

Department of Hygiene, Medical University of Lublin
Regional Social Politics Centre in Lublin

BARBARANIERADKO-IWANICKA, JANUSZ IWANICKI,
MAŁGORZATA KOENNER, ANDRZEJ BORZĘCKI

*The socio-economic situation of people with disabilities
in the Lublin voivodeship*

In the Lublin voivodeship there is the highest rate of disability of Poland. According to the data from 2002, 18.5% of the Lublin voivodeship population are people with disabilities compared with 14.3% in Poland and 10% in the European Community (EC). The high rate of disability in the Lublin region coexists with poverty, joblessness and low level of education of the disabled. They cannot fully participate in social life nor accomplish their aims. It is not only the region and its agricultural characteristics that make the situation of the disabled so miserable. The situation is also caused by constant changes in Polish legislation and the recent entering the structures of the EC (9).

The aim of the study was to collect and analyse data about the present socio-economic situation of the disabled in the Lublin voivodeship.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The data about the numbers of people with disabilities living in the districts of the Lublin voivodeship, reasons and degrees of their disabilities, employment and sources of means necessary to sustain their needs, level of education, numbers of institutions specialising in teaching and occupational therapy of the disabled were collected and analysed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Percentages of people with disabilities living in districts of the Lublin voivodeship are shown in Table 1. There are people with legal disability, which means that they have an adjudication. There are also the ones with biological disability, who feel disabled but have no documents confirming the disability. In 2002 there were 68,709 people with biological disabilities in the Lublin region compared with 332,523 legally disabled (82,921 – with severe disability, 102,797 – moderate, 113,483 – slight, 25,304 – unknown, 8,018 – youth under 15 years of age). The percentage of disabilities grew from 16.48% in the year 1996 up to 18.5% in 2002 in the Lublin voivodeship (3). This is mostly due to the agricultural characteristics of the region. Working on the farms increases the risk of accidents and diseases in the country. This is also due to poverty, unhealthy lifestyles and high rate of alcoholism in the population (10).

The diseases causing disabilities in the Lublin region inhabitants are enumerated in Table 2 (2, 7). As the high percentage of the disabled suffer from locomotor system diseases there is a need for removal of the architectonic barriers in public utility buildings. And this is regulated by the law. In spite of that 100% of railway stations, 83% of police stations, 67% of secondary schools, 66% of bus

stations, 50% of post offices, 50% of offices and 50% of university buildings in the Lublin voivodeship are not accessible for people on wheelchairs because of entrance stairs, lack of elevators, narrow doors and corridors, etc. (1, 8).

Table 1. Disability occurrence in administrative districts of the Lublin voivodeship (%)

District	Total %	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
				in towns		in the country	
Bialski	17.5	16.8	18.2	14.5	15.1	17.3	19.0
Parczewski	21.5	20.0	22.8	16.4	15.7	21.6	25.6
Radzyński	19.0	18.3	19.7	17.9	17.3	18.4	20.1
Włodawski	21.5	20.4	22.6	17.3	18.0	22.0	25.0
Biała-Podl.	12.2	11.8	12.5	11.8	12.5		
Subregion: Bialski	17.8	17.1	18.5	14.1	14.5	18.9	21.2
Biłgorajski	18.1	16.7	19.4	14.5	15.9	17.7	21.2
Chełmski	25.4	25.2	27.5	16.3	18.5	23.6	28.1
Hrubieszowski	20.3	18.9	21.6	17.4	18.2	19.4	22.9
Krasnostawski	23.0	21.4	24.5	19.0	19.9	22.1	26.1
Tomaszowski	20.9	19.4	22.3	17.8	18.4	20.0	23.6
Zamojski	20.3	19.1	21.5	14.5	14.3	19.7	22.4
City of Chełm	19.7	18.8	20.4	18.8	20.4		
City of Zamość	16.1	15.8	16.5	15.8	16.5		
Subregion: Chełmsko-Zamojski	20.4	19.1	21.7	17.0	18.0	20.4	23.9
Janowski	16.2	15.8	16.7	15.4	14.8	15.9	17.3
Kraśnicki	19.6	18.8	20.4	17.5	17.8	19.7	22.1
Lubartowski	18.0	17.0	19.0	14.4	15.5	18.2	20.7
Lubelski	21.7	20.0	23.3	15.8	17.0	20.4	23.9
Łęczyński	17.9	16.7	19.0	10.3	0.95	20.7	25.0
Łukowski	13.5	13.7	13.4	14.4	13.8	13.4	13.2
Opolski	17.6	17.2	18.0	15.2	14.6	18.1	19.5
Puławski	17.6	16.9	18.2	15.3	15.5	18.5	20.9
Rycki	14.9	14.1	15.7	13.0	14.4	15.2	17.0
Świdnicki	18.9	17.9	19.8	15.8	16.8	21.0	24.3
City of Lublin	17.3	16.8	17.7	16.8	17.7		
Subregion: Lubelski	17.7	17.0	18.4	15.9	16.6	18.2	20.5
Lublin voivodeship	18.5	17.7	19.4	16.0	16.7	19.1	21.8

The structure of education of the disabled is depicted in Table 3. There are growing numbers of institutions for special education and integrating schools. In the school year 1999/2000 there were: 1 kindergarten, 32 elementary schools, 30 grammar schools, 15 technical schools, 2 secondary schools for the disabled children and youth in the Lublin voivodeship compared with 5 kindergartens, 33 elementary schools, 34 grammar schools, 18 technical schools and 2 secondary schools in the school year 2003/2004. There is an increase of numbers of regular schools with special classes where disabled kids can study together with healthy peers: in the school year 1999/2000 there were: 15 kindergartens, 13 elementary schools and 1 grammar school compared with 22 kindergartens, 30 elementary schools, 6 grammar schools and 5 technical schools in the school year 2003/2004 (4). There was a significant increase in the numbers of disabled with MSc degree in the Lublin region within the last 7 years. However, it was twice less than in other parts of the country (2). Low average level of education of the disabled in our region results from still too low numbers of secondary schools adopted to the needs of disabled youth. Out of 40,000 university students in Lublin only 500 are persons with disabilities (4).

Table 2. The reasons for disabilities in the Lublin voivodeship in 2004

Kind of disease	Persons under the age of 16 (%)	Persons over the age of 16 (%)	% of all adjudications
Mental retardation	7.8	4.6	5.7
Mental diseases	3.4	9.4	7.8
ENT diseases	5.0	4.3	4.6
Eye diseases	5.7	4.4	4.7
Locomotion system diseases	13.3	26.8	23.2
Epilepsy	6.7	2.5	3.7
Respiratory and circulatory systems diseases	32.5	22.3	25.2
Gastrointestinal tract diseases	2.4	3.2	3.0
Urinary and reproductive systems diseases	4.2	1.7	2.4
Nervous system diseases	9.0	12.4	11.5
Other	9.6	7.9	8.4

Table 3. The structure of education of people with disabilities aged 15 and over in the Lublin voivodeship compared with the structure in Poland in 2002

Education	Percentage in Poland	Percentage in Lublin voivodeship	% of the disabled in Poland	% of the disabled in Lublin voivodeship
MSc	10.2	9.4	4.6	3.7
Secondary education	32.6	31.10	23.2	20.7
Further technical education	24.1	20.2	22.0	17.4
Elementary education	33.10	38.7	50.2	58

In 2002, the majority of the disabled of the Lublin voivodeship were social security claimants: 67,218 were retired employees, 65,261 retired farmers, 4,749 were on a dole, 198,055 were on disability pensions, 8,451 got social pensions and 11,362 family pensions compared with only 18,125 people working on the farms and 25,125 employed elsewhere (4). From the year 2000 to 2004 the numbers of jobless disabled kept growing (in 2000–1,429 persons, 2001–1,685, 2002–2,038, 2003–2,707 and in 2004–2,821) (4). On the contrary, the numbers of workshops for the disabled decreased constantly: there were 57 workshops in 2000 in the Lublin voivodeship with 4,917 disabled employed, 56 in 2001 with 4,829 employees, 55 in 2002 with 4,442 employees, 53 in 2003 with 4,188 employees and 46 workshops in 2004 with 3,891 disabled employed (4). The disabled have little chance for employment in the Lublin voivodeship. Only 10.6% of them have got jobs and thus get means to sustain their needs. 89.4% of the disabled in the region are on the pension or retired (7). The number of jobless disabled keeps growing. Among them vast majority is 45 to 54 years of age. There are many people that have never been employed before. The numbers of job offers for the disabled decrease every year (from 1,429 in the year 2000 to 1,012 in 2003). Every year there is less and less workshops for them as well (4).

Positive trends can be observed when it comes to occupational therapy workshops and mutual aid societies organised in the Lublin voivodeship from 2000 to 2004: the numbers of the disabled attending occupational therapy workshops grew from 480 in the year 2000 to 813 in 2004 and the numbers of the disabled active in local mutual aid societies grew from 690 in the year 2000 to 1,241 in 2004 (4). The occupational therapy workshops and mutual aid societies play a very important role in rehabilitation of the disabled. The increase in their number seems to be very helpful for the patients and their families. Most of the workshops were organised in Lublin and Zamość districts. Unfortunately, there is no such workshops in Janów, Lubartów, Parczew and Radzyń districts (4). There is no surprise that studies about the disabled of the Lublin region reveal that neither are their homes, schools and offices wheelchair-friendly, nor are they eager to change the situation. It is known that due to all the difficulties and limitations discussed above the disabled from our region are socially passive (5, 6).

CONCLUSIONS

The disability rate in the Lublin voivodeship is the highest of all the EC regions. The majority of the disabled have only elementary education and are jobless. Even though there are growing numbers of special schools and occupational therapy workshops, too few disabled get a chance to attend there, get education and rehabilitation. The main problem for persons on wheelchairs are still ubiquitous architectonic barriers.

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SUMMARY

Disability rate in the Lublin voivodeship is the highest of all the regions of Poland. According to the data from the year 2002, 18.5% of all the inhabitants of the Lublin region are people with disabilities compared with 14.3% in Poland and 10% in the EC. High intensity of the disability phenomenon coexists with serious economic and social problems in the Lublin region. It influences life quality of people with disabilities and diminishes their chances for education and careers. The factors that make the situation that difficult are: agricultural characteristics of the region, high unemployment, difficult

access to education, health services and rehabilitation for people with disabilities. There are too few public institutions and organisations providing help for the disabled. There are numerous barriers (in communication, architectonics) that make an independent existence of a disabled person almost impossible. Describing the present socio-economic situation of people with disabilities in Poland we must also take into consideration constant changes in Polish law regulations and the recent entering the structures of the EC.

Sytuacja socjoekonomiczna osób niepełnosprawnych w województwie lubelskim

Województwo lubelskie charakteryzuje najwyższe natężenie zjawiska niepełnosprawności w skali całego kraju. Według danych z 2002 r. 18.5% populacji regionu to osoby niepełnosprawne, w tym samym czasie w Polsce żyło 14,3%, a w Unii Europejskiej ok. 10% osób niepełnosprawnych. Znaczne natężenie zjawiska niepełnosprawności, współwystępując z poważnymi problemami natury ekonomicznej i społecznej, znacząco wpływa na jakość życia osób niepełnosprawnych oraz na możliwość realizacji osobistych aspiracji i celów. Do czynników bezpośrednio determinujących sytuację społeczną i ekonomiczną niepełnosprawnych można zaliczyć rolniczy charakter gospodarki regionu oraz przewagę ludności wiejskiej, trudną sytuację na rynku pracy, ograniczony dostęp do podstawowych usług publicznych, takich jak: edukacja, ochrona zdrowia, rehabilitacja, pośrednictwo pracy. Ważnym czynnikiem jest również infrastruktura społeczna, rozumiana jako obecność w danej sferze instytucji publicznych oraz organizacji społecznych działających w środowisku i na rzecz osób z niepełnosprawnością. Osobnym problemem jest obecność w środowisku życia niepełnosprawnych barier utrudniających lub uniemożliwiających samodzielną egzystencję, która uwarunkowana jest m.in. zdolnością do nieskrępowanego poruszania, komunikowania, uzyskiwania wsparcia. Opisuując sytuację społeczną i ekonomiczną osób z niepełnosprawnością, nie sposób pominąć uwarunkowań szerszych niż wyłącznie lokalne i regionalne. Należy odnotować również bezpośredni wpływ takich faktów, jak wstąpienie Polski w strukturę Unii Europejskiej oraz, co równie istotne, cykliczne zmiany prawa w Polsce.