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SELECTED ASPECTS OF REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT IN RURAL AREAS IN POLAND 2009-2011

*WYBRANE ASPEKTY BEZROBOCIA NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH
W POLSCE W LATACH 2009-2011*

Key words: rural areas, registered unemployment, labour market

Słowa kluczowe: obszary wiejskie, bezrobocie rejestrowane, rynek pracy

Abstract. The article analyses the most recent rates and changes of selected aspects of registered unemployment in local labour markets of four voivodships: kujawsko-pomorskie, mazowieckie, łódzkie and wielkopolskie. Special attention was paid to youth, female and elderly workers (55+) unemployment in rural areas, which are the most important issues of labour market development both in EU and Poland. Conclusions were based on findings of quantitative analysis of the latest available CSO statistics for 2009-2010 on poviats (NUTS 4) and communes (NUTS 5) local levels and qualitative analysis (NUTS 5 level), updating information on the discussed aspects till the end of 2011.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, employment has been an explicit concern of EU [European Foundation... 2008], and so it has been of Poland, which since that time experienced complex and complicated two-stage transformation process leading from centrally planned economy to a free market and further on to a membership in EU and its Single Market, including labour market as one of its four main elements. All these resulted in relatively rapid and for some groups unfavourable changes in Polish labour market, where at present the situation is still unstable and differentiated – with significant level of job creation in the biggest cities and high unemployment in towns and rural areas, especially those situated in regions lagging behind in social and economic development [Rakowska 2011]. That is why the key goals of EU and Poland are to increase employment and improve quality of work, as stressed in Lisbon Strategy, highlighted in European Employment Strategy¹ and Europe 2020 Strategy as well as included in Polish government strategies [Direction of Rural 2010]. However, economic crises and demographic changes may make obtaining them very difficult.

The main concern of labour policy makers both on EU and national level is youth, female and elderly unemployment, the last one due to ageing of European [European Network of... 2011] and Polish labour force [Boni 2009].

To elaborate effective strategies and measures preventing from increase in negative trends and phenomena in labour market and at the same time strengthening positive ones it is necessary to recognise unemployment scale, its main characteristics and changes as well as reasons for their occurring, especially in the most affected areas, which in case of Poland are rural areas.

The aim of this paper was to identify the recent developments and main characteristics of registered unemployment in rural areas of Poland on the basis of official statistics. The characteristics included total, youth, female and elderly workers registered unemployment. The study was also aimed at updating and completing available statistical data with opinions of local authorities on changes in local labour markets.

Materials and methods

To achieve the above described aims, conclusions presented in this paper are based on both registered unemployment statistics for 2009 and 2010 of Local Data Bank of Central Statistical Office of Poland and on findings of a qualitative research carried out at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012 in four voivodships of central Poland, namely mazowieckie, kujawsko-pomorskie, łódzkie and wielkopolskie.

¹ European Employment Strategy encourages measures to meet three headline targets by 2020: 75% of people aged 20-64 in work; school drop-out rates below 10%, and at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education and at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Quantitative research, which was the first stage of the analysis, was based on the latest² statistics of registered unemployment, i.e. for 2009 and 2010, for 861 communes (NUTS 5) in case of total and female registered unemployment and for 123 poviats³ (NUTS 4) in case of youth and elderly registered unemployment. These units are situated in four voivodships of central Poland, namely mazowieckie, kujawsko-pomorskie, łódzkie and wielkopolskie. They were chosen for survey according to the following criteria:

- 1) all these four regions comprise of both relatively well-developing cities and their surroundings as well as towns and rural areas lagging behind in social and economic development [Rakowska 2009], thus representing a wide range of conditions that can be observed in Polish labour market,
- 2) as centrally located regions they are not affected by special conditions or settings typical for some regions situated e.g. at the borders of Poland, which are either internal or external border of EU, thus they represent the more common characteristics of labour market in Poland.

The thematic scope of the research was limited by data availability and comprised of such categories as:

- share of the registered unemployed in the total number of population at working age (NUTS 5);
- share of unemployed women in the total number of women at working age (NUTS 5);
- share of unemployed youth (18-24 years old) in the total number of registered unemployed (NUTS 4);
- share of unemployed population at the age of 55 and more (so called 'late working age' or 'soon retiring') in the total number of registered unemployed (NUTS 4);
- changes in unemployment rates of the above categories between 2009 and 2010.

Statistics collected and disseminated by the CSO presents registered unemployment, i.e. [Registered Unemployment... 2012] regarding registered unemployed persons in accordance with the Law of April 20, 2004 on Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions, which include persons who are not employed and not performing any other kind of paid work, able and ready to take full-time employment and meeting all the criteria listed in the Law, among them the following ones:

- they are aged 18 or more and less than 60 (women) or less than 65 (men),
- they are not owners or holders (sole or dependent) of agricultural real estate with an area of agricultural land exceeding 2 comparative fiscal hectare; are not subject to retirement and pension insurance from full-time work due to being a spouse or a member of an agricultural household with an area of agricultural land exceeding 2 comparative fiscal hectare.

In case of rural areas especially the latter requirement is important, as the fact that owners or holders of agricultural land cannot be registered as unemployed creates so called 'hidden unemployment' or 'agricultural overload of unused labour force' and makes the scale of real unemployment impossible to define.

Statistics of the Central Statistical Office describe youth and elderly registered unemployment only in disaggregation into poviats (NUTS 4), thus they do not show differences between rural and urban areas. To achieve this aim it was necessary to carry out a survey with authorities of communes (NUTS 5). As the latest available LDB statistics present situation in labour market till 2010, the findings of the survey also updated information on the situation in this field until the beginning of 2012. They also enabled specification on the most detailed level of administrative division and extracting data for urban and rural areas separately.

Qualitative research, which was the second stage of the analysis was based on information obtained from local authorities of 276 communes (NUTS 5) in the above listed four voivodships. The authorities were asked several questions concerning selected characteristics of unemployment (questions 1 and 2) and the situation in their local and regional labour markets (question 3 and 4). Answers to questions 1 and 2 corresponded with data categories obtained from LDB and were used in the first stage of analysis, while questions 1a, 3 and 4 extended thematic scope of the survey onto basic issues of local labour markets.

Local authorities were asked the following questions:

- 1) Has the unemployment changed in the commune over the last two years?

Suggested answers:

It increased: significantly medium not much

It decreased: significantly medium not much

It remained unchanged

It has been fluctuating

- 1a) What were the reasons for such situation?

- 2) Which groups of inhabitants in the commune are mostly affected by unemployment?

Suggested answers: young people, women, elder people (55+), all those groups.

- 3) Do the inhabitants commute to work out of the commune? Where to (if they do)?

- 4) Do people emigrate to find a job? Where to? (If they do).

² As for the moment of elaborating the paper, i.e. April 15, 2012.

³ NUTS 4 is the lowest level of data disaggregation for these data categories, and although it did not show situation in this field in rural areas specifically, it was used in the elaboration as an indicative measure for trends and a basis for comparison for qualitative study findings.

The questionnaire was at first sent by mail, however a rather low response rate around 11% resulted in resending the questionnaire by post, which caused increase in response rate up to 36%.

Obtained answers to the above questions were put into a data base, verified and sorted. Various explanations to a part of question 1 and question 4 were coded and analysed according to the rules of standard qualitative methods [Danzin, Lincoln 1994, Flick et al. 2004, Miles, Huberman 1994].

Results

Selected characteristics of registered unemployment and its changes between 2009 and 2010 – quantitative study

NUTS 5 level

Total registered unemployment rates in urban communes of analysed regions equalled from 2.4% to 17.1% in 2009 and from 2.3% to 18.6% in 2010, while in rural areas it was slightly higher ranging from 2.7% to 25.0% in 2009 and from 4.0% to 26.2% in 2010. In 2009 the value of the rate was above the median (13.9%) in 9% of analysed rural communes and a year later it was above the median (15.1%) in 6% of analysed rural communes.

In 43% of rural communes, total registered unemployment decreased by <1%,2.2%> and in 38% of communes increased by <1%,2.3%>, which are the biggest changes in this group. Registered unemployment increased in more than half of surveyed rural communes, of which in 38% of them the increase was relatively insignificant – by values up to 1%.

Female registered unemployment in urban areas accounted from 2.4% to 18.3% in 2009 and from 2.1% to 19.3% in 2010, while in rural areas it was much higher ranging from 1.8% to 32.4% in 2009 and from 2.1% to 30.9% in 2010. However, in 2009 only 6% of surveyed rural communes was characterised by value of the analysed rate above the median (i.e. 17.1%), while in 2010 the rate was above the median (16.5%) in 7% of rural communes. Female unemployment rates increased in a big number of both urban (76%) and rural (64%) NUT 5 (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Changes in rates of total and female registered unemployment 2009-2010
Tabela 1. Zmiany stóp bezrobocia rejestrowanego ogółem i kobiet w latach 2009-2010

Type of commune/ <i>Rodzaj gminy</i>	Max ¹ decrease of [pps]/ <i>Maksymalny spadek 2009-2010 [p.p.]</i>	Per cent of communes where registered unemployment/ <i>Odsetek gmin, gdzie bezrobocie rejestrowane</i>					Max ² increase of [pps]/ <i>Maksymalny wzrost 2009-2010 [p.p.]</i>
		decreased by/zmalało o		stable/ <i>stale</i> (0 p.p.)	increased by/wzrosło o		
		[max ¹ , 1 p.p.]	<1 p.p.		<1 p.p.	[1 p.p., max ²]	
<i>Total/Ogółem</i>							
A	3.2	4	24	6	53	13	2.3
B	11.2	10	27	6	38	19	3.5
C	2.2	9.5	33	4.5	38	15	2.3
<i>Female/Kobiety</i>							
A	2.2	2	19	3	56	20	3.3
B	8.7	13	20	3	33	31	4.4
C	2.7	9	26	5	34	26	3.3

A – urban/miejska, B – rural/wiejska, C – urban-rural/miejsko-wiejska, rur – registered unemployment rate/stopa bezrobocia rejestrowanego (pps – percent points/punkty procentowe (p.p.), max¹ – the highest decrease of unemployment/najwyższy spadek bezrobocia, max² – the highest increase of unemployment/najwyższy wzrost bezrobocia)

Source: own study

Źródło: opracowanie własne

NUTS 4 level

In 2009 the share of registered unemployed young people in the registered unemployed total ranged from 10% up to 36% and in 2010 it changed only slightly ranging from 9% to 35%. Spatial distribution of analysed values was rather dispersed and did not show any tendencies to cumulate (Fig. 1).

When analysed in individual poviats, changes in unemployment rate between 2009 and 2010 differed: from 3% decrease up to 4% increase, however in one case (Toruń) unemployment of the young decreased exceptionally from 25% to 17%. In 26 poviats unemployment rate did not change, and in 23 it changed insignificantly decreasing (13 poviats) or increasing (10 poviats) by 1% only.

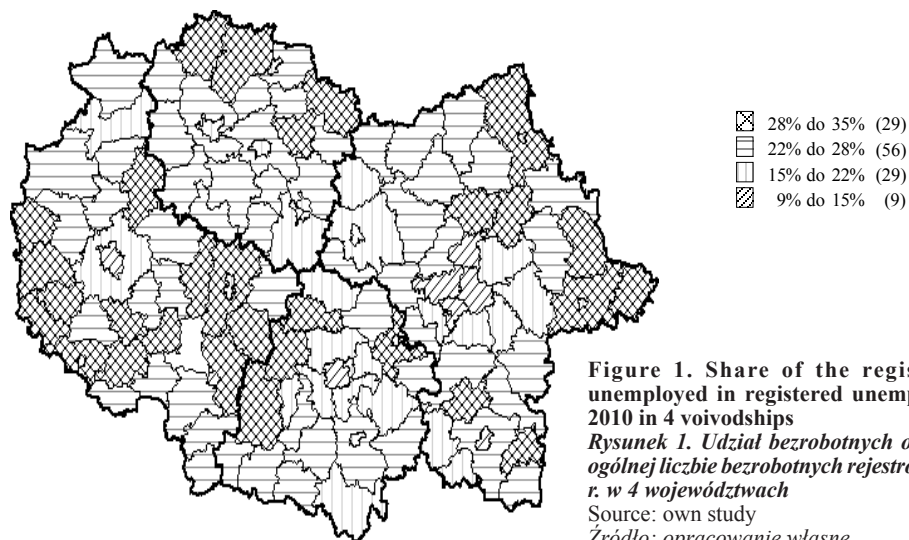


Figure 1. Share of the registered young unemployed in registered unemployed total in 2010 in 4 voivodships

Rysunek 1. Udział bezrobotnych osób młodych w ogólnej liczbie bezrobotnych rejestrowanych w 2010 r. w 4 województwach

Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

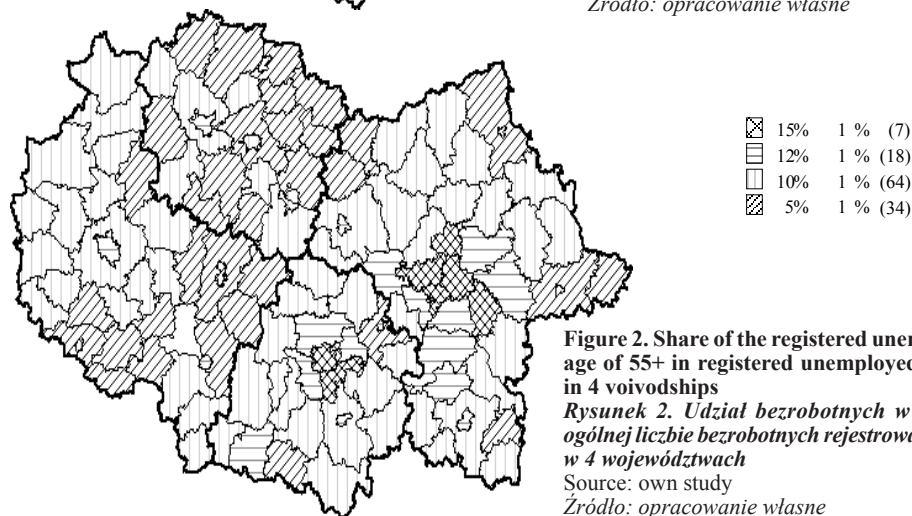


Figure 2. Share of the registered unemployed at the age of 55+ in registered unemployed total in 2010 in 4 voivodships

Rysunek 2. Udział bezrobotnych w wieku 55+ w ogólnej liczbie bezrobotnych rejestrowanych w 2010 r. w 4 województwach

Source: own study
Źródło: opracowanie własne

The last analysed category, registered unemployed elderly (at the age of 55 and older), made from 4% to 10% of all the registered unemployed in 2009 and from 5% to 18% in 2010. Changes in this field where none in 15 poviats (0%) and insignificant in 67 poviats (decrease or increase by up to 1%). In remaining 42 poviats changes varied from 4% decrease to 3% increase. Poviats with the highest share of the unemployed 55+ cumulated in the central part of mazowieckie i łódzkie voivodships, while most of poviats characterised by the lowest share were located in wielkopolskie and kujawsko-pomorskie voivodships (Fig. 2).

Although statics analysed and illustrated at NUTS 4 level did not show the situation in rural areas precisely, it may be assumed with high probability that rural areas were characterised by relatively similar unemployment rates as poviats, where they were situated.

Selected characteristics of unemployment in 2010 and 2011 – qualitative study on NUTS 5 level

Among 276 filled in questionnaires 11% did not answer question 1 on the changes in unemployment. In other questionnaires local authorities of 5% surveyed communes described the increase of unemployment in their local market as significant, 13% as medium and 19% as insignificant, while only 1% estimated the decrease in unemployment as significant, 5% as medium and 12% as insignificant. Remaining

18% of respondents answered that unemployment in their commune did not change and 16% pointed at fluctuation of the unemployment over the last two years.

In rural areas registered unemployment increased significantly in 6% of surveyed communes, medium in 12% and insignificantly in 29%, while decrease of unemployment was significant in 1%, medium in 4% and insignificant in 15% of surveyed rural areas. It did not change in 19% and fluctuated in 14% of surveyed rural areas.

Among the reasons for increase of unemployment authorities listed 'economic crisis', 'to heavy tax and social insurance burdens', 'decrease in demand for construction workers', 'return of young people from countries which experience crisis (Great Britain, France, Ireland)', 'decrease in the number of small businesses', 'lack of industry', 'liquidation of a big enterprise in the area', 'limitation of available jobs'.

In the opinion of local authorities who observed decrease in unemployment there were two reasons for it: emigration (especially of young people) to find jobs and a slight increase in local investments (however the latter was mentioned rather rarely). The reasons are the same for urban and rural areas.

Unemployment affected mostly young people in 16%, women in 6% and elderly workers in 3% of surveyed communes, while as many as 53% of respondents pointed out that unemployment affected all these three groups to an equal degree. In the remaining 7% cases mostly young people and women were unemployed, in 5% young people and people at the age of 55 and older. In surveyed rural areas mostly youth unemployment affected 15% of communes, mostly female unemployment 5% of communes, mostly elderly unemployment 3% and all groups equally 62% of communes.

Authorities of 4% communes claimed that inhabitants did not emigrate out of their commune in order to find a job. Interestingly enough they were representatives of the biggest surveyed cities, which – according to the findings – attract job seekers. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 91%, answered that inhabitants emigrated out of the commune to find a job, mostly in the biggest cities in the region and in towns located not far from the commune. Warsaw dominated as a destination for emigrating job-seekers and emigration abroad was also mentioned, however not so often as it could be expected in the conditions of Poland's full participation in EU's Single Market. Remaining 5% of respondents did not answer this question. Indicated directions of emigration were similar for surveyed urban and rural areas.

Conclusions

Although the aggregation of statistical data on registered unemployment does not allow to precisely define changes of all selected characteristics in rural areas, obtained quantitative and qualitative data enable drawing general conclusions on recent trends in this field.

The bottom value of brackets of total registered unemployment rate was quite similar for rural and urban areas both in 2009 and 2010, but the upper value of the brackets was significantly (8pps) higher in rural areas where it reached 25% in 2009 and 26.2% in 2010. In 2011 the negative trend of significant increase in registered unemployment was observed in 6% of rural communes and medium in 29%, while the positive trend of significant decrease was noted only in 1% and medium one in 4% of rural communes.

Female unemployment rate was much higher in rural communes where in some cases it reached as much as 32.4% in 2009 and 30.9% in 2010 (in urban areas 18.3% and 19.3% respectively). Authorities of 5% of surveyed rural communes indicated that female unemployment affected their local labour market most.

Youth and elderly unemployment statistics are not available on NUTS 5 level, however findings of the survey show that in 15% of rural communes unemployment affected mostly the young, in 3% mostly the elder and in 53% of rural communes all the three groups (including women) equally.

Only authorities of 4% surveyed communes, the biggest cities attracting jobseekers, claimed that inhabitants did not emigrate out of their commune in order to find a job. Remaining 91% of respondents answered that inhabitants emigrated out of the commune to find a job, mostly in the biggest cities in the region and in towns located not far from the commune. Warsaw dominated as a destination for emigrating jobseekers and emigration abroad was also mentioned, however not very often.

In local authorities' opinion the increase in unemployment was caused by economic crisis', 'to heavy tax and social insurance burdens', 'decrease in demand for construction workers', 'return of young people from countries which experience crisis (Great Britain, France, Ireland)', 'decrease in the number of small businesses', 'lack of industry', 'liquidation of a big enterprise in the area', 'limitation of available jobs'. The decrease resulted from emigration (especially of young people) to find jobs and a slight increase in local investments, however the latter was mentioned rather rarely. The reasons were the same for urban and rural areas.

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Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki analizy wybranych aspektów bezrobocia rejestrowanego na lokalnych rynkach pracy w województwach mazowieckim, kujawsko-pomorskim, łódzkim i wielkopolskim. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na bezrobocie ludzi młodych, kobiet oraz osób w wieku przedemerytalnym (55+) na obszarach wiejskich, gdyż są to najistotniejsze obecnie problemy na rynku pracy w EU i Polsce. Wnioski oparto na wynikach badań ilościowych przeprowadzonych przy wykorzystaniu statystyk GUS dla lat 2009-2010 oraz badań jakościowych, aktualizujących informacje dotyczące przyjętego zakresu badań do końca 2011 r.

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