

Back inTown

Role of social partners and policy makers in developing, implementing and monitoring youth-oriented policies

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Part A: Country overview of social dialogue for youth policies

1. Introduction (methodology and contents)

This part of analysis discusses the role of collective bargaining systems in Poland, particularly focusing on how it functions as governance tools and its impact on youth employment and social inclusion policies in urban settings. It outlines the key characteristics of Poland's collective bargaining system, emphasizing the framework established in the country's labour law, especially the Labour Code and Constitution. These laws provide the basis for collective agreements at both the company and supra-company levels, the latter involving multiple employers and entire sectors.

The methodology behind the analysis of the Polish collective bargaining system includes a review of legal frameworks, examining the roles played by major stakeholders such as trade unions (e.g., Solidarność and OPZZ) and employer organizations (e.g., Confederation of Lewiatan). It also involves assessing how collective bargaining is practiced in Poland, particularly regarding its relatively low coverage compared to other EU countries. The analysis further considers the socioeconomic context, with attention to the predominance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the rise of precarious employment, both of which contribute to the limited scope of collective bargaining in Poland in case of young people.

The content of the analysis reveals that while collective bargaining systems could theoretically contribute to employment and social inclusion for youth, their impact in urban settings has been limited. The challenges young people face in the labour market, such as high unemployment and underemployment, temporary or low-paid jobs, and the competitive urban environment, are exacerbated by the growth of the gig economy and non-standard employment forms. These trends are not adequately addressed by collective bargaining, which traditionally prioritizes the interests of older workers on permanent contracts.

Despite these challenges, the analysis identifies a growing recognition of the need for more inclusive collective bargaining strategies. These strategies would engage youth more actively and address their unique needs, such as better training opportunities, more secure employment contracts, and protections for non-standard work. Strengthening collaboration between unions, employers, and government agencies is highlighted as essential for creating policies that promote youth employment and social inclusion, especially in urban contexts.

In addition to the discussion on collective bargaining, the text also explores Poland's institutional framework for youth policies. It highlights how the fall of communism in 1989 prompted a reevaluation of the role of youth in society, leading to new challenges such as youth unemployment and social exclusion. The legal foundation for youth policies is rooted in the Polish Constitution, which guarantees the protection of young people's rights. This is supported by various national laws, including the Act on the Education System, the Act on Social Assistance, and the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work. These laws provide the structure for supporting youth through education, social services, and civic engagement.

Finally, the analysis touches on specific national strategies, such as the National Urban Policy 2030, which indirectly address youth through investment in housing infrastructure and initiatives aimed at improving access to affordable housing for young people. However, the lack of a dedicated national program for urban youth policies is noted, along with the challenges of involving social actors like trade unions and business associations in shaping

youth policies at the urban level. While nationwide consultations with youth have been conducted, there is limited direct involvement of traditional social actors in this process.

2. Key characteristics of the collective bargaining systems as governance instrument with particular focus on youth-oriented employment and social inclusion policies in the urban contexts

The foundation of collective bargaining in Poland is rooted in the country's labour law, primarily the Labour Code, which outlines the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees in the bargaining process. The Constitution of Poland¹ (especially in art. 12 and art. 59) guarantees the right to form and join trade unions and engage in collective bargaining, aligning with international labour standards set by the International Labour Organization.

Since 1995, one can differentiate between two main types of collective agreements: company and supra-company collective labour agreements. A company agreement is concluded at the enterprise level. A supra-company agreement may cover any number of different establishments, e.g. schools, mines, steelworks or other companies. A supra-company agreement may apply to establishments operating in the same sector of the economy, e.g. power plants, but the law does not conclude such agreements for enterprises from different industries.

Supra-company agreements are concluded by employers' organizations representing entrepreneurs who want to be on a given agreement and supra trade union organizations acting on behalf of employees employed in establishments covered by a supra-company collective labour agreement. A multi-employer collective labour agreement may also be concluded within the framework of the activities of the Social Dialogue Council.

The presence and role of trade unions are central to the collective bargaining system in Poland. Trade unions in Poland operate at various levels, including company, regional, and national levels. The most prominent trade unions include *Solidarność* (Solidarity) and *Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych* (the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ)). These organizations represent the interests of workers in negotiations with employers, advocating for better wages, working conditions, and benefits. On the other side, employer organizations such as *Konfederacja Lewiatan* (the Confederation of Lewiatan) play a role in representing the interests of businesses during collective bargaining. These organizations are instrumental in negotiating multi-employer or sectoral agreements.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the Polish collective bargaining system is the scope and coverage of collective agreements. In practice, the coverage of collective bargaining in Poland is relatively low compared to other EU countries. The limited scope of collective bargaining in Poland is influenced – *inter alia* – by the structure of Polish economy, with a significant proportion of employment in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where union presence is weaker and collective bargaining is less common. Furthermore, the rise of precarious employment and non-standard forms of work, such as temporary and gig economy jobs², poses additional challenges to extending collective bargaining coverage.

¹Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r., Dz. U. 1997, Nr 78, poz. 483 [The Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997, Journal of Laws 1997, No. 78, item 483].

²Still, according to the judgment of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal of June 2, 2015, the possibility of associating in trade unions has been extended, e.g. for contractors and self-employed: Kbroń-Gąsiorowska, Ł.

Although the platform economy and gig work are not a new phenomenon when considering for example freelancers, young people looking for a job may be in particular situation of being embraced in this system. According to the *Freelancing in Poland 2023* report by Useme, there are currently about 330,000 freelancers on the Polish labour market, with nearly half of them being young people aged 26 to 35, mostly living in large urban centres³.

While freelance work offers flexibility and the possibility of remote work, young people may face several challenges, such as job instability and a lack of access to traditional social benefits, like health insurance or pensions. This affects their sense of financial security, especially in the long term. The report emphasizes that although freelancers appreciate the freedom and ability to manage their time independently, they also experience uncertainty about the future, which can be particularly challenging for those just entering the labour market.

In Poland, this issue has yet to be addressed with systemic solutions. The most urgent actions in this area should include: (1) establishing a legal status for freelancers that acknowledges the specific nature of their work, (2) creating funds or financial mechanisms that allow freelancers to participate in voluntary social programs at minimal cost, (3) providing greater support from trade unions and other professional organizations to negotiate working conditions for freelancers (including negotiations with digital platforms and other clients).

In Poland, the challenge of integrating young people into the labour market, especially in urban areas, has become a critical issue. The high rates of youth unemployment and underemployment, coupled with the precarious nature of many entry-level jobs, have prompted the need for social inclusion policies. Within this framework, collective bargaining systems play an essential role, though their impact on youth employment in urban settings has been limited and uneven.

The transition from education to employment of youth is often fraught with difficulties, including the prevalence of temporary or low-paid jobs, and the competitive nature of urban labour markets. These challenges are compounded by the rapid growth of the gig economy and non-standard forms of employment, which often lack the protections traditionally associated with full-time work.

Young people should be able to rely on the support of certain social institutions, such as trade unions and employer organizations. As previously noted, analyses indicate that both these institutions and the collective bargaining system in Poland have a limited impact on addressing the specific needs of young workers. Trade unions in Poland have traditionally focused on securing better wages and working conditions for their members, who are predominantly older workers with permanent contracts. As a result, issues specific to younger workers, such as the need for stable employment, access to training, and pathways to secure jobs, have not always been at the forefront of collective bargaining agendas. However, some unions, have begun to recognize the importance of engaging with youth

(2023). Gig Workers in Poland: The Quest for a Protection Model. *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 12(1), p. 49.

³ Useme (2023). *Freelancing w Polsce 2023*. Raport Useme. Warszawa [Useme (2023). *Freelancing in Poland 2023*. Useme Report. Warsaw], pp. 4-6.

issues, advocating for better regulation of internships and apprenticeships, and pushing for more inclusive policies that address the needs of all workers.

Significant challenges remain in ensuring that youth-oriented employment and social inclusion policies are effectively integrated into the collective bargaining process. The relatively low unionization rates among young people, particularly in urban areas, and the focus of collective bargaining on more established workers mean that the specific needs of young workers are often overlooked. Research conducted by Polish authors indicates that the reasons for low unionization among this social group are directly rooted in its unique characteristics. Young people, especially those employed in modern and predominantly service-oriented sectors, tend to exhibit more individualistic and pragmatic attitudes, independently striving to secure optimal employment conditions and build their career paths, without perceiving a need for association or membership in trade unions⁴.

Young people today, especially those employed in high-growth, service-based industries, such as IT, marketing, finance, and hospitality, tend to view employment as a personal journey rather than a collective experience. They often approach the labour market with an individualistic and pragmatic mindset, focusing on personal career advancement, flexibility, and adaptability over long-term commitments to a single employer. This shift reflects global trends, where younger workers prioritize autonomy and self-reliance over the traditional stability once provided by long-term, unionized employment.

Moreover, younger generations face a highly competitive urban labour market that has increased their reliance on gig work and short-term contracts, often at the expense of traditional, stable employment. For many, the flexibility of freelancing or project-based work offers opportunities to diversify skills, gain valuable experience, and maximize income potential without the binding structure of a full-time role. Consequently, these young workers, viewing themselves as "free agents," may not see the immediate value of unionization, which they might associate with permanent, long-term employment roles.

Cultural attitudes also play a role. Many young Poles, raised in a post-communist society, may view unions with some scepticism. For them, unions may be perceived as outdated institutions primarily serving older workers with established careers and permanent contracts. This perception is reinforced by the fact that unions in Poland have historically been more effective in advocating for those in long-term, full-time employment, rather than addressing the needs of younger workers engaged in flexible or gig work.

To address these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need for more inclusive collective bargaining strategies that actively involve young workers and address their unique needs. This includes advocating for more secure employment contracts, better training opportunities, and greater protection in non-standard forms of employment. Moreover, strengthening the collaboration between unions, employers, and government agencies in urban areas is crucial for developing policies that effectively promote youth employment and social inclusion.

In conclusion, while collective bargaining systems in Poland have the potential to contribute to youth-oriented employment and social inclusion policies in urban contexts, their impact has so far been limited. Addressing the challenges faced by young people in the labour

⁴ Pańków, M. (2012). *Młodzi na rynku pracy. Raport z badania*, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych [Pańków, M. (2012). *Youth in the Labour Market. Research Report*. Warsaw: Institute of Public Affairs], p. 81.

market requires more inclusive and targeted approaches within the collective bargaining framework, supported by government initiatives aimed at promoting equal opportunities and reducing socioeconomic disparities.

In recent years, there has been a gradual shift in the approach of trade unions and employer organizations toward creating policies that better reflect the realities of the urban youth labour market. Recognizing that many young workers are employed in industries characterized by high turnover and flexible work arrangements, some social partners have started advocating for policies that specifically address the challenges of gig and freelance work. There is also a growing emphasis on developing educational initiatives and training programs tailored to emerging sectors, which can equip young people with valuable skills to navigate the modern labour market. Collaboration between unions, employers, and government institutions at the city level has the potential to create youth-oriented programs aligned with urban economic development strategies. These partnerships could promote stable and inclusive employment pathways for young workers, ensuring that collective bargaining adapts to the evolving demands of today's workforce.

3. National institutional framework for youth policies

The fall of communism in 1989 brought significant changes to Poland, impacting the approach to youth policies. The transition to a democratic system required a reassessment of the role of youth in society, accompanied by new challenges such as youth unemployment, social exclusion, and the need for civic engagement. This systemic transformation altered the social and economic landscape, necessitating the development of new strategies and legal solutions to support young people in adapting to these changes.

The legal foundation for youth policies in Poland is rooted in the country's Constitution of April 2, 1997, which guarantees equal rights and non-discrimination for all citizens, including young people. Article 72 of the Constitution specifically addresses the rights of children and young people, stating that 'the Republic of Poland shall ensure protection of the rights of the child'. This constitutional provision serves as the basis for the development and implementation of youth policies in Poland.

One of the key legal acts is the Act on the Education System of September 7, 1991, which defines the structure, organization, and functioning of the educational system in Poland. This law outlines the responsibilities of the state, local government units, and other entities in providing education and supporting the comprehensive development of young people. Education has become a vital tool in empowering youth, providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary for functioning in modern society and a dynamically changing labour market.

The previously mentioned Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions of April 20, 2004 plays a crucial role in promoting employment among young people, especially those under the age of 30.

Another important legal act is the Act on Social Assistance of March 12, 2004, which establishes the framework for social support services, including programs targeted at youth at risk of social exclusion. This law enables young people in difficult material or life circumstances to receive assistance, giving them a better start and support in areas such as education, health, and career counselling. This support is particularly crucial for youth from families at risk of poverty or marginalization.

Another significant piece of legislation is the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work of April 24, 2003, which promotes civic engagement and volunteerism among youth. This law supports the development of social activities, enabling young people to undertake social and civic projects. Through this, young people not only participate in public life but also develop social competencies such as leadership, teamwork, and social responsibility.

In Poland's decentralized system, local government authorities have significant responsibilities regarding youth policy. They are responsible for implementing national policies at the local level and developing their own initiatives to address the specific needs of young people in their communities. Local governments often collaborate with schools, NGOs, and other stakeholders to deliver services and programs for youth. NGOs also play a vital role in the Polish institutional framework for youth policies. They provide a wide range of services and programs, including educational support, career guidance, mental health services, and opportunities for civic engagement.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also play a critical role in the institutional framework for youth policies. Examples include programs offered by organizations like the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, which implements EU co-financed projects such as Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. These organizations provide a broad range of services for youth, from career counselling and educational support to mental health assistance and opportunities for personal development.

One should also mention youth organizations, like Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego (Polish Scouting and Guiding Association), that is one of the oldest youth organizations in Poland, with a history dating back to the early 20th century. It focuses on the personal development of young people through scouting activities, outdoor education, and community service. ZHP plays an important role in promoting values such as leadership, teamwork, and social responsibility among young people.

It is worth mentioning that from 2020 to 2023, Poland had a Government Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy. This Plenipotentiary implemented a series of initiatives for youth, including the legislative strengthening of the role of youth councils at all levels of local government and conducting the largest public consultations in Poland's history, with approximately 30,000 young Poles sharing their views on the proposed government document, the National Youth Strategy⁵. Unfortunately, this document was never finalized, and the position of the Government Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy was ultimately abolished in 2023. The absence of a central institution responsible for coordinating youth initiatives may negatively impact the cohesion and effectiveness of youth policy in Poland.

Poland's public policy for supporting youth in the labour market consists of the following components:

- (1) Initiatives and programs funded by the European Union.
- (2) Public policies implemented by the national and local government.
- (3) Initiatives implemented by social partners – trade unions and employer organizations – within the collective bargaining framework.

⁵ Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji (2023). *Polityka młodzieżowa w Polsce 2023/2024. Tom 1.* Warszawa [Foundation for the Development of the Education System (2023). *Youth policy in Poland 2023/2024. Volume 1.* Warsaw], p. 10.

Regarding the first of the mentioned components, a key focus in Poland is the implementation of public policy based on the EU Council's recommendations outlined in the *Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee*. This was followed by the need to adapt youth support measures to align with current labour market trends, as indicated in the new *Council Recommendation on a Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee* (2020), which replaced the previous recommendation. In light of these changes and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (with Polish youth proving to be a particularly vulnerable group in the labour market), the *Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland*⁶ was updated in 2022. The updated plan not only included an assessment of the situation of young people under 30 in the labour market and an analysis of the program's previous outcomes in Poland but also introduced new solutions.

In the first edition of the Youth Guarantee in Poland, approximately 5.4 million young people received support, with around 2.7 million participants securing employment⁷. The program has been, and will continue to be, funded through both national sources (the Labour Fund) and the EU budget via the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Key changes in this edition focus on new horizontal principles of the program, emphasizing:

- assessing and enhancing young people's digital skills,
- aligning support initiatives with the demands of the digital and green transitions,
- providing high-quality opportunities for young people,
- adopting a more individualized approach and actively reaching out to young people with tailored support offers.

Projects implemented under the EU's Operational Program Knowledge Education Development (in Polish: PO WER), particularly under Priority Axis I, *A Labour Market Open for All*, play an important role in shaping youth policy, combating unemployment, and improving young people's prospects in the labour market. Beneficiaries of these projects include, among others, young people aged 15 to 29 who qualify as NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training). Support for these individuals is provided in accordance with the standards set out in the *Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland*. This ensures that within four months, young people receive a high-quality offer of employment, further education, vocational training, or an internship. Additionally, the support is tailored based on labour market instruments and services identified as necessary to improve the situation of young people in the labour market.

Participants in these projects receive support in various forms, including:

- defining career paths, which may involve job placement services and career counselling,
- acquiring or upgrading skills and competencies, including continuing education or obtaining certification,
- gaining or enhancing professional experience through internships and employment support with employers, such as subsidized employment or reimbursement for equipment or workplace improvements,

⁶ Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej (2022). Plan realizacji Gwarancji dla młodzieży w Polsce. Aktualizacja 2022. Warszawa [Ministry of Family and Social Policy (2022). Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland. Update 2022. Warsaw].

⁷ Ibidem, pp. 7-8.

- covering commuting costs or providing relocation assistance, non-repayable grants for starting a business, as well as training to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to run a business.

The Operational Program Knowledge Education Development (PO WER) was initially planned for the years 2014-2020, yet many projects funded under this program are still ongoing. In line with the rules of EU structural funds, activities started within this program could be extended until 2023 (the so-called N+3 rule). Currently, PO WER has largely been replaced by the European Funds for Social Development (FERS), which aims to achieve similar goals related to education, employment, and social support in the coming years. FERS is part of the broader European Funds for 2021-2027, which currently serves as the main instrument for social and educational support in Poland, including support for youth.

Table 1 presents examples of other EU programs and initiatives implemented in Poland in the area of public policy supporting youth, along with information on their specific outcomes.

Table 1. Example Programs and Initiatives Supporting Youth Policy Implemented in Poland

Area of Support	Program/Initiative	Description	Implementation and Outcomes
Education, Training, Youth, and Sports	Erasmus+	A European Union program aimed at enhancing the professional skills and employment prospects of young people, supporting their social inclusion and well-being, and promoting youth work and youth policy at local, national, and international levels.	Between 2014 and 2020, more than 100,000 Polish students and young people participated in Erasmus+ educational and professional mobility projects. In 2022, Erasmus+ had 20,000 participants in Poland.
Young Entrepreneurs	Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (EYE)	An exchange program for entrepreneurs that offers the opportunity to work alongside experienced entrepreneurs in another participating country for a period of one to six months.	Since the program began in Poland, over 1,500 young entrepreneurs have participated in Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, gaining international experience and developing businesses in Poland and abroad.
Young Volunteers	European Solidarity Corps (ESC)	The program's goal is to strengthen solidarity within European society and engage young people in accessible and well-organized solidarity activities. The program	In 2021, more than 2,500 Polish volunteers participated in the European Solidarity Corps, engaging in projects both in

		supports volunteering, employment, internships, and local solidarity projects.	Poland and abroad.
Young Farmers	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF)	Young farmers may qualify for a supplementary payment of 25% of the direct payments they receive. Supplementary payments are granted to farmers under the age of 40.	Between 2014 and 2020, approximately 30,000 young farmers received financial support for business development through this program.
Young Unemployed Individuals	Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)	The program supports unemployed young individuals who are not in education or training, particularly in regions where youth unemployment exceeds 25%. From 2021 to 2027, the program has been integrated into the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+).	Between 2014 and 2020, the program supported around 150,000 unemployed young Poles (many participants belonged to the NEET category) providing them with training, internships, and employment offers.

Source: Own elaboration based on the following sources: European Commission (2022). *Erasmus+ Annual Report 2022*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu> (Accessed: October 23, 2024); Foundation for the Development of the Education System (2021). *Report on the Implementation of Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs in Poland*. Warsaw: FRSE; European Solidarity Corps (2021). *Annual Report 2021*. Available at: <https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity> (Accessed: October 23, 2024); Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2020). *Report on Support for Young Farmers in Poland*. Warsaw: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (2020). *Report on the Implementation of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in Poland*. Warsaw: Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

The second component of Polish public policy for supporting youth in the labour market namely government policy in the context of supporting youth in the Polish labour market, is closely linked to the previously mentioned the *Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions* of April 20, 2004. According to this law, the following instruments play a key role in activating young people in the labour market:

- **Training Voucher** – available from the labour office for individuals under 30 years of age. This voucher guarantees enrolment in a selected training program, with the associated costs covered.
- **Internship Voucher** – available to unemployed individuals under 30. It guarantees a six-month internship with a selected employer. The voucher is granted only to unemployed individuals who have secured an employer’s commitment to provide the internship.
- **Employment Voucher** – guarantees reimbursement to the employer for part of the wages and social security contributions associated with hiring an unemployed voucher holder under 30.
- **Relocation Voucher** – provides financial assistance to unemployed individuals under 30 to cover the costs of relocating for employment, another job, or self-employment outside their previous place of residence.

It should be noted that many of the instruments mentioned are implemented in cooperation with local government units. In Poland, there are three levels of local government: (1) the local level, represented by urban, rural, and urban-rural municipalities (gminas), (2) the supra-local level, represented by land counties (powiats) and large cities with county rights, and (3) the regional level, represented by voivodeships. A key role in combating unemployment and activating local labour markets is played by the *starosta*, the executive authority of the county.

The third component, i.e., initiatives implemented by social partners – trade unions and employer organizations – within the collective bargaining framework, has already been characterized in the earlier part of the report. Here, it is only worth adding that these initiatives play a crucial role in addressing the specific needs of young people entering urban labour markets. By advocating for fair wages, secure working conditions, and development opportunities, social partners help create a more supportive environment for young workers. Moreover, they contribute to reducing employment precarity, which is often a challenge for youth in competitive urban settings. In cities, where the gig economy and non-standard employment are more prevalent, the role of unions and employer organizations becomes even more significant in ensuring protections for young employees. Collaborative efforts between social partners and local authorities also foster policies that are more attuned to the unique dynamics of urban labour markets, facilitating smoother transitions for young people into stable and rewarding careers.

4. Specific programs or plans (at the national level) in the field of urban youth policies

As previously mentioned, Poland has not yet established a formally adopted nationwide strategy specifically for youth public policy. In 2021, the groundwork for such a document was discussed in public consultations led by the Government Plenipotentiary for Youth Policy and the Council for Dialogue with the Young Generation. However, no unified strategy has been adopted at the national level in this area.

In some national strategies, youth is identified as one of the groups needing support and is designated as a beneficiary of planned actions. One such strategy is the *National Urban Policy 2030* (Krajowa Polityka Miejska 2030), developed by the Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and adopted in June 2020.⁸ As regards young people, the Strategy indicate, among other things, needs:

- to intensify investment in housing infrastructure by public institutions funded at a central level (flats for young academics),
- in the context of changing economic and social situation, a need to analyse the possibility of limiting participation of people in costs of building apartments (build by social housing associations⁹ to increase accessibility of these resources, especially for young people,
- to popularise among self-governments good practices like: ‘Housing for renovation’, in which the city offers rental of free premises that are in a bad technical condition in exchange for renovating them by new tenants at their own cost. Tenants obtain an

⁸ Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej (2020). Krajowa Polityka Miejska 2030 [Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (2020). National Urban Policy 2030], <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/polityka-miejska> (Accessed: September 3, 2024).

⁹ In Polish: towarzystwa budownictwa społecznego, TBS.

- independent flat at lower costs than in the case of buying a flat. This instrument is usually addressed at young inhabitants, who cannot afford buying a flat,
- to transform of unused public utility premises into residential buildings functioning in accordance with the model of 'a friendly house'. This model assumes a building's adaptation for several independent flats for rent, in which, at the lowest floors flats for seniors are provided, and at higher – for young people, including those leaving foster care or care and educational facilities,
 - within good practices, to develop of a special formula of a Social Rental Agency dedicated to the groups that require the biggest support, depending on the socio-demographic situation of particular cities, among others to: seniors or young married couples and families with children, whose housing needs are not satisfied, as groups especially important for the demographic development of cities, in particular, those experiencing serious problems related to de-population.

Examples of other Polish planning/program documents related to youth issues in the urban labour market include:

1. **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland**¹⁰ – This document was updated in 2022, and it is related to the Youth Guarantee program, which aims to provide young people under 30 with access to high-quality employment, education, or vocational training opportunities. In Poland, this document has been tailored to meet the needs of the labour market and the specific characteristics of Polish cities. It includes initiatives focused on youth employment activation, particularly through support for urban employment.
2. **Operational Program Knowledge Education Development (PO WER)**¹¹ – Funded by the European Union from the European Social Fund (ESF). This program focuses on activating young people aged 15 to 29, including those not in employment, education, or training (NEET category). PO WER includes activities and projects, particularly in urban areas, that help young people acquire the skills and experience needed in the labour market.
3. **Strategy for Responsible Development (SOR)**¹² – This strategy emphasizes the support of youth employment in modern economic sectors and the development of urban areas. The document highlights the need for investments in human capital and professional support for young people within the context of urbanization and the growth of urban labour markets. The strategy also calls for actions that encourage residence and settlement in medium-sized cities (particularly for young and educated individuals), through housing incentives and improving the quality of public services.

¹⁰ Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej (2022). Plan realizacji Gwarancji dla młodzieży w Polsce. Aktualizacja 2022. Warszawa [Ministry of Family and Social Policy (2022). Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan in Poland. Update 2022. Warsaw].

¹¹ Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej (2014). Program Operacyjny Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój 2014-2020. Warszawa [Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (2014). Operational Program Knowledge Education Development 2014-2020. Warsaw].

¹² Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej (2017). Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju do roku 2020 (z perspektywą do 2030 r.) [Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (2017). Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (with a perspective until 2030)].

4. **Human Capital Development Strategy 2030 (SRKL2030)**¹³ – This strategy emphasizes aligning skills and qualifications with modern labour market needs, especially in digitalization and emerging technologies. Focused on youth, particularly in urban areas, it aims to facilitate their transition into the workforce through vocational training, internships, and skill-building in digital competencies, language, and adaptability. The strategy also supports youth entrepreneurship by developing a startup support ecosystem, including business advisory and mentorship programs. Flexibility in employment and work-life balance are promoted alongside initiatives to improve contract quality and reduce job insecurity. Additionally, targeted programs assist NEET individuals in re-entering education or employment. Close collaboration with employers is encouraged to create attractive opportunities and jointly develop training aligned with economic demands.

5. **Role of national Trade Unions and other social actors (business associations, professional associations, Orders and Bars, etc.) in the design and implementation of national youth programs and policies at the urban scale**

National trade unions, such as *Solidarność* and the *All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ)*, should play a key role in discussions on youth employment policies. While these organizations have traditionally focused on the rights of permanent employees, they increasingly recognize the need to adapt their programs to address the broader needs of younger people, especially in urban areas where flexible and short-term contracts have become common practice. Trade unions have noted that young workers are overrepresented in high-turnover sectors like hospitality, retail, and logistics and are adjusting their programs to respond to these challenges.

Trade unions in Poland participate in national consultations and negotiations, influencing youth employment policies while ensuring that labour market demands in cities are addressed. They advocate for stable employment, fair wages, and training programs for young workers, emphasizing the need for quality working conditions. Given the significant challenges posed by temporary employment and job instability, particularly in urban centres, trade unions aim to mitigate these issues through collaboration with the government on programs and policies that promote stability and fair compensation.

An example of their involvement is the consultations within the **Social Dialogue Council (RDS)**, where unions work with government and employer representatives to develop employment programs and strategies aimed at supporting young workers in the labour market. One example of trade union engagement in this area is the Youth Guarantee program, which seeks to activate young people professionally by providing access to job offers, training, and internships. Trade unions strive to ensure that this program includes solutions that help young people secure stable and well-paid jobs, especially in urban sectors where job insecurity is more prevalent.

¹³ Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej (2023). Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2030. Warszawa [Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy (2023). Human Capital Development Strategy 2030. Warsaw].

Social dialogue in Poland is a process of cooperation between representatives of employees, employers, and the government, aimed at creating and implementing policies and regulations related to the labour market, employment conditions, and broader social and economic issues. This dialogue is primarily conducted within the framework of the Social Dialogue Council (RDS), established by law in 2015 as a successor to the Tripartite Commission. The RDS serves as a platform where critical socio-economic issues are discussed in a structured and formal manner, enabling cooperation and conflict resolution among the parties.

The Social Dialogue Council consists of representatives of:

- **The government:** represented by relevant ministries and state bodies,
- **Employees:** mainly represented by trade union organizations such as *NSZZ Solidarność*, the *All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ)*, and the *Trade Union Forum*,
- **Employers:** represented by employer organizations like the *Lewiatan Confederation*, *Employers of Poland*, the *Polish Craft Association*, and the *Business Centre Club*.

The main tasks of the RDS in Poland are defined as follows:

- **Conflict resolution and dispute prevention** – through consultations and negotiations, the parties seek consensus on key labour market and economic policy issues.
- **Policy and strategy creation** – social dialogue includes reviewing legislative projects and socio-economic strategies and presenting legislative proposals on social and economic policy.
- **Youth employment activation and support** – social dialogue addresses actions supporting young people in the labour market, such as activation programs, youth career development support, educational initiatives, and youth employment support programs.
- **Promotion of equal working conditions** – worker and employer organizations work to establish better employment standards, which include job stability, worker health and safety, and counteracting unstable forms of employment, particularly for young people.

While social dialogue in Poland plays a crucial role in shaping labour market policy, it also faces challenges:

- **Low trade union activity in some sectors** – in some industries, especially modern ones like IT or services, unionization is relatively low, limiting the effectiveness of social dialogue concerning the needs of young workers.
- **Problems with implementing decisions made within the RDS** – occasionally, decisions made within the RDS are not fully implemented due to legal or financial constraints.

In the context of urban labour markets, social dialogue is particularly important in ensuring young people have access to decent jobs and career support programs. This includes promoting young people's professional skills, such as digital competencies, and initiatives that help young workers adapt to the unique demands of labour markets in large urban areas, where project-based work and the gig economy prevail. Through collaboration with employer organizations, it is also possible to create internship opportunities and educational programs that improve young people's chances of finding employment. Thus, social dialogue serves as a fundamental mechanism shaping policies that support youth in the labour market at both the national and local levels, especially in the rapidly changing urban environments.

Polish business associations, such as the *Lewiatan Confederation (KL)* and the *National Chamber of Commerce (KIG)*, play a significant role in shaping and implementing youth employment policies, particularly in urban areas where they represent numerous employers across various industries. These organizations advocate for employer interests in policy development, promoting initiatives related to vocational education, internships, and practical training programs aligned with current labour market needs.

- (1) Below are some examples of their activities that influence the design and implementation of youth employment policies, especially within urban labour markets:
- (2) **Internship and Professional Training Programs** – KL collaborates with businesses to create internship programs for young people, enabling them to gain practical work experience while still in education. These initiatives aim to align young people's skills with the needs of local labour markets, particularly in sectors such as IT, finance, and new technologies¹⁴.
- (3) **Information Campaigns and Workshops for Youth** – KIG organizes workshops and educational campaigns aimed at developing young people's skills in entrepreneurship and independent entry into the labour market. Examples of initiatives in this area include the "Young Innovators Forum" and the "Young Entrepreneurs Forum"¹⁵.
- (4) **Partnership with Educational Institutions** – KL collaborates with higher education institutions in Poland to develop dual programs that integrate academic learning with professional experience. This approach allows students to acquire practical knowledge in their chosen fields, increasing their employment prospects after graduation. The partnership with universities also aims to adapt curricula to align with labour market demands, better serving the needs of a knowledge-based economy. Additional key proposals from the Lewiatan EdTech Council include investing in digital solutions for higher education, launching a program to develop a modern interactive textbook for students, creating a platform to support educational and communication needs for

¹⁴ Konfederacja Lewiatan (2022). Staże uczniowskie kuźnią kadr dla przemysłu mody (Confederation Lewiatan (2022). Student Internships as a Talent Pool for the Fashion Industry). Available at: <https://lewiatan.org/tag/staze/> (Accessed: November 1, 2024).

¹⁵ Krajowa Izba Gospodarcza. Młodzi Innowacyjni (2014) (National Chamber of Commerce. Young Innovators). Available at: <https://minnowacyjni.pl/o-inicjatywie/> (Accessed: November 1, 2024).

universities and students, securing funding for university access to Polish academic publications, and advancing efforts to establish a centralized admissions system¹⁶.

- (5) **Promotion of Flexible Employment Forms** – Both KIG and KL are engaged in promoting flexible employment options, such as teleworking and remote work, which are especially popular among young people in urban areas. This flexibility allows young individuals to balance work with continuing education or other responsibilities, supporting their integration into the labour market.
- (6) **Social Dialogue and Collaboration with the Social Dialogue Council (RDS)** – KIG and KL actively participate in the Social Dialogue Council, where, as previously mentioned, they collaborate with trade union and government representatives. This involvement enables them to influence youth employment policies at the national level and advocate for support measures tailored to young workers, such as adapting support programs to the specific needs of urban labour markets.
 - (1) **Programs Supporting Youth Entrepreneurship** – KIG is involved in initiatives that support young entrepreneurs. One such program is "Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs," a European exchange initiative that allows aspiring entrepreneurs to gain experience alongside seasoned mentors in other EU countries. KIG acts as the national contact point for this program, providing support throughout the application and exchange processes.
 - (2) **Networking Platforms and Industry Events** – KL organizes events such as job fairs and networking meetings, offering young people opportunities to connect with potential employers and mentors. Examples include the Job Fairs organized by KL and the recurring "Work 4.0 Conference"¹⁷.

These initiatives are crucial for integrating young people into the labour market in Polish cities, where competition is high and flexible forms of employment are more prevalent. Such efforts help young people gain experience, develop skills, and adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing job market in major urban centres.

Other key entities supporting young professionals entering urban labour markets include **professional organizations, such as industry chambers**. Examples of their activities in this area include:

¹⁶ Konfederacja Lewiatan (2024). 20 kluczowych postulatów Rady ds. EdTech Konfederacji Lewiatan dotyczących edukacji, szkolnictwa wyższego oraz wsparcia rozwoju sektora edukacji technologicznej w Polsce (Confederation Lewiatan (2024). 20 Key Proposals of the EdTech Council of the Lewiatan Confederation regarding Education, Higher Education, and Support for the Development of the Educational Technology Sector in Poland (Accessed: November 1, 2024).

¹⁷ Konfederacja Lewiatan (2024). Konferencja Praca 4.0 „Zmieniający się świat – wyzwania i szanse dla rynku pracy” (Confederation Lewiatan (2024). Work 4.0 Conference: 'The Changing World – Challenges and Opportunities for the Labour Market) <https://lewiatan.org/wydarzenia/konferencja-praca-4-0-zmieniajacy-sie-swiat-wyzwania-i-szansy-dla-rynku-pracy/> (Accessed: November 1, 2024).

- (1) **Mentoring Programs** – Many professional chambers, such as the *National Chamber of Legal Advisers (KIRP)* and the *Polish Chamber of Civil Engineers (PIIB)*, run mentoring programs aimed at young people entering the labour market. These programs allow young professionals to work under the guidance of experienced mentors, helping them acquire practical skills and valuable career advice.
- (2) **Certifications and Training** – Professional organizations, such as the *Chamber of Architects of the Republic of Poland (IARP)* and the *Supreme Medical Chamber (NIL)*, offer preparatory courses and opportunities for professional certification. These programs enhance the qualifications of young specialists, making it easier for them to compete in demanding urban labour markets. Employers particularly value these certifications, which increases young people’s chances of finding employment in their field.
- (3) **Scholarships and Internship Programs** – Industry chambers, such as the *Polish Chamber of Information Technology and Telecommunications (PIIT)* and the *Polish Insurance Association (PIU)*, offer scholarships and internships that provide young people with direct industry experience. Through these initiatives, young professionals can not only secure their first job in their chosen field but also establish valuable connections within the professional community.
- (4) **Support in Networking** – The *Polish Chamber of Accountancy (PIR)* and other professional chambers regularly organize conferences, industry meetings, and seminars. These events enable young professionals to connect with industry peers, potential employers, and mentors. Such gatherings are crucial for building professional relationships and provide valuable insights into the labour market.
- (5) **Promotion of Flexible Work Arrangements** – Professional organizations, such as the *Chamber of Electronic Economy (IGE)*, promote flexible work options that are popular among young people. They help introduce programs supporting freelancers and remote workers, broadening employment opportunities for young professionals in urban areas.
- (6) **Career Guidance and Counselling** – Many professional chambers, such as the *Polish Chamber of Statutory Auditors (PIBR)*, offer free or low-cost advisory services, including career counselling for young members. These services provide young professionals with support in job searching, CV preparation, and skill development needed for the labour market.
- (7) **Pre-entry Programs** – Some chambers, such as the *Supreme Pharmaceutical Chamber (NIA)*, offer introductory programs for recent graduates, helping them adapt to professional requirements and gain initial experience in urban pharmacies. This allows young specialists to acquire practical knowledge under the supervision of experienced pharmacists, facilitating their integration into the labour market.
- (8) **Promotion of Young Talent and Industry Competitions** – Professional chambers organize competitions for young talent across various industries. Examples include the “Young Professional Competition”, organized by the *Association of Consulting Engineers and the Polish Chamber of Commerce (PIH)*, promoting consulting engineering as a diverse and attractive career path, and the “Young Architect

Competition”, organized by the *Chamber of Architects of Poland (IARP)*, which fosters innovation and growth within the architecture profession.

The described activities help young people gain industry experience, develop their qualifications, and build professional relationships—essential elements for success in the dynamic and demanding urban job market.

Part B: Case studies of the role of policy networks in youth policy outcomes

1. Introduction: selection of cities and policy case studies

To analyse the role of policy networks in youth policy outcomes two medium-sized Polish cities were selected, namely Bialystok and Opole. These cities, while smaller in population, play a crucial role in the national economy and face unique challenges and opportunities in the labour market, particularly for young people.

In recent years, these cities have experienced a decline in their youth populations (see Table 2, although in case of Opole this negative trend was reversed in 2023, but data from subsequent years are needed for final conclusions), primarily due to migration to larger urban centres in search of better educational and employment opportunities or because of migration abroad (that in case of Opole is unique as many inhabitants have double citizenship, including German one). This demographic shift poses significant risks not only to the local economies of these cities but also to the social fabric and community life, as a decreasing young population can lead to a reduced consumer base and diminished vibrancy in cultural and social activities.

To counteract these trends, both Bialystok and Opole have initiated measures aimed at retaining and attracting young talents. These initiatives focus on improving the quality of life, enhancing job prospects, and creating a supportive environment for young entrepreneurs. For instance, local governments have been proactive in offering career counselling services, establishing business incubators, and enhancing public transportation and housing options to make these cities more attractive to young professionals and graduates.

Furthermore, these cities have invested in upgrading educational facilities and expanding vocational training programs closely linked with local industry needs. This not only helps ensure that young people have the skills required by local employers but also strengthens

the ties between educational institutions and the business community, fostering a collaborative approach to economic development.

Another significant focus has been on enhancing cultural and recreational offerings to improve social cohesion and make these cities more appealing to young people. This includes the development of sports facilities, cultural centres, and public spaces that encourage social interaction and community engagement.

However, the challenges remain substantial. To truly revitalize these medium-sized cities as desirable places for young people to live and work, efforts must be continued and involving all stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Policies need to be holistic, addressing not only economic factors but also social and environmental aspects that contribute to the overall quality of life.

By creating more attractive conditions for young people, these cities can retain their local talent and attract new residents, thereby ensuring their long-term sustainability and prosperity. This approach not only benefits the individual cities but also supports the national economy by mitigating the overconcentration of resources in the largest urban centres.

Every city acts for the benefit of young people, and the effectiveness of these actions - even with the best intentions of city authorities - varies, for example, depending on the availability of financial resources. In order to indicate the circumstances that affect the effectiveness of policies aimed at improving the situation of young people at the city level, four case studies were analysed (two for each city).

In case of Bialystok, the first case study refers to support in rental of apartments for youth within a program 'Apartment for graduate'. The program was directed at students and graduates (not only from Bialystok universities but also from other cities) that did not have their housing needs met but would like to stay and work in the city. The program was directed to students/graduates with appropriate levels of grades, so one could notice that Bialystok offers such support to attract talents. The program was initiated by a politician born in Bialystok - a member of the Polish Parliament. The Mayor of the City and Bialystok City Council were two of the most engaged entities in this program. Support in promoting the initiative within young people was given by the scientific community (universities). The results exceeded the expectations of the program's creators. Hence, the number of available apartments in the program was increased by city authorities from 93 to 120 and the eligibility criteria were slightly liberalized to include a larger number of students/graduates in the support. In the opinion of the program beneficiaries, the program was attractive, because of the competitive rental price, location and as a good alternative to buying an apartment. This program is a very positive case study of supporting young people at the urban level.

The first case study in Opole is the Action Plan implemented as a second phase of the bigger project: 'Entrepreneurial and Intrapreneurial Mindset in Young People through the Dynamisation of Competences, Teaching Methodologies and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem - E-COOL'. The activities planned within an Action Plan included organization of classes shaping entrepreneurial attitudes among students at Opole schools and organization of a talent competition in the field of entrepreneurship. The beneficiaries of the Action Plan were students from 60 post-primary education institutions from the Opole Voivodeship, with particular emphasis on institutions from the Opole Agglomeration. In terms of creating the

Action Plan, the main entity was the Opole Agglomeration Association still, implementation engaged plenty of partners, including for instance: labour offices, universities, centres for development, municipal units, and associations working for the development of entrepreneurship.

Further, a joint policy that was implemented (and still is) both in Opole and Białystok was presented. This case study refers to the program that was created at the national level and implemented in Polish regions. In this case the program was somehow the opposite of the first case study in Białystok. The instrument used was a 'settlement voucher' - a form of assistance to unemployed young people (under 30 years old), intended to encourage young people to move to other regions of the country for work. The main intention (explained by the national then-government) was to support the spatial mobility of young people. This solution – that is beneficial for young people - is not necessarily fully beneficial for all regions. It is not beneficial in cities such as Białystok or Opole, whose labour markets are not as large as in neighbouring cities - in the case of Opole, this is e.g. Wrocław – in case of Białystok - Warszawa. From Białystok and Opole's perspective, a much better solution would be a 'reverse settlement voucher', i.e. a voucher for young people who want to live in Białystok/Opole respectively. The instrument that was applied (and still is) seems to give primacy to the situation on the labour market over the demographic situation and development of smaller centres. Thus, this case, from perspective of Białystok and Opole is a negative instrument.

2. City 1 _ The context

a. Brief introduction to the city

Białystok, the capital of the Podlaskie Voivodeship, is the largest city in the northeast of Poland, close to the Belarusian border. Podlasie region is called 'The Green Lungs of Poland' – it is ecologically clean and full of tourist attractions. Four national parks and three landscape parks are located within the city. Białystok is located only:

- 1 hour car ride from the lakes (Augustów),
- 1 hour car ride from the Belarus (Grodno),
- 2 hours train ride from Warsaw (the capital of Poland),
- 3-hour car ride from the Lithuania (Kaunas),
- 5-hour train ride from the seaside (Gdansk),
- 6-hour train ride from the mountains (Tatra mountains).

Białystok does not have a passenger airport. It has an extensive network of road and rail connections. With the use of EU funds, cycling has become popular in recent years - thanks to the numerous bicycle paths built in Białystok (as of the end of 2020, 158.92 km of bicycle paths were built¹⁸) and new roads are constantly being built.

Interesting facts about Białystok:

- 32% of the city constitutes the green areas – 'green city',
- the Branicki Palace resides in the heart of the city,

¹⁸ Strategia Rozwoju Miasta Białegostoku do 2030 r. [Białystok City Development Strategy until 2030], p. 15.

- Ludwik Zamenhof, the creator of the international language - Esperanto, was born here¹⁹.

Bialystok has many historic buildings and monuments, including the Branicki Palace, which is a beautiful baroque palace that now serves as a museum, and the Church of St. Roch, which is a Gothic church that dates to the 14th century. There is also Orthodox Church of the Holy Spirit - the largest Orthodox church in Poland, which is topped with a cross weighing an impressive 1500 kg. There is also St Nicholas' Orthodox Church - a Byzantine style church built in 1846 with a central cupola.

Street art that tells a story have become a permanent part of the city landscape. One should point out the beautiful murals (like one of a little girl appearing to water an actual tree - this has become a Bialystok icon; the official name for the art is The Legend of Giants, it was painted by Natalia Rak in 2013). Another well-known mural is Instability by the Italian artist Francesco Camillo Giorgino, aka Millo.

Bialystok is a popular tourist destination, with many visitors coming to the city to see its historic buildings, enjoy its cultural events, and explore the nearby Bialowieza National Park (the habitat of the European bison) and the Bialowieza Forest, which are both UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Bialystok has a population of 292 058, with 22% being young people aged 15-34. Over the last decade, the number of young residents in Bialystok has decreased by nearly a quarter, or 20,500 people. Warsaw, 198.3 km away (a 2-hour journey by train), is the primary migration destination for young individuals from the local labour market.

As of June 2024, 6.7 thousand persons were registered unemployed, unemployment rate was 5.1%, and average monthly gross wages in enterprise sector – 6716.33 PLN (app. 1560 €).

b. Indicators at the city level

c. **Table 2**

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Tot. Population	294 143	294 298	295 624	297 554	292 058 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers
Youth population (15-24)			30 532 (1)	26 418	25232 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers
Youth population (25-29)			24 623	19 217	17768 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers
Youth population (30-34)					22422 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers

¹⁹ <https://uwb.edu.pl/en/news/the-city-of-bialystok-2207.html> (Accessed: September 10, 2024).

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Young-age dependency ratio (pop 15< over 15-64 population)		28.7				City	Ratio
Old-age dependency ratio (pop 64+ over 15-64 population)		20.4				City	Ratio
% of foreigners on the total population		0				City/Nuts4	%
% of foreigners on youth population		0				City/Nuts4	%
% of people with tertiary education		34				City/Nuts4	%
% of youth with tertiary education						City/Nuts4	%
% of employed people (15-64)						City/Nuts4	%
% of employed youth						City/Nuts4	%
% of unemployed people (15-64)		12.4	10.7	5.4	5.1 (2023)	City/Nuts4	%
% of unemployed youth					23.9 (2023)	City/Nuts4	%
% NEET among youth (15-24)					9.8 (2021)	Nuts2	%
% of school dropouts among youth						City/Nuts4	%
GDP per person	27 179	34 003	38 484	49 255	57 538 (2021)	bialostocki region/ NUTS3	Currency (PLN)
Average income per household/person						City	Currency
Housing market price per sq					5764 PLN ~1372 €	City	Currency
Distribution of employment by sector: - Agriculture /mining (primary) - Construction - Manufacturing - Services			0.16 ⁽⁴⁾ 4.73 16.41 78.7		2.66 7.0 15.97 74.37 (2022)	City/Nuts4	%
Available beds for tourists in the city			1651 ⁽¹⁾	2239	2898 (2023)	City/Nuts4	Number
Universities in the city					8+4 ⁽²⁾ (2022)	City	Number
Post-secondary non-tertiary centres		54 ⁽¹⁾	36	29	21 (2022)	City	Number
Secondary / Upper secondary schools	21 ⁽¹⁾	20	22	25	28 (2022)	City	Number

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Unemployment benefits received by people looking for work						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Activation/support measures received by people looking for work				359 ⁽³⁾	146 ⁽³⁾ (2023)	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Incentives for Start-Up and/or support for self-employment						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Rent benefits for youth					120 (2024)	City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Living benefits for youth						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Social housing units		20 743	21 835	23 398	24 023 (2023)	City/Nuts4	Number
Take-up rates of children 0-3 in Early Childhood Education and Care Services						City	Rates
Average age of leaving the parental home			28.3	27.1	27.1 (2023)	Country	Age
Average age of having the first child		28.9	29.2	29.7	30.0 (2022)	Country	Age
Total public expenditure on education			41.7	41.9	43.9 (2022)	Country	% of GDP
Expenditure in active labour market policies					0.33 (2021)	Country	% of GDP
Expenditure in start-up incentives					0.03 (2021)	Country	% of GDP
Expenditure in youth policies						Country	% of GDP

- (1) Own calculations based on Bank Danych Lokalnych (Local Data Bank, Statistics Poland) <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/bdl/dane/teryt/tablica>
- (2) Including branches.
- (3) Sprawozdania o rynku pracy, Powiatowy Urząd Pracy w Białymstoku (Labour market reports, District Labour Office in Białystok) <https://bialystok.praca.gov.pl/documents/1938834/20203754/Sprawozdanie%20MPiPS-01%20miasto%20Bia%C5%82ystok%20grudzie%C5%84%202023.pdf/35a3d90b-700d-426d-a47c-562330a9141f?t=1705576695289>; <https://bialystok.praca.gov.pl/documents/1938834/8972541/Sprawozdanie%20MPiPS-01%20miasto%20Bia%C5%82ystok%20grudzie%C5%84%202019r./bca1ff5d-ec79-4ef9-9348-e915a4af5dcd?t=1578642046199>
- (4) Employed - as of December 31; own calculations based on the Socio-economic situation of Białystok in 2023, Statistical Office in Białystok, Białystok 2024, p. 49.

d. The demand for youth policies at the city level

Young people in Białystok constitute more than one-fifth of the entire population of the city. This is of great importance for the current development and for the future of them, their families and the city. Considering young-age dependency ratio at the level of 28.7, one can conclude that on the one hand those of working age may face a greater burden in supporting the young non-working population, but on the other hand there is a great chance and prospects for the future development of the city.

There is therefore a huge demand for activities aimed at young people at the city level. For these activities to be effective, i.e. to serve young people, their families and the city, it is necessary to precisely define what young people expect, e.g. in terms of education (and more broadly development), starting families, etc. In this first respect, it can be indicated that what is characteristic of Białystok is its academic nature.

According to the report 'Academicity of Polish cities (II)'²⁰ prepared by the Polish Economic Institute, Białystok took 10th place among the leaders of academicity in Poland. The ranking classified three academic universities located in the capital of Podlasie. These were: the Białystok University of Technology, the Medical University of Białystok and the University of Białystok. A total of 24 thousand students are studying at these universities and at non-public universities, which gives a result of 83 students per 1000 inhabitants of Białystok. In the Report on 2019, Białystok also took 10th place, which means stability in terms of the city's role as an academic city. At the same time, this gives rise to a certain responsibility, the need to take action to respond to the challenges related to it (such as in the field of housing) and opportunities (creating jobs corresponding to the qualifications of university graduates). Interestingly, the Białystok is fourth in Poland in terms of the number of students who, after completing their studies, remain in the city where they studied.

As far as labour market is concerned (data are available at the Nuts 2 level; still - Białystok is the biggest city in Podlaskie Voivodeship), in the last quarter of 2023, only 25,000 young people aged 15-24 (23.6%) were economically active in the Podlaskie voivodeship. Young people are characterized by lower economic activity than older age groups. For comparison, the economic activity rate in the next age group, 25-34, was 87.8%. The employability of people aged 15-24 is low – the employment rate in this age group was 20.8%, while in the age group of people between 25 and 54 its value exceeded 86% (the highest: 88.8% – concerned people aged 35–44)²¹. Ultimately, 81% of university graduates find employment, but the average time it takes a graduate to find a job is almost 4 months, which places Białystok in last place among the 31 cities included in the ranking 'Academicity of Polish cities (II)'²².

²⁰ Dębkowska, K., Kłosiewicz-Górecka, U., Szymańska, A., Wejt-Knyżewska, A., Zybertowicz, K., Akademickość polskich miast (II), Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny, Warszawa 2023, pp. 12, 22, 34 <https://pie.net.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Akademickosc-miast-2.pdf> (accessed: September 11, 2024).

²¹ Kwartałna informacja o sytuacji osób młodych na podlaskim rynku pracy w kontekście realizacji Planu Gwarancji dla młodzieży - IV kwartał 2023 r., [Quarterly information on the situation of young people on the Podlaskie labour market in the context of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee Plan - Q4 2023] https://wupbialystok.praca.gov.pl/documents/102984/21250790/Notatka_kwartalna%20_osoby_m%C5%82ode_IV_kw_2023/fb5e7f88-c504-4c76-9702-0704d6cc5b6f?t=1709559051176 (Accessed: September 11, 2024).

²² Dębkowska, K., Kłosiewicz-Górecka, U., Szymańska, A., Wejt-Knyżewska, A., Zybertowicz, K. (2023), op. cit., p. 36.

Białystok's strengths include the environment and safety. In these two areas, Białystok ranked first and second in the 2024 edition of the Polish cities ranking²³. In the future, these issues may be of key importance, for example, for young people planning to start a family.

In this regard, a situation on real estate market is also important. In Białystok, there are 480 apartments per 1,000 residents - this is a value significantly higher than the value for the Podlaskie voivodeship and significantly higher than the average for the whole of Poland. According to the National Bank of Poland, in the third quarter of 2023, a meter of used apartment in Białystok cost approximately PLN 8,150 [app. 2000 €] per square meter. Many factors influence real estate prices. One of them is certainly state interventionism, which is to support young people in meeting their housing needs (in the form of, for example, the possibility of using a safe 2% loan, i.e. a system of subsidies for mortgage loans). This has undoubtedly stimulated demand for apartments, and the increase in demand with a not very high supply generates an increase in prices. Another important factor is the availability and interest rates of loans, and the most important - especially for young people - the increase in wages, which affects creditworthiness. What is more, new apartments in the centre of Białystok are more often chosen by customers who are thinking about buying an apartment for investment and favourable rental. Housing estates and even the outskirts of the city are mainly chosen by families with a limited budget.

In conclusion, young people who decide to study in Białystok often stay in the city and, although with some difficulties, most graduates of Białystok universities find employment. Despite the increase in income, they cannot afford an apartment in the city centre - these are more expensive and often bought for investment purposes (for rent). Although thanks to the support, it is easier to buy an apartment and the age of leaving the family home is decreasing, it should be noted that at the same time the age at which the first child appears in the family is increasing. Perhaps the costs of maintaining an apartment are high, perhaps this is a strategy that is a response to the first difficult period after finishing school and finding a job. Another issue is combining family and professional responsibilities. In Poland, 30% of mothers of children aged 1-9 do not work professionally, and 16% of them declare that they do not work because of difficulties in finding a suitable job²⁴.

Taking the above into account, there is a need for activities aimed at young people:

- at the stage from finishing school to finding the first job,
- at the stage of purchasing apartments, as not only the purchase price of apartment, but also the maintenance costs, affect the decision to have a first child,
- at the stage of making the decision to have a first child in the context of combining family and professional responsibilities.

Białystok shall also focus on emphasizing its advantages: high safety and good environmental conditions, to encourage (already at the stage of choosing studies) young people to migrate to the city. What is very beneficial for Białystok is the fact that a significant portion of incoming students stay in the city.

²³ R. Kozielski, M. Mackiewicz, J. Pogorzelski, Raport 'Barometr Rozwoju Miast 2024' [The 'City Development Barometer 2024' Report], p. 16.

²⁴ Mama wraca do pracy - bariery behawioralne i kierunki wsparcia [Mom Returns to Work - Behavioural Barriers and Directions for Support] Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny, Policy Paper 7/2022, p. 4.

3. City 1 _ Youth policy subsystem

a. Institutional level: municipal frame in charge of youth policies

The city authorities include the City Council, which is the legislative and supervisory body, and the mayor of the City of Bialystok. The Council's competences include all matters within the scope of the City's activities, deciding on the directions of the mayor's activities. The mayor's tasks include preparing projects and implementing the Council's resolutions; the mayor of the city performs tasks with the help of the City Office. The Council's numerous tasks include, among others, adopting the city's program for combating unemployment and activating the local labour market, adopting resolutions on the principles of granting scholarships to pupils and students, etc. In performing its tasks, the Council may establish committees. In the context of the needs of young people, the following can be distinguished: the Education and Upbringing Committee, the Social Affairs, Family and Health Committee, the Sports and Tourism Committee, and the Culture and Promotion of the City Committee. These committees may take the initiative to adopt a resolution. The Education and Upbringing Committee considers matters including:

- public education,
- education of children and youth,
- cooperation with the academic community.

The Social Affairs, Family and Health Committee considers matters including:

- analysis and assessment of the social and living situation of families, women and children – generating the need for social assistance,
- initiating and giving opinions on action programmes affecting the living conditions of families,
- cooperation with organisations and institutions working for families,
- analysis of unemployment issues.

When it comes to youth policy in Bialystok, the Bialystok City Office should be mentioned in the institutional dimension. Although its structure does not include a direct Department dedicated exclusively to youth affairs, there are several departments that have the most frequent contact with young people as recipients of activities. These include in particular: the Department of Strategy and Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Culture, Promotion and Sports, and the Department of Social Affairs. The first of these is under the direct supervision of the Mayor of Bialystok. The next three Departments are headed by three different vice-mayors, with all three reporting to the Mayor of Bialystok, which ensures full coordination. In addition, it is necessary to mention the municipal organizational units whose activities affect the situation of young people, e.g. in the context of starting a family (in this case - municipal nurseries, there are 9 of them) or in the context of development and free time (Bialystok Sports and Recreation Centre or Bialystok Cultural Centre)²⁵.

Moreover, there are also commercial law companies with the participation of the city, e.g. Social Housing Association or Municipal Stadium in Bialystok, whose activities include, among others, sports-related activities, other entertainment and recreational activities, or extracurricular forms of sports education and sports and recreational activities. In both companies, the Bialystok commune has 100% of the company's shares.

²⁵ https://www.bip.bialystok.pl/urzad_miejski/ (Accessed: September 12, 2024).

One of the latest initiatives for young people (students at public secondary schools, for which the governing body is the City of Białystok), is the School Participatory Budget. The decision to introduce the School Participatory Budget was made by the Mayor of Białystok, Tadeusz Truskolaski. Thanks to this, each school covered by the program will be able to submit projects worth up to PLN 4,000 (almost €1,000), financed from the budget of the City of Białystok. As explained by the mayor of the city, the intention of this instrument is to shape civic attitudes among young people, inspire students to extracurricular activities and develop cooperation skills in them. This undertaking will also give students the opportunity to have a greater impact on their own school environment.

When analysing municipal frame in charge of youth policies at municipal level, consultative body of the City of Białystok on youth matters cannot be omitted. To support and popularize the idea of self-government, the Youth City Council of Białystok²⁶ was established with its seat in Białystok. 2. 2) The Youth City Council of Białystok has a consultative, advisory and initiative character. The Youth City Council of Białystok is a representation of young people living and studying in the City of Białystok. The aim of the Youth City Council of Białystok is to shape pro-social, civic, democratic and patriotic attitudes through, among others:

- developing, supporting and popularizing the idea of self-government among young people, 2) promoting the idea of civil society,
- popularizing the principles of local government among young people,
- initiating, supporting and coordinating local government activities of young people,
- recognizing and representing the interests of young people towards public and non-governmental institutions,
- organizing active participation of young people in public life,
- integration and cooperation of youth communities in the City of Białystok.

The tasks of the Białystok City Youth Council include:

- issuing opinions on draft resolutions concerning youth,
- participating in the development of the municipality's strategic documents for youth,
- monitoring the implementation of the municipality's strategic documents for youth,
- undertaking activities for youth, in the field of civic education,
- adopting a program of its activities,
- establishing problem committees, determining their number, and defining their tasks,
- electing and dismissing the chairman of the Białystok City Youth Council and other members of the Presidium,
- initiating and promoting activities of a social, educational, cultural, sports, recreational, ecological and charitable nature,
- adopting resolutions on the expiry of the mandate of a councillor of the Białystok City Youth Council,
- adopting resolutions on other matters falling within the competence of the Białystok City Youth Council,
- proposing changes to the Statute.

²⁶ Uchwała nr LIV/781/22 Rady Miasta Białystok z dnia 23 maja 2022 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu uchwały w sprawie powołania Młodzieżowej Rady Miasta Białystok i nadania jej statutu, Dz. U. z 2022 r. poz. 583 [Resolution No. LIV/781/22 of the Białystok City Council of 23 May 2022 on the announcement of the uniform text of the resolution on the establishment of the Białystok Youth City Council and granting it a statute, Journal of Laws of 2022, no. 583].

The Youth City Council of Białystok may participate in activities related to the creation and implementation of government strategic documents regarding youth policy. Councillors of the Youth City Council of Białystok may submit motions, postulates and initiatives related to the functioning of the City of Białystok, in particular in matters concerning youth.

It should be noted that in the scope of activities for young people, the City Office in Białystok not only operates within its own institutional framework but also cooperates - e.g. with the government. An example is, among others, the implementation by the City of Białystok of the Multiannual Government Program 'Meal at school and at home' for the years 2024-2028. The program provides financial support in the organization of canteens as well as support in the form of a meal, a cash benefit in the form of a purpose-specific allowance for the purchase of a meal or food and a benefit in kind in the form of food products. The program consists of 3 modules, including one module for children and youth.

- b. Social level: list and description of relevant non-institutional actors usually involved across all local youth policies



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participatory budgets, creating conditions for co-decision-making.

The Foundation designs and conducts the participatory process, in particular social consultations. It involves young people in the participation processes, developing participatory school budgets, creating conditions for co-decision-making. The Foundation conducts social research, diagnoses and evaluations for local governments, cultural institutions, social organizations. It cooperates with scientific units. It provides reliable analyses for making decisions based on knowledge (such as Cultural Education of Young People in the Podlaskie Voivodeship - Research Report). It introduces social innovations, such as the project 'Competencies of the Future - 4K' is a new program of the SocLab Foundation addressed to young people in the field of communication, cooperation, creativity and critical thinking.

<https://soclab.org.pl/>



Youth stock - The Białystok Youth Initiatives Incubator is aimed at secondary school students (and/or people aged 14-19) living in Białystok and, together with their friends, wanting to implement an activity, project or social initiative under the supervision of mentors and with financial support for its implementation up to PLN 3,000 (app.

€715). The project is organized by the Soclab Foundation in Białystok in the PROTEUS program implemented by the Transatlantic Foundation, co-financed by the European Union. The topics of projects submitted to the program are optional and may include areas such as ecology, culture, education, civic affairs and others. It is important that the actions taken within the selected thematic areas emphasize democratic values, building social bonds and strengthen civic and participatory attitudes. Additionally, the implemented initiatives should primarily engage young people from Białystok, supporting their social activity and developing interpersonal skills. These projects are of a crucial importance for young people. For instance, among implemented projects were:

- Youth Socially – ‘Youth initiatives market’ that encourages young people to act and develop,
- Youth Białystok – an initiative aimed at integrating young people with migration experience by organizing a sports climbing and bouldering tournament and a series of trainings promoting a healthy lifestyle,
- BePresent – a full-day integration event and workshops focused on the topic of mental health of young people and developing skills to build healthy relationships outside of social media.

<https://www.youthstok.org/>



The Polish Scouting Association - Stanisław Moniuszko Scout Troop in Białystok operates within the Białystok Banner and is the largest troop in Poland. Scouting in the Białystok

region has over a hundred years of tradition. The first Białystok troop was established in 1913. Currently, it continues to educate children and youth in the spirit of scouting values, such as brotherhood, service, working on oneself and respect for nature, but both the troop and the entire Polish Scouting Association are constantly developing and looking for new methods and means of action. As of 11.08.2023, the Białystok ZHP Troop had a total of 2,660 people, including 1,725 women and 935 men. The troop brings together children and youth of various faiths and nationalities, creating space for their comprehensive development.

<http://bialystok.zhp.pl/>

c. Role of trade unions in the design and implementation of urban youth policies

Białystok does not have a separate document dedicated to youth policy, although the following document should be mentioned: Białystok City Development Strategy until 2030, which contains references to the needs of young people and specific actions addressed to this group. The document was developed in accordance with the principles of the participatory-administrative-expert model. Experts who have specialist knowledge and tools and a more impartial and holistic view of the city's development - which affects increasing the objectivity and professionalism of analyses and conclusions. The group involved in the work consisted of residents of Białystok, as well as representatives of communities working for the development of the city. The involvement of society in the creation of the strategy, as part of the adopted participatory approach, took place during the entire process using many tools, i.e. opinion surveys, consultations, workshops. Additionally, the development of the Strategy was preceded by social consultations, which lasted from October 27 to December 31, 2020. Residents of the City of Białystok and non-governmental organizations, as well as entities conducting public benefit and volunteering activities for the residents of Białystok, could take part in the consultations by completing the survey in electronic or paper form. Interestingly, the largest number of surveys were completed by young people: aged 13-24 – 169 people (28.50% of all surveys) and aged 25-34 – 144 people (24.28% of surveys). The role of trade unions in the prepared strategy was not emphasized.

d. Remarks on the urban policy subsystem

1. **City Governance Structure:** Bialystok's urban policy subsystem is shaped by a dual structure consisting of the City Council and the mayor of the city. The City Council holds legislative and supervisory authority, while the mayor is responsible for implementing Council resolutions, with the assistance of the City Office.
2. **Council Committees Relevant to Youth:** The City Council operates several committees addressing youth-related issues. These include the Education and Upbringing Committee, which oversees public education and youth cooperation, and the Social Affairs, Family, and Health Committee, which focuses on the welfare of families and children. These committees can initiate policy changes that impact young people.
3. **Youth-Focused Departments:** Bialystok's City Office includes several departments that regularly interact with the youth, although there is no specific department dedicated solely to youth affairs. The Department of Education, Department of Culture, Promotion and Sports, and Department of Social Affairs are the most relevant to youth issues, working under the guidance of vice-mayors.
4. **Key Institutions and Programs:** The city's organizational units, such as municipal nurseries, sports, and cultural centres, provide services directly affecting young people's education, recreation, and personal development. The recently introduced School Participatory Budget allows high school students to propose projects, encouraging civic engagement among youth.
5. **Youth City Council:** The Youth City Council of Bialystok plays an advisory and consultative role, representing young people's interests and participating in policy development. Its initiatives promote civic education and democratic engagement, further integrating young people into local governance.
6. **Collaborations and Partnerships:** Bialystok actively cooperates with external bodies like the government on youth-related programs. For example, the city participates in the 'Meal at School and at Home' initiative, which supports children and youth through meal programs.
7. **Non-Institutional Actors:** Non-governmental organizations, such as the SocLab Foundation, play a significant role in designing participatory processes and initiatives for young people. These projects foster democratic values, civic engagement, and interpersonal skills, reinforcing youth participation in local decision-making.
8. **Youth Initiatives:** Programs like the Youth Initiatives Incubator offer financial and mentoring support for youth-led projects in areas like ecology, culture, and education. These initiatives help young people in Bialystok develop leadership and project management skills.
9. **Strategic Framework:** While Bialystok lacks a separate youth policy document, the City Development Strategy until 2030 includes elements that address youth needs. This strategy was developed through a participatory model, with significant input from young residents, demonstrating the city's commitment to engaging youth in shaping its future.

In conclusion, Bialystok's urban policy subsystem integrates youth issues across various levels, involving both formal structures and non-institutional actors. However, the absence of a dedicated youth policy document suggests that there is room for a more cohesive and focused approach to addressing the specific needs of young people.

4. City 1 _ Policy 1

a. Presentation of the policy

On September 18, 2023, the Białystok City Council adopted the implementation of the Apartment for Graduate program. This program is a part of municipal housing resources management policy in Białystok. The resolution²⁷ of the City Council entered into force on October 6, 2023. The originator of this initiative is Krzysztof Truskolaski, a member of the Polish Parliament - a politician born in Białystok making it a political initiative. The programme was inspired by the positive experiences of other cities in Poland, such as Łódź, Poznań, Torun, and Szczecin²⁸.

What is worth to emphasize is that the program is directed not only to students and graduates from universities located in Białystok – but from all cities in Poland.

The order on the list of applications was determined by the average grade criterion, and in the event of the same result, the order on the list was determined by the date of submission by the applicants of a complete application for renting premises. The approved list of candidates was the basis for concluding a lease agreement for the duration of the employment relationship. Premises are rented only for the duration of the employment relationship in Białystok²⁹, with an important exception. Namely, if the lease period lasts an uninterrupted 10 years, the lease agreement concluded for the duration of the employment relationship is extended for an indefinite period.

The area of the rooms in the rented premises per household member is:

- 1) in multi-person households, not less than 7 m² and no more than 20 m².
- 2) in single-person households, not less than 10 m² and no more than 30 m².

The program is implemented using apartments managed by the Municipal Property Board in Białystok (an organizational unit of the Białystok City Office) with the Białystok scientific community. In the first edition, 93 apartments were made available in a newly built apartment building at Depowa Street.

What is worth to underline, such programmes for graduates have already been implemented in several cities across the country. Still, in some cities financial participation of graduates is required, which often poses an insurmountable barrier for young people. In other cities allocation of apartments by the city is low (only a few apartments per year for this purpose)³⁰. In case of Białystok, there are no such restrictions. Furthermore, the cost of the renting an apartment is very attractive – it is 378 PLN per month (less than 100 €), which is about 10% of the price young people would have to pay to rent a flat on the open market³¹.

²⁷ On the basis of Uchwała nr LXXIV/1010/23 Rady Miasta Białystok z dnia 18 września 2023 r. zmieniająca uchwałę w sprawie zasad wynajmowania lokali wchodzących w skład mieszkaniowego zasobu Gminy Białystok [Resolution No. LXXIV/1010/23 of the Białystok City Council of 18 September 2023 amending the resolution on the principles of renting premises included in the housing resources of the Białystok Municipality].

²⁸ See focus group 1 - opinion of Andrzej Ostrowski, Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Białystok (Annex A2).

²⁹ Tenants are obliged to provide a current certificate of employment in the City of Białystok by May 31 each year.

³⁰ See: Interview 1 (Annex A1).

³¹ See focus group 1- opinion of Andrzej Ostrowski, Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Białystok (Annex A2).

The project was promoted by the mayor of the city himself: Tadeusz Truskolaski, who said at its inauguration: 'I encourage young people finishing their studies and university graduates to get acquainted with the principles of the Apartment for a Graduate program and apply to participate in this project. Bialystok is becoming more and more friendly to young people. We want them to live, work and develop here'. Announcing the possibility of submitting applications under the program, the mayor added 'Since the first signals released to the world that we want to implement this idea, we have had a lot of contact from young people interested in this topic. This is proof that the project is tailored to their current needs'³². As the city's deputy mayor Zbigniew Nikitorowicz emphasized: 'I am convinced that local authorities are best able to implement housing support for citizens'.

5. Identity card of the policy

- Name:

'Apartment for graduate' (in Polish: 'Mieszkanie dla absolwenta')

- Topic:

rental of apartments for young students and graduates in Bialystok

- Beneficiaries/target group:

Originally (based on this resolution) the conditions for using the Apartment for a Graduate program included:

- not having housing needs met, i.e. people who do not have ownership or co-ownership, a cooperative right to a premises or a residential building, a right to a premises included in the resources of the TBS, or a lease of a premises included in the housing resources of the Municipality of Bialystok,
- students in their final year of studies, with an average grade from the last academic year of at least 4.75, recommended by the rector of the university or a person authorized by him.
- graduates who completed their studies with an average of at least 4.75.
- persons who reside and are employed based on an employment contract and the place of work is the City of Bialystok and on the date of submission of the application have not reached the age of 35,
- submitting an application together with documents confirming compliance with the above conditions to the Municipal Property Board in Bialystok by 31 December each year.

On the basis of Resolution No. LXXVII/1085/23 of the Bialystok City Council of 18 December 2023 amending the resolution on the principles of renting premises included in the housing resources of the Municipality of Bialystok³³,

³² <https://www.bialystok.pl/pl/wiadomosci/aktualnosci/program-mieszkanie-dla-absolwenta-juz-dziala.html> (Accessed: September 14, 2024).

³³ Uchwała nr LXXVII/1085/23 Rady Miasta Białystok z dnia 18 grudnia 2023 r. zmieniająca uchwałę w sprawie zasad wynajmowania lokali wchodzących w skład mieszkaniowego zasobu Gminy Białystok [Resolution No. LXXVII/1085/23 of the Białystok City Council of 18 December 2023 amending the resolution on the principles of renting premises included in the housing resources of the Białystok Municipality].

which entered into force on 5 January 2024, the conditions for using the Apartment for a Graduate program were changed so that students in their final year of study with an average grade from the last academic year of at least 4.5 and graduates who completed their studies with an average grade of at least 4.5 became eligible for the program.

- Content:

o Policy goals

The city proposed to the councillors to introduce the 'Apartment for a Graduate' program to meet the housing needs of young people who want to live and work in Białystok. As the Mayor of the city explained: 'This is a good idea to support young people, who are so needed by the city, especially since it is an innovative initiative on a national scale. I am glad that it has gained the approval of the councillors, and I hope that it will be a significant incentive to live and work Białystok. The program offers an alternative form of housing for young people to commercial ones. It is also intended to encourage them to come here, which will in effect increase the potential of qualified staff in the city'³⁴.

As explained by the city authorities, the Housing for Graduates Program is needed in Białystok, especially since the implementation of the government project 'Housing Plus' in Białystok has not even budged. The effective implementation of the project was also to show that 'where the government's plan does not work, the local government rises to the challenge. We will show that as a local government we can act effectively and support our local community' - said the chairman of the City Council Łukasz Prokorym.

The program was also intended to support local businesses in recruiting qualified employees by stemming the trend of young people leaving for external labour markets³⁵.

The aim of the program was to increase the potential of the city's qualified workforce by encouraging young people to move to Białystok. And finally, one of the goals was promoting the city nationwide³⁶.

o Policy instruments (e.g. economic transfers -grants/fellowships-in-kind resources, such as free use of public premises, training programmes, advice, counselling, etc.):

- apartment rental

Apartments for students and graduates are located between Bema and Depowa streets. It is an 8-staircase building with 186 residential premises (with an area of 25 to 58 m²): 90 one-room apartments, 78 two-room apartments and 18 three-room apartments. Each of them will have a

³⁴ <https://www.bialystok.pl/pl/wiadomosci/aktualnosci/mieszkania-dla-absolwentow.html> (Accessed September 14, 2024).

³⁵ Report on the State of the City of Białystok, Białystok City Hall, Department of Strategy and Development, Białystok 2024, p. 142.

³⁶ See: Interview 1 (Annex A1).

storage room. There will be 242 parking spaces available to residents (90 spaces under the residential building, 79 spaces in the garage and 73 outdoor spaces). The current state of progress of the works is 80%. Finishing works in the building are underway, equipment, sanitary ware and fittings are being installed, as well as land development. The apartments were supposed to be ready into use by the end of August 2024.

- Expected results

It was originally assumed that 93 apartments would be allocated to young people (students and graduates) under the program. The great interest exceeded expectations. It should be emphasized that the city authorities reacted very quickly to this interest, liberalizing the rules of access to the program (lowering the average rating) and increasing its scope (increasing the number of apartments from 93 to 121). The announced second stage is also proof that the program met the assumed expectations.

- Achieved results (info based on existing evaluation or follow-up reports)

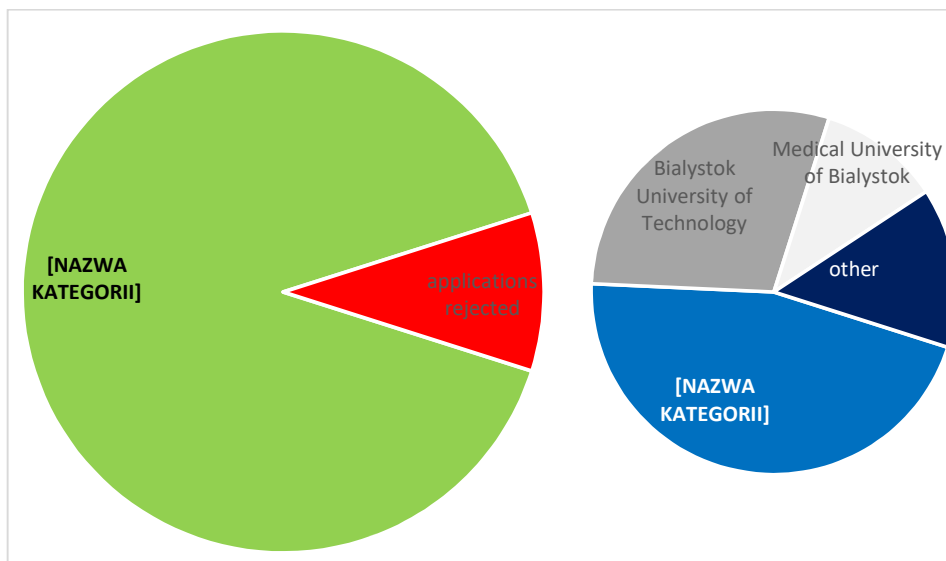
Initially, pursuant to Resolution No. 1010 of September 2023, the deadline for submitting applications under the program was December 31, 2023. On December 18, 2023, this date was changed, i.e. pursuant to Resolution No. 1085, the application submission period was extended to March 15, 2024.

By January 5, 2024, the Municipal Property Management Board received 49 applications, 44 were approved. Three people were asked to resubmit their application - in accordance with the new rules. Only two people did not meet the project criteria.

In the first edition of the program, 131 people applied to the Municipal Property Management Board. 120 of them met the required criteria. The beneficiaries include 11 students and 109 graduates. Students and graduates of the University of Białystok - 55 people, the Białystok University of Technology - 35 people and the Medical University of Białystok - 13 people have the advantage. Apartments from the program will also be occupied by students and graduates of universities such as the Jagiellonian University, Military University of Technology, Academy of Fine Arts (Łódź), Police Academy (Szczytno), Academy of Music (Kraków)³⁷.

Chart 1: The structure of approved application within 'Apartment for graduate'

³⁷ <https://www.bialystok.pl/pl/wiadomosci/aktualnosci/mieszkanie-dla-absolwenta-kolejny-etap-1.html>



Source: own calculations based on data from City Hall.

As emphasized by young people who took advantage of the program, its advantages include:

- attractive, competitive rental price compared to market prices reaching even several thousand zlotys,
- a good alternative to renting an apartment on the private market - due to high and rising prices (in the latter case, sharing an apartment is often necessary),
- an alternative to buying an apartment (which is a solution that young people often cannot afford), - the solution improves living conditions
- location - the possibility of combining simultaneous rental and saving for your own apartment in the future.

In the opinion of the beneficiaries, the requirements that had to be met by students/graduates are not high³⁸.

As the director of the Municipal Property Board, Andrzej Ostrowski, added, the apartments are ready to move in, they are not in developer condition, so you do not have to spend tens of thousands of PLN to adapt or finish the apartment. Rental prices will be the same as in other municipal apartments, i.e. in the case of such contracts for an indefinite period, it is around PLN 12-13 per square meter, i.e. an apartment of around 40-50 m² with fees will cost around PLN 1,000.

What is more, a huge advantage of the program is the consideration of the size of the apartments - they take into account the plans of young people to start families in the future.

The first edition of the program has come to an end and on October 31, 2024, the first people received the keys to their apartments from the hands of the

³⁸ Interviews with young people - beneficiaries of the 'Program for Graduate' - conducted by Hanna Kość, journalist of Radio Akadera, <https://akadera.bialystok.pl/120-osob-skorzysta-z-programu-mieszkanie-dla-absolwenta/> (Accessed: September 19, 2024).

mayor of Białystok, Tadeusz Truskolaski. The mayor emphasized then that the program, together with the authorities of Białystok universities, would be a way to build the academic character of Białystok. The program is to be continued. The City plans to build 612 new apartments ³⁹.

- Nature of policy change

On March 25, the Białystok City Council adopted a resolution⁴⁰ increasing the number of apartments designated for the program. Instead of the previously guaranteed 93 apartments, 121 units will be available for the program – i.e. no longer up to 50% of a new municipal building, but up to 65%. As previously mentioned, other changes include lowering an average grade from 4.75 to 4.5, thus it can be access that the program was changed to increase its reach and scope, to support even more young people. This was a response from the city authorities to the great interest in the program, which should be assessed as a premise of its success.

The authorities of the Białystok city are preparing to continue the program – there is already a building permit for three more apartment buildings with 612 apartments. For this purpose, the city plans to apply for funding from the Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego – Polish Development Fund. This amount could amount to over PLN 150 million.

6. Policy network

- The ‘Apartment for Graduates’ program was initiated by a politician born in Białystok - Krzysztof Truskolaski - a member of the Polish Parliament. Then, the program was processed by the City Council and finally adopted by councillors by resolution from September 18th, 2023. The program is implemented using apartments managed by an organizational unit of the Białystok City Office: the Municipal Property Board in Białystok. Taking above into account one can notice, that project relied on engagement of politician and city authorities.

The program was widely promoted by Mayor of the city - Tadeusz Truskolaski, by himself, with the support of Białystok scientific community, in particular three the biggest⁴¹ universities in Białystok: University of Białystok, Białystok University of Technology and Medical University of Białystok – students of which could benefit from the program. What was also crucial, the not only higher education

³⁹ <https://poranny.pl/program-mieszkanie-dla-absolwenta-pierwsze-osoby-odebraly-klucze-do-przyznanych-im-lokali/ar/c5-18913559> (accessed November 2, 2024).

⁴⁰ Uchwała nr LXXXII/1133/24 Rady Miasta Białystok z dnia 25 marca 2024 r. zmieniająca uchwałę w sprawie zasad wynajmowania lokali wchodzących w skład mieszkaniowego zasobu Gminy Białystok [Resolution No. LXXXII/1133/24 of the Białystok City Council of 25 March 2024 amending the resolution on the principles of renting premises included in the housing resources of the Białystok Municipality].

⁴¹ In 2020, they comprised 85.6% of all students of Białystok universities. Source: Diagnoza sytuacji społecznej, gospodarczej i przestrzennej Miasta Białystok, Urząd Miejski w Białymstoku, Urząd Statystyczny w Białymstoku (A. Godlewska, R. Łapińska, A. Rogalewska, U. Słucka, A. Szklarzewska, I. Szpaczko, D. Wyszowska), prace redakcyjne: K. Górka, D. Białystok 2021 [Diagnosis of the social, economic and spatial situation of the City of Białystok, City Hall in Białystok, Statistical Office in Białystok (A. Godlewska, R. Łapińska, A. Rogalewska, U. Słucka, A. Szklarzewska, I. Szpaczko, D. Wyszowska), editorial work: K. Górka, D. Białystok 2021], p. 112.

institutions but also - through them - student organisations and associations – has actively participated in the implementation of this programme⁴².

7. Remarks and comments on policy

Taking into account all presented information, especially assumed results, achieved results with the effectiveness of the initiative a program 'Apartment for graduate' initiative shall be considered as a very positive example of action by the city authorities that is focused on young people needs. The initiative is positive not only to youth and their personal development, but also to the development of the city – in demographic dimension (limiting emigration from Bialystok, creating better circumstances to start a family) and securing talented workforce at Bialystok's labour market and even attracting talented students to Bialystok universities. What is worth to underline is the enormous financial engagement of the City Hall – thank to that program is much more attractive than in other Polish cities that run similar initiatives.

Direct engagement of city authorities: City Council and Mayor of the Bialystok – Prof. Tadeusz Truskolaski, and (at the promotion stage) the biggest universities in the city: the University of Bialystok, the Bialystok University of Technology, and the Medical University of Bialystok and student associations had a very positive impact on the success of the program.

As Andrzej Ostrowski, Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Bialystok (ZMK) responsible for implementing this initiative at the operational level underlined, in Bialystok, 'the importance of youth policies is crucial'. Thus, it is worth to underlined, that the initiative is being developed by the city authorities. Even the name of the street was changed – into Graduates Street, and ZMK is now building additional infrastructure to improve the quality of life for young people. Next to the housing intended for talented youth, the mayor will be constructing a nursery. The green spaces around the housing are being developed, and a nearby pond will undergo revitalisation. Young people usually have cars, so in addition to the flats, so ZMK is constructing garage spaces and parking areas. The mayor also has plans to build additional apartments⁴³. Continuation of the program and its further development is one of the best proofs that the program was successful.

As Katarzyna Zdanowicz – one of the beneficiaries of the program – said, the application was very simple. That should be also considered as one of the advantages of the initiative. 'Projects like this are very necessary for young people. They motivate us to actively participate in the local labour market, to focus on personal development, and to plan a future tied to Bialystok'. What was touching in direct relation of Ms. Katarzyna Zdanowicz, is that - thanks to the program - she was able to think about starting a family without fear. Indeed, to start a family a security factor is one of the key elements of such an important decision. Such decisions will be the best proof of the success of the program in the long term.

'The development of additional services and green areas only reinforces our belief that Bialystok is the best place for us to live. I have many friends who study in other cities or who

⁴² See focus group 1- opinion of Andrzej Ostrowski, Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Bialystok (Annex A2).

⁴³ See focus group 1- opinion of Andrzej Ostrowski, Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Bialystok (Annex A2).

are from other towns. Now, I'm encouraging them to move to Białystok'⁴⁴. Such testimonials and the fact that beneficiaries of the program are personal ambassadors of it – are the substantial confirmation that the program was successful.

Still, it should be noted that one of the most important conditions to be filled in case of implementing this initiative in other cities is a high engagement (also in financial respect) from the city authorities. One could state, that in case of Białystok that was the clue.

8. City 2 _ The context

a. Brief introduction to the city

The festival, song, music, and the city are the main associations with Opole at the national level. Opole is known as the Capital of Polish Song. The National Song Festival in Opole in the Millennium Amphitheatre, built over 60 years ago, is one of the oldest European festivals (although dedicated exclusively to Polish music, it still finds huge interest among television viewers as well). The city is beautiful, friendly, safe, has a good reputation, is peaceful, clean, and developing – most residents have no doubts about that.

The city has over 800 years of history (in 2017 its 800th anniversary was celebrated). Initially, it was a small settlement on Ostrówek, and today it is a city of 128,000 inhabitants (due to changes in borders and favourable demographic trends, Opole surpassed the threshold of 100,000 residents in 1974). The 14th-century Piast Tower, a mediaeval knight guardhouse, is a symbol of the city's past. Modern-day Opole harmoniously blends tradition and modernity, as well as business and science. Visitors and investors can enjoy its well-developed infrastructure, including a network of bike rentals⁴⁵.

Since 1950, Opole has been the capital of the voivodeship (although it is the smallest provincial capital in Poland), the main decision-making centre in the region, an academic hub (recognized as such in 1954 when several hundred students began their studies at the Pedagogical Higher School at the university level). The city is the heart of the Opole Agglomeration, and one of the thirty largest cities in Poland in terms of population.

Opole is in southwestern Poland, along an important transport corridor, near the A4 highway. It has always been accompanied by the Odra River, which has brought both good and bad moments, such as the 'flood of the century' in 1997 or the current flood, in September 2024.

Students set the tone for the city. Opole is a young but ambitious academic centre. Students, scholars, their ideas, and initiatives have become an integral part of the city's development. They can be seen on the streets, squares, in cafes, at concerts, and on buses. The city is marked by dozens of academic buildings and university campuses. All of this contributes to the city's unique and important character.

Opole was recently recognized as a city of young, educated people. Statistically, in 2019, the average age of an Opole resident was almost 43 years. However, the forecasts are unambiguous – the population of Opole is aging, with an increasing number of senior citizens⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ See focus group 1- opinion of Katarzyna Zadykowicz, graduate of one of the Białystok's universities (Annex A2).

⁴⁵ <https://www.opole.pl/en/dla-turysty/about-opole> (Accessed: August 30, 2024).

⁴⁶ Opole Development Strategy until 2030, Opole City Hall, under coordination of: A. Wiśniewski, M. Stelnicka, M. Wujca, P. Zych, R. Cwirzeń-Szymańskiej, G. Marcjasz, Opole 2019, pp. 16-17.

Among the city's development priorities over the last 20 years (in the opinion of residents who took part in the plebiscite of the City of Opole and Gazeta Wyborcza, the aim of which was to determine the challenges facing Opole and jointly decide which of them are crucial for the residents), the three most important include: new infrastructure - a bridge over the Oder (36% of votes), green infrastructure for Opole (tree corridors along the main streets, parks and squares, real urban meadows, rain gardens or breathing walls) – 26% of votes, and in third place - the 'starter apartment' program, which was appreciated by slightly over 8% of votes⁴⁷.

b. Indicators at the city level

c. Table 3

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Tot. Population	126748	122625		128035	127387 (2021)	City	Absolute numbers
Youth population (15-24)			10 267	9 933	10 010 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers
Youth population (25-29)		10 884	6 176	4 858	5 098 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers
Youth population (30-34)		10668	10625		9 116 (2023)	City	Absolute numbers
Young-age dependency ratio (pop 15< over 15-64 population)		24.4	19.83		22.65	City	Ratio
Old-age dependency ratio (pop 64+ over 15-64 population)		22.4	27.23		33.0	City	Ratio
% of foreigners on the total population		0				City/Nuts4	%
% of foreigners on youth population						City/Nuts4	%
% of people with tertiary education		35				City/Nuts4	%
% of youth with tertiary education						City/Nuts4	%
% of employed people (15-64)						City	%
% of employed youth						City/Nuts4	%
% of unemployed people (15-64)			5.3		3.2 (2021)	City/Nuts4	%
% of unemployed youth						City/Nuts4	%
% NEET among youth						City/Nuts4	%
% of school dropouts among youth						City/Nuts4	%

⁴⁷ <https://opole.wyborcza.pl/opole/7,35086,27058061,opole-najwazniejszy-jest-nowy-most-w-zielonym-miescie.html> (Accessed: September 22, 2024).

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
GDP per person	29 428	37 365	43 482	54 081	65 076	City (Opolski region/NUTS 3)	Currency PLN
Average income per household/person						City	Currency
Housing market price per sq						City	Currency
Distribution of employment by sector: - Agriculture/mining (primary) - Construction and Manufacturing - Services					(2020) - 0.17% -44.22% -55.60%	City/Nuts4	%
Available beds for tourists in the city			894 ⁽¹⁾	1084	1063 (2023)	City/Nuts4	Number
Universities in the city					3+1 ⁽²⁾ (2022)	City	Number
Post-secondary non-tertiary centres		54	36	36	34 (2022)	City	Number
Secondary / Upper secondary schools	9	8	7	9	10 (2022)	City	Number
Unemployment benefits received by people looking for work						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Activation/support measures received by people looking for work						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Incentives for Start-Up and/or support for self-employment						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Rent benefits for youth						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Living benefits for youth						City/Nuts4	Number of beneficiaries
Social housing units			10132	13869	14697 (2023)	City/Nuts4	Number
Take-up rates of children 0-3 in Early Childhood Education and Care Services						City	Rates
Average age of leaving the parental home			28.3	27.1	27.1 (2023)	Country	Age
Average age of having the first child		28.9	29.2	29.7	30.0 (2022)	Country	Age
Total public expenditure on education			41.7	41.9	43.9 (2022)	Country	% of GDP

Description of the indicator	2007	2011	2015	2019	Last year available	Territorial level	Type
Expenditure in active labour market policies					0.33 (2021)	Country	% of GDP
Expenditure in start-up incentives					0.03 (2021)	Country	% of GDP
Expenditure in youth policies						Country	% of GDP

(1) Own calculations based on Band Danych Lokalnych (Local Data Bank, Statistics Poland) <https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/bdl/dane/teryt/tablica>

d. The demand for youth policies at the city level

Young people in Opole constitute almost one-fifth (19%) of the entire population of the city. This is of great importance for the current and future development of young people, their families and the Opole, that faces the problem of natural decrease. A young-age dependency ratio at the level of 24.4 is a little above the country's average. This part of the city population is a *dependent* part of the population and need support. On the other hand, high young-age dependency ratio today means a demographic potential for the future development of the city.

There is therefore a demand for activities aimed at young people at the city level. For these activities to be effective, i.e. to serve young people, their families and the city, it is necessary to precisely define what young people in Opole expect, e.g. in terms of education (and more broadly development), starting families, etc.

As far as education is concerned, Opole offers education at all levels, including secondary, post-secondary schools and at 4 universities. According to the report *Academicity of Polish cities (II)*, Opole had 16 thousand students in 2023, so in absolute numbers was not in top 10 cities. Wrocław – much bigger city in approximately 1hour drive (by car, by train) from Opole offers 26 universities and in 2023 104 thousand students were in Wrocław. It follows that Opole is situated with a high-competition region. On the other hand, considering population of the city, and the ratio of 128 students per 1000 people, it follows that students are very important for city development. However, only 14% of students stay in the same province after graduation⁴⁸. On the other hand, 84% of graduates find a job and on average it takes only 2.72 months to find an employment. Perhaps some of them find a job in other attractive cities like Wrocław. People from Opole prefer to migrate within a country than abroad – according to last available data, emigration to rural areas exceeded emigration to urban areas and abroad. Still, not young persons are the most mobile but people aged 30-44⁴⁹.

Regarding the situation on the labour market in the Opole voivodeship (NUTS 2) is systematically improving. In the period between 2015 and 2021, a 4% increase in the number of people in employment was recorded. However, in the case of people aged 15-29,

⁴⁸ 34% are graduates living in a different counties, but in the same voivodeship where they studied; 26 % graduates living in a different voivodeship than the one where they studied, and in case of 27% of graduates, data are not available; Dębkowska, K., Kłosiewicz-Górecka, U., Szymańska, A., Wejt-Knyżewska, A., Zybortowicz, K. (2023), op. cit., p. 34.

⁴⁹ Opole in figures in the years 2021-2022, <https://opole.stat.gov.pl/en/publications/folders/opole-in-figures-in-the-years-2021-2022,3,6.html> (Accessed: September 11, 2024).

the situation is more diverse. In 2016 and 2017, a significant increase in the number of people in this age group was recorded, followed by a decline to the previous value and a further sharp decline in 2020 (the effect of the Covid-19 epidemic). At the end of 2021, the number of people in employment increased, but did not exceed the highest values. The average values of the employment rate for younger people are lower (52.6% in 2021) than for the general population (56.6%). In the period 2015-2021, the general employment rate increased by 5.6 percentage points, and for people aged 15-29 by 7.5 percentage points. Employees aged 15-29 are significantly more likely to have temporary employment (temporary contracts) than all employees aged 15-64. Considering the group of economically inactive people, it can be noted that the inactivity of young people in 2021 was higher than the average for the general population (44.5% compared to 42.1%). The main reason for the inactivity of men aged 15-24 is primarily education (95.5%), and for those aged 25-29, illness and disability (59.7%). As for women, in the case of women aged 15-24, the most important reason for inactivity is education (92.0%), but for those aged 25-34, these are primarily family responsibilities (67.8%)⁵⁰.

Still, in the ranking of Polish cities, Opole is ranked 7th (out of 20 cities) as far as economic situation and situation on the labour market is concerned. The strong point of Opole is the involvement of its residents in co-creating the city (the indicator was developed taking into account six key levels of residents' involvement: two of them are cognitive, i.e. awareness and knowledge, and three are affective, i.e. attitude, planning, recommendations, and one is behavioural - the decision to get involved. In this respect, Opole ranks 5th among 20 cities in Poland⁵¹.

As far as employment is concerned, services are the most important in the structure of employment in Opole.

As far as housing stock is concerned, in 2020, 58778 apartments were in Opole with 224 109 rooms. On average, number of rooms in apartment was 3.8, 68.9 squared meter and number of persons per apartment – 2.17. This data is important in the context of owning your first apartment - it will be more difficult to move out of your parents' house if there are not enough apartments in Opole's housing stock. In 2020, only 2.8% of the city budget was spent on housing expenses (it should be borne in mind that many mandatory costs, e.g. those related to education or transport, need to be covered).

Concluding, one can list of four areas of special focus regarding youth:

- Educational Competition: although Opole offers education at all levels with 4 universities and a strong student population, it faces competition from nearby Wroclaw, which has more universities and a larger student population. Opole's academic environment is vital for city development but isn't attracting top numbers.
- Retention of Graduates: only 14% of students remain in the province after graduation. Although 84% find jobs within 2.72 months, many may be migrating to more attractive cities like Wroclaw, contributing to a potential brain drain.

⁵⁰ Analiza grup znajdujących się w niekorzystnej sytuacji w województwie opolskim [Analysis of disadvantaged groups in the Opole voivodeship], <https://ocrg.opolskie.pl/media/system/aktualnosci/Analiza-grup-znajdujacych-sie-w-niekorzystnej-sytuacji.pdf> (Accessed: September 11, 2024).

⁵¹ R. Kozielski, M. Mackiewicz, J. Pogorzelski, op. cit. pp. 16, 26-27.

- Labour Market for Youth: temporary employment and higher economic inactivity (44.5% vs. 42.1% for the general population) among youth present labour market challenges, especially for those aged 15-29.
- Economic Inactivity: young people, particularly men and women aged 15-24, are largely inactive due to education. However, older women (25-34) face family responsibilities, contributing to their economic inactivity.

Considering the above, in case of situation of young people in Opole, key challenges are:

- supporting the dependent youth population,
- prevent talent drain,
- enhancing employment opportunities for young people, particularly in permanent roles,
- addressing the causes of economic inactivity, especially for women aged 25-34,
- expanding housing stock and making housing more affordable for young residents.

9. City 2 _ Youth policy subsystem

a. Institutional level: municipal frame in charge of youth policies

The city authorities - just like in the case of Białystok - include the City Council, which is the legislative and supervisory body, and the Mayor of the City of Opole. Regarding legislative function of Council, it should be noted that the initiative to adopt a resolution may be taken not only by the council committee or the mayor of the City, but also by a group of at least 300 residents of the city of Opole who have the active right to vote - this is a civic legislative initiative. The Council's competences include all matters within the scope of the City's activities, deciding on the directions of the mayor's activities. The mayor's tasks include implementing the Council's resolutions and other tasks within his competences according to the law⁵². When performing his/her tasks, the mayor cooperates with the supervised organizational units of the City Hall (city office), organizational and auxiliary units, and councillors. In performing its tasks, the Council may establish committees. In the context of the needs of young people, the following can be distinguished: the Education and Culture Committee, the Social Affairs and Health Committee, the Sports and Tourism Committee. These committees may take the initiative to adopt a resolution.

When it comes to youth policy in Opole in the institutional dimension, the City Hall should be mentioned. Although its structure does not include a direct department/office dedicated exclusively to youth affairs, there are a few departments that have the most frequent contact with young people as recipients of activities. These include the Public Services Centre, which includes, among others:

- Accessibility Office (its tasks include, among others, carrying out tasks aimed at ensuring accessibility for people with special needs and considering applications for ensuring accessibility),
- Housing Department (its tasks include, among others, handling matters related to the lease of residential and commercial premises constituting a municipal resource, including

⁵² Obwieszczenie Rady Miasta Opola z dnia 27 grudnia 2018 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia tekstu jednolitego uchwały w sprawie uchwalenia Statutu Miasta Opola, § 61. 1 [Announcement of the Opole City Council of 27 December 2018 on the announcement of the consolidated text of the resolution on the adoption of the Statute of the City of Opole].

receiving applications and submitting them to the Social Housing Commission, drawing up lists of people qualified to receive or exchange premises and their implementation),

- Social Policy Department (its tasks include, among others, participation in the development and implementation of the municipal strategy for solving social problems, with particular emphasis on social assistance programs, prevention and solving alcohol-related problems and others, the purpose of which is to integrate individuals and families from special risk groups, participation in the preparation of an assessment of social assistance resources based on an analysis of the local social and demographic situation, cooperation with the District Labour Office in Opole in the field of disseminating job offers and information on vacancies, disseminating information on career counselling services and training and implementing the Activation and Integration Program, implementing tasks resulting from the regulations on child care for children up to 3 years of age, implementing tasks related to the 'Opolska Rodzina' ['Family in Opole'] Card as part of the 'Opolska Rodzina' Program).

Additionally, the City Office has a Centre for Civic Dialogue. Its tasks include supporting non-governmental organizations in obtaining funds to finance their own contributions to projects, implementing the procedure related to selecting tasks as part of a local initiative, in accordance with the Act on Public Benefit Activities and Volunteering⁵³. As Michał Kramarz, Head of the Department of Investor Service in Opole, underlined: 'a key tool supporting young people is the city budget, which enables the implementation of a wide range of programs'⁵⁴.

Moreover, there are also commercial law companies with the participation of the city, e.g. SIM Opolskie sp. z o. o. The main objective of the Company's activity is to build residential houses and operate them on a lease basis in accordance with the Act of 26 October 1995 on certain forms of supporting residential construction. The Company may also acquire residential premises and residential and non-residential buildings for the purpose of expansion, superstructure and reconstruction, as a result of which residential premises will be created and carry out renovations and modernization of facilities intended to meet housing needs on a lease basis.

Another example of a company is the Science and Technology Park in Opole sp. z o. o. The company's goal is to work for the development of the Opole region by creating favourable conditions for the development of entrepreneurship in the city of Opole, with particular emphasis on the high-tech sector, by developing a knowledge-based economy, creating effective links between science and business and stimulating innovative entrepreneurship.

When analysing municipal frame regarding youth policies at municipal level, the organizational structure of the city of Opole also includes: 5 city nurseries, kindergartens, public schools, as well as the very important in youth development Youth Culture Centre named after the Heroes of the Silesian Uprisings in Opole and the Municipal Education Support Centre in Opole (within which the Muchy-Odpaduchy [in Polish wordplay; literally Flies-Waste] workshop operates, the main task of which is to carry out classes shaping pro-ecological attitudes among young residents of our region). The mission of the Youth Culture Centre is to create a unique place, inspiring children, youth and adults to develop their passions, interests, talents and skills. The advantages of the Youth Culture Centre are: 70

⁵³ https://www.bip.um.opole.pl/umo,25_569 (Accessed: September 13, 2024).

⁵⁴ See focus group 2 (Annex A3).

years of tradition and experience; a wide and diverse program offer (over 60 workshops and teams, almost 2,000 regular participants in classes, about 100 events each year); a solid local and technical base (4 locations in three different parts of the city, 30 rooms, its own cinema, a historic park, 3 playgrounds); professional and enthusiastic teaching staff (over 70 teachers and instructors); modern work methods; friendly, family atmosphere⁵⁵.

On May 18, 2021, the first meeting of the newly elected Youth City Council in Opole, bringing together representatives of Opole's youth, took place in the Opole City Hall. The Youth City Council of Opole is, among others, the patron of Start ED Pack - an initiative for young people to develop their entrepreneurial and educational competences. Thanks to cooperation, the Council will be able to promote innovative projects and inspire young people to act. A very important project is the handover of the largest premises (300 m2 of space and a huge terrace) in the Opole Główne Transfer Centre to young Opole residents. The premises could be freely arranged by young people and for their needs. This is a clear signal from the city authorities of recognition of the Youth City Council and the voice of young Opole citizens.

In Opole, the dialogue with residents is generally well-developed. As part of this dialogue, a very interesting initiative is the 'Mapa Potrzeb Opola' ['Opole Needs Map']. As part of it, an application was created that allows for quick and efficient communication with the office. Through the application, residents can report various needs and problems in the urban space (from a hole in the pavement to needs regarding premises, municipal waste, greenery, etc.). Opole residents can not only report a problem, but also analyse progress on an ongoing basis and ultimately be happy with a solved problem.

To sum up, youth policy in Opole is not based on a single institution, but on cooperation and mutual complementation of various sectors. The city's task is to efficiently manage and combine these potentials⁵⁶.

- b. Social level: list and description of relevant non-institutional actors usually involved across all local youth policies



Piastun - Foundation for Children and Youth

Its mission embrace:

- supporting various forms of social activity for children and youth,
- helping children and youth in difficult life situations,
- helping children and youth from dysfunctional and poor families,
- activities in the field of education, and active recreation,
- counteracting the social exclusion of children and youth,
- equalizing educational opportunities for children and youth from various social environments.

⁵⁵ <https://mdk.opole.pl/o-nas.html> (Accessed: August 27, 2024).

⁵⁶ See focus group 2- opinion of Michał Kramarz, Head of the Department of Investor Service in Opole (Annex A3).

The Foundation realizes its goals through cooperation with natural and legal persons as well as local government and government administration units and international organizations whose activities are related to the goals of the Foundation, acquiring outstanding educators, psychologists and organizers of social activities who aim at the well-being of the child. Moreover, Foundation supports children and young people by organizing and financing free food points for children and youth, organizing and financing the purchase of school textbooks and teaching aids.

What is more, Foundation is active by organizing courses and training for people working with children and youth, by developing, implementing, and supporting educational programs that promote a healthy lifestyle without alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs, in promoting and financing forms of contact between young people and nature, or by implementing scholarship and training programs for school and university youth, volunteers, and specialists in various fields.

https://www.facebook.com/fundacjapiastunopole/?locale=pl_PL



The 'Europa Iuvenis' Association

The association is a youth organization operating in the Opole region. Energy, potential, mobility, Europe - these are the key words of the association's activities. The association wants to show youth energy, release its potential, create new opportunities

for international mobility of young people and discover Europe together. It wants to change and create reality in our local communities. It wants to show what a youthful Europe and Opole region can look like. In the 'Europa Iuvenis' Association, they believe that young people can and should create the reality around them. They have the potential and opportunities - all they need to do is create the right space for them to do so. The activities of the association fall into 3 main areas: Civic education and youth policy European education Youth initiatives

<https://www.europaiuvenis.org/kim-jestesmy/>



The Association of German Minority Youth in the Republic of Poland

The mission of the Association is to cultivate and popularize the German language, cultural heritage, art and traditions of the German nation, teaching German, strengthening friendly relations between German and Polish youth. Additionally, the Association supports education and acquisition of professional qualifications of the Association members, represents the interests of youth of German origin, and particularly the members of the Association, in the public forum. The activities carried out include, among others: organizing camps and language courses, preparing historical, political, educational (e.g. rhetoric) and popular science seminars. The Association conducts cultural activities (concerts, reviews of works, exhibitions) and organizes pro-ecological activities (camps).

<https://bjdm.eu/>

- c. Role of trade unions in the design and implementation of urban youth policies

Opole, like Bialystok, does not have a separate document dedicated to youth policy, although there are many references to youth needs and specific actions addressed to this group in 'Opole Development Strategy until 2030'. The document was developed:

- after asking opinion of Opole's citizens (on 'In what direction should Opole develop?' and 'What is the biggest challenge for Opole in the coming years?'),
- after discussion with entrepreneurs and scientists,
- after discussion within ten industry-specific/thematic working groups.

The strategy was built together with residents. The City Office organized thematic workshops and conducted quantitative and qualitative research together with the University of Opole. In addition, employees of the Office contacted residents directly - on the street, in squares, residents could talk directly to the mayor about the City Development Strategy. In addition, a social consultation process was organized. While the role of trade unions in shaping the strategy (especially those elements that concerned young people) was not highlighted, it is worth noting that one of the main starting points was the assumption that what will happen in a dozen or so years, in a few dozen years, will be decided by today's youth. That is why, together with one of the newspapers (the local editorial office of Gazeta Wyborcza), the City Office joined a journalistic project in which high school youth were asked how they see Opole in 2030. For almost three months, students in Opole high schools and technical schools talked about the strengths and weaknesses of the city, its promotion, prospects, and their vision of an ideal city from their point of view. The vision of the city was also discussed in workshops with representatives of the Youth City Council in Opole.

d. Remarks on the urban policy subsystem

The urban policy subsystem of Opole is composed of several governmental and non-governmental actors, structured to meet the needs of its residents, including young people. The key governing bodies are the City Council and the Mayor of the City, who collaborate to ensure effective policy implementation. The City Council holds legislative power and supervises the mayor's work, with the possibility for citizens, including youth, to introduce legislation through civic initiatives.

While Opole lacks a department dedicated solely to youth affairs, various municipal bodies engage with youth policy. These include the Public Services Centre, Housing Department, and Social Policy Department. There is also the Centre for Civic Dialogue, which promotes civic engagement and supports non-governmental organizations. The municipal government operates youth-specific institutions, such as the Youth Culture Centre and the Municipal Education Support Centre, which foster youth development, particularly through educational and recreational programs.

Non-governmental actors also play a key role in supporting youth in Opole. These include:

- Piastun Foundation: focused on helping disadvantaged youth and promoting social inclusion through educational programs, recreational activities, and financial support.
- Europa Iuvenis Association: focuses on youth civic education, European integration, and promoting international mobility for young people.
- Association of German Minority Youth: works to preserve and promote German cultural heritage while supporting education and environmental awareness among youth of German descent.

Trade unions have a relatively limited role in youth policy, though they could be part of a broader dialogue during the development of Opole's 2030 Development Strategy. Youth perspectives were widely integrated into this long-term vision for the city. The Strategy was prepared in open way through workshops, public consultations, and engagement with the Youth City Council.

To conclude, Opole's urban policy subsystem is characterized by:

- a collaborative governance framework, with active engagement between municipal authorities and residents, including young people.
- the presence of mechanisms such as the Youth City Council and opportunities for public participation ensure that youth voices are heard.
- while there is no formal youth policy, the integration of youth needs into broader municipal strategies indicates a commitment to fostering youth development.
- additionally, the vibrant role of NGOs further enhances the youth policy landscape, complementing governmental efforts by addressing social inequalities, promoting civic education, and fostering youth mobility.
- Opole's youth-focused initiatives, such as spaces dedicated for youth activities, underscore a growing emphasis on youth engagement in urban governance. This framework sets a strong foundation for more targeted youth policies in the future.

10. City 2 _ Policy 1

a. Presentation of the policy

A project '*Entrepreneurial and Intrapreneurial Mindset in Young People through the Dynamisation of Competences, Teaching Methodologies and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem - E-COOL*'⁵⁷ was implemented between 01.06.2018 – 31.05.2023.

It was an international partnership project co-financed by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund under the INTERREG EUROPE programme. The total project budget was 2,044,477.00 €.

The lead partner of the project was Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Shipping of Seville (Spain). Other partners were: The South Moravian Region (Czech Republic), Regional Development Fund on behalf of Region of Attica (Greece), Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurships and Crafts (Croatia), Harghita County Council (Romania), Puglia Region (Italy), Zemgale Planning Region (Latvia), Hanze University of Applied Science Groningen (Netherlands), Devon County Council (UK) and The Agglomeration Opole Trust (Poland).

The project was divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 - the policy learning,
- Phase 2 – developing the action plans (by partners) providing details on how the lessons learned from the cooperation could be implemented in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within a given region.

What is important, the phase 2 of the project was completely dedicated to the implementation of these plans in all partner regions, also in Opole Agglomeration. The analysis below is completely focus on this region and implementation of its Action Plan⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Title in Polish: 'Postawy przedsiębiorcze i kreatywne u młodych ludzi poprzez dynamizację kompetencji, metod nauczania i ekosystemu przedsiębiorczości E-COOL'.

The activities planned within an initiative were inspired by good practices developed within the project: Fomento de la cultura emprendedora en el ambito educativo (Promotion of an entrepreneurial culture in education) implemented by Andalusia Emprende, Fundacion Publica Andaluza (Andalusian Public Foundation, Spain).

The need to implement activities for the benefit of young people's entrepreneurship resulted from the diagnosed situation of the region. As this diagnosis showed, one of the main problems in the region was the process of depopulation. Over the years covered by the analysis 2014-2019, a negative trend was observed in the Opole Agglomeration area, related to the constantly decreasing population. In 2019, the population decreased by 2.3% compared to 2014 (even higher values were recorded at a higher level: Opole Voivodeship, where depopulation in the analysed years took the value of 4.8%). The main reasons for the population decline are low natural increase and negative migration balance. The diagnosis also indicated that the voivodeship had lower than the national average entrepreneurship indicators (the diagnosis analysed the indicator of the number of business entities per 10,000 inhabitants). The region is one of eight voivodeships with the lowest entrepreneurship levels in Poland. Moreover, the unemployment rate recorded among young people (aged 15-29) was twice as high as the total unemployment rate in the Opole voivodeship.

The Action Plan assumed two actions:

Action 1 – Organization of classes shaping entrepreneurial attitudes among students of Opole schools.

In this respect, it was assumed that the action would strengthen cooperation (in the field of entrepreneurship development) between the business and education environments. It was also assumed that with the involvement of local governments it would be possible to develop innovative for the region, long-term and consistent approach to building local partnerships cooperating to strengthen entrepreneurial attitudes among young people and promote the culture of entrepreneurship (the action included, among others, meetings with young entrepreneurs who shared their knowledge and experience as well as study visits to local entrepreneurs).

Action 2 – Organization of a talent competition in the field of entrepreneurship.

In this respect, the Action Plan assumed the involvement of a team of experts whose task would be to support students who would participate in the competition. In addition, it was planned to organize workshops for the teams participating in the competition and select the winners of the competition and award prizes - one in each of the following categories:

- technological talents (assuming technological development),
- social talents (assuming development in the social sphere),
- mobile talents (using mobile applications),
- talents in the field of environmental protection.

⁵⁸ https://projects2014-2020.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1631862562.pdf (Accessed: September 22, 2024).

11. Identity card of the policy

- Name: 'Entrepreneurial and Intrapreneurial Mindset in Young People through the Dynamisation of Competences, Teaching Methodologies and Entrepreneurial Ecosystem - E-COOL'
- Topic:
entrepreneurship and creativity among young people
- Beneficiaries/target group:
students from 60 post-primary education institutions from the Opole Voivodeship, with particular emphasis on institutions from the Opole Agglomeration.
- Content:
 - o Policy goals:
An initiative aimed to provide young people with the opportunity for high-quality entrepreneurship education, going beyond the activities carried out so far, which focused mainly on improving the competences of young people. An initiative focused on integrated activities aimed at creating an environment in which it will be possible to shape modern entrepreneurial attitudes and creative thinking, developing young people's ideas in this area. All activities were included in the Action Plan (AP).
 - o Policy instruments (e.g. economic transfers -grants/fellowships-in-kind resources, such as fee use of public premises, training programmes, advice, counselling, etc.):
Promoting entrepreneurship among young people through:
 - conducting a series of classes in schools on entrepreneurship development,
 - meetings with young entrepreneurs who shared their knowledge and experience,
 - study visits to local entrepreneurs,
 - a talent competition in entrepreneurship (as well as workshops and support for students by experts) in four categories (technological talents, social talents, mobile talents, i.e. using mobile applications and talents in the field of environmental protection).
- Expected results
In accordance with the Action Plan, it was forecasted that the effects of implementing the actions envisaged in the plan (along with the adaptation of elements of good practices defined within the new financial perspective being programmed at that time) would have a real impact on the implemented regional policy. This were supposed to be achieved by:
 - promoting interregional exchange of good practices and transfer of knowledge on entrepreneurship among young people,

- implementing cooperation within innovative actions concerning target groups,
- taking actions leading to the development of entrepreneurial attitudes among young people,
- creating a new action plan to provide professional support to young entrepreneurs,
- taking actions to stop the emigration of young people,
- simplifying procedures and ensuring the availability and effectiveness of entrepreneurship support,
- promoting innovative strategic projects, demonstration and pilot projects,
- simplifying financing instruments facilitating the development of entrepreneurship among young people and vocational training,
- creating new financing instruments facilitating the start of entrepreneurship among young people, with particular emphasis on those planning to emigrate,
- improving the selection and assessment processes in the field of entrepreneurship among young people,
- changing the rules on public subsidy programmes - these rules should be changed to make them more accessible to young people. The conditions for support (grants, loans) from EU and national/regional funds should be changed to make them mutually complementary and more accessible.

It was expected also that people participating in the activities provided for in the Action Plan would be better prepared to take on challenges in both their professional and personal lives, with a greater likelihood of establishing their own business in the future. Interventions in this area have the potential not only to increase the level of competitiveness and create new jobs in the region, but also to achieve social goals and contribute to the self-fulfilment of individuals. It was also assumed that the effects of the project would be observed both at the level of local markets and the region, supporting the management of the potential of technical and managerial staff and the resources of the young generation, particularly important in the context of strengthening the economic sphere of the region and creating conditions for the stable development of local economic markets.

- Achieved results (info based on existing evaluation or follow-up reports)

One of the challenges connected with the implementation of Action Plan was financing. As part of the preparations for the new EU financial perspective (2021-2027), The Agglomeration Opole Trust had taken steps to guarantee financing of the tasks indicated in the Action Plan (as an element of a broader project in the field of supporting vocational education) in a non-competitive mode under the program implemented at the regional level European Union Funds for Opole for the years 2021-2027. For this purpose, a project fiche (simplified project description) was submitted to the Managing Authority

(Marshal's Office of the Opole Voivodeship). The project was namely indicated in the regional operational program 'European Funds for Opole 2021-2027'⁵⁹, which should be considered as a success of The Agglomeration Opole Trust.

- Nature of policy change

Since the activities were part of a larger project, they must be carried out in accordance with the assumptions. At the same time, detailed data regarding, for example, the challenges related to the implementation of the activities could not be provided to us in September this year⁶⁰.

12. Policy network

- Actors' description and identification

In terms of creating the Action Plan, the main entity was the Opole Agglomeration Association.

Other partners and entities involved in the implementation of activities were:

- 21 communes from the Opole Agglomeration area with particular emphasis on secondary and vocational schools,
- Voivodeship Labour Office in Opole,
- District Labour Offices in Opole and Krapkowice,
- Opole Centre for Economic Development,
- Municipal Centre for Education Support in Opole,
- Opole Chamber of Commerce,
- Chamber of Crafts in Opole,
- Department of Strategic Studies and Socio-Economic Policy, Faculty of Economics, University of Opole,
- Academic Business Incubator of the University of Opole,
- Opole University of Technology,
- European Information Point Europe Direct- Opole,
- Science and Technology Park in Opole,
- Entrepreneurs from the Opole voivodeship,
- associations working for the development of entrepreneurship.

13. Remarks and comments on policy

The idea of sharing experience from implementing initiatives - in this case aimed at young people - and then implementing activities that have already been successfully verified in another region is interesting and may be a good solution in centres (e.g. small, medium-sized

⁵⁹ https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/media/137901/FEO-2021-2027_w2.pdf (Accessed: September 22, 2024).

⁶⁰ Planned interviews and participation in focus group had to be cancelled because of the flood in southern and south-western regions of Poland. The dramatic situation required all authorities, institutions, social partners, and residents to put all their efforts to protect the health and life of residents and animals and to limit the scale of destruction and then - to remove the destruction, which may last at least until December 2024.

cities), which, for example, due to limited budgets, cannot always afford experimental activities. Sharing knowledge is an opportunity for a broader, different perspective on a given activity. For example, as emphasized during the conference summarizing the project, 'We will remember the period of project implementation as a time of intensive learning, exchange of experiences and building cooperation networks at the international and regional level'⁶¹. The project referred to entrepreneurship of young people. The experience and knowledge gathered during the project implementation by the institutions involved in the project will certainly have a positive impact on the activities to youth.

14. Bialystok and Opole _ Joint Policy

a. Presentation of the policy

The Act of 14 March 2014 amending the Act on employment promotion and labour market institutions and certain other acts (Journal of Laws item 598) introduced innovative solutions aimed at increasing the impact of labour market policy on employment growth, mitigating the effects of structural mismatch and improving the efficiency of labour market policy. In this respect, a package of solutions was introduced, previously tested in the pilot project 'Your career - Your choice'. The settlement voucher was one of them⁶².

The settlement voucher is a form of assistance to unemployed young people introduced to the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions⁶³ in May 2014. It is intended to encourage young people to move to other regions of the country for work. As Jacek Męcina, the then deputy minister of labour, explained, the intention was to support the spatial mobility of young people. Support under the instrument can be applied for by a young person who wants to work or run a business in a town located more than 80 km from their place of residence or one that would take more than three hours to get to (every day). To receive it, all they need to do is show an employment contract at the employment office, and the employment period must be at least 6 months⁶⁴. Importantly, the act specifies that the settlement voucher is granted by the county governor⁶⁵.

The money granted as part of the settlement voucher is specified in the agreement - however, in accordance with the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions, it is an amount not higher than 200% of the average salary. In the second quarter of 2024, the average salary was PLN 8,038.41 (approximately €1,915), so the

⁶¹ <https://aglomeracja-opolska.pl/realizowane-projekty/e-cool/konferencja-podsumowujaca-realizacje-projektu-e-cool> (Accessed: September 29, 2024).

⁶² Ministerstwo Gospodarki, *Przedsiębiorczość w Polsce*, Warszawa 2015 [Ministry of Economy, *Entrepreneurship in Poland*, Warsaw 2015], p. 83.

⁶³ Art. 66n. of Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy [the Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions], Dz. U. 2024, No. 475, 742, 858, 863, 1089.

⁶⁴ It is worth emphasizing that the required period of 6 months of employment may include, among others, sick leave as well as maternity, parental and paternity leave - therefore, using the support does not interfere with, among others, plans to start a family.

⁶⁵ The three-level administrative (territorial) division of Poland was introduced on 1st January 1999 and in accordance with it, the territory of Poland was divided into voivodeships, then into counties (including communes with the status of cities with county rights) and communes. The county governor is the chairman of the executive body of the county, i.e. the county board. It should be noted that the county governor has a dichotomous systemic role: he is a quasi-self-government body and a government body. There is no statutory definition of the governor as a county body (she/he is only the chairman of the executive body, i.e. the board), and the county governor is entrusted with tasks previously carried out by county offices (local government administration apparatus).

maximum amount of funding was PLN 16,076.82 (approximately €3,830)⁶⁶. The regulations state that these funds should be used to cover the housing costs related to taking up employment, other gainful work or business activity.

A young unemployed person who has received a settlement voucher is required to:

- within 30 days from the date of receipt of the settlement voucher to provide the district labour office with a document confirming the commencement of employment, other gainful employment or economic activity,
- within 7 days, respectively from the date of loss of employment, other gainful employment or cessation of economic activity and from the date of taking up new employment, other gainful employment or economic activity, to submit to the district labour office a declaration of the loss of employment, other gainful employment or cessation of economic activity and taking up new employment, other gainful employment or economic activity,
- within 8 months from the date of receipt of the settlement voucher to document remaining in employment, performing other gainful employment or conducting economic activity for a period of 6 months⁶⁷.

Failure to meet the above conditions results in the return of the settlement voucher amount in full or proportionally.

15. Identity card of the policy

- Name: a settlement voucher
 - Topic:
'Settlement voucher' connected to mobility of young people in relation to their work or running a business in other region than their place of residence.
- Beneficiaries/target group
The target group are young people under 30 years old, who are unemployed and who take up employment, other gainful employment or business activity outside their current place of residence.
Such a person may receive a voucher based on the application submitted by him/her if:
 - from performing such work, the person will receive a salary or income of at least the minimum gross monthly salary and will be subject to social insurance,
 - the distance from the place of previous residence to the place where the unemployed person will settle in connection with taking up employment, other gainful work or economic activity is at least 80 km or the travel time to this place and return to the place of previous residence by public transport exceeds a total of at least 3 hours per day,

⁶⁶ <https://oposele.praca.gov.pl/dla-bezrobotnych-i-poszukujacych-pracy/formy-wsparcia/bon-na-zasiedlenie>
(Accessed: September 18, 2024).

⁶⁷ Therefore, if a person worked for e.g. 3 months for one employer, then had a one-month break in employment, and then took up three-month employment with another employer, even in a different region (but still located more than 80 km from the original place of residence), they do not have to return the voucher - it is important that they show 6 months of employment (or running a business activity) within 8 months.

- the person will remain in employment, perform other gainful work or conduct economic activity for a period of at least 6 months.
- Content:
 - o Policy goals

The goal of the policy was to increase the mobility of young people.
 - o Policy instruments (e.g. economic transfers -grants/fellowships-in-kind resources, such as free use of public premises, training programmes, advice, counselling, etc.)

The policy instrument was a non-refundable (after meeting the requirements) financial assistance in the form of a voucher to cover the costs of living in another region in connection with taking up employment or running a business outside the current place of residence.
- Expected results

Settlement vouchers were supposed to be an instrument to support the mobility of young people. From the point of view of mobility theory (in the neoclassical approach), this support is justified in that people who cannot take up employment in each region (e.g. due to a mismatch of qualifications with the needs of the local labour market) go to other regions where there is demand for work corresponding to their qualifications. Thanks to the settlement voucher, migration costs are significantly reduced, which encourages such mobility and ultimately (in the intention of the creators of the instrument) reduces unemployment among young people.

Nevertheless, this solution – that is beneficial for young people - is not necessarily fully beneficial for the region from which young people will emigrate, thus it is not a win-win-win scenario (including also regions to which young people migrate). In the demographic context, for emigration region this means an outflow of young people and may deepen problems such as the ageing of society.

In particular, cities such as Opole (or Bialystok) are in a difficult situation, whose labour markets are not as large as in neighbouring cities - in the case of Opole, this is e.g. Wroclaw. From Opole's perspective, a much better solution would be a 'reverse settlement voucher', i.e. a voucher for young people who want to live in Opole. The instrument seems to give primacy to the situation on the labour market over the demographic situation and development of smaller centres. There is also a lack of compensation, and the city authorities must make their own efforts to promote the city as not only a good place to study, but also to live, start a family and take up work or do business.
- Achieved results (info based on existing evaluation or follow-up reports)

Initially, the settlement voucher was not a very popular instrument for activating the unemployed. A few years later, the share of people taking up work outside their place of residence under the settlement voucher increased significantly - from 7.6% (in the period from May to the end of 2014) to 52.3% (in 2018) - already in 2018 it was the most popular form of activating the

unemployed. Representatives of various district labour offices indicated, among other things, that the interest in settlement vouchers was greatly influenced by the promotion of this form of support in social media. The reasons for using the voucher included: family matters, earning motivation (including the issue of higher salaries for similar work in other parts of the country), greater opportunities for professional development, as well as the desire to start a business in a town with greater access to the market for products or services and the desire to live and link one's career path with a large urban centre⁶⁸.

- Nature of policy change

The program remains essentially unchanged from its original version. The act specifies the maximum amount of the voucher - it is 200% of the average salary in Poland, the exact value is established in the contract with the unemployed young person - up to 30 years of age and this is the only element that is flexible.

16. Policy network

'Settlement voucher' is a national labour market instrument. Labour market institutions, which include district labour offices and voivodeship labour office act as intermediaries in granting the voucher. As far as implementation of the instrument is concerned, Voluntary Labour Corps and employment agencies were also engaged. As the representatives of labour offices indicated in the interview, the role of social entities and interest groups is very important. Non-governmental organizations, schools, and training institutions play an important role in career counselling for young people, during which they promote instruments of professional activation. Each instrument of youth policy requires promotion and flow of information about it. If young people do not hear about the possibilities of using such tools, they will not use them⁶⁹.

On the other hand, one can notice, that 'settlement voucher' as a national labour market instrument is not a tailor made, 'suits to all Polish regions' solution. Thus, Opole (as well as Bialystok) medium-sized cities were put in unfavourable situation when young talented residents were motivated by the 'settlement voucher' to leave the city. Thus, labour market institutions advocated to change the act and introduces a twin instrument - reversal of current one. Such proposals met with no interest from the government authorities (ministries).

It follows that the actors engaged in implementing analysed instrument at the regional level (their involvement was an obligation resulting from the law adopted at national level) were open for collaboration, knowing that implementation of labour market instrument requires engagement of social partners, that is necessary for promotion and success of the process. Still, authorities at the national level seemed to be less open for discussion and cooperation with the representatives of regional and local labour offices. Such attitude impacts the effectiveness of policy instrument that after hearing the regional and local voices could be a positive policy instrument, within which young people, labour markets and cities benefit. Ultimately, failure to take into account the situation of individual cities, especially those with

⁶⁸ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/bony-trampolina-do-ryнку-pracy> (Accessed: September 18, 2024).

⁶⁹ See: Interview 2 (Annex A1).

smaller labour markets, excludes the recognition of this instrument as a tool that can be assessed in terms of win-win-win scenario.

17. Remarks and comments on policy

The 'settlement voucher' enjoys great interest among young people, especially those who want to take up work in other cities. This applies primarily to people with higher education who want to find their place in large companies, corporations, which are lacking in the labour market, e.g. in Bialystok or Opole. However, this causes a brain drain, the escape of young, highly educated labour from the city, which is a very unfavourable effect from the point of view of Bialystok or Opole.

The voucher should have the opposite character - it should be intended for settlement, not resettlement. There was a proposal from the labour market institutions to change the act in this respect - concerning the reversal of this instrument - towards actual settlement, but so far it has not met with the interest of the Ministry.

It would be good to introduce a twin instrument, next to the settlement voucher. For cities like Bialystok and Opole, it would be a nice morsel to attract these people⁷⁰.

18. Final conclusion

⁷⁰ See: Interview 2 (Annex A1).

To sum up, both cities create favourable conditions for the integration of young people - both the city authorities of Białystok and Opole - as well as numerous partners: institutions, non-governmental organisations, youth organisations are involved in the constant process of creating better living conditions for residents, including young people. There are some limits like budget constraints (still, Opole has one of the largest civic budgets, in terms of the province, in Poland, but also on a city scale). There is, however, sometimes a problem with lack of diagnosis of the needs⁷¹. Both cities are often chosen by students, liked by their residents, placing great emphasis on green solutions, calmer than large metropolises - which is important in the case of starting a family. The challenge is to persuade young people to stay in the city. Emigration to larger centres (to Warsaw in the case of Białystok, to Wrocław in the case of Opole) is a challenge for demography and for the development of cities, which often lose very talented labour, which is felt by entrepreneurs. The functioning of youth city councils, the allocation of special space for youth organizations, the implementation of projects/programs dedicated exclusively to young people are evidence of the integration of young people, whose voice counts. City authorities are open for youth opinion and suggestions. It is enough to point out, using the example of Białystok, that the Youth City Council issues opinions on draft resolutions concerning youth, takes part in the development of the commune's strategic documents for youth and monitors the implementation of the commune's strategic documents for youth. Each councillor of the Youth City Council in Białystok has the right to submit motions, postulates and initiatives related to the functioning of the city of Białystok, in matters concerning youth⁷².

The 'Apartment for graduate' initiative implemented in Białystok is an example of an initiative that reflects high commitment of city's authorities in policy toward young people and their needs. This initiative may be considered as one of the best practices for youth inclusion in Poland.

Plenty of facts confirm that this initiative can undoubtedly be considered as a successful one - both from the point of view of young people, the local labour market and the development of the city. Beneficiaries stated – among others – that program was a motivation to young people to actively participate in the local labour market, to focus on personal development, and to plan a future tied to Białystok. What - in long term is the most crucial – program in relation of its beneficiaries helps start a family without a fear. Therefore, the most desired win-win-win scenario has been fulfilled.

Indicating the conditions for the success of this initiative, it is necessary to mention strong and direct engagement of city authorities: Mayor of the Białystok – Prof. Tadeusz Truskolaski, Białystok City Council and (at the promotion stage) the biggest universities in the city: the University of Białystok, the Białystok University of Technology, and the Medical University of Białystok and student associations. Still, financial engagement of the city

⁷¹ See focus group 2- opinion of Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa, Opole Agglomeration Association (Annex A3).

⁷² Uchwała nr LIV/781/22 Rady Miasta Białystok z dnia 23 maja 2022 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu uchwały w sprawie powołania Młodzieżowej Rady Miasta Białystok i nadania jej statutu, Dz. U. z 2022 r. poz. 583 [Resolution No. LIV/781/22 of the Białystok City Council of 23 May 2022 on the announcement of the uniform text of the resolution on the establishment of the Białystok Youth City Council and granting it a statute, Journal of Laws of 2022, no. 583].

authorities may be considered as *sine qua non* condition. On the other hand, the evaluation of the implementation of this project allows us to draw an encouraging conclusion that when certain issues (in this case the needs of young people) are given high priority by local authorities, which are able to identify these needs very well, and the enormous involvement of the authorities allows barriers to be overcome, including such important barriers as financial ones. Such solutions may be surely a suitable case for transferability in other European cities.

ANNEX

A1. Verbatim transcription translated in English of the Interviews with key-informants

Interview 1 [online, conducted by Dorota Perło, September 2024]

Ms. Monika Jakoniuk, Chief Specialist Department of Strategy and Development Bialystok City Office

Mr. Andrzej Ostrowski - Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Bialystok

The programme under the working title 'Housing for Graduates' is a scheme aimed at helping young people acquire their first independent home. It is targeted at top students and graduates of higher education institutions who live and work in the City of Bialystok.

The initiator of the 'Housing for Graduates' programme is deputy Krzysztof Truskolaski. This programme is promoted at the local level and is aimed at the residents of Bialystok.

It should be noted that meeting housing needs, along with employment conditions, remains one of the primary factors determining young people's decisions about where to live. The observed trend of graduates from secondary schools and universities migrating to other, more attractive cities, such as Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk, and Kraków, places an obligation on the City of Bialystok to undertake comprehensive actions to reverse these trends. One of the elements of this system is to offer additional incentives to graduates of Bialystok's universities and skilled workers. The programme is designed to help young people obtain a functional apartment on favourable terms, adapted to their financial capabilities.

The programme is implemented by the Municipal Property Management Board in Bialystok in cooperation with the local academic community.

It is assumed that the programme will:

- *create an alternative, more affordable housing option for young people compared to the commercial rental market,*
- *limit the migration of graduates from Bialystok universities and essential professionals to other centres offering employment conditions similar to those in Bialystok,*
- *encourage young people to move to Bialystok, increasing the potential of the city's qualified workforce.*

The programme will facilitate the rational use of new housing stock, which is intended to meet housing needs and is also one of the elements of the system being created by the city to build Bialystok's development potential. This will be achieved by maximising opportunities arising from cooperation and connections between academic activities, business development, and the support offered by the city through its resources, including ensuring a welcoming living environment.

The 'Housing for Graduates' programme has already been implemented in several cities across the country. For example:

- *Szczecin and Poznań run the programme based on the resources of the Social Housing Association (TBS), where, unfortunately, participation is required, which often poses an insurmountable barrier for young people. To give young professionals a chance, cities are cooperating with local businesses, which can contribute the necessary amount on behalf of their employees,*
- *Łódź and Toruń run the programme based on the housing stock of the Municipality with the participation of the management unit responsible for this resource, although they allocate only a few flats per year for this purpose.*

So far, the observations of these cities regarding the implementation of the programme have been very favourable. They indicate that young people, knowing they can take advantage of housing assistance, often plan their careers already at the stage of choosing an academic centre or during their studies. They diligently develop their academic careers, organise

conferences, write research papers, and begin their professional careers as early as their third year of studies, thereby increasing their chances of securing housing.

It has been assumed that the implementation of the programme, on the scale provided by the construction of residential buildings on Depowa Street (renamed Absolvent Street), will undoubtedly contribute to promoting our city nationwide.

This programme was introduced by a resolution of the Bialystok City Council regarding the rules for renting flats from the municipal housing stock of the Municipality of Bialystok. Based on this resolution, flats from the City of Bialystok's housing stock located in newly constructed buildings on Depowa Street (renamed Absolvent Street) were allocated, with up to 65% of the newly built municipal stock being designated for this purpose, for the duration of employment in the city of Bialystok.

The housing support offer is directed at:

- *students in their final year of higher education with an average grade of at least 4.5 in their final academic year, recommended by the university's rector or an authorised person,*
- *graduates of higher education institutions who completed their studies with an average grade of at least 4.5.*

Conditions for participating in the programme:

- *not owning or co-owning a property, not having a cooperative right to a flat or building, not having the right to a flat within the TBS stock, or not renting a flat from the housing stock of the Municipality of Bialystok,*
- *living in the city of Bialystok,*
- *being employed under a work contract, with the place of work being the city of Bialystok,*
- *being under the age of 35 at the time of application,*
- *having an average grade of at least 4.5.*

Interest in the programme has been and continues to be high. The goal was achieved by creating a list of potential tenants in the expected number, i.e., up to 65% of the newly built building, which equates to 120 people.

Tenancy agreements for these flats will be concluded for the duration of employment in the city of Bialystok. Tenants of these flats will be required to provide the landlord with a current certificate confirming their employment in the city of Bialystok by 31 May each year.

If the tenancy lasts uninterrupted for 10 years, the agreement, initially concluded for the duration of employment, will be extended for an indefinite period.

Interview 2 [online, conducted by Dorota Perło, September 2024]

Piotr Matusiak, Director of the District Labour Office in Bialystok (PUP)

Maciej Filipowicz, PhD, Labour Market Observatory - Voivodeship Labour Office in Opole (WUP)

1. What was your role in developing, implementing and evaluating the program/project in question?

'Settlement voucher' is a national labour market instrument defined in art. 66n of the Act of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions. Labour market institutions, which include PUP and WUP, act as intermediaries in granting the "settlement voucher".

2. How was this program/project developed? Who initiated this initiative?

The 'settlement voucher' was introduced in May 2014 based on the amendment to the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions. The initiative to introduce such an instrument was created at the national level. Its aim was to professionally activate unemployed people. It was planned to increase the degree of their spatial mobility and thus combat unemployment, especially of a structural nature. It was assumed that the voucher would be awarded primarily to people from villages and towns who would like to move to large cities in search of work, but at the same time it would be beneficial for unemployed students and residents of large academic centres who decided to return to their place of origin after completing their education.

3. Was the program promoted at local level or was it a part of a regional, national or European program?

The 'settlement voucher' is a national instrument promoted at local level by the District Labour Offices.

4. What were the goals of this program/project and what is the target group of young people?

The goal of the 'settlement voucher', commonly called a migration or resettlement voucher, is to professionally activate young unemployed people, through financial support in the amount of no more than twice the average salary, granted to the unemployed person on the basis of an agreement concluded between them and the starost⁷³ of the county they have previously resided in. The benefit is issued at the request of the unemployed person, and the funds granted under the voucher should be spent by the beneficiary to cover the costs of living outside their current place of residence.

The target group is young people – up to 30 years of age, who are registered with the District Labour Office as unemployed. An unemployed person up to 30 years of age can obtain such a voucher in connection with taking up employment, other gainful employment or business activity outside the place of previous residence, provided that certain conditions are met. Firstly, such a person must earn a salary or income of at least the minimum gross monthly salary and will be subject to social insurance. Secondly, the distance from the place of previous residence to the town where the person will live in connection with taking up employment must be at least 80 km or the travel time to this town and return to the place of previous residence by public transport exceeds at least 3 hours per day in total. The last condition is to remain in employment for a period of at least 6 months.

5. How was this program/project implemented? What instruments were used?

'Settlement vouchers' were and are implemented through the District Labour Offices. It is financed by national funds.

⁷³ County governor [in Polish: starosta].

6. What was the expected and actual timeline for this program?

The 'settlement voucher' is a continuous instrument, available to unemployed people since 2014.

7. What were the expected results of the program/project? Were they achieved?

The 'settlement voucher' enjoys great interest among young people, especially those who want to take up work in other cities. This applies primarily to people with higher education who want to find their place in large companies, corporations, which are lacking on the labour market, e.g. in Bialystok or Opole. However, this causes a brain drain, the escape of young, highly educated labour from the city, which is a very unfavourable effect from the point of view of Bialystok or Opole.

8. What kind of obstacles did you encounter in implementing this program/project?

The 'settlement voucher' did not work because it stimulates the relocation of young people from Bialystok or Opole to large urban centres (Warsaw, Wroclaw), and only to a small extent - from small centres in the Podlaskie or Opole voivodeships to Bialystok and Opole. The so-called "relocation" of young people is taking place, and not a permanent connection with the local labour market. The voucher should have the opposite character - it should be intended for settlement, not resettlement. On the other hand, the mobility of the workforce is also a mechanism driving the labour market, and therefore these are very difficult political decisions.

There was a proposal from the labour market institutions to change the act in this respect - concerning the reversal of this instrument - towards actual settlement, but so far it has not met with the interest of the Ministry. The intention of this instrument was to apply to smaller counties, where the unemployed had no chance of finding a place on the labour market. It would be good to introduce a twin instrument, next to the settlement voucher. For cities like Bialystok and Opole, it would be a nice morsel to attract these people. Young people who study in cities other than their place of residence often start working during their studies and, as a result, settle on these labour markets. The advantage of such a reversal is the IT industry, where young people work from home, often return to Bialystok, and are still most often employed by companies outside the city. But this also shows that Bialystok is a nice place to live.

9. Which entities put the most effort into designing and implementing?

The greatest effort was put in by labour market institutions, in particular: PUP, WUP, the Voluntary Labour Corps, employment agencies.

10. From your point of view, was the role of social entities and interest groups important for the effectiveness and success of this program/project?

Yes, the role of social entities and interest groups is very important. Non-governmental organizations, schools, and training institutions play an important role in career counselling for young people, during which they promote instruments of professional activation. Each instrument of youth policy requires promotion and flow of information about it. If young people do not hear about the possibilities of using such tools, they will not use them.

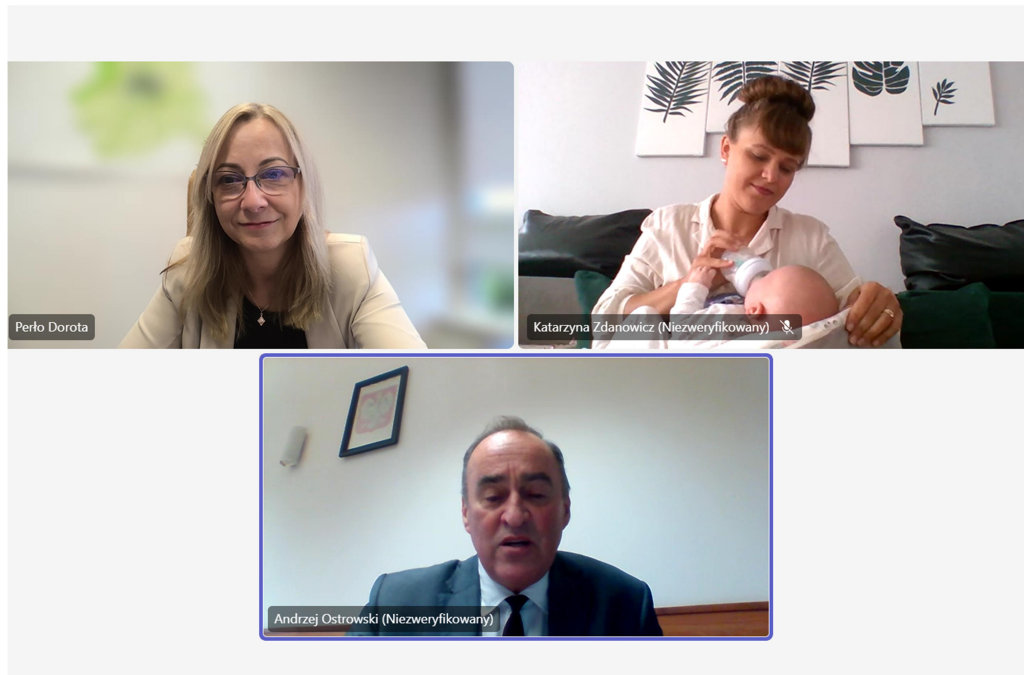
A2. Verbatim transcription translated in English – focus group 1

Focus group participants:

- Andrzej Ostrowski, Director of the Municipal Property Management Board in Bialystok (ZMK)
- Katarzyna Zadykowicz, graduate of one of Bialystok's universities

The host:

- Prof. Dorota Perło



I. **Time** – 54 minutes

II. **Place** – meeting online MS Teams

III. **The course of the meeting**

D. Perło: *Good morning, I am extremely pleased that you have agreed to participate in today's meeting. My name is Dorota Perło, and I am a faculty member at the Faculty of Economics and Finance at the University of Bialystok, where I hold the position of university professor.*

The Faculty of Economics and Finance at the University of Bialystok, together with 14 partners, including Politecnico di Milano from Italy, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from Spain, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro from Italy, Univerza v Ljubljani from Slovenia, and Institouto Ergasias GSEE from Greece, is implementing a European Commission project entitled "BACK IN TOWN – The role of industrial relations and social dialogue in supporting young people's employment and social inclusion at an urban level." The aim of the project is to assess the situation of young people in the local labour market and analyse policies/instruments aimed at supporting them, using the example of two selected cities from each country involved in the project. In Poland, these are the voivodeship cities of Bialystok and Opole.

On behalf of the Faculty of Economics and Finance at the University of Bialystok, we are working as a three-person project team, represented by: Professor Marzanna Poniatowicz, Professor Agnieszka Piekutowska, and myself.

In today's meeting, I would like to focus on one of Bialystok's youth policies, titled "Housing for Graduate," but also discuss other instruments dedicated to young people.

Director, may I kindly ask you to briefly introduce yourself and, in this context, outline your contribution to the development of the instrument known as "Housing for Graduate"?

A. Ostrowski: *Good morning, thank you for the invitation. My name is Andrzej Ostrowski, and I am the Director of the Municipal Property Management in Bialystok. The "Housing for Graduate" programme supports young people in acquiring their first independent home. It is aimed at top students and graduates of higher education institutions, who are under 35 years old, residing and working in Bialystok. The initiator of the "Housing for Graduate" programme was deputy Krzysztof Truskolaski, making it a political initiative. It was inspired by the positive experiences of other cities in Poland, such as Łódź, Poznań, Torun, and Szczecin.*

My role was to implement this initiative at the operational level. The Municipal Property Management (ZMI) was tasked by the mayor with preparing and executing the entire process related to this instrument. The youth policy of the city is carried out by the City Hall in Bialystok (UM). Various instruments are overseen by the UM departments, which possess the relevant competencies and are prepared in terms of expertise. "Housing for Graduate" falls under the competencies of the ZMK, which is why the mayor entrusted us with this task. Another instrument, for example, the "Academic Scholarships for Students and Pupils for Academic Excellence and Achievements," is implemented by the UM's Department of Education.

In the implementation of all city initiatives, other units such as the Department of Social Communication and the Centre for Social Activity are also involved, promoting initiatives and relaying information to the appropriate target groups. The "Housing for Graduate" programme is aimed at residents of Bialystok. It is designed to help young people obtain housing on favourable terms, adjusted to their financial capabilities.

The academic community in Bialystok – including higher education institutions and, through them, student organisations and associations – has actively participated in the implementation of this programme. The interest from young people was so high that the mayor decided to increase the number of flats to 120. These flats are being built on Depowa Street in Bialystok, which the City Council renamed "Graduates Street." These are flats of approximately 60 square metres, built using the newest technologies and finished as "turn-key project." They feature innovative personalised meters for heating and water. The rent for such a flat is also financially attractive – 378 PLN per month, which is about 10% of the price young people would have to pay to rent a flat on the open market.

D. Perło: *Thank you very much. I would also like to ask what is the significance of youth policies in the context of the city policies conducted by Białystok? How would you assess their effectiveness in overcoming barriers that prevent young people from successfully functioning on the labour market, or the social integration of young people in Białystok?*

A. Ostrowski: *In the context of the 'Housing for Graduate' programme, it can be confidently said that the importance of youth policies is crucial. Although the instrument is dedicated to the top graduates and students who are already employed, it will certainly motivate them to maintain their employment in Białystok and continue their personal development. Alongside this youth policy, we are implementing a number of other investments – city policies. On Graduates Street, we are building additional infrastructure to improve the quality of life for young people. Next to the housing intended for talented youth, the mayor will be constructing a nursery. The green spaces around the housing are being developed, and a nearby pond will undergo revitalisation. Young people usually have cars, so in addition to the flats, we are constructing garage spaces and parking areas. The mayor also has plans to build additional blocks of flats. Our aim is to create a space dedicated to young people. I believe that these efforts will help graduates and students at Białystok's universities find their place in our city, and as a result, we will reduce the migration of top specialists to nearby metropolitan areas, such as Warsaw. Additionally, through the promotion of our youth policy, we might even encourage other young people to come to Białystok, which would not only positively impact the development of the city's future workforce but also contribute to the growth of higher education institutions, as they would gain talented students.*

D. Perło: *Thank you very much. Now I would like to ask you for a short presentation, as well as information on how you found out about the project 'Housing for Graduate'? Was the application for this program complicated? Are policies of this type useful for young people who plan to connect their future with Białystok?*

K. Zdanowicz: *Good morning, my name is Katarzyna Zadykowicz, I am a graduate of one university in Białystok. I work at a school as a physical education teacher. I am 28 years old; I started a family, I have a 2-month-old daughter Marcelina. It seemed to me that after graduation I would find a job that would allow me to buy an apartment. The job market quickly verified my plans. I rent a small apartment with my family, for which we pay PLN 3,000 (without additional fees).*

I heard about the "Housing for Graduate" programme at my university. I graduated with an average grade higher than 4.5. When I found out that I met all the conditions to participate in the competition, I submitted my application. It was very simple. Now, I'm happy because I won the competition, and in October, I'll receive the keys to my apartment. Projects like this are very necessary for young people. They motivate us to actively participate in the local labour market, to focus on personal development, and to plan a future tied to Białystok. Białystok is a beautiful city – green, with excellent public transportation. For young people, easy movement around the city with accessible transport is very important. It's also possible to find your place in the job market here. However, the opportunity to get an apartment

really gives you wings. I was able to think about starting a family without fear, knowing that we will have our own space. The development of additional services and green areas only reinforces our belief that Bialystok is the best place for us to live. I have many friends who study in other cities or who are from other towns. Now, I'm encouraging them to move to Bialystok. When they come to visit, they appreciate the peace, cleanliness, excellent infrastructure, services, the proximity of green spaces – the high quality of life.

D. Perło: *Thank you very much. I also wanted to ask if other entities cooperate in implementing youth policies in Bialystok? Are there any formal structures or are these activities informal?*

A. Ostrowski: *Yes, in Bialystok there are many different initiatives, projects dedicated to young people. Practically every secondary school implements various educational policies financed from European Union funds, going beyond the core curriculum, which are to help young people find their place on the labour market better. These are internships, apprenticeships, study visits, or career counselling that help fill the competence gap diagnosed during research with local employers. They usually have a project formula in the form of informal structures. We also have more formalized structures, such as the Youth City Council, established to support and disseminate the idea of self-government, which initiates various needs of young people, but does not implement city policies. In our city, there is also the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations of the City of Bialystok, which brings together over 80 NGOs. It also has an advisory voice, especially in the field of social matters, support for young people with disabilities or from dysfunctional families, as well as in the area of mental support. When preparing the project 'Apartments for Graduates', we used their support by adapting the space for people with disabilities. An important role in creating city policy is also played by the Economic Council at the President of the City of Bialystok, which is appointed for each term of the mayor. It plays an advisory and consultative role, integrates business with science and local government. It helps implement educational policy in terms of adapting education to the needs of the labour market.*

D. Perło: *Thank you very much. Finally, I would like to ask for an assessment of youth policy in Bialystok, indicating successful or unsuccessful projects and activities. What contributed to the success or failure of these initiatives?*

A. Ostrowski: *In my opinion, Bialystok is a city that cares about every resident. There are policies dedicated to young people, but there are also those that focus on supporting the elderly. For example, a Senior Centre is being created in Bialystok, a place open to all seniors from our city, where you can spend time together, develop your passions, get advice. Recreational areas are being created throughout the city. In recent years, 50 such places have been prepared. They are beautifully developed, decorated with flowers, with ecological benches, sunbeds, and in some there are graduation towers. These are places open to all residents, encouraging active spending of free time, enabling the integration of the Bialystok community of different ages. They are most often financed from EU funds or from the civic budget. The mayor's latest initiative related to the civic budget concerns the creation of the School Participatory Budget. Students of public secondary schools, for which the governing body is the City of Bialystok, will be able to have a School Participatory Budget (SBP) at their disposal in the 2024/2025 school year. The amount allocated to the school implementing the SBP will be PLN 4,000. The aim of this activity is to shape civic attitudes among young people, inspire students to activities beyond the regular classes and develop cooperation skills in them. This initiative will also give students the opportunity to have a greater impact on their own school environment. The key to success in implementing youth policies is efficient city management, as well as the involvement and cooperation of various entities. The only problem in implementing policies may be the financial constraints and problems that our city is struggling with.*

K. Zdanowicz: *I have also only heard about positive initiatives of the city. I am very happy that I can develop myself and my family in Bialystok. It is also a good place for the elderly. My mother is very keen to spend her free time actively now, because there are many beautiful places dedicated to recreation, developing passions and opportunities to spend time at numerous events integrating younger and older residents, such as concerts or city dances. We lacked this before.*

D. Perło: *Thank you very much for your time. See you soon.*

K. Zdanowicz: *Thank you. Goodbye.*

A. Ostrowski: *Thank you too. See you soon.*



A3. Verbatim transcription translated in English – focus group 2

Focus group participants:

- Mr. **Michał Kramarz**, Head of the Department of Investor Service in Opole
- Ms. **Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa**, Opole Agglomeration Association

The host:

- Prof. Dorota Perło



Time – 52 minutes

Place – meeting online MS Teams

The course of the meeting:

Dorota Perło: *Good morning, I am very pleased that you have agreed to participate in today's meeting. My name is Dorota Perło, I am an employee of the Faculty of Economics and Finance at the University of Białystok. I work as a university professor. The Faculty of Economics and Finance at the University of Białystok, together with 14 partners, such as Politecnico di Milano from Italy, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from Spain, Università Degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro from Italy, Univerza v Ljubljani from Slovenia, Institutouto Ergasias Gsee from Greece, is implementing a European Commission project entitled "BACK IN TOWN - The role of industrial relations and social dialogue in supporting young people's employment and social inclusion at an urban level", the aim of which is to assess the situation of young people on the local labour market and to analyze policies/instruments aimed at supporting them on the example of two selected cities in each of the countries involved in the project. In Poland, these are voivodeship cities: Białystok and Opole. On behalf of the Faculty of Economics and Finance of the University of Białystok, we work in a three-person project team represented by: Professor Marzanna Poniatończ, Professor Agnieszka Piekutowska and me. Who do you think is the key institutional entity responsible for youth policy in the city?*

Michał Kramarz: *I think that there is no clear answer to the question you asked in the sense that it is difficult to point to one entity. A certain trend of sucking young people out of Opole began to change when the city's economy began to grow. Many entities, both public and private, are involved in youth policy in Opole. M. Kramarz drew attention to the importance of the economy, the labour market, higher education and efficient administration, indicating that the city mainly plays the role of a coordinator. This means that youth policy in Opole is not based on a single institution, but on cooperation and mutual complementation of various sectors. The city's task is to efficiently manage and combine these potentials. Another element is important. It is about the sense of security, which is indirectly influenced by the local government, but also health security, where the city also has an indirect influence here. To sum up, good education, universities, a good labour market, public administration that supports it, a safe city, and good quality of life are of key importance in implementing youth policies.*

Dorota Perło: *And do other social entities, associations, non-governmental organizations have an influence on the implementation of youth policies in the city?*

Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa: *I agree with the conclusions that the head of the department pointed out here, that it is important, first of all, when it comes to people entering the job market, to prepare jobs, and here companies are of key importance. The increase in the activity of non-governmental organizations in recent years also plays an important role. She emphasized that numerous initiatives are aimed at supporting young people, both in the professional and civic context. In the last five years, we have observed a revival of pro-youth activities, especially in the sphere of non-governmental organizations. There are many programs, although they are not always coordinated. This indicates the need for better integration of activities to increase their effectiveness and better respond to the needs of young people.*

Michał Kramarz: *Kramarz noted that the key tool supporting young people is the city budget, which enables the implementation of a wide range of programs. He pointed to the importance of scholarship and housing programs, which attract young people to Opole and create conditions for their professional development. First of all, we have a fairly extensive scholarship program, which can be applied for by people who want to start studies in Opole and have good results in secondary school, as well as students at doctoral schools, i.e. doctoral students, and this is certainly a tool that helps young people financially in particular. I think it would encourage more, but there are certain budget limitations, and we would certainly like these scholarships to be higher, but each commune has a lot of different needs and expenses, and we must somehow compromise on each of these areas, and we cannot always allocate as much money for scholarships as we can and would like.*

Another instrument is the grant program for universities, in which the mandatory condition is the participation of students in each grant. And here there is no way for the city to implement a research grant with a university without significant participation of students. This also somehow creates an environment in which these young people can find their place. Especially those who have some ambitions and want to do something more. In addition, we often get involved, outside of dedicated programs, in such ongoing assistance, supporting especially scientific students groups or student associations who are active on the academic market, who not only conduct research, for example, but also such work that is aimed at promoting science in the broad sense, or their specific industries, also on a national scale, or even on a pan-European scale, or even sometimes - globally, so I think that this is also a tool that means that in Opole you cannot only, let's say, go to the cinema or a football match, but you can also, for example, fulfil yourself as a young scientist, a good student, so this also has some added value. And I think the most important programs that we have are two such programs, one implemented directly by the city and the other by a company that is 100% owned by the city, and these are housing programs. These programs enjoy great interest, great success, and also great efficiency in the sense that these people (which results from the study of their fates), when they leave our programs, are needed on our labour market, because the programs are designed in such a way that they can get an apartment from us on very preferential terms. They stay in Opole later, so this is already such a proper and specific added effect, and we all know that probably today the key for young people, at least those who plan or want to become independent, is the possibility of finding a place to live in good conditions.

Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa: *looking at the Opole agglomeration area, at the activities of the municipalities, Opole is such a dominant city when it comes to the supporting of young people. Local governments also allocate funds from their budgets, like it was said, precisely for scholarship programs. We can say that each local government gives as much as it can, because the financial conditions of local governments are limited.*

I think it is very important that scholarship programs for young people are treated broadly - not only are they dedicated to people with limited income. Such a program should be motivating, taking into account the desire to establish in a given place. Scholarships should result from a diagnosis of needs.

We also have to keep in mind competition, that we compete here in the region, between provinces, but also on a wider scale. Because today for a young person it means work, not only in Europe, but also on distant continents, it is not a problem at all because we have a generation that is excellent in linguistic and also technological preparation and is doing great.

Dorota Perło: *thank you very much.*

Dorota Perło: *and I wanted to ask, because I know that there is a Youth City Council in Opole, but are there any other groups?*

Michał Kramarz: *The Civic Dialogue Centre provides a range of different activities, there is a Youth Council, there is also a Women's Council, I know that a lot is happening in these areas of non-governmental organizations. And this is a very wide range of activities, which in some way also significantly translates into these conditions and this quality of life of young people in Opole, and thus creates a more attractive city in this perspective.*

Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa: *I will only add that, indeed, when analysing what Opole excels in, it is the entire civic budget - Opole has one of the largest civic budgets, in terms of the province, in Poland, but also on a city scale. Within this budget, decisions are made on a number of programs, programs and infrastructure projects for residents, or young people - they are important. This also includes the construction of kindergartens, whether in Zaotrze or in the Malinka district. These are programs that create the attractiveness of the city, revitalization programs. I analyse local governments that form the Opole Agglomeration partnership, even these small local governments create these youth councils.*

Looking at what the city of Opole is currently implementing, there is also a plan in the Opole Główne transfer centre to give space to young people and to develop this space with programs, including those from European programs. I think that all local governments, from large Opole to small municipalities, are aware that this youth policy must be taken care of, that it is extremely key and that these programs should be continued and in a broad way.

Dorota Perło: *thank you very much.*

Dorota Perło: *I wanted to ask if you see any instrument that would be worth implementing in Opole, for example, but there are not enough funds, or there are no people who could prepare this instrument, or you tried to implement something, and it did not work out.*

Michał Kramarz: *we finish everything we start, but the key is simply the budget and what we can do, we are already doing at this point, because we also have a certain closed catalogue of possible actions resulting from the act on local government, although it is much better when it comes to the area of cooperation of the commune.*

Young people, it seems to me, are quite pragmatic and already at the stage of secondary school they more or less know what they need and expect from life. And they look for places where they can get it. Some will expect relative peace and will choose such a place to study. Others a good university and will choose such. And where do others get, for example, many different attractions. In order to ensure peace, or many attractions, or a high level of education, we simply need funds and what I would like to note, if my memory serves me right, is that in the country we spend 24 billion zlotys on higher education per year, and in turn we spend almost 90 billion on social policy per year. So there is a huge disproportion here. It seems better to release well-educated people into the market who will be able to provide well-paid jobs, so that they do not need social support. Social spending will not create either good jobs or high skills.

We should start financing at the government level what is necessary and important, and we really have all possible tools to create a gem from every place in Poland. All the more so because we have this great historical chance to be part of the European Union. And the European Union contributes a lot, especially in investments related to the quality of life, so all this could complement each other perfectly, so first of all more funds for local governments. For example, in our country, our universities, because the labour market is much smaller, also have slightly less certain opportunities. Here, greater support in the area of equipment (for example some laboratories), of course directly related to the needs of the market, could be important. This is the case in England, cities that may not be large, but thanks to the quality of their education are known all over the world, and even large companies are able to locate there.

Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa: *I wonder if it would be possible to have such programming dedicated to these young people, because this is also a problem on a European Union-wide scale. It should be comprehensive, not selective, in a given programming period, for example, only talents are supported, then vocational education, then we shift the scales of gravity to something else and so sometimes we adapt these projects to programming and I always lack such comprehensiveness in this. We do not always have diagnosed areas. And here I am thinking about it, it is up for discussion, how to define programming at the EU level, so that it is specifically targeted at a given region and allows for solving certain problems comprehensively.*

Dorota Perło: *thank you very much for today's meeting and for the time you have devoted.*

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*Ms. **Bernadetta Lisson-Pastwa**, Opole Agglomeration Association*

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*Ms. **Katarzyna Zadykowicz**, graduate of one of Bialystok's universities*

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Marzanna Poniatowicz, Dorota Perło, Agnieszka Piekutowska