

For many years older workers have been encouraged to deactivate soon from the labour market. Many of them retired long before they actually got old. In Poland, these outflows from the labour force to non-participation were enhanced by restructuring processes and obsolete skills of older workers in 1990s, the belief in lump of labour fallacy in times of high unemployment and numerous schemes of pre-retirement benefits and early retirement. But, these outflows have become problematic when the demographic pyramid reverted and population aging processes accelerated. Now, in light of low participation rates, especially among older workers, severe population aging processes and low fertility rates, every worker is worth one's weight in gold. It is then socially and scientifically justified and desired to look for the patterns in labour market attachment to see what affected pre-mature withdrawal from the labour market by older workers, and especially what was the impact of various policies (in principle pension policy and labour market policy interventions) operated by means of the public employment office.

We examine the underexplored country of Poland which severely experiences the problem of population aging. The overall population is expected to decrease by 10% in the next 35 years, whereas the number of 60+ individuals is expected to increase by more than a half what will result in an increase in their share in total population from 23% to 40% in the same time horizon. The life expectancy for a 60-year-old men in 2015 was estimated at 19 years, and for female counterpart 24.1 years. In 2016 almost 70% of those aged 50-74 who were inactive, indicated retirement as a reason for non-participation; and less than 2.5 workers fell on one pensioner (this ratio is constantly decreasing). In the period covered by the analysis, the standard minimum retirement age to become eligible to receive pension benefits was 60 for females and 65 for males. But, until the beginning of 2009, workers had access to a range of early retirement schemes that made them actually deactivate long before the above specified age. For example, in 2004 the effective retirement age was 56.8 years, in 2009 59.3, whereas in 2016 – 61.9 years. Since the government has recently reversed the reform which increased the retirement age, we can expect these values to decrease in the future.

In this research project we formulate the main goal as to analyse the labour force attachment pathways of older workers that led to old-age non-participation by means of public employment office. We observe labour market history of all workers born between 1940 and 1965 who experienced any period of registered unemployment and deregistered anytime between 1990 and 2017 because: (1) started collecting pension benefits, (2) started collecting disability allowance, (3) started collecting pre-retirement benefits, (4) turned standard retirement age, and confront them with (5) all other workers from the same birth cohorts who experienced any period of registered unemployment in 1990-2017, but were not assigned to any of the above specified groups. Chosen time spans allow us to follow workers who turned 50 years old in the time span when public employment offices operated.