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SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE PROGRAM'S DOCUMENTS OF POLISH POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OF THE VIII TERM

Summary: Primarily due to the nature of the emerging challenges, contemporary social policy is a global issue. This means that it is necessary to take certain political decisions and implement solutions at the international level, including within the framework of the European Union. As a result of elections to the European Parliament held in 2014, it seems important to consult with the social aspect of the election programs of the political spectrum. In the article the comparative analysis included nine national programming documents of election committees seeking seats in the European Parliament.

Keywords: social policy, European Union, European Parliament, political parties, socio-economic program.

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1. Introduction

Social dimension of the state – from the point of view of its development –appeared relatively late, but in today's world it plays a very important role. Social policy is understood as the "sphere of action of the state and other public bodies and social forces which actually shape the lives of people and relationships" [Polityka społeczna... 1996]. It is an essential part of the institutional activities of any state which is the addressee of the whole society.

In the literature, the relationship of social policy with economic policy service, often synonymous with economic policy, are described using various models. These models bring both solutions assuming the primacy of economic policy over social policy, as well as the reverse system, the independence of the two policies, and a kind of "partnership" based on cooperation. This last solution is the starting point for this article. Nowadays, economic development is possible only because the parallel following (and complementary to it) social development. In fact, both economic

policy and social policy have a common goal, which is to meet the specific needs expressed by the community. The approximation of social policy to economic policy can also be sought in the fact that the purpose of the first one is the realization of the idea of the state, which is responsible for the welfare of citizens [Polityka społeczna... 2008]. It should also be noted that in terms of many economic schools (also including liberal roots) social issues are an important part of the process management and economic goals are combined with social objectives [Pieńkowski 2012]. A belief that investments in human capital are crucial to the development, especially in the long run, are increasingly important in today's world [Polityka miedzynarodowa... 2012] and economic development should contribute to improving the situation and living conditions of the entire society, not just its parts [Transformacja i rozwój... 2005].

These are the politicians at different organizational levels, including members of the European Parliament, who primarily decide how this development will be conducted, and how the social sphere will operate at European, national and local level. The aim of the paper is to test how, even from a theoretical point of view, social issues are important for Polish political parties taking part in the elections to the European Parliament in 2014. To achieve the above objective a comparative analysis of program documents of national committees seeking seats in the European Parliament was done. The article is therefore purely theoretical, and draws practical conclusions relating to the implementation of pre-election assumptions which will only be possible before the next elections to the European Parliament in 2019.

2. The global dimension of European social policy

Contemporary social policy is not only a local, regional, or national matter. It definitely has a global dimension, which primarily results from the nature of the emerging challenges. As the global experience shows, the phenomenon accompanying globalization is often marginalized, considered as the process of a "twin" and peculiar paradox. This is due to the fact that the processes of globalization, primarily of the economic dimension (removal of the barriers to trade, capital investment) does not guarantee uniform access of individuals and entire societies to the performance benefits. The effects of that marginalization include social problems such as unemployment, social disintegration, increasing poverty or income stratification. These problems (due to their nature and impact area) are today no longer only local or national issues. Finding the ways to counteract them must take into account the international and global dimension. They should be talked about, discussed, and solved from such a perspective. It is not a simple matter primarily due to the differences in the scale of the problems in individual countries, including socio-cultural and political conditions and economic potential.

The functioning of the European Union from the very beginning was based on the development of common principles and the framework of proceedings relating to various areas of activity, including the social sphere. Already the treaty establishing the European Economic Community (1957) pointed to the need for cooperation among Member States in the implementation of social objectives aimed at improving the living and working conditions. However, it should be noticed, that despite the declared joint action, in fact, competences belonged to individual countries and tasks were actually implemented at their levels. Subsequent regulations — in the form of the Single European Act (SEA) (1986), the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) — significantly broadened the Community social competences (for example, through a common employment policy).

From the point of view of emphasizing the significance of the dimension of the Community's social policy, an important role was played by the Lisbon Strategy (2000), which – despite the fact that *post factum* it was evaluated rather negatively in terms of the objectives – it identified key directions to be taken at the European level. These directions included, among others: the development of knowledge-based economy, the liberalization and integration of markets and industries operating outside the so-called "common market", entrepreneurship, employment growth and changing of social model, as well as its permanent base development and the environment. It should be noticed that practically all of these objectives are to a lesser or greater extent associated with the social sphere. It ought to be also taken into account that the implementation of the so-called "active social policy" aimed at shifting the emphasis from hedging activities (mainly related to the tasks of public authority) to active ones (connected to the wider socio-economic participation) was one of the elements of strategic actions undertaken at the European level.

The continuation of the idea of the Lisbon Strategy is adopted in 2010 strategy for smart and sustainable growth foster to community inclusion – Europe 2020. Its main priorities are: development based on knowledge and innovation (smart growth), the development of a competitive economy, efficient uses of resources (sustainable growth) and the development of the economy with high level of employment functioning based on the principles of economic, social and territorial cohesion (inclusive growth). Their implementation is based on five overarching objectives, having a close connection with the sphere of social policy (among other things – to increase the level of employment, investment in research and development, raising the level of education and social inclusion).

The problem of contemporary social policy area is very broad. The emerging challenges of today (especially those of the global nature) in fact relate to different aspects of social life, but often interrelated. Among the most important problems first of all all issues related to the wider system of social security, including social insurance area, should be mentioned. Another area is the labor market – both in terms of the problems of employees and job seekers. For example, such problems as the lack of job security affecting especially those returning to the labor market, the selective nature of the market to exclude those with lower-skilled, relatively low wages, labor migration or so called "agreement junk" should be mentioned. The

aforementioned migrations entail social problems connected with family, culture as well as economy.

Significant changes in the functioning of the European social sphere are associated with an aging population, that is, with the increase of the proportion of people in older age in the population. The demographic change poses particular economic and social consequences. The challenges facing social policy also apply to ensure an appropriate level and quality of social life (health, education, housing) and to reduce the phenomena of social exclusion.

Problematic is also the diversity of relations between individuals (citizens) and the state. These primarily concern social expectations regarding security, which have — especially in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe — their attitude in the way these countries function after World War II. Their effect is deeply rooted in the conviction of society of certain obligations of public authority (for example in the form of social assistance and unemployment benefits), while significantly reducing the degree of resourcefulness of individuals and their responsibility for their own future.

Another issue is the problem, often referred to as "controversial" both from moral and legal point of view. We can include to these issues, among others: phenomena related to the procreation of human life and death (abortion, gene therapy, in vitro fertilization, cloning, organ transplants, sex change, euthanasia, death penalty), institutions of law education (sex education, teaching of religion) institutions of family law (adoption, free trade, adultery), criminal justice agencies (self defense, the use of torture) and other (protection of sexual minorities, the rights of women and children, exploitation of workers, the issue of plagiarism) [Bunikowski 2007].

3. Social issues as a matter of interest of the Polish political parties – the European Parliament elections 2014

Elections to the European Parliament in 2014 was the third vote of such significance, which Polish representatives took part in. Nine nationwide committees and three regional committees (the latter are not of interest to this study) put forward their lists. Due to the fact that social problems – as already mentioned – are often global in nature, it is appropriate to draw attention to proposals to solve the problems presented by the Polish political parties seeking seats in the European Parliament.

The coalition *Europa Plus – Twój Ruch*, which belongs to the faction of Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D), in its election manifesto – "It is in Brussels we will change Poland" basically presents two issues related to the wider social policy – the labor market and housing. They refer to the problems associated with the employment of the members of the coalition in favor of, inter alia, strengthening the cooperation of the public employment services. Strengthening such methods would monitor the activities of

labor offices in the Member States and enable the promotion of the most effective methods. Poland would have the chance to take new and innovative ways of combating unemployment thanks to the transformation of public employment services to "agencies managing change" that would offer an innovative combination of "active" and "passive" employment policy. Paying attention to the disadvantage of releasing full-time employees and transferring their duties to trainees and apprentices, for much lower or total lack of rates, the coalition is going to work on the adoption of the European Quality Framework Internships and Practices by the EU Council. The draft stipulates that an internship that lasts longer than a month should be paid. It also introduces mechanisms to ensure that young people will learn things that will be profitable on the future labor market. Referring to the case of unemployment, the members of the coalition Europa Plus – Twój Ruch advocate unemployment benefits, which firstly increase the confidence of workers to the state and secondly are an automatic stabilizer, causing that the fall in employment does not lead to a decline in the demand. The coalition also draws attention to the protection of the dignity of migrants and their equal treatment, manifested in guarantees and respect for their rights in the area of working conditions and social security. Europa Plus – Twój Ruch is of the opinion stating that the rights acquired as a result of the payment of social security contributions should result in having privileges during a stay in another Member State. It is therefore necessary to clarify the definition of "unreasonable burden on the social assistance system".

Another point of program of the coalition associated with social policy is the issue of housing. The members of the group postulate to reform European public aid law, which would allow States Member for the implementation of housing programs and would increase the supply of houses for rent, which, in turn, would contribute to the growth of flexibility of the labor market and by facilitating labor mobility would help in the fight against unemployment [Manifest Wyborczy Koalicji Europa Plus – Twój Ruch].

Kongres Nowej Prawicy (KNP) is the anti-EU party. In the program of "Union-election in 2014" the members of the group present one main goal, which is to eliminate the EU. According to the KNP their basic assumption is possible to achieve "by reducing the artificial, statist-fiscal and ideological solution in favour of the free trade zone – the original European Economic Community, which was a source of economic success and prosperity of the West after World War II" [Program Kongresu Nowej Prawicy...].

Platforma Obywatelska (PO) belongs to the faction of the group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in the European Parliament. In the European Manifesto of the PO "Strong Poland in Secure Europe", created for the European elections in 2014 emphasizes that the future of the country is inextricably linked to the future of the European Union. Stable work by PO is the basic condition of social security and a peaceful future. The party favors strengthening the internal labor market in the EU, and seeing the problem of a large emigration of Poles, is going to

act to promote the mobility and abolition of legal and practical obstacles to the free movement of workers. It is very important for the party to help young people and senior citizens. In the subsequent years, the *PO* declares to work in the European Parliament to activate older people through the promotion of the use of knowledge and skills of people above 50 years of age. Moreover in its manifesto the party emphasizes the need to increase the level of health security [*Europejski Manifest Platformy Obywatelskiej* ...].

The European Union and European Law are tools that *Polska Razem Jarosława* Gowina (PRJG), in the European Parliament belonging to the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), would like to use to implement its own policies both within the European Community, and in relations with other countries. The party believes, however, that the guiding principle of foreign policy should be the primacy of interests of the Polish Community, thereby expressing support for political and policy solutions tailored to the Member States. In terms of social policy the party pays special attention to the very unfavorable demographic situation and strongly opposes any attempt to the depletion of family rights. It proposes the promotion of pro-family tax solutions and the introduction of 0% VAT on clothes and products for children. The *PRJG* opposes "the use of Polish by Western politicians as a symbol of taking jobs of local communities" and highlights the benefits of the country by opening the labor market for Poles. According to the party the fight against unemployment should be primarily based on the activation and the corresponding issuance of funds – not for internships or training for the unemployed, but to create specific jobs by entrepreneurs. "Soft aid programs" should be limited to the necessary minimum [Program europejski PRJG...].

Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (PSL), belongs to the group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) in the European Parliament. It sees a great opportunity to solve the problems associated with social policy in the EU funds, which in the first instance should be directed to improve: the living conditions of Polish families, job creation, entrepreneurship, education, science, health and infrastructure. The health care system has to include every citizen, and the means and solutions should allow the Poles to purchase medicine at a much greater extent reimbursed and provide access to free testing and treatment specialists [Deklaracja wyborcza PSL...].

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) gathering representatives of eight EU countries in the European Parliament. Accordingly, the party agrees with the principle of the so-called "Prague Declaration", which in the context of social policy, among others, recognizes the family as the foundation of society. These principles also emphasize the need for effective immigration control, putting an end to abuse of asylum procedures, increasing efficiency and modernizing public services, raising awareness for the needs of urban communities and rural areas.

Before the European Parliament elections in 2014 the *PiS* as the only nationwide committee did not prepare a separate program, manifesto, or Decalogue. This party, however, as the only one had a new electoral program, which provided the program basis for both the Euro-elections in 2014 and the Polish local elections in 2014. Considering the above it is hard to refer to and evaluate how the party, using the opportunities offered by EU membership, would like to solve problems related to social policy. *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* believes that the most important achievements of the European Union are: common market, free movement of people, goods, capital and services, freedom and equality, shared rights and shared responsibilities. Within this framework, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity should guarantee the preservation of subjectivity of countries in accordance with national interests. As part of the program, which concerns the place of Poland in Europe and in the world, the *PiS* focuses on issues related to changes in law, foreign policy and European policy, as well as national defense and international security.

The program of PiS "Health, Work, Family" treats social issues in detail. It raises in particular the issues of family policy, labor, health, pension, social welfare, sport, education and culture. According to the PiS a job, own apartment, an easy access to health care and education are essential conditions for the proper functioning of the family. In case of difficult periods in life families, especially their elderly and disabled members, should be ensured decent help from the state. To reach these goals the PiS proposes several solutions. In order to improve family policy the party advocates the creation of a multi-annual program of family policy and national strategy for family activities. In addition, the PiS wants to introduce a monthly family allowance in the amount of PLN 500 for each second, third and subsequent children in a family, until a child is 18 years of age. The program of the European settlement of the demographic crisis should be a matter of common concern and funding by the European Union. The PiS therefore proposes to allot 1,200 Euro from the EU budget for every Polish child per year, stating the difference to the amount of PLN 500 would be covered from the state budget. In addition, the party wants, among other things to change the threshold income of family benefits to 50% of the minimum wage or 60% for families with disabled children, raise the minimum wage level of benefits care of parents of disabled children, introduce zero rate of VAT on children's clothes, extend to the sixth year of age obtaining benefit from the parental leave and create free kindergartens. According to the PiS public school– as well as high level education should provide a citizen with care, education, conditions for the development of abilities and talents, valuable food and medical care. The party proposes to introduce: compulsory schooling from the seventh year of age, changes in the education and upbringing, school medicine, nationwide Family Card and provisions to facilitate the issuance of the decision of the nutritional recovery of children.

In case of employment the *PiS* wants to help especially young people and proposes to reduce by 50 % the amount of contributions to the pension scheme in part financed by an employer in economically deprived communities for the first 12

months. In addition, the party wants to introduce uniform rules for the payment of social security contributions regardless of the type of a contract, to limit the amount and duration of such contracts and to maintain the protection from dismissal to four years before reaching the retirement age, reduced to 60 years for women and 65 for men. The PiS strongly emphasizes the need for a referendum in which Polish will decide on the selection of the solidarity pension system or capital. In addition, the party is in favor of maintaining KRUS – a separate system of agricultural insurance, after making only those changes that would eliminate embracing the insurance of non-real farmers. In matters of social welfare the party pays special attention to the development of care services for the elderly and the chronically ill. According to the party the state should stimulate housing construction in the mid-segment of society for most citizens income prevents them from acquiring ownership of housing. According to the assumptions the housing in social conditions will remain the task of self-government. In case of health problems the PiS proposes the elimination of the National Health Fund (NFZ), the increased reimbursement of medicine and the introduction of changes in the care for the elderly [Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości...].

The postulates of *Ruch Narodowy* (*RN*) based on the need to return power "of the EU's headquarters to the capitals of the nation" from the point of view of social policy in particular refer to matters of taxes and contributions. According to the members of the party the overall dimension necessary for the removal of taxes and contributions should be lowered for all full-time employed and self-employed citizens. Employees employed on civil law contracts must be ensured the right to social security, which they are deprived of now. The *RN* advocates a combination of income tax and social insurance contributions in a single fee, paid directly to the budget, and not from Social Security Institution (*ZUS*), which according to the party should be abolished.

In addition, the party draws attention to the protection of family. The extensive system of benefits, according to the party members is less effective than a properly designed tax incentives. The optimal solution of real support is tax-free amount granted for each child in a family, thus constituting the multiple of children. Additional support for the family could be a preferential VAT rate for all children's goods, which would lower the cost of education of offsprings [Postulaty Programowe Ruchu Narodowego...].

Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (SLD), which belongs to the group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D), before the elections in 2014 presented a document – "Manifesto of the Party of European Socialists", which is the basis of the program and sets the action of the Socialists and the Social Democrats. In this document, the SLD in very general terms refers to social issues. First of all the party highlights the problem of lack of work, emphasizing that the fight against unemployment will be a priority of parliamentarians in the years 2014–2019. The members of the SLD declare that they "will

fight for Europe that does not leave anyone behind, they will repel the attacks on public services, including health, education, communal housing, and they will guarantee that economic freedom will never undermine social rights" [Manifest Partii Europejskich Socjalistów...]. In addition, the SLD has developed a manifesto which presents the proposals for the EU in the coming years. The document underlines that the priority changes must refer to human, in particular, life, well-being today and better tomorrow. The new policy of the European Union should focus on equality, human rights and social rights for all citizens. In matters related to the labor market the SLD, among other things, favors the introduction of a universal catalog of workers' rights to safeguard them at the level of European Union directives, strengthening the position and role of trade unions in companies and institutions of social dialogue, the implementation of the employment guarantee scheme for the young and for the creation of the European Agency for Employment, as well as fighting of unemployment. In the opinion of the SLD, European social model to be able to fight the crisis, should be based on high-quality of public services in education, health and transport. In particular, so active fight against poverty and social exclusion stops the process of marketization of public services and invests in nursing services, mainly targeting the elderly [*Program SLD*...].

Solidarna Polska Zbigniewa Ziobro (SPZZ), which belongs to the group of Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), prepared the "European Decalogue of Solidarna Polska" for the purposes of elections to the European Parliament in 2014, clearly pointing in it the need for equalization of benefits in the Member States. The party calls for tax reductions and the increase in wages, family allowances and pensions to the level of services operating in highly developed countries of the Community. In addition, in the Decalogue the party draws attention to the education system, declaring the necessity of working to improve school infrastructure and raise the level of education. Contemporary Polish schools should be safe, friendly, without drugs, but with doctors, nurses, and free dinner. In addition, EU funds should be used to create free public kindergartens and raise the level of higher education [Europejski Dekalog Solidarnej Polski...].

4. Conclusions

The analysis presented in this article shows that except for the *KNP* all parties running in the European Parliament elections in 2014, include social issues in their programs. The parties relate to the analyzed problems more or less which can be seen in much attention they are paid to in this article. It can be assumed that they find the problems associated with this sphere of life important. However, it is worth paying attention to the fact that all committees (except the *PiS*) have developed specific manifestos and declarations for the purposes of elections to the European Parliament. The *PiS* has prepared a new universal program in which though social

issues are described very extensively in a few cases, the ability to solve the problems are perceived at the transnational level (in this case the European Union).

In view of the fact that the documents produced by various parties are not extensive, it is impossible to make a deeper comparative analysis according to the specific criteria. Therefore the presentation of issues in the area of social policy is only signaled. These are the most common issues related to unemployment, education, family-friendly policies and social security, but the assessment of actual implementation of the assumptions will only be possible after a few years. The analysis of documents has also not allowed to identify problems that evidently political parties find most important. It is worth paying attention that "morally and legally controversial" issues, which are in the initial part of the paper, do not appear in the programs of the analyzed parties primarily because of their controversial nature. This does not mean, however, that they are not taken into account in the policies and measures of various factions and politicians (concerning especially issues related to equality, abortion, sexual minorities, or in vitro fertilization). However, they have only local or national dimension

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PROBLEMATYKA SPOŁECZNA W DOKUMENTACH PROGRAMOWYCH POLSKICH UGRUPOWAŃ POLITYCZNYCH W WYBORACH DO PARLAMENTU EUROPEJSKIEGO VIII KADENCJI

Streszczenie: Współczesna polityka społeczna ma wymiar globalny, przede wszystkim ze względu na charakter pojawiających się wyzwań. Oznacza to konieczność podejmowania określonych decyzji politycznych i wdrażania rozwiązań na poziomie międzynarodowym, między innymi w ramach struktur Unii Europejskiej. W związku z odbywającymi się w roku 2014 wyborami do Parlamentu Europejskiego istotnym wydaje się zapoznanie ze społecznym aspektem programów wyborczych poszczególnych ugrupowań politycznych. W artykule analizie porównawczej poddane zostały dokumenty programowe dziewięciu ogólnopolskich komitetów wyborczych ubiegających się o mandaty w PE.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka społeczna, Unia Europejska, Parlament Europejski, partie polityczne, program społeczno-gospodarczy.