of European Communities specifies the disadvantaged situation in case of an employee:

- he or she did not have a regularly paid job in the last six months;
- he or she did not obtain a secondary level qualification or professional qualification (ISCED 3);
- he or she is over 50 years of age;
- he or she is a person living alone with one or two dependents;
- he or she work in a branch or profession of a member state, in which the gender imbalance is more than 25% bigger, than the average of imbalance of the total economic branches of this member state, and he or she belongs one of these underrepresented gender groups;
- he or she belongs to an ethnic minority of a member state and who needs strengthen his/her professional or linguistic qualification or strengthen his/her professional experiences to improve his/her chances to getting a job at a certain workplace. (EUR-Lex 2008)

According to the decree of Committee of European Communities, in case of disadvantaged employees, one of these criteria must met.

<sup>7</sup> Youth under 25 years of age only in justified cases – because of family –, social situation, or regional labour shortage – can be involved into the public works programme, which regulation's purpose is the involvement of youth into the Youth Guarantee System.





**FIGURE 1** Educational level of public works programme's participants ( $N = 150$ )

is needed to someone can participate and stay in permanently in the public employment programme, as one of the interviewees said: *"Since this mayor is, I constantly work. I have applied and I have been chosen."*

More respondents mentioned that the size of the family is an important aspect of the selection, so the social criteria prevail between the local conditions, like the following quote illustrates: *"The mayor takes into consideration who is poor, especially if he sees, there are a lot of children in the family."* *"If there is hiring time, the mayor sees it and helps, particularly where are a lot of children."*

For those who have no opportunities for constant work, they can get back into the public employment generally after one to three months break, but sometimes they must wait five to six months for return.

The unstructured interviews revealed that the mayor gives preferences at the entry into the public works programme to those people who voted on him at the time of municipal elections. In order to bridge the *"contra voting"* and get a job in public works programme, people have to buy significant quantity of meat from the enterprise of the mayor or a member of the local government on credit, which provides the possibility of work in the public works programme<sup>8</sup>. The repayment of credit is guaranteed for the *"seller"* by the monthly deduction from the wage. Those public workers who did no vote on the mayor and did not buy from the mayor's enterprise, when they take their holiday, in their cases the administrators book absentee day instead of holiday days, which after these days reach the limit, it consequences the exclusion from the public works programme.

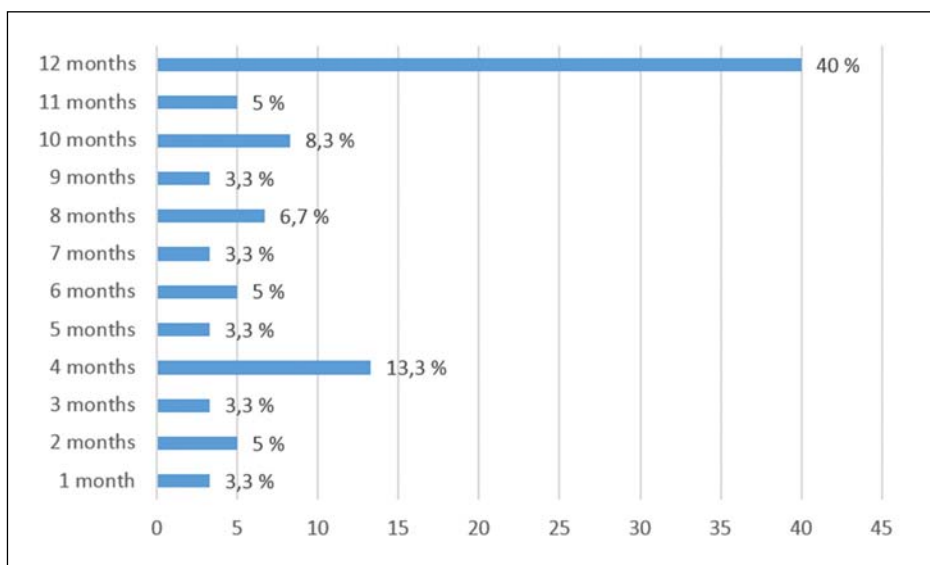
The refusal of application in public works programme is not perceived as discriminatory measure, because during the application, just 17,7% of the public workers ( $N = 62$ ) have already realized distinctions, but more than every fourth applicants have experienced rejection during the recruitment process (26,2%,  $N = 65$ ), which was justified with the reason of fully exhaustion of employment places.

<sup>8</sup> For entry into the public works programme, the people have to purchase at least 20 kilograms of meat (in average 1000 HUF/kilogram, 3,3 EUR/kilogram) from one of local government members who deals with cattle breeding and its cost is deducted from the wage of public works. The real price is depending on quantity.

But there were people who did not get any explanation, according to others, the primary cause was the vote on the other mayor candidate at the time of municipal elections: *“They did not justify it, but later they even took the aid as well”*

Naturally, the application of employees sent by the employment centre (governmental office) can not be refused from the part of local government and they do not do that officially. Therefore, when a *“contra voter”* applies for work, they employ him/her formally, but they indicate, that *“the number of workplaces is full”*, then they administrate absenteeism for his/her name for five days, which causes that they can terminate the employment relationship of the applicant in the public works programme. Because of that, these unemployed people will not receive social aid later, while they do not know, that they have participated in the public works programme. Thus, the political standpoints contribute to the exclusion from labour market and causes further marginalization.

The villagers, who could get a job in the public works programme for one year before the research, they worked in average for 8.5 months. Just 11.3% of the participants worked for 1 to 3 months’ period and 21.6% of them could work for 4 to 6 months. 13.3% of the public employees worked for 7 to 9 months’ period, while 53.3% of them were employed for 10 to 12 months. It seems that most of the public workers living in the village are employed continuously or just with short interruptions, because there are permanent colleagues of the local government in the highest proportion (40%)<sup>9</sup> (Figure 2).

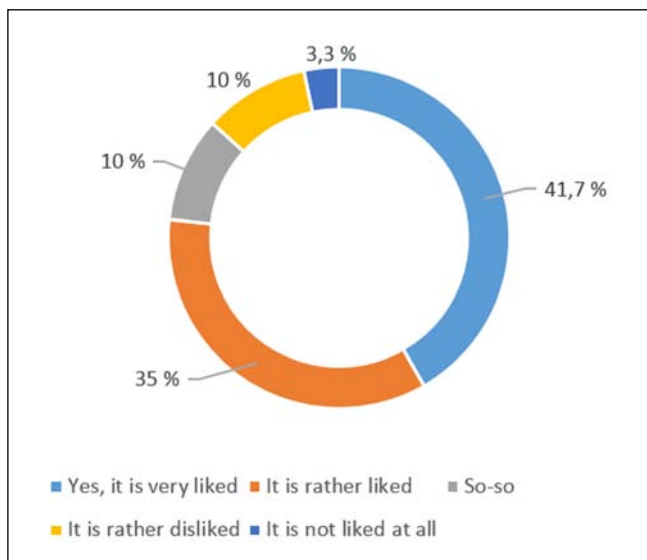


**FIGURE 2** How many months could the participants work in the public works programme in the one year (in the last 12 months)? (N = 60)

<sup>9</sup> Among those who do not work officially – so they do casual work or black labour – or get regular social assistance or entitled for assistance of working age, so they do not participate in the public works programme, 67% of formerly have already worked in the programme formerly. This group worked for one and a half year, so for 18 months in average in the public works programme, but they do not participate in it for averagely 21 months. They do no work because of childbearing or the types of available works of the public works programme do not match with their concepts, but the *“inadequate vote”* also causes inactivity in the village.

In the examined settlement, all of public workers are employed in daily 8 hours in the public works programme, so they do not try to enlarge the number of participants with part-time jobs.

The participant villagers' work attitude is shown well by the data; 71,7% of them love their job and just 13,3% of them indicated their dissatisfaction with the activity in the programme (*Figure 3*).



**FIGURE 3** *Do you like your job in the public works programme? (N = 60)*

There are six different kind of type of work in the public works programme in the village:

1. Administrative work
2. Value-creating work
3. Trained work
4. Unskilled work
5. Participation in training
6. Brigade leadership tasks

Not more than 7% of the public workers do administrative activities, they manage the documentation of the participants, book the absenteeism and prepare the work schedule. The role of value-creating public work is significant (28%) in the village, during which the participants deal with plant cultivation in plastic tunnel, wire spinning and adobe brick making. A part of the public workers grows paprika and tomato in plastic tunnels owned by the local government, and one part of the harvested vegetables is given to the school kitchen and another part of them is distributed among the workers. At the time of the research, the productions of the wire spinners and adobe brick makers were used for the archives which the local government had it built. The jobs of trained workers (8%) could be various; one part of them do earthworks at the edge of the village, others mow the lawn and some of them perform maintenance tasks, but the abovementioned archive is built by masons working in the public work programme, moreover, they renew the flagstones as well (*Figure 4*).

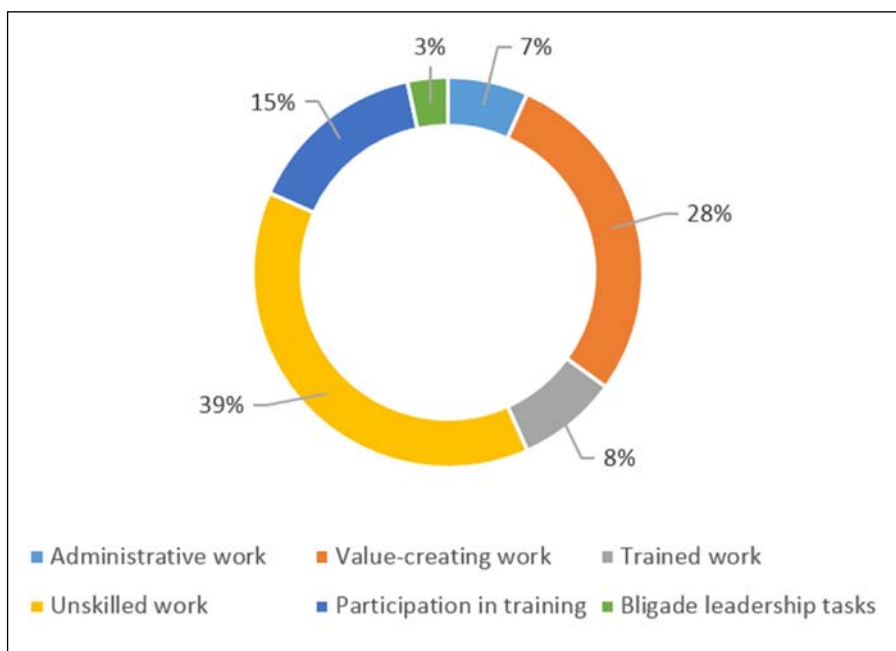


FIGURE 4 What kind of job do you work in the public works programme? ( $N = 60$ )

The fourth group of the public workers is formed by those unskilled workers (39%) who beside the spud, scythe and rake for plant trees, they deal with garbage collection and keep the streets clean.

It is possible to get qualifications within the framework of the programme, for witch the 15% of the public workers in the village have the opportunity. During the research, there were possible to participate in conveyor-, basket weaver and crop farmer trainings for public workers. Just 3% of public worker form the group of brigade leaders who do their job for higher wage. The adjudication of this job is diverse among other public workers; the brigade leaders are selected from close acquaintances of the mayor; therefore, these people's leadership attitude is different to those who voted on the current mayor of the village than to those who gave their vote to the other candidate.

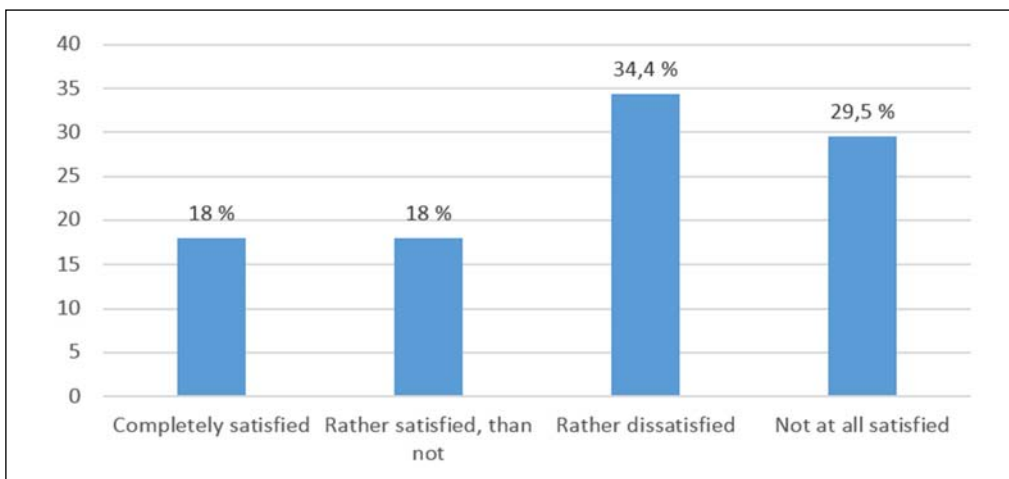
Besides the traditional alignment – but in context with it – by type occupation, there is an other kind of grouping of public workers based on the relationship with the mayor. The first group is formed by the relatives of the mayor and local government representatives and those sure voters who exempt from some rules, inter alia from the rule of absences' observance. However, the vote on the leader of the village does not mean sure public works position, usually, the members of this group work inside the village performing leadership tasks or administrative jobs at the mayor's office.

The other group is created by those who are called – referring to the current asylum problem – “migrants”, because these people work at the edge of the village doing harder works then the first group or they got job in the farm of one of relative of the mayor.

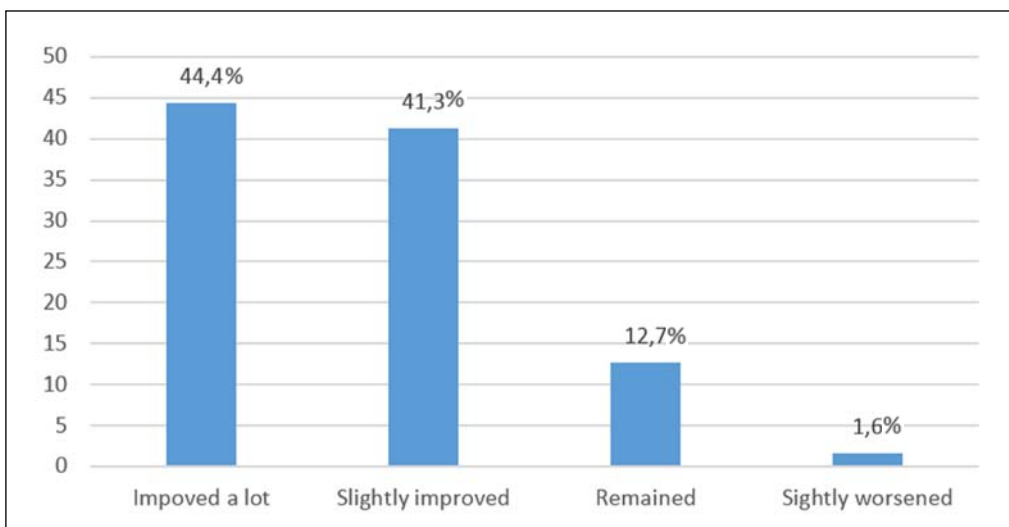
Those villagers who do casual work or sustain themselves from black labour or possibly live from benefits (regular social assistance or support for people for active age), 67% of them have already worked in the public works programme. This group in average was employed for a 1.5-year

period by the local government and worked 21 months ago in the programme for the last time. They generally do not participate in the programme, because of childbearing, or the nature of available jobs – “*I do not want to make adobe bricks, like in the '60s*” – but there are people who are excluded from the public employment due to the “*improper*” vote.

Accurately 64% of the public workers are not satisfied with the salary of the programme (Figure 5), in line with that, 36% of them find it adequate, but almost all of the public workers (85.7%) experienced improvement in the financial situation of their household as the result of the participation of public works programme. Besides that, 12.7% of them did not perceived any change and 1.6% of them felt decline in their financial situation during the programme.



**FIGURE 5** How satisfied are/were you with the payment in the public works programme? ( $N = 61$ )



**FIGURE 6** How changed the financial situation of your family or household due to the participation in the public works programme? ( $N = 63$ )

### 5.3. Experiences gained during the public works programme

The respondents have highlighted – in line with the positive experiences about the public works programme – that the opportunity provided by it improves the situation of families. Moreover, they can work among acquaintances and friends in good community and many people can work locally, and they can generate revenue for the village during the value-creating work, thus the settlement can develop.

Both the work and the participation in the trainings are experienced by the people as recreation and they do not have to work a lot during the work, furthermore in the trainings, the attendees can acquire nationwide recognized (National Qualification Register, OKJ) qualification.

The people evaluated as a counterpoint the low level of wage and the short-term employment due to the periodical hiring, but they mentioned the ignorance of the weather conditions too – “if there is very hot, even so we have to go” – which in case of the works inside the plastic tunnels can be particularly difficult.

People indicated that some villagers’ chances for entry are very narrow, so “just those can get into the public works programme, who buy meat from the representative” and the rules are not equally valid for everyone: “They take exception, because they allow someone to go away from work, even for up to two weeks. Others get letter of H<sup>10</sup>, if they go home earlier”, but the different management – depend on the voting side – with workers appears in the speaking style and the place of work as well: “That person goes to spud, who voted against the mayor.”; “They make us beast, if we do not spud, it comes the letter of H and deduct 4000 from the payment or fire us.”

Nonetheless, although according to one third of the workers, the participants have to work a lot, most of them (58.7%) feel, that the volume of the work is just right (Figure 7). The workmates come out well with each other, because they indicated in prominent proportions (85.2%), that there is no problem and debate among the colleagues.

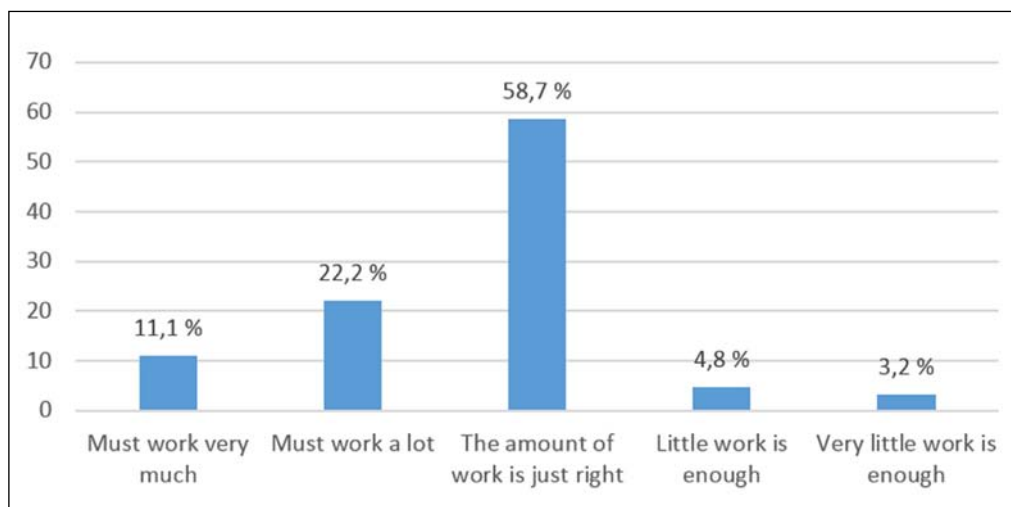
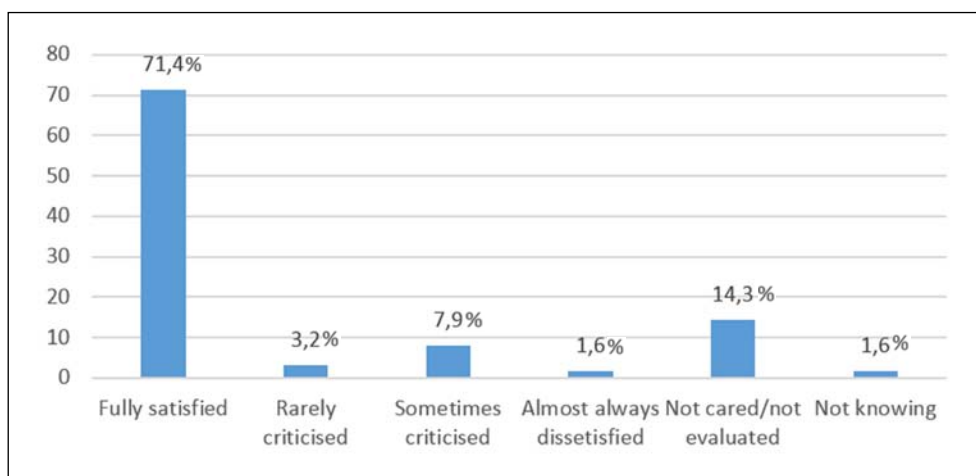


FIGURE 7 How much do/did you feel overloaded yourself in the public works programme? (N = 60)

<sup>10</sup> “H” is the letter for indicate the absenteeism in the report.

According to the own opinion of the majority of the public workers (71.4%), their superiors are satisfied with the quality of work done by them, however some of them (14.3%) say, that the brigade leader do not care about that (*Figure 8*).

Exactly 76.6% of the participants of the public works programme in the village mentioned as expectations the accurate arrival, only 39.1% of them said the precise work and 29.7% of them indicated as a requirement the compliance with the deadlines during the work. Beside these, they have mentioned the compliance with house rule and instructions, the cleanliness, and the alcohol-free appearance.



**FIGURE 8** How your superior evaluate/evaluated your work in public works programme? (N = 63)

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In case of the local government's workers it is often, that exploiting their low level of labour market opportunities, the local government fire them and hire them back through the frame of the public works programme. So the local government – in order to reduce their expenditures – employ their former public servants back, which means, that the workers do the same job, what they did before the public works programme, but for less money with unpredictable contract and in several cases without protective clothes required by their work or without sufficient amount of water.

The current system incites the local government to give jobs for people with availability support (RÁT), because in case of unemployed people, the local government has to pay 10% of the amount of benefit and 20% of the sum of availability support, but in that case if they employ them in the public works programme, the state defrays the 95% of amount of the public works' wage, which includes the availability support as well.

Besides that, the legal regulation of the public works programme means another advantage for the local government – because the public workers have just 20 days off – which does not take in account the rest of regulations of the supplementary leave's amount in employment legal relationships. So it does not depend on the workers' age and the numbers of children. This may result that the public workers supersede the low-educated workforces from the primary labour market.

In spite all of these, because of the lack of available jobs in peripheral areas, there is continuous demand to participate in the public works programme, moreover, according to the experiences of public workers, it is getting harder to get into the programme. Therefore, there are misuses experienced from the part of the local government, which are evolved due to the strong dependency relationships, exploiting the uniformedness and labour market vulnerability of underprivileged layers, some of village leaders give jobs in public works programme as privilege or employ their relatives in public works jobs with higher payment category than the rules allow it. These leaders also give preferences for those who voted them during the elections or intend to give public works job for those people who pay a part of their wage back to the representatives, or they have some works made by the applicants in order to get into the programme.

After the entry into the public works programme, the local government can take immediate redundancy in cases if the worker regularly drunk; if he or she neglects the work tools; if the labourer commonly does not do his/her daily work; if he or she endanger the safety of colleagues or he/she unjustifiably absent from work several times. The public worker can take immediate resignation, if the employer creates unworthy circumstances; does not provide appropriate equipment; the work safety is incomplete; the rest period is short; so in cases if he/she is humiliated, bullied or discriminated. Notwithstanding the misuses, the public workers living in peripheral areas do not dare to indicate, because on one hand they do not know their opportunities, which lead them to the direction of labour inspectorate, on the other hand, in case of any kind of complain, the representatives not just fire him/her, but all of him/her relatives will be dismissed, thus he or she in the absence of other job opportunities – according to the law – remains without any aid.

As Zsuzsa Ferge and her colleagues mention, besides the low level of financial possibilities, inter alia the poverty means the lack of access to knowledge and rights as well (FERGE et al. 2006). Therefore, the vast majority of the people in the village – in absence of the knowledge of their rights – do not aware of the infringements to their detriment, for which reason the only one employer in the settlement, that is the local government secures its misuse strategy taking advantage of its peripheral features and monopoly position.

Not incidentally, it is worth to note, that the public works programme did not reach its originally set of purposes, because just 1,6% of the locals (N = 64) got a job in the primary labour market thanks to their works in the public works programme, but in spite of the current operational problems, it is essential for the maintenance of the villagers' everyday life. However, in such a joblessness area, the primary aim of the public works programme is not the labour market integration, but the reduction of the social tensions and the mitigation of the subsistence difficulties.

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