

Environmental Conditioning of Health of Disabled People in Podlasie Region

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Abstract

In case of disabled people we cannot discuss full health. Depending on the type of disability, mental or physical health is affected, or both. That is why social health as a third component of health is so important. Social health is determined by the disabled persons' ability to work in a healthy place [1, 2]

The main aim of this study was to describe the scale of the unemployment among disabled people as a social health threat in Podlasie region. The detailed aim was to describe how sheltered work facilities deal with unemployment.

To analyze the problem of unemployment and sheltered work facilities activity we used information from GUS, the Regional Work Office in Białystok, the Podlasie Regional Office in Białystok, the Podlasie Department PFRON and local self-government. The results show that unemployment among disabled people is a big problem in Poland – among 4,085,000 disabled people in Poland, 3,550,000 are unemployed or professionally inactive. At the end of 2005 in the Podlasie region there were 2,315 of disabled people, which were 3.2% of all unemployed in the region. The following conclusions were drawn from the above-mentioned results:

1. The number of disabled people to the Podlasie is lower than the average for Poland; according to NSP data from 2002 there are approximately 143 disabled people per 1,000 inhabitants, and in Podlasie – 129 per 1000 inhabitants.
2. The main social health threat of disabled people aged 15-65 in Podlasie is unemployment.

Keywords: health, disabled people, unemployment

Introduction

According to valid legal acts, the disabled are people whose physical or mental status permanently or periodically limits or inhibits the possibility of social roles pursuance, and especially it limits the possibility of professional work, if such people have the proper statement [3]. An analysis of the impairment problem must include the definition of health presented by the World Health Organization, for whom "health is the state of complete physical, mental and social well being, not only the absence of disease or disability" [4]. In the case of disabled people we cannot describe their health as "complete." Depending on the kind and level of impair-

ment we observe that physical health is affected – a person with sensory or physical disability – or mental health is affected – a person with psychological impairment – or both types of disability are present. Additionally, the situation of disabled people is determined by many factors, emerging from the possibility of work. It can be addressed directly to the social aspect of health. Health status of disabled people is determined by physical health and professional activity that determines their participation in social and professional life of the local society.

The aim of this study was to describe the scale of unemployment in the Podlasie region as the determinant of disabled peoples' health and to describe how sheltered work facilities deal with unemployment.

Material and Methods

To analyze the problem of unemployment and sheltered work facilities we consulted information from the Main Statistical Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny – GUS), Poviats Labour Offices, the Podlasie Regional Labour Office in Białystok (Urząd Wojewódzki w Białymstoku), the Regional Work Office in Białystok (Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy w Białymstoku – WUP), the Podlasie Department of National Rehabilitation Fund for Disabled People (Państwowy Fundusz Rehabiliacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych – PFRON) and local self-government.

We based the study on two divisions of disability. The first includes sensory, physical and mental; the second includes people with a high degree of disability (old I group), people with medium disability (old II group), people with not serious disability (old III group) [3].

Results and Discussion

The attention aimed at the possibilities of unemployment elimination as a factor endangering disabled peoples' health is necessary, because of the growing scale of disabilities.

According to GUS, in 2002 the number of disabled people in Poland was 5,456,700, or 14.3% of all Polish citizens and in comparison to 1988 this percentage has increased by 4.4% percentage points. That means that in 2002 every 7th Pole was disabled, while in 1988 every 10th. The number of disabled during 14 years has increased by 1,721,200, that is by 46.1%. In total the number of disabled people per 1,000 Poles was 143 people in 2002, and in Podlasie alone this number was lower than the average for the country: this number was 129 disabled people per 1,000 Poles. The increasing number of disabled people is certainly related to the fact of ongoing society ageing and the elongation of life expectancy, both in men and in women in Poland [5].

The Scale of Disability in Podlasie Region

According to GUS in 2002 the number of disabled people in Podlasie was 153,000 that is 12.9% of all regional inhabitants. That means that almost every 8th citizen is a disabled person [6]. The number presented by GUS includes people who are biologically and legally disabled. According to the data from Poviats Family Aid Centres, at the end of 2004 the number of disabled people was 142,328 and these were only people who are legally disabled [7].

Among disabled people, women constitute 52.4% of the total. Besides, we observed that a higher number of disabled people live in the country (146 people per 1,000 inhabitants) than in cities (117 people per 1,000 inhabitants). The concentration of disability grew with age. According to GUS the most numerous group – including 44% of all disabled people – were aged 65 and older. People aged 50–64 years were 30%; people aged 40–49: 12%; people aged 30–39: 5%; 20–29: 4%; 15–19: 2%; 0–14: 3%. Almost 50% of all disabled people in our region were people in postproductive age [6].

The structure of disabled people according to their education status: 44.7% are people with basic education, 17% lack education or achieved only the lowest level, 13.6% vocational school, 18.4% are high school educated, 1.9% college, 4.1% university. In total, a basic education level was observed in more than 75% of all disabled people, and only 41% was higher educated [6].

As we can see in Table 1, over 80% of disabled people receive public services, especially disability compensation, which are the main source of upkeep for them. Less than one fifth is working (especially from hired labour, less from agriculture). Men more often work (60%) than women (40%).

Table 1. Disabled people in Podlasie according to the source of upkeep.

Source of upkeep		In total	Men	Women
Source of upkeep in total:		155772	74070 (47%)	81702 (53%)
Work:		20069	12005	8064
including:	Hired labour	11274	6303	4971
		100%	55.90%	44.10%
	Self employment	1948	1250	698
		100	64.20%	35.80%
	Agriculture – hired labour	208	137	71
		100	65.90%	34.10%
	Agriculture – self employment	6639	4315	2324
		100%	65%	35%
Off work:		135583	61993	73590
including:	Pension (not agriculture)	31431	14394	17037
		100%	46%	54%
	Pension (agriculture)	25563	8937	16626
		100%	35%	65%
	Disability pension	64297	33025	31272
		100%	51.40%	48.60%
	Government annuity	3232	1731	1501
		100%	53.60%	46.40%
	Dependents' pension	4248	375	3873
		100%	8.80%	91.20%
	Unemployment benefit	767	416	351
		100%	54.20%	45.80%
	Supplementary benefit	1908	1112	796
		100%	58.30%	41.70%
other	4137	2003	2134	
	100%	48.40%	51.60%	
Other income		120	72	48
		100%	60%	40%
Unspecified		199	96	103
		100%	48.20%	51.80%

This structure has an unbeneficial influence on their financial status and their social functioning. The structure showing the sources of finances for disabled people emerges from the educational structure [6].

According to GUS, in Podlasie most disabled people have medium and high levels of disability. The possibility of work depends on the level of disability. According to WUP in Białystok, in 2004 among a registered 2,242 unemployed disabled people were: 15 (0.7%) people with serious disability, 231 people (10.3%) with medium disability and 1996 (89%) people with not serious disability diagnosis [7]. The people with not serious disability can register more often as unemployed, so they are ready to work.

As presented by WUP in Białystok the most often observed kinds of disability are: limb impairment – 576 people (24.9%), eye diseases – 308 people (13.3%) and psychosis – 292 people (12.6%) [7].

The Scale and Structure of Unemployment among Disabled People in Podlasie, as a Factor Endangering their Social Health

Information obtained during the National Public Census that was conducted in 2002 in Podlasie were the basis for evaluating the significant problems related directly to unemployment among disabled people. The descriptive statistics showed that only 20% among disabled people in our region work and that a higher level of professional activity is present in men (25.7%) than in women (14.8%) [6].

The information from 2005 from WUP in Białystok (Table 2) show that per 73,193 of registered unemployed there were 2,315 disabled people. During the next years the percentage of disabled people among unemployed was: in 2000 – 2.1%, in 2001 – 2.3%, in 2002 – 2.4%, in 2003 – 2.6%, in 2004 – 2.9%, in 2005 – 3.2% [8]. So the percentage of disabled people among unemployed in Podlasie was slightly increasing. The number of unemployed has increased in 2002 by 58 people in comparison with 2001, in 2003 by the next 114, in 2004 by 84 people, and in 2005 by the next 73 people in comparison with the previous year [8]. The highest increase of unemployed disabled people was observed in 2003.

The demographic structure of this group is also very interesting. In 2005, among 2,315 unemployed disabled people in Podlasie there were 235 people (10,2%) aged 18-24, 245 (10.7%) aged 25-29, 170 (7.3%) aged 30-34, 176 (7.4 %) aged 35-39, 233 (10.1%) aged 40-44, 431 (18.6%) aged 45-49, 462 (20%) aged 50-54, 291 (12.6%) aged 55-59 and 72 people (3.1%) aged 60 and older [8]. The most numerous group were people over 45 who constitute over 54% of all unemployed disabled people.

The structure of education in the group of disabled unemployed people was in 2005 as the following: university education 70 people (32.6%), college and high school after professional school – 429 people (18,5%), high school – 140 people (6%), vocational school – 707 people (30.5%), secondary school – 5 people (0.2%), primary school – 964 people (41.6%) [8]. Unemployed disabled people have generally very low levels of education, with 72% below high school.

Table 2. The comparison of the number of registered unemployed with the number of unemployed disabled people in Podlasie region in the years 2000-05.

Year	The number of unemployed	Including disabled people	
		Number	% of unemployed
2000	79232	1647	2.1
2001	86471	1986	2.3
2002	86074	2044	2.4
2003	81274	2158	2.7
2004	76125	2242	2.9
2005	73193	2315	3.2

Among 688 work offers for disabled people there were 320 offers for subsidized work, and the public sector has presented 71 offers [8]. The highest number of offers was in the Labour Office in Białystok – 344, including 320 as subsidized work and it was the result of the fact that Białystok is a voivodship city with the Podlasie Voivodship of National Disabled Rehabilitation Centre. Fig. 1 presents the number of disabled people registered in PUP as unemployed in comparison to the number of work offers for disabled people in 2001–05 [8]. We can easily see that the number of offers cannot meet the demand from disabled unemployed people. Offers were received by: 4.4% in 2001, in 2002 – 44.9%, in 2003 – 34.8%, in 2004 – 36%, and in 2005 – 29.7%.

In Podlasie it is quite hard to find a job for an unemployed disabled person, and employers are urged to employ the healthy workers. Only 3% of work offers were addressed to disabled unemployed.

Sheltered Work Facilities Activity in Podlasie

The description of serious and not serious levels of disability is determined by the legal act, which presents the description of a disabled person that can work only in sheltered work facilities [3]. It has to be added that this act does

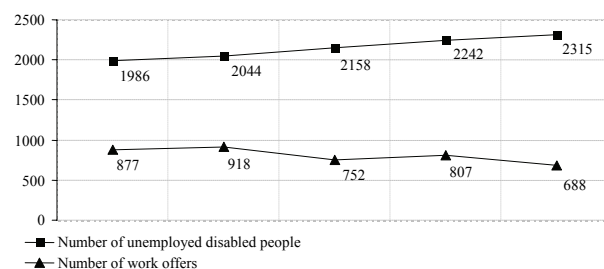


Fig. 1. The number of unemployed disabled people registered by poviats labour offices in Podlasie region in comparison with the number of work offers in 2001-05.

not exclude the possibility of other work, in case of the positive opinion from National Labour Inspectorate, which says that an employer has adjusted the work post to the possibilities of disabled people. Professional activity gives the disabled the possibility of money making, but also the so-called social rehabilitation that is social life. Sheltered work facilities (Zakłady pracy chronionej – ZPCh) are the basic places for disabled people to work and benefit from professional and social rehabilitation. According to article 28 of the above-mentioned legal act, an employer working for at least 12 months, employing no fewer than 25 full-time workers and the proper number of disabled people for at least 6 months, is a sheltered facility director [3]. The decision establishing sheltered work facilities belongs to the Podlasie Voivodship Leader.

Based on these regulations we evaluated to what extent the sheltered work facilities activity deal with unemployed, as the threat influencing health and social status of disabled people in Podlasie.

The number of all unemployed people in PUP in Podlasie at the end of June 2006 – during the study – was in total 64,744. Among all registered unemployed, 2,256 people (that is 3.5%) were disabled – Table 3 [9].

The analysis of ZPCh structure in the region shows it is uneven. People from 5 poviats did not have the possibility of work near their homes: Sejny powiat, Sokółka powiat, Mońki powiat, Zambrów powiat and Siemiatycze powiat. These territories have gone from 21 unemployed disabled people (Sejny) to 169 (Sokółka). The other 6 poviats have only one ZPCh each, so the possibility of employment for disabled people in this company was very low. The highest chance to work was for disabled from the Białystok area and Łomża [10].

At the end of June 2006 the highest number of ZPCh was in Białystok – 24 (including 7 cooperatives), 6 in Łomża, 2 in Augustów and one in Bielsk Podlaski, Ciechanów, Hajnówka, Kolno, Suwałki and Szczuczyn. ZPCh was employing 5,575 people, including 3,486 disabled, or 62.5% of all employees. Among disabled people employed by ZPCh the higher number (65%, 2,284 people) was not of serious disability, 1,040 people (30%) of medium level of disability and 162 people (5%) serious disability. These data are for all disabled people employed by ZPCh from Podlasie at the end of June 2006, but the numbers are related with full-time employment. At the end of June 2006 there were 5,296 full-time employment posts, including 3,289 (62%) for disabled people (including 66.4% for people with not serious disabilities, 29.4% with medium disabilities and 4.2% with serious disabilities) [10].

Conclusions

1. The number of disabled people in Podlasie region is lower than the average for Poland: according to the data from NSP in 2002 the average for Poland was 143 disabled people per 1,000 inhabitants, and in Podlasie 129 per 1,000 inhabitants.

Table 3. Unemployed disabled people in Podlasie poviats at the end of June 2006.

Powiat Labour Office	The number of unemployed disabled people	% of unemployed
Augustów	55	1.3
Białystok	1030	5.3
Bielsk Podlaski	152	6.3
Grajewo	45	1.0
Hajnówka	107	5.0
Kolno	31	1.2
Łomża	253	4.1
Mońki	36	2.2
Sejny	21	1.0
Siemiatycze	96	5.1
Sokółka	169	3.3
Suwałki	195	3.0
Wysokie Mazowieckie	28	1.0
Zambrów	38	1.2
Podlasie region	2256	3.5

2. Almost half of the disabled from Podlasie represented productive age – 80,000 people, but only 2,256 people (3%) were registered in 2006 as unemployed.
3. Sheltered work facilities in Podlasie employed 3,289 people per 142,328 unemployed. There is a need for employment increase, not only in ZPCh, but also widening the possibility of other employment ways for disabled people.

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