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PhD thesis summary

The Resilience Capacity of Small Local Labour Markets in Poland

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Dynamic socio-economic transformations shaping the contemporary world exert a significant influence on labour markets. These transformations stem primarily from economic development, which entails a transition from traditional forms of organisation and management to modern models oriented toward efficiency, innovation, and competitiveness. The functioning of labour markets has also been profoundly affected by processes of internationalisation and European integration, as well as by various crises (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine) and evolving consumer preferences.

The increasing prevalence of studies conducted within the framework of the resilience concept reflects a growing need to counteract shocks and to analyse the capacity of specific systems—such as regions or labour markets—to withstand and adapt to adverse phenomena. Despite the rising scholarly interest in this area, there remains a notable scarcity of analyses at the local level, even though this scale plays a crucial role in adaptive processes and in mitigating the effects of future shocks.

The primary objective of the research was to determine the level of resilience capacity of small local labour markets (LLMs) in Poland and to identify the factors shaping this resilience capacity. Within this overarching aim, five specific objectives were formulated, each accompanied by a corresponding set of research questions.

The research commenced with an extensive literature review, which enabled the systematisation of existing knowledge concerning labour markets and the resilience concept, as well as the identification of research gaps and the specification of the study's objectives. Subsequently, a delimitation of labour markets was undertaken, allowing for the identification of their spatial boundaries and distribution, as well as for the classification of markets according to size. The purpose of this classification was to identify the smallest units, which then became the subject of further analysis concerning labour market resilience.

The next stage of the dissertation involved the construction of a proprietary index of the resilience capacity of small local labour markets in Poland. This index characterizes the features of these markets that are directly or indirectly related to their functioning. Its

application made it possible to identify the spatial differentiation of resilience capacity and to select specific units for in-depth investigation. Among the small LLMs, two units each were selected for case study analysis—from groups distinguished by very low and very high levels of resilience. Identifying the determinants shaping resilience constituted an integral component of the main research objective. To this end, individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted in the selected labour markets, and the interpretation of their results facilitated the achievement of this goal. The interviews also made it possible to identify activities and initiatives that may be regarded as examples of good practice in building resilience within small LLMs.

Based on the findings derived from the qualitative research, a set of recommendations was developed for policymakers and stakeholders responsible for the functioning of small LLMs. These recommendations aim to support the implementation of measures designed to strengthen resilience. They are of an applied nature and seek to translate the good practices identified in the qualitative analysis into a broader strategic context.

The dissertation concludes with a diagnosis of areas requiring further research, including issues related to the delimitation and functioning of small LLMs and their actors, as well as the processes of resilience building and the development of methods for its measurement.