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Institutions of employment and labour-market policy in Poland

The article presents the institutional system of employment and labour market policy in Poland. Public and non-public employment services, as well as private labour market institutions have been described. Recently, the decentralization, socialization, marketization and, to a certain extent, employment policy commercialization processes have become more and more distinct. More and more various entities offer diverse social services to people seeking employment and the unemployed. The following text pictures the diversity of entities and measures used in the employment policy in Poland, and it also presents its legal and organizational aspects.

Labour-market shaping in Poland after the political system transformation

The industrial transformation of 1989 in Poland caused the emergence of the unemployment issue which, on such a scale, was not known in this country after World War II. Unfortunately, the first reforms focused mainly on cash-financial issues, disregarding the issues of labour market as a remaining (residual) consequence of the political system changes. It was then assumed that the unemployment problem, which was to exist on a large scale only during the first few years of transformation, will be “absorbed” relatively fast by the privatization of economy and the introduction of market mechanisms. The reality appeared to be much more complicated. Unemployment became the number one social problem in Poland for almost 15 years. One may propose a thesis that it was only the integration of Poland with the European Union and the opening of consecutive labour markets of individual EU countries that decreased the mass, widespread and structural unemployment in Poland in a considerable way (see i.a. Sobacka-Szczapa, 2003; Kryńska, 2001).

The process of developing the institutional bases of the unemployment prevention policy started when the unemployment problem emerged. In December 1989 the Act on Employment and, almost two years later, in 1991 the Act on Employment and Unemployment were passed. Among other things, these Acts introduced such labour-market policy measures as the employment fund as a special means of labour-market policy financing, the unemployment benefits (originally with large numbers of people entitled to receive them), and the categorization of the unemployed persons. Moreover, the public employment services were created in Poland on the basis of these Acts. In 1990 the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs as well as the local authorities (on the regional level – the Provincial Employment Bureaus, on the local one – the Regional Employment Bureaus; Kryńska, 2001) served as the employment policy bodies. The system of employment offices was not established until 1993. On the central level, the Employment Office was established and later transformed into the National Employment Office, subsidiary to the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. In 1994 another Act on Employment and Unemployment Prevention was passed. It maintained many previous provisions, however, the range of labour market measures in use was altered. Compared to the two previous Acts, in this one the conditions of entitlement to benefits for the unemployed were defined much more rigorously, and their amount and periods of provision were also reduced (Szytko-Skoczny, 2004:103-104).

As the public institutions and the employment services crystallized in the 1990s, the employment councils, which have been and remain to be advisory-consultative bodies, were established within the system of employment offices. Originally, these were regional councils, provincial councils and the head council. In 1999 the county councils replaced the regional councils due to the formation of a

new level of local government administration in Poland. The reason for the establishment of the employment councils was the need to socialize the process of social dialogue on the current labour-market and employment policy. However, the research by M. Kabaj shows that many employment councils failed to fulfill their functions and faced numerous obstacles and difficulties fulfilling their statutory advisory-consultative functions (Kabaj, 2004:294-296).

In the 1990s, apart from the above mentioned legislation measures and institutional system organization, two important target funds that were to counteract the negative effects of the unemployment of the special labour-market groups – persons with disabilities and persons dismissed due to employer's permanent insolvency – were established to reduce the unemployment rates. In 1991 the National Rehabilitation Fund for Persons with Disabilities was established that, among other things, aimed at social and occupational activation of persons with disabilities in the context of labour market, and the Guaranteed Employee Benefits Fund to secure employees in case of their employers' insolvency was created in 1994 (see Auleytner, 1996: 150-159).

Among the four great political system reforms made in 1999, the most significant for the institutional system and the organization of the employment services administration was the administration reform. The public employment services became adjusted to the new administration division of the country: the provincial employment offices remained (in the liquidated provinces the provincial employment offices subsidiaries remained), the county offices replaced the regional offices, adjusting the structure to the new territorial division. The most important was that the reform decentralized the existent central public employment service system to the local and regional level. Since that time all actions by the provincial and

county employment offices were subject to the local and regional authorities that faced new challenges more or less efficiently. Many researchers and experts support the opinion that this decentralization was not well thought and that it caused a decrease in the functioning quality especially of the county employment offices which were not able to cope with a massive load of problems emerging as the unemployment continued to increase in Poland (see Szytko-Skoczny, 2004:104-110). It has also been indicated that the activities of the county employment offices were limited only to the local markets, without a broader view of the labour market as a much greater area of employment opportunities and labour resources movements (see Boni, 2006). Since 2000 the entities in charge of the employment and labour market policy have been the following:

- the relevant Minister of Labour Market (state level),
- the local and regional authorities of a province (regional level),
- the province governor in the domain of supervision (regional level),
- the county authorities (local level).

The beginning of the 21st century was the period of the highest unemployment rates that continued to grow, amounting to over 3 mln unemployed persons in the years 2001-2002. The lack of employment and the scale of the unemployment phenomenon as well as the prospects for the accession of Poland to the EU motivated the Polish government to develop labour market measures and programs. In 2002 the government's strategy "Enterprise – Development – Employment" provided for a gradual implementation of deregulation and various support measures for running undertakings and starting businesses (including self-employment), the implementation of the special program "First Employment" for graduates, and the infrastructure investment measures in order to incite and stimulate

the creation of new workplaces. At the same time, the mid-term Social Policy Strategy for the years 2002-2005 proposed a change of the institutional model of labour market service. Regarding the fact that the labour-market policy implementation by the public employment services, decentralized in 1999, was not completely efficient (a defective division of competencies and tasks, incompetent staff due to high rates of movement, an insufficient number of occupational advisors and employment agents employed, low allocations for activation measures), in the Strategy the government proposed that the competencies of employment offices should be made more realistic and less bureaucratized, that the range of services be broadened, including the activation ones, the customer service quality be improved, the allocations for activation programs be increased, the qualifications of the employment offices staff be improved, and the efficiency of public funding expenditures be increased (Skoczny, 2004).

Among other things, the Strategy also included important provisions on the increase of social partners and other institutions' participation in the creation and implementation of the employment policy. It has been crucial to such an extent that, in fact, in the first 14 years after the system transformation, the public sector (first the central, then the local and regional one) was in charge of the employment policy implementation and the unemployment prevention policy. The institutions functioning under other sectors were not seriously taken into consideration as "media" of employment policy, even though services for the unemployed and the persons seeking employment developed both in the private sector and in the non-governmental one. It was the consequence of the common belief, as well as of the legal provisions employed, that the issue of unemployment lies within the responsibility of the public sector – the state and local and regional authorities. The

multi-sectoral model (welfare pluralism) gained importance in the employment policy not until the legislation changes of 2003-2006 were made.

The Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions that came into force on 20 April 2004 was of fundamental importance. The new Act introduced definitions of labour-market institutions. Apart from the public employment services (the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the provincial and county employment offices) and the public Voluntary Labour Corps, the statutory labour-market institutions began to include also non-public and non-governmental entities such as: the employment agencies, the training institutions, the social dialogue institutions, the local partnership institutions, responsible for the employment and labour-market policy. Thus, the legislator enabled the implementation of the pluralistic employment policy by various entities, including the ones beyond the public sector, which were to be supplementary, additional but sometimes also much more efficient providers of services for the unemployed and job-seeking persons. The new legislation provided for a new quality of labour-market measures and services which had to be adjusted to the EU requirements due to the accession of Poland to its structures. Poland had to adjust its legislation and procedures to the requirements of the European Employment Strategy and the open coordination method, and the cooperation with the EURES system and spending of the European Social Fund (Grewiński, 2006).

Apart from the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, which has changed the attitude towards the institutional labour-market service, the introduction of other acts – the Act on Social Employment, the Act on Public Benefit and Voluntary Work, the Act on Public-Private Partnership, and the Act on Social Co-operatives triggered the need to accept diversity and mixed forms of support for the groups at risk of unemployment or the ones defavourized in the

context of the labour market. This legislation introduced many important issues which facilitated the development of institutional pluralism in the social services provision. Simultaneously, the system solutions based on the Danish model of *flexicurity* (see Rymysza, 2005) and deregulation measures which were to improve the employment situation (Frieske, 2003) were introduced under the labour law.

Currently, various entities, characterized in the next sections, deal with the issues of unemployment and human resources development in the context of labour market in Poland.

The role of public employment services

In Poland public employment services (publiczne służby zatrudnienia; PSZ) include the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the provincial employment offices together with their subsidiaries, and the county employment offices. The relevant Minister of Labour plays the main role as they constitute the main entity that coordinates the employment and labour-market policy on the central level. The need for coordination is a consequence of the dispersed model of the public employment services (Huty, et al., 2004).

The tasks of the Ministry primarily comprise the fulfillment of tasks connected with the function of the Labour Fund manager. This Fund provides resources for active labour-market programs in Poland as well as the unemployment benefits paid by the public employment services. Moreover, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for the development of measures and methods for the field of occupational counseling, employment agencies, trainings organization for the unemployed, and persons seeking employment activation; it coordinates the functioning of the EURES network; gathers and analyses data on labour market,

implements certain ESF priorities and prepares reports for the open coordination method under the European Employment Strategy (see Kryńska, 2001; Sobocka-Szczapa, 2006).

The labour-market related tasks of the province authorities (regions) are realized by the provincial employment offices, and include: the development and implementation of the regional employment actions plans; the measurement of the surplus and shortage positions demands; the organization and coordination of the occupational counseling and the employment services on the regional level; the diagnosis of labour market needs connected with permanent education and vocational training; the definition and implementation of the measures for adjusting the fields of education and vocational training to the labour market needs; keeping a register of the training institutions; maintaining the social dialogue in the domain of employment and education policy; managing the information and occupational career planning centres for the unemployed and job-seeking persons in order to activate them.

On the county (local) level, the implementation of employment policy lies within the responsibility of the county employment offices whose tasks are as follows: the registration and deregistration of the unemployed persons; the unemployment benefits granting and payments; the occupational counseling provision; the employment services provision; the active employment-seeking support; the training organization and occupational activation; the EURES services implementation; the intervention measures and public works organization; the subsidies for persons starting their first businesses; placements and vocational qualifications organization; grants and other supplements payments; the

implementation of system projects funded by the ESF; cooperation with other labour-market institutions in the field of the statutory tasks implementation.

In 2009 the public employment services included 16 provincial employment offices and 339 county offices and their subsidiaries. In total 355 offices covering 379 counties and 16 provinces formed the public employment services structure. As per 31 December 2009 the provincial and county employment offices employed over 21,000 people.

In Poland the public employment services (PSZ) constitute the most important employment and labour-market policy entity. The national network of the employment offices, thousands of the PSZ staff members, the labour-market services and measures developed, the Labour Fund and partly the ESF resources spending contribute to the potential of these entities. However, for many reasons, the PSZ are unable to face labour-market challenges on their own. Thus, the necessity for other (public and nonpublic) entities activity arises to support employment and occupational activation policy.

The Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP) as a labour-market institution

The Voluntary Labour Corps (Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy; OHP), which have had a long-standing (pre-war) tradition of activation of the unemployed youth and the youth at risk of social exclusion, is a public institution not included within the public employment services. The OHP is a state run budget unit supervised by the Minister of Labour and Social Policy. The head office and the provincial offices form the Voluntary Labour Corps. The main tasks of the head office include the organization of the Labour Corps and Youth Training and Education Centres. Moreover, the Youth Education and Employment Centres aiming at young persons activation by

means of the Youth Job Agencies, the Job Clubs and the Mobile Centres of Vocational Information function within the OHP. The OHP is based on the provisions under two main Acts: the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 20 April 2004 and the Act on Educational System of 7 September 1991, as well as relevant implementing regulations.

The Voluntary Labour Corps primarily fulfill the tasks within two domains:

1. The domain of youth education and training mainly aimed at young people above 15 years of age and at risk of social exclusion, i.e. the youth who “has fallen out of” the educational system due to upbringing neglects or learning difficulties; this is primarily the youth of socially maladjusted backgrounds or even the pathological ones.
2. The domain of employment and the prevention of marginalization and social exclusion of youth with dissimilar education and occupational qualifications who still need assistance in the process of the entrance into the labour market.

The main aims of OHP in the above domains are the following:

- to enable the youth without primary or junior high school education or who do not continue their education after these stages to gain occupational qualifications and supplement their education,
- to enable the youth to supplement their secondary comprehensive and vocational education,
- to organize trainings and employment for young people above the age of 15,
- to provide occupational counselling and the Mobile Centres of Vocational Information,
- to incite international cooperation and youth exchanges,

- to run job agencies without the obligation to be listed in the employment agencies register,
- to reimburse the employer's costs of wages and contributions for social insurance of minor workers.

The Voluntary Labour Corps have over 300 organizational state units. They offer their services of youth activation and education to approximately 30,000 young persons. They have been implementing large-scale, both system and competition, ESF projects for 5 years.

The Voluntary Labour Corps play a significant role in the social-occupational youth activation. This organization constitutes a crucial entity providing a wide range of services due to the large number of organizational units and the network of entities throughout Poland, subject to the central supervision by the OHP Head Office (see Grewiński, 2006).

Employment agencies

Employment agencies are another primarily nonpublic labour-market institutions that provide national and international employment services, occupational counseling, personal counseling and temporary employment. These institutions may be divided according to the service types in the following way: the employment service agencies, the personal counseling agencies, the occupational counseling agencies and the temporary employment agencies. The entities that may run the employment agencies are: private undertakings, local authorities, higher education institution, associations, funds as well as social and occupational organizations.

As per December 2009 the employment service agencies may function in the area of the Republic of Poland and refer workers to work abroad. The agencies have

to be registered in the agencies register and possess a relevant certificate which is obtained from the Marshal of a province. The persons the agencies seek employment for or the ones they help choose proper occupation and workplace cannot be charged any fees by them. They can, however, charge fees for actually incurred costs due to referring a person to work abroad, i.e. the costs of transport, visa granting, medical examination, documents translations. The employment agencies are entitled to charge the employers the relevant fees.

The primary aim of the personal counseling agencies is to analyze the employment in undertakings and define the predispositions of the employees in various job positions. They also help employers organize recruitment procedures and assess candidates for employment. At first, the agencies established in the early 1990s provided mainly for undertakings with foreign capital. Today, many Polish entities also make use of their counseling services to recruit the employees with highest or specialized qualifications, the temporary workers or the replacement ones. More and more personal counseling agencies specialize in the surveys of employees' attitudes and needs, in the analyses of the promotion and motivation systems permeability, in outplacements and outsourcing. Many of such agencies also offer coaching and training services.

The temporary employment agencies are relatively new entities functioning under the provisions of the Act on Temporary Workers Employment of 9 July 2003. The services provided by these institutions are based on referring the persons willing to work temporarily to employers. The temporary workers may do seasonal, temporary or short-term jobs. Interestingly, a dynamic development of the temporary employment agencies sector can be observed. In 2007 there were 1,550 such agencies functioning in Poland (Kukulak-Dolata, 2007).

The occupational counseling agencies are the last type of agencies. These entities are characterized by wide-ranging activities. They provide the employees with help in choosing suitable occupation and workplace, and with occupational information, and the employers in choosing suitable candidates. These agencies serve both employers and employees (Kukulak-Dolata, 2007).

As per December 2008, there were 3,735 entities registered as the employment agencies. The number of certificates granted (in the period of register functioning) amounted almost to 7,000 with most registered agencies being the employment service agencies functioning in the area of the Republic of Poland, and the employment service agencies referring Polish citizens to work for foreign employers. Only in 2007 the number of new certificates amounted to 1,168.

The number of the employment agencies and the dynamics of the increase in their number in the last years prove that they are becoming a more and more important nonpublic actor in the Polish labour market. Also, increasing numbers of entities and individual customers make use of their services. The complementary role of the employment agencies in relation to the public employment services is primarily based on the fact that they serve employers and persons seeking employment who are not usually unemployed. Frequently, the services of these agencies are popular with those who never use the support of the employment offices, e.g. the employers in the building, industry or market services business. Contrary to the standardized services by the public employment administration, the employment agencies are often more flexible and respond to varied needs of the customers.

The private sector plays the dominant role in the domain of the employment agencies, comprising 2,381 entities. The non-governmental sector has a significant

share of 184 employment agencies, the public one a minor share of 30 agencies, and the church sector plays almost no role, with only 2 institution of this kind.

Training institutions

Training institutions are another labour-market entity. These include both public and nonpublic entities providing out-of-school education and registered in the provincial employment offices (Głąbicka, 2006:14). It can be assumed that the legislator's main idea was to establish these institutions for the benefit of the unemployed, however they actually serve the employed as permanent education facilities. The legislation for the training institutions is Art. 20 of the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of 20 April 2004, and the Regulation of the Minister of Economy and Labour on the training institutions register of 27 October 2004. Each training institution that aims at using the public resources (the Labour Fund, the European Social Fund, the National Rehabilitation Fund for Persons with Disabilities) as a subcontractor, needs to have an entry in the Training Institutions Register (Rejestr Instytucji Szkoleniowych; RIS).

According to the data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as per December 2008, a total of 8,589 training institutions were registered in Poland. 91% of them were nonpublic, and 9% public. Most frequently the natural persons provide training services. The specific division according to the sector in charge in 2008 is as follows:

- natural persons within their business activity (private companies) managed 41% of the training institutions,
- associations, foundations, partnerships and other natural persons managed 34% of these entities,

- permanent and practical education centres, secondary schools, higher education institutions, continuing education and supplementary occupational training, academic and research institutions as well as research-development centres managed 5% of these entities,
- 10% of the registered institutions represented a different organizational structure.

The most popular permanent out-of-school education forms are courses, training workshops, seminars and conferences. Post-graduate studies are offered infrequently. Other forms of education include lectures, discussions, talks, and consultancy of various kind (financial, tax-related, business).

According to the data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the years 2005-2007, over 1,825,000 people were trained by the registered institutions, out of which over 944,000 were the unemployed and persons seeking employment referred by the employment offices. Apart from trainings, the training institutions have also helped over 106,000 trainees (about 12%) obtain employment. In Poland, about 8% of the total number of the unemployed registered in the employment offices are provided with trainings.

Social dialogue and local partnership institutions

Public authorities (central, and local and regional) cooperate with the social partners in order to improve the state of employment in Poland and to implement the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions. There are three large trade union headquarters (confederations) in Poland – the Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (NSZZ "Solidarność"), the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych; OPZZ) and the Trade Unions Forum (Forum Związków Zawodowych; FZZ), with over 2 mln members in

2008. Apart from these, there function other numerous federations (about 300), nation-wide trade union organizations (273) and local trade union organizations (23,995). However, it has to be noted that only about 7,000 trade union organizations function independently – with no connections with a large trade union organization and exclusively on the local level. In Poland in addition to the ones mentioned above, there function also the farmers' trade unions that have, however, a different legal status. There are four main organizations to represent the employers' interests: the Confederation of Polish Employers (Konfederacja Pracodawców Polskich; KPP), the Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan (Polska Konfederacja Pracodawców Prywatnych; PKPP Lewiatan), the Association of Polish Craft (Związek Rzemiosła Polskiego; ZRP) and Business Center Club – the Association of Employers (Business Center Club – Związek Pracodawców; BCC-ZP). In Poland, the social dialogue is institutionalized, i.e. it takes the form of: the Trilateral Commission, the provincial social dialogue commissions, the trilateral trade teams and the bilateral social dialogue institutions.

The employment councils (the head one, provincial and county ones), which include the representatives of the trade union organizations, employers' organizations, local and regional authorities and non-governmental organizations, should play a special role in continuing the social dialogue for the implementation of employment policy. The councils as advisory-consultative bodies should inspire various undertakings of the employment offices, offer opinions about the activities of the labour-market institutions, and monitor the performance, efficiency and relevancy of measures aiming at human resources development in the context of labour market. Unfortunately, according to many practitioners and surveys, a lot of

employment councils do not realize their aims for different reasons, thus the social dialogue in this domain is limited and imperfect (Kabaj, 2004; Frieske et al.; 1999).

Other fields of the social dialogue are, either formal or informal, local partnerships. Their aim is to supplement the measures of the public sector which is not able to plan, design and implement the labour market policy in a complete way on its own. Frequently, these partnerships, which function within a net of inter-institutional relationships, complete this gap by combining the knowledge and the potentials of various entities, by using design methods and reacting to diverse needs of the specific beneficiary groups in a flexible manner. The aim of the local partnerships is to find solutions to social problems on the level of district or county. Unfortunately, numerous obstacles hinder the process of partnerships development in Poland, thus the creation of modern cooperation networks remains to be limited.

Non-governmental organizations in the employment policy

The importance of non-governmental entities is increasing in the domain of the labour-market policy implementation. Both the European Union and the Polish policy-makers view the implementation of the *workfare mix* policy by the non-governmental organizations as promising (see Rymsza, 2005; Grewiński, 2007).

In Poland, after passing the Acts: on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions as well as on Public Benefit and Voluntary Work in 2004, the non-governmental organizations gained eligibility to undertake measures for employment and human resources development. It is particularly important with regard to the still increasing unemployment rates and the relatively low occupational activity of Poles (the employment rates the lowest in the EU). It has been assumed that the non-governmental organizations can successfully complement numerous

service deficits that the public employment services fail to provide (especially for the persons who are disadvantaged in the labour market the most, i.e. the long-term unemployed and socially excluded persons). The non-governmental organizations are certainly extremely interesting labour-market entities, serving for many graduates as “a breeding ground for staff”, voluntary work, and gaining first occupational experience as well as the institutions which offer flexible employment, all the more so because the very non-governmental organizations offer thousands of stable job positions.

It is difficult to give the exact number of the non-governmental organizations functioning in the domain of the labour-market services (for many organizations this function may be marginal), however, rough statistical data show that out of the total 60,000 registered non-governmental organizations in Poland, approximately 1,300 provide services for the unemployed. It is worth noting that almost 500 of them are the non-governmental organizations with a nonpublic labour-market institution status, e.g. 116 employment agencies, 393 training institutions registered within provincial employment offices, 20 social co-operatives and Social Integration Centres. The most non-governmental labour-market organizations (77%) are involved in the organization of trainings for the unemployed, over 50% in the activities related to occupational counseling; about 55% deal in occupational services, 40.5% in social integration and social-occupational activation; 34% of these organizations offer enterprise development and self-employment support and 24.9% job positions creation.

The fact that the non-governmental organizations specialize in service provision to the specific groups of recipients, often other than the ones provided for by the public employment services, is an important argument for the increase in their

participation in the labour-market policy in Poland. The fact that these organizations provide services for those who are not covered by other institutions is particularly crucial. Most frequently, these include difficult groups in the context of the labour market – the disabled, former prisoners, the socially excluded or disadvantaged persons. They are often provided with highly individual and complex support (see Grewiński, 2007).

Enterprise development entities

Apart from the labour-market institutions activities, including the non-governmental labour-market organizations, there are also the public and nonpublic entities involved in direct support of enterprise, mainly small and medium-sized undertakings, as well as in employment development and employment sustainability in companies. One of the most important institutions of this type is the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości; PARP), which as a governmental quasi-agency is supervised by the Minister of Economy. The PARP was established in 2000. Its aim is to manage the funds from the state budget and the European Union allocated for enterprise support and human resources development, especially considering the needs of small and medium-sized undertakings. The aim of the Agency is to implement the economy development programs, especially in the fields of the support for small and medium-sized undertakings development, export, regional development, new techniques and technologies employment, new job positions creation, human resources development as well as unemployment prevention. The PARP is responsible for the measures to improve the innovativeness and competitiveness of the Polish undertakings. The UE funds that the Agency has at its disposal (for the years 2007-2013) are allocated primarily for the technological

modernizations within the undertakings, for the support of cooperative relationships creation and the clusters of small and medium-sized undertakings, for the initiatives of innovative activities, for the stimulation of research-development measures and for undertakings development. Helping to shape a friendly environment for business activities, the PARP cooperates with business-related institutions, entrepreneurs' organizations, the local and regional authorities offices and units.

The National Services System for Small and Medium Undertakings (Krajowy System Usług dla Małych i Średnich Przedsiębiorstw; KSU MŚP), which has functioned within the PARP since 1996, is a highly important element of support for undertakings. It is a system of service providers' groups, or organizations specializing in various service provision for undertakings and persons starting their businesses. The KSU supports information and consultative services within:

- the administrative-legislation aspects of starting, running, suspending and canceling a business,
- the available sources of public assistance and other sources of business financing,
- the opportunities, range and principles of other services provided under the system (e.g. the support for export activity development, training opportunities, obtaining help from an innovative projects supervisor, receiving funds for business financing under loan or guarantee funds).

The strategic objective of the KSU system is the creation of an efficient, recognizable system of entrepreneurship support in Poland as well as providing for over 350,000 different (and not recurrent) clients until 2015. The National Services System for Small and Medium Undertakings includes for-profit organizations experienced in the provision of services for micro entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized undertakings as well as persons starting businesses. The KSU centres comprise

i.a. the regional development agencies, business support centres, foundations, associations, clubs and other types of entrepreneurs' and employers' organizations, guarantee funds, loan funds, enterprise incubators, research-development institutes, economic chambers, industrial-trade chambers, trade chambers, craft chambers, innovation and technology centres, entrepreneurship support centres as well as other non-governmental organizations.

Within the network of KSU there are 99 Consultancy Centres for small and medium-sized undertakings, which provide the entrepreneurs and persons planning to start business with information services on a broadly understood enterprise development and the available forms of support for entrepreneurs free of charge. The activities of the Centres are financed from the PARP system project implemented under the European Social Fund.

To sum up, it has to be stated that the employment and labour market policy in Poland is implemented by various public, non-governmental and private entities. Until recently, the labour market policy was primarily associated with the public employment offices, however, according to the above analysis, many other entities support the employment domain. Currently their role being complementary in nature, it is likely to increase in the future due to the development of social policy in the spirit of *pluralism / welfare mix* (see Grewiński, 2009).

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UWAGA

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