Social services - an unexploited resource at the disposal of public social policy in Poland

1. A specific character of the development process of social welfare in Poland

The stages in the formation process of a new system after 1989

Social welfare constitutes an institution of social policy of a welfare state which enables individuals and groups of people to cope with difficult life situations by means of material benefits and social work. Social welfare developed as an element of socio-economic and cultural order of the industrial society which supplemented or replaced family support systems and the activities carried out by religious and secular charities. The development of social welfare in Poland was marked by the dominance of non-public institutions, predominantly related to the Church. Whereas in Protestant countries, due to Reformation, religious social welfare institutions were replaced by a public system, in Poland the victory of Counter-Reformation and the partitions reinforced the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church. Poland's lack of statehood resulted in the emergence of a different model of the occupational role of a social worker as this role was played by a patriot, an amateur community worker, a priest or a lay member of the Church or another religious community who acts for patriotic and religious reasons. This specific context delayed the process of professionalization of social work regarded as an occupation endowed with public trust and influenced the theory of aid activities. It can be traced in the thought of Helena Radlińska who lay the foundations for social pedagogy which is the Polish version of social work. The institutionalization of social welfare took place only after Poland regained independence in 1918 but a short process of establishing a public system was disrupted by the World War II and the introduction of a new political system in 1945. In the People's Republic of Poland social welfare became a marginal institution in the social security system. Due to the nationalization and centralization of social welfare in this new political system, the tradition of welfare society and its institutions were abandoned. Foundations and associations were made illegal, the local government was abolished and due to the fact that there were no statutory regulations the occupation of a social worker was deprofessionalized.

The formation process of the social welfare system after 1989 was based on the idea of
decentralization of the state and the revival of local self-governance. Two public administration reforms of the year 1990 and 1999 were crucial for forming a new institution. The legislative work on the bills concerning social welfare and the local government (1990) resulted in establishing an institution with a new partially decentralized organization structure. Communal social welfare centres assumed the role of a local partner of central and regional state institutions. Central government agencies took on the function consisting in organizing social welfare as well as scheduling, regulating and controlling functions whereas local government bodies provided services in the place of residence. The dual character of targets set for social welfare became a major problem, which was reflected in the division of tasks carried out by social welfare centres. The performance of communes' own statutory tasks was financed from the local government funds and in the case of delegated tasks, financial resources came from the central budget. The subjectivity of the commune with regard to social policy and social welfare was limited to a narrow area defined by statutory tasks, and delegated tasks financed by the state reduced the role played by the local government's social welfare to an instrument of social support for the victims of the systemic transformation, that is to managing and supervising social problems at the local level. Local social welfare provided within the closest environment fulfilled short-term goals of interventional nature directed at new groups in need but at the same time it constituted a vital element of the policy of transformation of the whole social security system in Poland. The activities were aimed at changing common programmes into selective ones which would be available only for the people who meet particular income-related criteria. This resulted in transferring the benefits which used to be universal from social insurance and social security to social welfare. The increase in the number of social welfare beneficiaries and in the range of tasks assigned to social welfare and the limited amount of resources made the system more bureaucratic. Its role was reduced to distributing funds and controlling whether they were assigned in a legitimate way. This reduction of the role of social welfare was carried out at the cost of social work, non-material services, stimulating economic and social activity of customers etc.

The second public administration reform (1999) was supposed to eliminate the above mentioned flaws of the social welfare system by introducing full-scale decentralization of the social tasks of the state, development of self-governance, subjectivization of local communities, imposing on the family the status of the main subject of social policy and reconstructing civic society

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pursuant to the principle of subsidiarity. Two new tiers of the self-government system were introduced and the scope of operation of the social welfare system was expanded by adding care and upbringing of children and teenagers to social welfare's range of activities. However, the public administration reform was ineffectively prepared. The scope of operation of the social welfare system, its competence and the measures at its disposal were defined in a very vague way, there were no role models and no patterns of operation for new organizations to follow. Staff did not have adequate background to perform the tasks imposed on them, and the formation of self-government administration units as well as the development of local social policy programmes were carried out in a very spontaneous way being at the same time to a large extent dependent on local determinants. The relations between newly established organizations – district centres of family support (PCPR) and communal social welfare centres (GOPS) proved vital for the development of local social policy and social welfare. A comparative analysis carried out by Marek Rymsza proved that the institutions which constituted the object of the study differ in terms of the form of aid offered by them (basic level in the case of GOPSes and specialized level in the case of PCPRs), the kind of benefits they offer (financial benefits – GOPSes, counselling – PCPRs), the criteria applied to select beneficiaries (income-related – GOPSes, no criteria – PCPRs), the kind of social intervention carried out by each institution (salvage – GOPSes, prevention – PCPRs), the methods of social intervention (casework – GOPSes, community work method – PCPRs). Communal centres pursue the residual model which entails short-term support whereas district centres of family support represent the institutional model, i.e. prevention, in which the need which arises is the only criterion for offering aid. The customers' background is different in the case of district centres from that of the customers of communal centres. District centres find their customers in residential social welfare establishments whereas communal centres' customers are found in the environment they live in. In the course of functioning of the welfare system it turned out that district centres of family support did not take over the functions consisting in providing assistance for the family as they focused their activities on residential social welfare establishments and a few categories of statutory beneficiaries: foster families, the disabled, refugees and charges of foster care facilities. As Halina Lipke pointed out the establishment of district centres of family support created an opportunity for social services development by the application of the community work method of social work and by the participation of social services in the formation of local social policy. Favourable conditions for development were created when better opportunities for cooperation between social services and

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2 M. Rymsza, Praca socjalna...
the non-governmental sector were secured by taking into consideration the role of non-governmental organizations in solving local social problems. The establishment of local district services, whose activity embraces all the families, was supposed to alleviate the effects of stigmatization resulting from the fact of being a beneficiary of social welfare and to secure a more rational development and usage of local social infrastructure. The above mentioned benefits resulting from the new organization of social welfare provision after the reform of 1999 were squandered because of the shortage of financial resources needed to carry out the tasks, random or politically-biased selection of staff and the adoption of the conception consisting in the lack of mutual dependence between communal and district social welfare organizations.

Józefina Hrynkiewicz very accurately indicated the reasons why the reform proved to be a failure. She pointed out that the model of self-government relations requires an organizational culture focused on cooperation and on abandoning long-standing habits of building group identity and social bonds which take into account particularistic interests. When analysing the policy lying behind the reform, Janelle Kerlin pointed out that centralized fiscal policy was responsible for the fact that decision-making competence lied exclusively with the central tier and was not delegated to lower tiers. In turn the lack of decentralization of the fiscal system imposed constraints on democracy at the district and regional tier. The establishment of municipal districts (powiat grodzki) resulted in aggravating inequality between rural and urban areas with regard to access to financial resources which can be allocated to social welfare provision.

The public social welfare system which was criticized after the reform of 1999 was amended in the years 2003-2004 and successive changes were aimed at lowering the costs of functioning of the system and increasing its effectiveness. In this period legislative measures concerning public benefit activity and volunteering as well as social employment (2003) and a new Act on Social Welfare (2004) were developed. These legislative initiatives were aimed at building a welfare state by introducing the representatives of the community, non-governmental organizations and individual volunteers into the sphere of activity of public social welfare organizations, by stimulating the economic activity on the part of long-standing beneficiaries of social welfare who are threatened with exclusion, and finally by implementing the instrument of a contract upon which the granting of financial aid is conditioned. This instrument should encourage an inactive beneficiary to participate in the process of aiding local communities and in stimulating their activity.

4 Ibid., p. 57.
5 J. Hrynkiewicz, Decentralizacja zadań..., p. 192.
2. An attempt at evaluating the potential of social welfare

In the above discussion concerning the process of development of public social welfare there was no reference to the current effectiveness of this institution and the degree to which the tasks assigned to it have been carried out. The most fundamental question is whether the practice pursued in its operations by the social welfare system meets the social needs: fighting the problem of impoverishment and exclusion of numerous groups and areas. In order to evaluate social welfare provision in an objective way it is necessary to analyse human and financial resources at the disposal of this institution of state social policy, its relations with the environment, i.e. local authorities, non-governmental organizations etc. The questions concerning the condition of the Polish social welfare system require empirical data, answers which will not be anyhow biased or based on stereotypes as they commonly are when being discussed in the media. The lack of knowledge concerning social welfare, the staff working for the benefit of social welfare and welfare beneficiaries is associated with the prevalent negative opinion about this institution. Those who criticize Polish social welfare provision use economic, socio-cultural, political and effectiveness-related arguments to justify their negative opinion. Liberally-oriented economists point out too high in their opinion costs of maintaining the social welfare system and of financing social transfers7. Researchers conducting socio-cultural studies warn against making beneficiaries addictively dependent on social welfare and thus impairing their individual responsibility. It is suggested that there exists the risk of de-motivation resulting from granting income guarantees. It is also pointed out that the operations of the social welfare system are influenced by politics, which is evidenced by the strategy consisting in granting low benefits to a wide range of subjects (many people are given small sums of money) without the necessity of carrying out a selection. Such selection could induce those who have been deprived of certain entitlements to goods or services which they have hitherto enjoyed to become political opponents8. A negative opinion was also expressed about low effectiveness of the social welfare system with regard to helping beneficiaries to become self-reliant, to regain the life resourcefulness they have lost, which pursuant to the Act on Social Welfare was supposed to constitute the main objective set for social welfare.

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7 Stanisława Golinowska points out that it is necessary to distinguish two clear-cut stages in the functioning of social welfare provision. In the first stage, in the years 1990-1993, there was an increase in the social benefits expenditure (from 0.2% of the GDP in 1990 to 0.6% of the GDP in 1993) and the number of beneficiaries (from 4.3% of the total population in 1990 to 7.8% in 1993). In the second stage, after the amendment to the legislation in 1996, the proportion of social welfare expenditure in the GDP halved and the number of beneficiaries decreased by one third. This cost-cutting entailed the decrease in the value of benefits and the number of people entitled to benefits and the fall in the number of services (from 20.1% in 1980 to 3.8% in 1999). Cf S.Golimowska, I. Topińska, Pomoc społeczna – zmiany i warunki skutecznego działania, CASE, Warszawa 2002, p. 28.

8 S.Golimowska, I. Topińska, Pomoc społeczna ..., p. 61.
What is the actual condition of public social welfare? According to the data collected by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy which were presented on this department's website, in 2007 there were approximately 120 thousand people (119,922) employed in organizational units of the social welfare system. The highest percentage of these social workers (49,796) was employed in nursing homes, 42,907 in communal social welfare centres and 13,279 in foster care facilities. Communal centres are basic social welfare facilities which pursuant to the Act on Local Self-government can be found in each Polish commune. However, the potential of social welfare provision in communal centres measured by the number of human resources ranges from a few employees in rural areas and a few thousand employees in big municipal communes. The scale on which social welfare benefits are granted is manifested in the number of people who in 2007 were awarded the decision on granting assistance which amounts to 2,366,055 and the total number of people being the members of the families to whom support was offered – 4,383,434. The main reasons for awarding assistance comply with statutory provisions (income-related and situational criterion) and have not changed in any way over the years. They are as follows: poverty (2,444,685), unemployment (2,253,734), helplessness in child-rearing and running a household (1,209,303), disability (1,067,844), chronic or severe illness (964,105).

The data obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy quoted in this paper showing the prevalence, scale and trends in the operations of the social welfare system have been substantiated in the study entitled “Social aid in the opinion of the Poles: who should receive aid and in what form?” carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) in August 2008. 28% of the respondents surveyed by CBOS stated that he or she or a member of his or her family received aid within the social welfare system and over a half of respondents (54%) knew some beneficiaries of this institution of social security. The following groups of people were granted assistance: the poor, the unemployed, the pensioners, people with no professional qualifications. Women outnumbered men as beneficiaries of social welfare. The reasons for awarding social benefits were reflected in the opinions of Poles on who needs support. Most commonly mentioned groups included: the poor, the unemployed, the sick and the elderly. According to the respondents, the following institutions are obliged to support those in need: self-government social welfare (82%) and state social welfare (72%). More respondents expect the aforesaid institutions to offer assistance than it is in the case of family and other traditionally recognized care systems (eg. secular and church charities). The scope of assistance as perceived by the respondents is still too narrow in relation to social expectations as 42% of the surveyed by CBOS maintain that the number of people

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9 Komu i jak pomagać? Pomoc społeczna w opinii Polaków” Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej 2008
who receive social assistance is too small (in 2004 56% of respondents were of this opinion), and
more than half of the surveyed (57%) believe that inadequate amounts of public funds are allocated
to this purpose (in 2004 75% of respondents were of this opinion). The comparative analysis of the
data collected in August 2008 with the data collected by way of a survey carried out in 2004 shows
that the respondents evaluated the operations of the social welfare system in more favourable terms.
However, the evaluation of the accuracy of allocating benefits resulted in more negative opinions as
only 9% of the surveyed thought that only those people who really need assistance receive it
whereas every sixth respondent (17%) thought that only those people who do not really need
assistance are the beneficiaries of the social welfare system. The analysis of opinions on who should
be granted support from public funds and in what form this support should be offered shows that
half of respondents believe that using the services provided by the social welfare system is only
natural and that these support services should be available to every person who is in difficulties
regardless of his or her financial standing. 74% of the surveyed pointed out that the form of
assistance should be adjusted to particular circumstances. The human resources at the disposal of
the social welfare system seem to be the key factor which can contribute to the improvement of
functioning of the system. The opinion held by researchers on the professionalism of social workers
was different from that expressed by practitioners. Marek Rymsza10 maintained that thanks to the
measures which were adopted and implemented in the period of transformation, the process of
professionalization of staff is parallel to the formation process of social welfare institutions. The
process of professionalization is conducive to building the professional identity of the employees of
the institution of social welfare, who as a result of assigning social work to this institution have
become synonymous with social workers. Halina Lipke11 believes that in spite of the
professionalization process which was initiated in 1990 by passing a bill on social welfare, statutory
qualifications of the employees of the public system pose a problem for the public sector. The
conditions of improving the qualifications of social workers substantially deteriorated after putting
into force the public administration reform of 1999. The function of training staff was assigned to
self-governing bodies at the district and regional level, which resulted in reducing the training
activity due to the shortage of funds and the lack of understanding on the part of district local
authorities of the importance of the professional development of social workers. The
professionalization of social services is hampered by bureaucratization which entails a peculiar
cognitive dissonance: the qualifications of social welfare staff improve but at the same time the
operations carried out within the framework of social welfare provision become more and more

10 M. Rymsza, Praca socjalna..., pp. 99–110.
routine. In the studies on communal social welfare carried out by the author of this paper in the
years 2000-2004 fully competent human resources constituted the least numerous group of
professionals. The predominant group was made up of the employees who were of lesser use for the
organization and who required a long-term professional development policy. The process of formal
professionalization in educational terms was not accompanied by the process of professionalization
in terms of skills. A low level of knowledge and limited skills of social welfare staff were also
connected with the reasons for which social welfare staff decided to choose this occupation which
were not related to its substance. This resulted in occupational burnout and decreased job
satisfaction, which in turn induced staff to give up their job and adversely affected the quality of
customer service. The evaluation of the activities undertaken by the management of social welfare
institutions revealed the lack of recruitment and staff selection systems and professional adaptation
programmes for employees, which would guarantee a more effective control of the inflow of new
employees and facilitate the adjustment process they had to go through to meet the demands
imposed by the organization. There were no training systems with regard to professional
development and supervision and the working conditions were difficult. External determinants,
such as the financial standing of local self-governments, a shortage of jobs and the human resources
policy pursued by local authorities which hampered professionalization, were only partially
responsible for such a state of affairs.

It is possible to verify whether the findings of earlier empirical studies are still valid by
means of a study entitled “Analysis and evaluation of the professional background of social welfare
staff in Poland” which constituted a report from a research project commissioned by the Ministry of
Labour and Social Policy which was carried out in 2007 in the Institute for the Development of
Social Services12. Within the framework of the project researchers surveyed 2521 employees of
362 establishments which represented 11 types of organizational units. In order to present
exhaustive empirical analyses the author would have to go beyond the scope of this paper but it is
worth focusing special attention on a few findings. It was evidenced in the survey that the
profession of a social worker is feminized (86.8%) and that this profession is characterized by a low
pay. Average gross remuneration of the surveyed amounted to 2012.33 PLN but almost half of
employees (48%) earn between 1000 and 2000 PLN gross. The analysis of the level of education of
public social welfare staff indicates that there has been an improvement in this field – more than
half of the surveyed claimed that they completed higher master's degree studies or higher bachelor's
degree vocational studies. The predominant field of study was still pedagogy but employees also

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12 Analiza i ocena przygotowania zawodowego kadru pomocy społecznej w Polsce” (2007), Instytut Rozwoju
Służb Społecznych, Warszawa
graduated special colleges for social workers (szkoła pracowników socjalnych). In the period of 12 years (the previous research of this kind was carried out in 1995) the number of employees with higher education almost tripled. As regards continuous professional development, the situation was less optimistic. Only 13.6% of respondents completed post graduate studies and only one out of four respondents were specialized in the profession of a social worker. The majority of the surveyed (82.3%) did not participate in continuous education. This passivity with regard to education may be justified by the self-assessment of qualifications held by respondents. Over 4/5 of the surveyed regarded their qualifications as adequate. Over 2/3 of the heads of establishments in which the survey was carried out also expressed a positive opinion on the professional competence of their employees. 2/3 of employees claimed that in the previous year they attended courses and participated in trainings, which should contribute to improving the qualifications of human resources. However, it is hard to evaluate the quality of the training offer and its usefulness for work practice, especially due to the fact that the surveyed participated in trainings only once a year. A low level of training activity of the surveyed staff of the public social welfare system can be attributed to the fact that only in the case of 15.7% of establishments the management allocates substantial funds to the professional development of their employees. The findings of the study presented by way of territorial and institutional division indicate that there exist major differences in respect of the character of the commune (municipal or rural) and between particular voivodships. The largest number of employees can be found in municipal establishments (38.6 on average) and the following voivodships: śląskie, dolnośląskie and mazowieckie and the smallest number of employees can be found in the social welfare centres in rural communes and voivodships (podlaskie, opolskie). The ratio of the average number of core staff to the average number of all the employed indicates an increase in the effectiveness of core operations of establishments in the poorest voivodships in which rural areas prevail over urban areas (świętokrzyskie, podkarpackie, pomorskie) as they are not so heavily burdened with administrative expenses.

In the course of the process of decentralization of social welfare provision which has been carried out in Poland since 1989 attempts have been made at the subjectivization of social welfare perceived as an instrument of developing social policy in its self-government, local and regional aspects. The provisions of the Act on Social Welfare of 12 March 2004 (Articles 17.1, 19 and 21) facilitate the realization of this objective as they impose on the commune the duty of developing and implementing the strategy for coping with social problems. The development and implementation of the strategy were the tasks assigned to the district authorities and to voivodship self-government as stipulated in the aforesaid Act. The task of coordinating the implementation of the strategy for coping with social problems was allocated to communal social welfare centres,
district centres for family support and regional social welfare centres. However, the statutory provisions do not specify the standards of the strategy, the procedure for developing and implementing the strategy, time limits for these activities, and what is most important they do not prescribe any method of fulfilling this duty. The strategies for coping with social problems and their role in developing local social policy were analysed in the research project carried out in the Institute for the Development of Social Services. Within the framework of the research project 500 communal strategies and 99 district strategies became the object of quantitative and qualitative analysis. The findings of the study on these strategies which were presented in the report by Halina Lipke and Agnieszka Hryniewiecka13 are not optimistic. A small number of strategies (40% of communes and over 60% of districts drew up such documents) and low quality of these strategies forced the authors of the above mentioned report to advance a thesis stating that there is no clear vision of solving social problems in an effective way and to question the idea that the documents being the object of the analysis are an instrument of designing local social policy. The authors of the report considered the idea that these strategies play the role of a long-term programme of social welfare provision. These strategies are developed on the basis of the reports drawn up by self-governments and statistics collected by these bodies rather than on the basis of a reliable diagnosis of the social situation. They do not try to predict social phenomena, needs and problems. In many cases they can be regarded as examples of wishful thinking, formal documents which are of no use from the point of view of local social policy. The situation with regard to the aforesaid strategies is particularly grave in rural areas, which is evidenced by the findings of a nationwide research project “Diagnosis of the Social and Professional Situation of Rural Women in Poland” carried out in 2007 under the supervision of the author of this paper within the framework of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (activity 1.6 b)14. The majority of the documents which became the object of the analysis did not meet the basic requirements of the strategic planning method. These documents did not include any method of monitoring the degree to which the objectives were realized, the sources of funds and estimate costs of pursuing strategic objectives. Only a few strategies were developed with the application of the participatory method which makes it possible to build local partnership focused on the activities aimed at solving local social problems. Many documents were drawn up with the application of the managerial method (local authorities and officials) or the expert method (hired consultants)15. In the light of the

15 Przywojska, J.(2008), Strategie gminne i powiatowe jako instrumenty polityki władz lokalnych wobec kobiet
findings quoted in this paper it may be stated that the strategies for solving social problems which theoretically constitute a perfect instrument of social policy planning and of mobilizing local resources do not fulfil the functions attributed to them with regard to integration, building local partnership and social education of self-government bodies and social actors.

3. Problems and prospects of public social welfare

The above discussion shows that although there have been many reforms implemented after 1989 researchers and practitioners point out long-lasting flaws of the institution of social welfare. Jakub Wygnański grouped these flaws under two categories: structural and systemic faults and functional constraints. The first category encompasses the following faults: the lack of social problems diagnosis, social bureaucracy, a more and more fragmentary nature of local welfare, badly-made social law and the lack of local, regional and central social policy. As regards the category of functional flaws, they include unequal access to social services, the routine character of activities, the lack of local social policy and budget-oriented instead of task-oriented planning. Joanna Staręga-Piasek, who was one of the people responsible for developing a new social welfare system after 1989, criticizes the functioning of the system with regard to fighting poverty and social exclusion. In her opinion social welfare in Poland does not fight poverty and exclusion. It is an institution whose structures of beneficiaries are ossified, which leads to decreasing the activity undertaken by the beneficiaries and finally to creating social pathology. The critical opinions presented in this paper are legitimate but they do not devote enough attention to the vital issue of managing social welfare establishments. If the legislative measures aimed at improving the functioning of the social welfare system are to be effective this complex institution must be well managed. If the way in which social welfare is managed improved it would be possible to enhance the organization of work and to prevent overburdening of social workers with administrative activities carried out at the expense of their core activity – social work and thus to minimize the risk of occupational burnout. One of the faults of the system is the focus on short-term activities and the lack of long-term strategies and solutions. The course of action for the system is defined with reference to the so called “fiscal year” and there is no strategic planning at the district and communal level. The issue of strategic planning is a problem which urgently needs to be solved.

16 Wygnański J. a talk delivered during the Sociological Convention, Zielona Góra, 2007
because of the requirements imposed by the European Union for using the EU funds. The cooperation between public institutions of social welfare provision and non-governmental organizations constitutes another issue which needs to be dealt with. In order to be able to solve social problems at the local level it is necessary to foster cooperation and partnership between public and non-governmental subjects operating in the field of social welfare. The analysis of the functioning of communal organizations dealing with community social welfare indicates that they focus their activity on the disbursement of benefits. The process of stimulating economic activity in the beneficiaries is hampered by insufficient amount of social work based on cooperation with the local environment and its resources. Low operational effectiveness poses the risk of maintaining the situation of dependence on social welfare, marginalization and exclusion of whole social groups and regions of Poland. Social work focused on building social capital in the local community with the purpose of solving the social problems pertaining to this community seems to be an alternative to the application of the community social welfare method which has been applied hitherto. The analyses of local social welfare organizations in terms of the possibility of using them as an instrument of solving the problems of the customers of these organizations and their social environment show that the most effective method of operation consists in using the social capital pertaining to social welfare i.e. the professionalism of managers and social workers, the network of social relations. The findings of a survey carried out among the beneficiaries of social services indicate that there are two fundamental elements which can secure the satisfaction of customers. One of them is connected with subjective treatment of beneficiaries and the other with the quality of service which must be reliable and competent. Other factors which contribute to the satisfaction of customers encompass professional and well-organized welfare provision and the character of the relations with social workers which should be based on partnership. This need for subjective treatment expressed by customers and their willingness to participate in the process of social intervention in a conscious way was evidenced by the importance attached to the access to the information on the guidelines and procedures for granting assistance. The beneficiaries of social services pointed out how important is the privacy in the relations connected with providing assistance, which should be secured by appropriate organization of a social welfare centre. This need for subjective treatment and enjoying the right to dignity induced researchers to question the opinion that financial factors are the important for satisfying the needs of customers and solving their problems.

18 Krzyszkowski, J. (2005), Między państwem opiekuńczym a opiekuńczym społeczeństwem, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego
The social relations between the environment, local institutional actors and the local community in the territory where social welfare facilities operate are vital for the quality of social welfare provision. The findings of research\textsuperscript{20} prove that the quality of relations between social welfare facilities and the environment is low. Local authorities do not constitute a suitable partner for managers and social workers, which is manifested in the attitude of local political elites as well as in the strategies adopted by self-government bodies for social welfare provision which ensue from this attitude. The relations between social welfare and non-governmental organizations which operate in the commune constitute a source of social capital. However NGOs cannot be regarded as a significant partner of social welfare centres due to the fact that there is a very limited number of them and they are characterized by a small potential. The negative attitude of social welfare staff to the members of associations and foundations also hampers the development of useful relations. They are regarded as unreliable and incompetent and as the rivals of social welfare centres in the fund-raising battle. Other public subjects of social welfare seem to play the role of a natural source of social capital and an operational partner but the analysis carried out in this field point out that there is no cooperation between public subjects as regards social welfare provision. In order to build local partnership it is necessary to improve the relations with customers, local authorities, public subjects and social organizations. Good relations with the aforesaid partners may result in an increase in the effectiveness of the social welfare provided within the local community and augur well for the changes introduced to the system, financing, the role of the employee and the customer as well as the role of the environment. Social welfare depends on local authorities and the public opinion and occasionally it may become the subject of the political game, which requires special knowledge and skills with regard to public relations.

The authors of the report drawn up by the Institute for the Development of Social Services which was quoted before recommend undertaking activities aimed at promoting education and at increasing the availability of continuous education. However, this requires the allocation of additional funds to the professional development of social welfare staff. The aforesaid activities should be accompanied with the measures aimed at improving the financial standing of social welfare staff. One of the most important measures should be the Act on the Profession of a Social Worker which would improve the social perception of this profession, guarantee higher remuneration and improve the image of a social worker. The organizational structure of social welfare institutions also needs to be amended. The activities aimed at enhancing social welfare provision by self-government bodies with regard to its organization and financing should be carried

\textsuperscript{20} Krzyszkowski, J. ibid.
out in the areas characterized by a low level of urbanization.

It is necessary to support the development of the non-public sector in social welfare provision i.e. non-governmental organizations and to promote valuable private initiatives in the areas struck by the shortage of public services (eg. home care services). However any attempts at uncontrolled marketization or privatization of care services provision or at handing over the provision of certain social services to the non-public sector should be prevented. In order to carry out a rational privatization process we cannot focus only on the capital on the part of investors and potential customers but it is also necessary to secure a public system of supervision which would enforce the conformity with adequate standards and availability of services offered by non-public subjects (the scandals which take place in private nursing homes prove that there is no such supervision).

All the conclusions and recommendations presented in this paper which are targeted at the authorities, managers and social workers can produce fruitful results as long as social welfare provision is regarded not as a cost but as an investment in human resources aimed at reducing social exclusion.

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