

Wacław JARMOŁOWICZ and Magdalena KNAPIŃSKA  
Poznań University of Economics

## THE LABOR MARKET POLICY IN POLAND IN 2000–2006

### 1. Introduction

The aim of the study is to present theoretical aspects of the labor market policy, with particular emphasis on its goals, instruments and the place it occupies in the national economic policy. Moreover, the theoretical study is supplemented with an analysis and evaluation of the labor market policy realized in Poland after the year 2000, regarding its diversity and efficiency in fighting unemployment along with its social and economic consequences.

### 2. Labor market policy and employment policy

The issue of the relationship between the labor market policy and the employment policy or the economic policy has often been discussed in the literature. In general, it is usually remarked that the employment policy, with "full employment" as its priority, is just one of the types of the economic policy [Jarmołowicz, 2005; Jarmołowicz, Woźniak, 2003a; 2003b].

The employment policy focuses on the determination and explanation of the power of connection of the economic development process with demographic and social processes. It means revealing particular employment goals along with methods, means and ways of their implementation. The employment policy also influences the formation of directions and pace of development of employment [Sęp, 1996, 23].

Among the goals of the employment policy the following are mentioned most frequently: full and rational employment; subordination of actions in the area of the employment growth to the maximization of the growth of social product; restriction of unemployment or partial employment; as well as continuous and efficient distribution of the emerging surplus of labor force [Sęp, 1996, 25].

It should be stressed that the main goal of the employment policy in the market economy is usually not full employment but reaching possibly high and efficient level of employment and restriction of the unemployed surpluses of labor force. It leads to maintenance of the unemployment rate at the value accepted by the society [Wiśniewski, 1994, 31]. Moreover, as it has been emphasized in the literature, the crucial task of the employment policy is fighting discrimination of particular social groups on the labor market and supporting adjustment processes aiming at achieving compatibility between individual qualifications and skills and labor conditions [Dolny, Meller, Wiśniewski, 1990, 30]. Simultaneously, the notion of "full employment", at the presence of a certain level of "permanent unemployment", may mean an attempt at reaching a more "relative" balance between the number of people who want to work and the demand for workers in particular professions, with particular skills, in various regions of the country, etc. [Meller, 1993, 7].

According to the pragmatic assumptions of the "National Strategy for Employment and Human Resources", the main priority of the employment policy in Poland is achievement of higher commitment of people in the work processes. This aim should be realized by the growth in employment, development of the quality of human resources, development of entrepreneurship, improvement of the adjustment capacity of companies and their workers, as well as by the strengthening of the policy of equal opportunities on the labor market [*Narodowa Strategia Wzrostu Zatrudnienia...*, 34].

Intervention of the state with the macroeconomic instruments (within the economic policy and including the employment policy) on the labor market has its important constraints. The efficiency of such a policy is weakened by, among others, such conditions as a lack of perfect mobility of capital and labor, underdeveloped infrastructure of the market, etc. Therefore, even if the macroeconomic policy might and should be applied to increase employment and restrain unemployment, also in regions, the employment policy has not only its own particular tasks but also its own specific instruments.

At the same time it seems obvious that the functioning of the labor market, including the regional labor market, is influenced by the employment policy or labor policy, whatever definition should be chosen, but it is also influenced – at least indirectly – by other types of economic policy [Kryńska, Kwiatkowski, Zarychta, 1998].

Indicating here more universal (both national, regional and local) goals, instruments and conditions of the employment policy as a part of the economic policy in general, we should observe that in the literature it is an important issue to differentiate between the employment policy and the labor market policy.

In a larger scope, especially in the microeconomic perspective, though also on the microeconomic scale, the state intervenes with the functioning of the labor market *via* various instruments, especially those of monetary and fis-

cal character. Such actions are aimed at making more dynamic the economic growth leading to not only maintaining the work places existing to date, but also creating new ones. Such an activity of the state, characterized by the implementation of various (more indirect than direct) forms of influence on the functioning of the labor market may be determined as the employment policy. However, these forms of intervention having a more direct characteristics and aiming at the improvement of functioning of the labor market at the given demand for work and the work supply, may be understood as the labor market policy [Meller, Zieliński, 1995, 105–109].

As concluded above, the employment policy may not be identified with the labor market policy. Therefore, as some economists claim, the labor market policy should be treated as an autonomous but crucial component of the employment policy. Others, however, rank it as an element of the *industrial and labor relations* [Wiśniewski, 1994, 29]. In any case, the labor market policy is directed to the realization of significantly other goals than the employment policy. It is focused more on solving structural and social problems of the already functioning labor market, whereas the goal of the employment policy is to achieve the full employment, however defined [Wiśniewski, 1994, 29]. It should also be added that while the employment policy concentrates on issues of labor demand and supply, together with the means and institutions of global management of work demand and supply, the labor market policy is usually restricted to instruments applied by the state labor agencies [Dolny, Meller, Wiśniewski, 1990, 30].

J. Meller perceives the problem of the relationship between the employment policy and the market labor policy in yet another way. According to this author, in order to define both, one could use their role in the prevention of unemployment. Thus, if the sources of unemployment should be found in the condition of the economy, which would create too few work places, then fighting this deficit may be achieved through an active economic policy supporting development of the non-employment character. Such a policy is only the employment policy which creates economically justified, efficient and relatively permanent work places [Meller, 2001, 73].

If the sources of unemployment should be found in the malfunctioning of the market itself or of its elements, then restriction of the unemployment may be realized only *via* programs and funds for the activation of the labor market and the unemployed, *i.e.* the labor market policy [Meller, 2001, 73].

### 3. Goals of the labor market policy

Regarding the above-stated arguments, it should be noticed that the labor market policy is usually characterized by four priorities: employment, struc-

tural, production and social. The realization of the priorities consists in: the employment priority – the restriction of the level of unemployment, of the structural priority – the decrease in the structural maladjustments on the labor market, of the production priority – the attempt to raise the level of productivity of the labor force, and the social priority – the assurance of financial insurance for dismissed workers or for workers having particular difficulties at the labor market and undergoing the professional adjustment procedures [Wiśniewski, 1999, 20].

The state, as much as it influences the labor market, may, on the one hand, stimulate the growth of the demand for work, and, on the other one, reduce the supply of labor force [Zajdel, 1999, 81]. The increase in the number of work places is realized, among others, through subsidizing pay and employment, which aims at their maintenance or growth in private enterprises. Moreover, the state may also create new work places in the state sector, including those within special programs for employment development. Besides, there are other important ways to increase the demand for work, like supporting entrepreneurship, supporting the creation of new work places in the private sector among small and medium businesses, stimulating local initiatives for the increase in employment, or financial and organizational aid to people for “self-employment” (*i.e.* changing a person’s status from an “unemployed” to “employed” in one’s own company) [Markowski, 1992, 156].

The decrease in labor supply may be realized by early retirement, prolonging training periods, prolonging or expanding the military service, prolonging holiday periods, reducing the amount of overtime and by partial employment [Markowski, 1992, 171].

Taking into consideration the labor and employment legislation, it must be emphasized that the functions and tasks of the state as a subject of the labor market policy in the market economy system under creation in Poland focus mainly on the issues of serving the labor market through the development of work agencies and mitigating economic and social consequences of unemployment [Gontarski, 1991, 380].

The labor market policy is also a way of the state intervention in the functioning of the labor market. Such an approach has its supporters among the followers of the classical approach, for whom solving of midterm employment problems consists only in the improvement of adjustment processes on the labor market. Therefore they suggest here, among others, improvement of the quality and transfer of information on supply and demand of work, development of professional consulting, stimulation of sector, regional, professional and qualification mobility of workers and even, eventually, periodical reductions of real pay during tariff negotiations in order to stimulate the economic situation [Wiśniewski, 1994, 36]. This policy also has to “supplement and

strengthen" the macroeconomic policy and the policy of the competition development [Borowiec, 1996, 181].

#### 4. Types of labor market policies

Types of labor market policies may be classified according to various criteria. Taking into account the recipients of particular actions for fighting unemployment, there may be determined general (universal) and specific actions performed by the state. The first group consists of the active and passive forms directed to the recipients registered in the state labor agencies. The other group includes funds and programs created for specific social groups, for example, actions for the long-term unemployed, women, the youth, the disabled, or representatives of particular professions. Such programs must additionally perform a specially important role. They do not only aim at decreasing the unemployment itself, but should also create the social and psychological support for the unemployed in their own actions against unemployment. The meaning and efficiency of such programs should not be merely subject to simplified evaluation, but they must be realized even despite low economic profits [Bernais, 1996, 15].

Still another classification of the types of policy realized by the state on the labor market enables to determine offensive and defensive actions. Defensive actions include actions aiming at lowering labor force supply and inactivation of labor force, whereas the offensive actions comprise indirect forms (like active tax policy or monetary policy), as well as direct forms (like subsidizing work places, public works, intervention works, work agencies and professional trainings) [Cieślukowski, 1998, 267].

Regarding the administration level at which actions directed at the labor market are taken, there can be differentiated methods, programs and measures taken at the central, and regional and local levels. The first group comprises all obligatory passive and active actions and investments of national character. In the second group there are decisions, like regional and local initiatives, which have been made to create new work places and to involve free labor force on the particular labor market [Bernais, 1996, 16–17].

Summing up, it has to be emphasized that the labor market policy comprises different and varied actions, which, regarding the applied measures of this policy, may be divided into two basic groups: active measures of the labor market policy (directed towards employment growth and protection of the existing work places) and passive measures of the labor market policy (directed towards lowering work supply and mitigating negative consequences of unemployment and to social security of the unemployed) [Lichniak, 1994, 89].

In the literature, the active labor market policy is often contrasted with its passive form in this respect that the first one is aimed to help the unem-

ployed to "return to work", whereas the latter, just the opposite, is aimed at payment of the unemployment social allowance to the unemployed [Barr, 1994, 160].

Another classification of the types of labor market policy defines the active labor market policy as aiming at reduction of unemployment and the passive labor market policy as the social help to the unemployed. In a more general perspective, it is however emphasized that the active labor market policy is mainly based on the implementation of both macro and micro economic policy. The macroeconomic policy basically consists in the implementation of fiscal and monetary instruments to reduce unemployment. However, in the case of microeconomic policy, it is this part of the active labor market policy which comprises a set of actions aiming at the improvement of the functioning of labor market and at the reduction of unemployment in particular social groups [Milewski, 2001, 547; Kwiatkowski, 1998, 8–9].

According to Z. Wiśniewski, a few basic functions of the active labor market policy of the state deserve attention. They are professional activation of the unemployed, decrease in structural maladjustments on the labor market, increase in productivity of labor force, influence on the volume of employment and unemployment and verification of readiness to work of the unemployed [Kryńska, Kwiatkowski, Zarychta, 1998, 74].

In general, for the sake of the following discussion, it has been assumed that the active labor market policy (ALMP) is a set of instruments implemented by the state and directed towards "inclusion" of the unemployed in the labor market *via* their employment [Golinowska, 2001, 16].

It also has to be added, in accordance with Z. Wiśniewski, that among particularly important actions in the active labor market policy there are the following: publicity of work and professional trainings, investment in the development of the infrastructure, and, in order to improve conditions for private investments, increase in the role of initiative at the local level, as well as taking other steps aiming at creation of work places on the "secondary" labor market (and which should be of supplementary importance and should be directed towards professional integration of the unemployed with the primary labor market) [Wiśniewski, 1999, 9].

Following M. Bednarski, it may be stated that active forms of fighting unemployment are such economic instruments which involve particular economic resources, increasing work demand over the one reported by an automatically acting labor market or ones that change the structure of work supply so that it corresponds better to the work demand structure reported by the market. Thus, the instruments of the policy may modify both the demand and the supply of the labor market [Bednarski, 1997, 36].

The passive labor market policy (PLMP) comprises such actions as: flexible treatment of the retirement age, prolonging the training period, periodical

weakening of professional activity, dividing the existing work places among a bigger number of employees, flexible forms of working hours and social security for the unemployed [Lichniak, 1994, 96].

Therefore it is the priority of the passive labor market policy to mitigate financially the consequences of unemployment [It is the way PLMP is understood in the following: Klimczak, Dyczewski, Pisz, 1999, 310] *via* social unemployment allowances, pre-retirement allowances, early retirement pensions, discharge allowance and other social allowances. The passive labor market policy is realized from the funds of the Labor Fund, Social Security Fund and the state budget and, as a rule, it does not lead to the creation of work places. Its influence on the decrease in unemployment is visible as it does not allow for a part of labor resources to stay permanently inactive [Kryńska, 2000, 3].

It should be stressed that the policies are closely related with their goals. The active labor market policy realizes its main employment and structural goal, whereas the passive one – its social goal. Even though for the improvement of the situation on the labor market, active programs play a crucial role, the passive forms should not be underestimated as they mitigate the negative consequences of the imbalance on the labor market. Therefore, the state should, as a rule, direct more funds to the active forms of fighting unemployment, but it should also maintain their high efficiency.

## 5. Some aspects of the realization of the labor market policy in Poland after the year 2000

According to the survey of the Central Statistical Office, the number of the employed in the 3rd quarter of 2006 was 14,926 thousand and it was 0.8% higher (apart from the individual farmers) as compared with the corresponding period of 2005 [*Biuletyn statystyczny 2006*]. However, the commitment of persons in the work process measured with the employment ratio (*i.e.* the percentage share of the total of the employed in the general number of people in a given category) also grew slightly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2006 as compared with the corresponding period of the previous year and it was 47.4% [*Biuletyn statystyczny 2006*]. By analogy, there were some positive changes in the aspect of unemployment: the number of the unemployed lowered to 2,287.3 thousand at the end of November 2006, and the unemployment rate fell to 14.8% in the same month [*Biuletyn statystyczny 2006*]. Undoubtedly these are symptoms of improvement of the situation on the Polish labor market.

The improvement is partially connected with the increasing importance of the state policy on the labor market, as it influences indirectly through instruments of the fiscal policy (tax allowances, creation of special economic zones) and the monetary policy (lowering inflation rates, maintenance of high

exchange rate of PLN). It is also connected with the direct reduction of unemployment – *i.e.* the labor market policy. It is however hard to state definitely, which of these actions and to what extent have contributed directly to the improvement of the situation on the labor market recently.

However, the scope and forms of the labor market policy realized by the state in its active and passive forms should be examined more closely. From 2001 to 2003 the expenses on this policy from the Labor Fund were growing. As presented in Table 1, the majority of this expenditure consisted in the expenditure for the passive labor market policy realized in the form of unemployment benefits and pre-retirement allowances. Starting with the year 2004, the total amount of the expenditure from the Labor Fund decreased (compare the data in Table 1).

The important fact is that since 2003 the total amount of unemployment benefits paid from the Labor Fund dropped year by year, which was especially connected with a falling number of the persons entitled to receive this allowance. Moreover, the number of people entitled to receive the pre-retirement allowance also decreased. As a result there could be observed a fall in the total expenditure for the passive labor market policy (ref. to Table 1). However, in the financial plan of the Labor Fund for the year 2006 the expenditure for passive forms amounted to PLN 3,474.8 million [www.mps.gov.pl], which means a slight increase and a change of their tendency from the period of 2003–2005.

**Table 1.** Expenditure from the Labor Fund in the years 2000–2005 (in PLN million)

Specification	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total expenditure	1,6945.9	8,343.9	9,806.8	10,494.4	9,180.2	5,550.8
Passive forms, including:	–	–	8,764.5	8,717.6	7,258.5	2,997.7
Unemployment benefits	3,528.1	3,914.6	4,285.2	3,741.4	3,391.9	2,997.7
Active forms, including:	–	–	790.6	1,406.6	1,323.5	1,905.3
Training	150.4	108.6	50.8	109.2	125.9	181.8
Public works	120.2	64.9	88.4	297.4	279.3	294.3
Intervention works	146.2	96.5	93.5	222.9	232.0	193.9
Loans	247.0	338.8	69.3	196.2	92.9	405.7

Source: own study based on: *Informacja o aktywnych formach przeciwdziałania bezrobociu...*, 2006, 16; *Polska 2004...*, 2004, 43, 45; *Rocznik statystyczny pracy 2001*, 2001, Table 6 (53), 86; *Rocznik statystyczny pracy 2003*, 2003, Table 6 (53), 92; Bukowski, 2005, 205

It is, however, interesting that in October 2006, PLN 1,52.7 million was spent on unemployment benefits and PLN 387.8 million on pre-retirement allowances [*Biuletyn statystyczny 2006*] and that both amounts are lower than

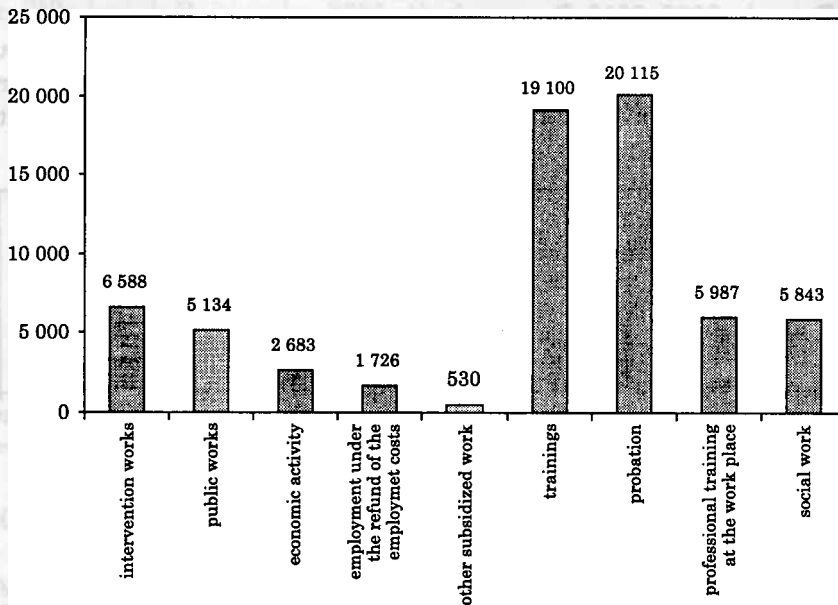


the expenditure for these benefits spent in October 2005. Thus, the realization of the financial plan did not always mean an increase in expenditure on passive forms.

Regarding the efficiency of programs for active fighting of unemployment, the highest ratio of this efficiency (calculated as the share of the number of people who obtained employment having finished their participation in the program in the total number of the people who finished the program) reaching 1, was obtained in 2005 regarding the loans granted for the establishment of own forms of economic activity or for creation of new work places [*Polska 2004...*, 2004, 47]. A definitely lower ratio of 0.66 (in 2005) was obtained in the case of the intervention works [*Polska 2004...*, 2004, 49].

As regards the number of people taking part in the active programs of the labor market policy in 2004, there were 474,825 of those, and in 2005 there were even more, namely 567,669 [*Informacja o aktywnych formach przeciwdziałania...*, 2006, 14]. In October 2006, there were 67,706 persons [*Informacja o bezrobociu w październiku 2006*, 2006, Tab. 47] who took part in the active forms, which leads to the conclusion, that in 2006 the total number of persons taking part in the active forms of unemployment prevention increased.

Detailed data on the participation in active forms are presented in Diagram 1. As it can be seen, the highest number of people participated in trainings and



**Diagram 1.** Persons excluded from the register of the unemployed, who participated in active forms of fighting unemployment in October 2006

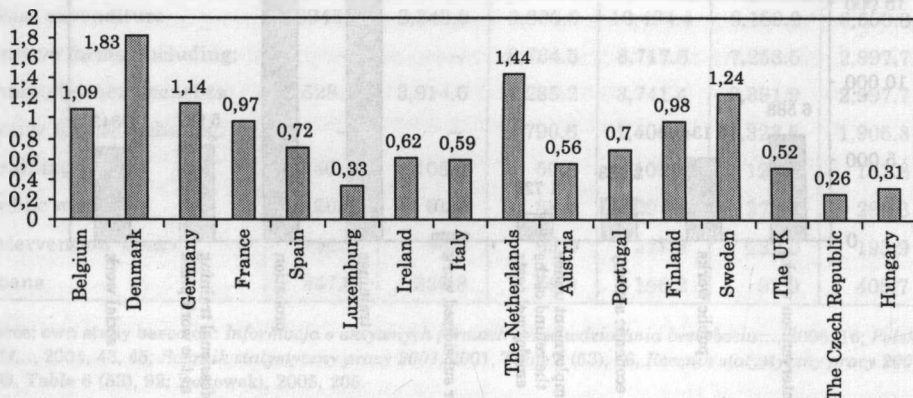
Source: *Informacja o bezrobociu w październiku 2006 r.*, 2006

started working on probation paid from the Labor Fund. It is interesting to note that, though the number of participants in the trainings was very high, the expenditure for trainings was not the highest. Possibly, it is connected with the fact that these trainings are characterized by permanent costs which are not influenced by the number of participants (*e.g.* fees for the trainers, rent for the training rooms, organization costs, etc.). Due to this fact the expenditure for trainings was not so high as it could have been expected and, simultaneously, the trainings could be participated in by a vast number of trainees.

Moreover, the data in Diagram 1 show that relatively few people undertook employment under refund of the employment costs and subsidized work. These forms are characterized by a relatively high expenditure ratio per 1 participant and probably therefore few people could use this form of activation.

As shown in Table 1, the expenditure for active forms of fighting unemployment rose in 2005 in comparison with the previous year by PLN 581.8 million. In 2006, it was planned to spend PLN 2100 million [www.mps.gov.pl] on active forms, which leads to the conclusion that the expenditure for these forms will be growing also in the future. The predictions included in the National Development Plan for the years 2007–2013, and regarding the share of expenditure for active forms of fighting unemployment in the GDP have a growing tendency. According to this document, in 2005 they were to amount to 0.3% of Poland's GDP, and in 2006 to 0.4%, respectively [*Wstępny projekt Narodowego Planu Rozwoju 2007–2013. Prognozy*].

It means that the state started appreciating active forms of fighting unemployment. It may also be a prognosis for the further fall in the number of people entitled to receive the unemployment benefits and, consequently, the



**Diagram 2.** Expenditure for active forms of fighting unemployment as a share in GDP in some European countries in 2004 (in %)

Note: Data for the UK refer to the period 2003–2004

Source: own study based on: OECD Employment Outlook 2006, 2006, Table H, 270–276.

expenditure for the passive forms of the labor market policy will also lower (which, in fact, has been noticed over the period of dozens of months).

In comparison with the other countries of the European Union [Jarmołowicz, Knapińska, 2006] the predicted values are not very optimistic. As shown in Diagram 2, in all the countries of the “old fifteen” member-states the expenditure for active forms constituted more than 0.3% of the GDP. The Polish prognosis for this ratio is similar to its level in such countries as Luxemburg, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The unemployment rates in these countries were, however, much lower than in Poland in 2004 and they amounted to: in Luxemburg – 4.8%, in the Czech Republic – 8.3%, and in Hungary – 6.1% [OECD *Employment Outlook*, 2006]. Therefore, the necessity of growth in the importance of active forms should still be emphasized in the Polish labor market policy [Jarmołowicz, Knapińska, 2005].

Facing the European integration, it seems crucial to apply the structural funds more efficiently in the labor market policy realized in Poland. As shown in Diagram 3, the European Union is planning to spend a remarkable part of its structural funds on new members, including Poland. In the period of 2004–2006, Poland may obtain from the structural funds of the European Union the total of EUR 8,631 billion (*i.e.* PLN 35.5 billion excluding the funds from the Cohesion Fund). This sum will be supplemented with national funds: public – at around EUR 3,181 billion, and private – at around EUR 2,361 billion [Władyniak-Bujnowska, 2005, 4].

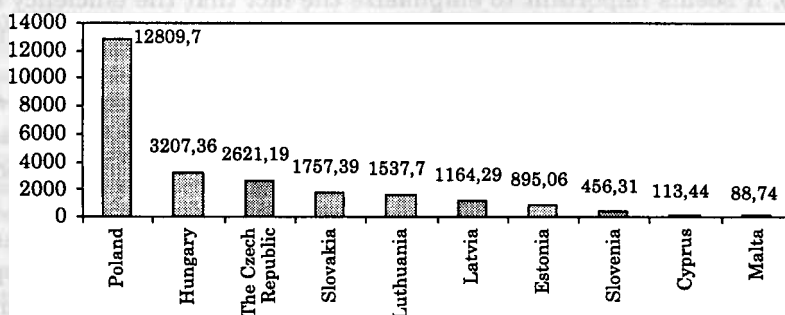


Diagram 3. Structural funds for new member states for the years 2004–2006

Source: Władyniak-Bujnowska, 2005b, 3

## 6. Conclusion

As it results from the theoretical review, drawn conclusions and the picture of the economic situation in Poland, the need to implement active and developed economic policy of the state towards the labor market seems fully justified.

The state economic policy should also be applied to solve the issue of the too high a level of unemployment in Poland. It must be realized *via* actions supporting economic growth and the required changes of the economic structure, or strengthening and creating economic institutions and instruments characteristic of the mature market economy.

In a more definite scope, it is necessary to activate the employment policy (especially, if it concerns creation of new work places) and the labor market policy with much emphasis on its active forms.

Most importantly, the state, implementing this policy which aims at fighting unemployment in the long run, should direct more funds to active forms of fighting unemployment (particularly for trainings, education and professional reorientation). It should also make the principles of funds division more flexible to adjust them to the social and professional needs (especially among the young) and to the special needs.

Multi-subjectivity of the state institutions which are entitled to implement such a policy, undoubtedly requires bigger coordination in realized activities, as well as developing cooperation (particularly of labor agencies) with employers, educational institutions, personnel consulting companies and other subjects of the labor market.

Perceiving here the above mentioned and other needs and possibilities for developing and increasing the efficiency of the labor market policy (especially, regarding its active forms, however, not disregarding the social and protection actions), it seems important to emphasize the fact that the efficiency of this policy of fighting unemployment and its social and economic consequences is quite restricted.

Having taken into consideration experiences of the European Union states, the USA and others, it should be stressed that the main actions for the increase in the level of employment and its efficiency are connected with the employment policy. This policy enables creation of new efficient work places and is closely combined with other types of the state economic policy (monetary, fiscal, price, pay, etc.). Only the global influence of the state on the development of economy and maintaining its growing tendencies under the conditions of stable prices and high level utility of the total of the production factors, will enable high and rational employment.

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