

Polish Labour Force Survey – methodological summary on the correction for break in time series 2009-2020

The changes introduced in the Polish LFS since 2021 concerned mainly the subjective range of the survey as well as definitions and the way of specification of particular populations on the labour market, i.e. the employed, the unemployed and economically inactive persons. It is closely connected with coming into force of the Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 October 2019 (the so-called Framework regulation IESS FR) and its implementing acts for the labour force domain. In turn, the provisions of the IESS FR are based on recommendations of the “Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization” worked out in 2013 at the Nineteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in Geneva and recommended for the use by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In the Polish LFS, there were also introduced the Eurostat recommendations regarding the appliance of the uniformed set of questions (flow charts), used for specification of adequate populations in accordance with the definitions and criteria applied in the EU-LFS methodology.

The above changes could have influenced comparability of the results obtained before and after the revision of the survey. Potential factors that might disturb the comparability and result in break in time series could concern changes in definitions, as well as the effects related to, i.a. the order of questions in the questionnaire and the way of asking them, which was the objective of analyses carried out in respect to the Polish LFS.

The analytical work carried out on the basis of the one-off, independent pilot survey conducted alongside the core survey in the fourth quarter of 2020, did not give grounds for ascertainment of statistically significant effects related to a change in the survey methodology disturbing comparability of the data regarding main categories of economic activity. However, due to the fact that new IESS FR regulation (its implementing acts) changed definitions of particular categories of persons on the labour market, which itself is a source of incomparability, it was decided to recalculate historical data for the previously implemented editions of the survey based on new definitions. These recalculations were conducted on anonymised individual data of the Polish LFS before the revision – i.e. new categories of the status on the labour market, specified with the use of definitions obligatory in the LFS from 2021 onwards, were designated to particular records in the quarterly individual data for the years 2009-2020.

The following definition changes were taken into account in the case of specification of new categories of the status on the labour market:

- introduction of the upper age limit for an employed person (89 years), all persons aged 90 years and more are included among the economically inactive
- including in the employed population:
 - ✓ persons staying on parental leaves (currently in the Polish LFS, all persons on parental leave are included among the employed, as they meet a criterion of receiving the employment-related benefit),
- excluding from the population of employed persons:
 - ✓ self-employed persons who work in private agriculture (on farms owned by natural persons) and allocate the effects of their work exclusively or mainly for own consumption and simultaneously do not have any other job.

Due to designating new categories¹ of the status on the labour market in the quarterly files of individual data for the years 2009-2020, it was possible to compile the results for particular populations in accordance with the new methodology. The obtained results indicate a decline in the population of employed persons and an increase in the number of economically inactive persons, while maintaining a similar number of unemployed persons in particular quarters for the years 2009-2020. A drop in the number of employed persons is caused mainly by exclusion of self-employed persons who work in private agriculture (on farms owned by natural persons) allocating the effects of their work exclusively or mainly for own consumption and who simultaneously do not have any other job. Whereas, transition from economic inactivity into the population of the employed is mainly connected with a change in the hitherto criteria of classification among the employed of persons staying on parental leaves (mostly women in particular age groups).

The changes in the number of particular categories of persons specified according to their status on the labour market have also an impact on changes in the level of indicators, such as activity rate, employment rate and unemployment rate.

¹ The fact should be taken into account that these recalculations were compiled on the files which data were collected for different layout of a questionnaire and the variables preceding the LFS revision, therefore the complete and exact application of the new definitions obligatory from 2021 onwards is not possible, albeit such approach allowed grasping most of definition changes, particularly those of the key importance for comparability of the results.