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**ECONOMIC VERSUS CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF  
CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT OF  
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES.  
GOOD PRACTICES IN POLAND**

In Poland a low rate of employment of people with disabilities persists (the employment rate for people of working age (18–59/64) who are legally certified as disabled is 23.7% (2016)). The key actors in this area are employers, whose attitudes and involvement largely shape the availability and type of job vacancies for people with disabilities. The article presents research results on companies and institutions from the open labour market that have good practices in employing disabled workers. These are the results of a survey carried out in 100 organizations in Poland, 10 case studies carried out in organizations in Poland, and 10 case studies in other European countries. Conclusions from research on Poland indicate the importance of economic instruments in supporting employment of disabled people, but also their limited impact. The biggest barrier are negative stereotypes and prejudices on the part of employers and employees, rooted in the dominant patterns of behaviour in society. The study of good practices in organizations employing disabled employees in Poland and other countries shows that it is important for them to have a culture open to people with disabilities and other categories of employees. It is reflected in the values, standards and beliefs shared by employers and employees, as well as in organizational culture and management methods.

Keywords: disabled worker, employer, organizational culture, Poland

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## INTRODUCTION

In Poland the rate of employment of people with disabilities is very low and deviates from the levels achieved in other European Union countries. Until 1989, Poland was a country of real socialism. Employment of disabled persons was organized mainly in separate workplaces intended for people with functional limitations. After the change of the political system (transition to a market economy), many measures were applied in the public policy of the state aimed at increasing the employment rates of disabled people in the open labour market. In 1991, the first act regulating the employment and rehabilitation of disabled people was adopted and a special fund was created: The State Fund for Rehabilitation of the Disabled (Polish acronym: PFRON) supporting the employment of disabled people. In 1997, a new law was adopted, the Act of 27 August 1997 on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, and the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People was appointed. The Plenipotentiary is to be appointed and dismissed by the Prime Minister, on request of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

Prohibition of discrimination in employment on grounds of disability is also present in other national documents: According to the Labour Code, and the Act on the Implementation of certain Regulations of the European Union in the field of equal treatment from 2010, since 2011 a disabled person has priority in employment in government and local-government administration units, if he or she meets the requirements for a given position and is in the group of the best candidates.

In international politics, there has been a visible shift in employment policies regarding people with disabilities. This is a move from a segregation-based policy towards professional activation of people with disabilities and main-streaming disability on the open labour market. The basic international document on the rights of persons with disabilities, including their right to work is the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), which entered into force on 3 May 2008. As of 11 November 2016, 168 States and the EU ratified the Convention, representing 87% of Member States in the United Nations, (ratification in Poland took place in 2012). The Convention in its basic provisions recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with other persons. Implementation of the right to work gives rise to certain obligations of the state, such as creating opportunities to earn a living in a freely chosen, inclusive and accessible work environment, introducing rational improvements in the workplace, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of disability in all employment matters, ensuring appropriate labour conditions, guarantees of trade union rights, as well as the development of labour market and vocational training services. The recommendations of the Convention were reflected in the document: *European Disability Strategy 2010–2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe* (2010), which confirmed that access to employment and implementation of the principle of equal employment opportunities are important goals and recommendations for public policies in the EU<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Poland has been a member of the European Union since 2004.

In international documents, the importance of increasing the employment of disabled people through the creation of workplaces and supporting their employment above all in the open labour market is very important. This is supported by activities of the state in the field of education, vocational and social rehabilitation, job placement and career counselling, development of continuing education and anti-discrimination policies. In Poland, so far, the state's activities have had a slight impact on the overall employment growth of disabled people. Only the proportions of employment between the closed and open labour market have changed. There is a visible decline in employment in the closed labour market and an increase in employment in the open labour market.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The reasons for low employment rates of people with disabilities in Poland have been the subject of many studies, analyses and expert opinions. There are three main groups of reasons: 1) those resulting from state policy, 2) practices used by organizations (company/institution policy, employers' attitudes), and 3) attitudes of disabled people and their families.

## PUBLIC POLICY OF THE STATE

The system of supporting the employment of disabled people in Poland is extensive. Professional activation of people with disabilities can take place within one of four independently functioning systems: (1) social assistance focused on clients' regaining independence, (2) job placement to assist in finding employment, (3) the PFRON system dealing with occupational and social rehabilitation of disabled people and supporting employers in creating jobs for them, and (4) social employment centred around vocational and social reintegration of participants of support programs (Rymsza 2013: 253).

The PFRON system is the main employment support system. It is based on the economic support of employers from the PFRON special purpose fund, directed towards entities employing people with disabilities on the protected labour market (vocational workshops, occupational activity centres, sheltered employment facilities) and employers from the open labour market. In 1991, a quota model for the employment of disabled employees was introduced in Poland, obliging employers from the open labour market to employ people with disabilities at the level defined by the state. Employers are obliged to employ 6% of disabled workers (applies to entities employing more than 25 employees) or, if this result is not achieved, to pay a special tax to a separate fund: PFRON. Employers who employ people with disabilities can receive financial support from the fund, including reimbursement of remuneration costs, social insurance, training, equipment in the workplace, and assistants for disabled persons. In principle, the system was designed to motivate employers from the open labour market to employ people with disabilities. Practice has shown that employers in the open labour market prefer to pay contributions to PFRON rather than employ disabled workers (Gąciarz and Giermanowska 2009). Initially, the PFRON system preferred employers from the protected labour market, who received much higher funding for the employment of employees with

disabilities. After equalizing the rules of co-financing (in 2014), employment of disabled persons in the protected labour market decreased and employment in the open labour market increased, although the overall employment level did not change significantly.

According to many experts, the public policy of the state in the area of supporting the employment of people with disabilities is excessively focused on economic support for the employers rather than for people with disabilities, which reduces their motivation to take up employment (Gąciarz and Giermanowska 2009; Garbat 2012; Rymsza 2013; Giermanowska 2014). In addition, the mechanism of functioning of the quota system in Poland, based on the payment of fines to PFRON by employers not employing disabled employees and subsidies to salaries of disabled employees, carries a high risk for the fund's financial health. It occurs in the event of a significant increase in employment of people with disabilities and a drop in the number of employers obliged to make payments into the PFRON. Paradoxically, the success in combating the unemployment of people with disabilities is not beneficial for the fund's inflows and contributes to the deterioration of its funding and task implementation it was created for (Kozłowski 2016: 264).

The system supporting vocational activation of people with disabilities is complicated, complex and non-transparent for its beneficiaries, and at the same time unsuited for the growing professional aspirations of these people. Employees of job centres and other support institutions often duplicate old patterns of action based on routine and formalism, rather than adapt to the individual needs of disabled people and the changing labour market. For example, they do not see growing educational and professional aspirations of disabled people graduating from higher education institutions and seeking employment appropriate to their education (Giermanowska, Raławski 2014). The policy of commercialisation of support institutions implemented in Poland, as part of the new paradigm of social policy, that is New Public Management, contributed more to the economization of these institutions by focusing on their benefits, rather than real professional activation of disabled people (Giermanowska and Raławski 2016).

## ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES OF EMPLOYERS

The results of research on organizational practices and employers in Poland indicate the existence of many barriers that hinder the employment of disabled people (Gąciarz and Giermanowska 2009; Garbat 2012; Kryńska and Pater 2013; Giermanowska 2014). Among the reasons mentioned by employers, the most common are economic arguments related to lower productivity of disabled people and costs incurred by organizations. Higher labour costs result from lower productivity of people with disabilities and their rights (shorter working hours, longer holidays, more frequent sickness and rehabilitation benefits), and additional costs incurred for adapting premises and workstations. Additional costs are also created by organizational changes resulting from the need to adapt the type of work and organization of work to the capabilities of disabled employees (including the introduction of greater supervision, and excessive loads on other employees).

The concerns of employers are exacerbated by informational barriers, such as lack of knowledge about the possibilities of obtaining financial support for employment of disabled

employees, using their professional potential and managing problems of people with disabilities in the workplace. Administrative problems related to the excessively bureaucratic procedure for obtaining funding from PFRON are also a significant obstacle. The use of subsidies for employment of people with disabilities is hampered by often-changing legal regulations and ambiguous interpretations thereof. This is particularly troublesome for small and medium-sized companies with small human resources departments.

Employers can benefit from the support of local organizations and infrastructure adjustments only to a small extent. Local support from local government authorities and institutions, including public job centres, is assessed as insufficient. In turn, non-governmental organizations are too weak and operate mainly in large urban centres. Local communication, rehabilitation and medical infrastructure is also judged to be inadequate, which prevents people with disabilities from taking up employment.

To finish this list, we will mention socio-awareness barriers, which are perhaps the most important and certainly are among the main barriers that hinder the employment of disabled people in Poland. These are created by stereotypes and prejudices of employers and employees. They are based on negative ideas about the work of disabled people and the possibilities of their functioning in the working environment. They are strongly accented by supporters of the so-called social model of disability, who point to the mental barriers present in the social environment as particularly difficult to change (Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare 2005).

#### ATTITUDES OF DISABLED PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

As mentioned in the introduction, people with disabilities in Poland participate only to a small extent in the labour market. Only every fourth person of productive age (18–59/64) performs paid work. The majority of people with disabilities are dependent on their families and benefit from various types of social benefits. Empirical studies and analyses regarding the professional activity of people with functional limitations prove the complexity of the problem, which can include, apart from the external factors mentioned above, internal factors on the part of the disabled person related to the type and degree of disability, the age at which the dysfunction was acquired and its consequences, level of education and qualifications possessed, educational and vocational biography, and attitudes and behaviours of disabled people and their families (Kryńska and Pater 2013: 21–22).

Disabled people, as do other actors on the labour market, make their professional activity dependent on various adaptation strategies and choose favourable solutions for themselves. From the perspective of individuals, avoiding employment may be the result of applying various adaptation strategies, including those based on economic rationales. Research indicates reluctance to undertake professional activity caused by the fear of losing disability benefits as a result of earning too high wages, high risk of maintaining work, and low chances of getting a well-paid job in line with their qualifications (Gąciarz and Giermanowska 2009; Kryńska and Pater 2013).

In the policy of professional activation and employment in relation to people with disabilities, increasing attention is paid to various types of factors demotivating participation in

the labour market: vocational rehabilitation, training, and employment (WHO 2011: 248–249). In Poland, the above-mentioned benefit trap is an important barrier to the employment of disabled people. Another factor reducing motivation to taking up employment is a high tax wedge resulting from an excessive burden of low wages with social insurance contributions and taxes (Magda, Potoczna and Lis 2013). A high tax wedge and social insurance contributions and taxes levied on low wages contribute to a lack of professional activity and social benefit dependence and/or working in the grey market. This applies to people who are long-term unemployed and with fewer opportunities to find a better-paid job.

The reforms of support institutions for people with disabilities in Poland focus on the family and the need to provide support for the family. Experts talk about “familialism of care” and “familialism of disability policy” (Kubicki 2017: 87). Responsibility for full social integration of disabled people, in the light of documents prepared and implemented, rests primarily on the family. Critical evaluation of institutional activities under public policies and the continuing unfavourable economic and social situation of disabled people encourage sociologists to formulate a thesis about the need to change the paradigm of public policy towards the disabled and disability. The need to transform public policy towards people with disabilities is indicated by, amongst others, Barbara Gąciarz, who postulates a change in institutional rules, a departure from activities resulting in segregation and directed towards leaving the disabled under the control (and care) of institutions (typical for industrialised societies) and in turn adopting solutions leading to social integration and independence (Gąciarz 2014: 31–32). This means creating favourable employment conditions in the open labour market.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research results discussed in the article were carried out as part of a project concerning public policy of the state towards disability, implemented in 2012–2014. The project was led by Prof. Barbara Gąciarz of the Faculty of Humanities at AGH in Kraków and was financed by PFRON. Research on the employment of disabled people was prepared and developed by: Ewa Giermanowska (Warsaw University), Joanna Kotzian (HRK S.A.), and Magdalena Pancewicz (HRK S.A), with cooperation of Magdalena Arczewska (Warsaw University) and Mariola Raław (Warsaw University), (see Giermanowska 2014; Kotzian and Pancewicz 2014).

The purpose of the research project was to gather knowledge and analyse the best programs and practices regarding the employment of disabled employees in companies and institutions on the open labour market. The empirical studies covered two types of research. A survey was conducted in 100 companies and institutions in Poland employing people with disabilities. The survey was sent by post or online addressed to Human Resources departments. Its aim was to collect information about companies’ experience in hiring people with disabilities, practices and propounded solutions, and forms of fostering employment of people with disabilities. Case studies were carried out in 10 companies/institutions in Poland,

and 10 in other European countries<sup>2</sup>. The selection of companies and institutions was made based on the analysis of documents and consultations with experts. The aim was to choose those employers whose good practices in employing disabled people are recognized on the domestic market, and even at the international level.

Descriptions and analyses of each case were made on the basis of available data for each company/institution, from the following sources:

- documents and statistics: codes of ethics, organizational procedures for the management of diversity and disability in the workplace, training programs in this regard, statistics of employment for people with disabilities;
- archive data: information on the origins of employment of disabled persons and practices in this field;
- internal physical artefacts: films, photos, websites;
- articles about the company/institution regarding the employment of disabled employees;
- applicable legislation and practices in a given country.

In each company/institution interviews were carried out with representatives of employers and employees: directly (in Poland) or telephone and Internet based (in other countries), based on a scenario with prepared dispositions. Interviews were conducted with a representative of the board and/or the personnel department. In addition, in each case study, a description of an individual case (employed person) was made, based on an interview with the disabled person, her/his supervisor, a co-worker and possibly subordinates. Interviews with disabled employees, her/his supervisor and colleagues helped to show the social dimension of the organizational integration process. An additional source of information was direct observation by researchers (only in Poland).

Analysis of data from various sources (the data triangulation method) permitted better understanding of the internal and external conditions of success of good practices. It is worth noting that an added value of the implemented project was the joint participation of academic researchers and practitioners who deal with personnel policy in organizations on a daily basis. One innovative element of the project was the use of the knowledge and experience of consultants who have direct contact with employers in the Polish and foreign labour markets on a daily basis. The project involved consultants from the consulting company HRK S.A., which for nearly 20 years has been cooperating with Polish and international companies in the field of recruitment and development of personnel, building the image of employers and running social projects.

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<sup>2</sup> In Poland: Altix (IT company, Warsaw), Carrefour Polska (retail chain, Warsaw), Sopockie Towarzystwo Ubezpieczeń Ergo Hestia (insurance/financial company, Sopot), Hutchinson (automotive company, Bielsko Biala), Dr Irena Eris Cosmetics Laboratory (cosmetics company, Piaseczno), Offices of Rehabilitation Rudek (medical care, Rzeszów), Sodexo (commercial real estate service, Warsaw). Municipal Public Library (Katowice), Office of the Ombudsman (Warsaw), State Plant Health and Seed Inspection Service – Central Laboratory (Toruń). In Europe: Allehånde Køkken (restaurant company, Denmark), Ford-Werke GmbH (automotive company, Germany), IKEA Deutschland (retail company, Germany), Marionnaud Parfumeries (cosmetics company, France), Max Hamburgerrestauranger (restaurant company, Sweden), Rehab Station Stockholm (rehabilitation company, Sweden), Thales Group (arms industry, aerospace, land transport, France), Électricité Réseau Distribution France (energy company, France), European Parliament (Belgium/Luxembourg), Department of Social Integration of People with Disabilities (Cyprus).

## ANALYSES

## MOTIVATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING A POLICY OF EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The quantitative research allowed us to identify various reasons for making decisions on implementing a disability management policy in the workplace. Among the main factors the professional qualifications of disabled people and the mission of the company and its organizational culture were equally important, and immediately following that were the financial benefits (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Reasons for employing disabled employees in the organization (Giermanowska 2014: 73)

Case studies carried out as part of the project allowed us to deepen the quantitative research, confirming the significant impact of already identified factors and revealing additional motivations, which can be divided into internal and external.

The company's decision to implement a policy supporting the employment of disabled persons was usually a combination of internal and external motivations (Table 1). Altix<sup>3</sup> was founded by blind IT specialists who, as part of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities, established a foundation that works on behalf of this group of people. Employment of people with disabilities in this case was the result of the individual experience of the management board representatives, the history and profile of the company's operations, and the CSR policy. There was another combination of motivational factors at IKEA Deutschland. Hiring

<sup>3</sup> A Polish company that produces and distributes software and equipment for the blind.



of people with disabilities is in line with the company’s culture, one that is open to diversity (the employment structure should reflect the diversity of society), sustainable development policy and the result of German legal regulations.<sup>4</sup> Similar combinations of factors occurred in all the surveyed institutions. In Carrefour and Sodexo, these were factors related to recruitment, the company mission or CSR strategy, or individual experience. In some cases, one of these factors proved to be the leading motivation. The Ombudsman’s Office indicated its mission as the main motivating factor. In case of Dr Irena Eris the deciding factor was the company’s history of being a sheltered employment facility.

**Table 1.** Internal and external motivations

Internal motivations	External motivations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organizational culture and (global) company HR policy</li> <li>– Individual experience (of a person from the management level or one of the employees)</li> <li>– Action consistent with the CSR strategy</li> <li>– Company’s profile (e.g. providing products and services for people with disabilities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Standards and regulations introduced by the government</li> <li>– Standards and regulations introduced by the company’s headquarters (especially local adaptations of the diversity policy)</li> <li>– Company’s history (status of a protected workplace in the past)</li> <li>– Problems with recruitment of employees for specific positions</li> <li>– Employee acquiring the status of a disabled person while working for the company (in connection with disease, ageing processes, accidents)</li> <li>– Possible financial benefit<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>

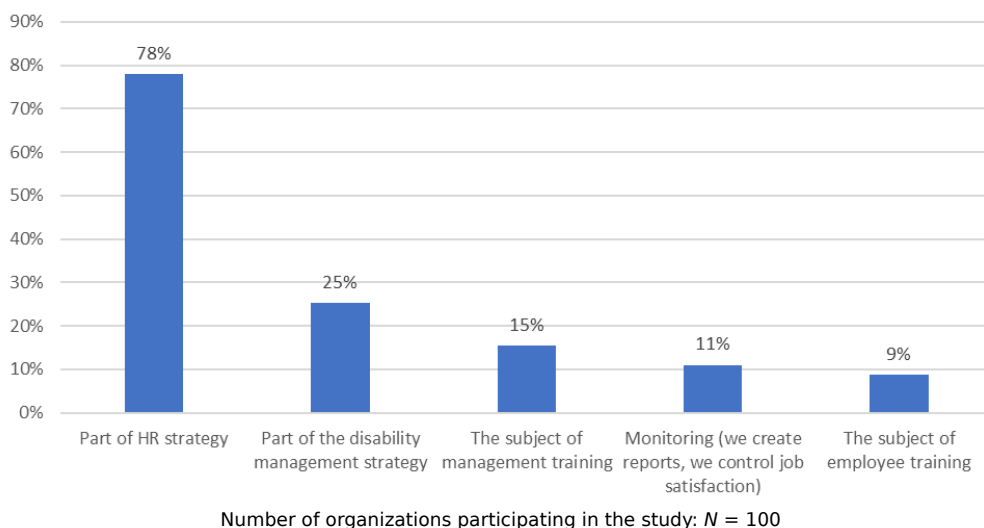
National legislation usually appeared as one of the motivating factors for employing people with disabilities – however it was not listed as the main factor. It was the same with financial incentives. Both of these motivational factors were more common in international companies (for example German or French), which would indicate a need to revise Polish legislation. Polish employers often pointed to difficulties related to the management of disabilities: the nuisance of reporting on the number of employees, bureaucratization and slowness of decision-making processes, and the complicated settlement of funds from PFRON. For these reasons, many companies did not use privileges and subsidies they had a right to. In the case of each of the companies presenting good practices in the field of employing disabled people, organizational culture was mentioned as one of the factors of introducing the policy of employing disabled people, which proves the immense role of this intangible and hard-to-measure factor.

<sup>4</sup> These regulations require a 5% participation of disabled employees in companies employing over 20 people.

<sup>5</sup> This factor was never mentioned in the first place but was rather an additional incentive.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF RECRUITMENT POLICY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Among the majority of Polish companies surveyed, employing disabled people was not a separate process, but was conducted as part of HR policy. This would emphasize the importance of implementing comprehensive and well thought-out policy in this area, despite the fact that 25% of companies participating in the survey declared that they had a separate disability management strategy (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Is employing disabled people in your organization (affirmative answers) (Giermanowska 2014: 76)

The method of implementing the employment policy of people with disabilities largely depended on the size and scale of the organization's activities. Smaller companies were characterized by greater openness to employing people with disabilities and flexibility of approaches – their principles were not codified or structured: they pointed to a lack of policies, procedures and guidelines. Small companies did not necessarily have their own documented HR policy. It was largely determined by labour law regulations (“we obey labour law”). Lack of regulation in unusual cases meant that small companies used individual approaches that allowed them to be flexible in non-standard situations.

Global companies with comprehensive HR policy usually had a comprehensive approach to disability, covering all HR processes (employment, training, promotion, etc.). Employment of people with disabilities usually functioned as part of a wider HR policy or diversity policy, or it was related to CSR activities. Companies such as Thales, Ford, IKEA, Carrefour and Sodexo represent the comprehensive approach.

STU Ergo Hestia (an insurance company), as part of the CSR policy, set up the “Integralia” foundation, whose task is to integrate people with disabilities into the labour market through

training or internships. Some of Integralia's disabled clients became interns at STU Ergo Hestia, and then found employment there. The organizational culture of the company, open to disability, manifested itself in the area of integrated HR policy and CSR.

In large companies covered by the study with formalized HR policy and CSR, the starting point for the implementation of measures for employing people with disability was often the signing of a declaration setting guidelines for such a policy. International documents most often indicated by companies include "Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace" or the 10 principles of the "United Nations' Global Compact". One of the most frequently indicated Polish documents was the "Diversity Charter". Large companies monitor the implementation of their diversity management policy and strive to obtain an independent certificate documenting their good practice. Such a certificate allows for an external audit and also helps to build the image of a socially responsible company and the brand of a good employer. One such example is Ford-Werke GmbH, the first company in Europe to obtain a certificate confirming compliance with the standards of the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC)<sup>6</sup>, and the company includes this information when promoting its brand.

Some of the large companies needed strategic, legal or organizational support when implementing diversity management strategies in the workplace. Third-sector organizations provided the support needed. Carrefour Polska provides an example of a comprehensive policy of employing disabled people and cooperation with third-sector organizations. Employment of disabled people is carried out in Carrefour as part of a sustainable development policy and remains within the competence of the HR department. Carrefour's activities are based on documents signed by the company: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and conventions of the International Labour Organization, the "Code of Conduct on Disability Management in the Workplace" and the 10 principles of the "Global Pact" of the UN. The company has also started cooperation with the Business and Disability Network, a network supporting organizations in the employment of people with disabilities. By implementing the policy of employing persons with disabilities, Carrefour Polska has established cooperation with organizations from the third sector: Polski Związek Głuchych (Polish Deaf Association), "Niepełnosprawni dla Środowiska EKON" (the Disabled for the Environment EKON) association and the Platforma Integracji Osób Niepełnosprawnych PION (Platform of Integration of People with Disabilities).

For companies that wanted to start employing disabled people, the support of other companies or NGOs turned out to be crucial in solving problems related to recruitment, employee introductory training and integration, and team support, as well as issues concerning labour law and regulations on employment of disabled people. Many companies pointed to the difficulties associated in particular with the recruitment of employees. Polish Altix and Swedish Rehab Station recruited from among their clients; Thales financed scholarships for the most talented students with disabilities, hoping that later they would associate themselves with the company, and cooperated in this area with government institutions. Max Hamburgerrestaurant cooperated with the Swedish organization Samhall. Carrefour and Sodexo

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.idmsc.org/pages/index.html>.

cooperated with third sector organizations. The cooperation made it possible to shorten the recruitment process, and some organizations also provided assistance in the initial training of the employee, or support for a job coach, which accelerated the process of introducing the new employee with disabilities and relieved the company financially and organizationally.

In the management of disability, it is of great importance to prepare co-workers and infrastructure. A disabled person should have a workstation that is adjusted to their needs and effective performance of their duties from their very first day of work. Preparation of a workplace may be financed from public funds, although – as research shows – not all companies used such a solution. Many companies preferred to adjust their work positions independently to avoid bureaucratic obligations, while others were not aware of subsidies available. It is also easier to start employing disabled people in health care and rehabilitation organizations, because their infrastructure is adapted to the needs of disabled patients. Both in the preparation of the workplace and the team for the presence of a disabled colleague, non-governmental organizations can be of great assistance, whether through providing support or information on necessary adjustments or possible problems that might arise in due course. In each of the companies presenting good practices, the key was to prepare for the implementation of disability management policy. The companies also received expert support in this area, be it from one of the employees, from non-governmental organizations or from state institutions (abroad). The financial support was plainly available to them, although not all companies made use of it. Depending on the legal regulations in force in a given country, companies received financial support for employing a person with disability (e.g. for work-station adaptation or other employment costs) or, by employing a disabled person they avoided paying dues to special disability funds.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study confirmed the thesis about the dominant, but not decisive, role of economic incentives in creating jobs for people with disabilities. The incentives must be present alongside other factors, which may include: the company mission and organizational culture, knowledge and attitudes of employers, and measurable benefits for the organization (social, organizational, image). The importance of organizational culture, reflected in organizational practices and attitudes of directors, management, and co-workers, has been proven in abundant research and analysis regarding hiring people with disabilities (see: Gottlieb, Myhill and Blanck 2010). It is worth mentioning that best practice analysis is a more and more common way of gathering knowledge and an important form of staying in touch with employers and other job market stakeholders (see for example: *Disability in the Workplace: Company Practices* 2010, *Disability and Work. A trade union guide to the law and good practice* 2011; *Supported Employment for people with disabilities in the EU and EFTA-EEA. Good practices and recommendations in support of a flexicurity approach* 2012; *Research on good practice in the employment of people with disabilities in the public sector* 2018).

According to our research, application and promotion of good practices in each country does not happen in a social void. The implementation of the employment policy of people

with disabilities is fostered by efficient laws, support for non-governmental organizations, and the social and institutional environment in which organizations operate. The determinants and failures of the employment policy for people with disabilities in Poland are the result of wider social processes to which we want to pay special attention. These are: mental and awareness barriers in society; bureaucratic management structures and institutional resistance; and familialism of nursing institutions versus the policy of independent living.

**Mental and awareness barriers.** One of the main barriers slowing down the increase of the employment of people with functional impairments are the negative stereotypes and prejudices persistent in Polish society. Antonina Ostrowska draws attention to this, discussing the results of comparative studies carried out at an interval of twenty years (1993–2013). The author pointed to the persistence of beliefs regarding the conditions of employment and remuneration for the work of disabled people, and the lack of favourable changes regarding their promotion and professional development (Ostrowska 2015: 282). As well, disabled people are convinced that the jobs available for them in the labour market are dead-end positions that do not require high qualifications. Despite the removal in recent years of many architectural, institutional and legal barriers, the persistent mental and awareness barriers impede the actual integration introduced by social policy institutions (Ostrowska 2015: 12).

**Bureaucratic management structures and institutional resistance.** In Poland, the dominant model of public management is management through legislation, and the law is treated as an instrument of implementation and achievement of policy objectives. The authorities also treat legislation as the main form of social control and subordination of other stakeholders (Zybała 2013: 35). The attempts to implement the UN Convention in Poland are an illustration of the concept of conducting public policy through managing failure (Kubicki 2017: 175). On the one hand, there were great expectations related to the adoption of the Convention and the effects of its implementation, while on the other there have been limited and small changes which correspond to the concept of permanent failure. The adoption of the postulates of the Convention has not been internalized at the level of the entire community of disabled people, the bureaucratic apparatus, nor the society as a whole (Kubicki 2017: 179).

Specific policy failures concern the labour market and the vocational integration of people with disabilities. An example of this is the professional activation of disabled people who have obtained higher education. Disabled graduates are the initial social category of the disabled in Poland who are increasingly demanding recognition of their right to work and the creation of employment corresponding to the education and qualifications obtained. The process of emancipation, which was launched by enabling people with disabilities to obtain higher education (following the transformation), was halted by numerous external barriers limiting their employment (institutional resistance of employment services, prejudices and stereotypes of employers, demotivating role of social benefits). Currently, we are dealing with an unfinished process of emancipation regarding the unused potential of disabled graduates, who in the future, unless changes occur in the labour market, will become a problem for institutions (Giermanowska and Raław 2014).

**Familialism of care versus the policy of independent living.** Other reasons for the failure of the employment policy for people with disabilities are seen in the excessive concentration of activities on professional integration, without strengthening social integration

(Rymsza 2016). The goal of the services should be strengthening and the empowerment of individuals, and not excessive focus on increasing the “employment rate” indicator. The so-called “productivization” of disabled people carries the risk of instrumentalization of activities and objectification of individuals. It results in low indicators of effectiveness and efficiency, and it does not translate into the motivation of people with disabilities to improve their life situation through economic activity (Rymsza 2016: 42).

We conclude that the implementation of good practices in the employment of people with disabilities is a complex process. Its effectiveness is conditioned by the legal provisions and activities of the institutions, but also by the established values, norms and patterns of behaviour prevailing in a given society. Changes in attitudes of employers and employees, people with disabilities and their families require time and rooting in the institutional and cultural systems of society. The efficient functioning of civil society institutions – non-governmental organizations – is also important. Their role has proved to be crucial for employers implementing good practices.

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#### EKONOMICZNE *VERSUS* KULTUROWE DETERMINANTY ZMIAN W ZATRUDNIANIU OSÓB NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNYCH. DOBRE PRAKTYKI W POLSCE

W Polsce utrzymuje się niska aktywność zawodowa osób niepełnosprawnych (wskaźnik zatrudnienia dla osób w wieku produkcyjnym (18–59/64) mających prawne orzeczenie o niepełnosprawności wynosi 23,7% [2016]). Kluczową stroną stosunku pracy są pracodawcy, od których postaw i zaangażowania w dużym stopniu zależy oferty pracy dla osób niepełnosprawnych. Artykuł referuje wyniki badań firm i instytucji z otwartego rynku pracy mających dobre praktyki w zatrudnianiu pracowników niepełnosprawnych. Są to wyniki badania ankietowego zrealizowanego w stu organizacjach w Polsce oraz dziesięciu studiów przypadku wykonanych w organizacjach w innych krajach Europy. Wnioski z badań dotyczących Polski wskazują na istotne znaczenie instrumentów ekonomicznych we wspieraniu zatrudnienia osób niepełnosprawnych, ale także na ograniczony ich wpływ. Największą barierą są negatywne stereotypy i uprzedzenia występujące po stronie pracodawców i pracowników, zakorzenione w dominujących wzorcach postępowania w społeczeństwie. Badania dobrych praktyk w organizacjach zatrudniających niepełnosprawnych pracowników w Polsce i innych krajach dowodzą, że ważną rolę odgrywa w nich kultura otwarta na osoby niepełnosprawne i inne kategorie pracowników. Znajduje ona odzwierciedlenie w wartościach, normach i przekonaniach podzielanych przez pracodawców i pracowników, a także w kulturze organizacyjnej i metodach zarządzania.

Słowa kluczowe: pracownik niepełnosprawny, pracodawca, kultura organizacyjna, Polska