



THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT IN WROCLAW

THE COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY STUDIES

Public Funds Management as a Tool for Combating Youth Unemployment in the Lublin Voivodeship

Dissertation

Author:

mgr Grzegorz Czapski

Scientific director:

prof. dr hab. inż. dr h.c. Zbigniew Ciekanowski

Sub-promoter:

dr inż. Michał Kruszyński, prof. MWSLiT

WROCLAW

january 2026

Summary

Youth unemployment constitutes one of the key challenges of contemporary socio-economic policy, both at the national and regional levels. It is of particular significance in regions characterized by a weaker economic structure, a limited number of attractive job opportunities, and unfavourable demographic trends, which further hinder the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market. Despite the observable improvement in the overall labour market situation in Poland in recent years, young people continue to face significant barriers related to entering the labour market, obtaining stable employment, and achieving long-term professional development. These barriers are both structural and institutional in nature, and their consequences extend beyond individual experiences, affecting the developmental potential of regions and the stability of socio-economic systems.

In this context, not only the scale of public interventions aimed at counteracting youth unemployment is gaining importance, but above all the manner in which public funds allocated for these activities are managed. Such management encompasses not only the process of spending funds, but also the stages of planning interventions, selecting labour market instruments, coordinating the activities of public institutions at various levels, as well as monitoring and evaluating achieved outcomes. The effectiveness of efforts to reduce youth unemployment therefore largely depends on the quality of public funds management and the degree to which it is adapted to the specific characteristics of local labour markets and the needs of young people.

The main objective of this dissertation was to determine the extent to which the management of public funds contributed to reducing youth unemployment in the Lublin Voivodeship in the years 2014–2024. Adopting this research perspective made it possible to combine the analysis of youth unemployment with a managerial approach focusing on the rationality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the use of public resources. A supplementary objective was to conduct a forecast of the unemployment level and the number of beneficiaries of labour market instruments among individuals aged 18–30 in the Lublin Voivodeship for the years 2025–2029, which allowed the results of the retrospective analysis to be related to future challenges facing regional labour market policy.

The choice of the Lublin Voivodeship as the research area was not accidental. For many years, the region has been characterized by a relatively unfavourable labour market situation for young people, a high share of youth in the overall unemployment structure, and

a limited capacity to generate new jobs. At the same time, the Lublin Voivodeship is among the regions receiving a significant volume of public funds—both national and European—allocated to the professional activation of young people. The combination of a high level of funding for activation measures with persistent problems of youth unemployment makes this region a particularly interesting case study from the perspective of analysing the effectiveness of public funds management.

The methodological foundations of the conducted research were presented in Chapter I of the dissertation. This chapter justified the choice of the research topic by pointing to an existing research gap in analyses of youth unemployment conducted from the perspective of public funds management, particularly at the regional level. The main objective and specific objectives of the study were formulated, along with the research problems and hypotheses, which were subsequently subjected to verification in the following parts of the dissertation. This chapter established the conceptual and analytical framework for the entire study. The empirical research was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. As part of the quantitative research, an original questionnaire survey was administered to unemployed young people aged 18–30 residing in the Lublin Voivodeship. The research sample consisted of 367 respondents, which made it possible to obtain a representative picture of the opinions of beneficiaries of labour market instruments regarding the effectiveness of the forms of support applied. The survey research was supplemented by interviews conducted with 13 directors of county labour offices operating in the Lublin Voivodeship. These interviews enabled an in-depth analysis of public funds management from the perspective of individuals directly responsible for the planning, allocation, and implementation of active labour market policy instruments at the local level.

Chapter II was devoted to the theoretical foundations of public management in the area of the labour market and counteracting youth unemployment. This part of the study discussed the concept of unemployment and its basic classifications, emphasizing the complex and multifactorial nature of this phenomenon. Particular attention was paid to youth unemployment, which was presented as a problem requiring a distinct analytical and intervention approach due to the specific situation of young people entering the labour market. The main causes of youth unemployment—structural, institutional, and individual in nature—were identified, along with its socio-economic consequences, including the risk of social exclusion, labour migration, and the postponement of key life decisions.

An important element of Chapter II was the presentation of the role of the state and public institutions in counteracting youth unemployment. Public funds were portrayed not merely as a financial category, but as a key instrument for implementing labour market policy, requiring rational and effective management. The chapter was framed within a managerial perspective in which public funds management is understood as a process encompassing labour market problem diagnosis, intervention planning, financial resource allocation, instrument implementation, and evaluation of outcomes. This theoretical approach provided the foundation for further empirical analyses conducted in the dissertation.

Chapter III had an analytical and statistical character and comprised an analysis of the scale, structure, and dynamics of youth unemployment in Poland and in the Lublin Voivodeship in the years 2014–2024. The analysis was based on statistical data from Statistics Poland, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, and the public employment services. The data analysis made it possible to illustrate changes occurring in the youth labour market during the examined period and to identify differences between the national and regional situations.

The conducted analyses demonstrated that, during the examined period, the Lublin Voivodeship belonged to the regions characterized by a relatively unfavourable labour market situation for young people. The share of youth in the overall unemployment structure was higher than the national average, and the pace of improvement in labour market conditions was slower than in the more developed regions of Poland. These findings confirmed the validity of selecting the Lublin Voivodeship as the research area and provided an empirical background for further considerations regarding the management of public funds allocated to counteracting youth unemployment.

Chapter IV of the dissertation was devoted to the analysis of the management of public funds allocated to counteracting youth unemployment in the Lublin Voivodeship. The discussion began with a socio-economic profile of the region, with particular emphasis on demographic conditions, the economic structure, and the situation on the regional labour market. It was indicated that the Lublin Voivodeship is characterized by a low level of urbanization, relatively weak dynamics in the creation of new jobs, and a significant share of agriculture in the economic structure, which substantially limits employment opportunities for young people.

An important part of Chapter IV was the analysis of the Labour Fund as the primary national source of financing active labour market policy measures. The structure of the

Labour Fund's revenues and expenditures in the years 2014–2024 was presented, with particular emphasis on funds directed toward young people. It was demonstrated that the Labour Fund finances a wide range of labour market instruments, including internships, training programs, subsidized employment, reimbursement of employment costs, and instruments supporting entrepreneurship. The analysis of financial data revealed considerable volatility in Labour Fund expenditures during the examined period, driven by, among other factors, economic conditions and extraordinary circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter IV also discussed the role of European funds in counteracting youth unemployment, with particular emphasis on the European Social Fund. The evolution of the objectives and priorities of the ESF was presented, along with its significance in financing youth-oriented measures across successive financial perspectives. Special attention was devoted to the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development 2014–2020, which constituted a key instrument supporting young people, including those classified as NEET. The analysis showed that this programme played an important role in the professional activation of young people; however, the effectiveness of the measures undertaken varied depending on the region and the quality of implementation of individual instruments.

From a managerial perspective, Chapter IV highlighted the importance of coordination among central, regional, and local institutions in the process of managing public funds. It was indicated that the effectiveness of public interventions largely depends on the coherence of strategic objectives, proper planning of fund allocation, and the institutional capacity of entities responsible for implementing labour market policy. Attention was also drawn to the need to monitor the effects of undertaken actions and to adjust support instruments to changing regional conditions.

Chapter V was devoted to the analysis of the results of the empirical research. In the section concerning the survey research, the opinions of unemployed young people regarding the effectiveness of labour market instruments, as well as the availability and quality of the support offered, were presented. The results indicated that respondents most frequently used such forms of support as internships, training programs, and subsidized employment. At the same time, many respondents emphasized the limited sustainability of employment outcomes and the insufficient alignment of certain instruments with the actual needs of young people entering the labour market.

An important complement to the survey research consisted of expert interviews conducted with directors of county labour offices. The experts pointed to numerous barriers hindering effective counteraction to youth unemployment, including financial constraints, excessive bureaucracy, regulatory rigidity, and insufficient employer interest in the long-term employment of young people. At the same time, they emphasized the importance of managerial competencies, staff experience, and effective cooperation among labour market institutions as factors conducive to the efficient use of public funds.

The results of the empirical research made it possible to assess the impact of public funds management on reducing youth unemployment in the Lublin Voivodeship. Both support beneficiaries and labour market experts assessed this impact as moderate, while simultaneously pointing to the need for further improvement of the public funds management system and better alignment of labour market instruments with regional specificities.

The study concludes with a final part that provides a synthetic summary of the research findings and formulates managerial recommendations. These recommendations concerned, among other issues, the need to strengthen coordination among labour market institutions, increase the efficiency of public funds allocation, place greater emphasis on instruments supporting the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market, and develop systems for monitoring and evaluating the effects of public interventions. The obtained results confirmed that effective counteraction to youth unemployment requires not only an adequate level of funding, but above all rational, coherent, and efficient management of public funds.