



Weekly Briefing

Poland Social briefing:
Non-Governmental Organizations in Poland
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Non-Governmental Organizations in Poland

Since early 1989 when the previous system allowed the Poles to open NGO the Polish Third Sector, however, has not developed steadily. During the period of 30 years, it was possible to observe large jumps in the dynamics of the emergence of new organizations. The rapid pace of organization formation started in 1989 lasted until 1992, then it started to fall slightly (that is, less and less new organizations were formed). In 1993 another growth started. At the end of 1994, a total of 47,036 organizations were registered in Poland, but the number of active organizations was estimated at 20,000. Fourteen years later, in the first quarter of 2008, more than 67,343 organizations were registered, however, 40-50,000 were considered a viable number organization. In December 2017, about 23,000 foundations and 111,000 associations were registered. Based on the results of the research "Condition of the NGO sector", estimates that about 70-75% of the organizations in the register actually conduct their activities.

The briefing discusses the structure, financial sources, rationale, density and divisions, the perception among Poles of the NGO in Poland. Moreover, it tries to answers the question why the NGO is more popular in the countryside, why not in the big cities and tries to correlate this phenomenon with the Poles political preferences.

The first important issue is the structure and financial sources of the NGO in Poland. There are five associations for one foundation. However, when we look at emerging organizations, we observe that the growth rate of new foundations is very high. Poles are eager to found foundations. In the previous year, 5.5 thousand were created new organizations - including only twice as many associations than foundations. Even in 2011, three times more associations than foundations were formed, and in 2007 the difference was sevenfold. In 2017, 50% of taxpayers

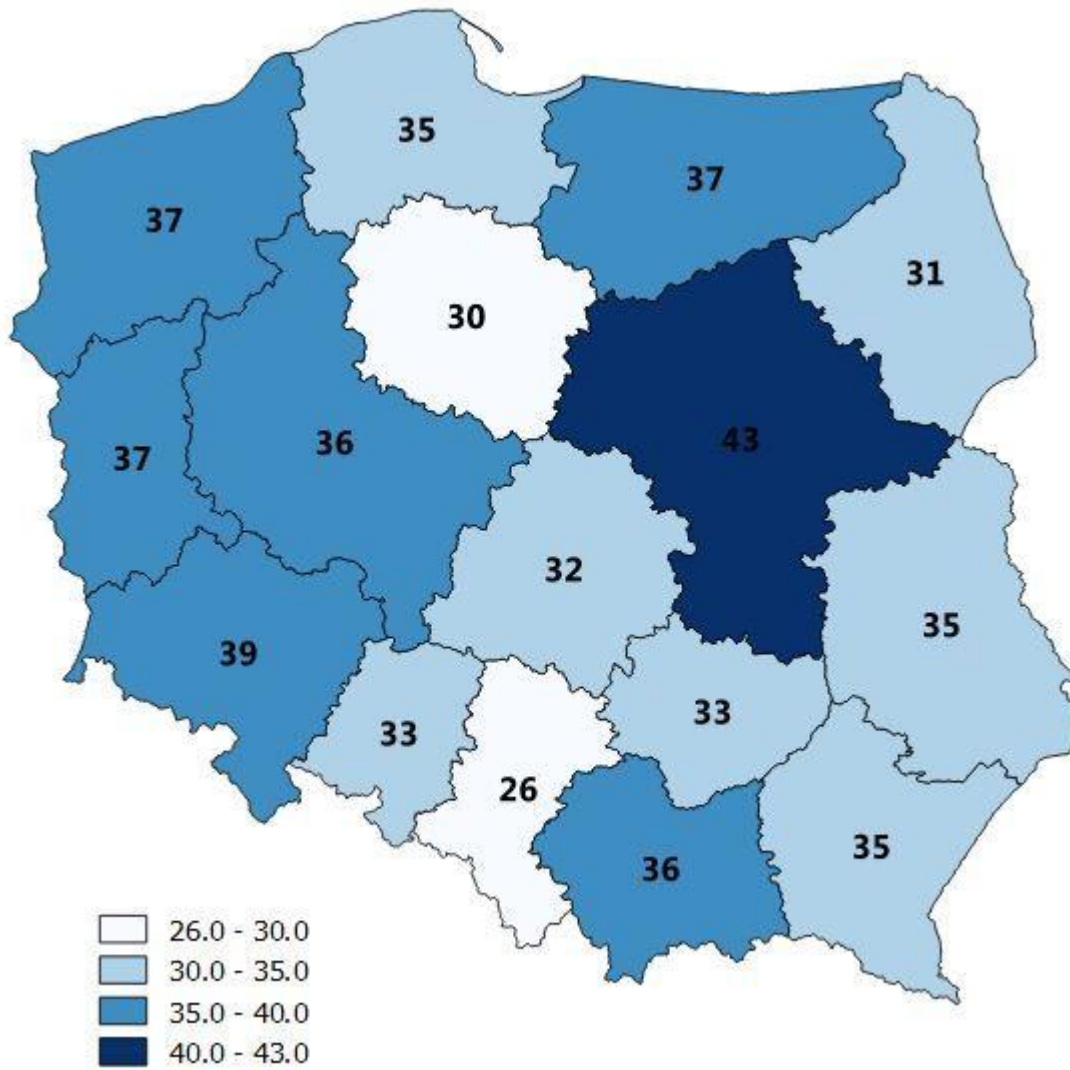
donated over PLN 660 million to the NGO through a one-percent mechanism. The one-percent mechanism allows the citizens to transfer one-percent of their tax directly to the chosen NGO. The list of the organization is published by the Ministry of Labour, Social Policy and Family. In the first year of its operation, public benefit organizations thus collected just over PLN 10 million, next year over PLN 40 million, and after two years more than PLN 60 million. In 2017, after 14 years of operation, the mechanism for transferring one percent of tax provided public benefit organizations PLN 660.2 million. The average income of the organization increases. The annual budget of the average organization in 2014 was PLN 27 thousand, while three years earlier it was about PLN 9 thousand less. The most commonly used sources of revenue for Polish organizations in 2014 are the national funds for the implementation of public tasks from local governments and the central administration app. 60% of organizations used them, membership fees app. 60% of organizations had such revenues, donations from individuals and enterprises app. 56% has this funds, funds from economic activity, paid or multiplication of property a source of income for 26% of associations and foundations, revenues from one-percent tax - 23% of the sector used them, foreign public funds (EU funds, European Commission, etc.) app. 18% of the organizations, and funds from subsidies from other organizations (domestic or foreign) used by the app. 14% of the NGO.

The next point discussed in the briefing touches the issue of the major sector for the NGO in Poland. The areas of activities are mainly concentrated on sports, tourism, recreation, and hobbies (34%): e.g. running sports activities, organizing recreational events, caring for sports facilities. The second is is the education and upbringing (15%) e.g. running interest groups for children and youth, organizing courses and training for adults, and organizing and running schools. The third is dedicated to developing of the culture and art (13%) for example, organizing festivals, festivals, cultural education, and actions supporting the regional tradition. The fourth deals with the social services and social assistance (8%) like help for the disabled, the poor, support for large families and addicted people. The

fifth and sixth areas are the health protection (7%) e.g. health promotion, health education, running rehabilitation centers and the local development (6%) e.g. animating activities of local communities, neighborhood activities, development of rural areas.

Regarding the scale, it is worth noticing that majority of the NGO deals with the issues at the commune or county and provincial level. According to the statistics the NGO operates at the nearest neighborhood (5%), a commune or a county (32%), voivodships (provinces) (25%), the whole country (28%) and outside the country (10%). Moreover, 56% of associations and foundations from rural areas operate on a local scale, almost half (48%) from small towns, over one third from medium-sized cities and only 18% from the largest urban centers. On a national or international scale, as many as 62% of the NGOs are active on such a wide forum. The international activities are mainly sponsored by the NGO from cities e.g. 61% of organizations from Warsaw, 54% from other major cities, about one third from small and medium urban centers and only 23% from villages are conducting such a large scale of activity. Over half of the non-governmental sector is located in the countryside and in small towns with no more than 50,000 inhabitants. In turn, almost every third organization operates in the largest Polish cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants (see Map 1).

Map 1. The NGOs in the Polish voivodeship per 10 000 inhabitants



The primary partner for the NGOs are the local governments. According to the statistic, 92% of organizations maintain contacts with local government from the commune or the county in which they are based. Compared with declarations from two years ago, you can see the intensification of these contacts more organizations have any contacts with the office, more often they are frequent and regular or taken from time to time. The most often close relations with offices have the organizations from the "sport, tourism, recreation, hobby" sector (49%), as well as those dealing with local development (48%) and social assistance (42%). Then, among the cultural organizations, 42% of associations and foundations have frequent and regular contacts with local government. The least often intensive relations with local self-government are maintained by educational and healthcare organizations (39% each).

The organizations have a better and better opinion on cooperation with the city or commune office where they are based. Three years ago, the average score for this cooperation was 6.57 (1 would mean a very bad rating, and 10 would be a very good grade). This year, this average is 6.88. The assessment of cooperation with local government is diversified regionally - the best opinion of it is from the Warmian-Mazurian organizations and the worst from the Śląskie Voivodeship. More to the point the NGOs make their own assessment about the cooperation with the local governments. In this area, 74% of organizations claim that their self-government announces open competitions, while 9% are of the opposite opinion. Following this opinion, 57% of organizations claim that more or less the same projects are financed each year, but it cannot be decided whether this is due to the office's conservatism or lack of new ideas on the side of the organization. Finally, the tone of the opinion is more unequivocal when it comes to the issue of the allocation of public resources. The NGOs think that this is mainly due to "the informal arrangements, acquaintances with officials, political games". 27% of

organizations agree with it, while 34% consider it untrue. Another 28% have no opinion on this matter.

The Poles considered the NGOs as the important pillar of the social life in the country. When the Poles are asked about activities typical of the organization, 74% of Poles point to helping the needy and 75% to run public collections. Moreover, the common perception is that the NGOs should provide their services for free and rely on volunteering (63% of Poles believe in it). What is important 58% of Poles say that non-governmental organizations provide aid more effectively than state institutions. Finally, the NGO is the organizations of trust. Poles trust them more than other institutions

60% of Poles trust the foundations and 53% for associations. This means a slight increase in confidence in third sector entities since 2014. For comparison, the church enjoys the trust of 50% of Poles, 54% trust local governments and 29% of the population for the government.

Conclusions

What is worth noticing is that the biggest number of NGOs works in the countryside and villages levels. One might imagine that due to the growing number of the NGOs is mainly driven by the urbanizations processes. Nothing could be more wrong. The priority of the NGOs is not part of the political life, but to assist people in need. The majority of people in need are staying in the countryside. In the case of Poland, one might associate that the NGOs is the symbol of freedom or liberty and in the current political context with the opposition parties. In fact, it is not the reality. The majority of the NGOs are based in the countryside when mainly people vote for the Law and Justice party, that is currently named by the opposition as the populist party. The real situation in Poland shows the different side of the issue.