

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ACTIVE LABOR MARKET POLICIES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE WARMIA-MAZURY PROVINCE IN POLAND**

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**Abstract.** This paper analyzes the level of expenditure on selected programs on the labor market in a regional context and the employment effectiveness of the selected programs. It also presents the results of surveys among the unemployed from the Warmia-Mazury Province. The research shows that there is no strong correlation between the labor market situation and the employment effectiveness of the active labor market programs. It follows from the research that 75% people who received a subsidy to start their own business were not entered again into the Register of the Unemployed within 3 years from getting a subsidy. In the third year from obtaining a subsidy, more than half of them continued to operate (58.6%) and every fourth company created a workplace.

**Key words:** reservation wage, active labor market policies (ALMPs), unemployment, labor market

### **INTRODUCTION**

Regional differences existing in Poland in the distribution of workplaces and in social potential of work both in quantitative and qualitative terms make that the general situation on regional labor markets usually differs from the general situation on the domestic market, which is reflected by the basic labor market indices such as the employment or unemployment rate. Therefore, the labor market policy should take into account the specific characteristics of the regions so that the activities undertaken would allow to improve labor market functioning. In the literature, the employment policy is clearly distinguished from the labor market policy. The aim of the employment policy is to influence the overall level of employment in the economy, particularly to achieve full employment, whereas the labor market policy is primarily aimed at solving structural problems of the labor market and improving the effectiveness of its functioning [Wiśniewski and Maksim

2008]. Due to the functions of the labor market policy, there are distinguished active and passive programs. Passive programs provide, inter alia, compensation for those losing their jobs, while the main function of active programs is to adjust the structure of supply to demand for work [Jackman 1994]. The active labor market policy is an important element in the effort to combat unemployment which is taken in the European Union. High costs of ongoing programs and the unresolved problem of unemployment have become the basis for searching for methods to evaluate the effects of actions undertaken. As regards Poland, such studies were conducted by Kluve et al. [1999] and Bukowski [2008]. The research on the effectiveness is very difficult due to a limited availability and quality of information on the fate of the participants of particular programs.

## **METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH**

Many legal regulations concerning various policies are created at the macroeconomic level but they interfere in the relations between employers and employees on the regional and local labor markets. Their impact can vary greatly due to differences in economic development between regions. Therefore, the question arises whether expenditure on the active labor market policy is more considerable in regions with a higher unemployment rate and whether a difficult situation on the labor market results in increased costs of activation of the unemployed.

The purpose of this paper is to present results of the studies in which an attempt was made to verify the effectiveness of the active labor market policy in the Warmia-Mazury Province. Having adopted this objective, the following research hypothesis was formulated, namely that the employment effectiveness of the programs is lower in regions with lower unemployment rates, and in addition it is distinguished by higher employment costs. It was also verified whether participation in active labor market programs results in greater salary expectations of unemployed persons being the subjects of the studies.

In the studies there was used the data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Provincial Labor Office as well as the results of surveys conducted among 174 unemployed residents of the Warmia-Mazury Province. The time-frame of the studies covers the period of 2008–2010.

In the analysis of the statistical material the following methods were applied: descriptive and comparative ones as well as the Pearson correlation.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACTIVE LABOR MARKET POLICY – RESULTS OF THE STUDIES**

The population of the Warmia-Mazury Province is 1,428 thous. residents which constitutes 3.7% of the population of Poland. The Warmia-Mazury Province, like the provinces of Eastern Poland, is characterized by a low level of GDP per capita (73.8% average for Poland) and a low contribution to gross value added. This region is developing more slowly than the whole of Poland, and its share in gross domestic product stands at 2.8% in 2010. According to statistic from the Regional Data Bank 15.9% employees work in

agriculture, 29.7% – in industry, and 54.4% – in the service sector (in 2010). The structure of employed people according to the three economic sectors as well as the direction of its change is not significantly different from that observed in Poland. Despite these changes, since the early 90's the region has been characterized by a high proportion of people without work. Based on the registry data in 2008 and 2010, 87.4 thous. and 105.9 thous. persons were registered in the labor office statistics. In this region, 20% of the economically active population is unemployed, which is the highest rate in Poland. The existing unemployment has been a serious challenge for the active labor market policy for years.

The studies were based on the data relating to supply-oriented instruments of the active labor market policy, i.e. trainings and internships, as well as the data on subsidized employment realized through intervention works, public works, community service, and subsidies to create workplaces for the unemployed and employers. All these instruments are classified as instruments of the active labor market policy (ALMP).

A comparison of the data on the labor market situation shows that both the unemployment rate and the number of participants of the programs has increased on the regional labor markets. In Poland, on average every second person was vocationally activated. The exception is the Opole Province where in programs were attended by the majority of unemployed – more than 80% of the unemployed (Table 1). In order to determine the significance of the active labor market policy at the regional level, the percentage of the economically active population, participating in ALMP, was adopted as a measure. The studies show that a share of vocationally activated persons varied greatly in particular regions. From 3 to 11 percent of the economically active population was covered by active labor programs. In the Warmia-Mazury Province benefited from these instruments 9% of the economically active population (Table 1).

A rise in the number of persons vocationally activated is associated with increased spending on the active labor market policy. Although expenditure on ALMP is low in comparison to that of Western European countries, an increasing tendency can be observed. In Poland, the expenditure on active labor market instruments equaled 0.6% GDP in 2008 and 1.3% GDP in 2009 [OECD Library].

Table 2 shows the level of spending on selected programs in a regional context as well as the cost of activation of one person and the effect of a particular program measured as the ratio of the number of people who following the termination of participation in a specific form of activation, were not registered again in the District Labor Office within 3 months after completion of the program [MPiPS 2011].

In Poland, about half of people are not entered again into the Register of the Unemployed following participation in a particular program. One can expect more difficulty in finding employment in regions with the highest unemployment rate.

The analysis shows that there is no strong correlation between the unemployment rate in the region and the re-employment rate. There is no strong correlation, either, between the situation on the regional labor market and the cost of activation of one unemployed person and the cost of re-employment although it may seem that the more difficult labor market situation, the more people will be employed, as a result of which the unit cost will be much higher. The results relating to the correlation coefficient are shown in Table 3. The results are determined by a number of reasons. First of all, funds available to poviats self-governments for the implementation of the tasks are distributed according to the

Table 1. Participants of the active labor market programs in 2008 and 2010  
 Tabela 1. Uczestnicy aktywnych programów rynku pracy w 2008 i 2010 roku

Item	Number of vocationally activated persons		Persons taking part in ALMP as a percentage of the economically active population		The unemployed covered by ALMP (%)		Unemployment rate (%)	
	2008	2010	2008	2010	2008	2010	2008	2010
Poland	652,314	788,674	4	5	44.3	53.5	9.5	12.4
Lower Silesia Province	48,625	57,592	4	5	42.7	50.6	10.0	13.1
Kujawy-Pomerania Province	48,956	57,734	6	7	44.4	52.4	13.3	17.0
Lublin Province	38,887	50,673	4	6	38.3	49.9	11.2	13.1
Lubuskie Province	30,856	41,344	8	11	66.6	89.3	12.5	15.5
Łódź Province	43,564	52,948	4	5	43.9	53.4	9.2	12.2
Małopolska Province	38,124	50,420	3	4	39.0	51.5	7.5	10.4
Mazovia Province	63,878	73,729	3	3	35.9	41.4	7.3	9.7
Opole Province	22,992	29,167	6	8	64.4	81.7	9.8	13.6
Podkarpacie Province	39,303	49,638	4	5	34.0	43.0	13.0	15.4
Podlasie Province	19,595	25,063	4	5	42.8	54.7	9.7	13.8
Pomerania Province	36,957	42,248	5	5	54.5	62.3	8.4	12.3
Silesia Province	62,104	71,138	3	4	50.6	58.0	6.9	10.0
Świętokrzyskie Province	29,711	38,456	5	7	38.2	49.5	13.7	15.2
Warmia-Mazury Province	40,857	48,635	8	9	46.7	55.6	16.8	20.0
Wielkopolska Province	45,790	52,907	3	4	50.1	57.9	6.4	9.2
West Pomerania Province	42,115	46,982	7	8	51.0	56.9	13.3	17.8

Source: Author's calculation, data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy [2009, 2011].

Źródło: Obliczenia własne, dane MPiPS [2009, 2011].

algorithm, and their level depends in large part on an outflow from unemployment to employment, the unemployment rate and the number of unemployed people aged up to 25 years. The likelihood of a higher outflow from unemployment can be observed in case of people who are out of work for a short time, who are better educated and already have work experience. Assistance is often given to those unemployed persons who are in the best position on the labor market. The effect of "pointless loss" occurring here could be lower if there functioned an unemployment profiling system to identify those at risk of a long-term unemployment and to select appropriate activation programs.

## PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVE LABOR MARKET PROGRAMS

In Poland, most labor market programs are addressed exclusively to a selected group of people being in a special situation on the labor market. These are only job placement services and trainings that are directed to a wider group of people. The result is that only some people have a possibility to perform subsidized work or improve their skills, even though they so desire and need support.

Table 2. Information on the re-employment rate and the cost incurred in the Polish regions in 2008 and 2010

Tabela 2. Informacje o wskaźniku ponownego zatrudnienia i poniesionych kosztach w regionach Polski w 2008 i 2010 roku

Item	Re-employment rate (%)		Cost of activation of 1 person (PLN)		Cost of re-employment (PLN)	
	2008	2010	2008	2010	2008	2010
Poland	56.0	54.2	4,768.79	6,749.90	9,147.54	12,947.66
Lower Silesia Province	57.3	54.7	5,119.19	7,136.75	9,362.84	12,998.73
Kujawy-Pomerania Province	52.8	52.6	4,524.85	6,331.24	8,848.36	12,777.11
Lublin Province	50.5	48.7	5,034.88	7,006.65	10,911.23	15,404.06
Lubuskie Province	68.3	65.6	3,057.40	4,086.17	4,622.43	6,572.46
Łódź Province	60.3	55.9	5,238.87	6,891.79	9,435.12	13,057.55
Małopolska Province	53.7	52.8	4,854.42	6,710.00	9,680.90	13,184.66
Mazovia Province	44.1	44.3	5,272.48	7,816.15	13,149.90	18,015.98
Opolskie Province	56.6	47.0	3,828.61	5,623.65	6,995.75	12,208.78
Podkarpacie Province	52.3	53.1	4,919.83	7,779.09	11,011.00	15,720.32
Podlasie Province	57.0	52.8	4,688.84	6,718.07	8,881.37	12,796.39
Pomerania Province	64.5	62.2	4,763.54	6,605.75	7,443.50	11,186.90
Silesia Province	57.1	55.8	4,644.03	6,843.24	8,847.84	12,725.18
Świętokrzyskie Province	53.4	54.3	5,059.76	7,140.31	9,673.15	13,088.07
Warmia-Mazury Province	52.5	50.9	4,668.79	6,551.80	9,344.68	13,191.21
Wielkopolska Province	62.7	61.7	4,883.07	6,744.72	8,560.34	11,229.59
West Pomerania Province	60.5	57.8	4,693.81	6,575.40	8,840.38	12,207.11

Source: Author's own compilation, data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy [2009, 2011].

Źródło: Obliczenia własne, dane MPiPS [2009, 2011].

Table 3. Pearson correlation coefficient for the unemployment rate and selected properties in the Polish regions in 2008 and 2010

Tabela 3. Współczynnik korelacji Pearsona dla stopy bezrobocia i wybranych cech w regionach Polski w 2008 i 2010 roku

Item	2008	2010
Number of vocationally activated persons	-0.31	-0.37
Persons taking part in ALMP as percentage of the economically active population	0.78	0.81
The unemployed covered by ALMP (%)	-0.02	0.13
Re-employment rate (%)	-0.10	0.01
Cost of activation of 1 person (PLN)	-0.20	-0.27
Cost of re-employment (PLN)	-0.10	-0.18

Source: Author's own compilation, data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy [2009, 2011].

Źródło: Obliczenia własne, dane MPiPS [2009, 2011].

In the Warmia-Mazury Province a third of vocationally activated unemployed persons took part in internships which are addressed mainly to young people and in trainings and community service (Table 4). Both trainings and community service are characterized by low efficiency in the short-term but they are relatively cheap instruments (the cost of participation of one person in the training is about 3,000 PLN and in community service – 552 PLN).

Table 4. Employment effectiveness and the share of the unemployed in particular programs (%)  
Tabela 4. Efektywność zatrudnieniowa i udział bezrobotnych w poszczególnych programach (%)

Item	Structure of persons participating in programs (%)				Re-employment rate in 2010 (%)	
	Warmia-Mazury Province – WM		Poland		WM	Poland
	2008	2010	2008	2010		
Training (with scholarships)	25.4	17.8	29.4	23.1	38.5	36.7
Intervention works	12.1	9.6	8.0	5.5	63.1	70.8
Public works	8.9	12.6	7.8	9.5	45.6	46.0
Community service	15.7	13.9	11.2	8.6	29.0	39.8
Internships	25.5	33.8	29.7	38.0	47.2	48.4
Funds to take up the business activity	7.3	7.0	9.1	9.8	100.0	100.0
Additional equipment and equipment for a workplace	5.1	5.4	4.9	5.7	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's own compilation, data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy [2009, 2011].

Źródło: Obliczenia własne, dane MPiPS [2009, 2011].

There was also observed a change in the structure of employed persons between 2008 and 2010. The share of people who took part in trainings and intervention works declined, while the share of persons participating in internships increased. The analyzed region noted a significant rise in the proportion of people who received funds to take up the business activity (an increase by 4.6 percentage points). At the national level, the change was smaller – percentage of people who set up their own businesses rose by 1.7 percentage points. Trainings and internships are directed to a large group of people, whereas only a small percentage of people benefits from a subsidy to start their own company. They are expensive and help a few people who are mostly residents of cities (only 30% were rural residents) and most are men (60%) [A subsidy granted... 2008]. As regards the assessment of a subsidy to start one's own company, the effectiveness should be evaluated in the long-term since in a short-term the re-employment rate is 100%. Moreover, the threat of reimbursement of a subsidy, if the company exists less than one year, mobilizes people to meet this requirement even when the actual business activity does not bring any profit. It is clear that some of these companies will not remain on the market longer than 1 year since in Poland most entities give up their businesses after the first year of the activity (1/3), and after 5 years the survival rate of firms run by natural persons is 32.7% [Conditions of formation... 2009]. Studies conducted in Germany show that the rate of survival of firms is not affected by the fact that the founder was formerly employed or unemployed [Hinz and Jungbauer-Gans 1999]. Due to the specific terms of repayment of a subsidy, to

evaluate the effectiveness, there is needed the data on the functioning of these entities for a period longer than 3 months.

In the Warmia-Mazury Province the studies were conducted among persons who received a subsidy to start their own company three years before. These studies show that 58.6% of companies (930 companies) continued their business activity. In addition, 17.7% entities (in 212 companies) established in 2005 created 352 new jobs. The vast majority, as much as 72%, of those who received a subsidy was not entered again into the Register of the Unemployed within 3 years [The effectiveness of subsidies... 2009]. One can only assume that despite the failure in running one's own business, some people found another job. This shows that subsidies are an effective instrument to combat unemployment. They foster the development of entrepreneurship in the region and creation of new jobs, and therefore expenditure on the development of micro enterprises should be gradually increased, especially since in other provinces (e.g. the Małopolska and Wielkopolska Province) subsidies to start a company constitute one third of total expenditure, whereas in the Warmia-Mazury Province – 19% (in 2008) [Klembowska 2011]. Studies conducted in Sweden indicate that the chances of becoming unemployed again are two times lower for people who have benefited from subsidies than in the case of subsidized employment [Carling and Gustafson 1999]. Therefore, it can be concluded that subsidies contribute to more stable workplaces, although it should be borne in mind that some companies would still be established without any subsidy. It is difficult to eliminate an aimless cost and limited opportunities to obtain capital from other sources makes that many people will strive for this capital, by registering as unemployed ones.

## **EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION IN LABOR MARKET PROGRAMS VERSUS RESERVATION WAGE**

The active labor market policy is an out-of-market mechanism of reallocation of the labor force which helps to overcome, through its instruments, structural mismatches. Active labor market programs are to maximize employment and reduce unemployment duration by increasing the economic attractiveness of the unemployed for the employer – through trainings or subsidizing workplace equipment or financing some labor costs charged to the employer. In the literature, the attention is drawn to the fact that, e.g. participation in active programs such as trainings, on the one hand, raises the qualifications or results in retraining and, on the other hand, it may increase the reservation wage, that is a minimum acceptable rate of pay at which the unemployed person will be willing to work.

Therefore, it was studied whether participation in active labor market programs is related to the reservation wage. Participation in internships and performance of subsidized work gives the opportunity to gain work experience, while training has an impact on improving the quality of human capital. Therefore, one would expect that the increase of skills and qualifications of the unemployed is paralleled by an increase in their salary expectations. It turned out that the average reservation wage of respondents who participated in at least one form of activation is 1,369.8 PLN, which is by 10% lower than the average for a group of people who did not participate in active programs targeted at the unemployed (Table 5).

Table 5. Reservation wage versus participation in the activities addressed to the unemployed organized by Labor Offices

Tabela 5. Płaca progowa a udział w działaniach skierowanych do bezrobotnych organizowanych przez urzędy pracy

Item	Average	Standard deviation	
Participation in the activities addressed to the unemployed	ALMP (internship, training, intervention works)	1,369.80	278.87
	Unemployment benefit	1,417.24	403.62
	I have not benefited from it	1,578.10	616.66

Source: Author's own research.

Źródło: Badania własne.

The theoretical and empirical findings of Krueger and Meyer [2002] show that unemployment benefits result in an increase of salary expectations of the unemployed persons. The obtained results of analysis of variance indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between the average reservation wage of beneficiaries of active programs and benefits and people who did not take advantage of these programs at all.

Unemployed respondents who were receiving benefits for a certain period of time indicated higher pay than those who benefited only from active programs. However, the highest expectations were observed in the group of people who did not take advantage of any form of activation of the unemployed (Table 5). Perhaps this is due to the fact that the first group of people is most engaged in a search for a job, has the greatest contact with employers and professionals involved in the activation of the unemployed. In the Warmia-Mazury Province, the average pay is lower by 17% than the average for Poland, and in many counties in the region the minimum pay is half the average pay [Regional Data Bank – Wages]. One can assume that pay expectations may be a barrier to starting to work.

## CONCLUSIONS

The active labor market policy, especially in regions with a high unemployment rate, allows to reduce structural mismatches on the labor market, however without an increase in the demand for labor and mobility of the unemployed, no permanent employment effects could be achieved. In the Warmia-Mazury Province, more than half of registered unemployed persons was encompassed by ALMP which represented 9% of the economically active population. Although this is a region with the highest percentage of the unemployed among the economically active population and the efficiency index of the labor market policy is lower than that for Poland; however, it is much higher than the re-employment rate for the Mazovia Province which has the lowest unemployment rate. In almost all over the country there was noted a decline in the employment rate of the unemployed with the exception of the Mazovia Province where it is virtually unchanged. There is no strong link between the situation on the regional labor market and the costs of the conducted active labor market policy. High costs of employment of one unemployed person are also for regions with a relatively better situation on the labor market.



As regards instruments such as subsidies for taking up a business activity or for additional equipment and equipment for a workstation granted to employers hiring the unemployed persons, in order to calculate the employment effectiveness, one should take into account a much longer period. As the studies show, three quarters of those who received a subsidy are not entered again into the Register of the Unemployed. Moreover, in the third year from receiving a subsidy, over half of the companies continued to operate on the market (58.6%), and one in four of them employed a worker. These results suggest that it is worth seeking to increase resources to support business development in the region.

The active labor market policy through training influences the increase of quality of human capital, improvement of qualifications or reskilling. However, participation in trainings or other programs which are the instruments of this policy did not result in higher salary expectations. The highest reservation wage was declared by those who did not benefit from the active labor market programs or unemployment benefits.

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## **EFEKTYWNOŚĆ AKTYWNEJ POLITYKI RYNKU PRACY NA PRZYKŁADZIE WOJEWÓDZTWA WARMIŃSKO-MAZURSKIEGO**

**Streszczenie.** W artykule dokonano analizy poziomu wydatków na wybrane programy rynku pracy w ujęciu regionalnym oraz analizy efektywności zatrudnieniowej wybranych programów. Przedstawiono również wyniki badań ankietowych wśród osób bezrobotnych z województwa warmińsko-mazurskiego. Z badań wynika, że brak jest silnej korelacji pomiędzy sytuacją na rynku pracy a efektywnością zatrudnieniową aktywnych programów rynku pracy. Z badań wynika, że 75% osób, które otrzymały dotację na założenia własnej firmy, nie powróciło do rejestru bezrobotnych w okresie do 3 lat od przyznania dotacji. W trzecim roku od przyznania dotacji ponad połowa nadal funkcjonowała (58,6%) i co czwarta firma stworzyła miejsce pracy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** płaca progowa, aktywna polityka rynku pracy (APRP), bezrobocie, rynek pracy

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