

Voivodship Labour Office



Who is (not) needed at the labour market in Podlasie?

**Characteristics of job supply
and demand in the voivodship.**

It is not enough to secure a job – The inhabitants of Podlasie want to work in their profession!!

The vast majority of jobs in the labour market of Podlasie is in the agriculture or services. The regional employment rate for the population at the productive age is among the highest in the country while the salaries are below the national average.

The employment rate is an important element characterizing the labour market because it is connected with the potential of the economic development. A bigger number of employees contributes to the increase in the Gross National Product while lowering the unemployment rate without raising the employment rate (e.g. when different categories of the unemployed become entitled to early retirement or pensions) does not bring such advantageous economic effects. As already mentioned, the employment rate in the Podlasie Voivodship is very good in comparison to the whole country. Even though it dropped in the 4th quarter of 2009 in relation to the three preceding quarters, the employment rate in Podlasie was still nearly 50,7% while in the whole country – 50,4%. There are many reasons to think that the positive tendencies on the labour market will continue in 2010. The research conducted by the Voivodship Job Centre in Białystok – the Podlasie Observatory of Labour Market and Economic Forecasts, indicates that in 2010 the size of planned layoffs will not exceed the size of planned hiring. Although the average surplus of the number of new hires over the number of layoffs will be nearly three times lower in 2010, still almost 60% of the local employers are planning to keep this year the level of employment from the previous year.

On the other hand, a survey conducted among the employees shows that 85% of them are not afraid of losing their jobs. The ones who feel the most secure in their jobs, besides the people at managerial positions, are those who have very specific, technical skills – e.g. operators, fitters with relevant certificates and professional qualifications. What is interesting is that people with bachelor degrees are more worried about losing their jobs than those with vocational education.

It is difficult to say to what extent the observed situation is the effect of an economic downturn or if it is a symptom of a temporary satisfaction of employers' needs and a stability on the labour market. If the second reason is true, there is a price to pay for the stability. A low demand for new workers freezes the situation on the Podlasie labour market. It is particularly hard on the young people, who have problems with finding a job matching their qualifications. As a result, there are many young people in Podlasie who have jobs inadequate to their qualifications and are less certain to keep them.

Balancing supply and demand in 2010 – which one will tip the scales – hiring or laying off?

If we compare the current balance of employment with the planned one, we will see that in 2010 the local entrepreneurs intend to take on fewer employees than in 2009. This year, there will still be more hiring than layoffs. The number of dismissed employees will be close to the number of the newly hired ones, which may be interpreted as stability (satisfying the demand for labour) or stagnation (no development prospects). It is expected that in 2010 this trend will continue to be more or less similar in each administrative district of the Podlasie Voivodship.

Regardless of the so-far proportions between the number of hired and laid off workers, the same percentage of enterprises plans to keep this year a positive balance of employment policy. Every fifth company which laid off more workers than they hired intends to continue this policy next year. In comparison, among the companies which have had a positive balance so far, only 6% declare that they are going to change their employment policy.

The research shows that the total number of layoffs planned for 2010 will mainly affect the following branches:

- Construction – 449 people;
- Road transport; pipeline transport – 297 people;
- Wholesale and commission-based trading, except for the sale of mechanical vehicles and motorcycles – 199 people;
- Retail sale except for the sale of mechanical vehicles and the repair of household and personal appliances – 176 people;
- Postal services and telecommunications – 98 people.

Also the total number of new hires planned for 2010 has been estimated. The hiring will refer to the following branches:

- Construction – 855 people;
- Retail sale except for the sale of mechanical vehicles and the repair of household and personal appliances – 727 people;
- Healthcare and social services – 611 people;
- Wholesale and commission-based trading, except for the sale of mechanical vehicles and motorcycles – 673 people;
- Road transport, pipeline transport – 242 people.

It is worrying that the entrepreneurs do not declare any hiring planned in connection with the company development, which may be a bad forecast for the labour market in Podlasie. Most often, they announce their readiness to take on new employ-

ees when a need occurs, which is hard to predict. Depending on the nature of business activity, hiring may be related to the following circumstances:

- As regards the companies which operate in the branches of industry where the volume of production increases seasonally (food processing, construction) the employment is increased mainly by means of hiring additional workers on the basis of contracts for a specific task. A characteristic thing is that the best workers have a great chance to keep their jobs for longer than one season;
- The companies with stable employment levels plan to hire new employees only in the case of vacancies due to retirement of maternity leaves.

Employers favour qualifications and skills

A comparative analysis of the structure of job offers and job applications in the Podlasie Voivodship shows a great disparity between the lists of professions. There are no candidates for the jobs offered by the employers in Podlasie except for:

- shop assistants and sales representatives,
- industry and construction workers
- chefs.

On the other hand, there are no vacancies in the professions that the job seekers would like to do (see table 1). In some professions, certain matches would be possible – for instance, a construction worker after a relatively cheap training could be employed as a road worker, but there are very few of such cases. It is also worth noticing that there are very few vacancies in the jobs which are traditionally performed by women, such as:

- childminder,
- beautician,
- cleaning lady,
- kitchen assistant.

The research shows that women more often than men work as accountants, office and administration workers, hairdressers or tailors. Also in these professions there are few vacancies and a lot of job seekers.

Table 1. Matching job offers and job applications in the Podlasie Voivodship.

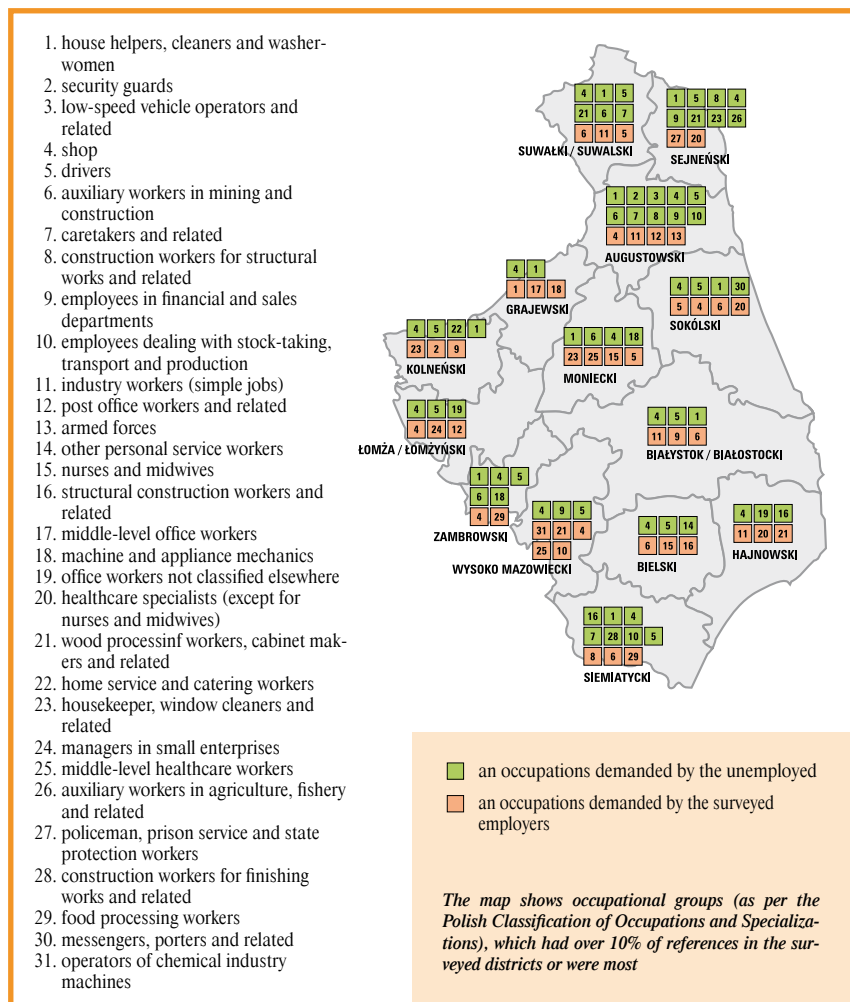
Profession / Job category	Job offer (from employers)	Job applications
Shop assistant		
Manager of a small wholesale or retail company		
Auxiliary worker in food processing		
Other unqualified physical workers in the industry		
Commercial worker		
Road worker		
Post office worker		
Mail carrier		
Nurse		
Sales person		
Chef		
Sales representative (regional representative)		
Welder		
Accountant (including independent accountant)		
Beautician		
Security guard		
Hairdresser		
Tailor		
Construction worker		
Truck driver		
Kitchen assistant		
Car mechanic		
Administration worker (technician of administration)		
Janitor		
Carpenter		
Childminder (including babysitter)		
Bricklayer		
Warehouse operative		
Office worker (office work technician)		
Drivers		
Cleaning lady		

Source: GALLUP, a survey conducted among the unemployed 2009, a survey conducted among the employers 2009.

The employers perceive the labour market in terms of qualifications rather than occupational deficits or surpluses. In most cases, they do not attach great importance to education or profession of applicants.

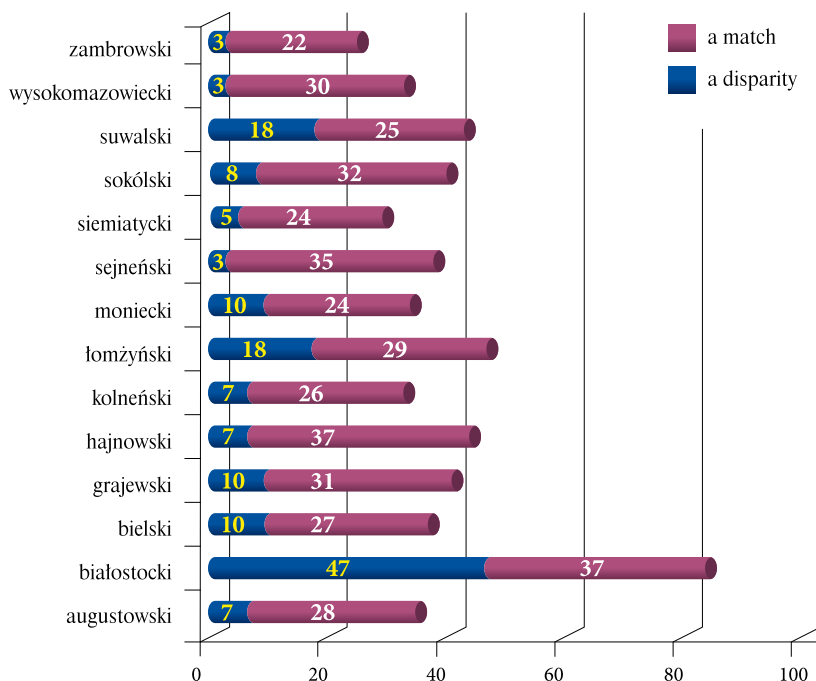
The analysis of the disparity between labour supply and demand in particular administrative districts shows that the situation is similar throughout the whole voivodship (see table 1).

Map 1. The occupations most often demanded by the employers and the unemployed



Source: GALLUP, a survey conducted among the unemployed 2009 r., a survey conducted among the employers 2009r.

Chart 1. Matches and disparities between labour supply and demand in occupational categories in the administrative districts of the Podlasie Voivodship (a number of occupations).



Source: GALLUP, a survey conducted among the unemployed 2009, a survey conducted among the employers 2009

In some occupational categories, a disparity concerns the location, i.e. there are employers offering jobs and there are jobseekers ready to start working in the demanded professions, but they are located in different administrative districts.

It refers mainly to the following professions:

- junior and senior secondary school teachers;
- lawyers;
- filing clerks, librarians and scientific information specialists;
- engineers and similar jobs;
- computer operators;
- forest workers and similar;
- printing industry workers and similar;
- machine operators in chemical industry;

- operators of machines used in the manufacture of metal products;
- operators of printing machines;
- auxiliary workers in transportation and porters.

For some categories:

- health protection specialists,
- special school teachers,
- managers of company departments

there were job offers but there were no candidates among the unemployed ready to take them.

Who is (not) needed at the labour market of Podlasie?

Despite the declining demand for new employees, more than a half of employers looking for workers to fill in the vacancies had problems with finding the right candidates. At the same time, as much as 87% of the surveyed employers believed that it is difficult to point at any particular profession or occupational group where it is especially difficult to find employees. It was claimed that the problems with finding appropriate candidates were mainly caused by the general lack of candidates with suitable professional qualifications – 45% of the surveyed employers quoted the candidates' lack of formal qualifications (e.g. qualifications confirmed by relevant certificates) and 20% – the lack of skills required for a given position. We should mention here that according to the local entrepreneurs, at the regional job market there is a surplus of specialists with a university degree in the field of humanities.

The biggest demand for labour invariably refers to trade-related professions, mainly shop assistants and sales representatives. It should be underlined, however, that employers do not really create new workplace, but only hire new people for the same workplaces. For example, shop assistants are often laid off or quit their jobs and have to be replaced with other employees. Hence, the constant demand for sales employees and the opinion expressed by employers that they are difficult to find. However, that does not mean there is a huge demand for labour force reported by the local employers operating in the trade industry.

Profession is a fuzzy and changeable category. Be ready to get new qualifications!

The situation at the job market is constantly influenced by two powerful forces – the supply, which is represented by jobseekers and employees, and the demand created by employers. There is no balance on this market – either the employers cannot find the right workers or the jobseekers cannot find employment.

One of the indicators of a disparity between the supply and demand is the percentage of people who classify their job as not corresponding to their acquired profession. It appears that such jobs are most often taken by persons with bachelor degrees (79%) or general secondary school graduates (58%). It happens, however, that people with the same qualifications doing similar jobs evaluate their work in a different way. Some of them said it conformed with their education and others claimed it did not.

It must be emphasized that also the local employers clearly had problems with using the term ‘profession’. As already mentioned earlier, even though employers reported recruitment difficulties, nearly 87% of them could not point at any particular deficit professions. It may be caused by the fact that in the case of many positions employers assume in advance that they will not find the candidates with adequate skills. Quite often, employers from the very start look for people who seem to be conscientious and hard-working and who will be able to quickly learn a new profession. In the face of the growing crisis of vocational education as well as the problems with the vocational preparation of university graduates, such a strategy often seems to be the most effective for the entrepreneurs in Podlasie.

The results of the research indicate that it is time to change the way we think about the labour market – especially as far as deficit and surplus occupations are concerned. A person who works as a car mechanic today, tomorrow may be hired as a carpenter, and an academic teacher may become a financial analyst or a civil servant. The occupational category appears to be a relative and, first of all, a changeable term. Especially the young people, who are just entering the job market, have to be ready for frequent changes of occupation, which nowadays loses its lifelong status. Therefore, in job market analyses, the notion of profession is more and more often replaced by professional qualifications, which are understood not only as specific skills, but also general personality predispositions to taking up professional challenges.

While analyzing their strengths and weaknesses, the inhabitants of Podlasie Voivodship see themselves as having the following positive traits: conscientiousness and responsibility (50% of respondents), honesty (39% of respondents) and ability to work hard (37%). At the same time, 41% of respondents find it difficult to specify their bad flaws. If they point to any weaknesses at all, most often these are: no flexibility

(19%), low availability (15%) and not being able to learn quickly (18%). It creates an image of an employee who is ready to conscientiously and honestly fulfill their duties, but wants to keep a clear borderline between their professional and private life.

The local employers seem to be rather happy with this kind of employee profile, but in fact, a lot depends on the kind of position the person is holding. Workers who do simple jobs are expected to be hard-working, technicians and physical workers should first of all be available to work at different times. Specialists, on the other hand, should be flexible and managers – able to skillfully solve conflicts. People who work in the sales department or customer service should be very communicative and approachable.

Information and communication society of Podlasie

Are the inhabitants of Podlasie Voivodship computer literate? More than a half of respondents claims that they can use the computer and every third one declares that they have no problems with that. In the times of the information society, it is one of the basic skills, which is vital in everyday life and at work. Working people much more seldom than the unemployed declare that they cannot use the computer – only 16% of employees and as much as 42% of the unemployed have admit to not having any computers skills at all.

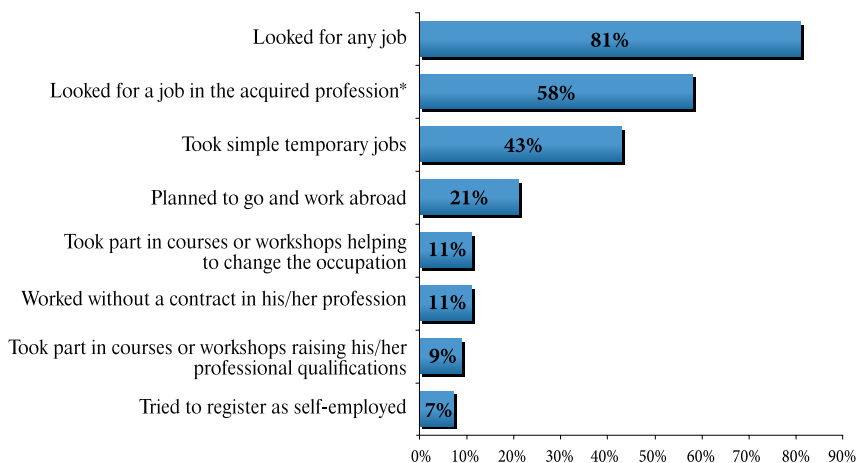
Another competence which makes it easy to operate on the labour market is the knowledge of foreign languages. It is particularly important especially in the borderland, due to the increased intensity of commercial contacts, The inhabitants of the Podlasie Voivodship can boast a relatively high percentage of people who speak foreign languages – only 19% do not know any foreign language, which means that 81% know at least one. In Podlasie, the prevailing foreign languages are Russian (66% claim to speak this language) and English, which is known by slightly more than a half of respondents (51%). In the national survey conducted CBOS in July 2009, only 49% of Polish people claimed to know a foreign language. If we compare that to the declarations of the inhabitants of Podlasie, it is easy to see that linguistic competences of the local people significantly exceed the “national average”.

Working without a contract but in the acquired profession – choices made by the unemployed in Podlasie

The vast majority, i.e. nearly 73% of the unemployed registered at the local job centre, is ready to take up a job within the following 2 weeks. On the other hand, a small, but significant group of the unemployed (15%) are not going to start any work at all within the next year. In reality, having the status of the unemployed does not have to mean that the person is not doing anything – about 43% of the unemployed did some simple temporary jobs within the last month and nearly 11% worked without a contract, but in their acquired profession (see: chart 2).

A vast majority – 81% of the unemployed registered in the local job centres, looked for a job within the last month. Recommendations of friends and relatives are an invaluable channel of job seeking – 75% of the unemployed used this method (the least often it refers to the people with higher education – 68%).

Chart 2. Last month activity of the unemployed



**) The question about the acquired profession was not asked to the unemployed who declared that they have none, the percentage basis in this case is N=625.*

Source: GALLUP, a survey conducted among the unemployed 2009.

Local economy is driven by ENTREPRENEURSHIP

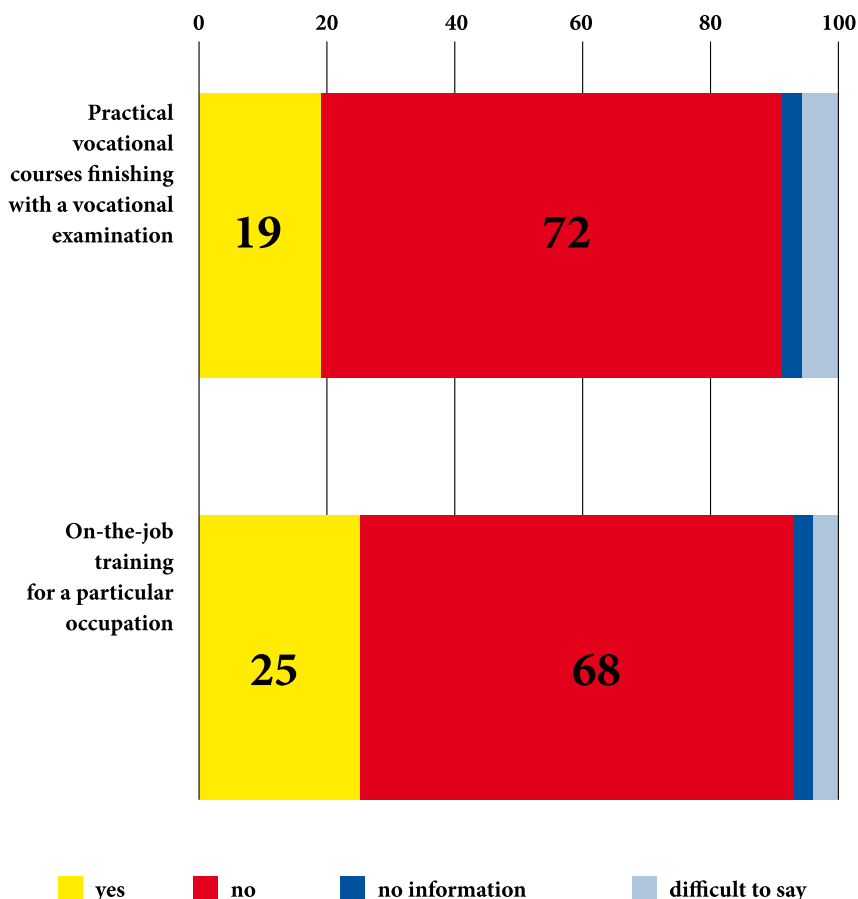
The propagation of entrepreneurship and providing incentives encouraging people to set up their own business, even as sole-traders, guarantees the creation of new workplaces and the development of the regional economy. It is also a challenge for the regional institutions of the labour market.

Most certainly, the labour market in Podlasie needs a certain activation in this respect. Podlasie is a region with the lowest entrepreneurship ratio in the country as well as the only region in the country where in the years 2004–2008 there was absolutely no increase in the number of newly set up businesses. Within the last month, only 7% of the surveyed unemployed took some steps aiming at setting up their own company.

New forms of vocational preparation

To activate the local job market, the authorities, in cooperation with employers, should also organize relevant courses and workshops, which would help to adjust the actual skills of jobseekers to employers' needs. Unfortunately, employers are seldom interested in new opportunities for vocational preparation of workers provided by the Labour Fund – vocational courses or on-the-job training. Only 19% of employers were interested in the first form of vocational preparation and every fourth entrepreneur would be willing to consider the possibility of providing on-the-job training for jobseekers (see: chart 3).

Chart 3. The attitude of employers to new forms of vocational preparation (%)



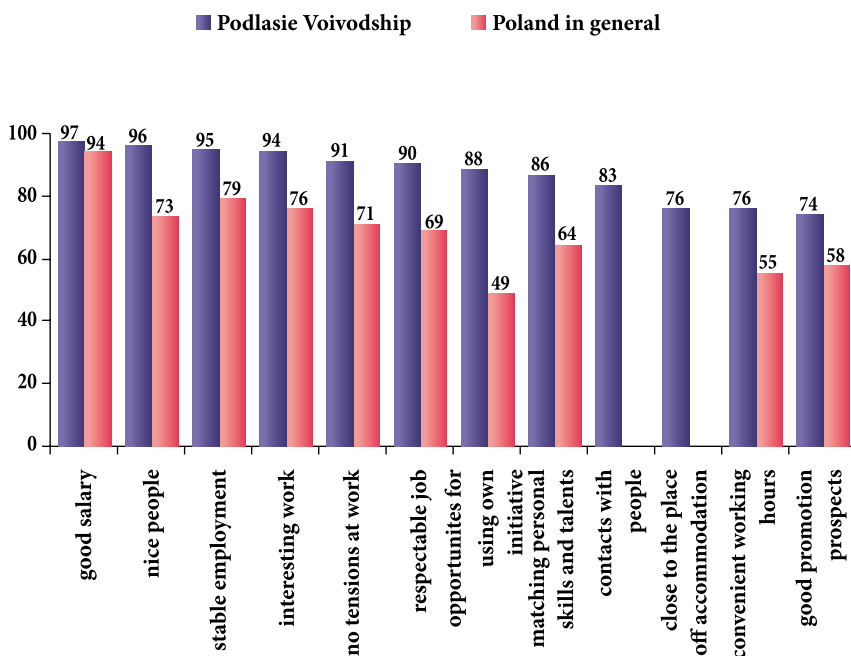
Source: GALLUP, a survey conducted among employers 2009 r.

Considering the fact that nearly all the employers have difficulties in finding adequately qualified staff, these figures are surprising – the new forms of vocational preparation of workers financed from public funds still need to be advertised and actively promoted by job centres.

Is Podlasie an enclave of mature work culture?

The inhabitants of Podlasie voivodship opt for interesting and respected jobs, where they can show their own initiative and use their individual skills. They tend to appreciate working with nice colleagues in a relaxed atmosphere and having convenient, flexible working hours (see: chart 4).

Chart 4. Features of a “good job” – the Podlasie Voivodship compared to general results for Poland



Source: Results for Poland in general – European Values Survey 2008, results for the Podlasie Voivodship – GALLUP, a household survey 2009.

All of the above-mentioned components are typical for labour markets with developed culture such as, for instance, in the Scandinavian countries. In comparison to the other regions – which are often more economically developed – the inhabitants of the Podlasie Voivodship seem to be more aware of the great importance of non-eco-

conomic aspects of workplace evaluation, such as good relationships with co-workers or convenient working hours. In this respect, the Podlasie Voivodship is ahead of the rest of the country.

This information has been prepared on the basis of the publication entitled “A Map of Occupations and Qualifications in Podlasie. The Analysis of Job Supply and Demand in the Podlasie Voivodship at the Local and Regional Level.”, Voivodship Job Centre in Białystok, the Podlasie Observatory of Labour Market and Economic Forecasts, Białystok 2009.

The research “A Map of Occupations and Qualifications in Podlasie.” was conducted by the company The Gallup Organization Poland Sp. z o.o., for the Voivodship Job Centre in Białystok as a part of the project “The Podlasie Observatory of Labour Market and Economic Forecasts.” on the following samples:

- *households in the Podlasie Voivodship; N=1022*
- *the unemployed; N=1000*
- *companies employing over 10 people; N= 1000*
- *individual in-depth interviews (IDI) with the unemployed; N=15*
- *individual in-depth interviews (IDI) with employers; N=15*
- *individual in-depth interviews (IDI) with foreigners working in the Podlasie Voivodship; N=10.*



www.obserwatorium.up.podlasie.pl
www.up.podlasie.pl
www.eures.praca.gov.pl
www.eures.europa.eu

This publication was prepared with support from the European Union.