

Poland – ANED country profile

The information contained in this summary was compiled by the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED) in April 2009.

Academic networks and resources

There is currently no specific academic research network on disability studies in Poland. However, the following journals publish a range of relevant papers.

[Człowiek-Niepełnosprawność-Społeczeństwo](#) (Person-Disability-Society)

[Szkoła Specjalna](#) (Special School)

Policy and enforcement bodies

The key national bodies with responsibility for disability law and policy implementation include:

The [Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People](#) (Pełnomocnik Rządu do Spraw Osób Niepełnosprawnych)

The Plenipotentiary is the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy responsible for supervising legislation concerning people with disabilities. The Plenipotentiary is obliged among other things to create and comment on law regulations concerning employment, rehabilitation and living conditions of people with disabilities and to draft government programmes concerning people with disabilities.

The [National Consultation Council for Disabled Persons](#) (Krajowa Rada Konsultacyjna ds. Osób Niepełnosprawnych)

This is the advisory body to the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People and a cooperative forum of government administration, self-government and non-governmental organizations acting for people with disabilities.

Organisations of disabled people

The national organisation representing disabled people at the European level (European Disability Forum) is:

The [Polish Disability Forum](#) (Polskie Forum Osób Niepełnosprawnych), with four full members which are among the most influential associations of and for people with disabilities in Poland:

[Polish Association of the Blind](#)

[Polish Association of the Deaf](#)

[Polish Association for People with Mental Handicap](#)

[Polish Federation of Organisations of Persons with Physical Disability](#)

Other significant national organisations of disabled people include:

The [Autism-Poland Alliance](#)

[Friends of Integration Association](#)

[Polish Association Against Handicap](#)

A comprehensive list of NGOs working on the field of disability can be found at <http://www.bazy.ngo.pl>.

National law and strategy

Poland has signed the [United Nations Convention](#) but not the [Optional Protocol](#).

Important national laws, policies and strategies concerning disabled people include:

The [Charter of Rights for Persons with Disabilities](#) (1997).

The Charter acknowledges that people with disabilities have the right to an independent, active life, free from discrimination and it can serve as a catalog of rights of people with disabilities. However, the Charter is a resolution; therefore, it is not binding. Legislation adopted after 1 August 1997 cannot contradict the terms of the Charter. The Charter also imposes an obligation on the Polish Government to provide information concerning implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The [Act on Vocational and Social Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities](#) (1997)

This act regulates the social and vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities in Poland as well as disability assessment procedures.

Other disability laws and regulations are spread in different, more general acts.

Facts and figures

Data on population indicate that:

There are approximately 4.5 million of people with a legal status of disability in Poland (11.7% of the general population). If people without a legal disability status, but considering themselves disabled, are also included, it is 5.5 million (14.3% of the general population) of which 47.1% are male and 52.9% female. Of these, 5.3% were aged under 20; 57.1% aged 20-64; 37.6% aged 65 and over ([2002 National Census](#)).

National research carried out by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) in 2004 shows that the population of people with disabilities aged 15 and over included 46.1% people with motor impairment; 29.5% visual impairment; 13.9% hearing impairment; 48.5% circulatory system impairment; 29.0% neurological disorders; 7.9% mental health disorders, 2.5% intellectual disability ([CSO, Health of the Polish Population in 2004](#)).

Data on employment indicate that:

In 2007 the employment rate of disabled people was 19.4% compared to 57% for the general population of working age. The employment rate of people with disabilities for several years has been staying more or less at the same level. The situation of



disabled women is more difficult than the situation of men. In 2007 the employment rate gap between disabled women and men was 4.4% (Labour Force Survey in Poland).

Data on education indicate that:

People with disabilities have substantially lower levels of education than others. In 2007 as many as 68.6% of people with disabilities aged 15 and over had education below secondary level (compared to 49.5% for people without disabilities) and only 5.7% had university education (compared to 15.7% for people without disabilities) (Labour Force Survey in Poland).

Available statistics show that only 0.5% of people with disabilities aged 25-64 report participation in life-long education compared to 5% of people without disabilities ([Chłoń-Domińczak&Poznańska 2007](#)).

In the school year 2007-2008 approximately 60% of pupils with disabilities attended mainstream or integrated primary schools and 44% at secondary level. However, these statistics include also children who were officially registered in mainstream schools but who fulfilled their educational obligations either in special classes in schools or outside, in the form of individual teaching at home. ([CSO, Education in the school year 2007-2008](#)).

Data on accessibility indicate that:

In 2007, 45.1% of all buses in urban transport stock had been adjusted to carrying disabled persons (38.9% in 2006) and 5.7% of trams ([CSO, Transport – activity results in 2007](#)).

In 2008, the most important rail carriers had not ensured access to trains and railway buildings for people with disabilities and the ministry responsible for rail transport as well as the Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People had not found solutions for the transportation of passengers with disabilities ([Supreme Chamber of Control, P/07/070](#)).

In 2007, 57.3% of all cinemas, 24.2% of museums, 39.5% of art galleries and 16.6% of public libraries had been adapted to the needs of wheelchair users ([CSO, Culture in 2007](#)).

In 2008, as many as 68.9% of people with legal disability status (aged 16-74) had never used computer and 75.0% the internet, compared to 37.7% and 43.7% for general population ([CSO, ICT 2008](#)).

[Data from the MeAC accessibility survey](#) (2007) showed that

None of the selected public or commercial websites passed even the automatic evaluation.

The main emergency number was not accessible by text phone,

Both public television channels provided some national language TV programs with subtitling, (7% and 10%). and one provided some programmes with signing (less than 3%).



Neither of the commercial TV channels provided national language programs with subtitling, signing or audio description.

Neither of the two main banks had installed talking ATMs

Data on poverty and incomes indicate that:

Generally, people with disabilities in Poland have a disproportionate risk of being poor. In 2005, the risk of minimum subsistence level poverty in households including at least one person with disabilities was 2,4% higher than in households without persons with disabilities (14% vs. 11,6%) and 4,3% higher in households headed by a disabled person (15,9% vs. 11,6%). In households including at least one person with disabilities, 21,2% were living below the relative poverty line (vs. 17% in case of families without persons with disabilities), and 20,5% below the legal poverty line (vs. 17,2%). Families with a disabled child are at particular risk of poverty ([CSO: Living conditions of the Polish population in 2004-2005](#)).

Data on attitudes indicate that:

In the mid-1990's Polish society was generally supportive of integration. However, segregated provision, especially segregated work settings, was still very common, possibly resulting from the long-standing tradition of sheltered employment. There was also evidence of clear social distance. Almost 20% of adult population did not have any contact with or know "by sight" a person with. One in seven people reported believing that disability is a punishment for sins or wrongdoing. This research reported that 40% of respondents indicated that persons with disabilities should not have jobs in times of high unemployment particularly when they had small but regular monthly income (pensions) (Ostrowska&Sikorska, 1996). The research was repeated in 1999 and 2000 and showed some positive changes in attitudes toward persons with disabilities. The number of people who had personal relations with persons with disabilities was higher and persons with disabilities became more visible. The percentage of people who accept an integrative model of employment also increased (Ostrowska, Sikorska, & Gaciarz, 2001).

In 2007, 45% of Polish society held attitudes judged to be positive towards people with disabilities. Only 16% thought that people with disabilities should not work and 76% were in favour of non-segregated employment settings.

Around two-thirds declared readiness to help people with disabilities, however, this depended on the type of disability: the respondents seldom declared they would help people with mental health disorder ([CBOS](#)).

The [2007 Special Eurobarometer on Discrimination in Europe](#) showed that 49% of people knew someone who was disabled (compared to 55% EU average) and 73% acknowledged that being disabled tended to be disadvantage in society (EU average 79%).

Disability discrimination was viewed as widespread by 53% (EU average 53%); 26% thought that disability discrimination was more widespread than five years ago. 68% thought that not enough was being done to combat discrimination in general (EU average 51%).



72% thought that more disabled people should be in the workplace (EU average 77%) and 91% thought specific measures on equal opportunities were needed in this field.

Data on public spending indicate that:

In 2006, Poland spent 9.3% of total social benefit expenditure on disability benefits compared to the EU27 average of 7.5% ([European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics, provisional data](#))

In 2005 Poland spent 2.7% of GDP on incapacity related benefits (including all public, mandatory private, cash and in-kind benefits) compared to the OECD average of 2.6% ([OECD Social Expenditure Database](#)).

Social protection

Key features of the national system include (including adapted items from the [MISSOC](#) database December 2008):

Disability benefits

Welfare payments are financed through compulsory social insurance payments by employees, self-employed people and employers, as well as through taxes. The amount of earnings-related pension received depends on contributions made and the duration of affiliation (MISSOC, 2008)

The number of inability to work pensions paid by ZUS (Social Insurance Institution) is systematically decreasing every year. The number of persons receiving these fell from 2.526 thousand in 2001 to 1.474 thousand in 2007 (36.4% female, 63.6% male; in December 2007). In 2007, the average monthly amount of pension received was PLN1.011 (including nursing supplements), which made up 44.5% of the average monthly remuneration ([Social Insurance Institution](#)).

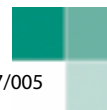
In 2007, social pensions were also paid by ZUS on average (monthly) to 238 thousand persons ([Social Insurance Institution](#)).

The number receiving farmer disability pensions from KRUS (Agricultural Social Insurance Fund) fell from 794 thousand in 2001 to 295 thousand in 2006. The average paid by KRUS in 2006 amounted to PLN638 ([Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2007](#)).

Rehabilitation and re-training

Medical rehabilitation is financed by public resources (Act on Health Care Services Finances from Public Means). In 2007 the National Health Fund spent approximately PLN1.25 million (3.13% of its health services costs) on medical rehabilitation ([CSO, Basic data on health care in 2007](#)).

According to the [Act on Rehabilitation](#), two main forms of activity supporting vocational and social rehabilitation are rehabilitation holidays and occupational therapy workshops. In 2007, the number of persons participating in rehabilitation holidays subsidized by the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons amounted to 196 thousand ([CSO, Basic data on health care in 2007](#)).



At the end of 2007, 643 occupational therapy workshops operated in Poland with nearly 22 thousand participants with disabilities ([BIFRON 2008](#)).

The Social Insurance Institution provides training pensions, rehabilitation benefits and compensatory allowances. The training pension is payable to those eligible for disability pensions, who have received a decision on the advisability of vocational retraining due to incapacity for work in an earlier occupation. It is not payable if the pensioner receives remuneration or income (irrespective of its level). In 2007 the monthly average number of training pensions was 321 and the average paid was PLN1459.

Rehabilitation benefit may be granted to an employee who, after cessation of the right to sickness allowance, is still incapable of work if there is a good prognosis as to restoration of earning capacity. In 2007 it was paid to a monthly average of 47.2 thousand persons, and the average monthly amount was PLN1085.

The compensatory allowance is payable to an employee whose remuneration has been reduced due to undergoing vocational rehabilitation. Expenditure in 2007 amounted to PLN0.7 million ([Social Insurance Institution](#)).

Preferential employment and quotas

Poland has applied quota schemes both in the public and private sector and all employers with 25 or more employees have to meet a quota of 6% (with some exceptions), ([Act on Rehabilitation, 1997](#)).

More severely disabled persons may count as double or triple. In instances of non-compliance, employers face a penalty of 40.65% of average wages for each disabled person that should have been hired (i.e. a maximum payroll tax of around 2.5%). These payments go to the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych, PFRON), which uses them to fund various rehabilitation and employment programmes (MISSOC, 2008).

Long-term support and care

Long-term support and care is provided in Poland via health care and social welfare. The health care system is financed mainly from the National Health Fund and the social welfare system mainly from the State budget and from the funds of local self-governing organisations.

The social welfare system is meant to support those citizens and families who, for objective reasons, are not able to fulfill their primary necessities of life. A person is entitled to these financial services if his/her income is lower than that specified in the social welfare regulations (in 2007, PLN477 for a one-person household, and PLN351 for a family). Municipalities also provide in-kind assistance, social work, special advisory services, care or nursing services in people's homes, at care centers and in residential institutions. Care and specialist care services are granted on the basis of an administrative decision and are free of charge only for those individuals who met the income criteria specified in the social welfare regulations ([Act on Social Welfare](#),



[2004](#)). The amount of payment for these services depends on the person's monthly income.

In 2007, care services and special care services were granted to approximately 90 thousand persons and special care services for people with mental health problems were granted to nearly 10 thousand persons ([Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, MPiPS -03, I-XII 2007](#)).

If a family cannot take care of a person who needs 24 hour care (and where necessary help from care services is not sufficient) he/she may be referred to the nearest social welfare home (residential institution). The total number of residents in social welfare residential facilities in 2007 in Poland was nearly 96.7 thousand. Most of the residents paid for these services but only 4.5% the total amount ([CSO: Basic data on health care in 2007](#)).

Additional information

Useful sources of more detailed information about the situation of disabled people, and the policies and support available, include:

Government website dedicated to people with disabilities at:

<http://www.niepelnosprawni.gov.pl/>

Information on the situation of persons with severe disabilities and/or with complex needs in Poland is available from [Inclusion Europe](#)

This summary and more detailed country reports on selected themes are available on the [ANED](#) website.