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Social Policy and Social Policy Research in Poland

A Report on Social Policy Teaching, Political Consultancy and Research Data Infrastructure

AT A GLANCE

- As of 2023, eight curricula were carried out in Poland in a field of study that included the category "Social policy" in its name.
- In the Polish tradition of higher education, studies in the field of social policy are by far the most often offered as studies carried out within the discipline of political science and administration.
- There is a tendency to move towards the practical dimension of social policy, as well as a focus on issues of analysis (evaluation) and management of the social sphere in curricula.
- Social policy is also the focus of other fields of related studies, which can be divided into two types, i.e. majors adopting a broad perspective of social policy (e.g. public policy) or a narrow perspective (e.g. social work).

- Policy consultancy in the area of social policy is present in all key institutions of public administration involved in the creation and implementation of social policy at all levels of its operation.
- The predominant institutional forms are councils, panels and committees established at different levels - government, local government; executive (both at the level of the Council of Ministers, individual ministries and the office of the President of the Republic of Poland) and legislative (both at the level of the Sejm and the Senate).
- There is no specific institution that can be identified as the main body responsible for the transfer of social policy research into political decision-making.
- There are three general institutional categories of entities collecting data and doing research in social policy: central administration institutions, institutions of local administration, research and academic institutions.
- The Central Statistical Office (GUS) coordinates the programme of public statistical surveys and provides aggregated data.
- Cooperation between researchers and data producers takes place mainly at the level of councils and other consultative bodies of public institutions at different levels.

ABSTRACT DEUTSCH

In Polen gibt es wenige Studiengänge im Bereich der Sozialpolitik, aber es werden neue Studiengänge mit dieser Bezeichnung geschaffen. Vorwiegend handelt es sich um Bachelor-Studiengänge, die meist in den Politikwissenschaften angeboten werden. Darüber hinaus gibt es eine Reihe von Studiengängen in verwandten Fächern, in denen sozialpolitische Themen behandelt werden. Sozialpolitische Politikberatung ist auf allen Ebenen des Regierungssystems und in allen möglichen sozialpolitischen Institutionen verbreitet. Am häufigsten findet sie in Form von konsultativ tätigen Räten, Gremien und Kommissionen statt, die sich mit allgemeinen wie spezifischen sozialpolitischen Themen befassen. Es gibt eine umfangreiche sozialpolitische Dateninfrastruktur. Öffentliche Einrichtungen sind verpflichtet, Daten, die im Zusammenhang mit ihren satzungsgemäßen Tätigkeiten entstehen, zu sammeln. Diese Daten werden in Form von Datenbanken und Berichten zur Verfügung gestellt. Auch akademische und andere Forschungszentren führen zahlreiche Studien und Untersuchungen zur Sozialpolitik durch. Die wichtigste Institution, die quantitative Schlüsseldaten zur Sozialpolitik sammelt, ist das Statistische Zentralamt.

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

Studies in the field of social policy are not numerous in Poland, but new majors containing this category in the name are still being created. Bachelor's degree curricula in this area are predominant, with studies most often offered within the discipline of political science and administration. In addition, there are a number of study programmes in related majors, where social policy issues are discussed. Social policy political consultancy is widespread at all levels of state organisation and in every type of social policy institution. It most often takes place in the form of the work of consultative councils, panels and commissions addressing broader or narrower social policy issues. There is a rich social policy data infrastructure. Public institutions are required to collect data relating to their statutory activities. These data are made available in the form of databases and reports. Also, academic and other research centres carry out numerous studies and research on social policy. The most important institution aggregating key quantitative data on social policy is the Central Statistical Office.

1 Introduction

This report focuses on the analysis of the higher education, policy consultation and data and research infrastructure regarding social policy in Poland. The following research questions were formulated:

1) In what forms is social policy taught in higher education in Poland? How many bachelor and master study programmes are there that focus on social policy or have a critical quantity of courses that deal with subfields of social policy? What is their disciplinary background and what are the key subfields covered? Which job market are these study programmes aimed at? In what ways do these programmes promote social policy research and scientific careers in social policy research?

2) What are the most common forms of political consultancy in Poland? Which institutions and formally established bodies have been relevant for the main areas of social policy? Do these institutions engage scientists only, or do they rather involve mixed councils including representatives of, e.g., interest groups, political parties, administration, as well as science? Is there a specific institution which can be identified as the main body responsible for the transfer of social policy research into political decision-making?

3) What are the main data infrastructures to be considered for social policy research in Poland? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the social policy research data infrastructures? Are survey and/or (administrative) register data integrated within one institution or are there several institutions holding data? How is the access to survey and/or register data organised? In which forms do researchers and data producers co-operate to improve data infrastructures and their accessibility for social policy research?

The report consists of three parts containing a detailed analysis of the research issues undertaken. It concludes with synthetic answers to the research questions.

2 Review of higher education study programmes in social policy

2.1. CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN POLAND

Most university studies in the social sciences in Poland are based on the so-called Bologna Process. Thus, there are two degrees (cycles) of study, with **bachelor's** (*studia licencjackie*) and **master's** (*studia magisterskie*) degrees for the social sciences. In addition, some programmes have the character of a **five-year full degree programme** (*jednolite studia magisterskie*). Degree programmes in specific fields of study are established by universities within the framework of legally **defined scientific disciplines**, which in turn comprise legally defined **fields of science** (on the basis of the regulation of the minister for science and higher education). The defined **field dealing with social policy is the field of “social sciences”** (*nauki społeczne*). This field consists of several disciplines within which social policy or related studies may be pursued. The most important of these **disciplines** are:

- political science and administration (nauki o polityce I administracji),
- sociological sciences (nauki socjologiczne),
- legal sciences (nauki prawne),
- economics and finance (ekonomia I finanse),
- pedagogy (pedagogika),
- management and quality sciences (nauki o zarządzaniu I jakości).

As far as majors (degree courses, e.g. social policy) are concerned, they can be assigned to one discipline or to several disciplines. The university offering a programme for a particular field of study must specify the percentage of the specific disciplines in that programme. In the case of several disciplines involved - the leading discipline, within which more than half of the learning outcomes will be obtained, is indicated. It may also happen that the name of the major is the same as the name of the discipline to which the major is assigned (e.g. pedagogy). Often the name of the major can also be very similar, e.g. sociology major (within the discipline of sociological sciences), political science major (within the discipline of political science and administration), or law major (within the discipline of legal sciences).

First- and second-cycle studies are realised at the level of organisational units of universities (faculties, institutes specialising in specific disciplines). These **studies take place within a specific field (major) of study (e.g. social policy)**. In addition, narrower specialisations

may (but do not have to) be included in the curriculum of a given major, e.g. major: social policy, specialisation: social services management¹.

There are two basic **study profiles in Poland: general academic** (*ogólnoakademicki*) and **practical** (*praktyczny*). In the first case, more than half of the ECTS credits are allocated to courses related to the academic activity conducted at the university. In the latter case, more than half of the ECTS credits are allocated to courses developing practical skills. First- and second-cycle studies may be full-time or part-time (e.g. extramural).

A further stage of training may be a **doctoral programme**, which is currently organised by doctoral schools operating at university level. These programmes are either in a specific field of science and discipline (e.g. field of social science, in the discipline of political science and administration) or are interdisciplinary.

Over the past twelve years or so, there has been a specialisation of the fields of study. For example, the first studies in social policy in post-war Poland were established at the University of Warsaw in 1987 and for many years they were realised mainly as a specialisation in the field of political science (major: political science with a specialization in social policy²). Nowadays, independent fields of study are being created - both completely new ones and those that were previously specialisations within other majors. Therefore, **nowadays social policy is an independent major** (and not, for example, a specialisation within the political science major) pursued within different academic disciplines (see below).

2.2. SOURCES OF DATA ON STUDIES IN POLAND

The most reliable source on studies in Poland is the RAD-on system³. The data collected here show the scale and structure of the realisation of studies in a given field of study, although they do not always illustrate the full current status. For example, they do not provide information on the conduct of recruitment for a given field of study in a given academic year (e.g. 2023/2024), e.g. studies may still formally exist, but in fact may be in a state of suspension. On the other hand, not all newly created or re-activated studies must be taken into account by the system at the time of analysis. However, these are exceptional cases that should not distort the overall picture of social policy education in Poland. In order to deepen the analysis, this report also reached out to the information directly provided by the universities and other higher schools (e.g. to verify the validity of the information contained in RAD-on). The universities were also a source of more detailed descriptions and study programmes.

2.3. EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL POLICY

The analysis shows that - according to RAD-on system⁴ - in 2023, there were 17 study programmes, including 11 first-cycle programmes and six second-cycle programmes strictly on the "Social policy" major or on majors having the category of social policy in their name⁵.

¹ Example of a study programme at the West Pomeranian Business School, Academy of Applied Sciences, <https://www.zpsb.pl/qryfice/studia-ii-stopnia/kierunki-i-specjalnosci/polityka-spooleczna/>. Accessed 25th of August 2023.

² Previously, only from 1987 to 1992 it was an independent major. For some time in the 1990s, the political science major also had a slightly different name, i.e. "political science and social sciences". In 2007 social policy became a stand-alone major.

³ Source of verified data on higher education and science in Poland: <https://radon.nauka.gov.pl/o-systemie/czym-jest-rad-on>. Accessed 21st of August 2023.

⁴ <https://radon.nauka.gov.pl/o-systemie/czym-jest-rad-on>. Accessed 21st of August 2023

⁵ For a detailed overview of social policy and related studies, see Appendix 1.

Among these 17 programmes, five were assigned to one university (Jagiellonian University in Cracow). This is because, in 2009, programmes of study in the field of “social policy” with a general academic profile (at first and second degree) were created at this university, which were replaced in 2019 by other programmes (with the profile of study changed to practical). Then, in 2023, a new first degree programme with a general academic profile was created in the “Social policy management” major. A second-cycle programme in the new field of study was not created. In the academic year 2023/24, there was also no recruitment for first- and second-cycle studies in the field of “Social policy” with a practical profile at this university. Only first-cycle programmes in “Social policy management” were recruited. In fact, therefore, the five programmes out of the 17 mentioned amount to the evolution of two programmes (in first- and second-cycle studies), which were eventually replaced by one first-cycle study programme, which would give a total of 13 currently operating social policy study programmes in Poland. However, two cases of second-cycle programmes were identified, which were either discontinued in the last year (University of Economics in Poznań) or suspended and replaced by an offer of other programmes, i.e. a degree programme in “Public policy” offered from the academic year 2023/24 (University of Warsaw), reducing the number of actually functioning programmes to 11. In addition, in the course of the analysis, it turned out that of the remaining 11 programmes, three programmes (including one in first-cycle studies and two in second-cycle studies) were not a subject for recruitment for the academic year 2023/24, ultimately reducing the number of active programmes to eight.

In 2023, of the eight programmes mentioned, four were on a major called “Social policy” (three on the first degree, one on the second degree), two on a major called “International social policy and analytics” (one on the first degree and one on the second degree), and one on a major called “Social policy management” (on the first degree). In addition, one new study programme concerned an English-language major entitled “Social and Public Policy” (first degree). Six study programmes were based on a general academic profile and two on a practical profile.

Two programmes of the studies actually carried out were set up exclusively within the **discipline of “political science and administration”**, while for three more, this discipline was the leading one. For a further three, leading disciplines such as **“management and quality sciences”** (two cases), **“economics and finance”** (one case) were identified. Only one case did not refer to any learning outcomes from the discipline of “political science and administration”. Thus, the analysis shows that in **the Polish tradition of higher education, studies in the field of social policy are by far the most frequently offered within the discipline of “political science and administration”** (as the exclusive or leading one). On the other hand, the group of leading Polish social policy researchers represents more diverse disciplines and perspectives from which they undertake their analyses. Thus, they are representatives of such traditional disciplines as sociology or economics to no lesser extent than political science. They carry out didactic activities in centres specialising in these disciplines, in faculties assigned to them, where social policy as such is at most an element of several courses.

The analysis shows that the **predominant model of first-degree education in social policy** consists of five main elements (blocks)⁶:

1. propaedeutics of the social (political) sciences,
2. methodological and data collection and analysis subjects;

⁶ Sample study programmes are included in Appendix 2.

3. specialised subjects (concerning the foundations of social policy);
4. subjects concerning selected specific areas of social policy making.
5. subjects shaping universal skills.

As far as the **introduction to social sciences** is concerned, there are, for example, such subjects as elements of sociology, elements of economics, public administration, introduction to the science of state and law, history of social and political thought, basics of management, social psychology, social communication. **Methodological and data analysis** subjects include: social research methods and techniques, social diagnosis or statistics. As far as **specialised subjects** are concerned, these are e.g.: social demography, public policy process, social legislation, labour law, public finance, ethics in social policy, social services, social assistance, social work, social service design, management in social (public) policy institutions, third sector organisations, social economy. As far as **subjects focusing on selected specific areas of social policy making** are concerned, there are mainly subjects focusing on selected specific policies, e.g. migration policy, housing policy, family policy, health policy, labour market policy, social security policy, policy towards disabled persons. Finally, **subjects shaping universal skills** may include subjects such as critical thinking, the art of argumentation and career development. **Studies with a practical profile additionally include a compulsory work apprenticeship component.** Not all degree programmes offer all the example subjects mentioned above. Nor are they always compulsory, and sometimes some of them are offered as elective subjects (e.g. as part of thematic modules in the study programme). However, the structure of the five thematic blocks mentioned is maintained (although they are not necessarily distinguished in the study programmes as in this report) and the subjects belonging to them are similar in nature (including often the names). **Sometimes studies focus on a selected perspective of social policy**, e.g. at Korczak University - Academy of Applied Sciences it is **social policy in the local and regional dimension** (implemented within the leading discipline of political science and administration). On the other hand, at the Poznań University of Economics, studies in the field of social policy are realised within the leading discipline of economics and finance, which means that they focus more on economic aspects. There is, for example, a **specialisation in finance and management of social services**, which also includes subjects such as: corporate and institutional finance, public-private partnership, accounting, fundraising for social and public investment, or insurance.

The aforementioned structure of subject blocks is also reflected in other curricula containing the category of social policy in their names. English-language studies in "Social and Public Policy" (realised within the discipline of political science and administration at the University of Warsaw) place particular **emphasis on methodological issues** (quantitative and qualitative research and analysis of various areas of social and public policy), and broaden the area of study to include the **broader context of public policy**, of which social policy is one area. Hence, subjects such as policy analysis, public policy in practice and cyber security also appear in the programme. The degree programme in "Social policy management" (with a major in management and quality sciences at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow), on the other hand, places **more emphasis on the management of different institutional spheres**. Hence, there are many subjects with the category of management in their names, e.g. management of e-services in public administration, social capital management, intercultural management, project management in public and social institutions, management of local and regional development, diversity management in organisations, management in education and so on. The studies in the field of "**International social policy and analytics**" (conducted within the leading discipline of political science and administration by the Pedagogical University of the National Education Commission in Cracow), in turn, additionally include such

subjects as international political relations, public international law, problems of security of the contemporary world or international policy of protection of children's rights. A broader analytical context concerning social policy is also emphasised here, which is reflected e.g. in such subjects as data interpretation and analysis, analysis and evaluation of public policies.

Second-cycle studies are more specialised and are intended, among other things, to prepare for further academic work. Second-cycle studies are currently much less popular in Poland than first-cycle studies and are increasingly taking on an “elite character”. Classes are often conducted in small groups of students. The decline in the popularity of second-cycle studies in recent years has affected many faculties, especially studies in the social sciences, including, among others, studies in social policy and related majors.

The analysis shows that **the dominant model of second-degree education in the social policy major** also consists of five main elements⁷:

1. subjects developing theoretical and methodological issues in social policy;
2. specific subjects dealing with social policy practice;
3. subjects addressing transnational and international aspects of social policy;
4. research workshops;
5. subjects shaping universal skills.

As far as subjects developing **theoretical and methodological issues in social policy** are concerned, there are, for example, social and economic history, social policy theory, social policy evaluation. As far as subjects related to **social policy practice** are concerned, there are e.g. project management, managing change in social policy institutions, revitalisation in public space, social marketing, decision-making. With regard to **international aspects**, subjects such as international social security, international (comparative) social policy, European cohesion and development policy appear. With regard to **research workshops**, subjects such as research in action or field research workshops can be identified. Finally, in terms of **universal subjects**, subjects such as interpersonal communication can be mentioned. It is worth noting, however, that the above classification is a certain simplification. The selection of subjects and their assignment to the degree programme is often a matter of the individual university and it may happen that subjects assigned in the above schema to second cycle studies will, in a given case, be found in first cycle studies.

Different universities offer different perspectives for studying social policy in second-level studies. The degree programme in “Social Policy” (implemented within the framework of the leading discipline of management science and quality - at the West Pomeranian Business School - Academy of Applied Sciences; Faculty in Gryfice) offers, for example, a specialisation in “**Social Service Management**”. On the other hand, the studies in the field of “**International Social Policy and Analytics**” (conducted within the framework of the leading discipline of political science and administration) additionally include in the programme such theoretical subjects as e.g. theories of international relations and such more general subjects dealing with international issues as e.g. international sectoral cooperation, analysis of state foreign policy or international marketing.

A tendency can be observed regarding a **shift in the educational process towards the practical dimension of social policy**, as well as a **focus on issues of analysis**

⁷ Sample study programmes are included in Appendix 2.

(evaluation) and management of the social or - more broadly - public sphere⁸. With regard to the first trend mentioned above, it is not always possible to convert a degree programme profile into a practical one⁹ (due to certain legal requirements involved, e.g. the need to include a very wide range of practical classes, which implies adequate staffing, etc.), which does not change the trend towards making studies practical - also those that retain a general academic profile. As far as the second trend is concerned, **academic education in this area is increasingly focusing on social policy analysis from the perspective of public policy analysis**, which applies to both first- and second-cycle studies at various universities (also in majors where only the category of social policy is present in the name).

A narrow understanding of social policy (e.g., relating to the social sphere) is to a greater extent present in some studies pursued at related (most applied) majors focusing on narrowly defined areas of social policy (spheres of activity), such as, for example, social work, re-socialisation or social economy.

It is worth noting that although the offer of social policy studies in Poland is not as rich as the offer of classical social science studies (i.e. in fields such as, for example, sociology or political science) and, in addition, some studies are being abolished, suspended or replaced by others, universities continue to modernise their offer by creating new social policy study programmes. Since 2021, at least five new degree programmes in this field - which have the category social policy in their name - have been created.

2.4. RELATED MAJORS

The **majors related to the field of social policy** offered by Polish universities can be divided into two groups, i.e.:

1. **majors adopting a broader perspective**, of which the category of social policy is an element (e.g. public policy, public policy design, administration and public policy, management in public policies, sociology of social interventions and others)¹⁰;
2. **majors adopting a narrower perspective**, i.e. focusing in detail on selected areas of social policy activity (e.g. social work, public health, re-socialisation, management of specific areas of social policy, social economy, social dialogue and counselling, organization of labour market, vocational counselling with coaching and social work, social services, international migration and others)¹¹.

As can be seen from the above classification, especially the second type of majors is very numerous. This report will present a general statistical picture of them on the basis of an analysis of the RAD-on system data containing information formally reported by universities.

Related majors taking a broad perspective

⁸ For example, the University of Warsaw, responding to the needs reported by students, replaced the second degree studies in "Social policy" with a degree programme in "Public policy", thus extending the area of issues to include the analysis and management of various areas of the public sphere - beyond social policy (e.g. urban policy, etc.).

⁹ For example, the Jagiellonian University in Cracow converted its "Social policy" degree programme profile to a practical one and then created a new degree programme in "Social policy management", reverting to a general academic profile.

¹⁰ More general majors such as, for example, political science, sociology, economics, public administration, public management, public life, etc., within which there are sometimes (although not as a rule) single subjects, blocks of subjects or specialisations related to social policy, have been omitted here.

¹¹ Sample study programmes are included in Appendix 2.

The most common related major adopting a broad perspective is currently **“Public policy”**. The majors containing the category of public policy take different names, as illustrated above. In 2023, there were six degree programmes in this field. By far the predominant discipline was political science and administration, and the predominant study profile was general academic. In public policy studies, social policy issues are addressed from the broader perspective of public policy analysis. More often than not, these studies aim to train analysts and evaluators of public policy in its various areas (including social policy) or managerial staff ready to manage public institutions.

The curricula of the selected studies include subjects such as e.g. social policy, anti-discrimination policy, European cohesion and development policy, social security systems, social dialogue, senior policy, diagnosis of social problems, labour market and employment policy, education policy, health care, etc.

The second related field of study (offered by one university, i.e. the University of Warsaw) is **“Sociology of social interventions”**, which is offered within the leading discipline: sociological sciences. The studies are pursued in the second degree and focus on the evaluation of social interventions and public policy analysis.

Related majors taking a narrow perspective

The most popular major focusing on the narrow practical area of social policy is **“Social work”**. As many as 93 programmes of study in this area were identified in the RAD-n system. Six of the 93 programmes had a status of “liquidated” or “discontinued”. 59 study programmes were implemented in the first degree and 34 in the second degree, with 52 in the practical profile and 41 in the general academic profile. The degree programmes are predominantly delivered in leading disciplines such as pedagogy and sociological sciences. Occasionally, political science and administration appear as the leading discipline.

Another major of study is **“Public health”**. 48 programmes of study in this field were identified. seven of the 48 programmes had a status of “liquidated” or “discontinued”. 22 study programmes were implemented in the first degree and 26 in the second degree, with 28 in the general academic profile and 20 in the practical profile. The studies are implemented within the leading discipline of health sciences assigned to the field of medical and health sciences. In addition to medical aspects, the study programmes address issues of health care management and public policy making in health care.

Another major is **“Re-socialization”**. Twelve study programmes in this field were identified. Seven study programmes were implemented on the first degree and five on the second degree, with seven on the practical profile and five on the general academic profile. The studies were implemented within such leading disciplines as pedagogy, sociological sciences, psychology, legal sciences. Additionally, nine programmes were identified in the field of re-socialisation pedagogy (assigned to the leading discipline: pedagogy), which were omitted from this analysis.

Another related major is **“Management” profiled in different, specific areas of social policy** distinguished according to various criteria (thematic, activity types etc.). These areas include: migration, social change, social services, social projects. Six study programmes were identified in this area. Three study programmes were implemented in the first degree and three in the second degree, all with a general academic profile. The studies were implemented

within such leading disciplines as political science and administration (five cases) and management and quality sciences (one case).

Other fields of study provided by specific universities include **organization of labour market, social economics, social dialogue and counselling, international migration, migration and mobility, career counselling with coaching and social work, social services**. Eleven such study programmes were identified. Five study programmes were implemented at the first degree level and six at the second degree level, with seven study programmes conducted on a general academic profile and four on a practical profile. The studies were implemented within such leading disciplines as political science and administration (Three cases), pedagogy (two cases), economics and finance (two cases), theological sciences (two cases), sociological sciences (one case), cultural and religious sciences (one case).

2.4.1 GRADUATES ON THE LABOUR MARKET

The Polish central system of career paths monitoring of graduates of different fields of study does not allow for a precise quantitative analysis of the sectors and types of organizations in which graduates work. The sources of such information are first of all the contacts of universities with graduates. Basing on the available information of the latter type, it can be concluded that graduates of studies in the field of "social policy" are professionally prepared for work and often work in public administration institutions at central and local government level in the following fields:

- social assistance - as the social workers and family assistants
- labour market – as specialists, career counselors, employment agents,
- social insurance - as specialists in the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) or the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund),
- disability rehabilitation management,
- policy towards social economy and the third sector (NGOs).

The curricula include subjects related to the theoretical and empirical knowledge in the above-mentioned fields of social policy as well as the determinants and strategies of political decision-making in the field of state and local government policy instruments in the above-mentioned fields of social policy.

The relevant work place of graduates are NGOs and social economy organizations acting in different areas of social policy. A number of graduates also finds employment in Human Resources departments of institutions and corporations.

Furthermore, the graduates work in areas such as:

- social research (In field research centres, opinion poll centres etc.),
- consulting (regarding social policy; in public administration institutions and think-tanks);
- journalism (dealing with socio-political and economic issues, in press offices and TV stations).

Graduates from narrower related fields (such as social work) find employment in more specific professions, such as the social worker in the cited example.

2.5. CONCLUSION

Social policy studies are most often conducted within the discipline of **political science and administration - although not exclusively**. In individual cases, leading disciplines such as economics and finance, legal sciences or management and quality sciences are also present. Among other related studies, a distinction can be made between studies presenting a **broader social policy perspective**, i.e. a **public policy** perspective, and studies presenting a **narrow social policy perspective**, i.e. focusing on a selected area of social policy activity. As regards the latter perspective, by far the most popular field of study is **social work**. This field of study - usually pursued within such leading disciplines as pedagogy or sociological sciences - is the most represented among all social policy-related fields of study in Poland, and even belongs to the group of the most represented studies in the social sciences¹².

First degree programmes in - strictly - "Social policy" are by far the most popular. There is more specialisation in second-cycle studies, with universities having to increasingly adapt their study programmes to students' expectations - replacing, for example, social policy studies with public policy studies.

Across all types and degrees, one can see a desire to strengthen their **practical character**. In addition, two trends are characteristic. With regard to more general social policy related studies, there is a tendency to broaden the perspective of analysis and to treat social policy as an area of public policy. Such studies focus on the training of analysts, researchers, evaluators or managers of the public sphere, with a greater or lesser focus on social policy (but not exclusively). On the other hand, one can notice a tendency towards a narrow specialisation of studies focusing on a selected area of social policy, such as social work, labour market, migration and others. There are altogether many more such narrowly specialised studies, often with a practical profile, in the educational offer of Polish universities. These studies are aimed at educating specialists in a given area of social policy, which does not change the fact that they often also include an educational component presenting a broader social policy perspective (e.g., in the form of individual subjects).

Although studies that include the category of social policy in their name are not numerous, and some are being replaced by others, new study programmes are constantly being developed in response to contemporary social challenges and the expectations of study candidates.

¹² Although significantly behind the most represented field of study among the social sciences, i.e. pedagogy.

3 Review of social policy institutions and committees involved in political consultancy, differentiated by fields of social policy

3.1. POLICY CONSULTANCY IN FIELDS OF SOCIAL POLICY

Policy consultancy in social policy is present in all key institutions of public administration involved in the creation and implementation of social policy at all levels of its operation (state and local administration). It is also present in the office of the President of the Republic of Poland (state administration) in the form of the Presidential Councils (*Rady Prezydenckie*) appointed each term. In addition, the work of legislative normative acts related to social policy is carried out by thematic committees of the Sejm and Senate (the Polish Parliament is bicameral: Sejm and Senate), using professional advice from experts appointed to cooperate as needed. Here, the advice is not permanent, as it is linked to the subject of changing drafts of normative acts. Political consulting plays an important role in the development of concepts and social policy strategies in the programmes of political parties for the purposes of election campaigns, parliamentary debates, political and media discourse. It is also possible to identify numerous think tanks in Poland that bring together researchers and experts, representing different concepts of the political and socio-economic system of the state, supporting political parties and politicians with their knowledge.

3.2. POLICY CONSULTANCY IN GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Government administration is divided, in terms of its scope of action, into central (Prime Minister - *Premier/Prezes Rady Ministrów*, Council of Ministers - *Rada Ministrów*, ministers and central government bodies) and field (voivode - *wojewoda*, i.e. local governor- and bodies operating regionally). Central government administration bodies cover the entire territory of the country, while field government administration bodies operate only in a strictly defined territory. At all levels of government administration institutions, political advisory entities are present that are adequate to their scope of responsibility.

Professional advice in the field of social policy for the **Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers** is provided by **permanent units (panels - *zespoły*, councils - *rady*) and committees (*komisje*)**, established in each term of the respective government. Thus, in **2019-2023**, the following advisory bodies have been established in the government under the direction of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki: **The Panel of Social Advisors, The Inter-ministerial**

Panel for Counteracting Negative Demographic Phenomena, The Panel for Migration, The Inter-ministerial Panel for Developing Solutions to Improve the Situation of People with Disabilities and their Family Members, the Inter-ministerial Panel for Disability and Incapacity Certification, the Inter-ministerial Panel for Lifelong Learning and Integrated Qualification System, the Housing Council, the Public Benefit Committee. A key role is played by the Panel of Social Advisors that develops the state's strategic social policy goals and their detailed plans and instruments of action. Other panels and committees develop analyses that diagnose the situation and problem areas that fall within the subject of their advisory activity, and determine the directions of legislative and institutional changes in these areas. During the period under review, the advisory bodies of the Council of Ministers dealt with the **problems of migration, people with disabilities, civil society, the demographic situation in Poland and the directions of population policy**, as well as **credit relief programmes for families and young people buying their first apartments**. The aforementioned advisory bodies were formed by representatives of ministries and public institutions responsible for the establishment and implementation of specific social policies.

Councils of professional advisors are also appointed by the **Ministers of the ministries responsible for implementing the country's social policy** in its key areas: **family policy, labour market policy, public health, social security, education**. Thus, the **Ministry of Family and Social Policy** used the advice of three councils in the **2019-2023** government term: **Labour Market Council, Family Council, Social Assistance Council**. The **Labour Market Council** is made up of representatives of trade unions, employers' organizations and science and its advice focuses on such issues as the use of human resources, giving opinions on draft laws on employment promotion, mitigating the effects of unemployment, vocational activation, giving opinions on drafts of the resource allocation of the National Training Fund (*Krajowy Fundusz Szkoleniowy*), assessing the rationality of the management of Labour Fund (*Fundusz Pracy*) resources, strengthening the protection of labour rights. The advisors gathered in the **Family Council** represented universities, local governments at all levels, non-governmental organizations and the Catholic Church. Their role was to develop proposals for activities of state policy towards the family, including particular social instruments - financial benefits, leave, social services - to increase births in Poland and counteract poverty, promote the traditional family model and balance work and family life. The **Social Assistance Council** is formed by persons representing social assistance organizational units, local government units, voivodes - local governors (*wojewoda*), social and professional organizations, churches and other religious associations and scientific circles. The scope of the council's activities includes, among other things, giving opinions on drafts of legal acts, initiating changes in the law on social assistance and preparing expert opinions on selected areas of social assistance.

The **Ministry of Health** is supported by advisors who form two councils: the **Public Health Council** and the **Patient Organization Council**. The former is a professional body of advisors representing various areas of medical care, scientific centres and public institutions, including doctors, nurses, midwives, physical therapists, diagnosticians, pharmacists, representatives of the National Health Fund (*Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia*), the Institute of Public Health, ministries, among others. The Council supports intersectoral public health policy, provides a forum for cooperation in this field, gives its opinion on proposals for action in public health, including draft normative acts and the National Health Programme. The Council of Patient Organizations is a permanent body of advisors representing patient organizations, such as: the Polish Association of the Blind (*Polski Związek Niewidomych*), the Federation of Amazon Associations (*Federacja Stowarzyszeń Amazonek*), the Institute for Patients' Rights and Health Education, the *Give birth in a humane way* Foundation (*Fundacja Rodzić po Ludzku*); the SANITAS Association for Fighting Cancer. It initiates changes in health care

legislation, gives opinions on draft normative acts and other government documents in this field, conducts dialogue on systemic issues in health care and exchanges views on issues most relevant to the patient.

The **Ministry of Education and Science** uses two units of advisors concentrated in the **Children and Youth Council** and the **Panel of Social Advisors to the Minister of Education and Science**. The Children and Youth Council consists of 32 representatives of organizations and entities representing youth, such as e.g. youth dialogue councils and youth assemblies (*sejmik młodzieżowy*). The Council submits to the government administration proposals for solutions in the field of education and training, as well as opinions on proposals for legal and organisational changes in the education and training system. The Panel of Social Advisors to the Minister of Education and Science is made up of representatives of key disciplines in higher education institutions and their role is to analyse issues and problems concerning educational and scientific policy in Poland and to present conclusions and recommendations in this regard to the Minister of Science and Higher Education.

The last section of government administration consists of voivodes (*województwo*) and the provincial offices (*urzędy wojewódzkie*) they head. **Due to the predominance of the coordination and control functions of provincial offices to the tasks commissioned to local government entities by government administration in the fields of employment and unemployment policy, health care, education and social assistance, there are no permanent forms of policy consultancy attached to them.**

3.3. CONSULTANCY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES

Entities of local self-government in Poland - regional council (*sejmik województwa*), voivodeship marshal (*marszałek województwa*), county (poviat; *powiat*) and county council (*rada powiatu*), starost (local government - poviat's - head, *starosta*), municipality (community, *gmina*) and municipality council (*rada gminy*), mayor (*burmistrz*) or commune (village) head (*wójt*) - rarely use political consultancy. However, at the level of the voivodeship marshal, **voivodeship labour market councils** (*wojewódzkie rady rynku pracy*), formed by representatives of voivodeship structures of trade union organizations, employers' organizations, socio-professional organizations of farmers and non-governmental organizations dealing with labour market issues, operate as advisory and opinion-forming bodies. Their task is to create pro-employment solutions, give opinions on changes in the profile of education in accordance with the needs of the labour market, give opinions on the provincial criteria for issuing work permits for foreigners, cooperate with the provincial social dialogue councils in the area of developing a regional labour market strategy, and assess the rationality of the management of Labour Fund resources.

County (poviat) social councils for people with disabilities (*powiatowe rady ds. osób niepełnosprawnych*) and **county (poviat) labour market councils** (*powiatowe rady rynku pracy*) operate as permanent advisory bodies in the poviat. County social councils for people with disabilities bring together representatives of institutions and non-governmental organizations dealing with the labour market and social integration of people with disabilities in the county. As an advisory body, they give opinions on the projects of the county council's activities for people with disabilities, evaluate their implementation, and initiate projects of activities aimed at labour market and social integration of people with disabilities. County labour market councils, on the other hand, are formed by representatives of territorial trade unions, employers' unions, farmers' unions, non-governmental organizations and their task is to plan and monitor labour market policy at the local level, give opinions on the advisability of implementing special

programmes and implementing the Activation and Integration Programme (*Program Aktywizacja I I Intergracja*¹³), participate in the process of managing Labour Fund resources.

At the level of municipalities (communities; *gmina*), advisory bodies may be established for municipal councils (*rada gminy*) or mayors/community/village heads regarding local policy towards particular population groups or fields of activity¹⁴. As examples of advisory bodies at this level of social policy implementation, we can mention **councils of seniors** and **councils of youth**. The council of seniors is formed by representatives of elderly people, non-governmental organizations, pensioners' association and its task is to advise the municipal council on the development and implementation of senior policy in the municipality. In 2022, senior councils operated in 352 municipalities (out of 2477 municipalities). Youth councils are formed by representatives of school self-governments, social organizations, youth institutions who participate in the municipal council's debate on issues related to the situation of young people in the local area. They also learn how to participate in public debate, present arguments, proposals and conclusions. In 2022, youth councils were operating in 533 municipalities (out of 2477 municipalities).

3.4. POLICY CONSULTANCY IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

In the **2020-2025** term, President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda has appointed **ten Presidential Councils** as opinion and advisory bodies operating **within the framework of the National Development Council** (*Narodowa Rada Rozwoju*) integrating the fields of activity of the President of the Republic of Poland. **Four of them directly concern the social policy of the country**, and they are: **Council for Health Care, Council for Social Affairs, Council for Youth, Council for Family, Education and Training**.

The **Council for Health Care** has 19 members, including doctors in charge of hospitals and medical institutes and universities, provincial (voivodeship) consultants in the field of health care (*konsultanci wojewódzcy w ochronie zdrowia*), representatives of trade unions and medical associations. Its task is to analyse the current situation in the field of health care in Poland, prepare opinions and expert opinions, as well as assumptions and draft legislative initiatives for the President of the Republic of Poland.

The **Council for Social Affairs** has 16 members, including mainly specialists representing various disciplines in the field of social sciences such as social policy, social work, social insurance, sociology, demography. The task of the council is to prepare expert opinions for the President of the Republic of Poland diagnosing the state of social affairs and the scale of the needs of various categories of the population in Poland requiring support from state public policy. On this basis proposals for specific legal and institutional solutions and the principles for monitoring their implementation are developed.

The **Council for Youth** has 23 members, including mainly representatives of youth councils of municipalities, cities, counties (*młodzieżowe rady gmin, miast I powiatów*) and youth regional councils (*młodzieżowe sejmiki wojewódzkie*), scout organizations, student organizations, sports organizations, foundations and associations for, among others, people with disabilities, and the youth organizations of political parties from the right to the left. Its task is to

¹³ Activation and Integration Programme are activities in the field of professional activation and social integration of the unemployed implemented by the local labour office independently or in cooperation with the social assistance centre.

¹⁴ Law on Local Self-Government, DzU 2016 poz.446.

initiate and conduct debate and social dialogue on youth issues, and to develop assumptions for presidential legislative initiatives.

The **Council for Family, Education and Upbringing** has 13 members, including representatives of the educational and family issues administration (government and local government), academia, social organizations. Its task is to analyse the conditions concerning the functioning of Polish families, formal and informal education, public actions supporting families, improving the demographic situation of Poland, serving the development of education and the implementation of educational programmes. On this basis, it prepares opinions and expert reports for the President of the Republic of Poland on the situation of Polish families, the state of education, solutions to support upbringing, and develops assumptions and drafts presidential legislative initiatives in the field of pro-family policy and educational policies.

3.5. POLICY CONSULTANCY IN THE POLISH PARLIAMENT

The Polish Parliament is bicameral - it consists of the Sejm and the Senate. The substantive work of the two chambers of Parliament is based on the work of thematic committees (*komisje sejmowe, komisje senackie*), bringing together members of parliament (deputies in Sejm and senators in Senate) who are most professionally prepared for particular fields of issues.

Committees in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland

The 460-member Sejm is divided into 29 thematic committees, among which three deal directly with social policy issues, i.e. the **Social and Family Policy Committee**, the **Senior Policy Committee** and the **Health Committee**. Substantive support for the work of the Sejm committees on all fields important to the functioning of the state and society is provided by expert studies prepared on behalf of the parliamentary **Bureau of Research** (*Biuro Analiz Sejmowych*) and published by the **Sejm Publishing House** (*Wydawnictwa Sejmowe*).

The Sejm **Social and Family Policy Committee** has 36 deputies and the thematic fields of its analytical studies and experts' opinions are: social problems, social benefits, communal housing, problems of the disabled and veterans, labour law, equal treatment in employment, wage systems and cost of living, labour market, problems of families, protection of women's rights, including equal treatment. It gives opinions on draft laws (governmental, presidential and parliamentary) regulating the listed issues, evaluates government information on the situation in these areas, social policy strategies and their implementation.

The Sejm **Senior Policy Committee** has 16 deputies and its task is to give an opinion on draft laws on the state's social policy towards the elderly (especially regarding social benefits, health care, employment, anti-discrimination and violence) presented to the Sejm by the government, the President of the Republic of Poland, as well as parliamentary drafts. In addition, the committee evaluates the government's annual reports on the implementation of senior policy and presents its position on this issue to the Sejm.

The Sejm's **Health Committee** has 40 deputies and its task is to give opinions on health policy bills (government, presidential, parliamentary and civic bills), analyse the government's reports on the health situation of Poles and the implementation of government health policy, the Ombudsman's reports on the observance of patients' rights. It presents its position, formulates recommendations on reports presented for approval.

Committees in the Senate of the Republic of Poland

The Senate of the Republic of Poland has 100 senators working in 16 thematic committees, among which two are directly concerned with social policy, i.e. the **Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee** and the **Health Committee**. Substantive support for senators working in the various committees is provided by the **Bureau of Analysis, Documentation and Correspondence** (*Biuro Analiz, Dokumentacji i Korespondencji*), which provides expert and informational services, as well as prepares and provides information and statistical data necessary for the work of the Senate.

The **Family, Senior and Social Policy Committee** is formed by nine senators professionally involved in science and teaching, law, medicine and public administration. The Commission reviews laws adopted by the Sejm, takes legislative initiatives on such issues as economic, housing, educational, cultural and legal problems regarding protection of the family, social policy, demographic policy, senior policy, policy towards the disabled, employment policy including counteracting unemployment, the social security system, labour protection.

The **Health Committee** is made up of eleven senators with professional ties to medicine, health care and science. The subject of the committee's activities is to analyse and give opinions on the laws adopted by the Sejm, to take legislative initiatives on such issues as health promotion, prevention, the system of health care organization, health security and cooperation with foreign countries in the field of health.

3.6. EXPERT KNOWLEDGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLICY CONSULTANCY

In addition to the collegial bodies formally established for the needs of public institutions and both chambers of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland that act as opinion-making bodies in relation to legislative initiatives and the ongoing implementation of tasks in specific areas of social policy by government and local government institutions, **think tanks** that have been operating in Poland for many years play an important role in policy consultancy. In the model view, think-tanks should not represent the particular interests and expectations of individual social groups, they should offer objective knowledge of a given problem, propose to the political authority efficient responses to diagnosed issues and solutions serving the "common good." In practice, however, this ideal image of think-tanks as independent opinion centres not always takes place. Sometimes their position is used by politicians or lobbyists to support their goals.

Two types of think-tanks are relevant to policy consultancy in Poland:

1. think-tanks with administrative, financial or organizational ties to political parties, the executive and legislative branches,
2. contract-type think-tanks that provide research or studies for government agencies, consistent with the commissioned issue.

The first group includes: Government Analysis Centre (*Rządowe Centrum Analiz*), **Bureau of Research at the Sejm of the Republic of Poland** (*Biuro Analiz Sejmowych*), **Office of Analysis, Documentation and Correspondence at the Senate of the Republic of Poland** (*Biuro Analiz, Dokumentacji i Korespondencji*).

The **Government Analysis Centre** (*Rządowe Centrum Analiz - RCA*)¹⁵ - a state-owned unit in the Prime Minister's Office developing analyses on key public policies. It analyses selected socio-economic areas, identifies problems, proposes solutions, conducts research and strategic studies in domestic and international affairs. Moreover, it provides opinions on draft government documents in terms of their compliance with Government policy objectives and projected social, economic and legal effects, provides analytical support to members of the Council of Ministers in the design of Government activities, analyses the decision-making processes of the Prime Minister, the Council of Ministers and other government administrative bodies in terms of the strategic and programmatic coherence of the Government. It monitors and evaluates the effects of adopted public policy strategies, analyses public debates, evaluates public needs and expectations and the impact of public interventions on their change.

The **Bureau of Research at the Sejm of the Republic of Poland** (*Biuro Analiz Sejmowych*)¹⁶ orders and publishes expert reports related to the legislative process, provides MPs and Sejm bodies with factual information necessary for the performance of their duties related to the legislation of social, economic and political issues. The Bureau initiates and conducts study and research work in the field of law, political system and parliamentarism, economy and other fields important for the functioning of society. All publications are non-commercial publications, distributed free of charge to deputies and senators, as well as to scientific and academic communities.

The **Office of Analysis, Documentation and Correspondence at the Senate of the Republic of Poland** (*Biuro Analiz, Dokumentacji i Korespondencji*)¹⁷ provides expert and information services to the Senate, its bodies, senators and the Senate office, citizens correspondence addressed to the Senate, documents the work of the Senate and carries out popularization activities. It prepares and provides analyses, expert reports and thematic studies, provides information and statistics necessary for the work of the Senate, supports the process of examination of petitions by the Senate bodies, cooperates and exchanges information with research and analytical services of foreign parliaments, popularizes knowledge about the Senate.

Among the **contract think tanks** most often cited as sources of policy advice in Poland are the **Sobieski Institute** (*Instytut Sobieskiego*), the **Adam Smith Center** (*Centrum im. Adama Smitha*), the **Institute of Public Affairs Foundation** (*Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych*), the **Civic Development Forum** (*Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju*), the **Natolin European Centre** (*Centrum Europejskie Natolin*), and the **Republican Foundation** (*Fundacja Republikańska*).

The **Sobieski Institute** (*Instytut Sobieskiego*)¹⁸ is a multidisciplinary think-tank, dealing with issues of current state policy and issues relevant to the country's socio-economic development since 2004. It is an independent, non-governmental organization, based on its own research and analysis. It creates ideas (concepts) for public life in Poland, developing strategies for policies and the economy and initiating public debates. The values it represents are close to liberal ideology. These are: a strong and limited state, individual freedom and responsibility, economic freedom, social order based on natural law. The Institute develops its activities in the following areas: education, public finance and monetary policy, energy policy, defence policy and security, law, international relations and foreign policy, the political system and

¹⁵<https://www.gov.pl> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

¹⁶<https://bas.sejm.gov.pl> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

¹⁷<https://www.senat.gov.pl/kancelaria/struktura-organizacyjna/biuro-analiz-dokumentacji-i-korespondencji/> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

¹⁸<https://sobieski.org.pl/> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

political communication, technology and the information society, and telecommunications. One of the Institute's many activities is the preparation of expert reports for public institutions and business entities.

The **Adam Smith Center** (*Centrum im. Adama Smitha*)¹⁹ was the first independent scientific and research institute in Poland and Central and Eastern Europe. It was established in the year of the transformation of the political system in Poland (1989), as a centre for the study of the economy and action for a free market, built on the foundation of freedom and morality, and a free and responsible society. The centre brings together about 50 scholars and researchers, mainly economists, lawyers, political scientists, sociologists, computer scientists. It focuses on conducting research, education and developing effective legal and economic solutions. The Centre's outstanding achievement was the preparation and adopting of the "Law on Access to Public Information" in 2001, as well as the introduction of a bill to the Parliament on the abolition of the telecommunications monopoly (2004). One of the interesting initiatives of the Adam Smith Center is to calculate each year when the calendar marks "Tax Freedom Day". This is the day, when citizens - symbolically - stop paying taxes to the state and start earning for themselves.

The **Civil Development Forum** (*Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju*)²⁰ was founded in 2007 by Leszek Balcerowicz, a supporter of the neoliberal economic model, author of the rapid implementation of the post-1989 market economy model in Poland, and long-time Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. The Forum's mission is to increase active support in society for a wide range of individual freedom, especially economic freedom, and to raise the level of rule of law in the state. Its goals are also to develop civil society and increase public awareness, and to reduce support and strengthen resistance in society to solutions that go in opposite directions. In its analytical activities, the Civil Development Forum focuses on public finances, the labour market, the judiciary, the rule of law, economic freedom and the European Union.

The **Institute of Public Affairs Foundation** (*Fundacja Instytut Spraw Publicznych*)²¹ is a leading Polish think-tank and independent centre for policy research and analysis. The Institute was established in 1995 as a public benefit organization and its mission is to contribute to rational public debate on key Polish, European and global policy issues. The main areas of research include European policies, social policy, civil society, migration and climate policy. The Institute carries out research projects that are useful for the practice of public life, presents and disseminates proposals for systemic changes, initiates public debates, and draws attention to threats to the quality of public life. It conducts research, prepares expert reports and recommendations on fundamental issues of public life, and organizes conferences, seminars and lectures. Its publications are distributed to MPs and senators, members of the government and administration, in academic circles, as well as to journalists and NGO activists.

The **Natolin European Centre** (*Centrum Europejskie Natolin - CEN*)²² is a foundation established by the State in the early 1990s, and conducts educational, project, information and scientific research activities related to European integration, international relations and the promotion of knowledge in the area of memory and history of European countries. Its activities include the organization of conferences, seminars, training courses and workshops, the organization and development of European studies, the conduct of studies and research, the

¹⁹<https://www.smith.pl/> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

²⁰<https://for.org.pl/> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

²¹<https://www.isp.org.pl/> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

²²<https://www.natolin.edu.pl/> (Accessed 20th of September 2023).

conduct of publishing and dissemination of science, the implementation of research and educational projects and expertise for public administration.

The **Republican Foundation** (*Fundacja Republikańska*) was established in 2009 to pursue such goals as creating strong civic institutions, shaping Polish and European legal institutions in the spirit of the primacy of the common good over private interests, increasing the subjectivity of the Polish state, both internally and externally, shaping Polish and European institutions of public life in a spirit consistent with the Christian conception of man, especially in the protection of human life from natural conception to natural death. The values it represents are close to conservative ideology. It publishes reports and expert opinions on current problems of social policy, economy or international issues.

3.7. CONCLUSION

Policy consultancy occurs at all levels of decision-making about the directions and instruments of action in various areas of social policy. The selection of advisors is not random, they are professionals in the field who support politicians and the offices they lead in achieving their goals with a variety of tools. With regard to social policy, the following functions of policy consultancy are crucial:

- **diagnostic:** analysis of the social problem (in light of statistical data and the results of surveys, public consultations, etc.), analysis of the needs of a particular category of population (or common good), identification of political and social objectives of potential decisions, identification of priorities, estimation of costs and identification of sources of financing of proposed solutions,
- **strategic:** identification of ways to implement potential policy decisions, stages of action, organizational structure of actions taken, instruments,
- **evaluative:** defining rules for monitoring the course of implementation into practice of certain solutions, evaluating the results, making adjustments, etc.

Political consultants and advisors generally have knowledge and experience in the area of effectively influencing political processes. They are skilled at analysing and interpreting source data, identifying trends, potential threats and opportunities in given phenomena, and identifying tools to help politicians achieve their goals. The expertise of advisors offers the hope of an objective assessment of phenomena, indicating different perspectives on the subject of political decisions and practical solutions, taking into account the importance of a given problem and the effectiveness of political action. Those who are in advisory bodies (councils, commissions, panels, etc.) are also often an important element of political marketing. Their recognition and authority in a given field directly or indirectly influence the acceptance of political decisions and the image of politicians who take these decisions.

4 The main data infrastructures in social policy research including information on policy fields, data type, accessibility, and survey designs

4.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The description of the social policy research infrastructure refers to many fields of social policy and their target groups and the accuracy and effectiveness of social strategies and instruments adopted by the public administration addressed to specific groups. The nature and scope of tasks undertaken by analytical and research centres and institutions is diverse: from diagnosis (answer to the question: how is it?), through recognition of its conditions (answer to the question: why is it so?) to formulation of recommendations for better efficiency of the public social policy system (answer to the question: how should it be?).

Taking into account the organizational location of social policy research centres/institutions in the structure of public and non-public entities in Poland, this analysis identifies **three general categories** of these entities, such as:

1. Central administration institutions conducting analytical studies and statistical data banks,
2. Institutions of local administration - provincial (voivodeship, *województwi*) and county (powiat, *powiatowy*) levels developing regional statistics,
3. Research and academic institutions conducting research on social policy in Poland.

Central administration institutions develop and provide analyses and statistics on the social, economic and demographic situation of Polish society and various social groups requiring intervention and support from the state social policy. They also analyse the implementation of public tasks within the framework of specific areas of social policy from the perspective of their impact on meeting the needs and shaping the living conditions of the population, the relevance of the choice of instruments and the cost of social transfers. In addition, they make recommendations for future action strategies and indicated reforms in various areas of social policy. Central government institutions are obliged to maintain information (IT) systems that collect data on the subject of their activities and mandatory reporting in accordance with the rules of the public statistics programme to the Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS*), which coordinates the public statistics research programme and makes the

aggregated data available on the website²³. With reference to the classification of central government institutions of the European Union, the main bodies collecting data and providing analysis in the field of social policy in Poland are as follows:

1. The Government Analysis Center (*Rządowe Centrum Analiz, RCA*),
2. The Ministry of Family and Social Policy (*Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej*),
3. The Ministry of Health (*Ministerstwo Zdrowia*),
4. The Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS*),
5. The Social Insurance Institution (*Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych, ZUS*),
6. The Supreme Audit Office (*Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, NIK*),
7. The Office of the Ombudsman (Commissioner for Human Rights, *Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich*),
8. The State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (*Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych, PFRON*),
9. The Office for Foreigners (*Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców*),
10. Provincial (Voivodeship) offices (*urzędy wojewódzkie*) and their following departments: the Labour Market Department, the Department for Disability Services, the Department for Family and Social Policy, the Department of Foreigners' Affairs).

Institutions of local administration at the level of voivodeship (*województwo*), county (*powiat*, *powiat*) and commune (municipality, *gmina*) are responsible for diagnosing the needs of the population and providing social benefits and social services in accordance with the tasks assigned to them by law in the areas of labour market, social assistance, family support and organizing foster care, rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Like central government institutions, local government entities also operate internal (IT) systems for collecting data on the subject of their activities and submit reports in accordance with the rules of the public statistics programme to the Central Statistical Office, which coordinates the public statistics research programme and makes the aggregated data available on the website. Of key importance with regard to social policy matters are such institutions as:

1. Provincial (Voivodeship) and County (Poviat) Labour Offices (*Wojewódzkie i Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy*),
2. Regional Social Assistance Centers (*Regionalne Ośrodki Pomocy Społecznej*),
3. County (Poviat) Family Assistance Centers (*Powiatowe Centra Pomocy Rodzinie*),
4. Social Assistance Centres on the level of municipality (*Ośrodki Pomocy Społecznej*).

Academic and other scientific research institutions conduct qualitative and quantitative research on social problems and social policy or, more broadly, state public policy from the perspective of various scientific disciplines. It also responds to the diagnostic needs of the institutions that commission and fund research projects relevant to their subject matter. The structure of these institutions is as follows:

²³Regulation of the Council of Ministers of November 19 on the programme of public statistical surveys for 2022, Journal of Laws of December 14, 2021, item 460, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20210002303/O/D20212303.pdf> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

1. State research institutes organizationally linked to government administration,
2. Public universities and higher schools,
3. Non-public universities and higher schools,
4. The Public Opinion Research Center (*Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej - CBOS*).

4.2. CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION INSTITUTIONS CONDUCTING ANALYTICAL STUDIES AND STATISTICAL DATA BANKS

This report reviews the fields of research and data banks of the aforementioned central administration institutions concerning various contexts of social policy of the Polish state, corresponding to the scope of their tasks.

The Government Center for Analysis (*Rządowe Centrum Analiz*) is a state-owned unit in the Prime Minister's Office that coordinates analyses of key public policies, including social policy. It analyses selected socio-economic areas to identify problems and formulate proposals for their solution. It conducts research and strategic studies, gives opinions on draft government documents in terms of their compliance with the Government's policy objectives and projected social, economic and legal effects. Furthermore, it provides analytical support to members of the Council of Ministers in designing the Government's activities, monitors and evaluates the effects of adopted programme strategies of key public policies, analyses public debate to identify current social and economic processes and analyses social needs and expectations and the impact of public interventions undertaken. The centre consists of three departments: Department of Strategic Studies, Department of Analyses, Department of Regulatory Impact Assessment.

The Ministry of Family and Social Policy (*Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej*)²⁴ is responsible for the implementation of key social policy activities, i.e.: social insurance, family policy, labour market. It collects and prepares aggregate information, analyses, diagnoses and evaluations on activities related to each field. Thus, in the social insurance section, these are the following issues: the structure of types and recipients of pension and disability benefits, pension funds, forms of social assistance and benefits for people and households in difficult material and social situations, social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people, social economy. In the family section, the data covers such matters as the demographic situation of Poland, care for a child under three years of age, protection and support for families with dependent children, development of the system of foster care for children, senior policy. Labour market issues include data and information in the areas of employment and counteracting unemployment, labour relations and working conditions, wages and employee benefits, labour relations, trade unions and employers' organizations, foreigners on the labour market. Current data is available in annual quarterly and monthly statements.

The Ministry of Health (*Ministerstwo Zdrowia*)²⁵ conducts a system of statistics in health care. The data and information collected enable analysis of the health situation and phenomena occurring in health care. They constitute the basic information base for the Minister of Health and the Central Statistical Office. In 2021, the first map of health needs was prepared, containing demographic and epidemiological data, data on the services provided, as well as

²⁴<https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/dzialania-ministerstwa>, <https://psz.praca.gov.pl> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

²⁵<https://www.gov.pl/web/zdrowie/programy-i-projekty> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

the use of personnel and equipment resources. Based on these, a forecast of future health service needs is being made for each province (voivodeship, *województwo*) and the country as a whole²⁶. In addition, the Ministry of Health issues Statistical Bulletins²⁷ containing detailed information on, among other things, diseases, the number of hospitals and medical personnel by year.

The Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny - GUS*)²⁸ is the central body of government administration. It is responsible for collecting statistical data provided by all entities of the national economy and information systems of the central administration and official registers in accordance with the principles set forth in the programme of statistical surveys of public statistics. The cyclical annual basic publication is the Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland (*Rocznik Statystyczny Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*)²⁹, which includes key statistics on Poland and its regions, as well as international comparisons. In addition, the Office collects detailed statistics on 15 specific thematic groups, including the following in the area of social policy: social welfare, health, living conditions, labour, wages, population, migration, social economy, education. All publications are available at the Central Statistical Library (*Centralna Biblioteka Statystyczna*), whose book collection is the oldest and largest specialized collection of its kind in Poland and the second largest of its kind in Europe. It contains all the publications of the GUS since its foundation in 1918, as well as the more important publications of provincial (voivodship) statistical offices (*wojewódzkie urzędy statystyczne*) since 1975. The GUS also has the country's richest collection of worldwide current and retrospective statistical publications. Of particular importance among them are the current statistical yearbooks of individual countries and international institutions, such as the UN, the European Union, Eurostat, received by the GUS from about 50 international offices and organizations. Periodical collections mainly include current journals in the field of statistics and demography, including 97 foreign titles from dozens of countries around the world and 82 titles of domestic periodicals. Legal journals, journals of central offices, scientific and technical institutions are also collected. GUS publications are available at the Department of Statistical Publications (*Zakład Wydawnictw Statystycznych*)³⁰. The Local Data Bank (*Bank Danych Lokalnych*), in turn, contains data by territorial units: province (voivodeship, *województwo*), county (poviat, *powiat*), municipality (*gmina*)³¹.

In addition, an important source of information in the area of social policy are specialized information systems of the GUS, combining various sources of information, i.e.:

- The STRATEG system³², which is a publicly available system that is updated at least quarterly, supporting the process of monitoring development and evaluating the effects of actions taken to strengthen social cohesion. The database contains a comprehensive set of key indicators for monitoring development (mainly with annual frequency) at the national level, as well as at lower levels. In order to ensure the possibility of international comparisons, the database also collects basic indicators for the European Union, member countries and regions at the NUTS 2 level. The system includes indicators from public statistics and dozens of other sources, which include scientific institutions, centres ,

²⁶<https://ssoz.ezdrowie.gov.pl> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

²⁷<https://ezdrowie.gov.pl/portal/home/badania-i-dane/biuletyn-statystyczny> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

²⁸<https://stat.gov.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

²⁹<https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-statystyczny-rzeczypospolitej-polskiej-2022,2,22.html> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁰<https://zws.stat.gov.pl> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³¹<https://bdl.stat.gov.pl/bdl/dane/teryt/jednostka> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³²<https://strateg.stat.gov.pl/#/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

institutes and offices of national and regional scope, databases of international institutions and organizations.

- The Geostatistics Portal³³, which is a modern solution for presenting statistical data in spatial terms. It has the functions of collecting, presenting and making information available to a wide audience, including public administration, entrepreneurs, individual users and scientific and research institutions.

The Social Insurance Institution (*Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych - ZUS*) is a state organizational unit carrying out tasks in the field of social insurance. The ZUS statistical portal³⁴ provides up-to-date data on the number of insured, types and structure of benefits (pensions, allowances) by gender, amount of benefits and by provinces (voivodeships) and counties (poviats), sickness absence, medical certification, medical rehabilitation, family support programmes. ZUS data are also a good source of knowledge about legally working foreigners in Poland. Moreover, the ZUS produces periodic publications such as the *Statistical Yearbook of Social Insurance*, the *Quarterly information on selected benefits*, the *Quarterly information on the results of inspections of the correctness of adjudication of temporary inability to work*.

The Supreme Audit Office (*Najwyższa Izba Kontroli - NIK*) is a body that controls the activities of government administration bodies, the Central Bank of Poland (*Narodowy Bank Polski*), state legal entities and other public organizational units and at the same time provides knowledge on the implementation of public tasks assigned to these bodies. Among the subject areas to audit by NIK are social affairs, health care, public finances, education and science. The results of the audit are the basis for assessing the efficiency of public institutions and formulating corrective proposals. The results of the audit (reports) are made available to the public³⁵. An example of an audit report in the field of social policy in 2023 may be: "Vocational and social rehabilitation tasks carried out by the local government"³⁶ and "Foster care support in the process of deinstitutionalization"³⁷.

The Ombudsman (Commissioner for Human Rights, *Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich*)³⁸ checks whether citizens' rights are respected by state institutions. If someone has a problem with, for example: pension, housing, alimony, access to health care, the right to education, freedom of speech, equal treatment, he or she can turn to the Ombudsman, who will check whether officials have acted in accordance with the rights of citizens regulated by both national and international legislation (UN Conventions). He presents the results of his analysis and his position to the public, suggesting how to improve the law and state action.

The State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People (*Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych - PFRON*)³⁹ is a public administration body supporting rehabilitation and employment of the disabled. It has been in existence since 1991. It deals, among other things, with subsidizing the salaries of disabled people, adaptation of workplaces for disabled people, assistance for disabled people who start a business or agricultural activity, support for sports, cultural and recreational events for disabled people, support for participation in social and occupational therapy workshops (*warsztaty terapii zajęciowej*) and vocational activity institutions (*zakłady aktywności zawodowej*), purchase of rehabilitation and orthopaedic

³³<https://portal.geo.stat.gov.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁴<https://psz.zus.pl> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁵<https://www.nik.gov.pl> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁶<https://www.nik.gov.pl/kontrola/P/22/032/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁷<https://www.nik.gov.pl/kontrola/P/22/031/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁸<https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rzecznik-i-biuro/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

³⁹<https://www.pfron.org.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

equipment, support for education of disabled people, inspires and finances research on the situation of disabled people in Poland and the system of assistance for this category of people. A database of PFRON research is available, including monographs, reports and anthologies of texts on disability published in Poland since 2010⁴⁰.

The Office for Foreigners (*Urząd ds. Cudzoziemców*) - established on 1st July, 2001 - is a central government administration body competent in matters of foreigners' entry into, transit through, stay in and departure from the territory of the Republic of Poland, granting international protection in Poland and providing social assistance and medical care to persons seeking such protection, granting refugee status to foreigners and granting temporary protection⁴¹. It provides statistics on the legal status of foreigners, the reasons for immigration to Poland, the country of origin of immigrants and others. It also publishes special reports, e.g. *Report on Belarusian Citizens, Migration trends in the V4*⁴².

Poland is divided into 16 provinces (voivoships, *województwa*). Each of them has a **Voivodeship Office** (*Urząd Wojewódzki*), which is an office of government administration in the province. Voivodeship offices conduct matters assigned to their authority in the areas of the labour market, rehabilitation and employment of disabled people, family and social policy, affairs of foreigners in the territory administratively assigned to them. They also keep statistics in accordance with public reporting requirements.

4.3. INSTITUTIONS OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION - PROVINCIAL (VOIVODESHIP, *WOJEWÓDZKI*) AND COUNTY (*POVIAT, POWIATOWY*) LEVELS DEVELOPING REGIONAL STATISTICS

Organizing the labour market, supporting the family and foster care, people with disabilities, preventing family violence and social assistance are key areas of local social policy carried out by local government entities as part of their own and central government mandated tasks. The following are the areas of statistical reporting of key local government entities in this area.

Provincial (Voivodeship) and County (Poviat) Labour Offices (*Wojewódzkie i Powiatowe Urzędy Pracy - WUP, PUP*) are the primary labour market institutions responsible for implementing labour market policies at the provincial and county levels, including monitoring of labour market processes. Both provincial and county labour offices collect, analyse and publish statistical data, making them available to local authorities, provincial statistical offices, scientific and educational institutions.

Three sources of data collected by provincial and county labour offices can be identified:

1. Secondary data collected as part of mandatory unemployment statistics, obtained by the Poviat Labour Offices (PUP) and the Voivodeship Labour Office (WUP). They include data on: unemployment rates, unemployment by gender, age, education, time of unemployment, economic activity, employment by gender, age, economic sectors. These data are available on the websites of the provincial offices in the "Statistics" section.
2. Secondary data obtained by institutions other than the Voivodeship Labour Office (WUP) directly or indirectly on labour market issues used in thematic analyses conducted by

⁴⁰<https://www.pfron.org.pl/o-funduszu/publikacje-pfron/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁴¹<https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/statystyki-migracyjne> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁴²<https://www.gov.pl/web/udsc/raporty-specjalne> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

labour offices. These data are also available on the website of the Provincial Labour Offices in the "Statistics" section.

3. Primary data obtained in field surveys to expand and deepen the information provided on the basis of secondary data analysis. The surveys are generally coordinated by Regional Labour Market Observatories operating at Voivodeship Labour Offices and their results are available in the "Surveys and Reports" section.

Regional Social Policy Centres (*Regionalne Ośrodki Polityki Społecznej - ROPS*) develop and update programmes to counteract social exclusion, develop regional social welfare programmes, provide employees with access to professional training, cooperate with non-governmental organizations performing social policy tasks, cooperate with managing and intermediary institutions in the development and implementation of social policy projects. They collect and publish statistical data available in the databases of the Internet Observatory of Social Statistics in each province (voivodeship, *województwo*). For example, the database of the regional Social Policy Centre in Małopolskie Voivodeship includes data on the following issues: portrait of the municipality (*gmina*) and county (*powiat, powiat*), population, households, family, social assistance (reasons for use, beneficiaries, infrastructure), foster care, health, disability, wages, pensions, culture, education, labour market, mobility, municipal budgets⁴³.

Powiat Family Assistance Centres (*Powiatowe Centra Pomocy Rodzinie - PCPR*) carry out the tasks of the county (*powiat*) - own and commissioned by the government administration - in the field of social assistance, support for the family and foster care, prevention of domestic violence, support for people with disabilities. With regard to the above-mentioned task areas, they conduct reporting using an information system and identify the needs of the various population groups covered by their activities. There is a list of mandatory data submitted to the system of public statistics by PCPR, concerning: staff employed, activities of the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled People, including vocational and social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, funds for the purchase of orthopaedic and rehabilitation equipment, rehabilitation holidays, foster care, including institutional and family foster care, foster families, the beneficiaries of the crisis intervention centre, active programmes conducted by PCPR.

Social Assistance Centres (*Ośrodki Pomocy Społecznej - OPS*) are the basic organizational units of the local government carrying out their own and government commissioned tasks in the area of social assistance in the municipality (*gmina*). Social assistance is an institution of state social policy, aimed at supporting individuals and families in overcoming difficult life situations, with which they are unable to cope, using their own capabilities and entitlements, supports individuals and families in their efforts to meet the necessary needs and enables them to live in decent conditions. It also helps prevent difficult life situations, supporting clients in becoming independent and integrating into the community. Social assistance supports individuals and families in the form of financial, material aid and services. Social assistance centres are obliged to conduct reporting in accordance with the requirements of public statistics, covering the following information: organizational structure and staff of the centre, characteristics of social assistance benefits, nutrition of children, social assistance nursing homes, providing shelter, supporting the family and foster care, family benefits, care benefits, alimony fund, housing and energy allowances, costs of benefits.

⁴³<https://obserwator.rops.krakow.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

4.4. ACADEMIC AND OTHER SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Quantitative and qualitative research on social policy is carried out by many scientific and research centres, providing a rich resource of knowledge about the social and economic problems of Polish society, the directions and instruments of state social policy and their impact on meeting the needs and shaping the living conditions of various groups of the population.

There are differentiated research profiles of research centres established by the government administration and public and non-public universities. In general, the first type of research institutions mentioned is oriented towards diagnosing problems that are the subject of the current political discourse at a given time around normative and administrative decisions at the central and local government level on detailed social policy issues. An important part in this type of research is the collection and analysis of detailed data obtained from central and local government administrations, combining detailed (fragmentary) statistical data dispersed between institutions. Data collected in this way are complementary to the databases collected by the Central Statistical Office. Their value is based on continuity of analyses in a given area of issues and possibility to follow trends. Research institutions related to government administration focus mainly on labour issues, social assistance, social insurance, health, family. Researchers from universities also have access to the detailed data they collect. The research of both categories of research institutions is diagnostic and applied in nature. The research results are used to formulate recommendations for public institutions and to support them in planning and developing social and public policy strategies. However, there is not the one institution responsible for linking micro data from different administrative sources or administrative data with survey data. The Main Statistical Office links some of such data, but it does not cover all key, detailed and in-depth data regarding social policy. Listed below are the scientific institutions most prominent in social policy research in Poland. They are structured into four categories:

1. State research institutes linked to government administration;
2. Key institutes and departments of public universities and other higher schools;
3. Key institutes and departments of non-public universities and other higher schools;
4. The Public Opinion Research Centre (*Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej - CBOS*).

As far as State **research institutes linked to government administration** are concerned, the following centres should be mentioned here:

- The Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (*Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych*)⁴⁴,
- The Central Institute for Labour Protection - National Research Institute (*Centralny Instytut Ochrony Pracy - Państwowy Instytut Badawczy*)⁴⁵,
- The National Institute for Public Health (*Narodowy Instytut Zdrowia Publicznego*)⁴⁶
- The Polish Economic Institute (Polski Instytut Ekonomiczny)⁴⁷.

⁴⁴<https://www.ipiss.com.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁴⁵<https://www.ciop.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁴⁶<https://www.pzh.gov.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁴⁷<https://pie.net.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

As far as **key institutes and departments of public universities** and other higher schools are concerned, one should mention the following centres:

- The Institute of Social Economy of the SGH Warsaw School of Economics (*Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego SGH*)⁴⁸,
- The Department of Social Policy⁴⁹ and the Department of Labour System and Labour Market⁵⁰ of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the University of Warsaw (*Katedra Polityki Społecznej i Katedra Ustroju Pracy i Rynku Pracy Wydziału Nauk Politycznych i Studiów Międzynarodowych UW*),
- The Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw (*Ośrodek Badań nad Migracjami UW*)⁵¹,
- The Department of Applied Sociology and Social Work of the Institute of Sociology of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow (*Zakład Socjologii Stosowanej i Pracy Socjalnej w Instytucie Socjologii Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie*)⁵²,
- The Department of Social and Economic Policy of the University of Economics in Katowice (*Katedra Polityki Społecznej i Gospodarczej Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach*)⁵³,
- The Department of Sociology and Social Policy of the Wrocław University of Economy and Business (*Katedra Socjologii i Polityki Społecznej Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu*)⁵⁴,
- The Department of Quality of Life Research and Applied Sociology of the Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (*Katedra Badania Jakości Życia i Socjologii Stosowanej Instytutu Socjologii Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu*)⁵⁵.

Key institutes and departments of non-public universities and other higher schools undertaking social policy research are:

- The Institute of Healthcare Management, Lazarski University In Warsaw (*Instytut Zarządzania w Ochronie Zdrowia w Uczelni Łazarskiego w Warszawie*)⁵⁶,
- The Centre for Community and Local Policy Research⁵⁷, Centre for the Study of Social and Economic Risks⁵⁸, and Centre for Public Policy⁵⁹, Collegium Civitas (*Centrum Badań Społeczności i Polityk Lokalnych, Centrum Badań nad Ryzykami Społecznymi i Gospodarczymi oraz Centrum Polityki Publicznej, Collegium Civitas*).

⁴⁸<https://www.sgh.waw.pl/kes/instytut-gospodarstwa-spolecznego> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁴⁹<https://wnpism.uw.edu.pl/katedra-polityki-spolecznej/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁰<https://wnpism.uw.edu.pl/katedra-ustroju-pracy-i-ryнку-pracy/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵¹<https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵²<https://sociologia.ui.edu.pl/PL/instytut/zssips> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵³<https://www.ue.katowice.pl/jednostki/katedry/wgpitr/katedra-polityki-spolecznej-gospodarczej-i-srodowis-kowej/informacja-wstepna.html> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁴https://www.ue.wroc.pl/jednostki/katedra_socjologii_i_polityki_spolecznej.html (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁵<https://www.soc.umk.pl/katedra-badania-jakosci-zycia-i-socjologii-stosowanej/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁶<https://izwoz.lazarski.pl/> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁷<https://civitas.edu.pl/pl/nauka-i-rozwoj/centrum-badan-spolecznosci-i-polityk-lokalnych> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁸<https://civitas.edu.pl/pl/nauka-i-rozwoj/centrum-badan-nad-ryzykami-spolecznymi-i-gospodarczymi> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

⁵⁹<https://civitas.edu.pl/pl/nauka-i-rozwoj/centrum-polityki-publicznej> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

As for the **Centre for Public Opinion Research** (*Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej - CBOS*)⁶⁰, it is a specialized centre that conducts regular survey research, representative of Polish society, on opinions on all major socio-political and economic issues. It has the status of an independent foundation, conducting social research for public use and the CBOS Council, which includes specialists from seven academic institutions and representatives of the Sejm, the Senate, the President of the Republic of Poland and the Prime Minister, oversees the planning and quality of research work. The CBOS survey collections contain data on the opinions of the Polish public on, among other things, social mood, attitudes toward the government, evaluation of the activities of public institutions, assessment of Poles' living conditions, system of values, religiosity, attitude toward democracy, sense of security, attitude toward membership in the European Union, use of new technologies and others. CBOS surveys Poles' opinions on current issues, referring to current domestic and foreign events.

4.5. CONCLUSION

Central and local government centres are a key source of information on the socio-economic situation of the population, the structure of needs, forms and scope of social benefits and services provided by institutions of public authority. They collect statistical data according to the standardized rules of the programme of public statistics submitting them compulsorily at the dates specified by law to the Central Statistical Office (GUS). The latter coordinates the programme of public statistical surveys and provides aggregated data on an annual basis, quarterly, according to the territorial division of the country (voivodeship, municipality, powiat) and also in the form of cyclical thematic studies. At this level of aggregation, data are widely available in the Central Statistical Library and on the GUS website. They concern such issues as the demographic structure of the population, migration, social benefits, pensions, benefits from the social security system and social assistance, health, living conditions, labour, unemployment, wages, social economy, education. In our opinion, the system of public statistics in Poland provides a rich range of information about public social policy in Poland and the demographic and territorial structure of its recipients, and is in line with the standards of public statistics of the European Union.

It is difficult to identify a synthetic source of information covering the catalog of all analyses and research on social policy. This is because these studies are conducted by numerous centres, i.e., research institutes diagnosing social problems for central government entities implementing public social policy, public and non-public universities, private research centres and the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS). There is no aggregate register of empirical research and the publications in the field of social policy in Poland that have been produced on their basis. The report identifies the most relevant institutes, departments and other entities specializing in key areas of quantitative and qualitative research diagnosing the social problems of Polish society.

⁶⁰<https://www.cbos.pl/PL/home/home.php> (Accessed 10th of November 2023).

5 General conclusion

With regard to the research questions concerning university studies in the field of social policy in Poland, it was found that, as of 2023, eight study programmes were carried out, of which six programmes were based on a general academic profile and two on a practical profile. The dominant discipline within which the studies are implemented is political science and administration. There is a tendency to reinforce the practical nature of the studies, as well as a focus on shaping students' analytical and evaluative competences. Thus, the studies are predominantly oriented towards the training of analysts, researchers, advisors and also managers of social policy institutions. In addition to introductory subjects in the social sciences and social policy, the study programmes include a number of specialised subjects on specific areas of social policy in which current research and analysis results are analysed. Second-degree studies are oriented more towards the international perspective of social policy. Among other things, they serve as preparation for further academic work in the field of social policy. In addition to degree programmes which include the category of social policy in their name, there are degree programmes which adopt a broader perspective of policy analysis (mainly public policy), where social policy is treated as one of the public policies. As for narrowly specialised studies related to social policy, there are the largest number of them (as of 2023, 157), with social work as the dominant major. Graduates of studies in social policy usually work in public administration institutions at central and local government level in the different fields of social policy. Graduates from narrower related fields (such as social work) find employment in more specific professions, such as the social worker.

As for the forms of policy consultancy in Poland (the second research area), the predominant institutional forms are councils, panels and committees established at different levels - government, local government; executive (both at the level of the Council of Ministers, individual ministries and the office of the President of the Republic of Poland) and legislative (both at the level of the Sejm and the Senate). These entities are mixed in nature, i.e. involving both socio-political activists and academics. In addition, there are think-tanks of a diverse nature, which also prepare expert reports and analyses in the field of social policy for the needs of political circles. There is no specific institution that can be identified as the main body responsible for the transfer of social policy research into political decision-making. The issue is dispersed among the various actors broadly described in this report.

Answering the third research question (regarding data infrastructures), among the strengths of this infrastructure is the source-based nature of the data collected by individual social policy institutions. These institutions publish both detailed databases on their statutory social policy activity and thematic social policy reports - on a periodic basis (annual and sometimes quarterly or monthly), at different levels of aggregation. Most often, the main social policy institutions at various levels (central, local) make key data available on their websites in the section 'Statistics' or 'Research reports' and in special, profiled applications. It is also possible to

obtain more detailed data (at different levels of aggregation) directly from a particular institution, that function under a specific IT system. The obligation to report for official public statistics means that most of the key official data is collected and published (at various levels of aggregation) by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). The GUS both makes a lot of data available in an open access and additionally, there is a possibility to purchase more detailed sets of profiled data. At the level of individual provinces (voivodeships), this role is fulfilled by the voivodeship statistical offices (*województwskie urzędy statystyczne*). In addition to official data collected from social policy institutions, the GUS also collects and publishes other data from its quantitative surveys (e.g. household budget surveys, Labour Force Survey and others). Another source of information is continuous monitoring of public opinion conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS). Many such measurements are of a cyclical nature. CBOS also publishes the results of these surveys on an ongoing basis in the form of reports, and it is also possible to purchase data sets relating to particular variables of a given research. Moreover, it is also worth noting that there are many commercial opinion polling centres, which, however, do not publish their surveys in such a wide range, but carry them out on the order of individual clients (institutions). The system of public statistics and access to very diverse data on social policy in Poland should be assessed positively. Mention should also be made of state research institutes conducting primary and secondary analyses and numerous academic centres carrying out quantitative and qualitative research, also conducting secondary and primary analyses - on very diverse social policy topics. Usually, specific centres (key ones are listed in this report) specialize in a particular area of social policy. For example, the Department of Social Policy at the University of Warsaw specializes in research on topics such as migration policy, family policy, labour market policy and the third sector. The results of this research are published both in the form of research reports, monographs and scientific articles.

The weakness of the existing data infrastructure is a certain dispersion of detailed data across different institutions, the sometimes diverse form of presentation of these data and the not always comparable level of data aggregation (between different institutions).

The central institution collecting much of the data is the Central Statistical Office (GUS), but GUS databases do not cover all available social policy data. Cooperation between researchers and data producers takes place mainly at the level of councils and other consultative bodies of public institutions at different levels. This is mainly the case for institutions whose activities are of a strictly research nature. In other institutions, there are usually specific departments whose task is to collect and analyse data or prepare reports. Exchanges of expertise between government departments and research institutions (e.g. universities) also take place at the level of thematic social policy conferences and seminars, which are often attended by representatives of social policy practitioners and academia. Most often, however, the exchange of expertise concerns individual data areas and is not systemic.

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