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The System of Means for Overcoming the Crisis – Based on an Empirical Examination at Companies in Budapest and Békés County, Hungary

Abstract: The economic crisis started in 2008 had a significant negative impact on employment in most sectors. During the research authors sought the answer to the question which employment systems were applied for overcoming the crisis at companies in Budapest and Békés County. To examine this, the authors compiled the questionnaire in co-operation with the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Management and HR Research Centre of Szent István University.

The authors' questionnaire findings also provide a proof for the fact that by creating and implementing the suitable human resource management models and by promoting them widely, the changes due to the current economic circumstances will be manageable and the increase in the competitiveness of organizations will be ensured.

One of the ways to decrease the personnel costs is to apply atypical employment forms. This form of employment is becoming more and more popular among employers; yet, despite the achievements, those questioned still prefer traditional employment forms.

Keywords: Atypical employment, Employment, Traditional employment, Human Resources Management, Crisis

Introduction

In most industries the competition in order to improve efficiency and to reduce costs has become stronger, which frequently involves decisions resulting in closing factories and mass redundancies. This is the very reason why human resource management has gained a strategic importance in the life of an organization (Karoliny and Poór, 2010).

Several surveys have been made in order to provide help with meeting the challenges of globalization and developing strategies, employment forms and models as guidelines for company managers (Fodor, Kiss and Poór, 2011). Different methods exist that professional literature acknowledges as means of determining the competitiveness and efficiency of a company. Regarding its focus, in one of the methods, it examines the activities of companies and their conditions; those managed with low costs of labor and effective internal processes are considered successful. Another method finds productivity and profitability indicators of competitiveness; financial performance gains relevance.

In connection with the economic crisis publications appeared in the literature on a kind of crisis in the field of labor law as well (Blanpain, 2008, pp 3–4), which anticipated the disappearance of labor law if it did not adapt flexibly to the new kind of employment system required by the economic circumstances.

Literature overview

According to the viewpoint of Chikán and Czakó (2009), we cannot refer to a company as competitive unless it creates such an additional value with its service or product for the consumers that it would be preferred over its competitors. This advantage can only be ensured by a company in the long run if it reacts to the continuous changes of the economic circumstances with the required degree of flexibility and sensitivity, being the first to adjust to them. According to Parker, as a result of globalization, the world becomes a single commercial market where the flow of money, assets, products, services becomes free and naturally workforce may be replaced and employed in any way (Parker, 1993 quoted by Csath, 2008). During their research, Prahalad and Hamel (1990) found that the dismissal of human resources, reorganization or restructuring the positions do not result in the decrease of corporate expenses or profitability, and neither do they lead to competitive advantage in each case. These necessary actions lead to short term improvement; they cannot create long term values.

When making corporate decisions it must be born in mind that changes must take place in accordance with well-focused processes planned in advance in compliance with the activity, culture and management methods of the company (Anthony, Perrewé and Kacmar, 1993). With this workforce it will be optimally plannable, employees will be trainable in other fields as well, and competitiveness and profitability will be helped by more efficient resource management (Armstrong, 2009, pp. 25–38, 424–443).

In order to increase organizational efficiency, continuous renewal must be ensured; innovation today is inevitable. Competitiveness may only be reached if we can activate our necessary resources at the right time in the right place (Guest, Paauwe and Wright, 2011, Poór et al, 2012a). Our contribution is needed to maintain organizational efficiency by means of human resource management attracting, preserving the suitable colleagues

(Briscoe, Schuler and Claus, 2008) and if necessary making them redundant (Poór et al, 2012b). For the profitable functioning of a company efficiency must be brought in balance with profitability from the perspective of its influential groups (stakeholders). To achieve this, long and short term planning, flexible adaptation to economic circumstances and the efficient management of the workforce meaning one of the most significant costs of companies are indispensable.

On the basis of the research conducted by the International Labour Organization (2015) and the European Commission (2010), the main employment challenges facing managers in connection with ensuring corporate competitiveness can be summarized as follows:

- Global labor markets are worsening there are 200 million unemployed people,
- Job creation rates are particularly low, as typically happens after a financial crisis,
- Youth unemployment has risen sharply,
- The digital transformation is having an even more profound impact on the transformation of our production and consumption methods. These transformations are presenting massive quantitative and qualitative challenges in terms of employment,
- Significant changes in the world of work, in work organization and in worker status,
- We must now be more flexible and able to adapt easily to change.

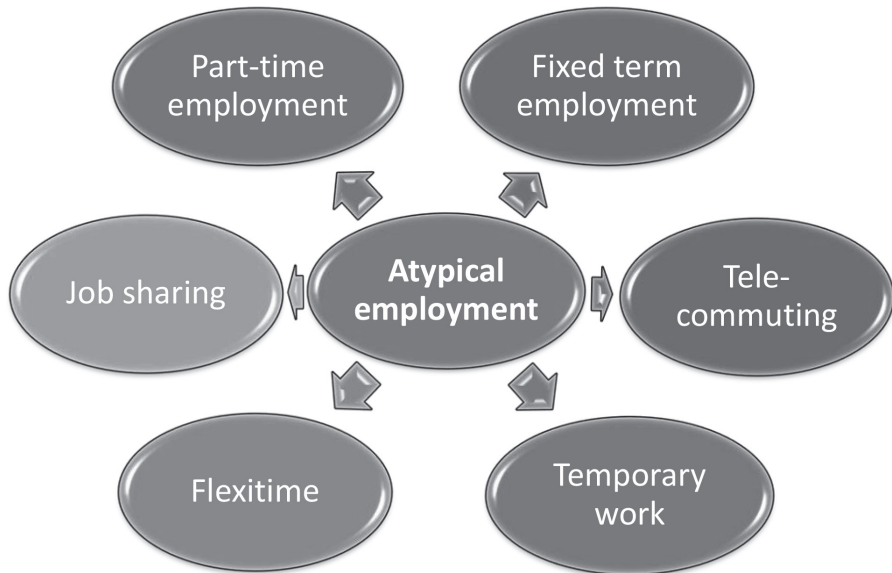
The European Commission, in its publication entitled „Modernising labor law to meet the challenges of the 21st century” concluded that the modernization of labor law was essential for adaptability to the rapid changes (Green Book, 2006). The European Special Employment Taskforce also dealt with the phenomenon, from their research they concluded that the layer of employees employed by companies was getting further away from the employees who were not employed at all, or only in a manner different from classic employment, which could also be resolved by the moderniza-

tion of labor law (Wim Kok-report, 2004). Effective workforce management is influenced by such corporate factors as commitment to the corporate culture, loyalty, attitude, confidence, professional knowledge, or refusal to change long-established employment habits (Arthur, 1994, Deakin, 2005, Dyer, 1993). Leading companies, however, know that they need to adapt to constant changes (Bersin, 2013) one form of which is the introduction of different forms of employment (Farr and Tran, 2008, Handy, 1985, Karoliny, Farkas and Poór, 2009).

The use of atypical forms of employment, different from classic employment, less formal, more flexible, with less administrative burden, is seen as a means of recovery from the crisis (Bardasi and Francesconi, 2003, Contreras, 2008).

According to the Definition of ILO (International Labour Organisation), atypical employment is a form of employment that is different than usual, in most cases the parties contract in writing and it is highly protected based on social rights (ILO, 2015).

Atypical forms of employment are, among others, those forms classified as employment, which to a certain extent differ from typical employment (European Commission, 2007). Such difference can be when an employee is contracted for a few months, for a fixed term, or is employed part-time, through a temporary work agency, or using job sharing, or is working from home where appropriate (Gyulavári, 2006, Nienhueser, 2005).

Figure 1. Atypical Employment

Source: Authors' own design, 2017

In the labor market the most common forms of atypical employment include fixed-term contracts and part-time employment (typically for 4 or 6 hours a day). These forms of employment have long been available in the Hungarian labor law, furthermore in terms of regulation they do not differ significantly from classic employment.

Fixed term employment is when a contract is concluded between the parties for a predetermined period of time. On the last working day specified in the contract the employment automatically terminates without a period of notice and the obligation to pay severance pay. Fixed-term contracts may be extended for maximum 5 years with the same employer.

In the case of part-time employment, the employee works less than the classic 8 hours a day, typically 4 or 6 hours a day. This form of employment is especially popular among students and female employees (Kalleberg, 2000).

The regulation of telecommuting and temporary work was included in the Labour Code in 2001 and 2004, respectively, promoting awareness and the use of these two atypical forms of employment, despite the fact that in these cases the difference from typical employment is significant.

In the case of telecommuting the employee does not commute to a site provided by the employer, but works typically from his/her own home. Information technology equipment is essential for the work, which is usually provided by the employer.

Temporary work is when the employing company concludes a civil law contract with a temporary work agency for providing workforce to it under the specified terms and conditions (OECD, 2002). In this case the employer's rights are exercised by the temporary work agency.

Regulations on employment forms are laid down in Act I of 2012 on the Labour Code (NetJogtár, 2016). The main aim of the legal regulation of the atypical forms of employment was to ensure the effectiveness, competitiveness of employers (Wilthagen and Tros, 2004, pp. 166–186), by reducing the payment of public dues.

Observing employment forms, research results

Research goal

In cooperation with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Békés County and Budapest, and the Management and HR Research Centre of Szent István University, the authors conducted a survey among economic operators. The basic aim was to identify the recovery from the crisis, and to map the typical employment-business models and new forms of employment common during growth. Thus, among others, to analyse the atypical employment options, that is to study the forms of part-time employment, telecommuting, job sharing, etc.

Review of research method

In this study the authors presented some of the results of their research in 2015, which examines the tools of recovery from the crisis, particularly with regard to cost effective atypical forms of employment. For the survey of the research authors applied a questionnaire method; participation in the survey was voluntary and responders did not have to pay for it. Authors handle personal data confidentially. The quantitative element of the data gathering was provided by the interviewees via electronic questionnaire.

The electronic questionnaire was completed by 141 respondents, the sampling method used was basically the snowball technique, for this reason, among others, and the research could not be regarded as representative. The researchers further narrowed the given sample number and conducted the tests specifically in relation to companies operating in the capital and in Békés county. To some of the questions the replies could be given with the help of a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (Likert-type, that is, agreement scale), which was intended to express significance. In such a case, we asked for the marking of the degree considered appropriate after the assessment of the given statement.

On the basis of this the research sample size was 112 companies. During the research the analytical processes covered univariate and multivariate tests, thus frequency, mean, standard deviation analyses, crosstab-analysis, ANOVA, factor and cluster analysis, etc.

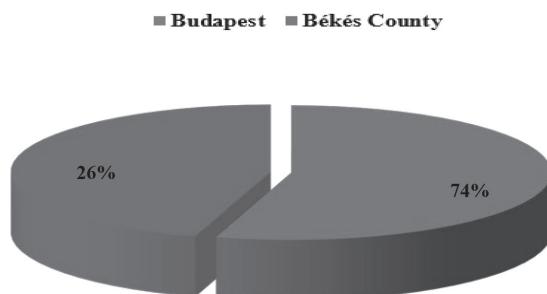
In the followings the research results are presented along the hypothesis formulated by the authors.

Participant statistics

The presentation of the test results starts by specifying the sample. As mentioned above, during the analysis the authors worked with a sample

size of 112 companies. From the companies 83 operated in the capital (74%) and 29 operated in Békés county (26%).

Figure 2. Sampling distribution by operating areas



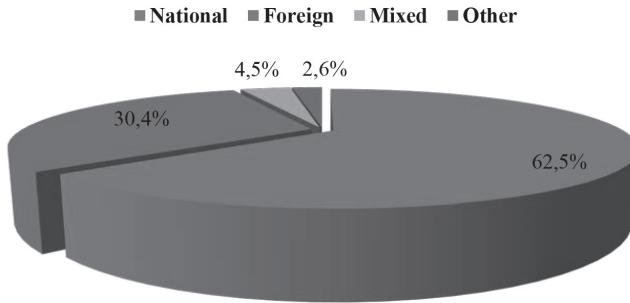
Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

The selection included organizations operating on two areas at very different stages of development. In the analysis of the results, however, it should not be forgotten that companies operating in Budapest were over-represented in the sample.

A wide range of activities were covered: typically industrial (18.8%) and commercial companies (14.3%) were involved in the study, but economic operators in the field of business services (9.8%), the financial sector (8%), public administration (7.1%), health-care (4.5%), IT (5.4%), telecommunications (2.7%), transportation (2.7%), etc. were also represented.

In terms of ownership structure, 62.5% of the test organizations were national, 30.4% were foreign, 4.5% were mixed, and 2.6% were other.

Figure 3. Sampling distribution by ownership (%)



Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

While from the companies operating in Békés county all (100%) were domestically owned, from those operating in Budapest 49.4% were domestic, 41% were foreign, 6% were joint ventures, and 3.6% had other ownership structures.

75.7% of the organizations operated in the private sector, 18.9% of them operated in the public sector, while 5.4% of them operated in other sectors. From the companies operating in Békés county, about one tenth of them operated in other sectors, while almost 90% of them operated in the private sector. From the companies operating in Budapest, one fourth of them were public companies, 70% of them operated in the private sector, and about 4% of them operated in other sectors.

In terms of number of employees, almost 43% of them had less than 50 employees, while 16% of them had more than 500 employees.

50.9% of them were chamber members, in this respect there was significant difference between the companies operating in Budapest and those operating in Békés county, that is in the case of the organizations operating in Békés county this ratio was 71.4%, while in the case of companies operating in Budapest it was 43.9% (Pearson's Chi-square test: 6.328 df: 1 sign.: 0.012 $p < 0.05$).

Analyzing the distribution of opinions

In the followings the authors present the test results along proving the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: From the companies included in the study sample, the organizations operating in Budapest were more inclined to take measures aimed at human resources in order to recover from the crisis than the companies operating in Békés county.

The first question the organizations participating in the research had to answer during the study was what effects recovery from the crisis, growth had on the field of employment at their company. They had to indicate on a 5-point metric Likert scale how typical the effect given by the authors was of their organization. 1 stood for Not at all, while 5 stood for Very much. Table 1 shows the mean and the standard deviation of the answers given to the question:

Table 1. What was the most profound effect recovery from the crisis and growth had in the area of employment at your company?

	N		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
Increase in staff numbers	104	8	2,08	1,196
Increase in contract staff numbers	99	13	1,85	1,063
Increasing the number of shifts	99	13	1,26	,708
Increasing the number of work-days per week	99	13	1,19	,634
Increase in salaries	102	10	2,16	,972

We do not plan major changes	100	12	2,29	1,365
Job-cuts will keep on being typical	99	13	1,32	,712

Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

From the data in the table it can be seen that the companies were not really planning major changes, although the mean value is quite low and the standard deviation is quite high, which shows that the sample was very heterogeneous on this question. It is clear, however, that typically no further downsizing was planned, and this shows one of the lowest standard deviation values. For further study the variables were compressed, that is the authors formed factors from the test statements. The KMO-Bartlett's test result was between medium and appropriate: .685 appr. Chi-square: 97.39 df: 15 sign.: .000. The explained variance was: 58.453 %. One variable was not suitable for factor formation: „Job-cuts will keep on being typical”, therefore this was omitted by the authors.

Two factors were formed, which on the basis of factor weights were named as follows:

- 1) Measures in the field of human resources
- 2) Measures in the field of work organization

Using the above two factors, clusters were formed with the k-means method for the purpose of determining whether based on these the sample can be divided into homogenous groups. The cluster centers are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. Cluster centers

	Cluster	
	1	2
REGR factor score 1 for analysis 3	-,03074	,21517
REGR factor score 2 for analysis 3	-,33702	2,35916

Source: Authors’ own research, 2015.

On the basis of the cluster centers the groups were named as follows:

- 1) Group detecting and having little effect
- 2) Group detecting and having active effect

It was further studied whether there was any connection between the grouping and the geographical location of the companies. The Chi-square test did not show a significant correlation. Pearson’s Chi-square test: 2.743 df: 1 sign.: .098 $p > 0.05$. The crosstab data showed that from the companies operating in Békés country 100% belonged to the first cluster, while from the companies operating in Budapest “only” 85%, while 15% of them detected and took measures in the fields of employment and work organization. Naturally, it should not be forgotten that downsizing, as a further option, was not included in the factors.

The next question was about what measures the tested companies planned in the field of employment in order to exploit the effects of recovery from the crisis, growth. Similarly, to the first question, the respondents had to indicate typicality on a 5-point Likert scale. 1 stood for Not at all, while 5 stood for Very much. Table 3 shows a summary of the results of the answers:

Table 3. What measures are planned in the field of employment in order to exploit the effects of recovery from the crisis and growth?

	N		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
Nothing needs to be done	88	24	1,67	1,047
Increasing atypical employment	93	19	2,01	1,068
Employing cheaper workforce than before	95	17	1,71	1,051
Outsourcing	90	22	1,72	,948
Eliminating wage freeze	90	22	1,99	1,268
Eliminating job cuts	89	23	2,31	1,458
Technical development; purchasing machinery	98	14	2,67	1,242
Product development; producing new products	96	16	2,83	1,412
Increasing organization efficiency	99	13	3,64	1,156

Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

The answers showed that the companies focused on measures improving organizational effectiveness, with technical and product development. They clearly knew that they could no longer avoid these issues, fail to react to the changes in some way, even by considering the option of increasing atypical employment. The ending of downsizing shows a higher than average value in terms of typicality, but response heterogeneity is the highest.

The variables were compressed into factors for the purpose of reducing the number of variables. The KMO-Bartlett’s test result was between the medium and low value: .584, appr. Chi-square: 147.397 df: 36 sign.: ,000. The explained variance was: 59.986%. 3 variables were formed, which were as follows:

- 1) factor Developments (in the technical field)
- 2) factor Developments (in the human field)
- 3) factor Developments (organizational effectiveness)

Using the 3 factors, 2 clusters were formed (with the k-means method), with the following cluster centers:

Table 4. Cluster centers

	Cluster	
	1	2
REGR factor score 1 for analysis 2	-,47101	,87223
REGR factor score 2 for analysis 2	,10728	-,19867
REGR factor score 3 for analysis 2	,33162	-,61411

Source: Authors’ own research, 2015.

The clusters were named as follows:

- 1) Group focusing on organizational effectiveness and human development
- 2) Group focusing on strong technical development, with weak organizational and human development

There was no significant correlation between the grouping and the geographical location (Pearson’s Chi-square test: .123 df: 1 sign.: .726 $p > 0.05$), from those operating in Békés county 60%, while from those operating in Budapest 65.7% belonged to the 1st cluster.

In the followings the view of the respondents on atypical employment was studied. Those participating in the research had to determine with respect to some statements how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement. 1 stood for Strongly disagree, while 5 stood for Strongly agree on a 5-point Likert scale. Table 5 shows the results of the answers:

Table 5. Views on atypical employment

	N		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Valid	Missing		
I am not aware of atypical forms of employment and I cannot deal with them now.	96	16	1,97	1,269
We have applied it but the experiences were not good.	92	20	2,12	1,004
I know it, but we do not want to change our currently established employment regime.	95	17	3,04	1,383
I have heard about it, but in our company there is no employment case that could be solved by atypical employment.	96	16	2,25	1,346
Basically, managers accept the traditional employment model better than any form of atypical employment.	96	16	3,23	1,440
We are quite willing to employ disadvantaged labor force.	94	18	3,14	1,113
There are institutions that provide information/assistance in the field of atypical employment.	94	18	3,23	1,149
Persons hired after persistent unemployment must be employed in the same work schedule as the rest of the employees.	94	18	3,69	1,312

There are activities at my company that do not require that the employee be present in the workplace.	94	18	3,26	1,135
I like working with manpower lending companies.	92	20	2,57	1,320
As I see it, my employees would be willing to work in some form of atypical employment.	95	17	2,93	1,187

Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

The respondents were more or less familiar with the atypical forms of employment, but were typically more open to the traditional forms of employment. Managers were also still more committed to the non-atypical forms, despite the fact that they knew that there are institutions that can provide information/assistance in the field of atypical employment. The views were not significantly influenced positively in the direction of non-traditional forms of employment even by the fact that most of them had no bad experience with atypical employment.

It was analyzed with the ANOVA test whether there was a difference depending on the location of the particular companies. Table 6 shows the ANOVA results:

Table 6. ANOVA results (p=0,05)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
I am not aware of atypical forms of employment and I cannot deal with them now.	Be-tween Groups	5,667	1	5,667	3,618	,060
	Within Groups	147,240	94	1,566		
	Total	152,906	95			
We have applied it but the experiences were not good.	Be-tween Groups	,932	1	,932	,924	,339
	Within Groups	90,753	90	1,008		
	Total	91,685	91			
I know it, but we do not want to change our currently established employment regime.	Be-tween Groups	,011	1	,011	,006	,941
	Within Groups	179,821	93	1,934		
	Total	179,832	94			
I have heard about it, but in our company there is no employment case that could be solved by atypical employment.	Be-tween Groups	7,500	1	7,500	4,286	,041*
	Within Groups	164,500	94	1,750		
	Total	172,000	95			
Basically, managers accept the traditional employment model better than any form of atypical employment.	Be-tween Groups	,934	1	,934	,448	,505
	Within Groups	196,025	94	2,085		
	Total	196,958	95			

We are quite willing to employ disadvantaged labor force.	Be-tween Groups	2,043	1	2,043	1,661	,201
	Within Groups	113,159	92	1,230		
	Total	115,202	93			
There are institutions that provide information/ assistance in the field of atypical employment.	Be-tween Groups	,119	1	,119	,089	,766
	Within Groups	122,732	92	1,334		
	Total	122,851	93			
There are activities at my company that do not require that the employee be present in the workplace.	Be-tween Groups	,707	1	,707	,408	,524
	Within Groups	159,346	92	1,732		
	Total	160,053	93			
Persons hired after persistent unemployment must be employed in the same work schedule as the rest of the employees.	Be-tween Groups	15,465	1	15,465	13,627	,000*
	Within Groups	104,407	92	1,135		
	Total	119,872	93			
I like working with manpower lending companies.	Be-tween Groups	18,737	1	18,737	12,056	,001*
	Within Groups	139,872	90	1,554		
	Total	158,609	91			
As I see it, my employees would be willing to work in some form of atypical employment.	Be-tween Groups	11,201	1	11,201	8,589	,004*
	Within Groups	121,283	93	1,304		
	Total	132,484	94			

*significant at the 0.05 significance level

Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

In the case of the four variables marked with an asterisk there was a significant difference between the companies operating in Békés county and those operating in Budapest. In the case of the statement „I have heard about it, but in our company there is no employment case that could be solved by atypical employment”. The mean value of those operating in Békés county was higher, while those operating in Budapest typically agreed with the other three statements. It should be the subject of further research how these results are influenced by the stage of development of the particular area. As mentioned above, companies operating on two areas at very different stages of development were studied. The present research did not study the partial effects of the factor of economic development.

Table 7. Mean and standard deviation results

		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error
I have heard about it, but in our company there is no employment case that could be solved by atypical employment.	Budapest	80	2,13	1,277	,143
	Békés county	16	2,88	1,544	,386
	Total	96	2,25	1,346	,137
We are quite willing to employ foreign citizen.	Budapest	80	3,43	1,053	,118
	Békés county	14	2,29	1,139	,304
	Total	94	3,26	1,135	,117
I like working with manpower lending companies.	Budapest	78	2,76	1,311	,148
	Békés county	14	1,50	,760	,203
	Total	92	2,57	1,320	,138

As I see it, my employees would be willing to work in some form of atypical employment.	Budapest	80	3,08	1,178	,132
	Békés county	15	2,13	,915	,236
	Total	95	2,93	1,187	,122

Source: Authors' own research, 2015.

Summary

The precondition of the success of a company is to create value and ensure efficiency with the structure of its processes and that of the company. In reality, a company can be successful if its customers have become committed to its product or service. With the strengthening of globalization, during the examinations of competitiveness, the international approach gained greater emphasis; besides traditional trading, technology and capital, the flow of workforce are given a more significant role. One way to survive such economic recession is to rationalize the staff and personnel as the cost on labor is one of the heaviest burdens for enterprises. As a result of the economic crisis, the firms tried react to changes and adapt to the new circumstances. For employers the renewable forms of employment ensured the preservation of competitiveness. By contrast, for the employees the new legal framework provides a lower degree of labor and salary security, lower standards of work conditions and limited legal guarantee.

The particular study presented some results of a research conducted in 2015. The basic aim of the study was to learn about the employment policy of organizations operating in Budapest and in Békés county following the economic crisis, with special regard to the atypical forms.

In the light of the analyses it can be concluded that the hypothesis formulated by the authors is partially acceptable. The results show that most of the organizations operating in Budapest focused on organizational effectiveness and human development, although this was also typical of those operating in Békés county. In the case of about one seventh of those

operating in Budapest, however, several measures were actively planned, while in the case of those operating in Békés county this was less typical. The organizations were more or less familiar with the atypical forms of employment, but in Békés county the companies stated that there were few opportunities for non-traditional employment, and it is no coincidence that there was less incentive for these solutions, as the employees were not so open to these versions either, compared to those working in Budapest.

The authors' questionnaire findings also provide proof for the fact that by creating and implementing the suitable human resource management models, and by promoting them widely, the changes due to the current economic circumstances will be manageable and the increase in the competitiveness of organizations will be ensured.

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