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PROBLEMS OF PEOPLE OVER 45 ON THE LABOUR MARKET IN LODZ IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC OPINION POLL

Abstract. Lodz Province is one of the regions of high unemployment, where the majority are older people. The aim of this study is to present and estimate the specific problems of people over 45 on the labour market based on the opinions of the participants of "Alliance for Work" project. Respondents were uniform when it comes to sex, age and long job seniority; they work on the positions that require average qualifications. The dominating positions are taken mainly by people at the age of 45–50: 77.8% nurses, 68.6% office workers, 75% medical technicians.

To sum up, the respondents' opinion about the situation of employees over 45 on the labour market in Lodz, older workers may face difficulties in finding work or even be discriminated because of their age. However the problem should not concern all groups of workers over 45 in the same extent. Preliminary research indicated that people who had changed work at least few times, representatives of some professions (f.e. doctors, nurses), employees on certain positions (f.e. managers), people with higher education, may have less problems in finding work.

Key words: unemployed, person over 45, difficulties on the labour market

1. INTRODUCTION

Demographic prognosis for Poland show that the number of workers over 45 years of age will systematically grow. People at the retirement age, qualified and eager to work will be very important for the Polish economy (Sulmicka 2003, p. 24). It is known for a long time that employees who are getting old and the ones who are old have got many positive characteristics (experience, precision, discipline). Attention is also paid to the advantages of multi-generation teams of workers, because in such teams present knowledge and long-term experience may merge. Therefore it is easier to recognize needs of customers from different age groups more accurately. Negative attitudes are more effectively eliminated by changing of consciousness rather than by legal regulations. One should aim at working out the agreement between employers, labour unions, employers and non-government organisations.

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Partnership for Development called „Alliance for Work” is in line with this idea (within operational program – European Community program called EQUAL for Poland 2004–2006), which is co-financed from European Social Fund. UNDP, TOP, Foundation Pinel Poland, OPZZ, Women’s Right Centre – Łódź, Polish Women League – ZŁ, University of Łódź – Labour and Social Policy Department, Federation of Independent Self-Governing Labour Unions of Textile Industry, Karol Jonscher Hospital, Dr M. Madurowicz Specialist Hospital, SP ZOZ Pabianice take part in this project, which is being realized since July 2005 to March 2008.

The main goal of this project is to change the attitude of people taking part in this project towards raising their qualifications, implementing new technologies in companies, participation in flexible employment forms and changing attitude of employers and labour unions towards training and hiring of people over 45.

The aim of this study is to present and evaluate specific problems of people over 45 on the labour market in opinion of people taking part in Alliance for Work project. Study is based on data from GUS, information from Provincial Labour Office in Łódź, public opinion poll and literature of subject.

2. GENERAL CHARACTERISTIC OF 45+ SEGMENT ON LABOUR MARKET IN ŁÓDŹ COMPARED TO POLAND

The number of the unemployed registered in labour offices in Poland was 2232.5 thousands in March 2007. It is 14,4% of the active workers population.¹

The largest group of the unemployed is population between 25 and 34 years of age (27.9%), next one is group over 45 (45–54) 25.3%. The percentage of the registered unemployed people at the age of 34–44 is 19.9%, over 54–7.2% (GUS 2006).

Situation on the labour market may show significant regional diversity. In June 2006 there were 177 973 unemployed people in Łódź Province (total population – 2 571 534), 48 824 at the age of 45–54. The unemployment rate came to 16.2%; Lodz Province was placed on 9th position (16 Provinces on the ranking). The unemployment rate of population between 45 and 54 years of age amounted to 53% in February 2005 and in February 2006 it decreased to 48.8% (however it was the highest rate among different age groups in this period). Table 1 presents the number of the unemployed 45+ in administrative units of Lodz sub-region.

¹ The unemployment rate is calculated as a percentage of the unemployed in the number of active workers’ population.

Table 1

The number of unemployed 45+ in administrative units of Lodz sub-region June 2006

Administrative unit	Unemployment rate June 2006	The unemployed		
		total	45–54 years of age	over 55 years of age
Lodz sub-region	18.1	71 320	17 744	4 567
Brzeziny region	16.6	1 984	484	151
Kutno region	21.8	10 056	2 471	557
Łask region	16.3	3 339	875	261
Łęczyca region	18.1	4 468	863	203
Eastern Łódź region	18.3	4 709	1 286	372
Pabianice region	17.7	8 584	2 497	654
Podębice region	15.4	3 017	551	161
Sieradz region	17.3	9 620	1 992	547
Wieluń region	11.0	3 787	831	235
Wieruszow region	12.5	2 368	539	159
Zdunska Wola region	19.4	5 638	1 399	347
Zgierz region	23.0	13 750	3 956	920

Source: GUS, *Bezrobocie rejestrowane I–II kwartał 2006*.

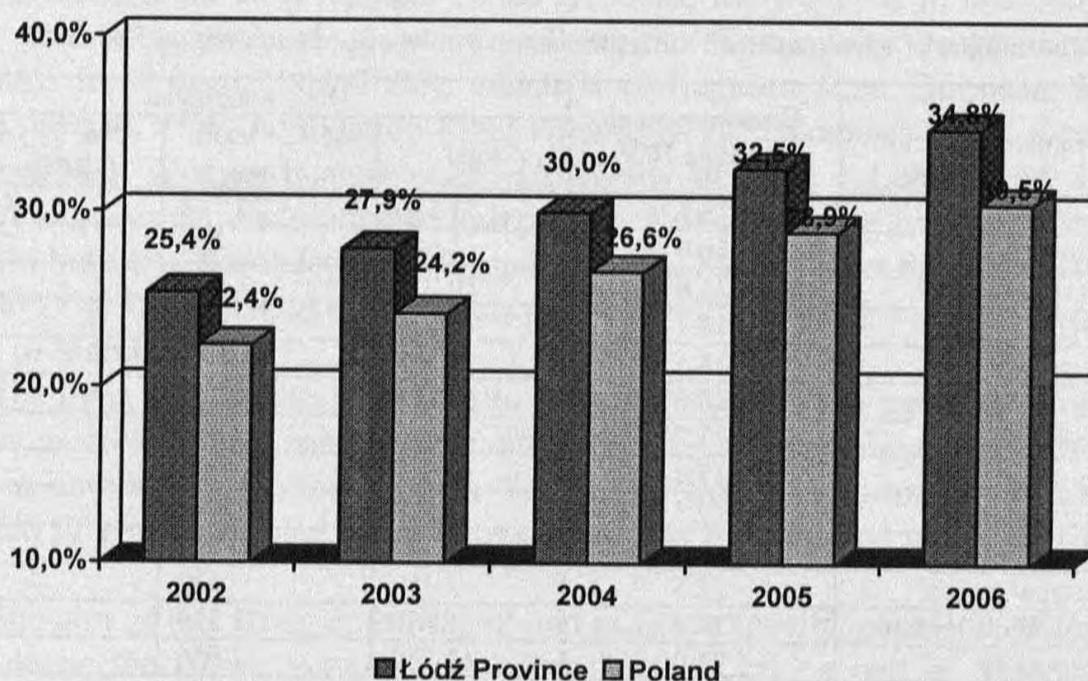
The number of the unemployed in the Łódź Province was 178 000 in June 2006. Within last few years the textile industry in this region was almost completely liquidated. Currently people employed in education sector or healthcare are most afraid of losing their jobs. Regions with the highest unemployment rate (shown in the Table 1) are:

- Zgierz region,
- Kutno region,
- Eastern Łódź region,
- Łęczyca region.

When we look at the whole Łódź Province we note that in June 2006 the highest unemployment rate was in Zgierz region (23%), Piotrków Trybunalski (21.5%), Opoczno region (20.5%), Radomsko region (20.5%) and Zduńska Wola region (19.45%). The lowest unemployment rate was noted in Skierniewice region (9.5%) and Wieluń region (11%)

Graph 1 presents the percentage share of the unemployed 45+ in the total number of the unemployed in Lodz Province and in Poland in 2002–2004.

In the end of 2004 there were 798.3 thousand registered unemployed people over 45, 85.4% of this number were people at the age of 45–54. In the same period there were 65.5 thousand of unemployed people 45+ in the Lodz Province (8.2% of all unemployed people from this category in Poland). Also in this case the majority of them were people at the age of 45–54. The statistical data presented above shows that the situation of people over 45 on the labour market in Lodz is difficult and looks unfavourably in comparison to Poland.



Graph 1. Percentage share of the unemployed 45+ in the total number of the unemployed in Lodz Province and in Poland in 2002–2004

Source: Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy, *Rynek pracy w województwie łódzkim w 2004 roku*, Łódź, marzec 2005, GUS, Bezrobocie rejestrowane I – II kwartał 2006 r.

3. EVALUATION OF DIFFICULTIES ON THE LABOUR MARKET FACED BY PEOPLE OVER 45 BASED ON RESEARCH RESULTS

The research part of Equal “Alliance for Work” project took place in the second half of 2006, public opinion research’s aim was to recognise difficulties faced by people over 45 on the labour market in Lodz, based on personal experience of people representing this group of people in the project. Other people had the opportunity to join the target group as well on condition that they were over 45 and they cooperated with BO in the same companies.²

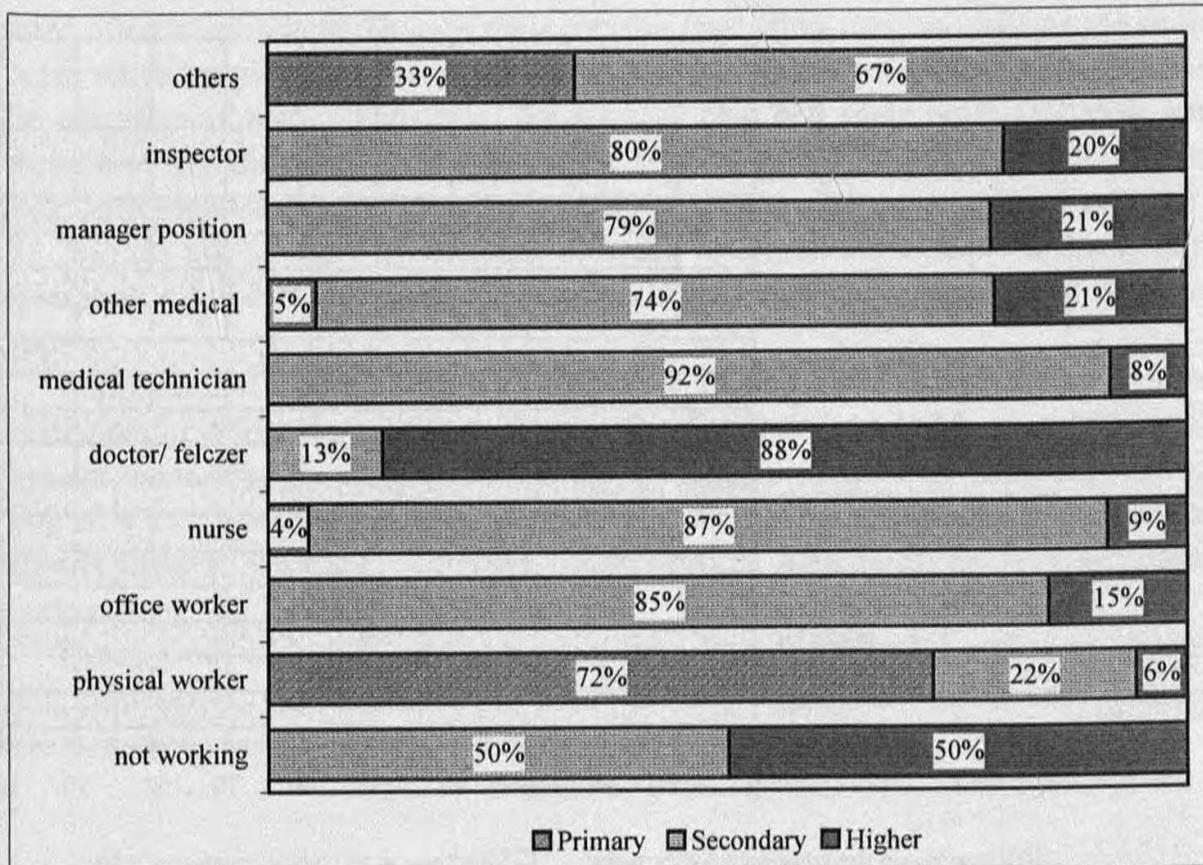
182 people took part in this research (81% of them were women). The majority of respondents were at the age of 45–50 (60.7% of the whole group). Every third respondent was at the age of 51–55; only few of them were in the oldest age group (56 and more – 7.1%).

Because of the type of institutions taking part in the „Alliance for Work” the group of people chosen for the research was dominated by hospital workers: nurses, medical technicians, doctors, sanitarians, orderlies, ward sisters, hospital

² The research was conducted in cooperation with job coaches, who had been trained how to fill in the questionnaires.

receptionists, office workers (secretaries, accountants, medical statisticians). These occupations do not require master degree in most cases; therefore the group was dominated by people with secondary education (three quarters).

People with master degree dominated – which is understandable – in the group of doctors. 72% of physical workers have finished vocational school at most.³



Graph 2. Level of education of respondents compared with their occupation

Source: own calculations based on the results of research.

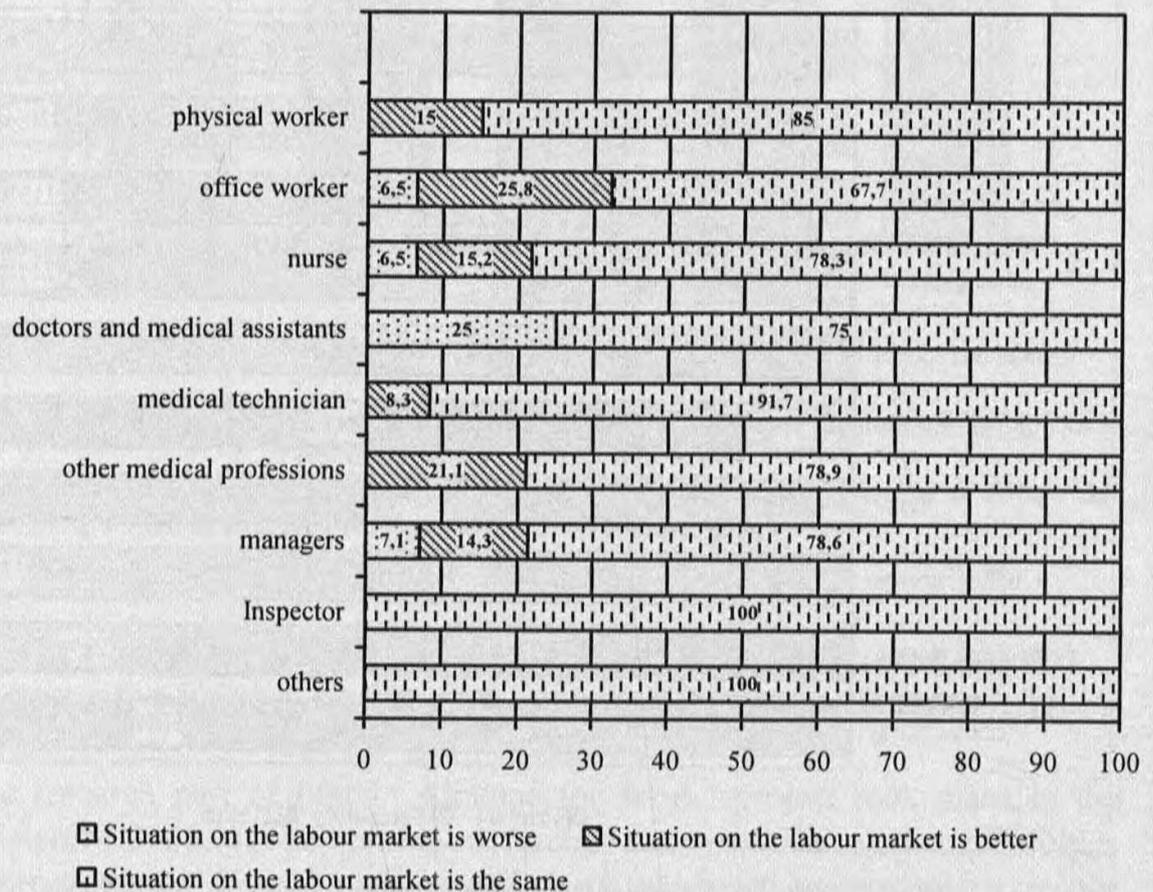
Most of the examined workers have got long job seniority. Workers with job seniority between 21 and 30 years (53%) created the biggest group, every fourth respondent has been working for over 30 years. Only 6 people changed work place more than 10 times. 76.5% of workers changed work less than 5 times (4% of them works in the same place).

The majority of respondents (78.7%) claim that their age influences their job opportunities. In their opinion the critical age for older workers is 45 (38.3%) or 50 years (26.2%). Among the participants of the research there were

³ There was one person with higher education and a master degree in this group.

found workers who claimed that age is not important at work (14.2%). Both men and women agreed that people 45+ are in worse situation on the labour market. Slight differences in opinions may indicate that women are more optimistic.

Representatives of such professions as: doctors, office workers, managers, nurses and other medical personnel estimated that situation of older workers in these occupations is not so bad (see Graph 3).



Graph 3. Evaluation of the situation of people over 45 on Lodz labour market compared to occupation of respondent

Source: own calculations based on questionnaires.

81.8% of respondents claim that they would have difficulties in finding new occupation in Lodz region at the moment. Among all people who were sure about the probability of difficulties in finding work the opinion of 33.7% was "definitely yes", whereas 18.2% of respondents do not think they could have problems in finding a new occupation. Women evaluate their work situation better than men in this group. 90.9% of asked men is sure that they would face difficulties in finding new work, at the same time only 79.6% of women share this opinion. Age group between 51 and 55 is least optimistic about their chances in finding new occupation. People over 55 see the smallest number of

difficulties that they may face when looking for a job. Generally speaking people who have the long work experience are less afraid of finding new occupation. People who do not see any obstacles in looking for new position were found in groups of workers with work experience between 21 and 30 years (4.2%) and over 30 years (4.7%). All respondents (100%) who have not changed their work place expect problems in finding new job. People who changed work more than 10 times are less concerned for looking for a new one (33.3%). Moreover, the more often respondents change their job the less often they see age as the main factor when employing older workers. It is worth to pay attention to the fact that the majority of respondents who have never changed their work (87.5%), and because of that they do not have experience in looking for a job, claim that age is very important in employing older workers. People working as managers (35.7%) do not see any connection between age and work opportunities. This opinion is shared by quite large group of doctors (25%) and physical workers (20%).

Improvement of situation of people over 45 requires first of all the need to realize and to show their advantages, on the other hand to develop qualifications that are demanded by employers. However, the main reason of problems in finding new occupation is lack of job offers, that is why sometimes more radical actions need to be done – change of profession. The question is – are older workers ready to take such challenge.

It turns out that 55% of the respondents is ready to take action to change their profession. The rest 45% did not want to change their current occupation. The opinion is varied in different age groups (Table 2).

Table 2

Opinion about willingness to change profession in different age groups

Answer		Age of respondents			Total
		45–50	51–55	Over 55	
Yes, means ready to change profession	Number	66	22	7	95
	%	60.6	40.7	53.8	54.0
No, means not ready to change profession	Number	43	32	6	81
	%	39.4	59.3	46.2	46.0
Total	Number	109	54	13	176
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own calculations based on questionnaires.

Data shown in Table 2 indicates that the “youngest” group of older workers – that is at the age of 45 to 50 – declares the greatest willingness to change their profession. Older groups – that is at the age of 51 to 55 and more – respondents were less willing to do so.

Even more diversity in opinions was observed within groups of different length of job seniority (Table 3).

Table 3

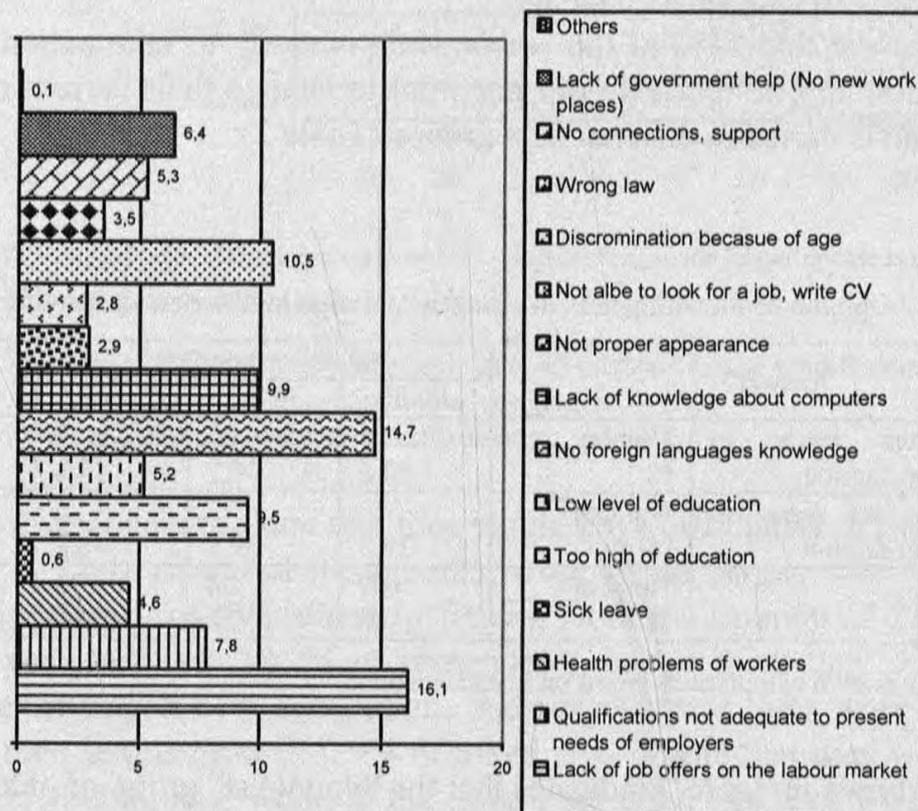
Opinion about willingness to change profession within groups of different length of job seniority

Answer		Job seniority (in years)				Total
		up to 10	10–20	21–30	over 30	
Yes, means ready to change profession	Number	7	22	54	16	99
	%	77.8	71.0	56.3	37.2	55.3
No, means not ready to change profession	Number	2	9	42	27	80
	%	22.2	29.0	43.8	62.8	44.7
Total	Number	9	31	96	43	179
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Study based on questionnaires ($p < 0,05, V = 0,244$).

As we can see in Table 3, the longer job seniority the less willingness to change profession.

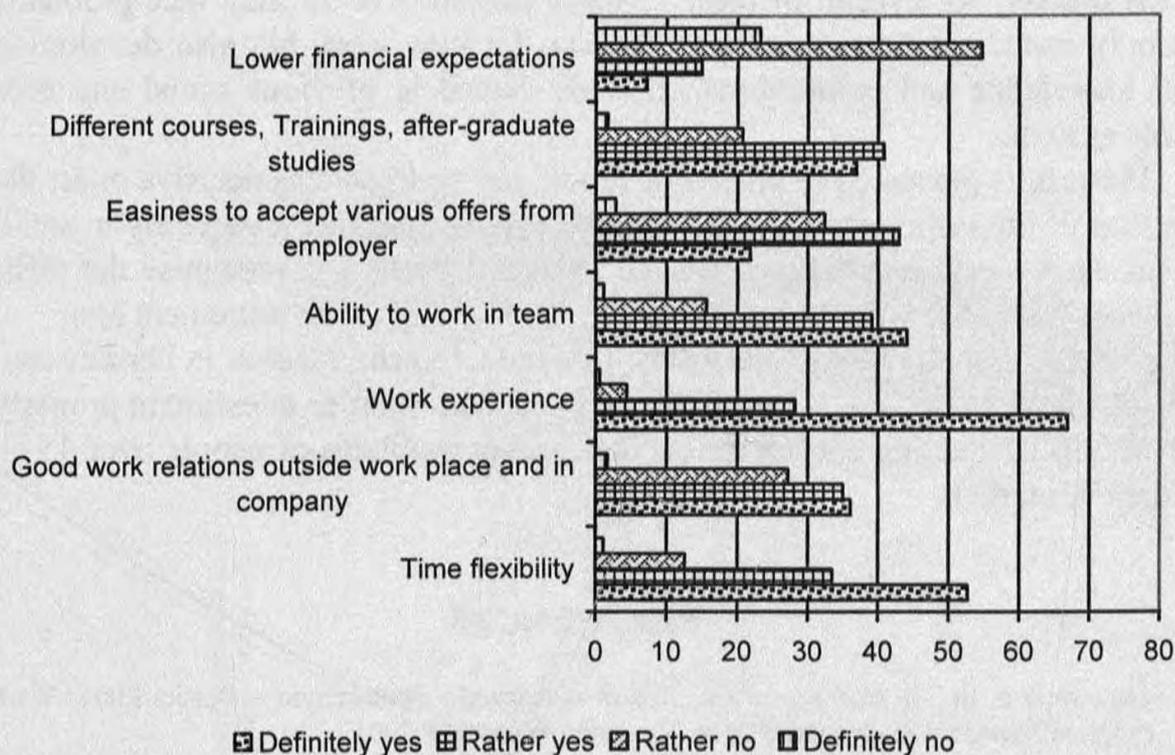
During research it was attempted to specify the reasons why older workers have got problems in finding an occupation. Opinions are presented in Graph 4.



Graph 4. Reasons why workers over 45 have got problem in finding an occupation

Source: own calculations based on questionnaires

Graph 4 shows that there are many various reasons why people over 45 find it difficult to get a job. They may concern policy of the government, situation on the labour market, discrimination of older workers and lack of certain qualifications. The most common reasons were: lack of job offers on the labour market (16.1%) and lack foreign languages knowledge (14.7%). Moreover the common opinion was that older workers are discriminated by employers because of their age (10.5%), they do not know how to operate the computer (9.9%), employers have got too high expectations (9.5%) and the qualifications of the employees over 45 do not match employers' requirements (7.8%). It is worth to pay attention to the third problem on this "ranking of difficulties", which is discrimination of older workers because of their age. It is necessary to outline that many of these barriers in finding an occupation by people over 45 may be overcome by supplementing their education and by trainings. We tried to evaluate competencies of people over 45, which can be their advantages on the labour market. Respondents estimated that the greatest advantage of older employees is their work experience (66.9% of answers – "definitely yes"), flexibility (52.7% of answers – "definitely yes"), the ability to work in team (44.1% of answers – "definitely yes").



Graph 5. Competencies of people over 45, which may be their advantage on the labour market

Source: own calculations based on questionnaires.

People over 45 create very diversified group of employees; representatives of this group may behave in a different way on the labour market. Other factors, beside age, that may have influence on their work opportunities are: sex, job seniority, work experience, level of education and the current profession.

4. CONCLUSION

People who are getting old or are old need to have adequate qualifications in order to be attractive participants of the labour market. The factor that determines the situation of certain groups on the labour market is the level and type of their qualifications (Kleszczewska 2005, p. 18).

Discrimination against sex, age or handicapped people may be intensified by the difficult situation on the labour market. Employees over 45 years of age are at the stage of their career that should be described this way: maintaining their achievements and work stabilisation. However Polish labour market gives them new challenges. High unemployment rate is accompanied by dynamic social and economic changes, which are the results of transformation process. Companies implement new technologies, new organisation as they want to be competitive on the market. As a result of these changes people over 45 may face problems not only concerning maintaining or looking for new work but also developing their knowledge and abilities, which were shaped in previous social and economic system.

The results presented in this work should not be treated as decisive ones; the opinions of the respondents represent the opinion of the age group only in small extent. However they are the reason to study the problems, recognise the difficulties faced by older workers who still have long way to the retirement age.

In author's opinion it is necessary to conduct such research in certain economic sectors with large group of the respondents, in order to estimate properly the process of creating consciousness concerning problems of people over 45 on the labour market.

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PROBLEMY OSÓB PO 45 ROKU ŻYCIA NA ŁÓDZKIM RYNKU PRACY W ŚWIETLE BADAŃ ANKIETOWYCH

Województwo łódzkie należy do regionów o najwyższym bezrobociu, przy czym w większości dotknięci są nim ludzie starsi. Celem tej pracy jest prezentacja i ocena specyfiki problemów osób w wieku powyżej 45 lat na rynku pracy w oparciu o opinie uczestników projektu „Sojusz dla Pracy”. Respondenci byli podobni jeśli chodzi o płeć, wiek i staż pracy; pracowali na stanowiskach wymagających przeciętnych kwalifikacji. Dominowały wśród nich osoby w wieku 45–50 lat – w niektórych grupach zawodowych odsetek tej grupy wiekowej oscylował nawet wokół 70% (77,8% dla pielęgniarek, 75% dla techników medycznych, 68,6% dla pracowników biurowych).

Opinie respondentów odnośnie sytuacji pracowników w wieku powyżej 45 lat na rynku pracy w regionie łódzkim są następujące: starsi pracownicy stają w obliczu trudności w poszukiwaniu pracy lub są dyskryminowani z powodu swojego wieku. Niemniej jednak problem ten nie dotyczy wszystkich grup pracowników w wieku 45+ w tym samym stopniu. Jak dowodzą badania, ludzie, którzy zmieniali pracę przynajmniej kilkakrotnie, reprezentują niektóre zawody (np. lekarze, pielęgniarki, menadżerowie), lepiej wykształceni, będą mieć mniejsze problemy ze znalezieniem pracy.

Słowa kluczowe: bezrobocie, osoby w wieku powyżej 45 lat, problemy na rynku pracy