



COUNTRY
REPORT
FOR
POLAND

A photograph of a woman holding a young child in a hallway with brick walls. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The woman is looking down at the child, and the child is looking towards the camera. The hallway has a metal handrail on the right side.

EUROPE 2020
SHADOW REPORT 2014

PROPOSALS FOR THE ANNUAL GROWTH SURVEY,
COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND NATIONAL POLICIES.
CARITAS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPE 2020 MID-TERM REVIEW.

01

EU 2020 Strategy: general evaluation

The document "Europe 2020", like a former (and more comprehensive) one – the Lisbon Strategy – is rather a manifest of political aims than an operational hand-book or guide on how to achieve them. Such documents play a significant role as a tool for coordinated social policies of EU member states by highlighting common priorities and crucial fields of interest. On the other hand, promoting such documents is always somewhat risky – as an example of wishful thinking. Comparing real achievements with the political goals of the Lisbon Strategy may serve as a good illustration of the latter.

Even taking that observation into account, "Europe 2020" looks like a step forward in the process of creating a more rational EU social policy agenda. It presents an approach to combine and balance solutions to both unemployment and poverty problems. This approach was less obvious in the past. For example, the European Employment Strategy – taken alone – was used sometimes as a programming tool to marginalise social policy by replacing it with vocational activation and labour market integration policies and programmes. It was highly visible (in Poland as well as in other EU countries) during the process of allocating European Social Fund resources for mainly activation programmes and projects. As a consequence, activation services became a type of social services where the idea of clients' integration within the labour market explicitly dominates the idea of social inclusion.

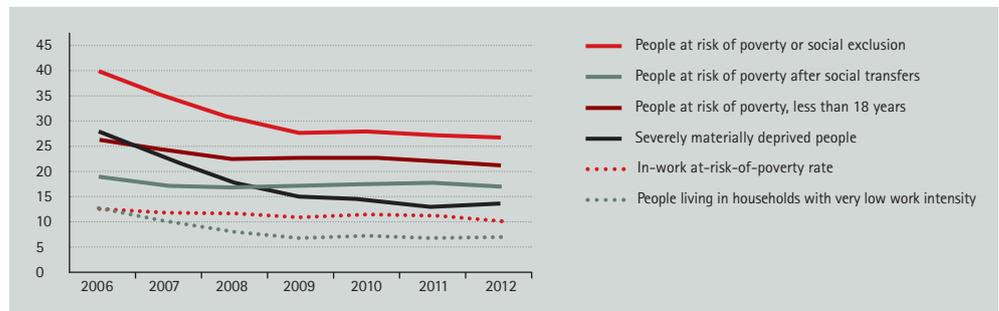
Recommendation for the further implementation of the Strategy: on a national level, social integration and vocational activation of excluded and marginalized people have to be treated as equally important and simultaneously applicable political aims. Only such a combine-approach may create a field for effective anti-poverty and employment-oriented programmes to be implemented on regional and local levels. Purely occupational activation programmes will not deliver social inclusion, and, in effect, will also not counteract poverty.

Secondly, targeting is a positive approach in social policy as long as it serves to better address and individualize services and social assistance offered to people in need. But it may also serve as a cover for social cuts and the latter cannot be assessed positively. Solving poverty and unemployment problems needs substantial resources and the best strategy of targeting is not limiting the costs as much as possible, but to use them as a form of social investment and not only as 'operating' (current consumption-oriented) transfers.

02 Poverty

2.1 Recent trends

Eurostat (% of population)	2009			2010			2011			2012			EU average
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
Poland													
POVERTY													
People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	-	-	27.8	-	-	27.8	-	-	27.2	-	-	26.7	24.8
People at risk of poverty after social transfers	16.9	17.4	17.1	16.9	17.4	17.1	17.8	17.6	17.7	17.1	17.1	17.1	17.0
People at risk of poverty, under 18 years of age	-	-	22.5	-	-	22.5	-	-	22.0	-	-	21.5	20.8
Severely materially deprived people	-	-	15	-	-	14.2	-	-	13.0	-	-	13.5	9.9
In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate	12.1	9.8	11	12.2	10.6	11.4	12.3	9.7	11.1	11.8	8.7	10.4	9.2
People living in households with very low work intensity	-	-	6.9	-	-	7.3	-	-	6.9	-	-	6.9	10.3



Development of poverty and social exclusion indicators in Poland (2009-2012) based on Eurostat:

- ➔ Most poverty rates remained stable during the observed period, with the only exception being men at risk of poverty after social transfers, which rose by 0.2 p.p. to 17.1% in 2012.
- ➔ Some poverty indicators dropped during the observed period (e.g. people at risk of poverty and social exclusion, in-work-at-risk-of-poverty, and child poverty), with the **highest absolute drop in severe material deprivation**, which fell from 15% in 2009 to 13.2% in 2012, nevertheless, remaining well above the EU-average (9.9% in 2012).
- ➔ It is worth highlighting that, while in 2009 more women (17.4%) were at risk of poverty after social transfers than men (16.9%), gender disparities disappeared by 2012 when the rate reached 17.1%. At the same time, despite an overall drop in the rate among men and women, gender disparities widened in the in-work-at-risk-of-poverty rate which continues to affect more men (11.8%) than women (8.7%) in 2012.

Additional national data shows the severity of the problems reflected by the above Eurostat data:

- ➔ If we discuss the problems of poverty and social exclusion, it is important to focus not only on inequalities of the situation within different 'category groups', such as women, and children etc., through comparing the average indicators for those categories. Such (dominant) orientation in research and analysis, results in constructing targeted programmes where support is offered to people in specific situations and with specific problems or needs – mainly to persons, and not to selected local communities as such. At the level of research there is a need to focus also on local communities and territorial inequalities. Polish researchers distinguish between Poland 'A', and 'B' – the latter consists of regions located mainly in the eastern part of the country: with significantly higher rates of poverty and employment (one of these regions – Lubelskie voyevodship – is in fact one of the poorest regions in the EU). And we need more community work (the Anglo-Saxon term) or social work with local communities (as it is called in Poland) to solve the problem of social exclusion in marginalised territories. Such an approach is, fortunately, currently being implemented in Poland.
- ➔ There is also a need to support families. In 2011 the Polish Parliament passed a new law on family support and foster care system. One of the main aims of this Act is to build a network of family assistance at the level of municipalities. Family assistance (*asystentura rodziny*) is a type of professional social service that is complementary with the casework offered by social workers. Caritas support such reorientation of social services as our organization has for many years willingly offered its own help and assistance to families in need (especially to families with three or more children). What is more, family poverty is not necessarily connected with unemployment: the structure of a family and the level of employment (in)stability are also significant factors. In-work-poverty is a rising problem in Poland as a consequence of the popularity of "flexible working contracts" – agreements between employers and employees based on civil law but with no social protection for employees guaranteed under the labour code. It has to be added that in the provincial and rural territories the chance of employment and/or social protection is correlated with lower access to public infrastructure utilities, such as health care, local schools, kindergarten, etc. The problem has already been noticed by politicians, but their response looks rather non-responsive. An influential portion of the decision makers supports the modernization strategy based on a 'development engines' formula. The idea is to accumulate investment of different kinds (EU funds as well) in big cities in order to help them absorb people migrating from the marginalised territories of the provinces. Caritas activists have collected a substantial amount of evidence of depopulation by age group going on in the rural areas and small towns which are sometimes almost bereft of young people looking for jobs and better lives in big cities, if not abroad.

Recent policy developments

Two policies have to be briefly described and evaluated: (1) reforming social and employment services and (2) the so-called 'flexicurity' policy as a frame for promoting employment.

- The government has announced plans to implement reforms of services delivered by labour market agencies and social welfare entities. In fact, only the former is in the process of implementation (new regulations came into power in January 2014) as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy published only working-drafts of the new regulations on social welfare. It looks like the administration wants to reshape municipal social welfare centres (*ośrodki pomocy społecznej – OPS*) and promote more task-oriented social agencies. It can be expected that these new type of welfare services – in case of reform implementation – will be delivered as vocational activation services, under the formulas of outsourcing, more targeting and orientation towards efficiency ('paying against results and not the procedures'). The evaluation of these plans has not been univocal, but rather ambivalent. On the one hand, outsourcing may serve as a vehicle to give more space for NGO activities in the field of social inclusion. On the other hand, it is very probable that NGOs may be systematically replaced by for-profit entities – as more instrumentally-oriented service providers, accustomed to the 'paying against results' formula of cross-sector cooperation and preferring, generally speaking, a 'work-first' approach.

Excessive focus on labour market activation, and treating social integration as secondary to that focus, is problematic on two important counts. Firstly, both the notion of social integration and the very persons subject to the integration efforts are then treated instrumentally. Secondly, when this approach is implemented, activation support services geared towards social reintegration are marginalized, i.e. no longer offered to persons who are unable to work, but whose functioning in society would benefit from receiving such services, or offered to those persons to a more limited degree.

- The history of legitimisation of civil agreements in the labour market in Poland may be described by the phrase 'from flexicurity solutions to junk contracts'. Legal regulation on temporary work agencies was passed under an agreement between numerous social partners: both national trade unions and main employers' organizations. At that time (year 2003) flexible contracts were well defined as a potential "win-win" solution, although practical experience gave evidence that they were used as a way to force only one-sided (the employers') interests. Trade unions recalled their acceptance for flexicurity policies and started to organize protests against 'junk contracts' and against the government which openly supported the employers' interests. Social dialogue reached a huge impasse. To sum up, the problems are not purely to do with the legal regulations but rather with the lack of social dialogue on labour market matters and with bad practices, as seen by the hundreds of thousands of apparently 'self-employed' persons who serve in fact as 'quasi-employees' to concrete firms without social protection. The year 2014 may be seen as a turning point in that history, as Parliament has just passed new regulations in this field. They extend social protection on additional civil contracts made by employers with their employees. One bad, but spreading, practice in Poland is to hire employees on a minimum wage and pay them an additional salary through civil contracts. Under the new regulations such additional contracts will be covered by the social insurance scheme. These regulations are a kind of compromise between the government's standpoint and the trade unions' advocacy, and the former – for several years – is evidence of social dialogue in praxis. Yet it has to be added that this new solution includes some exceptions which may be used by employers to avoid new obligation. Secondly, the new regulations do not improve social protection levels for quasi self-employed persons, who work for one employer under his/her direct control, but are not covered by the labour code norms and guarantees, and whose situation is the worst.

Assessment of Poland's Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) adopted in 2014:

The recommendations adopted in 2014 are adequate and mainly valid although they focus more on unemployment than poverty.

CSRs that could have a negative impact	Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="440 521 855 645">➔ CSR 1 '... improve targeting of social policies and the cost effectiveness of spending and the overall efficiency of the healthcare sector..' <p data-bbox="469 663 807 748">a plan of withdrawal from 'an extensive system of reduced VAT rates..'</p> <li data-bbox="440 1151 533 1178">➔ CSR 2 <li data-bbox="440 1227 533 1254">➔ CSR 3 <li data-bbox="440 1272 560 1299">➔ CSR 4-6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="951 521 1382 902">➔ To improve the targeting of social policies is rather an unclear recommendation which gives space for decision-makers to implement different solutions, including a significant reduction in the number of clients in different social programmes. 'Improve targeting' plus 'cost effectiveness' may result in a 'creaming' strategy – delivering no services to 'difficult clients' whose situation looks unchangeable. <p data-bbox="979 916 1382 1135">Increasing VAT will have an obvious negative impact on the economic condition of households, and especially for families living below the social minimum – as VAT is a kind of tax that charges the consumers, not the producers of wealth and services.</p> <li data-bbox="951 1151 1382 1211">➔ All recommendations under point 2 are correct and adequate. <li data-bbox="951 1227 1321 1254">➔ See observations given in point 3. <li data-bbox="951 1272 1362 1332">➔ Do not directly match the problem of poverty.

2.3 Recommendations

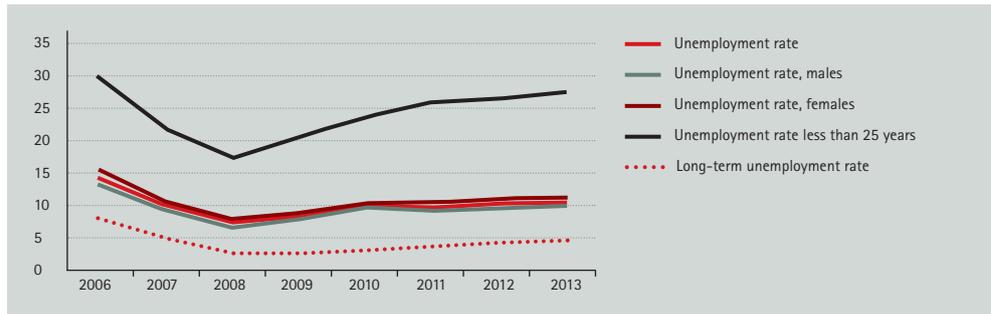
- ➔ Charitable organisations, such as Caritas, observe a general orientation towards integration programmes in Poland. Nowadays, social support has to be reshaped away from traditional poor-relief tools and into more activation-oriented approaches. Applying both solutions in parallel can be efficient of course, but support cannot be reduced to vocational activation. Treating social integration as secondary to labour market integration is a step in the wrong direction. In this approach, the clients' social skills are only developed as far as they are useful to the labour market. Yet, it is the labour market activity that should serve to improve the social functioning of a person (by making that person more self-sufficient), and not the other way round. Moreover, social skills can – and should(!) – also be fostered in persons with weaknesses that render them practically unemployable.

- ➔ Caritas Poland takes a position that the provinces of Poland 'B' have the same right to participate in social and economic development as Poland 'A'. And the people living in the provincial areas cannot be addressees only of public social welfare and charitable action run by the Church and NGOs. Territories of Poland 'B' have to be the places of social and economic investment by the State. Targeting and combating inequalities also has to have a territorial aspect.
- ➔ Family poverty is not, and never should be, a reason to put children into foster care. Awareness of this is rising in Poland under the creation of a system of family support and foster care. But still such cases of child-removal happen which means that families are in fact punished for suffering poverty. It has to be stressed that, at this time, poverty remains the foremost challenge facing social welfare agencies to deliver benefits and services.
- ➔ It has to be added that the future of new regulations on social welfare (not only on social care!) is unclear. On the one hand proposals have been prepared in close co-operation with some NGOs from the field (under a systemic project co-financed by the ESF). That co-operation has resulted in some innovative and complex proposals: e.g. a model of policy toward solving homeless problem (CARITAS from the Kielecka Diocese participated in this initiative as a member of the NGOs anti-homeless project network). On the other hand, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has demonstrated a lack of interest in implementing new solutions based on the idea of empowerment of the clients as well as service providers, and promotes regulations based on an "underclass management" approach.

03 Employment

3.1 Recent trends

Eurostat (% of population)	2009			2010			2011			2012			2013			EU average
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	
Poland																
EMPLOYMENT																
Employment rate	72.6	57.6	64.9	71.3	57.3	64.3	71.9	57.2	64.5	72.0	57.5	64.7	72.1	57.6	64.9	68.3
Unemployment rate	7.8	8.6	8.1	9.4	10	9.7	9	10.4	9.7	9.4	10.9	10.1	9.7	11.1	10.3	10.8
Unemployment rate, under 25 years of age	-	-	20.6	-	-	23.7	-	-	25.8	-	-	26.5	-	-	27.3	23.4
Long-term unemployment rate	2.2	2.8	2.5	2.9	3.2	3	3.3	4	3.6	3.7	4.6	4.1	4	4.8	4.4	5.1



Developments of employment indicators in Poland (2009-2013) based on Eurostat:

- ➔ The highest relative increase occurred in the male long-term unemployment rate, followed by the female rate resulting in an increase of the overall long-term unemployment rate from 2.5% in 2009 to 4.4% in 2013.
- ➔ The highest absolute increase occurred in the youth unemployment rate, which rose by 6.7 p.p. from 20.6% in 2009 to 27.3% in 2013.
- ➔ Employment rates barely fluctuated during the observed period, finishing at 64.9% overall in. The male employment rate experienced a slight drop of 0.5% p.p. from 2009, reaching 72.1% in 2013 and above the EU-average of 68.3%, while the rate for women reached the same level in 2013 as in 2009 (57.6%).

In addition to the above data, it should be highlighted that the problem of analysing employment and unemployment in Poland is that a significant percentage of adult Poles (especially young people) work (but not necessary live) abroad.

3.2

Recent policy developments

A targeting-oriented shift in employment policy, especially in activation services, has been done. In 2014 Poland, following in the footsteps of several 'old' EU-15 member states (e.g. the Netherlands, the UK), reformed the functioning of labour market institutions. The concept of the reform was to commercialise labour market activation services to a significant extent. This is to be achieved by increasing the role played by commercial businesses as subcontractors to local governments. The objective of the reform is to boost the effectiveness of activation services in line with the new public management approach (mentioned above as 'payment by results not procedures'). In this approach, the payment is a specific amount of money per client in a given client category. The service provider receives the payment only once the client is actually employed. The approach does indeed raise the effectiveness of services in the short term, since their employability immediately after the project ends is higher. Yet at the same time, the clients are treated in an instrumental manner. What is more, the approach attempts to push clients into the labour market with no consideration for what happens to them next; the entire focus is on the service provider securing a 'result'. Yet, losing a job – particularly for persons who lack the prerequisite skills and who are losing their jobs very quickly – is stressful and lowers the client's employability in the long-term. Most importantly, it is perceived as harmful to the client's dignity.

Assessment of Poland's Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs) adopted in 2014:

CSR 2 on strengthening efforts to reduce youth unemployment in line with the objectives of a youth guarantee, increasing adult participation in lifelong learning, and combating labour market segmentation as well as CSR 6 on improving the business environment by simplifying contract enforcement and requirements for construction permits and reducing costs and time spent on tax compliance by businesses are considered to have a positive impact on the situation of poverty and social exclusion in Poland. Nevertheless, the following CSR may have negative impacts:

CSRs that could have a negative impact	Observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="491 674 925 831">➔ CSR 3 ... "underpin the general pension reform by stepping up efforts to promote the employability of older workers to raise exit ages from the labour market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1002 674 1437 1346">➔ Generally speaking, the idea of raising exit ages from the labour market is correct as a political aim to achieve in an ageing society. The problem is that the Polish government has already increased the 'administrative' retirement age (especially and significantly for women). And this is not a way to promote the employability of older workers, but a clear fiscal solution which will probably result, in the future, in a situation of a "double no": no job, and no pension for the elderly. Pension reforms implemented in Poland after 1999 look like a package of solutions passed in favour of the financial lobbies, accompanied by a state-budget interest correction done during last three years. The interests of citizens are still not on the front-page of the agenda.<li data-bbox="1002 1357 1437 2029">➔ Secondly, raising the retirement age – if necessary – has to be implemented very gradually. While Poland chose rather the pendulum formula, after years of using early retirement as a tool to combat unemployment, the government forces have swung the opposite direction. As a result, the legal retirement age for women has been changed from 55 (early retirement age during nineties) to 67 (the retirement age to be achieved in the future). An additional year of working has been implemented as a consequence of lowering the age of school enrolment (from 7 to 6 – which means that young people will enter the labour market a year earlier). An additional 13 years more for women to work is definitely a kind of life-cycle revolution and not a step-by-step, moderate change.

3.3

Recommendations

- ➔ Include people employed on civil contracts ('junk contracts') into the pension system. It is necessary to solve the problem of job insecurity and small contributions into the pension system.

It has to be added that these are quasi self-employed persons whose situation is the worst and has to be improved first. Self-employment has to be forbidden in cases when (1) the employee works not independently but under the direct control of the employer, and (2) when the 'employee' has an exclusive contract with the employer; strictly speaking – when and where a worker does not offer his own services but simply sells his labour.

- ➔ Expand the network of day care centres and kindergartens.

It has to be added that we especially need more flexible and less institutionalised arrangements. For instance, social cooperatives could provide more day-care services for children. It is a win-win solution as it guarantees not only care for children, but also gives employment to people, mainly women, who are otherwise marginalised in the labour market. (Such a solution has been successfully implemented elsewhere, e.g. in Italy, and both NGOs and Church entities promote these kinds of service-oriented social cooperatives).

Similar solutions may be offered for elderly care and disabled persons' assistance. Currently in-home care services are provided mainly by family members. Such persons – referred to in social policy literature as 'informal-care-providers for dependant persons' – need support from public social services. In other cases they are often excluded from the labour market. These are mainly women.

In Germany, infirm older people have already been covered as a new social risk by the social security scheme. And new premiums accumulated by the Social Insurance Agency have created a new market of services. Such a solution builds a kind of stability for care providers. In Poland care supply for the elderly is insufficient compared to the demand. Caritas in Poland, for instance, provide a network of *stacje opieki* (care centres). Their in-home services and support are welcomed by the elderly and their families, but the financial situation of these centres is very insecure as they offer services for free and public subsidies are limited and insecure. Caritas also offers professional beds for chronically ill persons and this programme is especially popular, which may be used as illustration of the scale of unmet needs of older and ill people.

04 EU Initiatives and programmes implementation

4.1 Social Investment Package

Social investment package: investing in children¹

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- With regards to providing for adequate living standards through a combination of benefits
 - The EU document promotes a combination of universal and selective programmes and benefits addressed to children and families. Poland still prefers selective tools, although some universal solutions were introduced or developed over the last few years, e.g. tax relief for parents bringing up children. In Autumn 2014 the Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, announced a plan to extend pro-family relief through the Personal Income Tax (PIT) system, but he has since discarded this position for the EU one, and his successor, Ewa Kopacz, is much less concrete on this issue. The family-oriented manifesto has been prepared and presented by the Chancellery of the President and some universally oriented attempts are to be undertaken in the case of children disability (it is a consequence of ratification by Poland of the United Nations' Convention on Disability). Nevertheless, Poland, when compared to other EU countries, still has relatively undeveloped family-oriented universal programmes and social transfers.
 - At the level of local government, some city and urban authorities have passed the Family Charters (based mainly on France's experience). A powerful advocate for such solutions is the Association for Big Families 'Tree Plus'. Caritas Poland is familiar with the agenda of this association.
 - It has to be stressed that selective programmes may be run by local governments and NGOs, while the government is irreplaceable in implementing universal solutions. Without the latter, support for children and families in need is delivered with a significant side-effect: stigmatisation. Stigmatisation of clients is, in fact, an inevitable side-effect of delivering benefits to targeted groups, especially when selection is based on means-tested techniques. The stigma-effect may be a product of both: using official procedures of selection by administrative staff, and a product of the clients' own self-definitions (self-stigmatisation). In other words, a stigma is a kind of price to be paid for delivering more accurate help by public administrations. A way to limit the stigma-

¹ European Commission, 2013, Recommendation *Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* 2013/112/EU approved under the Framework of the Social Investment Package

effect is to contract out the selective programme to NGOs which operate in a more flexible and less formal way. But to eliminate a stigma, we definitely have to push the social programme in a universal way. For instance, if we organize cheap subsidised catering in school for all students (which means that the local government covers the costs) we are able to eliminate a stigma effect. If we offer free meals only to selected students (a means-tested programme) we open a space for stigmatization processes.

➔ **Regarding the reduction of inequality at a young age by investing in early childhood education and care**

- To provide access is not the same as to force solutions. For instance, the Polish government has forced earlier enrolment in schools (from the age of 6 instead of 7) even though a great grass-roots movement by parents was against this reform. It is very probable that the government's determination was a consequence of technical efforts to solve labour market problems connected with demographic processes rather than to invest in human capital. Such a reform may serve as a tool for investment in children and may limit inequalities in human capital between children from different socio-economic stratum. But it should have been prepared and implemented in a different manner, with strong partnership with citizens, and especially the NGOs representing the parents.

- Similarly, it is not the same thing to offer care-utilities for small children in order to support families whilst providing a policy demanding women to be active in the labour market. Citizenship-oriented social policy has to be based on creating possibilities and opportunities for the people, and should avoid imposing strict solutions based on "the government knows best" formula.

- It has to be stressed that Caritas Poland positively evaluates all kinds of investment in children and youth education. Caritas itself tries to be active in this field as the operator of two programmes: (1) *Skrzydła* (Wings Programme) offering educational grants to youth, and (2) *Tornister uśmiechu* (Happy Knapsack Programme) offering in-kind support for school newcomers.

➔ **Concerning the improvement of the education system's impact on equal opportunities**

- In spite of government's approval of the 'equal opportunities' agenda, we observe a process of schools closures in villages and small towns. Such decisions are rational for local governments from a strictly economic perspective, but results in rising inequalities of access. Some experts argue for the opposite: that rural schools usually offer worse education – so the policy of closing such entities is advantageous for children as it offers them access to services of better quality. But the newly-created coalition of NGOs active in the field presents a different point of view. They advocate for treating schools as not only entities for delivering pure formal education services but also vehicles for civic education and vital institutions for local communities. From such a perspective each local community definitely needs to have its own school, and especially marginalized communities in the provinces.

➔ **As regards the improvement of the responsiveness of health systems to address the needs of disadvantaged children**

- Generally speaking, it is a very positive agenda, and especially universal access to health services for children has to be supported very strongly. It may be added that open access to health care in Poland is based on being insured under the public insurance scheme called *ubezpieczenie zdrowotne*, but children enjoy, in practice, even more universal access to the basic services. The problems are connected with the general condition (which is poor) of the overall health care system in Poland, and not in legal regulations.

- What may be improved? For instance, the network of public schools might play, throughout Poland, a much more important role in the field of health protection and prevention.
- Special attention has to be paid, and is paid, to families with disabled children. Disability as a problem is both social- and health-related in nature. So the support offered to disabled children (and youth) has to be organized much more using a 'case management' formula. Currently too much services are withdrawn automatically when the client turns 18 years old. But the situation has improved slightly since 2013 when the Act on Family Support and Foster Care was passed. Families with disabled children are under the 'family assistance' programme and some effort is given to organizing better access for those children to rehabilitation and health services. What is new is that special professional foster families are being trained to take care of disabled children.
- The Child Ombudsman is active in the field of promoting the extension of services of different kinds delivered to children.

EU initiative: youth guarantee²

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

- ➔ Poland has already realised a special pilot programme *Twoja kariera – Twój Wybór* (Your Career – Your Choice). It tested 'vouchers' of different kinds as possible new tools to help youth into career paths: educational, placement, settlement, and also special subsidies for creating jobs for youth leaving university. At the local level, cross-sector partnerships promote youth employment, while at the central level, one of the banks controlled by the state – *Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego* - has become active in this field.
- ➔ The agenda of the special government document updated in April 2014 shows how to use, in a more universal way, the experience gained from the above mentioned pilot programme and it looks almost perfect. On the other hand, support offered by district employment offices and other institutions and services is not enough as still many young Poles have a strategy of earning through migration which looks much more attractive and shapes their crucial decisions regarding what to do after leaving the education system.
- ➔ Unfortunately, the problem of youth unemployment cannot be solved in Poland only through a package of separated targeted programmes. The general orientation of employers on civil or temporary and short term contracts results in situations where young people need more and more time to get 'rooted' in the labour market. Without reversing this general trend, special targeted support addressed to young labour market newcomers will have limited impact.

² Council of the European Union, 2013, *Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee* (2013/C 120/01)

Innovative services or programmes implemented by Caritas Poland

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR PROGRAMME

- ➔ Caritas Poland organised "Biura Aktywizacji Osób Bezrobotnych" (Centres for Unemployed-Persons' Activation, the Polish acronym being BAOB). At the time of implementation, a few years ago, it was a unique and innovative project based on the experiences of Caritas in France. Caritas Poland, in co-operation with some dioceses, promoted a new approach in the activation of unemployed persons based on the idea of accompaniment. It means that each unemployed person cooperates with his/her own assistant (called an 'accompanist'). Such a helper assists a client in all kinds of ways to find a job on the labour market: offers advice, gives psychological support etc., but never takes responsibility for the client's decisions or behaviour. Such an approach activates the clients under the empowerment principle without the side-effect of the more stringent 'welfare to work' techniques. Generally speaking, Caritas Poland have a real influence in promoting an innovative approach to supporting unemployed persons under the general idea of 'empowerment' rather than 'mobilization'.
- ➔ The pilot programme *Wyjść z szarej strefy* (Leaving the Grey Sphere) is a common initiative of Caritas structures in Poland (seven dioceses) and Germany (one diocese). It offers support for Poles (almost all of whom are women) who deliver personal care services (mainly to the elderly and children), in Germany, under informal contracts. The aim of the programme is to legalize these contracts and raise awareness among the care givers of their rights and entitlements, and deliver social protection to them.
- ➔ Caritas in several dioceses run *stacje opieki* (care centres). This is an innovative kind of support as the centres deliver both health care and social care services to older and chronically ill persons, while the public system separates these two kinds of support. Also, the new Caritas programme on delivering professional beds for chronically ill persons has generated great interest among Polish families. Both initiatives illustrate that the Polish health care and social care systems need not necessarily offer more effectiveness of services already delivered, but rather increasing the spectrum of those services, especially those delivered outside of hospitals.
- ➔ Caritas itself tries to be active in the field of human capital investment. Caritas runs two such programmes. Under the 'Wings' Programme (*Skrzydła*) Caritas delivers 3,500 educational grants to young Poles each year; and under the 'Happy Knapsack' Programme (*Tornister uśmiechu*) Caritas offers in-kind support for 40 thousand school newcomers each year. Caritas's experience in fundraising shows that Poles are becoming more and more aware of the significance of such programmes.

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This report is supported by the European Union Programme for
Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS (2007-2013).