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**Support For Economic Activity Of People Aged 50+ In Poland:  
The Best Solutions Of The Government's Programme  
*Solidarity Of Generations***

**Abstract**

*The article aims to assess some selected solutions of the Polish government's programme "Solidarity of generations" [SG] designed to support economic activity among people aged 50+. It presents the results of a national survey conducted in the first half of 2012, mainly the outcomes of questionnaire interviews carried out with representative samples of people aged 45+ and employers. Studies under the name 'Diagnosis of the current situation of females and males 50+ on the labour market in Poland [D50+]' were conducted within the project "Equal Opportunities in the Labour Market for People Aged 50+". In addition to standard methods of descriptive analysis and the assessment of relations, factor analysis is also used to identify the main types of activities advancing opportunities for people aged 45+. Some solutions of the government's programme, such as the protection of employees from dismissal during the last four years before their retirement, were sometimes evaluated very differently by employers and people aged 45+. At the same time, both employers and people aged 45+ were favourable about free training and public*

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*subsidies to set up jobs for an unemployed persons aged 50+. According to the factor analysis results, the most important activities for people aged 45+ to have equal opportunities in the labour market are those activities that directly improve their qualifications. Although this finding is endorsed by both employers and people aged 45+, the insufficient systemic support for life-long learning limits the number of opportunities they could use to increase their employment activity. The variety of evaluations presented by the beneficiaries of the government programme should be taken into account in planning its modification.*

**Keywords:** *ageing of population, economic activity, older workers, state intervention for employment of people aged 50+, lifelong learning*

## **1. Introduction**

The demographic aging processes require a change in the approach to building careers which would encompass changes caused by units (individuals) and socio-economic processes. Although a unit seeks employability throughout his life, this fact becomes particularly important in the later stages of life, when the aging process make it increasingly difficult to stay in the labour market (Arnold 1997). In a world of deteriorating economic condition in countries where aging populations face increasing barriers related with staying on the labour market, job insecurity, and the consequent uncertainty as far as their pensions are concerned (Phillipson 2013; Moulaert, Biggs 2013), more and more attention is paid to intervention actions aimed at improving employment opportunities for people who are older than 50 years of age. At a meeting of the EPSCO Council in December 2012 which summarized the achievements of the 'European Year 2012 for active aging and solidarity between generations', the importance was stressed of promoting participation in the labour market through measures favourable for the involvement of older and younger people together in training and life-long learning, thus facilitating the transfer of knowledge between generations (Council of the European Union 2012, p. 4.) These measures are important in the context of extending and, at the same time, levelling the retirement age for men and women not older than 67 (acts raising the retirement age were adopted on 11 May 2012), which, in turn, is expected to bring an increase in GDP in 2060 of about 6.5% as compared with the situation if the pension reform was not carried out (The convergence program, updated in 2013). Measures aimed at extending economic activity and ensuring the

effective functioning of older people were included in the specific objectives of the national Human Capital Development Strategy 2020 (ibidem, pp. 36-38, 60-61). It was assumed that the economic activity rate among people aged 55-69 is expected to increase to 35.8% in 2020 (of women - 26.7% and of men - 48.0%), and the effective retirement age to 64.3 years of age (ibidem, p. 65). The European Commission encourages Member States to develop programs to support the elderly in the labour market. A variety of approaches at the national level have been developed, which use varied mechanisms for impacting the attitudes and practices of key stakeholders in the labour market, ranging from prescriptive measures, fortified with sanctions, i.e. in France, to recommendations of measures deemed as good practices, for example in the UK (Kryńska, Szukalski 2013).

In Poland, great importance is attached to the preparation of institutional solutions aimed at supporting people aged 50+ in the labour market. This article aims to assess some selected solutions of the Polish government's program "Solidarity of generations" [hereafter SG], designed to support economic activity among people aged 50+. First of all it presents the results of a national survey conducted in the second quarter of 2012 entitled *Diagnosis of the current situation of females and males 50+ in the labour market in Poland* [hereafter D50+]. This diagnosis was conducted within the project *Equal Opportunities in the Labour Market for People Aged 50+*, conducted by the Human Resource Development Centre partnered by the University of Lodz, co-financed by the European Union within the European Social Fund, and initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Poland).

## 2. Data and methods

In this paper two main sources of data were used: the Eurostat database and the results of D50+,<sup>1</sup> which encompasses large-scale representative quantitative researches, i.e. CAPI survey of people aged 45-69 (n = 3200) and CATI survey of employers (n = 1011) and quality researches: IDI study of poviats (district) job centres, employment agencies, training institutions and non-government organizations as well as casual interviews with representatives of social assistance units (for each of the groups n = 50), and a panel of experts. The sampling rules of people aged 45+ take into account grouping by age groups, as follows: 45-49 years of age; 50-59/64 years of age; 60/65-69 years of

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<sup>1</sup> Full details of this research are presented in: Kryńska E., Krzyszkowski J., Urbaniak B., Wiktorowicz J. (2013), *Diagnosis of the current situation of women and men 50+ on the labour market in Poland. Final Report*, The University of Lodz, Lodz.

age. They also provide controlling sample distributions by voivodeship (Province) and size of town/city in which the surveyed subjects dwelled. The studies of employers included, in turn, groups distinguished by type of ownership (public sector and private employers) and the size of the organization according to the level of employment (micro, small, medium and large companies). In this paper, we refer to the partial results regarding the evaluation of the activities carried out in Poland as part of active labour market policies for people aged 50+, and among those we refer mainly to the outcomes of interview questionnaires carried out with people aged 45+ and employers.

The analysis was conducted with the application of basic descriptive statistics, as well as the chi-squared test and factor analysis. On the basis of a factor analysis a group of the most important instruments of equalization of opportunities for persons aged 50+ in the labour market was distinguished (playing in this study the role of the hidden variable, latent). The factor analysis was preceded by: (i) the assessment of the significance of reported correlations between all indicators of Bartlett's test of sphericity, and (ii) the assessment of the adequacy of the data for factor analysis with the use of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) criterion. The resources of common variability were estimated using the main components method, and at the stage of determining the number of factors the Kaiser criterion and the Cattell criterion were applied (scree plot). The rotation of factors, as a result of which a list of variables was obtained which constitute the main factors of the analysed phenomenon, was made with the use of the Quartimax method with Kaiser normalization (Rószkiewicz 2011, pp.34-51).

### **3. The demographic situation in Poland**

The situation on the labour market in Poland, as in other countries of the European Union, is increasingly determined by the deepening processes of population aging. This unfavourable demographic situation will result in a decline in the number of working age population and an increase in its median age. Currently, Poland is a relatively young EU Member State in demographic terms - the age median and the economic dependency ratio (total, and by people at retirement age) is below the EU average, similarly the share of people aged 65+ in the total population is among the lowest, but the share of people at an immobile economic activity age in the general population aged 15-64 is higher than the EU average by 1.3 percentage points (Table 1.)

**Table 1. Current and projected demographic situation in Poland as compared with the EU-27 - basic characteristics**

Variables	Year	Poland	EU-27		
			average	min	max
Median age of population (in years)	2012	38.4	41.5	35.0 (Ireland)	45.0 (Germany)
Life expectancy (less than 1 year)	2011	76.9	80.4	73.8 (Lithuania)	82.8 (Italy)
Life expectancy in health at birth - females (in years)	2011	63.3	62.2	52.3 (Slovakia)	70.7 (Malta)
Life expectancy in health at birth - males (in years)	2011	59.1	61.8	52.1 (Slovakia)	71.1 (Sweden)
Change in the total population (in%)	2012/1970	18.0	X	-13.4 (Bulgaria)	55.7 (Ireland)
Changing the number of working-age population (15-64 years) (in%)	2012/1970	29.7	X	-13.2 (Bulgaria)	79.6 (Ireland)
The share of people aged 65+ in the population (%)	2012	13.8	17.8	11.9 (Ireland)	20.6 (Italy)
The share of people aged 65+ in the population (%)	2060 (P)	35.4	32.9	25.4 (Ireland)	38.0 (Spain)
The share of older workers in the productive age population (%)	2012	38.9	40.5	34.5 (Ireland)	44.4 (Germany)
	2060 (P)	44.6	43.3	39.8 (Sweden)	47.6 (Portugal)
Age dependency ratio	2012	40.6	50.2	39.3 (Slovakia)	55.8 (France)
	2060 (P)	89.4	65.9	73.9 (Ireland)	96.5 (Spain)
Old dependency ratio	2012	19.4	26.8	17.8 (Slovakia)	31.6 (Italy)
	2060 (P)	67.0	61.1	44.3 (Ireland)	74.8 (Spain)

P - prognosis (non-immigrant variant)

Source: Own calculations based on Eurostat data [demo\_pjanind, demo\_mlexpec, demo\_pjangroup, demo\_pjanbroad, proj\_10c2150zmp], the state of the plot06/03/2013.

The trends which are expected in the coming decades are not optimistic. Poland will painfully collide with the problem of an aging population and, according to Eurostat forecasts, all the major indicators characterizing the demographic situation in the country will be at a level deviating from the average in the EU-27, illustrating a much worse situation in terms of an aging population than the EU average. This implies the need to take actions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of this situation. Currently, Poland is characterized by low economic activity and a low level of employment of people approaching the retirement age (50+), which in the perspective of the further shrinking of the

labour force due to demographic reasons can lead to a lack of manpower necessary to meet labour demand. Certain measures aimed at mitigating this tendency have already been taken. The government's program *Solidarity of generations*[SG] is one such measure.

#### **4. The situation of people over 50 years of age in the labour market in Poland**

The low economic activity of people over 50 years of age is mainly the result of institutional conditions, which allowed for mass departures for early retirement of women over 55 years of age and men over 60 years of age. In light of the Eurostat data (Table 2), the economic activity of individuals aged 50-64 in Poland is much lower than the EU average and about 34% lower than in Sweden - a country with the highest level of economic activity of people aged 50+ in the EU. It should be noted that over the last 12 years, Poland's position has improved - the economic activity rate of persons aged 55-64 increased from 31.3% in 2000 (its lowest level was recorded in 2002 - 29.1%) to 41.8% in 2012, due to the fact that the possibility of early retirement became less possible and due to the increase in the effective retirement age. Nevertheless, the economic activity rate in the age group 55-64 is still among the lowest in Europe. There is a significant difference as compared with other EU countries, where the percentage of the economically active aged 55-64 is on average 53% (i.e. 11 percentage points higher than in Poland), and where there seems to be a slight increase in the economic activity in this age category despite the difficulties caused by the economic crisis (European Commission 2012a, p. 3). This gap in the level of economic activity between Poland and the EU average is mainly caused by the low labour market participation of women in the age group 55-64 (45% as compared with the EU average of 55.7%).

The improvement in the economic activity of people aged 50-64 is more and more due to an increase in employment, which rather should be attributed to their ability to maintain occupied jobs. In 2012, one Pole in two aged 50-64 was employed, including three in five men and slightly more than two in five women. Again, the scale of women's employment is not high, although still twice as high as in Malta, but almost twice lower than in Sweden. The career expectancy of Poles is a little over 30 years. In this respect, however, significant differences in relation to other EU countries cannot be noted. The unemployment rate of people over 50 years of age in Poland is not significantly different from that of the EU average (7.7% as compared with 7.4% in the EU-27 in 2012).

**Table 2. Basic characteristics of economic activity of people aged 50-64 in Poland as compared with the EU-27 in 2012**

Variables	Population 50-64	Poland	EU-27		
			total	Min	max
Economic activity rate (%)	total	53.5	63.3	44.4 (Malta)	81.3 (Sweden)
	males	63.0	71.2	57.5 (Slovenia)	84.6 (Sweden)
	females	45.0	55.7	22.7 (Malta)	77.9 (Sweden)
Employment rate (%)	total	49.4	58.4	42.1 (Malta)	77.2 (Sweden)
	males	57.9	65.5	53.4 (Hungary)	79.8 (Sweden)
	females	41.7	51.7	21.2 (Malta)	74.5 (Sweden)
Duration of working life <sup>and</sup> (career - years)	total	31.8	34.7	29.7 (Hungary, Italy)	40.4 (Sweden)
	males	34.3	37.4	31.8 (Hungary)	41.7 (Sweden)
	females	29.2	31.9	22.3 (Malta)	39.0 (Sweden)

a/2011

Source: own elaborations on the basis Eurostat data [lfsi\_act\_a, lfsi\_emp\_a, lfsa\_argan, lfsa\_ergan, lfsi\_dw1\_a], the state of the plot 22.02.2013.

In the light of Diagnosis D50+ most people aged 50-59/64 are employed under a contract of employment (mostly for an indefinite period). One person in ten is unemployed. As many as 37% of women and 36% of men aged 50-59/64 are economically inactive. The statutory retirement age determines the turning point of employment for the majority of Poles – about 86% of women and 95% of men aged 60/65-69 and approximately 12% of women and 15% of men aged 50-59/64 are retired. Retired people aged 50-69 have taken advantage of this privilege at an average age of 56.9, while the average is only slightly lower for women (56.3 years) than for men (57.9 years). The effective retirement age in Poland is therefore lower than the statutory retirement age, which is not only specific for Poland - in all Member States the trend is similar. This is one of the reasons why measures aimed at prolonging the period of economic activity are being undertaken in Poland, including the SG programme (*Adoption of the Act amending the Act on pensions and disability pensions from the Social Insurance Fund and Certain other acts*), which provide for gradual equalization and postponing the retirement age for men and women to 67 (incremental postponement to reach the target in 2020 for men and in 2040 for women) (*National Reform Programme Europe 2020*, p. 50).

## **5. Characteristics of the government program aimed at supporting the economic activity of people aged 50+ - "Solidarity of generations"**

The *Solidarity of generations. Actions for professional activation of people in the 50+ age group* (SG) program is the first comprehensive approach to equalization of opportunities for persons aged 50+ in the labour market in Poland. The SG program, adopted in 2008 and updated in 2013, is a package of measures aimed at (1) supporting lifelong learning of people aged 50+; (2) support for the employed aged 50+; (3) measures for social integration of people aged 50+; (4) stimulation of labour force participation of people aged 50+, including the disabled; (5) promotion of entrepreneurship among people aged 45 and over; and (6) postponing the effective retirement age (*National Reform Programme Europe 2020*, p. 11). Incentives aimed at increasing exit ages from the labour market are focused on the supply and demand side of the labour market. They most have the character of direct actions aimed directly at increasing employment opportunities for people aged 50+. The intervention measures targeted at people aged 50+ comprise those directed at (1) the unemployed, which are included in ALMP; and (2) at the employed, in order to enhance their chances of staying in employment. Support for the unemployed aged 50+ includes, for example, extending the period of employment to four years within the framework of intervention works and employment in public works. On the other hand, protective measures against dismissal from work during the four years preceding retirement are aimed at the employed at the age of 50+. Regardless of the status of a person aged 50+ in the labour market (unemployed, employed), he/she may benefit from extensive support for various educational efforts by obtaining: (i) referrals for free trainings or obtaining an interest-free loan from public funds for this purpose; (ii) referral for an internship or vocational training for adults, during which the individual is entitled to a scholarship from public funds; (iii) refunding the costs of public exams and licensing. To encourage employers to employ people aged 50+, the following are planned in the SG program: (i) reducing the period in which the employers pay for sick leave of their employees from the generally applicable 33 days to a period of 14 days; (ii) exemption from contributions to the Labour Fund and Employee Benefits Guarantee Fund for newly hired people in this age group; (iii) the possibility of co-financing of equipment intended for the workplace of an unemployed person from public funds, up to six times the average salary. The indirect measures which positively impact the growth of employment of people aged 50+ include: (i) limiting entitlements to the so-called 'bridging pensions'; (ii) limiting the possibility to combine work with a full pension until the termination of employment with the employer; (iii) defining acceptable limits of labour income achieved by pensioners who have



not reached the common retirement age; (iv) not limiting the amount of income of pensioners from labour after they reach the common retirement age; (v) facilitating the establishment of nurseries, children's clubs, subsidizing childcare programs for employees, daily caregivers and nannies, (vi) the possibility of financing company kindergartens by employers within the framework of the Social Fund. The latter two facilities are designed to relieve people aged 50+ from caregiver responsibilities in the family and at the same time create new opportunities to pursue careers as day caregivers and nannies.

The government SG program is monitored and improved. Further government action aimed at supplementing the support for people aged 50+ in the labour market - to be implemented in 2014 - includes: co-financing, up to the level of 30% of the minimum work remuneration, of the remuneration of a long-term unemployed 50+ person, and support covered by National Training Fund (NTF) for trainings to adapt the competences of older employees (45+) to economic and social changes (*National Reform Programme Europe 2020*, p. 78).

## **6. Evaluation of the tools of state intervention for employment of people aged 50+**

The support instruments included in SG have been evaluated by participants of the Diagnosis D50+ study.<sup>2</sup> The first conclusion which can be drawn from the study is the lack of knowledge of the solutions contained in the SG programme, both by people aged 45/50+ as well as by other stakeholders. Only employees of poviats job centres (quite obviously) and employers demonstrated a good knowledge in this field. Differences in assessments involving a more focused approach on the various offered solutions are noticeable. Specific differences concern the four-year period of protection of older employees before reaching the common retirement age (the employer cannot dismiss an employee). This solution was very poorly assessed by employers, who claimed even that it hinders them and does not promote equal opportunities for older workers in the labour market. Representatives of employment agencies, training institutions, and also the job centres were of a similar opinion. However, people

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<sup>2</sup> The methodology of analysis in this regard was the same in both quantitative studies (people aged 45+ and employers). In the qualitative research (labour market institutions, social welfare units, non-governmental organizations), respondents were given freedom of expression, first by asking general questions about their knowledge of any instrument contained in the legislation and having any actual impact on the situation of people aged 45/50+ in the labour market. In the event of difficulty in obtaining answers, respondent cards were used, on which were solutions that were asked about in detail in quantitative surveys.

aged 45/50+ had an extremely different opinion on this subject, as they considered it to be a good instrument supporting their work. In Polish conditions it is a solution which on the one hand protects the interests of employees, but on the other hand constitutes a barrier when it comes to employing those who have lost their jobs or are trying to find themselves in the labour market after a period of inactivity. Representatives of institutions involved in work mediation (poviat labour offices, employment agencies) and training institutions express a negative opinion in this regard - in practice, people who are close to the protected age are dismissed, following which it is very difficult for them to enter the open labour market.

Employers prefer solutions that allow them to reduce costs (reducing the period in which the employer pays the employee's salary when on sick leave from 33 to 14 days, exemption from compulsory contributions to the Labour Fund and the Guaranteed Employee Benefits, subsidizing workplace equipment). In their opinion, this instrument is very important for the potential increase in employment among persons aged 50+ and at the same time an increase in these allowances is postulated. Solutions concerning subsidized employment are also considered to be beneficial.

In the light of the factor analysis,<sup>3</sup> the main factor of equalization of opportunities for older workers in the labour market encompasses those solutions of the SG program which are directly related to expanding the qualifications of persons belonging to this group (Table 3). What's important, the same instruments were identified as crucial for the equalization of opportunities for persons aged 45/50+ in the labour market by both the intended beneficiaries as well as their employers.

The factor analysis shows that the key direction for further actions under the SG program should be aimed at enriching the human capital of people aged 45/50 and older. This is reflected in the expected changes in the SG programme, which are aimed at increasing access to trainings for unemployed people aged 45+ within the framework of the National Training Fund (NTF). Initial assumptions predict that in the first period the NTF will be financed from the national Labour Fund and by the European Social Fund. Employers are to

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<sup>3</sup> The adequacy of data for factor analysis measured with the KMO is high (KMO = 0.878 in the study of people aged 45+, and KMO = 0.819 in the study of employers), and Bartlett's test of sphericity confirmed the significance of the correlation matrix (p in the test is close to 0 for both populations). In the study of people aged 45+ the main factor explains 34% of the variances of the latent variable, i.e. the impact on the equalization of opportunities for persons aged 45/50+ in the labour market; in the survey of employers the percent of explained variance reaches 29%. In the first module five factors were extracted, encompassing the variables explaining the latent variable, which varies to a lesser extent, while in the employers study there were six of these factors.

determine the field in which the unemployed aged 45+ should raise their qualifications, and access to resources from this Fund should be first granted to micro and small entities (Kryńska et al. 2013, p. 357).

**Table 3. The most important instruments of equalization of opportunities for persons aged 45/50+ in the labour market in the light of the factor analysis**

Instrument of equalization of opportunities for persons aged 45/50+ in the labour market	Factor loadings	
	survey of people 45+	survey of employers
Sending persons 50+ to adult vocational preparation, during which the individual is entitled to a scholarship from public funds	0.831	0.821
Sending persons 50+ for an internship, during which they are entitled to a scholarship financed from public funds	0.818	0.801
Sending persons 50+ to free trainings financed from public funds	0.780	0.748
Interest-free loans from public funds to cover the costs of training of persons 50+	0.775	0.716
Public financing of costs of post-graduate studies of people aged 50+	0.744	0.671
Funding from public funds for workplace equipment of an unemployed person of 50+, up to six times the average salary	0.526	0.556

Source: own calculations on the basis of unpublished materials from *Diagnosis of current situation of females and males 45+ on the labour market in Poland* (survey of people 45+ and employers).

## 7. The reality of the involvement of Poles aged 45/50+ in lifelong learning

The conclusions presented above are very important in the context of the low level of involvement of elderly Poles in lifelong learning. For people aged 55-64 the *lifelong learning* rate for 2011 in Poland reaches only 0.8% (compared to the EU-27 rate of 4.3%), and for those aged 45-54 only 2.2% (EU-27 – 7.1%), whereas for those younger than 45 years of age it is 5.7% (EU-27 – 10.2%) [Eurostat, trng\_lfs\_01, 2012]. The D50+ research shows that an educational effort was undertaken only by 6% of those aged 45/50+, and that more often these were women (7.4%) than men (4.4%).<sup>4</sup> In the case of the employed, twice as many undertook the educational effort (11.2%). The survey responses showed that every third person whose career is still in progress does not think about retraining or deepening his or her skills, while another 30% allow for only a slight broadening or deepening of skills (if the need arises).

<sup>4</sup> While these figures are higher than in the cited EU studies, the examined period is different. In *Diagnosis* people were asked about their educational activity in the past two years, and in the LFS research (*Labour Force Survey*) - during the four weeks preceding the survey.

Among the various forms of education, most people participated in the past two years in various types of trainings - professional, IT, general (i.e. in the field of psychological support), and language courses. E-learning is also becoming increasingly popular. Participation in these activities is financed mainly by employers (46%), especially in the case of men, but also in large part from the own resources of the respondents (40%). Almost exclusively women (15%) took advantage of EU support.

When assessing the interest of people aged 45/50+ in further professional development, it should be emphasized that as many as half of the employers have never encountered reluctance on the part of older workers to participate in training, and about 60% of the employed are satisfied with the existing opportunities to participate in trainings offered by the employer. However, there is a small group of people who are not interested in raising their qualifications, as pointed out by employers (one in five employers often has troubles getting older workers to accept trainings). This is confirmed by older workers, since 14% of the employed aged 45/50+ are not satisfied with the fact that they must participate in trainings. As a result, every fourth employer believes that employees aged 45+ either do not want to participate in trainings or do so reluctantly. What's important, one in ten employers points that the improvement of the skills of this group is an important action that would increase the employment of older employees. They rank this condition in third place among the desired directions of support for employment of people over 50 years of age - behind improvement of the economic situation in the country and more funding from public funds for the employment of this category of people (14% of responses).

Lifelong education for people aged 45/50+ should take into account three important issues: individualized educational paths and programs, promoting the idea of lifelong learning, combined with the increasing awareness of the basic principles of a market economy. Support for these activities is available in Poland thanks to the European Social Fund. The situation will be similar in the next financial perspective 2014-2020. State support now involves a partial refund of the cost of training from the Labour Fund, which supplements the funding of trainings from the company training fund [*The Act on Promotion of Employment ... 2004, Art. 69 section 1*], the establishment of which by the employer is voluntary. Continuing support of lifelong learning from public funds in Poland is particularly important in view of the fact that almost every third employer does not organize any trainings in addition to the mandatory health and safety training. This applies mainly to SME's, which perceive training expenses as unnecessary labour costs and which the first to be subject to reduction during an economic crisis.

## 8. Conclusions

Poland is currently a country which is still relatively young as far as its demography is concerned. This situation will, however, change dramatically and the country will soon feel a shortage of labour force due to demographic aging. The increase of economic activity of the population in its pre-retirement age, i.e. people of more than 50 years of age, can help overcome this barrier to economic development. Unfortunately, this group of people has encountered outstanding difficulties in the labour market, which have led to state intervention in the form of economic activity support programmes for people aged 50+. Deferring the age of withdrawal from the labour market is desirable, despite the rising problem of youth unemployment. First of all, public expenditures related to the financing of pensions should be reduced and the prolonged independence of people aged 50+ should be achieved by participation in social, economic, and civic life. Therefore, in EU Member States support programs are being developed for people aged 50+ in the labour market (in Poland the program *Solidarity between generations* is the response to these needs). The effect of these programs should be an increase in the employment of this group of people. National measures included in the Polish government's SG program are aimed, on the one hand, at creating the conditions for the older generation to achieve greater independence through participation in social, economic and civic life, while on the other hand they allow the use of the human capital of people aged 50+ in the labour market, and through this achieve an improvement in the economic performance of the country. Thus, the older generations will be able to self-manage their own lives by keeping their economic activity potential as long as possible.

The analysis of the intervention tools of the state aimed at boosting employment among people aged 45/50+ shows that the most important tools are encompassed in the broadly understood policy of educational support of people in pre-retirement age. Great importance is attached to them, both by employers and older people themselves. This is very important information, as the Polish society has so far shown only a very modest degree of participation in lifelong learning - only 0.8% of those aged 55-64 (EU-27 – 4.3%). There is a still not enough appreciation of the benefits of attending training courses organized by employers, hence the educational effort among workers over 50 years of age is currently unsatisfactory. Hopes for improvement are associated with the introduction in 2014 (as part of the intervention a package *Solidarity of Generations*) of support covered by the National Training Fund (NTF) for trainings to adapt the competences of older employees (45+) to economic and social changes. Studies conducted within the framework of the *Diagnosis of the current situation of women and men aged 50+ on the labour market in Poland*

confirmed the important role lifelong learning in maintaining employability as the population ages, and the need for institutional and promotional programs aimed at increasing awareness among people aged 50+ on the need for continuous development of competencies in order to be able to stay on the labour market.

The systemic solutions which have been developed under the “*Solidarity of Generations*” programme to support active aging express the Polish state’s policy of stimulating the occupational activity of people aged 50+. Similar initiatives have been implemented in other EU countries, too, at the national, mezzo and micro levels (by local governments, enterprises, NGOs). As it seems, the least risky option for Poland would be to take over legal, organisational and financial solutions applied in the labour markets to people aged 45/50+ from countries the institutional apparatus of which is the most similar to that in Poland (Kryńska, Szukalski 2013, p.97). These countries can be found in Central and Eastern Europe. Three of them, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria, differ from the others in their group in that they have the most favourable indicators of the situation of older people, particularly in the labour market. However, the labour market measures the countries address to this age group are either fairly modest or, as is the case of Romania, practically non-existent. A recommended tool that might prove useful in the Polish circumstances is Czech job clubs for older employees and older job-seekers.

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## Streszczenie

### **WSPARCIE AKTYWNOŚCI ZAWODOWEJ OSÓB W WIEKU 50+ W POLSCE: NAJLEPSZE ROZWIĄZANIA RZĄDOWEGO PROGRAMU SOLIDARNOŚĆ POKOLEŃ**

*Celem artykułu jest ocena skuteczności wybranych rozwiązań zaproponowanych w rządowym programie Solidarność pokoleń [SG] dedykowanym wsparciu aktywności zawodowej osób 50+. W artykule zaprezentowano wyniki ogólnokrajowych badań przeprowadzonych w I poł. 2012 r., w tym przede wszystkim badań kwestionariuszowych*

*przeprowadzonych na reprezentatywnych próbach osób w wieku 45+ oraz pracodawców. Badania pt. Diagnoza obecnej sytuacji kobiet i mężczyzn 50+ na rynku pracy w Polsce [D50+] zostały zrealizowane w ramach projektu Wyrównywanie szans na rynku pracy dla osób 50+. Poza standardowymi metodami analizy deskryptywnej i oceny współzależności, zastosowano analizę czynnikową celem wskazania głównych kierunków działań sprzyjających wyrównywaniu szans osób w wieku 45/50+ na rynku pracy w Polsce. Rozwiązania ujęte w programie rządowym, jak np. wprowadzenie okresów ochronnych przez zwolnieniem z pracy pracowników na 4 lata przed nabyciem praw do emerytury, spotykały się niekiedy z krańcowo różną oceną przez pracodawców i osoby 50+. Zarówno pracodawcy, jak i osoby w wieku 45+ wysoko oceniają bezpłatne szkolenia czy dofinansowanie ze środków publicznych wyposażenia miejsca pracy dla bezrobotnego 50+. W świetle analizy czynnikowej, dla wyrównywania szans osób w wieku 45/50+ na rynku pracy zasadnicze znaczenie odgrywają te działania, które bezpośrednio przyczyniają się do zwiększenia kwalifikacji osób w wieku 45/50+. Pracodawcy i osoby w niemobilnym wieku produkcyjnym są zgodni w tym zakresie, lecz niedostatek systemowego wsparcia edukacji ustawicznej dla osób w wieku 50+ osłabia możliwości wzrostu ich aktywności zawodowej. Zróżnicowane oceny mogą być wzięte pod uwagę przy modyfikacji programów wsparcia aktywności zawodowej 50+.*

**Słowa kluczowe:** *starzenie się ludności, aktywność ekonomiczna, starsi pracownicy, interwencja państwa na rzecz zatrudnienia osób w wieku 50+, kształcenie ustawiczne*