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The Unemployed and Disabled Inhabitants of the Lubuskie About the Quality of Their Lives

Unemployment without any doubt belongs to a series of negative phenomena that have occurred with the progressive changes in the economy connected with the process of political-social-economic transformation in Poland. It has many forms. It has a nature of temporary, periodic phenomenon, such as a friction unemployment, which is associated with changes in the place of work and the seasonality of certain jobs (e.g. in agriculture or construction industry). It may also take the form of long-term unemployment, particularly dangerous and difficult to eradicate quickly. If we mention also that the unemployment affects negatively people which are out of work, so its impact on the so-called. quality of life seems to be beyond dispute. Disputed issue can be just term of 'quality of life'. As A. Ostrowska (1999, p.84) writes, this term '... is easier to an intuitive understanding than to scientific defining'. In the literature it is recognized in many aspects.

Hunt and Mc Kenna believe that the quality of human life remains in close connection with the sphere of motivation that is with the ability and capacity to meet human needs. The higher is degree of fulfillment important for the human needs, the better is the quality of life (Walden-Gałuszko, Majkowicz 1994, p.13-14). S. Kowalik (1995, p. 28) is of the opinion that the category of quality of life should be seen in two aspects. On the one hand, its assessment boils down to the individual "feeling life by recognizing it", on the other – "feeling life by experiencing it". In contrast, B. Stelcer (1995) argues, that the quality of life of concrete persons takes a specific and unique form, what depends on the subjective intensity and validity of experience of such dimensions as financial concerns, functional ability, a sense of satisfaction in the family, emotionality, spirituality, social functioning, satisfaction with treatment, orientation for the future, sexuality / intimacy, the subject of interest. Adam A. Zych (1999), describing the position of the elderly, declares for recognizing the activity as the main determinant of the quality of life. This author is convinced that 'one of the fundamental characteristics of the value life at the turn of maturity and old age is activity. The human body is just created to the activity and action' (ibid, p.99). Not dealing further define details¹, it can be considered that the most common meaning of 'quality of life' is a cumulative category, which includes: the mental and physical condition, material prosperity, interpersonal relationships, opportunities of personal development, ownership. There is sometimes attached to their ability to pursue the objectives and desires, reaping the satisfaction with the implementation of significant value. It is also noted the role of self-evaluation; the estimation of the quality of life is often a factor in comparison with other people.

The unemployment among the disabled in the Lubuskie

¹ See - in addition to those, such as: Bańka A., Derbis R. (red.) *Psychologiczne i pedagogiczne wymiary jakości życia*, Poznań – Częstochowa 1994; Bańka A., Derbis R. (red.), *Pomiar i poczucie jakości życia, u aktywnych zawodowo oraz bezrobotnych*, Poznań – Częstochowa 1995; Czapiński J., *Psychologia szczęścia. Przegląd badań i zarys teorii cebulowej*, Warszawa 1992; Kolman R., *Jakość życia na co dzień*, Bydgoszcz 2002.

The existence of the disabled is accompanied by a number of barriers (Ossowski, 1999; Frackiewicz, Zrałek, 2005). One of the most important are the barriers to employment (*Bariery w zatrudnianiu ...*, 2005). Practically, they are all over the world, generating more or less unemployment among this group of people. In Poland, despite the changes, which in recent years has undergone a system of vocational rehabilitation of the disabled (Barczyński, 2001), the members of this group still have enormous difficulty in finding their place in the labor market and the vast majority of this group remain beyond its reach². The professional activity rate of this group is 21.5%, and the employment rate is 18.1% (*Aktywność ekonomiczna...*, 2006³). It means that approximately 80% of disabled people of working age do not work and do not look for a job. In the countries of the European Union the situation in this regard is much better - the professional activity rate of the disabled averages out at 40 - 50% (Gałęziak, 2004, p. 8).

In the Lubuskie participation of people with disabilities in relation to the general population is significantly higher than in Poland; almost every fifth person, which lives in the Lubuskie is disabled (about 20%) while across our country - every seventh (14.3%-NSP 2002).

Based on the information available in the labour offices can be concluded that **the higher unemployment in the region is a condition of greater problems in getting a job for people with disabilities**. This situation exists in Lubuskie - rapid decline in the unemployment rate that has been recorded since 2003 (December 2003 - 25.4% - now - 14,2%) - **does not concern persons with disabilities**. For six years there has been registered a regular increase in the number of the unemployed people with disabilities in the total population of unemployed (2002 - 1.5% 2003 - 2.4%; 2004 - 3.0%; 2005 - 3.5%; 2006 - 3.8%; 2008 - 4.9% -- for comparison, in Poland, 2007 - 3.9%)⁴.

The data obtained from the Voivodship Labour Office in Zielona Góra shows that the behavior of persons with disabilities in the labor market is influenced by the factors such as type and degree of disability, age and education, as well as place of residence (town, village). Analysis of data from the last year (2007) shows that the largest participation among both the disabled and unemployed and the disabled job seekers was represented by those, who lived in the city, at the age of 45 - 54 years old, with elementary or severe education, with a period of service between 10 - 30 years (among the disabled looking for a job without work experience), that were out of work for more than 24 months, with a slight degree of disability (among the disabled looking for a job- a moderate degree) and the most often- with disease organ motion (among the disabled looking for a job – with a disease organ of sight). Due to the sex, predominance among the disabled unemployed were women (55.8%), and the percentage of people that were entitled to a benefit was 18.7%.

The assumptions and results of researches

² The author of this article uses the term 'labor market' and identifies it both with an open labour market, which, based on its assumption, is open to all interested, as well as protected (closed) labour market, which is adapted to the psycho-physical capacity and reduced productivity of persons with disabilities)Majewski T., *Rehabilitacja zawodowa osób niepełnosprawnych*, Warszawa 1995, s. 113)

³ The ratio of professional activity represented in a study carried out by the Central Statistical Office was calculated as a proportion of people that are professionally active (employed and unemployed persons) in the population (aged 15 years and more) in total and the group. The employment rate was calculated as a proportion of working people in the population (aged 15 years and more) in total and the group.

⁴ On the basis of the data of the Voivodship Labour Office in Zielona Góra for the years 2002 - June 2008

Considering the quality of life and unemployment there should be taken into account additional parameters. The unemployment leaves its stamp in the sphere of economic, social and individual of functioning as a disabled person. Therefore, interesting was to try to answer the question: How unemployed people with disabilities evaluate the quality of their lives in the Lubuskie?

Empirical studies included people with disabilities, which were registered as unemployed or looking for a job in the District Labor Office in Zielona Góra. They were conducted at the turn of January-March 2007 and were based on the method of diagnostic survey and the technique of free conversation with the unemployed person. In the dialogue there was drawn attention to the fundamental factors that shaped the quality of life (which were connected with professional activity, mental and physical well-being, material prosperity, interpersonal relationships, the possibility of personal development, the possibility of achieving the aspirations and desires, and also reaping the satisfaction with implementation of significant value), which are inextricably connected to the functioning of human being, including the disabled in the basic inter-linked areas: body, mind, heart, spirit (Covey, 2003). Due to the number of surveyed - 21 people, the results are given in the quality form of (not postponed to the percentages). Among the surveyed is a predominance of women (13 to 8), persons with the mobility disability, with a low educational level (basic, vocational; only 1 person had a higher education and 1 person completed this level of education). Respondents represented different age groups, but all were in professional activity age (the youngest - 24 years, the oldest - 55 years), all were out of work for more than 12 months (the longest - more than 6 years).

Gathered empirical material allowed to formulate the following observations:

1. The disabled of the Lubuskie have huge problems in getting a job (it can be supposed that this is conditioned by scale unemployment that is a greater than in other regions of the country).
2. A common obstacle to the admitting to the job indicated by our interlocutors is the state of health (potential employers may be afraid of paying the higher costs associated with the rehabilitation of employee).
3. For some trial subjects a major obstacle in getting a job is the type of disability, for example physical and intellectual disability (in these cases, the concerns of employers can be concerned with less productive work of these people).
4. Most interviewees show a low or moderate interest in job offers. There is no knowledge about the atypical forms of employment such as teleworking, temporary work. They rarely make contact with the labour office outside the designated deadline.
5. Only one person among trial subjects is interested in self-employment.
6. The younger (age range 24-30) want to benefit from training or other forms of activation. In the case of older people there can be more often observed discouragement to a fruitless looking for a job.
7. Respondents in the vast majority are not active socially - do not belong to the non-governmental organizations or others, and do not display a desire of belonging, although they often used the services of different organizations (especially in the field of rehabilitation and counseling, and individuals with cultural activities, tourism and sports).
8. Only one of the interlocutors has the right to unemployment benefit. The others are either dependent on family or benefit from social assistance or sometimes do "casual works" (such as cleaning, washing windows, caring for the child).

9. All the disabled assess their financial situation as poor and very poor. Most of them have no sufficient funds to meet even basic needs, such as payment of rents, telephones and travel costs.
10. Housing conditions were assessed as 'good' and 'satisfactory' (nearly 1/3 of interlocutors benefited from the PFRON to adapt housing for their needs).
11. A huge burden for the respondents is high, the monthly expenditure on health: medicines, hygienic measures, etc. In their opinion, they are twice higher than in the situation of the average family with no disabled persons.
12. Respondents are looking for a job primarily in order to gain the financial resources to meet the basic needs of life (rent and other fees, medicines, hygienic measures) only for two people this fact is determined by the need for self-fulfillment.
13. Unemployed persons with disabilities have inadequate education to the needs of the labor market (the level and type). Most of them completed the basic education level and professional level. Only 1 person from all complements higher education.
14. Unemployment among the disabled generates the formation of pathological behavior-a significant part of them reach for an alcohol far more often than in working time, and the three of all become drunk at least twice a week.
15. Unemployment is a factor causing conflicts in the family. Many interviewees indicate that they have a low position in the family as people out of work.
16. Conditions of respondents are directly proportional to the time spent out of work. The longer this situation lasts, the more frequently a person experiences distress and irritation states, a sense of helplessness, and even nonsense of life.
17. It is worrying that many interlocutors feel lonely, they have no sense of support (security) or in the family, nor on the part of the state. They feel sorrow 'to all' and 'to everything'.
18. Only one person (a young one) has positive emotions - pride of its achievements.
19. Unemployment has a negative impact on lifestyle - only two persons have indicate that they sometimes go (though not frequently) to the cinema, to the concert or another cultural event. Other respondents participate in the cultural life mainly through listening to the radio, watching television. They rarely read books, do not buy magazines for financial reasons.
20. Unemployment has a negative impact on the health of person with disabilities. A significant part of interlocutors ascertain that ailments connected with the main cause of disability are more intensified, in some cases there are new diseases.
21. There is among unemployed people with disabilities overall decline in satisfaction with life among others because of limitations or lack of social contacts.
22. In the vast majority of the trial subjects there is a lack of faith in the effectiveness of the activities of the labor offices, lack of confidence in the officials.
23. Regarding realization of the aims of life - unemployed people with disabilities of the Lubuskie rarely declare these aims, and if they do - aims are concerned mostly with everyday needs or connected with the rehabilitation.
24. Inhabitants of the Lubuskie want, more than successes, a quiet life, a happy family (or founding it in the case of lack).

Conclusions and recommendations

In developed countries the prospects for disabled people clearly changed in the second half of the last century. Despite that they occurred at different times and were at a different pace, they always evolved in a similar direction - from segregation and discrimination to the full participation and equality.

These changes did not avoid also Poland. The evolving system of social-political-economic, opening borders, the influence of the European Union on social policy of our country are reflected in activities taken over vulnerable socially groups, so also taken over the disabled. It is not easy for the disabled to fit in to a new reality. They often need a support.

Researches carried out by me, although they do not give comprehensive information on the area, they rather have a signal significance - seem to confirm this fact.

It may be said with certainty that there is a feedback between the quality of goods and services, the quality of work and quality of life. Having a job is a special value. It is not just a source of revenue, of organization of time, the surface of social contacts, satisfaction, fulfillment, but also a source of a sense of identity, confirmation of self-esteem and usefulness, identification with the role of social inclusion. For people with disabilities, employment and work, beside the values listed above, are a way of escaping from social exclusion, a way of overcoming barriers to integration with the environment, and thus – a way of improving their quality of life.

The quality of life felt by the unemployed people with disabilities of the Lubuskie, described by subjective attitudes to the different areas of their existing, is not encouraging. During research it has emerged an image of the disabled person who could not always manage with life, in particular on the contemporary labor market - despite having proper level of education, work experience, willingness to work. There has been also emerged another image of the disabled person: lack of education, and what is linked to that lack of qualifications, not positive professional experiences combined with stigmatization and marginalization, indifference to life, passivity, withdrawal from social and family life, lack of willingness to take action to change its own fate.

The first and the second group require social support - support aimed at least at three directions:

- modification of the assessment of its own position in life connected with creating conditions for the abilities to execute its own plans for life;
- modification of the perception of external environment (the relationships with other human beings) connected with creating opportunities to participate in life, a sense of doing, the right to interact with other people, to make common tasks, to participate "in the work of building and changing the world ";
- modification of perception of itself in the perspective of the others connected with no overstepping the limits between dependency and independence of the person with disabilities from others (ensuring the right to live in conditions of independence, freedom and autonomy to the best of their abilities) (see: Ossowski, 1999).

For sure, the disability violates the most valuable human values, namely health, physical agility, ability to fulfill their social roles, it is also an obstacle to achieve their objectives, but does not prevent their implementation.

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