

## Poland's Labour Market Institute at a crossroads

*The mission of the Labour Market Institute is to professionally support current and potential members of the labour market... for the dignity of man. (Labour Institute mission statement)*



The Labour Institute, which is funded by the European Social Fund, is an interesting organisation in Poland. The Krakow Post spoke to Monika Doniek, a key employee at the institute who works in their Lublin office, which is one of many.

**KP:** Could you tell us what the institute does and why?

**MD:** The institute began in 2007, which is when we could first apply for European funding, and now conducts many different activities. These are generally related to the objectives of European social funding. Essentially, we help unemployed or vulnerable people find jobs. We do this by distributing information and giving specific advice to new graduates and other new members of the labour market. This has included helping mothers and those with disabilities to return to work. There are two simple reasons that we do this: firstly, because there is a need in the market and secondly because the funding to mitigate that need exists.

**KP:** What challenges and successes have the institute seen since 2007?

**MD:** We have produced good results in the past four years. For example, a lot of what we do is aimed at arming people with skills through workshops, lectures, seminars, classes and experience opportunities. Consequently, lots of people are getting new jobs because of these courses and because of the internships we have helped

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them secure. We have seen cases in which women who have not worked for 20 years have become more active and started working again. In some cases, demoralised job seekers have started looking for jobs themselves and taking responsibility for

their careers. Approximately 30 per cent of the people we place in internships stay with the companies where they have acquired experience. However, the institute faces a new problem: the European funds we rely on could dry up during an imminent EU interim budget planning period.

**KP:** How do you see the future of the institute in relation to the Polish economy?

**MD:** In the future we need to reorient our position and focus on becoming a research-orientated institute capable of delivering forecasts. We have published some reports that have illustrated the increasing motivation of our target demographics in the first four years. This is important, because the Polish economy faces many challenges now, and there will be more in the future. For example, the university system is producing a labour force that is not prepared for the modern job market. Consequently we are experiencing a significant brain drain, which is a real shame. This is understandable – many youngsters are thrown on the scrap heap because their potential is not utilised. This is precisely what the EU funds are for – to battle unemployment and utilise potential. And this is also what we want.

*Mathew Davies*