

**LABOR MARKET POLICY IN POLISH REGIONS
ON THE BASIS OF THE WIELKOPOLSKA
AND WARMIA AND MAZURY REGIONS
(IN THE YEARS 2011–2016)**

Wacław Jarmołowicz¹, Magdalena Knapińska²

¹ Finance Institute

School of Banking in Poznan

² Department of Macroeconomics and Development Studies

Poznan University of Economics and Business

e-mail: magdalena.knapinska@ue.poznan.pl

Key words: labor market, labor market policy, employment policy, regional policy.

Abstract

While implementing economic policy, the State concentrates on four main goals related to economic stabilization referring to economic growth: a stable price level, a balance in the economic relationships with other states and the implementation of a full employment policy. Employment policy and labor market policy are crucial aspects of these actions. In the current study, attention has been paid to the very differentiation between the notions of employment policy and labor market policy, special emphasis has been placed on the latter as it directly influences the level and structure of unemployment in the national and regional economy. Another important part of the study presents particular aspects of the policy implementation against the phenomenon of unemployment in the studied regions in the period 2011–2016. The wielkopolskie voivodship and the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship have been chosen as the study subjects. These regions significantly differ regarding their level of unemployment, but also in terms of their labor market policy implementation.

**POLITYKA RYNKU PRACY W POLSKICH REGIONACH NA PRZYKŁADZIE
WIELKOPOLSKI ORAZ WARMII I MAZUR (W LATACH 2011–2016)**

Wacław Jarmołowicz¹, Magdalena Knapińska²

¹ Instytut Finansów

Wyższa Szkoła Bankowa w Poznaniu

² Katedra Makroekonomii i Badań nad Rozwojem

Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu

Słowa kluczowe: rynek pracy, polityka rynku pracy, polityka zatrudnienia, polityka regionalna.

Abstrakt

Państwo, prowadząc politykę gospodarczą, koncentruje się na realizacji czterech głównych celów związanych ze stabilizacją gospodarczą, które odnoszą się do wzrostu gospodarczego, stabilnego poziomu cen, równowagi w zakresie stosunków gospodarczych z zagranicą, a także postulatu pełnego zatrudnienia. We współczesnych gospodarkach trudno jest pojmować ten ostatni cel w sensie dosłownym, dlatego zadowalający staje się zwykle postulat możliwie wysokiego i racjonalnego poziomu zatrudnienia przy pewnym dopuszczalnym społecznie poziomie bezrobocia. Istotne miejsce w tych działaniach państwa zajmuje polityka zatrudnienia i polityka rynku pracy. W opracowaniu zwrócono najpierw uwagę na ustawowe i umowne regulacje stosunków pracy, a także na samo odróżnienie pojęć „polityka zatrudnienia” i „polityka rynku pracy”, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem tej ostatniej jako bezpośrednio oddziałującej na poziom i strukturę bezrobocia w gospodarce narodowej. Ponadto istotną częścią opracowania jest ukazanie konkretnych aspektów realizacyjnych polityki wobec zjawiska bezrobocia, prowadzonej w Polsce w latach 2011–2016.

Introduction

While implementing economic policy, the State concentrates on four main goals related to economic stabilization referring to economic growth, a stable price level, balancing economic relationships with other states and implementing a full employment policy. Employment policy and labor market policy are crucial aspects of these actions. In the current study, attention has been paid to the very differentiation between the notions of employment policy and labor market policy, special emphasis has been placed on the latter as it directly influences the level and structure of unemployment in the national and regional economy. Another important part of the study is presenting particular aspects of the policy implementation against the phenomenon of unemployment in the studied regions in the period 2011–2016. The wielkopolskie voivodship and the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship have been chosen as the study subjects. These regions significantly differ regarding their level of unemployment but also in terms of their labor market policy implementation.

Employment Policy and Labor Market Policy

Full employment is one of the main goals of economic policy. Taking into account the fact that the achievement of this goal in a market economy encounters crucial and varied difficulties and limitations, the level of this goal is regarded relatively satisfactory if it corresponds to the level achieved for the natural unemployment rate. Moreover, full employment is understood, e.g. by M. Friedman and E.S. Phelps as the unemployment level balancing labor market while taking into account frictional and structural unemployment. However, according to the Keynesians (e.g. F. Modigliani and L. Papademos) this

market is balanced under the concept of NAIRU (Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment) (JARMOŁOWICZ 2014, p. 143–146).

The above mentioned goal is realized by the State as it implements its employment policy which is part of economic policy. Economic policy is an activity which not only aims at possibly high (full) employment but also at the rational management of human resources at the macroeconomic scale and on the regional and local scales. These actions take into account not only the phenomena and processes related to the professional and social preparation of the population, but also the implementation of human resources into the active and productive functioning of the labor market (JARMOŁOWICZ, KNAPIŃSKA 2010, p. 180 and further).

The influence of the State on the labor market via its macro and micro economic instruments has significant limitations. The efficiency of this policy is weakened by such conditions as the lack of perfect mobility of capital and labor, limitations to possession and the flow of information, frequently imperfectly developed market infrastructure and others.

Employment policy may not always be equated to labor market policy. In the opinion of many economists, labor market policy should be treated as a relatively separate (or an autonomous) but important part of employment policy. In another approach it could be included within industrial and labor relations. Nonetheless, labor market policy is undoubtedly, and at least partly, oriented towards the implementation of other goals than employment policy exclusively. In terms of relations between economic policy, employment policy and labor market policy there have arisen many disagreements, also on the regional scale. Taking into account various discussions and disputes conducted in the research centers of Toruń, Łódź, Olsztyn, Katowice and Poznań by such labor market researchers as J. MELLER (1981), Z. WIŚNIEWSKI (1999), W. KWIATKOWSKA (2017), E. KWIATKOWSKI (2002), E. KRYŃSKA (2001), A. ORGANIŚCIAK-KRZYKOWSKA (2005), D. KOTLORZ (2007) and the authors of this study (JARMOŁOWICZ, KNAPIŃSKA 2005), some conclusions should be drawn and current discussions and disputes should be identified.

Labor market policy concentrates on solving the structural and social problems of an already existing labor market whereas the aim of employment policy is full or high employment (via the creation of new and full value workplaces). Employment policy concentrates on the issues of labor supply and demand along with the institution for global control over these variables, but labor market policy is most often limited to instruments applied by employment agencies.

However, if we look for the sources of unemployment in the malfunctioning of the labor market and its elements, a reduction of unemployment may only be carried out with the help of programs and measures to activate the labor market and the unemployed, namely via labor market policy.

According to Z. Wiśniewski, labor market policy is characterized by four basic goals: an employment goal to reduce the size of unemployment, a structural

goal to reduce structural maladjustment to the labor market, and a productive goal to increase labor force productivity. The realization of the fourth social goal consists in providing people who have lost jobs with financial back up and in providing the unemployed who have particular difficulties in the labor market with professional adaptation programs.

While influencing labor, the State may stimulate the growth of labor demand, and on the other hand decrease the supply of the labor force. The number of workplaces may increase due to, among others, subsidization payroll and employment, in order to maintain or increase the current employment level in private enterprises. The State may also create new workplaces in the public sector, also on the basis of special programs for the development and restructuring of employment. Another significant way to increase labor demand is supporting broadly understood entrepreneurship, favoring the creation of new workplaces in the private sector among small and medium businesses, favoring local initiatives for employment growth or granting financial and organizational aid to the citizens who want to be self-employed, which means changing their status from “unemployed” to “self-employed” in their own companies.

The decreasing of labor supply may be carried out by earlier retirement of workers, extending training and educating time, extending the time or scope of obligatory military service, a shortening of the working time, extending vacation periods, and decreasing the number of extra work hours or partial time employment.

Labor market policy is still an interference of the State (and it has its proponents especially among the successors of the classical and neo-classical approach), under which solving problems is usually limited to improving adjustment processes in the labor market. Thus it offers improvement of the quality and flow of information on labor demand and supply, the development of professional consulting, the stimulation of sectoral, regional, professional and qualificational mobility of workers and even the periodical lowering of payroll in order to stimulate the economic situation. This policy should also supplement and reinforce macroeconomic policy (including employment policy).

Active and Passive Labor Market Policy

In the literature, active labor market policy is often contrasted with its passive variant, namely the first one should help the unemployed to “return to work” whereas the other one is focused on “paying” social benefits to the unemployed. According to another definition of the two types of labor market policy, active market policy aims at the reduction of unemployment, passive market policy aims at social help to the unemployed.

Labor market policy of the State consists in the application of macro and micro economic instruments. The macroeconomic instruments include fiscal and monetary instruments and microeconomic instruments include projects aiming at the better functioning of the labor market and a reduction of unemployment in particular social groups.

Active labor market policy (ALMP) is a set of instruments used by the State and aims at making the unemployed join the labor market as they become employed. Active labor market policy uses a wide range of activities, aimed at the creation of new workplaces in the public sector and subsidizing employment and payroll, but also promoting education (KNAPIŃSKA 2010, p. 251).

Basic instruments of this policy include public works, intervention works, loans for the unemployed and employers, training the unemployed and professional consulting. Public works consist of subsidizing workplaces usually created by local authorities for projects including construction, renovation or current operation of the municipal or town infrastructure facilities. These works mainly aim at the activation of the long term unemployed with low professional skills.

Intervention works are used not only to activate the unemployed but also to create possibilities for them to get permanent jobs. They mainly consist in partial subsidization of employment by employment agencies to those employers who create new workplaces for the unemployed. It is also recommended for people directed to perform intervention works to possess qualifications necessary for the performance of these works, as this allows them to have bigger chances of finding further employment in a particular company.

Loans are granted by employment agencies to employers for the creation of new workplaces for the unemployed and also to employees during their redundancy notice period or if they are made redundant for reasons not attributable to the workplace provider.

Training should include apprenticeship, retraining, raising professional qualifications or learning how to look for and obtain employment. Training for the unemployed is initiated by employment agencies and aims at increasing the chances of finding work; especially if a person lacks professional qualifications, must change professional qualifications or is no longer capable of performing their current job.

Professional consulting is a service provided by employment agencies to people who are unemployed or looking for work in which they organize so-called work clubs which are group meetings during which participants learn how to look for jobs, learn about their professional predispositions and share experiences related to job searching.

On the other hand, passive labor market policy (PLMP) covers such actions as flexible treatment of retirement age, extension of training period, periodical weakening of professional activity, dividing the existing workplaces among a larger number of the employed, flexible work time forms and social protection of the unemployed.

Therefore it is the basic aim of passive labor market policy to “mitigate” the financial results of unemployment with unemployment benefits, pre-pension benefits, early retirement pensions, redundancy payments related to reasons attributable to workplace providers and social benefits¹.

While discussing the two different kinds of labor market policy, it should be stressed that they are closely connected with their aforementioned goals. Active labor market policy aims at employment and structural changes, but passive labor policy is focused on social goals. Although to improve the situation in the labor market, active programs have the greatest importance. Passive forms should not be underestimated as those which mitigate the negative results of an imbalance in the labor market. Therefore, the State which creates its labor market policy as a long-run activity should designate most of its funds for active forms of fighting unemployment and also ensure they are efficient.

Realization of Labor Market Policy in the Wielkopolskie and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodships in the Years 2011–2016

As shown in the data in Figure 1, a relatively stable growth of the employment rate could be observed in the years 2011–2013. This rate dropped significantly although differently in different regions in the years 2014–2016 and the tendency was sustained at the beginning of 2017. Comparing the levels of the unemployment rate, it can be noticed that it reached the highest value in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship, being over twice higher than that of the wielkopolskie voivodship. Simultaneously on the national scale, the unemployment rate was slightly higher than that of the wielkopolskie voivodship and much lower than that of the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship.

It should be added that there were poviats among those of the wielkopolskie voivodship in which the unemployment rate was much higher than the national average. For example, such a situation was observed in 2013 in the wągrowiecki powiat where the unemployment rate amounted at 21.6% (KNAPIŃSKA 2014, p. 138). In other poviats the unemployment rate was lower than the national average but higher than the voivodship average. Such a situation was in the following poviats: koniński (19.1%), słupecki (17.9%), złotowski (17.2%), kolski (16.2%) and chodzieski (16.1%) (*Ocena...* 2014, p. 10).

¹ Passive policy is financed in Poland from the Labor Fund, the Social Insurance Fund and from the State budget, and as a rule does not result in the creation of new workplaces. Its influence on the reduction of unemployment consists in the prevention of permanent professional deactivation of some part of labor resources.

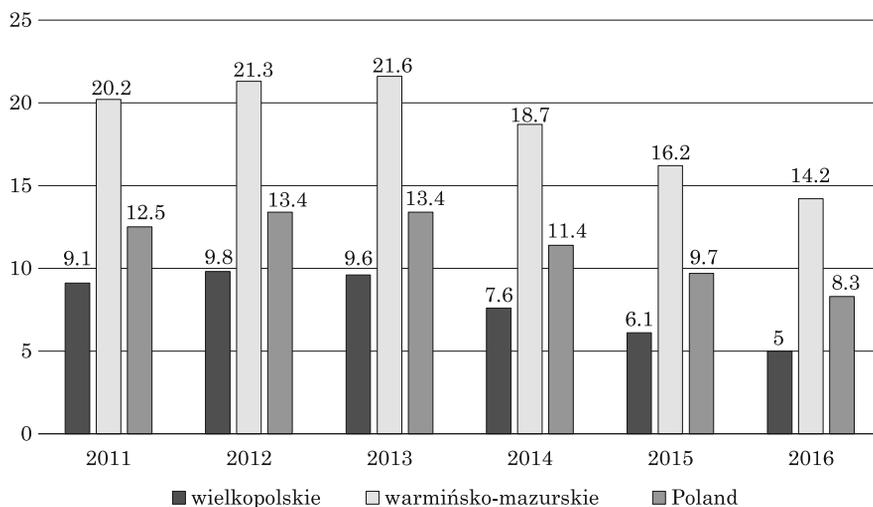


Fig. 1. Unemployment rate in the wielkopolskie and warmińsko-mazurskie voivodships and in Poland [%]

Source: own study based on the statistics of the Local Data Bank (online).

The lowest unemployment rates in the wielkopolskie voivodship were observed in 2013 in the city of Poznań (4.1%), and in the following poviats: poznański (4.6%), kępiński (5.1%) and wolsztyński (5.8%) (*Ocena...* 2014, p. 10).

As regards the level of unemployment rates in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship, in 2013 the group of poviats of the unemployment rate exceeding 27% included the following poviats: bartoszycki, braniewski, elbląski, kętrzyński, lidzbarski, piski and węgorzewski. Thus they were poviats characterized with the most unfavorable situation in the labor market. The lowest level of unemployment rate in 2013 in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship was observed in the iławski poviat where it was below the national average and was between 8.5 and 9.1 %. Generally in 2013, in most poviats of the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship the unemployment rate significantly exceeded the national average (*Rynek pracy...* 2014, p. 9).

Moreover, attention should be paid to the data on the number of registered unemployed in the poviat employment agencies of the wielkopolskie and warmińsko-mazurskie voivodships presented in Figure 2. Although the unemployment rate is reportedly much lower in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship, when we look closely at the number of the registered unemployed we can see that it was higher in the wielkopolskie voivodship, which is at the same time more populated. As regards the dynamics related to the number of unemployed in the wielkopolskie voivodship, it initially grew and since 2013 has been dropping. However in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship, the number of registered unemployed was visible only in 2014. The following years showed improvement in the area of unemployment.

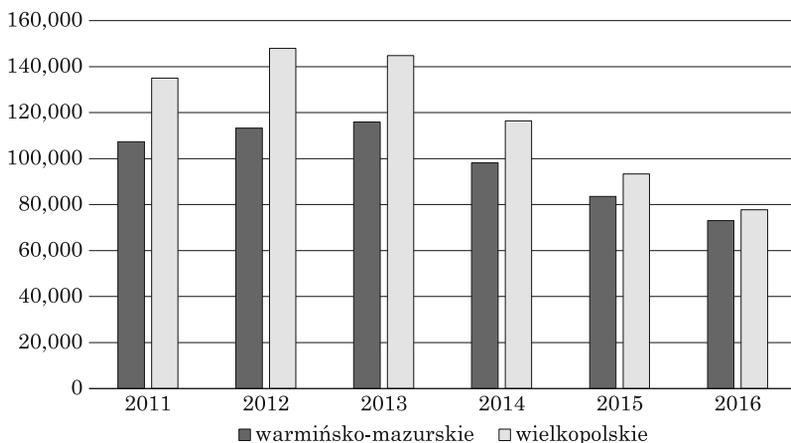


Fig. 2. Number of unemployed in the wielkopolskie and warmińsko-mazurskie voivodships
Source: own study based on the statistics of the Local Data Bank (online).

Taking into account the number of unemployed per 1 job offer, the data is presented in Figure 3. The largest number of unemployed per 1 job offer was in 2011. In consecutive years, this number dropped both in Poland and in the studied voivodships. However it must be noted that the most difficult situation in this respect was in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship, and in the wielkopolskie voivodship this number was even lower than the national average which at that time oscillated between 20 and 90 people.

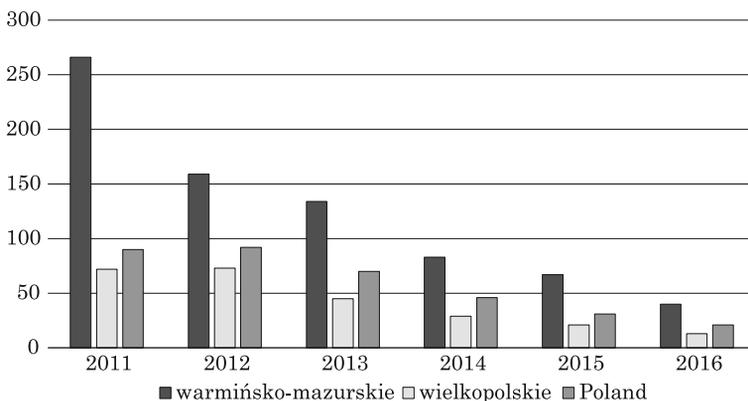


Fig. 3. Number of unemployed per 1 job offer (as at the end of December)
Source: Own study based on the statistics of the Local Data Bank (online).

Pursuing labor market policy in the region consists in preparation and implementation of the plan of action for employment which is a detailed version of the National Action Plan for Employment, drawn up for the entire country. Each region implements its own action plan, in which the most important goals for a particular region are emphasized. More specifically, the priorities of particular action plans prepared for the wielkopolskie voivodship in 2011 is presented in Table 1. As can be observed, most funds were allocated to Priority 1, which was the most important and desired goal with regards to the aims of labor market policy.

Table 1

Funds spent in 2011 in the wielkopolskie voivodship under the Action Plan for Employment

Priority name	Funds spent in 2011
Priority 1. Increase of employment and professional activity of inhabitants	612,458,167.94 PLN
Priority 2. Equal access to employment and promotion of social integration	110,674,465.20 PLN
Priority 3. Development of businesses, entrepreneurship and innovation in the region	62,102,428.87 PLN
Priority 4. Raising the level of education and its availability of inhabitants	157,938,511.35 PLN
Priority 5. Partnership for the development of rural areas	41,386,576.23 PLN

Source: own study based on data (*Sprawozdanie...* 2012, p. 11).

In 2016 the weight and hierarchy of priorities changed, which was presented in Table 2. In particular, in 2016 the funds spent under the Action Plan for employment in the wielkopolskie voivodship amounted to 1,969,862,820.77 PLN. The number and content of the priorities also changed significantly from five to three. In 2016, most funds were spent on Priority 1 which was promoting employment growth and the mobility of inhabitants.

Taking into account assumptions resulting from the plan of the labor market policy of the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship for 2011, it may be observed that even then, the number of priorities indicated in the Action Plan for Employment for 2011 was limited to three, including Priority 1. The growth of professional and educational activity for the inhabitants of the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship was Priority 2. An efficient labor market was Priority 3. This was the development of active labor market policy (*Regionalny plan...* 2011, p. 22).

Table 2

Funds spent in 2016 in the wielkopolskie voivodship under the Action Plan for Employment

Priority name	Funds spent in 2016
Priority 1. Growth of employment and mobility of inhabitants	1,594,726,591.00 PLN
Priority 2. Investments in education and continuous training	160,562,482.65 PLN
Priority 3. Social integration and fighting poverty	214,573,747.12 PLN

Source: own study based on data (*Sprawozdanie...* 2017, p. 11).

Considering the goals of the action plan for employment set forth in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship in 2016, it may be noticed that the number of priorities was also limited in this case, from three to two: Priority 1: Supporting the growth of employment and mobility of the inhabitants of Warmia and Mazury and Priority 2: Reinforcement of efficiency of actions taken for increasing adaptability in the labor market (*Regionalny plan...* 2016, p. 44). Thus, in both voivodships the number of priorities was reduced in the strategic documents. For the priorities, detailed actions were formulated and they are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Priorities and actions of labor market policy in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship for 2016

Priority name	Detailed actions
Priority 1: Supporting growth of employment and mobility of the inhabitants of Warmia and Mazury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – creating new and supporting already existing workplaces by supporting entrepreneurship – supporting mobility of the unemployed in the national and European labor market – increasing employment chances and the growth of professional activity of people remaining in special situations in the labor market
Priority 2: Reinforcement of efficiency of actions taken for increasing adaptability in the labor market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – raising the quality of services provided by state employment agencies and Voluntary Labor Corps employees – monitoring labor market policy efficiency – development of cooperation with partners in the labor market

Source: own study based on *Regionalny plan...* (2016, p. 44–47).

It is important to analyze expenditures on particular active forms of employment promotion. As shown in Table 4 the studied voivodships have slightly different data bases available on-line. It poses certain difficulties in presenting the data in this study. However, the comparison of the most crucial forms of employment promotion leads to the conclusion that in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship in December 2016 more funds were spent on intervention

works, public works and works of social use, which proves the rather traditional nature of labor market policy carried out in this voivodship. In the wielkopolskie voivodship, however, more funds were spent, in the studied period, on trainings, internships, professional training to adults and employment vouchers.

In the analyses of labor market policy it is crucial to monitor the efficiency of programs implemented under this policy. In Figure 4 we presented the employment efficiency of basic activation forms, measured as the percentage of people who took part in the programs and found employment against the entire group of participants of the active programs organized by powiat employment agencies.

Table 4
Expenditure on employment promotion incurred in December 2016 (thousand PLN)

Specification	Wielkopolskie voivodship	Warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship
Intervention works	116.4	2,128.9
Public works	817.5	3,197.1
Trainings	2,431.5	2,167.0
Internships	8,037.9	5,679.9
Social use works	109.3	436.1
Professional trainings to adults	92.1	56.1
Refunding of social insurance contributions	34.6	–
Employment voucher	168.3	80
Training voucher	420.9	–

Source: own study based on *Informacja nr 12/2016* (2017, p. 8), *Biuletyn informacyjny...* (2017, p. 59).

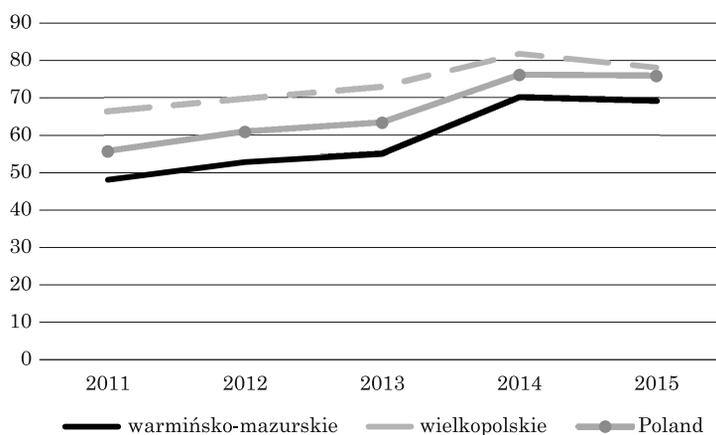


Fig. 4. Employment efficiency of basic active forms in the years 2011–2015 [%]
Source: own study based on data from: *Efektywność...* (2012, p. 12, 2013, p. 8, 2014, p. 12, 2015, p. 12, 2016, p. 12).

Data in Figure 4 prove that the employment efficiency of active programs in the years 2011–2014 grew. In the last year of the studied period, this efficiency slightly dropped. Moreover the relationship between the levels of this indicator for the wielkopolskie voivodship, the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship and the country in total was the same over the studied period. The highest efficiency was observed in Wielkopolska, and the lowest – in Warmia and Mazury². Simultaneously, there was observed a growing tendency of this indicator and the equalization of its levels in the three studied areas.

Conclusions

The presentations, analyses and evaluations given above prove that there is a continuous falling tendency as regards the unemployment rate in Poland in the last years of the studied period, which may also be observed in the studied voivodships. In the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship, the unemployment rate remained permanently at a level higher than the national average, but the wielkopolskie voivodship was among those who were characterized with having a better situation regarding this indicator. Also, the number of unemployed per 1 job offer was also favorable for Wielkopolska, which confirms that the economy of Wielkopolska managed to absorb the labor force surplus. The number of unemployed was slightly less favorable for this region. As shown in the studied period, the total number of unemployed inhabitants of the wielkopolskie voivodship was higher than the number of the unemployed registered in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship. It indicates not only differences in population, but also that the problems of unemployment faced by powiat employment agencies have a similar character, at least in terms of the number of participants. This phenomenon occurs more frequently in the warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship. Employment agencies of Wielkopolska show a higher employment efficiency of programs organized for hiring the unemployed, which may be interpreted as a higher organizational efficiency of employment agencies or that the conditions in this region are more favorable for creating new workplaces for the unemployed.

The conclusions encourage further and more profound analyses of labor market policy performed in Polish regions and the preparation of a wider comparative study of the Polish region. Although they are included in a relatively uniform

² Other publications on the issue of labor market policy efficiency should be mentioned here: KNAPIŃSKA (2015, p. 192), *Polityka rynku pracy* (2015).

national labor market policy, they differ significantly in terms of the size of the unemployment phenomenon and the efficiency of the employment policy carried out in a particular region.

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