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Problem osób niepełnosprawnych na rynku pracy w Polsce

Streszczenie

Obecna sytuacja osób niepełnosprawnych nadal jest niepokojąca. Zarówno w życiu codziennym, jak i zawodowym. Wciąż występuje wiele czynników, które zmniejszają szanse na ich rozwój i spełnienie zawodowe. Niestety starania poczynione, aby zwalczyć bariery w życiu zawodowym takich osób są niewystarczające. Stąd, widoczny jest też podział na pełnosprawnych i niepełnosprawnych pracowników na rynku pracy. Pogorszenie obecnej sytuacji może mieć również niekorzystny wpływ na gospodarkę narodową. Dlatego też celem niniejszego artykułu jest próba identyfikacji czynników mających wpływ na współczesny rynek pracy w Polsce oraz analiza i ocena sytuacji niepełnosprawnych w badanym aspekcie. Ponadto postawiono pytanie czy obecna sytuacja niepełnosprawnych na rynku pracy ulega poprawie? Założony cel badawczy realizowano z wykorzystaniem metod studiów literatury przedmiotu, dedukcji, opisu oraz prostych techniki statystycznych i wizualizacji. Artykuł poprzedzono wprowadzeniem i zakończono sformułowaniem propozycji rozwiązań dla obecnej polityki społeczno-ekonomicznej państwa.

Słowa kluczowe: rynek pracy, osoby niepełnosprawne, bezrobocie, aktywność ekonomiczna

People with disabilities in the labor market in Poland

Abstract

The current situation of people with disabilities is still worrying, both in everyday professional and non-professional life. There are still many factors that reduce the chances of the development and professional fulfillment of such persons. Unfortunately, the efforts made to overcome the barriers in the working life of people with disabilities are inadequate. Hence, also noticeable is the division between able-bodied and disabled workers in the labor market. The deterioration of the current situation may also have an adverse impact on the national economy. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to attempt to identify the factors affecting the contemporary labor market in Poland and to analyze and assess the situation of people with disabilities in the studied aspect. The article also posed the question of whether the current situation of people with disabilities in the labor market is improving. The assumed research objective was pursued using the methods of studying the literature, inference, description and simple statistical techniques and visualization. The article is preceded by an introduction and completed with the formulation of proposals for solutions to the current socio-economic policy of the state.

Keywords: labor market, people (persons) with disabilities, unemployment, economic activity

JEL CODE: E2, E23, R11

Introduction

It is a common observation that one of the most serious social problems for developed states in the modern world is the incomplete ability of their members (Żbikowski, Dąbrowski, Kuźmicki 2012, p. 6).

It is therefore necessary to effectively carry out the process of social integration, including the economic “activation” of people with disabilities. Currently, this problem is still considered a significant challenge in Poland as part of the country’s social policy. It is worth noting here that many years of efforts to develop an effective support system for people with

disabilities have proven insufficient. There is still no consistent or complete solutions that could be considered effective. The most important factors responsible for the situation of people with disabilities in Poland are: economic changes (including deregulation on the labor market), decentralization of power and modification of social and welfare functions of the state (Gąciarz, Ostrowska, Pańków 2008, p. 5).

The scale of disability as a social phenomenon is so high that, indirectly, it affects everyone in the socio-economic dimension. It has a huge impact on the individuals affected as well. Persons with disabilities encounter, among other things, limitations in fulfilling social roles. It should be understood as the influence on the range of tasks which can be performed and which are socially expected depending on age, gender or group position (Kawczyńska-Butrym 1998, p. 10). This translates into reduced chances of getting a job, lower productivity, low earnings, etc. At the same time, the state see itself obliged to direct increasing funds to help persons with disabilities. The state should place great emphasis on the situation of people with disabilities in the labor market. Otherwise that situation will reflect negatively on the national economy as a whole.

Therefore, this article attempts to identify factors affecting the contemporary labor market in Poland and to analyze and assess the situation of people with disabilities in the studied aspect. In addition, the question arose whether the current situation of people with disabilities in the labor market is improving. The data used in the study concerns persons with disabilities in the understanding of the 2011 NSP (Polish National Census) methodology. In addition, information from the Government of the Republic of Poland on measures taken in 2015 to implement the provisions of the resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 1 August 1997, *Karta Osób Niepełnosprawnych* (Charter of Persons with Disabilities), was used. The above are the basic sources of information concerning disabled people. Selected analyses of this social group were enriched with a comparison with the general situation on the labor market in Poland. The assumed research objective was pursued using the methods of source literature study, inference,, description and simple statistical techniques and visualizations. Synthetic conclusions from the conducted analyses are included in the summary.

A disabled person and types of disabilities

The commonly available source literature contains a wealth of approaches to the definition of a disabled person in Poland. However, the most common ones are by the World Health Organization and GUS (Polish Central Statistical Office). The former treats a person with a disability as someone characterized by impaired life activity or whose degree of functional ability indicates a difficulty in performing social roles (Serafin, Łuczak, Kurkus-Rozowska, Konarska, Bugajska 2007, p. 13). However, according to GUS, a person with a disability can be defined as someone regarding whom the relevant decision has been issued by the competent authority. It is also someone without the relevant certificated, although additionally characterized by reduced ability in performing basic activities relevant to their age, e.g. working or studying (*http*). T. Majewski terms this similarly. According to him, a disabled person is someone whose reduced body ability or damage makes it difficult, impossible or restrictive for such person to perform daily and professional tasks (Majewski 1995, p. 12). The Polish legislator put it somewhat broader. According to the legal definition of disability contained in the Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, disabled people are characterized by: "permanent or temporary inability to fulfill social roles due to permanent or long-term impairment of the body ability, in particular resulting in inability to work" (*Act ... 1997*, art. 2, item 10). Another normative act concerning people with disabilities is the already mention Charter of Rights of Persons with Disabilities which defines persons with disabilities as individuals with impairment of physical or mental abilities, persisting periodically or permanently, as a consequence of which daily

life, work, learning, as well as fulfilling roles, are limited or impossible in accordance with legally and customary standards (*Karta...* 1997).

All these approaches to defining a disabled person place a major emphasis on the fact it must be someone who is in a state that hinders the performance of everyday life functions, e.g. at work or at school, as a result of a specific condition (e.g. accident, illness, congenital malformations). As regards formal requirements, it is necessary for the authorized state body to issue a disability certificate. That certificate unambiguously assigns the person to the group of disabled people, provided that that person's physical or mental condition has a clear (negative) impact on the performance of social roles (Serafin, Łuczak, Kurkus-Rozowska, Konarska, Bugajska 2007, pp. 13-14).

There is a number of ways to define a disabled person. According the 2011 *Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań* (Polish National Census of Population and Housing), two ways, i.e. legal and biological, can be indicated (*Narodowy ...* 2011, p. 63):

- legal - applies to persons with a valid certificate issued by the competent authority;
- biological - applies to persons without certificates, but with a full or serious limitation of their ability to perform basic life activities by themselves.

The first approach can be considered as an objective assessment and the second as a subjective assessment.

The Polish legislator, in article 3 of the Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons With Disabilities, set three levels of disability for disabled people: severe, moderate, and mild (*Act ...* 1997).

People with disabilities in Poland

In order to draw up the characteristics of people with disabilities in Poland, data from GUS and official statements of the Government of the Republic of Poland on measures taken in 2015 to implement the provisions of the resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 1 August 1997, *Charter of Persons with Disabilities*, was used. The situation of people with disabilities was analyzed in terms of: age, structure, education, and economic activity. In light of the above, the following analyses of people with disabilities were developed:

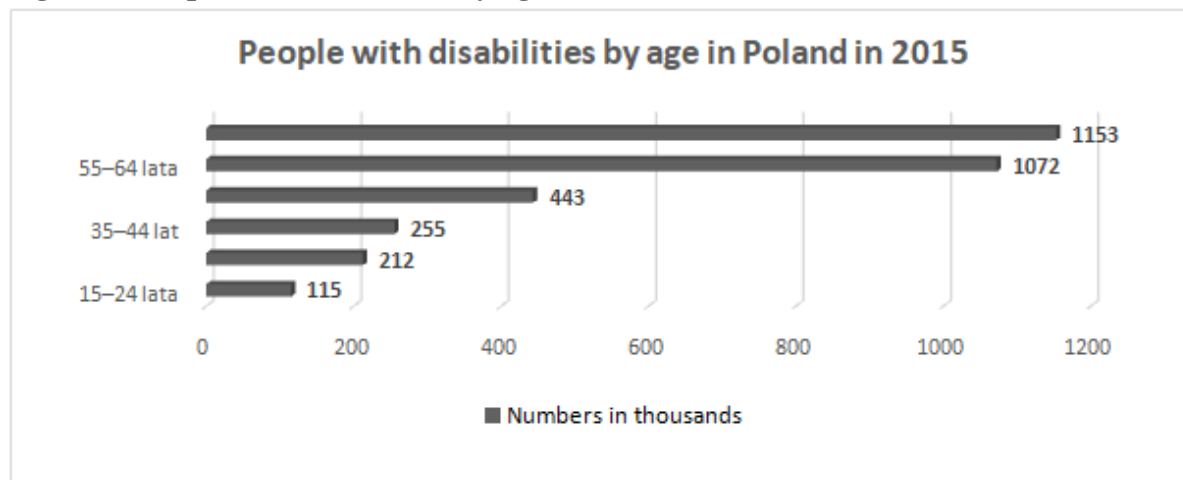
- people with disabilities by age in Poland in 2015,
- breakdown of people with disabilities in 2015,
- people with disabilities aged 16 and more by education in 2015,
- people with legal disabilities in Poland in 2001-2015,
- economic activity rates of people with disabilities aged 15 and more,
- economic activity of people with disabilities aged 16 and more by degree of disability in: 2005, 2013, 2014, 2015.

Based on Eurostat data, there were 42.228 million people with disabilities in the European Union countries in 2012 . This represented 12.8% of the total EU population. The participation of people with disabilities in Member States is quite diverse. Norway had the highest share of this social group (20.1%), while Italy the lowest (6.1%) (*http*). By contrast, in 2015 there were over 3.2 million people with legal disabilities aged 16 and more in Poland, which made up for 10.5% of the total population in that age group¹. Among the total population of people with disabilities, the highest number were men (50.6%), at 1.65 million. There were slightly fewer women (49.3%), at 1.60 million. A greater discrepancy occurred between city residents (63.4%) at 2.06 million people

¹ According to data from the Polish Labor Force Survey conducted quarterly by GUS.

and village residents (36.6%) at 1.19 million. For comparison, there were over 1.86 million people in the working age (economic age group²), which account for 8.2% of the population at that age in terms of the entire population of Poland (Figure 1).

Figure 1. People with disabilities by age in Poland in 2015

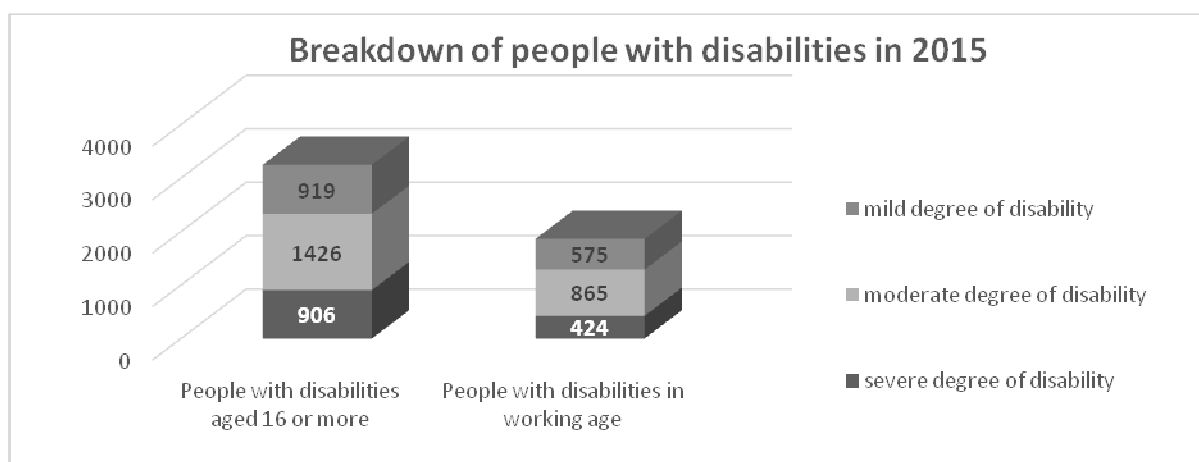


Source: Own study based on: BAEL, average annual data, analysis of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People based on GUS data, data on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for 2015, p. 5.

When analyzing people with disabilities by age, it can be seen that two age groups (i.e. 55-64, and 65 and more) make up over 2/3 of the sample. It was more than the total working population (1.86 million people). In the era of the common problem of population aging, it is no surprise that the most numerous group was the age group of 65 and more. The smallest population was the group of 15-24 year-olds (115,000 people). A significant part of the total population of people with disabilities was included in the non-mobile working group (i.e. 45-65 years). These people are reluctant to changing their place of residence and willing to change their current job.

It is worth analyzing the structure of people with disabilities at this point, taking into account the degree of disability (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Breakdown of people with disabilities in 2015



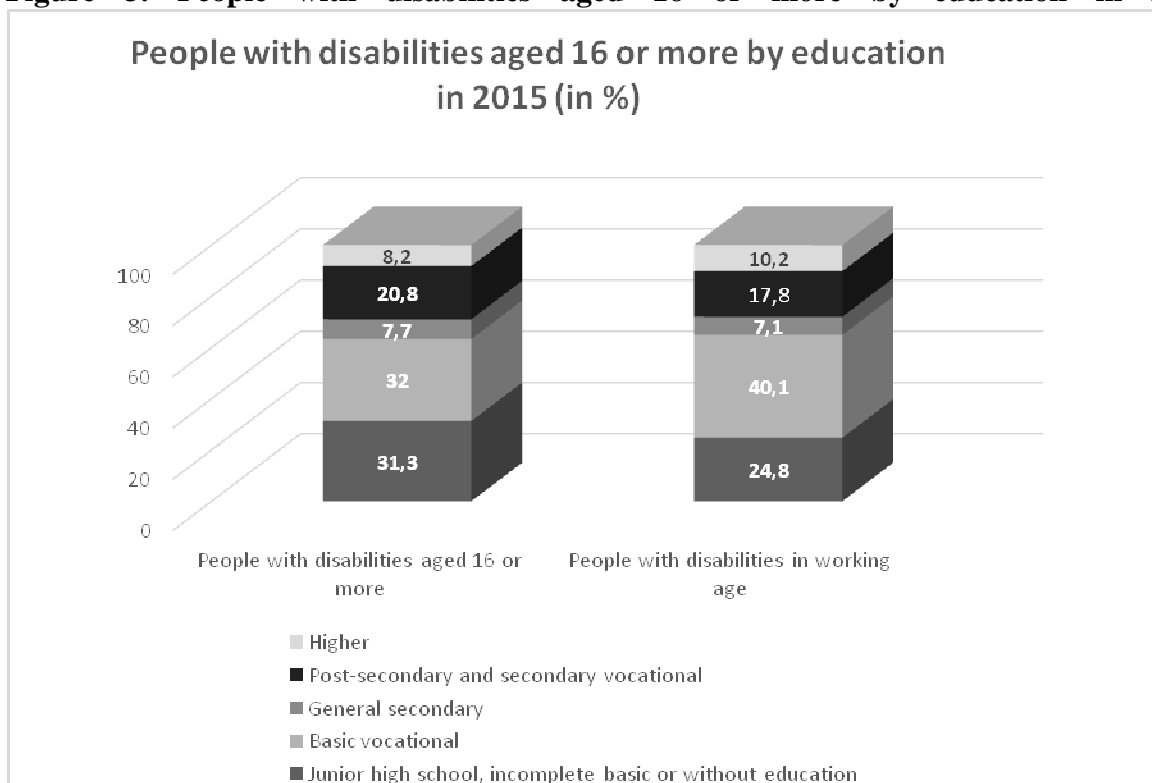
Source: Own study based on: BAEL, average annual data, analysis of the Office of the Gov-

² 18-59 years old for women and 18-64 for men.

ernment Plenipotentiary for Disabled People based on GUS data, data on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for 2015, p. 6.

Figure 2 shows that people with a severe (906,000) and mild (919,000) degree of disability are very similar in terms of numbers. Taking into account the percentage distribution of the surveyed groups, it should be stated that people with a severe degree of disability in working age make up nearly 47% of the total number of holders of the same disability certificate. A similar scenario occurs in the case of the proportion of mild and moderate degrees in working age to the total surveyed population (approx. 60% - 62%). In both groups the highest number of people were those with moderate disability. The analysis of people with disabilities by education is presented below (Figure 3).

Figure 3. People with disabilities aged 16 or more by education in 2015

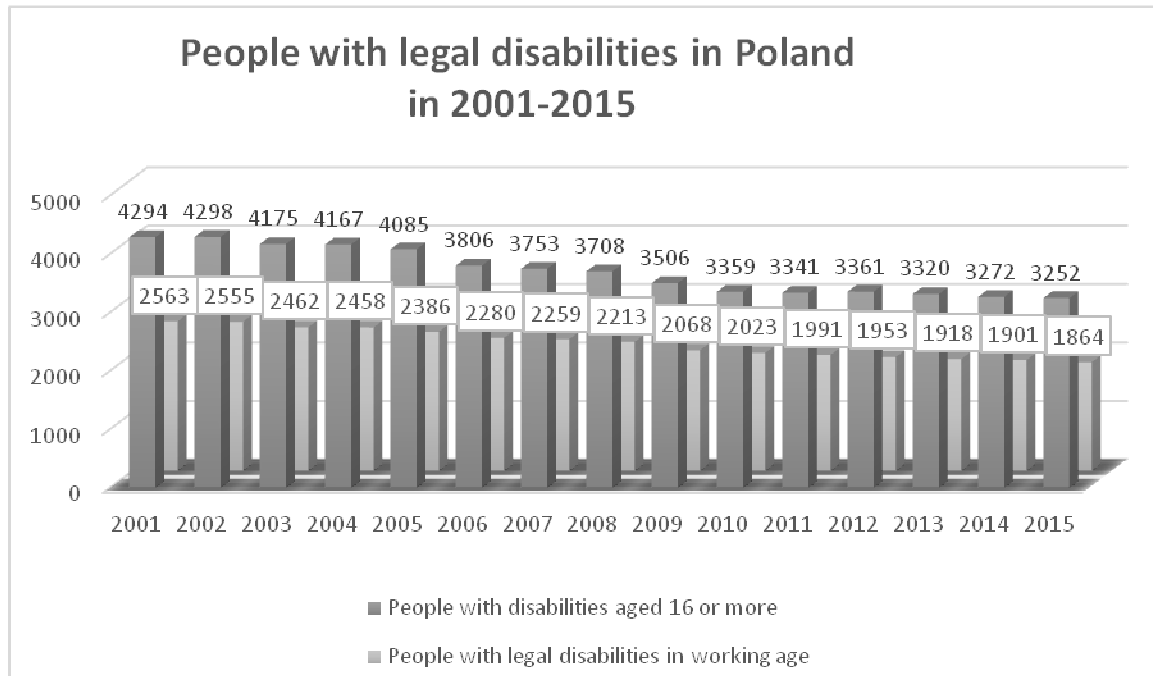


Source: Own study based on: BAEL, average annual data, analysis of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People based on GUS data, data on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for 2015, p. 7.

The percentage distribution by education is similar in both cases. The highest deviations occur in the level of basic vocational education, 32% for the general population and 40.1% for the working age group. A similar scenario occurs for the lowest level of education, 31.3% and 24.8%, respectively. In descending order, the distribution of the level of education is as follows: basic vocational; junior high school; incomplete basic or without education; post-secondary and secondary vocational; higher; general secondary. Especially disturbing is the fact that the two most numerous groups constituting over 60% of the total for both analyzed cases are characterized by the lowest level of education. This has a negative impact on job opportunities. It is common knowledge that the higher the education level, the better the chances of successful integration in the labor market. It is worth noting yet another correlation, and that is that in both generic cross-sections (by age and education), these subpopulations represent the largest fraction among the entire population of people with disabilities. On this basis, it can be assumed that the oldest people have the lowest education.

At this point it is worth analyzing the development of the number of people with disabilities in the longer period of time (Figure 4).

Figure 4. People with legal disabilities in Poland in 2001-2015



Source: Own study based on: BAEL, average annual data, analysis of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People based on GUS data, data on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for 2013, 2014, 2015.

It can be noticed in Figure 4 that within 15 years the number of people with disabilities decreased significantly. There were 4.229 million and 3.252 million people with disabilities aged 16 and more in 2001 and 2015, respectively. A similar scenario can be observed for the productive age - a drop from 2.563 million people (2001) down to 1.864 million people (2015). Attention should be drawn to the fact that numerous legislative changes in the field of people with disabilities took place during this period. Therefore, the fact that the number of people with disabilities decreased should not be equated with a purely positive situation, with the criteria on the basis of which the degrees of disability are granted having been verified. The main focus was on people with a mild degree of disability. The above verification prompted the decline in the number of people with legal disabilities, with a particular loss of disability status observed among the healthier individuals (Wałęga, Wałęga 2007, pp. 83-84).

Knowing the distribution of people with disabilities over a longer period of time, it is worth focusing on their occupational activity rates (Table 1).

Table 1. Economic activity rates for people with disabilities aged 15 and more

Year	Total (in thous- ands)	Economically active in thousands			Economi- cally inactive	Economic activity rate (%)	Employ- ment rate (%)	Unem- ployment rate (%)
		Total	Including:					
			working	unem- ployed				
2002	4298	775	637	139	3523	18,0	14,8	17,9
2003	4175	690	574	116	3485	16,5	13,7	16,8
2004	4167	677	544	133	3490	16,2	13,1	19,6
2005	4085	663	535	128	3422	16,2	13,1	19,3
2006	3806	571	481	90	3235	15,0	12,6	15,8

2007	3753	566	494	73	3187	15,1	13,2	12,9
2008	3708	578	508	71	3130	15,6	13,7	12,3
2009	3506	552	485	67	2954	15,7	13,8	12,1
2010 ^{*)}	3359	566	485	81	2793	16,8	14,4	14,4
2011	3341	569	486	83	2773	17,0	14,5	14,6
2012	3361	585	495	91	2776	17,4	14,7	15,5
2013	3320	574	478	96	2746	17,3	14,4	16,9
2014	3272	569	484	85	2703	17,4	14,8	14,8
2015	3252	537	472	65	2715	16,5	14,5	12,3

^{*)} Since 2010, as a result of the clarification by the GUS of the age population of people with disabilities under the Polish Labor Force Survey (BAEL), statistical data relate to persons with disabilities aged 16 and more.

Source: Own study based on: BAEL, average annual data, analysis of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People based on GUS data, data on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for 2013, 2014, 2015.

In 2002-2015, a downward trend in all the generic categories presented in Table 1 can be observed. Unfortunately, this should not be perceived as something good. The decline in the number of economically inactive and disabled people as a whole, as shown above, is not equivalent to improving the situation of people with disabilities. Especially worrying is the fact that the economic activity rate decreased from 18.0% (2002) to 16.5% (2015). The unemployment rate, although falling from 17.9% (2002) to 12.3% (2015), cannot be considered a good indicator, but rather the result of a significant reduction in the number of people with disabilities as a whole. This hypothesis can be confirmed by the low employment rate at around 12.6% (2006) - 14.8% (2014). The above certifies that legislative changes have resulted in the lower profitability in employing people with disabilities for Polish employers. Table 2 shows the economic activity of people with disabilities.

Table 2. Economic activity of people with disabilities aged 16 and more by degree of disability in: 2005, 2013, 2014, 2015

Degree of disability	2005	2013	2014	2015
Economic activity rate (%)				
severe	4,2	4,8	4,4	4,7
moderate	13,3	19,1	20,2	18,5
mild	25,4	26,8	25,7	24,9
Employment rate (%)				
severe	3,6	4,1	3,8	4,1
moderate	11,0	16,2	17,5	16,5
mild	20,0	21,7	21,5	21,4
Unemployment rate (%)				
severe	–	14,4	17,1	14,0
moderate	16,4	15,1	13,2	10,6
mild	21,2	19,3	16,3	14,0

Source: Own study based on: BAEL, average annual data, analysis of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People based on GUS data, data on the implementation of the Charter of Rights for 2005, 2013, 2014, 2015.

Analyzing people with disabilities by degree of disability in 2005-2015 there is a favorable change to be observed. Across all three levels of disability, the unemployment rate dropped. The biggest improvement concerned mild disability, with a 7.2% decrease. The employment rate also increased for all generic groups. In this case, the moderate employment

rate improved the most, with an increase of 5.5%. A similar scenario occurred for the economic activity rate. Similarly to the employment rate, the highest increase was recorded for moderate disability at 5.2%. For comparison, in the fourth quarter of 2015, the economic activity rate of the Polish population was 74.8%. The employment rate for the total population was 52.6% (and 69.5% for the working-age population). The unemployment rate, meanwhile, was calculated at 6.9% (*Aktywność ... 2016*, pp. 25-30).

In light of the above, it is the economic activity of people with disabilities during the period considered that should be perceived as improving.

Conclusions

The conducted analysis indicates that the analyzed period demonstrates a relatively low level of economic activity of people with disabilities and a relatively high level of economic inactivity. Compared to the population of Poland as a whole, this is an unsatisfactory result. It should be emphasized that the factors that still inhibit economic activity include legal and institutional regulations of the labor market. In addition, changes in the demographic structure of the Polish population and its aging have a significant impact on the current situation. The above analyses allow to provide the answer to the research question posed. The situation has improved in relation to previous years, but further efforts need to be made in order to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities. It is also necessary to simplify the complex administrative procedures when applying for compensation, as well as their service on the part of public entities (PCPR, MOPS, MOPR, OPS, UM). Another important issue is the strengthening of the state's activities to increase the level of education among people with disabilities (e.g. the program *Aktywny Samorząd* [Active Local Government]). The search for solutions that could alleviate persons with multi-faceted disabilities proves particularly challenging and other countries, including highly developed ones, are facing the same problem (*Transforming ... 2003*).

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