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The development of the society's social culture- a chance for disabled people and their families

As the Ministry of Work and Social politics informs, there are about 5.5 million disabled people living in Poland – compared to the year of 1988 the group has increased about 50%. Among the common population of disabled people, we distinguish 202,4 thousand disabled children, which stands for 2,7% of the population in this age group. Among them, 17,3% have full and 56,3% serious movement restrictions. Most families with disabled children live in cities, but already every third disabled child lives in the country, which means in our conditions, that it has very difficult access to rehabilitation help, medical care, and education¹.

The determined majority of disabled people support themselves mainly from social benefits: benefits, pensions, and retirements, 8% remain on the support of other people because of not having any personal means. In families in which there are disabled children mostly one of the parents devotes oneself to the care and rehabilitation work of one's child or children (as in the case of disabilities caused by genetic illness) and the second parent works professionally trying to satisfy the family's needs (ibidem).

Currently, in view of the unceasingly increasing common costs of our life support families with a disabled child/children find themselves in a particularly difficult financial situation. Their situation often causes that they have to face the dilemma on what goals should they purpose their already modest financial means; whether spend it on the daily security of the family's functioning or at the cost of all the family members, first of all, secure the needs and the treatment of the sick child. As one can possibly imagine, parents choose the second option, at the same time remaining with the feeling of bitterness and grief towards everybody around and especially toward the country in which they live on and which by the power of the obligatory law is responsible for the help and support towards its citizens.

In a sense, this approach reflects the realized social politics of the country which makes its way towards the building of an institutionalized help system for its citizens.

Wide actions in this case have awoken, even among a part of the community, expectations towards the realization of the protective country concept where every citizen that is in a problematic situation could count on the country's actions through different types

¹ MPiPS data from 7.12.2006, <http://www.mps.gov.pl/>

of specialized services. This solution, unfortunately, seems to be constantly unreal considering the economical and organizational capabilities of our country, which is still going through a process of changes in all the life's spheres. However, one has to admit that the diversity, scale, as well as the human fate drama, unceasingly extort the usage, both in the sphere of theory and in social practice, more adequate transformation programs to the changing conditions and undertaking more resolute help, compensating, and prophylactic actions, precisely from the country's side. The realization of social care towards citizens, and in it undertaking social work with individuals, groups, or whole community environments, among which the largest group is determined by disabled people and their families, despite constantly improving and searching for new solutions, still is not capable of satisfying needs and social expectations of the interested.

And so, this initial ecstasy over organizational efficiency and effectiveness of satisfying needs on mass scale by the system of formal, specialized government institutions along with the progressive process of decentralization of the country's structures and authority began to give way to new conceptions of the citizens participation in the society's and country's life ².

It appears in scientific theory and in practice, so **option – culture** focused on searching for more general solutions, qualifying values and the characteristic philosophy of the humanistic perspective on human problems, based on which directions of important actions in different scopes, areas are pointed out and with reference to various subjects.

A characteristic determinant of this option (important considering the performing social changes) became the generalization of the citizen society's functioning and in it the rules of country's assistance directed at providing help for mutual aid rules of social relations that maximalize possibilities inherited in a person. Unofficial organizations have stepped into the sphere of relations between the country and the society and began, in a considerable way, to take over public tasks, especially those ones that earlier when there was no such possibility with various effect towards its citizens tried to realize the country. Today, it is commonly considered that the third sector – the activity of unofficial organizations determines the fullest term of an active, civic society, that is why it is considered to be the warp of the democratic tissue of modern societies because: it is created by infomercial organizations based on voluntary resolutions being able to make decisions about their own matters independently from the authorities of the public sector ³.

² Woźniak, Z. Warowicki M.(2001) Aktywność obywatelska w rozwoju społeczności lokalnej. Od komunikacji do współpracy, Warszawa, p.9

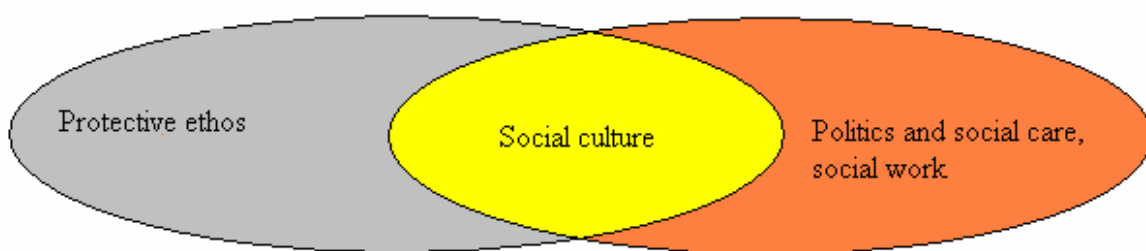
³ Woźniak, Z. Warowicki M.(2001) Aktywność obywatelska w rozwoju społeczności lokalnej. Od komunikacji do współpracy, Warszawa, p.12

The dynamical development of social organization appears on the public scene after 1989 what determined the term of self-organization of the society and the increase in the feeling of citizen responsibility directed at mutual good.

Currently, in the realized system of social care directed at satisfying social needs unofficial organizations, basing on the citizens activity, have already marked their unshaken place and worked out a model of partner cooperation with a nation sector. However, the basic task of the country's accepted social politics became the further society activation in the way of building a democratic nurturing society as the only antidote to the increasing social problems.

However, the basic goal of the county's and society's actions should be the construction of **social culture reflected both in the protective behaviors of specific individuals towards themselves, person towards another person, as well as in the whole network of the obligatory social system assigned by operative legal norms and accepted and realized social politics and social work in the country.**

Social culture- in J. Materne's opinion – it is a form of a widely known care which appears when the society reaches a very high level of economic, political, and cultural development. Care for the people, both as an evidence of common high culture as well as guaranteeing people care in a normative (legal) way, care for their well-being, development and prosperity is becoming an integral part of the whole society's goods ⁴.



Source: J. Materne p. 68

⁴ Materne J.(1999), Pedagogika socjalna, Szczecin, p.66

Social culture is an outgrowth of the crossing of individuals protective ethos and a consciously organized nurture activity by the community. In result of this crossing: **good social law, efficiently functioning nurturing institutions, and an informal social custom of caring creating a sensible system**, are uniting with each other.

Sociology of culture proves that the culture notion's trait, almost from the beginning of its introduction to humanistic language, is its ambiguity. However, as A. Kłoskowska after Herder reminds us, "culture determines the universal, qualitative human propriety"⁵ (...) "it is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behaviors which stored elements are common for members of a given society and passed on its precincts"⁶ (ibidem p.24). Culture is an over and above individual (social)occurrence, connected with the human as a being leading a social life style. Within the specific collectivity it is passed on through space and time. It is a way of organizing the collective life. The participation in the culture by particular individuals is usually different. They may know, live, use in practice some of the principles, rules, and ideas, but also they could know more or less about their existence. Analyzing the culture we always discover people reacting in a certain way in the society⁷.

John Paul II reminded many times that "thanks to culture a person truly lives a human life. Culture is the right way of a person's being and existence. (...) Culture is this through which a person as person becomes more of a person, he is more "is". Every nation exists "from culture" and "for culture" and that is why culture is an educator of rank towards "being more" in the community which has a longer history than a man and his family. Culture is a lasting element of human experience and a person's humanistic perspectives⁸.

In every society there exist certain examples and normative culture models, people's experience and habits, connected with the social activity.

The roots of this activity lie in the primary occurrence of human nature. Like the subject's literature proves, and mainly anthropology culture, human nature changed its form along with civilization transformations (way of life, culture development, ect.). "The analysis of the history of the care phenomenon shows the process of its changes from the most basic

⁵ Kłoskowska A.(1983) Socjologia kultury, Warszawa, p.14

⁶ ibidem p.24

⁷ ibidem

⁸ J. Paweł II (2005) Pamięć i tożsamość, Kraków, p.89-90

form of own care, through care about offspring, individual self-help, social self-help, philanthropy, social help, to social politics and social work”⁹.

Care has its groundwork in the man’s biological nature. It is the human, as opposed to other being, that is the most dependent from his closest surrounding. Lets pay attention, that the period of leaving a child under the care of adults is relatively longer from the similar one in the animal world. Mutual care between people is a long and comparatively lasting process, primitive compared with other human actions. In modern times the care’s universalism is pointed out, expressed in the spread of nurturing duties towards different categories of charges on different phases of their ontogenetic development. “In primitive times parents were the main caregivers. In ancient times, in result of specialization, also house servants. However, in the Middle ages we have to do with full spread of care because care grows up to the level in which it becomes a moral duty for all people. In modern societies this ethic care dimension grows to the culture rank. Taking care of the other person is not only an individual and moral obligation for every person, it is also an element and a symptom of personal culture and the culture of the entire society. In opinion of the quoted author, both single people and communities cannot call themselves cultural if they do not represent a high nurturing level¹⁰.

Therefore, care can be marked spiritually and culturally. In a spiritual manner it is an expression of a person’s inner need which is a disinterested care for other people. Manifestation of this need is the accepted and culturally consolidated custom specified as **Protective ethos**. Tradition, intensity, and many-sidedness of this custom decide, among other things, about the fortune and level of people’s culture¹¹.

The term ethos alone, belonging to the studies of culture, has four basic meanings: 1. a characteristic for a given social group set of morally-costumed rules and/or actually binding in a given social group; 2. an overall culture model of a given society or a life style binding in a given social group; 3. a set of certain characteristic for a given social group behaviors of different kind; 4. a common orientation of a specified culture, so called culture spirit¹².

Maria Ossowska defines ethos as a set of behaviors characterizing some group and stated by the accepted in it values’ hierarchy, at the same time it is usually believed that some sort of dominant can be found in these values, some sort of main vertical from which

⁹ Materne J.(1999), Pedagogika socjalna, Szczecin, p.24

¹⁰ Ibidem, p.55

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 43

¹² Ossowska M.(1986) Socjologia moralności. Zarys zagadnień. Warszawa, p.12

derivative values could be derived ¹³.

Protective ethos should be understood as a lasting conduct custom expressing care about other people which has its source both in the humans biological instinct and also in their spiritual proprieties. The goal of this conduct is the peoples' good always concentrated on their specified life situation. Every individual realizes these goals differently. They do it with the help of accessible to them and characteristic for them material means, postures, and ways of conducting. Protective ethos has a morally deep and spiritual level. Norms that are resulting from this are becoming the life's arranging and uniting personal care actions principle ¹⁴. Therefore, the basic care of every society should be maintaining and consolidating this protective ethos as a certain constant rooted, as it was already mentioned, for good in the society's culture. One should look for the beginnings of every collective activity in peoples' individual behaviors – peoples' strength understood as the base on which, not earlier, it will be possible to build a system of care actions, help and social activity in the society. Protective ethos is an important and truthfully speaking the basic element of the society's social culture. Relinquishment, and so care for maintaining, consolidating the protective ethos in individuals and society is a fundamental barrier of incapacity of the functioning care system.

And so, fate, care, and feeling of happiness of disabled people and their families in a considerable measure depends from every human's understanding of their special role in social life. Of course, in the first row, the protective responsibility for the disabled person should be sustained, first of all, by his entire family understood as a family group, therefore, people related on a closer or further level. However, the situation and conditions of disabled people and their families has to be also the care of people living in the local environment – neighbors who can provide care in the simplest daily matters. Acquitting ourselves of human obligations – the realization of one's own human nature determines the basics of protective ethos's functioning of the society with benefits for the totality, and in the described case – for disabled people.

The second important element of social culture in the society is the accepted and realized **social politics supported by good social law.**

Social politics – despite it is, in an obvious way, entangled in a game of interests of differentiated social groups and its realization is connected with acquiring, and, first of all, in

¹³ Tamže, p.256

¹⁴ Materne J.(1999), Pedagogika socjalna, Szczecin, p.65

the case of social politics – maintaining and wielding authority (and not only government) similarly to social work it refers to the same subject: satisfying basic needs of individuals and the community, which they are not capable of doing by themselves; base yourself on the activity of a similar subject, which is the society, however, in the shape of different institutions, social organizations, informal groups, or individuals; they have a common goal – satisfying needs on the level recognized as indispensable in a given society ¹⁵.

J. Materne admits that social work and politics result from a social contract guaranteeing within the collective duty division, care for existence, and safety of all citizens. The subjects of this activity are professional social politics, social workers, and professional guardians ¹⁶ (Materne, p.65).

Social work and politics is realized by a network of specialized institutions: social, protective-educating, counseling, addressed to different people under somebody's charge or social help clients. The basic determinant of creating specified helping institutions should be a honest diagnosis of social needs with reference to certain age groups in the society.

Social institutions, with a solid or time character, should be organized both by the government and unofficial or private sector, acting on the government's commission. Only this kind of solution ensures the universality of the country's actions in the help and care sphere towards its citizens. Naturally, the country's actions in this sphere should not limit, in any way, initiatives and actions of the remaining sectors; however, it is the country that must express the fullest care towards its citizens and flexibly react to the appearing social matters giving this way its citizens a feeling of social safety.

The basics of functioning of certain institutions must be professionally prepared social services. In this moment we do not have at our disposal a sufficient staff and their suitable specialized occupational preparation. The social workers' professionalism, possibilities of realization the occupational role determines, however, a completely separate issue. It may concern, however, the unappreciated role of the social worker by the country and in consequence also by the society, which they serve from reason of their occupation duties. The position of a social worker oscillates between a status of a fully devoted activist and a clerk in the big social machinery. Considering the number of disabled people in the society, diversity

¹⁵ Piątek K.(2004) Polityka społeczna – praca socjalna (skomplikowany charakter związków i zależności) [w] Socjologia i polityka społeczna a aktualne problemy pracy socjalnej, (red) K. Wódz, K. Piątek, p.109-110

¹⁶ Materne J.(1999), Pedagogika socjalna, Szczecin, p.65

of their illnesses, and problems with which their families struggle, there is still a lack of adequate projects and helping or activating programs which guess right the expectations of this group of charges.

Support for the realized social politics, social towards disabled people and their families must determine the **social law**. In well organized countries, for example, Denmark, Sweden disabled people and their families very well know their rights and the range of help owned to them from the country's side. Social insurance which they systematically and not joint-stockingly are given lets them function worthy in the society.

Law is this element of every society's life which forms peoples' way of behaving. These are rules defining the behaviors in relations between people. Law regulates mutual relations that form between people directly or indirectly. Indirect relations between people contain relations in , for example, a family group; instead, indirect relations form between individuals and social organizations created by people. An organism like that is , among others, the country understood as a organization focusing people and their relations ¹⁷.

The law is proclaimed by the government, and the majority of citizens act accordingly with the demands stated by the law and this not out of concern of using more or less severe constraint forms, but because that in their just conviction this way it is better and more beneficial both for them and for the society in which they live in. Therefore, the better obligatory law, the better functioning society in the country.

The country's care towards its citizens is reflected , in a special way, in the law concerning the social sphere. Good law, clearly specified law norm, should not leave a person even the smallest doubt what behavior is advisable, permitted, or prohibited in specified life situations. Law is one of the basic work tools for particular individuals and social services directed towards resolving difficult life situations of particular individuals; it is the main premises of maintaining dignity by the people who are not able to support themselves . law is the basic factor of their dignified life ¹⁸. Currently, people directed towards helping disabled people: social workers, tutors, educators, unofficial organization workers, voluntaries, ect., repeatedly, in order to take care of their charges' matters, reach for various law means. Lack of clear regulations forces subjects often to intuitional behaviors making it hard to solve the problem for fully satisfied both sides.

¹⁷ Gebethner S.(1976) Prawoznawstwo, Warszawa p.5

¹⁸ Skapska G.(1999) Prawo i społeczeństwo, Katowice, p.9

Good social law determines the challenge of our times. On one hand, as we know, legal relations, their level and contents, in an obvious way, are dependent from the common level of the society's culture; from the individuals sensitivity, emotion empathy, interpersonal relations, social communication, etc., when meanwhile, more and more often professed material values and relativism in the way of thinking and acting, which in turn negatively influences person-person relations. In this situation legal culture cannot develop properly. On the other hand, precisely the growing universality of the democratization of social life, self-government, autonomy, and in this also anxious indications of the moral crisis, unsettlement of basic norms and values, appearance of larger and larger groups of people addicted to help institutions indicates that a society's wider legal education is necessary, increasing its legal consciousness in order for them to better understand their rights and duties, to understand the law's obligatory action system and especially the actions of legal institutions. As S.L. Stadniczenko indicates, indoctrination of the special role of the law's actions should be a special motive not only to its improvement but also to its recognition. This involves in particular these people who engage in helping another person from reason of one's profession or calling (volunteers). These people should know the law's main assumptions and have in it support for their actions ¹.

The society's culture is not passed on a biological path or by gene intervention, but is created in a bringing up and learning process. The ways of learning social culture can assume different forms. You can learn culture in an purposeful and conscious way but also in an unintentional and even unconscious way. It can be accepted, that social culture should be understood not as a factual state but as a farming "fallow" – "farming the person" directed towards forming and individual responsible for the other person for the common good. Generalizing the essence of social culture in the society, rebuilding its specified elements are the XXI century's basic tasks. Disabled people and their families have been especially experienced by fate. However, because they live and function in a wider society they should not be left alone with their problems. Their quality of life depends on us and our social culture realized in different spheres.

¹ Stadniczenko S.L.(1995) Zarys pedagogiki prawa, Opole, p.5

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