

Katarzyna Włodarczyk - Śpiewak
Department of Microeconomics
University of Szczecin
71-101 Szczecin, 64-66 Mickiewicza St.
E-mail: kwlod@wneiz.pl

CURRENT SITUATION IN A POLISH LABOUR MARKET ACCORDING TO THE OPINION OF POLISH SOCIETY

Abstract

Political-economic changes which took place in Poland during last ten or fifteen years had a various effect on the development of the entire economy. A great changeability of factors shaping socio-economic situation was a cause of such a state of affairs. These changes had an influence on both the goods and service market as well as labour market. The aim of the present paper is a presentation of subjective opinions of Polish society concerning current situation in a labour market 15 years after a transformation of the economy. The Poles who were polled specified their current situation in the labour market, assessed changes, evaluated the activity of trades union, expressed their opinions regarding unemployment, resourcefulness, working abroad as well as other serious problems that bothered public opinion. In the paper, compilations made available by Central Statistical Office (GUS) and reports made on the basis of the research drawn up by Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) were used, both of which were conducted in 2005 and 2006.

Key words: labour market, households, society

Introduction

Political-economic changes which took place in Poland during last ten or fifteen years had a various effect on the development of the entire economy. A great changeability of factors shaping socio-economic situation was a cause of such a state of affairs. These changes had an influence on both the goods and service market as well as labour market. A thorough restructuring of the infrastructure of the economy played a crucial role as for these changes. The increase in the share of a private sector occurred, among other things, due to a rapid development of MSP sector (to which the involvement of private capital contributed) and as a result of the privatisation of state enterprises. The growing share of the private sector in the economy had a positive influence on the development of the entire economy. For, private economic subjects were more independent and flexible, they quicker responded to changes that occurred in the market, whereas large state firms sought support in public help, especially when there was a slump in the economy.

Transformations that took place in the structure of the Polish economy from 1990 to 2005, resulted in the changes in the structure of employment (see table 1). While at the beginning of 90's, the majority of working people (52%) found employment in public sector as for the Polish economy, the main "employing" became a private sector five years later. The largest percentage of people working in this sector (72,2%) was recorded in 2000. Year 2004 brought slight changes in the sector structure of employment, which was a consequence of a

decline in the number of private subjects.

Table 1. The structure of working people according to sectors and types of employment

Detailed list	Years			
	1990	1995	2000	2004
Working people altogether (in thousand) including:	16484,7	15485,7	15480,0	12640,7
in public sector (in %)	52,0	38,6	27,8	30,0
in private sector (in %)	48,0	61,4	72,2	70,0
Out of the total of working people:				
Employers and people working independently (in %)	30,3	34,0	36,0	26,5

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Poland, Warsaw (years 1991, 1996, 2001, 2005)

At the same time, while observing changes in the number of enterprises functioning within the Polish economy, it can be noticed that from 1994 to 2004 a significant growth in their number took place (from 2,3 million in 1994 to 3,5 million). At the end of 2004, there were 3576,8 thousand enterprises, the majority of which were small and medium-sized firms.

Table 2. The number of enterprises according to REGON

Years	Enterprises altogether	MSP enterprises
1994	2 301 972	2 294 665
1995	2 099 577	2 093 148
1996	2 379 949	2 373 484
1997	2 552 649	2 546 405
1998	2 552 649	2 546 405
1999	3 013 876	3 007 444
2000	3 182 577	3 176 161
2001	3 374 956	3 368 366
2002	3 521 189	3 514 859

Source: Statistics – MSP sector in Poland, Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, www.parp.gov.pl

The aim of the present paper is a presentation of subjective opinions of Polish society concerning current situation in a labour market 15 years after a transformation of the

economy. The Poles who were polled specified their current situation in the labour market, assessed changes, evaluated the activity of trades union, expressed their opinions regarding unemployment, resourcefulness, working abroad as well as other serious problems that bothered public opinion. In the paper, compilations made available by Central Statistical Office (GUS) and reports made on the basis of the research drawn up by Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) were used, both of which were conducted in 2005 and 2006.

Labour market in Poland

Year 1989, treated as a crucial date, is the most often equated with the beginning of democracy and free market. New economic reality as well as its theoretical and ideological principles imposing the philosophy of labour laws on society forced to other, then it had been hitherto accepted, ways of judging, choices and behaviour both in the sphere of labour and consumption (Beskid, Milic- Czerniak, Sufin, 1995, p.9).

Economic conditions created in the first phase of economic changes enabled one to conduct one's own economic activity, create new workplaces, and in this sense higher earnings as for some professional groups, make use of market institutions service, such as the stock exchange, insurance companies or banks. Yet, on the other hand, negative aspects accompanied these changes as well, for instance: group layoffs, unemployment, difficult access to goods during trade privatisation, a rise in prices, a decline of real wages, widening the sphere of poverty (Baka, 1989, pp. 57-81; Strategia ...2000).

The transformation of socio-economic system caused changes which could be viewed from two perspectives. First of all, subjects dealing with the market changed during last fifteen years in the scope of structure, function, activity scope, property, capital origin, specialisations or other elements co-deciding about their existence. In consequence, only some of them were able to approve of new conditions of acting, and some of them were forced to give up conducted activity. At the same time, this led to the creation of new economic subjects. Many enterprises which had functioned before 1989 and have been still functioning determined, most of all, a demand barrier as the most difficult element of entering the rules of market economy game. Hitherto existing consumers, brought up in the economy of deficit and, as a rule, buying all the goods offered to them- very often for storing, and suddenly put in a situation of a wide supply range, could or even had to change their shopping habits. The transformation entirely changed hitherto existing demand. There was one more task that firms faced: identification of the market and needs. This was connected with discovering consumers' preferences, proper shaping the supply, proper selection of channels of distribution and sale activation.

Not all socio-professional groups took advantage of economic changes and the introduction of free market and, in this sense, advantage of a new and diverse supply range. The distance between white-collar and blue-collar workers became very distinct, to the advantage of the first ones. There were also considerable disproportions between earnings and consumption of city and country dwellers. The scale of disproportions was accompanied by the phenomenon of unemployment and poverty.

Political changes and, in this sense, the realisation of particular policy took place by means of various instruments and influenced a change in behaviour of market participants both on the side of demand as well as supply. The necessity of adjusting forms of activity to the rules of the economy should have guaranteed the coherence of instruments of policies that have been used: economic and social. The aim of these instruments in relation to society ought to have been a rise in the standard of living then, as well as shaping rational structure of consumption. The transformation of Polish economy in the 90's caused the fact that instruments used by policies, economic and social, were introduced in ill-considered, often

random order, and substitutes for the market economy were not able to eliminate decisions made incorrectly, as it had been taking place in other countries in which free market had been functioning efficiently for years. Macroeconomic policy is directed toward the maintenance or restoration of internal and external balance in a particular country and involves the following policies: fiscal, monetary, exchange rate and incomes. Government is constantly making use of a number of instruments of economic policy, thanks to which it can influence functioning of the economy as a whole. It imposes taxes, commissions orders, influences the amount of money supply and exchange rate. By spending money and imposing taxes, it plays a crucial role in the process of the allocation of resources in the economy, supports a high level of employment and production as well as stable level of prices and economic growth. Economic policy on a micro scale are changes in a branching structure of the economy as well as the influence on the change in incomes and behaviour of particular groups of economic subjects. Government regulates private production providing it with obeying legal regulations, regulations concerning environmental protection, safety and industrial safety. By using tax relieves, it influences rational use of resources and therefore decisions made by government may have an influence on the tendency of particular persons to work, to save money or to invest (Begg, Fischer, Dornbusch 1996, pp.18-19; Begg, Fischer, Dornbusch, 1996, pp.101-102; Kamerschen, McKenzie, Nardinelli, 1991, pp.81-82, p.95). Social policy is the activity of the country and other organisations in the sphere of shaping conditions under which people live and work as well as social relations. The aims of social policy is, among others, to guarantee social security or social order. Social policy involves the activity of health protection policy, employment, education, labour protection, family policy, housing policy, cultural policy or social protection (Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna, 1996, p. 963).

The above mentioned aspects of changes and their consequences have a direct influence on both shaping the structure of incomes as well as expenses of particular households. For, the economy transformation should stimulate economic and social development, including the development of consumption which is characterised by a proper quality and structure as well as it ought to stimulate the structure of incomes, as it results from the fact that both consumption and labour (and payments that are connected with it) are elements of economic structure in a particular country. The level of incomes at the same time reflects material situation of individuals. Their amount and sources are results of households behaviour that is supposed to adjust them to circumstances that exist in the market. For, every consumer has a usual basket of goods and service which he or she purchases and possessed income should enable him or her to carry out their ordinary habits. Consumers' incomes are a total of incomes coming from paid work or social security benefits, savings and various kinds of incomes coming from capital as well as material resources such as, for instance: real estate, works of art, articles of permanent use decreased by charges (Households – selected elements of living conditions of population in the first half year of 1999, pp.12-13)¹.

Changes which occur at the level of incomes are not the same in all social classes. Distinguishing socio-professional groups makes it possible to observe certain models of individual consumers behaviour that have become widespread. The amount of incomes which may be reached in a particular country along with the level of prices of goods and service,

¹ On the basis of GUS (Central Statistical Office) classification: The following are treated as sources of income: income coming from hired labour (permanent and casual in public and private sector), income coming from self-employment, income deriving from privately owned farm, income from property (including interest, share in enterprises' profits, renting the land which is not connected with economic activity), income coming from renting buildings not involving economic activity, social insurance benefits (national pensions and invalidity pensions, unemployment benefits, family allowances, maternity benefits, childcare benefits, funeral benefits, sickness benefits after one has retired, rehabilitation benefits) as well as welfare benefits (benefits and aids paid from the country's budget, local governments as well as help coming from non-commercial institutions) and the remaining income (on account of insurance, donation, tax overpayment, foreign pensions and allowances).

determine an energetic attitude to life and the allocation of labour resources, and, in this sense, also the structure of particular households' incomes. The higher average pay in the economy, the greater the activity of the poorest groups of consumers should be, so that one could find a new and at the same time better paid employment. In Poland, during the transformation of the economy, incomes reached the lowest level as for large families, among the residents of the country and small towns as well as in households in which there were unemployed or persons who earned their living by working in agriculture or who worked physically. Yet, there are no clear tendencies with regard to behaviour aiming at the improvement in financial situation (Kuśmierczyk, Piskiewicz 2000, pp.7-19).

In Poland in 2005, 15 years after the economy transformation, the number of working people amounted to 7639,2 thousand and this number increased by 1,9% in comparison with the end of 2004. People employed in the private sector constituted 56,4% of all working people, and 43,6% in the public sector (Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, 2006, pp.40-41).

In 2005, in comparison with 2004, an increase in employment took place in the following sections of the national economy (Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, 2006, p.47):

- in industry by 1,1%;
- in industrial processing by 2,1%;
- in trade and repairs by 5%;
- in hotels and restaurants by 2,5%;
- in financial agencies by 3,8%;
- in public administration by 2,7% and
- in education by 2,5%.

On the other hand, there was a fall in employment in (Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, 2006, p.47):

- agriculture, hunting and forestry by 0,9%;
- fishing by 3%;
- mining by 3,6%;
- construction by 0,3%;
- transport and communication by 0,2%;
- real estate and firms service by 0,7%;
- health protection and social welfare by 0,3%.

In 2005, an average monthly gross pay amounted to 2389,29 zlotys and increased by 4,7% in comparison with a previous year. At the same time, public sector offered a 2694,23 zlotys pay, and private sector- 2220,76 zlotys. In 2005, in the public sector, a pay increased by 5,4% in comparison with an average pay in 2004, whereas in the private sector by 3,7% (Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, 2006, p.18). Table 3 shows an increase in pay level in particular sections of the economy in comparison with 2004.

Table 3. An increase in monthly gross pay in 2005 according to a section of the national economy.

DETAILED LIST	AN AVERAGE MONTHLY GROSS PAY	THE DYNAMICS OF GROSS PAY (2004=100)
ALTOGETHER	2380,29 zlotys	104,7
Agriculture, hunting, forestry	2519,80	111,3
Fishing	2210,21	105,3
Industry	2539,76	103,1

Mining	4399,12	107,8
Industrial processing	2290,52	102,8
Generating and supplying with electric energy	3293,89	104,3
Construction	2346,73	105,4
Trade and repairs	2345,54	101,2
Hotels and restaurants	1859,17	103,5
Transport and communication	2827,09	102,7
Financial agencies	4450,63	105,9
Real estate and firms service	2571,08	108,6
Public administration and national defence	3060,73	104,6
Education	2479,52	104,3
Health protection and social welfare	1979,41	104,8

Source: Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, Statistical information and compilation, GUS, Warsaw 2006, p.53.

Unemployment rate is still a great problem of Polish labour market. Despite the fact that at the end of 2005 it was lower than the rate recorded in 2004- 19,1% and in 2003- 20,0%, 17,6% was a disadvantageous rate in the aspect of the entire economy as well. The phenomenon of unemployment is the greatest in the following provinces: Warmia- Mazuria (27,5%), West Pomerania (25,6%), Lubuskie (23,3%) as well as Kujawy-Pomerania (22,3%). On the other hand, the lowest unemployment rate was recorded in such provinces as: Małopolska province and Mazovia province (13,8% and 13,8% respectively) as well as Wielkopolska province (14,6%) (Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, 2006, pp. 18, 28-29, 94).

In 2005, there were 2773000 unemployed registered in Poland. The greatest number of people who registered themselves as unemployed lived in Mazovia province – 332500 persons, then in Silesia province – 281300 as well as Lower Silesia province – 233400 persons. On the other hand, the smallest number of registered unemployed lived in the following provinces: Opole province - 69400 persons, Podlasie province – 73200 as well as Lubuskie province – 89200. In 2005, there were 17500 new workplaces offered. Silesia province had the greatest number of new job offers in 2005 – 2700, the least Świętokrzyskie province – 100. All in all, an average number of 158 unemployed was to one job offer in 2005, yet the greatest number – as 1070 persons – was in Świętokrzyskie province, and the smallest – 83 persons – in Małopolska province (Employment and pays in the national economy in 2005, 2006, p.94).

The Poles' opinions concerning the situation in the Polish labour market

Opinions of particular individuals – employers as well as households – are shaped by social, demographical and psychological factors and, as a rule, should not be separated one from another. Combining social and psychological profile of an examined individual (in this case, of a respondent), one should remember about the influence of personality, attitudes, habits, opinions, motives, emotions, norms and values which, as a result, is a kind of a set of indefinable factors (Kusińska, 1999, p. 39; Binkowska, 2000, pp.15-18). In the literature, a simultaneous description of psychological and social characteristics, which is called

psychography, can be found. This involves the analysis of a lifestyle, describes one's actions, family, ties, ways of spending time, activity, interests, views, beliefs, opinions, preferences and priorities. On the other hand, psychography and demographic profile should be treated as complementary descriptions as demographic factors involve some features characteristic for examined population, and psychography aims at including immeasurable and indefinable factors that can determine opinions and behaviour of respondents (Roscoe, Le Clair, Schiffman, in: *Consumer and Industrial Buying Behavior*, 1977, pp. 70-71; Inglik – Dziąg, 1999, p. 11; Falkowski, Tyszka, 2002, pp.97-99).

Factors which directly and indirectly influence opinions of household members enable one to get to know potential characteristics of these persons and understand their behaviour. However, no determinant may influence a final opinion of an individual all by itself. How particular elements are going to be combined, what conclusions concerning chosen topic will be drawn – it is up to a person who makes decisions. At the same time, it should be added that the presentation of the entire, standard mechanism of expressing opinions has to consider both factors directly connected with an individual himself or herself and political, economic and social factors.

If one wants to make an assessment of the situation in the Polish labour market, he or she should most of all begin with the fact that almost two fifths of respondents (78%) believe that the situation in the labour market is bad, at the same time 32% consider this situation as very bad, and 46% as bad. In 2006, only 17% expect that the situation in the labour market is going to improve, but as many as 58% think that it will not change, and, in this sense, improve. As far as the Poles are concerned, unemployment is their greatest fear. Two fifths (41%) are afraid of the loss of employment, out of which 14% are really afraid of it (Evaluation of the situation in the labour market, 2006).

Fear of unemployment may result from the fact that the majority of Polish respondents (61%) was never unemployed, but at the same time two fifths of respondents had experiences both of unemployment and the unemployed. Nowadays, almost 33% of polled households contends with the problem of unemployment. Obviously, unemployment affects the poorest families to the greatest extent, and finding job is, according to respondents, additionally hindered by poor education and lack of qualifications as well as professional experience. What is more, according to them, the problem of unemployment is especially evident in numerous families (Social scope of unemployment in Poland, Report on the Research, 2006).

Nowadays, the Poles believe that the main reasons of unemployment are the following (Attitude toward unemployment and the unemployed, Report on the Research, 2006):

- lack of workplaces (90%),
- graduating from schools after which there are no workplaces and chances of finding job (67%),
- profitability of illegal work (56%),
- making use of the help from the family (52%) and
- lack of qualifications necessary to take up a job in the labour market (51%).

At the same time, Polish society notice negative aspects which are a consequence of unemployment and most of all include the following into these (Attitude toward unemployment and the unemployed, Report on the Research, 2006):

- weak psychological condition of the unemployed (according to 42%),
- approval for exploitation and ill-treatment of the employed at work (according to the opinion of 38%),
- approval for low earnings (37%) and
- impoverishment of families of the unemployed (36%).

High unemployment brings about the fact that the selection of proper methods of job-hunting becomes significant. Despite the diversity and multitude of ways of looking for a job,

their effectiveness may be various. Chances of finding job depend on many factors, among other things, on an employee's characteristics (qualifications, mobility), but also on environment in which an individual exists. As for Polish respondents, it resulted from the poll that the ultimate of professional activity was the period between 25 and 44 years. Due to the fact that Polish unemployment has a long-term character- the unemployed who have not had any job for more than a year constitute the majority- most of all, short-term unemployed (23%) live off benefits, and occasionally long-term ones (2%). In April 2006, 15% of the respondents regarded themselves as the unemployed. 9% were on unemployment benefit and this percentage increased by 1% in comparison with 2005. More than two thirds of jobless respondents (71%) are dependent on their families for support. Casual job is a means of support for almost a half of respondents (47%). Social welfare plays a crucial role in supporting the unemployed (16%). Moreover, 13% live on their savings (cf. table 4) (Social diversity of professional activity , 2005; The unemployed about their situation, 2006).

Table 4. Means of support of the unemployed in 2005 and 2006

Means of support of the unemployed	March 2005 The number of times it was mentioned in %	March 2006 The number of times it was mentioned in %
Are dependent on their families for support	68	71
Casual job	39	47
Social welfare	17	16
Savings	13	13
Unemployment benefit	9	11
Small trade	7	7
Sale of possessed objects	1	4
Money gained not exactly in an honest way	3	4
Steady job	1	1
It is hard to tell	2	1

Source: The unemployed about their situation, Report on the Research, CBOS, Warsaw, April 2006, www.cbos.pl

79% of the unemployed are looking for a steady job and this percentage increased by 6% in comparison with 2005. In order to find a job, the unemployed (The unemployed about their situation , 2006):

- make use of family contacts (77% do so),
- contact employers directly (67%),
- respond to advertisements (63%),
- make use of Labour Offices offers (57%),
- take advantage of contacts from previous job (57%),

- make use of acquaintances from school and college (28%),
- demonstrate resourcefulness and try to set up their own firms (14%).

At the same time, many unemployed were ready to take up a job practically immediately. According to declarations, 78% would take up a job that or the following week. Almost three fourths (72%) of them would be eager to reskill themselves and learn a new profession, and 70% would take up a job outside the place of residence and would commute to work. What is more, determination to find a job would make 64% take up a low-paid and not connected with learned profession job, 53% would go abroad, and 37% would change the place of residence in order to get a job. The same percentage (37%) would decide to establish their own companies if they were given money from a Labour Office (The unemployed about their situation, 2006).

Psycho-sociological aspects play a crucial role in shaping human behaviour in a labour market. Hence, the fact that the Poles believe that an unemployed individual gets the greatest support from the family is not surprising (80% of the respondents thought in such a way in 2005 and 86% in 2006). Friends play a crucial role in bringing help- according to 54% of the respondents in 2005 and 65% in 2006. On the other hand, a small percentage of them believed that one might count on a help from a district- 16% in 2005 and 20% in 2006, from a country- 11% and 19% respectively, non-governmental organisations- 14% and 16%, or their parishes- 9% and 13% (Attitude toward unemployment and the unemployed, 2006).

Working abroad is a crucial element of the improvement in conditions existing in the labour market and the reduction in unemployment. As it turns out from data of Ministry of Economy and Labour from 2004, more than 400 000 Polish people worked in the European Union. According to CBOS research, every seventh respondent has a person in his or her family or the nearest environment who works or worked abroad. 84% of them declare that no one from their families left to take up a job in the EU. Generally, after two years of Polish membership in the European Union the Poles view the presence of Poland on the international arena positively, as a rule. More than 80% of the respondents are supporters of the EU, and only more than 10%- opponents. Supporters of the membership in the European Union point to many positive aspects, among which some concern labour market in fact. Almost two fifths of Polish people (39%) consider a possibility of taking up a job abroad as the greatest advantage resulting from Poland accession to the EU. This is mainly caused by open borders and free flow of persons within the EU (according to 24% of the respondents), but only 3% claim that there are new workplaces in Poland thanks to the EU. The respondents also mention the reduction in unemployment, access to and opportunities of various forms of education and, in this sense, better perspectives for young people as distinct advantages. Of course, negative aspects of integration can also be seen, and the Poles mention the fact that specialists, educated people and young people leave Poland as particularly distinct in the labour market (Assessment of the two years of the EU membership of Poland, 2006).

Polish people choose Germany (28%) and Great Britain (21%) as their main destinations. Moreover, popular destinations are as follows:

- Italy (11%),
- Ireland (7%),
- the Netherlands (7%),
- Belgium (6%),
- France (5%),
- Sweden (4%),
- Spain (3%),
- Greece (3%),
- Austria (3%) as well as

- Cyprus (1%).

75% of the Poles who work abroad work legally, but every fourth is employed illegally. 94% of the respondents have not looked for a job in the EU at all since May 1, 2004, and nowadays only 33% declare that they do not take such an option into consideration. Two thirds would decide to take up a job in the EU. In 2006, according to declarations of the respondents- 54% will look for a legal job abroad, and, what is more, 27% would take up such a job if they were offered one, but they will not make efforts themselves (The Poles work in the European Union countries – Plans and Experience, 2006).

The fact that the above opinions concerning the labour market depend on, to a great extent, a hierarchy of values preferred by Polish society is beyond any doubt. According to the poll, values that are cherished the most by Polish people are:

- health (51%),
- money (46%),
- family (34%),
- work (24%),
- love (11%),
- positive relations with people (9%),
- peaceful and stable life (7%),
- happiness (6%),
- stability in the country and in the world (4%),
- appropriate characteristics (3%),
- friendship (2%),
- house and flat (1%),
- self-realisation and career (1%),
- faith and religion (1%),
- education (1%) (What is the most important in life? , 2006).

On the basis of the above hierarchy, taking particular opinions regarding the labour market into consideration, it may be seen that while the fact that one has a job is crucial for one fourth of the respondents, professional career and self-realisation are not significant elements of a good life.

Polish society fell loyally attached to their work places. Making an assessment of the previous year, the majority of Polish respondents, since as many as 53%, believe that 2005 was very good for their work places, only one fourth claim that it was average, and 16% that it was bad. Such research has been conducted since 1988 and in 2005 an index connected with a good appraisal was the highest, whereas an index connected with a bad appraisal was the lowest. What is more, 47% think that next year will be advantageous for their work places, 35% do not assume any improvement, 11% do not have an opinion, and only 7% declare that the situation will worsen (Assessments of 2005 and prognoses for 2006, 2006).

The following may influence the quality of work: the activity of the unions, working overtime and extra payment, average working hours or satisfaction with work.

According to declarations of 39% of the respondents, the unions function within their work places. 54% declare they are members of the unions (Obeying employees' rights and black economy in employment. Unions in enterprises, 2005).

Main charges against employers are, according to the respondents, overtime work without extra payment as well as disobeying sanitary conditions by employers. 28% claim they sometimes work longer than it is stated in the contract and without any extra pay. According to the opinion of the respondents, 19% of employers do not obey appropriate sanitary conditions. Yet, the regularity of pays is a very positive aspect. More than 90% (92%) claim their salaries or wages are paid regularly (Obeying employees' rights and black

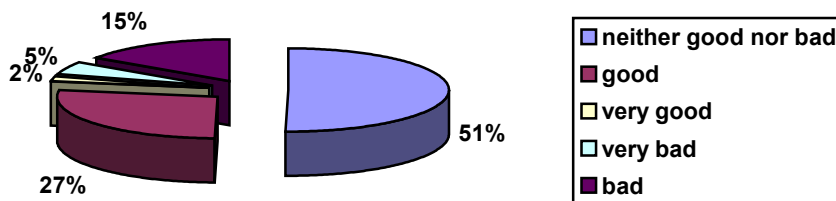
economy in employment. Unions in enterprises, 2005).

Polish people work 8 hours and 27 minutes a day on average, which amounts to 44 hours and 17 minutes a week. According to declarations, women work shorter than men. A woman works 8 hours a day, while a man 8 hours and 53 minutes. Women work 41 hours and 56 minutes a week, whereas men- 46 hours and 30 minutes (Obeying employees' rights and black economy in employment. Unions in enterprises, 2005).

Furthermore, in the case of the opinion concerning work, the percentage of persons declaring satisfaction with their career has been consistently increasing since 1994. 64% of people who have a job declare they are satisfied with it. At the same time, the percentage of those who are not satisfied with their jobs remains almost the same – this percentage amounted to 13% in 2005, while 16% of the respondents in 1994. Despite the satisfaction with work, in 2005 only 20% were satisfied with their financial situation and incomes. Dissatisfaction with these issues was declared by more than a half of the respondents – 51% (The level of satisfaction with life of the Hungarians, the Georgians and the Ukrainians, 2006).

Taking incomes coming from work and possessed wealth into consideration, the Poles the most often, as in the case of 50% of the respondents, believe they live an average life, almost 30% think they have a good life, and 21% are dissatisfied with their lives.

Figure 1. Subjective assessment of living standard (all-Poland research)



Source: CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre), Assessment of material situation, Report on the Research; Warsaw, March 2006

8% of Polish respondents claim they live in poor conditions, 30% that they live modestly, 52% regard their living standards as average, and 10% have good lives (among whom 1% may afford luxurious expenses). What is more, the respondents believe that their incomes are sufficient as far as complete satisfaction of their needs (25%) is concerned. More than 40% think that these needs are nearly fulfilled, and one third claim that their incomes are not sufficient as for the satisfaction of their needs.

Moreover, Polish households noticed the lack of money for:

- holiday and vacation for the children – 59% of the respondents declared so;
- changes in furnishings – 57%;
- expenses for culture – 44%;
- clothing and footwear purchase – 36%;
- treatment – 36%;
- expenses for the maintenance of a flat – 24%;
- food purchase – 25%;
- purchase of hygiene products and household detergents – 20%;

- expenses for education – 21%.

According to the poll carried out on a representative random sample of adult inhabitants of Poland, in 2005 the Poles were very satisfied with their lives in comparison with previous years. Satisfaction with children, marriage, the place of residence, as well as career, the state of one's health and material living conditions was declared. 19% of the respondents declared a complete satisfaction with life, 48% were rather satisfied with it, 27% were generally satisfied with it, and only 5% were dissatisfied (among whom 1% did not feel any satisfaction at all).

Table 5. Satisfaction with life (according to the residents of Poland)

The level of satisfaction with:	Very satisfied	Rather satisfied	Generally satisfied	Rather dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
	In %				
Children	74	21	4	1	1
Marriage	59	27	7	4	2
The place of residence	33	45	13	6	2
Career	22	42	22	9	4
Health	23	34	20	14	9
Material living conditions	8	36	34	14	8
Incomes and financial situation	2	18	28	25	26

* only those respondents who had experience as parents (754), wives or husbands (675), and who had employment (613) evaluated their satisfaction with these domains. "It is hard to tell" answers were omitted.

Source: CBOS, Level of satisfaction with life during the years 1994-2005, Report on the Research, Warsaw, January 2006.

The Poles' satisfaction has been constantly increasing since 1989. In 2005, Polish people were extremely satisfied with their lives in comparison with previous years. In comparison with 1989, when 18% considered themselves lucky people, in 2005 this percentage increased to 31%. The percentage of unlucky people remained almost the same-16% in 1989 and 17% in 2005, while the percentage of persons who could not specify precisely to which group they belonged and replied that "life has its ups and downs" decreased- such people constituted 65% in 1989, and 52% in 2005 (The level of satisfaction with life of the Hungarians, the Georgians and the Ukrainians, 2006).

On the basis of the above data, it can be seen that family life is the most satisfying for the Poles. This tendency (according to CBOS research) has been the same for a dozen or so years. The number of people who declare satisfaction with the place of residence and career has been increasing. Hence, some values cherished by Polish society are timeless and do not depend on the age of the respondents or system determinants, politic and economic changes (The level of satisfaction with life among Polish people during the years 1994-2005, 2006).

Conclusion

Polish labour market has been rapidly changing. It is, most of all, a result of the fact that our economy has been adjusting to the realities of a global labour market. At the same time, on the basis of respondents' opinions that were presented, it might be seen that employees' mentality has been changing as well. Working people are, to a considerable extent, satisfied with their jobs and, what results from it, people have learned to respect both their and someone's work. Along with the end of the country's protective policy in 1989, the Poles became convinced that work was a good which did not come easy and which ought to be valued. Nowadays, effects of these actions may be seen in Poland. People who have employment work hard since they know that the results of work reflect on them. The Poles are young society, as far as Europe is concerned, more and more educated and ready to improve their qualifications. Seeing current dangers, such as unemployment and also the necessity to increase the country's competitiveness on the international arena, employers become more and more aware of the fact that changes in the global economy require enterprises, which function nowadays, to achieve competitive advantage in markets in which competition becomes more and more fierce. As for the 21st century economy, knowledge is one of the most important resources and, at the same time, a factor determining the "strength" and competitiveness of both the economy as well as particular firms. Knowledge has competitive qualities of goods and service, and, apart from that, shows the importance of qualified labour.

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