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Dialogue and social participation in the context of education and development of youth in Poland

Dialog i partycypacja społeczna w kontekście edukacji i rozwoju młodzieży w Polsce

Abstract:

Background: The development of civil society is based on dialogue and participation. Young people are characterized by low interest in social activity and building a civil society, therefore it seems crucial to look at what education for participation looks like.

Objectives: The authors considered the issue of dialogue and social participation in the context of education and development of young Poles. The authors drew attention to the forms and importance of civic dialogue, as well as diagnosed the goals, functions and deficits of civic education.

Methodology: The topic was presented on the basis of the literature on the subject, the results of sociological research and hard data on the forms and scale of civic involvement in Poland, especially in Warsaw. Data analysis was used in the form of desk research.

Results: Research by CBOS and KBPN shows that only 40% of young people who could take part in the 2018 elections for the first time in their lives intended to exercise their right. Also in the parliamentary elections in 2019, the youngest eligible respondents voted least frequently. In general, young Poles show involvement in the affairs of the local community significantly less often than adults, and are also characterized by an above-average lack of trust in others and increasing individualism.

Conclusions: Civic involvement of young Poles and their participation in building a civic society are low and are accompanied by a high level of individualism combined with a lack of trust in others. Therefore, a more effective education for participation seems to be of key importance. Examples of good practice in this area, although still carried out on a small scale, are classes conducted for students in the field of public communication and tools for social participation developed and used by some local governments, such as the Civic Budget or Local Initiative.

Keywords: civic dialogue, social participation, civic education, youth.

Abstrakt:

Tło: Rozwój społeczeństwa obywatelskiego oparty jest na dialogu i partycypacji. Młodzi ludzie charakteryzują się niskim zainteresowaniem społeczną aktywnością i budowaniem społeczeństwa obywatelskiego, stąd kluczowe wydaje się przyjrzenie temu, jak wygląda edukacja do partycypacji.

Cele: Autorzy podjęli rozważania dotyczące kwestii dialogu i partycypacji społecznej w kontekście edukacji i rozwoju młodych Polaków. Autorzy zwrócili uwagę na formy i znaczenie dialogu obywatelskiego, a także zdiagnozowali cele, funkcje i deficyty edukacji obywatelskiej.

Metodyka: Temat został przedstawiony na bazie literatury przedmiotu, wyników badań socjologicznych oraz danych twardych dotyczących form i skali zaangażowania obywatelskiego w Polsce, w tym zwłaszcza w Warszawie. Zastosowano analizę danych zastanych w postaci desk research.

Wyniki: Badania CBOS i KBPN wskazują, iż jedynie 40% młodych ludzi, którzy mogli pierwszy raz w swoim życiu wziąć udział w wyborach w 2018, zamierzało skorzystać ze swojego prawa. Również w wyborach parlamentarnych w 2019r. najmłodszy uprawnieni do głosowania respondenci najrzadziej głosowali. Młodzi Polacy istotnie rzadziej niż ogół dorosłych wykazują zaangażowanie w sprawy lokalnej społeczności, a do tego cechują się ponadprzeciętnym brakiem zaufania do innych i narastającym indywidualizmem.

Wnioski: Zaangażowanie obywatelskie młodych Polaków i ich udział w budowaniu społeczeństwa obywatelskiego są niskie i towarzyszy im wysoki poziom indywidualizmu połączony z brakiem zaufania do innych. Kluczowa zatem wydaje się bardziej efektywna

edukacja do partycypacji. Przykładem dobrych praktyk w tym zakresie, choć ciągle realizowanych na niewielką skalę, są zajęcia prowadzone dla studentów w obszarze komunikacji publicznej oraz rozwijane i wykorzystywane przez niektóre samorządy narzędzia partycypacji społecznej, takie jak Budżet obywatelski czy Inicjatywa lokalna.

Słowa kluczowe: dialog obywatelski, partycypacja społeczna, edukacja obywatelska, młodzież.

1. Introduction

Poland, like most European countries, is currently facing a huge demographic challenge. As a result of a significant drop in the number of births and an increase in life expectancy, we belong to a wide group of “aging” countries. The average age of Polish voters is increasing every year, and the number of young people is decreasing proportionally. In addition, a worrying phenomenon is the decreasing voter turnout in the case of young people, who are a category significantly less frequently involved in democratic processes in relation to the national average.

While in the October 2019 parliamentary elections, the voter turnout was record-breaking and amounted to slightly over 61% among the general population eligible to vote, it was traditionally the lowest among the youngest voters, reaching only 47%. As it results from the post-election analyses, the group of the youngest Polish voters, apart from the fact that for years has been characterized by a lower turnout, also shows the lowest level of knowledge in the field of issues related to elections. This applies not only to basic knowledge (who and whom can elect in general elections), but also to more specific issues (polling station opening hours, voting procedures, etc.).

A significant group of young people surveyed do not know that they can elect members of the European Parliament in general elections (Batorski, Drabek, 2012, p. 74). This is worrying from the point of the effectiveness of civic education. It seems that these issues should be well known to young citizens from school activities. Youth, unlike the elderly, do not treat the basic democratic procedure of voting as a civic duty. Young people consistently indicate that they are much less willing than the elderly to give up their plans (e.g. holidays, rest) in favour of participating in elections (Batorski, Drabek, 2012). Significantly less often than adult Poles in general, they express interest in social activity, and as a consequence they are less often involved in building a civil society (Boguszewski, 2019b, pp. 135–146).

In order to strengthen democracy and legitimize political decisions, it is very important to involve more young people socially. A significant step in finding solutions to meet this challenge is the increase in the number of young people with the right to vote and participate in the decision-making process (Systematized dialogue, 2012, p. 7). On the way to achieving these goals, however, appropriate social dialogue with the young generation of future and present voters (also with the use of modern technologies, especially Internet-based communication channels), as well as effective education for participation are necessary.

Dialogue and social participation are extremely important concepts considered in the context of public communication. It is impossible to talk about activating citizens without paying attention precisely to building a platform of dialogue serving mutual understanding of needs, views, expectations and points of view. Dialogue can also be seen as a tool for the education and development of young people. In the context of public communication, communication of offices with residents and citizens, attention should be paid to the forms and tools of civic dialogue, which is a process of communication and information flow between the public authority and citizens. It enables citizens to speak, take a stance on matters that are important to them, as well as participate in making decisions concerning themselves, their relatives, and the local community with which they identify with problems.

Only effective civic dialogue in combination with effective education for participation and creating opportunities for your people to engage in local communities creates an opportunity for the development of civil society in Poland, and thus an increase in social involvement of young Poles resulting from the need to influence the affairs of the country and local communities.

In our article, based on the literature on the subject, the results of sociological research and hard data on the forms and scale of civic engagement in Poland, and especially in Warsaw, we take up the issue of dialogue and social participation in the context of education and development of young Poles. In the first part, we consider the theoretical aspects of social dialogue, its forms, ownership and meaning. In the second, we focus on issues of citizenship education – its goals, functions and examples. The next part of the article is a short diagnosis of the effects of civic education in Poland, based on the example of research conducted among young Poles entering adulthood. The article ends with examples of practices in the field of dialogue and involvement of residents for the local community, which are implemented by the Capital City of Warsaw.

2. Civic dialogue and social participation in the theoretical dimension

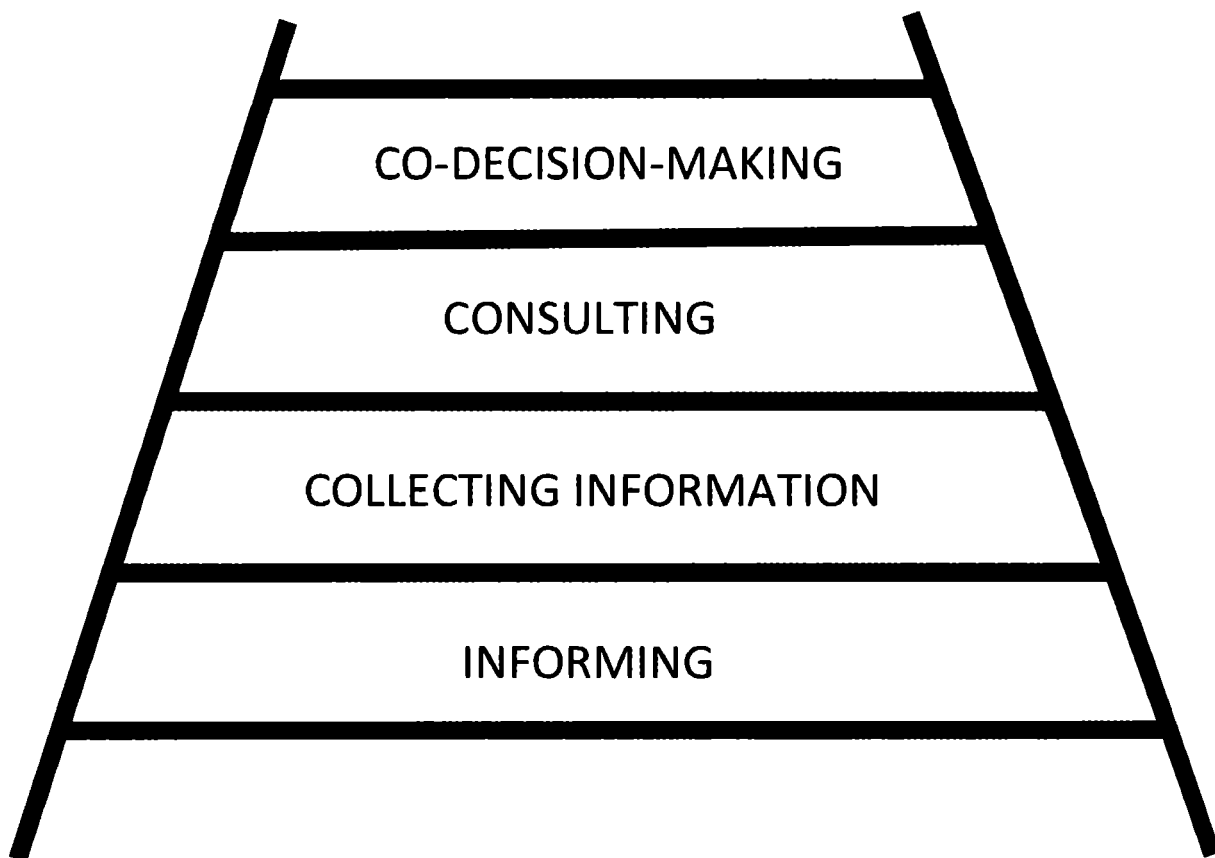
Civic dialogue and social participation should occupy not only an important place in the city management system, but also in the sphere of education and development of young people. Participation in making decisions important from the point of view of a given community, participation in a dialogue serving not only the exchange of information, but also the mutual understanding of the needs and expectations of each party, constitute a real challenge not only at the level of city management and building an efficient system of public information flow, but also in the area of education and preparing young people for life in the society. The ability to obtain information, collect and process it, and on the other hand consciously participate in decision-making processes for the development of a given community, seems to be extremely important from the point of view of shaping decision-making processes relating to the functioning of individuals in specific local communities. So how can we define civic dialogue and social participation? “In modern terms, social participation in the management of local government units means not only the participation of various groups of local communities in creating public policies (among others building development strategies), but also, and perhaps most of all, the participation of these groups in making decisions and implementing formulated together with local government authorities of public policies” (Boryczka, 2016, p. 116).

On the other hand, civic dialogue can be treated “as an interaction between the public authority and citizens who gain not only a channel to express their opinions on issues of interest to them, but can also influence public policy programs by co-building solutions in areas important to them” (Cisek-Lachowicz and Kichewko, 2018, p. 63). Civic dialogue defined in this way is one of the scenes of participatory democracy. (Grzechnik, Góral and Wilk, 2019, pp. 13–15).

Bukowski, Hess (2019, p.5) note that “civic dialogue is also an analytical category, thanks to which it is possible to deepen the understanding of the actual mechanisms of civil society”. The importance of civil dialogue understood in this way is unquestionable. As noted by Fudala-Barańska (2019, p. 31), dialogue with residents, openness of taken actions, universal access to information should be prioritized by every authority, not only local government. Civic dialogue is therefore an instrument that allows for the implementation of basic communication needs, and thus the implementation of the information function, but also allows for building two-way communication, consequently not only leading to the exchange of information, opinions and views, but also giving the possibility of co-decision making and participation in decision-making by citizens. Therefore, it can be concluded that the civil dialogue is a gradual tool and can be pre-

sented using a participation ladder, on which there are levels indicating the lowest involvement of citizens in making public decisions and levels indicating the highest possible level of citizens' participation and inclusion in decision-making processes (Szaranowicz-Kusz, 2014, p. 4).

Fig. 1. Ladder of social participation



Source: (Szaranowicz-Kusz, 2014, p. 4)

The first level of the social participation ladder is information, i.e. the process of sending and providing information to recipients – citizens. It refers to the implementation of the information function by using various channels and means of communication in order to provide the citizen with appropriate information. For this purpose, various types of media or specially prepared information materials (guides) can be used. Thus, it is a process of one-way communication which, in the understanding of dialogue as an exchange of information serving to understand the other person, their needs and expectations, becomes a determinant of civil dialogue. It should be noted that dialogue – in the traditional sense of the word – is equated with two-way communication, it is the opposite of a monologue. “In a situation of dialogue [...] the parties are focused on mutual discovery of meaning”, and the purpose of such a dialogue “is to create a new perspective

of perceiving a given matter. [...] This form of conversation leads to mutual understanding, and its ultimate consequence is the possibility of making peace” (Nordhelle, 2010, p. 147). Therefore, dialogue is a two-way communication, which is focused primarily on understanding the interlocutor, and not on presenting one’s arguments and focusing attention, focusing on the need to convey content and be heard. This is what distinguishes the traditional approach to dialogue from discussion or debate. Dialogue is an end in itself, while debate or discussion are forms of communication oriented and directed at convincing the other party to specific arguments (Nordhelle, 2010, p. 147).

Therefore, dialogue is a two-way communication, which is focused primarily on understanding the interlocutor, and not on presenting one’s arguments and focusing attention, focusing on the need to convey content and be heard. It is a form of communication that covers all levels of the social participation ladder – from informing to co-decision. Thus, it contains both two-way communication aimed at exchanging information, obtaining feedback, learning about the expectations or needs of the interlocutor, but also one-way communication – serving only to convey important or interesting content from the recipient’s perspective.

In this context, another – the second level of civic dialogue can be mentioned, i.e. collecting information. An important issue in the civil dialogue is not only the provision of information that may prove useful to citizens and to meet their information needs, but also receiving and collecting information from citizens. This direction of information flow, however, has some limitations due to the fact that the subject matter or principles according to which information flow takes place at this level is determined by one party – the authorities and decision makers.

Another level at which a civil dialogue can take place is consultations, which allow for discussion and free exchange of information. An example is public consultation, which allows citizens to have influence on matters that are important to them. They are a form of dialogue between the governmental or local government entity, which allows for the exchange of information, learning about the needs and expectations of citizens regarding a specific problem. Therefore, they allow for joint development of solutions, giving the opportunity to collect opinions and views of citizens. Usually it is a complex process consisting of several steps. Public consultations include informing about planned projects, collecting information about the needs or ideas relating to the consulted project, informing about the results of consultations and controlling, i.e. monitoring the implementation status of the consulted project¹.

¹ On the basis of the regulations of conducting consultations with the residents of the Capital City of Warsaw.

The last level of the social participation ladder on which a citizen's dialogue can be conducted is co-decision. At this level, citizens have the opportunity not only to express their opinion on a specific undertaking, problem or dispute, but most of all they can participate in making decisions. The possibility of co-deciding, participating in making decisions, may translate into the quality of life of citizens. Dialogue with residents based on participation may stimulate an increase in the level of life satisfaction, as well as increase the sense of belonging and responsibility of citizens in terms of decisions made in a given local government unit (Laskowska, 2017, p. 74).

An important issue in the sphere of dialogue and social participation is civic education, the subject of which is every citizen, especially young inhabitants of the country. Acquiring and practicing certain elements of social responsibility and commitment at an early stage of life creates an opportunity to create sustainable pro-social attitudes that are rather deficit, although extremely important from the point of view of the development of civil society and taking responsibility for the fate of the country and the development of local communities.

3. Dialogue and participation in the youth education system in Poland

Civic dialogue can be conducted at various surfaces and levels of communication. An important issue in shaping it and building a communication model, based on the full and conscious commitment of each party, is the education of young people, which is to serve not only informing, but also shaping attitudes that lead to conscious involvement and participation in making decisions regarding the functioning of in a given society. P. Depczyńska, among others, writes about this commitment and civic education. The author emphasizes that the goal of civic education is to shape and “create a critical competence, a critical attitude towards reality, the ability to independently shape judgements and engage in public life” (Depczyńska, 2019, pp. 171–172). The involvement in question means that a citizen can shape the environment in which he or she functions, and thus has an impact on social, political and economic micro- and macrosystems (Depczyńska, 2019, p. 172). Civic education should serve to build an active society involved in solving social problems, matters concerning specific communities – citizens involved in public affairs and aware of the possibility of participating in making decisions concerning them. Civic education is an opportunity for children and youth in the field of:

engaging in important social problems that are their area of interest, are important and relevant to them;

discussing important but often controversial topics, involvement in matters that require repair, change, which allows to improve the quality of functioning of some groups or individuals in society; acquiring the ability to conduct dialogue with various partners and institutions².

This education can take place at various levels and take various forms. It can be addressed to children and youth from primary and secondary schools, but also to academic youth. Actions and projects carried out by the Office of the Capital City of Warsaw are an example of educational activities aimed at building an active society that is involved in solving social problems. One of such undertakings is the organization of cooperation with universities, on which employees of the Office meet students, conducting classes on issues related to social participation and civic dialogue. An example of this type of meetings and lectures are classes organized for students of Warsaw universities, including the Warsaw University of Life Sciences.

At the Faculty of Sociology and Pedagogy, students of both of these faculties have the opportunity to attend classes on social communication and public communication, listen to lectures by employees of the City Hall of the Capital City of Warsaw, including the Social Communication Centre, who present the practical possibilities of using various forms and communication tools in the sphere of public communication. As part of these classes, students learn about the principles of creating social campaigns, learn about tools for activating residents and social participation, such as the civic budget, local initiative, social consultations, issues related to volunteering. In addition, in the 2018/19 academic year, students of social communication in the field of Sociology analysed the information collected in the Municipal Youth Guide “Young Warsaw” published by the capital city of Warsaw. Their comments, suggestions and ideas were to enrich and update the offer prepared for young residents of Warsaw.

The cooperation of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences with the Social Communication Centre of the Capital City of Warsaw allows not only to enrich students' knowledge in the field of practical communication solutions used in public, but also to expand their knowledge in the field of active participation in public life, use the available opportunities allowing for joint decision-making, speaking up, expressing opinions and participating in decision-making, thus participating in civic dialogue at all its levels.

² The benefits of civic education and human rights education are discussed in more detail in: P. Brett, P. Mompoin-Gaillard, M. H. Salema, *Edukacja obywatelska i edukacja na rzecz praw człowieka jako zadanie wszystkich nauczycieli. Opis kompetencji nauczycielskich i sposobów ich rozwijania*, Education Development Centre, Warsaw 2012

Therefore, it is a positive example of civic education, which can certainly be multiplied, but as the statistics and results of sociological research show, on a larger scale civic education in Poland seems to be not very effective, and certainly not effectively satisfactory, as we present below.

4. Dialogue and youth participation in practice

Young people in Poland turn out to be quite withdrawn when it comes to their social and political commitment, especially when we consider them against the background of all adult Poles. According to the CBOS and KBPN research from October 2018³, people entering adulthood significantly less often than all adult Poles declare a sense of influence over the affairs of the country (27% compared to 34%) and the matters of their city or municipality (45% compared to 59%) (Grabowska, 2019; Boguszewski, 2018a). At the same time, this limited influence seems to be the choice of young Poles rather than resulting from the inability to influence. In the CBOS survey from February 2018, 81% of respondents aged 18 to 24 believed that the voice of the inhabitants of their municipality/city is taken into account by local authorities when making decisions that affect residents, while among adults in general, such an opinion was shared by 64% of respondents (Boguszewski, 2018c).

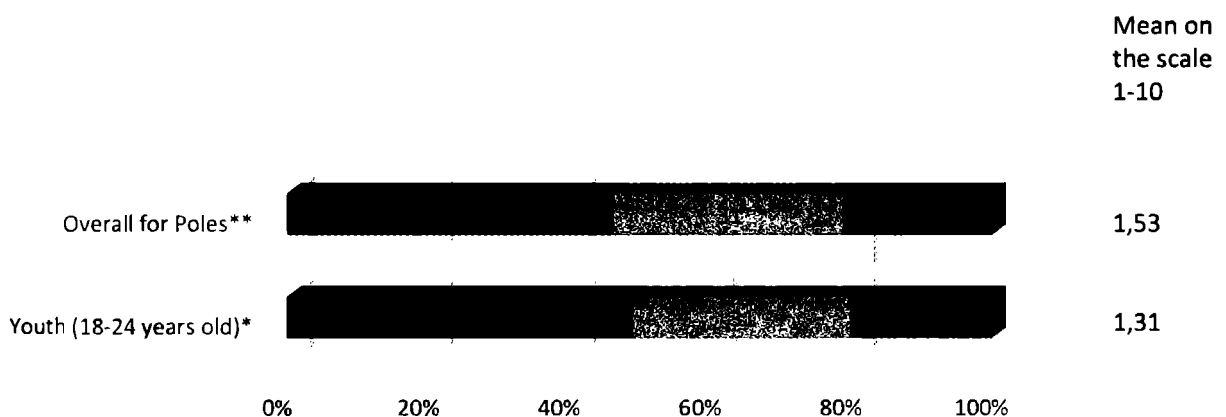
The fact that civic involvement is not a desired feature by Polish youth, nor the habit instilled in them, can be demonstrated by declarations of students of the last years of secondary schools regarding their participation in elections to the school council. According to the results of the 2018 survey, 59% of respondents have never participated in such elections. Regular representatives to the school self-government are selected by only about 20% of the surveyed students and – most importantly – this percentage has basically been stable over the last 20 years. As a consequence, young people in Poland do not feel the need to vote in general elections when they acquire electoral work. According to declarations obtained in the latest CBOS and KBPN survey, among people who in October 2018 could take part in the nationwide voting for the first time in their lives, just be-

³ The study “Consumption of psychoactive substances by young people – Youth 2018”, financed by the National Bureau for Drug Prevention, was carried out by the Foundation Centre for Public Opinion Research on October 1–30, 2018. The study was carried out on a nationwide random sample of 80 day secondary schools – high schools, technical secondary schools (and specialized, vocational or technical high schools) and basic vocational schools (excluding special schools), in departments of the last grade, in 69 towns, one department in each school. The study was conducted using the auditorium method. The interview lasts for one lesson (45 minutes). The main sample implementation rate was 77.5%. A total of 1,609 interviews with students were carried out – the average number of interviews per one class (school) was 20 interviews.

for the elections, only 40% planned to go to the polls, while at the same time in the entire adult population the percentage of those planning to take part in the elections was 64%. In turn, in the parliamentary elections of 2019, voter turnout in the youngest group of respondents turned out to be significantly below the national average (47% compared to 61%).

Other CBOS studies indicate that while 44% of all adult Poles show a complete lack of social commitment, and 25% are characterized by above-average commitment, in the group of respondents aged 18 to 24, a complete lack of commitment concerns half of them (49%), while an above-average activity is shown only by 20% (Boguszewski, 2018c) – see Fig. 2.

Fig. 2



*Based on the CBOS survey from May 2018

The summary indicator created from the summary of positive responses to 10 questions about different forms of involvement in matters of the local community within 24 months before the study, including, among others: participation in meetings of the residential community, undertaking actions for the residents, using the Internet for discussions about local matters, participation in social consultations, collecting signatures for the petition or the intervention in the office on the matters concerning local issues, etc.

■ No involvement (0) ■ Slight involvement (1-2) ■ Above average involvement (3-10)

Indicator for the involvement of local community in matters (1–10 scale)*

Source: Own study based on Boguszewski, 2018c

The limited socio-political activity of young Poles is related to their high level of individualism, combined with a lack of trust in others. The analysis of the life goals of young people completing their education at secondary school level shows that in the years 1994–2018 there was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who mention achieving a high professional position (from 19% to 33%) and high material status (from 25% to 33%), in turn, the number of those for whom being useful to others – “life for others” (from 15% to 10%) (Boguszewski, 2019a). In addition, over twenty years (from 1998 to 2018), the

view among young people grew stronger, according to which nowadays a person who wants to achieve something in life should do his own thing, counting only on himself (an increase in from 38% to 56%), on the other hand, the opinion that in order to achieve success one should look for the possibility of joint action with people who have similar problems (a decrease from 45% to 32%). For over twenty years, the trust of young people towards other people has remained at a low and significantly lower level than in the entire population. The belief that most people can be trusted is expressed by only 11% of students entering adulthood, while in the entire population it is 22% (Boguszewski, 2019b; Cybulska, Pankowski, 2018). The lack of trust in others is certainly a significant barrier to the development of civil society in Poland. The analysis of dependencies confirms that people characterized by greater social trust are more often involved in the socio-political dimension. Moreover, respondents trusting others, significantly more often than those who are reserved in interpersonal contacts, declare a sense of influence over the matters of the school (70% compared to 62%), the city or municipality (59% compared to 44%) and the country (39% compared to 25%) (Boguszewski, 2019b, 151).

5. Examples of good practices based on the experiences of the Capital City of Warsaw

The limited trust of Poles, especially young people, towards other people, a high level of individualism and scepticism as well as civic education which is ineffective on a larger scale, constitute a real challenge for local governments, which care about the participation of their residents in the decision-making process and the involvement of citizens in the development of local society. In order to meet this challenge, it is important to implement measures in the field of civil dialogue in a comprehensive and methodical way. As noted in the first part of the article, civic dialogue is a form of communication that covers all levels of the social participation ladder – from informing, through gathering information, then consulting, to co-decision. The capital city of Warsaw implements individual elements of the civil dialogue with the use of various tools, often independent of each other, but only in a comprehensive approach, bringing the expected results.

In the field of information, there are, among others, the City Contract Centre Warsaw 19115, which provides residents with information on services provided by the City Hall and municipal units 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Access to information is possible thanks to the application, the portal as well as e-mail

and telephone contacts with consultants. Importantly, the City Contact Centre is also a platform for collecting information from residents (reporting problems and monitoring the implementation of the reported case) and for co-decision (the possibility of residents sharing ideas for improving the city). (<https://warszawa19115.pl/>).

Gathering information, and thus the second level of civic dialogue, is facilitated, apart from the City Contact Centre, by regular opinion polls conducted among Warsaw residents. The Warsaw Barometer is an example. It is a research carried out on a random, representative sample of the capital's inhabitants, conducted in the form of face-to-face interviews at the respondent's home. Each study is carried out on a sample of 1,100 Warsaw residents aged 15 and over. Residents assess the quality of life in the city and the changes introduced in it, submit their postulates and give their opinion on ideas to be implemented. Thus, this tool is also used for consulting and, in a way, for engaging, and the results of the study are made public as an element of informing residents (<https://www.um.warszawa.pl/o-warszawie/warszawa-w-liczbach/barometr-warszawski>).

A tool used strictly for consultation, which is the third level of civil dialogue, include public consultation. It is a form of dialogue between the office and residents in order to obtain opinions on various important problems, issues and matters. The aim of public consultations is not only to inform residents about specific matters, but above all to obtain feedback, i.e. what the residents think about the proposed solutions. Public consultations most often concern spatial development plans, modernization and new investments (<https://konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl/>). It is worth noting that "at the level of everyday language, social consultations are almost a functional synonym of civic dialogue in a broad sense. They are also the basic instrument for the implementation of the general objectives of the civil dialogue, i.e. partnership co-creation of public policies by the authorities and citizens. The idea of public consultations is based on understanding people speaking on a topic that directly concerns them as experts (Grzechnik, Góral, Wilk, 2019, pp. 45–46).

Consultation is also supported by, among others, the Social Dialogue Commissions operating in the city and the District Social Dialogue Commissions, which are opinion-giving and imitative and advisory bodies. They are created by non-governmental organizations, as well as districts of the capital city of Warsaw. Their nature, consisting in the cooperation of the non-governmental and clerical community, makes them a key partner in developing solutions in individual districts of the Capital City of Warsaw. Yet another entity is the Industry Social Dialogue Commissions. These bodies are also consultative, imitative and

advisory in nature. They are created by interested non-governmental organizations and the Capital City of Warsaw. Their nature, focused on cooperation and collaboration of the non-governmental and clerical community, makes them an important partner in the development and preparation of solutions in specific areas of public tasks belonging to the capital city of Warsaw (<http://ngo.um.warszawa.pl/>).

The widest range of tools are those that engage residents. Among them, first of all, the civic budget should be mentioned, under which residents decide on the purpose for which part of the Warsaw budget will be allocated. The Warsaw residents (and residents of other cities) submit their own projects each year. These projects are then put to vote in which residents decide which of them should be implemented. This method is used by the residents to decide on some investments in the city (<https://twojbudzet.um.warszawa.pl/>). The civic budget can be referred to as a special type of public consultation, the position of which as an instrument of civic dialogue was strengthened in 2018 when the concept of the civic budget was literally introduced into the act regulating the work of local governments in Poland. Therefore, from 2018 cities with poviata rights are obliged to carry out a civic budget. (Grzechnik, Góral, Wilk, 2019, p. 49).

Another project involving the inhabitants of the capital to act for the benefit of others is the Warsaw Volunteers. Its aim is to promote and popularize the idea of volunteering among the residents of Warsaw and to increase the number of residents involved in volunteering activities in the city. This is done through the implementation of various projects and undertakings in cooperation with public institutions and non-governmental organizations. The city consolidates and combines the activities of various entities aimed at the development of volunteering, creates and prepares instruments supporting the work of volunteers and volunteer organizers, and organizes system support for organizers and volunteers in various scopes and areas – e.g. employee or school volunteering (<https://ochotnicy.waw.pl/>). The development of city volunteering takes place by directing specific activities to three groups of recipients, i.e. residents of Warsaw, including volunteers, organizers or volunteering and the volunteer environment (City volunteering project in Warsaw “Warsaw Volunteers” 2.0 for 2016–2020).

The local initiative is also used to engage the inhabitants of Warsaw. It is also a form of cooperation of local government units with their inhabitants, serving the joint implementation of public tasks for the local community. Residents who have an idea for a specific project, important from their perspective and from the perspective of the neighbourhood community, have the opportunity to submit an application to the Office, thanks to which they can obtain financing for its implementation (<https://inicjatywa.um.warszawa.pl/>).

It is also important for the development of civic initiatives to create an appropriate space for residents in which such initiatives can be created and developed. For this purpose, the Local Activity Places (MAL-e) were established in Warsaw. These are various types of places whose task – apart from everyday activities (e.g. being a community centre, library, café club) – is to support and strengthen local ideas, projects and social activities of residents. MAL-e are intended to implement the ideas of residents, establish and maintain neighbourly relations, as well as actively spend free time in the immediate vicinity. They can, among others, provide residents with free space and equipment necessary to undertake specific initiatives and activities, co-organize local events important for residents. The concept of Local Activity Places is best seen in the context of the use of Neighbourhood Houses, which are financed or co-financed by the capital city of Warsaw. These places (premises) – their entire space – are intended only for local activity of residents. Their primary goal is to support local initiatives and neighbourhood integration. It is worth emphasizing that in the case of Neighbourhood Houses there is no pre-defined and formulated program of activities, because it depends on the ideas and suggestions of residents, informal groups and non-governmental organizations that formulate an action plan for such places on an ongoing basis (<https://inicjatywa.um.warszawa.pl/mal>).

The above-mentioned initiatives are only some of the tools for the development of social dialogue in Warsaw, but they show that the capital city authorities are trying to implement their activities in every dimension of the dialogue. According to reports posted on the websites of individual initiatives, some of them are more effective, others less. Some are implemented on a larger scale, while others concern a smaller number of inhabitants, but all of them comprehensively may constitute an example of good practice for other local governments. What is important, however, is the systematic evaluation of individual programs – in order to best adapt them to the needs, possibilities and expectations of the inhabitants of individual towns, because only in this way you can effectively build a civil society – both at the local and national level. It is also important to pay attention to the education and development of young people in the context of knowing the forms, principles and meaning of dialogue and social participation. Knowledge of the opportunities provided by various forms of public communication may support the development of behaviours that favour active participation in the life of the local community and participation in making decisions conducive to its development and changes, which are an integral part of social life. It should be remembered that various forms of communication also serve to build a community, meet the needs of members of a given community. Moreover, “members of social groups, as a result of communication interactions,

also make a permanent contribution to the development and shape of the entire cultural system” (Rzeszutko-Iwan, 2016, p. 37).

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6. Summary

The sociological image of the civic involvement of young Poles is quite critical. Contemporary youth is characterized by a far-reaching political and civic alienation, combined with low trust in others and clear manifestations of individualism. Young Poles show a sense of being lost in an intensely changing reality and difficulty in shaping their own identity, and even more so their collective identity – as a community. This is favoured by a high level of scepticism and criticism, a deficit of authorities and shallow social ties. School education in the field of civic participation does not bring the expected results, which is why the examples of actions of local self-governments coming out with the initiative to residents, especially young people, and offering them various tools of dialogue and forms of participation are all the more important. Examples of good practices in this regard may include activities undertaken by the city of Warsaw. It is important that they are implemented at all levels of the social participation ladder – from informing, through gathering information, consulting, and getting involved.

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