



COE239782

Strasbourg, 20 July 1993  
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Coord/Fam (93) 19

**CO-ORDINATED RESEARCH PROGRAMME IN THE SOCIAL FIELD**

**STUDY GROUP I ON**

**"The interaction between the providers of family services"**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> meeting**

**Strasbourg, 9 - 10 December 1993**

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Report on the situation in

**Poland**

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**POLAND**

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**TOPIC I: FAMILY IN CONTEXT**

The family code defines the family as consisting of a married couple with children. The definition also implicitly includes a unit of a single parent with children. As the attitudes towards cohabitation are becoming more liberal, the scope of the family also tends to embrace cohabiting couples with children. However, the Catholic Church strongly emphasizes the significance of formal (clerical) marriage.

The attitudes of Poles towards the family are mostly traditional, laying stress on the meaning of the family in one's personal life. The integrity of the family and close ties between the members of the family are appreciated, the stand having been consolidated by the Catholic revival during the pre-transition period as well as by "real socialism" that, while controlling other spheres of life, contributed to the family's becoming the sole realm of autonomy. Parallel with this tendency, liberal attitudes have become somewhat more evident, particularly in cities.

All legal matters relating to the family are included in the specific family code, except certain issues such as abuse that are incorporated in the criminal code.

The most prevalent family problems at the moment arise from the severe economic recession. Steeply increased unemployment (15 percent in 1993) has caused the deterioration of living conditions of a great number of families; it has been estimated that about 9 million Poles or one quarter of the population are now living in poverty. A survey conducted in 1992 on families

with children aged under thirteen indicates that the opinions of Polish people on their own living conditions coincide quite well with the "objective" indicators drawn up by authorities: 22 percent of the respondents admitted that they were living in poverty. Nearly a third or 30 percent said that they were not living in poverty, whereas for almost one half (48 percent) it was difficult to say if this concerned them. A study conducted in October 1991 proved that the majority of Poles (66 percent) regarded unemployment as the most significant problem in the country.

As a specific example of the effects of recession, the housing problem is worth mentioning. Although the shortage of flats was already a chronic problem during the Communist era, the situation has worsened since then. House construction has dropped drastically since 1988: the number of completed dwellings has declined by about 30 percent from 1988 till 1990 and the trend has been continuing. At the same time housing costs have increased due to the elimination of greatly subsidized prices for electricity, gas, oil, coke and rent in early 1991.

The economic recession, being a big problem as such, has also caused social problems. The feeling of isolation is one, but more significant seems to be conflicts within the family endangering the integrity of the family. Economically uncertain life also tends to lead to substance abuse causing additional conflicts within the family.

## **TOPIC II: FAMILY SERVICES**

### **A. Information about family services**

The Central Statistical Office compiles **statistics** on family services covering, as a rule, only the public sector. However, even this data is not considered adequate for the description of the present situation, for the situation changes so rapidly that data-collecting agencies cannot keep up with the pace of change. In spite of this problem, the statistical data on family services appears to be sufficient for the description of the public sector, whereas the private sector is not as well charted. However, plans have been made for charting the

situation in this sector, too. As to voluntary organizations, a recently published catalog (Informator. O Organizacjach Pozarządowych Działających Na Polu Pomocy Społecznej. Bank Informacji Sanopomocy Społecznej. KLON. Badanie 1992/93) gives good information about 1621 nongovernmental organizations and their activities.

A great number of **scientific studies** have already been conducted or are being done on the family, most of them concentrating on the effects of transition on the living conditions of Polish families. Part of the studies deal with family services and more are being planned. Research on this topic is conducted by different Ministries and their research institutes as well as Universities.

Particularly, in the beginning of transition **the media** favoured ideological issues on the family, even though economic problems already were pressing. The popularity of ideological debate was due to the leading position the Catholic Church had gained during the liberation process, providing it with an opportunity of making its values public after the collapse of the Communist regime. Therefore abortion received a lot of publicity in the media as did divorce to a lesser extent. Recently the effects of recession on the family have attained more publicity. TV has included family issues in its programmes, the coverage reaching both family pathological phenomena (rape, incest, violence) and "happy families". Family services are still lacking sufficient publicity, and individual citizens and voluntary organizations are not yet experienced in making use of the media for publicizing those family issues that they find important.

## **B. Characteristics of family services**

It is difficult to ascertain whether family services are organized and integrated into a coherent family policy. The major reason for this is that the current situation that is so variable and under perpetual reorganization. Consequently, it is difficult to make a stable and continuous policy with regard to all family services, instead, in many cases, there is need for resorting to **ad hoc policies**. To avoid this, groups of experts have been set up for careful examination of the living

conditions of families as well as of the adequacy of family support and services. One of these groups works at the Council for Matters of Social Policy with the President of the Polish Republic (from 1993). The results of this study will be used in planning for more stable and satisfactory family policy.

Recession, from necessity, very much directs the provision of family services in Poland, assigning an obviously significant role to a deficit model, although an empowerment model is regarded as a final goal. Characteristic of the present circumstances is also the proportionally high share of money benefits at the expense of family services; in 1991, cash benefits of social expenditure increased by 23 percent, while benefits in kind decreased by 22 percent. This trend, prevalent already during the Communist era, has swelled mostly due to high unemployment and great numbers of families living in poverty as well as a steeply increased number of pensioners, all of these people being entitled to cash benefits.

Family services are as a rule organized in a bilateral way, i.e. from the provider to the recipient. As to general values that guide family policy, equality, economic safety and security in general were most often mentioned.

### **TOPIC III: WHO PROVIDES FAMILY SERVICES**

As a heritage of the Communist regime, the state has still a dominant role in designing family policy, but the situation has undergone remarkable changes since the transition period began. The Local Self-Government Act that was passed in March 1990, signified the beginning of decentralization; the implementation and funding of many family services were transferred to local authorities. However, the governmental agencies are still in charge of programming and supervising services and they also appropriate financial aid for family services provided by municipalities. The money available from public resources is not sufficient for keeping family services in compliance with requirements, which in turn has put pressure upon the private sector to intervene in the provision of services (see below).

Polish people have an ambivalent attitude towards the state; there exists evident resistance to the all-encompassing monopoly

of the state, but at the same time people put strong demands upon it. One can also conclude that initial enthusiasm for privatization has cooled down, particularly with regard to the domain of the social sector. In general, people consider that the state should be responsible for social security, but to what extent this should be carried out, is still an open question. The biggest trade union (OPZZ: All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions) has made its own proposal for a "social minimum" for social security and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has worked separately for the same goal. The idea of both proposals is to guarantee basic social security for all citizens, but so far negotiations with the Government have not reached an agreement on its standard. The role that the state should take in the provision of family services is indeed a burning issue in Poland at the moment, and a number of different circles have called for a broad public discussion on the topic.

Because of the severe recession, the state and local authorities are willing to welcome **private agencies** to bear the responsibility for the provision of family services. **Voluntary organizations** have become active in this respect quite a lot. During the Communist regime it was difficult for them to act; a licence was needed and activities were strictly controlled, therefore the number of nongovernmental organizations was limited. The Associations Act (1989) gave permission for citizens to establish nongovernmental organizations which very soon proliferated. It has been estimated that the number of voluntary organizations was approximately 1000 in 1989, whereas three years later it was as high as 4500. All voluntary organizations are obliged to register themselves in order to be authorized to collect money. The state no longer regularly finances them, but governmental agencies and especially local authorities may grant some financial support for them if the budget permits. Specific projects are favoured.

There are two types of voluntary organizations, associations and foundations. The former can be set up by a minimum of five persons, the latter also needs a capital of a minimum size. Both of these organizations provide family services. According to a recent study of 1621 voluntary organizations, 1175 or 72 percent provide family assistance and/or services. The most popular

target group consists of families with disabled children (42 percent of the organizations provide assistance for these families), followed by children and the young in general (32 %), families with sick members (32 percent) and families with many children (23 percent). No central union for nongovernmental organizations has been formed due to repugnance for any centralization so characteristic of the Communist regime but nevertheless, many of them are large nation-wide organizations with a number of local associations.

In general, voluntary agencies concentrate their activities on such services as are not provided by the public sector, therefore services are mostly **complementary**. However, because of the budget deficit in the public sector, voluntary organizations have to direct a good deal of their activities to those services that the state or local authorities are responsible for. This has interwoven the public sector and voluntary organizations with each other in an interesting way. The system is most visible in schools and child day care centres. In so-called social schools, nurseries and kindergartens, at least half of the expenses are funded by the public sector (salaries of teachers and nurses), whereas voluntary associations that are mostly set up by parents, are responsible for the other half of the expenses caused by e.g. daily meals and different kinds of equipment. The parents' associations are often required to solicit additional financial aid from sponsors in order to maintain the standard of services at previous levels.

Information about the role of the **Catholic Church** in the provision of family services was not sufficiently available because contacts with representatives of the Church were not able to be organized. Therefore, we have to be satisfied with information that is given by outside informants. Generally speaking, the Church grants financial aid to poor families and it also provides certain family services (see below).

During "real socialism" **trade unions** and particularly **state-owned enterprises** were significant providers of family services for the employees and their families - kindergartens, sanatoriums and holiday facilities having been the most common services. During the transition phase the situation changed drastically; enterprises, whether they are state-owned or

private, supply any longer family services due to the necessity to economize. Some of the child care centres run by state-owned enterprises have been closed or transferred to local authorities. Trade unions now concentrate more on salary issues and acting as pressure groups for more satisfactory public social policy. However, the members are still granted a small stipend when having a child.

Privatisation got started in 1989 when the Business Bill of Rights was passed. Enthusiasm for privatisation was at first high soon reaching the social sector also. One motive for this was the sense of freedom, the other was the myriad scarcities in the area of public social services. The process was not preceded by extensive public debates; instead changes in the social sector were more based on spontaneous activities related to the general ethos of privatisation, promising something better than was possible during "real socialism". The most glowing enthusiasm for privatisation has waned, since the expenses for private family services proved to be too high for most Polish people. For this reason, the number of commercial family services has remained marginal. However, it may be slightly greater than the statistical data indicate, because part of family services are supplied by private persons (e.g. nurses and pensioners) working in the "grey zone", i.e. as unregistered workers.

The development of the private sector may be helped along by the adoption of provisions allowing the public agencies to allocate some funds to the private social sector. According to the Law on Establishments (1992), the supplier of public funds has a right to sign a contract with agencies regardless of the type of ownership. Municipalities, in particular, use this right and they also supervise and monitor the implementation of such services. However, so far it is too early to ascertain how much these contracts will advance the expansion of private family services. At the moment, this seems to be unlikely due to the budget deficit that makes the state give priority to public services and to abandon private agencies more or less to their own devices.

The government does not very actively encourage the development of action groups or other similar civic activities, but neither does it try to prevent them. The problem with this



issue is more on the side of citizens who are not used to civic activities due to the heritage of "real socialism". But even this statement does not fully describe the situation, for "real socialism" also "taught" people to use personal social contacts for their own benefit. In this respect, neighbourhood networks and particularly families themselves are of great significance. Social assistance services, particularly nursing of elderly, infirm and sick people are rendered primarily by families themselves due to the fact that Polish society still retains close cross-generational bonds and a sense of family duty. Part of the care provided by the family members is entitled to care allowance.

The approximate proportional share of the public and private sectors within each family service are as follows:

**Child day care.** During the Communist regime all nurseries and kindergartens were public and run by the state, but since then the situation has changed somewhat. The local district councils are now responsible for administration and financing public child day centres but a small subvention from the state budget is still granted and the Ministry of Education continues to provide pedagogical direction but it is not as detailed as it used to be. A novel matter is also a fee that most parents now must pay for child day care.

Nurseries and kindergartens have decreased in number, particularly in 1989-91, while the over-all drop from 1985/86 till 1992/93 was about 20 percent (26 476 - 21 164). The reasons for the decline are on one hand, the shortage of money and on the other hand, the decreased demand for child day care due to unemployment that mostly concerns young people (64 percent of unemployed are under 35 years of age), as well as due to the fact that mothers also voluntarily want, more often than before, to take care of their young children. In 1992, 51 percent of 3-6 year old children in urban areas were in kindergartens, whereas the proportion in rural areas accounted for 32 percent (43 percent on the average). No more than about 6 percent of 0-2 year old children are in nurseries. As to the rest of the children, no comprehensive statistics are available but it has been estimated that 90 percent of mothers stay at home at least one year after the delivery (full-paid maternity leave is 16 weeks for the first child, 18 weeks for each subsequent child).

As mentioned above, so-called social kindergartens have been introduced as a solution for the declining number of child day care centres. In these kindergartens parents' associations are in charge of collecting money for, e.g. meals and equipment. The exact number of social kindergartens is unknown but it seems to be very limited. The number of private kindergartens is estimated to be 1-2 percent of all kindergartens. Enterprises practically no longer provide this service; these kindergartens have been either closed or transferred to local authorities. The Catholic Church supplies or supports financially some child day centres.

Pre-school education is obligatory for 6 year old children but nevertheless, not all of them attend. In 1992, 96 percent in urban areas and 87 percent in rural areas enjoyed pre-school education (92 percent on the average) that is mostly provided by the public sector.

Substitute care for children is supplied both in institutions and foster families, the latter type of service being more significant. In 1990, 57 percent of children under custodial care and delinquent juveniles were living in foster families, whereas the rest (43 percent) were in institutions. All in all, about 1.2 per cent of children under 19 years were in substitute care (the figure includes a small number of orphans too). Voluntary organizations also participate in the provision of foster parentage and, besides, some private families with enough money foster children in their own homes without remuneration. It has been estimated that the number of children who need foster care far exceeds the numbers that can be accommodated by existing facilities.

**Maternal and child clinics.** All pregnant women and young children are entitled to due care in maternal and child clinics which are mostly public. However, a few private clinics have been set up.

**Home help.** There are both public and private home helpers giving mostly practical assistance for the elderly. Voluntary organizations and the Church have become quite active in this field. A tiny number of home helpers work in the "grey zone" without paying taxes for the salaries they receive for their work in private families. Some of these workers are pensioners.

According to a survey conducted in 1992 on families with children under 13 years, 53 percent of families had received some consultative or practical aid from outsiders. One form of home help is meal service for poor families provided by NGOs and the Church.

**Shelters.** There are shelters for homeless people and young single mothers. Some "nests" are also supplied for battered children. The number of shelters is rather limited and they are provided by the public sector, voluntary organizations and the Church.

**Care for the elderly.** Institutionalized homes for the elderly seem to belong to those rare family services that have not diminished in number, quite the contrary, the number in this case has even increased during transition. The majority of these services are provided by the public sector but some private old people's homes have also been established. The number of places in the public institutions amounted to 69701 in 1991 which is about 1.5 per cent of all people over 65 years of age. This means that the huge majority of the elderly live either on their own or with their children or other relatives. In need of occasional help, the elderly rely very much on their own family members or neighbours. In addition to institutions for permanent living, there are also day houses and clubs for the elderly; voluntary organizations are particularly involved in these services.

**Holiday facilities.** During the Communist regime it was typical for employers to organize holiday facilities for employees and their families, but since then the situation has changed. State-owned enterprises have trimmed costs by giving up holiday facilities and private enterprises never adopted this practice. The public sector has strongly reduced expenditures for recreation as well. Due to these measures, the number of holiday facilities has declined. In 1993, no more than 30 percent of children could spend a holiday in public vacational resorts (few years ago the percentage was 40). The Ministry of Education supervises the provision of services through an office that has been set up in every voivodship (province). Each office selects those children that are in most urgent need of public holiday facilities. Private rest and recreation centres, which have been mushrooming "everywhere" since privatisation was

legalized, have partly compensated for the deficit resulting from measures taken by the public sector and private enterprises, but, being expensive, private holiday facilities are available only for a minority of Polish people. In addition to the public sector and commercial agencies, holiday facilities are provided by voluntary organizations, the Church and private persons.

#### **TOPIC IV: INTERACTION BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AGENCIES**

The main rule is that the public and private agencies providing family services are not coordinated, neither does there exist any specific law with regard to the interaction between different providers of family services. Nevertheless, a number of forms of interaction have been developed since the private sector was permitted to act in the social sector. In general, the attitudes of governmental and local authorities are positive towards voluntary organizations and they have been welcome, particularly for the reason that the public sector cannot supply all those family services that are needed. Additionally, the public sector admits that voluntary organizations are able to see the needs of people better than the public sector and that volunteers are often more committed in their work. Both these factors are seen to have a positive effect on the standard of family services.

**The forms of interaction.** One of the most modest forms of interaction takes place when a person in need of some family service comes to governmental officials, who if not able to help her/him, give her/him a list of voluntary agencies to which the person can then turn. Interaction also takes place in some councils and work groups that have been set up for evaluation and study on the current living conditions of families; on study these boards, scientific and governmental experts work together with representatives of, e.g. the Church. However, the interests of individual citizens and voluntary organizations are not brought forward very well due to their under-representation or absence in these organs. At the local level, interaction is a bit more visible, particularly in rural areas, where parents and other local people are more involved in the provision of family services together with local authorities. Social kindergartens

are also a good example of interaction; parents' associations collaborate with local authorities in many ways, for instance, when negotiating about equipment and extra instruction programmes as well as when collecting money for running the kindergartens. Parents even come to assist during the day. If only the first steps have been taken to initiate interaction between the public and private sectors, interaction between voluntary organizations has become more obvious. They help each other and hold joint conferences.

There exist no formal barriers to the formation of interaction between the public and private sectors providing family services. Barriers are more based on a long history of "real socialism" which afforded an all-encompassing role to the state. For this reason, at least the most militant members of voluntary organizations are principally against cooperation with the public sector, which they furthermore regard as a threat to their autonomy. On the other hand, the public sector is suspicious of voluntary organizations that, despite their endeavours to maintain their autonomy, are yet pushing the public sector to fulfill so many demands, every organization being of the opinion that particularly its needs are most urgent and necessary. Due to the budget deficit, the public sector is not able to satisfy all these demands which in turn diminishes interest in interaction on both sides. The representatives of the public sector also regret not having a capacity for cooperation.

The budget cuts in several family services are caused by the economic recession which compels the state to allocate more and more money to social security. But this trend already began during the Communist era; characteristic of that time was the continuous growth of state expenditure on social benefits which was carried out even during those years when national income declined. This indicated a disproportion between economic growth and increase in the state's social commitments and expenditure. Parallel with this tendency was a higher increase in cash benefits compared to benefits in kind. In this respect, the time of transition has not brought about any change. Still in 1991, all cash benefits increased by between 20 and 30 percent, in the case of maternity and child care benefits even by nearly 40

percent. At the same time national income dropped by 8-10 percent.

The imbalance between the declining national income and rising cash benefits caused the state to react to the situation by resolutions, taken in autumn 1991, which led to, for example, the reduction of family support grants. Social services were also revised; it was resolved they would be financed to a greater degree by recipients and categorized by some priority criteria. Besides the decrease in the number of certain family services, the state budget cuts have caused the lowering of service standard which the recipient families try to redress by money collected by voluntary organizations from their members and outside sponsors.

The future situation is very much dependent on economic development which so far is uncertain. As mentioned above, however, the commission that is exploring the present living conditions of families, may produce to suggestions for a more stabilized family policy.

#### **TOPIC V: PROBLEMS IN FAMILY SERVICES**

The emphasis placed on the private provision of family services was first understood to reflect a reformist ideology, but enthusiasm in this respect has waned. Nevertheless this does not mean that privatisation would now be suggested to reflect a conservative ideology, people rather think that it simply does not work in Poland due to the costs that appear to be too high for most recipients of family services.

The provision of family services is not adequate, not even in urban areas which are, in general, better equipped with family services than rural areas. There are also great differences between regions with regard to unemployment which renders the regions with exceptionally high unemployment less capable of providing family services up to requirements. Some surveys also indicate that lack of information about available services is a barrier to their effective use. Low income level in the public sector is also a severe problem.

Evaluation of family services is mainly run by governmental agencies through normal supervision and monitoring. Significant in this respect will be wide-scale studies on family support and

services that are being undertaken at the moment. Several studies that are being conducted by different governmental agencies and research institutes also aim at evaluation of the current situation. In addition, evaluation has been made by international agencies.

#### **TOPIC VI: TRENDS IN FAMILY SERVICES AND THEIR IMPACT**

As to the impact of family services on the family, it is probable that the declining number of child care centres has decreased the employment of mothers of young children, but it has also been suggested that mothers are now voluntarily more reluctant to work outside the home, which has caused or at least made it easier for authorities to close child care centres.

The trend in interaction between the different actors providing family services will most probably be towards more interaction, but it is worthy of note that only the first steps have been taken in this respect. Social kindergartens could provide one model for the further development of interaction; the basic funding of family services would then come from the public sector, whereas the recipients and/or their family members would finance the rest of the costs by collecting money and becoming directly involved in the provision of services. The principle of this kind of mixed model is that recipients of services and their family members are most committed to voluntary work which in turn makes the provision of services effective.

The future development of family services is uncertain and dependent on the economic development. The whole field seems to be under reorganization. The present system with a marginal share of market-type institutions and slowly expanding field serviced by voluntary organizations probably fits to characterize the trends in the near future as well.

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