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Society and labour market

Society

The Wielkopolska Region is inhabited by approximately 3.5 million people. Current demographic trends, such as population migration, an ageing society, changing family models, and a declining birth rate, affect many areas of life, including the labour market, the housing market, the healthcare and social care systems, education, and the transport infrastructure. The consequences of this progressive population ageing may pose a particularly significant challenge in the near future. Although slower than in other parts of the country, these negative demographic processes are actively shaping the future of Wielkopolska's society. Demographic shifts influence both the supply and demand for specific social services and drive the development of new branches within the silver and white economies.

Maintaining social cohesion is among the core challenges faced by the Regional Government. Intra-regional demographic changes – especially those driven by migration – impact local labour markets (leading, for instance, to the depletion of human capital resources), alter the social structure of the population, and reshape the local economic framework. The growing reliance of employers on foreign workers, including the recent influx of migrants from Ukraine, creates a pressing need to adapt public services to foreigners and facilitate their social integration. Increasing migration flows also place demand on the development of both individual and public transport services. In light of an ageing population and a decreasing number of children, the education sector and school networks will likewise require restructuring. Another critical challenge lies in counteracting de-urbanisation and chaotic suburbanisation, which lead to a decline in city populations in favour of the surrounding functional areas. Achieving effective integration in development planning is vital in this regard.

To bolster the social security of the region's residents, it is essential to improve access to public goods and services. Furthermore, proactive measures are needed to enable individuals who are excluded, marginalised, or at risk of these phenomena to fully participate in various spheres of socio-economic life. Mitigating the risks of poverty and its intergenerational transmission will significantly contribute to the region’s social cohesion and economic growth.

Labour market

For many years, the Wielkopolska Region has maintained its position as a key economic hub, playing a vital role in shaping the national labour market. The region is characterised by stability and competitiveness, yet it remains susceptible to socio-economic phenomena such as economic crises, adverse demographic changes, the current geopolitical climate, digital transformation, and the implementation of artificial intelligence.

The market situation in the region depends on the financial health of the economy and businesses, prevailing legal regulations, and demographic trends. Moreover, it is inextricably linked to the educational attainment and fields of study chosen by its residents.

Compared to the rest of the country, the Wielkopolska Region possesses substantial labour resources, accounting for 10.15% of the total workforce in Poland. The labour market is characterised by volatility and a reliance on numerous socio-economic factors, most notably the financial health of the economy and businesses, current legal regulations, and demographic trends. It is also inherently tied to the

population's level of education and fields of training.

For years, Wielkopolska has consistently maintained one of the lowest unemployment rates in Poland, hovering at around 3.4%. The region stands out for the high professional activity of its residents and a steadily expanding corporate base. Unemployment within the region varies geographically, depending on the specific location of a given district (powiat) on the map of Wielkopolska and its distinct internal conditions. The Public Employment Services operating across the region initiate professional activation measures, maximizing the use of funds allocated from the Labour Fund and other sources, including European funds and the National Training Fund. The specialized unit of the Wielkopolska Regional Government responsible for shaping labour market policy in the area is the Provincial Labour Office in Poznań.

The Wielkopolska Region is one of the most dynamically developing regions in Poland. It is highly regarded for its well-developed engineering, automotive, metallurgical, and food industries. The region employs over 350,000 people in the industrial sector alone. Additionally, the presence of major manufacturing plants – such as Volkswagen, Solaris, H. Cegielski, and others – alongside numerous small and medium-sized enterprises, generates a high demand for highly qualified production workers, engineers, and technical specialists. A favourable geographical location and an extensive transport network enhance employee mobility and facilitate access to a wide array of jobs throughout the region. Furthermore, owing to this strategic location, many foreign companies choose to invest in the Wielkopolska Region, thereby creating additional employment opportunities.

Self-employment enjoys immense popularity and recognition in Wielkopolska. Sole proprietorships and micro-enterprises constitute a vital element of the labour market and serve as a testament to Wielkopolska's entrepreneurial spirit. The region boasts long-standing craftsmanship traditions, alongside the vigorous activity of guilds and chambers in developing crafts and training young apprentices in these trades. Social entrepreneurship and cooperatives are also experiencing dynamic growth. Supporting innovative entrepreneurship remains a top priority for sustaining the region's economic development.

Despite its sustained stability, the Wielkopolska labour market operates amidst growing structural and organizational challenges. Legislative shifts, adverse demographic trends in population structure, and skills mismatches necessitate coordinated actions from all stakeholders. For the Wielkopolska labour market to function effectively, close cooperation is essential among all partners, namely public institutions implementing labour market policies, employers' organizations, trade unions, employment agencies, educational and training institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

A high employment rate coupled with a low unemployment rate indicates a shrinking pool of human resources in Wielkopolska. According to the 11th edition of the “Occupational Barometer” survey, there are 24 deficit occupations in the Wielkopolska Region. While this number has decreased by 10 occupational groups compared to the previous year, the shortages in two areas critical to the future of Wielkopolska remain deeply concerning: education, which helps train future workforces, and medicine, which is becoming paramount due to an ageing society. Other sectors vital to the regional economy are also grappling with staff shortages.

The primary challenge for the Wielkopolska labour market is to enhance employment opportunities by aligning the educational process with employers' expectations and the requirements of an innovative economy. The rapid pace of change in the labour market, driven among other factors by ongoing technological advancements, underscores the need for a flexible response to emerging demands for new competencies and qualifications. Technological progress may lead to a polarisation of the labour market – particularly as modern technologies displace human labour – while simultaneously driving up demand for workers with entirely new skill sets. Consequently, creating the right conditions for the advancement of continuing education is of paramount importance.