

**ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF GROUPS BEING
IN A SPECIFIC SITUATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET
IN THE LODZ PROVINCE**

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Key words: economic activity, labour market, employment structure, vulnerable groups in the labour market.

A b s t r a c t

The aim of this study is to determine the structure of economic activity among selected groups of individuals experiencing the greatest difficulties in the labour market, especially: people under the age of 30, people over the age of 50, persons with disabilities, women and people caring for dependents, as well as the characteristics of these particular groups. The study includes a deepened analysis of the employment structure by employment status, work contract and working time in the analysed groups. Also the reasons for part-time work and economic inactivity have been identified.

The study uses cross-sectional data from the Labour Force Survey for the fourth quarter of 2013 as well as the data from The Assessment of Resources of Social Assistance in the Lodz Region for the year 2015 and covers the Lodz province.

**AKTYWNOŚĆ EKONOMICZNA GRUP BĘDĄCYCH W SZCZEGÓLNEJ SYTUACJI
NA RYNKU PRACY W WOJEWÓDZTWIE ŁÓDZKIM**

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Słowa kluczowe: aktywność ekonomiczna, rynek pracy, struktura zatrudnienia, grupy problemowe na rynku pracy.

A b s t r a k t

Celem badania jest określenie struktury aktywności ekonomicznej wśród osób należących do grup doświadczających największych trudności na rynku pracy, w szczególności: osób poniżej 30. roku życia, osób powyżej 50. roku życia, osób z niepełnosprawnościami, kobiet oraz osób opiekujących się osobami zależnymi, a także charakterystyka poszczególnych zbiorowości. Badanie pogłębiono analizą struktury pracujących należących do analizowanych grup ze względu na status zatrudnienia, rodzaj umowy oraz wymiar czasu pracy. Przeanalizowano przyczyny pracy w niepełnym wymiarze czasu pracy oraz bierności zawodowej w badanej zbiorowości.

W badaniu wykorzystano dane przekrojowe pochodzące z Badania Aktywności Ekonomicznej Ludności (BAEL) z czwartego kwartału 2013 roku oraz dane z *Oceny zasobów pomocy społecznej dla województwa łódzkiego za rok 2015*. Zakres przestrzenny badania obejmuje województwo łódzkie.

Introduction

The risk of staying outside employment or exclusion from the labour market is not equal for all social groups – it is highly associated with the socio-demographic characteristics of the population such as age, gender or health status. Factors influencing the risk of exclusion from the labour market or disfavours certain groups particularly include the lack of qualifications and professional experience, necessity to combine professional and family responsibilities, temporary cessation of work or other forms of participation in the labour market or a reduced level of physical and mental forces (STASZEWSKA 2010, p. 233, 234).

The aim of the study is to determine the structure of economic activity among selected groups of individuals experiencing the greatest difficulties in the labour market¹ in the Lodz province, especially: people under the age of 30, people over the age of 50, persons with disabilities, women and people caring for dependents. The study includes a deepened analysis of the employment structure by employment status according to the International Classification of Status in Employment (*Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski...* 2014, p. 16) (self-employed person, employee, contributing family worker), work contract (permanent, temporary) and working time (full-time, part-time) of the analysed groups. Also reasons for part-time work, cessation of work and economic inactivity were identified.

The study used cross-sectional data from the Labour Force Survey (fourth quarter of 2013 illustrating the situation at the end of the year). Also data from The Assessment of Resources of Social Assistance in the Lodz Region for the year 2015 was used.

¹ With respect to these groups, the following terms are used interchangeably in the paper: vulnerable groups, disadvantaged groups, disfavoured groups.

National and regional policy towards vulnerable groups in the labour market

The category of persons with special labour market status has been defined in the legal system (*Ustawa z 20 kwietnia 2004 roku o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy*, from now on referred to as: *ustawa o promocji zatrudnienia*) where it refers directly to the unemployed: those under the age of 30, those over the age of 50, the long-term unemployed, social assistance recipients, those unemployed bringing up at least one child under the age of 6 years (or 18 years old and having a disability) and people with disabilities. However, in national and regional programs relating to employment, these categories refer not only to the unemployed, but also to all the communities mentioned above.

The legal act (*ustawa o promocji zatrudnienia*) established the National Action Plan for Employment, which has been implemented in Poland since 2005. It is the basis for the state task of employment promotion, professional activation and mitigating the effects of unemployment. One of the prior areas specified in the Plan for the years 2015–2017 is supporting groups disadvantaged in the labour market: young people, people over the age of 50, people with disabilities, women and parents with young children (*uchwała Rady Ministrów 28/2015...*, p. 4, 5, 18). Professional activation of groups experiencing the greatest difficulties in the labour market is also one of the main action directions in the Regional Action Plan for Employment in the Lodz Region in 2016 (*Regionalny plan działania... 2016*). Particular priorities include professional activation of young and older people by increasing the availability of labour market instruments, supporting the employment of persons wishing to combine family and professional responsibilities, as well as support in the inclusion of people socially excluded and threatened with exclusion.

The difficult situation of some social groups requires increased and more targeted state intervention in order to improve their chances of finding employment, as well as prevent their exclusion from the labour market (SZYLKO-SKOCZNY 2004, p. 225). This intervention is mainly reflected in the application of labour market instruments on both the supply side (e.g. vocational training, work experience, training in the workplace) and the demand side (job creation) (see KWIATKOWSKA 2012). Professional activation of vulnerable groups in Poland also takes the form of special programs such as: “The Solidarity between Generations. Actions to increase the professional activity of people aged 50+” or “Guarantees for Youth”.

The importance of supporting the economic activity of vulnerable groups is perceived by the regional authorities, which is reflected in the direction of regional and social policy defined in strategic documents such as: Regional

Strategy for Social Policy 2020, Regional Program for the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities, Prevention of their Social Exclusion and Support for their Employment for the years 2014–2020 or Plan for preventing depopulation in the Lodz region 2020. Furthermore, particular actions included in the Regional Operational Program for the Lodz Region 2014–2020 may receive EU funding. The program includes an organization of training and granting business start-ups for unemployed and economically inactive women, people with disabilities and persons over 50 years of age, improvement of qualifications and supporting professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities, as well as job placement and training for people caring for children under 3 years of age who are willing to return to work (*Szczegółowy Opis Osi Priorytetowych...* 2017, p. 129–222). Since one of the obstacles to active participation in the labour market is the insufficient availability of services of institutional care for dependents², both in the Regional Strategy for Social Policy 2020 and in the Regional Operational Program, a number of actions aimed at increasing the availability of care services for children, seniors and persons with disabilities have been planned; thus increasing employment possibilities. Particular attention was paid to the development of deinstitutionalised and personalised care services provided in the local environment, especially homecare provided by professional caregivers (daily assistance) and health care professionals (home health nurses, hospice care) who take over responsibilities related to care for dependents traditionally resting on members of their families. Regional government support is also provided for by self-help groups of carers and the development of business activities for the market substitution of household services related to care for dependents, especially in the form of social enterprises (*Wojewódzka Strategia...* 2017, *Szczegółowy Opis Osi Priorytetowych...* 2017, p. 179–201).

The situation of vulnerable groups in the labour market

This paper includes a detailed analysis of four groups considered as being disadvantaged in the labour market in the Lodz province: young people of working age – over 15 and under 30 years old, older people of working age

² The main source of data illustrating actual and future (in the perspective of two consecutive years) demand for services of institutional care for children, seniors and persons with disabilities in the region are data from The Assessment of Resources of Social Assistance in Lodz Region. Actual analysis in this area can be found in the following documents: *Analiza sytuacji wewnątrzregionalnej...* 2016, *Diagnoza dotycząca zapotrzebowania na miejsca opieki...* online, *Institucje świadczące opiekę...* 2016.

– between 50 and 64 years old³, people with disabilities (legal criterion) and women.

Because the data from the Labour Force Survey does not allow the extraction of a separate group of people caring for dependents (children under 6 years old and other persons who remain unable to support themselves due to age or disability and require constant care) it was impossible to conduct a detailed analysis of this group. Therefore, a diagnosis of the situation of persons caring for dependents have been limited to an analysis of their situation within each of the four disadvantaged groups mentioned above (especially among women).

People under 30 years of age

The share of the population under the age of 30 who are economically active in the Lodz region was at 57% in 2013 (the entire working age population was at 70%). The highest level of economic activity was among people aged 25–29 (about 90%, where 80% are employed and 10% unemployed) and in the group aged 19–24 not including students (87%; 64% – employed, 23% – unemployed) (Fig. 1). At the same time, people aged 19–24 (especially among the population without pupils/students) were unemployed more often than people aged 24–29. It indicates greater difficulties in finding employment by people from this group which may result directly from their younger age, as well as the lesser professional experience or lower level of qualifications.

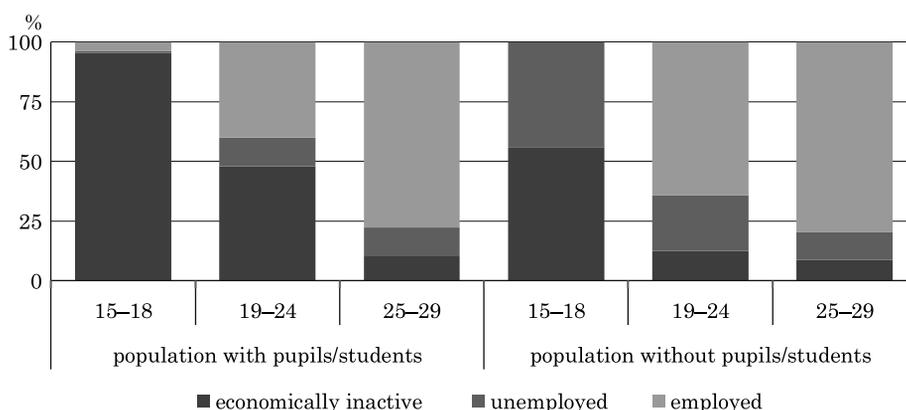


Fig. 1. Economic activity of people under 30 years of age in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

³ Analysis also includes people over 65 years of age, however this group has not been widely analysed.

While analyzing the economic activity among people under 30 years of age, it should be noted that people in the youngest subgroup (under 18 years old) are obliged to learn. Therefore, the share of economically inactive people aged 15–18 among whom are pupils/student is the highest and a slight percentage of employed representatives of this group are at most trainees. On the other side, it is very worrying that people aged 15–18 who have completed (or discontinued) their education do not work at the same time – 56% of them are economically inactive and 44% – unemployed.

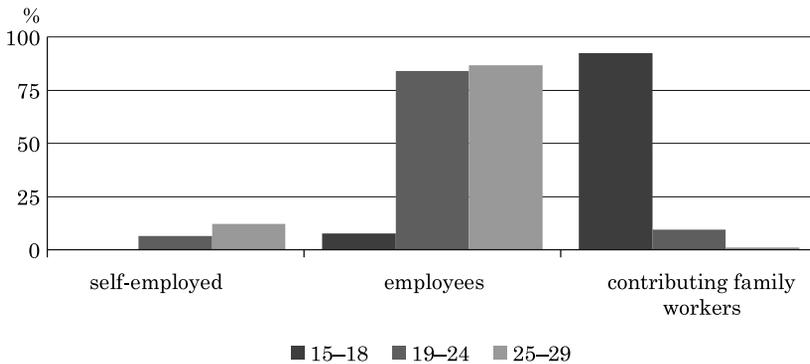


Fig. 2. Employed under 30 years of age by employment status in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

The share of self-employed persons among the employed under 30 is very low (Fig. 2). It is relatively the highest in the age group of 25–29. The share of employees is the highest (and almost equal to) among people aged 19–24 and 25–29. Contributing family workers most often covered the employed aged between 15 and 18. Young employees most often had a temporary work contact (58% of employees aged 15–29) and only 42% of them had a permanent work contract, which is the most advantageous form of employment (mainly it concerned employees in the eldest group – at around 53%). Temporary work was the most common among employees aged 15–18, where the main reason was training, and among employees aged 19–24 – most often because of an inability to find another job.

All of the employees aged 15–18 worked part-time and most of the employees in older groups worked full-time (82% in age group 19–24 and 96% in age group 25–29). The most common reason for taking part-time work among younger employees (15–24) was learning and training. Among employees aged 25–29, the most common cause of working part-time was an inability to find a full-time job.

In the group of people under 30 years of age who are not working (unemployed and economically inactive) 82.4% were people who have never

had any paid work (nearly 90% of them were pupils/students) and only 17.6% had already worked in the past. The most common reasons for the cessation of work among young people who had already worked in the past was the end of temporary, casual or seasonal work (51.3%) and loss of work connected with the liquidation of the workplace or the job (16.2%). A relatively common reason for cessation of work in the 19–24 age-group was also dismissal. One of the likely reasons for this situation could have been low employer satisfaction with the quality of work provided by this group due to short (or negligible) work experience or a low level of professional qualifications.

The main reasons for not seeking work by inactive people under 30 was supplemental education and qualifications, which mostly affects younger people: almost all of them were aged 15–18 and about 87% aged 19–24. In the 25–29 age group, the leading cause of inactivity was taking care for children and other dependent persons (44%), but this situation was not related to a lack of access to care services or their poor quality.

People aged 50 years and older

The structure of economic activity in the population aged 50 years and older varies among different age groups. The youngest group (50–54 years old) is relatively more involved in the labour market. In 2013, this age group had the highest share of employed (72%) among all age groups in the population aged 50 years and older and higher when compared to the total working age population in the Lodz province (63%). Only 20% of persons aged 50–54 were economically inactive, which is the lowest among separated age groups over 50 and lower by 10 percentage points when compared to the total population (Fig. 3).

The share of economically active persons decreases with age (especially the employed – the share of unemployed within the elderly population is relatively

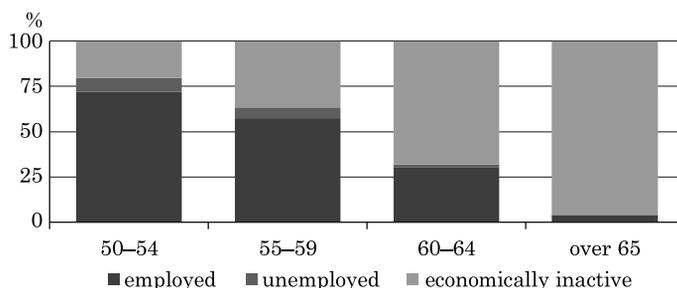


Fig. 3. Economic activity of people over 50 years of age in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

low). The share of employed in the 50–54 age group was at 72% and in the 60–64 age group it was only 30%. It can be seen that after crossing the age of 55, career opportunities significantly decrease. On the one hand, it may be a result of the unwillingness of employers to hire older workers which often are perceived as less efficient, but on the other hand persons over 55 years of age are often interested in withdrawal from the labour market (WASILEWSKA 2014, p. 39). In 2013 in the Lodz region, retirement, early retirement or going on pension was the reason for ceasing work among 69% of people aged 60–64, 34% of people aged 55–59, but also for 28% of people aged 50–54. At the same time, the most common reason for stopping work in the 50–59 age group was the loss of a job due to the liquidation of the company or the job (about 30%).

A common reason for inactivity among older people in the Lodz province was due to health problems. It is significant that illness or disability was the most common cause of inactivity for nearly 50% of representatives of the age group 50–54 and for nearly 40% of people aged 55–59 years. This may indicate generally poor health within the elderly population, which is not supporting their involvement in the labour market.

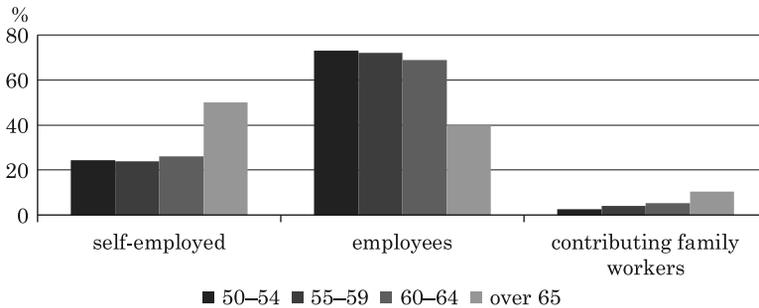


Fig. 4. Employed over 50 years of age by employment status in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

The structure of employment of those aged 50 years and over in the Lodz province in 2013 was dominated by employees (Fig. 4). The share of self-employed was the highest among the employed aged 65 years and over (50%). These persons had also worked more often as contributing family workers (10% of representatives of this group).

Older employees (in all age groups) most often had a permanent work contact (77%). The most common reason for having a temporary work contract was the inability to find another job, but some employees (especially in older groups) preferred this type of work contract.

In 2013 in the Lodz region, most employees aged 50–64 worked full-time (92% of employees aged 50–59 and 85% of employees aged 60–64). Part-time

work was more common among employees aged 65 years and over (52% worked part-time), so the share of working part-time increased with age. Older employees working part-time (especially aged 65 years and over) mostly preferred this form.

People with disabilities

In the Lodz province in 2013, the share of the employed among people with disabilities of working age was far lower than for the population without disabilities (17% vs. 56%) and most of this group was economically inactive (80%; 38% among people without disabilities). What is more, the highest share of the employed was among people with a minor degree of disability (23%) and the lowest was among people with a severe degree of disability (5%). Therefore, the level of economic activity decreases in the higher ranges of disability (Fig. 5).

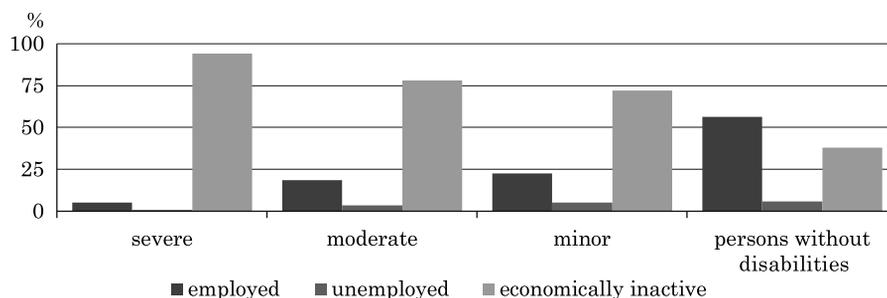


Fig. 5. Economic activity of people with disabilities by degree of disability in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

The share of particular employment status among people with moderate and minor ranges of disability is close to the range for persons without disabilities (although there were fewer self-employed and a higher share of employees among people with disabilities) (Fig. 6). The situation for the group of people with severe degree of disability is quite different. There were no self-employed and the share of contributing family workers was much higher (16%).

Employees with severe and minor degrees of disability most often had a permanent work contact (56-60%) and employees with a moderate degree of disability most often had a temporary work contact (64%). The most common reason for having a temporary work contract was the inability to find another

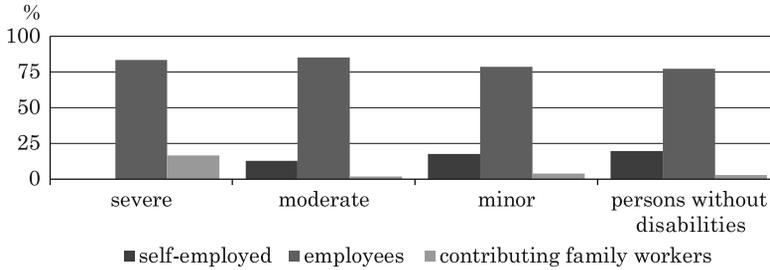


Fig. 6. People with disabilities by degree of disability and employment status in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

job, especially among people with a severe and moderate degree of disability. The share of working full-time is higher than working part-time in this group (73% on average), although it decreases with a higher range of disability and is still lower than among the non-disabled (93%). Illness or disability was indicated as a reason for part-time work more often by employees with a moderate degree of disability than by people with a severe degree of disability, while employees with a severe degree of disability more often could not find a full-time job despite their willingness to take it (Fig. 7). Employees with a minor degree of disability more often choose a part-time job because they prefer this form.

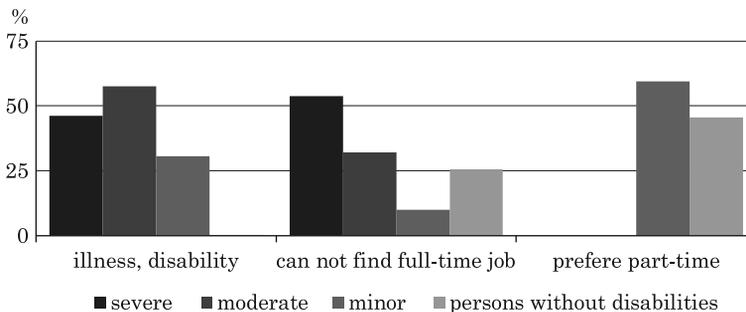


Fig. 7. People with disabilities by degree of disability and reasons for working part-time in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

Among people with disabilities who are not working, 11.5% are people who have never had any paid work, where 60% are persons with a severe degree of disability. The share of previously employed is higher among people with a moderate degree of disability (40%). What is interesting is that the percentage of people who are not working and never had any paid work is higher for the non-disabled (over 24%). It can be related to the fact that people with disabilities are the recipients of particular activities aimed at developing

or maintaining work skills necessary to participate in vocational training or to start working (e.g. schools preparing to work, occupational therapy). People with disabilities also have the possibility to take up employment within specific units and organizations carrying out professional rehabilitation such as: sheltered workshops and work centres or social enterprises, so that they can obtain necessary skills and work experience before entering the open labour market. On the other hand, the careers of people with disabilities often end up at protected forms of employment and most of them never enter the open labour market.

The most common reasons for cessation of work among people with disabilities who have already worked in the past (excluding retirement) was going on pension (40%), although it concerned mainly people with a minor to moderate degree of disability and much less frequently people with a severe degree of disability (about 20%). The second reason was the fact of having a disability (19%) although (again) it was mainly mentioned by persons with a moderate degree of disability and rarely by persons with a severe degree of disability.

Furthermore, among the main reasons for economic inactivity in the group of people with disabilities (except retirement), the most frequent was illness and disability; while in the group of people without disabilities, the most common reason was learning and skills supplementation. This indicates that the largest obstacle to labour market participation for people with disabilities is the very fact of having a disability and the difficulties which people with disabilities experience in the labour market due to disability.

Economic activity by gender

The level of economic activity among women in the Lodz region in comparison to men is much lower. In 2013, the share of employed women was at 45% while among men it was nearly 61%. The share of unemployed was similar in both groups. There were also differences in the structure of employment status for women and men. There was a lower share of self-employment among women (15%; 23% for men) and a higher share of being employees (81%; 71% for men) and contributing family workers (4%; 2% for men).

Women as often as men have a permanent work contract (about 70%). Nevertheless, the share of full-time working women (90%) was lower than men (95%). Women more often worked part-time due to the inability to find another job or the need to care for dependents (children or other dependent persons). The most common reasons for working part-time among men were that they prefer this form or they are learning (Fig. 8).

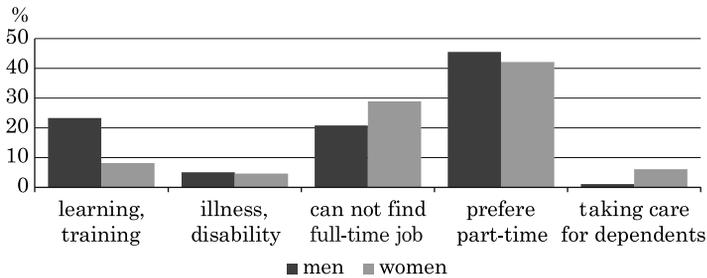


Fig. 8. Reasons for working part-time among men and women in the Lodz province
Source: own elaboration based on LFS results.

Among women who are not working, 19% are persons who have never had any paid work, while among men it was nearly 27%. Therefore despite their lower economic activity, women more often take up employment. A common reason for cessation of work among men and women were similar: going on pension, loss of job due to the liquidation of the company/job or the end of temporary work; although these reasons were mentioned mainly by men. Women much more often gave reasons connected with taking care of dependents (mainly children) and poor non-financial working conditions. Taking care of children or other dependent persons is also a common reason for economic inactivity among women – this reason was mentioned by 17% of women and only 2% of men.

According to Labour Force Survey data, the economic inactivity of women in the Lodz province is connected with taking care of dependents and is not directly related to the availability of institutions providing care services due to their localization, financial reasons or poor quality of services. However, the problem may be an insufficient number of places in these institutions. The Assessment of Resources of Social Assistance in the Lodz Region (*Ocena zasobów pomocy społecznej...* 2016) shows that there is a need to increase the number of places in child care institutions (nurseries, kindergartens) and elderly and disabled care centres (nursing homes, community self-help homes) in the region. The index reflecting the insufficiency of places in child care institutions⁴ in the region in 2013 was at 5% (4.5% for kindergartens, 14% for nurseries), which means that the demand for places is 5% higher than the number of existing spots. The situation in this area is systematically improving. In 2011, the rate was at the level of 6.6%, while in 2015 it was at 3.5%, although it was mainly the result of an increase in the number of places in kindergartens. Definitely a worse situation is observed for the elderly and the

⁴ Indicator calculated as the ratio between the number of children not granted a place in the nursery or kindergarten, illustrating the missing places, and the number of existing places.

disabled care institutions, where the rate illustrating the insufficiency of places⁵ in 2013 was at the level of 155%. The needs were one and a half times higher than the number of existing places. The availability of places in these institutions is also improving (the rate decreased to 60% in 2015), while there are still visible shortages in this area.

Summary

An analysis of the economic activity of vulnerable groups in the Lodz region indicated certain disadvantages and difficulties which these groups experience in the labour market.

The highest level of economic activity among young people occurred in the 25–29 age group. People from the youngest subgroup (under 18 years of age) were mostly economically inactive as they are obliged to learn. Most young people were employees with a temporary work contract which they did not prefer and the end of which was the most common reason for cessation of work in this group. The economically inactive population under 30 years of age was not seeking work mainly because of learning or qualification supplementation.

People just after crossing the age of 50 were often in the climax of their careers, but their activity decreased with age. It was related to the fact that people aged 55 years and over mainly want to retire. On the other side, employers are often unwilling to employ older workers. Therefore, it is necessary to promote the “silver economy” and support the economic activity of older workers, inter alia, by improving professional qualifications, especially in the ICT area. What is more, a common reason for economic inactivity in this group seems to be mainly concerned with health; indicating a general poor health condition of the older people in the Lodz region, which is not supporting their involvement in the labour market.

People with disabilities were the most excluded from the labour market. The share of employed among people with disabilities was very low and most of them are economically inactive. The results suggest that the largest obstacle to participate in the labour market for representatives of this group is the fact of having a disability. At the same time, people with severe degree of disability (more than people with other degrees of disability) want to participate in the labour market despite their limitations. This group much less frequently mentioned issues directly related with disability as a reason for cessation of work or economic inactivity when compared to the people with other degrees of

⁵ Indicator calculated as the ratio between the number of people waiting for placing in nursing homes and community self-help homes (missing places) and the number of persons placed in these institutions (existing places).

disability. There was also a question concerning the effectiveness of the system of professional rehabilitation which in its current form seems to give people with disabilities limited opportunities to participate in the open labour market.

The level of economic activity among women in the Lodz region in comparison with men was much lower. Women much more often than men indicated taking care of dependents as a reason for cessation of work and staying out of professional activity which can be related with the poor availability of places in institutions providing care services for children (especially in nurseries), elderly and persons with disabilities occurring in the Lodz province. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the availability of care services for children and dependent people (mostly the elderly), which will support people – mainly women – who care for dependents and allow them to return to work.

Bearing in mind the above conclusions, it is necessary to indicate solutions planned within the regional and social policy which may contribute to increase the professional activity of the described groups, such as: the promotion of lifelong learning and retraining, the promotion of career planning and combining education with work among young people, the enhancement of cooperation between employers and schools, health-related actions which may improve access to medical care for seniors, the creation of conditions for the transition from protected forms of employment to the open labour market for people with disabilities and the integration of activities within professional, medical and social rehabilitation. Solutions should be applied which enable participants in the workforce to combine family and professional responsibilities; such as flexible working hours, tele-working, the development of workplace nurseries and kindergartens and deinstitutionalised care services for dependents.

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