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Large Families in the Social Structure – Problems and Possibilities of Support

Family as such is of great importance for our tradition. Many scholars write about it or research it, the Constitution and other legal regulations acknowledging its due significance also stress its relevance, to recall for instance the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, European Social Charter, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Declaration on Social Progress and Development, and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Many politicians emphasise the magnitude of the family and the state which should provide it with appropriate support. Nonetheless, taking into consideration functioning of the family during the last few years, particularly in the context of political transformation and reforms that have taken place, it occurs that Polish family is changing, evolving, often imitating global trends, not always the most favourable ones. The number of divorces and separations is rising, the mediation efforts are becoming significant, and the increase of the family size and evolution of the Polish Family and Guardianship Code are noticeable. The term “reconstructed family” has emerged,

referring to such type of a family that is set up by those, who have children from previous relationships, altogether establishing a new, larger in size, family.

Interpersonal relations between the family members usually rely on tradition passed on throughout the process of upbringing or work, mutual feelings and the time spent together. The relations are oriented towards fulfilling individual needs through channels of direct contacts. Children identify with their own family to exceptionally intense degree, as this is the environment where they experience first emotions, learn the rules of coexistence and responsibility, acquire first experiences and adjust to their obligations and duties. Hence, family provides with the sense of emotional security and awareness that one is loved and needed at the same time. Family is assigned to number of important functions in order to sustain biological continuity and for the sake of mental as well as social development of individuals and society at large. The most important objectives of a family as a social group *include procreation, caretaking, stratification, as well as economic and upbringing (socialisational) functions* (Łobocki, 2009, p. 298).

The symptoms of threats to the family and the process of reproduction of the country emerged as early as in the mid-1960s, as already in 1964 families in Polish cities did not ensure continuity of the generation. It was the time when the change in proportion of productivity occurred between the urban and rural areas. Despite the fact that rural areas were in minority, the agricultural population determined the demographical potential of the country. Nonetheless, with the passage of time the differentiation lessened. Although in the 1990s the agricultural families maintained their status of linear reproduction, they failed to provide its compensational role for the entire country. Therefore, *a downward trend in the number of children in agricultural families came across as rather worrisome for the future outlook* (Wierchosławski, 1997, p.101).

Hence, we may pose a question what the definition of a large family means nowadays. In social research such type of a family is referred to a family with three or more children, whereas from the demographical perspective, a large family implies extended substitution of the generation. Thus, in such context it embraces at least four children and is subject of analysis concerning demographical and social conditions of having children. With regards to economic circumstances, having many children is associated with three children, *as the moment of arrival of the third baby significantly lowers the wealth of a family, in comparison with those with smaller number of children* (Kowalska, 2006, p. 12).

Social and political transformations in Poland brought about evaluation of priorities in different aspects of family life. The attitude to marriage has also changed since young people procrastinate the decision to enter such formal relations what, in turn, has an impact on the procreative attitudes and willingness to have children. It is undoubtedly influenced by the lack of security that marriage used to provide with its long-lasting nature and inseparability rooted in tradition, as well as changes of the mentality in the society towards non-formal patterns of relationships, accompanied with the transformation of a family model. Rise in the awareness of sexuality and contraceptives have also contributed in this regard, as it allowed women to control their productivity. It must be stressed that the contemporary reality and threats it involves sometimes force women to make such decisions. Situation of large families in terms of economy, health and education is complex and challenging, despite the fact these are the families that constitute the source of demographic potential of Poland. Still, children from such families will pay the consequences of inevitable outcomes of significant rise in the number of citizens at retirement age. Drop in the birth numbers is reflected in smaller size of the family, as the model of parents with one child or two children

is becoming more and more common, concurrently accompanied by a downward trend of families with three children or more. At the moment of arrival of the third baby the affluence of the family is decreasing, what proves to be a global tendency, affecting not only Poland but also other western European countries. Sometimes, after the arrival of their second child, parents conclude that a third child would significantly burden them financially, influencing their quality of life, hence frequent decisions of surgical or pharmacological limitation of fertility. Situation and maturity of a given family to become adoptive families also require meeting many criteria, legal regulations and trainings. For instance, according to the new law, each child should have its own place and a desk, whereas the income of parents-to-be should enable the adopted children to live on appropriate level. The decision to adopt a child is not commonplace in Poland, whereas to have for instance three or four children, i.e. to become a large family, is almost unreachable condition for those willing to adopt. The state does not provide any financial support for such family, limiting the assistance to foster families and other models of parenthood.

Family Environment and Social Changes

The mode of social policy as well as accesses to commercialised services (especially the caretaking ones) determine the process of family-orientation (family as a foundation of social growth and fulfillment of their members' needs) or the opposite, so called *de-familisation*, when the law offers wide range of social benefits and public services. Hence, since the market develops network of commercial services, the significance of the family at various stages of their members' life is diminishing (Firlit-Fesnak, 2007). Moreover, it may be noticed that current trends move towards a small family, with separate flat and own household. Apart from fathers, also the mothers often work professionally, hence men try to help in duties related to taking care of the

children. Family controls its productivity by contraceptives, and although it is an intimate group, it is simultaneously subject to dissolutions of the relations what seems disadvantageous for accomplishment of the upbringing function. Despite family crisis, it is still the place of transmission of norms and patterns of social, religious and moral behaviours. Moreover, it is a go-between the individual and the society. Demographical situation of Poland, as far as the ageing population is concerned, throws light on those aspects of family policies, that concern the causes and effects of low birth rate in families. Polish society has been currently experiencing changes in the attitudes towards the marriage and becoming a parent with evolving forms of family life and economic models of a contemporary family. Perception of women's and men's role is also subject to modification. Hence, the challenge is to establish such conditions of fulfilling needs that would enable accomplishment of the plans to have children, and, if possible, to simply give birth to them and bring them up. Providing a good and valuable childhood is a key task for parents as they – bearing in mind the future of their children as citizens – must provide them with appropriate care, rear them, educate them and ensure the right conditions for multi-dimensional development.

The EU documents tackling demographical changes explicitly stress the necessity to act for the sake of the rise in birth numbers. The term “demographical reconstruction” is applied to emphasise the need for increased number of births in the circumstances of low productivity. Many European countries struggle with this currently prevailing phenomenon. The decrease in number of families with children, including the large families, results from the dominating family model and unfavourable demographic conditions, including low women's productivity factor that affects not only Poland, but entire Europe.

The research tackling women's productivity have been for long present within Polish social research, as it was first con-

ducted within the 1970 census. The research from 2002 was particularly important due to the following reasons:

- In 1990s Poland was subject to profound demographical depression, unprecedented in the history of the postwar Poland.
- Starting from 1989, the population reproduction in Poland has not been guaranteeing linear substitution of the generations; current population forecasts do not imply changes in the process of low birth rate in the perspective of the next 20 years, as since 1999 Polish population is in decline (Central Statistical Office data from 2013). Therefore, since the resources of the persons at productive age are diminishing and the number of advanced age inhabitants is rising, the already accessible work resources should be used most effectively, namely, employment should be strengthened.

As far as changes in family behaviour are concerned, it is worth to throw light on the decision whether to, and when, the establish a family, how it should look like (should it be a marriage or cohabitation), or what is the dynamics of the process of its dissolution. On the basis of the recalled issues it may be assumed that contemporary families are currently subject to destabilisation. Establishing appropriate economic security for the members of the family (i.e. parents' presence on the job market, whether they have their jobs, to what degree they are involved in it, and how to combine such professional engagement with the family life) is also an important factor taken into consideration while the above-mentioned questions are tackled. Demographical changes and their pace result from processes such as migration, unemployment, entering marriage, procrastinating the decision to enter a marriage, giving birth to a first baby and having children in general. From the social and economic perspective, the factors affecting decrease in birth rate include intensified interest in obtaining higher education, difficulties on the job market, combining professional

and family duties, low social benefits for the families, as well as lack of family strengthening efforts.

Moreover, changes of women's position on the job market in Poland are also palpable. Their situation within combining professional and family obligations plays important part in the process of population reproduction. It constitutes important element *of efforts directed at reduction of unfavourable demographical phenomena, affecting the level of the life of current and future generations* (2011 Regional Research Report, p. 11).

Average number of children given birth to by women aged 15 to 49 does not guarantee linear substitution of generations. *In 2004 the child birth rate was 1,22 – lowest in 55 years, whereas in 2005 it insignificantly rose to 1,24* (Kowalska, 2006, p. 7). The above-mentioned transformations in Poland resulted in family adaptation to the new economic realm involving insecurity of the working place, unemployment, commercialisation of the caretaking and educational services, as well as marketing the household maintenance, food prices and other goods related to the process of running a household. In consequence, decreased level of life of many families was noticeable, as significant number of families lost their source of income. Impoverishment began to rise with many families becoming recipients of social benefits. It intensified social inequalities as living conditions of many families threatened the developmental process of children, whereas deprivation of economic, educational and cultural needs in such families led them to marginalisation and social exclusions. The population of children and teenagers in 2002 became most significantly affected by these changes, particularly among households where expenses per capita were lower than the minimum social benefits, embracing 16,1% children aged to 14, and 15,8% teenagers aged 15 to 19 (the overall percentage below such minimum reached eventually 11,1%). As much as 21,6% of the families with children aged to 24 included one unemployed parent. Lack of the possibility to

provide income from professional activity makes such families dependent from the benefits of social welfare. In 2005, 1573 recipients used such benefits, including 968 130 families with children, with the total number of children being brought up in families receiving social benefits reaching 2 290 000 (Firlit-Fesnak, 2007, p. 194).

Concluding, consequently lowered numbered of large family households is noticed in comparison with one-family households, that made up 69% of the total number of households in 2002 and 75% in 1988. The family structure in terms of number of children differ depending on the type of a family. Only in case of marriage families one child remains provided by less than half of the marriage population (42,5%); whereas families with one child are predominant. Urban families provide on average for smaller number of children, i.e. 1,64 comparing to the rural areas, where the factor reached 2,01 in 2012 (Central Statistical Office data from 2012). As far as rural families are concerned, each fourth family provides for three or more children. In incomplete families and families of all types in the cities three or more children constitute insignificant percentage of the total population of the families.

State Support for Large Families

Despite many declarations and regulations in governmental bills and acts, in fact, families are not sufficiently supported for instance financially, as official attitudes towards the family after 1989 in Poland have been rather selective, i.e. access to benefits is conditioned by low income, hence the state support has exclusively been, and remains, directed at the poorest households. Financial benefits became the main instrument of the state policy towards the family – in 1995 only basic family benefits ceased to function within benefits from social security and only those meeting income criteria are subject to such assistance.

80 Several actions undertaken to lower the income criteria resulted

in continuous limitation of the families entitled to such benefits, whereas lack of indexation of the benefit figures brought about decrease in their real value. The working places, previously a significant subject of family support, ceased to function as such from the 1990s. Caretaking units at the working place such as nursery schools or kindergartens, along with leisure time facilities became sold or closed down. Such changes were accompanied by increased parental financial responsibility for the children. The services became so expensive that they limited access of the underprivileged families, additionally affected by the second wave of unemployment that widespread across the impoverished areas (Kłos, Szymańczyk, 2011).

Social support may be defined as *organised activity of various subjects enabling individuals and social groups to overcome difficult life situations* (Radziewicz-Winnicki, 2008, p. 91). The organisational units of social support include Regional Social Welfare Centre, District Family Support Centre, Local Social Welfare Centres, Social Support Facilities, institutions of specialised counseling (including family issues), caretaking and educational institutions, adaptation and childcare centres, as well as crisis intervention units. Providing social support in local communities belongs to the objectives of the Social Welfare Centres. The social support activity in Poland is based on the Act of 12 March 2004 on social support, *where it is declared that the reason for providing such support may include the necessity to protect maternity or large families, and the helplessness in caretaking and upbringing activities or running the households, particularly in incomplete or large families* (Dz. U. 2004, Nr 64, poz. 593).

Providing support for large families is often of great importance as the main problem within such families concerns the disability to fulfill basic needs resulting from significant expenses related to maintenance and upbringing several children. The social support benefits are divided into financial

and non-financial ones. In most cases, families receive the following benefits:

- Financial support such as permanent benefit, temporary benefit, designated benefit or special designated benefit, as well as.
- Non-financial benefits such as social work, credit passes, contributions for the social security and health insurance, material help, securing the funeral, specialised counseling, crisis intervention, meals, shelter, indispensable clothes, services at the place of residence or support centers.

Designated benefits of meals for children constitute another form of support that are accessible for large families. In 2005 special programme *State support providing (extra) meals for children at school* was launched (modified in 2008, Dz. U. dated 22 December 2008). Its objective concerns prevention of malnutrition among children, promotion of healthy lifestyle, as well as improvement of the level of life among low-income families. The programme is particularly focused on children aged up to 7 and pupils until they complete senior secondary school. It must be stressed that such support is also subject to family income.

There are new regulations in force from 2004 concerning family benefits, providing foundation for the system of benefits for the family (Act on family benefits from 2003). It embraces family benefits, benefits allowance and caretaking services including caretaking benefits. The procedure for benefits concerns support for the families upbringing or educating a child, **large families**, disabled members of the family and the seniors. The main objective of the new law is to direct public assistance towards best possible accomplishment of basic family objectives, i.e. upbringing, education, care provided for the disabled members of the family and for the sick and infirm because of their age, including situations when such family is incapable of fulfilling its own tasks. The system of family benefits has

become a part of social welfare. Nonetheless, family benefits are of demanding nature, although concurrently they do not constitute a temporary method of providing support, as by its definition they do not refer to the principle of auxiliaries and activation of the beneficiaries in order to improve their life situation. *It is rather a permanent support provided by the state because of the need to protect family, large families and the disabled* (Korcz-Maciejko, Maciejko, 2008, pp. 45–46).

It must be also stressed that the regulations protecting the family, including the large one, also have to embrace such sphere when a family is subject to dissolution, consequently facing divorce or separation. We may pose a question what happens to children rights in such circumstances. The alimony obligation provides resources for maintenance also for upbringing those, who are incapable to live independently, what is regulated by the §128-144 of Polish Family and Guardianship Code. According to §133.1., parents are obliged to provide alimony benefits for their children that are not yet able to maintain themselves independently, unless the profits from such children's inheritance are sufficient to cover the costs of maintenance and upbringing (Family and Guardianship Code).

§203 of the Civil Code states that the married couple is obliged by the very fact of entering a marriage to maintain and bring up own children. This obligation also concerns natural kinship, i.e. resulting from non-marriage relationship. The alimony obligation is limited to provision for the minimum indispensable expenses to live, nonetheless, it also includes the costs of children's education (Civil Code legal status of 2012).

The way of granting benefits from alimony funds was defined in the Act of 7 September 2007 concerning support for persons entitled to the alimony (Act on state support). It is, however, worth to mention that there are many regulations concerning family assistance within EU law, which should be obeyed by Poland as its legitimate membership country. However, inter-

nal conditions are regulated by the gross domestic product and executive regulations that are disadvantageous for Polish families, not providing with the opportunity to fulfill their members' needs. Hence, many young people, already having, or planning to have children, emigrate to other EU countries in order to obtain their social and family benefits there, as they are far more attractive than in Poland.

Large Family Objectives in the Process of Education

The period of child's school attendance, also for those from large families, is costly, regardless of the principle that public education is free. A pupil must have a school bag, textbooks and notebooks. Moreover, there are costs of transportation, if he or she lives further than three kilometers from school. Additionally, there are costs of injury insurance, class fees and other payments that parents must face. Even in a situation when not three children, but just one child goes to school, the financial status of a family deteriorates, particularly if such family struggles with financial problems or its income is minimal. Large families, i.e. with three or more children, make up 17% of all families in Poland, whereas their children constitute 33% of the total number of children in Polish population.

Average wages of large families are higher than other in families, what may prove their extraordinary resourcefulness, enterprise and hard-work. At the same time, due to large number of those to be provided for, they are less affluent than other Polish families. For example, a marriage with one child has on average 847 PLN income per capita, and with two children it is 627 PLN. Consequently, the average income for those with three children reaches 445 PLN per capita, whereas in families with four or more children it is 325 PLN per capita. Children from large families are far less affluent than those brought up by single mothers, whose average income reaches 613 PLN per capita (Central Statistical Office data from 2004). Nowadays

large families, including their children, belong to the poorest social group in Poland.

European report from June 2009 shows that Polish children are the most impoverished among European countries – as much as 26% of them is at risk of poverty (in comparison to 19% of the European average). Recently published report “Doing Better for children – OECD 2009” concludes that Polish children are among the poorest one in OECD (comparing to the average wages in given country, i.e., income 50% lower than the average is considered the poverty threshold). Hence, Polish children are eight times poorer than the German ones in relation to the average level of wealth in own country. Apart from state family policy, there is also its local governmental dimension, as the local authorities in the city or community possess number of instruments to improve the family lives. The instrument of a family policy called *Large family cards* was first introduced in France in 1921, with its Polish debut in 2005 in Wrocław, where such solution offered public transport discounts for large families at weekends. The same card was then introduced in Grodzisk Mazowiecki in 2008, allowing families with four children to travel free within the city, offering half price discounts for admission to sports and cultural facilities and extra-curricular activities. Tychy introduced such card at the beginning of 2009 promoting private enterprises, providing concurrently discounts for large families. Subsequently Sandomierz offered large family card solution calling it “Us three and more”. Łowicz introduced this card in October 2012, and at the beginning of 2014 it came into being in Gdańsk. Authorities of the Kujawy-Pomerania province are also planning to introduce such card soon. In the context of the impoverished large families and insignificant support from the state, such cards may become a key element of the local government policy improving the quality of family lives, shaping positive image of a large family and the conviction that “a large family is something to be proud of”.

There are two crucial reasons for which family policy should become a priority for the state policy. First one refers to the demographical situation as Poland belongs to the countries with lowest birth factor in Europe. Linear substitution takes place when the birth rate reaches 2,1. That was accomplished in Poland for the last time in 1988. During the consequent years it dropped to 1,2 what means that the generation of the newly born children at that time is 45% smaller than their parents' generation (Puzyna-Krupska, 2011).

Many parents are unaware that the governmental programme "A set of textbooks and workbooks for the pupil" allows to claim partly refund of the costs of textbooks not only for those with extremely low income. Regardless of income, other families, such as large one or having at least three children, or in especially difficult life situation, can also apply for such assistance. In all the previous years large chunks of money dedicated to this programme returned to the budget, as according to the Highest Chamber of Control, the local governments used only 70% in 2009, and 62% of the allocated funds in 2010. It proves that in this case money for the needy, i.e. the families below income criteria, is sufficient.

The programme "A set of textbooks and workbooks for the pupil" is accomplished on the basis of the Act of 12 July 2013, which, in §3.6., tackles the circumstances of providing assistance regardless of income criteria, whereas within the cases defined in §7 of the Act of 12 March 2004 on social support, such assistance could be provided only for pupils mentioned in §7.1., i.e. coming from families where income per capita is higher than income criterion defined in §7.14. The Act on social support declares that large families are included within. §7 clarifies that social support is provided for persons and families particularly on the grounds of the necessity to protect the maternity or having many children.

Documents necessary to be granted funding include the following:

Application

Parents of a pupil must submit an application for co-funding the school books to the headmaster of a school such a pupil will attend in the school year 2013/2014.

Justification

The application must enclose justification claiming that in accordance to §7.8. of the Act of 12 March 2004, a large family is also entitled to such support.

Invoice

As Ministry of Education informs, invoice is the evidence of textbooks purchase, issued specifically for the pupil by a parent or legal caretaker, along with receipt or confirmation of a textbook purchase. In case of declaration of textbooks purchase, information on calculated costs only within the above-mentioned programme is subject to reimbursement.

Delectionation or statement concerning wages

If a family applies for refund regardless of income criteria, no statements concerning income are required. The legislator also took into account a situation when children are subject to parental negligence or when it is a dysfunctional family and the meal at school or kindergarten is the only one provided for such child during the day. Sometimes, money allocated to provide children with food supplies are wasted on, for instance, alcohol or cigarettes. In such cases such support is ensured by a commission to a given shop for purchase of given food articles, or a meal is provided at school or kindergarten. In justified cases the headmaster of a school or, appropriately the supervisor of a kindergarten, provide with such meals, at the same time informing the social welfare centre. The support defined in the §1 of the Act on nutrition provisions does not require examination of a situation in a family by environmental interview or issuing an administrative decision. Both

commissioning purchase or providing a meal guarantee that at least one warm meal will be consumed by such child and it shall not remain hungry throughout the day. This project is commonly financed by the state budget – 60% and the local community funding – 40%, hence many families are beneficiary.

As in other families, there are many difficulties not only related to insufficient funds that large families also have to face. Often other functions, such as the upbringing issues, are disturbed, for instance a child can have problems or experience conflicts at school and the parent is not able to manage it. Sometimes it also concerns family domestic violence. Family members often ask for help in solving difficult situations, as they have no idea what they are entitled to, or where to ask for counseling or assistance. On the basis of §46 of the Act on social support, social support centres provide specialised counseling, including legal advice within the bidding law such as Family and Guardianship Code, social security, tenancy protection, psychological support embracing diagnosis, prevention and therapy as well as family counseling tackling family functioning, taking care of children and the disabled.

There is also an allowance families are entitled to regardless of their income, i.e. a single benefit resulting from giving birth to a baby, so called “newborn allowance”, at the amount of 1000 PLN. It is currently subject to a great debate as the government authorities also want to make it a subject to the income of a given family.

Similarly as in the case of social support, despite the obligation of verification, the income threshold has remained frozen since 2004. It brought about a situation when the costs of food, medication and house maintenance increased simultaneously with the pay rise, hence many people were excluded from the system of benefits, although their family situation did not improve in reality. In 2004, 5 000 000 children were entitled to the

children. Increasing both the income criteria and the financial value of benefits is in Poland necessary, as large families are highly exposed to the threat of impoverishment. It is confirmed by the Central Statistical Office data according to which 9,8% of families with three children and 24% with four children live below the minimum level of existence, i.e. such level of income that allows to meet necessary needs (Central Statistical Office website with data from 2010).

Difficulties Faced while Working with Large Family

Definition regarding social work states that it embraces professional activity aiming at improvement of living conditions of individuals and communities, providing relief in suffering and solving social problems. Social workers, as specialists, assist people in their activities in order to enhance their access to various forms of social support and resources, establishing humanitarian social services sensitised to human needs, acting for the sake of broadening the range of impact on institutions providing with help (Wódz, 1998). Definition of social work established within Recommendation Rec (2001) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe defined social work as specific professional activity which tasks concern mutual adjustment of the individuals, families, groups and social surroundings they live in, as well as development of the sense of own individual self-esteem by activating human potential, interpersonal relations and resources accessible within local communities (Data from CMCE).

The methods of social work *include structured diagnostic and intervention procedures, strategies of planned stimulation of changes within individuals, groups, and communities in accordance with the objectives of social work* (Wódz, 1988, p. 132). There are three types of working modes, i.e.:

- Social work with an individual – single case method.
- Social with a group or family.
- Social work with the local environment.

On the basis of the working modes the social worker selects such activities for the sake of persons and families that are adjusted to the individual clients' needs, e.g. mediation or counseling, directed at various support groups or others. The most frequent forms of social work include:

- Rescue, that is of short-term nature in an emergency or situation demanding immediate reaction. It refers to activities such as support for the victims of flood, shelters for homeless people or providing meals at school for children from poor families.
- Caretaking resulting from precise diagnosis of the needs and analysis of the situation of the needy. It relies on the dependence of the charges from the caretaker, what turns out to be a frequent consequence of the helplessness of the one that receives such support. This mode is predominant in the facilities for chronically sick, home caretakers activities and orphanages for small children.
- Assistance, such as activities supporting successful development of those exposed to social pathologies and the society at large, e.g. social and professional counseling, senior clubs, family counseling or youth clubs.
- Social compensation is another form compensating environmental insufficiencies hindering successful course of individual or group lives, involving such institutions as orphanages, foster families, court guardian or facilities for single persons. *Social work with a given person, family, group or community may solely rely on one form or combine rescue, caretaking, assistance and compensation activities* (Sztur-Jaworska, 2007, p. 110).

It must be remembered that having many children is not a pathology. Nonetheless, among large families that use social assistance, apart from having many children, there are other issues defined in the §7 of the Act on social support, considering unemployment, violence and addictions (predominantly to alcohol).

Social work may be analysed from various perspectives, depending on the emphasised functions. Nonetheless, it proceeds towards the diagnosis of the charges' needs and projecting the process of becoming independent. By its definition it is a temporary action that embraces various influences stimulating to social integration, but also leading towards economic independence. Difficulties resulting from social work in large families consider mainly passive attitude and demanding approach towards social assistance and social workers. The obligation to provide social support is regulated within the Act on social support, whereas the Act itself imposes on persons and families relying on social support an obligation to cooperate with the social worker while solving their problems, i.e. they are assigned to active participation in searching for, or undertaking, professional activity and engagement in social work. In case of lack of cooperation of a given person or a family with a social worker in solving difficult life situation, refusal of concluding social contract, unwillingness to follow its stipulations, ungrounded refusal to undertake work by the unemployed or ungrounded refusal to undertake rehabilitation therapy, may all constitute a basis for declining benefit application, withdrawing the decision of granting the benefit or withholding financial benefits of social welfare (in accordance with the Act on social support).

Nonetheless, in reality, the client's engagement is not always noticeable. When an unemployed person is offered to undertake public works, it is taken unwillingly as the gained income influences the benefits received from social welfare, hence it does not *pay off* to work. Hence, such clients often prefer to undertake illicit odd jobs. They are, in a way, dependent on social support and got used to state's responsibility for maintenance of their family. It is a mistake made by the clients to identify social support with providing financial and social benefits. It is also a fact that they often come to work, when they finally decide to do so, under the influence of alcohol, what is explicitly tantamount

to becoming fired. Then, they register again as unemployed with no entitlement to the unemployment benefit.

The clients also calculate profitability of the accepted work for the lowest country's average wage. On the other hand, they eagerly undertake socially useful activities, defined by the Journal of Laws (Dz. U. 2005, Nr 210, poz. 1745) precise as for number of working hours, place and time. If such type of work is declined, given person is crossed out from the Regional Job Centres and the list of the unemployed, losing health security and the access to social welfare benefits.

Difficult economical situation of a country results in emphasis on overcoming problems related to commonplace social maladjustment and pathologies within families, especially those, where children are brought up in poverty. New legal regulations within social welfare assign more and more tasks to the local governments. *Hence, the social care workers are expected not only to be specialists in solving difficult life situations, but also almost automatically diagnose the needs, set up social contract or help the needy in overcoming difficult life situation until they cease to use the social assistance* (Urbanek, 2012, p. 20). The social worker begins to spend more and more time behind the desk, completing additional papers and working out documentation of the client's history instead of working in the field, i.e. in the local environment. Therefore, the social welfare requires some changes, shifting from caretaking approach, expressed in undertaking responsibility for the charges (concurrently deepening their helplessness and inability to use own resourcefulness) towards assistance stimulating their independence, activating own creative and resourceful approach.

Crisis intervention is also a part of social work activities that embrace set of interdisciplinary activities undertaken for the sake of persons and families in crisis. Its aim is to restore the mental balance and skills of independent life management, at the same time preventing transformation of the crisis into

mental and social insufficiency. It is provided for persons and families regardless of their income. Thanks to crisis intervention mothers with small children and pregnant women that are subject to domestic violence are located in shelters for women with small children and pregnant women. Moreover, in a justified situation of direct life or health threat, a social worker has the right to take the child away from such family and place it at other next of kin's, not living in the same house.

Large family in Poland has been currently in decline, although this is a still functioning mode. Parents from large families are perceived by the environment as peculiar, sometimes as dysfunctional. For sure, their financial and housing conditions are worse than in families with one child, nonetheless, despite governmental declarations, not much is done for such families both within fiscal area, support and social work. The only aspect they can count on is the minimal benefit, if they meet appropriate criteria, and a single allowance when purchasing textbooks for children, but only for those pupils from the lowest elementary classes. They have to deal alone with the rest of the problems, with no support provided. Other EU countries, particularly those western ones, promote large families by introduction of fiscal solutions, commonly referred to as "family quotient" that takes into account the family structure, i.e. its size and composition. Large family with no state support is often left without any faith in success, without dreams or ability to achieve anything despite the fact that children from such families will provide for the aging society, no matter what type of a family given retired person had, i.e. if he/she had children at all. I don't believe something will change in Poland soon in this regard. Poverty will duplicate poverty, life helplessness and claiming attitudes. ■