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COMPETITIVENESS OF WOMEN ON POLISH LABOUR MARKET

Abstract

Women on labour market are considered to be less competitive than men. This paragraph will focus on not perceived but actual competitiveness of women on labour market in Poland. Competitiveness of employees on labour market is strictly related to their social and demographic features, especially the level of education and flexibility. Flexibility, on the other hand, strongly depends on the load of family and household responsibilities.

The aim of this article is to present the level of professional activity of women in context of education and the load of family and household duties.

Key words: competitiveness of women, labour market

Introduction

Women on labour market are considered to be less competitive than men. The reason of such consideration is the stereotype approach to the role of women in the society, according to which women are more saddled with parental and household duties than man. Such approach also suggests that women, on contrary to men, are less interested in “work” and more interested in “home”.

This paragraph will focus on not perceived but actual competitiveness of women on labour market in Poland. Competitiveness of employees on labour market is strictly related to their social and demographic features, especially the level of education and flexibility. Flexibility, on the other hand, strongly depends on the load of family and household responsibilities.

It is mainly woman who has to compromise household and professional duties. Women are more saddled with household responsibilities, what may have negative influence on playing specific professional parts and also worsen the situation of women on the labour market. This problem mostly affects women with relatively high level of education, for whom work is not only the possibility to earn and provide for family, but also is a chance for self-realization. [Balcerzak - Paradowska B., 2003, s. 136]. The necessity of choosing between professional and domestic work is the reason for restrictions of women’s flexibility in the place of work. That is what makes the employment of women and its continuation more difficult than men. It also results in worse working conditions, especially financial. This fact is substantiated by numerous studies presenting the inferior position of women on the labour market¹.

¹ Ref.: Raport Komisji Unii Europejskiej: Ocena stanu przygotowań Polski do akcesji z UE, 2004; Raport Komisji Unii Europejskiej: Ocena stanu przygotowań Polski do akcesji z UE, 2003; Raport Open Society Institute (OSI): Raport o sytuacji kobiet w nowych państwach UE oraz krajach kandydujących, 2005; Raport Banku Światowego nr 29205: Płeć a możliwości ekonomiczne w Polsce: czy kobiety straciły na transformacji?,

The differences in professional activities between women and men in Poland.

In Poland women are less professionally active than men. Table 1. shows professionally active and inactive population and the share of women among professionally active.

Table 1. Population aged 15 years and more professionally active and inactive in thousands and the share of women among the professionally active.

Particulars	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION									
Men	17052	17161	17214	17300	17229	17097	16991	17139	17161
Women	9264	9283	9307	9397	9340	9283	9215	9323	9403
	7788	7878	7907	7903	7889	7814	7776	7816	7880
PERSONS ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE									
Men	12675	12900	13174	13371	13664	14012	14016	14057	14097
Women	4878	5023	5171	5222	5381	5544	5558	5547	5536
	7797	7877	8003	8149	8283	8468	8458	8510	8515
share of women among professionally active in %								45,60	45,92
	45,67	45,91	45,93	45,68	45,79	45,67	45,77		

Remarks: Data cc. 1997 – 1998, November; 1999-2005 4th quarter

Source: own compilation based on: GUS 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006a.

As it can be seen in the table above in the period from 1997 to 2005 women in Poland were less professionally active than men. However, there were more women aged 15 or more than men of the same age (in 1997 – 1443 thousands more and in 2005 – 1456 thousands more) there was a majority of professionally active men (in 1997 – 1476 thousands more and in 2005 – 1523 thousands more). The share of professionally active women in the period of concern was established at the level of 45% - 46%. So, the men formed the majority on the labour market.

The fact the women were minority among professionally active was also substantiated by lower both professional activity and employment rates for women than for men. In the years of 1997-2005 the professional activity rate was below 50% for women and above 60% for men. In the period of concern activity rate decreased from 50% to 48,1% for women and from 65,5% to 62,9% for men. Similarly, though in greater degree, the employment rate was

Biuro Banku Światowego w Polsce, Warszawa 2004; Raport Karat: Wpływ przystąpienia do Unii Europejskiej na sytuację kobiet na rynku pracy w krajach Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej. Analiza sytuacji w Polsce, red. K. Lohrman, A. Seibert, Warszawa 2003; Raport Państwowej Inspekcji Pracy: Równe traktowanie kobiet i mężczyzn w stosunkach pracy. Mobbing w środowisku pracy, Warszawa 2005; Raport Światowego Forum Gospodarczego: Ranking równouprawnienia płci, 2005; Raport Eurostatu: How Europeans spend their time – everyday life of women and men (Data 1998 – 2002) z dnia 27.07.2004, Informacja rządu o sytuacji kobiet w Polsce z 05.03.2004 r.

decreased: from 44% to 39,2% for women and from 59,8% to 53,2% for men. The above can be seen in the table 2

Table 2. Economical activity rate and employment rate of population of 15 and more years old, between 1997 and 2005

Particulars	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Activity rate (%)	57,4	57,1	56,6	56,4	55,8	55,0	54,8	54,9	55,2
Men	65,5	64,9	64,3	64,3	63,4	62,6	62,4	62,7	62,9
Women	50,0	50,0	49,7	49,2	48,8	48,0	47,9	47,9	48,1
Men in the working age	77,9	77,6	77,0	76,9	76,0	75,1	74,9	74,9	75,3
Women in the working age	67,5	67,7	68,0	67,2	62,6	65,0	64,9	65,0	65,4
Employment rate (%)	51,5	51,0	48,0	47,4	45,5	44,1	44,2	45,1	45,9
Men	59,8	58,9	55,9	55,2	52,5	50,7	50,9	52,2	53,2
Women	44,0	43,9	40,7	40,3	39,0	38,1	38,2	38,5	39,2
Men in the working age	Bd	Bd	66,9	65,8	66,6	60,5	60,8	62,1	63,5
Women in the working age	Bd	Bd	55,4	54,7	53,0	51,4	51,3	51,9	53,1

Remarks: Data cc. 1997 – 1998, November; 1999-2005 4th quarter

Source: own compilation based on: GUS 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006a.

The above data reveals that the professional activity level of women is much lower than men. It can be explained by the greater number of professionally inactive women than men. In addition to that, the reason for diversity between women's and men's situation concerning professional activity lays in the field with no reference to economics, in unequal distribution of family and household duties [A. Karwińska, 2003 – 2004, pp. 133–147]. The symptoms of women discrimination in the sphere of economy can be noticed while studying the causes of professional inactivity. These causes are presented in table 3.

Table 3. Persons economically inactive by reasons for inactivity in Poland in the period of 1997-2005

Particulars	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Persons economically inactive (thousands.)	12675	12899	13174	13371	13664	14012	14016	14057	14051
Men, including:	4878	5023	5171	5222	5381	5544	5558	5547	5536
discouragement caused by inefficiency of job	120	168	136	147	153	174	129		

seeking								181	159
education training	1523	1611	1579	1644	1661	1697	1730	1766	1766
family and household responsibilities	45	47	47	52	23	16	36	41	36
Retirement	1285	1356	1423	1560	1748	1885	1881	1896	1988
illness, disability	1557	1525	1543	1434	1405	1333	1336	1326	1259
Unwillingness to start working	235	224	350	204	135	145	150	Bd	Bd
persons seeking job but not ready to take it on	78	92	93	77	72	84	49	42	44
Women, including:	7797	7877	8003	8149	8283	8468	8458	8415	8515
discouragement caused by inefficiency of job seeking	126	132	163	150	209	230	220	239	218
education training	1585	1364	1631	1723	1736	1810	1799	1827	1817
family and household responsibilities	1403	1403	1262	1294	1208	1147	1141	1244	1207
Retirement	2402	2455	2641	2897	2601	2754	2874	3036	3236
illness, disability	1884	1875	1798	1653	1849	1783	1696	1466	1524
Unwillingness to start working	218	180	341	161	259	300	300	Bd	Bd
persons seeking job but not ready to take it on	136	165	167	161	124	134	98	83	85

Remarks: Data cc. 1997 – 1998, November; 1999-2005 4th quarter

Source: own compilation based on: GUS 1999, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006a.

The table above shows that in the period of concern the situation did not change to a large extent. At the beginning of the considered period the difference between professionally inactive females and males was 2919 thousand, 38% of which was caused by greater number of women in retirement age (1117 thousand more females in retirement age than males), further 327 thousands – by illness or disability. However, the biggest difference emerged from unequal load of family and household duties and responsibilities – 1358 thousand more women than men were professionally inactive because of the family and custodial reasons.

In the final period the difference between professionally inactive females and males was 2979 thousand, 41,9% of which was caused by greater number of women in retirement age (1248 thousand more females in retirement age than males), further 265 thousands – by illness or disability. Similarly to 1997, the biggest difference emerged from unequal load of family and household duties and responsibilities – 1358 thousand more women than men

were professionally inactive because of these reasons.

Non economical reasons, such as the family and household responsibilities caused, that in the analysed period 1403 thousand to 1207 thousand of women, the most of whom were in the age bracket of 25 – 34 (for example: 431 thousand in 2005), did not take up any professional activities. Above reasons for not seeking job were barely discernible for men, since only 45 thousand to 36 thousand of them were professionally inactive because of these reasons.

Household responsibilities load – time of house works for females and males in Poland

The results of Polish National Statistics Office surveys from 1996 show that females in Poland spent the average of 5 hours 18 minutes a day for house works. Males, however spent only 2 hours 19 minutes (the surveys took into account both professionally active and inactive females and males). Therefore, women spared 3 hours a day more than men for house works [GUS 1998, pp.135-136].

The studies of the Women Rights Centre from the year 2000 show that professionally active Polish women spend 4 hours and 18 minutes for household works during weekdays. During holidays professionally active women spared 5,7 hours for household works. Unfortunately, these studies did not cover men [Chiniewska, 2000].

The research conducted by the author² in 2004, among the persons employed in management, showed, that the household duties took up the average of 1 hour 30 minutes for male managers and 2 hours 15 minutes for female managers. Moreover, the research showed that persons employed in management spent relatively more time for professional work than the others. However, they spent less time for domestic works. The cause for that may be the outsourcing some of the domestic duties to specialised companies and housekeepers reasoning from the higher household income.

The Eurostat³ figures, however show that approximately the same amount of time is spent on both non-profit and professional work. In other words, this research proves that the amounts of domestic work and professional work are more or less the same. The studies on time consumption also illustrate, that the commitment to both types of tasks is highly dependent on the gender of worker: women spend significantly more time on carrying out of their non-profit duties, particularly if there are small children in the family [Zwiech, 2006a]. In Poland, the daily average time spent on domestic work was 4 hours 45 minutes for females and 2 hours 22 minutes for males⁴[Eurostat, 2006].

It clearly emerges from the presented data, that women dedicate more time

² Survey carried out by the Author on the group of 602 persons employed in management, including 304 males and 298 females from sub regions of Szczecin, Koszalin and Poznań in June and July 2004.

³ In March 2006 Eurostat presented results of research cc. time spend on household activities in chosen European countries. The research took place in 1998-2004 and covered persons of age 20-74, living in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

⁴ Among responded women the residents of Italy spent most of their time on household duties (05:20h), further of Estonia (05:02h), Hungary and Slovenia (04:58h) and Spain (04:55h), the least time is devoted to household duties by woman in Sweden (3:42h), Finland and Latvia (03:56h). Men spent most of their time on household activities in Estonia (02:48h), Hungary and Slovenia (02:40h). Men in Italy and Spain spent the least time on those works: respectively 01:35h and 01:37h. The biggest difference in time spent on household activities preformed by females and males can be noticed in Italy (03:45h) and in Spain (03:18h). In new member countries the average difference in time spent on household activities preformed by female and male equals 02:20h, in Poland – 02:23h, Lithuania – 02:20h, Italy an Slovenia – 02:18h. The least time is spent in Sweden (01:13h), Finland (01:40h), Germany (01:50h) and Belgium (01:54). The males spared less time on household activities than females, however the most devoted man spent less time on household works (in Estonia 2 hours and 48 minutes) than the less interested in household activities woman of Sweden (03:42)

than men for domestic work. It results in greater fatigue, less flexibility and less abilities for commitment to professional work. This in turn, transfers to decreasing women's position on the labour market. What is more, the above mentioned relations influence not only professional work, but also leisure time (including: helping other households, socialising and entertainment, sports and outdoor activities, hobbies and games, reading, watching TV, resting and doing nothing). The amount of the time off for women in Poland was 4 hours 36 minutes and for men 5 hours and 25 minutes.

Doubtlessly, the bigger load of domestic responsibilities influences on minor professional activity of women.

Education of professional active female and male in Poland

Level of education is the feature that strongly expresses competitiveness at the labour market. Table 4 shows distribution of persons professionally active by the level of education and gender in Poland

Table 4. People professionally active in age of 15 and more and the distribution of people by level of education and gender in Poland

Particulars	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION (in thousands)	17052	17161	17214	17300	17229	17097	16991	17139	17283
Men (in thousands.)	9264	9283	9307	9397	9340	9283	9215	9323	9403
(in %)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Tertiary (in thousands)	933	974	963	997	1097	1140	1281	1430	1475
In %	10,1	10,5	10,3	10,6	11,7	12,3	13,9	15,3	15,7
Post-secondary In %	2254	2344	2489	128	157	165	149	162	187
In %	24,3	25,3	26,7	1,4	1,7	1,8	1,6	1,7	2,0
Vocational secondary In %	24,3	25,3	26,7	2336	2250	2302	2233	2272	2355
In %	2,8	3	3,9	24,9	24,1	24,8	24,2	24,4	25,0
General secondary In %	259	278	362	380	371	398	446	492	536
In %	2,8	3	3,9	4	4	4,3	4,8	5,3	5,7
Basic vocational In %	4039	4049	3985	4042	4050	3906	3883	3776	3724
In %	43,6	43,6	42,8	43	43,4	42,1	42,1	40,5	39,6
Lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary In %	1779	1637	1508	1515	1415	1372	1224	1191	1126
In %	19,2	17,6	16,2	16,1	15,1	14,8	13,3	12,8	12,0

Women (in thousands) In %	7788	7878	7907	7903	7889	7814	7776	7816	7880
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Tertiary (in thousands.) In %	941 12,1	1078 13,7	1088 13,8	1160 14,7	1250 15,8	1396 17,9	1555 20	1672 21,4	1910 24,2
Post-secondary In %	2590	2615	2744	453 5,7	481 6,1	490 6,3	459 5,9	468 6,0	481 6,1
Vocational secondary In %	33,3	33,2	34,7	2218 28,1	2106 26,7	2005 25,7	1957 25,2	1964 25,1	1975 25,1
General secondary In %	824 10,6	796 10,1	909 11,5	878 11,1	864 11	892 11,4	914 11,8	908 11,6	900 11,4
Basic vocational In %	1970 25,3	2009 25,5	1960 24,8	2007 25,4	2080 26,4	1972 25,2	1915 24,6	1896 24,3	1837 23,3
Lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary In %	1464 18,8	1383 17,6	1206 15,3	1187 15	1107 14	1058 13,5	976 12,6	908 11,6	777 9,9

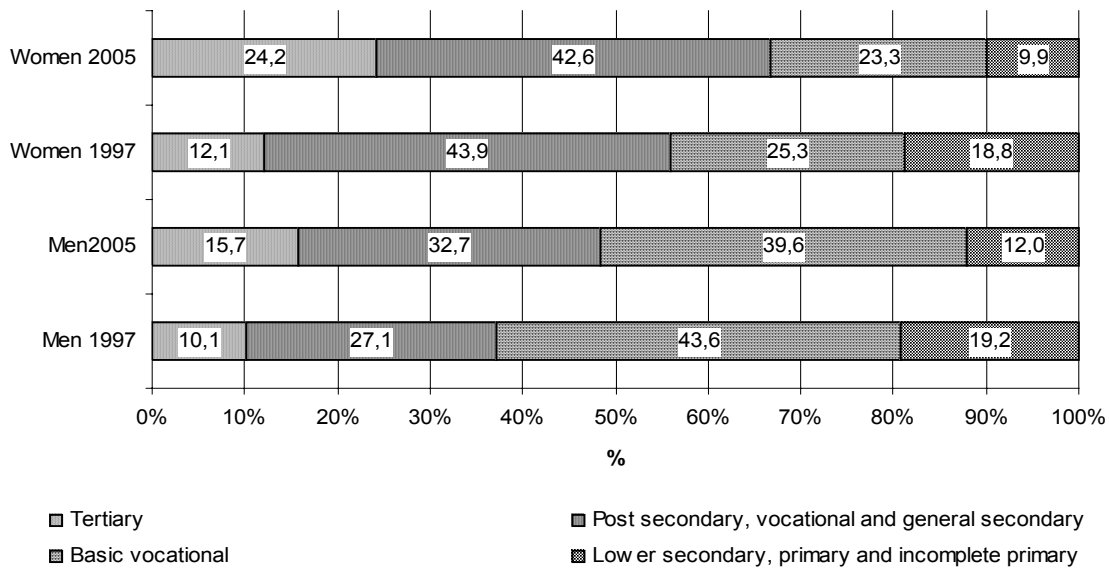
Remarks: Data cc. 1997 – 1998, November; 1999-2005 4th quarter

Source: own compilation based on GUS 1997, 1998b, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, 2006a.

As expressed in the table above professionally active female were better educated than professionally active male in whole surveyed period. In 1997 – 2005 the share of professionally active women having higher education increased from 12,1% to 24,2%, and the share of women having secondary education insignificantly dropped from 43,9% to 42,6%. In the same time the share of men with higher education rose from 10,1% to 15,7% and the share of men with post-secondary education rose from 27,1% to 32,7%. It means that in whole concerned period the female with at least post-secondary education covered 56% up to 66,8% of professionally active women, and male – from 37,2% to 48,4% of professionally active men. The chart 1 illustrates the distribution of professionally active female and male in 1997 and 2005

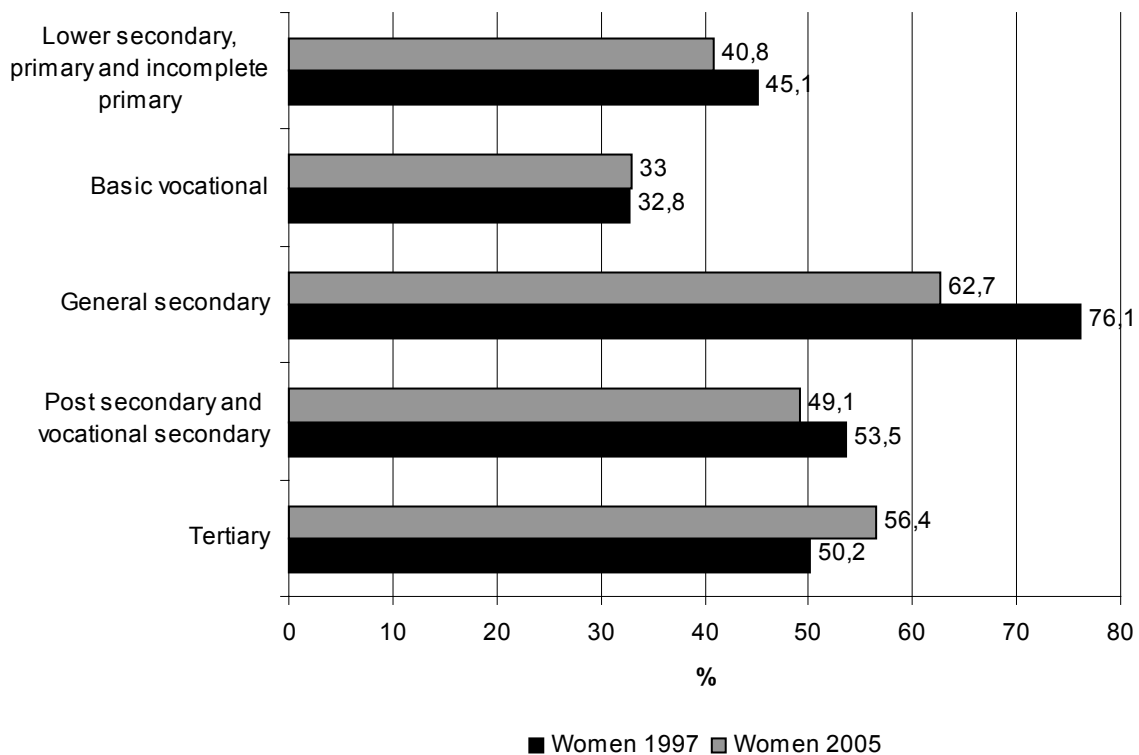
Taking the level of education into account, in 1997-2005 persons with general secondary education formed the most “feminized” professionally active group. However the majority of men formed the group of vocational secondary education. The chart 2. illustrates the degree of feminization of several levels of education among professionally active

Chart 1. Distribution of professionally active by education and gender in Poland in November 1997 and 4th quarter of 2005



Source: own compilation based on: GUS 1999, 2006a.

Chart 2. Share of professionally active female in several levels of education in Poland in November 1997 and 4th quarter of 2005



Source: own compilation based on: GUS 1999, 2006a.

Above presented data reveals that in the concerned period the proportion of

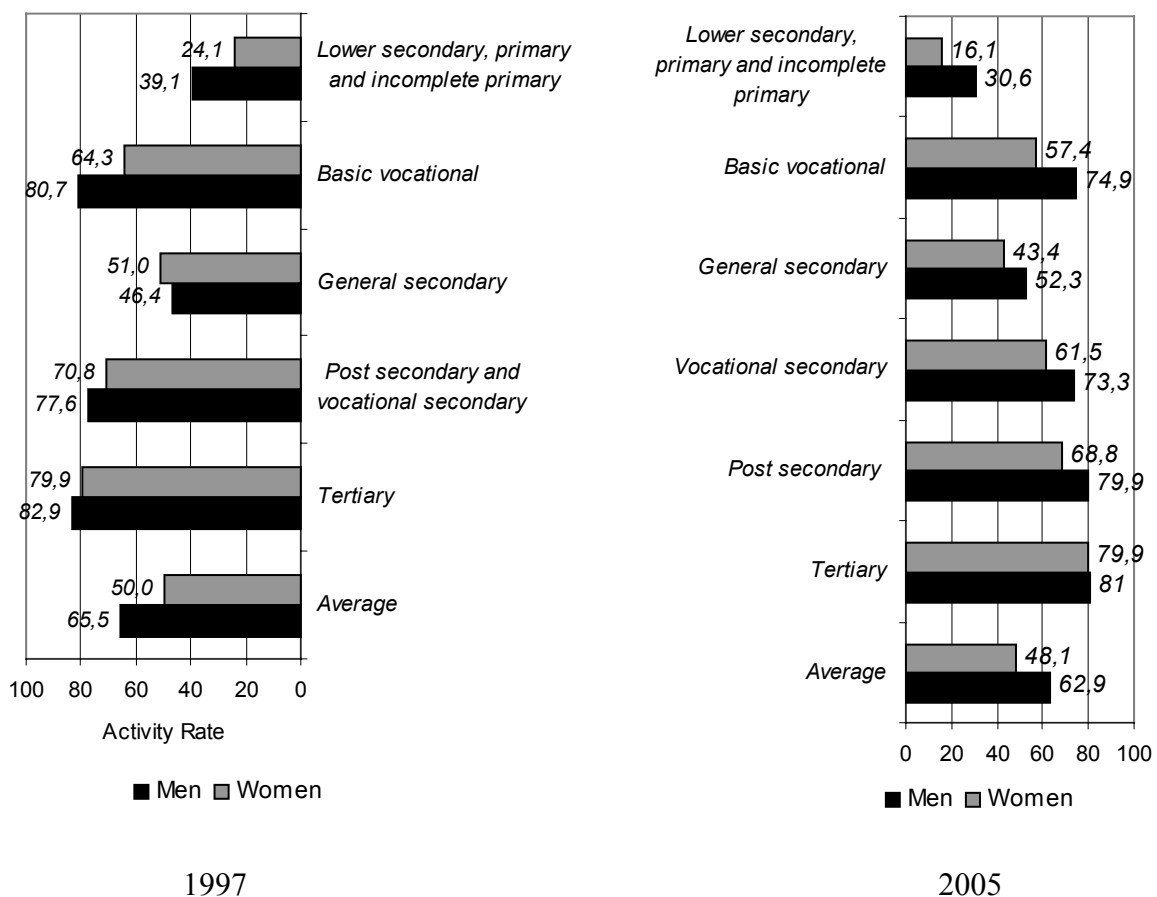
professionally active women in those having general, vocational and post secondary education decreased. On contrary it increased within the group of professionally active having higher education.

It is presumed that such regularity will be held in next years, because the analysis shows that women are majority among students. For example in academic year 2005/2006 in the total of 1 953 832 students there were 1 103 890 women, which is 56,6%. The proportion of female attending daily studies was 55,3%, the part time studies 57,2%, the evening studies 60,2% and the extramural studies 67,9%. There were in total 135 930 student on post-graduate studies, including 92 943 women (68,4%). In 2005/2006 the total of 32 725 persons attended the doctorates studies, including 16 131 women (49,3%) [GUS 2006b]

The level of education and professional activity of female and male

The level of education influences the level of professional activity. In general it might be stated that the higher level of education, the higher professional activity rate, what is presented in chart 3.

Chart 3. The professional activity rates of persons aged 15 and more by education and gender in November 1997 and 4th quarter of 2005.



Source: own compilation based on: GUS 1997, 2006a.

Women with higher education are characterized by higher professional activity rate

(about 80%) in comparison to the women with lower levels of education. The presented rate of professional activity was registered among women with lower secondary, primary and incomplete primary education. The professional activity rates beneath the average was also registered for women with general secondary education.

Conclusion

Professionally active females are better educated than males. In the period of concern the ratio of women with at least secondary education was 56% to 66,8% of all professionally active women, and men – 37,2% to 48,4% of all professionally active men. Women however, are more saddled with household duties. They spend more time for domestic works than men. It automatically transfers to minor professional activity of women. It results in greater fatigue, less flexibility and less abilities for commitment to professional work. This in turn, transfers to decreasing women position on the labour market. What is more, above mentioned relations influence not only professional work, but also leisure time

In addition, it should be noticed, that despite their minor average professional activity, women with higher education level are characterised by high professional activity rates (approximately 80%). So it can be stated, that the higher level of education the higher professional activity and employment rates. Therefore, the level of education should be increased for both women and men.

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