

## LABOUR MARKET AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF LUBUSKIE VOIVODESHIP'S RESIDENTS, CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the publication is to present changes in the Lubuskie labor market and their impact on the living conditions of the local community.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The paper uses statistical data and source materials.

**Findings:** The article presents the most important issues related to the labor market and analyzes key indicators, GDP dynamics, employment rate, directions of social policy development in order to present the changes taking place in Lubuskie province.

**Originality/value:** The article is aimed at people interested in analyzing the labor market, living conditions of the population, people also interested in regional policy.

**Keywords:** labour market, regional development, region, Lubuskie Voivodeship.

**Paper category:** research paper.

### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, when the labour market and living conditions of the inhabitants of the Lubuskie Voivodeship are increasingly becoming the area of various research, an attempt was made to examine the relationship between these two factors. This region, located on the western border of Poland, is a unique subject of research on these connections, taking into account its specific challenges and development prospects.

The aim of this paper is to analyse current and future trends in the Lubuskie labour market and their impact on the living conditions of the local community. For this purpose, it is necessary to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities related to economic development, employment and quality of life of the population. The specific objectives of this work focus on the following areas: 1) The current situation on the Lubuskie labour market, taking into account key indicators such as the unemployment rate, salary level and employment structure, 2) Key economic sectors in the region and identification of their potential and challenges, 3) Assessment of the impact of the labour market on the living conditions of the

population in terms of income, education and access to health care, 4) Forecasts and scenarios for the development of the labour market and living conditions in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, considering global factors such as demographic trends and climate changes, 5) Identification of potential public policies and initiatives that can improve the labour market and the quality of life of the voivodeship's inhabitants.

## **2. The labour market and the living conditions of residents**

The Lubuskie Voivodeship is located in the western part of Poland, covering an area of 13,988 km<sup>2</sup>, which means that it covers 4.8% of the country's area. It borders on three voivodeships, and the western border of the region is also the border between Poland and Germany. From the east, Lubuskie borders with the Wielkopolska Voivodeship, in the south with the Lower Silesia Voivodeship, and in the north with the West Pomerania Voivodeship. The Lubuskie Voivodeship consists of 12 counties and 82 communes, of which 39, i.e. the majority, are rural communes, 34 are urban-rural communes and 9 urban communes. The level of industrialization of this region is associated with the largest economic centres in two main cities – Zielona Góra and Gorzów Wielkopolski and industrial zones located in the Special Economic Zone in Kostrzyn, Słubice, Nowa Sól and Gubin (Social Policy Strategy..., 2021, p. 14).

Lubuskie Voivodeship is located in the central-western part of Poland. The region's area is 13,988 km<sup>2</sup> (4.5% of the country's area), which places Lubuskie in 13th place among Polish provinces. With a population of just over 1 million people, the region is the second voivodeship in the country with the smallest population (after the Opolskie Voivodeship). Lubusz citizens make up 2.6% of Poland's population. Lubuskie borders the Greater Poland Voivodeship to the east, the Lower Silesia Voivodeship to the south, and the West Pomeranian Voivodeship to the north (Development Strategy of Lubuskie Province 2030, 2021, p. 5).

An asset of the region, but also a challenge, is its inter-metropolitan location - proximity to the Berlin, Wrocław, Poznań and Szczecin agglomerations, as well as accessibility to strategic transportation routes of international importance. Two corridors of the base network of the Trans-European Transport Network TEN-T, North Sea-Baltic and Baltic-Adriatic, with the A2 highway (Berlin-Warsaw) running along them - latitudinally, and the S3 expressway (Swinoujście-Lubawka) running longitudinally. The TEN-T comprehensive road network, meanwhile, includes national road No. 18 (A18), which is part of the Berlin - Wrocław route. Thanks to its favorable location, Lubuskie Voivodeship is an attractive area for investment, settlement and leisure. Extensive cooperation and progressive integration with German neighbors, as well as the activity of various institutions (including businesses, educational and cultural institutions), taking advantage of the resulting opportunities, create favorable conditions for the development of the voivodeship (Development..., 2021, p. 5).

The current situation on the Lubuskie labour market, taking into account key indicators such as the unemployment rate, salary level and employment structure. According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in the fourth quarter of 2018, the number of economically active population (i.e., according to the survey's definition, the number of people considered employed or unemployed) in Lubuskie Province was 436 thousand. In relation to the same quarter of the previous year, this number decreased by 7.0 thousand, i.e. by 1.6%, with both the number of employed (by 1.2%) and the number of unemployed (by 13.3%) being lower than in the fourth quarter of 2017 (Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, 2019, p. 14).

Labour market in Lubuskie Voivodship in 2019. According to the results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) conducted in 2020, the number of economically active people aged 15 and over in the Lubuskie Voivodship decreased annually. The number of employed people also decreased and the number of economically inactive people increased, as a result of which the burden of the working population on the non-working population increased in 2020. To illustrate: there were 863 unemployed people per 1,000 workers, more than a year earlier. The economic activity rate and the LFS employment rate then decreased year on year (Statistical Publishing House, 2021, p. 12). During the Labour Force Survey, professionally active and inactive people were subjected to a detailed analysis depending on their place of residence, the results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Division into active and passive people by place of residence*

Specification	Professionally active						Professionally passive		
	total (in thousands)			working (in thousands)			2018	2020	2021
Year	2018	2020	2021	2018	2020	2021	2018	2020	2021
Total	436	433	432	423	424	423	359	357	347
Cities	286	283	282	278	277	277	232	230	221
Villages	150	151	149	145	147	146	128	127	126

Source: Own study based on: Labour market in Lubuskie Voivodship in 2020, Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, Statistical Publishing House, Zielona Góra, 2018, p. 14; Labour market in Lubuskie Voivodship in 2020, Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, Statistical Publishing House, Zielona Góra, 2020, p. 14; Labour market in Lubuskie Voivodship in 2020, Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, Statistical Publishing House, Zielona Góra, 2021, p. 14.

According to the obtained results, out of a total number of 433 thousand professionally active people in 2020 in the Lubuskie Voivodship, 424 thousand are working people, of which 277 thousand are urban residents, and 147 thousand are villagers. Among the professionally inactive (357 thousand), 230 thousand are city dwellers, and 127 thousand – village inhabitants. There was little variation in the rate depending on place of residence. The employment rate of urban residents increased slightly by 0.2 percentage points to 54.1% compared to the previous year. The employment rate among rural residents amounted to 52.9% and was 0.9 percentage point lower than a year earlier. The majority of employees (65.3%) were urban residents, numbering 277,000, unchanged from the previous year. 147,000 people worked in the countryside, which was 0.4% less than a year earlier (Statistical Publishing House, 2021, p. 17).

In 2020, the number of job admissions in enterprises employing nine or more employees decreased compared to the previous year, but the most admissions were recorded in industry and the transport and warehousing branch (Statistical Publishing House, 2021, p. 12).

The 2020 LFS study provided interesting data on the relationship between professional activity and education of the voivodeship's inhabitants. It was found that employment rates varied significantly by educational level. The highest employment rate, but 0.9 percentage points lower than a year ago, was recorded among people with higher education, at 79.2%. In the group with post-secondary and secondary vocational education, the employment rate was 57.3%, which meant a decrease by 2.8 percentage points, and in the group with basic vocational education it was 55.7%, i.e. a decrease by 0.1 percentage point. The employment rate of people with general secondary education was 51.8%, which meant a decrease of 0.7 percentage points compared to 2019. The lowest employment rate was recorded among people with lower secondary education, primary education and no education and amounted to 15.3% (Statistical Publishing House, 2021, p. 18).

The labor force participation rate, i.e. the percentage of the economically active population between the ages of 15 and 89, has been increasing slightly in recent years. Its value in 2021 was 55.5%, up 0.3 percentage points from the previous year. Nationally, the labor force participation rate was 57.8%, 2.0 percentage points higher than in the previous year. In all provinces, the value of this indicator was higher than the year-ago figure, ranging from 52.9% in the Subcarpathian Voivodeship to 61.9% in the Mazovian Voivodeship. Thus, Lubuskie ranked 12th ahead of the West Pomeranian, Silesian, Warmian-Masurian and Subcarpathian provinces.

In 2021, the labor force participation rate for men was 64.1%, 16.7 percentage points higher than that for women. In relation to the previous year, the labor force participation rate for men decreased 0.5 percentage points (against an increase of 0.5 percentage points in 2020), while in the female population it increased by 1.0 percentage points (to 47.4%, against a decrease of 0.4 percentage points a year ago) (Statistical Publishing House, 2022, p. 15).

Key economic sectors in the region and identification of their potential and challenges. There are enterprises representing almost all economic sectors in the Lubuskie Voivodeship: food, printing, paper, chemical and furniture. The economic sector that is particularly strongly represented is construction. The numerous presence of industrial plants of various sizes allows for the sustainable use of local raw material resources. In the Lubuskie Voivodeship, the number of registrations of new enterprises is relatively high, but in the case of enterprises operating on the market for many years, the level of adaptation to changes in the market and business reality is often unsatisfactory. They adapt poorly to new challenges and opportunities, as evidenced by a decrease in the number of national economy entities per 1,000 inhabitants, which is observed in more than half of the communes of the Lubuskie Voivodeship. Insufficient market activity of entrepreneurs is one of the most serious economic problems affecting the Lubuskie Voivodeship, leading to growing problems that must be understood by representatives of local governments of the region's communes ([bip.lubuskie.pl](http://bip.lubuskie.pl)).

Due to the data collected in the “Socio-economic diagnosis of the Lubuskie Voivodeship” from 2019, it was established that in 2016 the Gross Domestic Product in the voivodeship amounted to PLN 41,348 million, which represented 2.2% of the national GDP. The years 2012 and 2014 saw the highest GDP dynamics in the Lubuskie Voivodeship on a national scale, while in 2013, 2015 and 2016 the lowest GDP rate was recorded than the national average (bip.lubuskie.pl). The data in question are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**

*Dynamics of Gross Domestic Product in the Lubuskie Voivodeship compared to other voivodeships*

	Total GDP dynamics over 5 years				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Lubuskie	102,3	100,4	103,8	102,9	102,6
Poland	100,6	101,4	103,3	103,8	103,1
The place of the Lubuskie Voivodeship among voivodeships in terms of GDP growth dynamics	3	13	3	11	8

Source: Own study based on: *Socio-economic diagnosis of the Lubuskie Voivodeship*, 2019, p. 23, [https://bip.lubuskie.pl/system/obj/43883\\_Diagnoza\\_strategiczna.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1vppREBPxcYBBd2t3MsUQyhzzMV5lkCdMX-rq5knzxqVslPPYzGejJ7FY](https://bip.lubuskie.pl/system/obj/43883_Diagnoza_strategiczna.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1vppREBPxcYBBd2t3MsUQyhzzMV5lkCdMX-rq5knzxqVslPPYzGejJ7FY), 10.11.2023.

According to the data in Table 2, in the years 2012-2016 the Lubuskie Voivodeship approached the results of the national average GDP per capita, i.e. from 83% in 2012 to 83.9% in 2016. Although there was a slight increase in this indicator, it was recognized as a positive signal and the possibility of reversing the trend from 2005-2011. During this period, the level of GDP increased, but its percentage decreased. This was mainly because there was a dynamic development of neighbouring voivodeships in which there were large urban agglomerations (bip.lubuskie.pl).

**Table 3.**

*GDP in Lubuskie province over 2016-2022*

Title	Total gross domestic product						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	[mln zł]	[mln zł]	[mln zł]	[mln zł]	[mln zł]	[mln zł]	[mln zł]
<b>Poland</b>	1 853 205	1 982 794	2 126 506	2 288 492	2 337 672	2 631 302	3 067 495
<b>Lubuskie</b>	41 262	43 412	46 099	48 996	50 026	56 102	65 163

Source: Own study based on: Statistical Office, Local Data Bank, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/>, 8.01.2024.

**Table 4.**

*Total gross domestic product dynamics*

Title	Total gross domestic product dynamics, previous year = 100						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]	[%]
<b>Poland</b>	103,0	107,0	107,2	107,6	102,1	112,6	116,6
<b>Lubuskie</b>	103,5	105,2	106,2	106,3	102,1	112,1	116,1

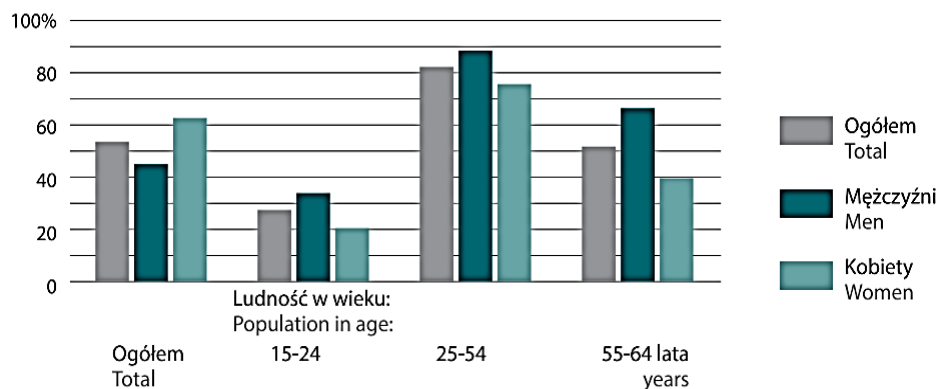
Source: Own study based on: Statistical Office, Local Data Bank, <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/>, 8.01.2024.

Assessment of the impact of the labour market on the living conditions of the population in terms of income, education and access to health care. In 2020, the average monthly gross salary in the Lubuskie Voivodeship increased further compared to the previous year, representing 87.6% of the national average. The number of beneficiaries of pensions and annuities paid by the Social Insurance Institution continued to increase, but the number of beneficiaries of the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund decreased (Statistical Publishing House, 2021, p. 12). The structure of the labour market influences the occurrence of various types of negative behaviour in society. Among such problems occurring in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, alcoholism and drug addiction pose a serious threat because they are particularly important due to their complexity, social and economic costs. The negative effects of alcohol and drug abuse, caused by various factors – including unemployment, are widely known and can be observed in many areas of social life (Municipal Program for...). One of the undesirable phenomena associated with alcoholism is the destabilization of families. It was noticed that the main reasons for placing children in foster care, also in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, are the parents' alcoholism as well as care and educational insufficiency. Other important reasons for placing children in family foster care are: semi-orphanhood, the presence of at least one of the parents abroad and the disability of at least one of the parents. According to data from Lubuskie orphanages, as of March 31, 2020, there were 33 homes in the region with 521 children ([bip.lubuskie.pl](http://bip.lubuskie.pl)).

According to data from the “Social Policy Strategy of the Lubuskie Voivodeship for 2021-2030”, residents of the Lubuskie Voivodeship have a total of 23 hospitals at their disposal, functioning as hospital treatment facilities. In 2019, there were 573 clinics in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, most of them located in the commune of Zielona Góra (108 clinics) and Gorzów Wielkopolski (82 clinics). Taking into account the number of facilities in the voivodeship, most (63 facilities) are located in the Nowa Sól district and the least in the Wschowa district. According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO), health care expenses increased by 12% in 2019 and amounted to an average of PLN 63.84 per household member per month. Employment in this sector in 2019 in the Lubuskie Voivodeship was as follows: 4,415 nurses and a total of 2,610 doctors, 551 paramedics, 474 physiotherapists, 568 midwives and 246 dentists were employed in health facilities. The least numerous staff were physiotherapists (22), clinical psychologists (40) and psychologists (151), which may not be sufficient considering the large number of people struggling with various types of psychological problems (Social Policy Strategy..., p. 48).

Forecasts and scenarios for the development of the labour market and living conditions in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, considering global factors such as demographic trends and climate change. When attempting to shape the direction of social policy development, key demographic data should be taken into account: 1) total population, 2) age groups in the economic context, 3) population structure by gender, 4) population structure by urban and rural areas, and 5) demographic dependency ratio (Social Policy Strategy..., p. 17). Age groups in an economic context can be traced with the example of employment. In 2020, in the Lubuskie

Voivodeship, the highest employment rate was recorded among people aged 35-44, it amounted to 86.7% and meant an increase of 1.5 percentage points every year. The age group 45-54 also recorded a high rate of 80.5%, but it was a decrease of 2.1 percentage points, and the age group 25-34 – 78.7% (an increase of 1.5 percentage points). In the remaining age groups, specifically from 15 to 24 years and over 55 years of age, employment rates were much lower and amounted to 27.5% and 24.9%, respectively (Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, p. 17). The data in question is presented in the chart in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Employment rate in the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2020.

Source: *Labour market in Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2020*, Statistical Office in Zielona Góra, Statistical Publishing House, Zielona Góra, 2021, p. 17.

However, the analysis of data for the years 2014-2019 confirmed the downward trend forecast in the “Social Diagnosis of the Lubuskie Voivodeship” until 2020 in terms of the total population and the working-age population. In terms of the total population, the projected decrease in the number of inhabitants was to amount to 1,007,600, and population of working age to 597,700. It was forecast that in 2030 the population of the voivodeship would amount to 979,702, which means a decrease of approximately 3.15% compared to 2019 (Social Policy Strategy..., p. 18). Demographic changes are observed especially in the distribution according to the place of residence, where, according to the statistics of the Central Statistical Office, the increasing trend in the number of rural inhabitants applies only to people of post-working age, while in other categories significant declines are observed in this area (Social Policy Strategy..., p. 19). The small number of specialists, such as clinical psychologists and employment psychologists in health facilities, is a cause for concern, considering the large number of people with mental problems resulting from various factors diagnosed in the Lubuskie Voivodeship.

Identification of potential public policies and initiatives that can improve the labour market and the quality of life of the voivodeship’s inhabitants. According to data published by the Central Statistical Office in 2020, a large number of people with disabilities live in the Lubuskie Voivodeship. It even turned out that the Lubuskie Voivodeship took first place in Poland with an indicator of 886 people per 10,000 inhabitants. This group also includes people with certificates of incapacity for work. Due to this situation, the Lubuskie Voivodeship has undertaken actions to counteract the phenomenon of exclusion and other negative effects of

disability. These activities include social and vocational rehabilitation, through activities at occupational therapy workshops, and vocational rehabilitation, including sheltered workshops and professional activity (Social Policy Strategy..., pp. 30-31). Occupational therapy workshops, of which there are 19 in the region, are facilities providing rehabilitation in order to acquire skills needed for employment. On the other hand, sheltered workshops and vocational activity centres aim at vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

In 2020, in the Lubuskie Voivodeship, there were 39 employers who received the status of a sheltered workshop, including two cooperatives for disabled people. Two of them had the status of disabled people's cooperatives (Social Policy Strategy..., p. 31). The alcohol problem, drug addiction and other addictions is of particular interest to local authorities due to the negative effects on the local community and the labour market. This phenomenon is even more disturbing because, according to the study "Diagnosis of the use of psychoactive substances by residents of the Lubuskie Voivodeship" ([polityka-spoleczna.lubuskie.pl](http://polityka-spoleczna.lubuskie.pl)) conducted by Sławomir Koziel in 2015, the number of people consuming alcohol in the Lubuskie Voivodeship ranges from 45% to 81%. The highest alcohol consumption among residents was recorded in the following counties: ślubiński (81%), żarski (76%), wschowski (75%) and nowosolski (74%). When developing the "Municipal Program for the Prevention and Solving of Alcohol Problems and Counteracting Drug Addiction in the City of Zielona Góra for 2021", the recommendations of the State Agency for Solving Alcohol Problems and the guidelines of the National Bureau for Counteracting Drug Addiction were used. The "Municipal Program for the Prevention and Solving of Alcohol-related Problems and Counteracting Drug Addiction for 2021" is a description of planned activities in the field of addiction prevention, and is consistent with the Program for Counteracting Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims of Violence in the city of Zielona Góra. The second program implemented as consistent with the municipal program is the Strategy for Solving Social Problems in Zielona Góra, and the third is the Cooperation Program of the City of Zielona Góra with Non-Governmental Organizations (Municipal Program for..., 2021, pp. 4-5).

There are many preventive programs in the Lubuskie Voivodeship for early detection of diseases and counteracting their development, presented in Table 3 along with the number of people who benefited from them.

**Table 4.**  
*Health prevention programs and the number of people who benefited from them*

Program	Number of people who benefited from the examination
"Lubuskie inhabitants effectively against cancer"	6200
"Colonoscopy for people working, studying or living in the counties of the Lubuskie Voivodeship: Krosno, Nowa Sól, Zielona Góra, Żagań, Żary"	1800
"Cytology and mammography for women from Lubuskie - support for the prevention of cervical and breast cancer"	2600
"Health policy program - Infertility treatment using in vitro fertilization for residents of the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2021"	101 procedures

Source: Social Policy Strategy of the Lubuskie Voivodeship for 2021-2030, Management Board of the Lubuskie Voivodeship, Zielona Góra 2021, p. 49.



Data from the Department of Health of the Marshal's Office shows that in the years 2014-2020, many important tasks for the local community were carried out, of which the four programs listed in Table 2 were the most popular: The first of them was the "Lubuskie inhabitants effectively against cancer" program, which supported for residents of the Lubuskie Voivodeship in the detection and prevention of malignant tumours of the colon, cervix and breast. The program also involved supporting the implementation of campaigns publicizing and promoting healthy behaviours aimed at preventing diseases. 6,200 people from the Lubuskie Voivodeship took part in the first program. The second program was "Colonoscopy for people working, studying or living in the counties of the Lubuskie Voivodeship: Krosno, Nowa Sól, Zielona Góra, Żagań, Żary". About 1800 people took advantage of this program and underwent preventive examinations. The third most popular program was the one carried out under the slogan: "Cytology, mammography reaches Lubuskie women - support for the prevention of cervical and breast cancer". The number of women who benefited from this program was 2600. The last popular program was "Health Policy Program - Infertility treatment with in vitro fertilization for residents of the Lubuskie Voivodeship in 2021", the number of procedures performed was 101 (Social Policy Strategy..., 2021, p. 49).

The social economy sector is represented in the voivodeship by several dozen institutions. Social economy is considered an area of residents' activity, which, including economic activity combined with public benefit activities, is an excellent way of social and professional integration for people at risk of social exclusion as a result of unemployment, homelessness or addictions. The most intense increase in the number of Lubuskie social enterprises occurred in 2016-2020. The availability of European Social Fund funds allocated to the activities of two Social Economy Support Centres (OWES) probably contributed to this. These entities had to meet appropriate conditions, including the implementation of projects in the area of combating social exclusion and poverty ([es.lubuskie.pl](http://es.lubuskie.pl)). Already at the end of December 2020, the list of social enterprises whose status was confirmed by OWES was 85 entities. Job creation indicators in social enterprises were also effectively implemented. However, a clear weakness of this sector is the durability of these entities, i.e. their unstable situation on the market and, therefore, the uncertainty of the jobs they offer (Social Policy Strategy..., 2021, p. 53). In order to make it possible to become familiar with the offer of cooperatives, foundations and associations implementing social economy programs, the Lubuskie Social Economy Support Centre has launched a special website under the same name ([lowes.lubuskie.org.pl](http://lowes.lubuskie.org.pl)).

Social policy is an important element of the "Regional Operational Program Lubuskie 2020", covering the issues of unemployment, health care, support for people with disabilities and social economy. Based on the information collected on the basis of the "Annual Report on the implementation of the Lubuskie 2020 Regional Operational Program in 2019", it is possible to verify the implementation status of the planned activities based on the amount of funds allocated for financial support of projects and the values of selected indicators at the end of 2019. The first of them is Priority Axis 6. Regional labour market, with the allocation of funds

in the amount of EUR 68,348,451 - Thematic objective 8 Promoting sustainable and high-quality employment and supporting employee mobility. The effect of this program was the signing of 152 contracts for the amount of co-financing from EU funds in the amount of EUR 50.71 million (i.e. 74% of the allocation), expenses in the amount of EUR 31.86 million were considered eligible, and support covered 8,364 unemployed people and 4657 working people (Social Policy Strategy..., 2021, p. 54).

However, the in-depth “Socio-economic diagnosis of the Lubuskie Voivodeship” from 2019 showed that one of the biggest problems of Lubuskie communes is the lack of investment in infrastructure serving social purposes. This particularly applies to cultural facilities and centres intended for the development of sports and recreation. The diagnosis indicated a lack of investments in areas that contribute to the quality of human capital in the long run, but are also important in the process of creating the basis for future development (bip.lubuskie.pl).

To sum up, the Lubuskie Voivodeship is struggling with many problems that influence each other and determine its structure in the examined area. A thorough analysis allowed determining the fundamental problems facing the local community. These include the deteriorating demographic situation, which is manifested by depopulation, aging communities and growing migration trends. The demographic dependency ratio indicates a negative trend in each of the analysed communes of the Lubuskie Voivodeship, which was considered a worrying trend because the population decline is characterized by an underestimation of the population decline caused by frequent registration in municipal population records of people who actually changed their place of residence (bip.lubuskie.pl). It should also be noted that unemployed people constitute a group of so-called unused human resources, and economic immigrants have become a relatively new phenomenon on the labour market.

The disturbing changes in the age structure of the population outlined above indicate a constant aging process of society, which is characterized by a decreasing number of young people and a growing number of older people. Taking into account the ongoing processes and their impact on the development of the region, it should be noticed that negative natural growth weakens the population potential and has a negative impact on the demographic structure, and the ongoing aging process of society has a negative impact on it, leading to a decline in the number of people of working age. This affects the structure of enterprises to some extent. Although they have shown an increase in newly registered entities in recent years, their overall potential turns out to be quite weak. The lack of young people engaging in entrepreneurship results in a falling level of competitiveness of entities that have been operating on the market for many years (Social Policy Strategy..., 2021, p. 18).

To maintain the appropriate level of the labour market and the profitability of many enterprises, skilful support for people at risk of social exclusion, such as disabled, addicted or unemployed people, is necessary. Vocational and social rehabilitation of disabled people in appropriate facilities located in the Lubuskie Voivodeship allows them to prepare for

an independent and independent life, consistent with their psychomotor capabilities. After successful rehabilitation, it is possible to find appropriate employment outside the facility (Social Policy Strategy..., 2021, p. 30). The number of specialist staff employed in health facilities may be insufficient considering the number of people struggling with various types of problems.

One of the positive initiatives in the Lubuskie Voivodeship is the actively operating social economy sector, represented in 2020 by 85 branches. This should be considered an important element that affects the studied area, which is the labour market and the shaping of the living conditions of the inhabitants of the Lubuskie Voivodeship. Economic activity combined with public benefit activities contributes to initiating and consolidating social and professional integration among people at risk of social exclusion, which is also the case in the studied region, where the number of people unemployed has increased in recent years. This may be related to the results of research presented in the “Socio-economic diagnosis of the Lubuskie Voivodeship” from 2019, where the summary stated: “As the main limitation in the effective acquisition of EU funds, Lubuskie communes primarily indicated the need to provide their own contribution for the implemented projects” [bip.lubuskie.pl]. This allows assuming that the Lubuskie labour market still faces many challenges in order to achieve such living conditions for residents that will enable them to have stable employment and access to health, development and recreation facilities.

### **3. Conclusions**

Due to the dynamic changes on the markets, which are caused, among others, by globalization and internalization of enterprises, it is advisable to continue research in the indicated area. The Lubuskie Voivodeship, without using the available financial tools, will not be able to compete on the labour market with other voivodeships in terms of generated GDP or maintaining a low level of unemployment. This will probably make it impossible to obtain appropriate living conditions and prevent excessive migration to voivodeships associated with strongly impacting urban agglomerations, where the labour market is richer and more stable, constituting a serious argument for demographic changes.

A challenge that will have to be met is the phenomenon of population aging, which is the result of both increasing life expectancy and weakening fertility rates. Demographic processes taking place in recent years in the Lubuskie region are identical to trends national, but also with population changes in Central and Eastern Europe.

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