

СЕКЦІЯ 3. ПРАКТИКИ ЄС В РОЗВИТКУ СОЦІАЛЬНО-ЕКОНОМІЧНОЇ ІНКЛЮЗІЇ МОЛОДІ

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GLOBAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES: EUROPEAN CONTEXT

The current labour market in Poland and the European Union is quite difficult for those who are just starting to operate in it. Therefore, youth unemployment has been one of the most serious social problems in Europe for many years. It is noteworthy that the youth unemployment rate, despite being significantly higher than the official overall rates for individual EU countries, has been steadily declining over the past few years. However, the coronavirus pandemic has slowed this process to some extent. In some Community countries, such as Spain or Greece, unemployment is around 30%, while it should be noted that a few years earlier it was around 50% [1-2]. In Poland, the problem seems to be smaller, as unemployment affects about 9-10% of young people, and it is also significantly lower than a few years ago. The situation is best in Germany, where only about 5% of young people are unemployed. At the current stage of development of European society, the issue of youth employment, as well as the relevance of education to the needs of the labour market, has become particularly relevant. Despite the high level of educational systems in many EU countries, more and more young people are unable to find a job in their field of study [3]. One of the main reasons for this is the structural mismatch between what is taught in educational institutions and what is actually required in the labour market. According to Eurostat, in 2024, approximately 26% of young Europeans (aged 20-34) who graduated from higher education did not work in their field of study [1].

As can be seen from the above, these problems affect not only individuals but also the economy as a whole. One of the reasons for this situation is outdated educational programmes in higher education institutions that do not take into account the needs of modern employers. For example, many universities still provide theoretical knowledge, while practical skills, soft skills, digital literacy, or entrepreneurial thinking are neglected. According to a survey by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP), 45% of employers in the EU complain about the lack of practical training among young people. Another important challenge is precarious forms of employment, which have become more widespread in Europe in recent years. Temporary, seasonal work, freelancing, zero-hour contracts are the forms of employment that have become

particularly common among young people. According to Eurofound, around 43% of young workers under 29 in the EU have a temporary or precarious contract. In the Netherlands, Poland, and Portugal, this figure is even higher. We would like to emphasise that such forms of employment can provide flexibility, but they have low levels of social protection, lack of stable income, limited access to pension insurance and the inability to plan for the long term. Many young people are forced to accept such conditions due to a lack of stable offers or due to pressure in a competitive market.

According to the European Commission's Employment and Social Affairs in Europe (ESDE) 2022, a large proportion of young people have been affected by job losses due to the coronavirus pandemic [4]. It also highlights that the post-pandemic recovery in the EU has improved the labour market situation of young people to a lesser extent than other social groups. In the light of this report, it should be emphasised that programmes aimed at helping young people to start and find themselves in the labour market, which are now abundant within the framework of European Union funds, are important. And the new cash flow under the EU's 2021-2027 financial framework is important in this context.

In view of the above, the proposed ways to overcome the difficulties faced by young people, as outlined in the European Commission's ESDE report on social policy and employment, seem very important. In particular, easier integration of young people into the labour market, acquisition of digitalisation skills by young workers, support for upward mobility of workers as a basis for successful and resilient careers, reduction of risks for young people (unemployment or illness, poverty and debt), acquisition of property by young people and purchase of real estate, etc.

According to Eurostat, as of May 2023, youth unemployment in Poland was around 10.3%, which places Poland in the middle of the EU ranking. This indicates that the situation on the Polish labour market for young people is better than in the southern EU countries, although not the best in the Union. There are a number of initiatives in Poland aimed at helping young people enter the labour market and start a business. The Public Employment Service (Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy) offers young unemployed people (under 30) special support "bons" - vouchers for education, internships, employment or relocation (moving to work) [5]. These vouchers cover the costs of advanced training courses, paid internships, or relocation, encouraging employers to hire young people and young people to look for work more actively. The government also encourages youth entrepreneurship. There is a soft loan programme called "Pierwszy biznes - Wsparcie w starcie" ("First business - support at the start"), which has been implemented since 2014. Under this programme, young entrepreneurs (students, graduates, unemployed people under 30) can receive a soft loan (about 113 thousand PLN for 7 years) to start their own business. According to the Ministry of Family and Labour, as of the beginning of 2022, the programme helped to create 5,734 new firms, with loans worth over PLN 398 million [6]. Such support makes it much easier for young people to start a business. There are also grants from employment services to start a business for registered unemployed young people (one-time start-up assistance).

Youth employment in the European Union remains a pressing socio-economic issue that requires a comprehensive approach. The main challenges are the structural mismatch between education and the labour market, precarious forms of

employment, and the effects of global instability. These problems can be overcome by implementing targeted policies, youth support programmes and modernising education systems to meet the requirements of the modern labour market.

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