

Marian NOGA and Angelika JABŁOŃSKA
Wrocław University of Economics

SPECIAL GROUPS OF THE UNEMPLOYED IN OPOLE PROVINCE

1. Introduction

The transformation of the Polish economy has yielded a fast growing unemployment rate. The proportion of the people who stay out of work to the population of Poles available for work is so high at the moment that the problem of unemployment has become the most pending social and economic issue of the time of transformation. This question refers also to the job market in Opole Region.

The most significant determiners of the high growth in the unemployment rate in Opole Province are macroeconomic factors which cause a considerable drop in the demand for labour with a simultaneous rise in the supply of the latter. Among them the following must be enumerated:

1. slowing down of the economic growth rate and stagnation of economy, which does not favour conditions to create new workplaces;
2. a drop in the rate of accretion of workplaces in small and medium-sized enterprises;
3. restructuring processes of the economy, which cause reduction in the employment;
4. introduction of three social reforms that entail restructuring employment in the healthcare system, education and public administration;
5. termination of privatisation agreements which include a ban on reduction of personnel and employers' commitment to stabilize employment in companies.

Other aspects worth enumerating here include the demographic situation of the region and administrative factors. The job market is now being entered by people born in the demographic boom. There is also noted

a high rise in the number of population who are available to work yet are immobile (being over 44 years of age), as well as those acquiring retirement rights and elder ones. A significant role has, too, been played by the health insurance reform. A number of people decided to register at job centres solely to be eligible for medical and insurance-related benefits [*A Report on Research...*, 4].

The aim of this paper is to present the situation in which given groups of the unemployed found themselves in the labour market of Opole Region and also to determine selected structural features of this kind of employment. A proper identification of specific groups affected by unemployment and determination of structural changes in the unemployment rate do have, in the opinion of the writer, a crucial meaning for the labour market policy.

The following groups of the unemployed were included in the present research:

1. women,
2. people living in the country,
3. the unemployed affected by prolonged unemployment,
4. the unemployed due to redundancies,
5. graduates without employment.

The structure of the unemployed in Opole Province in the second half of 2003 was as follows:

Month in 2003	Number of the unemployed	Unemployment rate
January	86,050	19.9
February	85,879	19.8
March	84,880	19.7
April	82,927	19.2
May	80,788	18.8
June	80,117	18.7

2. Women

Women belong to the social groups which are particularly prone to the negative effects of unemployment [Suchoński, 68]. The job markets for women and men are not complementary in principle; nevertheless, because of the specific role performed in the family by women, the dynamics of the rise in the unemployment of this social group is higher than that of men.

Among the total number of the unemployed in Opole Region, in January, the majority were women whose share in the number of the registered unemployed amounted to 52.5% and was lower by 0.8% than the level in December 2002. The highest percentage of the unemployed women was registered in the counties of Krapkowice (59.5%) and Kędzierzyn-Koźle (58.2%), whereas the lowest one in the counties of Prudnik (46.3%) and Nysa (47.4%).

In February 2003, the share of women in the number of the registered unemployed in the Region amounted to 52.2% and was lower than that in January by 0.3%. In comparison with February 2002 it dropped by 1.4%. The highest percentage of the unemployed women was registered in the counties of Krapkowice (59.4%) and Kędzierzyn-Koźle (58.8%), while the lowest in the counties of Prudnik (46.2%) and Nysa (47.1%).

The same situation repeated at the end of March when the share of women in the number of the registered unemployed in the Region amounted to 52.2%, thus remaining on the level of the preceding month. In comparison with February 2002, this index decreased by 1.4%. The highest percentage of the unemployed women was registered in the counties of Krapkowice (60.2%) and Kędzierzyn-Koźle (58.5%), while the lowest in the counties of Prudnik (45.6%) and Nysa (47.0%). In the area of three counties, that is Krapkowice, Strzelce Opolskie and Głubczyce the share of the unemployed women in the total number of the unemployed rose in comparison with that at the end of February 2003, the most so in Krapkowice County since it went up to 0.8%.

At the end of April, the share of women in the number of the registered unemployed in the Region increased by 0.3% in comparison with that in March 2003 and amounted to 52.5%. In comparison with April 2002, this index decreased by 1.5%. The highest percentage of the unemployed women was registered in the counties of Krapkowice (61.5%) and Kędzierzyn-Koźle (58.8%), while the lowest in the counties of Prudnik (46.0%) and Nysa (47.4%). The feminisation index grew in this month in the area of 9 counties, the most so once again in Krapkowice County by 1.3%.

Among the total number of the unemployed at the end of May, women again were in the lead – their share in the number of the registered unemployed in the Region amounted to 53.1%, and it was still another month when the index for the Province went up (a rise by 0.5%) in comparison with April 2003. In comparison with May 2002, the index decreased by 0.6%. The highest percentage of the unemployed women was registered in the counties of Krapkowice (62.4%) and Strzelce Opolskie (58.9%), whereas the lowest one in the counties of Prudnik (47.3%) and

Nysa (48.4.0%). The feminisation index grew in May in the area of 10 counties, the most so in Prudnik County by 1.3%.

The month of June also saw rising of the index of the unemployed women. It grew by 0.7% in relation to May. In comparison with June 2002, this index decreased by 0.5%. The share of women in the total number of the registered unemployed amounted to 53.8%. The highest percentage of the unemployed women was registered in the counties of Krapkowice (63.4%) and Kędzierzyn-Koźle (60.1%), while the lowest in the counties of Prudnik (48.7%) and Nysa (49.0%). A characteristic feature for this month is a rise in the number of the unemployed women (by 188) despite a general drop in the number of the registered unemployed [*Information on the situation...*, 2003].

The situation in the labour market can undoubtedly be influenced positively by flexible forms of employment and organization of work, which – as the experience of the European Union countries shows – facilitate combining the duties at home with professional work [Kryńska, 2001].

3. Inhabitants of the Country

A large group of the unemployed are people living in the country. The Polish countryside, in comparison with that in the countries of the European Union, is very specific. This depends on the percentage of the rural population, which amounts to 38% of the whole population of Poland and almost 28% of the those employed in the national economy system [*A Small Statistical Yearbook...*, 2001; 114 and 140]. A fact that is worth noticing is that throughout the whole period after the War the Polish society has been getting strongly urbanized. The scale of the rural unemployment determines its economic and social rank. It does not appear in the shape and to such extents in the highly developed countries, not even in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe [Czyszkiewicz, 1998, 22].

In the light of Poland's integration with the EU it is a most vital problem to limit the scale of the rural unemployment. The competitiveness of the Polish agriculture in the European market must be raised, which entails reduction in the employment in the agriculture without generating unemployment among farmers and rural population; the economic degradation of the country should also be prevented [Padowicz, 1998, 33]. However, as the data published by the Regional Job Centre in Opole show, a characteristic feature of the Province is that there is a high number of the unemployed inhabitants of the country in this area. From January to June 2003 the index fluctuated, yet it remained on the level above 44% all the time then.

At the end of January, there were 38,424 registered unemployed inhabitants of rural areas. They made for 44.7% of all the unemployed. There was a drop noted here as regards the total number of the unemployed in comparison with December 2002 (by 0.2%). Definitely, the highest percentage of the unemployed inhabitants of the country occurred in the area of Opole County (83.2%), followed by Namysłów County (61.1%). The lowest percentage of the unemployed rural population occurred in the counties of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (25.5%) and Krapkowice (33.0%). The County of Opole City has not been included here due to the fact that there is no rural population in it.

At the end of February, there were registered 38,506 unemployed inhabitants of rural areas. They constituted 44.8% of all the unemployed. In contrast to the total number of the unemployed, the number of the inhabitants of the country without employment rose by 89 people in comparison with January. Again, the highest percentage of the unemployed inhabitants of the country occurred in the area of Opole County (83.2%), and then in Namysłów County (66.0%). The lowest percentage of the unemployed rural population occurred in the counties of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (25.5%) and Krapkowice (33.5%).

The end of March saw fewer registered unemployed inhabitants of rural areas, whose number amounted to 37,989. Like in February, they made for 44.8% of all the unemployed. The highest percentage of the unemployed inhabitants of the country occurred in the area of Opole County (83.4%), and Namysłów County (66.0%). The lowest percentage of the unemployed rural population occurred in the counties of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (25.7%) and Krapkowice (33.3%).

In April, the number of the registered unemployed inhabitants of rural areas dropped to a total of 37,077, which amounted to 44.7% of all the unemployed. In comparison with March the share decreased by 0.1%. Definitely, the highest percentage of the unemployed inhabitants of the country occurred in the area of Opole County (83.5%), and then in Namysłów County (66.1%). In both of them the percentage grew by 0.1% despite the general decreasing tendency. The lowest percentage of the unemployed rural population occurred in the counties of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (25.5%) and Krapkowice (33.9%).

At the end of May, the number of the registered unemployed inhabitants of rural areas again lowered to amount to 35,855. They constituted 44.4% of all the unemployed, which means that in comparison with April the share dropped by 0.3%. The highest percentage of the unemployed inhabitants of the country occurred in the area of Opole County (83.7%), followed by Namysłów County (66.4%). The lowest percentage of the

unemployed rural population occurred in the counties of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (25.0%) and Krapkowice (33.9%).

At the end of June, the number of the registered unemployed inhabitants of rural areas again lowered to amount to 35,478. They constituted 44.3% of all the unemployed, which means that in comparison with May the share dropped by 0.1%. The highest percentage of the unemployed inhabitants of the country occurred in the area of Opole County (83.2%), then in Namysłów County (66.5%). The lowest percentage of the unemployed rural population was noted in the counties of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (24.9%) and Krapkowice (33%) [*Information on the situation...*].

4. Prolonging unemployment

The high and constant rise in the number of the unemployed affected by prolonging unemployment, that is those staying out of work for over 12 months, is a greatly worrying occurrence. Their long-lasting professional inactivity decreases the chance to undertake employment and de-motivates the unemployed who might look for jobs more efficiently. They lose contact with work environment, with the structural changes that undergo in it, which result from progress in technology and organisation of work. Also their professional qualifications become weakened. The length of the period of staying out of work is not without importance to the potential employer, either, who might be convinced that the time is related to the mobility of those seeking employment.

The occurrence of prolonging unemployment is directly connected with the number of the unemployed who have no rights to be granted unemployment benefit.

At the end of January 2003, there were 72,791 registered people without the right of unemployment benefit, that is by 2,362 more than in December 2002. This group constituted as much as 84.6% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the data for December 2002, the share grew by 0.2%. Also in this category of the unemployed one can notice a considerable differentiation as far as job centres are concerned. In the County Job Centre in Nysa there were 78.8% of the unemployed who were not eligible for the unemployment benefit, whereas in Opole County the corresponding share amounted to 90.2%.

The end of January 2003 saw 72,866 people without the right of unemployment benefit, that is by 75 more than in the preceding month. This group constituted as much as 84.8% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the preceding month the share increased by another 0.2%. Also as regards this category one can notice a considerable differentiation as far as job centres are concerned. In the County

Job Centre in Nysa there were 79.5% of the unemployed who were not eligible for the unemployment benefit, whereas in Opole County the corresponding share amounted to 90.3%.

At the end of March 2003, there were 72,460 registered people without the right of unemployment benefit, that is by 406 fewer people than in February. This group constituted 85.4% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the data for February 2003, the share grew by another 0.6%. In the County Job Centre in Nysa there were 79.8% of the unemployed who were not eligible for the unemployment benefit, whereas in Opole County the corresponding share amounted to 91.1%.

At the end of April 2003, there were 71,338 people without the right of unemployment benefit, that is by 1,122 fewer people than in the preceding month. This group constituted 86.0% of the total number of the unemployed. Despite a fairly big drop in the number of the registered unemployed their share increased in comparison with the preceding month by 0.6%. In the County Job Centre in Nysa there were 80.7% of the unemployed who were not eligible for the unemployment benefit, whereas in Opole County the corresponding share amounted to 92.4%.

The end of May 2003 saw 69,706 people without the right of unemployment benefit, that is by 1,632 fewer people than in April. This group constituted 86.3% of the total number of the unemployed. Despite a fairly big drop in the number of the registered unemployed their share increased in comparison with the preceding month by another 0.3%. In the County Job Centre in Nysa there were 81.1% of the unemployed who were not eligible for the unemployment benefit, whereas in Opole County the corresponding share amounted to as much as 92.6%.

At the end of June 2003, there were 69,503 people without the right of unemployment benefit, that is by 203 fewer people than in the preceding month. This group constituted 86.8% of the total number of the unemployed. Despite the drop in the number of the registered unemployed their share increased in comparison with the preceding month by another 0.5%. In the County Job Centre in Nysa there were 82.67% of the unemployed who were not eligible for the unemployment benefit, whereas in Opole County the corresponding share amounted to 92.7% [*Information on the situation...*].

5. Redundancies by reason of the employer

Another feature characterizing the Polish labour market is a large scale of dismissals due to reasons lying on the side of the employer, that is redundancies.

In the month of January, there were 394 people who had been made redundant by their employers and registered in the job centres in Opole Region. This number is higher by 54 than that from December of the previous year. The majority of people belonging to this category came to the job centres in Opole and Nysa (89 people). At the end of the month the registers of the unemployed in Opole Region showed 7,611 people made redundant because of the employer (8.8% of the total number of the unemployed). The intention of making their personnel redundant in the financial month was reported by 8 companies. Among them there were four that represented the public sector, intending to make 35 people redundant, as well as 4 firms from the private sector, intending to reduce a total of 107 of their personnel.

In February, the job centres of Opole Region registered 214 people made redundant because of the employer, that is by 180 fewer than in January. The largest number of the people belonging to this category called at the job centres based in Opole (48 people) and in Nysa (47 people). At the end of the month the registers of the unemployed in Opole Region showed 7,405 people made redundant because of the employer (8.6% of the total number of the unemployed). The intention of making their personnel redundant was reported by 12 companies. Among them there were 8 that represented the public sector, intending to make 136 people redundant, and also 4 firms from the private sector, intending to reduce a total of 171 of their personnel.

In March, the job centres of Opole Region registered 183 people made redundant because of the employer, and that is by 31 fewer than in February. The largest number, that is 82 people, called at the job centre in Opole. At the end of the month the registers of the unemployed in Opole Region showed 7,152 people made redundant because of the employer (8.4% of the total number of the unemployed). The intention of making their personnel redundant was reported by 8 companies. Among them there were 5 in the public sector, intending to make 43 people redundant, and also 3 firms from the private sector, intending to reduce the total of 125 of their personnel.

In April, the job centres of Opole Region registered 219 people made redundant because of the employer, that is by 36 more than in March. Like in the previous months the most people belonging to this category called at the job centre in Opole (61 people). At the end of the month the registers of the unemployed in Opole Region showed 6,910 people made redundant because of the employer, which made for 8.3% of the total number of the unemployed. The intention of making their personnel redundant in the financial month was reported by 22 companies. Among them there were 14 that represented the public sector, intending to

make 240 people redundant, and also 8 firms from the private sector, intending to reduce 215 people. This is a considerable increase in comparison with the preceding month, in which the intention of making a total of 168 personnel redundant was reported by 8 companies. The largest number of employers planning redundancies were based in the City of Opole – a total of 8 firms intending to make 223 people redundant.

In May, the job centres of Opole Region registered 307 people made redundant because of the employer, and that is by 88 fewer than in April. The largest number called at the job centre in Nysa (82 people). At the end of the month the registers of the unemployed in Opole Region showed 6,719 people made redundant because of the employer, which amounted to 8.3% of the total number of the unemployed. The intention of making their personnel redundant was reported by 14 companies. Among them there were 6 based in the public sector, intending to make 81 people redundant, and also 8 firms from the private sector, intending to reduce a total of 168 of their personnel. The biggest planned reduction of personnel was reported to the County Job Centre in Krapkowice, where two companies planned reduction of 115 people.

In June, the job centres of Opole Region registered 249 people made redundant because of the employer, and that is by 58 fewer than in May. The largest number, that is 73 people, called at the job centre in Opole. At the end of the month the registers of the unemployed in Opole Region showed 6,526 people made redundant because of the employer, which made for 8.1% of the total number of the unemployed. The intention of making their personnel redundant was reported by 13 companies: 6 from the public sector, intending to make 43 people redundant, and also 9 firms from the private sector, intending to reduce a total of 874 of their personnel. The largest planned redundancy was reported to the County Job Centre in Brzeg, where 4 companies planned reduction of 436 people [*Information on the situation...*].

6. Unemployment among graduates of schools and colleges of higher education

A worrying phenomenon in the Polish labour market is also the number of young people looking for jobs, that is the population ranging between 24 and 35 years of age, including unemployed graduates of schools and colleges of higher education.

The unemployment rate among graduates to a great extent depends on seasons, which results from the cycle of learning at schools. The sources of unemployment among this group should be seen, apart from

economic and social reasons, also in the fact that the system of teaching does not adjust to the fast changing economic reality, and – what is connected with it – to the needs of the labour market. Due to a considerable influence of technology, organization of work and high competitiveness, as well as internationalisation of the production process of the labour market, the education system should take into account the following ideas:

- departure from narrow specializations,
- departure from life-long occupations,
- elimination of simple and repetitive tasks,
- a shift from physical to mental work,
- appearance of new professions and changes in the existing ones [Czajka, 1997, 12].

January 2003 saw 673 graduates who called at the county job centres in Opole Region. This number is lower than that of the preceding month by 118 people. The share of graduates in the total number of new registrations dropped in this period from 12.3% to 9.1%, the largest number being constituted by graduates with basic vocational education (200 people). At the same time there were 780 graduates to be crossed out in the register of unemployed graduates (in December – 662 people). Of this group 241 people took up jobs and 266 were directed to graduates' practices. On 31st January, 2003, the number of unemployed graduates in Opole Province amounted to 3,766 people, *i.e.* 4.4% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with December the number decreased by 107 people.

In February, there were 589 graduates to call at the county job centres, which is by 84 people fewer than in the preceding month. Despite this the share of graduates in the total number of new registrations increased in this period from 9.1% to 12.4%. The largest number was constituted by graduates with secondary vocational education (201 people). At the same time there were 579 graduates to be crossed out in the register of unemployed graduates (in January – 780 people). Of this group 185 people took up jobs and 172 were directed to graduates' practices. At the end of February, the number of unemployed graduates in Opole Province amounted to 3,776 people, *i.e.* 4.4% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the preceding month the number increased by 10 people.

In March, there were 682 graduates who called at the county job centres, which is by 93 people more than in the preceding month. The share of graduates in the total number of new registrations increased in this period from 12.4% to 14.3%, the largest number being constituted by graduates with secondary vocational education (247 people) and higher

education (237 people). At the same time there were 749 graduates crossed out in the register of unemployed graduates (in February – 579 people). Of this group 218 people took up employment and 363 were directed to graduates' practices. At the end of March, the number of unemployed graduates in Opole Province amounted to 3,709 people, *i.e.* 4.4% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the preceding month the number dropped by 67 people.

In April, there were 646 graduates to call at the county job centres, which is by 364 people fewer than in March. The share of graduates in the total number of new registrations amounted to 13.4%. The largest number was constituted by graduates with secondary vocational education (238 people). At the same time there were 882 graduates crossed out in the register of unemployed graduates (in March – 749 people). Of this group 222 people took up employment and 204 were directed to graduates' practices. On 30th April, 2003, the number of unemployed graduates in Opole Province amounted to 3,473 people, *i.e.* 4.2% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the preceding month the number decreased by 236 people.

In May, there were 603 graduates who called at the county job centres, which is by 43 people fewer than in the preceding month. The share of graduates in the total number of new registrations amounted to 11.9%. The largest number was constituted by graduates with higher education (207 people). At the same time there were 970 graduates crossed out in the register of unemployed graduates (in April – 882 people). Of this group 295 people took up jobs and 247 were directed to graduates' practices. In May, the number of unemployed graduates in Opole Province amounted to 3,106 people, *i.e.* 3.8% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the preceding month the number decreased by 367 people.

The month of June saw 1,269 graduates call at the county job centres, and the number is more than twice as high as that in the preceding month. The share of graduates in the total number of new registrations in June amounted to 20.8%. The largest number was constituted by graduates with secondary vocational education (687 people). At the same time there were 2,855 graduates crossed out in the register of unemployed graduates (in May – 970 people). Of this group 166 people took up employment and 118 were directed to graduates' practices. The decisive majority lost their status of the graduate one year after completing their education. On 30th June, 2003, the number of unemployed graduates in Opole Province amounted to 1,520 people, *i.e.* 1.9% of the total number of the unemployed. In comparison with the preceding month the number decreased by 1,586 people [*Information on the situation...*].

7. Conclusion

The currently adopted policy related to the labour market is not able to overcome the crisis we have encountered in this area. There is a considerable risk that even far-fetched extension of the range of active policy of the job market will not lead to eliminating massive unemployment. The consistent effort to decrease the imbalance in the labour market somehow enforces acceptance of the priority to limit the unemployment rate as one of the crucial objectives of the economic policy. This is due to the need to create new workplaces to meet the growing demand and also because of the condition of our economy, in which the other markets enjoy a relative balance [Kryńska; 62]. The macroeconomic policy, which should aim at stimulating the demand for labour, appears to hold the key position in the process of decreasing the unemployment rate among the groups presented in this paper. Obviously, the active policy of the job market should not be eliminated as it is to be implemented along the macroeconomic policy. Its task, however, should chiefly rest on expanding the significance of employment agency services, professional counselling, and also organising trainings and retraining schemes for people looking for jobs. Undoubtedly, it is worth observing that the dynamically changing situation in the job market, manifesting itself in a rise in the demand as regards newly-employed workers often requires the latter to retrain. Additionally, the continuing demand to raise professional qualifications, to develop mobility and the skill of adapting to the new situation are becoming more and more indispensable in the process of finding employment nowadays.

Literature

- Czajka, Z., „Rynek pracy a system edukacji” (“The job market and the educational system”), in: *Praca i Zabezpieczenie Społeczne (Labour and Social Security) No. 3, 1997*, p. 12.
- Czyszkiewicz, R., „Bezrobocie wiejskie w Polsce lat dziewięćdziesiątych” (“The rural unemployment in Poland of the 90s”), in: *Rynek Pracy (Labour Market) No. 10, 1998*, p. 22.
- Kryńska, E., „Elastyczność zatrudnienia w Polsce i w Unii Europejskiej” (“Flexibility of employment in Poland and in the United Europe”), in: *Gospodarka Narodowa (The National Economy) No. 1/2, 2001*.
- Kryńska, E., *Dylematy polskiego rynku pracy (The Dilemmas of the Polish Labor Market)*, p. 62.
- Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski 2001 (A Small Statistical Yearbook for Poland in 2001)*. GUS Warszawa, pp. 114 and 140, 2001.
- Padowicz, W., „Zatrudnienie i bezrobocie na wsi i w rolnictwie – trudny problem integracji z UE” (“Employment and unemployment in the country and in agriculture – a difficult problem of integration with the EU”), in: *Rynek Pracy (Labour Market) No. 10, 1998*, p. 33.
- Regional Job Centre in Opole, *Information on the Situation in the Labour Market in 2003. A Report on Research and Information On Labour Market*, Regional Job Centre, Opole, p. 4.
- Suchoński, A. *The Situation of Special Groups of the Unemployed in the Polish Job Market*, Scientific Volumes of Higher Banking School, vol. No. 2, p. 68.