

**PROSPECTS FOR THE SHARED SERVICES CENTERS  
DEVELOPMENT IN POLAND IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN  
RESOURCES AVAILABILITY**

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**Abstract:** This article aims to explain the characteristics of shared services centers (SSC) as the employment chance for university graduates in Poland. Poland is the leader in SSC localization among Central and Eastern Europe countries, which is affected by high educated workforce and relative low labor costs. The analysis of the results of the survey conducted among students, aiming in determination of the relation of the respondents to the work in the shared services centers is the main part of the study. The paper identifies the factors affecting the perception of SSC by the students. The research conducted amongst students shows insufficient knowledge about functioning of shares services centres and workstations offered by those centres. Shared services centres is acknowledged as a good place for starting a career and gaining experience, as well as, the place that does not offer a stable and long-term employment.

**Key words:** shared service centers, work resources, employment, career management

DOI: 10.17512/pjms.2017.15.1.21

*Article history:*

*Received January 5, 2017; Revised February 26, 2017; Accepted March 3, 2017*

**Introduction**

As a result of the global competition and the constant aspiration to the reduction of costs directly connected with target activity, as well as of simultaneous keeping the quality of products and services on more and more higher level, such subjects like shared services centres started to be created (shared service center – SSC) (Chłodnicki, 2004; Ślusarczyk and Golnik, 2015). Until recently these individuals were treated as the next creature of the globalization which will pass along with changing direction of global expansion. At first, for implementing of the concept of shared services centres only a little number of companies afforded, because it is connected total change of the strategy and the operational activity of the organization. Effects of such changes are long-term and possible failures very firmly affect functioning of the organization. With time, however, they started discovering more and more advantages of such a model of functioning and at present shared services centres are enjoying the unremitting popularity.

The aim of this article is to describe the characteristics of shared services centres as places of employment of graduates of Polish colleges as well as the attitude of those students to the possibility of taking up employment in such units.

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Very centres and motives for creating them will be expressed. Then the author will focus on presenting Poland as the optimum location of the SSC structure. Poland is the field's leader in the Central-Eastern European countries what, among others, is affected by highly educated workforce and low labor costs (Wysłocka and Verezubova, 2016). An analysis of the results of the examination conducted in sample of students in Czestochowa city constitutes the body of the study, which purpose revolved around determining the attitude of respondents towards taking up employment in shared services centres, as well as the attempt of identifications of factors affecting the way of perception of SSC by students.

### Characteristics of Shared Services Centres

SSC is a separate organizational unit, which consolidates, standardizes and restructures functions, systems and processes, whose task is to support transactions for at least several business units (Strikwerda, 2006). In common understanding, shared services center is a unit of support organizations and functions that relate to processes within the organization. These processes are separated and implemented independently, allowing the use of maximum efficiency and quality of services, while creating a value-added in the organization (Maatman and Bondarouk, 2014; Post, 2012; Implementing Shared Services Centers, 2000; Cselényi et al., 2005). Knol et al. define SSC as *“semi-autonomous organization units that deliver previously distributed support services to internal clients within organizations primarily to save costs”* (Knol et al., 2014). Similar definition present Janssen and Joha, who consider, that SSC is *“separate and accountable semi-autonomous unit within an (inter)organizational entity, used to bundle activities and provide specific pre-defined services to the operational units within that (inter)organizational entity, on the basis of agreed conditions”* (Janssen and Joha, 2006).

Shared services center is a concept which in recent years has gained on importance. The main principle is to reduce the costs associated with the activities of the company. It is a cost advantage that made a number of such centers around the world grows rapidly (Banachowicz, 2008). Other motives for shared services implementation are i.e. (Paagman et al., 2015; Marciniak, 2013):

- improvement of service quality,
- improvement of work efficiency,
- access to external resources,
- standardization processes,
- focus on core competencies,
- concentration on innovation,
- improvement of customer orientation,
- exchange of internal capabilities,
- improvement of control.

Shared service centers can be distinguished due to the nature of their business or the type of activities. According to the first criterion which is distinguished

between: outsourcing centers, off-shoring and near-shoring – the variety of off-shoring, which thanks to the development of services has become a separate category described in the economic literature. The second criterion refers to another type of activity (Duening and Click, 2005):

- 1) BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) – thanks to the concept, each of the smallest unit in the company comes as a set of multiple processes that determines its success (Gajewski, 2007);
- 2) KPO (Knowledge Process Outsourcing) – with this approach, there can be distinguished advanced expertise, analysis, evaluation, research etc., which require technical abilities, analytical and decision-making skills. In addition, its aims is to provide for companies access to qualified employees at the lowest possible cost (Mierau, 2007);
- 3) ITO (Information Technology Outsourcing) – an approach that focuses primarily on the delivery and maintenance of information technology in an enterprise (Hintaya and Faudziah, 2012).

### **Poland as a Good Location for Shared Service Centres**

At the beginning, India was the best place for a business location. Yet in the 90s of the last century, this trend turned around. The reason of that was fast growing labor costs, high staff turnover and also deteriorating situation with Pakistan. The same Indian companies also decided to move their businesses outside that region (for example: Tata Group, Infosys, Wipro) (Fersht et al., 2011).

Nowadays, the following factors can be also added: cultural diversity and desire to have a greater control over their subsidiary parent's unit. By locating SSC relatively close to their branches, customers feel safer, mainly because of the possibly frequent visits and inspections of foreign troops. This also has an influence on an easier flow of human capital and sharing knowledge.

For those reasons, Central and Eastern Europe becomes a place where the development of centralized foreign units, can be observed (Winnicka-Wejs and Klich, 2011). Poland has emerged as one of the most comprehensive IT/BPO/KPI service delivery locations in Central and Eastern Europe, supported by vastly improved macro-economic fundamentals. In 2012 some countries' economic performance was noticed by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) which states that: *"Poland has been the best growth performer within the OECD through the global economic crisis"* (OECD Economic Surveys POLAND, 2014). The Polish labor market, a reasonable operational costs and sound socio-political market environment makes the country a viable option to be an alternate destination to deliver high-end processes.

The KPMG Report: *"Poland as the destination of the Shared Service Center"* from 2013 lists the reasons for the development of the SSC in Poland. This report indicates the following, among other things (Investing in Poland 2014, 2015):

- The number and quality of Polish human capital,

- Lower labor costs,
- Office infrastructure,
- Transport infrastructure,
- Polish government and the law for foreign investors,
- Overall condition of life balance.

Rankings of the Tholons company, which indicate the most popular locations for centres of joint services, also reaffirm a significant role of Poland in Central-Eastern Europe. Data concerning the most important locations from the discussed area of Europe was presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Ranking of the fastest growing cities (CEE) under the terms of the SSC in 2013-2015 years** (Author's elaboration based on: 2014 Tholons top 100 outsourcing destinations: *Regional Overview*, 2014, p.10; 2015 Top 100 Outsourcing Destinations, Tholons, December 2014)

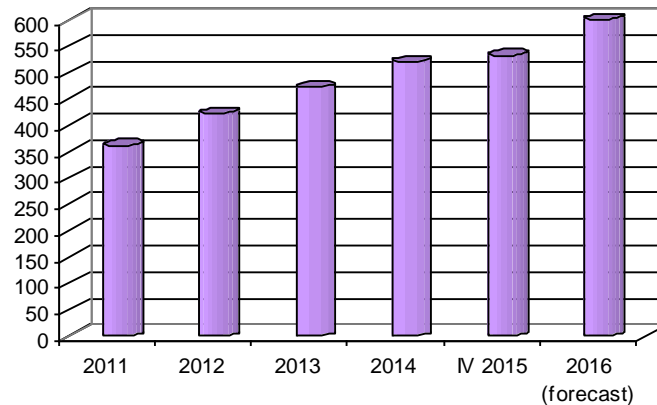
Country	City	Ranking 2013	Ranking 2014	Ranking 2015
Poland	Krakow	10	9	9
Czech Republic	Prague	17	16	15
Hungary	Budapest	28	26	25
Czech Republic	Brno	30	29	29
Poland	Warsaw	36	32	30
Slovakia	Bratislava	47	47	49
Poland	Wroclaw	75	65	62

In recent years, Cracow has been the best place, in Central-Eastern Europe, for shared services centers location. What's more, it should also be emphasized that Cracow ranks among first ten places as the only European city. The strong position of Poland is reinforced, not only by Cracow but also, by two other Polish cities, that is, Warsaw and Wroclaw. No other Central-Eastern European country can show such a success off. Both Wroclaw, and Warsaw are gaining the more and more popularity and are systematically climbing up balance sheets. The development of Wroclaw, which in 2015 corrected its position against 13 places with regard to ranking concerning 2013, can be specially admired. Other Central-European cities correct their positions much more slowly, and Bratislava registered even a fall. This data strongly attest the fact that Poland is most willingly being chosen as the location of shared services centres in this area of the world.

The first shared service centers in Poland appeared in the early 90s of the last century. It was possible due to the economic and social transformations in the former socialist countries of Europe. The opening of markets has increased global demand and the beginning of the expansion of businesses in areas previously inaccessible (Gabryś, 2009). However, the significant increase in investment of business services took place after 2004, when Poland joined the European Community. This coincided in time with the "investment boom" business services

sector globally. The need to seek new markets meet the expectations of investors in terms of location and human resources, made Poland to be seen as an attractive partner to this type of investment (Lelek, 2014; Sirková et al., 2016; Zillner et al., 2012).

Figure 1 shows the number of foreign shared service centers in Poland in years 2011-2016. The prognosis for 2016 is shown and data for 2015 reflect a real state of matter for the end of April.



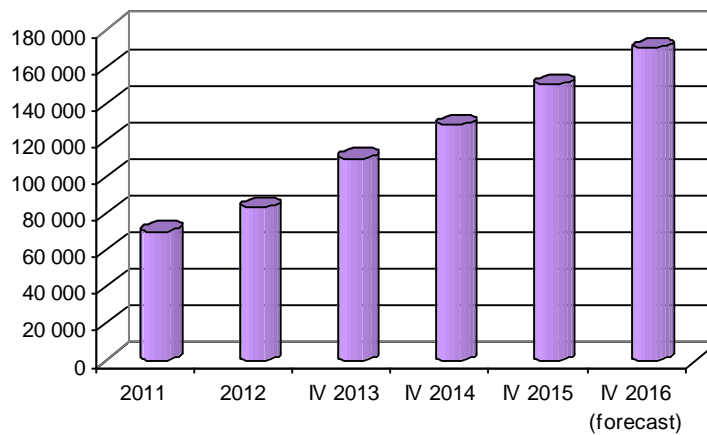
**Figure 1. Number of foreign shared service centers in Poland in 2011-2016 years**  
(Author's elaboration based on: *Sektor Nowoczesnych Usług Biznesowych w Polsce 2015*)

Since it is already known that Poland is a great destination for SSC, it is not surprising that number of these units, in Poland, is steadily increasing. From 2011 to April 2015 there were approximately 170 new service units being created, while during nearly 4 months of 2015 twelve new units were being created. 2012 was a time, when the substantial amount of new shared services centres started its activity in (61 individuals). According to forecasts by the end of 2016 about 600 centres with the foreign capital are supposed to act in Poland, what means that only within 5 years their number will rise by about 250 subjects. It attests the very intense SSCs development in Poland and proves the significant position of the country in this industry.

The largest number of centres is in Cracow (101) and Warsaw (93), a little bit less in Wrocław (67). Also Tri-City, Łódź, Katowice Metropolitan Area and Poznań have significant meaning in this industry - in every of these locations over 40 SSC act. It is not impossible to see that these are major cities of the country, well communicated and having recognized centres of higher education, being able to shape staffs for shared services centres. The development of the sector of SSCis closely connected to the employment growth in these units. Data connected with the employment in SSC in Poland in years 2011-2016 were presented in Figure 2.

The number of employees of shared services centres in Poland is constantly rising. Forecasts state that at the end of April 2016 about 170 thousand persons are

supposed to be employed in these individuals that is by 100 thousand more than it took place in 2011.



**Figure 2. Number of employees working in SSC in Poland in 2011-2016 years**

(Author's elaboration based on: *Sektor Nowoczesnych Usług Biznesowych w Polsce 2014*; *Sektor Nowoczesnych Usług Biznesowych w Polsce 2015*)

The annual employment growth for the period examined is around 20 thousand employees. It is also worth pointing out that the dynamics of employment growth in the centres is higher than the growth dynamics of the number of these centers. This situation is a result of increasing employment in the already existing units.

The greatest number of employees is in centres located in Cracow (24% of the whole employed in such individuals), Warsaw (18%) and Wrocław (16%), that is on areas, where there number of these subjects are the largest.

However, it is worthwhile paying attention to differences between Warsaw and Wrocław – in this first city a number of 26 centres more are being located and the difference of the participation in the employment structure takes out scarcely 2%. It means that in Wrocław bigger units act, which employ averagely greater number of workers.

### **Attitude of Students to Work Opportunities in the Centre of Joint Services – Methodology and Results**

The development of shared services centres gives young people new job opportunities. Forecasts say that only in 2016 there will be about 20 thousand workstations created in such units. Centres will need new workers and specialists in various areas. And again it gives the graduates the opportunity to find employment once they complete their studies. Yet, there's still an important question to consider, namely, what the attitude of those graduates towards such a job offer will be.

To find the answer to that question, a survey of 293 respondents was carried out. The research was conducted among students of the Faculty of Management of Technical University of Czestochowa in the period from March to June 2016. Data concerning age, sex, level of education and time of its completion, knowledge of foreign languages and subject of studies of the respondents were described on Figure 3.

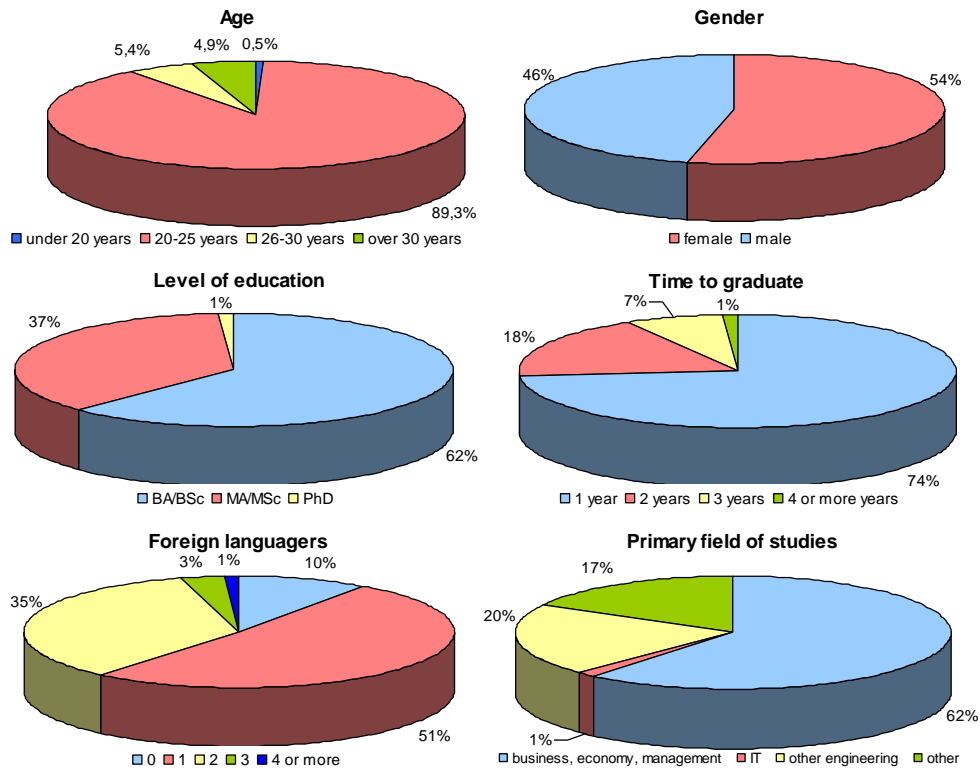


Figure 3. Main data regarding respondents

The great majority of respondents are between 20 and 25 years old. The examined from remaining age groups constitute the little percentage of respondents. The structure of the sex of respondents is relatively balanced, with the slight majority of women. Most of them are enrolled in bachelor's degree programs. The smallest percentage, because only 1%, are those of doctoral studies. Almost 75% of the respondents are in their final year of studies; therefore they will soon enter the labor market. Broadly defined business, economics and management, pointed out by over 60% of respondents, are among the major fields of study. Also a sizeable group of respondents study engineering (20%) and other subjects, amongst which the logistics dominates. When it comes to the knowledge of foreign languages,

over 50% of the respondents indicated to be able to communicate in one foreign language. Also respondents using two foreign languages constitute the essential group. Alarming data can be facts that up to 10% of respondents communicate only in their mother language. Amongst the most popular foreign languages, which knowledge respondents indicate, are English (172 of indications) and German (44). It fits world-wide trends, according to which English is the language of the global communication. Respondents, as all potential employees, have a set of criteria, which they follow while looking for a job. Data regarding criteria of employer's assessment were shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Criteria of potential employers assessment**

	<b>not at all</b>	<b>a little</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>important</b>	<b>very important</b>
reputation of the organization	8	8	42	101	134
products/services that organization produces	27	21	99	87	59
size of the company	39	36	111	72	35
attractive internship programs	17	13	53	109	101
career opportunity	3	8	25	65	192
good reviews from friends	13	23	61	103	93
travel opportunities offered by the organization	35	38	92	71	57
high salaries	0	2	20	63	208
geographical closeness to your place of living	11	26	36	89	131
opportunity for training and development	0	3	29	96	165
good working atmosphere	3	4	14	57	215
well-balanced work	0	2	44	113	134
shift worktime or work time-frame	13	35	89	83	73

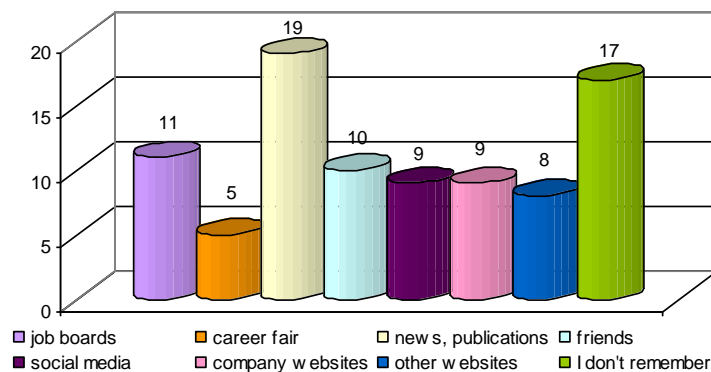
For respondents the most important criteria, when it comes to the assessment of potential employers, are: career opportunities, high wages, training and development opportunities, as well as, good atmosphere at work. Over a half of the examined indicated every of these replies as the crucial factor. A good reputation of the organization, a balanced work and a close distance from a domicile are also very significant. However the size of the company and travelling opportunities offered by the company were regarded as the least crucial criteria when it comes to choosing a potential employer. It results from it that respondents are putting the greater attention to the remuneration, the possibility of the professional development and the atmosphere at work; however factors so to speak additional,



not having a direct effect to earnings and very work, are definitely less important for them.

Moving on to matters strictly connected with shared services centres, the most important question would be to ask if students, in general, realize that there are such units, and whether they have knowledge regarding their actions (Figure 4), and what is more – their job offers.

Almost 30% of respondents don't know what shared services centres and business services centers are. This result proves that in spite of the fact that the development of these units is becoming more and more dynamic, the knowledge about them, among students, is still unsatisfactory. Further studies were carried out in the group of the respondents who has knowledge of the units SSC. However, it can't be excluded that student already got in touch in such units, although they can not name them professionally. It is also without any doubt that shared services centres are being poorly identified by respondents.



**Figure 4. Sources of information about SSC**

Respondents having knowledge about shared services centres learn about them above all from news and publications that is from more professional, scientific sources. Considerable part of the examined does not also remember where they learnt about existing of SSC. Also an Internet (social media, websites) is a significant source of knowledge on these individuals. Least examined declare that it acquired knowledge concerning shared services centres on careers fairs, that is in the place, which peculiarly firmly should promote such individuals and strengthen their existing in the memory of students. However, it is hard to state, whether such a low effectiveness of careers fairs results for lack of SSC representatives, whether rather from the fact that students are not participating in events of this type.

As many as 75% of respondents do not have a knowledge about job offers provided by SSC and BSC. It is a result, mainly, of the fact that the majority of the respondents doesn't know, what these units are. And it is natural that not having knowledge about their existence, they cannot know about job offers proposed by them. In addition it is worthwhile to notice that the part of people being able to

identify SSC does not also know, what job offers it possess. So shared services centres must find a more effective way of communication with students in order to provide job offers to them as well as inform them about their existence. Lack of solid knowledge about shared services centres can result in the misperception of their functioning. Table 3 shows an assessment of features, which should characterize shared services centres.

**Table 3. Views regarding typical features, which are characteristic to shared services centres**

	not at all	a little	medium	fairly typical	typical
the work is too monotonous there	14	31	62	51	47
you have to communicate very well in more foreign languages	8	19	62	71	45
there are only few promotion opportunities there	12	27	80	58	28
there is higher salary than the average there	17	35	90	50	13
there is youthful working environment and low average age among the employees	2	17	48	58	80
there are operating in well-equipped, modern office buildings	4	17	89	64	31
it matters less your degree and other academic results	23	39	59	41	43
there is quite high staff turnover rate	9	32	69	59	36
they intend to develop a work environment needs to Y-and Z-generation	7	15	117	43	23
the work day is typically longer than 8 hours	10	40	68	58	29
they support the flexible forms of employment	8	8	54	63	72

As the most typical features of shared services centres respondents recognized the young work environment, the low average age of employees – indicated by 80 respondents, and the flexible forms of employment (72 indications). According to students, there are also other typical features of these individuals: the need to communicate in a few languages, the turnover of employees, the monotonous work and the minor importance of the education learning and results. What is interesting, last two features were indicated at the same time by other respondents as ones least typical of shared services centres. It can provide perhaps the fact that students indeed do not have knowledge about functioning of SSC and have diametrically different ideas in this subject. What is interesting, most respondents perceive "the

medium" box like "a safety buffer" – when they are not sure how to assess a given feature, they are likely to choose the medium one. This response happens as the most frequent one in at least 8 categories. Once again it is shown very well how little students know about the shared services centres. In order to determine the attitude of students to the employment in shared services centres the following question should be answered: whether they are able to accept the fact that job offer given to them come exactly from SSC; or in other words, whether they are willing to work in such unit. Although respondents' knowledge about shared services centres is not very wide, the possibilities of working in such units don't discourage them. Almost 80 % of respondents claim that they will not give up applying for the employment, even if the vacant position will be offered by the shared services centre. It means from one side that a very fact of the placement is most important for the majority of students (in addition a little bit less essential is, where this work will be), on the other however is attest the fact that shared services centres do not seem to be negative for respondents (therefore they are willing to work in them). Such attitudes of students help the developing or newly created shared services centres to find employees among the future graduates. As main motives discouraging from working in shares services centres respondents indicated lack of the potential for development of the career, negative ratio to such a form of supporting the employment, negative opinions of their friends, the stressing work, the monotony and the routine of the work. However ah main motive stopping the resignation from the employment in SSC is a belief that the work in such a place is a good way to start the professional career. Also a conviction about the good remuneration and work opportunities in the vicinity of the domicile has also a significant meaning. Shared services centres offer a quite specific catalogue of workstations. Figure 5 shows an attitude of students to the employment in chosen positions, typical for SSC.

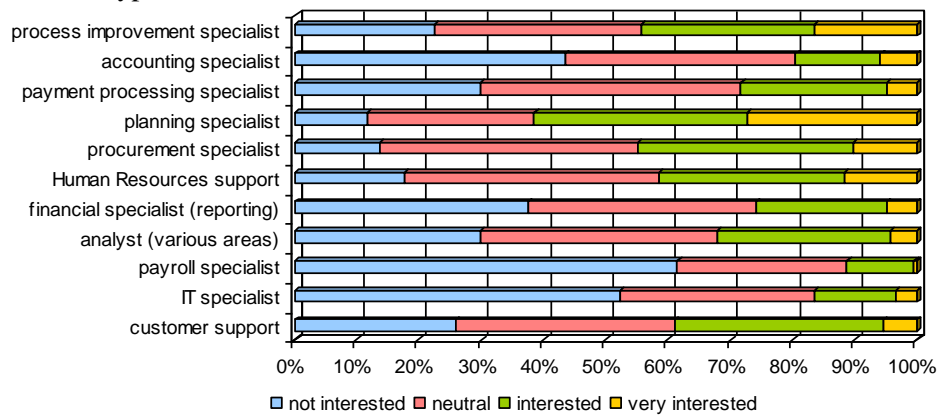


Figure 5. Willingness of working on chosen work stations offered by shares services centres

The position of the planning specialist enjoys the greatest interest among respondents – over 60% of them were interested in being employed in such position (30% of which was very much interested in this position). Positions like process improvement specialist, procurement specialist and Human Resources support also enjoy a considerable interest – over 40% of the respondents would like to work in those positions. Pay Payroll specialist and IT specialist and, in a little bit lower rank, accounting specialist and financial specialist are definitely the least popular posts (over 50% is not interested in them). These positions were connected with the monotonous work, and, in addition, the demand of expertise and skills and for those reasons respondents probably refuse to apply for them. Positions involving creativity enjoyed great interest which, considering respondents' majors, shouldn't surprise anyone.

### Summary

Within a dozen or so last years the concept of creating shares services centres gained a considerable circle of supporters. Therefore at present we are dealing with the very intense development of individuals of this type. At first they were mainly located in Asian countries, however today they are created worldwide. In Central-Eastern Europe Poland and especially Cracow, leading the field amongst European cities, is a peculiarly popular place of locating investment of this type. Choice of Poland as the optimum location for the shares services centre is justified in such premises, as even: low labors cost, the educated workforce, the well-developed office or also a transport infrastructure. Not without meaning also a generally good living conditions and relatively great safety remains. High dynamics of the SSC development observed in Poland affects the labor market and possibilities of finding employment by graduates with the higher education. However, the research, conducted amongst students, show insufficient knowledge about functioning of shares services centres and workstations offered by those centres. It means that the units of these types must find a way to appeal to the graduates if they aim to attract qualified workers. For the time being the respondents consider SSC as the place of relatively high earnings, yet, with low career opportunities and monotonous work. Shared services centres is seen both as a good place for starting a career and gaining experience (Ostoj, 2016), as well as, the place which does not offer a stable and long-term employment. However, it does not change the fact that the majority of respondents are ready to take up work there, most willingly on the positions like planning specialist, process improvement specialist, procurement specialist or Human Resources support. Above research opens a large research gap. There are some limitations of the results, such as the need to reference the results to a larger study sample, located in various academic centers with a greater number of courses, which could change the research results in area of desired jobs by students. Also, research scope can be extended with further important aspects, as the definition of the educational needs for the training of potential staff within the context of long-term development trends for shared services centres.

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### PERSPEKTYWY ROZWOJU SSC W POLSCE W KONTEKŚCIE DOSTĘPNOŚCI ZASOBÓW LUDZKICH

**Streszczenie:** Celem artykułu jest charakterystyka centrów usług wspólnych (SSC) jako miejsc zatrudnienia dla absolwentów szkół wyższych w Polsce. Polska jest liderem w lokalizacji SSC wśród krajów Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej, na co ma wpływ m.in. wysoko wykształcona siła robocza oraz niskie koszty pracy. Analiza wyników badania przeprowadzonego wśród studentów, którego celem było określenie stosunku respondentów do pracy w centrach usług wspólnych, jest główną częścią badania. W artykule zidentyfikowano czynniki wpływające na postrzeganie SSC przez studentów. Przeprowadzone badania pokazują niedostateczną wiedzę respondentów na temat funkcjonowania centrów usług, jak również stanowisk oferowanych przez te jednostki. Centra usług wspólnych są uznawane za dobre miejsce do rozpoczęcia kariery i zdobywania doświadczenia, a jednocześnie, takie, które nie oferuje stabilnego i długoterminowego zatrudnienia.

**Słowa kluczowe:** centra usług wspólnych, zasoby siły roboczej, zatrudnienie, zarządzanie karierą

#### 在波蘭的發展共享服務中心前景人力資源可用性上下文

**摘要:** 本文旨在說明共享服務中心 (SSC) 的就業機會在波蘭大學畢業生的特點。波蘭是中東歐國家之間的定位SSC，這是由高相對受過教育的勞動力和低廉的勞動力成本影響的領導者。該調查結果的分析和學生中進行的，旨在確定的受訪者在共享服務中心工作的關係是研究的主要部分。該文件確定了影響SSC的由學生感知的因素。學生當中進行的研究，並顯示有關提供給這些中心財務服務中心和工作站的運作知識不足。共享服務中心被確認為開始職業生涯，並獲得經驗，還有，不提供一個穩定和長期就業的地方的好地方。

**關鍵詞:** 共享服務中心，工作資源，就業，職業生涯管理