

LABOUR MARKET POLICY IN POLAND IN THE LIGHT OF THE NEW LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES ACT: AN ANALYSIS OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

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Purpose: The paper analyses the paradigm of the Polish labour market through a critical assessment of the Labour Market and Employment Services Act as a tool of labour activation policy. It indicates changes in mechanisms responding to challenges such as digitalisation, flexible employment, demographic shifts, and the importance of soft skills. At the same time, it identifies directions of institutional change for more effective activation and adjustment of labour policy to evolving socio-economic realities.

Design/methodology/approach: The study applies comparative analysis of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions with the new Labour Market and Employment Services Act, combined with critical analysis of legal acts and strategic documents. The approach is interdisciplinary, integrating legal, economic, and social perspectives, with reference to labour market theory.

Findings: The analysis shows that the new Act introduces major changes in labour market functioning, though some areas remain unchanged. Research and literature review confirmed hypotheses and addressed research questions.

Research limitations/implications: Future studies should analyse the Act's implementation, focusing on its impact on labour office structures, service efficiency, and the use of labour market services. Empirical research including employees' and beneficiaries' perspectives is recommended to evaluate functioning and identify areas for modification.

Practical implications: The Act supports digitalisation, flexibility of enterprise support, and broader access to services. This should improve institutional efficiency, better match labour supply and demand, and increase professional activity with notable economic and social effects.

Social implications: The research offers insights for assessing legislative effectiveness and shaping social awareness of activation's role in economic transformation. Findings may inform flexible legal solutions that meet the needs of employers and job seekers. Modernisation of institutions also fosters public-private cooperation, contributing to higher quality of life through more effective services.

Originality/value: The article provides original scholarly value through a multidimensional analysis of the 2025 Act, combining legal, economic, and social perspectives. Its contribution lies in identifying directions of change as recommendations for legislators and practitioners,

supporting the adaptation of employment policy to contemporary challenges. The intended audience includes researchers, policymakers, and labour market practitioners.

Keywords: labour market policy; employment services; professional activation; legislative reform; Poland.

Category: Research paper.

1. Introduction

A natural stage in the life of most adults, following the completion or interruption of the educational process, is the commencement of professional activity. This stage plays a crucial role in achieving individual life goals, fostering personal development, and attaining financial independence. Entering the labour market, however, constitutes a significant challenge for many individuals, due to the existence of various barriers such as unstable employment conditions, limited job availability, or high competition. The labour market can be understood as the totality of all transactions of purchase and sale, together with their conditions and contexts, which determine the functioning of the system (Dębek, 2016). According to different criteria, markets may be classified by (Dębek, 2016):

- the object of exchange, distinguishing between markets for consumer goods and services and markets for production factors, such as land, labour, and capital,
- the degree of homogeneity of the transaction object, i.e., homogeneous markets and heterogeneous ones (for instance, the labour market, where different professions require diverse qualifications),
- the degree of price equalisation, i.e., perfect and imperfect markets,
- the market situation, i.e., a seller's market, reflecting excess demand, versus a buyer's market, reflecting excess supply,
- the geographical scope, encompassing local, regional, national, international, and global markets.

The concept of the labour market derives from classical economics, shaped in the 19th century during the formation of the market economy, and subsequently evolved under the influence of neoclassical, Keynesian, and contemporary economic theories. The labour market emerged as a distinct domain once human labour began to be treated as a commodity, which led to perceiving labour resources as a specific category of goods. This resource, however, is of a unique nature, as it consists of individuals endowed with "free will" and the capacity to make independent decisions. In the context of supply and demand relations, the value of this resource is expressed in the level of remuneration. Unlike machines or raw materials, labour resources exhibit autonomy, since employees can consciously decide whether to remain in employment or change employers. The labour market is marked by considerable dynamism,

manifested in constant transformations and the emergence of diverse socio-economic phenomena and interdependencies (Bania, 2017).

At present, the labour market is interpreted through a variety of economic theories, which are continuously modified and developed, drawing largely on neoclassical and Keynesian assumptions. These two schools often differ significantly, offering alternative, extended, or complementary sets of hypotheses concerning the occurrence, origins, and persistence of disequilibrium in the labour market. Consequently, interpretations of labour market phenomena and relations are frequently based on contrasting approaches of these two dominant traditions. Neoclassical and Keynesian theoretical frameworks thus constitute the foundation for analysing and explaining the functioning mechanisms and dynamics of the labour market (Dylkiewicz, 2014).

The neoclassical school of economics builds its theory of the labour market around two central research questions: the functioning of the market itself and the behaviour of individuals as participants in the transaction of buying and selling labour power. In the traditional neoclassical perspective, the labour market is conceived as a homogeneous and integrated system, where the allocation of labour is regulated by the price mechanism. In this context, the labour market functions as a space of exchange in which those offering work and those seeking employment meet, and the interactions between them determine both the level of employment and the level of wages.

In the economic literature, attention is also drawn to the concept of market equilibrium, understood as a theoretical, ideal state towards which the labour market tends, though unattainable in practice. Equilibrium assumes the confrontation of two groups of stakeholders: job seekers and employers offering vacancies. Moreover, there is a constant tension between employers seeking to hire labour at the lowest possible cost and employees expecting remuneration commensurate with their qualifications, experience, and skills. As a result, due to the natural competition on the supply side, two groups may be distinguished: the employed and the unemployed, both competing for available jobs. Employees aim to maintain their positions and market attractiveness, while the unemployed strive to secure employment. Supporting both groups are labour market institutions, which undertake activities aimed at mitigating the consequences of unemployment, promoting labour market activation, and fostering employment (Frączek, 2015).

One of the key contemporary public policies is state intervention in the functioning of the labour market. This stems primarily from the significant influence of labour market mechanisms on economic and social development, which are subject to dynamic and continuous transformations characteristic of this sector. Since such changes often generate substantial negative socio-economic consequences, state intervention in this domain becomes indispensable in order to minimise these effects and ensure the stability of the labour market system.

It is worth emphasising that the concepts of labour policy and employment policy are not synonymous, and the academic literature consistently distinguishes between them. Employment policy focuses on influencing the overall level of employment in a country, with particular emphasis on attaining full employment. The realisation of these objectives relies primarily on economic policy tools of a macroeconomic character, such as fiscal and monetary policies. Labour market policy, by contrast, primarily addresses structural problems and aims to enhance the efficiency of labour market functioning through the use of specialised instruments, such as training programmes, designed to align labour supply with demand. Unlike employment policy, labour market policy is characterised by a microeconomic approach, focusing on detailed aspects of labour market dynamics (Wiśniewski, 2020).

2. Methodology

The research methodology was based on the analysis of available sources concerning the labour market, both Polish and international, as well as on legislative changes introduced through the draft *Labour Market and Employment Services Act*. In the first stage, a detailed review of the literature was conducted, covering not only academic publications but also reports produced by public institutions. Subsequently, the method of document analysis was applied, which enabled the identification and evaluation of key changes in the legal provisions governing the functioning of the labour market (Krajewski, 2020).

The adopted approach was interdisciplinary, combining legal, economic, and social perspectives, which ensured a comprehensive view of the studied problem. This methodological framework allowed for the integration of theoretical insights with an assessment of practical regulatory changes. The research was exploratory in nature, aiming not only to verify selected assumptions but also to provide a basis for developing recommendations regarding future directions of labour market policy.

3. Labour Market Segmentation: A Historical and Theoretical Approach

The origins of unemployment are closely associated with the development of capitalism, while its wider dissemination dates back to the 19th century, when the number of industrial workers increased sharply. In the Polish context, unemployment remained relatively limited due to the small size of the industrial workforce and its strong ties to rural areas. In cases of job loss within the industrial sector, many workers would return, either seasonally or permanently,

to the countryside, where they engaged in various forms of agricultural labour. Others sought employment in industrial centres of the partitioning states, which further alleviated the negative consequences of unemployment on the domestic labour market. This pattern of seasonal and permanent migration was characteristic of the socio-economic conditions of that period and highlights a specific model of the labour market that combined both agricultural and industrial elements. Thus, while unemployment existed, it did not assume the form of a mass social problem that would later emerge during subsequent phases of economic development (Kłos, 2014).

Kwiatkowski, a distinguished Polish economist, argues that unemployment constitutes one of the most serious social issues of the 20th century, and there are strong grounds to believe that its significance will not diminish in the 21st century. The gravity of this phenomenon arises from its multidimensional nature: unemployment affects not only living standards and economic growth but also social attitudes and the public's evaluation of government effectiveness. Accordingly, unemployment should be treated simultaneously as an economic, social, and political issue. The diversity of definitions of unemployment stems from its complex nature and the multitude of research perspectives (Drela, 2015). Economists, policymakers, and sociologists approach this phenomenon in different ways, depending on their theoretical assumptions and analytical objectives. Each group emphasises distinct aspects—ranging from economic consequences, to social implications, to policy-related challenges (Głuc, Jurek, 2025).

According to the basic premise of labour market segmentation theory, the labour market does not operate as a uniform structure but rather exhibits significant heterogeneity on both the demand and supply sides. Consequently, it is possible to distinguish specific segments of the labour market that encompass jobs of a similar character and employees with comparable characteristics. The coexistence of similarities and differences among occupational groups and employers leads to the formation of market segments that function according to specific institutional rules, both formal and informal. In practice, this means that individuals aspiring to enter a given segment must meet certain access criteria, some of which are objective and beyond their control (e.g., age, gender, or ethnic background), while others relate to qualifications, work experience, or employment gaps. Depending on the segment in question, the balance between supply and demand may vary, resulting in both balanced and imbalanced market segments (Jurek, 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, the concepts of internal and external labour markets, as well as dual labour market theory, provide important insights into the sources and mechanisms of segmentation. These frameworks explain how the labour market is divided into structurally and functionally distinct segments. Such segmentation may manifest itself in differences in access to employment, job stability, wage levels, and career progression opportunities. Understanding the nature and mechanisms of segmentation enables policymakers to design more equitable and

effective instruments of state intervention. Accordingly, the analysis of segmentation processes becomes a key element in shaping effective labour market policy.

The distinction between internal and external labour markets highlights two separate segments. The internal labour market is characterised by employment stability, well-defined promotion pathways, limited entry opportunities for new workers, and regulated wage systems based on established norms and procedures. It also features a clear division of labour and detailed job classifications. While new entrants are admitted to the internal market, their access is usually restricted to the lowest levels of the promotional hierarchy. P. Doeringer and M. Piore identify three main factors shaping the formation and functioning of internal labour markets: unique firm-specific skills that are difficult to transfer to other employers, in-house training systems, and established customs concerning pay policies and the allocation of employees to specific positions (Zwiech, 2013).

For employers, the strategic goal is to ensure the appropriate qualifications of employees through targeted training. Initially, organisations invest in the professional development of their workforce and subsequently aim to maintain a stable staff base, thereby maximising returns on investment and reducing recruitment costs. Higher wages and greater employment security contribute to workforce stability, which in turn fosters the development of organisational norms and practices. Workers employed in the internal labour market do not compete directly with those from the external market, since access to the former is strictly regulated and limited (Jurek, 2023). By contrast, increases in overall employment are largely concentrated in the secondary sector, where employers tend to minimise costs associated with workforce turnover. Disadvantaged groups constitute a significant share of this sector, which is characterised by lower wages and limited promotion prospects (Jurek, 2023). Moreover, membership in the secondary sector is linked to restricted access to training opportunities provided at the workplace.

Scholarly debates also reveal divergences in views regarding the boundaries of labour market segments. Some researchers argue that segmentation occurs between firms, while others contend that it also exists within organisational structures. This situation is partly due to the fact that larger firms often outsource certain tasks to smaller firms in competitive sectors or employ workers on a part-time or temporary basis. In the context of dual labour market theory, key determinants of inequality include not only segmentation and specific candidate selection mechanisms but also training programmes and the persistence of real or perceived social roles. These factors influence employment interruptions and perpetuate unfavourable patterns for certain social groups and secondary labour market positions.

4. Labour Market Activation of the Unemployed

Labour market activation is defined as a set of activities aimed at maintaining balance within the labour market. The implementation of this task focuses primarily on individuals remaining without employment, who are offered support in job-seeking and skills enhancement, thereby facilitating their reintegration into the workforce. The concept also encompasses assistance for employers in recruiting suitable candidates for vacant positions. Activation processes are carried out by various labour market institutions, which employ both active and passive measures.

Active measures consist of direct actions supporting the unemployed in securing employment and assisting employers in finding appropriate personnel, with the overarching goal of preventing and reducing unemployment. This group of instruments includes, among others, job placement services, career counselling, internships, and training programmes (Szara, 2013). Contemporary socio-economic transformations emphasise the importance of shaping proactive attitudes and developing the capacity for employment or self-employment. Consequently, career guidance and counselling have become increasingly integrated into everyday practice. In light of dynamic labour market changes, rising competitiveness, challenges in career choice, and difficulties in securing employment or coping with unemployment, the assistance of professional career counsellors has become indispensable. As a result, the demand for advisory services designed to facilitate orientation and adaptation within the evolving labour market continues to grow (Krawczyk, 2014).

In Poland, supervision of career guidance is shared by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. Both ministries define, through relevant legal acts, the scope of competences and responsibilities of institutions providing this form of support. This division of competences ensures a comprehensive approach to the organisation and functioning of career counselling across various levels and areas of social and educational policy. Accordingly, the Polish career guidance system is coordinated by multiple institutions working together to ensure effective assistance to individuals seeking support on the labour market (Wiśniewski, 2013).

Within the activities of labour offices, two main types of counsellors can be distinguished. The first group comprises professional career counsellors in the strict sense, whose primary task is to conduct counselling assessments and provide consultations to job placement officers. The second, far more numerous group consists of rank-and-file labour office staff, for whom counselling functions as an auxiliary role rather than an independent profession. In providing technical and informational assistance, these officials frequently extend support into areas of career planning, including psychological aspects. As a result, the scope of activity differs between the two groups in terms of both specialisation and the nature of the support delivered (Bańska, 1995).

Unemployed persons, employers, and employees may also benefit from a wide range of programmes co-financed by both European and national funds, which are intended to facilitate job placement, personal development, skills enhancement, and capacity building, as well as to strengthen the competitiveness of enterprises. A notable example is the set of regional programmes implemented in Polish voivodeships, financed under the European Funds for the period 2021-2027, which allocated over 33 billion euros to initiatives targeting labour market improvement and SME competitiveness. Within this framework, local labour offices (*Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy*) administer programmes designed for unemployed persons, employers, and employees alike, playing an essential role in fostering labour market participation and ensuring stability at the regional level (Strzczak, 2007).

European Funds allocated to Poland for 2021-2027 are intended to promote labour market development and raise the skill levels of citizens. Implementation of diverse programmes fosters the advancement of particular regions. For instance, the programme *European Funds for Małopolska 2021-2027* draws on resources from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and the Just Transition Fund (JTF). Within the labour market priority, seven key objectives have been established: improving access to employment and activation measures for jobseekers; promoting the balanced participation of women and men in the labour market; adapting workers and enterprises to ongoing transformations; ensuring equal access to high-quality education and training; promoting lifelong learning; facilitating the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals; and supporting marginalised communities in their socio-economic integration. These objectives reflect a comprehensive approach to labour market development and human capital formation (2004).

Job-seeking activities are often accompanied by high levels of stress for candidates; however, the contemporary labour market offers numerous solutions that mitigate these challenges. Job postings are widely available online—on forums, social networks, blogs, and thematic groups—which significantly simplifies access to potential opportunities. Employers also undertake diverse initiatives to attract the most suitable and skilled employees, thereby advancing company goals and fostering competitive, dynamic enterprises. On the other hand, jobseekers also hold expectations that extend beyond financial considerations. Increasingly, employees value respect, fairness, work ethics, the safeguarding of personal dignity, and the recognition of their contributions through rewards and acknowledgment. Rising levels of qualifications and knowledge have also translated into heightened demands regarding job type and conditions, which in turn shape new standards in employment relations (Dolot, 2018).

The job search process is a complex challenge for candidates, and the choice of appropriate forms and methods significantly affects their prospects of securing employment. Candidates must possess the ability to prepare effective application documents—such as curricula vitae and cover letters—and be familiar with the principles of successful self-presentation, which are

indispensable for progressing beyond the initial recruitment stage. Job search strategies can be divided into passive and active methods. Passive methods, such as reviewing job advertisements or registering with labour offices, require limited engagement and are relatively less time-consuming. Active methods, in contrast, demand greater initiative, including personal visits to firms, participation in job fairs, or networking activities. An active approach substantially increases the likelihood of finding employment, as it facilitates more direct interaction with potential employers. Therefore, the effective combination of both approaches can yield the best results in job seeking (Mazur-Mitrowska, 2018).

5. Changes in the Labour Market Activation of the Unemployed

The new *Labour Market and Employment Services Act* is a comprehensive document exceeding 300 pages, affecting multiple groups directly and indirectly engaged in labour market functioning and the formal-legal processes associated with its implementation (2025). The proposed reforms cover a wide range of regulatory areas and labour market operations, aiming to strengthen the state's capacity to promote employment, mitigate the consequences of unemployment, and enhance labour market activation. These tasks are pursued through both public and non-public labour market institutions that support individuals struggling to secure or retain employment, as well as employers seeking qualified workers. In 2023, more than 2.5 million people made use of labour office services.

The structure of public employment services encompasses 16 regional labour offices (*wojewódzkie urzędy pracy*, WUP), subordinated to provincial marshals, and 340 district labour offices (*powiatowe urzędy pracy*, PUP), subordinated to county governors. This system, operational since 2000, follows a central-local governance model, in which each organisational unit retains autonomy. By the end of 2023, WUPs and PUPs employed a total of 20,145 staff members. Notable problems in this sector include excessive administrative workload and a shortage of qualified personnel—challenges that the new legislation seeks to address. For example, in some PUPs, the caseload per career counsellor ranged from 113 to as many as 2571 registered unemployed individuals. Similarly, the number of unemployed per job placement officer varied from 43 to 891, and per frontline client service worker from 29 to 367. Such disproportionate caseloads hinder the ability of staff to devote adequate attention to individual clients and to reach out effectively to the economically inactive population. This underscores the urgent need for reforms that align with the evolving requirements of both employers and employees in the labour market.

The necessity of introducing the new Act was justified by the structural challenges facing the labour market, one of the most pressing being the low level of economic activity. In the fourth quarter of 2023, approximately 3.8 million working-age individuals were inactive,

meaning they did not participate in the labour market. This group is highly diverse in terms of reasons for inactivity, but it is essential to reach and support them in their return to employment. Economically inactive persons constitute an untapped reserve of labour resources, with significant potential to contribute to economic growth. Their effective activation is crucial for increasing both the activity rate and the employment rate in Poland, particularly given the projected decline in the working-age population in the coming years.

Reforms concerning support for individuals under 30 years of age focus primarily on assessing digital competencies at the time of registration as unemployed or job-seeking. Each PUP is staffed with an employment advisor dedicated to young people, allowing for a more individualised and effective response to their labour market needs. Moreover, young unemployed individuals may access educational loans of up to four times the average monthly wage. These funds may be allocated to various educational purposes, such as paying for training courses, postgraduate studies, skills certification, or obtaining documents necessary for continuing formal education. Importantly, up to 20% of the loan may be forgiven. Additionally, the existing relocation allowance (*bon na zasiedlenie*), previously reserved for individuals under 30, has been extended to all unemployed persons regardless of age, reflecting growing demand for this form of support among older groups.

The reforms also extend access to support measures provided by PUPs to family micro-enterprises, regardless of kinship between the unemployed client and the employer. This adjustment eliminates previous barriers that limited assistance for family businesses, thereby supporting their development and, in the long term, contributing to job creation and local labour market stability.

Further changes include raising the age of a disabled child for whom a county governor may reimburse childcare costs, from the previous limit of 7 years to 18 years. Currently, reimbursement applies only to children under 6 years of age and disabled children up to 7 years of age. The method of calculating benefits for socially useful work has also been revised, with the new amount set at 44% of the minimum hourly wage. The loan ceiling for establishing a workplace has been raised from six times to ten times the average wage, with up to 25% of the funds allowed for employee-related costs. The mandatory period for maintaining subsidised workplaces has been shortened from 24 months to either 12 or 18 months, depending on the circumstances.

As a result of these changes, the practice of referring unemployed persons to private employment agencies will now extend to all registered jobseekers, not only those facing the most difficult labour market situations. Furthermore, the remuneration for agencies maintaining long-term unemployed individuals or youth under 30 in employment has been raised from 150% to 200% of the base rate, provided that the employment lasts at least 180 days within a 240-day period from referral. Given the significant distance of these groups from the labour market, intensified support and tailored reintegration mechanisms are essential. Similarly,

intervention work programmes for youth under 30 are preserved, offering employment for 3 to 12 months, with the requirement that jobs be retained for a period equal to the subsidy duration.

Employment advisors are now required to conduct individual interviews with every person registering at a PUP, aimed at diagnosing their life circumstances, needs, and potential labour market participation. Continuous professional development of both career counsellors and employment advisors has also been prioritised, with training programmes designed to raise their competencies. This effort seeks to build a highly skilled workforce capable of effectively identifying and responding to local labour market needs. Moreover, the scope of career counselling responsibilities has been expanded to include PUP staff who, while not formally recognised as career counsellors, possess the necessary qualifications to provide such services, thereby increasing the accessibility of counselling.

Collaboration between WUPs and PUPs with schools, universities, and social economy entities engaged in career counselling has also been strengthened. Another important reform is the obligation for public entities, state-owned companies, and organisations managing public assets to submit job offers to the central job database, with certain exemptions granted due to operational specificities. This database is managed by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy through the *ePraca* portal (formerly the Central Job Offers Database, CBOP). Posted job offers must include details on employment conditions, employer characteristics, and candidate requirements. The system also verifies whether the employer has outstanding social security or tax liabilities exceeding two months; if so, the posting is blocked and redirected to the relevant PUP for review. This mechanism aims to curb abuse and protect jobseekers. The introduction of automated candidate–job matching is also expected to shorten job search times and improve labour market efficiency.

Unemployed members of large families holding a Family Card (*Karta Dużej Rodziny*) and single parents raising at least one child are now given priority in access to support measures under the new Act. Additionally, caregivers of disabled persons, who were previously excluded from many support instruments, are now entitled to the same benefits and services as other unemployed persons, thereby significantly expanding their rights.

Major changes have also been introduced in the technical functioning of labour offices, particularly through the modernisation and automation of client services via the online platform *praca.gov.pl*. This innovation enables clients to handle numerous matters remotely, such as checking their registration status, selecting appropriate training programmes, browsing job offers, reviewing individual action plans, and communicating with assigned advisors. The digital system also allows users to prepare and share CVs, apply for support measures, and access thousands of job postings listed on *ePraca*. Clients may also update their data concerning cooperation with the labour office entirely online.

6. Discussion

The reforms introduced by the new *Labour Market and Employment Services Act* aim to enhance both the accessibility and the effectiveness of available forms of assistance for the unemployed. Priority treatment for jobseekers from large families and for single parents with dependent children reflects an increased awareness of the needs of groups particularly vulnerable to social exclusion. At the same time, the expansion of support to caregivers of persons with disabilities demonstrates a commitment to a more inclusive approach toward system beneficiaries. Aligning their entitlements with those of other unemployed individuals helps to reduce inequalities in access to public support.

Furthermore, the introduction of comprehensive “activation packages” and programmes such as *internship plus* increases the likelihood of sustainable employment by integrating multiple forms of support. Equally important is the focus on young people under the age of 30, which includes the assessment of digital competencies and the possibility of accessing educational loans. These measures directly address the challenges of today’s labour market, in which digital skills and lifelong learning are increasingly essential.

The reforms also highlight the need to adapt employment policy to the dynamic socio-economic environment. Expanding the role of employment advisors and investing in the professional development of PUP staff enhances the capacity to deliver services tailored to individual client needs. The modernisation of job placement processes through digital tools—particularly automated candidate–job matching systems—underscores the growing significance of technology in labour market management.

Equally noteworthy is the expansion of registration opportunities, which allows unemployed persons to register at any labour office, thereby removing administrative barriers and facilitating easier access to support services. This flexibility, combined with new mechanisms for workplace creation loans, reimbursement of childcare costs for children with disabilities, and more flexible subsidy conditions for employers, reflects a broader effort to increase both the inclusivity and the efficiency of labour market activation instruments.

Taken together, these legislative changes represent a comprehensive step toward a more inclusive and effective labour market policy. By focusing on disadvantaged groups, integrating technological innovation, and broadening institutional cooperation, the reform addresses the structural weaknesses of the Polish labour market and provides a framework for adapting to ongoing economic and demographic challenges.

7. Conclusions

The analysis conducted allows us to conclude that the new *Labour Market and Employment Services Act* has introduced significant changes both in the functioning of District Labour Offices (*Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy*, PUP) and in the scope of assistance provided. These reforms are primarily focused on increasing the effectiveness of career counsellors' activities and on adapting support instruments to the current needs of the labour market.

The digitisation of services and the expansion of access to career counselling contribute to more efficient client service and to higher levels of professional activation. Moreover, the extension of the beneficiary group to include farmers and economically inactive individuals reflects the growing commitment of labour market institutions to inclusivity and individualised support.

Changes concerning reimbursement conditions and support for family micro-enterprises further illustrate the pursuit of a multidimensional approach to labour market activation. In effect, the new legislation addresses the challenges of the contemporary labour market with the dual aim of improving the quality of public services and enhancing the overall effectiveness of employment policy in Poland.

At the same time, the solutions introduced establish a framework for further development and adaptation of the support system to evolving economic and social conditions. This forward-looking orientation indicates that the Act should be seen not as a final stage of reform, but as a foundation for continued innovation in labour market policy. Future trajectories may include, for instance, the gradual integration of artificial intelligence into employment services to personalise support, the development of lifelong learning frameworks aligned with digital transformation, or the creation of targeted instruments for groups most vulnerable to automation and demographic change. Another possible direction is the expansion of public–private partnerships in vocational training and reskilling initiatives, enabling closer alignment between labour supply and employer demand.

Such scenarios highlight that the long-term value of the Act will depend not only on its initial provisions but also on policymakers' capacity to use it as a platform for adaptive, evidence-based strategies responding to structural shifts in the Polish and European labour markets.

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