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What does it mean to be a female citizen in Poland? Civil activity of women in the Province of Silesia in the perspective of quantitative research.

Abstract

The paper is a report on the quantitative research of civil activity of women in the Province of Silesia (N = 200). Research technique used here is CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview). The starting point of the proposal is conceptualisation of term of active citizenship and subsequently identification specific indicators that will be taken to represent the phenomenon explored (such as political participation, interest in government, law enforcement, altruism and volunteering, trust in people and institutions, and the use of the privileges of direct democracy). The article shows the importance of this project for development of civil society in Poland and the possibility of change that can be achieved in this way.

Key words: civil activity, women, political participation, democracy, voting.

INTRODUCTION

The text is based on empirical research carried out in the framework of the annual research project entitled “Active Citizen”, which lasted in the years 2013-2014. The project was financed by a grant on scientific research specifically aimed at the development of young scientists (No. WNS-61-38/12). The main objective was to obtain quantitative data on the civil activity of women in the Province of Silesia and the classification of the ways in which this activity is manifested. Selected determinants of active citizenship, such as political participation, interest in government, law enforcement, altruism and volunteering, trust in people and institutions, and the use of the privileges of direct democracy were the subject matter of the analysis. In order to obtain reliable information in quantitative research on the extent and scale of the analysed phenomenon, it is necessary to narrow the research context to the above mentioned determinants of citizenship.

There is no clear definition of the notion of active citizenship in social sciences. Nevertheless, it is usually defined as all kinds of activities that focus on evoking social change associated with the creation and development of civil society. Active citizenship is based on a rational, legitimate, effective exercise of the rights and dispositions that result from the privilege of being a citizen, in order to multiply the socio-cultural capital and expand the civic network (Putnam 1995, Putnam 2008, Barber 1984). It also means active participation of individuals or social groups in the public sphere and co-deciding on important matters relating to the public. Participation is understood in two ways. Firstly, it is taking part of different social subjects in the process of managing the public sphere. Secondly, it is understood as a practical manifestation of democracy and proof for the existence of civil society, where all citizens are free and equal in their rights and they all have the right to co-decide about the life of the political community to which they belong.

Active citizenship is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon which consists of different dimensions, types, and forms. As noted by Piotr Glinski and Hanna Palska (1997: 365) active citizenship as a conscious and joint action, which aims to articulation, implementation and defense of the interests (needs, aspirations) of one social group by the members of this group. These are activities that allow the formation of civic identity and meet the common features of civil actions as the control of power, the articulation of the interests of some social groups, civic protest or boycott. Active citizenship encompasses much more than a way of functioning in society ('the rules of the game') within the framework of existing models and structures. Active citizenship concerns the political competencies, social integration and inclusion, building up structures and justice agendas, relations of power to change these, where and when imperative (Lister 1997: 64). It also concerns to civic emotions, such as trust, honesty, loyalty, solidarity, aid, confidence, which are necessary in a civil society.

METHODOLOGICAL BASIS OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

In the present study the technique of CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) has been used. CATI is based on conducting telephone interviews with respondents with the assistance of a computer (Babbie 1992: 276). In the case of quantitative research CATI is the optimal technique because it gives the opportunity to question a larger portion of the population than 0.9. The advantage of this type of research is the possibility to obtain the necessary information in a quick and relatively cheap way: thus "telephone interviewing should be used as an alternative to personal interviewing under certain circumstances - especially when the interview schedule is relatively simple" (Nachmias 1992: 233).

The research was conducted on a group of women selected a result of random sampling. The sample consisted of 200 respondents randomly selected on the basis of telephone records coming from the national database. CATI was based on a standardized questionnaire, which was inspired by the Polish General Social Survey (ISSP Citizenship). The results of the research conducted in the local community – while maintaining equivalence studies – have seemed to indicate the broad mechanisms of citizen participation of women in Polish society.

Cafeteria predicted several possible options of response. At the same time, thanks to the frequency scale “always / often / rarely / never”, the respondent could accurately determine the frequency of their civic activity. The information obtained helped to determine which activities are important to the respondents, which are obvious and necessary (the ones undertaken always and often), and which are considered unnecessary, exhausting, confusing, perhaps even harmful by the respondents (and therefore never undertaken by them).

PARTICIPATING IN ELECTION: FEMALE CITIZENS GO VOTING

Participation in general election is one of the primary determinants of citizenship - international research shows that having the right to vote and systematic referendal activity are perceived by social awareness as the core of citizenship (Dolata et al., 2004, Raciborski 2011). As indicated by Putnam, participation in elections is the most common form of civic activity, it is the practical implementation of the democratic principle of equality – to vote means to belong to a political community and to decide about its future on an equal footing with others. This thesis seems to be even more justified by the fact that the citizens who are regular voters are usually involved in a number of additional civil initiatives and projects: they work as volunteers, pay the money to charity, serve as jurors, participate in meetings of the school council, take part in demonstrations, are interested in politics, cooperate with others to solve the problems of the local community (Putnam 2008: 58). Besides, electoral participation indicates the direction of modernization of the society – “it can serve as an indicator of broader social change” (Putnam 2008: 60). This is because by voting, an individual influences the shape of social reality, which makes him or her a creator of changes at micro, mezzo- and macrostructural level.

Participation in an election is a determinant of democracy and political pluralism. By having the right to vote an individual can have a real impact on the legislative process by participating in public debates, formulating public opinion, and manifesting his or her views. A citizen-voter sets more or less effectively the direction of policy at both regional and national level – as he/she is in fact a member of the larger civil community, whose social influence is not and, in accordance with political correctness, cannot be neglected.

Although taking part in election is not the only and the most important form of civil activity¹, vast majority of the respondents were convinced of the important role of electoral participation in shaping the attitude and behaviour of citizens. The possibility to vote was perceived by the respondents as the primary determinant of citizenship, which has its constitutional justification - The Constitution of the Republic of Poland assumes that the right to vote is given only to fully-fledged citizens of the state, and therefore the act of granting citizenship to an individual is equivalent to the legal guarantee of the right to participate in the elections. While at the declarative level political participation is a manifestation of citizenship,

¹ As Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady claim: “the perception of civil engagement only from the point of view of participation in elections is incomplete and misleading [...]”. As compared with those active in various other political activities, voters show a specific combination of needs they satisfy and different interest in problems, which are the motives of their activity [...]. Voting is the action of a sui generis”. Quote after R. D. Putnam 2008: 61.

practice of everyday life shows that the Poles relatively rarely take advantage of the privileges of direct democracy. Voter turnout at both local and state government level is low, it sometimes does not even exceed or meet the electoral threshold. When you compare Poland with other countries of Western Europe, for example France or Great Britain, the difference is even more striking as there more than three-quarters of eligible voters usually go to the polls. In terms of referendal activity the picture of the study group is consistent with the national electoral situation²: more than half of the respondents – 55.50% always takes part in elections, 26.50% declare frequent participation in referendums, 15.50% occasionally use their voting rights, 2.50% of the respondents have never participated in elections. The degree of electoral absenteeism is high, although it seems optimistic that it does not exceed 20 percent. 55.50% declare permanent participation in the election, which seems to be too enthusiastic diagnosis - the overestimated number of the so-called permanent voters probably has two reasons. Firstly, there exists in Polish society a tendency among some respondents to confirm their participation in the elections, despite the fact that the declaration does not reflect their actual participation. Secondly, the result of the survey is burdened with significant statistical error, which in the case of random sampling is particularly common, mainly due to the large quantitative deviation of the sample group from the actual image of the population.

INTEREST IN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLITICS: FEMALE CITIZENS ARE INTERESTED IN POLITICAL LIFE

Another indicator of civil activity is a constant interest in politics at regional, national, international level. 60% of the respondents declared interest in the governmental issues (21% confirmed constant; and 39% frequent interest). 40% take almost no or no interest at all in governmental issues. Alarming high number of people alienated from political life seems to have its historical reasons. Poland, like other post-communist countries, is a country with a poorly developed civil traditions - which is reflected primarily in the lack of citizenship, poor interpersonal relationships, low social capital, loss of values promoting citizenship (such as solidarity, the ability to cooperate, dialogue skills, activities for the common good). That results in political apathy, a sense of social helplessness, reluctance to engage in the public sphere, remaining on the margins of the society while presenting discontent and demanding attitude at the same time. According to Victor Osiatyński this attitude is the aftermath of communism - a system which denied individualism, while encouraging wrongly understood collectivism. The effects of collectivization in almost every aspect of life were as follows: dispersed responsibility, life helplessness, lack of self-determination, inability to decide about one's own destiny, a sense of dependence on the government (Osiatyński 2004: 22-26).

The remains of the communist system may be one of the reasons for the poor political participation and civil alienation. Inappropriate political socialization or

² Average turnout in Poland during the parliamentary elections is 47% and is the lowest in the European Union. A slightly higher turnout is reported in presidential elections - 58.2%. (See: www.idea.int).

complete lack of it can be another factor explaining the situation, especially justified from a gender perspective. The Upper Silesia is a region with centuries-old patriarchal and androcentric traditions, it is characterized by a hierarchical system of gender: men are seen as the dominant sex, women as the subordinate one (e.g. Górnikowska-Zwolak 2004, Kossakowska-Jarosz 2009). The traditional division of roles was strongly radicalised and it was in force much longer than in other regions of Poland, not to mention Europe. This division resulted from the image of a woman engaged in family and household duties, which was fixed in the regional culture. The above mentioned patterns of gender due to the process of internalization have become a permanent part of gender identity. The belief that women belong to the private sphere, which was sanctified by tradition, history, and social adaptation to the roles of women associated with reproduction and domestic production (unpaid work in the household), reduces or completely denies the access of women to the institutional spheres connected with politics, government, and power. According to this mechanism, the implementation of a political culture occurs at the expense of women. Unfamiliarity with political culture or indifference to the political system turns into reluctance to civil participation and other activities contributing to broadening the public sphere and strengthening democracy. The attitude of civil passivity tends to persist - women are not interested in political life, which results in the lack of involvement, poor knowledge of political science (subjects relating to ways of functioning political parties, organizations or state institutions), the lack of knowledge about basic constitutional principles and poor orientation in current affairs occurring at home and abroad.

LIFE IN THE RULE OF LAW: FEMALE CITIZENS WANT TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF LAW

One of the basic characteristics of a civil society is the recognition of the idea of the rule of law, where the rule of law prevails, and the Constitution is the most important act regulating the life of the society. The concept of the rule of law implies that the citizens and institutions of a democratic state comply with the legislation, and thus the rights and civil liberties are preserved. The essence of the law is to protect citizens from unlimited interference of the state in their lives, especially in personal and intimate spheres, from violating personal benefit or the boundaries of conscience. There are institutions such as independent courts or the Ombudsman especially set up to guard whether the civil rights are respected.

Research shows that the idea of the rule of law is very important and useful: the vast majority of respondents (92.50%) always obeys the law, what is more - none of the women interviewed did not admit to constant violations or disregard of the law or to committing any of the so-called white-collar crimes which include: financial fraud, money laundering, tax evasion, embezzlement, or illegal trafficking. Obviously, this does not mean that illegal activities do not occur at all. The high number of responses confirming the obedience of the law does not necessarily reflect the actual respect for the institutions of the democratic state and the conviction of the necessity of law in social life and constitutional validity in the assessment of certain examples of behaviour and attitudes. The fact that respondents

gave more than 90% of support for the idea of the rule of law may be the result of political conformism or ritualism, which derived from adaptation of an individual to a group³. As indicated by Robert K Merton, ritualists comply with socially recognised standards (in this case the standards set by national and international legal regulations), but do not see the values behind them. Ritualists thoughtlessly comply with the law, without being aware of its social significance, or obey the law only for fear of sanctions for acts of bending or disregarding the legal code (Merton 1965: 149-153).

Failure to abide and implement the law at the level of microstructure causes serious global consequences, i.e.: economic stagnation, growing corruption, strengthening class divisions, the weakness of public institutions (courts of justice, police, state and local government). Personal benefits achieved regardless of the cost incurred by others and relativity of selfish behaviour become priority.

Civil society needs mature and conscious citizens who know and respect the law. "A high quality citizen"⁴ actively participates in civic community, protects the interests of a group, is interested in the problems of the local community he or she is a member of (by the place of work or residence). This is justified by centuries-old tradition of the rule of law, in which the constitution is the most important document which regulates the functioning of the state and its relations with the citizens. To be a citizen means to recognize and respect the constitution, which simply allows one to use the rights and privileges of citizenship and obliges him/her to fulfil the obligations towards the society as a whole.

ALTRUISM, PHILANTHROPY, VOLUNTEERISM: FEMALE CITIZENS WORK FOR OTHERS AND FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Altruism, philanthropy, volunteering, spontaneous helping are constantly identified as the main components of social capital (Putnam 2008: 196-212; de Tocqueville 1996: 132). When combined with honesty and trust they are the values (in terms of the classical approach – "civil virtues"), which determine the formation of relationships and social networks built on a sense of community, solidarity, and security. Philanthropic and altruistic behaviour is closely linked to the anthropological principle of reciprocity - *do ut des* (I give to you, you give to me), based on an informal sense of commitment to the interaction partners who are giving us a gift (which has material or immaterial value). This mechanism is based on psychological rituals of exchange practised in primitive communities characterised by low level of organisation. The gift obtained obliges to reciprocate in the same or a different form. In the case of philanthropy and volunteering the most "return gift" takes the form of a substitute - in exchange for the donated money, time, food, clothing - donors gain awareness of well-fulfilled obligation, which strengthens their own axiological system and build their self-esteem. It also happens (even

3 Piotr Sztompka appealed to the concept of Robert K. Merton analysing attitudes of Poles towards political transition (Sztompka 2000).

4 Jacek Raciborski states that there are less than 20% of „high quality citizens” in Poland. High quality citizens are “people who are interested in politics, who know the basic constitutional solutions, who are sufficiently informed about what is happening in Europe and in the world, and who regularly participate in the elections.” (See: „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 08.10.2011)

quite often) that philanthropic deeds bring tangible benefits to the donors. Whatever the motivation, which encourages the voluntary behaviour, every sign of help given integrates the individuals and strengthens their civil engagement.

Research shows that such activities as: helping people, providing support, donating time and money, doing social work are common. The absolute majority of respondents (92%) declare that they help and support the weak and disadvantaged. The assistance is provided in both a formal way in accordance with the legal regulations for public benefit (e.g. on the basis of the Law on the activities of the institutions of public benefit and volunteerism) and in an informal way, which manifests itself in the daily work for others, such as e.g.: baking cakes for school festivals, looking after the neighbours' children, organizing events, toy auctions, collecting clothes or school supplies. The above mentioned informal actions counterbalance the institutionalized actions which are subject to bureaucratic requirements and sanctions. In the course of qualitative research, it turned out that the motives of altruistic behaviour are mainly connected with religion and belonging to a church or other institutions functioning in a church (Caritas, St. George's House) – in this case the inspiration for such activities is the internal need which is synonymous with the sense of duty or moral imperative. Secondly, the aid activities are connected with volunteering or voluntary membership in Non-governmental Organisations focused on helping the needy. New forms of financial support practiced by the respondents, such as: contributing to local provident funds, the creation of local civic budgets, fund-raising or other strategies of innovative sponsorship are also worth mentioning.

Altruism, philanthropy, volunteerism, self-help in many contexts of everyday life function as one of the main forms of civil participation. Life in a civil society requires from citizens independent and voluntary work for other members of the community. Individual and altruistic actions are the engine of other major social changes, and in some cases – they are the only way to transform the reality.

SOCIAL TRUST: FEMALE CITIZENS TRUST OTHERS

The main components of civil activity are: solidarity, reciprocity, being helpful, and above all social trust. To trust someone (i.e. to assume that he/she will act loyally and honestly) determines the type of social relations people make (Sztompka 2007: 36). Systems deprived of confidence, even at the elementary level, are so fragile and unstable that they have no chance to survive and bring any benefit. Lack of confidence leads to increased level of social control and multiplying additional sanctions, the implementation of which requires time, energy or financial resources. From the point of view of social cooperation it brings loss to the interaction partners because it increases the expenditures which are referred to in economics as transaction costs. The costs are associated with “monitoring, concluding contracts, legal proceedings and enforcement of formal agreements” (Fukuyama 1997: 171).

Trust, metaphorically called “the foundation of a society,” is the basis for normal relationships, primarily because when trusting one another people can cooperate

more frequently and more fruitfully, and thus their actions are effective, simple and quick. As Putnam adds, “society based on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than communities characterised by mistrust - for the same reasons why money is more efficient than barter. Honesty and trust alleviate friction, which cannot be avoided in social life.” (Putnam 2008: 228). Trust fosters establishing strong relationships and social networks; it is the glue that incorporates an individual and the group. Communities that base their activities on trust within the agreed terms of the contract gain tangible benefits from it (Fukuyama 1997: 56). When analysing the level of trust it is necessary to take into account its two forms: firstly, *thick trust* - built in personal relationships, which are based on strong, frequent and lasting ties, secondly, *thin trust* - general trust in other people resulting from belonging to a community and anticipating reciprocity (Putnam 2008: 230).

Research shows that the level of social trust is (in the study group and in the whole Polish society) at a low level. Only 21.5% of the study population claim that they definitely trust people around them; compared with 10.5% who never trust anybody. Weakened public confidence seems to have at least two reasons. The first is described by Stefan Nowak as “sociological vacuum”, which is a symptom of distrust in all the people, due to the loss of social bonds which form the civil capital (Nowak 2009: 140-143). The second reason is a general social belief that one should be cautious with the unknown “generalized other”, which results from the conviction that there are fewer and fewer honest people, so in interpersonal relations one should be reserved and suspicious. The research confirms a visible tendency to trust people in one’s nearest environment: - we trust our spouse, children, parents, friends; while being much less likely to trust the people in the so-called secondary groups: colleagues, friends and representatives of church or state authorities (67% of respondents believe that politicians cannot be trusted) Representatives of other communities and cultures belong to the group we trust the least and the most rarely.

If the culture of trust flourishes in Poland it will give impetus to the process of creation of civil society. Citizens, when trusting each other, become more credible and have a good reputation. The more trust in the community, the higher the civil activity: “people who trust other fellow citizens, are more likely to undertake work as volunteers, contribute more to charity, more often join in the policy and operation of local organizations, are more inclined to undertake the duties of a juror, donate blood more frequently as honorary donors, keep their tax obligations more conscientiously, are more tolerant of minority views, and exhibit many other civil virtues [...] those who believe that other people are honest, rarely lie, cheat, and steal themselves, and they better respect the rights of others. In this way, fairness, civil engagement and social trust mutually reinforce”(Putnam 2008: 231). Trust can be seen as a base of social life, often reflecting the bonds and networks – which could also be interpreted as the precondition of citizenship.

DEMOCRATIC PRIVILEGES: FEMALE CITIZENS ARE ACTIVE

There are various socio-political activities which are the evidence of how active the citizens are, for example: signing petitions; participation in demonstrations, strikes, manifestations; participation in the National Assembly; subsidizing social actions, participating in charity fund-raising; establishing contacts with the authorities or the media to solve social issues; participation in online forums or panel discussions devoted to social issues. All of these can be regarded as an indicator of the quality of civil society and democracy.

In Poland the change of the political system of the year 1989 changed the general trend of taking action in the public sphere, which derive from the advantages of direct democracy. This change was marked by three features of the new social order: free market, democratic constitution, and pluralism of ideas and institutions. The development of democratic structures fostered the improvement of attitudes, values and aspirations of citizens. Through innovative and creative possibilities of the direct impact on the public sphere the competences and skills of citizens changed. However, it must be emphasized that the development of civil society in Poland, as in other post-communist countries of Europe, will take longer due to weak civil traditions. This does not obviously mean that the process of crystallization of a civil society is very distant in time or impossible to implement, but the creation of the foundations of citizenship is directly proportional to the activity of all citizens.

There are different strategies and possibilities of democratization. The research shows that the most popular civil action is signing petitions. Collecting signatures for social initiatives is an important component of modern citizenship, but at the same time it is an activity which poorly involves the citizens – it is the least time-consuming and does not require a relatively great amount of energy and effort. As a consequence, signing of a proposal or initiative petitions is not always equivalent to the actual need to settle the case or interest - sometimes it can be a replacement operation or a defence mechanism (the signers explain themselves that they did something to settle the matter and that they did not remain indifferent). Many times this is done in a mechanical way, sometimes unconsciously, as a result of the pressure exerted by charismatic individuals or the environmental lobbying. In some cases signing petitions or letters to the authorities is a way of organizing civil life – it gives the impression of self-decision, sanctions subjective opinions or assures people that the views held by them are shared by other people. Signing appeals often becomes a substitute for the direct and active citizenship, which require active participation, monitoring, supervision and personal conduct. Delegating civic responsibility to the petitioners or bodies that deal with appeals submitted, provides an excuse that one has engaged and done something. The least frequently practised type of civic activity (6.5% of responses) was contact with the media, including the appearance in the media to present one's own or group views, and consequently initiate a public debate on the subject. Similarly, most respondents (62%) declared that they would never take such an activity. This state of affairs can be justified by stereotyped perception of the media overrating their

rank or ascribing them too strong impact on the collective consciousness. The lack of involvement in the media comes not so much from the absence of the mass media as from the uncertainty and concerns generated by the institution of television, radio, newspapers (it seems that in the case of the Internet, this interpretation is not justified because of the anonymity and the general availability of the medium). These concerns arise first of all from the sense of remoteness of media from everyday affairs and the fact that the media focus mostly on the themes of popular culture and entertainment; secondly, the need to overcome the shyness and stress resulting from a possible opportunity to speak on a television program, on the radio, or in the press. The declared distance towards the media is not good news from the point of view of the dynamics of the development of civil society. It should be emphasized that without media relations, sponsorship or media attention, most social initiatives will be impossible to implement as the media are the main tool of political and symbolic struggle. The greater the media support for some initiatives, the better conducted the marketing strategy, the expected result of which is a further increase in support. The media are an excellent forum for social mobilization, they are such a significant force to promote and propagate the idea that their effect becomes dominant and unrivalled.

Active citizenship is connected with the general attitude of the citizens to democracy and the institutions of a democratic state. Opinions on democracy and its mechanisms influence the actions of individuals in the spheres of public life, and thus determine the direction of development of civil society. Democratic order requires above all the implementation of procedural rules (such as sovereignty of the people, division of power, representation, and political pluralism etc.), the use of which enables the achievement of the objectives considered important and necessary for the collective life and the fulfilment of basic axiological values, (freedom, equality, dignity, tolerance, and justice). The respondents considered primarily high wages and high standard of living to be the key criteria of democracy. Subsequently, they enumerated: the equality of citizens before the law (65%), freedom of thought and expression (55%), choice of government in free elections (54.5%). The right to equality and freedom is considered a non-negotiable condition for democratic governance as perceived in a traditional and classic way, whereas the most-highly noted response (concerning the quality of life) seems to characterize modern democracies. At the same time, as diagnosed by Inglehart, it confirms the return of modern societies to postmaterialistic values. Inglehart argues that the emergence of postmaterialism is a part of the great process of cultural change, which relates to gender roles, religion, sexual mores and cultural norms of Western society. This change involves a redefinition of the hierarchy of needs, which results in a shift from the traditional values (such as: material security and financial stability) to the non-traditional, or post-materialistic ones (such as: self-expression, the sense of belonging, freedom of speech, quality of life). In the situation when basic needs and civil liberties are satisfied (assuming that the democratic system is mature, stable and durable), individuals strive to achieve the so-called higher needs, the implementation of which improves the quality of individual and collec-

tive existence, creates identity, releases energy to creative or expressive activities (Ingelhart 2005: 334).

When correlating the evaluation of democracy with the subjective assessment of the sense of civil activism, the following picture of the studied population emerges: women who consider themselves to be active citizens claim that democratic order depends primarily on the equality of citizens before the law, freedom of opinion and expression, high wages and standard of living. The least important criterion of democracy for them are the rights of cultural minorities (sexual, religious, national).

CONCLUSION

Civic participation of women in the Province of Silesia is not satisfactory. The vast majority of the population should be included in the civil processes or re-activated. All the analysed determinants of citizenship (political participation, interest in government, law enforcement, altruism and volunteering, trust in people and institutions, and the use of the privileges of direct democracy) remain at a low or average level, which may indicate the fact that the formation of civil community is burdened with many difficulties and requires a long-term perspective.

It is difficult to give a precise and clear answer to the question what are the causes of poor engagement of women in common and rational action, the aim of which is to build a civil society. On the one hand reluctance to such civil activities which in countries of Western Europe and Scandinavia are considered as natural and practised every day is observed. Moreover, the respondents, even those thinking forward, declare a negative attitude to the fact that they could possibly engage more and do it more effectively (e.g. by making contact with representatives of political power and the media). The degree of social trust also leaves much doubt, especially in the case of trust in people outside the family or the immediate environment. Although confidence in the closest social circles remains at a relatively high level, it results from natural bonds and it is difficult to see it as a great asset. On the other hand, contrary to the beliefs of selfish human nature, the respondents evidently show a high rate of altruism and voluntary activities for the needy, which is important in building solidarity and self-help, i.e. the pillars of civil society.

Active citizenship is the only way to build a modern society and mature democracy in Poland. Only when citizens are willing and able to transform the status quo, it will be possible to talk about the civilisation development of the state. In this context, one should stress the importance of the project and indicate its practical dimension. Presentation of the actual state of citizenship should be an excuse for civil activation adjusted to the standards and capabilities both of the region and of the country.

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