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Public Participation as an Element of Social Security

Abstract

From the point of view of social policy, the need of security is considered as the indispensable part of functioning and development of every society. Citizens' participation avers that the inhabitants will have the possibility of taking part in making decisions about their own surrounding, which results in development of the sense of security. The actions taken in the social space initiate the existence of the self-aware civil society. This article's main aim is to discuss the possibilities of assuring the social security through civil commitment and their active participation in the public life. The formal instruments that occur in the system of Polish law (i.e. a participation in the open debate, a participation in the elections, a legislative initiative) have been analyzed. Those instruments enable to the residents the participation and co-decision making and, what follows, they contribute towards forming broadly defined security.

Key words

safety, social safety, public participation, civic society, third sector, social consultations, participatory budgeting, non-governmental organization – NGO

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1. SAFETY – THE EXISTENTIAL NEED OF CITIZENS

Nowadays many scientists are focused on research in the field of security. Globalization, information revolution, as a result of which increasing of level of prosperity, spread of modern technologies, improvement of management and funding methods are taking place, are one of the key factors having big impact on security environment². Also the condition of the national security system, defense potential, protective potential and socio-economic potential have relevant influence on security³. This aspect is relevant due to fact that the sense of security of citizens influences their activity. In the literature there are many definitions, which describe basic assumptions of discussed topic, that is security. Undoubtedly, this multiplicity is caused by a broad research field and it emphasizes the complexity of safety issues. Therefore one can single out different securities according to established criteria: external, military, internal, political, cultural, ecological, ideological, common, civic, economical, informative and social^{4,5}. Generally, “security is seen as a condition and process, need and sophisticated system together with numerous arrangement of subsystems, which purpose is assurance of a safe development of nation using legally available means (technical, organizing and lawful)”⁶. It has to be emphasized that the need of security is necessary for existence, development and proper functioning of every society⁷.

2. SOCIAL SECURITY AS AN ELEMENT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

A human is by nature a social being⁸ and thus treats the sense of affiliation to the state (society) as an assurance of social security. Due to this he derives the benefits,

² S. Koziej (ed.), *Biała księga bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2013, p. 11.

³ S. Koziej (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 9–11.

⁴ J. Gierszewski, *Organizacja systemu bezpieczeństwa społecznego*, Warszawa 2013, pp. 24–25.

⁵ W. Kitler, M. Czuryk, M. Karpiuk, *Aspekty prawne bezpieczeństwa narodowego RP. Część ogólna*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 32–45. For more about the topic of security see: W. Kitler, M. Czuryk, M. Karpiuk, *Aspekty prawne bezpieczeństwa narodowego RP. Część szczegółowa*, Warszawa 2013.

⁶ A. Shah, *Participatory budgeting*, Washington 2007, p. 23.

⁷ L.F. Korzeniowski, *Podstawy nauk o bezpieczeństwie. Zarządzanie bezpieczeństwem*, Warszawa 2012, p. 113.

⁸ Latin *homo est animal sociale* – sentence, which was said by Greek philosopher and thinker Aristotle.

has certain privileges as well as a number of obligations⁹. For further considerations reasonable will be description of “social security as a relevant component of national security, which is a process which includes various actions in the field of national security, the primary aim of which is survival, prosperity and sustainable development of society, through assurance of high quality of life of citizens, families [...], and also combating unemployment, social stratification and social conflicts¹⁰”. Actions of citizens in the social field allow to mention the existence of the aware, civic society¹¹. Features of those groups are undoubtedly: efficient organization, freedom, making decisions in the public area, expressing opinions about the surrounding reality, legality and agreement¹². In economic policy, apart from the two extreme sectors: private and public¹³, there is also the so-called third sector, in which definition it contains every form of social actions¹⁴ identified with civic society. The area of work of the third sector is focused among others on introduction of changes in the human environment. It is realized by the activity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which are involved in comprehensive public activity¹⁵.

The most common guarantee, which speaks about freedom, security and voluntary association, is the Constitution of the Republic of Poland¹⁶.

Janusz Gierszewski emphasizes the fact that from the point of view of social politics the need for security is relevant, as it is necessary for keeping social groups (units) alive and also when it enables creating certain social roles. He lists rules that social politics should follow:

- the rule of forethought – social security of a unit should arise from the feeling of responsibility of a human for himself and his family, it should not be the effect of benefits;

⁹ W. Kitler, M. Czuryk, M. Karpiuk, op.cit., p. 37.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 36.

¹¹ More about citizen society: M. Witkowska, A. Wierzbicki (ed.), *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Warszawa 2005; J. Herbst, *Oblicza społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, Warszawa 2005.

¹² A. Chodubski, *Spółeczeństwo obywatelskie i jego powołanie* [in:] A. Chodubski, L. Kacprzak, K. Pająk (ed.), *Instytucje państwa a społeczeństwo obywatelskie*, Piła 2009, pp. 165–175. Here p. 165

¹³ K. Kietlińska, *Rola trzeciego sektora w społeczeństwie obywatelskim*, Warszawa 2010, p. 50

¹⁴ M. Arczewska, *Nie tylko jedna ustawa. Prawo o organizacjach pozarządowych*, Warszawa 2009, p. 7.

¹⁵ K. Pająk, *Wpływ samorządności terytorialnej na bezpieczeństwo lokalne* [in:] A. Marcinkowski, D. Mierzejewski, K. Pająk, *Europejskie, narodowe i regionalne aspekty bezpieczeństwa*, Piła 2010, p. 83–149. Here p. 125.

¹⁶ Dz.U. z 1997 Nr 78 poz. 483; i.e., Rozdział II Konstytucji RP Wolności, prawa i obowiązki obywatela i człowieka.

- the rule of self-help – concerns mutual aid of people who have similar life issues (they are usually small, informal groups);
- the rule of social solidarity – which is also identified with social solidarity. Its main assumption is transferring the consequences of social risks from units to society;
- the rule of subsidiarity – in the case of a unit, which after using all available resources, is unable to meet minimum requirements, may receive support from other social institutions. This help is being provided in a strictly specified order;
- the rule of common good – relies on the fact that authority takes into account benefits and interests of all citizens in undertaken public actions and in case of conflicts of interest it seeks for a compromise;
- the rule of multisectorality – is visible in the simultaneous functioning of non-governmental organizations, market institutions and public entities of social politics. The aim of those organizations is delivering resources, which would support satisfying the needs of society¹⁷.

Beside the six rules, which are mentioned above, the author mentions also one extremely important rule – the rule of participation. It is this principle, which provides citizens with the possibility of co-decision in terms of their own surroundings, effectively giving them the feeling of security.

3. PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN THE PUBLIC LIFE AS A METHOD OF MAINTAINING SOCIAL SECURITY

Participation of citizens is one of the most important issues of contemporary democratic societies in terms of decision-making referring to their environment. So defined participation is quite frequently in literature supplemented by different adjectives that better define a method and form of actions taken by a unit or a group. In reality, we can speak of: “social participation”, “civic participation”, “community participation”, “individual participation” or earlier mentioned “public participation”.

Public participation, also known as vertical, relies on engagement of society in different democratic structures and institutions like, among others, state authority institutions or public sector organizations. Participation in the local and national elections, being a councillor, being a governmental official, membership

¹⁷ J. Gierszewski, op.cit., p. 55.

in different kinds of associations and consultations with citizens conducted by authorities are a few examples of its application¹⁸. It should be emphasized that vertical interference of civil society in the national issues refers to politic processes, including co-management.

The participation ladder created by Dagmir Długosz and Jan Jakub Wygnański reflects the relation of co-decision on authority-citizens level. Authors differentiate nine grades, on which authority:

1. decides completely one-sidedly and independently, without informing the public opinion;
2. decides completely one-sidedly and independently, with informing the public opinion after adoption;
3. decides one-sidedly and independently, with informing the public opinion about taken decisions after acceptance, broadly justifying those decisions and urging for acceptance;
4. informs about plans before taking a decision and collects social opinions, using them to a greater or lesser extent in changing the contents of a decision;
5. actively consults with individual citizens (chosen leaders, experts) or uses public hearings, telephone surveys or polls before taking a decision;
6. actively seeks for opinions before taking a decision, conducting social consultations with different social groups and their representations (organizations) based on the requirements of law or political will;
7. before taking a decision consults with statutorily established public institutions focused on consultations and advising, whose hearing is mandatory;
8. before taking a decision cooperates with social partners (negotiation, mutual planning, achieving consensus) and together with them reaches a compromise, a mutual decision, for example as an agreement or a common program;
9. transfers taking a decision to groups or social partners and accepts those decisions, eventually controlling their procedural legality, correctness and compatibility of contents of decisions with the applicable law (for example referendum, collective labor agreements)¹⁹.

¹⁸ E. Bordie, E. Cowlin, N. Nissen, *Understanding participation: A literature review*, Londyn 2009, p. 4. Reference. [online:] <http://www.pathwaysthroughparticipation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2009/09/Pathways-literature-review-final-version.pdf> [16.09.2014].

¹⁹ D. Długosz, J.J. Wygnański, *Obywatele współdecydują. Przewodnik po partycypacji społecznej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 26.

Expressing own opinion, building and changing surroundings and also co-decision by citizens not only emphasize their affiliation to certain social groups or position in hierarchy, but simultaneously satisfy the need of feeling secure and need for participation and self-realization.

In terms of the Polish legal system, resources which can contribute to building broad social security, which is to be executed through participation, can be found, among others:

- in social consultations – defined as a process in which representatives of various authorities inform the general public about planned investments, legislative changes or other projects, which would have influence on changing the surroundings. Consultations are held not only to present plans but also to hear the opinions of citizens. Usually they are not binding for the authorities²⁰. Consulting with citizens is connected with a benefit, namely the legality of public authority and decisions issued by it. Through consultation actions taken by national administration are more understandable for the society, they better suit their needs and interests and give them a feeling that the authorities are “for them” and their decisions have more reliable substantiations²¹. The result of successfully conducted consultations should be agreement achieved between all sides and interest groups. Through that agreement the possibility of development provides multidimensional improvement of quality and life²² and also provides the feeling of stability and security for citizens. The most commonly used forms of consultations are: a written form involving sending written notices and opinions by consulted entities and direct meetings with representations of those entities²³. Rules of conducting social consultations usually are described in bylaws of social consultations, which are passed by the city council²⁴;

- in the citizens’ initiative (in literature one can encounter a local, folk initiative) – in which the right to bring the project of an act is vested to at least 100 thousands citizens of the Republic of Poland having a right to vote. This solution is one of the basic instruments which enable a direct contribution of citizens in

²⁰ Ł. Zamecki, *Spoleczne podstawy ladu politycznego*, Warszawa 2011, p. 148.

²¹ A. Krajewska, *Konsultacje spoleczne w jednostkach samorzadu terytorialnego po nowelizacji Ustawy o dzialalnosci pozyltku publicznego i o wolontariacie* [in:] G. Makowski, P. Sobiesiak (ed.), *Prawo a partycypacja publiczna. Bilans monitoringu 2010*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 47–58. Here p. 47.

²² K. Iwińska, *Po co komu konsultacje spoleczne?* [in:] „*Animacja zycia publicznego. Analizy i rekomendacje*” (2012), No. 2 (7), pp. 24–25. Here p. 25.

²³ A. Krajewska, op.cit., p. 55.

²⁴ M. Gerwin, *Odkrywanie demokracji* [in:] P. Filar, P. Kubicki, *Miasto w dzialaniu. Zrownowazony rozwój z perspektywy oddolnej*, Warszawa 2012, pp. 25–53. Here p. 41.

governance²⁵. It is sanctioned by Article 118 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland and the Act on the exercise of legislative initiative by citizens^{26,27};

– by participation in the elections²⁸ – as the only form of social action in self-government community in which the suffrage gives not only a possibility of choosing (the so-called active suffrage), but also manifests itself in independent electioneering (the so-called passive suffrage)²⁹. Additionally, participation of citizens in this field includes involvement in collecting signatures of support on list of candidates list (it is required for candidates' registration) and other forms of support for competitors in election;

– in the implementation of uniting the participatory budgets – called also civic budgets³⁰. They are one of the most successful practices in participation, in which citizens co-create budget of a certain city, so they co-decide in matters of distribution of a determined pool of public funds. The origins of the functioning of participatory budgeting should be sought in Porto Alegre – capital of the state Rio Grande do Sul in south-eastern Brazil, where it was introduced in 1990³¹. Participatory budgeting was introduced to the Polish reality in Płock, where the so-called “grant fund” was created in 2003–2005, where the local non-governmental organizations were applying for funding of their projects. However in Sopot in 2011 it appeared as “civic budget” in the same form as the participatory budget which was already in use in Poland³². To distinguish civic budget from other participation practices the following criteria are helpful:

²⁵ G. Makowski, *Lokalna inicjatywa ludowa. Pomysł na aktywizację obywateli?* [in:] G. Makowski, P. Sobiesiak (ed.), *Prawo a partycypacja publiczna. Bilans monitoringu 2010*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 59–67. Here p. 59.

²⁶ Dz.U. 1999 Nr 62, poz. 668.

²⁷ G. Makowski, *Nowe ramy uczestnictwa obywateli w procesach decyzyjnych* [in:] G. Makowski, P. Sobiesiak (ed.), *Prawo a partycypacja publiczna. Bilans monitoringu 2010*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 9–21. Here p. 18.

²⁸ In Poland every four years there are elections of representatives to authorities on the level of voivodeship, county and community and also there are elections of candidates for the office of mayor and president. Reference: Ł. Zamęcki, op.cit., p. 148.

²⁹ Ibidem, p. 148.

³⁰ Wojciech Kębłowski points out that the term “participatory budget” is more suitable due to fact that it does not create an impression of distinctness of Polish budgets and links them with other similar experiences in other countries and also opens in this initiative a possibility of participation not only for adult citizens, but also nonresidents or citizens without the status of residents (for example immigrants) or members of cities (like students). Reference: W. Kębłowski, *Budżet partycypacyjny. Krótka instrukcja obsługi*, Warszawa 2013, p. 6.

³¹ A. Shah, *Participatory budgeting*, Washington 2007, p. 23.

³² W. Kębłowski, *Budżet partycypacyjny. Ewaluacja*, Warszawa 2014, p. 4.

- firstly, its integral part is public discussion between habitants of a city, who on at least one step meet and deliberate on meetings which were specially established for this objective;
- secondly, discussion in terms of a civic budget focuses on funds which are always limited and clearly defined;
- thirdly, participatory budgeting should not be limited to district, housing or institution level. It is assumed, that on at least one of the steps it should consider a citywide level³³;
- fourthly, results of participatory budgeting are binding. Propositions chosen by citizens have to be realized;
- fifthly, civic budgeting is a long-term process realized every year for many years, and it is not a single process³⁴.

– in local referendum – which is very attractive for citizens as it lets to make a binding decision³⁵. It is undoubtedly an example of the most advanced form of including citizens in a decision processes – delegation. Regulations of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland refer to the institution of local referendum. Article 4 reads that the supreme authority in the Republic of Poland belongs to the nation, which exercises it through their representatives or directly. However, Article 170 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland proclaims that members of a self-governing community can decide, by referendum, on matters regarding their community, including the dismissal of an organ of local government established by direct election. An act which specifies regulations and mode of conducting a local referendum is the Act of 15 September 2000 on local referendum³⁶. This document clearly defines, to facilitate residents using this privilege, the amount of signatures required for a referendum proclamation. On every community level in Poland this threshold is equal to 10 percent³⁷ and initiators of this referendum have 60 days to collect signatures. In the case of a local referendum, the attendance is also relevant and hence to valid a result of a referendum additional requirement of 30 percent of attendance is obligatory³⁸.

³³ Wojciech Kęblowski suggests that projects working on a too local level can particularly easy be subjected to domination of particular interests of single social groups.

³⁴ Z. Osmólska, *Budżet partycypacyjny po polsku* [in:] D. Plecka (ed.), *Demokracja w Polsce po 2007 roku*, Katowice 2014, pp. 261–270. Here pp. 262–263.

³⁵ M. Gerwin, op.cit., p. 36.

³⁶ Dz.U. 2000 Nr 88, poz. 985.

³⁷ Regarding voivodeship the threshold is equal to 5%.

³⁸ M. Gerwin, op.cit., pp. 37–38.

– in civic hearing – in the functioning of the Polish law since 2006, when regulations about lobbying came into force in lawmaking³⁹. Gathering opinions about projects of ordinances and acts is performed mainly by government departments and the Parliament. As rightly observed by Grzegorz Makowski, after a few years of functioning of this mechanism one can see that effects are moderate. This fact is ascribed to the incorrect localization of regulation which covers public hearing – it does not have much in common with lobbying and resembles more the right to petition – in this case association with lobbying did not influence in favor of image or commonness of usage⁴⁰. One should not forget about the attractiveness of this instrument as it opens broad possibilities of including residents in a decision processes⁴¹.

4. SUMMARY

Techniques of participation, cited by the author, certainly influence a feeling of safety among the residents (and non-governmental organizations) of a certain region. Participation and awareness of influence on the surrounding environment gives them a possibility of development and it satisfies basic needs. Taking such actions as participating in an election, local referendum or social consultation convinces me that activity in the social field gives a safety guarantee and, equally important for residents, stabilization of their position. Regarding the assurance of human rights in participation in the public life, Poland becomes a modern country (through, among others, increasing the controllability of nation by transferring many tasks from the centre to territorial bodies, creating democratic institutions of the civic society, making efforts for security, compliance with the law and minimal freedom for units and democracy for society)⁴².

Analyses of economists, sociologists and political scientists lead to the conclusion that the development of crucial civic society and growth of social activity is influenced by a high level of social capital – defined as a features of organization of society like: trust, norms and linkages, which can increase the efficiency of

³⁹ Ustawa o działalności lobbingsowej w procesie stanowienia prawa z dnia 7 lipca 2005 [in:] Dz.U. 2005 Nr 169, poz. 1414.

⁴⁰ G. Makowski, *Nowe ramy...*, op.cit., p. 17.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 18.

⁴² B. Balcerowicz (elab.), *Bezpieczeństwo polityczne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 86–88.

society through coordinated actions⁴³. Due to the functioning of trust in society and deep bonds between residents, society and economy can achieve much more than in the comparable group with a lack of those values. Thus, social capital, comprising of trust and norms passed down from generation to generation in the process of socialization, enables people to take common actions and contributes to the assurance of a social society⁴⁴.

One can assume that conscious and active society is a better social background for building other areas of national security. Active residents, who know the realities of contemporary politics, but are also engaged in development of their own surroundings, would be more aware of all factors (like military, political or threatening the natural environment) endangering their safe development.

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⁴³ Ł. Zamęcki, op.cit., p. 150.

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 151.

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