

## **NIK on the employment of disabled persons**

**More and more disabled persons are looking for a job. Over the last three years, PLN 300 million was spent on vocational activation programmes for the disabled, their results, however, are unsatisfactory. The number of the disabled registered with the audited job centres went up but still they rarely find jobs after completing traineeship.**

In the years 2007-2010 (first half), the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PFRON) co-financed five large programmes supporting vocational activation of the disabled. Non-governmental organisations received almost PLN 300 million as part of these programmes and numerous smaller initiatives,. According to NIK, these funds were used properly. NIK also positively assessed promotional campaigns run by PFRON popularising information on the programmes being implemented.

Nevertheless, NIK identified some shortcomings in those programmes. Above all, they lacked a thorough analysis of the needs that the programmes were expected to satisfy. The programmes were also implemented without prior information on the number of potential participants and without proper cost simulations.

Several irregularities were also found in the course of the programmes' implementation. NIK negatively assessed changing the rules of cooperation with non-governmental organisations after starting the programmes, cuts in already granted funds and delays in financial settlements. In some cases, settlements were delayed by as many as three years. As a consequence, some organisations decided to withdraw from cooperation with PFRON.

NIK has also voiced some reservations about the lack of the assessment of the programmes' effectiveness. For example, the objective of the *Job Coach* programme (Polish: *Trener Pracy*) was unmeasurable, which made it practically impossible to assess the programme execution stage. NIK also points out that, on the one hand, in most of the audited job centres the number of registered disabled persons grew year by year. But on the other hand, the effectiveness of measures aimed at helping these people to find a job dropped simultaneously. For example, the percentage of trainees who found employment after completing the traineeship co-financed by PFRON went down from 71.5 percent in 2007 to 36 percent in 2010.

NIK also indicates that the disabled face serious barriers which hinder their physical access to offices. In half of the buildings audited by NIK, including city offices and employment agencies, significant architectural barriers were found. Architectonic barriers were removed from the main office space only, however other rooms and upper storeys remained unadapted. That is why many offices still cannot be considered disabled-friendly.