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Social portrait of people who use social support

The politics of social support is a state obligation towards people who, without their fault, do not possess sufficient source of maintenance. In Poland, over fifteen years ago great changes in politics and economy took place. Also new and so far unknown phenomenon appeared (unemployment, poverty, homelessness, corruption, free market, terrorism, increase in crime, drugs and declining sense of safety in the society). "Democracy and a number of reforms connected with it, not familiar to the society, created mechanisms that put less resourceful and weaker individuals on the margin of the society. Those include: people with the lowest education, elder people, those with low income and inhabitants of small towns and villages, especially post-PGR(State Farms)"¹. It does not mean that in the previous political system those phenomena did not exist. They had a smaller scope and were hidden because of the ideological reasons.

One of the fundamental factors which influence the existence of an adult person in our civilization is the possession of permanent employment, which determines his material existence.

Psychical reactions over unemployment differ. The predominant emotional state is depression, irritation, anxiety, the feeling of the lack of perspectives, the inability to realize one's life plans, and as well the lack of faith in changes for better. The unemployed feel humiliated by the fact of taking the unemployment benefit, the decrease of their position in family, and also they experience loneliness and isolation, since most of their acquaintances they met at work. Elder people do not see chances to find work, a possibility of retraining, or taking up an economic activity. They give in to the psychical breakdown and are unable to cope with the surrounding social reality².

¹ J. Niewęglowski, Wyzwania polityki społecznej w procesie transformacji. Rola katolickiej nauki społecznej,(w;)Społeczeństwo, demokracja, edukacja, Nowe wyzwania w pracy socjalnej, red. K. Marzec-Holka, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Akademii Bydgoskiej, Bydgoszcz 2000, s. 102.

² Por.: I. Reszke, Postawy wobec bezrobocia, Wyd. „Śląsk”, Katowice 1999, s. 60-61.

- A. Żukiewicz³ introduces three fundamental doctrines, and at once models of social politics realized modernly in many countries of the world:
1. *Liberal doctrine* based on the private property system, widely understood freedom and aiming to the increase of wealth. It assumes social inequality, elitism, individualism, and the development of enterprise.
 2. *Socialistic doctrine* formed on the ground of capitalism's critics. It rejects social inequality in the name of the principle of equality and collective property, as well as the commonness of access to the social support system. Assuming the principle of full employment, it proclaims an idea of promotion of the whole society(where is no place for aristocracy, bourgeoisies, and kulaks),
 3. *Socliberal doctrine*, which is in opposition to the liberal and socialistic assumptions. It proclaims a battle with the social injustice, which results from the capitalistic relations, and also it opposes excessive bureaucracy in the political and economical life, especially in the period over the year 1945.

The model of social politics in today's Poland is hard to define. After the year 1989 the expense of existential protection was in the hands of the state. Actions took up by successive governing groups had an impulsive character, spontaneous and unplanned. This long lasting situation caused the formation of three types of attitudes⁴:

1. Expectation that the state will still guarantee a wide catalogue of welfares,
2. Expectation for the total withdraw of the state from the role of the protector, together with the liquidation of previous social benefits,
3. Practices, resulting from the confrontation of the previous attitudes, relying upon support of the state, in the framework of social policy, of structural and economical reforms(creating a social protection for the economical transformations).

At present the subjective scope of the persons who are entitled to a social benefit, includes Polish citizens living on the territories of the Republic of Poland, as well as the foreigners who have a permission of permanent residence or an immigrant status⁵.

³ Por.: A. Żukiewicz, *Praca socjalna Ośrodków Pomocy Społecznej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2002, s. 24-25.

⁴ Tamże, s. 34.

⁵ Dz. U. z dnia 15 kwietnia 2004r. Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004r. o pomocy społecznej art.5.

Social support is given to the people and families particularly because of :

1. poverty,
2. orphanhood,
3. homelessness,
4. unemployment,
5. disablement⁶,
6. long-lasting or hard illness,
7. family violence,
8. need of protection of maternity and families with a great number of children,
9. helplessness in the pedagogical matters and running a household, especially in the incomplete families and families with a great number of children,
10. the lack of abilities to adjust to life by the young people after leaving the penitentiary,
11. problems of people who received the immigrant status with integration,
12. problems with adjusting to life after leaving the penitentiary,
13. alcoholism or drug addiction,
14. lot's experiences and crisis situations,
15. natural or ecological disasters⁷.

The specified task of the social support is to make economically independent, the people or families who receive help from social support, and their integration with the environment.

It is stated that the longer the time period of one's dependence on the social support, the harder it is to overcome the resistance in seeking solutions of the problem of economical shortage⁸.

In the case of pathological families, additionally affected by unemployment, there is noticed a phenomenon called *generation inheritance*. Using the help of social support becomes a life-style, internalized from generation to generation. It is proved by what social workers⁹ with several years' experience say. The number of families that do not know how to deal with many difficulties in the new economical circumstances is rising.

⁶ T. Majewski, Rehabilitacja zawodowa osób niepełnosprawnych, Warszawa 1995, s. 40, mówi, że „osoba niepełnosprawna ta taka, u której uszkodzenie i obniżony poziom sprawności organizmu spowodował utrudnienie, ograniczenie lub uniemożliwienie wykonywania zadań życiowych i zawodowych oraz wypełnienie ról społecznych biorąc pod uwagę jej wiek, płeć, stan, czynniki środowiskowe, społeczne i kulturowe”.

⁷ tamże, art.7.

⁸ wypowiedzi pracowników socjalnych z Ośrodka Pomocy Społecznej w Gryfinie, wrzesień 2006r.

⁹ tamże

Except the group of people whom the new political and economical situation allows to fully develop their abilities, there appeared a different, increasing in number group which has problems with finding themselves in the new reality, helpless, scared by the shade of unemployment, poverty, and inability to maintain the hitherto standard of living¹⁰.

In the situation of rapid changes takes place social disorganization, which manifests itself, among other things in drug abuse, alcoholism, social orphanhood, unemployment or social maladjustment¹¹.

The main causes of poverty, in opinion of A. Roter¹², include:

- a great number of children in a family,
- addictions (especially addictions and drug abuse),
- disablement (physical, psychical and intellectual),
- solitude (the lack of family relations, especially in the situation of low pensions),
- growing up in incomplete families or broken homes,
- low status of education, leading to unemployment (lack of competences needed to find work at the job market),
- chronic illness,
- other traumatic experiences (e.g. death of somebody close)

It comes out from the studies¹³ that, the biggest group which used the help from social support in the year 2004 and 2005 were poor and unemployed people, then disabled and life helpless persons, what shows the following table.

¹⁰ J. Troc, Aktualne funkcje pracy socjalnej- potrzeby a rzeczywistość, w: Społeczeństwo, demokracja, edukacja. Nowe wyzwania w pracy socjalnej, red. K. Marzec- Holka, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Akademii Bydgoskiej, Bydgoszcz 2000, s. 221.

¹¹por.: U. Kamińska, Rodziny niewydolne wychowawczo i ich dzieci nowy paradygmat pracy socjalnej, w: Praca socjalna, w poszukiwaniu metod i narzędzi, red. M. Orłowska, L. Malinowski, Wydawnictwo Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa 2000,s. 243.

¹²por.: A. Roter, Proces socjalizacji dzieci w warunkach ubóstwa społecznego, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2005, s. 60-61.

¹³Terenem moich badań były Miejskie Ośrodki Pomocy Rodzinie w Szczecinie i Gryfinie oraz Ośrodki Pomocy Społecznej w Gryfinie i Widuchowej, gdzie zastosowałam metodę sondażu diagnostycznego i techniki: wywiad z kierownictwem i pracownikami, analizę dokumentów oraz obserwację uczestniczącą.

Categories of awarding social support

Table 1.

Cause of difficult life situation	Numer of families				Numer of persons In families	
	Total		country		2004	2005
	2004	2005	2004	2005		
Poverty	832	725	404	370	2688	2159
Orphanhood	-	1	-	-	-	1
Homelessness	35	39	7	11	40	41
Need to protect maternity	55	24	29	19	251	112
Including: possession of a great number of children	6	14	5	9	47	75
Unemployment	830	671	384	306	2725	2348
Disablement	566	594	213	232	1504	1533
Long-lasting or hard illness	108	101	31	28	292	248
Helplessness in the pedagogical matters and running a household	277	258	182	154	1183	1071
Including: incomplete families	169	158	96	89	585	538
Including: families with a great number of children	95	58	63	43	564	395
Family violence	8	13	2	5	32	55
Alcoholism	120	134	47	49	322	328
Drug abuse	3	4	1	1	15	7
The lack of abilities to adjust to life after leaving the penitentiary,	21	22	6	7	60	4
lack of abilities to adjust to life by the young people after leaving the pedagogic – bringing up institutions	1	1	1	-	5	1
Difficulties with integration of the people who received an immigrant status	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lot's events	6	8	2	2	14	19
Crisis situation	2	3	2	1	8	10
Natural and ecological disaster	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: self- study, on the base of documents obtained from Social Support Centre in Gryfin

Impoverishment of our society is an alarming fact, for the comparison in the year 1999 no single person used the help of social support because of poverty, what illustrates the table nr 2.

Reasons of awarding social support in 1999

Table 2

Cause of difficult life situation	Numer of families	Number of persons in families	
		total	women
Poverty	-	-	-
Orphanhood	1	2	-
Homelessness	7	8	1
Need to protect maternity	82	348	186
Unemployment	288	985	529
Disablement	440	1000	519
Long-lasting illness	143	475	251
Helplessness in the pedagogical matters and running a household	197	945	493
Including: incomplete families	94	329	212
Families with a great number of children	83	548	274
Alcoholism	85	277	123
Drug abuse	1	2	1
The lack of abilities to adjust to life after leaving the penitentiary	15	29	12
Natural or ecological disaster	1	4	2

Source: self- study, on the base of documents obtained from Social Support Centre in Gryfin

From the above-mentioned table follows that in 1999 the group that used help from social support were disabled persons (440 families), the second group were unemployed persons(288 families), on the third position were persons, helpless with dealing with life matters(197 families).

Comparing, in the year 2005 disabled people place on the third position(594 families). The most numerous group is made up of poor persons(725 families), then unemployed persons(671 families).

A similar structure can be observed in Szczecin¹⁴, where the major cause of awarding the social support was poverty(9003 families – number of persons in these families – 18102), on the second place unemployment(7809 families – number of persons in these families – 16853), on the third place disablement(3712 families – number of persons in these families – 6285), then helplessness in the pedagogical matters and running a household(2954 families – number of persons in these families – 8602), long-lasting or hard illness(1891 families- number of persons in these families – 3313), the next reason for using the help of social support is alcoholism(1589 families – number of persons in these families – 2648), a remarkable position takes homelessness(1199 families – number of people in these families – 1528).

A different structure of people who use the help of social support is observed in a Social Support Community Centre in Widuchowa, what is presented in the table nr 3.

Reasons for awarding social support in the Social Support Centre in Widuchowa

Table 3.

Causes of difficult life situation	Numer of families				Numer of persons In the family	
	total		country		2001	2005
	200	200	200	200		
	1	5	1	5		
Poverty	35	340	35	340	152	1195
Orphanhood	2	-	2	-	7	-
Homelessnes	1	3	1	3	1	3
Need to protect maternity	42	28	42	28	196	163
Unemployment	140	185	140	185	559	728
Disablement	42	75	42	75	126	188
Long-lasting illness	23	-	23	-	95	-
Helplessness in the pedagogical matters and running a household	160	258	160	258	665	1032
Including: incomplete families	43	52	43	52	148	180
Families with great number of children	55	51	55	51	401	330

¹⁴ Analiza dokumentów z Miejskiego Centrum Pomocy Rodzinie w Szczecinie oraz sprawozdań z udzielonych świadczeń – zadania własne gmin.

Alcoholism	47	35	47	35	192	178
Drug abuse	-	-	-	-	-	-
The lack of abilities to adjust to life after leaving the penitentiary	3	2	3	2	11	7
Natural or ecological disasters	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: self- study, on the base of documents obtained from Community Centre

From the above-mentioned combination follows that population in the countries experiences poverty in the alarming tempo, unemployment and the helplessness in life matter rise. The number of persons using the help of social support, rises from year to year, what is illustrated in the table nr 4.

Persons who used help of the Social Support Community Centre in Widuchowa during 2000 – 2005.

Table 4.

Year	Number of persons using help	Number of families	Number of persons in family
2000	266	271	1031
2001	271	278	1106
2002	380	360	1448
2003	369	377	1482
2004	365	365	1369
2005	324	324	1420

Source: materials obtained from Social Support Centre in Widuchowa

From the accessible materials from the Social Support Community Centre in Widuchowa, follows that social support is used mainly by women – about 80%, pathological families – 20%, families with a great number of children – 17%, families where unemployment occurs – 43%, incomplete families – 20%, families from former PGRs(State Farms) – about 50%. 35% of the total number of school children is supplied with additional nutrition(these children come from poor, neglected or pathological families)

Social Support Centre workers also pointed out the leakiness of the social support system. Symptomatic is the fact that to MOPS and OPS come people who have the ability to overcome the existential hardships on their own, but the legal regulations allows them to use a variety of types of help, e.g. single mothers living in a relationship, people working illegally, etc. Other example can be people unemployed by choice, who are hard in cooperation and with pretensions. These persons are well informed about what they are entitled to, and in their environment they pass as competent and enterprising individuals.

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