

SELECTED PROBLEMS OF CHANGES ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL LABOUR MARKETS IN POLAND PRESENTED ON EXAMPLE OF THE COASTAL PROVINCES

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Abstract: The political and economic system reforms became the source of creating market economy and real labour market. Employee-oriented market, which supplied work places for everybody and was a dominant feature of the centrally planned economy was transferred into market of high demand for work. The present article focuses on transformations that took place on regional labour markets in the coastal provinces in 1989 - 1998. Those transformations caused a conspicuous decrease of the employed in national economy from 1.629.300 in 1989 to 1.396.100 in 1997 and massive unemployment which number amounted to 198.200 people in December 1997, although its number in 1994 ranged on the level of 325.000 people.

Key words: social-economic transformation, structure of labour market, labour supply, structure of the unemployed, hidden unemployment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of transformation of a social-economic system, which began in 1990 and gradual activation of free market economy mechanism, they led to change of condition and structure of labour market in Poland. The market, whose typical features were full employment and chronic labour force shortage (254 000 free work places in 1989) ¹ has been transformed in situation of economic crisis into a market of high

¹ P. Churki. Local labour markets in the province of Poznań during social-economic transformation, PWN Poznań, 1999, p. 5

demand for work. Number of people looking for work is much higher than a number of jobs offered. The fact that illustrates the scale and pace of changes is that in December 1989 there were 20 job offers per one person while two months later there was only one job offer per 20 people registered as the unemployed, and at the end of 1998 per 252 unemployed.² Thus, we can observe disappearance of shortage of labour supply, which was a permanent feature of centrally planned economy and as its inevitable consequence emerging of surplus of labour force and unemployment.

There have been observable discrepancies on labour market in Poland since the early nineties, which might be caused by:

- ♦ global demand limitations and as their consequence production range, especially this part produced for domestic market needs, which finally decreased demand for labour in all economy,
- ♦ changes of management philosophy as necessary condition to suppress hyperinflation tendencies and tie up modernisation and restructuring of economy which effected in gradual transformation of hidden unemployment into an open one,
- ♦ changes of branch structure of economy caused by a loss of Poland's traditional markets, opening up of Polish economy and export barriers intensified by recession in the West in the early nineties, which activated process of structure (professional, spatial, etc.) misapply of labour supply to demand for it.

The purpose of this paper is to present a general characteristic of regional and local labour markets based on the example of the coastal provinces in administration structure existing before 1st of January 1999. The paper focuses not only on terms of quantity of the described subject but also on particular specific features of unemployment. Identification of condition and rate of unemployment was based on data gathered between 1989 - 1998.

The described region of North Poland includes the provinces of Elbląg, Gdańsk, Koszalin, Słupsk and Szczecin, with total area of 39.395 km², composing 12,6% of Poland territory. In December 1998, 3.916.700 people composing 10,1% of Poland's population inhabited the region.

2. FACTORS INFLUENCING SITUATION ON LABOUR MARKET IN THE COASTAL REGIONS

The recent gradual process of restructuring of economy might be characterised by decreasing demand for labour force. It effected in considerable decrease of people employed in national economy and increase of unemployment. Between 1989 - 1997 the number of people employed in national economy in the coastal regions decreased by

² A. Kowalski. Social conditions of development of agriculture. Studies and monographs. IERiGŻ, Warszawa, 1998, p. 114

223.200 people. It is 14,3% while respective coefficient for the whole country was 9,2% (Table 1). We could notice considerable decrease of demand for labour force in the first period of transformation in 1989 - 1991(almost with 41,0%), which was caused by different reaction of a public and private sector to transformation into market economy. State companies were made to re-organise employment system. In order to make their activities more effective, also privatized former state companies tended to limit employment and decided to reduce number of their employees. However private sector in spite of its rapid development did not cause fast employment growth because it was formed of small companies mainly, which employed a quite small number of people and did not level recession effects of big state companies.

Table 1 Structure of the employed in the coastal regions according to the forms of property in comparison with Poland in 1989 and 1997

Specification a - 1989 b - 1997		The employed in state companies (in thousands)			sectoral structure in %	
		total	including		private sector	public sector
			private sector	public sector		
Coastal regions	a	1 629,3	1 249,0	380,3	76,7	23,3
	b	1 396,2	486,9	909,2	34,9	65,1
	c	-233,2	-762,1	528,9	-41,8	41,8
Poland	a	17 558,0	11 709,4	5 848,6	67,7	33,3
	b	15 940,8	5 072,6	10 868,0	31,8	68,2
	c	-1 617,2	-6 636,8	+5 019,4	-35,9	34,9

The source: Statistical yearbook of the provinces 1989. GUS Warszawa 1990. Statistical yearbook of the provinces 1998. GUS Warszawa 1998. Own estimations.

Following years brought suppression of this tendency and we could notice a slight increase of employment in conditions of slow economy development. Between 1989 - 1998 in spite of this positive situation the number of the employed per 1000 population in the coastal regions decreased. The 1989 records show 428 employed people while the number of the employed recorded in December 1998 is only 358 people. Similar records concerning Poland were adequately 431 people and 401 people. What happened was a very radical and disadvantageous transfer of approximately 233 000 of capable to work people from productivity sphere into part time employment or social sphere.

In order to adjust Polish economy to free market conditions the structure of the employed according to the sectors was changed significantly (Table 1). The number of people employed in private sector in the coastal regions increased substantially with 41,8 percentage points to 65,1% in 1997 while in 1989 its level was only 32,2%, when similar tendencies were observed in the whole country.

The additional factor, which generates labour demand, is the grey economy, which includes illegal activities, unregistered companies and all kinds of activities that were not recorded in statistical documents. The August 1995 research results concerning the grey sphere employment proved that accordingly to the seasonal fluctuations there were

1.100.000 people employed in July and 300 000 people employed in January.³ Grey "economy" included agriculture, construction, house remodelling and trade mainly. It cannot be classified as a developing factor of social-economic progress but certainly, it might be a way to survive for both some employers and employees who have no chances on official labour market.

However, the most serious challenge in the process of moulding current situation on labour market of the coastal regions is opening of this market to demographic explosion (Figure 1). Government prognosis show that the pace of population growth in professional activity age in years 1996 - 2005 will be on the level of 247 000 people what means that it will be higher in comparison to the country average. Therefore, in order to employ increasing number of people in productivity age the state will have to make some system changes and solutions in social policy, including creating new work places.

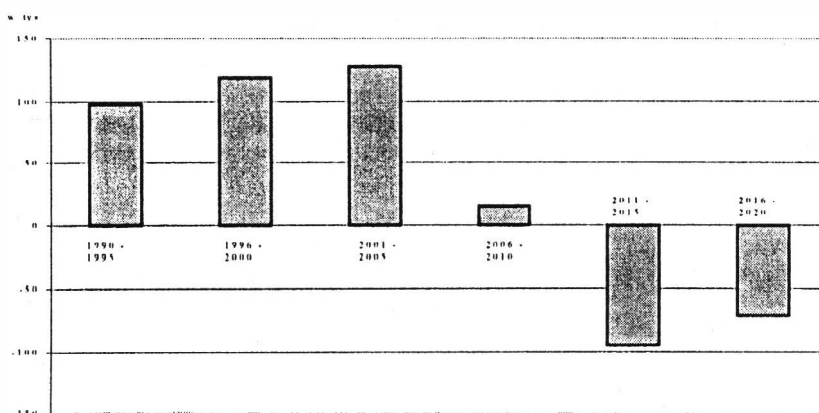


Fig. 1 Increase of population in the productive age in the coastal regions in 1990 - 2020

Within the following years in Poland, including also the coastal regions, labour market will be reinforced by people who used to be employed in restructured sectors of economy such as the railways or the military industry, and people whose contracts were secured by the proper agreements which will be terminated soon.⁴ It is estimated that thanks to these reasons it will lose their jobs approximately 300 000 people in Poland and 40 000 people in the coastal regions.

³ Resource results BAEL. Grey sphere economy in Poland. Extent, causes, consequences. Studies and Papers. Cited from papers prepared in Zak ad Bada Statystyczno-Ekonomicznych GUS and PAN, Warszawa 1996

⁴ Significant extent of unemployment and threat of unemployment influence the agreements connected with capital privatization directly and the mentioned factors also influence sale of companies to foreign or domestic capital considerably. A very important element of those agreements is security provided by a buyer to employ the previously hired staff for a year at least

Another challenge facing labour market will be necessity to employ considered redundant labour force in the rural regions. It is estimated that hidden unemployment in the rural regions amounts approximately 920 000 people, including approximately 55 000 people in the coastal regions.

"The national employment strategy and human resource development for years 2000 - 2006" is a government project, which expects to employ about 1 000 000 people out of approximately 2 000 000 people registered as unemployed at the present moment. This project purpose is to decrease unemployment ratio from 12% to 6%.⁵

One of the system transformation effects and especially changes on labour market was growth of negative attitude of the society towards those processes. Those tendencies were expressed by the society in its reluctance to accept changes and radical activity of the trade unions. Problems of labour market (employment) became the issue highly involving workers' interests what was equal to be a potential source of conflict. Thus, the attitude of workers modified decisions of the employers concerning reduction of employment to high extent.

The employees also became aware of losing the feeling of security and stabilization. Because of this situation the employees very often agree to decrease the salaries in order to keep the present level of employment. Realising and understanding economic difficulties of a company makes many employees give up their claims.

3. RANGE AND STRUCTURE OF THE UNEMPLOYED.

Massive unemployment is one of the most negative features of modernization of Polish labour market in transformation period. Within first four years of economic transformation period, the number of the unemployed in the coastal regions increased with approximately 334 000 people. In December 1993, unemployment rate was estimated on the level of 15,5% in the province of Gdańsk and 29,7% in the province of Silesia while the country average was 16,4% (Table 2). The rapid growth of the number of the unemployed might be compared to the countries with high level of unemployment such as Ireland 14,3%, Italy 11,4%, France 12,3% or Spain 18,6%.

Social range and massive character cause that almost 2 000 000 families are afflicted with unemployment (one unemployed person in each family at least). It means that approximately 8 000 000 people have a direct contact with unemployment. Similar situation might be observed in the coastal regions, although in case of local labour markets (local Labour Offices) for example in Człuchów, Miastko, Sławno, Łobez, Białogard or Świdwin unemployment ratio is much higher and ranges from 24,0% to 26,0% (Figure 2).

⁵ M. Solecka. Let Polish work and learn. Rzeczpospolita, 10th of July 1999

Table 2 The unemployed in the coastal regions (in thousands, December 31)

Specification a - number of the unemployed in thousands. b - unemployment ratio in %		Years								
		1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Poland	a	1 126,1	2 155,6	2 509,3	2 889,6	2 838,0	2 628,8	2 359,5	1 826,4	1 831,3
	b	6,1	11,6	13,6	16,4	16	14,9	13,2	10,4	10,4
Coastal regions total	a	109,6	244,1	295,2	333,6	325,6	300,8	266,1	198,2	195
including provinces of Elbląg	a	17,3	36,7	46	57,5	55,7	51,7	46,6	37,2	37,7
	b	8,4	16,4	21,4	27,3	27,3	25,6	23,4	19	19,3
Gdańsk	a	31,6	75,5	91,8	89,7	85,5	77,4	61,8	40	35,9
	b	5	11,5	14,7	15,5	14,6	13,1	10,6	7	6,3
Koszalin	a	23	47,4	60,7	71,8	68,8	61,6	56,4	42,9	43,2
	b	9,5	17,9	24,1	28,9	29,2	26,8	24,7	18,9	19,2
Słupsk	a	16,8	37,3	45,8	54,3	56,9	53,4	49,4	37,8	36,7
	b	9	17,8	23,2	29,7	29,8	28,4	25,7	20,8	20,5
Szczecin	a	20,9	49,9	50,9	60,3	58,7	56,4	51,9	39,9	41,5
	b	4,6	10	11,6	14,5	13,9	14,2	13,1	9,8	10,3

The source: Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV quarter 1994, GUS, Warszawa 1995, Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV quarter 1995, GUS, Warszawa 1996, Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV quarter 1997, , GUS, Warszawa 1998, Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV quarter 1998, GUS, Warszawa 1999.

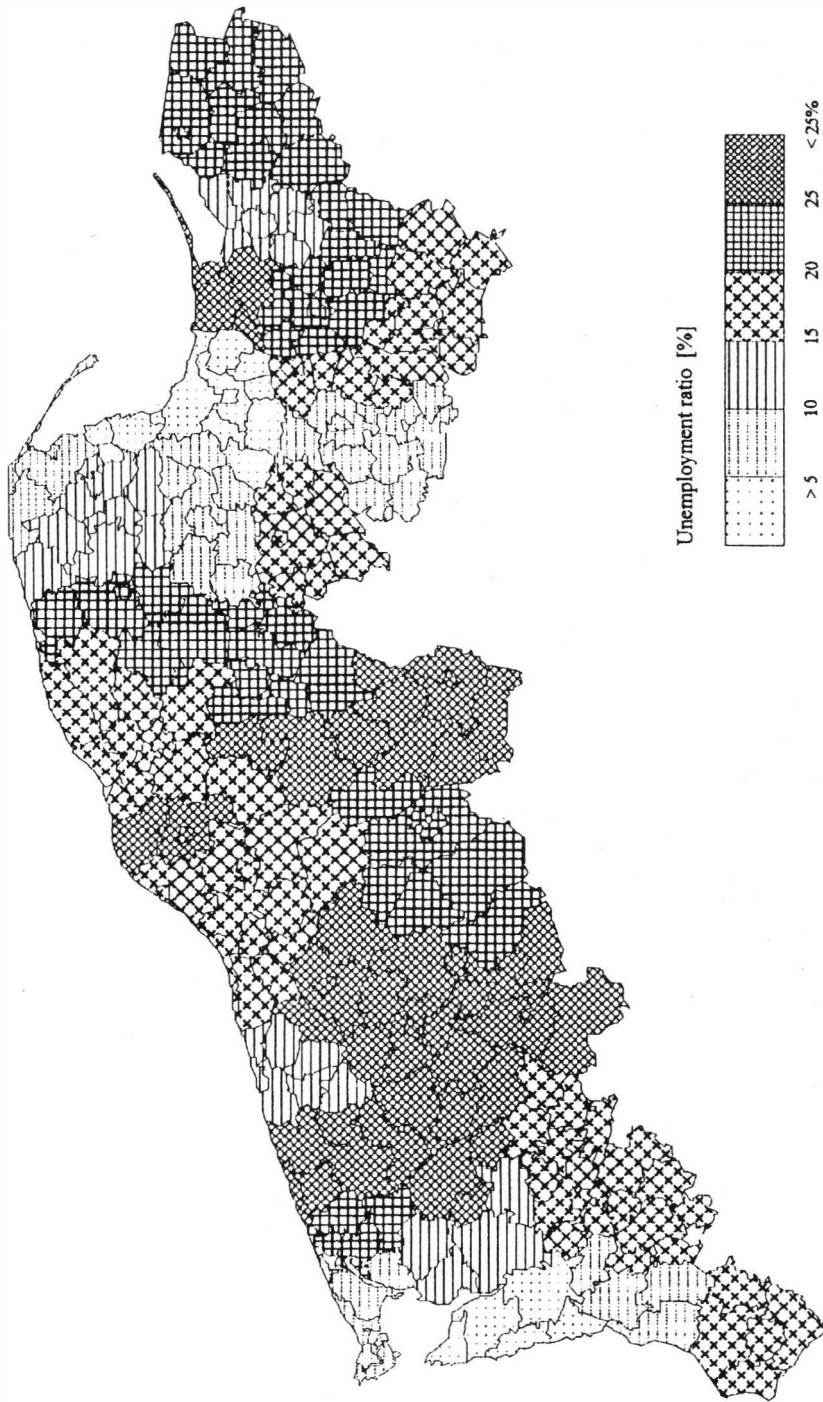


Fig. 2 Rate of unemployment in the coastal regions in 1998

Present difficulties with efficient facing unemployment are connected with its rapid growth. Polish economy has been generating a great number of unemployed and this situation also starts to be a problem of private sector. The number of people losing their jobs is constantly high. During first six months of 1999, up to 78 000 people lost their jobs affected by group reductions, whereas in June 1999 unemployment level was 386 000 people higher than a year before.⁶

Another crucial factor of rapid growth of unemployment, noticed for the very first time, was massive unemployment of secondary school graduates. Unemployment recorded in this group in the described period was very high. Almost 223 000 (44,6%) graduates out of 500 000 their total number became unemployed at the very beginning of their professional career. At the present moment, approximately 5% of the unemployed are the graduates of various secondary schools.

Disclosure of unemployment in the rural regions was also noticed in the period of economic transformation. This new situation influenced social structure of the rural regions, the pace of modernization and restructuring of agriculture and also attitudes and behaviour of the farmers. As recorded in December 1998, up to 835 700 registered unemployed lived in the countryside, what was 45,6% of the total number of the unemployed, while the inhabitants of the rural regions were 38,0% of Poland's population. Additionally difficult situation was aggravated by 750 000 people considered redundant on the farms. Hidden unemployment in agriculture ranged on the level of 21,5% of total number of workers working in agriculture sector. According to the 1995 Census, more than 1 600 000 people were looking for a job. A significant feature of rural unemployment is the fact that opposite to the national economy, it is increasing constantly. This situation was aggravated due to the increasing number of young people entering the productive age.

Different problems of rural labour market are connected with closing down and restructuring of former state farms. In 1990 almost 470 000 people were employed in the state farms what summed up with the members of their families made a group of 2 000 000 people. In the middle of 1993 only 168 800 people were employed in public sector in agriculture (that is 36,0% of the employed in 1990). In 1994, their number decreased by additional 20 000 people. Similar situation concerning employment in the state farms was noticed in the coastal regions. Sometimes the situation was more drastic due to the fact that in some communities the state farms covered over 75% of the total area. It is worth mentioning that none of the branches of Polish economy did not reduce employment as fast as agriculture. According to J. Wilkin (1997) unemployment caused by restructuring or closing down the state farms was estimated on the level of 10% of total unemployment in the rural regions.

Solving the problem of unemployment caused by former state farms in the provinces of Elbl g, Koszalin, S upsk and Szczecin is extremely difficult. Location of places inhabited by the former workers of the state farms is a very serious impediment, such as are their low qualifications and their usual professional passivity. Other factors

⁶ A. Kowalik. With dismissal to register. Rzeczpospolita, 30th of July 1999

limiting taking actions towards labour force is demographic and professional structure of the unemployed.

Shortcoming of local labour markets that proves recessive character of unemployment was limited number of offered free work places for the unemployed (Table 3). There were only few chances to get a job by the unemployed both in the coastal regions and in the area of the whole country. The most favourable situation was observed in the province of Gdańsk, which confirms the thesis that urban regions adjust to the conditions of market economy most easily.

Table 3 The number of the unemployed per one job offered (December 31)

Specification	Years					
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Poland	133	112	128	171	153	251
including provinces of						
Elbląg	400	124	106	102	278	415
Gdańsk	47	37	79	36	70	73
Koszalin	457	528	254	353	111	306
Słupsk	705	559	607	837	701	993
Szczecin	195	156	182	371	285	553

The source: Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV quarter of 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998. Information about social-economic situation of provinces, nr 4/98 GUS, Warszawa 1999.

Recessive character of unemployment in Poland is confirmed by the fact that most of people lost their jobs because of economic purposes. People that lost their jobs as a result of company closures or their work positions reduction compose the majority of the unemployed (54,6% in 1995). Bankruptcy and closing down of agriculture companies in the coastal regions are classical example of the mentioned situation. People who came back to the market after a longer break might be allocated on the second place (approximately 28,0%) and those who were looking for their first jobs on the third one (approximately 14,0%). In case of both categories, percentage of the unemployed women was much higher than of the unemployed men. It proves that coming back to work or looking for the first job is more difficult task for a woman than for a man. People who gave up their job and later could not find another one are in the minority of the unemployed (more than 5,0%).

Another feature of unemployment in Poland is its selective character. Definitely, it is the age, which is the most serious differential factor of unemployment (figure 3). According to this point of view, situation in Poland is not unusual. What really differentiates conditions in Poland from other countries is difficult situation of young people on labour market. In 1994, up to 49,0% of young people in the age of 18 - 19 was unemployed. Doubtless, unemployment among young people (up to the age of 24) estimated on the level of 27,0% in December 1998 is one of the most unfavourable features (it concerns more than 52 000 people) and demands taking actions to fight unemployment in the coastal regions. Older people (in the age between 25 - 44) are also threatened by unemployment because almost 54,0% of them stay without work. The

number of the unemployed in older productive age groups is not high due to the fact that many people decided to retire.

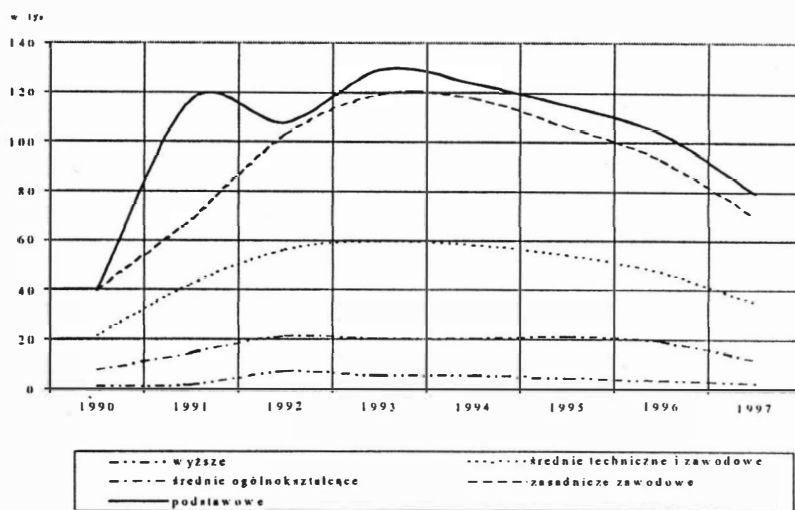


Fig. 3 Structure of education of the unemployed in the coastal regions in 1990 - 1997

Level and sort of qualifications is a very important factor, which increases chances on labour market. Well-qualified people usually do not lose their jobs. If they do, they do not have problems to find a new one. Poorly qualified people are in much more difficult situation and usually this group is the biggest problem in fighting unemployment. People without qualifications (elementary education only) constitute a numerous group in the coastal regions (more than 79 000 people). It is estimated that their participation in the total number of the unemployed ranged 40,5%. People who graduated from vocational schools have also problems to find a job. Their participation in the total number of the unemployed in the coastal regions ranges 35,4% and 38,3% in the whole country. At the present, there is a strong demand to generate a system for changing theirs' qualifications and become professionally mobile.

According to the expectations, the university graduates should not be afraid of threat of unemployment. Their participation in the number of the unemployed in the coastal regions ranged 1,4% while the country average was 1,7%. Summing up, we can state that the higher education the more chances to find a job.

Regional labour market faces also a problem of unemployment among people with secondary school education and vocational background. Their share on the total number of the unemployed in the coastal region ranged 23,0%. This situation also indicates necessity to change qualifications of these people. It is worth mentioning that in this group of the unemployed we could notice considerable decrease of a number of people looking for a job from 77 600 in 1992 to 45 000 in 1998 what is about 42,0%.

Another characteristic feature of Polish labour market is systematic expansion of long-term unemployment. It is obvious that prolonging professional idleness lowers chances to go back to work significantly (Strzelecka 1993). That is why authorities of many countries try to limit this kind of unemployment efficiently. Usually a period of being out of work for a year is classified long-term unemployment.

According to the recent research results, we can observe a reduction of long-term unemployment in the coastal regions. The number of people looking for a job for more than a year decreased from 78 000 in December 1994 to 46 800 people in 1997. The number of people looking for a job for more than 24 months was reduced even more significantly. This positive tendency might be explained by improving situation of labour market, easier access to work by the long-term unemployed, renewing registration in labour office after termination the right to get the welfare and limiting periods of unemployment by providing intervention jobs. However, the number of the unemployed looking for a job from 6 to 12 months is still on the high level (table 4).

Table 4 The unemployed according to duration of unemployment in the coastal regions in comparison to Poland (December 31)

Specification a - 1994 b - 1997	total	Time of being without work						
		less than a month	1 - 3	3 - 6	6 - 12	12 - 24	24 months and more	
Coastal regions total	a	325,6	21	43,2	50,1	73,7	78	59,6
		100%	6,4	13,3	15,4	22,6	24	18,3
	b	198,2	16,9	30,6	25,8	48,7	46,8	29,4
		100%	8,5	15,4	13	24,6	23,6	14,9
Poland	a	2 838,0	159,6	354,5	428,3	640,4	687,7	567,5
		100%	5,6	12,5	15,1	22,6	24,2	20
	b	1 826,4	144,9	249,3	219,4	404,5	423	385,2
		100%	7,9	13,6	12	22,1	23,1	21,3

The source: Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV 1995. GUS Warszawa 1996. Registered unemployment in Poland I - IV 1997. GUS Warszawa 1998.

The level of qualifications of people looking for a job is a very specific feature of the situation in Poland. These unemployed are usually well-qualified workers although the situation of women is different because they represent various professions. Unfortunately, high qualifications of workers in Poland do not increase their chances to go back to work after a period of unemployment.

4. FINAL REMARKS

A characteristic feature of the described region is the high level of unemployment developed dynamically in a considerably short time. A crucial feature of unemployment

in the coastal regions is its very strong differentiation in the particular groups of labour force. We can notice a relatively higher number of the unemployed women than men, a considerable share of young people (up to the age of 24) in the total number of the unemployed and a quite high level of long-term unemployment.

According to the research results labour market will face strong pressure of people in the productive age in years 1996 - 2005. Therefore, increase of the population must be taken into consideration in labour market policy.

The further processes of privatization of national economy and rationalization of employment might activate a new stream of unemployment. It is expected that processes of rationalization of unproductive employment will be introduced by using existing reserves of employment. This situation might limit increasing the number of work places for the unemployed.

The mentioned factors, which determine situation on labour market and necessity of modernization of agriculture as well as reducing of employment in agriculture, indicate that we should not expect a considerable decrease of unemployment. That is why in my opinion policy of labour market should be concentrated on reducing of long-term unemployment, unemployment among young people and help provided to local markets threatened in this issue.

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Resume

Wybrane problemy zmian na regionalnych i lokalnych rynkach pracy w Polsce na przykładach z województw nadmorskich

Zapoczątkowany w roku 1989 proces transformacji systemu społeczno - gospodarczego oraz stopniowe uruchomienie gospodarki wolnorynkowej doprowadziło do zmiany stanu i struktury rynku pracy w Polsce. Rynek ten charakteryzujący się pełnym zatrudnieniem i chronicznym niedoborem siły roboczej (254 tys. wolnych miejsc pracy w 1989 r.), przekształcił się, w sytuacji kryzysu gospodarczego, w rynek dużego popytu na pracę. O skali zmian świadczyć może fakt, że o ile w grudniu 1989 r. na jednego poszukującego pracy przypadło 20 ofert pracy, to dwa miesiące później na jedną ofertę przypadło już 20 osób zarejestrowanych jako bezrobotne, natomiast na koniec 1998 r. aż 252 osoby poszukujące pracy.

Na przestrzeni lat 1989-1997 liczba pracujących w gospodarce narodowej regionów nadmorskich zmniejszyła się o 223,2 tys. osób, tj. o 14,3 % - analogiczny wskaźnik dla całego kraju wynosił 9,2 %. Szczególnie wyraźne zmniejszenie popytu na pracę nastąpiło w pierwszym okresie transformacji (1989-1991) prawie o 41,0 %. W kolejnych latach tendencja ta uległa częściowemu wyhamowaniu, a od 1994 r., zapoczątkowany został nieznaczny wzrost zatrudnienia w warunkach powolnego rozwoju gospodarczego. W całym omawianym okresie liczba pracujących na 1000 mieszkańców w regionach nadmorskich zmniejszyła się z 428 osób w 1989 r., do 358 osób na koniec grudnia 1998 r., podczas gdy w skali kraju wielkości te wynosiły odpowiednio 431 i 401 osób. Nastąpiło więc na omawianym terenie radykalne i bardzo niekorzystne przesunięcie około 233,0 tys. osób zdolnych do pracy ze sfery wytwarzania do sfery podziału lub sfery socjalnej.

Konsekwencją zaistniałych zmian, jakie nastąpiły na regionalnych i lokalnych rynkach pracy był o pojawienie się masowego bezrobocia w skali znacznie przekraczające średnie krajowe (10,4 % w grudniu 1998 r.). O masowym charakterze i społecznym zasięgu tego zjawiska świadczy wysoka stopa bezrobocia (ryc. 2). Szczególnie dotkliwa jest ona w obwodach RUP-cy, na terenie których do 1994 r. funkcjonowały przedsiębiorstwa państwowe gospodarki rolnej, np. w Łobzie (26,1 %), Miastku (25,1 %), Białogrodzie (24,6 %), Sławnie (24,5 %) i Człuchowie (24,3 %). O recesyjnym charakterze bezrobocia świadczy m.in. mała liczba ofert pracy (tab. 3), a także struktura bezrobotnych według podstawowych kategorii.