

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: FROM CARE TO SOCIAL SERVICES*

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THE POLISH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE ROUTE FROM ITS BEGINNING TO 1939

In Polish lands, as throughout the whole of Europe at that time, public activity in the field of social assistance dates back to the 12th century. It was connected with the charitable and philanthropic activities of the Roman Catholic Church. The main forms of assistance were almsgiving to the needy, beggars, and the poor as well as monastery shelters called “hospitals” — charitable organizations combining the functions of a shelter for the homeless, a hospice for

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the terminally ill, and a medical facility. The social base of charity was broadened when lay people — rulers and aristocrats — became involved in philanthropy. A new form of charity institution appeared in the 15th century — religious brotherhoods. There was no state intervention in the social sphere during this period. In the 16th century, the ideas of the Reformation in Western Europe ushered in postulates of the reform of charities. Among other things, this resulted in a ban on the sale of indulgences, which had been the basis for alms. The charity reforms carried out in Western Europe were not introduced in Poland and the Roman Catholic Church remained the main institution financing and administering charity.

The 17th and 18th centuries were a period of wars, economic crisis, and mass poverty of broad sections of society — help was provided by the Church, religious confraternities, and, in the case of national and religious minorities, religious communities. In Poland, the role of the state — in contrast to the Protestant countries of that

time that had public and nationwide systems of social benefits — was very limited. Orders such as the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God, the Order of Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious School (Piarists), the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Captives (Trinitarians), and the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul came to Poland and developed their social offerings in the field of modern hospital services, education, and child care. Beneficence was also offered by magnates in the form of testamentary legacies for the poor, hospitals, etc. The ideas of the Enlightenment brought with them a new understanding of charity and philanthropy. It was no longer perceived as an expression of love for God, but also of secular humanism. Work became a form of assistance justified by the welfare of the recipient as well as economic rationality. The Western European concept of compulsory labor homes was taken over by Polish charities. Aid through work became the main form of assistance in charitable institutions transformed into manufactories, which was facilitated by the economic recovery and its associated demand for labor. The state attempted to record hospital funds, define rules for granting support, and to secularize care organizations through the introduction of the secular management of hospitals and the coordination of aid activities.

Analysis of the process of development of social policy and welfare institutions in Poland before the Partitions shows that it did not differ significantly from the organization of systems in other European countries in the Middle Ages. It mostly involved the help of family and church organizations, secular philanthropy (mainly by magnates), and the self-help of religious groups. In Poland, the Counter-Reformation strengthened the position of the Church in the area of social assistance while limiting the participation of the state. Only the last years preceding the collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth brought attempts at reform and an increase in the involvement of state authorities in helping those in need.

The loss of statehood as a result of the Partitions caused the development of social welfare on Polish lands to be diversified. The loss of independence changed the capabilities of the previously existing social assistance systems. Charity and philanthropy were continued by the Church and secular institutions of Polish society, but their functioning was hindered by the partitioning powers. Social organizations were an instrument of political and economic resistance as well as social development. They combined philanthropic activity with independence conspiracy efforts. Charitable and philanthropic initiatives were treated not only as help for the needy, but also as a patriotic duty. In the rural Polish countryside, the main centers of charity activity were manors and rectories. They maintained parish hospitals and provided alms, financing their activities through donations from the public. However, the main provider of charity was the Roman Catholic Church. During the Partitions it created its own religious congregations in response to various social needs. Secular philanthropy, which was the domain of women, was also developing and a new form of charity began to be offered by professional associations and institutions providing charity, care, healthcare, etc., which were established at the end of the 19th century. Led by representatives of the intelligentsia, they used modern forms of work with individuals and families (children's holidays, legal aid, etc.). Socio-philanthropic activity had a universal character and a common goal — national rebirth. In the history of social assistance in Poland, the period of the Partitions caused historical experiences and models of social intervention to be different in Poland as compared with other countries. The Polish path of social welfare development was non-public, based on philanthropy, religious and secular charity, and patriotic social solidarity. A key role was played by informal assistance organizations, mainly families. Social organizations were an instrument of political and economic resistance as well as social development, combining philanthropic activity with underground independence activities.

In the first years after regaining independence (1918), nongovernmental organizations, associations, and foundations were the main entities providing social assistance. It was not until the Con-

stitution of March 17, 1921 that the right to assistance was granted for all those in need. Detailed rules governing assistance were specified in the Social Welfare Act of August 16, 1923. This Act regulated the scope of social welfare activities, resources for satisfying needs, and the division of care duties among the gminas [municipalities], powiats [counties], wovodeships [provinces], and the central authorities. Conditions granting rights to care were defined, along with rules for financing. Social assistance encompassed infants, children and adolescents, mothers, the elderly, the disabled, cripples, the terminally ill, the mentally handicapped and incapacitated, homeless war victims, those in dire need, prisoners after having served their sentences, beggars, vagrants, alcoholics, and harlots. The forms of assistance specified in the Act included the provision of vital food, clothing, undergarments and footwear, the provision of facilities with light and heating fuel and assistance in the acquisition of vital tools for professional work, the restoration or improvement of fitness for work, assistance in the field of hygiene and sanitation, and funeral services.

The state took over responsibility for social assistance, but the tasks were carried out by local government. The Minister of Labor and Social Welfare was the supreme body of the state administration in the field of social welfare, while the Rada Opieki Społecznej (Social Welfare Council) was an advisory and consultative body composed of representatives of local government, social welfare institutions, and the interested ministries. The state reserved legislative and supervisory functions to itself, but the main financial burden was borne by the municipalities, which could not refuse help for their permanent residents. The state had to bear the costs of caring for those who did not have such right in municipalities. The subject-oriented scope of social welfare was made up of material assistance, which was mainly provided in kind in the place of residence. The system was complemented by social carers whose tasks included initiating cooperation and collaboration with municipality organizations, supervision over the provision of assistance, examination of the family and property situation of beneficiaries of social assistance, provision of emergency assistance, communication with the management, and reporting.

The principles of social law in the Second Polish Republic were its universality and the obligation of providing benefits. Its special feature was socialization, i.e. cooperation of the public sector with nongovernmental organizations. Organizations established before 1918 continued to operate and new ones appeared. A characteristic feature of the nongovernmental sector in the Second Polish Republic was the domination of religious and national organizations (Catholic, Jewish, Ukrainian, etc.). The solution adopted for the division of rights and duties between the state and local government administration was modeled on the German dualistic political model, while the institution of social carer made reference to the concepts adopted in the legislation of Austria and Germany as well as the local solutions of some cities.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC AND AFTER 1989

A qualitative change occurred in the times of the Polish People's Republic. It was then that the rules of market democracy were replaced by central planning and authoritarian power. The organizational foundations of the system were created during the period referred to as the "rescue period" (1945–1947): the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, welfare departments in voivodeship offices, and social welfare committees. At that time assistance covered 26.5% of the total population. Prewar social organizations restarted their activity, leading, apart from state institutions, rescue services in the form of food, clothing supply, and accommodations and shelters.

Qualitative changes took place in the years 1947–1956—a period of reorganization and reforming of social assistance. The process of liquidation of independent organizations and associations

and the taking over of control over the social sphere by the state as well as a new act on local bodies of a single state authority (1950) that eliminated local government, abolished the legal and organizational system of the interwar period. Social activities became the domain of state enterprises and trade unions. Existing foundations were liquidated, new state foundations were established in place of the old, independent ones, and inpatient healthcare facilities were nationalized. The Constitution of the Polish People's Republic of July 22, 1952 guaranteed the right to social assistance and healthcare, maternal and child care, free education, scholarships, boarding schools, etc.

The development of social welfare was halted over the 1950–1957 period for political and doctrinal reasons. Social assistance was treated marginally because of the conviction that socialism, by guaranteeing work and company social assistance, social security, etc., eliminated the legitimacy of welfare institutions. The aid system covered only elderly people who were unable to work as well as people with psychophysical dysfunctions, where such aid was limited to cash benefits or placement in closed care facilities. The principle of locality was abandoned, attempts were made to foster the economic activation of people in need of assistance, and support was granted in exceptional cases to selected categories of citizens.

The "Thaw" of 1956 initiated a new period in the social security system in the Polish People's Republic. The institution of social carers was reactivated by way of a resolution of the Council of Ministers from 1959. *Powiat*, municipal, and district social workers were appointed. They were employed as staff members of social welfare sections of the health and social welfare departments of the national council presidiums. They organized and coordinated the activities of local social carers operating in the care regions. In the wake of October 1956, a development of social organizations did take place, but it was limited by the authorities. Parishes undertook charity work, some secular and Catholic associations were permitted to reactivate, and new institutions were established (e.g., the Polish Social Welfare Committee). Social assistance was reorganized: The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was established (1960). At the voivodeship level, a voivodeship social welfare center operated as a part of the voivodeship polyclinical hospital, while at the basic level a position of social carer operated as part of a social care team or as a separate cell in regional outpatient clinics or municipal health centers. The first schools for social workers were established in the 1960s and the profession of social worker was introduced into the official nomenclature of professions by way of the Directive of the Minister of Education of November 24, 1966. There was a shift in social assistance activities from passive to active, where work involved the finding of persons and families in need of care and assistance by identifying community needs.

Another qualitative change took place in the 1970s. It was then that health care units were established, within which social service sections started to function. The role of social carers remained changed. Their jurisdiction now encompassed the reporting of cases requiring assistance to the appropriate social services, contact with beneficiaries of assistance, and preliminary social diagnoses (in the form of interviews). Their duties were limited to preparatory and diagnostic activities preceding social intervention by full-time social workers. In the 1970s (1974), the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare adopted a program for the professional development of social services for the years 1975–1990. It was intended to develop professionalization by increasing the number of full-time social workers and limiting the tasks of social carers to the role of representatives of their own communities, caring for their needs.

The 1980s were a period of deep political and economic crisis, growth of poverty areas, and new social problems (drug addiction, alcoholism, youth crime, etc.). Changes in the social welfare system in Poland in this period meant an increase in the role of informal philanthropic activities, self-help groups, and nongovernmental

organizations. As part of the liberalization of the system forced by the inefficiency of public social assistance, Church organizations were allowed to operate in this area. This is clearly demonstrated by the re-legalization of foundations. The Foundations Act of 1984 was introduced to regulate the distribution of gifts by the Church.

Throughout the entire period of existence of the Polish People's Republic, the scope and means of action were adapted to the changing concepts of successive groups in power. There was no coherent statutory legal regulation. Social assistance functioned on the basis of ministerial instructions. The personal scope of the aid was selective and enumerated when it came to selecting and favoring different categories of aid recipients. When qualifying for aid, demographic and social criteria dominated (age, disability group, etc.), at the expense of situational factors (income level and family situation). The policy of hiring non-professionals, wage pauperization of social workers, and lack of rights to grant benefits led to high turnover and de-professionalization of staff. The dominant function was substitution of social assistance in place of complementary functions in relation to other social security institutions. There was a lack of counseling and prevention.

The centralized method of financing social assistance activities and the high degree of monopolization of activities by the state, including the nationalization of social organizations, limited social activity and resulted in a lack of initiative in the assistance activities of individuals, groups, and professional social services. During the whole period of existence of the Polish People's Republic, the gap separating the rate of growth of demand for social assistance and the rate of development of social infrastructure supply grew. Criticism of the social welfare system at that time led to the establishment of a special group for social welfare reform during the Round Table discussions. As regards the organization and functioning of social assistance, it was proposed that:

- 1) The state serve as a policy-maker in the field of social assistance and an entity co-financing social assistance measures at the local level;
- 2) Responsibility for the organization and implementation of social welfare tasks be transferred to self-governing social welfare centers and voivodeship social welfare units;
- 3) Social services undergo professionalization by expanding the structure of positions and creating opportunities for professional advancement and wage differentiation;
- 4) Social insurance be introduced, financed by the central budget, and paid out by the local social security body (on the basis of identification performed by social welfare services), replacing permanent and periodic benefits;
- 5) The method of financing tasks outsourced to social organizations be changed through the transfer of subsidies to local budgets and waiving payment of social assistance benefits to soldiers and disabled people;
- 6) Appropriate legal and organizational conditions be created for the development of extra-budgetary measures (tax breaks, etc.);
- 7) Greater emphasis be placed on various types of support, corrective, advisory, and other services.

The social welfare system in Poland was the subject of many transformations after 1990. Their aim was to give it a local character. Local governments took over the providing of social welfare services for their residents as well as responsibility for strategic thinking in this area, to be based on comprehensive programs. The difficulty was that public social welfare policy needed to be re-constructed. At the *gmina* level, this was established on the basis of legislation passed in 1990. The social assistance centers — institutions with a new, partially decentralized organizational structure — started to provide services at the place of residence and become a partner of state, central, and voivodeship institutions. In the new system, government institutions adopted programmatic, regulatory, and control functions. However, the social welfare system created at that time had a serious flaw. It was based on a dualism of objectives. Social assistance centers (OPS) were assigned two

types of tasks. They had their own tasks (shelter, in-kind assistance to the victims of natural disasters, care services, burial services, etc.) that were to be provided by the centers using money from the local government and commissioned tasks (most welfare payments, specialist services, etc.) carried out with money from the central budget. Municipalities only administered and controlled the scale of social problems at a local level. This resulted in local aid institutions that were ad hoc in character. *Gminas* undertook only intervention efforts towards new groups in need, but at the same time they were an important element of the policy of transforming the entire social security system in Poland. They implemented the change from general schemes into selective benefits encompassing people meeting income criteria.

As a consequence, those who had fallen out of the universal system of social security and social provision were sent to the aid system. At the same time, the number of people in need of assistance, i.e. those who could not cope with new conditions, was growing. The mismatch between demand and supply of social benefits increased, resulting in an increase in administrative control over the justification for granting aid. This made the system more bureaucratic, leading to a situation in which the activities of assistance centers were almost reduced to the distribution of a small number of financial resources at the expense of active social work, intangible services, activation of residents, etc. The system was also made increasingly difficult to implement.

The second administrative reform (1999) was supposed to eliminate these shortcomings by introducing the full decentralization of social tasks. Two new self-governing levels were introduced. The concept assumed that the family would become the main subject of social policy. The aim was also to rebuild civil society in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. The expansion of the activities of social assistance institutions by including the care and upbringing of children and youth was also planned. However, the reform was not properly prepared. The scope and jurisdiction of the new institutions were defined in general terms and they were not provided with sufficient resources to carry out their tasks. There was also a lack of role models for new organizations and the staff was not adequately prepared for the new tasks. The new *powiat* social services were to cover all families, which was to reduce stigmatization of those who benefited from social assistance and to enable a more rational creation and use of local social infrastructure. The planned advantages of the new social welfare organization after the reform in 1999 were lost. The reason for this was the lack of sufficient financial resources for the implementation of tasks, random or politically motivated selection of personnel, and the adoption of the concept of mutual independence of *gmina* and *powiat* social welfare organizations.

Public social assistance underwent major changes in 2003–2004. The aim was to reduce operating costs and improve efficiency. Many legislative solutions were developed at that time. They included public service and volunteer activities as well as social employment (2003). A new law on social assistance (2004) was also developed. The aim of these statutory initiatives was to build a society that cares about the welfare of its members. The means making this possible was the introduction of nongovernmental organizations and individual volunteers more widely into the system. The aim was also to intensify measures regarding economic activation, addressed to long-term wards of social assistance (at risk of permanent social exclusion). One idea was to introduce a contract as a condition for granting material support to facilitate the transition from the role of a passive client to active participation in the process of assistance and integration in the local community.

EVALUATION OF THE FUNCTIONING OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OVER THE 1990–2015 PERIOD

Ryszard Szarfenberg (2015), analyzing the functioning of social welfare over the 1990–2014 period, assessed income support,

social services, and social welfare organizations. The success of income support is the objective method for estimating the standard of living, the obligatory nature of the periodic benefit, the ban on enforced debt collection of benefits by court debt collectors, and the possibility of combining periodic benefits with contractual work remuneration. However, poverty in Poland has not been overcome and the constitution guarantees no such support. Poland is incapable of fully ratifying the right to social assistance (Article 13 of the European Social Charter) because access to benefits is too restrictive and, at the same time, the benefits are at too low a level.

In the field of social assistance services (social work, care services, crisis intervention, occupational therapy, and family assistantships), the development of education in social work and the introduction of the standard of “one employee per two thousand inhabitants of a given locality or per fifty families” is a success. The emergence of crisis intervention services and the development of social reintegration services such as social integration centers, social integration clubs, community self-help homes, and occupational therapy workshops is another accomplishment. Yet another success was the separation and development of family assistantship services and the supplementing of the public service offer by nongovernmental organizations, churches, and religious associations, as well as the introduction of supervision as a form of support for social workers. On the other hand, failures include the lack of separation of social work from administrative procedures, lack of standards of social work and other services, and the insufficient supply of reintegration services, assistantships, and supervision. The lack of activity of the Polish Society of Social Workers and the lack of updating the code of ethics of this professional group is also a defeat.

As far as the organization of social assistance is concerned, the presence of a social assistance center in each local government unit (i.e. in 2,478 municipalities) and numerous other forms of social assistance is a success. The standardization of social welfare homes and the professionalization of managers of social welfare center units (meeting a requirement to complete a post-graduate studies in social welfare organization) as well as the establishment of the Polish Federation of Social and Social Welfare Workers Union can be considered a success. The failure to meet the standard of “one employee per two thousand inhabitants” and the fact that many social welfare homes do not meet standards is a failure in the organization of social welfare. Nongovernmental organizations are not sufficiently present (lack of commissions), the Social Welfare Council has a limited role, and there is no democratic control over the operation of social welfare organizational units. Challenges facing social assistance include the ratification of the European Social Charter, improving access to and increasing the level of benefits, separation of benefits and social work, its standardization, the improvement of the accessibility and quality of services, and the reactivation of the Polish Society of Social Workers.

Marek Rymysza (2017) points to other limitations of the three waves of Polish social reforms up to the year 2015. The first wave, the 1990–1993 period, covers the local government reform of 1990 and was connected with the building of the social assistance system and education for social work. Emphasis was put on the development of social assistance institutions. Over time this led to bureaucratization of social assistance centers and the marginalization of social work. On the other hand, the local government reform of 1999 assumed the creation of a local support system for children and families, coordinated by *powiat* family support centers. Unfortunately, this new institution turned out to be a weak unit with limited jurisdiction and no capacity to coordinate wider-ranging activities. The biggest drawback of the second local government reform is its reductionism, i.e. bringing local social policy into social assistance. The third wave of reforms took place between 2003 and 2005 and marked a shift towards occupational and social reintegration services. In practice this meant the development of new aid segments, such as social employment and the social economy.

This in turn was linked with the gradual allocation of cash aid and social work.

DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE IN SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AFTER 2015

As indicated by Rymcza (2017), the fourth wave of social welfare reforms started in 2015. It was characterized by a horizontal approach that replaced the existing sectorial measures. Evidence of this new approach is the development of family policy, where the flagship program is the “Family 500 plus” program. Another activity in the field of family policy is the social policy aimed at older people. It develops activation and care services such as the “Senior+” or the “Care 75+” programs. What are the effects of this new wave of Polish reforms?

In connection with the introduction of the “Family 500 plus” program, it is possible to observe changes concerning persons benefiting from the social assistance system. Despite the fact that this benefit is not included in the income entitling receipt of social assistance benefits, the number of families with children who benefit from this assistance is decreasing due to the improvement in the financial situation of families and their independence. According to the Central Statistical Office (GUS), the number of households benefiting from social assistance (including homeless persons benefiting from such assistance) in 2016 amounted to 2,480,000 people. Compared to 2015, this number decreased by 251,000 people, i.e. by 9.2%. Compared to 2008, when the analysis of the beneficiary population was conducted for the first time, by 1,170,000 people, i.e. by nearly one-third (“Beneficiaries...,” 2017: 23). At the same time, there was an increase in the number of families covered by social work. According to a PricewaterhouseCoopers report, Poland is currently ranked fourth in terms of children’s allowances and family benefits — after France, Hungary, and Austria. Poland is at the forefront of the countries with the highest financial support for families compared to the average salary in the country — 7.9%, while the EU average is 4.9%.

The second direction outlined after 2015 was the development of social services provided in the local community (deinstitutionalization). The aim was to improve both the accessibility and the quality of services provided by support centers for people in need, e.g., those with mental disorders, the elderly, or the disabled. Community self-help homes for adults with mental disorders play an important role in the map of services provided at local level. The second type of institution building a network of support centers, aimed at increasing active participation in the social life of seniors, are day-care senior citizen homes and Senior+ clubs. The map of these activities is complemented by sheltered homes providing training and support, the purpose of which is to prepare (under the supervision of specialists) residents for independent living or to support them in their daily functioning. Sheltered housing has a very wide range of recipients — people in a difficult life situation (the elderly, sick, and disabled), and in particular with mental disorders, leaving foster care, youth education centers, or other institutions for minors. Refugees and foreigners who have been granted supplementary support in Poland may also live there. In connection with the implementation of the “‘For Life’ Comprehensive Support Program for Families,” a network of homes for mothers with dependent children and pregnant women who have experienced violence or are in some other crisis situation are being developed. Fathers with dependent children or other persons with legal custody of children may also be admitted to these homes. Ultimately, forty such units are expected to operate.

The map of social assistance infrastructure is complemented by institutions for the homeless: warm-up facilities, overnight shelters, shelters for the homeless, and shelters for the homeless with care services. The changes taking place in the functioning of units providing services for the homeless are aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of services provided to these people.

Due to changes in the demographic structure of Polish society — an increase in the share of elderly people — there is an increase in the demand for care services provided at the place of residence. Therefore, the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Policy introduced a new program — “Care 75+.” Its aim is to improve access to care and specialist care services for single people over 75 years of age in *gminas* providing care services (including specialist services) independently. Financial resources can be used to increase the number of hours of services for people who have already benefited from such services (or have benefited over the last year) or to co-finance care or specialist care services for people who have not benefited before.

A successive direction of activities implemented after 2015 is the improvement of the safety and conditions of residence of elderly and disabled persons in legally operating institutions providing 24-hour care, to reduce the scale of irregularities in such institutions, and to increase the effectiveness of sanctions imposed on entities running institutions without a permit.

Moreover, an important area of activity is increasing the effectiveness of services for persons and families benefiting from the support of social assistance centers (OPS). In order to improve the quality of services provided by social assistance centers and to provide persons and families benefiting from support with a more effective service, starting with June 2017 social assistance centers may form separate specialist units in their organizational structure for social work and social assistance services that will allow social workers to specialize in a given area of work with people and at the same time improve the functioning of the centers themselves. The Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Policy has prepared recommendations for managers of social assistance centers concerning the reorganization of the organizational structure of their units (if such changes are possible and necessary).

Supervision also has an impact on the management system of social assistance organizational units. Conclusions can be passed on to the persons in charge of the facilities in order to improve their functioning, both in terms of the services provided and in terms of human resource management. Supervision of social work should be a priority activity of professional work from the point of view of local government organizational social assistance units as well as social workers employed in the institutions themselves. The first twenty-four social work supervisors were certified in 2017.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that starting with the year 2015 social welfare expenditures have been increasing. This is despite the fact that the number of beneficiaries is decreasing. What is happening is that the structure of spending on social assistance is changing.

CONCLUSION

The history of social assistance in Poland points to two processes that are, in a way, parallel processes. The first is a continuous attempt to respond to emerging social needs. The second is the growing complexity and internal diversity of social assistance organizational structures, which generate the need for the integration and coordination of their activities. At present, social assistance in Poland, although primarily an institution of state social policy operating through local government, is also more and more often implemented by nongovernmental organizations and private entities.

Reform efforts undertaken in recent years in the public social assistance system indicate attempts at adapting this institution to meet new social needs, such as strengthening the family or supporting senior citizens. In family policy, this is seen in the “Family 500 plus” program while in senior citizen policy in the intensification of actions and the addressing issues that have so far remained outside the area of interest. Examples include sheltered housing and care services for senior citizens in poorly urbanized areas —

rural villages and small towns. An attempt is also being made to improve the quality of services, as evidenced by the introduction of supervision into the practice of public social assistance. Time will tell whether these efforts will bring the expected results, but their implementation points to the growing importance of this public institution, which in Poland has come a long and rather specific way from traditional, mainly Church care to modern public social assistance.

- ¹ Act of March 17, 1921 – Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws of 1921, No. 44, item 267).
- ² Act of August 16, 1923 on Social Welfare (Journal of Laws of 1923, No. 92, item 726).
- ³ Constitution of the Polish People’s Republic as passed by the Legislative Sejm [Parliament] on July 22, 1952. (Journal of Laws of 1952, No. 33, item 232).
- ⁴ Resolution No. 92 of March 5, 1959 of the Council of Ministers on the Appointment of Social Carers (Journal of Laws of 1959 No. 32, item 145).

ABSTRACT

The article is about the genesis and evolution of social services in Poland. The authors presented the Polish way of building social services in Poland until 1939, as well as the way of functioning of social services in the People’s Republic of Poland and during the years 1990–2015. The last chapter of the article is focused on the reforms of social services in Poland after 2015. In the conclusion of the article, the authors state that history of social services in Poland shows the never ending efforts of meeting new social needs, as well as growing complexity and internal diversity of organizational structures of social services that require integration and coordination.

Key words: social service, public assistance, institution, organizational structures

- ⁵ Act of April 6, 1984 on Foundations (Journal of Laws of 1984, No. 21, item 97).
- ⁶ Act of November 29, 1990 on Social Assistance (Journal of Laws of 1990, No. 64, item 414, as amended).
- ⁷ Act of March 12, 2004 on Social Assistance (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 64, item 593).
- ⁸ European Social Charter (Journal of Laws 1999, No. 8, item 67).

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