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**„The process of social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities
on the example of sheltered workshops of the Silesian Voivodship”**

**Summary of a doctoral dissertation written under the academic supervision of
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The issue of disability was taken up several thousand years ago, which shows longevity and importance of this subject. However, over the years there have been different approaches to disability from eugenics to egalitarianism. The positive approach to disability caused that this issue started to appear in legal documents. A model of disability was also created, which included activities in the field of psychological, medical, social and professional rehabilitation. It is professional rehabilitation that is currently recognized as the most important, because it lets disabled individual become independent. In Poland professional rehabilitation has for many years been carried out in sheltered workshops. Despite the action taken in sheltered workshops over 70% of the disabled remain professionally passive.

Therefore, studies on the professional activation of people with disabilities conducted in sheltered workshops aim to find an answer to the basic question: What are the reasons for such low effectiveness of the rehabilitation and employment process in the area of the main link of the rehabilitation model in Poland in terms of strengthening inclusion activities in the protected labour market of people with physical dysfunctions and the prospects of employment growth outside it.

The undertaken research topic is extremely important due to the continuous growth of the subpopulation of people with disabilities, which results, among others, from demographic conditions related to the process of aging of the working age population, longer life expectancy, a decrease in the percentage of children and youth in the population, as well as high emigration of young people abroad.

The main aim of the dissertation is to present and attempt to evaluate the process of social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities on the example of sheltered employment workshops, with particular emphasis on counteracting environmental exclusion and supporting employment in the open labour market.

In addition, the following specific aims have been listed, through which the main aim is achieved:

1. The theoretical (cognitive) aim is to examine the leading determinants of economic activation of people with disabilities in the context of existing national and international regulations within the framework of social policy and psychological factors conditioning the employment of people with disabilities. It is complemented by the characteristics of the rehabilitation and employment process based on the following models functioning in Poland: rehabilitation and support of employment of people with disabilities with particular emphasis on the role of sheltered workshops in this area.
2. The methodological aim is to indicate the relationship between the number of enterprises with the status of a sheltered workshop in Poland and the processes of: unifying wage subsidies and tightening the system of reliefs in contributions to the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People. The implementation of this aim requires an analysis of the amount of subsidies to the remuneration of employees with disabilities in 2009-2016 for the protected sector and regulatory changes in the quota system and taxation of open sector employers.
3. The application (utilitarian) aim is to present and evaluate the course of the rehabilitation and employment process in the enterprises of the protected labour market of the Silesian Voivodship on the basis of independently selected research criteria.

In connection with the set aims, the following research hypotheses were adopted:
Main hypothesis: There are a number of barriers to the process of social and professional inclusion in the protected sector of the labour market of people with physical dysfunctions, among which factors related to disability and the character of the operation of sheltered workshops are of significant importance. The basic hypothesis was supported by detailed hypotheses:

1. People with disabilities do not take up employment due to endo- and exogenous limitations, among which difficulties in implementing the assumed activation goals are of significant importance.
2. The status of a sheltered workshop is unprofitable due to the scope of rights similar to that of the open labour market, resulting mainly from the process of unification of wage subsidies in the years 2009-2018, as well as the high scope of obligations related to maintaining such a status.
3. Employers of the protected labour market have limited possibilities to implement the established rehabilitation and employment program due to formal, legal and financial barriers, as well as problems with integrating rehabilitation and market goals.
4. The failure to implement the improvements indicated by the employers of the protected sector will result in the liquidation of this link in the Polish rehabilitation model.

The subject of the research of this doctoral dissertation was the process of social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities, conducted in the sheltered employment workshops. The scope of the research included factors conditioning the employment of people with disabilities, both external and internal, directly related to the psychological aspects of the functioning of the studied population. Another area of research activities was the Polish model of rehabilitation of people with physical dysfunctions, which has determined the main link in the process, i.e. sheltered workshops. In order to explain the mechanisms of functioning of the abovementioned entities, an analysis of the paradigms supporting the inclusion process and the market of people with disabilities was undertaken. The subject matter was complemented by a survey conducted among entrepreneurs running sheltered workshops, which also indicates the theoretical and empirical nature of the study. The questionnaire questions concerned both current and future activation activities. The study covered entities concentrated in the Silesian Voivodship in 2019, and the research period covers the years 2009-2018, which included the unification of wage subsidies.

The dissertation consists of five chapters, an introduction and final conclusions.

Chapter I discusses the issues of perceiving and defining people with reduced physical capacity in a historical context. It also reviews literature, national and international documents on the protection of rights and employment opportunities of people with disabilities.

Chapter II presents the national rehabilitation and employment policy for people with body dysfunctions. It also indicates the basic sources of institutional and environmental support for the discussed subpopulation.

Chapter III deals with the issues related to the functioning of the sheltered workshops in Poland, at the same time indicating the basic definitions of these entities, the main conditions of activity, rights and obligations related to obtaining and maintaining the status of the sheltered workshop.

Chapter IV analyzes the sources of information about people with disabilities and, based on this, a short description of the discussed subpopulation in terms of socio-demographic characteristics and the professional situation in relation to the entire country was built, followed by an identical analysis in relation to people with disabilities living in the Silesian Voivodship.

Chapter V is the last part of the research process, in which the author, on the basis of independently selected research criteria, tries to determine the professional situation of people with disabilities employed in the Silesian sheltered workshops, as well as to indicate the employment prospects of people with reduced physical capacity in the Silesian Voivodship for the upcoming years.

Achieving the aims and verifying the adopted research hypotheses required the use of secondary and, at a later stage of research, primary data sources. In order to explore the secondary data sources the following research methods were used: literature studies, descriptive method and critical analysis of Polish and foreign literature and analysis of documents, among which the Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities¹ together with amending, executive and related acts turned out to be significant in the context of Polish regulations. The documents of international institutions: the United Nations and its affiliated agency of the International Labor Organization, the Council of Europe and the European Union were also analyzed. Moreover, in the course of the research the analysis of the statistics conducted by Central Statistical Office, State Fund for Rehabilitation of the Disabled, Supplementary Financing and Reimbursement Servicing System, Silesian Voivode, institutional reports, research of scientific centres and market intelligence agencies was carried out. In order to organize and

¹ Act of 27 August 1997 on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities (Journal of Laws 1997, No. 123, item 776, as amended)

present the data, statistical and descriptive methods were used along with the methods of comparative analysis and synthesis. In order to collect research material from primary sources the indirect measurement method using questionnaires of surveys distributed among employers of sheltered workshops was applied.

All the aims of the dissertation were successfully achieved, and this in turn allowed for a positive verification of the main research hypothesis about the existence of many barriers to the process of social and professional inclusion of people with disabilities. These barriers are found in the broadly understood environment of a person with a disability, but a person with a disability can also, to some extent, create the situation they find themselves in. The significant exogenous factors hindering the process of social and professional inclusion include unfavourable social attitudes towards this subpopulation over the years, which in turn have influenced the time, shape and place of appearance of subsequent documents regulating the issue of disability also in Poland. However, despite the existence of many regulations at a national level, there are still problems with the uniform definition of disability, with the equivalent validity of disability degree certificates issued by various judicial bodies. The possibilities of earning money and benefiting from the offered forms of financial assistance are also hampered because of the introduced income limits for recipients of disability benefits due to limited employability. The overly isolating educational system, the attitudes of families of people with disabilities, as well as the extensive social security system are further examples of conditions that adversely influence the process of inclusion of people with disabilities. What seems no less important in the light of the research carried out, are the attitudes of people with disabilities themselves, which in turn are strongly influenced by socio-demographic factors, as well as unfavourable attitudes of employers. Therefore, people with more severe dysfunctions are often employed within the protected labour market. However, having the status of a sheltered workshop is burdened with many obligations, which include, among others, having the employment rates for people with disabilities defined by the regulations, adapting the facility and individual rooms to the needs of people with disabilities, providing emergency and specialist medical care, counselling and rehabilitation services, keeping an account of the company fund for the rehabilitation of people with disabilities. A wide scope of responsibilities and equalisation of wage subsidies to the level of the open market have led to a situation in which having the status of a sheltered workshop has become unprofitable for employers of the protected labour market, especially since they have to participate in the market game with enterprises from the open market. The surveys conducted

among the entrepreneurs of the protected market also showed a high degree of underfunding of their facilities. The undeniable conclusion that arises from the analysis of research material from primary and secondary sources is therefore that it is difficult for protected market companies to combine their rehabilitation goals with market ones due to their high incompatibility. Therefore, a great facilitation for the further functioning of the current sheltered employment workshops would be an increase in the level of wage subsidies and contributions to the Company Fund for Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (ZFRON), which finance the social and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities, as well as changes in the method of calculation of reliefs in contributions to the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (PFRON), which makes these entities competitive on the market. In the light of the conducted research it also seems important to increase the reliefs for the employers of the sheltered workshops while reducing the amount and scope of financial penalties to which they are subject. One should also consider whether it would not be a better solution, however, to separate the functions performed by the sheltered workshops and transfer some of them to the local government units or to release the sheltered workshops from the necessity to participate in the market game on the competitive market of goods and services, i.e. to transform them into non-profit institutions. Otherwise, in the next few years, the sheltered workshops will disappear completely from the labour market dedicated to people with the most severe health impairment and there will be no places suitable for performing rehabilitation and employment activities. And such a picture of future changes in the structure of the labour market of people with disabilities would be particularly undesirable in the light of many years of demographic trends, which clearly inform about the aging of the society, the increase in the average life expectancy, the decrease in fertility rates, the migration of young people abroad and the resulting continuous growth of number of people with limited physical capacity. The expected changes would therefore, paradoxically, lead to an increase in professional inactivity among the subpopulation in question, which, in the light of the regulations of the European Union, as well as other international organizations of which Poland is a member, and low activity rates in this group in the country, will be exceptionally unfavourable.