

A SOCIAL CONTRACT AS A WORK TOOL FOR SOCIAL WORKERS IN POLAND - ASSUMPTIONS VERSUS REALITY

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Abstract: Social policy is an important aspect of the activities of any state because it determines the welfare of citizens. To achieve its goals, social policy has to be effective, and the solutions used in public activities should contribute to the actual improvement of the situation of citizens. In Poland, as part of social policy, many initiatives are undertaken and tools implemented, but they often do not contribute to improving the social and living conditions of citizens. This article aims to identify the effectiveness of social contracts, one of the tools used in the social assistance system. The empirical research and analysis carried out for this article show that social contracts are ineffective, which can be considered one of the manifestations of the dysfunctional solutions used in Polish social policy.

Keywords: dysfunctionality, Poland, social assistance, social contract, social policy

1 Introduction

Social policy is an extremely important aspect of the activity of every state, it is its effectiveness that determines the well-being of individuals and the entire society. To achieve its goals, social policy should first of all be effective, and the solutions used in the public activity of the state must contribute to the actual change in the position of citizens. In Poland, as part of social policy, various initiatives, programs, and tools are introduced, but the effects of these changes are often negligible and do not improve the living conditions of individuals. Hence, conducting research and analysis on the state's social policy is extremely important, and identifying signs of the dysfunctionality of this activity may be of key importance for improving the well-being of citizens of the entire country. This article fits into these assumptions.

Social policy has many definitions in the literature on the subject. For example, P. Alcock notes that the term social policy can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it means activities undertaken by politicians and decision-makers aimed at changing the legal framework to improve the welfare of individuals and society. It also means researching these decisions by politicians and decision-makers (Alcock, 2016: 7). It can be assumed that all definitions boil down to the view that contemporary social policy is designed to implement the ideas of the state that lead to the well-being of citizens. One of the key areas of social policy of each country, making a significant contribution to the empowerment and equalization of life chances for the economically and socially weakest individuals, is social assistance.

The occurrence of social problems such as the phenomenon of poverty (see Zastrow, 1988: 6), as well as support systems for those in need, is not a new phenomenon. Both of these elements of social life have always existed, but their nature and intensity, forms of assistance, and finally their location in the structure of social policy have changed over time. Based on these few reflections, one can therefore formulate a statement that also in Poland there was almost always a "social welfare system", which was more or less structured, but not always supported by the state and was often implemented through charity work or support of non-governmental organizations. (see more e.g. Płasek, 2014; Brenk, Chaczko & Płasek, 2018). There are many publications in the scientific circulation that describe the development and history of the Polish social assistance system (see e.g. Surdacki, 2018; Broda-Wysocki, 2010). Interested readers can therefore benefit from these publications, and there is no reason to go over these points again.

In Poland, the currently applicable social assistance system was shaped by the Act of 12 March 2004 on social assistance (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1508, as amended), which defined its structure and tasks. The main goal of social assistance

is to support people who are unable to get out of a difficult life situation using their strength and resources. This support, however, should be incidental and may not lead to their dependence on social assistance. This system should be supportive, not caring or helping (see more Rymysza, 2016), which means that a necessary feature of this system should be its effectiveness, manifested in the independence of individuals from social welfare and the use of active social welfare tools that they increase the level of participation of individuals in the helping process.

The social contract as a solution in social assistance was introduced to the Act on social assistance on March 12, 2004. The goals that were set before the social contracts were extremely ambitious. It was assumed that this tool would help: eliminate long-term dependence on social assistance; it will enable people in a difficult life situation to return to the labor market and enable better use of the forces and resources wasted so far (Kaźmierczak, 2016: 80). Currently, the provisions on the social contract are regulated by the Act of March 12, 2004, on social assistance. Article 6 (6) of the Act on Social Assistance indicates that a social contract means a written agreement concluded with a person applying for assistance, which defines the rights and obligations of the parties to the contract as part of jointly undertaken actions aimed at overcoming the difficult life situation of a person or family. Such a definition of a social contract indicates that when concluding a contract with a person benefiting from social assistance, there is active participation in the assistance process and consent as to the activities undertaken under the concluded agreement. The written form of the concluded contract is also clearly defined. Therefore, these assumptions indicate that the social contract can be classified as an active form of social assistance. Each contract should also contain legal sanctions in the event of failure to fulfill the provisions of the contract. Such legal sanctions have already been included in the Social Assistance Act itself. When specifying the regulations concerning the limitation or refusal of social assistance benefits, the legislator indicated that refusal to conclude a social contract, failure to comply with its provisions may constitute grounds for refusing to grant benefits, revoking the decision on granting benefits, or withholding cash benefits from social assistance (Act, 2004, art. 11 section 2). Thus, non-performance of the provisions of the social contract is treated as a failure to meet the agreed obligations by the beneficiary of the social assistance system. Confirmation of the provisions of the Act on limiting the voluntary nature of beneficiaries to conclude social contracts in social assistance may be the positions of Polish administrative courts (see e.g. judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 7 May 2015, OSK 3305/15; judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Kraków of 9 December 2013, III SA/Kr 424/13; judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 12 September 2012, OSK 623/13; judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 24 May 2017, OSK 489/17). In Poland, the conclusion of social contracts has been entrusted to social workers employed in social welfare centers or poviat family assistance centers. The provisions of art. 108 sec. 2 of the Act on Social Assistance indicates that to determine the method of cooperation in solving the problems of a person or family in a difficult life situation, a social worker may conclude social contracts. Contracts are concluded to strengthen life and professional activity and independence or to counteract social exclusion. This means that the contract concluded with the beneficiary of social assistance is not only intended to allow them to overcome the difficult life situation in which they find themselves, but also indirectly lead to the development of full "social independence" through social integration and professional activity. For social assistance to be effective, also its tools, such as social contracts, should be effective.

2 Materials and Methods

To analyze social contracts in Poland, in 2017 an empirical study was carried out in one of the regions of Poland, i.e. Podkarpackie Province. The first stage of the research was to survey a group of social workers working in social welfare centers in the Podkarpackie Province. The survey covered all 160 social welfare centers in the voivodeship. The author managed to obtain 420 return questionnaires, which means that 33.98% of all social workers performing their work in the Podkarpackie region (420 out of 1,236 people) participated in the empirical study.

The second stage of the empirical study was to obtain social contracts collected in social welfare centers in the Podkarpackie Province. When obtaining the existing materials and selecting the research sample, a random stratified selection was used, which consists of dividing the entire general population into the so-called layer and making direct sampling of independent samples within each layer. Three layers were created, distinguished according to the type of commune in which social contracts were concluded (urban communes, urban-rural communes, and rural communes), the minimum sample size was estimated using the formula for the sample size for a finite population, and then a random selection was made in proportion to the size of the layers. Ultimately, during the field research, 516 social contracts were obtained from social welfare centers in the region (n = 516, including 215 contracts from rural municipalities, 223 contracts from urban-rural municipalities, and 78 contracts from municipal municipalities). That is, 18.35% of all social contracts concluded in 2015 in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship were covered, and the value of the estimation error will not exceed 4%. The collected material was subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. The Statistica 12.0 program was used for statistical analysis. The qualitative empirical material was analyzed following the assumptions of the grounded theory (see Charmaz, 2006; Konecki, 2000; Konecki, 2009; Denzin, 2009). For scientific research, the main research hypothesis was also formulated, which was contained in the statement that social contracts in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship are most often concluded when attempts are made to activate people using the support of the social welfare system.

3 Results and discussion

One of the goals of the empirical study was to determine the type of commune in which the analyzed social contracts were concluded. 215 social contracts (i.e. 41.7% of the total) were concluded in social welfare centers located in rural communes, 223 contracts (i.e. 43.2% of the total) were concluded in centers located in urban-rural communes, and 78 contracts (i.e. 15.1%) were included in centers located in cities.

From the point of view of the analysis of social contracts, it was important to determine the subject of the social contract, i.e. the reason that made social contracts concluded with people benefiting from social assistance in the region.

Tab. 1: Reasons for concluding social contracts with people benefiting from the support of the social assistance system in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship

The subject of the social contract	N	%*
unemployment / professional activation	502	97.3%
participation of the social welfare center in projects financed from external funds	247	47.9%
disability	99	19.2%
improvement of the living situation	96	18.6%
supplementing professional qualifications by people using the social welfare system	76	14.7%
counteracting social exclusion	73	14.1%
addiction	57	11.0%
improvement of housing conditions	22	4.3%
social activation	20	3.9%
getting out of a difficult life situation	18	3.5%
improving the health situation	10	1.9%
obtaining cash benefits	7	1.4%

rebuilding family ties	6	1.2%
helplessness in care and educational matters	5	1.0%
another	7	1.4%

Note: *interest does not add up to 100% as the social contract could be concluded for several reasons

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

In the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, social contracts were most often concluded due to the lack of work for people benefiting from the support of the social welfare center or due to attempts to activate these people in the labor market. In the region, as much as 97.3% of all analyzed social contracts (ie 502 contracts) were concluded precisely for this reason. A significant part of social contracts were concluded also due to the participation of social welfare centers in various types of projects financed from external sources (247 contracts, i.e. 47.9% of indications).

Box 1: Examples of reasons for concluding social contracts among respondents

"A family of 4, a married couple, they raise two sons aged 6 and 4. The reasons for the difficult situation of the family are: Mr. Piotr's long-term unemployment, lack of professional qualifications, poverty caused by unemployment, conflict with the law (stay in arrest)"(Social contract No. 7)

"Ms. XYZ is a long-term unemployed person, registered in the District Employment Agency in Krosno. The above-mentioned is married, but for many years she has been informally separated from her husband, who is staying at the Homeless Shelter in Warsaw. They are not in contact with each other. The reasons for the difficult life situation are: lack of knowledge about the possibilities of forms of assistance, low activity, fear of changing the lifestyle, lack of work and income"(Social Contract No. 2)

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The conducted empirical research also allowed to determine the duration of the contract - welfare tents in Podkarpacie. In the Podkarpackie voivodship, short-term social contracts were concluded most often in social welfare centers, the duration of which did not exceed 6 months. In 2015, 337 such contracts were concluded in the region (i.e. 65.3% of the total).

An analysis was carried out to check whether the type of commune influences the duration of concluded social contracts.

Tab. 2: Correlation analysis using the chi-square*** test for the variables: duration of the social contract and the type of commune

Duration of the social contract	Community						Together
	rural		urban-rural		urban		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
up to 6 months	181	84.19%	84	37.67%	72	92.31%	337
over 6 months*	34	15.81%	139	62.33%	6	7.69%	179
Overall	215	100%	223	100%	78	100%	516
Chi-square test results**	χ ² = 134.1126; df = 2; p = 0.0000 ^Δ ; Cramer's V = 0.5098119						

Note: *in the category of the duration of the social contract over 6 months, 4 contracts were also included (i.e. 0.8% of all researched contracts), which lasted 13-18 months
**statistically significant results (p <0.05) are marked ^Δ, and results close to the limit of significance are marked ^B.

***meaning of symbols used in the tables: Pearson's chi² = symbol χ² - the value of the chi-square test statistics; df-number of degrees of freedom; p-test probability; Cramer's V -measure of the strength of an effect (strength of a relationship).
Source: Own study using Statistica 12.0.

The results show that short-term social contracts (up to 6 months) were most often concluded in the region. Short-term contracts accounted for 84.19% of all contracts concluded in rural communes and 92.31% of contracts concluded in municipal communes. Only in urban-rural communes contracts whose duration exceeded 6 months dominated. The chi-square test analysis showed a statistically significant relationship (p = 0.0000) between the type of commune and the duration of the social contract. The value of the V coefficient indicates a strong relationship (Cramer's V = 0.5098).

An analysis was also carried out to check whether the duration of the social contract depends on the cause of the difficult life situation in which the person covered by this form of support finds himself.

Tab. 3: Correlation analysis using the chi-square test** for the variables: the cause of the difficult life situation of the person covered by the social contract and the duration of the social contract

The cause of the difficult life situation of a person covered by support in the form of a social contract	Duration of the social contract				Tog ethe r	χ^2	p*	Cram er's V
	up to 6 months		over 6 months					
	N	% ***	N	% ***				
lack of work	328	97.33%	175	97.77%	503	0.090483	0.76356	0.0132
lack of professional qualifications	88	26.11%	65	36.31%	153	5.830993	0.01575 ^A	0.1057
addiction	48	14.24%	3	1.68%	51	20.729870	0.00001 ^A	0.1965
disability, long-term illness, poor health	103	30.56%	36	20.11%	139	6.489045	0.01085 ^B	0.1114
no income (including very low income)	319	94.66%	177	98.88%	496	5.598270	0.01798 ^A	0.1035
problems related to care and educational matters	7	2.08%	0	0.00%	7	3.769234	0.05220 ^B	0.0851
life helplessness (including improper management of financial resources, neglect of the condition of the apartment)	60	17.80%	12	6.70%	72	11.997260	0.00053 ^A	0.1507
low self-esteem (low self-esteem)	26	7.72%	2	1.12%	28	9.916424	0.00164 ^A	0.1373
inappropriate relationships in the family (including domestic violence, marital conflicts)	26	7.72%	2	1.12%	28	9.916424	0.00164 ^A	0.1373
incomplete family (single parenting)	6	1.78%	10	5.59%	16	5.636640	0.01759 ^A	0.1039

Note: *statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) are marked ^A, and results close to the limit of significance are marked ^B.

**meaning of symbols used in the tables: as for tab. 2

***interest does not add up to 100% because the social contract could be concluded for several reasons (multiple choice question)

Source: Own study using Statistica 12.0.

The results show that the reasons for the difficult life situation of people for whom short-term (up to 6 months) and medium-term (over 6 months) social contracts were concluded were similar, i.e. the reasons for unemployment and lack of income prevailed. If the difficult life situation of a social assistance client was caused by addiction, disability or poor health, care and educational problems, life helplessness, low self-esteem, or improper family relationships, social contracts were concluded for up to 6 months. On the other hand, when the cause of the difficult life situation of the person benefiting from social assistance was the lack of professional qualifications or single parenthood (incomplete family), social contracts lasting more than 6 months were concluded more often. The results of a series of chi-square tests revealed that, except for one reason, i.e. joblessness, in all other causes of a difficult life situation, there was a statistically significant correlation between the reason for a person's difficult life situation and the duration of social contract. It should be noted, however, that the strength of the effect as measured by the Cramer's V coefficient indicates a weak relationship, the highest value (only $V = 0.19$) was obtained for the cause of a difficult life situation related to addictions.

The conducted empirical research showed that in Podkarpace, social contracts they were concluded with women (54.3% of the total) than with men (45.7% of the total).

During the analysis, it was also checked whether the sex of the person covered by the social contract influences the performance of the contract under its provisions.

Tab. 4: Correlation analysis using the chi-square test** for the variables: was the social contract implemented as agreed and gender

Whether the social contract was implemented as agreed	sex				Together
	woman		man		
	N	%	N	%	
Yes	252	90.00	221	93.64	473
No	28	10.00	15	6.36	43
Overall	280	100.00	236	100.00	516
Chi-square test results*	$\chi^2 = 2.226194$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.13569$; Cramer's V = 0.0655423				

Note: *statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) are marked ^A, and results close to the limit of significance are marked ^B.

**meaning of symbols used in the tables: as for tab. 2

Source: Own study using Statistica 12.0.

The conducted analysis showed that, regardless of gender, social contracts in the region were implemented as agreed. The analysis of the percentage distributions showed that at least 90% of all contracts in the voivodship were implemented as agreed. However, the chi-square test analysis did not show the existence of a statistically significant probability between the sex of the person covered by the social contract and whether the contract was performed as agreed ($p = 0.13569$).

In the course of the analysis, it was possible to identify the factors that led to the difficult life situation of people from the Podkarpace region and forced them to use the social assistance system.

Tab. 5: Reasons for the difficult life situation of people supported in the form of a social contract in the Podkarpackie Province

The cause of the difficult life situation of the person covered by the support in the form of a social contract	N	%*
lack of work	503	97.5%
no income (including very low income)	496	96.1%
lack of professional qualifications	153	29.7%
disability, long-term illness, poor health	139	26.9%
life helplessness (including improper management of funds, neglecting the condition of the dwelling)	72	14.0%
addiction	51	9.9%
low self-esteem (low self-esteem)	28	5.4%
inappropriate relationships in the family (including domestic violence, marital conflicts)	28	5.4%
incomplete family (single parenting)	16	3.1%
problems related to the care and educational matters	7	1.4%
other problems	13	2.5%

Note: *the interest does not add up to 100% because the difficult situation of people covered by the social contract could have had several reasons

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The most common cause of the difficult life situation of people supported in the form of a social contract was the lack of work, as much as 97.5% (i.e. 503 contracts) of the contracts concluded related to a situation in which people did not work professionally. The lack of a job was closely related to the lack of income. Almost all persons with whom social contracts were concluded did not have sources of income, or their income was very low. In many cases, people with whom social contracts were concluded also did not have professional qualifications that would allow them to perform work on the labor market (153 contracts, i.e. 29.7%) or were disabled (139 contracts, i.e. 26.9%).

Persons supported in the form of social contracts undertook to undertake specific actions leading to the achievement of the main goals of the contracts. In turn, achieving the main goals of

the concluded contract was to allow the beneficiaries of the social assistance system to overcome the difficult life situation in which they found themselves. In return for fulfilling the provisions of the social contract and carrying out specific activities, persons covered by this type of assistance received financial or non-cash support from social welfare centers. The analysis of the social contracts collected in the analyzed region made it possible to identify all these factors.

The conducted research made it possible to determine the main goals that were to be achieved by people covered by social contracts in the Podkarpackie Province.

Tab. 6: Main goals that were to be achieved by people covered by social contracts in Podkarpackie

Main goals that were to be achieved by people covered by social contracts	N	%*
taking up a job / or actively looking for a job	355	68.8%
obtaining financial independence	193	37.4%
proper functioning of the family (including extinguishing conflicts, building proper relationships in the family)	41	7.9%
obtaining a certificate of the degree of disability	30	5.8%
improving your health situation	17	3.3%
carrying out renovation, repairs in the household	15	2.9%
abstaining from addiction	14	2.7%
another	6	1.2%

Note: *the interest does not add up to 100% because the person could have several main goals in the concluded social contract

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

Social contracts were most often concluded so that people benefiting from the support of the social assistance system would take up work or actively seek work - 68.8% of the contracts concluded, ie 355 people. In the region, it was also important from the point of view of concluded contracts to bring people using the social assistance system to obtain financial independence - 37.4% of contracts concluded (193 people).

Persons covered by support in the form of a social contract, to achieve the main goals of the contract, were obliged to undertake specific actions stipulated in the contract.

Tab. 7: Actions are taken by people covered by the social contract in Podkarpackie

Actions are taken by a person covered by a social contract	N	%*
supplementing professional qualifications (including retraining)	282	54.7%
active job search (including registration at the employment office)	281	54.5%
systematic treatment / treatment	58	11.2%
obtaining a certificate of the degree of disability	55	10.7%
taking action to obtain cash benefits (including, for example, an application for alimony)	49	9.5%
refraining from addiction	26	5.0%
improving the functioning of the family (including mitigating conflicts)	18	3.5%
repair / renovation of a dwelling	16	3.1%
purchase of necessary products/goods for household needs	13	2.5%
preparation of necessary documents, e.g. ID card	6	1.2%
another	6	1.2%

Note: *the interest does not add up to 100% because the person could undertake several activities under the concluded social contract

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The activities are most often undertaken in the field of concluded social contracts included supplementing professional qualifications (including retraining) - 282 people, i.e. 54.7% and

active job search (including registration at the labor office to obtain the status of an unemployed person) - 281 people, i.e. 54.4%.

Fulfilling the provisions of the social contract by people covered by this type of support allowed them to obtain various forms of help from a social welfare center.

Tab. 8: Assistance obtained by persons under the concluded social contract

Assistance obtained by persons under a social contract:	N	%*
financial support	425	82.4%
material assistance	40	7.8%
organizational assistance	45	8.7%
social work	134	26.0%

Note: *the interest does not add up to 100% because the person could obtain several forms of assistance under the concluded social contract

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

In the analyzed region, people covered by social contracts from social welfare centers received mainly assistance in the form of cash benefits. The analysis of the collected social contracts shows that as many as 425 people (82.4% of concluded contracts) in a difficult life situation received cash benefits as support. The second most common type of support was social work (134 people, ie 26% of concluded contracts).

To evaluate the activities set out in the social contracts, it was checked whether the contracts were implemented under the arrangements or whether they required taking additional actions and making changes.

Tab. 9: Implementation of social contracts as agreed in the Podkarpackie Province

Whether the social contract was implemented as agreed			Is a social contract required changes and action?		
Findings	N	%	Findings	N	%
YES	473	91.7%	YES	33	6.4%
NO	43	8.3%	NO	483	93.6%
Together	516	100.0%	Together	516	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The collected data indicates that almost all social contracts in the region (i.e. 473 contracts - 91.7% of the total) were implemented as agreed. Only in 43 cases (i.e. 8.3% of the total) contracts were not performed under the contract concluded by social workers. Moreover, almost all the contracts performed in the analyzed voivodship did not require any actions or introducing changes.

During the research, an attempt was also made to assess whether the activities included in social contracts have been fully implemented.

Tab. 10: Implementation of activities specified in the surveyed social contracts

The activities stipulated in the social contract have been implemented	N	%
Yes	493	95.5%
No	23	4.5%
TOTAL	516	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The review of social contracts obtained from social welfare centers in the Podkarpackie voivodship shows that in almost all contracts the agreed measures were implemented (493 contracts, i.e. 95.5% of the total). Only in 23 cases (4.5% of the total) the measures provided for in the contract could not be fully implemented.

One of the main goals of the research was to determine whether social contracts effectively contribute to the improvement of the life situation and the development of full "self-social independence" of social welfare beneficiaries through their social integration and professional activity. During the analysis, it was checked whether the social contracts in the region contributed to a full or only partial change in the life situation of the beneficiaries of the social assistance system. The complete change of the situation of the person covered by the social contract meant an improvement in the life situation and the achievement of full "social independence". The implementation of the social contract meant that the person covered by it could independently function in society and on the labor market, and did not have to use the support of the social assistance system.

Tab. 11: The impact of social contracts on changing the difficult situation of people benefiting from the support of the social assistance system in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship

Achieving the goal of the social contract led to a change in the difficult life situation of a person	N	%
YES - full change	165	32.0%
NO - partial change	351	68.0%
TOTAL	516	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

In most cases, in the case of people with whom social contracts were concluded, the implementation of tasks provided for in the contract only led to a partial change in a difficult life situation, which means that they did not achieve full "social independence". Despite the implementation of the social contract, these people were not able to function independently in society and on the labor market and still had to use the support of the social assistance system (351 people, ie 68% of the total). Only in 165 people (32% of the total) the social contract led to a complete change in the difficult life situation and the achievement of full social independence, and thus to social integration and professional activity.

To explain the reasons for concluding social contracts in social welfare centers in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, an analysis of the correlation seniority of social workers and the reason for concluding a social contract.

Tab. 12: Correlation analysis using the chi-square test** for the variables: the reason for concluding social contracts and the seniority of the surveyed social workers

Reasons for entering into contracts	work experience up to 10 years		work experience 11-20 years		over 20 years		Toget her	χ^2	p*	Cramer's V
	N	% ***	N	% ***	N	% ***				
addiction	61	34.27 %	24	27.91 %	48	30.77 %	133	1.17 72	0.55 51	0.053
homelessness	17	9.55 %	8	9.30 %	11	7.05 %	36	0.73 64	0.69 20	0.042
Violence in the family	6	3.37 %	2	2.33 %	9	5.77 %	17	2.05 71	0.35 75	0.069
unemployment / professional activation	163	91.57 %	81	94.19 %	136	90.48 %	380	3.58 97	0.16 61	0.092
disability	28	15.73 %	10	11.63 %	thirty	19.23 %	68	2.40 98	0.29 97	0.075
helplessness in care and educational matters	37	20.79 %	18	20.93 %	39	25.00 %	94	0.98 06	0.61 24	0.048

Note: *the statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) are marked ^A, and results close to the limit of significance are marked ^B.

**meaning of symbols used in the tables: as for tab. 2

***the percentages do not add up to 100% as the question was a multiple choice question.

Source: Own study using Statistica 12.0.

To illustrate whether the length of service of social workers who conclude social contracts affects the reasons for concluding contracts, an analysis was carried out using the chi-square test.

The results show that the reasons for concluding social contracts are similar, regardless of the length of service of the social worker who used this tool in their work. The results of a series of chi-square tests showed that there is no statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) relationship between the length of service of a social worker and the reasons for concluding social contracts in social welfare centers in the Podkarpackie Province.

It was important during the research to also identify reasons for breaking social contracts in social welfare centers in the region. Most of the surveyed social workers stated that social contracts were not broken in their centers. Such an answer was given by 227 people (54% of respondents), and 182 people (43.3%) stated that in their commune the agreement concluded in the form of a social contract with people using the social assistance system was broken. It can be assumed that the main reasons for terminating social contracts in the region are: lack of cooperation with the client or failure to comply with the provisions of the contract, and undertaking professional work or going abroad by persons who are parties to the contract.

One of the objectives of the survey was to determine the experience of social workers from the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in concluding social contracts. During the survey, social workers were asked how often in their everyday work they choose the social contract method in working with the client, how many in the form of contracts they concluded in the last 7 years (2010-2017), and when they first used the social contract tool in their professional work.

Almost all respondents, i.e. 415 people (98.8% of the total), indicated that they choose the social contract method sporadically when working with clients, which means that they conclude up to 11 social contracts a year.

Tab. 13: Number of social contracts concluded by surveyed social workers during the year

How often do you choose the method of the social contract when working with the client	N	%
sporadically (up to 11 a year)	415	98.8%
quite often (12-19 a year)	4	1.0%
often (20 and more per year)	1	0.2%
TOTAL	420	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

Only one individual indicated that they choose a social contract quite often (4 people indicated that they conclude 12-19 social contracts annually, which is 1.0% of the total). This means that social workers in the region only sporadically use social contracts in their daily work.

During the survey, social workers were asked whether the possibilities of actual enforcement of the provisions of the social contract were limited.

Tab. 14: Opinions of social workers on the possibility of actual enforcement of the provisions of social contracts

Do you think the possibilities of actual enforcement of the provisions of the social contract are limited?	N	%
Yes	303	72.1%
No	106	25.2%
Hard to say	11	2.6%
TOTAL	420	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The answers of the respondents indicate that the majority of them believe that the possibilities of actual enforcement of the provisions of the social contract are limited, such an answer was given by as many as 303 surveyed social workers (ie 72.1% of the total). Thus, the analysis of the statements of the surveyed social workers leads to the disturbing conclusion that social

workers, even though in their daily work they use a tool such as a social contract, most consider that the current legal regulations limit the possibilities of actual enforcement of the provisions contained in the social contract. Most often, social workers indicated that the enforcement of the provisions of the social contract was limited because a person in a difficult life situation could not be refused help.

Because some of the surveyed social workers signaled that the limitations in the possibility of enforcing the provisions of the social contract are because a person in a difficult life situation cannot be refused help, the respondents were asked whether they had encountered a refusal to assist a client at their workplace, if they do not comply with the provisions contained in the social contract.

Tab. 15: Refusal to assist a client of a social welfare center in the event of failure to comply with the provisions of the social contract, in the opinion of the surveyed social workers

Have you ever encountered a refusal to help a client in your workplace in the event of when he fails to comply with the provisions contained therein in a social contract?	N	%
Yes	30	7.1%
No	390	92.9%
TOTAL	420	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

Almost all respondents (390 people, i.e. 92.9% of the total) indicated that in their workplace they had not encountered a refusal to assist a person who did not comply with the provisions contained in the social contract.

One of the elements of the evaluation of the effectiveness of the tool, which is the social contract, is whether the persons covered by this type of support continue to use the social assistance system after the end of the contract.

Tab. 16: Using the social assistance system after the end of the social contract by persons in the opinion of the respondents

According to your knowledge, do people covered by this support still benefit after the end of the social contract from the social assistance system?	N	%
Yes	392	93.3%
No	8	1.9%
I do not know	20	4.8%
TOTAL	420	100.0%

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

The results obtained during the study seem to be disturbing, as 392 social workers (i.e. 93.3% of the total) indicated that after the end of the social contract, people covered by this type of support continued to benefit from the social assistance system.

People who received support in the form of social contracts were also asked what form of assistance.

Table 17. Forms of support from the social assistance system which are used by people after the end of the social contract

What forms of help are used by people who were covered by a social contract (N = 392)	N	%*
financial support	354	90.3%
material assistance	74	18.9%
food aid	73	18.6%
social work	60	15.3%

Note: *the percentages do not add up to 100% because the question was a multiple choice question

Source: Own study based on the conducted research.

People who were supported in the form of a social contract and still use the assistance of a social welfare center receive mainly cash benefits (354 responses, i.e. 90.3%).

Over 60% of all surveyed social workers (254 people) negatively assessed the effectiveness of the social contract as a method of work in social assistance. The contracts were assessed positively by 115 employees (i.e. 27.4% of the total).

Conducted scientific research allowed to obtain new information on the effectiveness of social contracts in Poland, which constitute an important supplement to the existing scientific research. The audit of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) carried out in 2013 in Poland indicated that the effectiveness of social contracts - measured by the level of independence of social assistance beneficiaries was low (NIK, 2013: 9). Similar conclusions were also received by R. Szarfenberg, who in 2006 established that the opinions of social workers (N = 104) about social contracts in Poland are rather negative (Szarfenberg, 2007: 13). Also A. Golczyńska-Grondas and A. Kretek-Kamińska, after surveying social workers in Lodz in 2006-2007 (N = 213), stated that as much as 80% of all surveyed social workers were sceptical about the possibility of achieving better work results thanks to the use of social contracts in social assistance (Golczyńska-Grondas, Kretek-Kamińska, 2009: 156). Slightly different results were obtained by M. Mikołajczyk, who covered 16 social welfare centers in the area of Warsaw and studied 64 social workers. The author pointed out that the great advantage of the social contract is motivating clients to take action to change their difficult life situations (Mikołajczyk, 2017: 102-112).

Empirical research carried out in the Podkarpackie region, confirmed some of the research conducted so far on the effectiveness of social contracts in Poland and strengthened the voice in the discussion about the ineffectiveness of this tool in the Polish social assistance system.

4 Conclusion

One of the elements of the country's social policy is the social assistance system. Its task is to support people and families in difficult life situations in regaining social independence. The current social assistance should be focused on strengthening and making its beneficiaries independent. This leads to the conclusion that the use of social assistance should be incidental, and the success of the assistance system is that people become independent and stop using social assistance. For the efficient functioning of the social assistance system, however, tools are needed that will make it possible to provide support to those in need. According to the assumptions, these tools should be active, i.e. not limited to financial transfers, but also involve individuals in the aid process and make them independent. Such assumptions in Poland have been assigned to the social contracts, which are the subject of the conducted analysis.

The empirical research aimed to analyze the effectiveness of social contracts. During the study, it was possible to establish the circumstances and reasons for concluding social contracts in the Podkarpackie Province (south-eastern part of Poland). In the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, social contracts were most often concluded due to the lack of work of people benefiting from the support of social welfare centers and they were short-term (up to 6 months).

Social contracts in Podkarpackie usually led to the improvement of a difficult financial situation by paying benefits in the form of cash to the needy, or increasing professional qualifications, and improving the professional activity of the beneficiaries of the social assistance system. However, even this kind of change, despite the full implementation of contractual tasks, did not make people using the help of social welfare centers take up employment on the labor market and become independent from the support of the social assistance system. It should therefore be concluded that the social contracts concluded in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship did not contribute effectively to the improvement of the life situation and the development of full

"social independence" of the beneficiaries of social assistance through their social integration and professional activity. Undoubtedly, professional activation, fuller social integration, and the cessation of using the support of a social welfare center can be considered a manifestation of full independence of recipients of social assistance benefits. During the research, it was found that almost all surveyed social workers indicated that after the end of the social contract, people covered by this form of support continued to benefit from the support of the social assistance system (93.3% of responses in general) and receive mainly cash benefits. Hence, it indicates that the tool of social contracts is ineffective and in no way contributes to achieving full independence of people who received support in this form from a social welfare center. The ineffectiveness of this tool can be considered one of the symptoms of dysfunctional solutions used in Polish social policy. The conducted empirical research allows to confirm the main hypothesis of this text and indicate the discrepancy between the goals that were set for social contracts at the time of their introduction to the social assistance system, and the effects of using these tools in Poland. It is disturbing that despite voices about the dysfunction of this tool in the Polish social assistance system, the state does not change the assumptions and structure of social contracts.

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