

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY IN RURAL AREAS OF POLAND

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**Abstract.** The article analyses the poverty issue and its influence on unemployment level in Poland after the year 1989 till now. Author describes poverty reasons and its results especially on the rural areas. Possibility of the quick transformation of the Polish agriculture, which is connected with working force release and liquidation the issue of unemployment (both registered and hidden), is rather improbable. Solving the unemployment problem on the rural areas will depend on government policy, efficiency of macroeconomic regulations and local activities.

**Key words:** unemployment, poverty, rural areas.

### INTRODUCTION

Transformation of the Polish economy after 1989 has brought a number of significant changes in the labor market. Unemployment appeared, affecting living standards of families involved in agriculture. Closure of state-owned farms caused a very significant increase of the unemployment rate, pushing employees unable to find other jobs.

Private farming assumed new significance, becoming more detached from the process of economic transformation. This was due to special characteristic of the Polish family farms, where traditionally all family members worked on a farm either part- or full-time. Unemployment rate at the countryside is much higher than in urban areas. People who lose jobs return to their farms, living with their families, creating hidden unemployment. There are two categories of hidden unemployment in agriculture:

- unemployment affecting people who are not professionally active and have no chance of finding a job,
- unemployment of people who are not fully employed in agriculture, perform seasonal work or assist others.

To a large extent, such a situation reduces the impact of unfavorable socio-economic conditions. After losing their jobs or the right to unemployment benefits, people who worked full-time while living on a farm start working there even if their services are not essential, creating hidden unemployment.

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## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Unemployment is the subject of numerous studies, mainly socio-economical projects – their results do not answer key questions:

- was the rapid growth of the unemployment rate during the transformation period unavoidable?
- was this unemployment caused exclusively by economic factors?
- is structural transformation the main source of unemployment, or perhaps is it the result of economic recession?

The article is based on data provided by publications of Polish Main Statistical Office. There were also used data from publications: Kabaj M., „Program przeciwdziałania ubóstwu i bezrobociu”, Rajkiewicz A., „Polityka społeczna”.

## RESULTS

### Costs of unemployment

The issue of unemployment is extremely serious because it leads to poverty and social deprivation. It also says something about overall state of the economy, which produces less than it could if everyone was employed. Unemployment creates several consequences:

- economic – expressed by the incomplete utilization of society's productive capacity,
- psychological – the need to adopt to new role, personality changes,
- political – threat of political destabilization by uncontrolled social movements.

Unemployment brings not only high economic expenses, but also social and psychological costs. There are two types of unemployment-related costs – individual and social. Individual cost of unemployment (more painful for those who are actually out of work), occurs in two situations:

- the first category affects people who left the labor force on their own, or due to migration, serving as the natural unemployment rate,
- the second category includes people who would like to work, but are unable to find jobs.

In the first case personal costs include lack of steady income, while in the other category in addition to lack of fixed income there are additional psychological and physical costs, creating a feeling of uselessness, as well as various social problems. People refuse to discuss their personal situation. Poor people are not just those sleeping in railway stations, social assistance centers, hostels and other shelters, they also include large families without fixed incomes, families of alcoholics and drug-users.

The second category is the social cost of unemployment. Society is providing for the unemployed for a certain period of time, during which these people should find new job while receiving guaranteed means of personal support.

## **Magnitude of unemployment**

The following analysis begins with the evaluation of unemployment, its dynamics and special characteristics. In general, in recent years Polish unemployment figures were always going up. One key feature of the Polish labor market is the very rapid increase of the unemployment rate, which grew from 1,5% in the first quarter of 1990 to 16% at the end of 1994, then declined to 14.3% in mid-1996, climbing to 18% in January 2002. To a large extent falling unemployment rates in mid-1990's are due to better economic situation and more restrictive criteria for the registration of new unemployed by the Polish Labor Offices.

Another indicator illustrating situation on the labor market is the number of unemployed per each available job. This ratio reflects chances of finding a new job through Labor Offices and on the local job market.

It is estimated that public job offers account for approx. 33–35% of all jobs on the market (calculated as proportion of job offers available through the Labor Offices vs. the total number). In practice, two-thirds of all available jobs are offered through sources other than Labor Offices. Both channels provide very limited opportunities for the unemployed to find new jobs. On the national level, on average Labor Offices had only one job offer for every 113 unemployed, while on the wider market there were 38 job seekers for every available job.

Level of unemployment in Poland has gone far beyond natural, socially acceptable frictional unemployment. Within a short period of time Poland has joined countries with the highest unemployment rates.

The period from 1990 until 1995 saw a very rapid increase of the labor pool (by about 800.000 potential job seekers), accompanied by rapid decline in the number of available jobs (by 2.4 million). This social process has led to a very significant change in the proportion between pensioners, recipients of disability benefits and the jobless on the one hand and working population on the other – from 39% in 1989 to 77% in 1995. Similar situations are rarely found in Europe, only in Hungary there are 90 seniors, recipients of disability benefits and the unemployed for every 100 workers.

## **Processes of unemployment creation**

The process of shifting labor resources from the productive category, contributing to GNP increase to the consumption category, has taken two ways.

Liberalization of early retirement and disability benefits programs for Poles who were still in their productive age has led to an explosion of the number of pensioners and recipients of disability benefits between 1990 and 1995, growing almost three times as fast as in the previous period – by 2.257 million compared with 693.000 from 1985 to 1989. This increase is more than four times higher than actual number of people reaching their retirement age. In 1995 the number of senior citizens and recipients of disability benefits exceeded retirement-age population by 3.8 million, or 72%. These processes are driven by the situation on the labor market (growing unemployment) and

liberalization of state pension policy in order to hide part of the unemployment by increasing the number of early retirees.

Economic transformation was accompanied by mass unemployment, as well as an increase in hidden unemployment, particularly in agriculture.

As a result of these two processes almost five million people moved from the productive sector to consumption within a very short period of time (the number of retirees and recipients of disability benefits grew by 2.3 million, while the number of job-seekers increased by 2.6 million). Meanwhile, expenditures for pensions and disability payments rose from 6.5% of the Polish GNP to about 15% by 1995. At the same time, proportion of social security payments made by employers rose to 48% of the actual wages. Although wages and productivity in Poland are much lower than in the European Union, in relative terms social security payments imposed on the employers are twice as high as in the EU. These negative structural shifts have led to a rapid increase in taxation of Polish corporations, from 6.4% of their revenues in 1991 to 14.6% in 1994, i.e. by 230%. One negative effect was the reduction of the competitiveness of Polish firms compared with EU companies. Poland was creating a social welfare state, in which fewer people work and produce, while an increasing number is participating in the consumption of Gross National Product by receiving pensions, disability benefits, unemployment and welfare payments.

These processes are cushioned by the gray economy, where between 0.8 and 1.2 million unemployed find extra income and part-time, or seasonal work.

### **The young people unemployment**

One of key features of unemployment in Poland is that it affects mainly young people – 34.6% of the unemployed are under 24. A total of 909.000 young people had no jobs at the end of 1995. Nearly two-thirds of all the unemployed (over 1.6 million people) are under 34. Unemployment rate among young people has reached 31%, which is twice as high as the average for all age groups. In Europe only Spain has higher unemployment rate among young people. Average youth unemployment rate in EU countries is 15.3%, half the Polish levels. The issue of unemployment among young people has several important aspects. Many of these job seekers begin their "career" by applying for unemployment benefits. The fact that 1.6 million Poles under 34 are without jobs means big losses for the economy and the country, because large part of Poland's most dynamic economic resources is effectively wasted. Unemployment among young people also has its social and moral aspects and could endanger social order.

### **Unemployment and education**

Unemployment creates serious economic and social losses. It must be emphasized that these losses grow exponentially with increasing levels of education. Over the last three decades the number of university graduates in Poland has increased nearly five-fold, while the number of Poles with primary education fell by more than half. For example, data from 1994, based on all those employed in the national economy illus-

trates variations in workforce participation by sex. More women have university and high-school education than men. On the other hand, level of education of those working in agriculture is much lower, than in other sectors.

In recent times the number of students at both state-owned and private schools has increased considerably. It is widely believed that the future of young people and the economy depends to an increasing extent on the acquisition and practical use of knowledge, ability to innovate and creative thinking. Raising competitiveness of the Polish economy will require major improvement of the quality of its labor.

### **Long-term unemployment**

It would appear that time is the most important factor differentiating various categories of unemployment. In an economy without general shortage of jobs, people usually find new work within a relatively short time and most unemployment is merely frictional (temporary). In a country with acute shortage of new jobs a very considerable percentage of all job seekers is unable to find work for long period of time.

Excess unemployment levels are permanent in a situation of general economic instability. It is estimated that current shortage of jobs in the Polish economy has reached 2 million. Unless the number of work places increases at some point in the future structural unemployment will not be reduced to a meaningful extent. Effectiveness of the labor market has little impact on the level of unemployment, although market effectiveness plays an important role for other reasons.

In order to discuss the structure of unemployment in Poland and the resulting conclusions for unemployment prevention programs, it will be necessary to utilize comparative analysis. Using time as the main criteria, it is safe to assume that frictional unemployment includes those job seekers, who are out of work for up to six months, while the six-month deadline means a permanent job deficit and leads to structural unemployment. Structural unemployment appears when the unemployed are out of work for more than 12 months and in some cases even up to several years.

The length of time in which typical job seekers are out of work continues to expand. Proportion of long-term unemployment in overall unemployment levels rose from 24% in 1991 to nearly 44.2% in December 1994, falling to 37% in December of 1995. In practice, almost half the unemployed are without work for 12 months or more, while a fifth of that number has been looking for work for more than two years. Level of long-term unemployment depends on a large extent by the character of local labor market.

Collective data from the entire country refers to general level of unemployment and is not representative of the situation on local labor markets. In Poland there is no free movement of job seekers between the regions (lack of housing), consequently, there is no single labor market. Instead, there are many very different local labor markets. Characteristically, in recent years there were no significant changes in the unemployment levels in regions with the highest and lowest unemployment rates. That is despite state intervention on the labor market (preferences in the allocation of state funds and investment grants in regions suffering from mass unemployment).

Labor market in Poland is regressive. Historically influx of the job seekers was usually larger than the outflow (with few exceptions). The difference continued to accumulate as long-term unemployment, extending the period of time in which the jobless are out of work. These proportions reversed only in 1994–1996. In order to increase unemployment reduction rate it will be necessary to speed up creation of new jobs. After 1997, situation on the labor market begun repeating itself and the influx of new jobless expanded once again, exceeding reduction of the jobless figures. It will also be necessary to reduce unemployment growth rate through rational protection of the existing jobs.

### **Unemployment and economic growth**

The process of transformation and recession is accompanied by the decline of both GNP and employment levels. These processes are not directly proportional. Typically, there is a delay where in the initial period of every recession the level of employment is falling much slower than the level of production, leading to a temporary decline in labor productivity and the rise of excess unemployment (hidden unemployment). In a contemporary market economy this rule is universal and does not apply exclusively to transformation from planned to market economy. There are two main causes for the delay in reduction of employment levels – first, labor input is by definition less mobile than production and capital, secondly, at the initial stage of every recession employers try to reduce layoffs of experienced employees, since the cost of recruitment and training new employees is much higher than the cost of temporary hidden unemployment. However, in a competitive environment it is impossible to maintain excess employment for extended period of time, even when the economy starts coming out of the recession. The delay stage turns into the acceleration stage and optimization of employment levels to production levels. The second stage means reduction of excess employment.

Next, and this applies specifically to the Polish economy, is the third stage and the adaptation of levels of employment to desired productivity levels, i.e. reduction of hidden unemployment present before the transformation process.

The first stage has occurred in 1990–1992 – 18% fall of Poland's GNP was accompanied by 12% decline of the number of employees, similarly in the industry production was slashed by 33.2%, while employment fell by 13.2%. In the first case delay ratio (falling production vs. lower employment level) reached 1.8, in the other the ratio was 2.4. Hidden unemployment was the highest in 1991 – 1.2 million people overall, including almost one million in the industry.

At the second stage, starting from 1992, the gap between production growth and levels of employment begun to narrow. It was eliminated almost completely by 1993. Productivity and excess employment climbed to the levels of 1989.

The third stage, which begun in 1993–1994, consisted of reduction of hidden unemployment which existed in the economy before the transformation process.

Since 1997 unemployment rate in Poland has been edging up again, reaching 18% (3.15 million unemployed) in January 2002. Unemployment was now driven by a new factor – gradual elimination of excess employment levels by Polish corporations.

At the current stage of development rise of labor supply will depend increasingly on demographic expansion of the labor pool and reduction of excess employment in the national economy. In this context, to maintain current unemployment rates GNP growth has to produce new jobs not only for large numbers of young people entering the labor market, but also to people laid off by Polish companies as a result of decrease in hidden unemployment. In order to achieve this goal, Polish economy must create correspondingly larger number of new jobs.

### **Unemployment in agriculture**

Experts commonly recognize the need to reduce employment levels in agriculture. Usually, the only differences focus on the rate and methods used to reduce agricultural labor pool.

The decisive factor that will determine the possibility of reducing employment levels in agriculture is the capacity of the labor market in other sectors of the Polish economy. This in turn depends on growth rate of employment in other industries and growth rate of the labor force. Data from the most recent forecast for the Polish population by 2020, prepared by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) in mid-1996, as well as own estimates and forecasts for production-age population in urban areas and in the rural areas, including farm and non-farm residents of agricultural areas by 2010 (based on a "zero-immigration" scenario) were used to determine growth rates of labor resources. According to GUS forecasts, the decade from 1996 to 2005 will be a period of very high growth of production-age population, totaling nearly 200.000 people per year on average. This expansion will slow down dramatically only in the next five-year period. Growth will peak in the initial years of this century, falling systematically to 2010, when employment growth will actually turn negative. This date will mark the end of expansion of production-age population. In the following decade production-age population will decline by about 1.6 million people.

Forecasts for the period up to 2010 indicate that the impact of natural growth on the increase of production-age population will be stronger in rural areas than in the cities. Over the entire 15-year period, the number of production-age residents of rural areas will rise by about 1.3 million (16%), increasing by approx. 0.9 million (7%) in urban areas. In the last five years only rural areas will see any growth at all, with falling production-age population in the cities. It is also worth noting that in the rural areas growth rate of production-age population will be slower among farmers than among non-farm population. This is due exclusively to different initial demographic structure of the two populations.

Reduction of the number of people employed in agriculture is a positive development, although it also means correspondingly greater pressure of non-farming population on the labor market.

In the first few years of economic transformation expansion of the labor pool was accompanied by a very rapid decline in the number of people employed outside private farms. There was a visible improvement in recent years, in line with economic recovery.

Increase of employment outside farms by some 210.000 people in the last three years, i.e. on average by 1.9% per year, brings new hope that economic growth will continue to generate more jobs than the numbers lost as a result of liquidation of excess employment and corporate restructuring. However, in order to absorb entire workforce expansion and to reduce the level of unemployment both in the cities and in rural areas, employment growth rate outside agriculture would have to accelerate even more over the next decade. This will be a very difficult challenge even in an environment of continuous, high GNP growth, given the need to increase significantly labor productivity figures.

### Unemployment and poverty

Long-term unemployment creates poverty and destitution. Poverty has many sources, dimensions and aspects. In terms of underlying factors, there are three root causes of poverty [Kabaj 2000, Golinowska]:

- Incidental poverty (accidents, illnesses, divorces, natural disasters).
- Subjective poverty, caused by low level of resourcefulness, poor qualifications and education, unwillingness to work, dependence on social assistance and welfare, various social problems (alcoholism, drug use, etc.).
- Structural poverty, which just like structural unemployment is not caused by accidents or subjective reasons, but rather by external economic factors: unemployment, low earnings, growing gap between the lowest and highest wages, high prices, elimination of subsidies for basic products and services.

Poverty, just like other terms used in social sciences, does not have a single definition. Poverty is a state in which an individual or social group lacks resources to satisfy basic needs, those regarded as essential by the society. Besides food, the term basic needs also includes other necessities, such as clothing, shelter, health care and education. Poverty is very difficult to quantify more accurately.

Poverty in rural areas is evaluated by accepting specific benchmarks of essential consumption. According to the Main Statistical Office (GUS), various levels of consumption of essential necessities creates poverty zones based on five different standards [Kabaj 2000]:

- basic personal budget level, calculated and published on a quarterly basis by the Institute of Labor and Social Issues (IPiSS), divided into single-person and households with large families,
- absolute poverty constitutes about 45% of the basic personal budget level,
- relative poverty line, 50% of the average household expenditures,
- subjective poverty line,
- statutory poverty line.

Table 1 indicates, that those most exposed to the risk of poverty include households of farmers and employees managing agricultural farms, as well as recipients collecting welfare or those receiving other forms of social assistance.

As mentioned earlier, the main source of poverty is the increase or decrease of the unemployment rate. Unemployment grew rapidly in 1990–1993 and by the end of 1993 affected nearly 3 million people, or 16% of the workforce. Reduction of poverty rates between 1994 and 1997 is due mainly to the decrease of the official unemployment rolls by over one million people.



Table 1. Percentage of household members in Poland below the poverty line, divided into socio-economic categories (in percentages, data from 1998)

Household socio-economic groups	Percentage of household members below:		
	Basic personal budget level	Absolute poverty	Relative poverty line
Total	49,8	5,6	15,8
Employees	48,8	4,1	12,6
Farmers	64,1	10,4	27,2
Employees managing agricultural farms	60,3	6,6	21,5
Self-employed	36,8	3,1	9,0
Pensioners	33,8	3,1	8,8
Recipients of disability benefits	56,6	8,0	22,1
Unemployed, welfare recipients and others	78,8	26,2	48,0

Sources: GUS, IPiSS.

Reappearance of another, growing wave of poverty is also associated with an increase of the unemployment rate, which continues until today and has once again reached the level of 3 million people.

High levels of poverty remain for the last several years and to continue to expand. This brings many other threats, which are particularly visible in agricultural communities. Malnutrition of children or rapid increase of illnesses endanger biological state of the population.

Worsening economic and social conditions are reflected by:

- increase in the number of people using social assistance,
- inability to continue financing house ownership,
- increase of social illnesses and deviations.

The relationship between unemployment rate and poverty line is particularly visible in geographical terms (table 2). Regional variation of the unemployment rate is caused by mass lay-offs in heavy industry, as well as closure of state-owned collective farms. Provinces with high levels of unemployment are also suffering from high rates of poverty – see for example province of Warmia-Mazury and Świętokrzyskie. Poverty rates in provinces with the lowest unemployment rate, e.g. Mazovia and Silesia are low.

### Roots of the poverty

Social ills such as poverty cannot be reduced without eliminating root causes of that problem. Today these root causes are more numerous and more complex, which is why evaluation of the current situation is difficult, making it impossible to isolate a single main source of poverty. Government economic, employment and social security policy plays a key role in the prevention of poverty. Previous legal and institutional solutions adopted in Poland indicate, that despite vast expenditures on social policy, poverty remains a very serious and growing problem. The variety of root causes of poverty and accumulation of these factors effectively prevent creation of coherent programs to eliminate poverty. There are many people in Poland for whom welfare rather than

Table 2. Unemployment rate and rate of poverty in Poland by province (data from 1998)

Province	Unemployment rate	Poverty line
Lower Silesia	13,3	14,7
Kujawy-Pomerania	12,2	18,3
Lublin	8,2	20,8
Lubuskie	11,8	10,9
Łódź	10,7	15,3
Małopolska	8,1	13
Masovia	9,2	11,9
Opolskie	11,4	13,9
Podkarpackie	11,8	24
Podlasie	9,8	18,3
Pomerania	11,1	19,1
Silesia	10,2	10,3
Świętokrzyskie	13,1	22,9
Warmia-Mazury	16,8	22,8
Wielkopolska	7,5	15,3
Western Pomerania	15,1	15,7

Sources: GUS, IPiSS.

regular job is the main source of income and some welfare recipients are not even looking for work. Growing unemployment has increased the pressure on social security system, leading to an increase of cash payments as a proportion of all social security expenditures. Securing even the minimum social safety level for very large numbers of the unemployed has exceeded financial capacity of the Polish state. Social policy has limited the number of recipients able to receive unemployment insurance payments, while reducing actual amounts. On the one hand, this reduces material status of the unemployed, on the other it stimulates potential recipients to look for work. The issue of labor resources in Poland should be treated as an opportunity for the economy. Effective prevention of the unemployment must incorporate three main areas – macroeconomic policy that would support creation of new jobs, active policy on the labor market and efficient management of the unemployment offices. Countering the effects of unemployment requires active social policy. Adoption of specific policies also requires resolution of a number of other issues, such as guaranteed minimum wage, basic personal budget level, family benefits, unemployment benefits, disability benefits and pensions, work hours etc. Scope and methods of the social policy and employment policy depend on various factors, including traditions of each society, development level, GNP growth rates, strength and effectiveness of trade unions as well as state policy.

Unemployment is not a serious social issue when it is temporary (frictional unemployment) and the unemployment rate does not exceed 3–4% of the workforce. It becomes a major problem when it turns into structural unemployment (people who are out of work for more than 12 months). Share of structural unemployment depends on

the general unemployment rate and low flexibility of the labor market. In a situation where the unemployment rates are high, after several years part of that unemployment turns into structural unemployment. The highest proportion of structural unemployment (45.2%) was recorded in 1993. Since 1994 this share has been declining slowly (to 40.4% in 1998), while in 1999 this tendency was reversed and long-term unemployment begun growing once again.

Farmers' incomes fell significantly in early 1990's and in general this process continues to this day. The decline and in many cases even lack of actual income is the main reason behind poverty in this social group. This state of affairs is due to factors such as:

- falling demand for domestic agricultural products,
- increasing export of agricultural products,
- unfavorable relationship between revenues and expenses,
- lack of proper agricultural support policy,
- surplus of working age people per farm area.

Overall, in 1997 real, gross disposable household income was 11.8% higher than in 1995, while in the case of individual farming households, gross disposable income fell by 16.3%. It seems that farmers' incomes will not improve over the next few years.

### **Transforming the labour market**

Over 90% of those structurally unemployed have lost their right to unemployment subsidies, while 30% have turned to welfare or found jobs on the gray market. One characteristic feature of changing labor market in Poland, especially in the rural environment and the main reason for increasing poverty is the declining number of unemployed entitled to receive unemployment benefits.

Theoretically, the unemployed who lose their right to unemployment benefits should intensify their efforts to find a new job. Their chances of finding work depend on the number of available positions and professional qualifications. Unemployed unable to find new jobs are facing several alternatives:

- turning to social assistance center for temporary welfare payments,
- try to find temporary/seasonal employment on the gray market,
- approach local charities, asking for ad hoc assistance or use the assistance of relatives and friends,
- take advantage of the various programs available on the labor market (vocational training, public works).

While each of these alternatives can reduce to a large extent the impact of poverty, none actually eliminates this problem. Paying unemployment benefits for more than 12 months does little to motivate the unemployed to look for work, while the reduction of these payments has numerous negative social and ethical consequences. Recipients who lose their right to unemployment benefits typically turn into welfare recipients and this process is just as negative from the point of view of stimulating the unemployed.

## Conclusions

Based on experiences of European Union member-states, it appears that one opportunity to avoid high unemployment rates would be to increase flexibility of the labor market. This can be achieved by:

- reducing the influence of labor unions on the process of setting wages and salaries,
- reform of the social insurance system (lower social insurance payments equal lower costs of employment),
- increasing the level of education and assistance in changing professional qualifications,
- improvement of the housing market, particularly rentals of homes and apartments.

In the nearest future, the most critical issues in the attempt to prevent very high unemployment rates is the development of a strategy to make the labor market more flexible and assistance leading to higher physical and professional mobility to people abandoning agriculture.

Another characteristic of the Polish unemployment in Poland is that in 1990's it affected mainly young people. Unemployment at that age is particularly harmful because of lack of self-fulfillment and the inability to use knowledge acquired in schools leads to various negative social developments. The reasons for these development are lack of interest in education or lack of resources for further studies. Educational level of agricultural workforce is very low, especially when compared to EU countries. Professional Vocational agricultural education is also very poor, with just 28% of agricultural workforce having any special education, mainly farming courses. Only about 8% of farmers have graduated from agricultural schools.

Compared with 1988 agricultural census, agricultural workforce has become younger – back then 59% of all farmers were older than 44, now that proportion stands at 52.3%. In terms of age, young people serve as high-quality workforce, but surplus numbers slow down structural reforms in agriculture.

Over the next few years economic conditions may well prevent rapid changes of farmers' income situation. Increasing demand for untrained workforce is very unlikely and major structural changes and improvement of farmers' live will not be possible without the reduction of employment in small-farm areas. The situation of small-farm owners will be difficult. Many of them will not be able to cope with challenges brought by the free market and will be eliminated because of high costs of production on their farms. Opportunities to find new jobs for residents of rural areas will appear only after the exhaustion of labor resources in urban areas.

Rapid transformation of the Polish agriculture, resulting movement of vast labor resources and elimination of the issue of unemployment (both official and hidden unemployment) are unlikely. Considering the demographic structure and the eventual size of individual farms that must be achieved by Polish agricultural sector, some 2.75 million people would have to move to other parts of the economy, reaching the levels comparable with EU countries (the number of agricultural workers per 100 hectares).

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## BEZROBOCIE I POZIOM UBÓSTWA NA OBSZARACH WIEJSKICH W POLSCE

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł przedstawia analizę poziomu ubóstwa i ocenę jego wpływu na bezrobocie w Polsce po 1989 roku do chwili obecnej. Podjęta została próba określenia przyczyn ubóstwa oraz skutków, jakie ono powoduje, zwłaszcza na obszarach wiejskich. Możliwość szybkiej transformacji polskiego rolnictwa, a co za tym idzie uwolnienie znacznych zasobów siły roboczej i zlikwidowanie problemu bezrobocia (zarówno jawnego, jak i ukrytego) jest mało prawdopodobne. Rozwiązanie problemu bezrobocia na wsi będzie zależało przede wszystkim od polityki państwa oraz skuteczności makroekonomicznych regulacji i lokalnych działań.

**Słowa kluczowe:** bezrobocie, ubóstwo, obszary wiejskie.

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