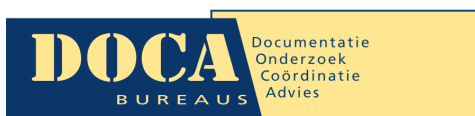


# Inclusion and education in European countries

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INTMEAS Report for contract –2007-2094/001 TRA-TRSP0

Final report: 9. Poland



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Lepelstraat  
August 2009

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Drafts of this report benefited from comments and advice from the consortium's reference group members and from other experts in this field.

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## **Inclusion and education in Poland**

The final national report

Contract -2007-2094/001 TRA-TRSPO, Strategies for supporting  
schools and teachers in order to foster social inclusion

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# **1 Introduction**

Social exclusion is complex multifaceted phenomenon and social inclusion measures must take into account this complexity. Education is only on the one dimension of social exclusion. The social exclusion results from the combination of factors such as poverty, unemployment, low level of educational attainment and functional literacy of parents, ethnic minority status and other risks located in the family or wider social context. These risks and resulting disadvantages usually accumulate; The factors often occur jointly and are interweaving with each other. While social exclusion in education influences other areas of social exclusion, the casual link also runs in the opposite direction. In other words, while lack of access to high-quality education is one of the aspects of social exclusion, the social inequalities reflected in social, economic and cultural factors shape the performance of the educational sector.

For this report the team has focussed on available materials as available, with special attention to policy priorities and measures situated in the national institutional and policy context and secondary data and research that would enable evaluation of their effectiveness. Number of statistics cited in the report are available internationally. However, comparative analysis rarely consider rules and institutions that affect them and help to interpret them. While the prime focus of the report is on education, it encompasses also related fields of social assistance and labour market institutions and policies. Close links between educational attainment, poverty and the labour market make it necessary to take this kind of linkages into account. In the Polish context, labour market in particular is the area of particular significance for the social inclusion.

## **1.1. The basic social and economic context**

The last decades in Poland were marked by substantial changes in the social policies. In the early 90s social policy was subordinate to the economic reform. The, so called, transformational recession that followed the implementation of the stabilization and market reforms of 1989/1990 was manifested by the decline of income, rising poverty and unemployment. Some temporary measures, such as establishing labour administration and unemployment benefits were introduced. The economy recovered in 1993 and more comprehensive review of the social policy started. However, the major changes were introduced only 1998 when the comprehensive reforms of the decentralization (creating three independent tiers of local and regional government and substantial decentralization of the state responsibilities), health care, pensions and education were initiated. Their implementation was however hampered by declining of economic growth and difficulties of public finance. Particularly dramatic was the situation on the labour market, where despite the positive economic growth the employment declined and unemployment rose substantially, exceeding 20% in early 2004. Economy started to grow again in 2004 (with the average GDP growth in 2004-2008 of above 5%). The situation on the labour market improved. In the last years the policy developments were in important ways influenced by the preparation process and the membership in the European Union, which appeared to strengthen the social inclusion dimension of social policy.

The general assessment of the changes in the Polish economy and social policy in the last two decades is positive, which is visible not only in economic indicators, but also in some social indicators, such as educational attainment or life expectancy. There are, however, also downsides. The social situation became more diversified. Social inequalities grew and are reflected in disparities and material and social situation of individuals. There are also significant geographical disparities in economic development. The main dividing line, which results from longer historical developments divides Poland between more developed west and less developed east part of the country; the divide, which is often referred to as Poland A and Poland B. Out of 16 regions, five accounted for 59% of GDP in 2005. Of significance are also disparities within some regions, especially within the fastest growing region: Mazowieckie, in which the capital of Poland: Warsaw is located. They are mainly explained by the second main divide: urban-rural divide between large cities, in particular, so called “metropolitan areas”, and rural and intermediate areas. These two divides are reflected in number of indicators, such as per capita GDP or unemployment rates, but also in social indicators, including those describing the performance of the education system. These differences are visible on the level of regions, but it often more dramatic on the lower levels.

## **1.2. Policy context of social inclusion**

The concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion are relatively new in the Polish policy debates, but are now widely used among the social policy experts and civil servants working in the area. There are also embodied in strategic documents and legislation. Thinking in terms of social inclusion is less popular in the political and public debate. Crucial for the social inclusion agenda was the process of the European integration. Social exclusion bears, however, special meaning in the Polish context. In academic discussions on social exclusion very often reference is made to the specific situation of radical social and economic transformation that has taken place in Poland. While these changes were in general beneficial for the welfare of Polish people, the ability of various social groups to adapt and face the challenges and opportunities were unequal and some groups were vulnerable to the process of social exclusion.

Basic strategic documents that referred to the European Union debates and policy priorities were adopted yet before the date of the official accession of Poland to the European Union. This has been in particular visible in the employment policy. The National Employment Strategy that followed the guidelines of the Luxemburg process (Strategy of Employment and Human Resources Development in 2000-2006) was adopted yet in January 2000. It was followed by annual national plans of activities towards improvement of employment situation.

The first official government programme, which directly referred to the social inclusion, was the Social Inclusion Strategy (called National Strategy for Social Integration in Polish) adopted in 2004, which covered the period till the year 2010. The taskforce for the drafting of the strategy was formed by the representatives of government administration, self-government administration, social partners and non-governmental organisations. Non-governmental organizations played an important role in developing the strategy. The strategy was fairly comprehensive and was developed on the basis of the diagnosis of the problem of social exclusion in Poland. The Strategy comprises twenty priorities shown as indicators, which should be achieved and which should contribute to a decrease in social exclusion in Poland.

Education was emphasized in the strategy. The strategy was followed by two action plans, adopted for the years 2004-2006 and 2006-2008. The most recent plan covering the period 2008-2010 was adopted in 2008.

Particularly important for the social inclusion policy was the funding from the European Social Fund, which started after joining the European Union in May 2004. In the years 2004-2006 (with the actual implementation until 2008) the inclusion measures were supported in particular from the program “Human Resource Development 2004-2006”. The second important program funded from the European Social Fund was the Integrated Regional Development Operational Program (IRDOP), which was supposed to create conditions for better competitiveness of the regions and counteracting marginalization a way that would be favourable to long-term economic growth of Poland, its economic, social and territorial cohesion and integration with the European Union. Important role was also played by the community Initiative EQUAL, which aimed at creation of new and better work places and at assuring that no one would be deprived of access to them. EQUAL served as a platform that allows seeking and learning new ways of achieving objectives of the European Employment Strategy and Social Integration. The timing of financing was relatively short and it is difficult to evaluate fully the results. However, these experiences formed important test and pilot of ideas of directing the European funds.

At present, the key for the social inclusion measures are the priorities of the Operation Program Human Capital (2007-2013), which is the part of the implementation system of the National Strategic Reference Framework. Its main objective is “increased level of employment and social cohesion”. The program has four priorities directly related to social inclusion in education: “Employment and social integration”, “High quality of the education system”, “promotion of social integration” and “Development of Education and Competences in Regions”. Other operational programmes relevant for education are The Innovative Economy Operational Programme and The Development of Eastern Poland Operational Programme.

Of relevance for the inclusion policies in education are sectoral government programs in the area of social policy, employment and education. These include in particular:

- Strategy for Youth 2003–2012’ adopted in 2003 (refers mainly to the age group 15-24).
- National Action Plan for Children 2004–2012 ‘Poland for Children’ adopted in 2004.
- the Social Policy Strategy 2007-2013 adopted in 2005, which was aimed at building an integrated state policy system in the scope of social integration.
- Education Development Strategy 2007–2013 (adopted in 2007).

The above documents are only examples of strategic documents that are important from the point of view of social inclusion in education. Several other documents are mentioned in the text. In June 2009, the government published, for example, the Green Paper “Poland 2030”, which was presented as the document that describes the main government priorities for the next years.

The relevance of strategic documents for the practice of educational policy differs. The case of the National Strategy for Social Integration is illustrative. There were notable changes in priorities already in the first action plan. While some of the changes in consequent action plans reflected changes in European Union priorities.; in some cases, more important were political changes in Poland and changing priorities of subsequent governments. The large number of “strategies” and “programs” developed in recent years in Poland is a problem in itself and some of these programs are even unfamiliar to people in institutions that are

supposed to implement them, not mentioning the general public. It should be also emphasized that development of strategic with more horizontal focus crucial for the European agenda in education and implementation of coherent educational policy. The good example is the delay of the development of the lifelong learning strategy. Its preparation started a few years ago, but could not be completed and was postponed for the year 2009.

## 1.2 Institutions

Policy towards the youth is coordinated in Poland by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The latter ministry is also responsible for the Labour Policy. The responsibility for implementation of policies is mainly vested in local governments, which finance the tasks from grants received from the state budget and own funds. Local and regional governments develop their own strategies of development. For example, municipalities adopt their own local strategies of dealing with social problems, which take into account specific problems found in the given locality.

The structure of territorial self-government operates on the constitutional principles that municipalities (in Polish *gminas*) are the basic self-government institutions. There are 2478 municipalities in Poland with a mean population of around 7300. Other levels of self-government on the regional level (16 *voivodships*) and intermediate district level (*powiaty*) play a subsidiary role. There are 379 local governments at this level with mean population of about 75000. This includes 65 largest municipalities, which have a status of districts and combine the responsibilities of municipality and district. Authority and responsibilities of self-government at three levels are divided in such a way that each level has full autonomy. In principle, higher levels of self-government play subsidiary role to the municipality.

- ✚ Municipalities (*gminas*) are responsible for pre-school institutions, primary schools and lower secondary schools (called gymnasium). They have also broad responsibilities in the area of social services, including social assistance and combating poverty. Basic social policy institutions for counteracting social exclusion in municipality are social assistance centres.
- ✚ Counties or districts (*powiats*) are responsible for upper secondary general schools and vocational schools, as well as for post-secondary schools and public special schools. In addition, they are responsible for the management of artistic schools, sports schools, lifelong education centres, psychological and pedagogical guidance centres, and out-of-school education centres. Districts also run childcare and upbringing establishments such as care and adoption centres, specialist emergency institutions, and foster family care centres. District's self-government is responsible for labour policy tasks and family policy. At the level of the district, there are State Centres for Family Assistance (PCPR). PCPRs coordinate social care initiatives at district level and supply child and family care. They implement tasks of social assistance which exceed the scope of activities and the possibilities of municipalities (families at crisis, children and adolescents without the care from parents, foster families, persons with mental illnesses, persons with disabilities, refugees). District Labour Offices implement labour policies.
- ✚ Regions (*voivodships*) are responsible for some higher education institutions. They are responsible for overall strategic planning and management of the part of the European funds. Regional Centres of Social Policy (RCSP) develop, update and implement the district's strategy for social policy which is an integral part of the district's development strategy.



Municipalities and districts are responsible for financing education based upon the subsidies received from the state budget. Allocation formula takes into account the real number of pupils, adequately increased by the system of weightings (taking into account specific conditions, i.e. rural areas, small towns, as well as specific educational tasks, i.e. presence of pupils with special education needs, etc). Pedagogical supervision over schools is separated from the supervision exercised by local governments. This task is assigned to the education superintendent (*kurator*) appointed by the voivod (*wojewoda*) – the government representative in each region.

Important role in tackling the problems of social exclusion is played by the community and voluntary sector. Its position is strengthened by formal regulations that make it possible for public administration to cooperate and contract specific tasks and, secondly, by the possibilities to apply for the European Union funding.

It is well recognized that one of key problem that hampers the effectiveness of social inclusion policies and social policy in general is the lack of institutional coordination. This concerns lack of common programming, informational and organisational measures. The public interest is often defined in narrow terms which reflect the sectoral perception of society with differing priorities. At the same time, human potential of social and labour policy is still insufficiently developed.

### 1.3. The educational system and recent educational reforms

In the last decade the Polish educational system was undergoing an important reform process. A program of reform started to be implemented in 1999. The reform was intended to popularize secondary education, equalize educational opportunities, and improve the quality of education. The main change was the extension of general education for one year. This was done by shortening the education in primary schools (ISCED 1): from 8 to 6 years and, secondly, splitting the existing secondary level of schooling into lower and upper-secondary levels (ISCED 2 and ISCED3). A new type of school: gymnasium was introduced: a 3-years school to be attended by all students.

Compulsory education phases	Age groups of children
Pre-school '0' grade ( <i>klasa zerowa</i> )	Usually age of 6
Primary school ( <i>szkoła podstawowa</i> )	Usually 7-13 years olds'
Lower secondary school ( <i>gimnazjum</i> )	Usually 13-16 13 years olds'

The education on the upper secondary level was shortened by one year. Therefore, in 2002, when the lower-secondary schools had their first graduates, a new system of upper-secondary education started to function. It comprised of:

- basic vocational schools (2-3 years of education) that provide vocational education and basic-level vocational qualifications,
- technical schools (4 years) that prepare for the career in specific occupations (secondary level qualifications) The graduates can enter higher education after passing matura exam.

- Profiled lycea (3 years) that give possibility to gain double qualifications of general and vocational education, making it possible to obtain secondary-level occupational qualifications and general education leading to matura exam.
- General lycea (3 years) that provide general education and have more academic orientation (for those that want to continue their education at the tertiary level).
- Supplementary lycea and technical schools (2-3 years) for the graduates of basic vocational schools, who wish to complete upper-secondary education.

Important changes concerned the organization of teaching in primary schools, which after the reform combines integrated teaching (in grades 1-3) and subject-based teaching (in grades 4-6). The change of the school structure was followed by the change in curricula. New core curricula were introduced in first grades of primary and lower-secondary schools and their introduction advanced grade by grade. The autonomy of school principals was increased. Also the authority of teachers has been broadened as they could devise their own teaching programs or choose among programs and textbooks, while observing the centrally set core curricula. External, standardized examinations were gradually introduced. Students are assessed at the completion of primary and lower-secondary level, as well as at the end of upper-secondary level. First national exams of this kind were organized in 2002 for the final grades of primary and lower secondary schools. In 2005, the first national external exam was organized for the final year students in general and technical secondary schools (secondary-school leaving examination, so called matura exam) and since then it basically replaced the entrance exams for tertiary education. As part of the system of standardized exams were also introduced to confirm vocational qualifications (vocational exams).

These institutional changes were very successful in rising pupils' performance of both low and high performing pupils. While in PISA 2000, the average result of Polish 15 years olds in reading was below the OECD average, in PISA 2006 it was clearly above. Percentage of pupils with reading literacy proficiency at the level 1 and lower on the PISA reading literacy scale decreased from 23.2 in 2000 to 16.2 in 2006. The improvement was not so marked in mathematics and science. Moreover, between-school variance (variance between schools expressed as a percentage of the total variance within the country) of performance is now among the lowest in the OECD (15.8%). In practice, this means that most of the differences in student performance is in schools, rather than between schools or, in other words, performance of schools is not so differentiated.

The priorities of the current government elected in 2007 are framed as the continuation of the reform process. The main idea is to introduce gradual changes in the system through the lowering of the age of compulsory education, introduction of changes in the core curricula, which would further lengthen general education to the first grade of upper-secondary schools and strengthen the focus of education on core skills and competencies for the participation in adult life and labour market. The changes in curricula are planned to be introduced between 2009 and 2015. The reform of the vocational education is considered to be the next step in the reform process, to be implemented around 2012. These broad systemic changes are supported by the funding from the structural funds for the period of 2007-2012, in particular by the funding from the European Social Fund, where number of measures were directly related to the reform program.

## 2 Measures against early school leaving (ToR1, ToR7)

### 2.1 Policy frames

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland and the law on the system of education stipulates that education is compulsory until 18 years of age. More precise statement, which includes the start of education, is in the Educational System Act (ESA). Accordingly, the obligation starts at the beginning of the school year of the calendar year in which the child completes the age of 7<sup>1</sup>. In addition, in 2004 the obligation of participation in pre-school education at the age of 6 was introduced in so called ‘0 grade’ (for 6 years olds organized either in a kindergarten or a primary school)<sup>2</sup>, 6 grades of a primary school and 3 grades in the lower secondary school (*gimnazjum*). By this time students, normally at the age of 16 end the general part of the education.

Pupils have the constitutional right and at the same time an obligation to continue their education until reaching the age of 18. The obligation of participating in schooling can be fulfilled either in the school or out-of-school forms. Most of the pupils attend different types of upper-secondary schools. According to the article 16 par. 5a of the ESA, the out-of-school forms include participation in the educational activities organized by accredited institutions and on the job training at the employer. The amendment of ESA of July 2008 made it also formally possible to fulfil the obligation abroad, on the basis of international agreements or individual agreements of public administration of schools. This change was motivated by growing participation of pupils in the European educational exchange programs.

At each level of education, there is a possibility to fulfil the obligation of schooling in an adjusted curriculum, which aims at adjusting the scope and time of learning the curriculum to individual needs. This requires the permission of the school principal after consultation with school teachers’ body and psychological and pedagogical guidance centre. The specific regulations for this type of schooling are defined by the special regulation of the minister of education. It may include, for example, having lessons in specific subjects from two grades instead of one school grade or following the curriculum of higher grade. This form is distinct from so called “individual teaching” (*indywidualne nauczanie*), which can be organized for specific time, usually due to break in schooling due to illness or temporary inability to attend the school. This form of education is relatively rare (2937 pupils in the school year 2007/2008). If requested by parents, the school obligation can be also fulfilled by home education (*edukacja domowa*). The permission for such a form of education is issued, after the request by parents, by the school principal as an administrative decision. The child can obtain the certificate for specific grades or completion of the school after passing special examinations conducted in the school. Yet another form of fulfilling the schooling obligation is participation in the Voluntary Work Corps (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*, OHP).

Voluntary Work Corps (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*, OHP), organized on the regional basis with the headquarters in Warsaw, are the statutory labour market institutions specialized in operations supporting youth on the labour market, in particular, as emphasized by legislation

<sup>1</sup> Starting from September 2012 the compulsory schooling age is lowered to the age of 6 (amendment of ESA of 2009).

<sup>2</sup> This form of education will be phased down by 2012 due to lowering of compulsory schooling age in primary schools.

in the two areas: the youth in danger of social exclusion, that is early-school leavers and, secondly, for the unemployed under 25 years of age (For this group OHP offers job agency services, organizes training and provides job counselling). Operation of the Voluntary Work Corps is defined in the chapter 5 of the *Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions*. Work Corpses provide education to enable early school-leavers to complete primary or secondary education or acquire vocational qualifications. They also organize employment of early-school leavers of more than 15 years of age, the unemployed under 25 years of age and pupils and students. For this purpose they refund the costs of salaries and social security contributions (up to a threshold defined in social security legislation) of employed on the basis of contract paid from the Labour Fund. The participants in OHP complete the general education on the level of primary or lower secondary schools and gain at the same time job qualifications or qualification at the level of basic vocational education (ISCED 3C). General education takes place in schools and the practical training is organized in cooperation with employers or in units run by OHP. The practical part of training lasts for 2-3 years until completion by the participant of the lower secondary level of general education, but no longer than 22 months. After completion of education, the participants get the school leaving certificate and after passing the practical exam, the certificate of training for a specific job title. This form of education is attractive because training is free of charge and the participant can combine education with paid work. About 16 thousands of young people are enrolled in the OHP, including 30% of those who could not finish their education (such as repeating the grade twice or three times), 50% coming from very poor families and 40% of families with unemployed adults or with many children. The poorest individuals taking part in the activities of the OHP have a right to a free of charge place in dormitories and full board.

OHP has been running several projects financed from the European Social Fund and the Community Initiative EQUAL in the area of social inclusion of youth. One of them was the “Education-Knowledge-Work” project (2006-2007), a continuation and widening of the similar project “Your knowledge - Your success” (2005-2006). As part of the project vocational, psychological and legal guidance was offered, together with foreign language courses, practical computer literacy skills and learning methods of active looking for a job. 8000 project beneficiaries were recruited on the basis of contacts with municipalities and social workers of the people aged 15-18 years (group 1) and 18-24 years’ old (group 2) coming from families and communities threatened with social pathologies, poverty and long-term unemployment, not-studying and not-working. The achieved results included a return to the education system or continuation of the education or trainings by 85% of beneficiaries from group 1 (3400 participants of the project), acquiring professional qualifications by 85% from group 2 (3400 participants of the project) and taking the employment or a business activity by 30% of beneficiaries from group 2 (1200 participants).

For children with special educational needs there is a dual track education. Most of the pupils attend special schools, which function on the level of primary school, lower-secondary school and upper-secondary school. Special schools had 122 939 pupils in the 2007/2008. The 72 931 pupils attended so called „integrated classes” in the mainstream education or regular classes in mainstream education. Another segment of schooling is formed by special education centres, youth education centres, youth social therapy centres and rehabilitation-education centres. 51 special education centres had 2920 residents, including blind and sight impaired, deaf and hearing impaired, chronically ill, motor-skill impaired, mentally disabled and socially maladjusted. 61 Youth education centres had 3649 residents. 49 Youth social therapy centres had 2591 residents. Finally, 102 rehabilitation-education centres had 4192

residents including 1917 with profound mental retardation disorders, 109 with autism and 1917 with associated defects. While the special education and the situation of children with special education needs is not discussed in detail in this report, it can be noted that this group is at the significant risk of social exclusion. The employment rate among disabled is very low. Relatively fewer students with special education needs enter higher education. As pointed out in recent government report, in one of the top Polish universities there are only 1% students with disabilities compared to the 3% share in the total population in the respective age category (Polska 2030, p. 282). It is recognized the special education segment of schooling requires significant changes (and some initial steps in this direction have been recently taken).

Parents are obliged to take care that their child is in education until the age of 18. This obligation is interpreted in lines of rights and responsibilities of parents written in the Family and Guardianship Code (Kurzydina-Chmiel 2009, p. 61). The Code allows family courts to give appropriate orders if the child's wellbeing is endangered such as obliging the parents and the minor to specific behaviour and appoint the supervision by the curator. The fulfilment of the schooling obligation is monitored by principals of primary and lower secondary schools together with local governments. Principals are required to have a register of all students in the school age, who live in the designated area of their operation (*obwód*). If a student living in the area attends school outside the area, the school principal in that school is obliged to report about it. The municipalities are obliged to provide the schools with the information from the evidence of children and youth at the age of 3 to 18. For the 16-18 years olds who completed the compulsory part of schooling, similar register is run by the municipality. Controlling the fulfilment of the obligation of schooling is relatively easy at the level of primary and lower-secondary schools and is much more difficult on the level of upper-secondary schools. To smooth the operation of this administrative mechanisms the amendment to the ESA of July 2008 shifted the obligation of reporting the information to the municipalities to schools or other educational institutions in which pupils are enrolled. Parents of children attending primary and lower-secondary schools were obliged, if requested, to report to the municipality the way of fulfilling the obligation of schooling by the child.

If parents fail to fulfil their obligation and a student do not attend the school, the municipality can institute the financial fine or ask the police for help (article 20 of the ESA). Until recently, this mechanism was not very effective as there was no legal definition of the not fulfilment of the obligation of schooling. The amendment of ESA of July 2008 made the definition of the fulfilment of the obligation of schooling more precise. Accordingly, not fulfilling of the obligation of schooling was defined as the absence in school or other educational institution without formal explanation at 50% or more obligatory school activities or vocational education activities in a period of month.

## 2.2 Evaluation

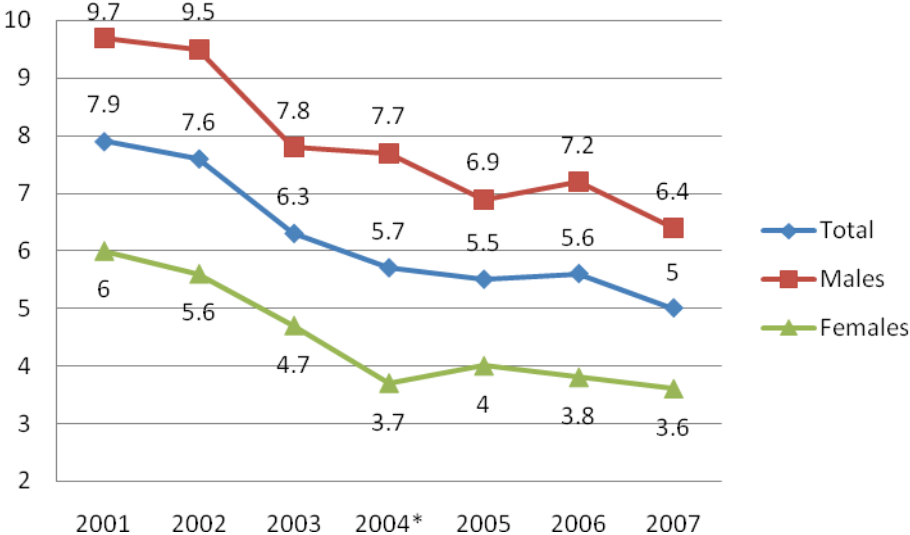
The early school leavers, as defined by Eurostat<sup>3</sup>, constituted 5% of the age group 18-24 (in 2007). This share is much lower than in the European Union (14.5% for the EU-25). Moreover, there is a positive downward trend both among males and females. LFS 2006 data shows that 87% of early-school leavers in Poland had lower-secondary education, 12% completed primary school and 1% had no formal education. Contrary to the situation in many

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<sup>3</sup> persons aged 18 to 24 in the following two conditions: the highest level of education or training attained is ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3c short and respondents declared not having received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator consists of the total population of the same age group, excluding no answers to the questions "highest level of education or training attained" and "participation to education and training". Both the numerators and the denominators come from the EU Labour Force Survey

other countries of the EU, most of the early school leavers (71%) are not in employment, which makes them particularly vulnerable to social exclusion.

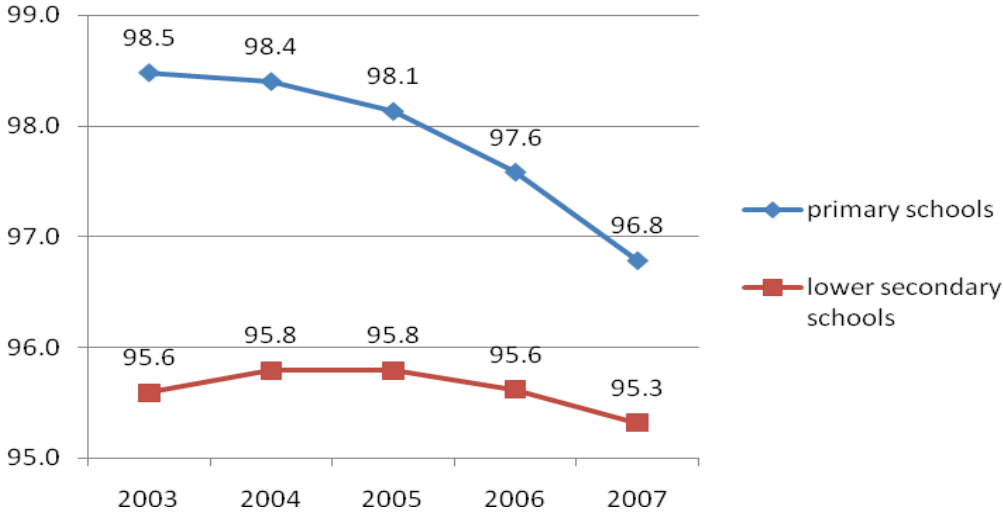
Table Early school leavers (aged 18-24) in Poland 2003-2007



Source: Eurostat, based on LFS survey.

It can be also noted that the indicator of “Youth education attainment level” (referring to the share of 20-24 years having attained at least upper secondary education) based on EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) for Poland is among the highest among the Member States. In 2008 it was 91.3% compared to 78.5% in the EU-27.

Net enrolment rates for primary and lower secondary schools

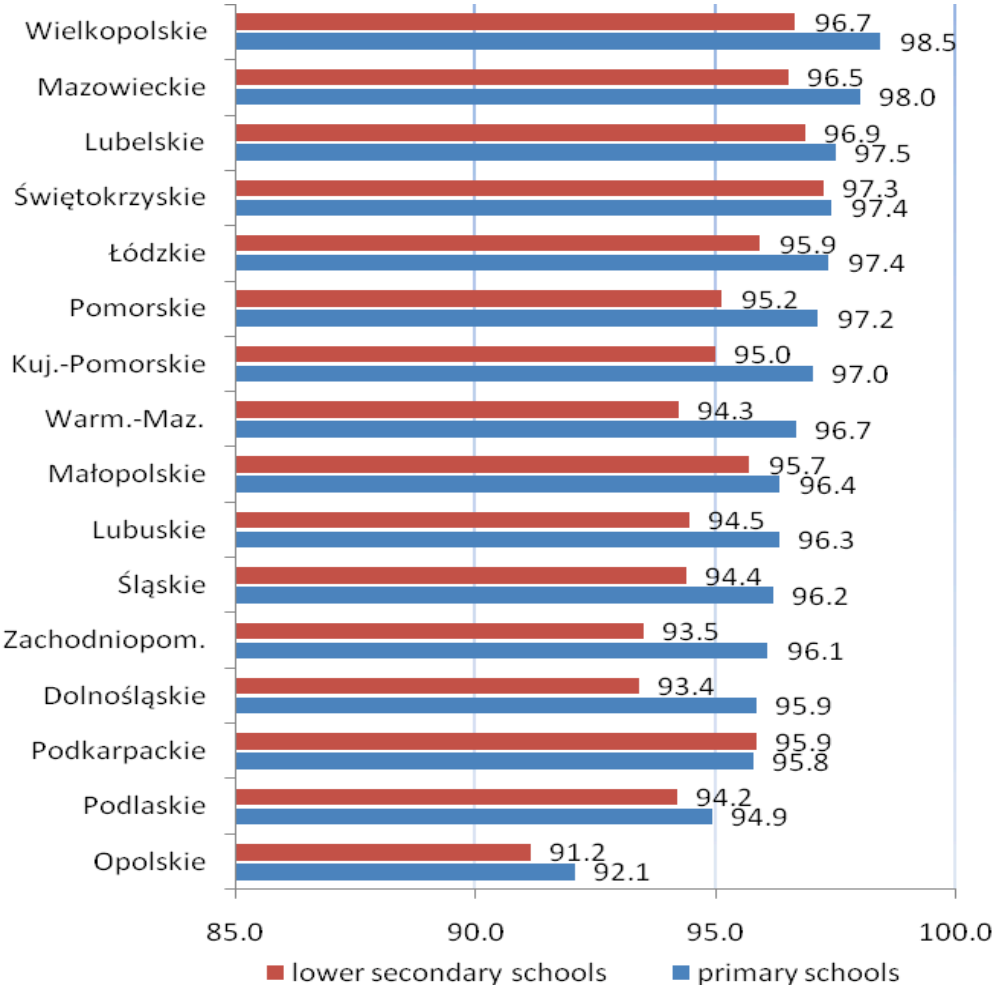


Source: Eurostat, based on LFS survey.

National statistics presented by the Central Statistical Office do not show explicit figures concerning early-school leavers. The enrolment rates, which are the basic statistical data, presented by the Central Statistical Office give only a vague picture of the phenomenon.

The enrolment rates are high in Poland. Even for 18 years old participation in education (all levels) is very high and reached, according to Eurostat data 93.9% in 2007 (compared to 77.2% for the EU-25). Enrolment rates data shows however, that there is significant geographical variation in the level of enrolment rates at the level of both primary and lower-secondary secondary level.

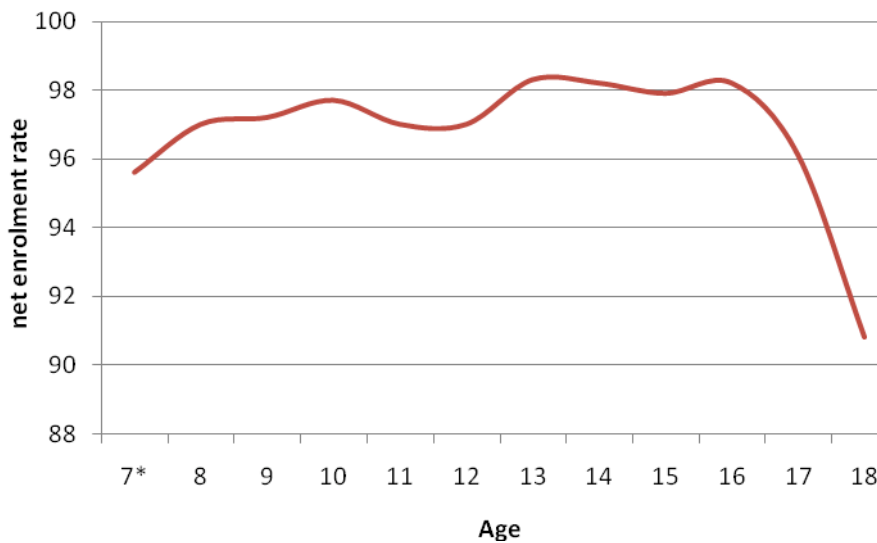
Net enrolment rates in the regions of Poland (2007)



Source: Central Statistical Office.

Enrolment rates are slightly lower in the age cohorts corresponding to the final years of primary school (typically completed by 12 years' olds) and in the age groups that correspond to the education in the upper-secondary education (16+).

Net enrolment rates for the age groups 7-21 in the primary and secondary education (2007/2008)\*.

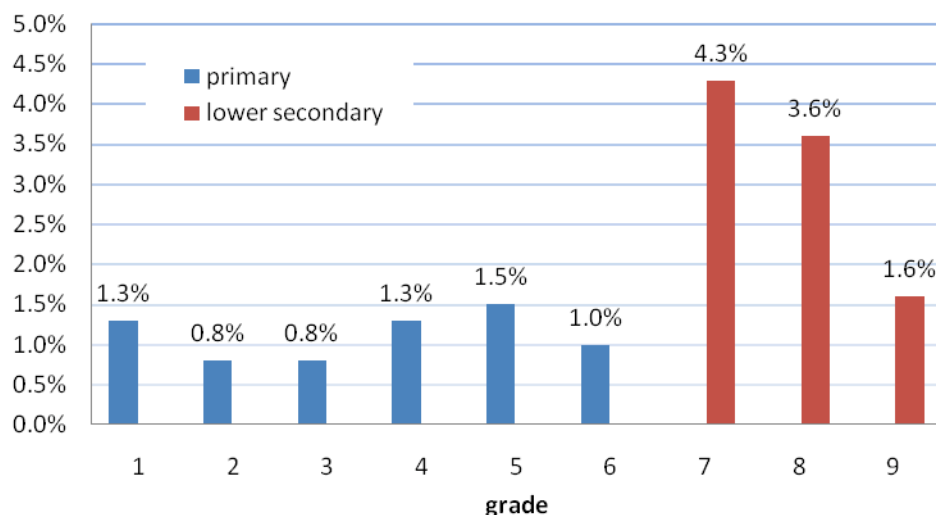


\* excluding 7 years' olds in kindergartens and students in higher education.

Source: Central Statistical Office.

A major problem with the enrolment data, however, is that age does not necessarily correspond to grade levels in education. Firstly, there exists a possibility to start education earlier (at the age of 6) or later (at the age of 8). Secondly, some pupils repeat a grade, particularly, in the first two grades of lower-secondary education.

Share of pupils repeating the grade in the total number of pupils in the grade (2007/2008)



Source: Central Statistical Office.

The study on dropout by of Fatyga and her colleagues (2001) emphasizes that it is actually impossible to estimate the scale of the drop-out phenomena in Poland. This has to do with the problems related to data collection and their presentation: the statistical data is not presented in Poland in a form that would be useful for educational policy and practice and detailed



information is rarely available in the local public administration as well. However, this is partly due to the measurement problems due to the complex nature of the phenomena. In case of drop-out. Fatyga and her colleagues distinguished five main categories of drop-out:

- ✚ natural drop-out – related to natural causes (death, suicide, etc)
- ✚ superficial drop-out – related to permanent or temporary leaves, after which the pupil can return to the schooling system
- ✚ drop-out in the proper sense – which is about the pupils who, for different reasons have dropped out from the school system, not completing the primary or lower-secondary level of education.
- ✚ Potential drop-out – which is about the pupils, who are still in the schooling system, but are very likely not to complete the primary or lower-secondary level.
- ✚ hidden drop—out, in which pupils were dragged through the educational system: being transferred to “worse” schools, special schools, vocational or adult schools and special educational centres.

While most of the factors that influence drop-out phenomena are located outside the school, some of them are related to the school system itself. For example, drop-out can be related to unsatisfactory school performance. The school system uses different strategies of dealing with “difficult” students such as shifting them to special schools, shifting them to the worse schools, making them to repeat the grade, etc. (Fatyga et al 2001). In some cases, these strategies result in practice in drop-out.

The main weakness of administrative mechanism in place in Poland is the poor cooperation of school principals and local governments especially in a situation, as it was the case until 2007, drop-out was and early-school leaving was not treated as a priority issue. Regional educational administration (*kuratoria oświaty*) have no formal role at that time in collecting or analyzing this kind of data from schools and local governments and as result either do not pay any interest to the phenomena related to drop-out or use not reliable and fragmentary data (Fatyga et al 2001).

The drop-out problem was investigated in 2007 by the Supreme Audit Office (*Najwyższa Izba Kontroli*) – the state audit agency with respect of pupils aged 16-18 in relationship with the investigation of the use of stipends financed from the structural funds. The Office pointed out that in the years 2004-2007 the problem of pupils aged 16-18, who are outside education was neglected in the priorities of the Ministry. The Office found that information on the number of such pupils in the information system of the Ministry is incompatible with the information of the Central Statistical Office. As a consequence the ministry obliged educational authorities to prepare the diagnosis of the school activities in the children registering area and the actions taken to prevent not fulfilling the obligation by May 2008. While full information from these analyses was not revealed to the public, the available analyses show what actions are taken by schools. In the Gdańsk region, for example, most common actions reported by principals concerned the control of the presence and absence of pupils in school, contacting parents and informing them about their child’s absence or contacting other schools. The issue was also discussed on the meetings of teachers of the school and analyzed during the preparation of statistical reports or discussed with the local authorities. Less common actions were about contacts with law and justice institutions like police or probation officers of the family courts.

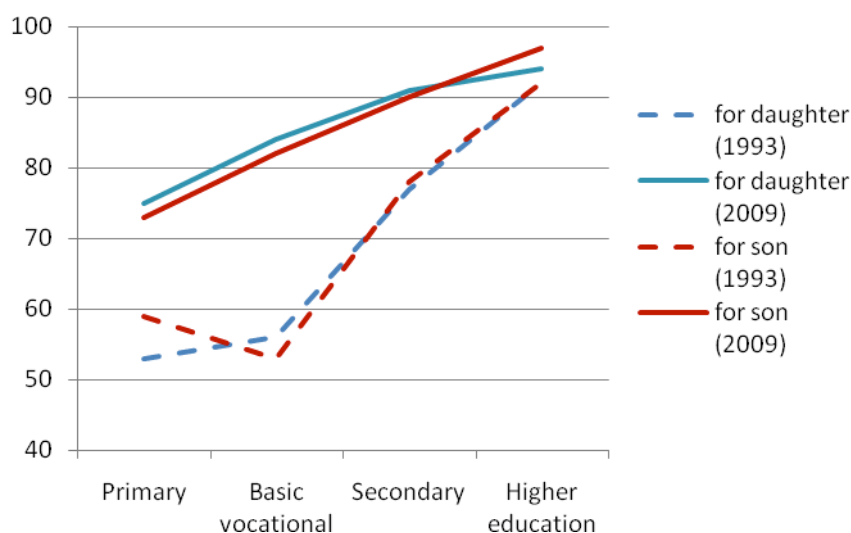
Based on the information of the Gdańsk educational authorities, main reasons for not fulfilment of the schooling obligation could be attributed, according to school principals, to pathologies in the peer environment (reported by 57% school principals), pathologies in the

family (37%), early maternity (3%) and different nationality (2%)<sup>4</sup>. The abovementioned study of Fatyga presented more nuanced overview. Among the main factors that may influence the incidence of drop-out, identified on the basis of interviews with the school principals, police and social workers are primarily factors related to the family (lack of proper care, poverty).

What factors are behind the Polish success in keeping early-school leaving figures so low? In the view of authors, there are several reasons for this. First of all, administrative mechanisms connected with the registration of children in the school age prove successful. Secondly, the high enrolment is influenced by regulations in other areas. For example, one of the conditions of obtaining family benefits is to prove that the child is in the education. There are also restrictions in the Labour Code that prevent the employment of adolescents without education. Thirdly, of importance are also other increased educational aspirations of Poles (connected to increased opportunities to continue education on the higher education level) and labour market situation.

Improvements in the indicators on early school indicators can be mainly related to the growing educational aspirations. Although one can still see the differences among particular strata of society, the educational aspirations clearly increased. According to Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) data, which throughout the last two decades repeatedly asked the question on the desired level of education for one's son or daughter, one can see that large majority of Poles want their children to complete higher education. The figures are very high even among those with lowest level of education. These aspirations reflect the recognition of the value of education on the labour market, on which the salaries are more related to the qualifications than in previous decades with there is relatively high wage premium for those with higher education.

Educational aspirations in Poland. The share of those who would like their daughter/son to complete higher education (ISCED 5A) by their completed education

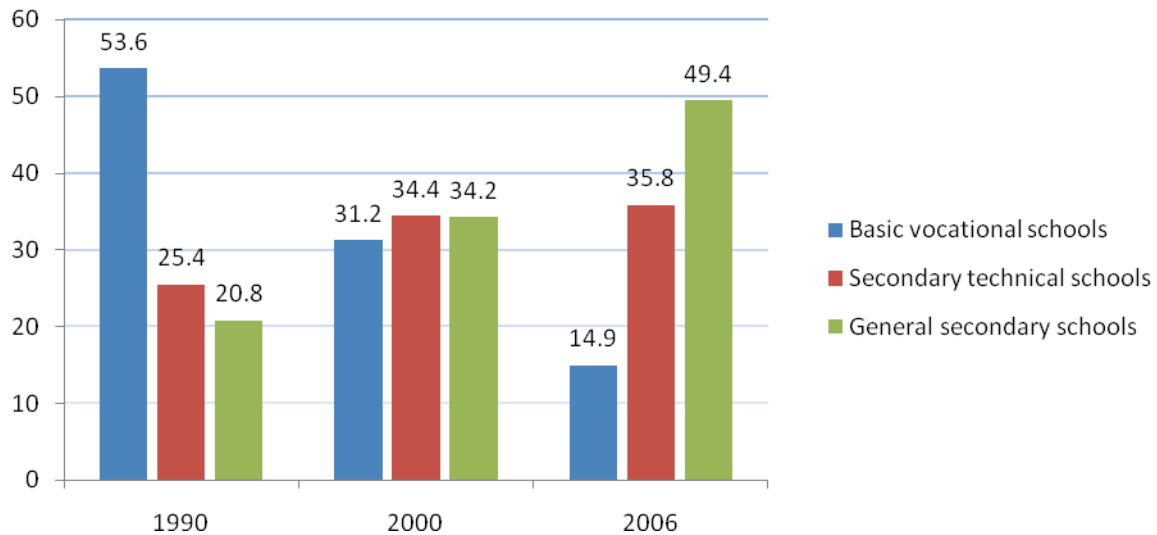


Source: Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), May 2009.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.kuratorium.gda.pl/pliki/II.INFORMACJA%20DO%20MEN-OBOWIAZEK%20SZKOLNY-2008.pdf>

Higher educational aspirations are reflected in increasing enrolment rates in secondary education. Basic vocational schools were decreasing in importance. From the perspective of the labour market this trend is even excessive. However, the unpopularity of vocational streams of education also reflect the lack of reforms and modernization of vocational education.

Graduates by type of (upper-)secondary schools

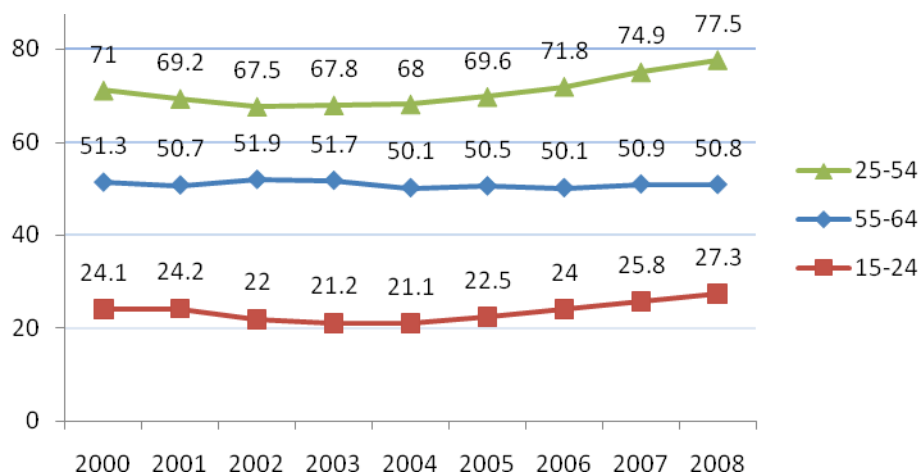


Source: Central Statistical Office.

The number of students in higher education increased from some 400 thousands in academic year 1990/91 to more than 1.5 million in 2000/01 and nearly 2 millions in the academic year 2007/08. Starting from the very low level, entry rate into higher education reached 78% in 2006 and is now among the highest in the OECD. This remarkable achievement was possible because of liberal policy towards the emergent private sector, introduction of fee-paying part-time studies in the public sector, gradual emergence of two-tier degree system and the development of vocational higher education programmes (Kwiek 2008, p. 93).

The second major factor is the unfavourable situation on the labour market. According to LFS 2006 data employment status of early school leavers was unfavourable compared to the situation in other EU Member States: Most of them were inactive (36%) or unemployed (35%) and only 29% were employed (the EU-27 average was 25%, 19% and 56% respectively). This can be related to very unfavourable situation of youth on the labour market. Differences in employment rates in specific age groups are very significant: it is lowest among the youngest and oldest age groups. The employment rate in the age group 18-24 increased in recent years, but it reached only 23.7% in 2008 compared to 34.7% in the EU-27 (where it tended to decrease).

## Employment rates in age groups 18-24; 25-54 and 55-64 in Poland\*

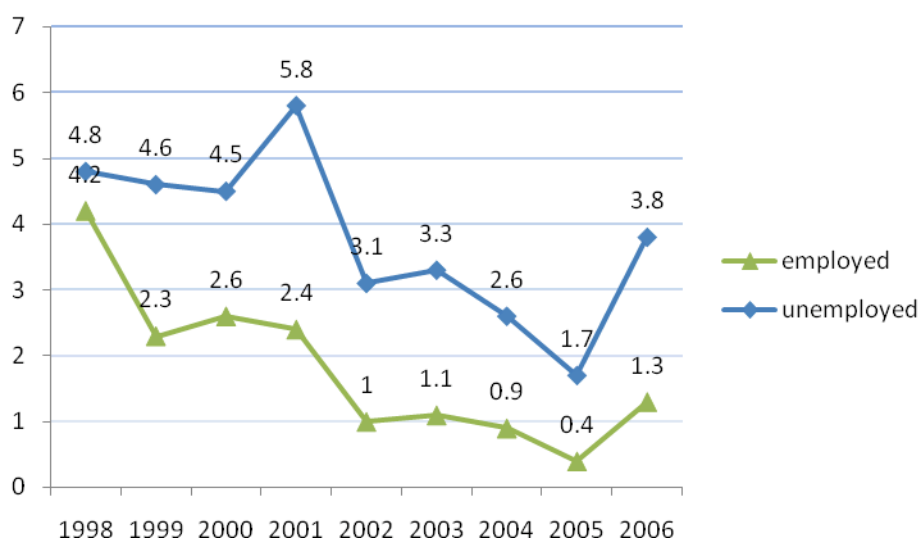


\* Persons in employment in age groups a proportion of total population in the same age group.

Source: European Commission.

According to the OECD data, among those 15-19 years olds, who were not in the education, the share of unemployed was higher than those who were employed. This was also the case of 20-24 years' olds in 2002-2005 (not shown).

The employment situation of 15-19 not in education (the remaining % of the population is in education) in Poland (1998-2006)

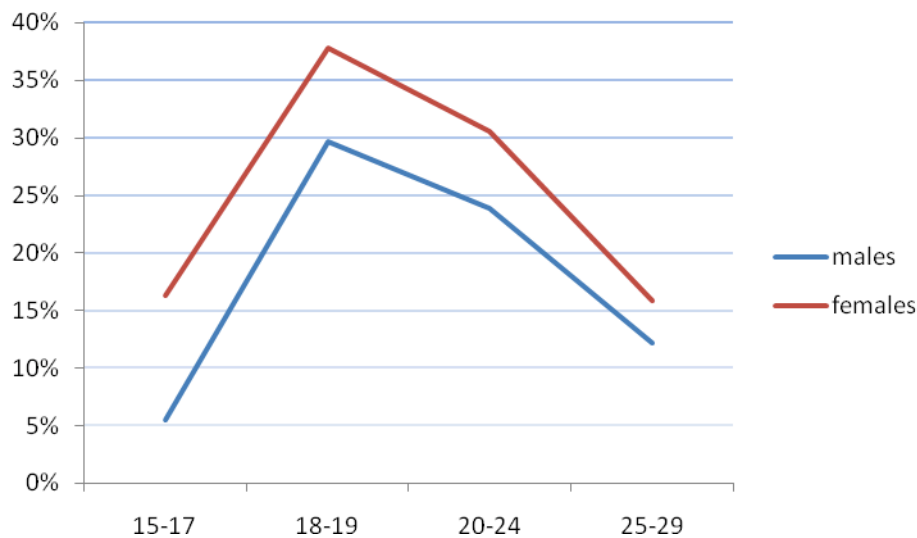


Source: OECD, Education at Glance, 2008.

Unemployment rate in Poland has been relatively high reaching the peak 20% in 2002-2003. There have been substantial geographical variation in unemployment rates with significantly higher rates in some regions and localities. Between 1998-2005 unemployment rates in the age group 15-24 outside the education, increased from 29% to 42% and the age group

(626800 people) constituted the one-fourth of all unemployed in Poland<sup>5</sup>. The unemployment rate is also higher among women. One of the factors that contributed to this situation was demographic. In these years Poles born during the baby boom of the early 1980s reached production age. Particularly vulnerable are those aged 18-19, who did not have qualifications needed on the labour market.

Unemployment rate in specific age groups (2006).

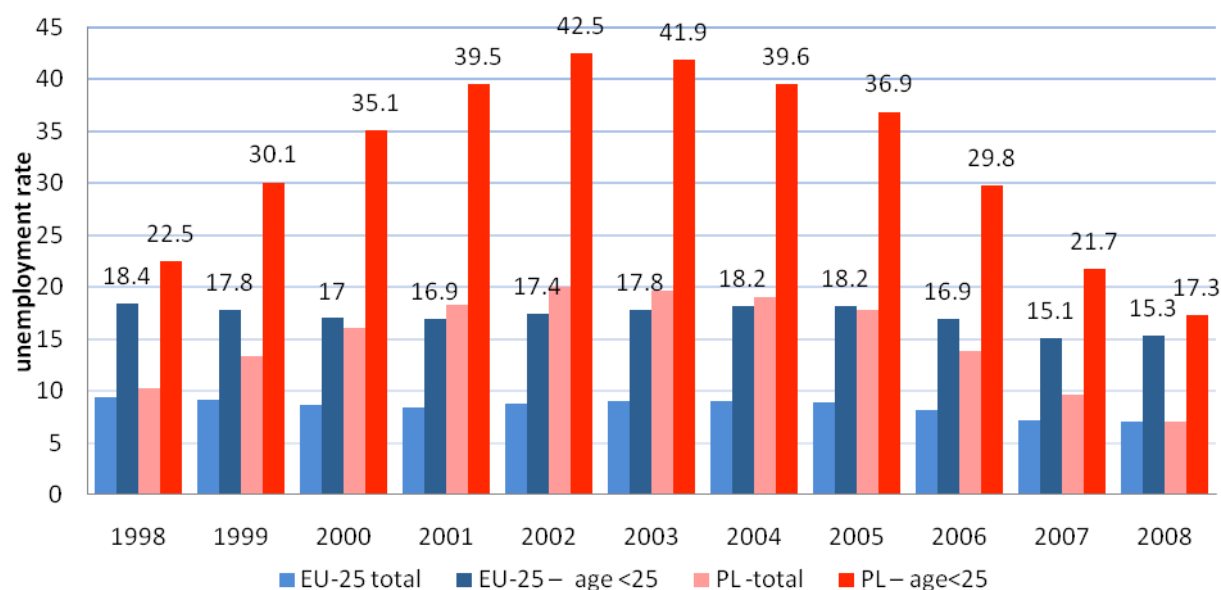


Source: Absolwent. Badanie aktywności zawodowej w kontekście realizacji programu „Pierwsza Praca”. MPiPS, 2007, p 54.

Relatively new factor is the economic emigration, in which young people dominate (which results of the removal from the official register of unemployed due to lack of confirmation of readiness to work). The unemployment rate was declining sharply in recent years.

<sup>5</sup> Young people aged 15-18 have a special status on the Polish labour market. Section IX of the Labour Code defines the status of, so called, juvenile workers (workers aged between 16 and 18). According to article 191 juvenile may be employed only if She/he has completed grade nine; She/he has presented a medical certificate attesting that the work in question will not be detrimental to her/his health; Their employment is only for purposes of vocational preparation, provided that the juvenile does not already have vocational qualifications. Vocational preparation (apprenticeship) is regarded by the law on the system of education as satisfying the condition of compulsory education.

## Unemployment rates (total and the age group <25 for the EU-25 and Poland)



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey (yearly averages)

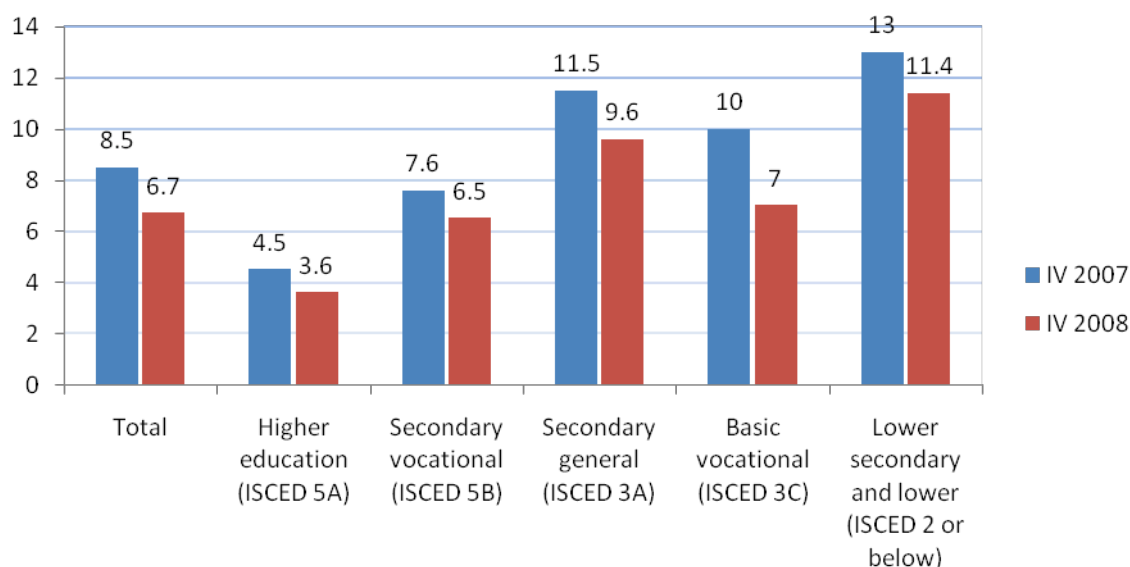
The youth are more affected by changes in the economy and expected rise of unemployment is likely to affect young people to a larger extent than other age groups. According to data reported by Eurostat, in May 2009 the youth unemployment rate increased to 19.6% compared to 17.7% in May 2008, while the general unemployment increased from 7.2 to 8.1%. In such a situation, some of young prolong their education simply because of the lack of job opportunities and enter the labour market late.

### 2.3 Beyond early-school leavers: school-to-work transition and the quality of education

While economic growth is crucial for the situation on the labour market, of equal importance are structural factors, such as the mismatch of qualifications to the demands of the market, lack of work incentives and poor job creation policy. The troubling characteristics of the Polish labour market is low and decreasing employment rate. Participation of adults in lifelong learning is among the lowest in the European Union. Provisional data for 2007 show that only 5.1% of adults participate in education in training compared to the EU-27 average of 9.7% and 20-30% in best performing European countries.

Particular risk group, irrespective of age, are the people with lowest levels of education. Polish LFS data for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 reported by Central Statistical Office shows that unemployment rate is lowest among those with higher education and is highest among those with lower secondary education and less (11.4%). It is also high among those who completed general secondary education only (9.6%).

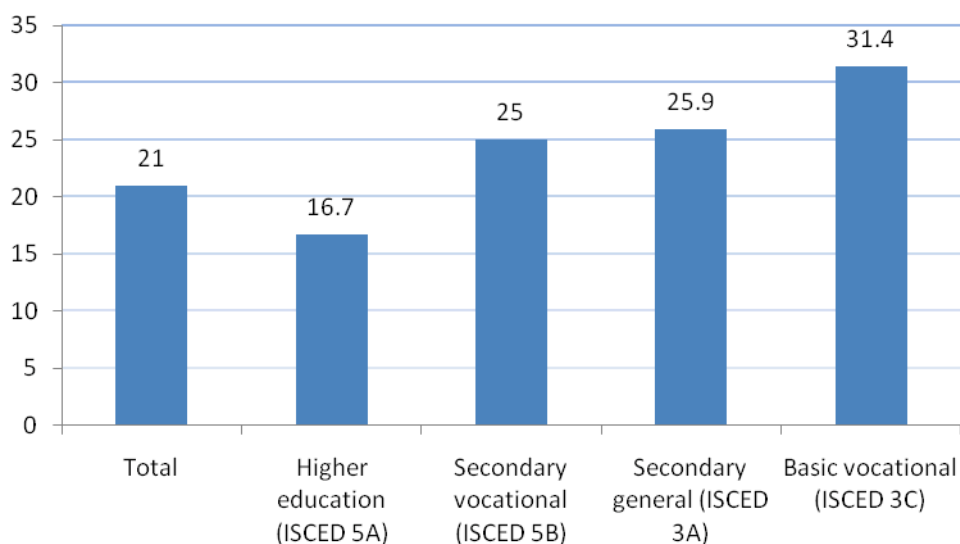
### Unemployment rate by the level of education completed



Source: Central Statistical Office.

As part of labour statistics, unemployment among graduates is also reported. In 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2008 unemployment rate among graduates was 21% (24,6% in rural areas and 18,5% in towns). The rate among the graduates in higher education was the lowest. The highest rate was among the graduates of basic vocational schools.

### Unemployment rates among graduates by type of education completed (IV 2008)



Source: Central Statistical Office.

Number of programmes aimed at the labour market activation of youth were initiated in the last decade. The most common actions were internships and vocational training for graduates. The first large program targeted at graduates was the government program „the Graduate programme” introduced in 1998, which was replaced in 2002 by the „First Job programme”.

The new law on promotion of employment and labour market institutions adopted 2004 regulated the operation of such programs, which are implemented by the district labour offices. Contracts are signed by three parties: by the young unemployed, the employer and a district labour office. These programmes can be considered to be complementary form of education and training and opportunity to gain some practical experience. However, critics point out, this is mainly the task of the education sector rather than the area of labour market policy. Moreover, internships are often used by employers as a source of subsidized labour and are not always interested in continuing of the employment of the interns. As the economic situation worsens, those involved in internships often return to labour offices as new unemployed.

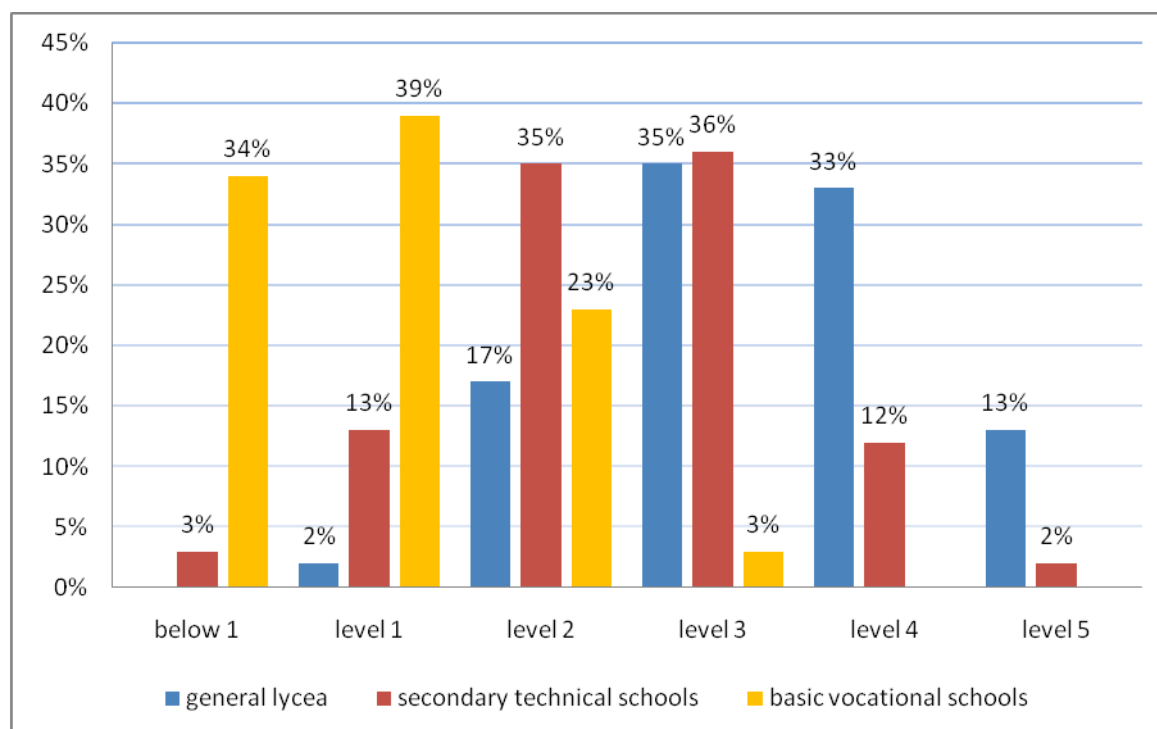
Above data confirm that there is a mismatch between the formal education system and the labour market. The situation is particularly bad in the basic vocational education. This stream of education has been always judged to be of relatively low quality. This was already the case under socialism, but the economic transformation made it even worse. The expansion of vocational education was one of main innovations pursued under socialism to promote the education in the working class (Heyns and Bialecki 1993). Vocational schools were often linked to state-owned-enterprises. They offered little general education and very narrow specializations, quite often lined to a particular technology. After 1989, many of these schools were handed to the Ministry of National Education or local governments. This resulted in diminished sources of funding and limited opportunities for practical training. The clear vision of the function and the organization of vocational education in general was also missing. The labour force survey results suggest that the offer of the basic vocational schools did not meet the demands of the labour market. Their graduates have faced problems in finding employment and seem not prepared well for further education and training (Sztanderska and Wojciechowski 2008). The changes to occupational structure started, in which general education was more highly valued and educational aspirations increased, as reflected in dramatic increase of students in higher education. The drawback of this trend was that the basic vocational schools started to attract students with the lowest abilities or students with educational problems. This trend was matched with even lower preference of teachers to work in such schools and limited professional support to deal with educational problems in these schools. Qualitative studies conducted in Poland show that the everyday life in different types of schools, especially in secondary school was a life in “different social worlds”. Students in basic vocational schools attend schools, but tend to be very passive and disaffected by the education (so called “dropping in” discussed in French report for the project). Early-school leaving and drop-out statistics tell only part of the story of the social exclusion related in education. Hypothetically, one can imagine a situation, in which a pupils remains in education longer for a year or two, but did not improve their skills or readiness to participate in social, political and economic life. Research results suggest that this might be the case for some of the pupils in Polish schools. Results of PISA 2000 showed substantial variation of performance between types of schools. Students in basic vocational schools scored very poorly with as much as 34% of students in basic vocational schools not reaching the 1st level of performance. Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  were below the level 2, which can be considered a basic level of reading skills<sup>6</sup>. The results of students in secondary technical schools were better, but still significantly lower than in general schools.

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<sup>6</sup> Refined list of Laeken indicators (2006) includes an indicator of low reading performance (Level 1 and below on the PISA proficiency scale) as an indicator of the risk of future social exclusion.



Student performance in reading (PISA 2000 by type of school and performance level) -15 years' olds



In 2006, Polish national PISA team decided to take the opportunity of high standards of PISA assessment and to take a closer look at the situation in upper-secondary schools. The design of the national option was an extension of PISA assessment to grades 11 and 12 (first two grades in upper-secondary schools - 16 and 17 years olds). 150 schools were sampled representing all types of upper-secondary schools. The results shown that students in all types of school did markedly better in PISA 2006 than in PISA 2000. However, the results improved more in secondary schools than in other types of schools. This happened despite the increased number of students choosing general education.

Average student performance (with standard errors in brackets) in reading by type of secondary schools (PISA 2000) and upper secondary schools (PISA 2006 – national study) – mostly 16 and 17 years' olds

Type of school	PISA 2000 (15 years' olds)	PISA 2006 (16 and 17 years' olds)
General lycea	543 (6.6)	587 (5.3)
Technical secondary schools (technical secondary schools and profiled lycea in 2006)	478 (5.8)	503 (6.4)
Basic vocational schools	357 (6.0)	387 (7.4)
Total	479 (4.4)	520 (4.5)

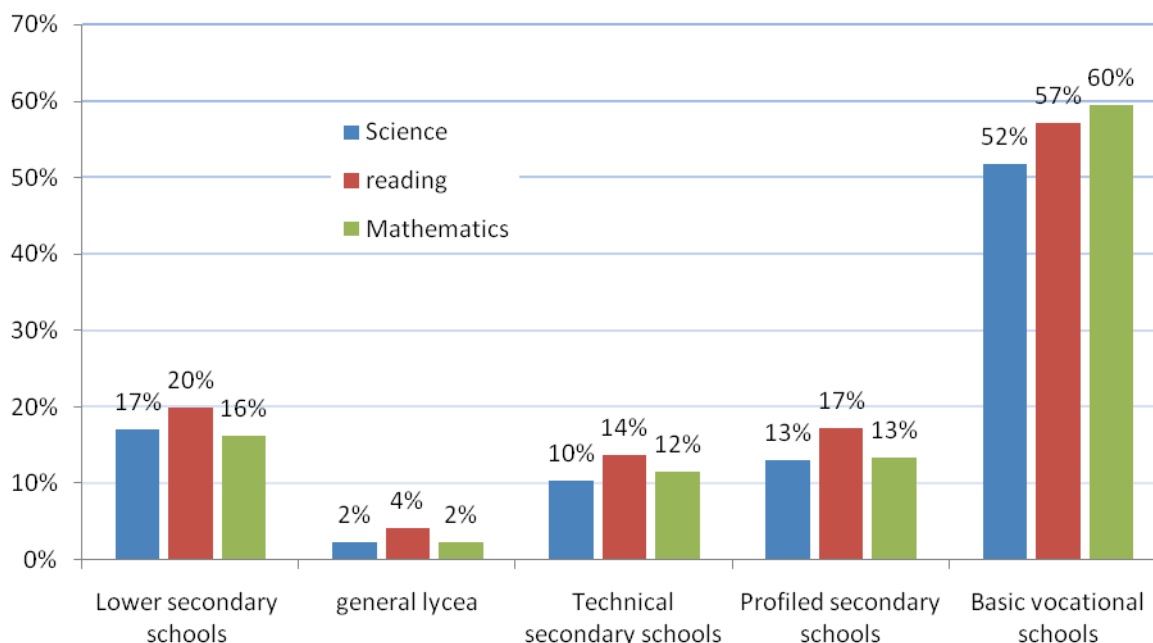
Source: Own analyses on the basis of the PISA data.

The average results show only part of the story. As recognized in the discussions on social exclusion, the particularly important is the information on the share of those, who are at the lowest levels of performance. In the social inclusion context, literacy and numeracy indicates

future life chances, as low performance likely affects the labour market prospects and ability to fully participate in society.

More than the half of pupils in basic vocational schools are below level 2, which means their proficiency in reading, mathematics and science is so low that they are at the risk of social exclusion.

Pupils at the risk of social exclusion – share of pupils below second level of performance in science, reading and mathematics in Poland



Source: PISA 2006 data for Poland

Sociological studies conducted in Poland point out that important role in the transition between primary and secondary education and the secondary and tertiary education is played by social origins of pupils (Domański 2004, Sawiński 2008). Accordingly, particularly important and persistent in time was the first transition threshold. It has been suggested that the effect of social origin rose dramatically in the 90s and then fall to the previous levels. Educational reforms played important role in the process. While extension of general education implemented through the introduction of gymnasia was decisive, the evidence shows that the social origins still exerts important effect in the educational choices.

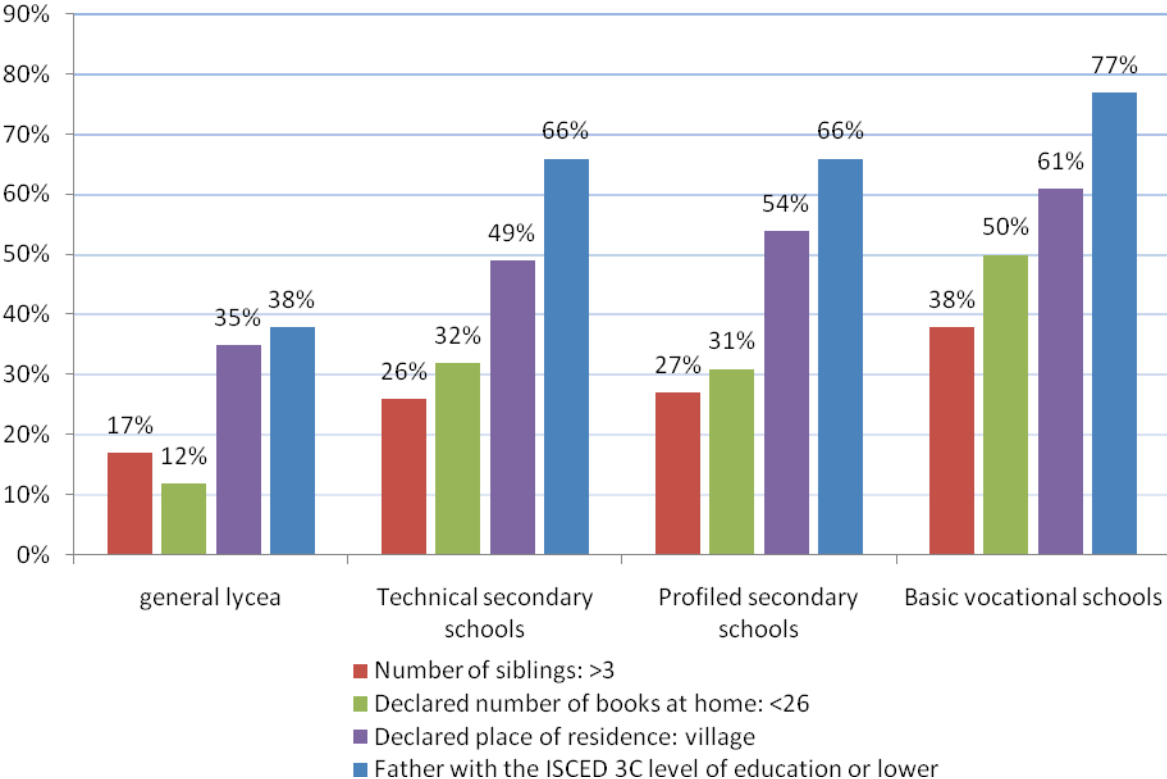
The strength of the effect of the social origin on the educational transitions\*

	1982	1984	1987	1992	1993	1994	1995	1998	2002	2004
After primary school	0.36	0.34	0.36	0.38	0.38	0.32	0.37	0.37	0.28	0.23
After secondary school	0.17	0.24	0.21	0.19	0.19	0.24	0.24	0.26	0.2	0.16

\* Coefficients of canonical correlation between the occupational category of father and passing the given transition threshold.

Source: Domański, H. (2007). *Struktura społeczna*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR.

The Polish PISA study shown that Polish upper-secondary schools are still highly stratified in terms of social origin. The relative chances of attending general lyeca are much higher among pupils with higher socioeconomic status than those with lower socioeconomic status.

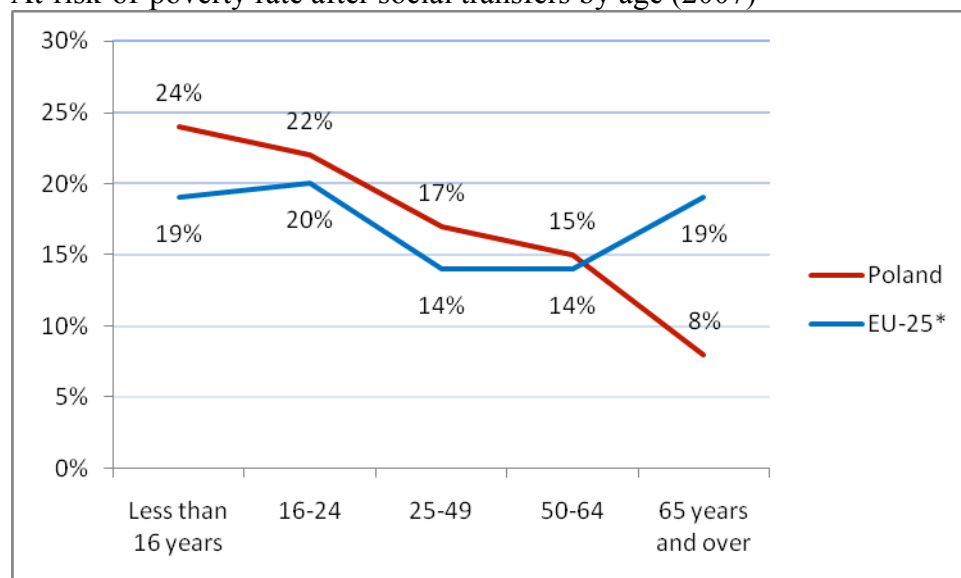


### 3 Priority measures in relation to social and economic inequities (ToR2, 3)

#### 3.1 Poverty and support for pupils from disadvantaged background

The poverty in Poland to a large extent affects children and the youth. Both total and child poverty at risk rates in Poland, defined for the comparison within EU as having an equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national median, was highest in the EU and the children in Poland are at significantly higher risk than the overall population. Mainly as the result of the improved employment situation Poland managed to narrow the gap to the EU-25 in recent years: for the age group <16 at risk poverty rate in 2005, 2006 and 2007 was at the level of 19%, while in Poland it decreased from 29 to 24%. Similarly, for the age the EU-25 level was 20%, while in Poland it decreased from 26 to 22%. The rates are still above the EU average, however, and the profile of poverty, which is unfavourable for the youth was preserved.

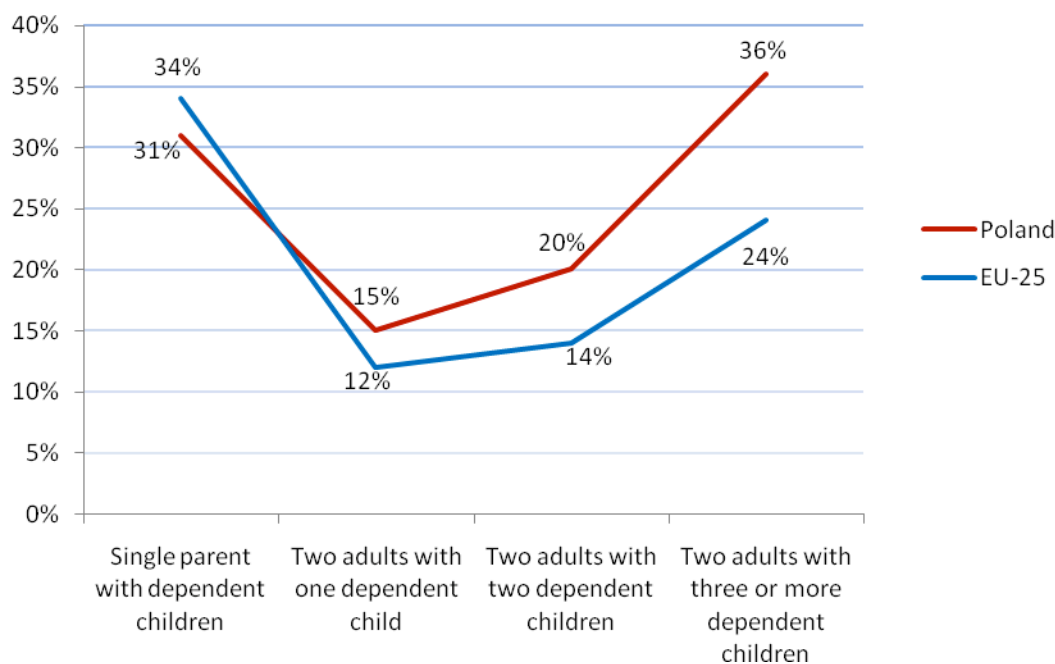
At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers by age (2007)



Source: EUROSTAT (data for the EU-25 are provisional).

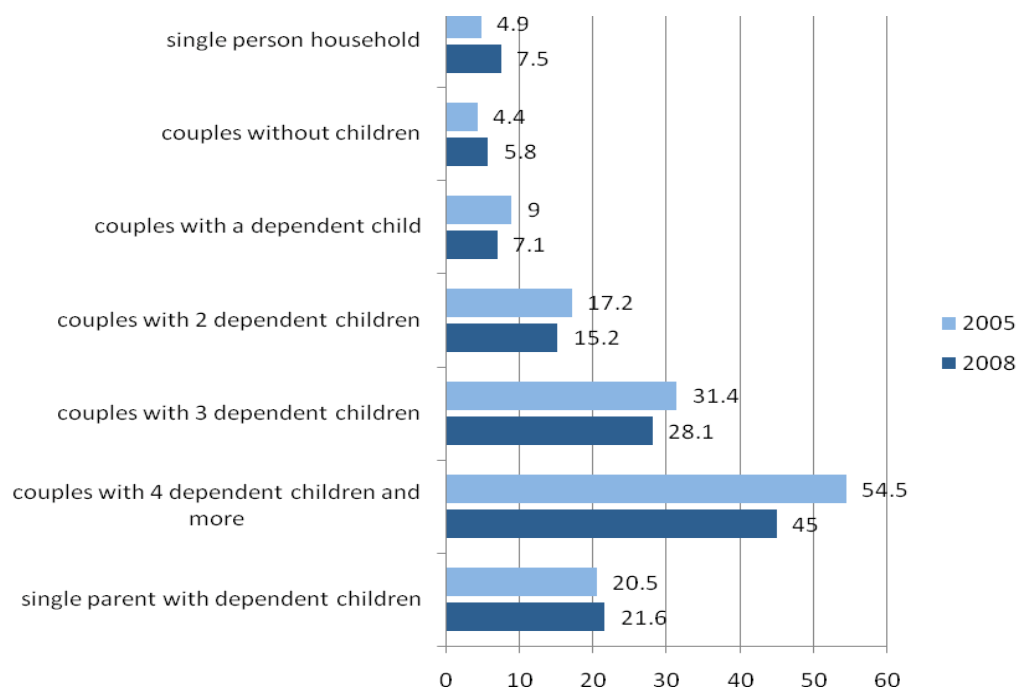
A distribution of poor children by type of households in Poland is different than in other EU-25 countries. The risk of poverty for children who live in single-parent households is not as much a problem as in many other Member States. Between 2005 and 2007 the share of single parent household with dependent children at risk at poverty decreased from 40 to 31% and was below the EU-25 average. The risk of poverty of two-adult households with two or more children is above the national average and is particularly high among families with three or more children.

### At-risk-of-poverty rate after social transfers, by selected type of households



More recent data is provided by the Polish Central Statistical Office and is based on the national household survey. It confirms that the risk of poverty increases with the number of children. Among households with 4 or more children, the share of households at risk is as high as 45%. However, the data also shows the changes that have taken place in last few years, which made the couples with children less disadvantaged

### Relative at risk-poverty rates by the type of household (2008)\*

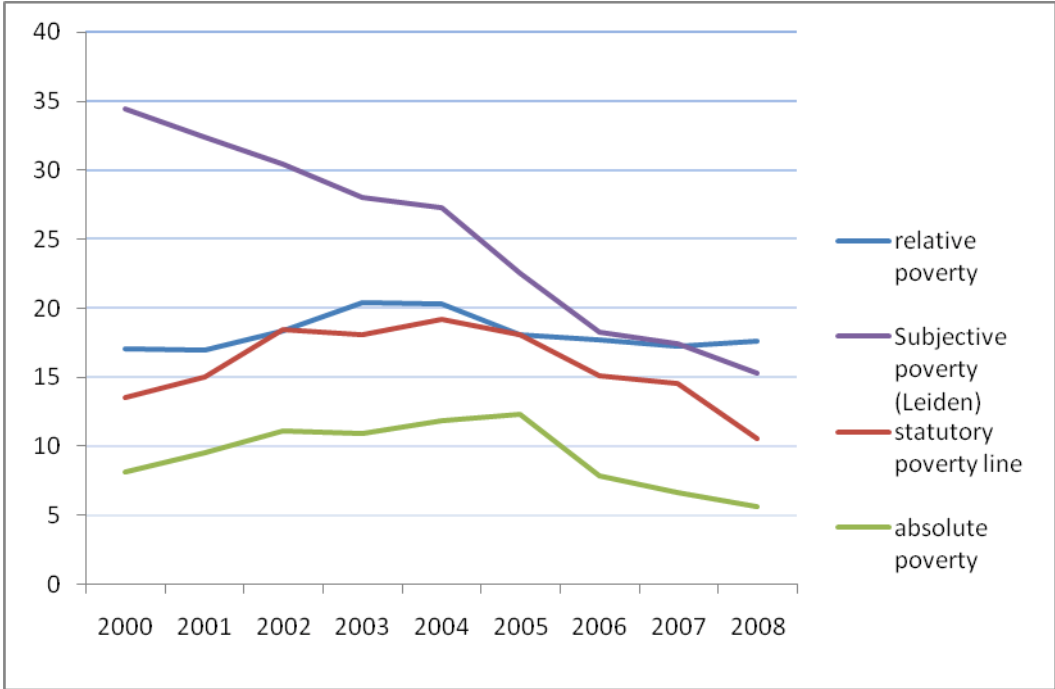


\*50% of average household expenditures

Source: Central Statistical Office household budget surveys.

Various poverty measures used in Poland show slightly different dynamics of phenomena. The relative poverty line, which is set by the Central Statistical Office at the level of 50% of the mean expenditure (more strict criterion than used by the Eurostat), was the most stable. It reached a peak in 2004, when about 20% of households lived in poverty defined in relative terms (50% of average household expenditures). However, the relative measure only partly measure the deprivation or living standards in absolute sense. In Poland, three other measures are officially reported. The first one is statutory poverty line, which is defined as a monthly income of a household qualifying the household to applying for a social benefit in cash. The so called minimum standards of living measure is estimated by the Institute of Labour and Social Studies is the measure based on the consumption and is defined in relation to the basket of extremely basic basket of goods and services that are necessary for a given type of family to satisfy its biological, cultural and social needs at the level recognised to be indispensable. This measure shows that extreme poverty was highest in 2005, when 12.3% of households were estimated to fall below the threshold. Finally, subjective poverty line faced the steepest decline.

Poverty rates according to different measures used in Poland (2000-2008).



Source: poverty estimates based on the based on the annual household budget survey conducted by the Central Statistical Office

**Geographical differences in poverty rates and enclaves of poverty**

There are significant regional disparities in the poverty rates. Research on poverty in Poland points out that specific enclaves of poverty and social exclusion in Poland. According to Jędrzejko (2008), who describes these areas in his study as “Polish *favelas*”, these are in particular, the areas, in which the former state-owned farms were liquidated leaving families occupying nearby small apartments without job, small towns were large companies were

liquidated or specific districts in some of the large Polish cities, where poverty is concentrated. This kind of “ghettoization” of poverty and social exclusion was the subject of number of studies conducted on the level of local communities. These included, for example, former state-owned farms (Tarkowska 2002) or inner-city poverty enclaves in the districts of industrial towns of Lodz and Katowice area, which suffer from the vicious circle of poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment.

### **Policy measures and their effectiveness**

Reducing child poverty has been the priority of all strategic programs in the area of social inclusion. The basic measures that are included in the Polish legislation concern the family benefits. Family benefit system was reformed in 2004. It became more targeted on the children and youth, the age criterion was extended and the list of the specific allowances was extended. Eligibility criteria for family benefits are income-related and comprise of basic benefit and number of supplements such as care benefits (nursing allowance and nursing benefit) and one time child grant provided after the birth of the child. Children and youth are eligible to benefit until reaching 18 years of age, until reaching 21 years of age, provided that the child learns at a stationary, evening, or extramural school, or at courses and until reaching 24 years of age, if the child continues education at the college/university level and holds a certificate of moderate or significant disability. Since 2006 the family allowance depends of the child age. Documents that need to be submitted to municipality include certificate of the family’s income, certificate of the child’s disability, if applies, and certificate of the child’s school enrolment, if the child is older than 18.

The family benefits can significantly reduce the risk of poverty. According to estimates presented in the European Commission report on child poverty in the EU-25, social transfers other than pensions reduced the risk, on average, of poverty for children by 44% (in 2004). Poland was in a group of countries, where this impact was the lowest (26%). This has to do primarily with the sizeable population of children at-risk. However, the relatively low impact is also due to the low level of expenditures targeted at children. ESSPROS statistics of the Eurostat show that the expenditures on family benefits in Poland (both as % of GDP and as the % of social expenditures) are among the lowest in the European Union Member States. In 2007, family and care allowances constituted about 5% of total social expenditures (0.76% of the GDP)<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, the income-criterion (about €125 per capita of the average income in the family) was not changed since 2004, which resulted in lowering of the number of children eligible for the benefits: from 5.55 million in 2004 to 3.8 millions in 2008. The value of average benefit is relatively low (162 PLN in 2008). Efforts were made to strengthen pro-family policies in recent years, which were partly motivated by the traditional values of political parties in power and partly by alarming trends of declining fertility. In 2005 additional benefit related to the birth of the child was introduced, which covered all children born (of the value of 1000 PLN and different from the similar supplement to the family benefits). Yet another additional measure was introduced in 2007: a pro-family tax credit for families with children (which was initially relatively low, but was raised on the eve of parliamentary elections in 2007 to the value of 1 145,08 PLN that can be claimed for each child). Parents can claim the income tax credit for children and youth under the age of 25 provided that child is attending school and does not receive an income. While this measure led to a significant increase of the family

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<sup>7</sup> National Program on social protection and social inclusion 2008-2010  
[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/docs/social\\_inclusion/2008/nap/poland\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2008/nap/poland_en.pdf)

benefits expenditures and significantly increased the coverage of the family benefit system, it was not the most effective way of channeling the funds<sup>8</sup>.

Financial support is also provided in the framework of system of education. The general objectives in this respect are declared in the ESA, which stipulates that differences in the access to the education should be diminished and the barriers that has to do with the material situation should be diminished (Art. 90b, par. 1). According to law, the student has a right to material benefits (*pomoc materialna*) financed from the state and local budgets. The benefits have to forms: they are either social or incentive-oriented (for the school or sport results). This kind of assistance is defined by the chapter 8a of the law on the system of education (introduced in 2004).

The social stipends are financed by local governments from the grants allocated from the national state budget. The in kind benefits are preferred over the financial help (art 90d, par. 5) and the assistance should be targeted at the covering the costs or refunding educational materials and services. In practice this means full or partial coverage of the costs associated with the participation in education activities, in-kind benefits related to education (covering the cost of textbooks or other educational materials). In case of upper-secondary schools, the cost of all or partial costs of travel and accommodation are covered, if pupils attend a school which is far away from his or her place of residence. These are financed during the school year and the decisions in this respect are taken by the local government executive in the beginning of the school year. The stipend is granted on the basis of application from parents, application of the school principal or on the initiative of the local government. The opinion of the school principal is taken into account in the process of making the decision. There are two criteria that need to be met to receive the stipend: low income in the household and difficult family situation. In the latter case, the law mentions such examples as unemployment, disability, serious or durable illness, having many children, single parenthood alcoholism or drug-addiction. The level of this kind of stipend varies as this is the local government that defines the rules of granting the stipends that pertain to specific conditions. These rules also define the form of the stipend and the ways it is delivered to pupils. While social benefits are financed for successful applicants throughout the school year, there is a separate temporary benefit (*zasilek*), for which, the pupils who are in the temporarily difficult situation can apply.

The provisions of the law on the system of education create also the possibility to organize national and local programs targeted at equalizing educational opportunities and supporting gifted children and youth. These kind of the programs can be adopted by all self-governments (on the local, district and regional levels) and are financed from the local governments own revenues (article 90t). They can be also set up by the government (article 90u). In this case, the programs can also be devoted to supporting regional and local programs. The main initiative of the ministry of education in this respect has been the government program “*wyprawka szkolna*” (“school equipment”) that was adopted in 2002, as continued in the next years. The goal was to refund the cost of buying textbooks for pupils from families, which income per person is below the level set out in the Social Assistance Act. Between 2002 and 2007 programme covered 32-33% of pupils, who attended to 1 grades of primary school. In 2007, the programme was extended for children from one-year pre-school and levels 1-3 of primary school for financing the purchase of the uniforms. The latest update of the program adopted in 2009 has focused the programme on the co-financing of textbooks. It also has focused on these grades, in which new curricula is introduced, namely first grade of primary schools and pupils starting the first grade of lower-secondary schools.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://cenea.org.pl/images/stories/pdf/working\\_papers/cenea\\_wp\\_0309.pdf](http://cenea.org.pl/images/stories/pdf/working_papers/cenea_wp_0309.pdf)



The second initiative is the program 'State aid for extra meals' in which funds are allocated from the state and local government budgets to finance meals for all levels of education (primary, lower and upper-secondary levels). In 2008, almost 528 millions PLN was spent on the program from the state budget and about 70% of all schools and kindergartens participated in the program. About 900 thousands of pupils (about 14.5% of the total) benefited from the program, mostly attending primary schools. A related program is 'A glass of milk' program, which involves extra payments for the consumption of milk and milk products in educational centres and which is coordinated by the Agricultural Market Agency.

In recent years, important role was played by stipends financed from the European funds (measure 2.2. of the Integrated Regional Development Program for the years 2004-2006). They were targeted at students living in the village or town if 5 thousands inhabitants or less and attending the upper-secondary schools leading to matura exam with the per capita income in the household below a pre-defined threshold. According to the evaluation study, this measure only partially led to the improvement of the situation of pupils from the poor background. This had to do with the relatively low value of stipend, the administrative burden involved, the limitations of the income-criterion and neglect of the local conditions. As the results of the negotiations with the European Commission in 2007, these kinds of stipends were changed and in 2007-2013 they are now targeted at the most gifted students. The Human Capital Operational Programme priority 'The development of education and competence in the regions' includes a sub-measure 9.1.3. 'The grant assistance for the most gifted pupils', which enables implementation of regional grant assistance programmes for the most gifted pupils of lower and upper-secondary schools, whose poor financial situation constitutes an obstruction in their education. The sub-measure is estimated to cover some 3000 pupils.

The support for disadvantaged children is fragmented and it is not always very effective. Limited attention is given to measures that would support teachers in dealing with children from poor backgrounds. Knowledge and skills of this kind are hardly existent in the teacher education programs. Such a conclusion is suggested from limited number of qualitative studies. For example, qualitative research undertaken in 2005 in four lower-secondary schools of the poor rural areas in Poland showed that schools tend to concentrate on didactics rather than upbringing and care functions, which is disadvantageous for pupils from poverty-stricken milieus (Tarkowska et al 2007). There is a lack of systematic approach to poverty-stricken milieus in schools and most of measures based on existing laws (stipends, free meals, etc.) are ad-hoc rather than long-term oriented. Research shows that school's hidden curriculum stigmatizes the poorer students (e.g. by organizing school trips, ability tracking in classes). There are, however, experts that argue that, the social inclusion measures should be responsibility of professional assistance, which would be able to work not only in schools, but also outside the school: with the family and within the community. From this perspective, arguing for more involvement of teachers in the family problems of children is not the best option and may lead to even more stigma in practice.

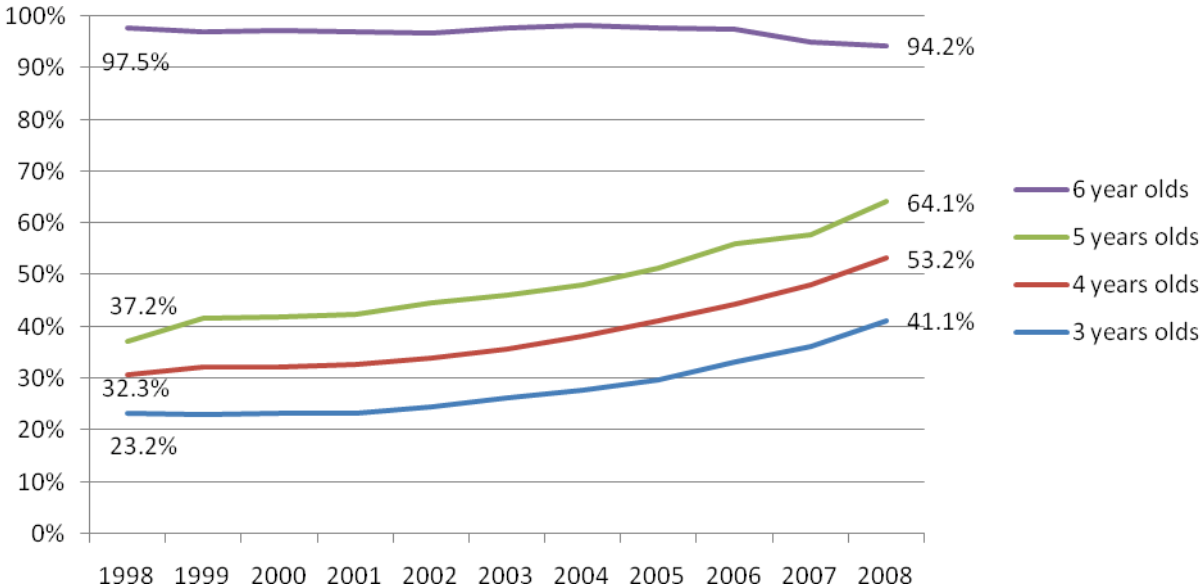
Important reason of limited effectiveness of the social inclusion is also lack of coordination of the actions taken by different institutions, both in the vertical and horizontal plane. While there are exceptions to the rule, schools tend, in general, to cooperate with the formal institutions of police, courts and probation officers rather than making use of the potential hidden in the community (Tarkowska et al 2007). The cooperation of social assistance institutions with labour market institutions is poor. Lack of common programming, informational and organisational measures result in "narrow" interpretation of the public interest and sectoral perception of social problems. The central role among the institutions established to alleviate the problem of social inclusion is played by social assistance. Other institutions often assume that social inclusion is the responsibility of the social assistance

institutions. As the result social assistance often needs to deal with problems caused by the absence of family policy, the reduced upbringing and social functions of schools (Golinowska 2008, p. 236). Given this increasing responsibilities the particular problem is that social assistance has not sufficient staff.

### 3.2 Pre-primary education: measures and their evaluation

The factor that stands out in the Polish case is very low level of participation in the pre-primary education. The participation in pre-primary education can be considered as an important measure of social inclusion. Poor access to childcare services is also important for the position of women on the labour market. The enrolment in pre-primary education in Poland never exceeded 55% (this was the highest level, reached in 1980). After the 1989 the enrolment rates were decreasing and started to rise only recently. The most recent national statistics (the school year 2007/2008) show that the share of children aged 3-5 who attended preschool education is only 47.5%. The average enrolment rate for 4 years' old increased between 2000 and 2006 from 33 to 41.2%, which is still far behind the respective figures for EU-27 (82.8 and 86.8% respectively).

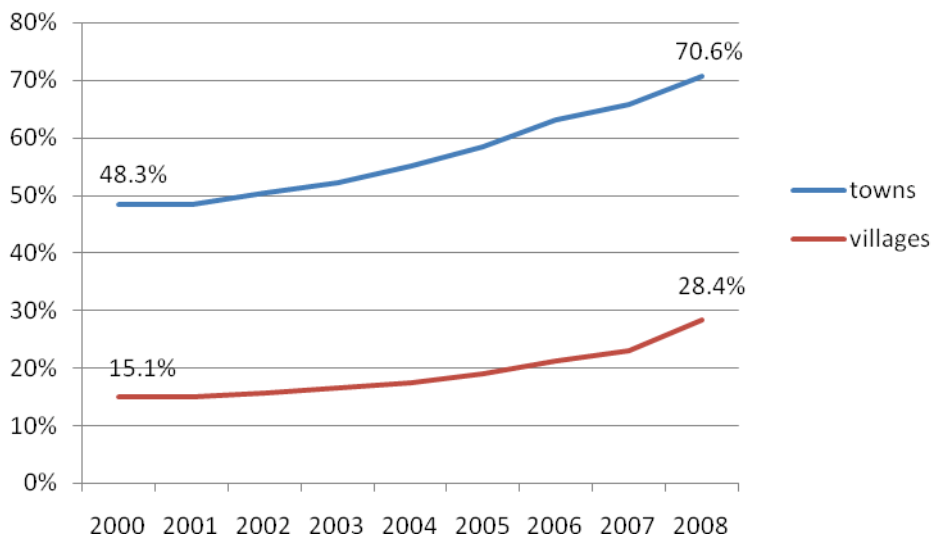
Net enrolment rates in pre-primary education in Poland (1998-2008) by age.



Source: Ministry of National Education, June 2009.

The main dividing line in the accessibility of pre-primary care is between large towns and rural areas. Despite the increase of places in kindergartens in recent years, the gap has not been narrowed, which is reflected in difference in net participation rates.

### Net enrolment rates for the age group 3-5 in rural and urban areas



Source: Ministry of National Education, June 2009.

For children aged 3 to 6 pre-primary education is offered by kindergartens (*przedszkola*), which are the part of the educational system. However, for children aged 3-5, the education in the kindergarten is not compulsory and is interpreted as the right rather than obligation. Only at the age of 6, children are required to complete the preparatory year for the primary education, so called zero-year. The zero-year can be completed either in a kindergarten or in a pre-primary class in a primary school.

Majority of kindergartens are public. They are administered and financed by municipalities, which can also subsidize private kindergartens. With exception of organizing the compulsory zero grades, there is no obligation on the part of local governments to have kindergartens. The demand for pre-primary care exceeds the supply. Many kindergartens were closed in the 90s because of financial limitations. Unlike the primary and secondary education, where municipalities receive a grant from the central budget to cover the school operations, kindergartens are financed only from the budgets of municipalities. Only between 1990 and 1993 almost 20 per cent of pre-school institutions were closed. Between 1990 and 2003 their number declined drastically, by almost 26% in towns and almost 50% in villages with the most of decline appearing in the early 90s. (Domalewski et al 2008:114). In 2008 there were no kindergarten in 539 out of 2478 municipalities. Access to pre-primary education in rural areas is a particular challenge. Regions with an economy that is strongly dependent on agriculture, less urbanised and also less economically and socially developed, have also much lower pre-school participation rate than industrialised and urbanised regions. When children of poorer educated parents start education later or where pre-primary services are not accessible in some rural areas, which is the case in Poland, educational opportunities are unequal from the very start of education and aggravates the differences in the socioeconomic status of parents, which the main predictor of educational results.

Pre-primary education for the age 3-5 is not free-of-charge. Parents' payments cover children's meals, extra lessons selected by parents from the pool of lessons available and so-called extra fee if a child attends the kindergarten for more than 5 hours a day (this has to do with the legal obligation to provide only 5 hours of unpaid teaching and nursing, during which core curriculum for pre-primary education is implemented). In practice, the care is provided

full-day and take into account the needs of working parents. The local governments can decide that families with low income or in financial difficulties are exempt from payment of some of the fees.

For children aged 0-3 years the care is provided by crèches (*żłobki*), which are formally a part of the healthcare system. The proportion of children attending crèches is very low: in practice crèches exist only in large cities. Only about 2% of all children aged 0-3 were attending them in 2005.

The strengthening of the pre-primary education was declared to be a top priority of recent ministers of education. This was reflected in searching for new forms of pre-primary education, supporting the establishment of small kindergartens in the rural areas and lowering of the age compulsory education. The school year 2008/09 was declared the Year of Kindergarten Kid.

For the years 2007-2013 the measures to promote preschool education are included in the Human Capital Operational Programme (priority 9: “The development of education and competence in the regions” under Submeasure 9.1.1. “Decreasing inequalities in the access to the preschool education” - Submeasure 9.1.1), which includes support for the Project on:

- + creation of pre-schools (including the creation of other forms of pre-schools education) in the areas and environments where pre-school education is not very popular (especially rural areas),
- + support for existing pre-schools (including other functional forms of pre-school education), contributing to the increased participation of children in preschool education, e.g. support for pre-school and other forms of pre-school education endangered with winding up, extending working hours, additional intake of children, employing additional personnel, etc.
- + working out and implementing information campaigns promoting pre-school education.

The priority of the Ministry of National Education is to lower the age of beginning of compulsory education in primary school from 7 to 6 starting from the school year 2009/10. As this requires substantial investments in primary schools that are not always prepared to meet a standards of care for 6-years olds, a transition period was introduced and in the school years: 2009/2010, 2010/2011, 2011/2012, parents will have the ability to choose whether they wish to send to schools their children at the age of seven or six. In practice, this means gradual phasing out of the existing „zero-grades”. Importantly, from the school year 2009/10 children aged 5 will be entitled to a one-year pre-school education, which will become obligatory in the school year 2010/2011.

An additional measure to promote pre-school education regards the opportunity to create new forms of pre-school education – teams for pre-school education and pre-school points which are financially supported by local governments. The aim of the introduced solutions is to promote pre-school education. Children who do not have to go to the full time pre-school will have the opportunity to have their educational programme and be with their peers. New forms of preschool education are options to both rural areas where the access to education is hindered, and big cities where children are threatened by social exclusion

Starting from January 2008 new form of pre-primary education for children aged 3-5 were legally defined by the regulation of the minister of national education. Their activities can be organized in some days of the week or for limited number of hours for small groups of children (3-25). These kind of pre-primary education institutions are promoted in particular in

the situation of these localities, where there is no kindergarten or opening the kindergarten would not be feasible. However, these forms of limited pre-primary education are also considered as the option to broaden participation in pre-primary education in other areas.

The funding from the European Social Fund in the 2004-2006 made it possible to establish or support a number of projects that aim at the creation of new forms of pre-primary education in these localities where kindergartens are not available. The example below is only one of the many initiatives financed in this framework.

Activities of the Jan Amos Komeński Foundation started with the project “Where There Are No Pre-schools” that was designed to help local communities to build new, flexible early childhood services for children aged 3-5. The project helped to establish centres in selected municipalities, housed in community centres, schools or library facilities, where the children could take part in classroom activities for a few hours per day, three or four days a week. The teachers were trained and guided by the Foundation, while municipalities provided the funding for the Centres’ resources and the teachers’ salaries. The involvement of parents was emphasized, as well as monitoring of the class activities and sharing the experiences. The project was followed by the programme “Pre-school Centres: A Chance for a Good Start”, which was co-financed from the European Social Fund. The project was implemented between June 2005 and March 2008 in 6 regions in localities with the lowest participation in the pre-primary education. 94 Pre-school Centres have been opened in 36 communities, providing learning activities to 1,268 children. The Centres established in municipalities (located in schools, libraries, community centres or fire stations) are open for three or four hours a day, three or four days a week. The teachers work with groups of 10-15 children aged 3-5 years following an innovative curriculum. The activities are innovative because of the mixed-age grouping and involve active parent participation. Teachers and parents can also rely on the expert support of a psychologist and a speech therapist, who visit the Centres regularly.

As pointed in the evaluation studies of the projects, the added value of this kind of project was their role in activating local communities and parents in the initiative. They were also well-targeted benefiting the communities with highest needs of any form of pre-primary education.

Recent measures taken by the government to increase participation in pre-primary education should contribute to increased participation in pre-primary education, although the radical change of situation would need to be supported by large investment initiatives of local governments. The success of the legislated obligation to participate in the pre-primary education at the age of 6 and lowering of the school age will depend mainly on the ability to enhance the existing infrastructure. Of importance are also the cultural barriers to the development of pre-primary education, namely, the traditional view of family and distrust towards institutionalized forms of care. Initiatives originating in non-governmental sectors and municipalities, were reinforced by the funding from the European Social Fund. They have brought some important innovative projects which are mobilizing local support and extending the access to pre-primary care in disadvantaged areas.

## **4 Measures to reduce ethnic school segregation (ToR4)**

### **4.1. Ethnic and national minorities**

There are 9 national minorities, which have Polish citizenship (declared nationality in 2002 census in brackets): Belorussians (47 640), Czechs (386), Lithuanians (5 639), Germans (147 094), Armenians (262), Russians (3 244), Slovaks (1710), Ukrainians (27 172), Jews (1055) and 4 ethnic minorities: Karaites (43), Lemkos (Łemkowie, 5850), Roma (731) and Tartars (447). This list minorities are recognized by the act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language, which indicates the difference between national and ethnic minorities. In addition, there is one regional language that is officially recognized: the Kashubian language. According to the population register, approximately 55 000 foreigners were permanent residents of Poland at the end of 2006, 0.14% of the total population of Poland. The three main national groups were Germans (21%), Ukrainians (9%), and Russians (6%).

In addition to international law documents, the rights of the minorities are defined in the Constitution of the Republic in Poland and the act on the system of education. Of particular relevance is the act on national and ethnic minorities and the regulation of the minister of education of November 2007, which defines the conditions and scope of tasks related to supporting the sense of national, ethnic, and language identity of pupils belonging to national and ethnic minorities and communities that use regional languages.

The schooling of ethnic and national minorities can be organized, if requested by parents, in separate groups. There can be additional school lessons organized to teach language or one's national history or culture. There is also possible to organize special school lessons attended by children from different schools. Special forms of language education defined in the abovementioned regulation of the minister of education include:

- ✚ schools or classes in which school subjects are taught in the language of specific minority, with exception of the subjects of Polish and specific parts of the subjects of the history and geography that concern Poland.
- ✚ schools or classes, in which school subjects are taught in two languages: the Polish language and the language of the minority
- ✚ schools or classes with additional language lessons (of the minority)
- ✚ inter-school teams of learning (of the size of 3-20), in which there are 3 hours weekly.

In the school year 2007/2008 teaching the national minority language (as well as the regional language was organized in 535 schools and inter-school teams and was attended by 32.3 thousands of pupils (including 24 thousands members of German minority). At the lower-secondary level respective figure was 205 schools and 13 thousands pupils.

The special case is the Roma community, which is in more difficult situation than the other minorities. According to 2002 census, Romany nationality was declared by 12 731 citizens of the Republic of Poland. 15 657 persons declared that they used the Romany language at home. Unofficial estimates of the Roma population range from 15 to 50 thousands. This number is sizeably lower than in neighbouring countries of Czech Republic and Slovakia. The key document that describes the measures targeted on social integration of Roma minority is the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland. The programme was adopted by the government on 19 August 2003, planned for the years 2004-2013 with the annual budget of

about 10 million PLN. More than the half of this allocation was spent in 3 out of 16 Polish regions: Małopolskie (28.8%), Dolnośląskie (18.3%) and Śląskie (7.5%). The program was based on the experiences of the Pilot Government Programme for the Roma Community in Małopolskie Region for the years 2001-2003 carried out in 13 communities, where a system of supporting Romany children studying in integration units was introduced. Educational measures are considered the priority. Measures include provision of additional educational resources and employing Roma teaching assistants in local schools. One of the main aims of the programme is improvement of the teaching and increasing the attendance rate of pupils of Roma origin. However, the program covers number of activities associated with improving quality of life of Roma community, prevention of unemployment, maintaining Roma identity, disseminating knowledge on the Roma community and popularising civic knowledge among the Roma minority. Grants for secondary school level and higher education students are also provided within the framework of the program. In the Operational Programme Human Capital 2007-2013 one of the actions undertaken within priority I (employment and social inclusion) funding for the projects that benefits Roma community with the allocated funding for the years 2007-2013 (as of February 2009) of 22 million euro.

Despite the existence of the programs in favour of Roma minority, some forms of direct and indirect discrimination were noted in recent past in areas such as employment, housing, education, access to public services and health care. Most prominently, this problem was raised in the European Roma Rights Center publication „The Limits of Solidarity, Roma in Poland after 1989” (Country Report Series N° 11) published in 2002. In 2005 ECRI noted that, while in some areas integrated approach promoted by the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland was introduced, there were still primary schools, in which separate classes were created attended only by Roma. While the declared motivation was improvement of Roma pupils’ skills in Polish, in practice this was discriminatory and detrimental for the pupils’ integration and education<sup>9</sup>. This issue was picked by the daily Dziennik, which published a series of articles in July and August 2008, in which the case of segregation of Roma children taught in separate classes in 6 cities was shown. Following the publications, the minister of education ordered the inspection of all district offices where Roma-dedicated classes operated and ordered that Roma children education be fully integrated with Polish children.

It can be also mentioned that two strategies of the development of education of national minorities were adopted in Poland: for the Lithuanian minority (in 2002) and for German minority (2007). The first one was developed as the result of bilateral international agreement and was worked out by the team composed by the representatives of government officials and Lithuanian minority. The latter responded to the requests of the representatives of the German minority.

#### **4.2. Immigrant Pupils in the Polish Education System<sup>10</sup>**

The Constitution secures the right to education to everybody and therefore education is secured even for the children who are on the territory of Poland illegally. According to the ESA immigrants have the same access to education as Polish children. Free-of-charge education in the upper-secondary schools was, until recently, restricted to family members of migrant citizens of the EU and EFTA member states employed in Poland, persons of Polish origin (as defined by repatriation legislation), persons with the right to settle down in Poland, persons who gained such right on the basis of international agreements, persons with a

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<sup>9</sup> [http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XML/Ecri/ENGLISH/Cycle\\_03/03\\_CbC\\_eng/POL-CbC-III-2005-25-ENG.pdf](http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XML/Ecri/ENGLISH/Cycle_03/03_CbC_eng/POL-CbC-III-2005-25-ENG.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> This part of the report was written with the assistance of Mikołaj Pawlak

refugee status. Recent change of ESA had introduced exemption for the tuition fees for other immigrants.

The enforcement of the schooling obligation is in the school principal in which vicinity the child lives. According to the regulation of the Minister of National Education of October 2001 on Admission of Persons not being Polish Citizens to Public Kindergartens, Schools, Teachers Training Establishments and Institutions, the school principal is obliged to organize the test to recognize the educational qualifications of foreign child if he or she does not have any documents regarding his or her schooling experiences<sup>11</sup>. The aim of the test is to recognize the level of knowledge of a child and to help the school principal to assign the child to a specific grade. The ESA obliges municipality, where the child is living to organize free of charge lessons of Polish language for those who do not have any or have insufficient command of Polish language. These lessons can be organized as preparatory or additional and are offered for no longer than one school year (for at least 2\*45 minutes per week).

The Act of 12<sup>th</sup> March 2004 on Social Assistance and the Ordinance of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2005 of the Minister of Social Policy about Assisting the Refugees introduced the institution of the Individual Integration Program which is the one year lasting program of social integration of person granted the status of refugee in Poland. The refugee signs a contract which social work. In practice, one of the statements of contract is fulfilling of the obligation of education of adolescent refugees under the penalty of withdrawing the financial benefits.

In the school year 2006/2007 Polish schools were attended by 3618 foreign pupils. Compared to 6.241.500 pupils of schools in Poland this gives only 0.06%. This is the reason why immigrants are not a major issue in a public debate. The largest number of foreign pupils lives in Mazowieckie region: they account for 44.7% of all foreign pupils population in Poland. There are two reasons for that concentration. The first one is that the Warsaw agglomeration attracts the biggest number of immigrants. The second one is that several refugee centres are located here and refugees and people granted tolerated stay decide to stay in Mazowieckie region after being granted their status.

Poland attracts three totally different types of immigration. The biggest in numbers is the shuttle immigration of citizens of western parts of former Soviet Union. Ukrainians migrating to Poland form the biggest group. Ukrainians usually combine legal residence for periods shorter than one year (so according to United Nations definition they cannot be recognized as immigrants) with illegal employment. According to the research, their migration strategy does not include travelling with children, who usually stay at home being under the guardianship of other members of family.

The second group is middle class migration, which includes expats from developed countries. Expats fulfilling longer contracts in Poland arrive with their families but they do not witness problems of exclusion characteristic for labour migration. The situation of Vietnamese community is more complex<sup>12</sup>. This group seems to combine the two modes of immigration to Poland. The community has its middle class (usually private entrepreneurs in the trade of textiles) which resides for longer periods in Poland with whole families, and its working class, which strategy is to send to Poland one member of family transferring home the remittances.

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<sup>11</sup> The regulation was issued as the result of the amendment of the EAS in December 2000, which implements the Directive 77/486/EEC

<sup>12</sup> Teresa Halik, Ewa Nowicka, Wojciech Poleć, *Dziecko wietnamskie w polskiej szkole* [Vietnamese Child in Polish School], Warszawa 2006; Małgorzata Głowacka-Grajper, *Dobry gość* [The Good Guest], Warszawa 2006; Teresa Halik, Ewa Nowicka, *Wietnamczycy w Polsce* [Vietnamese in Poland], Warszawa 2002.



The third group are asylum seekers. In recent years for the refugee status in Poland apply mostly citizens of Russian Federation (about 91%), out which 90% declare Chechen nationality. Refugees run away in whole families from the persecutions in their home country. Chechen refugees usually do not treat Poland as the final destination. They have to stay here only because of the international agreements on state responsible for hosting the refugee (so called Dublin Convention). The Chechen children in Polish schools experience a real threat of exclusion. As the Chechen families follow the traditional model with the high fertility rate, young Chechens are a significant group among foreign pupils. This is the same reason for which Podlaskie and Lubelskie are second and third district with high number of foreign pupils. These are the poorest regions of Poland, which do not attract immigration as other parts of Poland but they are populated by refugees.

The number of foreign pupils in Polish schools is more or less stable (statistical data on them is systematically gathered since year 2001 when as a consequence of educational reform the System of Educational Information was introduced). In the school year 2001/2002 there was 3488 foreign pupils in Polish schools. So in a period of 5 years the number of foreign pupils increased by 130, which means a growth by the 3,7%. But the overall population of pupils in Poland is decreasing due to the demographic low, so the proportion of foreign pupils is growing more rapidly than in absolute numbers. During the last 5 years the over-all population of pupils decreased by nearly 800 thousands, so in school year 2001/2002 foreign pupils were less than 0.05% of the overall pupils population.

In the upper-secondary level the education is tracked into general and vocational streams. Foreign pupils are overrepresented in schools leading to academic education. This is because the foreign pupils present in Poland are mostly (only exception are Chechen refugees) children of highly skilled professionals or private entrepreneurs. Their children have a high cultural capital and attend prestigious schools leading to academic training. In that sense it cannot be said that in Poland the pattern of exclusion is followed. The pupils of migrant background study in more prestigious schools leading to academic education. The obvious reason is the different (described above) structure to immigration to Poland than immigration to other Member States of the EU.

The integration activities of public institutions are aimed only at the children who are refugees or who are applying for the refugee status. The small number of immigrant pupils is the reason why the issue is not recognized as the problem for the whole system of education.

The main policy measures are implemented by municipalities where the immigrant pupils reside. As Warsaw is the place where significantly higher number of immigrant pupils are living (both of refugee and middle class background), the city authorities started to support teachers who have immigrant pupils in their classes. Warsaw is a place for a number of Non-Governmental Organization's activities towards improving the school's educational situation of immigrants. Some of the so called 'civic schools' run by non governmental organization are quite successful in integrating and educating immigrant pupils (Pawlak, 2005).

Beside Chechens, the visible group of pupils are Vietnamese, who are mainly concentrated in Warsaw. Available research suggests that Vietnamese pupils are recognized as very good ones, and not causing problems. They are quite often gaining prizes in inter-school knowledge competitions even in such subjects as Polish orthography. Teachers claim that the Vietnamese children do not need any special support as they manage very well in the schools (Głowacka-Grejper 2002, Halik et al, 2006)

The situation of Chechen pupils is extremely opposite. They are mostly concentrated in the vicinity of refugee centres. The Chechen children are mostly the children applying for the

status of the refugee as the majority of members of nationality are refused to be recognized as refugees. Their situation in the refugee centres is very temporary (they usually spend there from 6 up to 12 months), so it is very difficult for them to get accustomed to the local school. The policy of the Foreigners' Office, which is running the centres, is to locate them in rural or suburban areas – very often in post-industrial zones in former workers hostels or former barracks. Schools in these localities gather Polish pupils of lower educational expectations, so in the effect refugee children are segregated to the worse schools. The studies on the situation of pupils of refugee background are conducted both by the research institutions and NGOs engaged in helping that group. In the study of Grzymała–Moszczyńska and Nowicka (1998) the situation in school was very briefly described. The authors were claiming that schools are totally not prepared for hosting refugee students and introduce discriminatory practices like not registering the pupils, segregating them in separate class groups or not performing any actions toward integration. In general teachers are unmotivated to work with refugees as they stay in school just for the period of examining their application for gaining the refugee status. In consequence they are not very engaged in the work with refugee pupils (Pawlak 2005). The organization paying much attention to the fulfilment of compulsory education of children in refugee centres is Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej (*The Association of Legal Intervention*), which among the direct actions to support the education of refugees conducts research on the situation of pupils of refugee background. According to the research most of the municipalities, where the centres are located do not provide Polish language classes for children, which is violation of above mentioned regulations. The research of the Association revealed some other irregularities like: the practice of refusing access to the schools for the children who performed bad in the qualification test (according to regulations one cannot fail the test, test is just to assign the pupil to the most suitable level of class) or organizing the test just once per year and not letting the children who did not have the chance to do the test to attend the schools (Jasiakiewicz and Klaus 2006). The situation improved in recent years. A handbook for special lessons about refugees was published by the Centre of the Development of Teachers (Koszevska 2001) and schools, located in the vicinity of the refugee centres, improved their experiences. Much depends on the initiatives in specific municipalities. For example, in the school with a large number of Chechen pupils in Niemcy (Lubelskie region), the municipality employed a special person with a good knowledge of Russian, who is responsible to work with children and mediate in the relationships between the school and parents. To support teachers in schools with immigrant pupils, the ministry of education introduced a change to ESA, which makes it possible, starting from 2010, to employ teacher assistants that could be assigned to specific classes for a period of 12 months to teach Polish language and cooperate with teachers on the matters connected to immigrant pupils. The ministry also considers revising the formula of financing of schools in order to accommodate higher costs of running the school with immigrant pupils.

An important change was introduced to motivate the refugee families to send children to school. The majority of Chechen refugees are people of low level of education and low level of educational aspirations for their children (Frelak et al 2007). The Office started paying the parents who send their children to schools the so called 'feeding equivalent'. The parents receive in cash the money for the food that children are not served in the refugee centre under the condition that they attend the school. The equivalent is treated among of the inhabitants of the centres as a source of income. The children also receive educational materials for free.

Based on the reports of the Office for Foreigners, the central authority of governmental administration, in 2008, 8517 people applied for the status of refugee in Poland. Only 189

people were granted the status and 1507 people were granted tolerated status<sup>13</sup>. The situation of children of recognized refugees is just a bit different to the ones whose application is being examined. First of all they do not live in refugee centres, so they do not attend the schools that have experience with such pupils. For one year they are receiving relevantly high social benefits and they take part in the Individual Programs of Integration. According to the study made to evaluate the efficiency of the programs children granted refugee status attend the schools but experience the same problems as children from refugee centres (Frelak et al 2007). The Individual Programs of Integration are not focusing on the integration of children in schools and the school is often not used as a tool of integration. Social workers, who are running the programs with the refugees, come along to check if the children attend the school, not initiate any other actions. There are two reasons for such situation. Firstly, compared to the problems of the parents, who cannot find jobs and apartments, the problems of children are recognized by social workers as less urgent. Another problem is similar to the lack of attention of the school teachers being attended by the refugee pupils. The social workers believe that the majority of the refugees with whom they work will leave Poland using their Geneva Passports just after they have finished the Individual Program of Integration. Therefore, they do not pay too much attention to the school performances of the refugee pupils.

There are a few schools in Warsaw which are recognized by the migration experts as performing best practices in integrating the refugee pupils. But it has to be stressed that they work with the refugees who decided to stay in Poland and majority of the parents in opposition to the majority of refugees in Poland are highly educated. These schools introduced programs encouraging immigrant pupils in all spheres of social life of the school, securing them individual assistance and improving their social positions among Polish classmates (Pawlak 2005).

To conclude, the number of immigrant pupils in the Polish education system is very small and situation of specific groups is different, thus it is not an important issue for the educational authorities. The immigrant pupils are divided into two opposite groups. One includes children of the middle class immigration, who possess a high cultural capital and perform in schools very well. They are not in the danger of exclusion. The second group are the children of refugees and persons applying for the refugee status. They possess low cultural capital and are very likely to be excluded by the educational system but at the moment the main problem is to convince them to attend the schools, so the problem of their exclusion seems to be secondary.

## 5. Conclusions

The performance of Poland in relation to social inclusion is mixed. International comparison of early-school leaving, enrolment rates and educational achievement show that the performance of the formal education system is excellent. Even here, however, there are significant problems, especially in the pre-primary education and upper-secondary stages of education, where the disparity of educational quality appears clearly. In the latter case, despite the successful reform of the lower-secondary level, the upper-secondary level exhibits significant social inequalities and concentration of the students most threatened by the social exclusion in one specific types of schools: basic vocational schools. Generally, Poland scores very low on such dimensions of as material and subjective well-being (see in particular Bradshaw and Richardson 2009). The performance is also not good when education is

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<sup>13</sup> However, for the 5309 of the 9889 cases decided in 2008 the proceedings were discontinued. Negative decisions concerned only 1454 cases.

considered more broadly, as encompassing lifelong and lifewide learning activities. Such a broader perspective focusing not only on children and schools, but taking into account the context of the family, school-to-work transitions and the labour market, learning and qualifications gained outside the context of the formal education, would be helpful to diagnose better and eradicate the inequities in the education.

Important lesson of the Polish case is that very low levels of early school leaving should not be considered in isolation, but should be considered together with the quality of education and labour market context. In Poland, early school leaving is very low, but is accompanied by low levels employment and high unemployment rates among youth.

Measuring effectiveness of inclusion policies requires an interdisciplinary approach, which would account for different aspects of social exclusion phenomena. This implies that varied research methods should be used, including both quantitative and qualitative research. In particular, quantitative studies should be accompanied by qualitative institutional studies, which would enrich the understanding of the operations of organizations and their relationships. As pointed out in the report, lack of inter-organizational cooperation and coordination of specific policies is apparently an important barrier to reduce social exclusion. The nature of the social inclusion, which is to a large extent about the process, makes it difficult to capture the effectiveness of social inclusion policies and measures by cross sectional research. This is important limit for the international comparison of social exclusion phenomena. This also means that particularly useful would be a longitudinal design.

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