

# THE LABOUR MARKET SITUATION AND JOB QUALITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WHO PARTICIPATED IN JOB ACTIVATION PROGRAMMES IN POLAND

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*The low level of employment of persons with disabilities is a challenge in all EU countries. Therefore, public policies seek programmes that may help those people find employment. The paper primarily investigates the labour market situation of unemployed people with disabilities who participated in job activation programmes implemented by a country-wide NGO in Poland between 2018–2021. Based on data from a telephone survey conducted six months after the programme, the share of participants who reported good working conditions and satisfaction with their job six months after the programme is presented. The number of programme participants reporting improved self-esteem and social relations is then analysed. Finally, a comparison is made between young and older participants and rural residents and their urban counterparts. The results show that most programme beneficiaries who found a job upon completion of the programme remained in employment six months after the programme, often at the same employer and with a permanent contract. Most participants reported good working conditions and general satisfaction with their job. Less than half reported satisfaction with a salary, which may be due to the low earnings (around the minimum wage level). The results show that young people and urban residents were more often employed in unsheltered workplaces. Also, young people more frequently reported training opportunities at the workplace and less often remained at the same employer. People from rural areas more often reported positive effects of employment on their self-esteem and social relations.*

**Keywords:** *disability; job activation programmes; job quality; rural areas; young people.*

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## INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities constitute around 16% of the world's population (Darryl Barrett *et al.* 2022). However, the mechanisms and solutions that support their functioning in society are still insufficient. They face various challenges and barriers that limit their opportunities for social and economic participation. Therefore, they rarely participate in the labour market and are at a higher risk of social exclusion (Darryl Barrett *et al.* 2022).

Three main groups of factors that limit their labour market integration may be distinguished (World Health Organization 2011). Although these factors differ from case to case, most affect all individuals to some extent. The first group consists of individual factors, such as a difficult financial situation, a low-income level and the low levels of schooling of people with disabilities. The research shows that higher levels of schooling among people with disabilities is associated with enhanced employment opportunities (Albinowski, Magda, and Rozszczypała 2023) and a smooth transition from school to work (Boman T. *et al.* 2014). The positive effect of education on labour market outcomes appears to be twice as strong for people with disabilities as for the general population, even though both education and employment levels are lower for people with disabilities (Ballo 2020). Therefore, one of many means that may enable these individuals to secure employment is by affecting individual factors, such as supporting people with disabilities in receiving an appropriate education or training.

Another group affecting the integration of people with disabilities into the labour market are social factors. They are related to aspects such as insufficient actions taken by the institutional and non-institutional environment, weakened social bonds (including neighbourly bonds) (World Health Organization 2011), stereotypes and prejudice against the employment of people with disabilities (Lindsay *et al.* 2023). It should be noted that relatives play an important role as families of people with disabilities and do not always support them in finding employment since they may not want them to work (Włodarczyk 2013). This is especially visible in rural areas. According to the study conducted by Włodarczyk (2013), the most frequent reasons mentioned by families of people with disabilities are concerns about their health and the belief that they cannot cope with new duties at work. Another reason is the fear of losing the disability pension, which often constitutes a financially significant fixed income for the household.

The third group of factors are those related to the progress of civilization. They primarily refer to the still insufficiently developed technical, health and educational infrastructure and the limited access to modern communication and information technologies (World Health Organization 2011). This phenomenon is global. It occurs not only in the Polish countryside but also in other rural areas worldwide. No rehabilitation centres, universities, specialist medical facilities, or career counselling services are on site. At the same time, accessible transport is

also limited as the transport infrastructure in many places still poses challenges for people with disabilities, making it difficult for them to travel long distances with ease (Borkowski 2021). The effect is exacerbated by the fact that these factors usually occur together. This, in turn, often gives rise to the so-called double marginalization of people with disabilities in terms of their entry into the labour market.

The general life situation of these people, including their economic conditions and limitations in everyday functioning, makes it necessary to examine this group of people more closely in terms of the risk of social exclusion, including the risk of exclusion resulting from difficulties in finding employment (Włodarczyk 2013). Overcoming these barriers is a challenging endeavour as it may require significant changes in society, infrastructure and attitudes.

### **THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER**

This paper aims to investigate the labour market situation of unemployed people with disabilities in Poland who participated in job activation programmes run by a country-wide NGO between 2018 and 2021. The programme participants were offered skill-upgrading courses, training, job counselling, and other measures seeking to help them find a job. Based on the data from the telephone survey conducted six months after the programme, the share of participants who reported good working conditions and satisfaction with their job six months after the programme is presented. The number of programme participants reporting improved self-esteem and social relations is then analysed. First, results are presented for all the participants. The same results for separate groups are then presented: younger participants (15–29 years) are compared with older participants (30 years and above) and residents of rural areas with their urban counterparts.

Employment is the main focus as low participation in the labour force is still a challenge in all EU and OECD countries, despite the implementation of several programmes in recent years to promote employment among this group (OECD 2022; Eurofund 2021). Hence, by investigating the features of programmes that support people with disabilities in finding employment and monitoring their career path, the factors that should be considered when designing and implementing programmes targeting this group may be brought to light. This is particularly relevant since the data on the socio-economic condition of this group at both European and national levels is limited. The long-term monitoring of their career paths is also rare. Monitoring the labour market situation of people who have participated in job activation programmes may provide information not only on how many of these people work and where but also on the causes of difficulties in finding employment and their reasons, and the working conditions in their jobs.

A comparison is then made between the younger (15–29 years) and older participants (30 years and above). The purpose of this comparison is due to the fact

that research points to young people generally being in a worse position in the labour market, regardless of their disability status (Mascherini and Ledermaier 2016). They often lack qualifications and experience; they work on the basis of temporary agreements and in precarious jobs (Pulford *et al.* 2022). Therefore, they are one of the hardest hit by economic downturns as it is easier to terminate contracts with them (OECD 2016). The labour market situation of persons with disabilities appears to be even more difficult. The results of the EVS research showed that people describing their health as bad or very bad and people with disabilities are over 40% more likely to be at risk of being in the NEET group (*not in education, employment or training*) compared to people without disabilities (Subocz 2020). Young people also tend to be more dependent on their families, who may be overprotective or discourage them from employment due to the fear of losing government benefits (OECD 2022). One of the aims of this paper is to investigate whether programme participants' labour market situation differs according to their age.

Rural residents are also examined more closely as the research shows that people living in rural areas may have poorer access to job market services and health services (OECD 2010). They often face exclusion from transport which hinders their abilities to use public employment services support or commute to the employer (OECD 2010). Rural areas can be more isolated, making socializing and connecting harder (Włodarczyk 2013). Also, access to education and training opportunities that can prepare people with disabilities for the workforce may be limited in rural areas (OECD 2010). By comparing the labour market situation of participants from urban and rural areas, it is possible to ascertain whether it differs according to place of residence.

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN POLAND

According to the Labour Force Survey data, there were around 3 million people with disabilities in Poland in 1<sup>1</sup> (*Table no. 1*). Almost two-thirds resided in urban areas (62%), and over one-third (38%) in rural areas. Regarding level of schooling, the largest share, 52%, held a vocational education qualification, 28% had completed primary education, 10% had completed secondary education, and 10% had tertiary education. Among all the persons with disabilities, 7% were young people aged 15–29 years.

Several Polish institutions support the employment of persons with disabilities. The National Disabled Persons Rehabilitation Fund (PFRON) provides funding and support for employment programmes for people with disabilities that

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<sup>1</sup> The data includes individuals with a disability certificate. Due to the fact that disability certificates are granted only to individuals aged 15 years old or above, only people of this age are included in these statistics.

are implemented by various non-governmental organizations. PEFRON also works with employers to create accessible jobs and provides financial incentives and subsidies to support hiring individuals with disabilities. Unemployed people with disabilities can register with the Public Employment Services and participate in various activation programmes. Additionally, various NGOs support this group in finding employment.

Less than 25% of working-age (15–64 years) people with disabilities were employed in 2019 in Poland (compared to over 70% of those without disabilities). The employment rate among young people with disabilities aged 15–29 years was lower (21%) than among older age groups (31% among people aged 20–29 years, 34% among people aged 40–49 years, and 22% among people aged 50 years and above). As far as the place of residence is concerned, the employment rate of persons with disabilities from rural areas stood at 19% compared to 29% in urban areas.

Table no. 1

**The population of persons with disabilities in Poland**

		<b>Total</b>	<b>The employment rate of persons with disabilities</b>	<b>The employment rate of persons without disabilities</b>
Sex	Total	10.1%	24.8%	71.8%
	Women	50.0%	26.6%	63.7%
	Men	50.0%	23.3%	80.2%
Education	Primary	27.8%	7.8%	27.4%
	Secondary	10.4%	32.1%	64.4%
	Vocational	51.4%	24.8%	75.2%
	Tertiary	10.4%	59.7%	88.7%
Age	15–29	6.5%	21.2%	51.9%
	30–39	6.9%	30.8%	85.4%
	40–49	10.4%	33.9%	89.0%
	50 and more	76.2%	21.6%	65.0%
Region (NUTS-1)	East	13.8%	21.3%	69.8%
	Central	11.3%	28.2%	71.7%
	North-West	19.0%	23.8%	73.2%
	North	17.0%	24.7%	71.6%
	South	18.6%	24.5%	69.8%
	South-West	10.1%	26.3%	73.3%
Place of residence	Mazovia	10.2%	27.2%	75.3%
	Urban area	62.0%	28.8%	73.2%
Disability level	Rural area	38.0%	19.3%	69.9%
	Slight	25.4%	34.4%	-
	Moderate	42.3%	27.3%	-
	Severe	27.3%	9.3%	-

Source: author's calculation based on the Labour Force Survey data for 2019.

## DATA, SAMPLE AND METHOD

This paper investigates the labour market situation of participants who took part in job activation programmes. The activation programmes under analysis were implemented in 2018 and 2021 by a country-wide NGO that supports the labour market integration of people with disabilities (Activation Foundation). They sought to support participants in finding good-quality, stable jobs in unsheltered workplaces<sup>2</sup>. They targeted unemployed, working-age people with all types of impairments. The eligibility criteria for participation in the project were being unemployed or economically inactive and having a valid disability certificate. According to the programme's rules, most participants should have a moderate or severe level of disability. Only 20% of participants could have a slight level of disability (this limit did not apply to persons with developmental disorders, long-term chronic mental disability and multiple disabilities).

The recruitment was conducted by local outreach teams cooperating with employment agencies, social welfare institutions, schools, and other local NGOs. The outreach was carried out along with the information campaign on social media and popular job search engines.

Individuals who registered for the programme and met the eligibility criteria had sessions with a job counsellor which included a detailed assessment of their needs and predispositions. It ended with an individual action plan establishing what kind of support a participant would receive. This might take the form of skill-upgrading courses, on-the-job training, job crafting, job counselling, psychological and legal support, help in caring for another dependent person or assistance with daily activities and duties, among others. Depending on needs, it could be one or a combination of these measures. Upon mutual consent, the participants and job counsellor developed the action plan jointly. A mentor assigned to the participant provided support throughout the whole programme. Job matching was the last step – a job adviser supported participants in developing a CV and other application forms, contacting employers, preparing for the job interview and negotiating the job agreement. In total, 3 352 participants took part in these programmes between 2018 and 2021. On average, the programme lasted 11 weeks, and each participant received around 60 hours of support paragraph non.

Data was used from a telephone survey (*Computer Assisted Telephone Interview, CATI*) that was conducted six months after participants had completed the programme to gather information on their employment status, work conditions, and job satisfaction. CATI is a method of conducting surveys over the phone using computer software to assist the interviewer. The survey included questions on various issues related to the employment status of the participants, their satisfaction with work, quality of work and various job amenities in their workplaces. It

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the programmes, eligibility criteria, recruitment, courses offered, and monitoring were provided by the Activation Foundation.

covered all participants who entered the labour market shortly after completing the job activation programme (around 30% of all participants). The pollsters who conducted the survey took into account the rules of accessibility for people with disabilities (e.g., easy language of the survey, available survey tool). The Activation Foundation collected the data and provided an anonymized dataset to conduct the analysis.

The sample contains information on 1,047 participants surveyed six months after the programme. Our sample is gender balanced (52% women and 48% men) (see *Table no. 2*). Around 65% of the study participants have completed secondary education (general or vocational), around 30% hold a university degree, and approximately 6% have completed primary education. Most participants live in urban areas (86%). They live in all the geographical regions of Poland. Most of them have a moderate level of disability (70%), and they represent various types of disability – both physical and intellectual. In comparison to the general population of unemployed people with disabilities in Poland, there is an overrepresentation of urban and tertiary-educated residents. Additionally, there are more individuals with a moderate and severe degree of disability (see *Table no. 1* for a comparison).

*Table no. 2*

**Sample structure**

		<b>Total</b>
Sex	Women	51.9%
	Men	48.1%
Education	Primary	5.5%
	Secondary	44.7%
	Vocational	20.3%
	Tertiary	29.5%
Age	15–29	18.5%
	30–39	30.4%
	40–49	24.5%
	50 and more	26.7%
Region (NUTS-1)	East	21.8%
	Central	20.7%
	North-West	15.6%
	North	14.7%
	South	10.5%
	South-West	9.8%
Place of residence	Urban area	86.3%
	Rural area	13.8%
Disability level	Slight	21.9%
	Moderate	69.6%
	Severe	8.5%

*Source:* author's calculation based on the CATI survey. N=1047.

In the following section, the descriptive statistics are presented showing the labour market situation of the programme beneficiaries with regard to their working status, job satisfaction and job conditions. Statistics on their subjective self-esteem and quality of social relations are also presented. To such end, the percentage of participants in employment six months after the programme who had kept a job with the same employer, and worked in unsheltered workplaces is shown. The percentage of those satisfied with the job six months after participating in the programme, who had training opportunities, agreed that the employer cared for their health needs and were satisfied with the salary is also shown. Finally, the share of programme participants who reported that their relations with family and peers had improved and that they are more active and have more courage is displayed. A comparison is then made of the labour market situation of (1) young people aged 15–29 years with people aged 30–64 years and (2) people from rural areas with people from urban areas. To determine whether there is a significant difference between these groups, a battery of independent sample t-tests was run.

## RESULTS

*Table 3* shows that most programme beneficiaries kept employment high six months after the programme (81.5%). Almost all the participants worked within the scope of a permanent contract (98.4%), and the vast majority (89.4%) worked with the same employer. Most of the participants worked in unsheltered workplaces (81.1%). Almost 2/3 of the participants were satisfied with their job. Over 80% reported that the employer cared for their health needs. Less than half were satisfied with their salary. This may stem from the fact that the earnings of the vast majority of the programme beneficiaries were at the minimum wage level or lower.

Regarding the age group comparison, young people worked more often at unsheltered workplaces (88.9% vs 79.3%), worked less often at the same employer (84.6% vs 90.6%) and more often reported that their workplace offered them training opportunities (40.7% vs 27.2%) (*Table no. 3*). The differences regarding other labour market outcomes were small and not significant. However, *table 3* shows that the employment level was slightly higher among young people (83.5% vs 81.0%), they were slightly more satisfied with their job (61.1% vs 59.6%) and salary (50.0% vs 46.3%) and more often reported that the employer cared for their health needs (85.8% vs 80.2%). Almost all the programme beneficiaries worked within the scope of a permanent contract in both groups.



Table no. 3

**Labour market outcomes of participants six months after participation in the programme,  
by age**

	Total	Age		Difference (significance)
		15–29 y.	30–64 y.	
Working	81.5%	83.5%	81.0%	2.5 (no)
Working in an unsheltered workplace	81.1%	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>79.3%</b>	<b>9.6 (yes)</b>
Permanent contract	98.4%	98.8%	98.3%	0.5 (no)
Working at the same employer	89.4%	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>90.6%</b>	<b>-6.0 (yes)</b>
Satisfied with the job	59.9%	61.1%	59.6%	1.5 (no)
Training opportunities	29.8%	<b>40.7%</b>	<b>27.2%</b>	<b>13.6 (yes)</b>
Employer cares for health needs	81.2%	85.8%	80.2%	5.7 (no)
Satisfied with salary	47.0%	50.0%	46.3%	3.7 (no)

*Note:* the table shows results from the t-tests. Significance level 0.05. The *Table* with full results is available in the *Appendix*.

*Source:* Author's calculation based on the CATI survey

Urban residents more often worked at unsheltered workplaces (82.9% vs 70.7%), and the difference was statistically significant (*Table no. 4*). Other labour market outcomes were similar for both groups, and the differences were small and insignificant. The employment rate among people from rural areas was slightly higher (85.4%) than that of those from urban areas (80.8%). They also worked more often at the same employer (92.7% in rural areas vs 88.9% in urban areas). In both groups almost all the participants worked within the scope of a permanent contract. Rural residents were generally more often satisfied with their job (64.3% vs 59.2%), but less often satisfied with the monthly wage (43.1% vs 47.7%). In both groups, over 80% of people reported that the employer cared for their health needs, and around 30% reported training opportunities at their workplace.

Table no. 4

**Labour market outcomes of the participants six months after participation in the programme,  
by place of residence**

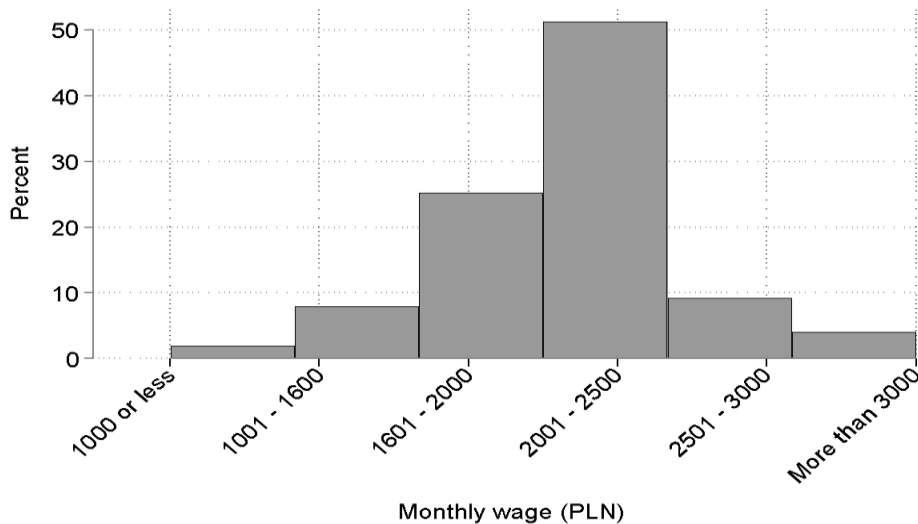
	Total	Place of residence		Difference (significance)
		Urban areas	Rural areas	
Working	81.5%	80.8%	85.4%	-4.6 (no)
Working in an unsheltered workplace	81.1%	<b>82.9%</b>	<b>70.7%</b>	<b>12.1 (yes)</b>
Permanent contract	98.4%	98.4%	98.4%	0.0 (no)
Working at the same employer	89.4%	88.9%	92.7%	-3.8 (no)
Satisfied with the job	59.9%	59.2%	64.2%	-5.1 (no)
Training opportunities	29.8%	29.3%	32.5%	-3.2 (no)
Employer cares for health needs	81.2%	81.0%	82.9%	-1.9 (no)
Satisfied with salary	47.0%	47.7%	43.1%	4.6 (no)

*Note:* the table shows results from the t-tests. Significance level 0.05. The *Table* with full results is available in the *Appendix*.

*Source:* Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

Graph 1

**The monthly wage (gross) of programme participants six months after participation in the programme**



*Note:* 100 EUR  $\approx$  450 PLN. The minimum wage was 2250 PLN gross ( $\approx$  500 EUR) in 2019 and 2600 PLN gross ( $\approx$  580 EUR) in 2020.

*Source:* Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

Employment may positively affect the well-being of people with disabilities, including increased self-esteem and social connections. It may also help reduce the economic and social exclusion many people with disabilities experience. Therefore, the programme's participants' assessment of the effect of employment on various aspects of their life was also investigated. *Table no. 5* shows that the majority of participants reported that their relations with family and peers had improved (69.1% and 61.8%, respectively), and they are more active and more courageous (73.4% and 64.5%, respectively).

Regarding the age group comparison, the young people reported a similar effect of employment on these aspects of life to the older participants. Interestingly, considerable differences between rural and urban residents were observed. Rural residents reported positive aspects of employment on these aspects of their life more often (*Table no. 6*). The differences exceeded 10 p.p. in all cases. This suggests that people with disabilities from rural areas may subjectively experience more social gains from employment than their urban counterparts.

Table no. 5

**Effects on various aspects of life six months after participation in the programme, by age**

	Total	Age		Difference (significance)
		15–29 y.	30–64 y.	
Improved family relations	69.1%	69.2%	69.1%	0.1 (no)
Improved relations with peers	61.8%	61.8%	61.8%	-0.1 (no)
I am more active	73.4%	70.4%	74.1%	-3.7 (no)
I have more courage	64.5%	70.4%	63.1%	7.2 (no)

*Note:* The table shows results from the t-tests. Significance level 0.05. The *Table* with full results is available in the *Appendix*.

*Source:* Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

Table no. 6

**Effects on various aspects of life six months after participation in the programme, by place of residence**

	Total	Place of residence		Difference (significance)
		Urban areas	Rural areas	
Improved family relations	69.1%	67.5%	78.0%	<b>-10.5 (yes)</b>
Improved relations with peers	61.8%	59.3%	76.4%	<b>-17.1 (yes)</b>
I am more active	73.4%	71.8%	83.0%	<b>-11.2 (yes)</b>
I have more courage	64.5%	62.6%	75.6%	<b>-13.0 (yes)</b>

*Note:* The table shows results from the t-tests. Significance level 0.05. The *Table* with full results is available in the *Appendix*.

*Source:* Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the labour market situation of persons with disabilities who participated in job activation programmes conducted by a country-wide NGO in Poland between 2018 and 2021. The research results suggest that over 80% of the people with disabilities who participated in these programmes and entered the labour market afterwards kept their employment six months after completion of the programme. Their jobs were stable as most participants worked within the scope of a permanent contract and remained in employment with the same employer. Most of them reported good working conditions and general satisfaction with their job. However, they were less satisfied with their earnings as their salary was usually at the level of a minimum wage. No major differences in employment level and job satisfaction were found between younger (15–29 years) and older (30–64 years) participants. However, six months after the programme, older participants were more often employed by the same employer. This may be a

direct consequence of the more frequent layoffs among young workers or their higher job mobility.

Older participants and residents of rural areas were also found to be more often employed in sheltered workplaces. These workplaces seem to be a legacy of a socialist period when people with disabilities in Central and Eastern European countries were frequently assigned to sheltered, state-protected workplaces and residential institutions for social care (Mladenov 2018). Firstly, unsheltered workplaces may offer more modern positions and services that attract younger participants. Secondly, sheltered workplaces may provide better health and rehabilitation-related services, which may be more important for older participants. Thirdly, this may suggest that access to various public services in Poland is limited in rural areas. Sheltered workplaces are obliged by law to provide their workers with various medical and rehabilitation services as well as adapted offices. Due to the limited access to those services in rural areas, sheltered workplaces may be more attractive to rural residents. This may also suggest generally fewer job opportunities in rural areas and/or higher reluctance among employers to employ persons with disabilities in rural areas. The participants residing in rural areas in the sample were mainly from eastern regions of Poland (see *Table A1* in Appendix), which are generally characterized by fewer job opportunities.

It is worth noting that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (ratified by Poland in 2012) promotes the employment of people with disabilities in the open (unsheltered) labour market as an inclusive solution ensuring persons with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else. This is due to the fact that sheltered workplaces may reinforce the segregation of individuals with disabilities from the broader community and limit their opportunities for socialization and integration, as well as perpetuate the stigma associated with disabilities. Zavrsek (2014) argues that recent implementations of sheltered employment models in certain post-socialist CEE nations during the 2000s perpetuated the segregation associated with disability services under the previous socialist state regimes. Therefore the Convention expressly identifies that persons with Disability have a right to “work on an equal basis with others (which includes) work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to all” (United Nations 2008). Segregated employment settings are inconsistent with this right. Therefore, work in the sheltered market “should be intended only for those people with disabilities who are unable to compete due to their limitations on the open labour market” (Giermanowska 2016). Thus, the career opportunities of people with disabilities may increase in the unsheltered labour market, counteracting the phenomenon of marginalization and “closure” in the sheltered market (Garbat and Paszkowicz 2013).

Participants with disabilities living in rural areas also reported employment positively affecting their well-being more frequently. They more often claimed that

their relations with family and peers had improved; they were more active and courageous. This result may suggest that employment can prevent social exclusion, especially in rural areas.

This paper has policy implications. It points to several factors that appear to be important in the support of persons with disabilities. Firstly, it shows that the individual approach that helps identify the specific needs of persons with disabilities and flexibility in support may bring positive employment outcomes. Secondly, it shows that collaboration with relevant stakeholders and outreach activities make it possible to reach out to groups who may not use the support otherwise, as programme participants differ from unemployed persons with disabilities registered with public employment services. In this case, the outreach strategy allowed for the recruitment of participants with more severe disabilities. The inclusion of outreach strategies in social programmes has gained importance in the literature (Lindert *et al.* 2020) and policymaking (European Commission 2020; European Commission 2018) in recent years. Thirdly, this suggests that greater emphasis should be placed on increasing labour market opportunities and promoting the employment of persons with disabilities among employers in rural areas and generally in areas with fewer job opportunities. What also matters is that policy measures should involve the environment of people with disabilities, their families and peers. Such a two-way approach creates favourable conditions for achieving independence in the labour market among people with disabilities. Comprehensive, long-term, and individualized services tailored to the needs, possibilities, and expectations of disabled rural residents are crucial for improving their quality of life and countering the prevalence of low-paying, menial jobs typically offered to them (Gąciarz and Rudnicki 2014; Supreme Audit Office 2021; Daniłowska and Gawska 2021).

The study has limitations. Firstly, external validity is limited as the programme participants differed in observable and non-observable characteristics from the general population of people with disabilities in Poland and from the group of unemployed people registered with the public employment services. Hence, one should be cautious when generalizing the results of the study. Secondly, the labour market outcomes were measured in the short run, therefore further studies on the durability of these solutions are needed. Thirdly, our sample included only individuals who found employment shortly after participating in the project (around one-third of all participants). Therefore, the effectiveness of the programmes was not assessed. The working conditions of those who found employment were studied and the results compared among various subgroups. Despite these limitations, we believe that our study provides insights into the mechanisms behind job activation programmes.

Further research may investigate the effectiveness of various measures targeting persons with disabilities, as the literature in this area is scarce, especially regarding causal evaluations. Also, analysing the labour market outcomes of study

participants in the long run will show whether the effects are durable. Finally, as the population of persons with disabilities is very heterogenous, more in-depth studies are needed to investigate the employment challenges and opportunities among the various subgroups.

## Appendix

Table no. A1

Detailed sample structure

		Total	15–29 y.	30–64 y.	Rural areas	Urban areas
Sex	Women	51.9%	53.1%	51.6%	52.8%	51.7%
	Men	48.1%	46.9%	48.4%	47.2%	48.3%
Education	Primary	5.5%	2.1%	6.2%	5.6%	5.4%
	Secondary	44.7%	54.1%	42.6%	40.3%	45.5%
	Vocational	20.3%	9.8%	22.7%	27.1%	19.2%
	Tertiary	29.5%	34.0%	28.5%	27.1%	29.9%
Age	15–29	18.5%	–	–	19.4%	18.4%
	30–39	30.4%	–	–	31.3%	30.2%
	40–49	24.5%	–	–	21.5%	24.9%
	50 and above	26.7%	–	–	27.8%	26.5%
Region (NUTS-1)	East	21.8%	5.7%	7.2%	41.7%	18.6%
	Central	20.7%	15.5%	21.9%	11.8%	22.1%
	North-West	15.6%	24.7%	21.1%	9.0%	16.6%
	North	14.7%	13.4%	9.9%	16.7%	14.4%
	South	10.5%	10.8%	9.6%	5.6%	11.3%
	South-West	9.8%	15.5%	15.6%	11.1%	9.6%
	Mazovia	6.9%	14.4%	14.8%	4.2%	7.3%
Place of living	Urban area	86.3%	14.4%	13.6	–	–
	Rural area	13.8%	85.6%	86.4	–	–
Disability level	Slight	21.9%	13.9%	23.7%	25.0%	21.4%
	Moderate	69.6%	75.3%	68.3%	68.1%	69.9%
	Severe	8.5%	10.8%	8.0%	6.9%	8.7%

Source: Author's calculation based on the CATI survey. N=1047.

Table no. A2

The difference in labour market outcomes between 15–29 y. and 30–64 y. six months after participation in the programme (t-test results)

	15–29 y.	30–64 y.	Dif.	St Err.	t value	p value
Working	.835	.810	.025	.031	.8	.419
Working in an unsheltered workplace	.889	.793	.096	.034	.2.8	.005
Permanent contract	.988	.983	.005	.011	.45	.651
Working at the same employer	.846	.906	-.06	.027	-2.25	.025

Satisfied with the job	.611	.596	.015	.043	.35	.729
Training opportunities	.408	.272	.136	.04	3.4	.001
Employer cares for health needs	.858	.801	.057	.034	1.65	.099
Satisfied with salary	.5	.463	.037	.044	.85	.398

Source: Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

Table no. A3

**The difference in labour market outcomes between rural and urban residents six months after participation in the programme (t-test results)**

	Urban	Rural	Dif.	St Err.	t value	p value
Working	.808	.854	-.046	.035	-1.3	.19
Working in an unsheltered workplace	.829	.708	.121	.038	3.2	.002
Permanent contract	.984	.984	0	.013	0	.989
Working at the same employer	.889	.927	-.038	.03	-1.25	.208
Satisfied with the job	.592	.642	-.051	.048	-1.05	.291
Training opportunities	.293	.325	-.032	.044	-7	.473
Employer cares for health needs	.809	.83	-.019	.038	-.5	.606
Satisfied with salary	.477	.431	.046	.049	.95	.347

Source: Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

Table no. A4

**The difference in effects of employment on various aspects of life between 15–29 y. and 30–64 y. six months after participation in the programme (t-test results)**

	15–29	30–64	Dif.	St Err.	t value	p value
Relations with family improved	.692	.691	.001	.041	.05	.979
Relations with peers improved	.618	.618	-.001	.043	0	.988
I am more active	.704	.741	-.037	.038	-.95	.335
I have more courage	.704	.631	.072	.042	1.75	.082

Source: Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

Table no. A5

**The difference in effects of employment on various aspects of life between urban and rural residents**

	Urban	Rural	Dif.	St Err.	t value	p value
Improved family relations	.675	.78	-.105	.045	-2.35	.019
Improved relations with peers	.593	.764	-.171	.047	-3.65	.001
I am more active	.718	.83	-.112	.043	-2.6	.009
I have more courage	.626	.756	-.13	.046	-2.8	.005

Source: Author's calculation based on the CATI survey.

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**V**olumul mic de angajare al persoanelor cu dizabilități reprezintă o provocare în toate țările din spațiul UE. Iată de ce politicile publice caută programe care ar putea ajuta aceste persoane să găsească slujbe. Lucrarea investighează situația pe piața muncii a persoanelor șomere cu dizabilități, care au participat în programele de găsire a locurilor de muncă implementate de un ONG de anvergură națională din Polonia, între anii 2018 și 2021. Pe baza datelor colectate cu ajutorul unei anchete telefonice la șase luni de la terminarea programului, este evidențiat procentul de participanți care a declarat condiții bune de muncă după încheierea programului. Este analizat numărul de participanți care au raportat o îmbunătățire a stimei de sine și a relațiilor sociale. În final este realizată o comparație între participanții tineri și cei mai în vârstă și între cei din mediul rural și omologii lor de la oraș. Rezultatele arată că majoritatea participanților care au găsit o slujbă după terminarea programului, au rămas angajați la șase luni după terminare, de cele mai multe ori la aceiași angajator și cu un contract permanent. Majoritatea participanților au declarat condiții bune de muncă și satisfacție generală cu slujba. Mai puțin de jumătate au declarat satisfacția față de salariu, ceea ce este probabil din cauza câștigurilor mici (în jurul salariului minim). Rezultatele arată că tinerii și rezidenții din mediul urban au fost în măsură mai mare angajați în locuri de muncă fără adăpost (în aer liber). De asemenea, tinerii au raportat mai frecvent oportunități de pregătire la locul de muncă și faptul că au schimbat mai des locul de muncă. Persoanele din mediul rural au raportat mai des

*efectele pozitive ale angajării asupra respectului de sine și a relațiilor lor sociale.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *dizabilități; programe de activare a muncii; calitatea angajării; mediul rural; tineri.*

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