

## Students entering the labour market, their hopes, expectations and opportunities in the context of sustainable economic development

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**Abstract.** Students are the future middle class members, people with higher education, the ones who will identify consumer trends, and those who will become the entrepreneurship accelerator. The success associated with the implementation of sustainable development principles in Poland will be based on actions of members if this social.

The aim of this research is to study vocational preferences and aspirations of social sciences students in view of their future jobs - their hopes, expectations and opportunities in the context of implementing ideas of sustainable economic development.

The survey was carried out in January 2015 in Great Poland. The whole researched group consisted of 354 students. The main conclusions are as follows. Respondents hope that the education gained will allow them to find a satisfactory jobs rather in their place of residence or in its vicinity. First of all, they would prefer to be employed in public administration or in the private sector. They also take into account the chance to set up their own business. The participating students are vaguely familiar with the possibility to take advantage of EU programmes supporting young people, including those related to the idea of sustainable development. They expect that work will allow them to earn money, improve their status, fulfill their dreams, and in the future to

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benefit from pensions. Studies taken up by them give them possibilities and prepare them well to work and meet their own expectations. Respondents believe that the way of education is adapted to the requirements of the labour market and do not fear unemployment and exclusion from the labour market. Therefore, the implementation of the idea of sustainable development gives positive results and, when supported by a growing awareness of students to invest in their own future and greater knowledge of market conditions, can bring positive results for the Polish labour market, high quality of life and the economy.

**Keywords:** Polish students, labour market, sustainable economic development

**JEL Code:** J24, J28, M5, M13, O10

## INTRODUCTION

Addressing the challenges of sustainable economic development in the countries of the European Union demands the implementation of a series of activities in the field of innovation and efficiency development, as well as balancing the needs and requirements of developing societies with opportunities to meet them at the domestic level. It is anticipated that the existing indicators of societies development, including the most popular GDP, do not allow for an objective and painstaking assessment of the economic development, and, as a result, hinder creation of policies in countries depending on economic, social and environmental changes. They are supposed to be replaced by the synthetic index covering the quality of life and environmental issues (Kubel-Grabau, 2014).

In order to realize the idea of sustainable development, the European Union has developed the action plan explained in the strategy papers. The implementation of the 'Europe 2020' strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (a long-term programme for economic and social development of the European Union) assumes three mutually reinforcing priorities:

- Smart growth – i.e. innovation and knowledge-based development
- Sustainable growth - turn towards a low-carbon economy, but above all, competitive and, simultaneously, effectively using resources
- Inclusive growth - supporting the government in achieving high employment, and ensuring economic, social and territorial integrity (Komunikat... Europa 2020, 2010, p. 6).

The instruments to implement the goals of the strategy are local National Reform Programmes and flagship initiatives developed by the European Commission, including the 'Youth on the Move' initiative and 'The Agenda for New Skills and Jobs' (Bąkowski, 2012).

The implementation of the strategy has also resulted in a number of documents related to business development. According to researchers, a group that identifies consumer trends, and which is the entrepreneurship accelerator, is the so-called middle class - educated, well-endowed conscious consumers. The success associated with the implementation of sustainable development principles in Poland as well as in better developed countries, will be based on this social group members' actions (Wizja zrównoważonego rozwoju... 2050, 2010, p.28 ). In the context of the sustainable development implementation, for the years 2014-2015 the European Council recommends that Poland stimulates the economic growth and employ-

ment, including, in particular, increased efforts to reduce unemployment of young people, in particular, by adapting education to the needs of the labour market<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, the idea of sustainable economic development and its implementation gives many more opportunities to meet the expectations of young people, including students entering the labour market. In practice, the report suggests balancing the demand for work with its supply in the territorial sense as well. Conversely, in compilations of statistical data the available information is that young people understand the need to invest in their own development, they are not satisfied with just basic or secondary education. The percentage of people with higher education is increasing and this social group is responsible for the drop of the unemployment rate (Cichocki, 2014a, p. 13). In addition, Poland has the largest percentage of people with higher education in Europe (OECD Better Life Index).

Currently, the unemployment rate in the age group of 15-25 years in Poland is 24.1 %, but it is steadily improving (Cichocki *et al.*, 2014a, p.11). In the last quarter of 2014 the ratio of professional activity of persons aged 25-34 years increased as well, the employment rate did not change compared with the previous quarter, and it increased compared with the previous year. The unemployment rate among individuals from higher age groups - 25-34 years is 9 %, in Great Poland 7, 2%. (Główny Urząd Statystyczny. Opracowanie sygnalne Warszawa, 24.02.2015, Monitoring Rynku Pracy, Kwartalna informacja o rynku pracy, p. 3, 9). In addition other problems can be found on the Polish labour market. Technical professions are still valued by employers (Raport płacowy 2013, p. 18; <http://www.polishexpress.co.uk>; <http://www.bankier.pl>), however students of humanities or social sciences have great difficulty in finding jobs. Do they take any measures to prepare well for their future profession? Do they try to find a job and get experience before? Is the Polish labour market attractive enough for young people not to seek jobs outside their place of residence? Are there more innovative ways of employment which the students know about? Finally, what are their expectations when it comes to future income, place of work, additional benefits, and taking care of employing the disabled according to the idea of social integration (one of the items of sustainable development)? Another given issue may be the question how they are prepared by their own universities to take up future jobs.

Professor Kleiber believes that the future belongs to educational interdisciplinary institutions that combine many different fields of science. However, such a reform is far in the future. In turn, Steve Jobs believed that to achieve technological and market success of the product it was necessary to connect technology with the Humanities or social sciences. His business was based on the idea of interdisciplinarity (Isaacson, 2011, pp. 352-353, Isaacson 2014). In modern economy, innovative institutions need experts in different fields of knowledge.

## AIMS OF THE STUDY, MATERIAL AND METHODS

The aim of this research is to study vocational preferences and aspirations of social sciences students in view of their future jobs - their hopes, expectations and opportunities in the context of implementing ideas of sustainable economic development.

Detailed objectives:

1. To determine students' economic activity and the probable direction of labour migration
2. To define major selection criteria for employment.
3. To check students' knowledge on opportunities in the labour market.

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<sup>1</sup> Zalecenie Rady z dnia 8 lipca 2014 r. w sprawie krajowego programu reform Polski na 2014r. oraz zawierające opinię Rady na temat przedstawionego przez Polskę programu konwergencji na 2014r Dziennik Urzędowy Unii Europejskiej, 2014, p.100

4. To identify expectations towards selected universities in the context of preparation for future work and, as a result, the possibility to find a future job easier.

Hypotheses:

1. Students connect their professional future with intensified work since their early youth, hoping it will help them enter the labour market easier.
2. Criteria for the selection of research areas are related to employment in public institutions, for example, government or local administration.
3. Students have knowledge on various employment opportunities in the labour market
4. The higher education institution meets the requirements concerning the effective activity in the labour market.

The survey was carried out in January 2015 at one of the state universities in Great Poland. It was a multi-stage random selection. From the list of public and non-public universities with social sciences majors the higher education institution was selected randomly, and then majors in which the research was conducted. The whole researched sample consisted of 354 people – undergraduate students drawn out of 650 studying in randomly chosen majors.

The study group consisted of social sciences students, majoring in: national security, governance, politics and journalism. The average age was 19,92 +/- 1,46. In the group there were 48.3 % of men and 51.7% of women. The students were mostly from Great Poland -73.2%, and 26.8% from the outside.

The authors' questionnaire contained closed multiple choice questions and semi-open questions<sup>2</sup>. This study is part of the project investigating students' hopes, expectations and opportunities, as well as their expertise on the labour market and requirements of future employers. Consecutive results will be presented in further publications.

## STUDENTS' ACTIVITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND A DIRECTION OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION (AIM 1)

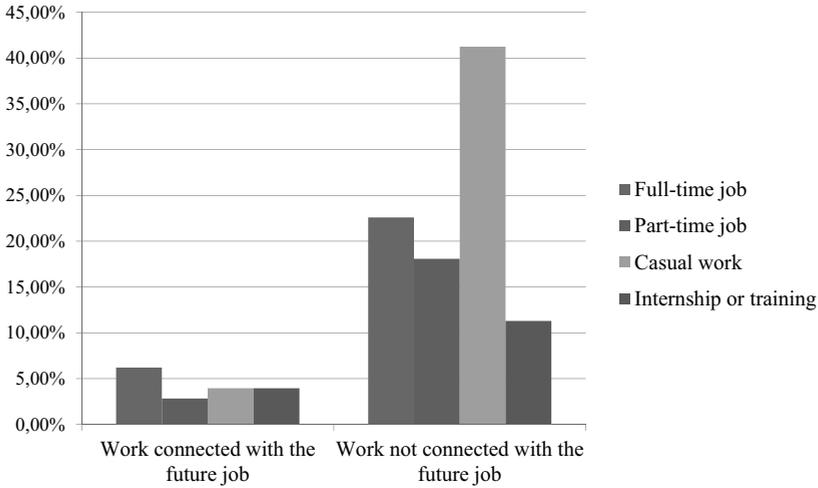
Over 74.29 % of undergraduates worked before. It was basically work not connected with the future profession, usually, the part-time job (see *Figure 1*). Fewer than 4% of the surveyed students did work placement connected with their future jobs.

The results of the research conducted for this paper are consistent with all-Poland trends. According to the Gumtree report - Active+, Young Polish people on the labour market in 2014, 72% of students or graduates work or do work placement (Raport Gumtree Aktywni +, Młodzi Polacy na rynku pracy w 2014 p.5, 8). In the conducted research more than 74% of the respondents have already had work experience.

Research conducted in the Lublin province indicates that more than 72% of the students believe that the experience gained will enable them to establish contacts, facilitating the search for future work (Krok-Czyż *et al.*, 2011, p.30). This report indicates that 36% of the students did some jobs in line with their education. Authors' own studies show worse proportions as most students took up jobs that were not associated with their future professions (see *Figure 1*).

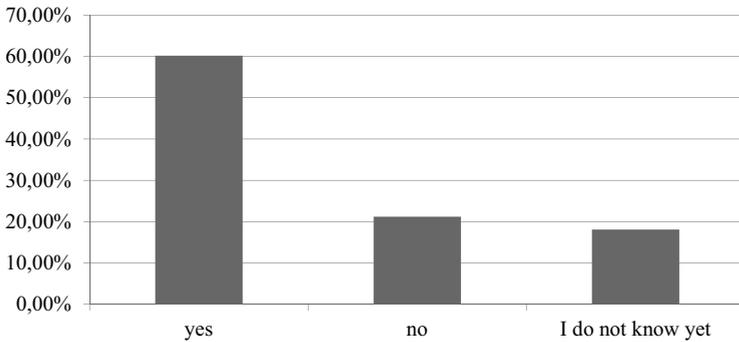
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<sup>2</sup> When making a few questions, materials from the report 'Prospects of youth in the labour market' were applied (Krok-Czyż *et al.* 2011, s. 92)



**Figure 1. Paid work done by students**  
 Source: own study.

The question whether in the province the respondents live the company they dream of can be found was answered positively by 60.17%, negatively by 21.19%, and the others did not know. Thus, the professional career and aspirations of undergraduate students are very well-considered.



**Figure 2. Students' knowledge on the dream job in the province they come from**  
 Source: own study.

The question whether in the province the respondents are currently studying you can find their dream companies was answered positively by more than 76.77%, negatively by 6.23%, and the others did not know (see *Figure 3*).

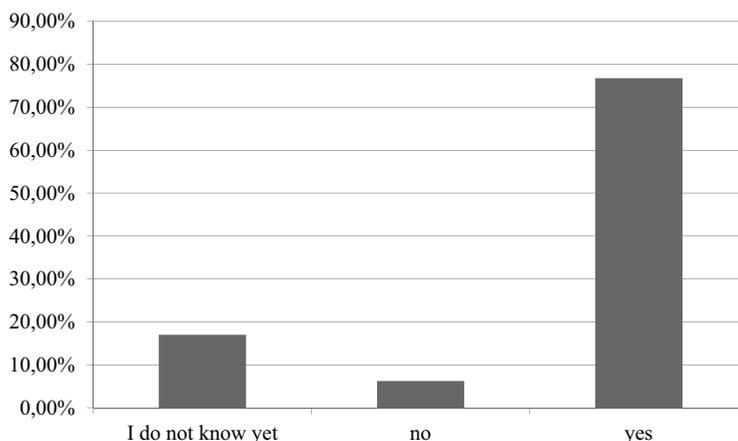


Figure 3. Students' knowledge on the dream job in the province they study

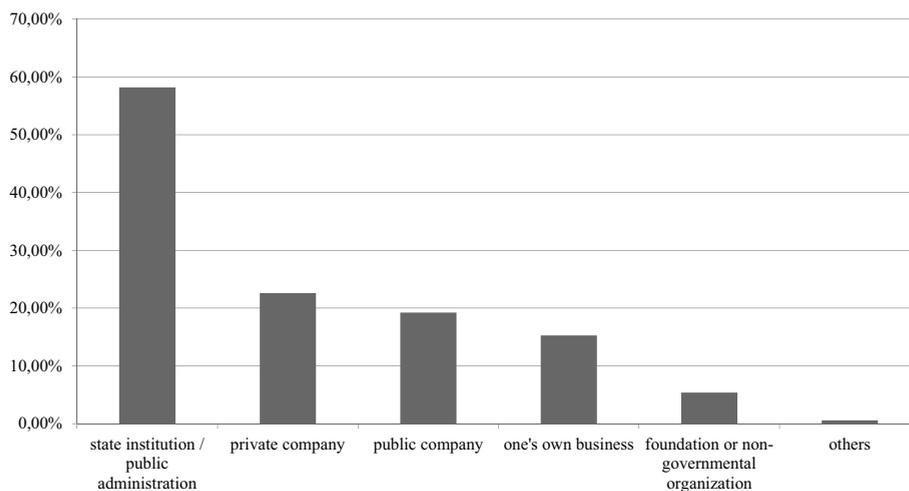
Source: own study.

Based on the available data, the correlation between the students' place of origin (province) and dream companies in the region they are currently studying or the province they come from was assessed. It may be stated that for people living in Great Poland the ideal companies respondents would like to work in can be found in their place of residence (49.3%), and among those who live outside Great Poland 11.7% believe that these companies are in their place of residence (Spearman's correlation coefficient  $R=0.2524$  for  $p=0.0000002$ ). In total 61% do not want to migrate for work. 22.60% of those who live in Great Poland believe that the ideal companies are outside their place of residence, and persons residing outside Great Poland claim in 16.40% that these companies cannot be found where they live. This shows that 39% of respondents want to migrate for work regardless of whether they live in Great Poland, or outside. These data do not indicate a clear migration trend.

World reports indicate low mobility of Poles. Experts say that this is due to difficulties in purchasing their own housing, poor infrastructure, and low economic activity of the Poles. Studies of the Centre for Public Opinion Research (2010) show that the most frequent reasons for leaving for another locality are: becoming independent, moving out of the family home, starting a family (44%). Getting a job is a side reason for migration (28%). Thus, the World Bank experts are calling for the implementation of incentives for greater mobility in the labour market. This is confirmed by the partial results of authors' own studies. The lack of mobility may be threatening for entrepreneurship and investment attractiveness because companies with foreign capital analyze the market in terms of the availability of specialists in a given field in a particular region (Wizja zrównoważonego rozwoju dla polskiego biznesu 2050, 2010, p.28). Conversely, economic migration may mean emotional separation, separation from the family and old friends, as well as greater difficulties in childcare.

## CRITERIA OF WORKPLACE SELECTION AND EXPERTISE ON THE LABOUR MARKET (AIM 2,3)

The majority of respondents - 58.19% - would like to start their professional career in state institutions, 22.6% in private companies, and 19.21% in public companies. 15.25% of respondents plan to start their own companies, 5.37% - in foundations or non-governmental organizations, 0.55% will choose other than listed institutions (percentages do not make 100% in total because students could select multiple responses, the most frequently added response was their own business) (see *Figure 4*).



**Figure 4. Preferred first job in various institutions**

Source: own study.

The situation concerning promotion prospects is slightly different. Most respondents bind their career with the government administration - more than 48%, but almost 27% of respondents want to start their own business, more than 19% want to get promoted in private companies, and in the state ones - more than 18% (see *Figure 5*).

Students want to run their own companies 40.96%, regardless of whether they will find another job or not, and more than 31% - if they cannot find any job, 12% do not want to run their own companies. The analysis of the above tables shows that students, in addition to their main job (full-time job) want to run their own business (see *Figure 6*).

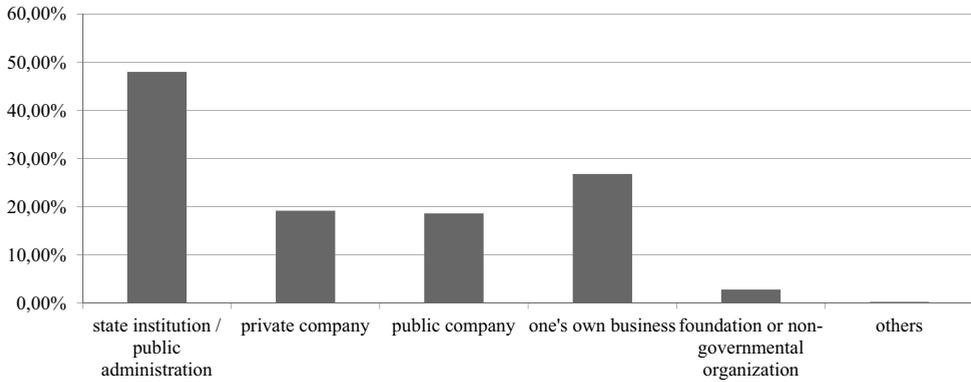


Figure 5. Preferred promotion direction in various institutions

Source: own study.

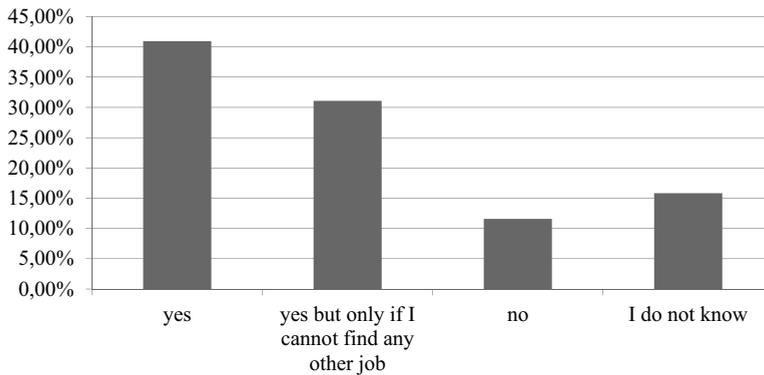
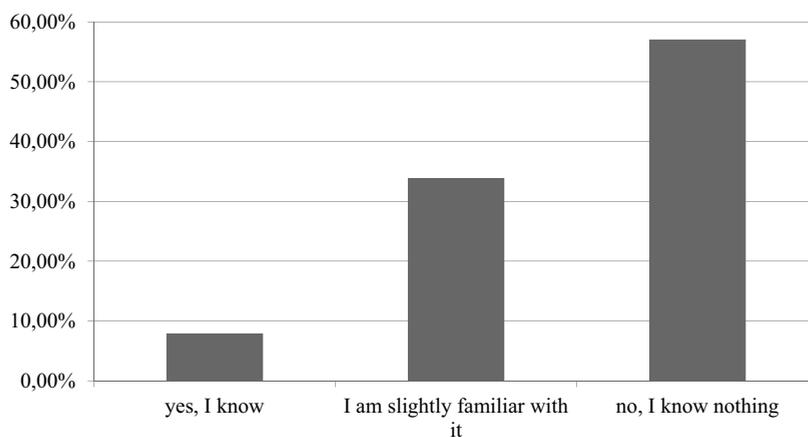


Figure 6. Readiness to run one's own company

Source: own study.

However, only 13% of respondents claim that they know the EU programmes, which support young entrepreneurs, 3.67% know such programmes of local governments. A new fashionable economic trend is the idea of promoting start-ups, aimed at young innovative companies operating on the basis of knowledge and new technologies (Ries, 2012, p. 27). Such companies can work on the intersection of technology, business and administration. Most frequently they receive financial support from business partners, the so-called business angels (direct funding) or are financed by venture capital (indirect financing). Knowledge about such projects is quite poor among respondents. Less than 34% are familiar with it, more than 57% claim to know nothing about it (see Figure 7).



**Figure 7. Knowledge of the start-up concept**

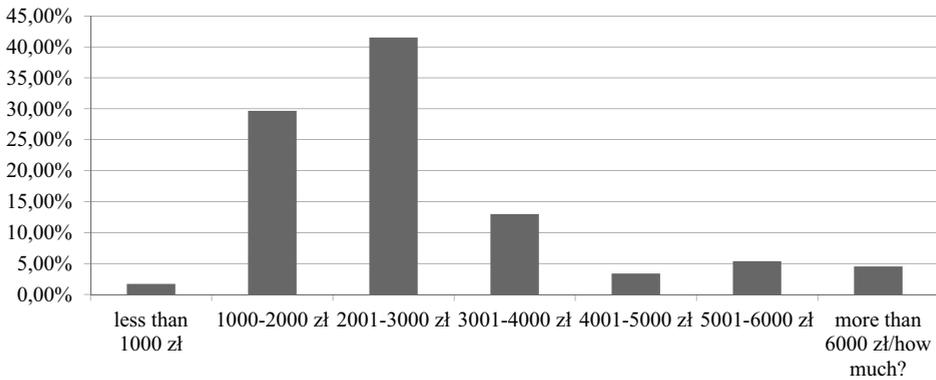
Source: own study.

The report 'Prospects of youth on the labour market' says that young people first of all would like to work in private companies (54%), public companies (20%), and 16% of the respondents would like to run their own business. Therefore, a significant percentage of the respondents show pro-business attitudes (Krok-Czyż, 2011, p.34). According to authors' own studies, the tendency to work in state administration institutions results from the major of study. However, the tendency to be promoted shows the respondents' readiness to run their own business, although knowledge of different solutions supporting young entrepreneurs is still limited. Interestingly, the respondents claim the readiness to run their business both in case of the lack of work and as an additional activity.

A particularly interesting solution for young people, underappreciated by the students are start-ups, which, while introducing new technologies, also lead to interdisciplinary cooperation (Ries, 2012, p. 27). One should, however, be aware of the limitations that may be encountered by young people who wish to combine work in the public administration with running their own business.

The second category of companies that the respondents would like to work in are private companies. In the context of economic recovery, which was observed in the first quarter of 2014, the private sector takes bigger and bigger part in the total employment from quarter to quarter. The number of employees in the public sector began to decrease. Experts say that this can be the total effect of the program to 'tighten belts' in the public administration and the growing demand for labour in the private sector (Cichoński *et al.*, 2014b, p.7).

The lowest incomes approved by respondents are mainly in the range of net 2000-3000 PLN (41.53% of respondents) or net 1000-2000 PLN (21.66%) (see *Figure 8*).

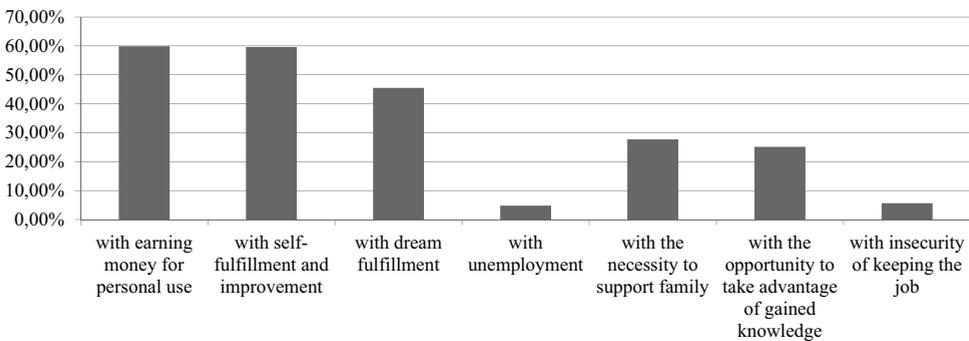


**Figure 8. The lowest incomes approved by students**  
Source: own study.

The lowest revenues approved by them do not differ from market realities. The most common earnings of young people are at the level of net 1000-1500 PLN (23%), net 1500-2000 PLN (19 %) (Raport Gumtree Aktywni +, Młodzi Polacy na rynku pracy w 2014, p.8).

Thus, there is not a big gap between reports and authors' own research.

When asked what they associate the word 'work' in the context of their future, students answered basically that with earning money for personal use (59.89%) and with self-fulfillment and improvement (59.60%), as well as fulfilling dreams (more than 45.48 %). Students do not have big concerns related to work or uncertainty of keeping it (5.65%) as only a small percentage of them answered that it was due to unemployment (4.80%) (see Figure 9).

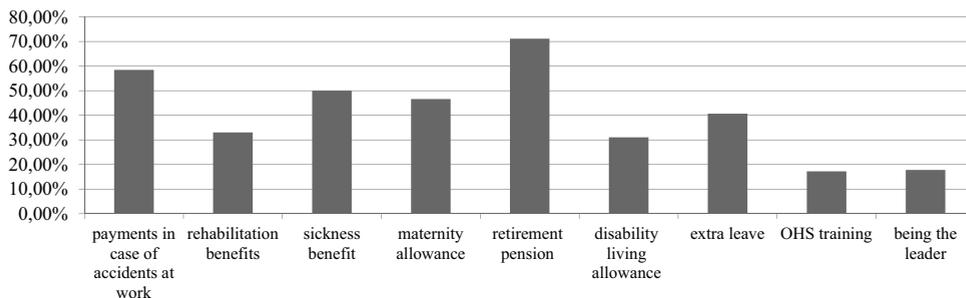


**Figure 9. Associations with the word 'work' in the context of student's future**  
Source: own study.

The income as the main benefit from work is very important to less than 30% of respondents (29.94%), it is important for more than 58% of the respondents (58.19%), it is medium important for just over 10% (10.17%), for other respondents (more than 1%) - it is not important.

An important factor related to work are contributions to health and social insurance. The contributions paid by employers are important, or medium important for more than 60% (66.39%) of respondents, but they are very important only for more than 10% (11.30%). This may indicate a rather low but not the lowest awareness of social insurance realities as well as rights and benefits for workers. However, the total percentage of positive responses is satisfactory in general.

The main fringe benefits available as a result of being employed are: retirement pension - more than 71%, payments in case of accidents at work - more than 58%, and the sickness benefit - 50 % (see *Figure 10*).



**Figure 10. The most important fringe benefits for students**

Source: own study.

Young people pay attention to the fact that the most important fringe benefits are retirement pension and payment in case of accident at work. These are positive data in terms of skepticism about the pension system and disbelief in it represented in the media in respect of young people's opinions (<http://wyborcza.pl>) as well as abusing civil contracts for a specified period. Perhaps recommendations of the Council of Europe for Poland in terms of reducing the use of civil contracts in favor of permanent employment, as well as completing the reform of the tax system, which will take effect in the form of appropriate legal solutions, will increase the confidence of young people in the issues of pension provision<sup>3</sup>.

Students' knowledge on the access to the labour market for people with disabilities is on the average level. More than 37% (37.57%) say it is a problem of social welfare (assistance), 32% connect it with government (32.77%) or local administration (31.92%). The answer is surprising in the context of social sensitivity and European trends and recommendations concerning the lack of social exclusion in case of people with disabilities. It should be emphasized that the research survey did not include disabled people.

A negative phenomenon, in turn, is the lack of students' knowledge about who is responsible for the access of persons with disabilities to the labour market. The economic reports state that more than 80% of people with disabilities in Poland are outside the labour market, while in the EU, the employment rate in this group is on average 40-50%. In Poland there are practical limitations in this respect and insufficient support for entrepreneurs wishing to hire disabled people (*Wizja zrównoważonego rozwoju...*, 2010, p.28). The results of both authors' own research and economic reports lead to the conclusion that probably too little information comes through the media to the public on benefits and financial inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market.

<sup>3</sup> Zalecenie Rady z dnia 8 lipca 2014 r. w sprawie krajowego programu reform Polski na 2014r. oraz zawierające opinię Rady na temat przedstawionego przez Polskę programu konwergencji na 2014r., *Dziennik Urzędowy Unii Europejskiej* 29.07.2014, (2014/C 247/19), p.100.

### EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN RESPECT OF PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FUTURE WORK (AIM 4)

More than 56% (56.21%) of respondents say that they are well prepared for taking up the future job (answers – ‘rather yes’), more than 15% (15.82%)- definitely well (answers ‘definitely yes’), the remaining are skeptical towards forms of education at the university in the context of their future employment (5.65% of answers –‘probably not’, 1.69% of answers ‘definitely not’, 18.36 % of answers – ‘hard to say’).

Students argue that specialists in their field of study are in demand on the labour market, and they are well prepared for a specific career. Moreover, they claim that studying this major provides interesting jobs, the opportunity for high earnings and promotion (the biggest number of ‘rather yes’ answers in these groups of questions) (see *Figure 11*).

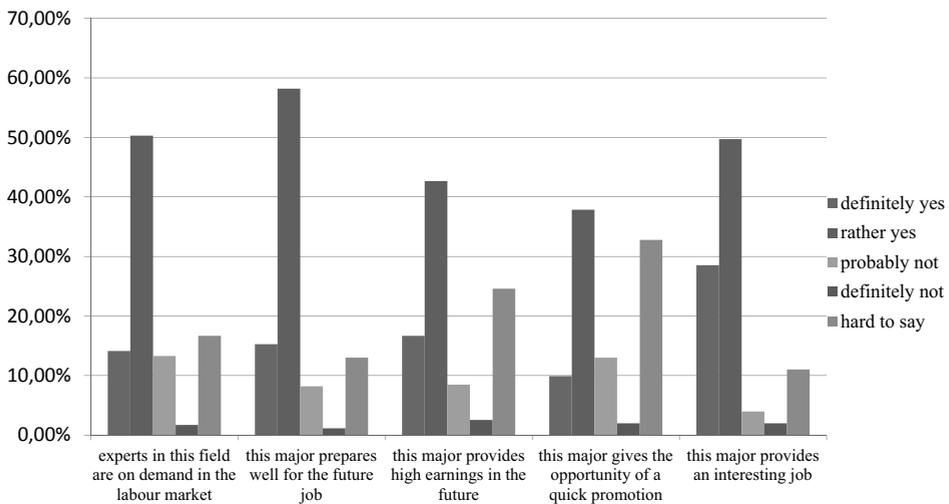


Figure 11. Assessment of the studied major in relation to the future job.

Source: own study.

Respondents’ positive associations with the word ‘work’(see *Figure 9*) in terms of their future can be a result of opinions on education. They argue that experts in the field they study are in demand on the labour market, universities prepare students well for a career, providing them with an interesting job, and the opportunity for high earnings and promotion.

Summing up, it can be stated that students hope that gained education will allow them to find a satisfactory job in their place of residence or in its vicinity. First of all, they would prefer to be employed in public administration or in the private sector. They also take into account the chance to set up their own business. Researched students are poorly familiar with the possibility to take advantage of EU programmes supporting young people, including those related to the idea of sustainable development. They expect that work will allow them to earn money, improve and fulfill dreams, and, in the future, to benefit from pensions. Studies, taken up by them, give them possibilities, well prepare them to work and meet their expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In the context of a detailed aim 1 implementation
  - a) Students are aware of benefits from the early recruitment, which gives them the opportunity to gain experience.
  - b) There is no tendency to migrate for economic reasons in the control group, which is not all together a positive phenomenon from the point of view of economic competitiveness.
2. In the context of a detailed aim 2 implementation
  - a) Students majoring in social sciences want to gain work experience in government agencies, but in the context of the promotion they think about running their own business as well.
  - b) Respondents' expectations concerning revenues in their profession are not unrealistic. They care about contributions to medical care and social insurance paid by employers, and the future pension which is associated with work stability.
3. In the context of a detailed aim 3 implementation  
Respondents are not familiar with innovative solutions supporting young entrepreneurs, offered by the market.
4. In the context of a detailed aim 4 implementation  
Students appreciate the way they are prepared by universities for future jobs in the structures of sustainable economy, adapted to the requirements of the European Union.

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