



## **Youth Wiki national description**

# Youth policies in Poland

# 2021

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# Poland

## Youth Policy in Poland

The "State Strategy for Youth for 2003-2012" ([Strategia Państwa dla Młodzieży na lata 2003-2012](#)) (Strategy) prepared before Poland's accession to the EU remains the only document determining the development and directions of Polish youth policy. Currently, there is no strategy in Poland directly relating to young people. In 2018-2019, the Association for Establishing the Youth Council of the Republic of Poland, together with 600 young people from Poland, developed a document ["The Assumptions for the National Youth Strategy for 2020-2030"](#). It identifies six strategic areas: labor market; civic activity; sport, health, tourism; innovation, internet, digitization; culture; education and higher education.

It is worth emphasising that despite the absence of a youth act, youth policy is more and more frequently regulated at regional and local levels. Local strategies (or other documents) targeting young people are present at various levels of local governments (province, district, commune), e.g. in [Warsaw](#), [Poznań](#).

Decisions on the implementation of individual public policies (including those relating to youth) remain a responsibility of government administration (e.g. the Minister of National Education is responsible for education and upbringing the Minister of Sport - for physical culture, the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy - for social policy and the Minister of Science and Higher Education - for higher education and research).

### 1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

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The "State Strategy for Youth for 2003-2012" (Strategy) prepared before Poland's accession to the EU remains the only document determining the development and directions of Polish youth policy. Currently, there is no strategy in Poland directly relating to young people. The Strategy emphasises the links that exist between youth policy and legal regulations concerning education, social welfare, national defence, employment and combating unemployment, children's living conditions in families, healthcare, as well as prevention of crime, drug addiction and alcohol abuse.

When determining the objectives of youth policy in the Strategy, the Council of Ministers assumed that the Strategy should cover people aged 15-25. The Strategy was prepared by a team composed of representatives of youth organisations, experts researching youth problems and representatives of the Minister of National Education and Sport. The document underwent public consultation with young people and public administration representatives. Work on the preparation of the Strategy was coordinated by the Ministry of National Education, and the Minister of Education was responsible for its implementation. The authors of the Strategy emphasised the necessity to create conditions for the coordination of the activities of the government, institutions and non-governmental organisations working for young people.

In February 2019 The Association for Establishing the Youth Council of the Republic of Poland ([Stowarzyszenie na rzecz powołania Rady Młodzieży RP](#)) published a document "The Assumptions for the National Youth Strategy for 2020-2030" (["Założenia do Strategii Państwa dla Młodzieży na lata 2020-2030"](#)).

In 2021 Government's Plenipotary for Youth Policy (Pełnomocnik Rządu ds. Polityki Młodzieżowej) and The Dialogue Council with the Young Generation has (Rada Dialogu z

Młodym Pokoleniem) [have launched a consultation of the "Strategy for the Young Generation"](#) („Strategii RP na rzecz Młodego Pokolenia”).

## 1.1 Target population of youth policy

In youth policy publications, their authors emphasise the necessity for introducing a definition of youth as a social group a notion that initially included people aged 15-25 (Raczek, 2014). However, as a result of the implementation of new youth programmes, the upper age limit has now been raised from 25 to 29. This change resulted from “the [willingness to offer high quality support](#) to a larger group of young people entering the labour market, and from the standardisation of target groups and the scope of support obtained from the European Social Fund as well as from the Youth Employment Initiative.

[Social policy programmes](#) consider youth as people aged from 13 to 30. The lower age limit coincides with the time when children become “active participants shaping their environment by their own actions” and finish a certain stage of education when “they make important choices regarding their further education”. The upper age limit is defined as the stage of becoming self-sufficient and setting up a household. However, under the Ombudsman for Children Act (Ustawa o Rzeczniku Praw Dziecka), “any human being is a child from conception to the age of majority, but “reaching the age of majority is regulated by separate provisions”. In accordance with the above Act, the notion of “youth” could refer to people who have reached the age of majority and therefore, have turned 18 or 16. [It is also accepted](#) that “young people” are those under 34 years old as it is difficult to pinpoint the age of passing from youth to maturity. The report “Youth 2011” describing young people’s situation in Poland applied the term “youth” to the age group of 15-29 (Szafraniec, 2011). It is this age range that is most frequently indicated when defining the notion of “youth”.

Youth policy researcher from the University of Warsaw, prof. [Barbara Fatyga defines “youth”](#) as “a diverse category of population aged 11 to 25”, within which there are various subcategories - age (teenagers (11-19 years) and young adults (20-25 years)), gender, health, family situation, territory (place of residence), educational situation, socio-economic status, employment, legal criterion.

The Central Statistical Office ([Główny Urząd Statystyczny](#)) provides no data for such an expanded age range (15-29). Instead, it indicates the following age ranges: 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29. According to data provided by the Central Statistical Office, as of 30th June 2021, Poland had 6 091 786 inhabitants aged 15-29, out of whom 3 111 389 were males and 2 980 397 - females. Young people account [15,96% of Poland’s whole population](#). The number of youth in Poland in the age ranges is as follows: 15-19 years old – 1 802 588, 20-24 years old – 1 940 927, 25-29 years old – 2 348 271.

## 1.2 National youth law

### Existence of a National Youth Law

The first attempts to lay down the foundations for the functioning of youth policy in Poland were linked to the EU accession process. They resulted in the “State Strategy for Youth for 2003-2012” ([Strategia Państwa dla Młodzieży na lata 2003-2012](#)), however, it “failed to (...) trigger the implementation of EU programmes and to influence the integration of the community of youth organisations”. Polish youth policy has no systemic solutions, nor is it operated and coordinated in a consistent way (Wiktorska-Święcicka, 2016). It cannot be said that before Poland’s accession to the European Union there were no activities targeting young people or their activation and inclusion in public life. Such activities were undertaken as part of sectoral policies operated within individual ministries. Poland’s accession to the European Union probably contributed to paying more attention to issues relating to young people’s lives and functioning (Raczek, 2014).

It is impossible to indicate one official document focussing on the needs and rights of young people and regulating issues relating to them ("Youth Law"). However, this does not mean that Polish legislation does not cover young people's lives, rights and duties. Youth-related regulations are provided in various legal acts, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Poland ([of 1997](#)) Family and Guardianship Code ([as amended](#)) Labour Code ([as amended](#)) Juvenile Proceedings Act ([as amended](#)), Education Law ([as amended](#)), Act on Higher Education ([as amended](#)), Post-graduate Placements Act ([as amended](#)), [Act on health care for pupils](#), or the Associations Act ([as amended](#)).

## Scope and contents

"The Republic of Poland shall ensure protection of the rights of the child. Everyone shall have the right to demand of organs of public authority that they defend children against violence, cruelty, exploitation and actions which undermine their moral sense" (art. 72 of [the Constitution of the Republic of Poland](#)). Parents have the right to bring up a young person in agreement with their convictions, however, they should take into account his/her degree of maturity, freedom of conscience and his/her convictions (art. 48 of [the Constitution of the Republic of Poland](#)). [Young people's rights](#), being part of the catalogue of human rights, can be divided into four main categories - personal, political (or public), social and economic rights. Coming of age offers young people new opportunities and full participation in public life. Young people - provided they are not incapacitated or deprived of public (or voting) rights - who are 18 or over may participate in referendums, elect the President of the Republic of Poland, Polish Parliament deputies, senators and local government representatives (art. 62 of [the Constitution of the Republic of Poland](#)). Young people under 18 may join associations however, they may not establish non-governmental organisations until they are 18 (art 3 of the [Associations Act of 1989, as amended](#)). The observance of young people's rights is supervised by the Ombudsman for Children ([Rzecznik Praw Dziecka](#)) and the Ombudsman ([Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich](#)).

## Revisions/updates

Not applicable

## 1.3 National youth strategy

### Existence of a National Youth Strategy

The "State Strategy for Youth for 2003-2012" ([Strategia Państwa dla Młodzieży na lata 2003-2012](#)) (Strategy) prepared before Poland's accession to the EU remains the only document determining the development and directions of Polish youth policy. Currently, there is no strategy in Poland directly relating to young people. The Strategy emphasises the links that exist between youth policy and legal regulations concerning education, social welfare, national defence, employment and combating unemployment, children's living conditions in families, healthcare, as well as prevention of crime, drug addiction and alcohol abuse.

When the "State Strategy for Youth for 2003-2012" ceased to apply, no new national strategy regulating Polish youth policy issues was created. The authors of the "Governmental Programme for Young People's Social Engagement for 2015-2016 Active Youth" ([Rządowy Program Aktywności Społecznej Młodzieży na lata 2015-2016. Aktywna Młodzież](#)) emphasised the importance of preparing a governmental document defining youth policy. "Laying down the strategic foundation for the implementation of youth policy" seems of paramount importance.

The Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland established in 2016 and operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education ([Rada Dzieci i Młodzieży Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej](#)) during its first term (2016-2017) worked on the draft provisions of the Act on the Youth Council of the Republic of Poland (Rada Młodzieży Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej). The Association for Establishing the Youth Council of the Republic of Poland



operating by the Minister of National Education in 2018 worked on the key aspects of the National Youth Strategy. As a result of these works, in February 2019 a document [“The Assumptions for the National Youth Strategy for 2020-2030”](#) was published. 600 young Poles worked on it. It describes six strategic areas important for young people: labor market; civic activity; sport, health, tourism; innovation, internet, digitization; culture; education and higher education.

As part of the project [“#PLdlaMłodych”](#) young people in 2021 in cooperation with experts realized an analysis of the needs of young people living in Poland. The result of the project is a [report with recommendations for policymakers](#). Recommendations include 7 thematic areas: education and higher education; labor market; civil society; technological challenges; health and culture; social policy; sport, tourism and entertainment.

In 2021 Government's Plenipotary for Youth Policy (Pełnomocnik Rządu ds. Polityki Młodzieżowej) and The Dialogue Council with the Young Generation has (Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem) [have launched a consultation of the "Strategy for the Young Generation"](#) („Strategii RP na rzecz Młodego Pokolenia”).

It is worth emphasising that despite the absence of a youth act, youth policy is more and more frequently regulated at regional and local levels. Local strategies (or other documents) targeting young people are present at various levels of local governments (province, district, commune). Examples of programs and strategies for youth adopted at the local government level include:

- “Policy for Young People of the City of Poznań for 2019-2025” ([Polityka dla Ludzi Młodych Miasta Poznania na lata 2019-2025](#)), adopted on 16 October 2018),
- “Leszno's Strategy for youth” ([Strategia Leszna dla młodzieży](#)), adopted on 30 May 2018).

The introduction of unified legislation or guidelines on the development of youth strategies would probably facilitate a regional comparison of activities undertaken for young people as well as the implementation of individual objectives and policies concerning young people.

## Scope and contents

Not applicable

## Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

Not applicable

## Revisions/updates

Not applicable

# 1.4 Youth policy decision-making

## Structure of Decision-making

A debate on official youth representation at central level has been conducted since the onset of the political transformation in Poland (i.e. The Polish Round Table Agreement; 1989). However, up till now no permanent and single authority representing young people's interests has been created. Work is currently in progress to create an entity whose activity may contribute to the development of Polish youth policy.

It is difficult to pinpoint one central level authority responsible for making decisions relating to youth. At present, decisions on the implementation of individual public policies remain a responsibility of government administration (e.g. the [Minister of Education and Science](#) is responsible for education, upbringing, higher education and research, the

[Minister of Sport and Tourism](#)- for physical culture, the [Minister of Family and Social Policy](#) - for social policy and the [Minister of Science and Higher Education](#). In 2008 initial declarations regarding the appointment of a Youth Plenipotentiary were submitted to the Office of the President of the Republic of Poland, however, no such plenipotentiary has been appointed yet (Raczek, 2014). It should be noted that the Ministry of Education and Science has most frequently been indicated as the central authority that supports structures representing youth.

Local government bodies operating at provincial, district and communal levels have all been assigned public tasks; some of which focus on young people. Communal governments are responsible for such matters as healthcare, social services, public education, culture and physical culture (Chmielnicki, 2009). Therefore, communes are responsible for the functioning of nurseries, primary schools, for supporting sports clubs, developing cultural activities, running libraries and supporting families in precarious life situations. Tasks assigned to districts and provinces are supra-communal and do not affect the competence of communes. Such tasks as public education in secondary schools, prevention of unemployment, stimulation of local labour markets and support provided to the disabled are supra-communal public tasks [\[MOU1\]](#) falling within the remit of districts. Provincial governments are responsible for running higher vocational institutions, developing economic activity in regions, maintaining libraries, museums and regional theatres.

The development of Poland's youth policy is visible at regional level. In all provinces are being created formal structures to support and represent youth:

- The Youth Parliament of Dolnośląskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Dolnośląskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Kujawsko-Pomorskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Lubelskie Province ([Parlament Dzieci i Młodzieży Województwa Lubelskiego](#)) - operates at the Lublin Board of Education. [For 2022 is planned to establish](#) The Youth Parliament of Lubelskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Lubelskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Lubuskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Lubuskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Łódzkie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Łódzkiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Małopolskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Małopolskiego](#))
- The Youth Parliament of Mazowieckie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Mazowieckiego](#)),
- The Youth Forum of Opolskie Province ([Forum Młodzieży Samorządu Województwa Opolskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Podkarpackie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Podkarpackiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Podlaskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Podlaskiego](#)),
- The Youth Council of Pomorskie Province ([Młodzieżowa Rada Województwa Pomorskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Śląskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Śląskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Świętokrzyskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Świętokrzyskiego](#)),

- The Youth Parliament of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Warmińsko-Mazurskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Wielkopolskie Province ([Sejmik Młodzieży Województwa Wielkopolskiego](#)),
- The Youth Parliament of Zachodniopomorskie Province ([Młodzieżowy Sejmik Województwa Zachodniopomorskiego](#)).

[Under Article 5 \(b\) of the Local Government Act](#), local government authorities may appoint a youth council as its advisory body. "Boosting young people's interest and involvement in public affairs at local level is the most important objective of communal youth councils" (Owczarek, 2013). Moreover, communal youth councils facilitate young people's participation in the process of making decisions affecting their peers. The establishment of consultation bodies such as commune councils is left to local government authorities. Youth councils have their statutes which describe the way in which they operate and how council members are selected. In 2007, [the operation of 224 youth councils was confirmed](#), most of them were active in Dolnośląskie, Śląskie and Wielkopolskie Provinces. A [report](#) prepared by the Children and Youth Council operating by the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Poland states that in 2017 in 2478 communes a number of 408 youth councils were active, in 2018 – 423, however in 2020 it was [514 youth councils](#).

In August 2020 was submitted to the Sejm [a draft act to amend the act on municipal of the Local Government Act \(article 5b\)](#), according to which youth councils would receive funds for their activities (provided by the local government), have a guardian and have the initiative to adopt resolution. [In March 2021 was submitted to the Sejm](#) a draft act to amend the act on municipal of [the Local Government Act \(article 5b\)](#), [the District Government Act \(article 3e\)](#) and [the Province Government Act \(article 10b\)](#). [In the amendment to the laws adopted in June 2021](#) was indicated the possibility of creating and operating youth councils in local, district and province governments. Apart from their advisory, consultative and initiative activities, those councils i.a. can issue opinions for the project resolutions concerning youth, monitor implementation of local strategic documents for youth. Until 2021 some district and province governments had established youth councils, but this was not statutorily regulated.

In 2016, the Minister of National Education appointed the Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland ([Rada Dzieci i Młodzieży Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej](#)) operating under the authority of the Minister of Education and Science. The Council is an advisory body. The term of the Council is one year. The Council is composed of 16 members and their substitutes (16) who are appointed by the Minister of Education and Science. Members and their substitutes [represent particular provinces](#). The pupils and students between 13 and 20 years old who [fulfill a number of criteria](#) (for example engagement in volunteering activities, active attitude in the local community, good grades) can become members of the Council. The sixth term of [Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland](#) ends in 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023).

[On 7th October 2019](#) the first term of The Dialogue Council with the Young Generation has begun ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)), which is an opinion-making and advisory body of the Chairman of the Public Benefit Committee (Przewodniczący Komitetu ds. Pożytku Publicznego). The Council is composed of minimum 20 representatives of public institutions, youth non-governmental organization, youth councils and The Student Parliament. [In the article 41](#) of the Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Service Act (Ustawa o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie) are defined competence of the Council, which include i.a. expressing opinions on legal acts concerning the young generation, creating a forum for dialogue between various public bodies and non-governmental organization and youth, supporting civil dialogue with children and youth. The term of the Council is two years. [The second term](#) of The Dialogue Council with the Young Generation has begun on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

In 2020 the Minister of Climate established the Youth Climate Council ([Młodzieżowa Rada Klimatyczna](#)), whose tasks will include „expressing opinions on matters covered by government administration departments climate and energy”.

Bodies dealing with youth matters are present at various levels of administration. [The Education, Science and Youth Committee](#) (Komisja Edukacji, Nauki i Młodzieży), composed of 40 deputies, operates within the Parliament of the Republic of Poland. The Committee deals with matters relating to “preschool, primary school, comprehensive secondary school, vocational, post-graduate and higher education (...), leisure, physical culture and sport for children and youth, care of children and youth (...) scientific cooperation abroad, pupil and student governments (...) fulfilling the aspirations of the young generation and to young people’s social and occupational adaptation”. There is a [standing youth subcommittee](#) composed of 16 deputies and working within the Committee.

29 April 2016 marked the appointment of the [Parliamentary Group Supporting Youth Councils Operating within Local Government Units](#) (Parlamentarny Zespół ds. wspierania młodzieżowych rad przy jednostkach samorządu terytorialnego), which aims at providing support and advice to youth councils, integrating communities linked to youth councils and promoting the idea of active citizenship through participation in the work of youth councils. [The Group is composed of 26 deputies](#). The Group cooperate with the Polish Council of Youth Organisations and with the Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland.

23 January 2020 was established the Parliamentary Group for Mental Health of Children and Youth ([Parlamentarny Zespół ds. Zdrowia Psychicznego Dzieci i Młodzieży](#)). The Group is composed of 33 deputies.

[The Union of Associations Polish Council of Youth Organisations](#) (Związek Stowarzyszeń Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych (PROM)) set up in 2011 and bringing together [30 member organisations](#) is the only youth representation still active. The Union represents over 250 000 young people. The Union aims to [participate in youth policy making](#), disseminate the idea of youth participation in public life, inform public opinion about the situation of young people in Poland, support the development of Polish youth organisations and of those which bring young people together. Since 22 April 2017 The Union is a full member of the [European Youth Forum](#). In April 2017 the Union adopted its position on the matter of youth participation in social and political life. The Union [addressed](#) five areas - support provided to youth organisations, policy makers’ readiness to share initiatives with young people, transparency in determining young people’s abilities and potential influence in decisions, facilitating young people’s access to information as well as long-term thinking building on existing structures and youth organisations. Moreover, the Union presented its position on the consultation of the project entitled Youth Solidarity in Action Programme for 2016-2019 (Młodzież solidarna w działaniu na lata 2016-2019) (2016), [amendments to the programme “Flats for Young People”](#) (Mieszkanie dla Młodych) (2015) and [amendments to the Associations Act](#) (ustawa Prawo o stowarzyszeniach ) (2014). The Union is cooperating also with the Parliamentary Group Supporting Youth Councils Operating within Local Government Units (Parlamentarny Zespół ds. wspierania młodzieżowych rad przy jednostkach samorządu terytorialnego). As the Union brings together only selected youth organisations, it is not regarded as an entity which fully represents the entire youth community.

Students’ interests at central level are represented by the [Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland](#) (Parlament Studentów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej), which is appointed on the strength of the Higher Education Act. This Parliament has the right to express opinions and present motions in matters relating to students, and give opinion on student-related normative acts ([article 338 of Act on Higher Education and Science of 2018](#)). It also organises training and workshops raising students’ qualifications, supports student projects, inspires international student exchange and participation in the international student movement. The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland brings together the student governments of all Polish higher education institutions.

Among the [advisory groups](#) that work for the Minister of Education and Science is the [Young Scientists' Council](#) (Rada Młodych Naukowców), whose tasks include the identification of barriers to development and supporting young scientists' careers, initiation of young scientists' contact with representatives of economic circles, and preparation of opinions and recommendations regarding the science and innovation policy of the country. Due to its specific character, the Council represents the interests of young scientists whose age equals the upper age limit for the youth age group.

[1 October 2017](#) witnessed the launch of the [National Agency for Academic Exchange](#) (Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej - NAWA) which supports academic exchange and the internationalisation of higher education and science. NAWA disseminates information relating to the Polish education system and promote the Polish language abroad. NAWA will be able to award funds to students, doctoral students and employees of higher education institutions or institutes. [NAWA](#) realize Programs for Scientists (Programy dla Naukowców), Programs for Institutions (Programy dla Instytucji), Programs for Students (Programy dla Studentów) and Programs for the Polish Language (Programy Języka Polskiego).

It is also worth paying attention to the bottom-up initiatives undertaken by youth at the local or national level, which focus on goals important to young people. Examples of activities are i.a.: Youth Climate Strike ([Młodzieżowy Strajk Klimatyczny](#)), Young Parliament of the Republic of Poland ([Parlament Młodych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej](#)).

## Main Themes

Activities undertaken on behalf of young people by the central government, national authorities and local government authorities are specified in legislation and presented in strategies adopted by the government.

In February 2013 the Council of Ministers adopted the "[Long-term National Development Strategy. Poland 2030. The Third Wave of Modernity](#)". (Długookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju. Polska 2030. Trzecia Fala Nowoczesności). This strategy, as part of Strategic Objective 3 [which aims to improve the accessibility and quality of education at all stages and increase the competitiveness of science] raises issues relating to the education of children and young people and to the necessity of adapting the education system to changing social and economic needs in order to facilitate transfer from education to the labour market.

The "Responsible Development Strategy" with a perspective to 2030 ([Strategia na rzecz Odpowiedzialnego Rozwoju \(z perspektywą do 2030 r.\)](#)) (Strategy) published in 2017 by the Ministry of Development updates the "Country Development Strategy 2020" (Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020) - a mid-term country development strategy adopted by a resolution of the Council of Ministers on 25 September 2012. The document presents the strategic tasks of the country and contains recommendations for public policies. The Strategy is "the basis for changes to the development management system, as well as to existing strategy papers (strategies, policies, programmes) and for the verification of other implementing instruments". The main objective of the Strategy consists in "creating conditions for facilitating the rise of income levels of Polish inhabitants while increasing social, economic, environmental and territorial cohesion", as well as in specific objectives:

- Specific objective 1: Sustained economic growth increasingly based on knowledge, data and organisational excellence,
- Specific objective 2: Community-sensitive and territorially-balanced development,
- Specific objective 3: An effective state and institutions which are dedicated to growth as well as social and economic inclusion.

The directions of regional development have been defined in the "National Strategy of Regional Development 2030" ([Krajowa Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego 2030](#)). The strategy refers to i.a. the development of the social capital of children and adolescents,



high quality education (objective 2.1), professional activation of youth, emigration of young people.

Integrated Skills Strategy (ISS) (Zintegrowana Strategia Umiejętności) consists of two parts – ["Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 \(general part\)"](#) (adopted in 2019) and ["Integrated Skills Strategy 2030 \(specific part\). Policies to develop skills in line with lifelong learning"](#) (adopted in 2020). The overarching objective of the ISS 2030 is to "create the opportunities and conditions for the development of skills necessary to strengthen social capital, social inclusion, economic growth and the achievement of a high quality of life". The indicated objective is implemented with reference to six priority areas:

- raising the level of key skills in children, youth and adults,
- developing and disseminating a learning culture focused on active and continuous development of skills,
- increasing participation of employers in development and better use of skills,
- building an effective system of diagnosing and informing about the current state and demand for skills,
- developing effective and sustainable mechanisms for inter-ministerial and intersectoral cooperation and coordination in the field of skills development,
- equalization of opportunities in access to development and use of skills.

The EU youth strategy indicates seven areas which are reflected in national strategies and programmes directly or indirectly relating to young people. The individual objectives of the EU Youth Strategy and tasks (e.g.: governmental programmes and strategic projects) which are likely to contribute to their implementation are presented below:

- Education and training: e.g. [Integrated Learning Platform](#) (Zintegrowana Platforma Edukacyjna) (Ministry of Education and Science with cooperation [Centre for Education Development](#) (Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji)),
- Employment & entrepreneurship, e.g. [Guarantees for Youth](#) (Gwarancje dla Młodzieży) (Ministry of Family and Social Policy), [Polish Craft Incubator](#) (Polski Inkubator Rzemiosła) (National Freedom Institute Centre for Civil Society Development),
- Health & well-being, e.g. [Programme Club](#) (Program KLUB), Programme Academic Sport ([Sport Akademicki](#)), Programme School Sports Club ([Szkolny Klub Sportowy](#)) (Ministry of Sport and Tourism),
- Participation: e.g. the programme [The Civil Initiatives Fund NEWCIF for 2021-2030](#) (Rządowy Program Fundusz Inicjatyw Obywatelskich NOWEFIO na lata 2021-2030) (National Freedom Institute Centre for Civil Society Development),
- Voluntary activities: e.g. the programme [Solidarity Corps](#) (Korpus Solidarności), [The Scout Movement Development Governmental Programme for 2018-2030](#) (Rządowy Program Wsparcia Rozwoju Organizacji Harcerskich i Skautowych na lata 2018-2030) (National Freedom Institute Centre for Civil Society Development),
- Youth & the world, e.g. CEEPUS – Central European Exchange Program for University Studies ([CEEPUS – Środkowoeuropejski Program Wymiany Uniwersyteckiej](#)) (National Agency for Academic Exchange),
- Creativity & culture, e.g. [The National Readership Development Programme 2.0](#) (Narodowy Program Rozwoju Czytelnictwa 2.0), [Scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage](#) (Ministry of Culture and National Heritage).

The choice of a specific target group is based, among other things, on the results of research and diagnoses presented in a given Strategy, programme or strategic project.

## The National Agency for Youth

The National Agency for Youth, which is responsible for youth policy at a central level, does not operate in Poland. Youth-oriented tasks are carried out by the central government as well as national and local government authorities in accordance with their competences.

## Policy monitoring and evaluation

It is difficult to clearly identify the way in which activities relating to youth policy are monitored and evaluated as there are no relevant documents and reports and no state-run centre dealing with youth-related research. A youth act and/or a national youth strategy would probably contribute to setting out the directions of the development of Polish youth policy which would then be systematically evaluated.

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

On September 22 2020, by the Regulation of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland the office of Government's Plenipotary for Youth Policy was created and Mr. Piotr Mazurek was appointed to the office. The Plenipotary's main tasks include, among others:

- Initiation of cooperation with government, local and regional authorities, as well as with non-governmental organisations, in matters related to increasing youth engagement in public life;
- coordination of dialogue between government administration and social and economic partners, non-governmental organisations, local and regional authorities in matters related to the creation of youth policy in Poland;
- monitoring the activities undertaken by the government and local authorities in matters related to youth policy and the situation of young people in Poland;
- cooperation with the Dialogue Council with the Young Generations in reviewing of legal acts proposals and presenting recommendations to central and local governments in matters related to young people;
- coordination of preparation works and implementation of the strategic document relative to national youth policy, based on a series of consultations.

Among the tasks entrusted to the Government's Plenipotary for Youth Policy by the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers in [2020](#) and [2021](#) was a.o. consultation of the "Strategy for the Young Generation", in which participated few thousands young people.

In 2014 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy appointed a group dealing with the social participation of young people. The group was meant to review and analyse governmental documents relating to youth policy and EU strategic papers concerning youth policy and to prepare a youth social participation programme (decision of 7 February 2014). [The Youth Policy Group](#) (Zespół ds. Polityki na Rzecz Młodzieży) operated within the Public Benefit Activities Council, which is an advisory body working for the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy (5<sup>th</sup> term of the Council). [In the new term The Youth Policy Group was not appointed.](#) The Group contributed to the preparation of the project "National Youth Programme. Active Youth".

In 2014 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (today Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy) appointed a group dealing with the social participation of young people. The group was meant to review and analyse governmental documents relating to youth policy and EU strategic papers concerning youth policy and to prepare a youth social participation programme (decision of 7 February 2014). [The Youth Policy Group](#) (Zespół ds. Polityki na Rzecz Młodzieży) operates within the Public Benefit Activities Council, which is an advisory body working for the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy. The Group [contributed to the preparation of the project "National Youth Programme. Active Youth"](#). In 2015 the

Minister of Labour and Social Policy made a decision to adopt the Programme for Young People's Social Engagement (Program Aktywności Społecznej Młodzieży) (decision of 27 August 2016). The main objective of the programme consists in increasing development opportunities and improving young people's start in social and professional life. Although the programme started in 2016, no call for proposals concerning public tasks under this programme has been announced.

The Department of European Social Fund of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy announced in June 2018 the programme Youth solidarity in action ([Młodzież solidarna w działaniu](#)) that supports initiatives contributing to gaining social competencies by young people under 29 years old. The budget of the programme amounted to PLN 20 mln.

The "[Responsible Development Strategy with a perspective to 2030](#)" indicates youth-related strategic projects whose implementation will contribute to the achievements of the objectives set:

- [Guarantees for Youth](#) - "a programme addressing the individual and comprehensive employment and educational activation of young people entering the labour market (unemployed, economically inactive and jobseekers)." The Ministry of Family and Social Policy is the entity responsible for the implementation of the programme.
- [The programme "Club"](#), which is "a programme supporting the activity of sports clubs (targeting children and youth) which are local centres of social activity and active leisure, developing social ties and competences such as teamwork, perseverance or diligence." The Ministry of Sport and Tourism is the entity responsible for the implementation of the programme.

Other sectoral and cross-sectoral programmes and projects with young people as beneficiaries include:

- The programme "Family 500+" ([Rodzina 500+](#)) which started on 1 April 2016. Under the programme, parents and guardians of children under 18 may be granted support amounting to PLN 500 for every child.
- The programme "Government Program First Business - Support for Starters" ([Rządowy Program Pierwszy Biznes - Wsparcie w starcie](#)) is run to support the development of entrepreneurship. This programme allows higher education students in their final year, those who graduate from either high school or higher education, as well as registered unemployed persons to apply for low-interest loans to start a business or create a job for an unemployed person. In 2022 the amount of the loan is above PLN 120,000. The programme has been implemented in all provinces.
- The Student Credit Fund ([Fundusz Kredytów Studenckich](#)) set up at Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego offers student loan interest subsidies. Loans can be awarded to students (under 30 years old) or doctoral students (under 35 years old).
- The Young Leaders Program ([Program Młodych Liderów](#)) provides young people over 16 years old paid internships in public institutions. The program aims to create modern public administration with the help of young, ambitious and creative people.

Projects implemented as part of the [operational programme Knowledge, Education, Development](#) play a vital part in the development of youth policies, including activities aimed at preventing unemployment and boosting young people's employability. Young people under 30, including those with disabilities, who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are the final recipients of support offered as part of those projects.

[The Children and Youth Parliament](#) (Sejm Dzieci i Młodzieży) is one of the first initiatives aimed at increasing young people's social engagement and arousing their interest in involvement in public life. The first session of the Children and Youth Parliament took place in 1994 on the initiative of the Polish Parliament Chancellery and the President of the Polish Humanitarian Action, Janina Ochojska. Young deputies debated the issue of "War as a threat to a happy childhood". The Children and Youth Parliament is held every year on 1



June, which is International Children's Day. By 2019, 25 sessions of the Youth Parliament have been held. In recent years, the Children and Youth Parliament has debated the following issues: public space (2015), memorial sites (2016), local heroes in the public domain (2017), members of the 1st Polish Parliament (2018), members of the 2nd Polish Republic during the occupation (2019) and [the values and ideals of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński](#) (2021). In 2018 the XXIV session of Children and Youth Parliament [was postponed](#) from 1 June 2018 to 27 September 2018. In 2020 the Parliament was not held [due to the pandemic of coronavirus](#). Resolutions adopted by the Children and Youth Parliament are recommendations submitted to educational institutions in Poland, however, the implementation of those recommendations is not monitored. Resolutions adopted by the Children and Youth Parliament are not binding. The Parliament Chancellery (Kancelaria Sejmu), Institute for National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej), Centre for Education Development (Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji) and the Ministry of Education and Science are the [organisers of session of the Children and Youth Parliament](#).

Poland develops various initiatives with young people in mind. At local and regional level most of those initiatives are implemented by non-governmental organisations which may obtain funding for public tasks targeting young people by way of open calls for proposals launched by local governments. The Public Benefit Activity and Voluntary Service Act mentions one task in the area of public tasks which directly targets young people; that is activities on behalf of children and youth, including recreation activities for children and young people. It should be noted that the main areas of the activity of non-governmental organisations in Poland (138 000 organisations, including 107 000 associations and 31 000 foundations) in [2021 were](#):

- sport, tourism, recreation, hobbies (35%),
- culture and art (15%),
- education and upbringing (14%),
- social services and social security (7%),
- healthcare (6%)
- local development (6%),
- environmental protection and ecology (4%),
- cultivation of national identity (3%),
- others (10%).

Examples of activities implemented for the benefit of young people by non-governmental organisations at nationwide levels include:

- The programme "Equalise opportunities" ([Równać szanse](#)) initiated in 2001 and aiming to "equalise young people's chances for a good start into adulthood". The programme targets people aged 13-19 living in localities with a population of up to 20,000. Under this programme, non-governmental organisations, libraries, community centres and informal groups may apply for subsidies to implement projects contributing to the development of young people's competences and skills. As part of all editions of the programme [over 3 200 projects](#) have been implemented with the participation of over 149,000 people. The programme is implemented by the Civis Polonus Foundation (Fundacja Civis Polonus) and funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation whose contribution to the programme amounts to USD 17 423 247.
- [The programme PROJECTOR - Student Volunteers \(PROJEKTOR - wolontariat studencki\)](#) – implemented by the Educational Enterprise Foundation (Fundacja Edukacyjna Przedsiębiorczości). The programme is authored and funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation. The programme aims at "prevention of exclusion and the activation of children and young people coming from Polish small towns and villages by developing their passions and interests, and discovering the talents and potential not only of students but also of project participants". As part of the programme, student

volunteers implement educational projects for the benefit of younger people living in villages and small towns. Since 2003, over 14,700 students have implemented over 40,000 programme-related educational projects in 2 800 Polish schools. The contribution of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation to the programme [PROJECTOR - Student Volunteers](#) amounts to USD 7 973 906.

- The programme "Exempt from Theory" ([Zwolnieni z teorii](#)) an educational program under which pupils and students can prepare and implement own social projects with the support of [the platform and mentors](#). Project teams compete against each other, earning points and badges for their respective achievements. Authors of project receive certificates and the best projects awards and distinctions. The first edition of the program took place in the school year 2014/2015. Young people in the program "Exempt from Theory" realized 2 809 social projects.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

Strategic programmes and projects implemented for the benefit of young people are evidenced by research reflecting the situation of young people in Poland. The authors of those documents rely on available research and analyses prepared by public, private and non-governmental institutions.

In August 2011 the Office of the Prime Minister issued a report entitled "Youth 2011" ([Młodzi 2011](#)) which (so far) may be regarded as the most extensive and multidimensional analysis of Polish youth. Apart from the report "Youth 2011" no other governmental paper concerning Polish youth has been published. Emphasis should be put on the fact that young people's situation has always been analysed for the purposes of programmes created for youth.

### Cooperation between policy-making and research

There is no single state-run centre which would deal exclusively with research in the youth field. It is impossible to indicate one body which is responsible for cooperation with centres and institutions conducting youth research. The [Youth Research Institute](#) (Instytut Badań nad Młodzieżą) as an organisation operating in Poland from 1972 to 1991. The Institute was supervised by the minister responsible for education and upbringing. When the Institute ceased to operate, it was transformed into the [Youth Research Centre at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw](#) (Ośrodek Badań Młodzieży w Instytucie Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego). The Centre "does not work for political parties but is open to the needs of the State administration, local governments, non-governmental organisations, schools, parents and other youth educators (...). The Centre also conducts research and professional evaluations in cooperation with other domestic and international institutions." In 2005, together with the Ministry of National Education and Sport, the Centre prepared the "White Paper on Polish Youth" (Fatyga, 2005). Two truths about active participation. Conditions and opportunities for young people's active participation in local communities from the perspective of the youth policy of the Council of Europe" (["Biała Księga młodzieży polskiej. Dwie prawdy o aktywności. Uwarunkowania i możliwości działania młodzieży w środowisku lokalnym w perspektywie polityki młodzieżowej Rady Europy"](#)) which is a valuable document describing the situation of young people in Poland in the period when the country began its membership of the European Union.

Authors of youth programmes rely on reports and analyses from various centres and research institutes such as the Central Statistical Office ([Główny Urząd Statystyczny](#)), Centre for Public Opinion Research ([Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej](#)), the Educational Research Institute ([Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych](#)) private and public entities, non-governmental organisations (e.g.: The Field of Dialogue Foundation – [Fundacja Pole](#)

[Dialogu](#), "Stocznia" The Laboratory of Social Research and Innovations - [Pracownia Badań i Innowacji Społecznych "Stocznia"](#)).

[The Central Statistical Office](#) (GUS) is a public administration body which is accountable to the Prime Minister. GUS collects and publishes statistics and conducts research into various aspects of public and private life. Data related to Poland's economy, society and environment is collected in the [Local Data Bank](#) (Bank Danych Lokalnych) which is run by GUS. Thanks to the [Atlas of Regions](#) (Atlas Regionów) data relating to a specific thematic area is spatially visualised to show distribution in regions or local areas. [The Area-specific Knowledge Bases](#) (Dziedzinowe Bazy Wiedzy) present data illustrating demography, education, the labour market and people's living conditions. The "Statistical Vademecum for Local Government" ("[Statystyczne Vademecum Samorządowca](#)") contains information on the social, economic and financial situation of local governments, a.o. the labor market, social services, infrastructure, public safety.

The Educational Research Institute ([Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych](#)) is an institution conducting interdisciplinary research concerning the functioning and effectiveness of the education system in Poland. The Institute main researches areas include i.a. lifelong learning and national qualifications framework, new core curriculum and subject teaching methods, psychological and pedagogical foundations of school achievement. IBE realize in Poland the [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#).

The Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) organises, prepares and publishes public [opinion polls](#) and submits their results to central government bodies, public institutions and society. CBOS receives funds from the State budget which are intended to meet operational costs and task implementation as well as finance non-commercial publications.

[The National Centre for Research and Development](#) (Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju (NCBR) is an executive agency implementing tasks relating to science, technology and innovation policies operated by the State. NCBR manages the implementation of strategic scientific research programmes and development work.

## National Statistics and available data sources

In 2021 the Batory Foundation (Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego) published a report "Youth 2020 - in search of identity" ("[Młodzi 2020 – w poszukiwaniu tożsamości](#)"), in which described factors shaping the identity of the young generation in Poland. The chapters of the report refer to the following issues: characteristics and values of the young generation, entering adulthood, emancipation of youth, mobility and work, state policy, climate.

In 2020 The Union of Associations Polish Council of Youth Organisations realizes a nationwide research "How do young people want to live?" ("[Jak chcą mieszkać młodzi ludzie?](#)"). The aim of the research is cumulate answers the questions – "How?" and "Where?" - young people (between 17 and 35 years old) would like to live in the next 5 years and longer.

At the request of the Ministry of Education and Science researchers from the Youth Research Center at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw prepared the report "Work with youth and youth in Poland - diagnosis of the state in 2019" ("[Praca z młodzieżą i dla młodzieży w Polsce – diagnoza stanu w roku 2019](#)"). The report presents definitions of basic terms (i.a. youth, youth work and work for youth, youth worker) and the main strategic goals of youth work in Poland and in the European Union.

In 2019 a study was carried out by National Research Institute ([NASK](#)) - Teenagers 3.0 ([Nastolatki 3.0](#)) and focused on the online presence of Polish teenagers.

In 2018, following a request from the National Bureau for Drug Prevention ([Krajowe Biuro ds. Przeciwdziałania Narkomanii](#)), CBOS conducted research and prepared a report Youth 2018 ([Młodzież 2018](#)). The report addresses the following spheres of young people's lives:

- family home, parents and peers,
- standard of living of upper secondary school leavers,

- school relations,
- aspirations, aims and life plans,
- political choices of young people and their presence in democracy
- civic activity and pro-social attitudes
- faith and religion (also in school)
- attitude towards abortion
- interests and leisure
- gambling

young people and psychoactive substances.

In 2013 and 2016 [similar research](#) into the situation of young people was conducted by CBOS.

In 2018 the report ["Youth 2018"](#) was been issued (this report is not official document of the Office of the Prime Minister), which contains the following areas:

- introduction: Introduction. Why young, why education?, World development trends – challenges and risk for young people,
- framework conditions: Internet and communication environment, Europe for young people, Young people in the age of migratory change, polish and european labor market. For young?,
- differences and divisions: Different educational and life opportunities of young people. Periphery casus, Children's and youth worlds – life in the enchanted territories of Polish cities, (un)visible differences. Gender,
- engagement: School as a place of anti-civic education, Young people about themselves, Young intellectual elites and their civic message,
- culture: Culture environment of unicorns – a few notes about youth and popular culture, In the mirror of recent literature, Reforming education,
- ending: Recommendations.

In 2020 and 2021 the British Council Poland organized the ["Next Generation. Poland"](#) research on attitudes, moods, views and visions of the world of Polish women and Poles aged 18-30. "Next Generation" is a research series on young people carried out by the British Council around the world. [The survey results are organized into three main themes](#):

- Experience and attitudes - ambitious optimists in the face of new emotional and generational challenges,
- Engagement and perspectives - citizens of the world, who can use digital technologies and who have mixed feelings about Poland and the rest of the world,
- Voice, Views and Values - disillusioned democrats with extreme views.

The Empowering Children Foundation ([Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę](#)) has issued reports on children and youth, i.a. "Patostream in the Internet" – ["Patotreści w internecie"](#) (2019, a nationwide sample of teenagers aged 13-15), "Nationwide diagnosis of the scale and conditions of child abuse" – ["Ogólnopolska diagnoza skali i uwarunkowań krzywdzenia dzieci"](#) (2018, youth aged 11-17), "Contact of children and adolescents with pornography" – ["Kontakt dzieci i młodzieży z pornografią"](#) (2017, a nationwide sample of students aged 11-18).

The Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland in 2019 issued a report "About school councils" ([O samorządach uczniowskich](#)), wherein described the cooperation between pupils, between pupils and teachers and school authorities. Moreover were

presented the role of the keeper of the school council, school elections, activities and problems of pupils.

In 2011 the Office of the Prime Minister published The report ["Youth 2011"](#) (Młodzi 2011). The report presents the first generations of Poles "brought up in an independent, democratic and free-market state, but living in families and adult communities which had to find their place and reorganise their lives in new political and economic circumstances" (Odorzyńska-Kondek, 2011). Young people were regarded as one of the basic "resources on which the strategy of building a modern society and country can rely".

In 2011 the Laboratory of Social Research and Innovations "Stocznia" published the report ["Youth in rural areas"](#) (Młodzież na wsi) where it presented the everyday life, lifestyles, opportunities and aspirations of young people living in rural areas and small towns.

## **Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field**

The report ["Youth 2011"](#) remains the only youth-related document published by the Office of the Prime Minister. It is impossible to indicate one (exclusively governmental) line of funding for research on youth. The research discussed was conducted as part of tasks performed by separate agencies or organisations.

## **1.7 Funding youth policy**

### **How Youth policy is funded**

No single source of funding for activities relating to Polish youth policy can be identified. Projects and programmes with young people in mind are financed from funds being at the disposal of individual ministries, governmental agencies or local governments. Based on available information, it is possible to quote the amounts that are earmarked for strategic programmes and projects for young people:

- [Programme CLUB](#): PLN 66 500 000 in 2022,
- [Programme School Sports Club](#): PLN 60 000 000 in 2022,
- [Programme "Family 500+"](#): PLN 59 500 000 000 in 2022,
- [National Readership Development Programme](#): PLN 70,000,000 in 2022,
- [Solidarity Corps](#): PLN 3 784 320 in 2022.

The Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland operating under the authority of the Minister of Education and Science has no budget of its own. Expenses relating to its operation are covered from a budget remaining at the disposal of the Minister of Education and Science.

As there are no sources available and because it is difficult to estimate the amount of support already provided (e.g.: as part of grant competitions organised at local, regional or national levels or competitions organised by non-governmental bodies) it is difficult to estimate the amount of funding which has reached non-governmental organisations implementing projects mobilising young people.

### **What is funded?**

Not applicable

### **Financial accountability**

Not applicable

## Use of EU Funds

Projects relating to increasing employment opportunities funded under the operational [programme Knowledge, Education, Development](#) within 2014-2020 will receive over EUR 2 000 000 000 out of the programme budget of over EUR 5 430 000 000.

The budget of the programme Youth solidarity in action ([Młodzież solidarna w działaniu](#)), that supports initiatives contributing to gaining social competencies by young people under 29 years old, amounted PLN 20 mln.

## 1.8 Cross-border cooperation

### Cooperation with European countries

Activities targeting youth are mainly developed at national, regional and local levels. Horizontal recommendations related to youth policy and to international youth cooperation focussing on common goals are mainly worked on at EU and international levels.

On 17 June 1991 the Polish and German Ministers of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement between the government of the Republic of Poland and the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, concerning German-Polish youth cooperation. When the [Polish-German Youth Cooperation](#) (Polsko-Niemiecka Współpraca Młodzieży) (PNWM) was established, the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany signed the Treaty of Good Neighbourship. PNWM is an international organisation and the only Polish-German institution of that kind. The Council of the Polish-German Youth Cooperation (Rada Polsko-Niemieckiej Współpracy Młodzieży) is the supreme organ of PNWM. [The Council of the Polish-German Youth Cooperation](#) is composed of 24 members - 12 from Poland and 12 from Germany. The Council of the Polish-German Youth Cooperation is jointly presided over by the Polish Minister of Education and Science and the German Minister of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

[The International Visegrad Fund](#) is the institution supporting cooperation between [Visegrad Group](#) states (established in 1991) and also their joint representation in third countries. Its objectives are implemented thanks to financial support provided to cultural cooperation activities, youth exchange, scientific exchange, cross-border cooperation and tourism.

On 9 September 2015, the [Polish-Ukrainian Council of Youth Exchange](#) (Polsko-Ukraińska Rada Wymiany Młodzieży) was established on the strength of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Ukraine. The Council aims to encourage youth and youth workers to undertake joint activities, "which will bring the countries closer together, facilitate the discovery of common roots, fight prejudice and stereotypes in the perception of their common history and in today's relations".

[The Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund](#) was established on 1 June 2007 under an agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, under the honorary patronage of the Prime Ministers of Poland and Lithuania. The main objectives of the activities undertaken within the Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund are i.a. shaping mutual international relations, discovering a shared history, eliminating prejudices and stereotypes in the perception of shared history and in contemporary relations.

### International cooperation

Central administration representatives participate in the [Eastern Partnership Youth Fora](#) (Fora Młodzieży Partnerstwa Wschodniego) (FMPW) organised during Eastern Partnership summits. The 5th Eastern Partnership Youth Forum was held on 23 and 24 November 2021.



## 1.9 Current debates and reforms

The [education reform](#) that was initiated in 2016 and whose implementation started on 1 September 2017 is one of the key reforms affecting young people's lives. The previous education system (6-year primary school, 3-year lower secondary school, 4-year comprehensive secondary school, 4-year technical secondary school, 3-year vocational school and post-secondary schools) has been replaced by 8-year primary schools, 4-year comprehensive secondary schools, 5-year technical secondary schools, 3-year 1st degree trade schools, 2-year 2nd degree trade schools, 3-year special schools preparing for work, and post-secondary schools. On September 1, 2019 lower secondary schools were completely closed.

1 August 2019 [a personal income tax \(PIT\) relief was introduced for people up to the age of 26](#) and they receive income from employment contracts and orders concluded with the company. Over 2 million young workers will benefit from the relief.

## 2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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In the contemporary sense of the term, volunteering has been present in Poland since the early 1990s, and NGOs, and especially association movements, have become its natural field of action. It was only then that their activity in Poland could be completely independent of the will of the political power. It is worth stressing, however, that the approach to volunteering has evolved over the last twenty years to promote pro-social attitudes, primarily rooted in the axiological basis of systemic solutions that facilitate co-operation with volunteers in various areas of social life, thus combatting social exclusion by involving citizens in participatory processes.

### 2.1 General context

#### Historical developments

Polish volunteering goes back to the 12th century, when social problems were first recognised as an issue. However, for centuries the attempts to solve them through social work or mutual help have not had any legal or formal basis nor nomenclature that would resemble the terminology we use today – those involved in relief efforts were referred to as 'social activists' and 'altruists', such as Henryk Jordan, Janusz Korczak, or their literary incarnations: Stanisław Wokulski or dr Tomasz Judym. The noteworthy forms of activity that preceded, but, to some extent, still influence, contemporary volunteering (and the closely related charitable activity) in Poland include the initiatives and attitudes of the first kings; the educational and care-giving activity of the religious orders brought to Poland; the charitable activity of the 19th and 20th century industrialists; and the initiatives of outstanding Poles from the interwar period. All of which formed the early institutional framework for volunteerism.

In the contemporary sense of the term, volunteering has been present in Poland since the early 1990s, and NGOs, and especially association movements, have become its natural field of action. It was only then that their activity in Poland could be completely independent of the will of the political power. It is worth stressing, however, that the approach to volunteering has evolved over the last twenty years to promote pro-social attitudes, primarily rooted in the axiological basis of systemic solutions that facilitate co-operation with volunteers in various areas of social life, thus combatting social exclusion by involving citizens in participatory processes.

In 1996, the [BORIS Foundation](#) ([Stowarzyszenie BORIS](#)) published "Rocznik", which was devoted entirely to volunteering and contained what was most likely the first legal analysis

of the relationship between the volunteer and the organisation and the first model of a volunteer contract of mandate. In 2000, provisions on volunteering for the first time made it into legal acts, including a Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy ([Rozporządzenie Ministra Polityki społecznej z 14 lutego 2005r. w sprawie placówek opiekuńczo-wychowawczych](#)), which regulates the work of volunteers at institutions of care for children and youth. However, it was not until 2003 that this phenomenon became fully regulated in legal terms, upon adoption of the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2003, No. 96, item 873, as amended; the provisions of this Act are discussed in Section 2.4 ([Ustawa z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie](#)). The first institution promoting this idea, which was, at the same time, the first manifestation of its institutionalisation, was the [Volunteering Centre \(Ogólnopolska Sieć Centrów Wolontariatu\)](#) founded in Warsaw in 1993, whose main area of activity still remains as the intermediation between volunteers, on the one hand, and institutions and persons needing their help, on the other.

All the activities aimed at institutionalising and legal regulation of volunteering in Poland do not alter the fact, however, that it is still less common in Poland than in countries with more established democracy. Sociologists point out that this is due to the lack of recent widespread awareness of the tradition of volunteering, passed down from generation to generation, as previous experiences in this area were discontinued in the Polish People's Republic (volunteering in Poland after World War II was limited to the [Polish Scouting Association](#) (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego - ZHP) and religious movements and organisations). Another factor is the material underdevelopment of the Polish society; and, consequently, the dominant attitude towards raising the standard of one's living and satisfying the basic needs, coupled with the low awareness of non-governmental organisations, which are the natural environment for voluntary activity. A curious feature of volunteering in Poland is also the peculiar discrepancy between declared values and real behaviours. In one aspect "[the belief in the effectiveness](#) of joint actions is strengthening throughout society, and models that encourage the dissemination of such activity are also increasingly available; in addition, Poles are mostly socially-minded and support human solidarity rather than fighting for their own interests, believing that joint action for their environment can be effective and bring tangible benefits to the local community."

## Main concepts

The first institution that promoted the idea, the Volunteering Centre ([Ogólnopolska Sieć Centrów Wolontariatu](#)) defines [volunteering](#) as "deliberate, voluntary activity that goes beyond the ties of family, friends and colleagues" and, as a consequence, define a volunteer as "any natural person who out of their own free will, voluntarily and for no fee provides services to organisations, institutions or individuals that go beyond the ties of family and friends". This definition, which has been used for years, has given rise to a number of doubts arising, for example, from the difficulty in identifying the boundaries of 'ties of family and friends' – i.e., is helping our grandmother's friend with her shopping 'volunteering'? If not, then perhaps the key to a definitional distinction is how the potential volunteer comes into contact with the person, and even the group or environment, for which he or she will work. It is also not clear whether help given to neighbours during a natural disaster, which is a common practice in the Polish countryside, should be considered (one-time) volunteering, or whether regular work for the parish should be considered full-time volunteering. Another issue is the distinction between formal and informal volunteering, which is not mentioned in the 2003 Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work ([Ustawa o Działalności Pożytku Publicznego i o Wolontariacie](#)) but was widely discussed at the time of its adoption. According to the statutory definition, a volunteer is "a natural person who voluntarily and without pay performs services in accordance with the provisions of the Act" (Article 2.3), where a member of an association may also be a volunteer (Article 42.3). There are several significant differences between those definitions: firstly, the Act significantly formalises the volunteer's actions by placing them in a clearly defined legal framework, describing the relationship between the volunteer and the institution that benefits from their work (this has resulted, inter alia, in



some volunteer's activities being referred to as "informal volunteering", or even 'grey area volunteering'). On the other hand, the latter definition does not impose the previously indicated limitation regarding close relationships between the volunteer and those who benefit from their help. Further problems arise (especially when trying to estimate the scale of the phenomenon) from the relationship between volunteering and membership in an association. The Act does not make a distinction between them, which, of course, has its justification in the real world – associations, as the most common legal formula for non-governmental activity, rely on the voluntary work of their members (for many years studies distinguished between those activities based on the assumption that one cannot be a volunteer for the association they are a member of). On the other hand, it would be difficult to set clear boundaries and determine which members of the association are volunteers and which are not.

It seems that in a situation of such significant doubts, it would be easiest to ask Poles directly whether they consider themselves volunteers, but the obstacle here is the lack of awareness of this concept, even among those socially engaged (due to the low level of civic education) – according to a [report](#) prepared by the [Centre for Public Opinion Research](#) (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej - CBOS), when asked directly whether they are a volunteer, only 5% of Polish men and women responded affirmatively. Such low rates of volunteer work experience have been maintained for over a decade. Since 2006, they oscillate between 4 and 9%. Relatively highest rates can be found in lowest researched age group – in 2020, 10% of people aged 18 to 24 have had at least a single experience with volunteer work.

The last issue is the frequent misuse of the concept of volunteering to denote traineeships (such as student placements and traineeship) and unpaid internships. It should be emphasised that the above – just like 'community work' in the Polish People's Republic or alternative civilian service at institutions such as care centres, community centres or hospitals in lieu of compulsory military service before it was abolished – do not meet (or meet but to a very limited degree) the voluntary condition of volunteering, and the concept is sometimes abused to obtain unlawful unpaid work, especially from young workers.

At the conclusion of the definitional considerations, it is worthwhile to place volunteering in the broader context of action for the social environment, especially the contemporary understanding of the concepts of charity and charitable action. Disregarding the historical evolution of those concepts (especially when it comes to the distinction between religiously and non-religiously motivated actions), simply put, both volunteering and philanthropy (a second branch of this kind of activity, involving financial or material assistance) are now part of them.

## 2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

### Governance

If we assume that a system is a set of elements that form a relatively autonomous whole segregated from the environment, within which internal links and interactions can be identified and an overall function of that whole can be defined, it must be said that such a system with regard to youth volunteering exists only in a dispersed and uncoordinated form. This is due to at least two reasons relating to both constituent elements of this term: on the one hand, there is no specialised public policy dedicated to this specific age group in Poland, and on the other, there is no co-ordinated system for the development and support of voluntary activities.

The main players involved in the development of volunteering (without identifying young people as a separate age group except Public Benefit Committee – see below) include:

- National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development ([Narodowy Instytut Wolności – Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego](#)) with Public Benefit

Committee ([Komitet ds. Pożytku Publicznego](#)) responsible for coordinating and monitoring of governmental interactions with the non-governmental sector and other organised forms of civil society - i.e. social economy actors or social cooperatives and [Solidarity Corps](#) – a long-term volunteering programme. The Council for Dialogue With the Young Generation ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)) was established in 2019. The Council is an advisory body at the Public Benefit Committee. It was created as a response to the common demand to increase the participation of the young generation in governmental decision-making. In the second half of 2020, the position of the Government's Commissioner for Youth Politics was created, with the Commissioner having the position of a Vice-Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister ([Pełnomocnik Rządu ds. Polityki Młodzieżowej](#)). The main duty of the Commissioner is to coordinate the dialogue between government agencies and other partners in regards to youth politics, and to create a strategic document outlining the national youth policy;

- relevant departments within ministries of the [Ministry of Education and Science](#), the [Ministry of Sport and Tourism](#), the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage ([Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego](#)) while the [Team for Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility in the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy](#) is responsible for the development of employee volunteering;
- local governments: Each local authority implements bespoke projects aimed at the development of community activity – they usually involve participatory budgets and co-operation with non-governmental organisations, but there are also schemes dedicated to the development of volunteering, and even specifically youth volunteering, such as the schemes operated by the authorities of Warsaw: Active Warsaw Youth ([Aktywna Warszawska Młodzież](#)) and Warsaw Volunteers ([Ochotnicy Warszawscy](#));
- public institutions at the local level, such as Social Welfare Centres or Cultural Centres (within the framework of the projects implemented);
- non-state actors, including, in particular, Volunteering Centres and Non-Governmental Organisation Support Centres as well as large nationwide non-governmental organisations such as Voluntary Fire Brigades.

It terms of actions directed at young people, the following should be mentioned:

- education sector at large: at national level schools since 2017 volunteering activities can be implemented based on the school statute, as regulated under the act of December 14th 2016 on Educational Law (Prawo Oświatowe). School council in cooperation with the headmaster can carry out volunteering activities and establish a volunteering council from among themselves;
- activities for the promotion of community action among the youth are also undertaken by specialised units of local authorities and, of course, individual schools – by running volunteer clubs (eg. [School Volunteer Club](#) or [E-Volunteering in school](#) ) scheme), but also by involving pupils in nationwide events of such as [The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Foundation](#), the Spring Association and their "Noble Box" ([Szlachetna Paczka](#)) action, [Caritas Polska](#) and their "Christmas Children's Aid" ([Wigilijne Dzieło Pomocy Dzieciom](#)) or the "[Christmas Food Collection](#)" ([Świąteczna Zbiórka Żywności](#)) by Food Banks ([Banki Żywności](#));
- the Ministry of Education and Science published School Volunteering Guidebook ([Wolontariat Szkolny. Poradnik](#)) dedicated to parents, teachers, pupils and headmasters;
- dedicated non-public youth organisations and schemes, including Scouting Associations, the "Equalising Opportunities" ([Równać Szanse](#)) scheme of the Polish Children and Youth Foundation, the "Act.pl" ([Działasz.pl](#)) scheme of the [Civic Education Centre](#), or the "Magnificent Eight" ([Ośmiu wspaniałych](#)) competition organised by the World Foundation ([Fundacja Świat na Tak](#)).

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

As there is no nationwide, centrally administered and managed youth volunteering system, no planned and co-ordinated sharing of responsibilities takes place between the national and the local levels. Nor does any co-operation exist in this respect between agencies, ministries and departments.

A network of 16 Regional Volunteering Centres ([Ogólnopolska Sieć Centrów Wolontariatu](#)) across Poland, and their associate members – Local Volunteering Centres, are striving to build the foundations of a co-ordination system. All the networked Volunteering Centres in Poland work on the basis of [common standards of action](#). However, they have a limited impact both territorially – at most to the province (*województwo*) level or regional level, and systematically – due to the lack of management competences and financial resources resulting from the fact that they are non-public institutions. They are not, of course, dedicated exclusively to the youngest age group among volunteers, although they sometimes undertake special activities in this area.

## 2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

### Existence of a National Strategy

In Poland, there is no national strategy for youth volunteering, however there exists a document which contains elements of strategic solutions for volunteering in general. It's the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital (Cooperation, Culture, Creativity) 2030 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego \(współdziałanie, kultura, kreatywność\) 2030](#)).

### Scope and contents

Regarding the development of volunteering in general, the assumptions contained in the document Strategy for the Development of Human Capital (Cooperation, Culture, Creativity) 2030 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego \(współdziałanie, kultura, kreatywność\) 2030](#)), seem to be the most essential.

The starting point is the observation that the Polish people seldom engage in volunteer activity, and that a few years ago in Poland there was a crisis of the "two pillars of volunteer activity, that is young and active young people who have not yet started a family and taken on full employment, and people towards the end of their professional career". In the Strategy, a direction of action was included under the task 1.2.2., that is increasing activity and competence of citizens through the support for volunteer activity, scouting movement, and people's universities. Three strategic projects are aimed at helping this: [Solidarity Corps](#) („Korpus Solidarności. Program wspierania i rozwoju wolontariatu długoterminowego na lata 2018–2030”), „Government Programme for the Support of the Scouting Movement for Years 2018-2030” ([„Rządowy Program Wsparcia Rozwoju Organizacji Harcerskich i Skautowych na lata 2018–2030”](#)) and “Programme for the Development of People's Universities for years 2020-2030” ([„Program Rozwoju Uniwersytetów Ludowych na lata 2020–2030”](#)). The former two are mostly aimed at young people.

### Responsible authority

The implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital (Cooperation, Culture, Creativity) 2030 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego \(współdziałanie, kultura, kreatywność\) 2030](#)) within the area of the goal number 1 is the responsibility of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland in cooperation with [National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development](#) ([Narodowy Instytut Wolności – Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego](#)), while the general supervision is done by the President of the Public Benefit Committee. The programme also calls for strengthening the cooperation with regional and local partners – local and municipal governments, non-

governmental organizations and individual volunteer work organizers, which can all help the development of volunteer work in local communities.

## Revisions/ Updates

All of the above-mentioned strategies and programmes have been accepted in the last few years and have not yet been updated.

## 2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

### National Programme for Youth Volunteering

For many years there has been no separate scheme in Poland that could be considered as fulfilling the criterion of a national programme for youth volunteering. Document containing elements of a strategic nature in this area are discussed in Section 2.3.

Assumptions laid down in the following documents should be considered of key importance when it comes to the development of youth volunteering:

- [Solidarity Corps](#) („Korpus Solidarności. Program wspierania i rozwoju wolontariatu długoterminowego na lata 2018–2030”) focuses on four main target groups: volunteers, volunteer work organizers, volunteer work coordinators, and the community around volunteer workers. The programme designed for support and development of long term volunteering 2018-2030 has been established and as of 2019 is fully operational and therefore can be considered as a national scheme for volunteering, where youth is one of the target groups. The strategic goal of this programme is to “help the development of the civic society through creation and introduction of solutions encouraging systemic and long-term engagement with volunteer work”. The programme calls for the increase of the number of volunteer workers in long-term volunteer work, increase in efficacy of volunteer work coordinators, increasing the number of volunteer work organizers, improving the public perception of volunteer work, and educating the society on volunteer work. The programme also includes various courses, holiday retreats and masterclasses, as well as the creation of the benefit programme “Volunteer worker’s card”, or handing out micro-grants for volunteer initiatives. A database of volunteers and organizations offering opportunities for them is also supposed to be created, as a national tool for finding volunteers and places where one can take on volunteer work.
- The main goal of the „Government Programme for the Support of the Scouting Movement for Years 2018-2030” ([„Rządowy Program Wsparcia Rozwoju Organizacji Harcerskich i Skautowych na lata 2018–2030”](#)) is “strengthening the scouting movement within the context of institutional potential, as well as empowering its functioning through the increase in abilities, competences, and qualifications of pedagogues and children and youth engaged in the scouting movement. Volunteer work within the scouting movement organizations is also to be supported”.

The importance of actions aimed at developing pro-social attitudes among students is also being highlighted, volunteer work included. To this end, support is extended to schools. Schoolmasters are obliged to create conditions for the development of volunteer work in their units. Students, through their councils, and in coordination with schoolmasters, can take on volunteer work tasks and establish the so-called volunteer work councils.

The long lasting lack of a national programme for youth volunteering, results in the increased importance of strategies created at the level of individual regions or cities. It is worth pointing out the Warsaw City Volunteering project run since 2016, “Warsaw Volunteers” ([Ochotnicy Warszawscy](#)), which is often referred to as a model and inspiration for activities undertaken in other localities. In the project, the youngest volunteer group is treated as one of the target groups: “It is necessary to organise, support and promote volunteering in institutions of education of all levels. It is important to encourage children and young people to gain volunteering experience from the pre-school stage through the

successive stages of general education.” The document highlights the importance of volunteering as a means of “strengthening intergenerational solidarity through the involvement and co-operation of youth and older people at the same time”.

## Funding

Because Poland does not have a separate scheme that could be considered as fulfilling the criterion of a national programme for youth volunteering, no budget assumptions can be identified in this respect. Budget for the enactment of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital has been set in a very general way, without being divided between particular goals of the strategy.

The budget of [Solidarity Corps](#) - a programme for support and development of long term volunteering 2018-2030 has been established at 54 million PLN (around 12.6 million Euro). Those funds will come from the Civic Society Development Fund.

The tentative budget for the “Government Programme for the Support of the Scouting Movement for Years 2018-2030” ([„Rządowy Program Wsparcia Rozwoju Organizacji Harcerskich i Skautowych na lata 2018-2030”](#)) has been set at 197 million PLN for years 2018-2030.

## Characteristics of youth volunteering

Young people are a group that engages in volunteers relatively more often compared to other age groups. According to a [report](#) prepared by the [Centre for Public Opinion Research](#) (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej - CBOS), when asked directly whether they are a volunteer, only 5% of Polish men and women responded affirmatively (in 2020). Such low rates have been holding steady for over a decade – since 2006, they oscillate between 4% and 9%. Relatively highest rates can be found in lowest researched age group – in 2020, 10% of people aged 18 to 24 have had at least a single experience with volunteer work. Those rates also oscillate – volunteering experiences in 2016 have been admitted by 14% of people aged 18-24. Several factors may contribute to this. According to a 2016 study one in three young respondents declares their affiliation to informal groups, associations, organisations, clubs, fan groups, unions or religious movements. This, of course, does not mean that they are volunteers, as the greatest number of students are affiliated with sports and fan clubs, unions and associations or culture and hobby clubs. The respondents have repeatedly stressed that the voluntary groups in their schools were not particularly visible and that in their opinion they were not functioning very well. On the other hand, young people are more likely than older people to call their social involvement ‘volunteering’. This is probably due mainly to the mass involvement of young people in one-time voluntary work during the finale of the [Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity](#) and activities like the “Noble Box” ([Szlachetna Paczka](#)). Young people are more likely to engage in voluntary activities within their immediate surroundings, which is supported by the fact that “especially pupils and students, more often than others, talk about volunteers in their circle of friends and colleagues in school or college”, and that there is also a growing number of youth organisations. In terms of preferred places and means of action (again, this does not necessarily mean volunteering only), “the youngest respondents (aged 18 to 24), mainly pupils and students, are distinguished by their activity in sports unions, clubs and associations as well as in youth organisations (scouting, student clubs and associations, etc.), in art groups such as choir, dance and theatre groups, and scientific societies”.

## Support to young volunteers

The provisions of the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work indicate that an institution using the work of a volunteer must provide them with safe and hygienic conditions for their services as well as personal protection equipment and personal accident insurance, and also – if the volunteer is working in the territory of another country in the area of an armed conflict or a natural disaster – personal accident insurance and medical treatment abroad insurance, unless those benefits arise from other provisions. The volunteer has the



right (which they may voluntarily waive) to receive reimbursement of travel expenses and subsistence expenses, and the relevant agreement should also lay down rules for covering other costs of the volunteer's work, such as training costs or liability insurance.

## Quality Assurance

There are no regulations in Poland for quality assurance of youth volunteering or volunteering in general. There is no national registry of organisations that offer the opportunity to work voluntarily. For those looking for such opportunities and for institutions and organisations looking for volunteers, the main source of knowledge and contacts is the network of Volunteering Centres (described in Section 2.2 Administration and Governance of Youth Volunteering), which consists of regional and local volunteering centres and some infrastructural (umbrella) non-governmental organisations. The only way to withdraw support for an organisation that is not properly running its volunteering programs is an inspection by sponsors during the funding period. The Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work also provides for the possibility of withdrawing the status of Public Benefit Organisation (a status which includes, among other things, the right to participate in the 1% tax donation mechanism), however, this only occurs if an inspection carried out by the minister shows that the organisation is guilty of the irregularities described in the Act, but they include formal irregularities (lack of reports, unreported public collections, or inadequate accounting of grants), rather than irregularities that are identified on the basis of an in-depth evaluation of the quality of the activities carried out.

The available information regarding volunteering in Poland comes primarily from surveys by the [Centre for Public Opinion Research](#) (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej - CBOS) and the Klon/Jawor Association ([Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor](#)), but it is mostly quantitative data and does not in any way constitute a source of knowledge about the quality of youth volunteering programmes.

## Target groups

Between 2016 and 2019 the departmental programme "Youth Joined in Action 2016-2019" was in force. It identified specific target audiences among young people whose participation is preferred. These were: young parents, youth with disabilities, youth from dysfunctional families, excluded young people or those threatened with social exclusion, persons gaining independence upon leaving a care institution, family custody, or prison." However, as of 2022 the programme is no longer continued, hence there are currently no target groups whose participation is preferred and fostered.

## 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

### EU programmes

European Voluntary Service - EVS ([Europejski Korpus Solidarności](#)) is a programme co-ordinated in Poland by the [Foundation for the Development of the Education System](#), the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme. FRSE is also responsible for monitoring the course and outcomes of the programme and disseminating the results of research and analysis. Erasmus+: Youth is aimed at young people, people working with them, and organisations that work for the youth, as well as institutions that have an impact on the development of non-formal education.

Those interested in participating in the European Voluntary Service must register in the volunteer work database, and then find a project they are interested in.

Any person aged 18 to 30 legally residing in Poland may travel abroad as part of the European Voluntary Service.

### Other Programmes

Information materials on international volunteering programmes do not provide data on the extent of the involvement of the Polish state in its funding. The Polish Ministry of

Foreign Affairs finances the “[Polish Aid Volunteering](#)” programme, which involves Polish organisations sending volunteers to work under projects and with partner organisations in the countries where those projects are being implemented. The programme has been implemented since 2008 and its aim is to support the direct involvement of Polish citizens in assisting the inhabitants of developing countries and dissemination of knowledge about the problems of those countries in the Polish society.

**Other major international volunteering programmes include:**

- work camps of the [Association for the Promotion of Volunteering](#) ([Stowarzyszenie Promocji Wolontariatu](#));
- work camps, European volunteering and long-term volunteering projects of the [One World Association](#);
- Global Volunteer projects of the [AIESEC Poland Association](#);
- the “Don Bosco International Voluntary Service” ([Międzynarodowy Wolontariat Don Bosco](#)) and “Youth for the World” ([Młodzi Światu](#)) projects of the Salesians Missionary Volunteer Work;
- international volunteering within the framework of humanitarian aid and the development assistance projects of the “[Polish Centre for International Aid](#)” Foundation.

## **Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers**

Since volunteering is a service equivalent to work (but not work as such), a foreigner is not required to obtain a permit to provide voluntary services. The rules that apply to foreigners are the same as for volunteers who are Polish citizens. If a foreign national is entering into a co-operation agreement for a beneficiary in the Republic of Poland and the volunteering agreement is for a period longer than 30 days, then personal accident insurance must be taken out for such a volunteer. In addition, as part of the co-ordination of social security systems in the European Union, citizens of the EU Member States benefit from the protection granted to them under European legislation. On the other hand, liability insurance is available in cases defined in specific regulations, i.e. where volunteers provide services in care institutions, and in other cases the beneficiary may take it out at its own discretion. No information on this topic is available on the website of the [Office for Foreigners](#), where volunteering is incorrectly equated with traineeship at the Office (the differences are discussed in [Section 2.4.3 Laws and Regulations on Youth Volunteering](#)).

## **2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities**

### **Information providers**

Public sector activities aimed at raising awareness of the availability of youth volunteering at national level are limited to the publication of basic regulations (again regarding volunteering in general and not specifically youth volunteering) on the website of the Public Benefit Committee ([Komitet ds Pożytku Publicznego](#)). Some information on youth volunteering are to be found on the websites of the National Institute of Freedom - Centre for the Development of the Civil Society ([Narodowy Instytut Wolności – Centrum Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego](#), established in 2017), in the reports on the Institute's events - for example in the minutes of the meeting of the expert team for establishing a school volunteering policy at the Polish Solidarity Corps. Undoubtedly, the largest compendium of knowledge on volunteering is available on the website of the nationwide network of Volunteering Centres ([Ogólnopolska Sieć Centrów Wolontariatu](#)). The network also organises cycles of meetings addressed to volunteer service organisers (e.g. within the framework of the Warsaw Volunteer Project), runs the Online Volunteer Service Agency, and organised (till 2015) a nationwide competition called the “Colours of Volunteering” ([Barwy Wolontariatu](#)). Similar activities are organised by regional and local

Volunteering Centres, as well as many organisations supporting the Polish non-governmental sector (infrastructural organisations).

## Key initiatives

In the past the key activities of the public sector aiming at raising awareness about youth volunteering were carried out mainly by the Ministry of Education and Science ([Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki](#)) and are eg. "Volunteer of the year" - a nation-wide competition for school pupils; "Teacher-volunteer of the year" - a nation-wide competition for teachers; "Open school" - competition for schools aimed at stimulating civic participation and engagement of young people; "Scouting volunteering" and "School volunteering" - a competitions aiming at providing trainings for volunteers and promotion of volunteering among young people. Currently, the information on those activities is missing from the internet page of the Ministry of National Education. From 2018, the matter of volunteering is being handled by the National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development, which is enacting the Solidarity Corps programme.

Moreover, the Association for the Promotion of Volunteering ([Stowarzyszenie Promocji Wolontariatu](#)) deals with "the promotion of the idea of volunteering as a special form of international youth contacts" and [a portal](#) devoted to online volunteering as well as other projects exploiting the potential of new technologies for strengthening civil society and increasing the level of social engagement. International Volunteer Day (5 December) is celebrated, but its celebrations are organised spontaneously and optionally by the individual organisations and institutions, without national co-ordination. Significant youth volunteering promotion effects have in recent years been produced by events such as Euro 2012 or Youth Days in 2016, and the media are annually publicising mass charity events based on voluntary work (such as those mentioned in Section 2.2.1 Administration and Governance of Youth Volunteering). Volunteering could potentially be promoted within the framework of the Programmes of Co-operation with Non-Governmental Organisations, which are mandatorily adopted (under the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work) by local governments, but promotion and organisation of voluntary service is nowhere to be found among the priority public tasks planned.

## 2.7 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

None of the described documents which concern volunteering contain any specific regulations pertaining to the skills acquired by volunteers, therefore any proposals or solutions in this regard cannot be considered as universally applicable. Another consequence is the lack of clear provisions on the mechanisms that allow the recognition of skills acquired by volunteers. Yet, volunteering can be an important part of one's career. Long-term engagement in volunteering is sometimes more beneficial for people entering the labour market than traineeships. It is important for employers to be able to appreciate volunteering as part of one's career and to promote those who engage in volunteering. In this respect it is worth mentioning the provisions of the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 27 August 2019 on school transcripts, diplomas and other educational documents ([Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 27 sierpnia 2019r. w sprawie świadectw, dyplomów państwowych i innych druków](#)). It states that volunteering activities shall be taken into account and listed in official school transcripts and diplomas. Social engagement shall also be taken into account in the recruitment procedures: a pupil can receive up to 3 additional points for volunteering activities or social engagement.

Provisions regarding the skills acquired by volunteers are only available in volunteering guides, which are not of obligatory nature. The exception is the Youthpass certificate, which is guaranteed for participants of the EU Erasmus+: Youth programme (described in [Section 2.6 Cross-border Mobility Programmes](#)) (it contains details of the skills gained during volunteering in the project), but this is a consequence of EU regulations, rather



than Polish regulations. Despite the fact that most of the documents and guides which describe how to build good volunteer relationships often include provisions regarding the conclusion of co-operation with a volunteer, when it comes to the skills acquired by them, they usually mention, at most, giving them feedback. We rarely see provisions such as those in the "Warsaw Volunteers" ([Ochotnicy Warszawscy](#)) document, which explicitly recommend "giving them a certificate or a reference".

## Existing arrangements

The Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work ([Ustawa z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie](#)) is the only document in Poland that is obligatory in the area of volunteering. Despite the fact that it contains a provision regarding the requirements for a volunteer in terms of their qualifications (they should be "appropriate to the type and scope of services provided, if the obligation to hold such qualifications and comply with the relevant requirements arises from separate regulations" – Article 43), the list of a volunteer's rights (described in Section 2.5.4) contained in this Act does not mention any obligation from the institution which benefits from their work to, at minimum, certify the skills acquired by the volunteer.

Since December 2015, the Act on the Integrated Qualification System has been in force in Poland. Article 4 reads that the Integrated Qualification System creates "the possibility of recognising learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning", but the concept of volunteering does not appear once in the entire piece of legislation (Act on the Integrated Qualification System of 22 December 2015, Journal of Laws (Dz.U. of 2020, item 226, [Ustawa o Zintegrowanym Systemie Kwalifikacji](#)). In turn, a [specialist publication](#) on the Integrated Qualification System says that "from 1 October 2016, the role of National Co-ordination Point (NCP) for the Polish Qualification Framework shall be performed by the Minister of National Education, under a resolution of the Interdepartmental Team for Lifelong Learning and the Integrated Qualification System. This ensures an appropriate combination of the functions to be performed by the NCP and the tasks of the Minister of National Education defined in the Act as the Integrated Qualification System co-ordinating minister". Although these [guidelines](#) contain an entry on informal learning, the term 'volunteering' appears only once in the entire publication: "informal learning also denotes the acquisition of new knowledge and skills >as a bonus< while working, volunteering as well as doing various activities related to social and family life". In addition, although the skills it goes on to list are undoubtedly achievable through volunteer involvement – especially of young people (project management, foreign language skills, use of computers and computer programs, knowledge and skills needed to care for others), neither the Act nor the Encyclopaedia contain any regulations regarding the recognition of skills specifically acquired by volunteers.

In Poland, there are no national regulations that facilitate recognition of the knowledge, skills and competences of young volunteers as part of formal education, e.g. in the system of compulsory work practice, [ECTS credits](#), or [ECVET credit](#) system, and introduction of such solutions remains dependent on the awareness of their usefulness among representatives of the authorities of each higher education institution.

## 2.8 Current debates and reforms

Two aspects will be key for the development of volunteering, including school volunteering:

- the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in grassroots actions aimed at helping the needy, providing impetus for initiatives such as Visible Hand ([Widzialna Ręka](#)) - local facebook groups providing help to people in quarantine or isolation or The Society of Help ("[Wspólnoty pomocy](#)") - local support networks created around parish organisation. Such initiatives enliven the ideals of volunteering (although, once again, this is more general than just youth volunteering) and can be significant for their development.

- a new challenge is posed by the work being put by NGOs, volunteers, and private citizens (including hosting families) into aid for Ukrainian refugees. From one side, the war in Ukraine has caused an unprecedented social engagement, but it should be expected that insufficient support and systemic action might lead to disengagements and “burnout” of social energy.

This does not change an important social and economic trend that may have an impact on youth volunteering solution is pointed out by [Magdalena Arczewska, Phd](#): “volunteering is now moving away from being community service and towards internship, traineeship or pro-employment volunteering, which aims to help young people enter the labour market, and, in the long term, find permanent employment. In this approach, volunteering is treated as a labour market institution” (Arczewska, 2017). The trend indicated by researchers from the National Bureau for Drug Prevention is not without significance either; they are writing about the high level of individualism that persists among young people: “the opinion that >nowadays a person who wants to achieve something in life should do their own thing, counting only on themselves< is almost as common as in 2013 and much more common than in 1998. At the same time, since 1998, the percentage of young people who believe that the ability to interact with other people is more important has dropped by 19 percentage points (from 45% to 26%), and since 2013 by 2 percentage points (from 28% to 26%) (...) Individualism is therefore stressed twice as often as co-operation with others.

### 3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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The issue of youth employment is one of the country’s key public policy areas. High youth unemployment has been a persistent characteristic of the Polish labour market since the regime change in 1989. It brought more opportunities for the education of young people, especially at third level. One contributing factor was the partial privatisation of higher education, which caused a snowballing increase in the number of those institutions. In the first decades of the political transformation, the main action taken by the state for the youth was a policy of counteracting unemployment. Before the accession of Poland to the EU (2004), the youth unemployment rate exceeded 40% and was the highest among Member States (Eurostat), however future years have brought a steady decline in this respect. The lack of jobs and satisfactory career prospects for increasingly better educated young people resulted in mass emigration after the opening of the EU labour market. The mass emigration, the increase in financial outlays for active labour market policies (ALMP) targeted at young people (e.g. from public and European funds), and the growth of jobs in the economy have all contributed to the gradual decrease in youth unemployment.

Since 2016 the situation on the Polish labour market has been gradually improving, with unemployment rates below 10%. Still, the highest unemployment rate is observed in the age group 15-24 years old, however many branches of industry complain about insufficient workforce resources. The Covid-19 pandemic influenced significantly the labour market situation in Poland, especially when it comes to services - a branch employing many young people.

#### 3.1 General context

##### Labour market situation in the country

###### 1990-2015

The question of youth employment is one of the country’s key public policy areas. High youth unemployment has been a persistent characteristic of the Polish labour market since the regime change 1989. In the first 15 years of the market economy, the difficult situation of school graduates was largely due to the general conditions in the labour market,

including: shortage of labour demand (the economy was not creative enough to provide new jobs), large supply of workforce (a period of intense demographic pressure associated with baby boomers entering the labour market), mismatch between the occupation and qualification structure of the population and the changing labour market needs, and imperfect institutional arrangements to support the unemployed (according to: Study of the Professional Activity of Graduates in the Context of Implementation of the First Job Programme. [*Badanie aktywności zawodowej absolwentów w kontekście realizacji programu „Pierwsza praca”. Raport*], Ministry Labour and Social Policy, Warsaw 2008.). Those factors determined the professional fate of all Poles, including graduates of various types of schools. However, in spite of being exposed to the same set of circumstances arising from changes in the labour market, the youth unemployment rate had always been higher than that among older generations.

The market economy brought higher educational expectations and more opportunities for the education of young people, especially at third level. One contributing factor was the partial privatisation of higher education, which caused a snowballing increase in the number of those institutions. In the 2016/2017 academic year, 1,348,800 people were studying at 390 third-level schools, compared to just over 400,000 people in 112 schools in 1990/1991. After many years of increase in number of higher education institutions, since the academic year 2010/2011 a decrease can be observed (this situation affects mainly private higher education institutions). The gross enrolment ratio in higher education increased during that time from 12.9% in the academic year 1990/1991 to 53.8% in 2010/2011. After 2011 it began to decrease and in the academic year 2016/2017 [was at the level of 47.4%](#). Higher education began to be treated as a remedy for, and a chance to avoid, unemployment. At the same time, there was a decrease in interest in vocational training among young people and a marginalisation of vocational education.

In the first decades of the political transformation, the main action taken by the state for the youth was a policy of counteracting unemployment. Before the accession of Poland to the EU (2004), the youth (under 25 years old) unemployment rate exceeded 40% and was the highest among Member States (Eurostat).

The persistent lack of jobs and satisfactory career prospects for increasingly better educated young people resulted in mass emigration after the opening of the EU labour market. According to estimates by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny - GUS*), at the end of 2016 around 2 515 000 Polish people were temporarily living outside of Poland, i.e. 118 000 (4.7%) more than in 2015. In Europe alone, in 2016 there were about 2 214 000 Polish people, with the vast majority – about 2 096 000 – living in the Member States [of the EU countries](#), the highest number was in the United Kingdom (788 000), Germany (687 000), the Netherlands (116 000), and Ireland (112 000).

The mass emigration, the increase in financial outlays for active labour market policies (ALMP) targeted at young people (e.g. from public and European funds), and the growth of jobs in the economy have all contributed to the gradual decrease in youth unemployment.

However, the increase in employment was achieved through the development of various forms of unstable employment. Young people were often employed on temporary contracts or civil law contracts (without social security contributions being paid for them). According to Eurostat estimates, in 2014 more than half of the people employed in Poland aged 15 to 29 worked on fixed-term contracts, which was the highest share of this type of employment in the EU (Eurostat). The lack of stable employment did not allow for building sustainable professional careers of young employees and young people themselves experienced a [strong feeling of social inequality](#). As a result, an overrepresentation of young people found themselves in a category known as the working poor.

The gap between the qualifications and skills of graduates and the needs of the economy and the labour market had also been widening.

The high unemployment rate among young people, the rise of unstable employment and the mass emigration of young people have prompted the authors of reports on youth to label them as the “lost generation”, a dreary prospect that could only be averted by decisive action through public policies (a report prepared on the initiative of the government, [The Youth of 2011](#), 2011: 180).

Poland has been actively involved in the implementation of the [EU Youth Employment Package](#) (2012) designed to boost employment among young people. In December 2013, a roadmap for the implementation of the [Youth Guarantee Initiative](#) was developed. Poland, as an EU Member State with more than 25% of youth unemployment (persons aged 15 to 24), has been provided with support through the Youth Employment Initiative and is expected to receive EUR 550 million from EU funds.

## 2016 - 2020

The situation on the labour market in Poland has been constantly improving since 2016 (until the 1st quarter of 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic began). The registered [unemployment rate fell below 10%](#) and in consequence, Poland has become an attractive country for foreign workers and the labour market gradually became worker-oriented. Between 2016-2019 a [systematic increase of work permits](#) issued for foreigners was observed. In 2019 there were 447 000 such permits issued - an increase by 116 000 comparing to 2018 and by 379 000 in 2015.

At the same time, employers are reporting shortages of workers with increasing frequency, including high-end professionals as well as skilled and unskilled workers (e.g. for seasonal jobs in agriculture or cleaning jobs). Since 2016 migration reports and [public opinion polls](#) have been showing a decline in youth declarations regarding the desire to emigrate for work, which is linked to the improved situation in the labour market.

## Main concepts

In current governmental documents, the issues of youth employment and the development of entrepreneurship among young people are a priority.

[The Strategy for Responsible Development](#) until 2020 (with a forecast up to 2030), adopted by the Council of Ministers on 14 February 2017, is a key document of the Polish state in the area of medium- and long-term economic policy. Internal factors hindering sustainable economic growth, which have a negative impact on the stable development prospects of Poland, include some factors directly connected with the employment and entrepreneurship of young people:

- unfavourable demographic processes – such as ageing of the population and migration from Poland, which has a negative effect on the prospects of providing appropriately qualified and creative workers;
- too few well-paid (and stable) creative jobs, especially in rural areas, guaranteeing professional self-realisation and generating high added value for the economy;
- relatively low and inefficient use of available and potential labour resources, a mismatch between qualifications and market needs, etc.;
- the growth and competitiveness of businesses is based on cost factors (including low labour costs);
- low innovativeness of the economy resulting mainly from insufficient incentives for undertaking innovative activities, low demand for new technologies among Polish companies, low efficiency of co-operation between the academic/research sector, administration, and business.

The main objective of the Strategy is to create conditions for increasing the incomes of the inhabitants of Poland, while increasing cohesion in social, economic, environmental and territorial terms. The Strategy is oriented towards responsible and solidary development through strengthening entrepreneurship, inventiveness and productivity in

the economy. These assumptions create the basis for promotion of employment and entrepreneurship of young people.

The situation on the labour market in Poland is improving, however is still unsatisfactory. Compared to other age groups, young people in Poland (under 25 years old) are characterised by a very low professional activity rate (only 35%) and low employment rate. In the 4th quarter of 2019 only 34,9% of people aged 15-24 were professionally active, while the employment rate for this age group was at the level of 32,1%. The main reason for the lack of professional activity is studying and other types of qualification development (for as much as 90% of 15-24 years old who are not professionally active). The unemployment rate in the age group of 15-24 years old was 7,9 in the 4th quarter of 2019.

Young people in Poland are in a more vulnerable position on the Polish labour market than other age groups, because of the lack of professional experience and skills mismatch. Young people, in order to increase their chances on the labour market often increase their skills and competences through lifelong learning. According to a [study](#) by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) of 2018, the most common response to unemployment are training courses (29% of respondents). Pursuing education at the tertiary education institution has noted a decline - from 15% in 2008 to only 8% in 2018. Going abroad for work is still an alternative for young Poles (26% of respondents), as well as starting a business (12%). The following answers were given:

- training courses - 19%
- going abroad - 25%
- taking any job, not necessarily in my profession - 19%
- starting a business - 12%
- pursuing education - 8%
- moving to another city - 5%
- not doing anything at all - 1%

The same study demonstrates that only one in ten respondents was against starting a business and one in three could not say whether they would ever start a business or not.

In the recent years, with the decline of unemployment rates, the attitudes of young Poles towards the labour market and their chances of finding a job change. Between 2013 and 2018 the percentage of young Poles who were afraid of not finding employment declined from 63% to 30%. At the same time, the percentage of those who believe they will find a job increased from 36% to 70%. Young Poles believe more and more often that finding employment depends on their individual skills, competences, courage and sense of entrepreneurship, rather than on connections.

Segmentation of the labour market, covering some categories of young people, is still ongoing. Persons with low qualifications or living in economically underdeveloped areas continue to have problems obtaining stable employment contracts, and receive low wages in low-satisfaction jobs. Difficulties with the work/life balance also continue to exist for those with young children, which particularly limits the professional activity of women. Disabled school graduates face problems with entry into the labour market, even after they have received a higher education diploma. There is still an unfavourable institutional environment for setting up one's own businesses, despite the announced changes.

A worrying phenomenon is the increase in the category of young people with various deficits that remain outside the labour market. These include young people from poor families, multiple children families, incomplete families, pathological or dysfunctional families with incapable caregivers, children who leave orphanages, foster families, penitentiaries and correctional institutions, young parents, young mothers, persons with low education and qualifications, early school leavers, people with disabilities, and chronically ill people.



The activities of public institutions in relation to these categories of young people are insufficient and often inaccurate. Various non-governmental organisations (often carrying out unique and highly successful projects) offer their support, but this is limited in scope because of the poor condition, in economic and human resource terms, of this sector in Poland.

The missing labour force is offset by mainly [Ukrainian workers](#). In 2016, businesses declared that they had employed 1.3 million people under the simplified procedure of employing foreigners. More than one million are Ukrainians. According to data from the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, the highest demand was for workers in menial jobs (750,000). The next highest groups were businesses which required industrial workers (247,000), machine operators (112,000), service workers and salespersons (65,000). Other occupational groups represented 10% of all declarations.

Covid-19 pandemic influenced the demand for labour in Poland. So far, as of the second quarter of 2020, no significant negative effects, such as the increase of unemployment rates among young people, have been noted as a result of government support initiatives. A [study](#) carried out by PWC demonstrated that young Poles are more and more interested in an employment that guarantees stability (preferably with a permanent employment contract).

## 3.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The objectives and tasks of Polish employment policy are defined in the [Constitution of the Republic of Poland](#) of 2 April 1997 (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 1997, No. 78, item 483, as amended). Its implementation is primarily the responsibility of public authorities.

The central role in the [state's public policy concerning the development of employment and entrepreneurship](#) is played by the [Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy](#) (until November 2019 Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology and the Ministry of Investment and Development) which prepare strategic documents on economic security and the country's development policy (including employment policy), monitors and coordinates the implementing of government's economic strategy and supervises the use of European funds. [The Ministry of Development](#) provides support for entrepreneurs and promotes entrepreneurship.

[The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy](#) is, on the other hand, responsible for the preparation of the [National Employment Action Plan](#) ([Krajowy Plan Działań na rzecz Zatrudnienia](#)) and co-ordination of its implementation; co-ordination and development of Public Employment Services; promotion of employment, including policies to counteract unemployment, mitigate the effects of unemployment and stimulate professional activation of jobless people; development of human resources; as well as ensuring uniform application of law; and co-ordination of social security systems.

A detailed legal framework for the labour market policy in Poland is set out in the [Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions](#) (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2017, item 1065, as amended).

The tasks of the state in the area of employment promotion, mitigation of the effects of unemployment and professional activation are implemented on the basis of the [National Employment Action Plan](#) passed by the Council of Ministers, which encompasses the principles of implementation of the [European Employment Strategy](#) and is based on the initiatives of the local governments of communes (*gmina*), districts (*powiat*) and provinces (*województwo*) as well as social partners.

The labour market policy at national level is consulted by social partners (including representatives of trade unions, employers' organisations, and NGOs), as well as by representatives of local governments and educational institutions. At the national level the

consultative body of the Minister is the Labour Market Council ([Rada Rynku Pracy](#)). At the provincial level, the body that provides province marshals (*marszałek*) with opinions and advice is the Provincial Labour Market Council, and at the district level, district governors (*starosta*) are consulted by the District Labour Market Council.

The state's tasks pertaining to the policy of employment promotion, mitigation of the effects of unemployment and professional activation are performed by [Public Employment Services](#), [Voluntary Labour Corps](#) (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*- OHP), employment agencies, training institutions, social dialogue institutions, and local partnership institutions.

The Act on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions provides for additional forms of support to foster employment of young people (in addition to the standard forms of support available to all categories of the unemployed). Public employment services are equipped with the following tools and labour market instruments dedicated to young people:

- Those who are unemployed under the age of 30 are considered to have "special" status on the labour market and are given priority in referral to dedicated schemes (Article 49).
- Those who are unemployed under the age of 25 should be presented with an offer by the district Employment Office within a period of up to 4 months from the date of registration (Article 50(1)). This offer should be in the form of employment, other paid work, training, internship, job skills training for adults, intervention works or public works or other forms of assistance specified in the Act.
- Additional instruments targeted at the unemployed under the age of 30 include training vouchers, internship vouchers, employment vouchers, and housing vouchers (Chapter 13d, Articles 66k to 66n).

The activities of the state aimed particularly at youth at risk of social exclusion and the unemployed under the age of 25 are implemented through the Voluntary Labour Corps (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*, OHP). OHP are government-financed entities supervised by the minister for labour that specialise in youth action (Chapter 5, Articles 11 to 17).

Regarding the education and training of young people, OHP conduct activities aimed at:

- 1) enabling young people who have not completed primary or lower secondary school, or who have not stayed in education after graduating from those schools, to acquire professional qualifications and to complete their primary or lower secondary education;
- 2) enabling young people to complete their general and vocational upper secondary education.

Within the field of employment and prevention of the marginalisation and social exclusion of youth, OHP undertake the following actions:

- 1) act as job centres and organise employment for: young people over the age of 15 who have not completed primary or lower secondary school or have not stayed in education after graduating from those schools; unemployed persons under the age of 25; pupils; and students;
- 2) provide career guidance for young people and Mobile Career Information Centres;
- 3) initiate international co-operation and youth exchange programmes;
- 4) refund the costs incurred by the employer for the salaries and social security contributions of young workers employed on the basis of an employment contract for the purpose of job skills training.

OHP, as labour market institutions, provide free services in the following formats: job centres; career guidance and vocational information services; active job search workshops; organisation of training; labour market schemes.

The duties of OHP are carried out through (as of 2017/2018):

- Mobile Career Information Centres (*Mobilne Centra Informacji Zawodowej*) (49 units),
- Youth Employment Offices (*Młodzieżowe Biura Pracy*) (49),
- Job centres (*Punkty Pośrednictwa Pracy*) (78),
- European Social Fund Vocational Training Centres (*Ośrodki Szkolenia Zawodowego EFS*) (34),
- Regional Vocational Training Centres for Young People (*Rejonowe Ośrodki Szkolenia Zawodowego Młodzieży*) (24)
- Youth Career Centres (*Młodzieżowe Centra Kariery*) (221).

Those entities are supervised by Centres for Youth Education and Work (*Centra Edukacji i Pracy Młodzieży*) (49).

Schemes for the education and employment of disabled youth are supported by a special purpose fund created from contributions paid by employers who do not employ people with disabilities – the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (*Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych*, PFRON). The policy of supporting employment of the disabled is defined in the [Act of 27 August 1997 on vocational and social rehabilitation and the employment of disabled people](#) (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 1997, No. 123, item 776, as amended). The funds from PFRON to support vocational activation and employment of young people with disabilities are funnelled to public, private and non-governmental entities as well as to individuals.

On the other hand, the Act of 13 June 2003 on social employment (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2003, No. 122, item 1143, as amended) regulates the processes of social and occupational reintegration of persons with the lowest chances on the open labour market due to their low qualifications, or lack thereof, and also those having problems with full participation in social and professional life. This applies in particular to homeless people, alcohol or drug addicts, mentally ill people, long-term unemployed, former inmates, refugees, and disabled people. Persons from those categories may participate in activities run by social integration centres and clubs (operated by local government units or by non-governmental organisations appointed to do so by the former) and receive various forms of assistance and support from public funds to aid employability (e.g. funds to establish a social co-operative).

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

The main mechanism of implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy in EU countries are National Reform Plans. Poland (based on the [National Reform Plan](#)) declared achieving in 2020 the following goals with respect to three social goals:

- employment rate for people aged 20-64 at the level of 71%
- decreasing to 4,5% the percentage of early school leavers and increasing to 45% the percentage of people aged 30-34 with a higher education diploma
- decreasing by 1,5 mln the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion

The National Employment Action Plan 2019 ([Krajowy Plan działań na rzecz Zatrudnienia](#)) aims at increasing employment, in particular of young and elderly people, the long time unemployed and people with disabilities, while assuring the high security of employment. The particular goals include:

- adjusting Labour Offices to the changing reality of the labour market
- increasing adaptability of the unemployed, workers and NEETs on the labour market
- increasing the professional activity of agricultural workers towards out-of-agriculture professions
- development of vocational education and training and lifelong learning



- increasing the security of workplace

The specific actions aiming at fulfilling the above-mentioned goals are the following:

- creation of a professions' demand model (in order to predict the demand for professions, trends in education and professional development)
- implementation of social and professional activation programmes as well as support programmes for young people and people with disabilities
- implementation of programmes for higher education students in order to increase their competences necessary on the labour market and in the society (programmes such as [Dydaktyczna Inicjatywa Doskonałości](#) or [Doktorat Wdrożeniowy](#))
- development of professional training within vocational education and training

Covid-19 pandemic contributed to the modification of these plans and reforms. The latest version of the [National Reform Plan](#) was updated on 28th of April 2020 and includes measures related to counteracting the negative effects of Covid-19 pandemic. These measures include: increasing the security of workers and various forms of support for entrepreneurs (loans, suspended insurance premiums, taxes and bank guarantees, deductions in rents and changes in flexible work time).

### 3.3 Skills forecasting

#### Forecasting system(s)

The demand for future jobs in enterprises is estimated by the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS). Every year, it prepares a publication on the basis of the results of a [labour demand survey](#). Since 2007, the survey has been conducted using the representative method, on a quarterly basis, and includes national economic operators employing 1 or more persons. Until 2007, the survey included only operators with a workforce of 10 or more.

The information obtained from the survey of enterprises includes: realised and unrealised demand, i.e. jobs filled and job vacancies by occupation; data on the number of newly created and liquidated jobs in the reporting period by workplace characteristics, namely spatial distribution, ownership sector, type of activity, and size.

The basic legal act introducing labour demand surveys in the European Union is Regulation (EC) No 453/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 regarding quarterly statistics on job vacancies within the Union.

Another source of information are employment forecasts, which use different data sources.

The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy has implemented a monitoring system for surplus and deficit occupations. In accordance with the provisions of the Act of 20 April 2004 on promotion of employment and labour market institutions (Article 8(1)(3) and Article 9(1)(9)), the preparation of labour market analyses, including monitoring of deficit and surplus occupations, is one of the tasks of provincial governments and district governments in the field of labour market policy.

The main source of information is data on the registered unemployed and job offers by occupation and specialisation originating from the information systems used in Employment Offices. This is supplemented by data from the monitoring of job offers on the Internet conducted by provincial Employment Offices and other sources.

Since 2015 an important forecasting mechanism is provided by the [Occupational Barometer](#) - a one-year forecast of situation in occupations. The Barometer qualifies jobs into three groups: deficit, balance and surplus.

Deficit occupations are those in which it should not be difficult to find a job in the coming year since the demand from employers will be high, combined with a low supply of labour willing to take up employment and having the right qualifications,

Balanced occupations are those in which the number of vacancies will be close to the number of people capable of and interested in taking up employment in the occupation concerned (the supply and demand sides will be balanced),

Surplus occupations are those in which it might be more difficult to find a job because of the low demand and numerous candidates willing to take up employment and meeting the employers' requirements.

Barometer shows demand for occupations for each county. It is also available at regional level.

Information on deficit, balanced and surplus occupations in Poland is available on the website of the [Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy](#). The results of monitoring for provinces and districts are available on the websites of the relevant Employment Offices.

An additional source of information about the demand among employers as well as qualifications and skills requirements is the research conducted by various institutions, including the Educational Research Institute (*Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych*- IBE), Manpower, Randstad.

According to research on the state of human capital in Poland (Social Diagnosis, Analysis of Qualifications and Key Competences for Increasing the Opportunities of Graduates in the Labour Market), there is a need for the development of the following skills, required to implement the government Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (with a forecast up to 2030).

1. Transversal skills – to enable playing of social and occupational roles/functions in different contexts, regardless of sector/industry or occupation, which are used in different situations (such as language skills, communication skills or entrepreneurship).
2. Digital skills – which are essential for functioning in today's world, regardless of age or physical fitness, and enable reading digital content and evaluating its credibility, using it in daily life, and expanding the demand base for e-services provided by public and business entities.
3. Professional skills – lack of qualified staff may prevent or hinder the economic development proposed in the Strategy.

Information from forecasts and studies is available in publications and on the websites of the relevant institutions preparing them.

## Skills development

Information from employment forecasts and research is used in government documents concerning, among other things, the national development, education and employment policies.

At provincial and district level, this information is used in documents related to regional and local development strategies, including in the planning of the directions of education in upper secondary education.

Implementation of the results of forecasts and analyses in formal education at national, regional and local level has so far failed to produce the intended outcomes.

Conclusions based on [studies of employers](#) indicate that in Poland there is a gap between the skills of employees and the needs of the economy and the labour market, that schools do not educate at the level expected by employers, nor does the content of the curriculum meet expectations. Furthermore, the offer for retraining adults (including those with the lowest level of basic skills) is not sufficiently attractive and flexible.

Studies by the Central Statistical Office Young People on the Labour Market 2016 ([Osoby młode na rynku pracy - 2016](#)) regarding the situation of young people in the labour market show that the extent to which one's educational background is utilised in the workplace depends on the occupational group. While among specialists more than 70% of the respondents indicated that they found their education highly useful in their professional work, the remaining groups achieved significantly lower results.

## 3.4 Career guidance and counselling

### Career guidance and counselling services

Education and career guidance services for pupils and career counselling for students and adults are provided by several institutions: schools, advisory centres, Voluntary Labour Corps, academic career offices, employment offices or non-governmental organisations.

#### Career guidance in schools

Career guidance in schools is available for all pupils. In the 2017/2018 school year, career guidance classes are organised for students in grade 7 and 8 of primary school, lower secondary trade school, general upper secondary school, and technical upper secondary school. The classes are based on a curriculum prepared by a relevant teacher and approved by the headmaster, after consulting the pedagogical council. The curriculum contains information about professions, qualifications, and jobs, as well as opportunities to obtain qualifications that match the needs of the labour market and one's occupational skills.

The career guidance staff within the education system are provided with support from the Centre for Education Development ([Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji - ORE](#)) (until 1 July 2016, the National Centre for the Promotion of Vocational and Continuing Education - [Krajowy Ośrodek Wsparcia Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej KOWEŻiU](#)).

The Centre for Education Development is a central public institution for teacher training with nationwide coverage. The body responsible for the Centre is the Minister of National Education. ORE is carrying out a project under the Knowledge Development Education Operational Programme (*Program Operacyjny Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój 2014-2020 (PO WER)*) The project is called "Effective Educational and Vocational Guidance for Children, Adolescents and Adults" ([Efektywne doradztwo edukacyjno-zawodowe dla dzieci, młodzieży i dorosłych](#)).

The main goal of the project is: to create a framework for the effective functioning of educational and vocational guidance in the education system.

#### Psychological and pedagogical counselling centres for school youth

The activities of schools in the field of educational and vocational guidance are supported by public psychological and pedagogical counselling centres, including specialist counselling clinics.

According to data from the Educational Information System ([System Informacji Oświatowej](#)) as of 30 September 2015 there were 949 psychological and pedagogical counselling centres in Poland (of which 561 were public), including 48 specialist counselling clinics (of which 19 were public).

The operation of public psychological and pedagogical counselling centres falls under the remit of the educational tasks of districts. There is at least one public psychological and pedagogical counselling centre in each district in Poland, which provides free psychological and pedagogical assistance.

Those counselling centres provide support to children and adolescents who require psychological and pedagogical help or assistance in choosing the direction of their education and their occupation, and in planning their education and career. This assistance is particularly important for students with special educational needs, particularly those

with disabilities and illnesses. Help is provided in the form of advice and consultations, workshops, lectures and speeches.

Public psychological and pedagogical counselling centres also provide support to schools, teachers and other professionals in the planning and implementation of educational and vocational guidance (by organising workshops, meetings with teachers, participating in consultations and sitting on teachers' councils).

In addition, the counselling centres provide information and training services regarding educational and vocational guidance aimed at [students, parents and teachers](#).

### **Career guidance at Voluntary Labour Corps ([Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy](#))**

Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP) are government-financed entities supervised by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

The target audience of the actions undertaken by OHP are:

- Minors (aged 15 to 17) from educationally malfunctioning backgrounds who are not fulfilling their schooling and educational obligations, have problems with graduating, and need to acquire vocational qualifications.
- Persons aged 18 to 25, including those who are looking for a job or want to be retrained, unemployed, school graduates, and students.

OHP, as labour market institutions, provide free services to young people, including job placement and career guidance and information services; conduct workshops on active job searching; organise training; and implement labour market schemes (e.g. under the Youth Guarantee Initiative).

Career guidance at OHP is generally provided to people aged 15 to 25, but is also available to those older if they contact OHP.

Career counsellors provide in-house counselling at Youth Career Centres and mobile counselling by visiting the interested institutions (e.g. schools) with Mobile Career Information Centres.

Career counsellors help choose a future career, plan one's career and education, as well as offer assistance with changing jobs, self-employment or job seeking.

They take into account local employment opportunities as well as the individual professional and personal predispositions of the young person. Their task is also to familiarise their clients with the local labour market and how to look for work.

### **Student Career Centres ([Akademickie Biura Karier](#))**

Student Career Centres are entities whose mission is the professional activation of students and graduates of higher education, run by a higher education institution or a student organisation, whose duties include:

1. providing students and graduates with information on the labour market and opportunities for improving professional qualifications,
2. collection, classification and dissemination of job, internship and work placement offers,
3. maintaining a database of students and higher education institution graduates interested in finding a job,
4. assisting employers in obtaining suitable candidates for job vacancies and internships,
5. helping with active job seeking.

In 2014, it was estimated that 346 Student Career Centres were in operation at 442 Polish higher education institutions. However, it should be emphasised that this is an indicative figure only.

## Career guidance at public Employment Offices ([Urzędy Pracy](#))

Career guidance is a labour market service provided by Public Employment Services (district Employment Offices at district level, and career information and planning centres at provincial level).

Career guidance consists of an employee of the Employment Office providing assistance in the form of face to face contact with the person in need of assistance, or via telephone or the Internet.

As part of the career guidance service, Employment Office workers also conduct group meetings in the form of workshops with the people in need of aid.

Career guidance services include assistance with:

- choosing or changing one's profession,
- career planning,
- supplementing professional qualifications,
- defining one's competences and interests,
- planning of professional development.

Career guidance at district Employment Offices and at career information and planning centres is free of charge and is provided in accordance with the following principles:

- accessibility,
- voluntariness,
- equality regardless of sex, age, disability, race, ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, political beliefs, religious affiliation or trade union membership,
- freedom to choose one's profession and place of employment,
- data confidentiality and protection.

## Career guidance provided by non-governmental organisations

NGOs specialise in educational and/or vocational guidance for selected categories of beneficiaries, such as disabled people (e.g. [The Fuga Mundi Foundation in Lublin](#)), children and adults with autism ([The Synapsis Foundation](#)), young homeless people requiring various forms of support ([The Monar Association](#)), and young people leaving orphanages or foster families ([The Robinson Crusoe Foundation](#)).

NGOs are complementary to public sector services. Their activities are funded by public, private and European funds.

## Funding

Educational and vocational counselling for pupils, and career guidance for students and adults are free of charge and are financed from public funds.

## Quality assurance

Poland has an institutional support system for pupils in the field of educational and vocational counselling as well as institutions providing career guidance services for students and adults. There is, however, no reliable system for assessing the quality of their performance and evaluation. This results in a particularly vulnerable position of disabled young people who have problems in accessing professional career guidance.

Work is ongoing on developing best practice solutions for the functioning of in-school educational and vocational counselling systems at different stages of education in the reformed school system: primary school, lower and upper secondary trade school, upper secondary technical school, general secondary school, and post-secondary school.

The works are carried out under the project [Effective Educational and Vocational Guidance for Children, Adolescents and Adults](#) within the framework of the 2014-2020 Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme.

## 3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

### Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Traineeships are organised for both upper secondary school and higher education students, but each are governed by different regulations.

On the job training (*praktyczna nauka zawodu*) taking the form of practical classes or traineeships for upper secondary vocational school students is regulated under the regulation of the Minister of National Education. Its time, place and possible salary depend on the type of school and class. The training takes place on the basis of an agreement between the school and the workplace, which takes in the student. Training can take place at school workshops, practical training centres, and with employers.

Another form of gaining vocational qualifications are apprenticeships for vocational school students, which involve on-the-job training. These are governed by separate regulations. The employer enters into an employment contract with the minor to provide them with vocational training in the form of on-the-job training. Theoretical instruction takes place at a vocational school or in a course. The apprentice is covered by compulsory social insurance and receives a salary. Hiring a minor as an apprentice is reimbursed to employers from public funds.

At present [changes are being introduced](#) with relation to classification of professions, financing of vocational education and training, cooperation between schools and employers and professional certification. The main aim of these changes is to improve the quality of practical education, better adjustment of graduates to the needs of the labour market and active involvement of employers in the process of education and training.

Tertiary education institutions offer two types of work placements: compulsory and non-compulsory ones. Until 2014, the [Law on Higher Education](#) did not impose on higher education institutions the obligation to include work placements in their curricula. Exceptions to this rule included teacher training courses, veterinary studies, architecture, medical studies, dentistry studies, pharmacy studies, nursing and midwifery.

Since October 1st 2014, study programmes with practical profiles must include work placements for students, which last three months at minimum. Faculties may organise student education in an alternate fashion: classroom instruction at the higher education institution and traineeships at the employer's.

For many bachelor's and master's degree programmes, the study programmes include compulsory work placements of a shorter duration.

Non-compulsory work placements are governed by individual arrangements between the employer and the student. Compulsory work placements are based on a contract for compulsory student placement. The employer contracts directly with the higher education institution. The employer defines the curriculum, and undertakes to provide instructional and organisational supervision, as well as a specific position/workstation and tools for the work.

Persons registered with an Employment Office are also offered internships with an employer, which are financed by the Labour Fund. The internships may last up to 6 months, and in the case of unemployed persons under the age of 30, up to 12 months. The intern is employed on the basis of an internship agreement (without entering into an employment relationship), during which the unemployed person is entitled to a scholarship of 120% of the amount of the unemployment benefit rate.



An additional form of activation is the internship voucher, which is an instrument for activating unemployed people under the age of 30. After completing the 6-month internship with an employer selected by the unemployed person, the employer is obliged to employ them for another period of 6 months after completing the internship.

In 2017, a paid internship scheme was launched for young people from the NEET group through the projects "[Unlock Your Potential – ESF](#)" and "[Unlock Your Potential – YEI](#)" implemented by OHP under the Youth Guarantee Initiative. Project participants are on internships with local employers in professions for which they had acquired qualifications during their courses.

## Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

### Activities of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions provide internship and work placement databases on their websites, often complete with reports on past placements completed by their students. Internship and work placement offers are advertised by student career centres, which often also participate in or organise career fair/expos, and prepare brochures on work placements and internships for students.

An important source of information for students are online forums and Facebook groups (such as Erasmus groups) and the websites of organisations that help find a work placement, such as AIESEC or Global Citizen.

In 2014, the Parliament of Students of the Republic of Poland launched an online student work placement database: [lepszepraktyki.pl](http://lepszepraktyki.pl).

### Activities of the [Foundation for the Development of the Education System](#)

The Foundation implements work placement projects financed from European funds. An example is the project "Transnational Mobility of Students and Graduates and Vocational Education Staff" (*Ponadnarodowa mobilność uczniów i absolwentów oraz kadry kształcenia zawodowego*). This project is implemented within the framework of the 2014-2020 Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme (Programu Operacyjnego Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój 2014-2020 - PO WER).

The Foundation acts as the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme for 2014-2020. The work placement abroad scheme may be availed of by undergraduate, master's and doctoral students.

### Activities of public institutions of the labour market: Employment Offices and Voluntary Labour Corps ([Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy, OHP](#))

Information on internships offered by public institutions of the labour market is available on the websites of those institutions and directly from career counsellors and work agents at those institutions.

These institutions, in addition to standard services, also perform additional activities under the Youth Guarantee Initiative. Those are local actions. Participation in projects and terms of participation are available at the respective institutions that are implementing the projects.

## Recognition of learning outcomes

In Poland, the Polish Qualifications Framework ([Polska Rama Kwalifikacji](#)) has been developed. It is consistent with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It is used to identify, organise and describe qualifications, including:

- learning outcomes obtained through formal education (schools, higher education institutions) and non-formal education received outside the general, vocational or higher education system (e.g. qualification, linguistic or specialist courses – all certified); and

- learning outcomes of informal education (e.g. professional experience and practice, traineeships, internships, work placements and self-learning).

From October 1st 2016 the Minister of National Education acts as the Coordination Point for Polish Qualifications Framework. [Works are ongoing](#) to implement the Polish Qualifications Framework into specific areas of education, particularly in vocational and higher education, as well as the labour market.

The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education consistent with the European education system was introduced in Poland in 2011 as a result of the Regulation of the Minister of Science and Higher Education of 2 November 2011 on the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) 2011.2553.1520). All higher education institutions are required to describe their study programmes through learning outcomes in three categories: knowledge, skills and social competences.

Work placements for students are covered by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and included in the study programmes.

Work is ongoing on the implementation of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). In order to support the national authorities, a National Team of ECVET Experts was established, which is functioning at the Foundation for the Development of the Education System. The Team's work also involves promoting the ECVET idea by publishing information materials and organising workshops and seminars for different audiences.

## Funding

Vocational schools for young people, vocational schools for adults, lifelong learning centres, and practical training institutions are financed by public funds. The key source of income is the education subsidy received from the central budget. It is divided between communes, districts and provinces on the basis of an algorithm, which is modified each year, applying different weights for particular groups of pupils and schools (including vocational school pupils/students).

In the years 2011-2013, local governments spent an average of PLN 60 billion annually on the financing of educational tasks. Nearly PLN 40 billion came from the education subsidy. The remaining funds are grants from the state budget, including funds from the European Union budget and local government funds. The scale and scope of educational tasks performed by local governments has been very diverse and depended on the wealth (budget) of the particular local government ([NIK 2014](#)).

Employers who organise apprenticeships in the form of on the job training receive a financial contribution from the school where the apprentice is learning.

The Polish legal framework guarantees the financing of employers who enter into an employment contract with a minor for the purpose of vocational training or job skills training. Training subsidies may be granted to enterprises which take in minors for vocational training or job skills training. The amount of the training subsidy per minor depends on the length of the training. It is reimbursed to employers from the Labour Fund.

Work placements for students can be subsidised by higher education institutions through grants from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and from European funds.

Internships for the unemployed and internship vouchers for unemployed people under 30 years of age are financed from the Labour Fund.

The State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons ([Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych - PFRON](#)) subsidises various forms of support for vocational activation of people with disabilities; such as internships organised by Employment Offices or other organisations implementing such schemes.

[Vortal of Public Employment Services](#) contains current offers of jobs, internships, traineeships, internships from Employment Offices, apprenticeships for adults, and work placements for students in the public administration institutions.

## Quality assurance

The principles and course of traineeships and apprenticeships, as well as various types of internships are subject of discussion and changes are planned to further improve their quality.

There is particularly strong criticism of the system of vocational education and training (basic vocational, secondary and post-secondary). Its ineffectiveness is exposed by the high unemployment rates among vocational school graduates (about 40% in the years 2012-2014), as well as the negative assessment of their skills reported by employers. According to the Supreme Audit Office ([Najwyższa Izba Kontroli - NIK](#)), [the main reason](#) for this situation is the mismatch between what the vocational schools offer compared to the needs of the labour market, which results from incomplete recognition of those needs and unsatisfactory conditions for vocational education and training. Another contributing factor has been the way in which vocational education has been financed from the state budget; without taking into account the actual costs of education for particular occupations. As a result, local governments have been abandoning costly education programmes. This has been reinforcing a vocational education model, in which the local infrastructural and personnel resources, rather than the needs of students and the labour market, were the decisive factors when launching a new programme.

The implemented education system reform (entered into force in 2017/2018 school year) aims to strengthen employers' participation in planning and organising traineeships and apprenticeships in trade (previously vocational) schools (see previous section on education).

Higher education institutions [develop their own Education Quality Assurance Systems](#), which take work placements for students into account in the assessment of their learning outcomes. Higher education institutions monitor the quality of education, including work placements, and run surveys to evaluate the quality of placements, as well as organise conferences/seminars to promote good practice standards. [The Polish Accreditation Committee](#) (Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna) plays an important role in assessing the quality of education, including student placements. It is an independent institution working to ensure and improve the quality of education.

The implemented education system reform (entered into force in 2017/2018 school year) envisages strengthening the importance of work placements in the process of educating students and tightening the link between education and business.

Since 2015, data has been collected through the national system of monitoring the Economic Fate of Graduates ([Ekonomiczny Los Absolwentów - ELA](#)) of higher education institutions. The monitoring system implemented by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education is an innovative solution on a European scale. The main source of information is the administrative data from reliable sources – the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS) system and the [POL-on system](#), i.e. the information system on higher education supporting the work of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

## 3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

### Youth employment measures

Youth employment is supported through a range of services and instruments provided for in the Act of 20 April 2004 on the promotion of employment and labour market institutions ([Journal of Laws \(Dz.U.\) of 2017, item 1065, as amended](#)). Many services and instruments addressed to young people are implemented through public labour market institutions i.e. Employment Offices and [Voluntary Labour Corps](#) ([Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy](#)). It is worth stressing that during the first decades of market economy the youth unemployment rate was very high and that the services and instruments supporting young people were available also for young adults (under 30 years old).

In Employment Offices, those registered as an unemployed may avail of the following services or support instruments:

- job seeking and recruitment, job placement, vocational guidance;
- intervention works, public works, socially useful works, reimbursed costs of travel and accommodation, reimbursed costs of taking care of child under 7 or a dependent;
- improving qualifications: traineeships, training sessions, tripartite training agreements, apprenticeships for adults, scholarship for continuing education, co-founding post-university courses, founding the costs of exams and licences, training loans;
- co-founding the business activity start, loan for the business activity start, co-founding the business activity start based on the rules stipulated for social cooperatives;
- employment voucher, occupancy (housing) voucher, traineeship (internship) voucher, training voucher (these forms only for an unemployed under 30 years old).

One of the most popular measures of support offered for young people by employment offices are internships, followed by trainings. In the years 2016-2019 it has been possible to reimburse the employer for part of the cost of salaries and social security contributions for full-time employment of unemployed persons under the age of 30. The refund covers a period of 12 months as long as the employment lasts 18 months. Another form of support can be the loan to start a business. The loan can be dismissed after fulfilling certain criteria

Employment Offices offer funding support which can be obtained for the purpose of starting a business (see 3.9 Start-up Funding for Young Entrepreneurs).

Implementation of the Youth Guarantee Initiative was launched in Poland in 2014. Among the addressees of the Youth Guarantee Initiative ([Zaktualizowany Plan Realizacji Gwarancji dla Młodzieży](#)) within Poland, four subgroups have been identified. The offering of the Initiative has been adjusted according to the subgroups needs:

- Persons aged 15 to 17 who are leaving school early – persons who neglect the schooling obligation (under 16 years old) or the educational obligation (under 18 years old).
- Persons aged 18 to 29 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) – including those who require special support, i.e. those who are separated from the labour market, from disadvantaged backgrounds, and from rural areas.
- Persons aged 18 to 29 registered as unemployed – including registered students of extramural and evening study programmes.
- Unemployed youth and job seeking graduates of schools and higher education institutions within 48 months from the date of graduation or receiving vocational qualification, aged 18 to 29 – in terms of support of young entrepreneurship.

Initially, activation measures for young unemployed were carried out exclusively by Employment Offices and Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP).

In November 2014, a loan scheme provided by [The National Development Bank](#) (Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego - BGK) was deployed throughout the country (the pilot phase covered only three provinces).

In 2015 and 2016, youth activation continued in Employment Offices (also through co-operation with BGK within the framework of the "First Business – Start-up Support" scheme) and through Voluntary Labour Corps.

In addition to the standard activities of Employment Offices and BGK, OHP projects "Action Activation – YEI and ESF" and "Unlock Your Potential – YEI and ESF" are implemented, which include individual psychological support; group active job search workshops; vocational courses; vocational qualification courses; language courses; ECDL courses; driving courses; entrepreneurship courses; job placement and mediation in the organisation of internships; and internships with employers. In 2017, the implementation

of projects “From Training to Employment – YEI and ESF” began for 3,700 professionally inactive persons from the NEET group.

Additional actions have been taken within the framework of central competitions organised under the programme “Young People on the Labour Market” (Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme). The competitions, announced by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy under the Youth Guarantee Initiative, concern projects supporting individual and comprehensive professional and educational activation of young people (unemployed, professionally inactive and jobseekers, especially those not registered at any Employment Office). The aim is to increase the employability of young people under the age of 29 who remain unemployed, especially those who are not in education or training (NEET youth). It is estimated that approximately 18 thousand people aged 15 to 29 will receive support within the framework of those central competitions (in 2016-2021).

**ECAM** – OHP have launched the Electronic Youth Activation Centre ([Elektroniczne Centrum Aktywizacji Młodzieży -ECAM](#)). It is a service platform for young jobseekers, those with learning difficulties or having problems with functioning in their environment. Through the ICT system, young people can receive specific information about the location of the nearest OHP unit, which can provide them with education or employment assistance. ECAM was created as part of the project “OHP as a Provider of Labour Market Services” thanks to European Union funds from the European Social Fund.

**State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons** ([Państwowy Fundusz Rehabilitacji Osób Niepełnosprawnych, PFRON](#)) PFRON subsidises services and instruments addressed to people with disabilities offered by Employment Offices. Support can be provided to people with disabilities registered as unemployed and those who do not have an unemployed status but who are looking for work.

In 2017, PFRON launched three pilot programmes aimed at increasing the employment of people with disabilities in the open labour market (including young people). Each programme is expected to provide employment to at least 1,000 people.

- The Graduate programme, addressed to graduates and students in their final year at higher education institutions.
- The Stable Employment programme in administration and public services.

The “Work-Integration” programme, addressed to enterprises and non-governmental organisations.

## Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

In Poland, measures have been taken to increase the security of employees on the labour market, which involved counteracting the abuse of civil law contracts by employers, temporary work, and low wages. These changes relate significantly to the situation of young people in the labour market, as they are the most affected by these practices. Other activities increasing the safety of young employees on the labor market are: zero PIT for young people and programs supporting work-life balance.

### Counteracting the abuse of civil law contracts and introducing a minimum hourly rate

In order to prevent the abuse of civil law contracts in employment and to protect the lowest paid workers, the Act of 22 July 2016 amending the [Minimum Wage Act](#) and certain other acts (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.), No. 1265, as amended) introduced into the legal framework a guaranteed minimum wage for specific civil law contracts (previously, it applied to only contracts of employment). From 1 January 2017, a minimum hourly rate of PLN 13 is applicable to each hour of commissioned work or services provided (including via self-employment). In subsequent years, the rate will be adjusted to a level corresponding to the increase in the minimum wage for employees. From 2020, the



minimum wage will increase to PLN 2,600 gross, while the minimum hourly rate to PLN 17 gross.

The Act also introduces amendments to the Act of 13 April 2007 on the State Labour Inspectorate ([Państwowa Inspekcja Pracy - PIP](#)). The tasks of PIP have been extended to include inspection of whether salaries are paid in amounts consistent with the minimum hourly rate. As a result of the findings of such inspections, PIP inspectors will be able to send a letter (including post-inspection conclusions and legal basis) or give oral instructions to pay a salary in the amount consistent with the minimum hourly rate.

### **Changes in the employment of temporary workers**

In 2017, the Act on Temporary Workers and various other laws were amended. The changes are to enter into force on 1 January 2018.

The maximum duration of temporary work has been reduced. A temporary employment agency will be able to delegate a temporary worker to work for a single employer for a period not exceeding 18 months in total in any period of 36 consecutive months. At the same time, the employer will be able to avail of the work of the same temporary worker for a period not exceeding 18 months in total in any period of 36 consecutive months. The law also envisages strengthening the court measures available to temporary workers. They will be able, like other employees, to bring action before a labour court of their choice.

**New list of work forbidden for minors (2016).** The amendment adjusts Polish regulations to EU regulations. Directive 2014/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 has amended Council Directive 94/33/EC on the protection of young people at work.

### **ZERO PIT - tax exemption for young people up to 26 (2019)**

From August 1, 2019, there is a tax exemption for salaries of persons up to 26. The relief (or more precisely, tax exemption) will cover revenues from the service relationship, employment relationship, outwork, cooperative employment relationship and contracts, received by the taxpayer up to the amount PLN 85 528 in a tax year.

### **Reconciliation of private and working life for young people**

Projects concerning the reconciliation of working and private life are carried out within the framework of competitions announced by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy.

In 2017, a practical web-based platform which provides comprehensive information on the mechanisms for reconciling working and private life was developed. It shows employers step by step how to introduce optimal solutions in this respect in their workplace. This platform was developed under the project "[Family and Work – It Pays Off!](#)" co-financed by the European Commission.

2017 (Q4) will see the announcement of the competition entitled "Implementation of Tools to Support the Fight Against Discrimination in the Workplace and Access to Employment in Small Enterprises" under Measure 2.1 Equal opportunities for men and women in all areas, including access to employment, career development, and the reconciliation of working and private life (Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme).

The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy is working on amendments to the [Under-3s Childcare Act](#).

A scheme supporting the development of childcare institutions for children under the age of 3 has been carried out by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy since 2011 ([Maluch Plus](#)). It envisages co-financing from the state budget – through an open tender – of initiatives for creating new or keeping the existing available places by various entities (public and non-public) in various forms of childcare institutions (crèche, children's club and daycare provider).



## Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

The youth employment promotion policy implemented by Public employment services is financed, among other sources, from the Labour Fund (a state-owned special purpose fund created from employer contributions) and from European funds, and in the case of people with disabilities, also from PFRON funds.

Public employment services may outsource some of their services to private and non-governmental organisations.

Implementation of the Youth Guarantee Initiative is financed from public funds and European funds, e.g. in the years 2017-2018 the effect on the public finance sector will total approximately PLN 2.7 billion annually (including about PLN 1.1 billion of European funds; estimated data).

Projects related to the reconciliation of working and private life carried out through competitions are financed from the state budget and European funds.

## Quality assurance

Statistics on youth participation in active labour market policies (ALMP), including the cost-effectiveness and employment effectiveness of the different forms of activation, are collected by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy and are publicly available.

The results of empirical research indicate, however, that young people are dissatisfied with the quality of services offered; especially young people who have difficulty entering and remaining in the labour market, such as the disabled.

Employment support projects funded by European funds in previous financial perspectives often did not have long-term goals, and those funds were not used effectively.

The diagnosed barriers in the use of EU funds in Poland include (Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020 (with a forecast up to 2030)):

- Insufficient developmental effect of the projects selected for co-financing
- Low effectiveness of the applied forms of support
- Poor effects of support in the area of innovation
- Insufficient potential of the implementing institutions and the beneficiaries to plan and implement strategic development projects affecting socio-economic growth and employment
- Ineffective mechanisms for co-ordination of the various European funding measures

The main task in the current financial perspective for 2014-2020 is to use EU funds to achieve permanent developmental effects in the country.

## 3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

### Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

The educational and professional mobility of young people takes place primarily within the framework of EU programmes – presently [the Erasmus+ programme](#). There are other multilateral, bilateral and national programmes (co-)financed by Polish authorities and/or by other countries or foreign organisations. Services to promote professional mobility are offered by the [European network of Public Employment Services EURES](#).

#### [Erasmus+](#) in Poland

The structure of the Erasmus+ programme for 2014-2020 includes the following components:

- Key Action 1. Mobility of Individuals;
- Key Action 2. Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices;
- Key Action 3. Support for Policy Reform;
- Jean Monnet programme;
- Sport – support for sports-related initiatives.

Within the Key Action1 international mobility of learners and staff is supported. Information on programmes regarding international job mobility, entrepreneurship mobility and career opportunities is available at <http://erasmusplus.org.pl/o-programie/> by sector and by action: school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education, youth, central projects, and sports.

### **Voluntary Labour Corps ([Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy, OHP](#))**

OHP conduct youth exchange programmes and organise youth holiday excursions, including trips to work in other countries. The international exchange of young people is carried out within the following programmes: Erasmus+, the Polish-German Youth Cooperation, the Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund, and the Visegrad Fund.

From 2015, [EURES](#) services are provided (in addition to Employment Offices) at OHP by EURES advisers and EURES assistants, who are employed in 16 OHP Regional Headquarters and 49 OHP Youth Education and Employment Centres.

They are open to the public, free of charge, and addressed to jobseekers interested in moving to another country for employment, as well as to employers who wish to recruit foreign workers.

### **Other entities for students**

Students are offered many work placement schemes in other countries with a variety of entities. For example:

International Parliamentary Scholarship of the German Bundestag. The scholarship programme of the German Bundestag and the Berlin Universities – International Parliamentary Scholarship (IPS) lasts five months. The main part of the programme is a 15-week internship at the office of one of the deputies to the Bundestag.

[The Polish-American Freedom Foundation](#) offers [internship scholarships and internships](#) at reputable American companies.

### **Services by Public Employment Services**

Public Employment Services in Poland are a member of EURES network since the time of Poland's accession to the European Union (2004). The function of the National Coordination Office is performed by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, Department of Labour Market. **EURES helps jobseekers to find jobs and employers to recruit from all over Europe**

### **[Vortal of Public Employment Services](#)**

Contains current job offers in EU and EEA countries.

### **[EURES](#)**

In Poland, activities within the EURES network are performed by:

- Provincial Employment Offices
- District Employment Offices
- Provincial headquarters of Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP)
- Youth work and education centres of Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP)
- Entities accredited by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy

The network of EURES advisers and assistants is nationwide.

It is also worth to stress the importance of the [European Job Mobility Portal](#).

### **Other opportunities for students**

- International Scholarship of Bundestag - 15 months' internship in one of Bundestag deputies
- [Polish-American Freedom Foundation traineeship scheme](#)

## **Legal framework**

### **Employment of foreigners in Poland**

Employing foreigners in Poland is governed first and foremost by the Act of 20 April 2004 on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions, the Act of 12 December 2013 of Foreigners and implementing regulations.

In accordance with EU documents, Poland accepts the free movement of workers in the Member States of the European Union, the European Economic Area, and Switzerland.

Permits to work in Poland are not required e.g. for family members of EU/EEA/Switzerland nationals, foreigners granted protection in Poland (e.g. a refugee status, tolerated stay), people holding a Polish Card, foreign language teachers in education system institutions, graduates of Polish upper-secondary schools and full-time university courses as well as students and PhD students during their studies in Poland.

The foreigners, third country nationals, can be entrusted work in Poland provided they obtain **a work permit** and they stay in Poland legally. The work permit is applied for by an employer to a competent voivode, and if this is an S-type permit (i.e. a seasonal work permit) to a competent starost (Poviat Labour Office). With respect to a temporary residence and work permit, the foreigner staying in Poland legally applies to a competent voivode.

The simplified procedure, also known as the "declaration procedure" (without the need to obtain a work permit), applies to citizens of the following countries: The Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine. They can work in Poland for 6 months in any period of 12 consecutive months, if the employer made a special declaration at the employment office.

## **3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence**

### **Policy Framework**

In Poland there is no separate strategy for teaching entrepreneurship, however the issue is addressed in several general strategies. The most important strategy is the Lifelong Learning Perspective ([Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie](#)) which defines the national strategic framework for lifelong learning and vocational training. The strategy is being implemented in the 2013-2020 period and covers all levels of education.

The government [Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020](#) (with a forecast up to 2030) focuses on the development of entrepreneurial competences and support for the creation of new innovative companies in Poland: "The Strategy, oriented towards responsible and solidary development, aims to trigger entrepreneurship, inventiveness and productivity."

Entities involved in entrepreneurship development in Poland include:

Government: Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the following ministries: Ministry of Development ([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) and the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy ([Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej](#) until November 2019 Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Ministry of Investment and Development), Ministry of

National Education ([Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej](#)), Ministry of Science and Higher Education ([Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego](#)), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy ([Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej](#)).

Other entities such as the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development, entrepreneurs and their organisations, and banks.

Among them, the Ministry of Development ([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) and the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy ([Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej](#), and the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development ([Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości -PARP](#)) play a particularly important role in the context of supporting entrepreneurship at policy level. Both the Ministry and the Agency actively participate in the creation and effective implementation of the strategy related to entrepreneurship and innovation.

For a number of years, the [National Bank of Poland](#) has been involved in the promotion of economic and financial education among young people, and operates an economic education portal (<https://www.nbpportal.pl/edukacja-w-nbp>). Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego implements the "[First Business – Start-up Support](#)" scheme of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy to support the development of entrepreneurship.

The most complete information on the entrepreneurship of young people in Poland is provided by the OECD report: [YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT IN POLAND](#). Rapid Policy Assessments of Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies and Programmes, 2015.

## Formal learning

Information on entrepreneurship education in schools in Europe, including Poland, is included in the [EURYDICE report](#): Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe (2016).

The report provides information on primary and secondary education (lower and upper secondary schools), including vocational schools. The reference year is 2014/15 and the information has been collected in 33 countries within the EURYDICE network. In addition to the extensive comparative description, the report also includes brief information on entrepreneurship education in each country.

Entrepreneurship education in schools in Poland is described on pages 179-180.

"Entrepreneurship Education is explicitly integrated in the curricula.

At ISCED levels 2 and 3, there is a compulsory subject entitled 'Knowledge about Society'. Within the subject, all students are required to participate in an educational project (20% of the course in ISCED level 2 and 10% in ISCED level 3).

In ISCED level 3, the compulsory subject 'Introduction to Entrepreneurship' involves students in social/civic activities and develops their creative skills and initiative. In the optional subject 'Economics in Practice', students implement an individual educational project" (Eurydice Report 2016, p 180).

In connection with the implemented reform of the Polish education system, which started in the 2017-2018 school year, the changes to entrepreneurship education have not yet been completed.

Currently, entrepreneurship education in schools takes place according to old and new programs. The report "School for an innovator. Shaping pro-innovation competences" ([Szkoła dla innowatora 2018](#)) published by the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology contains a critical assessment of teaching programs and methods covering pro-innovative competences in Polish schools. Critical assessment also concerns the system of teachers training in the area of entrepreneurship.

Government actions are being taken to improve the digital competences of students and the use of new technologies in the education process, including shaping innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship among young people, among others the number of hours of computer science teaching has been increased, curricula are being implemented to

develop inference skills, analytical skills, strategic thinking, the ability to look critically at the task solution, and the ability to apply knowledge in practice.

By 2021, all schools in Poland will have access to broadband Internet. The government's "Active Whiteboard" ("Aktywna Tablica") program (2017-2019) will allow to equip schools with multimedia devices to replace traditional blackboards in classrooms in three years.

Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology launched the "School for an Innovator" ("[Szkola dla Innowatora](#)") program in 2019. It aims to develop practical skills to work with students, shape students' pro-innovation competences, and develop recommendations in this regard. The program will be implemented in the 2020/2021 school year in 20 schools throughout Poland and will be used to introduce changes in school education in the field of entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship is part of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education. This means that most third-level students must, at least to a minimum extent, come into contact with entrepreneurship during their studies. However, the potential of students in this field remains unused (OECD Report, [YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT IN POLAND](#), 2015).

The new law in higher education, "Constitution for Science" (2018) focuses on promoting entrepreneurship through the development of partnerships for knowledge transfer and strengthening of co-operation between higher education institutions, on the one hand, and businesses and employers, on the other hand.

A valuable educational initiative of higher education institutions is the effort to transfer knowledge from science to business. An example is Innovative Youth: a thesis competition which has been organised by the Industrial Institute of Automation and Measurements since 2009. Competitions for best theses (engineering and master's) are organised in the fields of automatics, robotics and measurement, and currently also for best doctoral theses. In the years 2009-2017, 525 entries were submitted to the [Innovation Young competition](#).

## Non-formal and informal learning

Entrepreneurship training outside of formal education is conducted by many entities, a substantial part of which is financed by EU funds. Initiatives from previous EU funding programming sessions are available in the OECD Report, [YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT IN POLAND](#), 2015.

The most comprehensive scheme of supporting youth entrepreneurship is offered by the [Youth Enterprise Foundation](#) (*Fundacja Młodzieżowej Przedsiębiorczości*) (A member of [Junior Achievement Worldwide](#)).

This is a non-governmental public benefit organisation aimed at preparing children and young people for market economy conditions and enabling young people to acquire the knowledge and practical skills necessary to facilitate the implementation of their professional plans. The Foundation is a member of Junior Achievement Worldwide, the oldest and fastest-growing youth education organisation in the world, currently operating in 120 countries. The Foundation's schemes prepare young people for entry into the labour market, teach entrepreneurship and how to navigate through the financial world, develop critical thinking skills and shape an active attitude towards life. Currently the Foundation is operating 12 schemes and projects for the youth of primary schools, lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools, under which national competitions are organised. Participants have the opportunity to represent Poland during the international editions of those competitions.

The Ministry of Development launched a pilot version of a new form of support in 2017. This scheme was for people wishing to improve their skills. The Ministry has allocated over PLN 50 million to repayable aid (i.e. interest-free loans with the possibility of partial remission) for adults from all over the country who wish to take courses or postgraduate studies, [under the Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme](#). Loans will

be provided by two operators selected through a competition. The “Education Loans” Fund will be implemented by the Regional Development Agency Foundation in Starachowice, in partnership with the Co-operation Fund Foundation from Warsaw, and the “Nationwide Academic Education Scheme” Fund will be implemented by the Foundation for Enterprise Development in Suwałki.

The “Education Loans” Fund is aimed at adults. The loans are intended only for postgraduate studies, courses, training and other forms of adult education offered by national and international entities (except for level I, II and III study courses), lasting no longer than 24 months.

In 2017, a training and mentoring scheme was launched for graduates and PhD students of Polish higher education institutions who plan to have a career in science, business or public administration - [TopMinds](#). It is a joint initiative of the Top 500 Innovators Association and the [Polish-American Fulbright Commission](#). The aim of the scheme is to:

- Prepare its participants to take on challenges and find their own path to achieve their professional goals,
- Develop interpersonal competences and build proactive attitudes,
- Strengthen the sense of professional and personal value,
- Establish relationships and develop a network of contacts

The scheme offers participation in individual mentoring, meetings and lectures with representatives of various professions and participation in training sessions on the development of interpersonal competences.

### **Educators support in entrepreneurship education**

Entrepreneurship education has not been included in teacher training curricula, but is available through in-service training, which is essential for career advancement (Eurydice Report 2016). In-service training is provided through various types of courses. At present many higher education institutions offer postgraduate studies in entrepreneurship for teachers.

[Centres for Education Development](#) (ORE). In-service training is provided by institutions at central level (Centre for Education Development) and by provincial and district teacher development centres. ORE provides an in-service training offer in the field of teaching entrepreneurship to all lower secondary and upper secondary school teachers.

Postgraduate studies in entrepreneurship for teachers. Such study courses are offered, among others, by the [SGH Warsaw School of Economics](#). These are studies for teachers in lower secondary and upper secondary schools wishing to gain new qualifications in the field of entrepreneurship education. Due to the fact that the course is financed by the National Bank of Poland, the tuition fees for three semesters are PLN 500.

Postgraduate studies in the field of entrepreneurship for teachers can also be completed online (at [Polish Virtual University](#)).

Youth Enterprise Foundation ([Fundacja Młodzieżowej Przedsiębiorczości](#)) (A member of Junior Achievement Worldwide) The foundation offers in-service training in entrepreneurship education for all primary and secondary school teachers, including vocational schools. In-service training courses, workshops or free conferences to expand one’s knowledge of issues related to entrepreneurship education are also available.

## **3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs**

### **Access to information**

Information on how to set up a business and source funding is widely available, and can be located on various websites, including those of the Ministry of Development



([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) and the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy ([Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej](#)), the [Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy](#) ([Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej](#)) the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development ([Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości](#)) [Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego](#) ([The National Development Bank](#)), Employment Offices, Student Career Centres, business incubators, regional and local entrepreneurship support centres, entrepreneurship foundations and associations.

Many of those entities provide information and support upon personal contact.

The website of the Ministry of Development ([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) includes information on loan and guarantee funds, grants, economic zones and Corporate Social Responsibility.

The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy has launched the [Youth Guarantee Initiative](#) website.

Information regarding the forms of assistance when starting a business is available on the [websites of provincial and district Employment Offices](#) and through the Green Line service (i.e. electronic and telephone service centre for clients of Employment Offices from all over Poland):

The website of Academic Business Incubators ([Akademickie Inkubatory Przedsiębiorczości](#)) provides information and a contact form for interested parties.

The website of [Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego](#) contains extensive information about the loan scheme for young people provided by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy - "First Business – Start-up Support":

## Access to capital

The access to capital to start business is available from several sources:

The "[First Business – Start-up Support](#)" scheme of the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy is implemented by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego.

The aim of the scheme is to develop entrepreneurship and create new jobs. Funds for the implementation of the scheme come from the Labour Fund.

A loan for starting a business may be granted to:

- Final year students in higher education institutions
- Graduates of a higher education institution within 4 years from the date of graduation or receiving their vocational qualification
- Registered unemployed

The loan amount is PLN 91 604 (as of 1 December 2018). These are low-interest loans. Repayment period is up to 7 years. Borrowers who have obtained a business start-up loan may benefit from free consultancy and training services.

## Academic Business Incubators ([Akademickie Inkubatory Przedsiębiorczości](#))

Academic Business Incubators were established in 2004. The goal was to create a place in Poland where one could start a business and acquire support without huge risk. The offer is mainly for students, but can also be availed of by other people.

Academic Business Incubators offer the possibility of setting up a Trial Company, without registering a business. The pre-incubation model (Non-ZUS Business) involves using the legal personality of Academic Business Incubators by first-time entrepreneurs for the purpose of setting up their business.

In addition to accounting and legal support, the offer includes using the offices of Academic Business Incubators, consultations with experts, training, mentor support, and other support.

In 2005, the nationwide network of Academic Business Incubators had 12 incubators, while in 2015 there were 56.

In 2006, there were 300 start-ups in the Incubators. In 2015, there were 2,300.

Academic Business Incubators is Europe's leading start-up organisation, setting trends in Poland and abroad, which, together with the Business Link network and the Seed Capital fund, forms a start-up ecosystem comparable to the Google ecosystem.

Since 2004, thanks to Academic Business Incubators, more than 12,000 companies have been created, including well-known brands such as PhotoBlog.pl, Chomikuj.pl, MISBHV, Key2Print, and Glov.

### Employment Offices

Employment Offices offer funding support for starting a business (see 3.9) – this is a form of support provided to the unemployed. The amount of funding is specified in a contract, but cannot be higher than 6 times the average salary, (i.e. PLN 25 533 as at December 2017, PLN 29 035 as at September 2019). The aid is non-repayable, provided that the conditions specified in the contract are fulfilled.

Those who meet the criteria set out in the Act of 13 June 2003 on Social Employment (Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2003, No. 122, item 1143, as amended) may receive funds for the establishment of a social co-operative (e.g. persons coming out of homelessness, alcohol and drug addicts, mentally ill persons, long-term unemployed, disabled).

Some Employment Offices run schemes which offer funding to young people (aged 18 to 30) for the running of a business. An example is the scheme "Activation of unemployed young people in Warsaw (II)" co-financed by the European Social Fund under the [Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme, Sub-measure 1.1.1.](#)

## 3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

### Special events and activities

In the public policy of the state, the Ministry of Development ([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) and its subordinate agency, the [Polish Agency for Enterprise Development \(Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości - PARP\)](#), play an important role in promoting the culture of entrepreneurship.

The websites of the Ministry of Development ([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) and the Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy ([Ministerstwo Funduszy i Polityki Regionalnej](#)) contain basic information on the country's development and economic security policy, [support for entrepreneurship](#) (information on loan and guarantee funds, subsidies, economic zones and Corporate Social Responsibility) and on the [use of European funds](#) (use, projects and outcomes in 2004-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020).

The Ministry of Development ([Ministerstwo Rozwoju](#)) issues an annual report: [Entrepreneurship in Poland](#).

One of the main promoters of entrepreneurship in Poland is the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development ([PARP](#)) i.e. a government agency subordinated to the Ministry of Development. PARP is involved in the implementation of national and international projects financed by structural funds, the state budget and multi-annual programmes of the European Commission. Its main objective is to support SMEs. (Small and medium enterprises)

In the years 2014-2020, PARP will be responsible for the implementation of actions under three operational programmes:

- Smart Growth Operational Programme;
- Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme;

- Eastern Poland Operational Programme (supra-regional programme for 5 provinces in Eastern Poland: Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Podlaskie, Świętokrzyskie, and Warmińsko-Mazurskie).

The Agency offers entrepreneurship training and start-up loans. It co-operates with higher education institutions by supporting start-ups established by graduates and university spin-outs. It provides assistance to business support institutions and organisations, including science and technology parks, incubators and technology transfer centres, and conducts promotional activities. In 2013, it issued a manual "How to Become and Remain an Entrepreneur".

One of the manifestations of the Agency's activity is the annual Polish Product of the Future competition, designed to promote new, innovative technologies.

The Ministry of Science and Higher Education supports entrepreneurial attitudes among students and graduates through training and internship schemes such as the [Top 500 Innovators](#), the largest government scheme to support innovation in science. With classes conducted by eminent practitioners, study visits to foreign centres and internships at the most innovative companies, participants learn how to effectively commercialise the results of scientific research.

The new law of 2018 in higher education, "Constitution for Science" ([Konstytucja dla nauki](#)) promotes the launch of many initiatives focused on entrepreneurship at universities.

An example is the [program](#) launched at the University of Warsaw **the University's Integrated Development Programme (ZIP)**. It is a comprehensive project focused on improving the quality and effectiveness of education in Bachelor, Master and Doctoral programmes, as well as supporting adaptation of the University's offer to the needs of the economy, labour market and the society. It has started on **April 1, 2018** and will last until **March 31, 2022**. The main objectives of the project are:

- Strengthening the mechanism of adaptation of Masters programmes to socio-economic needs and launching a new or redesigned Master programmes in Polish and English, enriched with new didactic elements;
- Improving the quality of language education, increasing the number of fields of study taught in English and launching additional forms of education, e.g. interdisciplinary or specialized summer schools in foreign languages;
- Increasing students' competences matching the needs of the economy, labour market and the society, especially in the areas of analytical, IT, communication, interpersonal, entrepreneurial, language and professional competences;
- Increasing international mobility of PhD students, strengthening their practical skills and scientific competences, as well as scientific contacts for developing international and interdisciplinary research projects;
- Support for organisational changes and development of university management IT tools, especially in the field of education;
- Increasing the competences of university's staff and support the implementation of the human resources development strategy.

Activities promoting an entrepreneurial culture among schoolchildren are undertaken by the Youth Enterprise Foundation (A member of Junior Achievement Worldwide).

The foundation organises the [Entrepreneurship Day](#) competition (13th edition in 2017) Over 40,000 pupils from about 700 schools and almost 15,000 companies and institutions participate in the Entrepreneurship Day every year. The competition encourages young people to make the right decisions in planning their further education and career path. By participating in the scheme students are able to obtain information about the education, skills or predispositions necessary to go into a given profession. They can also learn how to organise and manage one's own business.

It is worth emphasising that young people in Poland [show high acceptance for entrepreneurial attitudes and willingness to set up companies](#). The results of nationwide studies of upper secondary school students show that young Poles want to be professionally independent (Feder, 2017). Young people want to run their own businesses in order to “take matters in their own hands” by planning their careers, increase their wages and develop on the labour market.

## Networks and partnerships

There are several networks of young entrepreneurs in Poland, which tend to focus on graduates of higher education institutions, such as [Youth Business Poland](#), [The Polish Chamber of Young Entrepreneurs](#) (*Polska Izba Młodych Przedsiębiorców*), and [Leviathan Youth Forum](#).

There are also many local associations of young entrepreneurs, such as the [Association of Young Entrepreneurs – Wrocław](#).

In principle, the support networks do not co-operate directly with each other. Efforts are being made to improve relations between the networks. The National Chamber of Commerce is carrying out a project called “Innovative Youth”, which attempts to facilitate co-operation between youth organisations, higher education institutions, business incubators and science and technology parks. The “Innovative Youth” project includes conferences, meetings with business leaders and the “Forum for Young Entrepreneurs”.

[Young & Innovative Forum](#) is one of the most popular startup conferences in Poland, which gathers approximately 300 young entrepreneurs on the spot and 15 000 online viewers (2018).

## 3.11 Current debates and reforms

The improvement of the situation on the labour market in Poland (decrease of unemployment, increase of employment rate, limitation of fixed-term contracts) contribute to a better situation of young people. However, not all barriers hampering the labour activity of young people have been removed. Many young people still face severe difficulties preventing them from starting an independent adulthood. In this respect, the young people not in education, employment nor training need to be mentioned. According to Eurostat data (2019), they account for 10,1 % of all Europeans aged 15-24 and 16,6% of those aged 20-34 (in Poland 8,1 and 17,7 respectively). Early school leavers (aged 18-24) in 2019 account for 10,3% in Europe against 5,2% in Poland. The employment rate of young people aged 20-29 as of 2019 is at the level of 66,3% in the EU28 and in Poland - 68,7% (however in many countries it is significantly higher - 78,3% in the UK, 80,1% in the Netherlands, 74,5% in Estonia and 76,8% in Germany).

Current issues and reforms regarding youth employment and entrepreneurship are linked to the following issues.

**Better support for the process of youth transitioning from school to the labour market.** This is to be achieved through, among other things, the education reform (effective from the 2017/2018 school year) and the modernisation of higher education study programmes (as a result the introduced reform of higher education from the 2018/2019). The main goals of those changes are the real inclusion of employers in the education and traineeship processes, at all stages of education, and approximation of the education and research process to the labour market and business needs.

**Support for the development of young entrepreneurship and start-ups.** The emphasis on developing innovative attitudes and launching start-ups is related to the development policy of the country, which is geared towards investment objectives and increasing the competitiveness of the economy, by increasing expenditures on science and development of new technologies, supporting Special Economic Spheres and improving

the functioning of the business environment (planned reduction of social security contributions (ZUS) for small enterprises in 2020).

**Measures to facilitate the reconciliation of working and private life.** This is to be achieved through initiatives aimed at the development of childcare infrastructure and forms of childcare, and the development of housing programmes for young people and families with children (Mieszkanie+ scheme, Maluch Plus).

**Support for disadvantaged groups in the labour market.** These are the actions undertaken under the Youth Guarantee Initiative and the Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme, as well as PFRON initiatives for the disabled. It is important to support the development of the social economy sector by implementing a system of accreditation of centres for support of social economy entities and allocating additional financial instruments for their development.

**Limitation of various forms of temporary employment (under employment contracts and civil law contracts) and better protection of employees.** The minimum wage and hourly rate are constantly being raised. In 2019, zero PIT was introduced for young employees up to 26 years old. Consultations on the new labour law are ongoing.

Public policy in the area of employment and entrepreneurship (cf. documents such as the [Strategy for Responsible Development until 2020](#) (with a forecast up to 2030), the [National Reform Programme. Europe 2020](#)), is aimed at better preparing young people for the labour market, creating attractive and development-promoting workplaces for young people in Poland as well as encouraging entrepreneurship and encouraging the establishment of new businesses. Priority is also given to creating conditions for better integration of working and private life by supporting the development of housing and social infrastructure (Mieszkanie+ scheme, development of various forms of childcare i.e. Maluch Plus) and by supporting the demographic development of the country and counteracting the poverty of families with children (Rodzina 500+ scheme: benefit in the amount of 500 PLN, monthly paid for every child under 18 years of age). An important aim is to stop the emigration of young people from Poland and to create conditions for the return of economic migrants to the country.

Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the transition towards remote forms of employment and automatisisation in many companies. The debates on the education system and the preparation of young people to entering the labour market often tackle the issue of digital competences necessary in the changing labour market. At the same time, automatisisation and robotisation might negatively influence the demand for labour and in consequence, increase of unemployment rates.

## 4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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The main problems affecting young people which can potentially contribute to their social exclusion include:

- searching for their identity in adolescence, shaping their own personality and world view. Lack of financial stability, lack of access to professional support, and lack of attractive opportunities to shape their own, as well as national or local, identity are a significant impediment to this process;
- the poor physical condition of young people, caused by the low level of physical activity of young people;
- disability – young people with disabilities are a diverse group, both in terms of the type and degree of disability, and in terms of social, educational and professional activity;

- poor mental condition of the young generation, including depression and eating disorders – one of the indicators is the increase in suicide rates among children and adolescents. Other manifestations include dysfunctional use of the Internet (including addiction), leading to attention disorders or aggressive behaviour, and substance dependence (nicotine, alcohol and drugs). Long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the younger generation are not yet fully known. However, it seems that it will exacerbate negative phenomena in areas of young people's mental health and fitness;
- low level of cultural activity among young people: poor participation in extracurricular activities, decrease in book readership, decreased interest in the offer of cultural institutions and participation in amateur artistic movements;
- the difficult situation of young people in the labour market due to lack of professional experience and low qualifications, and lack of skills and readiness to adapt them to the requirements of a dynamically changing labour market, low level of key competences useful in professional work (including the ability to show initiative and entrepreneurship, co-operation with others, and communication), low job security and undeveloped social capital in potential workplaces.

## 4.1 General Context

### Main challenges to social inclusion

The threat of social exclusion faced by young people should be considered in many dimensions: starting with financial exclusion, which frequently goes hand in hand with addictions, violence, unemployment, and inferior living conditions (often resulting in school failure of young people and poorer functioning in the community), to lack of opportunity or even lack of choice, to far-reaching consequences that disconnect young people from the entire sphere of higher education, career, or social life. The phenomenon of exclusion reinforces the process of inheritance of poverty, which potentially leads to young people repeating the life scenarios of their parents and guardians ([Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, Kruszyński](#)).

A comprehensive diagnosis of the most important challenges in this area is included in the National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030 ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021–2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)). A comprehensive diagnosis of the most important challenges in this area is included in the National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030. Between 2012 and 2019, the number of children aged 0 to 17 living in homes at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPe) decreased by half. However, around a million children in that age live within that risk. Around 172 000 children suffer from severe material deprivation (SMD). This affects children in incomplete families most of all (10% children in such families) and in multi-children families (3.5% children in those families). Another social group touched by poverty and social exclusion are children and youth with disabilities. Among homes with at least one child up to the age of 16 with a disability diagnosis we see a notably higher rate of economic poverty.

Access to care for children aged 1 to 3 keeps improving, but the 33% rate that was selected as a goal for the year 2020 has still not been reached. Currently, this goal has been moved to year 2030.

Education system in Poland provides access to education to all groups of children and youth. The number of children requiring help in the education process keeps growing. In school year 2016-2017 school year, special education was extended to 184 000 students with various kinds of disabilities. In 2020-2021, this number increased to 225 000.



In the context of older children and youth (ages 15 to 24), importance is on moving from education to the workplace. The phenomenon of people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is worrying. In Poland, the NEET rate for 2020 was 8.6%, translation to around 300 000 people in such a position.

The main problems affecting young people which can potentially contribute to their social exclusion include:

- Searching for their identity in adolescence, shaping their own personality and world view. Lack of financial stability, lack of access to professional support, and lack of attractive opportunities to shape their own, as well as national or local, identity are a significant impediment to this process;
- The poor physical condition of young people, caused by the low level of physical activity of young people – according to [study from 2018](#) the “most common risk factor for future health issues, present in all researched groups, is an insufficient level of physical activity.” This problem increases in age. Among young people, obesity and overweight are also problems, affecting around 30% of the researched population. However, “insufficient attention is paid to low body mass problems in the child population. It shows up in 14% of children aged 7-9 and among early adolescent youth (12-14 years), which compared to the referential value of 3 to 5% suggests a concerning result.” An overwhelming majority of leisure time is spent on activities that do not require movement and physical effort (the reason are alleged to be the low quality of physical education at school and the dominance of alternative non-physical ways of spending free time) as well as poor eating habits (leading to being overweight and/or deficiencies) and insufficient sleep.
- Disability – young people with disabilities are a diverse group, both in terms of the type and degree of disability, and in terms of social, educational and professional activity;
- Poor mental condition of the young generation, including depression and eating disorders – one of the indicators is the increase in suicide rates among children and adolescents. Other manifestations include dysfunctional use of the Internet (including addiction), leading to attention disorders or aggressive behaviour, and substance dependence (nicotine, alcohol and drugs);
- Low level of cultural activity among young people: poor participation in extracurricular activities, decrease in book readership, decreased interest in the offer of cultural institutions and participation in amateur artistic movements;
- The difficult situation of young people in the labour market due to lack of professional experience and low qualifications, and lack of skills and readiness to adapt them to the requirements of a dynamically changing labour market, low level of key competences useful in professional work (including the ability to show initiative and entrepreneurship, co-operation with others, and communication), low job security and undeveloped social capital in potential workplaces. In this context, it seems important to fill the gap in the educational offer (formal, non-formal and informal) with proposals aimed at developing competences highly valued by employers. Young people are often offered employment on the basis of civil law contracts or temporary contracts only, which means that they are less protected against dismissal, and this, in turn, creates a precarious employment situation for such people and thus prevents them from making long-term financial commitments (taking out a mortgage to buy a home) and private commitments (for example, this delays the process of starting a family and the decision to have children). As a consequence, they are reluctant to ‘fly the nest’ and end up living with their parents until they are 30, thus becoming independent increasingly late. The biggest concern is the phenomenon of staying outside of employment, education or training (NEET). In Poland, the percentage of young people in that situation was estimated at 14,9% in 2016, and mainly concerned young people aged 18 to 24. Analogous rate for 2020 was 8.6%. Being a member of the NEET group not only results in reinforcement of negative patterns in professional life, but also translates into lower trust – including in

institutions, less interest and involvement in public affairs (e.g. participation in elections) and less involvement in social issues (including membership in organisations);

- Being raised out of the natural family environment: in 2019, ca. 72 450 were living with foster families and in different types of institutions (emergency care, specialist therapeutic care, socialisation, multifunctional). It is a increase by 0,9% in comparison with 2018. Of all the young people raised out of the natural family environment, in 2019 77% were raised in foster families (67,3% in 2007).
- In 2018, over [2 million people aged 24 to 34 lived with at least one of their parents](#). As such, 36% of young adults are living with their parents.
- Large families and incomplete families as factors which can potentially lead to financial problems and thus exclusion (as evidenced by poverty risk or social exclusion indicators in EU 27). Poverty risk increases with the size of the household and is highest in families with three or more dependent children. A comparatively difficult situation is faced by incomplete families; furthermore, problems associated with poverty and exclusion have a particular effect on children and young people with varying degrees of disability. The significance of those risk factors increases markedly in the context of the low effectiveness of the support system for large families, which may exacerbate the concerns of young people about having children and severely limit the ability of families who have decided to have children to properly perform their functions as carers. In addition to single parenting and large families, teenage motherhood should also be given due regard. Although the general trend has been in decline since 2008, it has been growing in the case of very young mothers. The financial and non-financial status of children tends to be the same as that of the families and communities in which they are born and in which they grow up. This obvious fact gives rise to the risk of repeating the inequalities in subsequent generations. Children from wealthy and included families become wealthy and included adults, while children growing up in poor and marginalised families remain in the same situation as their parents. According to the methodology adopted for the purposes of the Europe 2020 strategy, over 2.1 million children in Poland (aged 0 to 17) are poor or excluded. This accounted for about 30% of children in this age group. Despite the declining number of poor or excluded children, this figure is obviously still unacceptable. Since 2016, a majority of the population groups taken into consideration has seen a decline in extreme poverty, with the greatest improvement in this regard being among children aged 0 to 17 and large families. [The decline slowed down in 2018](#), and extreme poverty increased again, including among children age 0-17 and large families.

## Main Concepts

The concept of social exclusion is not explicitly defined in Polish law, even in the Social Welfare Act (Social Welfare Act, Journal of Laws (Dz.U.) of 2004, No. 64, item 593, as amended – [Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej](#)), despite the fact it mentions counteracting this phenomenon, while emphasising the role of integrating people and families into their environment (as a goal parallel with self-reliance). Social exclusion sometimes coincides with relative poverty, understood as forced non-fulfilment of those needs that determine the quality of human functioning in a society; in Poland, social exclusion (and thus integration) is primarily thought of in the context of poverty, therefore the aim of integration schemes is to bring individuals back into the labour market so that they can improve their economic situation. Official documents very rarely make direct reference to exclusion stemming from different nationalities and/or belief systems, disabilities and any other social differentiations, which is largely a derivative of the homogeneity of Polish society.

Another issue concerns the way socially excluded groups, or groups facing such a risk, are distinguished – in Polish legislation they are generally not segregated according to the age criterion (except for the oldest generation). As a consequence, social integration of the young generation is also distinguished only in the context of the labour market, and

poverty is perceived primarily from the perspective of the family, even if it affects mainly children and adolescents. As a result, young people's poverty appears in the public discourse primarily in the context of becoming self-reliant, including entry into the labour market and access to housing.

## 4.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

In Poland, issues related to the area of social exclusion remain the domain of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy ([Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej](#)). As mentioned in [Section 4.1 \(General context\)](#), Polish legislation does not generally distinguish between issues of social exclusion according to the age criterion, so issues related to youth exclusion are dispersed across various departments of the ministry. Its flagship social project, "Family 500+" ([Rodzina 500+](#)) ([described in Section 4.6 Access to Quality Services](#)), is implemented by the Department of Family Benefits, which also handles other activities aimed at the family (such as the Large Family Card ([Karta Dużej Rodziny](#))), including youth aged 13 to 18. Other departments of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy which are responsible for those issued include the Labour Market Department (overseeing the "Youth Guarantee" Initiative (*Gwarancje dla Młodzieży*) dedicated to supporting young people in the labour market – described in [Section 4.7](#)), and, indirectly, the Department of Social Assistance and Integration, the Department of Social Economy and Solidarity, and the Department for ESF Implementation. The Ministry has no department focusing on youth issues (although the age criterion, as a way of organising issues, is present in relation to the oldest generation, as evidenced by the existence of the Department of Senior Policy).

To a certain specific extent, youth matters are also handled by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (e.g. it manages the "[Youth Employment Initiative](#)" and provides funds for its implementation, monitors ESF spending under the "Youth Guarantee" Initiative and spending under the "Youth Employment Initiative"), and also by the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Ministry of Sport and Tourism in their respective areas.

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

Public policies developed by individual departments of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy are subject to internal consultations (within the ministry), inter-ministerial consultations and (to some extent) are debated by the Council for Social Dialogue ([Rada Dialogu Społecznego](#)) – a body set up in 2015 to replace the Tripartite Commission for Economic and Social Affairs. The Council for Social Dialogue is the venue of dialogue between the government, employers' organisations and trade unions. It passes judgement on legislative bills which fall within the statutory activity of the Council, and it may propose legislative bills itself. The Council for Social Dialogue is responsible for the tasks set out in the five different statutory acts, regarding remuneration in the public service sector, minimum remuneration for work, social security, pensions and disability benefits from the Social Insurance Fund, and family benefits. The main areas of action (and, therefore, of consultations) of the Council for Social Dialogue are issues of the labour market, employment and selected areas of social security and social exclusion, but, again, without a separate focus on youth issues. The regional counterparts of the Council for Social Dialogue are the Provincial Councils for Social Dialogue (*Wojewódzkie Rady Dialogu Społecznego*).

## 4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

### Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

In Poland there is no document fulfilling the criteria of a strategy for the social inclusion of young people. There are more general documents with the status of programmes, in which such activities constitute one of several elements, often in the context of supporting the family, rather than strictly in age categories. The key document is Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2030 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2030](#)).

### Scope and contents

The main objective of the Strategy is to grow human capital and social cohesion in Poland. One of the specific goals deals with decreasing poverty and social exclusion, and with increasing access to services in response to demographic challenges. Within this goal, actions are planned that are aimed at laying foundations for ensuring material life conditions for materially deprived persons and for creating a system of social services. This includes the development of institutional and familial care for children up to the age of 3, help with returning to the labour market for parents after maternity/paternity leaves, help with social exclusion prevention, and support for families in crisis. Educational actions are also indicated, especially ones aimed at preparing youth for work and professional activity in adult life.

### Responsible authority

The Ministry of Family and Social Policy is responsible for the enactment of the strategy. The strategy itself, however, has a horizontal character and calls upon various ministries and government bodies for its implementation.

### Revisions/Updates

The strategy is an update to previous documents dealing with the development of human capital. It was accepted in 2020 and has not required updating since then.

## 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

### Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

"The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030 ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021–2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)) should be considered a key document organising issues related to combating youth exclusion. It is a continuation and update of the programme accepted in 2014: "[The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2020. A New Dimension of Active Inclusion](#)" (Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu 2020. Nowy wymiar aktywnej integracji).

It includes the main goal of reducing poverty and social exclusion, as well as increasing access to services in response to demographic challenges (as outlined in one of the specific goals of the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital 2030). One of the priorities is Priority I: combating poverty and social exclusion among children and youth. The priority includes following actions: development of community services supporting the family, as well as care and educational services for children; ensuring food security as one of the forms of help for families, children and youth; financial support for families with children; developing the care function of kindergartens, schools (in coordination with the local community); strengthening education of children and youth in key areas such as creativity, entrepreneurship, and cooperation; improving the vocational education model, including higher education, as well as promoting vocational education in response to the labor market demands; introducing a comprehensive system of first employment for youth, based on cooperation between educational institutions, the labor market, and the society.

As a whole, it mostly focuses on the socialisation and early-intervention function of the school, modernisation of the education system (focus on developing key competences, creativity, entrepreneurship and co-operation), improvement and promotion of vocational training, and implementation of the first job system.

The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion attaches particular importance to supporting children in families at risk of poverty or social exclusion, young people having problems with entering the labour market (NEET) and young people with disabilities (with unmet needs for rehabilitation and medical care, and problems with participation in education). Those target groups only partially correspond with the [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#), which identifies specific categories of young people at risk of exclusion on the grounds of ethnic background, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion and political views. The document also states that there is a correlation between social and economic exclusion and exclusion from political and democratic life. An additional difficulty in identifying target groups is the fact that the Polish social security system generally does not make a distinction based on age, but on the specific problem when categorising citizens eligible for social support (subject to certain conditions). Young people are included across those categories.

According to the analysed documents, the main governmental entity responsible for counteracting youth exclusion is the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. The specific actions described in the documents in question are tied to partners being provincial or local authorities, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health.

## Funding

Funds for the implementation of the "The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030" ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021-2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)) have been earmarked in the State budget, budgets of local government units, special-purpose funds (PFRON, The Labour Fund, programmes of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy) and European funds (primarily from Regional Operational Programmes, the Knowledge Education Development Operational Programme, and sometimes other schemes such as European Funds for Social Development, the Operational Programme Food Aid, or the National Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund).

The Programme includes a financial plan, but only indicatively; it is noted that there is no way to determine the scope of expenditures in coming years. Within Priority I (combating poverty and social exclusion among children and youth), specific expenditures have only been noted with regards to two tasks (out of the total of seven described). Regarding task 1.1 (development of community services supporting the family, as well as care and educational services for children), 458 million PLN have been budgeted for year 2021, 550 million for 2022, and 300 million for subsequent years. However, those funds do not include the resources of the Labor Fund. Furthermore, because of the planned process of deinstitutionalizing the fosterage system, it is impossible to predict the scope of expenditures. For task 1.2 (ensuring food security as one of the forms of help for families, children and youth) the 2021 budget provided 510 000 PLN. Further funds were supposed to be provided from the FEAD fund, but they have not been clearly determined.

## Quality assurance

Regarding The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030 ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021-2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)), there are no indicators describing the situation of young adults, as most of them describe either children, or the whole population. The only indicator which, to a degree, describes the situation of young adults is the rate of youth at risk of poverty or social exclusion between the ages 0 to 17 (AROPE). The source here is the data from EUROSTAT/EU-SIL. The base value was indicated to be 16% (for the year



2019); no expected value for 2030 was indicated, only that it should be decreased. It was also indicated that within the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, a task force for the enactment of the Programme is supposed to be created, including all stakeholders, including representatives of the civil society and social actors, central administration, and local and municipal governments.

## 4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

### Intercultural awareness

In Poland, central authorities do not carry out campaigns or other activities to promote the fight against discrimination and racism or to support multiculturalism. These areas remain primarily the domain of non-governmental organisations and, to a lesser extent, some local governments (e.g. Warsaw, which created and financially supported the Multicultural Centre, which has been active since 2017 and entrusted by the local government to local NGOs). The State body that takes action in this regard is the Ombudsman, who actively opposes various types of discrimination and is responsible for the understanding and protection of human rights. Due to a limited budget, which has been cut back by the ruling coalition, the Ombudsman does not, however, carry out any promotional activities and social campaigns.

In 2016, the Council for the Prevention of Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (*Rada do spraw Przeciwdziałania Dyskryminacji Rasowej, Ksenofobii i związanych z nimi Nietolerancji*) (established in 2013) was abolished by decision of the Prime Minister. Its task was to "[co-ordinate activities undertaken by public administration bodies to combat racial, national and ethnic inequalities, and to combat racism and xenophobia](#)". In the opinion of the government, the Council had been ineffective, and its field of activity was already covered by the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society and Equal Treatment. Currently, those two functions have been split and the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment ([Pełnomocnik Rządu ds Równego Traktowania](#)) serves at the rank of Secretary of State in the Ministry of Family and Social Policy.

Polish schools, in cooperation with social partners and local authorities, undertake activities aiming at fulfilling the obligations stemming from the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015. It obliges ministers of education to promote, through education, citizenship and common values such as freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination. As of 2017 these issues have been included in the [school curricula](#). Among the goals of civic education in Poland there are: solidarity and social relations based in respect and openness towards the world and other people. Moreover, the curricula state that xenophobia, racism and antisemitism shall not be tolerated.

### Young people's rights

The rights of young people do not constitute a separate category of rights in Polish law or public discourse, as is the case with respect to the rights of children (Poland has a separate Office of the Ombudsman for Children ([Rzecznik Praw Dziecka](#)) as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations). The word 'youth' does appear in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, for example in Article 68.5, which states that "public authorities support the development of physical culture, especially among children and youth". However, it is unclear who exactly this refers to as the Constitution does not provide any definition of the term 'youth'. A definition of 'youth' is also not to be found in any international convention that Poland is a party to. Basic regulations concerning youth generally relate to limiting the rights of minors, such as being away from home after 11pm or purchasing and using alcohol and cigarettes. Furthermore, restrictions are imposed on their right to intimate life, online shopping, obtaining a driver's licence, entering night clubs, and unassisted doctor visits – which are possible from the age of 16. The actual rights of persons under 18 years of age



include mainly limited criminal liability and various discounts on public transport (a privilege that continues beyond that age if the eligible person continues to study). Public campaigns organised by State institutions and aimed at young people to promote good behaviour included (no new campaigns have been organized for several years), for example, a campaign to promote sobriety among young drivers: "My Choice... Life" ([Mój wybór...życie](#)), "Drugs kill" ("[Narkotyki i dopalacze zabijają](#)"): an educational campaign showcasing the dangers of psychoactive substance use.

In 2019, an income tax deduction for people up the age of 26 has been introduced, allowing them to avoid paying the income tax until the deductible limit is exceeded.

### **Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism**

Polish schools are not centrally initiating any efforts to fulfil the obligations arising from the Paris Declaration of 17 March 2015 on the commitment of ministers of education to promote – through education – citizenship and common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination. ([Its main objectives are](#) "preventing rapid radicalisation of views and promoting democratic values, fundamental rights, intercultural understanding and active citizenship" and "fostering the inclusion of disadvantaged learners, including persons with a migrant background, while preventing and combating discriminatory practices".)

## **4.6 Access to quality services**

### **Housing**

The Social Welfare Act ([Ustawa o pomocy społecznej](#)) delineates individual support procedures for persons over the age of 18 who are leaving facilities such as residential care for children and young people with intellectual disabilities, a home for mothers with small children and also pregnant women, a shelter for minors, a juvenile correctional facility, a special education and training centre, a special care centre, a youth centre for socio-therapy providing 24-hour care, or a youth care centre. Activities for the person gaining self-reliance are also aimed at their integration into the environment through community work; providing financial support in the form of cash for gaining independence and continuing education; help in obtaining appropriate housing conditions (including protected housing under supervision and assistance of a social worker) and getting a job; and in-kind assistance for settling in. The condition to receive support is a commitment on the part of the person gaining self-reliance to follow their individual plan towards becoming independent with the assistance of a social worker.

In Poland, housing support (implemented through the allocation of social and council housing), like most other aid programmes, is not age dependent, but means tested. At the same time, many documents refer to housing as a condition for gaining independence by the young generation and to the importance of adequate housing conditions for the development of children and adolescents. A separate programme is comprised of the activities undertaken within the Housing Society (*Towarzystwa Budownictwa Mieszkaniowego*), and under the "Housing for the Young" scheme ([Mieszkanie dla Młodych](#)). The "Housing for the Young" scheme provided support for the purchase of a first home on the primary market or the construction of a first home. Its beneficiaries were initially only young families (up to 35 years of age), but later also other people. The State covered 10% of the cost of buying an apartment measuring up to 50 sq. m for people without children and 15% for those with children. In addition, for the next 5 years families with at least 3 children can receive another 5%. Within the programme, over 110 thousand applications have been accepted, to a gross sum of 3 billion PLN. The last edition of the programme had taken place in 2018 and was replaced by the National Housing Programme "Housing Plus" ([Mieszkanie Plus](#)). It is a programme that offers apartments for rent with the possibility of purchase. It was intended to build affordable housing for rent and to set up special savings banks in which Poles could be putting money aside for

their own apartment or house. For people with low income, there is also a system of housing allowances paid by the communes (*gminy*) as part of the social security system. Initially the programme was meant to offer low-rent apartments, currently it provides rent support. In 2019, the "Starting Apartment" ([Mieszkanie na Start](#)) programme has been introduced, which provides rent support up to 500 PLN.

## Social services

As mentioned above, support for the youngest generation in the social security system is implemented primarily through support to families – some types of support are means tested, others are not, and there are also those which apply mixed criteria, including the most significant support at the moment within the framework of the "[Family 500 +](#)" scheme. Initially (from April 1st 2016), the benefit was granted for the second and each subsequent child, without any additional conditions, and also for families with a first or only child who have a net monthly income of less than PLN 800. For families with a child with disabilities, the income criterion is higher and amounts to PLN 1,200 net, and additional support in the amount of PLN 500 per child is also received by foster families and by family-type children's homes under the Act on Family Support and Foster Care System. Those rules have been changed, and starting from July 1st 2019, the benefit is granted for every child up to the age of 18, regardless of the family income. Importantly, the "Family 500 +" parenting benefit is not included in one's income for the purposes of social welfare benefits, child maintenance funds, family benefits or housing allowances.

Other essential elements of the family support system include: (1) family benefit for parents, one of the parents, or legal or actual guardian of the child, which is means tested ("a zloty for a zloty" rule applies) and is available in relation to children under the age of 18, or 21 if the child continues to attend school and 24 if the child is disabled and continues to attend school or a higher education institution; (2) allowances in addition to the family benefit, such as for the education and rehabilitation of a child with a disability (to cover the increased rehabilitation or education expenses), for raising a child in a large family (third and subsequent children), for a child learning outside of their place of residence, or for single parenting; (3) one off childbirth benefit and parental benefit, which is available for a period of 52 weeks or longer in special cases provided for by law.

Family benefit system is complemented by the programme "[Good Start](#)" – a grant for all students commencing the school year. It is granted to every student up to the age of 20 (24 in cases of disability), regardless of the family income. It is valued at 300 PLN. A system of discounts for family with 3 or more children has also been introduced under the name of "[Large Family Card](#)".

Since January 1st, 2022, for the second and each subsequent child aged 12 to 35 months, a special benefit is being provided – Family Care Capital (RKO) at 12 thousand PLN. The money is provided in monthly payments of 500 PLN over two years, or 1000 PLN per month over a year, depending on the parents' decision.

A direct form of assistance for young people is support for the unemployed – a person who had worked for 365 days during the last 18 months and received at least the minimum wage may receive the unemployment benefit. Other forms of support for the unemployed include training, job announcements, and subsidies to start a business (mainly through EU funds) – but young people are often prevented from obtaining such benefits due to lack of employment history. Another form of support in the labour market is vocational counselling, which in Poland is provided within the framework of activities being part of (1) educational policy – at psychological and pedagogical counselling centres operating in the education system; (2) higher education – through Student Career Centres; (3) labour market policy – targeted to persons registered as unemployed and implemented by units of public employment services: the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, Career Information and Planning centres (functioning within Province Employment Offices), District Employment Offices, and Voluntary Labour Corps – as described in Section 4.7.

## Health care

For most young people – until the age of 18, and for those continuing education, until the age of 26 (and older, if they are registered as unemployed) – Poland offers free medical care. There is a separate specialist network of hospitals dedicated to people up to the age of 18 – they are also entitled to free meals and accommodation in children's hospitals in health resorts, children's sanatoria, and sanatoria (for children with significant disabilities, there is no age limit). In 2016, the [Act on Support of Pregnant Women and Families – "For Life"](#) came into force, under which persons under the age of 18 with a certificate of severe and irreversible disability or incurable and life-threatening disease that arose in the prenatal period or at the time of birth have the right to receive services without being placed on waiting lists.

## Financial services

Financial services dedicated to young people are related to the programmes described in [Section 4.6.1](#), enabling them to obtain independent accommodation.

## Quality assurance

In Poland, there is no separate nationwide system for monitoring and quality assurance (evaluation) of the support described in Section 4.6. Assessments and evaluations are conducted either for the purpose of specific projects, e.g. targeted at beneficiaries eligible for particular types of services, by the institutions providing the services (often at the level of local government units), or as part of broad assistance programmes, usually when it is a requirement resulting from co-financing from European funds.

## 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

### Policy/legal framework

The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021–2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)) is the key document in the context of social inclusion of young people. It also remains the main source of information and reference in the subject of youth work as a tool preventing social exclusion of young people, however the programme refers to youth work mainly in the context of supporting young people in employment and starting a family.

An important source of reference is the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 30 April 2013 on providing and organisation of psycho-pedagogical help in public kindergartens, schools and other facilities ([Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 30 kwietnia 2013r. w sprawie zasad udzielania i organizacji pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach](#)) as well as the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 August 2017 changing the regulation of the Minister of National Education on providing and organisation of psycho-pedagogical help in public kindergartens, schools and other facilities. ([Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 28 sierpnia 2017 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie zasad udzielania i organizacji pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach](#)).

### Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

The main programmes for excluded young people as well as their specific target groups were described in the chapter 4.4. The Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 August 2017 changing the regulation of the Minister of National Education on providing and organisation of psycho-pedagogical help in public kindergartens, schools and other facilities ([Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 28 sierpnia 2017 r.](#)

[zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie zasad udzielania i organizacji pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach](#)) lists the following causes for providing psycho-pedagogical assistance for young people:

- disability
- extraordinary talents
- speech disorders
- chronic diseases
- social alienation
- traumatic experiences
- family difficulties

## **Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people**

The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030 ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021–2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)) refers to educational institutions as the providers of youth work. In consequence, the school is the main actor responsible for youth work. The supplementary role in this respect belongs to [Voluntary Labour Corps \(Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy\)](#) Youth Education and Labour Centres (including Youth Career Centres, Mobile Labour Information Centres) and to Centres for Training and Education.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 August 2017 changing the regulation of the Minister of National Education on providing and organisation of psycho-pedagogical help in public kindergartens, schools and other facilities ([Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 28 sierpnia 2017 r. zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie zasad udzielania i organizacji pomocy psychologiczno-pedagogicznej w publicznych przedszkolach, szkołach i placówkach](#)) the person responsible for providing psycho-pedagogical help is the school headmaster and the executors of such help are teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, career advisors and other caretakers within the educational facility. The regulation also stresses that parents, as well as external actors (such as other educational facilities, non-governmental organisations and public bodies acting for young people or social workers) can be involved in the process of providing help and assistance.

Should a problem of social nature arise in the life of a young person, their entire family can seek help and assistance. In such cases the social care system plays the crucial role (including social workers, family assistants and in the most serious cases - foster families). These matters are regulated by the [Law on Family Support and Foster Care \(Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej\)](#) that aims at creating a coherent child and family support system.

In the most serious cases, young people can be placed in Special Training and Education Centre, Youth Education Centre, Social Therapy Centre or Juvenile Detention Centre.

With respect to youth work outside schools, the activities of scouting movements need to be stressed: The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association ([ZHP](#)) with membership about 110 000 girls, boys and leaders and The Scouting Association of the Republic ([Związek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej](#)) with almost 20 000 members.

Unconventional methods of youth work need also be stressed, for example art therapy (including musical therapy, theatre therapy or manual work therapy) or milieu therapy (a type of psychotherapy that seeks to control the environment to keep a person safe, improve their ability to learn new mental health skills, and encourage attitudes like respect and positivity).

## Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

Training and support of youth workers is mainly implemented within the academic curriculum within both bachelor and master degrees in pedagogy and resocialization, eg. educational care pedagogy at the University of Zielona Góra.

Moreover, the [publications and materials](#) prepared by the Centre for Educational Development can serve as help and support for youth workers.

### Financial support

Not applicable

### Quality assurance

As in the case of other youth inclusion actions, there is also no separate nationwide monitoring and quality assurance (evaluation) system for youth work as a tool of social inclusion of young people.

## 4.8 Current debates and reforms

Poland is witnessing two major discussions about the situation of the young generation. One concerns the implementation and effects of the "Family 500 +" scheme (described in Section 4.6 Access to Quality Services). Its main positive effects include substantial and rapid reduction in poverty, especially among children and adolescents, resulting in very high social support for the scheme. The major controversies are, however, about the actual and long-term impact of the scheme on improvement of the demographic situation, the mechanisms affecting primarily single parents, the possibility of fraud, the financial security of the State in the face of such high social security expenditures. According to the authors of the "[Family 500+ - evaluation and proposed changes](#)" report, the programme failed to increase the birth rate, pushed about 100 000 women out of the job market (mainly low-income, low-education women from small towns), increased social transfers and forced the introduction of new tax burdens. It is the result of the programme's core assumptions, offering benefits to all families, regardless of their financial situation. The authors indicate that only "37% of the programme expenses goes to poor families, and just 12% of funds committed by the state to 500+ would be enough to eliminate extreme poverty among children."

An important voice in this discussion belongs to the view of social researchers that claim that the family-centric approach (central to the 500+ programme) can, within a few years, change into a relatively unimportant part of a family budget, especially in the light of high inflation. From this point of view, it would be more beneficial to enact children-centric policies, such as developing the network of public services that children use (mainly investing into education, free time, personal development). Such approach provides better opportunities for permanently freeing from poverty the children that grow up in the conditions of social exclusion.

A new challenge for social policy is found in the mass migration of Ukrainian population due to the Russian invasion in February 2022. Arrival of 2 million people, mostly women with children, leads to a need to create systemic solutions in the area of housing, labour market, health care, and education. Currently, those people are mainly supported through actions by local governments, NGOs, and individual citizens (volunteers, donation-givers, and families accepting refugees into their homes).

## 5. PARTICIPATION

Polish young people's participation in representative democracy is currently being debated. Young people's membership of political parties, trade unions and other traditional organisations active on the political scene is low. As is the case in the rest of Europe, the lowest voter turnout for elections is among the 18-24 demographic. It is also in this group that support for extreme political solutions is relatively high. On the other hand, however, active development of alternative forms of young people's participation in social life is on the rise. These alternative forms are mainly initiated by non-governmental organisations. The common presence and relatively strong position of student governments do not always guarantee their real influence on the situation in schools. Citizenship education provided in schools enjoys extensive support in the form of programmes and projects offered by the government, EU and representatives of the Third Sector. All of the above circumstances give an ambiguous and not easily evaluable picture of active citizenship.

### 5.1 General context

#### Main concepts

##### Institutions of representative democracy

Poland is a parliamentary democracy. Bicameral Parliament is selected in a free democratic election process which adheres to the principles of universal suffrage. The term of office is four years. The Polish Parliament is composed of two houses (Sejm - lower house and Senat - upper house) elected in different ways and having different powers and competences. Active electoral (voting) rights are granted to citizens who have turned 18 years of age. The right to stand for election (passive suffrage) differs depending on the type of election. Poland is divided into 16 provinces (*Polish: województwo*), with districts and communes as local administrative units. The central government operates at national, provincial and district levels, whereas local governments operate at the level of provinces, districts and communes. Presidents are elected for five years in a separate presidential election process, which also adheres to the suffrage principle. The president is the head of the state.

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	Total	18–24 years	25–30 years	18–30 years
Parliamentary elections 2019	61,74 <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA	46,4% <sup>5</sup>
Parliamentary elections 2015	50,92 <sup>1</sup>	51,80 <sup>2</sup>	56,50 <sup>2</sup>	NA
Parliamentary elections 2011	60,00 <sup>3</sup>	54,00 <sup>3</sup>	52,00 <sup>3a</sup>	NA



Presidential elections 2015 (I round)	48,96 <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Presidential elections 2015 (II round)	55,34 <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Local elections 2018	48,83 <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA	34,8 <sup>7</sup>
Local elections 2014 (I round)	47,4 <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Local elections 2014 (II round)	39,97 <sup>1</sup>	NA	NA	NA
European Parliament elections 2019	45,7 <sup>1</sup>	35,40 <sup>6</sup> (EU average = 41,50)	40,20 <sup>6a</sup>	NA
European Parliament elections 2014	23,83 <sup>1</sup>	14,00 <sup>4</sup> (EU average = 28,00)	19,00 <sup>4a</sup>	NA

<sup>1</sup> data from the National Electoral Commission

<sup>2</sup> estimated on the basis of the survey: Polskie Generalne Studium Wyborcze. 14–29 November 2015, Centre for Public Opinion Research. Sample size: N = 1733.

<sup>3</sup> estimated on the basis of the survey: Polskie Generalne Studium Wyborcze. 20 October – 13 November 2011, Centre for Public Opinion Research. Sample size: N = 1919.

<sup>3a</sup> data source as above, data for the 25–32 age group.

<sup>4</sup> Post-election survey 2014, Eurobarometer.

<sup>4a</sup> data source as above, data for the 25–39 age group.

<sup>5</sup> Exit-pool survey 2019, data for the 18–29 age group

<sup>6</sup> Post-election survey 2019, Eurobarometer.

<sup>6a</sup> data source as above, data for the 25–39 age group.

<sup>7</sup> Exit-pool survey 2018, data for the 18–29 age group

## 5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

### Young people as voters

In general, Polish age limits for participation in representative democracy seem to be moderately restrictive. However, the same voting age limit applies to all levels and types of democratic procedures, although there are some differences regarding the minimum age for candidates running for president or for the position of local level executives. Regardless of the type (presidential, parliamentary) and level (local, national and European) of elections, young people acquire voting rights having attained the age of 18 not later than on the day of voting.

Only Polish citizens have the right to vote and be elected in national elections. Since 2004, Polish national law has had to comply with the requirements of the European Union and therefore it guarantees voting rights to EU citizens permanently residing in the territory of a commune and the right to stand for election in communal elections. This excludes the right to stand for local election for executive posts.

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland defines the age at which citizens may enjoy voting rights. Article 62 states that on the day citizens attain the age of 18, they acquire the right to elect the President of the Republic of Poland as well as Parliamentary deputies,

senators and local government representatives. The [initiative of lowering the voting age limit](#) applicable to the above types of election would require a Parliamentary majority being in favour of amending the Basic Law. The statutory lowering of the voting age limit is only possible in the case of European parliamentary elections.

Plans to lower the voting age limit resulted from initiatives undertaken by some political groups and in non-governmental circles. In 2003, the Freedom Union (*Unia Wolności*) proposed the participation of people aged 16-17 in the EU accession referendum. In 2010, the Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*) tried to sound out the idea of allowing junior youth to vote in local government elections. The demand to lower the voting age limit for all types of elections re-emerged in 2013 thanks to the party Your Move (*Twój Ruch*) (formerly the Palikot Movement) (*Ruch Palikota*).

The initiative to lower the voting age limit to 16 is not winning wide public support. Surveys show that not more than 15% of adult Poles are in favour (Waszak, Zbieranek 2011), however, youth organisations [are quite supportive](#).

There are no age-based legal regulations in Poland that would facilitate participation in democratic procedures (elections, referendums). Disabled young people or those in restricted access establishments ([hospitals, prisons and conscripted army units in the past](#)) may use the facilities to which they are entitled in the same way as representatives of all other age groups.

The turnout of the youngest age groups in Poland is significantly lower than the average overall population turnout. However, since the mid-1990s an upward trend has been observed. More and more young people participate in elections. In the latest local and European Parliament elections in (2018-2019), the significant turnout's increase was observed among youngest groups of voters, whereas the share of young voters in the national parliamentary elections had decreased.

## Young people as political representatives

The Political Parties Act (*Ustawa o partiach politycznych*) states that anyone aged over 18 may be a member of a political party in Poland. Most political parties liaise with various youth organisations. The nature of those relationships is very diversified. Some of them are officially affiliated youth organisations within political parties, some have the status of associated organisations or those loosely cooperating.

The [latest data](#) provided by the Central Statistical Office (2016) shows, that political parties have a total of 250 000 members which is almost equal to 1% of the overall population aged over 18. Comparing to 2014, a significant decrease of political party membership is observed, reaching 30%. Surveys show, that in the period from 2013 to 2015 the percentage of active members of political parties fluctuated from 3,2 to 4,2%.

In 2016, 16 political parties (versus 14 in 2014 and 9 in 2012) out of a total of 55 participating in the survey declared that they worked with youth organisations operating either within their party structures or acting as independent associations.

In 2016, the youth organizations of the party gathered 17 400 members, which is over 800 members more than in 2014. Among them were people under the age of 18, but their share in the overall structure membership was not significant as they accounted for only 6,3% (7% in 2014) of the total membership of the youth organizations of the parties. In 2016, the average youth organization gathered nearly 1 100 members simultaneously half of the youth had no more than 71 activists. Between 2014 and 2016, the share of women among youth members nearly doubled and amounted to almost 50%

In 2014 they had 16,500 members, which accounts for 5,5% of all members of political parties. 92% of them (15 400) were young people who were members of affiliated youth organisations within political parties represented in Polish Parliament. Under 18's accounted for slightly over 7% of all members of youth organisations within political parties. The percentage of female members of youth organisations operating within political parties was 34,4%. Data on the age structure of members of actual political

parties is not easily available, so it can only undergo selective analysis. For example, in 2013 the Civic Platform (*PO - Platforma Obywatelska*) had 3 400 members aged 18-24 (8%) and 15,500 members aged 25-40 (36%). Age demographic structures can vary significantly from party to party.

### Young people as candidates in elections

The Election Code is a document which contains all the regulations concerning the voting age limit and the age limit to stand for election in Poland (Journal of Laws 2011 No. 21 item 112). Among other things, it sets the minimum age of candidates participating in various categories of democratic elections. Art. 10 (1) of the Code states that voting rights can be exercised as follows:

- 1) In the case of parliamentary, Senate and presidential elections- Polish nationals who attain the age of 18 not later than on the day of voting can exercise their right to vote;
- 2) In the case of European Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Poland- Polish nationals who attain the age of 18 not later than on the day of voting and European Union nationals who are not citizens of Poland and who attain the age of 18 not later than on the day of voting and permanently reside in the territory of the Republic of Poland can exercise their right to vote.
- 3) in the case of local government elections:
  - a) commune councils - Polish nationals and European Union nationals who are not citizens of Poland and who attain the age of 18 not later than on the day of voting and permanently reside in the territory of the relevant commune can exercise their right to vote,
  - b) district councils and provincial parliaments - Polish nationals and who attain the age of 18 not later than on the day of voting and who permanently reside in the territory of the relevant district or province can exercise their right to vote;
- 4) in mayoral elections in a commune - people having the right to elect the council of that commune can exercise their right to vote.

Under Art. 11 (1), the right to stand for election in each category is as follows:

- 1) For Parliamentary Elections (*Sejm*) - Polish nationals who have the right to vote in parliamentary elections and attain the age of 21 not later than on the day of voting;
- 2) For Senate Elections - Polish nationals who have the right to vote in Senate elections and attain the age of 30 not later than on the day of voting;
- 3) For Presidential Elections- Polish nationals who have the right to vote in presidential elections and attain the age of 35 not later than on the day of voting while enjoying full voting rights in parliamentary elections;
- 4) For European Parliament Elections in Poland - people enjoying voting rights in European Parliament Elections in the Republic of Poland who attain the age of 21 not later than on the day of voting and have permanently resided in the Republic of Poland or in the territory of other member state of the European Union for 5 years;
- 5) For Local Government Elections - people enjoying the right to vote in local government elections;
- 6) For Mayoral elections - Polish nationals enjoying voting rights in such elections who attain the age of 25 not later than on the day of voting; however, candidates do not have to permanently reside in the territory of the commune where they are a candidate (Journal of Laws 2011 No. 21 item 112).

Polish legislation does not mention any parities relating to the age of candidates on an electoral ticket.

In the late autumn of 2019 there were 14 under-30s deputies in the Polish Parliament. They accounted for 3,1% of all Members of Parliament, compared with 10 persons of that age in the previous term of Parliament (The share of under-30s deputies in both Lower

(Sejm) and Higher (Senat) Chambers of Polish Parliament is 2,54%. ). Consequently, Poland ranked 47<sup>th</sup> in [the global ranking of youth participation \(2018\)](#), where the global average was 2,2%, and the European - 3,9%.

Although there is some data concerning candidate age in the most recent election, it is not accurate. However, certain general theses can be advanced. It is the candidates' average age that is most frequently quoted in announcements. It is understandably higher in the case of elections where higher age limits apply. In 2019 [the average age of all Parliamentary](#) candidates was 46 (42 in 2015 and 44 in 2011). In the 2014 local government elections, [the average age of candidates](#) was 47 (46 in 2014) and in the 2019 European Parliamentary Election - 46 (45 in 2014). The average candidate age in elections of mayors and city presidents in 2019 was 50 (49 in 2014), with the minimum age limit for standing for election being 25. The 2015 presidential election witnessed a generational change. The election was won by Andrzej Duda who was 43 years old at the moment of being sworn in as Poland's president. Therefore, he became the youngest president and head of state in Europe (except for Kosovo) and [one of the youngest in the world](#).

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

### Youth parliament

The Polish political system provides no comprehensive solution to the youth question. Although there are legislative pathways enabling dialogue between youth and policy makers at various levels of political authority, they do not form a coherent and effective system. At the moment, the nature and operating principles of Polish youth's representation are being debated. Two positions have emerged: The first view proposes to select a youth representation at grass-root level and, as a result of cooperation between organisations, bringing together young people. According to the second view, the composition of bodies representing Poland on the provincial and national level should be selected with increased or exclusive participation of government representatives (at central level) and representatives of Government administration (at provincial level)

Issues concerning the inclusion of all youth groups

There are forums bringing together youth with special needs, for example [organisations for disabled students](#) operating in higher education institutions, but there are no specific programmes encouraging young people with fewer opportunities or at risk of exclusion to increase their participation in representative bodies. In the case of the process of effective consultation and opinion seeking, the way in which children and youth representations are selected is more likely to attract elites, outstanding individuals with high social, economic or cultural capital than youth at risk of exclusion. For example, neither of the positions described above provides for mechanisms guaranteeing that disabled young people, those living in rural areas or those discriminated against in any way will have a sufficient representation at national level. Although the demand to equalise opportunities is relatively well adopted at the level of programme beneficiaries, in Poland the concept of "those excluded" from being full members of groups "representing" young people and their interests before the authority is something rather "unthinkable" in Poland.

### Structure

There is no bona fide children and youth parliament in Poland operating as an institution elected by general election and thus possessing democratic legitimacy. [The Children and Youth Parliament](#) (*Sejm Dzieci i Młodzieży*) is a representative institution in name only. In reality, this is an educational project of the Polish Parliament Chancellery and is not an element of the legal system. Its nature is purely didactic, consultative and opinion-forming. In addition to the Polish Parliament Chancellery, the Ministry of National Education and several other entities, including non-governmental entities, participate in its organisation.

## Composition

In light of the absence of a democratically elected youth parliament, the Children and Youth Parliament sometimes plays the role of a forum bringing attention to issues considered important by young Poles. The Children and Youth Parliament brings together 460 students of lower and upper secondary schools who are selected on the basis of competitions. Young deputies are appointed for a term of one year and they meet once a year at a plenary session.

## Role and responsibilities

Each term of the Children and Youth Parliament focusses on a specific keynote topic. Apart from that, plenary sessions offer Parliament members an opportunity to present their viewpoints, opinions and proposals concerning the activities of authorities, especially those governing education, aimed at the improvement of children's and young people's situation. The Children and Youth Parliament adopts resolutions which are subsequently submitted to representatives of the legislature and the executive. Plenary sessions held by the Children and Youth Parliament include speakers and deputy speakers of the upper and lower houses as well as selected members of Parliament. Sessions of the Children and Youth Parliament which are traditionally held on 1 June (International Children's Day) enjoy impressive media coverage which contributes to raising public awareness of children's and young people's problems. Keynote topics discussed in the Children and Youth Parliament in recent years include:

## Funding

The Children and Youth Parliament has no legal personality which is why it does not possess any financial resources nor does it make decisions on the distribution of public funds. It can only suggest certain activities in this field. The organisational costs of the Children and Youth Parliament are covered by the Chancellery of Polish Parliament and the other organisers.

## Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

It is difficult to present a synthetic description of the whole system of youth organisations operating in Poland as there are significant differences between bodies representing young people. For example, Poland's two basic organisations representing youth at central level have different origins, structures and missions, whereas regional and local bodies representing young people are better empowered by the legal system thanks to statutory provisions. However, a great extent of their scope of activity is not standardised which is why there are immense differences in the process of recruitment and the role, scope of responsibility and possibilities of tangible action.

## Structure

[The Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland](#) (*RDIM - Rada Dzieci i Młodzieży Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*) was appointed as an advisory and consultative body operating at national level by the Minister of National Education on the strength of an act in the first half of 2016. It is an advisory body operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education.

[The Polish Council of Youth Organisations](#) (*PROM - Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych*) was appointed as a union of associations in 2011. Although it operates under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and receives targeted subsidies, it remains an independent non-governmental organisation from a legal viewpoint.

The activity of municipal youth councils and communal youth councils is regulated by the Local Government Act whose Article 5 (b) states that: following an application from the communities concerned, the commune council may give consent to the establishment of a communal youth council of a consultative nature (Journal of Laws 1990 No. 16 item 95 as amended). The role of the commune council is of paramount importance here as it determines the scope of tasks, prerogatives, formal statutes and the voting system of its

youth council. Unfortunately, there are no similar provisions at the level of districts or provinces, which is why youth representations operating there often take the form of associations or bodies appointed as part of social consultation.

### Composition

The Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education is composed of 16 members and 16 deputy members representing all provinces. Membership is comprised of individuals selected by the Ministry of National Education from among young applicants taking part in open recruitment procedures. They are selected on the basis of competencies and experiences (activity, engagement, previous work for organisations). Lower- and upper secondary school students who are 13 or over may become members of the Council, as well as lower- and upper secondary school leavers until they turn 21. They are appointed for a term of one year. The Council elects its President and Vice-Presidents from within.

Membership of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations is open to any youth organisation who adhere to the following criteria: Any youth organisation operating in accordance with Polish law, co-administered by people under 35 and with at least 2/3 of members under 35, or those bringing together young people as an association or a legal person with organisational structures described in their statutes and with at least 2/3 of members under 35. The Polish Council of Youth Organisations is open to public, nationwide and regional organisations and to those which bring together particular groups of youth (e.g.: students). Each of those categories of organisations has its separate structure in the Council. Representatives of all full members (organisations) of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations elect a ten-strong management board from among themselves which takes a vote to elect the authorities of the association. Individuals sitting on the Council's management board are delegated by their own organisations but it is their duty to represent the interests of all young people in Poland.

The most common practice is that communal and municipal youth councils recruit their members by electing them. Usually, all lower- and upper secondary school students and - more rarely - primary school pupils from the relevant administrative area have the right to vote. Elections are usually organised in schools in close cooperation with the student government and teachers. This school-based electoral system has a certain disadvantage as it means excluding young people not in education who do not always possess the appropriate qualifications or competences to participate in the political or civic life of their local community (Sińczuch, 2012). Youth councillors are usually elected for one year or two years. Councils are usually autonomous in choosing their authorities and subcommittee members. About 200 communal and municipal youth councils are currently registered in Poland which means that youth councils [operate within every 12th local government unit](#) (8%).

### Role and responsibilities

The letter appointing the Children and Youth Council of the Republic of Poland operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education states that its tasks include expressing opinions and presenting proposals concerning children and young people in the scope of matters remaining within the remit of the education and upbringing area of the government administration. In particular they present opinions on planned changes, and include proposed solutions. There was some controversy surrounding the appointment of the Council. The Ministry was accused of having a lack of vision regarding the scope and scale of the Council's role within the system of legislation and social consultation.

The objectives of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations include: "the promotion of youth participation in public life, the provision of information to public opinion about the state of youth policy in Poland and the representation of member organisations". However, its [principal role](#) is to undertake activities aimed at the creation of a coherent and modern youth policy in Poland. The Council also represents its member organisations before the public sector and other circles; disseminates information and promotes the activity of



youth organisations bringing together young people and acting on their behalf. In 2013-2015 the Polish Council of Youth Organisations was granted the status of an organisation officially authorised to represent Polish youth at EU youth conferences. It co-operates with entities such as the Public Benefit Activities Council (*Rada Działalności Pożytku Publicznego*), the Visegrad Group, and the European Youth Forum (*Europejskie Forum Młodzieży*), to name but a few.

The objectives of communal and municipal youth councils are not statutorily defined, they are usually of a consultative nature. [Communal and municipal youth councils](#) are most frequently consulted about youth issues such as education, culture, sport, safety, communication and others. Apart from their advisory and consultative activities for local governments, those councils are meant to promote active citizenship and democratic practices among young people as well as identify the local needs of young people in their community.

### Funding

Polish bodies representing young people seldom have a real opportunity to influence the distribution of funds. The costs of the activities undertaken by them and their day to day operational costs are usually covered by direct funding or targeted subsidies coming from the central budget or local government funds.

Communal and municipal youth councils cannot have their own budgets as they have no legal entity status. However, this situation is now changing due to the dissemination of the formula of participatory budgeting. [Some communes](#) are introducing separate participatory budgeting for youth.

## Higher education student union(s)

### Structure

[The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland](#) (*PSRP - Parlament Studentów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*) is a nationwide representation of all student governments. Its objectives, tasks, structure and electoral procedures are determined in the Act on Higher Education (Journal of Laws 2005, No. 164, item 1365). It is an independent and self-organised body possessing the status of a legal entity.

### Composition

The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland is an umbrella organisation for all student governments operating in Poland. Pursuant to the Act, all students of a higher education institution form its student government. Quoting the exact number of people holding positions in student government bodies across the country is difficult. However, assuming that 4-6 persons per faculty are members of student government authorities, then, depending on the Higher Education Institution (HEI), about 0.3% to 1% of the total student population would be represented. 154 delegates participated in the most recent national assembly of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland. They represent various HEIs, regardless of their type of ownership and functioning. Each delegate representing a HEI educating between 1000 and 4000 students has one vote. Delegates representing HEI's with 4000-10,000 students have two votes and another vote is given for another 10,000 students above this number. Delegates elect their Chairperson and statutory organs - the Executive Council, Student Council and the Review Commission - [for a two-year term of office](#). Delegate assemblies take place at least once during each two-year term of office of the statutory organs of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland, whereas Executive Council sessions occur at least once a month. Student Council sessions are scheduled in separate regulations adopted at the beginning of a new term of office. The Executive Council is the Student Parliament's collegial executive body. The Executive Council is composed of the Chairperson of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland and of not fewer than 2, but not more than 6, Executive Council Members. Executive Council members are appointed and dismissed by the Chairperson of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland on the strength of a decree, which is

subsequently ratified by the Assembly (or, when outside the period of Assembly deliberations – the decree is ratified by the Student Council). The decision of the Chairperson of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland specifies the tasks of Executive Council members. The Student Council is composed of the Chairperson of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland and 12 members appointed by the Assembly. [All main organs of the Student Parliament](#) of the Republic of Poland are appointed for a term of two years.

### Role and responsibilities

The basic task of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland consists in representing student communities before state organs. Parliamentary representatives participate in the work of public administration bodies, Parliament and Senate Commissions. The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland gives opinion on legislation concerning the Polish higher education system and students' privileges and rights. It is Poland's only representative body in the European Student Union. The specific objectives of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland are specified in its Statute as:

- "1) representing and promoting students' educational, social, economic and cultural needs;
- 2) protecting the rights and interests of all students in the country and Polish students abroad;
- 3) creating and promoting student attitudes oriented towards active cooperation in the development of civil society;
- 4) identifying and removing barriers to young people's academic, cultural and sports development;
- 5) supporting student governance;
- 6) improving young people's knowledge, skills and social competences through the provision of informative, scientific and cultural activities relating to higher education, education, upbringing and physical culture;
- 7) supporting student mobility".

The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland also gives its opinion on draft legislation and selects 4 representatives to sit on the General Council for Science and Higher Education (*Rada Główna Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*). The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland elects an [ombudsman for students](#) whose tasks include intervening when students' rights are endangered, especially in dealings with HEI authorities.

### Funding

The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland receives budgetary funding from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. As an institution with the status of a legal entity it is also in a position to accept donations and bequeathed inheritances. The Review Panel appointed by delegates at assemblies is responsible for auditing the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland. The Chairperson and authorities of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland assume full responsibility resulting from their duties, on general principles applicable to entities being legal persons. The activities of student governments in HEIs and at faculties are funded by the relevant academic authorities.

## School student union(s)

The scope of responsibility of Polish school student governments is provided in Article 55 of the Education System Act of 7 September 1991. The most important responsibilities of Polish school student governments include electing class representatives, electing each school's student government, as well as ensuring school student participation in the School Council. Moreover, those who are members of school student governments have the right to submit motions and opinions regarding all school matters, - especially those relating to the observance of basic student rights - to school councils, teaching staff and heads of

school. School student governments have the right to influence the organisation of school life in a way that ensures an appropriate balance between learning efforts and opportunities for developing and pursuing pupils'/students' own interests. Moreover, school student governments have the right to conduct cultural, educational, sport and leisure activities as well as information activities such as editing and publishing school newspapers, maintaining webpages, operating the school radio station etc. School students being members of school student governments have the right to choose teachers responsible for their governments and to be acquainted with curricula, their contents, objectives and requirements. The organisation and structure of school student governments depends on the students themselves. The only condition is that regulations governing the principles of electing school student governments and describing their activities should be adopted by the whole population of students in a school through a process of voting by equitable, secret and universal ballot. School student governments are an important element in school governance along with Heads of school and school councils. There is no body in Poland which would play the role of an official representation of school student governments. Issues relating to the observance of school students' rights are the responsibility of ombudsmen for school students operating under the authority of provincial school superintendents. The Children and Youth Council operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education is supposed to play the role of a nationwide representation of school students (but not school student governments).

### **Other bodies**

The powers of entities representing youth at national level are predominantly limited. Sometimes individual youth organisations speak in the name of their members, although it would be difficult to quote spectacular examples of the effectiveness of such activities. Representatives of authorities organise traditional meetings with young people. Such meetings are held both at national and local levels. Although they prove the authorities' interest in such issues, rarely do they bring durable results such as legislative initiatives or propositions of specific solutions. Therefore, it is difficult to perceive them as representational bodies. Youth representation at regional level is very diversified. Practically every province can boast of some example of a forum focussed on youth which claims to represent young people. Some of those bodies are elected by young people by direct ballot, others are more in the style of conventions or conferences of local youth organisations.

## **5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making**

### **Formal Mechanisms of Consultation**

Formal basis consultation where young people act as a group authorised to take a position and express their opinion is held at local (communal and municipal youth councils) and central levels ([The Children and Youth Council](#) operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education, [The Polish Council of Youth Organisations](#) (PROM), The Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland, The Children and Youth Parliament). Consultation at regional level is not formalised although there are, or were, youth representation structures in some provinces. [A government expert's opinion](#) issued in 2005 and concerning the possibility of youth organisations participating in the system of public consultation accurately evaluates its principles, albeit it is perhaps too optimistic as to their implementation. "Under the regulations which are currently in force, non-governmental organisations representing young people's interests may express opinions about proposed normative acts, governmental, regional and local programmes, they may initiate activities for youth, disseminate the idea of voluntary service and conduct informative activities".

Consultation exercises with the participation of young people mainly focus on issues relating to the situation of youth. They relate to education, especially higher education, school students' and students' rights, but also to activities shaping the principles of youth

participation in public life, membership of organisations, supporting active participation, etc. Youth can be one of the groups that are involved in consultations concerning infrastructural investments, mainly in sport, recreation or culture.

At local level, the consultation process usually consists of the youth council or its internal commission adopting a particular stance, which is preceded by a debate aimed at familiarising themselves with the specifics of the subject matter. Sometimes on account of the initiative of young people, consultation exercises adopt a more interesting character. Public debates, plebiscites and surveys as well as happening-like activities are the most frequently organised events. At central level, consultation usually consists in the relevant body adopting a given stance on a particular matter. Most of the time stances are taken after debates which conclude in a round of voting. They are then publicly announced and submitted to the institutions concerned.

In Poland there is no special system of social consultation which would recognise young people as a particular group. Youth participation in the process of developing political governance follows the demarcation line determined by formal and legal statuses linked to the boundaries of youth. The first of them is age-related. As Polish young people come of age, they may access all legal forms of participation in public and social life. They can vote, participate in public consultation, join organisations and participate in all sorts of protests.

At the same time, there are no mechanisms which would facilitate the distinction of all young adults regardless of their socio-economic status or gender. On the other hand, being able to influence certain aspects of political reality is an attribute of certain youth groups - for example students whose representatives are statutorily included in the process of consultation concerning legal changes in higher education institutions. The effectiveness of informal political measures, such as protests or demonstrations initiated by youth which can be seen as a source of specific political decisions, is quite a separate matter. In this case there are two problems: how to objectively measure the youth percentage in particular protests, and - if the participation of young people is beyond doubt - how to prove their influence on politicians' particular reactions.

In the case of the only youth-specific form of political participation laid down in legislation; that is communal and municipal youth councils, the limits to youth participation in policy-making at local level are described only in general terms. At the same time, there are no government directives at national level which would obligate state institutions, government agencies or other entities to conduct consultation exercises within youth communities as such. Any legislative initiatives put forward as government proposals must undergo public consultation. However, the legislator neither specifies its methods nor clearly defines which groups would have to participate. Young citizens may participate in consultation just like all others, providing they have attained 18 years of age.

## Actors

Young people's presence in the political process is particularly visible in two areas. The first of these areas is science and higher education with undoubtedly the highest youth participation in the process of developing politics and evaluating various solutions. The other area is youth policy. As mentioned in the previous paragraph the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland plays a consultative role and gives its opinion on all changes to legal regulations affecting students. Adopted standpoints taken by the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland are publicly accessible. Four members of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland, indicated by the Student Council of the Student Parliament of the Republic of Poland, form part of the [General Council for Higher Education](#) (*Rada Główna Szkolnictwa Wyższego*). They are members of the Education Commission and the Economic and Legal Commission. During their two-year term of office, student representatives have the same powers as the remaining Council members. The tasks of the Education Commission include, amongst others: giving judgements on documents concerning the National Qualifications Frameworks for education areas; presenting proposals of model descriptions of learning outcomes for individual fields of study; giving

judgements on draft regulations on education standards applicable to fields of study mentioned in Article 9(b) and Article 9(c) of the Act on Higher Education; giving opinions on legislation concerning higher education and on international agreements related to higher education concluded by the Republic of Poland; giving judgements on applications to provide post-graduate programmes mentioned in Article 8(8) of the Act on Higher Education; giving judgements on draft legislation concerning upper secondary education and on other legislation presented by the Minister of National Education; analysing motions presented by the Ombudsman for Graduates and concerning a decrease in the number of barriers preventing access to jobs in line with graduates' fields of study, proposing areas of study-related initiatives resulting from analysis of the process of education and graduate employability; in the Economic and Legal Commission (*Komisja Ekonomiczno-Prawna*), student representatives and the remaining Commission members deal with: giving judgements on draft state budgets in the scope of the section for which responsibility is assumed by the minister responsible for higher education and the minister responsible for science; giving judgements on the principles of allocating budgetary subsidies to HEIs; giving judgements on matters concerning funds for science and higher education allocated in particular parts of the state budget which remain at the disposal of ministers indicated in Article 33(2) of the Act on Higher Education; giving opinion on the principles of awarding research grants and those for learning achievements under Article 21 (1) (39) of the Personal Income Tax Act; giving judgements on draft legislation relating to higher education and science; giving judgements on international agreements concluded by the Republic of Poland in the area of science and higher education: proposing initiatives focussing on economic and legislative matters pertaining to science and higher education (consolidated text Journal of Laws 2012, item 572 as amended).

[The Young Researchers' Council](#) (*Rada Młodych Naukowców*) is another body operating under the authority of the Minister of Science and Higher Education. It was appointed as a consultative body in October 2015 on the strength of a resolution and its members were indicated by the Minister. The Council performs the following tasks: identification of the existing and future barriers to the development of young researchers' careers; preparation of recommendations concerning instruments supporting young researchers' careers; presentation of science funding mechanisms to young researchers; provision of support to young researchers liaising with representatives of economic circles and institutions implementing innovative solutions in science; implementation of the provisions of EURAXESS and the Code of Practice while recruiting research workers in research units. The Council has successfully: changed regulations in ministerial grant programmes, modified the definition of a young researcher, introduced changes to post-doctoral thesis requirements, exempted various young researcher grants from tax, and undertaken activities aimed at a better presentation of Polish young researchers' problems. The Council posts its adopted stances on its [website](#).

## Information on the extent of youth participation

### Outcomes

Consultations in the realm of youth policy with the participation of national youth representations and youth organisations do not have a systematic nature. No wonder as consulting something which does not exist is rather difficult, and on the other hand youth organisations are too weak and lack the clout to make themselves heard.

### Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

Not applicable



## 5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

### Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

Currently there is no governmental strategic document whose principal aim would be to increase youth participation in civic and political life. [The Youth Strategy for 2007-2013](#) (*Strategia na rzecz młodzieży na lata 2007-2013*), and the [Youth Programme: Active Youth](#) (*Program na rzecz młodzieży: aktywna młodzież*), have not been fully implemented or have remained at the draft stage. Both documents treat the issue of increasing youth participation in political and social life as one of their priorities (Zielińska, 2009). There is currently one ministerial document which contains provisions relating to the promotion of young people's active citizenship - the ["Sectoral Programme Youth Joined in Action for 2016-2019"](#) (*Resortowy Program Młodzież Solidarna w Działaniu na lata 2016-2019*).

### Scope and contents

This document, prepared by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, is entitled the ["Sectoral Programme Youth Joined in Action for 2016-2019"](#) (*Resortowy Program Młodzież Solidarna w Działaniu na lata 2016-2019*). The program described in the document is a strategy for ministerial funding provided for delegated tasks aimed at the achievement of specific goals. It develops activities related to the Social Capital Development Strategy and the Human Capital Development Strategy and "extends the scope of support provided by the programme Active Forms of Social Exclusion Prevention - the 2020 new dimension, competition 3: Active youth attitudes - raising competences, entrepreneurship and environmental responsibility."

The main objective of the programme is to facilitate the creation of a space in which to develop young people's engagement influencing their identity, family, social, cultural and professional life. With regards to the stimulation of youth in the realm of civic activity, the programme aims at increasing social engagement and active citizenship as well as youth participation in cultural life. Priority III - Young citizens - envisages funding provided to activities aimed at supporting:

- Citizenship education and global education;
- young people's participation in the life of local communities and in representative democracy;
- youth participation in decision-making by extending consultation and social agreements with youth,
- participative ways of designing places of integration and leisure,
- creating and supporting regional and local youth websites,
- encouraging participation in local and national elections;
- various bodies (councils) representing youth;
- taking up local initiatives such as happenings, social activism in various areas;
- activities aimed at young people organising themselves into informal and organised groups (ordinary associations, associations, etc.);
- animating partnerships and cooperation networks.

Funding projects with the participation of 6000 end beneficiaries by 2019 is the intended end objective of the programme. This programme mainly targets young people at risk of social exclusion; young people with disabilities are also quoted as a target group. Currently there is no available information related to the stage of progress in activities funded under the project.



## Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The document has been prepared by [the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy](#).

## Revisions/Updates

Not applicable

## 5.6 Supporting youth organisations

### Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

Polish youth organisations are funded on the strength of general principles which are governed by the Public Benefit Activities and Voluntary Service Act passed on 24 April 2003 (*ustawa z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003 r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie*) and the Associations Act of 7 April 1989 (*Ustawa z dnia 7 kwietnia 1989 r. Prawo o stowarzyszeniach*) as well as some other laws: for example, the Social Cooperatives Act passed on 27 April 2006 (*Ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 2006 r. o spółdzielniach socjalnych*, Dz.U. 2006 nr 94 poz. 651 z późn. zm.); the activity of scouting organisations is regulated by the following acts: the Act on the Common Duty to Defend the Republic of Poland passed on 21 November 1967 (*Ustawa z dnia 21 listopada 1967r. o powszechnym obowiązku obrony Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*), Teacher's Charter passed on 26 January 1982 (*Ustawa z dnia 26 stycznia 1982r. Karta Nauczyciela*), Upbringing in Sobriety and Alcoholism Prevention Act passed on 26 October 1982 (*Ustawa z dnia 26 października 1982r. o wychowaniu w trzeźwości i przeciwdziałaniu alkoholizmowi*), Act on the Education System of 7 September 1991 (*Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991r. o systemie oświaty*), Forest Act of 28 September 1991 (*Ustawa z dnia 28 września 1991r. o lasach*), Act on the organisation and undertaking of cultural activity passed on 25 October 1991 (*Ustawa z dnia 25 października 1991r. o organizowaniu i prowadzeniu działalności kulturalnej*), Public Benefit Activity and Voluntary Service Act passed on 24 April 2003 (*Ustawa z dnia 24 kwietnia 2003r. o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie*), Drug Abuse Prevention Act passed on 29 July 2005 (*Ustawa z dnia 29 lipca 2005r. o przeciwdziałaniu narkomanii*), Emergency Medical Services Act passed on 8 September 2006 (*Ustawa z dnia 8 września 2006r. o Państwowym Ratownictwie Medycznym*) and the Mass Event Safety Act passed on 20 March 2009 (*Ustawa z dnia 20 marca 2009r. o bezpieczeństwie imprez masowych*). There is no document equivalent to a law or regulation which, in general terms, would: a) clearly define a youth organisation or an organisation acting for youth b) specify the terms of operation and potential support for such organisations; which differ from those relating to non-government organisations in general. Therefore, it is difficult to talk about a separate support system for youth organisations. It should be emphasised that [attempts to develop that kind of system](#) or its elements have been undertaken but have not been successful.

### Public financial support

The sources of funding for youth organisations in Poland are [diversified and dispersed](#). Apart from EU funding for youth programmes, youth organisations can [obtain funds](#) for public tasks as part of such initiatives as Youth, Youth in Action or the Erasmus+ programme. Public tasks become contracted when they have been transferred to non-governmental organisations or other entities. Contracted tasks may be transferred to non-governmental organisations, including those for young people, at central level (e.g.; agreements between non-governmental organisations and ministries, government agencies) or at a lower level (e.g.: agreements between non-governmental organisations and communes). Entities mandating youth organisations to perform such tasks must ensure the financing of the task.

## Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

The most important objectives of government and local government policies implemented by youth organisations as part of contracted tasks relate to the following areas: education and upbringing (especially issues of participation in social and civic life), youth and children international exchanges, cultural and sports activities, tourism and recreation for children and young people, environmental protection, prevention of addiction to psychoactive substances and behavioural addictions, safety and defence, historical education, sexual education and preparation for family life, equality education, European education, promotion of volunteering and the equalisation of opportunities in the labour market. A significant proportion of tasks delegated by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy are linked to the equalisation of children's and youth's opportunities and are aimed at safeguarding the needs of groups at risk of social exclusion in various forms.

Non-governmental organisations providing support are a significant source of support for youth organisations. The most important of these are: The Centre for Citizen Education, The Batory Foundation, The Civitas Polonus Foundation, The Polish-German Youth Cooperation, The Polish Children and Youth Foundation, The Orange Foundation, The Foundation for the Development of Local Democracy, The Stocznia Foundation, Norwegian Funds. They take advantage of various forms of foreign governmental assistance or obtain funds from private sponsors. Supporting organisations often focus on helping youth organisations operating locally, in communities where young people have fewer opportunities, and their priority is given to supporting grass-root activity and creativity. Improving youth workers' competencies is an important type of activity. Education and training programmes are intended for teachers, youth leaders, social workers, local politicians and many other groups.

Polish legislation offers provisions which are a good starting point for close cooperation and mutual support between student councils and public benefit organisations, including youth organisations. The Act on the Education System provides that formal education is supported by non-governmental organisations, including scout organisations, as well as legal entities whose statutory activity falls within the category of education and upbringing (J. of Laws 2004, No. 256, item 2572 as amended.). Moreover - in accordance with applicable legislation (J. of Laws 2004, No. 256, item 2572 as amended.) - heads of schools or educational institutions: "[shall, in particular, create in their school or institution](#) conditions to facilitate the activity of: volunteers, associations and other organisations, especially scouting organisations whose statutory aims are to engage in educational activities and to develop and enrich the forms of teaching, pedagogical and care activities of the school or institution."

## 5.7 "Learning to participate" through formal, non-formal and informal learning

### Policy Framework

Citizenship education and the development of social and civic competence in Poland are enshrined in basic strategic documents such as: The Long-term National Development Strategy ([Długookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju](#)) and the Social Capital Development Strategy ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego](#)). The first of these mentions [two goals](#): the development and introduction of citizenship education programmes at all levels of education with regards to life-long learning, and the development and introduction of professional support programmes for teachers. The primary school core curriculum (2017) provides a list of expected pupil attitudes, which are perceived as the intended outcomes of citizenship education:

- 1) involvement in civic activities: students become engaged in social activities;
- 2) social sensitivity: students recognise symptoms of injustice and respond to them;

- 3) responsibility: students undertake activities in their community, behave constructively in conflict situations;
- 4) sense of belonging: students feel strong bonds with local, national, European and global communities;
- 5) tolerance: students respect others' rights to a different opinion, behaviour, habits and convictions if they pose no risk to other people; oppose discrimination."

When providing citizenship education, schools should create the following conditions allowing their students to:

- 1) have access to various sources of information and various viewpoints;
- 2) participate in discussions in classroom and school;
- 3) have a real influence on selected aspects of school life, for example as part of their student government;
- 4) build their self-esteem and develop active participation in social life as well as trust in others".

The solid foundations of citizenship education in Poland are reflected in the number of education-related programs and initiatives supported by the government.

## Formal learning

Citizenship education starts at the first stage of education as an integrated subject (one hour per week in the last year of primary education). Elements of citizenship education are present in the subject "History and Society" provided from the 4th year of primary education. In lower and upper secondary schools, it is a compulsory subject in all curricula and for all school types (one hour per week) - the situation before the change of the education system in 2017. The new model of citizenship education proposes significant changes – citizenship education as a separate subject will be provided only in the last year of primary education and several important issues will be removed from the syllabus.. According to [the ICCS International report](#) citizenship education in Poland is compulsory and integrated into some subjects. It includes extracurricular initiatives, as well as team work and special initiatives, but lacks classroom experiences and cross-curricular approach. Civic knowledge in Poland is evaluated on the basis of cross-country tests, the results of which were quite impressive, whereas the results for civic involvement were only average. [The latest research \(2017\)](#) shows that in Poland the perception of democracy as the most valuable form of government is at a level comparable with those in France and Italy. There is a great deal of visible influence exerted by NGOs working in the field of Polish young people's civic involvement and knowledge. Citizenship education is provided to all young people. It discusses issues relating to the rights of ethnic and religious minority groups. Issues regarding some areas of the LGBT community's rights, such as in the realm of adoption and marriage, remains a controversial area of discussion. There are special citizenship education syllabuses which have been adapted for students with mental disabilities to take account of their cognitive skills.

## Non-formal and informal learning

Education leading to a better civic participation is one of the main topics of non-governmental youth organisations or those supporting young people in Poland. There are several programmes at national level that support various forms of civic and democratic participation. In Poland, school governments are the basic place in which to gain the social skills necessary for civic participation. The compulsory presence of pupil/student representations in schools is required by parliamentary regulations (Journal of Laws 2017, item 610). The same legislation encourages heads of schools to cooperate with non-governmental organisations and promote voluntary activities among pupils/students. Regulations and official recommendations requiring the presence of student representatives in Polish school-governing bodies apply to all levels of education (ISCED 1,2,3). The Ministry of National Education organises nationwide programmes meant to

support active membership in school governments. Some examples include: A School of Democracy - a School of Governance ([Szkoła demokracji – szkoła samorządności](#)) or A Summer Academy - a democratic school model ([Letnia Akademia – model szkoły demokratycznej](#)), coordinated by the Centre for Education Development ([Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji](#)). The main body among non-governmental organisations in the field of citizenship education, the Centre for Citizen Education ([Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej](#)), organises programmes oriented towards the strengthening of the competences of students, teachers and heads of school.

### **Measures to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society**

Presently there are no regulations in Poland obliging pupils or students to participate in activities serving their local community outside of school, however, there are solutions oriented towards prompting those groups to engage in voluntary activities. Participation in such activities which is mentioned in student CVs is taken into account and formally recognised during the upper secondary school recruitment process and could be decisive in the case of strong competition (Journal of Laws 2017, item 610). However, such a solution is being criticised for its instrumental treatment of voluntary work. The core curriculum ([podstawa programowa](#)), which is an official ministerial document applicable to citizenship education for all three ISCED levels, demands that teachers strive to encourage and prompt pupils and students to take part in the social and political life of local communities and in other forms of citizenship-related activities. National priorities for voluntary activities focus on the development of youth information rather than on an encouragement or a formal obligation to perform any form of voluntary work. The thinking behind this is that the lack of interest in voluntary service is caused by insufficient awareness of its benefits among young people.

### **Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth workers**

In the context of Poland differentiating between partnership and long-term cooperation can be sometimes challenging. Legal regulations encouraging schools to open up to voluntary service and cooperation with non-governmental organisations (youth organisations in particular), to create favourable conditions to establish local partnerships and co-operation for citizenship education. In practice, youth organisations (most often the scouting association), are, alongside the student councils, the most important partners of schools in initiatives promoting active participation in social and civic life. An agreement which was signed in 2010 by the Polish Scouting Association (*ZHP - Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego*) and the Ministry of National Education allows Scouting Association units to conduct educational activities in schools for the benefit of students, and exchange youth work experiences and methods. The Ministry also agreed to act as patrons for initiatives put forward by the Polish Scouting Association aimed at children and youth education and to consult draft legislation regarding children and youth education with the Association. Although the document does not explicitly mention cooperation in enhancing citizen participation, it is difficult to imagine the absence of this aspect in joint activities. Grass-root initiatives include the creation of tools helping to form local partnerships for citizenship education. A [guidebook](#) describing how to create local synergies and co-operation networks between various groups and communities at local level is one good example of such initiatives. The guide's proposals include making use of local non-school resources (libraries, community centres), and the experience of various ancillary groups (enhancing the activities of senior citizens, former members of the local government, experience exchange between various youth groups).

### **Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences**

The biggest projects supporting youth participation in civic and political life are run by government agencies and focus on donations, education and - to a lesser extent - on operations. They frequently include formal and non-formal education borderline activities,

although they tend to be more focussed on building teacher competences and a better exploitation of the school environment, mainly by giving ideas for interesting and non-standard forms of citizenship education. The Centre for Education Development (*ORE - Ośrodek Rozwoju Edukacji*) plays the main role in this type of governmental activity at central level.

EU programmes targeting youth are [a vital contribution](#) supporting and disseminating non-formal education in the field of social and civic competences. Since 2007, projects directly aimed at the promotion of young people's participation and civic competences have been funded under such programmes as [Youth, Youth in Action and Erasmus+](#). The aim of "Youth In Democracy" (Sub-Action 1.3) was to support young people's participation in the lives of local communities, familiarising them with the mechanisms of representative democracy and encouraging youth to consciously and fully participate in public life. In 2017, one of the priorities of Action 2 in the Erasmus+/Youth programme is the promotion of solutions and activities increasing youth participation in social and public life with particular emphasis on young people at risk of exclusion. For four years now, initiatives in the field of youth and formal education have been funded under Action 3. This action also supports dialogue and relations between young people and institutions as well as those responsible for youth policy. Meetings, debates, seminars, consultation exercises and workshops focussing on the policies and activities of EU institutions targeting youth serve the implementation of project objectives.

The programme Citizens for Democracy ([Obywatele dla demokracji](#)) is one of the biggest programmes implemented by non-governmental institutions. From 2013 to 2017, as part of the objective "Increase of civic participation in public life", support was provided to activities aimed at involving citizens and civic organisations in public life, shaping public policies and making decisions affecting city areas, communes, cities or the whole country. The objective resulted in the implementation of 133 projects (51 of those targeted children and youth) with 56,000 participants (including children and youth). [Those projects focussed on different issues](#) and their scale varied - from projects run at central level to those run locally to address small community problems. At present, the [Batory Foundation](#) is implementing a similar project entitled "You have a say, you have a choice" ([Masz głos, masz wybór](#)). The Centre for Citizen Education is another organisation providing a number of educational and stimulating activities for young people. The campaign "Young people have a say" (*Młodzi mają głos*) consists in the organisation of voting in secondary schools on the eve of elections and is its most spectacular and best-known initiative. Since the project's inception in 1997, up to 200,000 young people across the whole country have participated in the project each time an election has been held. Apart from this campaign, the Centre for Citizen Education creates programmes and educational projects in the following categories: school development and improvement, citizenship education syllabuses, educational and civic projects in the field of culture, heritage and media, student government, volunteering, global responsibility, etc. Some examples of projects implemented by the Centre for Citizen Education include: Citizenship Education in Autonomous Schools, Young Citizen, Student Government.

Examples of long-term cooperation between non-governmental organisations and the Ministry of National Education can occasionally be found, however, they usually refer to one project or groups of projects receiving ministerial support. Non-governmental synergies formed to conduct joint activities aimed at participation are quasi-partnerships. The coalition of non-governmental organisations for the European Year of Citizens 2013 is an example of that kind of activity. Cross-sectoral cooperation with the participation of non-governmental organisations and assistance funding bodies is another example of such cooperation. The initiative of legal education in upper secondary schools is implemented in line with this model. The Ministry of Justice coordinates those activities and its partners are: The Ministry of National Education, the General Public Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Bar Council, the National Notary Council, the National Bailiff Council and the Courts of Appeal. Within the framework of a school level legal education programme, schools implemented the following projects: "School education against legal exclusion"



(*Edukacja szkolna przeciwko wykluczeniu prawnemu*) (in 2012-2015, financed from Norwegian and national funds), "Pro bono Education or Mediation in youth life" (*Edukacja pro bono czy Mediacja w życiu młodzieży*).

## Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

The general quality of Polish citizenship education and its results can be evaluated on the basis of comparative international studies. Expert supervision is the most commonly applied method in the case of non-formal education. All major nationwide programmes typically contain an evaluation component. However, there is no generally accepted codified quality assurance system.

## Educators' support

Support offered to those active in the field of citizenship education is provided under a number of programmes. Most of them offer participation in training sessions and webinars. They also provide teaching aids such as textbooks and scenarios. Larger programmes such as [Erasmus+/Youth](#) or "[Citizens for Democracy](#)" have local resident networks helping in the field as well as mobile trainer teams. "Training Trainers" is a widespread practice.

## 5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

### Information providers / counselling structures

In general young Poles are not interested in political issues. Media information on participation in social and political life is formatted for middle aged recipients. The Internet is an exception to the rule. It is there that attempts of alternative forms of communication relating to politics and participation are made.

### Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

Awareness campaigns are one of the most common forms of citizenship education in Europe, however, the percentage of Polish students who have participated in such activities is extremely high and reaches [92%](#). Most citizenship education programmes contain information modules. The school is the main place where that kind of information is provided, which is why these campaigns take advantage of such tools as posters, leaflets, face-to-face meetings, and frequently use multimedia. Campaigns promoting participation in elections (to ensure high turnout) are the most common form of information campaigns. Some of them are targeted mostly at young people with voting rights. The following information campaigns are examples of such activities: "[This is where I live, this is where I elect](#)" (*Tutaj mieszkam, tutaj wybieram*)<sup>[2]</sup>, organised by the association "Cooperative of Initiatives" (*Spółdzielnia Inicjatyw*) and run online through social media and during events and concerts organised specially to encourage young people to join the electorate roll and exercise the right to vote, targeting mainly students studying far from their place of permanent residence, the campaign "[Wherever you are, you have a say/so vote](#)" (*Gdziekolwiek będziesz, masz głos/zagłosuj*) started by the coalition "You have a say, you have a choice" in 2010 and continued until now.

The campaign "[Change the country, vote in elections](#)" (*Zmień kraj idź na wybory*) is an example of activities enjoying nationwide success and targeting mainly young people. The campaign involved over 100 non-governmental organisations. TV/radio spots and announcements in the press were provided free of charge by the almost all of the mainstream media networks, resulting in wide coverage. The campaign was recognisable by over 94% Poles and 14% of the youngest voters (18-19 years of age) said that the campaign "Change your country..." [had had a decisive influence on their participation in elections](#) (another 36% said the campaign had encouraged them to vote).



## Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

Polish youth's attitude towards people of different religion and culture, especially of those coming from Muslim countries, is rather reluctant. Such attitudes stem from stereotypes present in media coverage and public debates [rather than from personal experience](#). Therefore, the Ombudsman suggests that more emphasis should be put on activities promoting inter-cultural dialogue and tolerance. The project ["Young Assisi. Youth for tolerance and peace"](#) (*Młody Asyż. Młodzież na rzecz tolerancji i pokoju*) is an example of activities promoting tolerance and multiculturalism, organised for over five years by the [Intercultural Dialogue Institute of John Paul II in Cracow](#). As part of the project, students search for publications relating to the main theme and collect them, maintain a website, and participate in exhibitions, conferences, workshops and shows promoting multiculturalism. They are also tasked with organising at least three events for students of their own school. It is also possible to take advantage of the workshop offer proposed by the organiser. During the [project](#), 67 schools in the whole country obtained certificates of cultural openness and tolerance. The promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and tolerance is one of the main themes of most international youth exchanges implemented in Poland as part of EU projects. In total, tens of thousands of Polish young people have participated in the programmes [Youth, Youth in Action](#) and [Erasmus+/Youth](#) within 2005-2017.

## Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

### 5.9 E-participation

Young people's e-participation is now being analysed by government agencies. It is present in two fields. The first field is about counteracting the e-exclusion of certain groups of youth, mainly those from rural areas and/or socially degraded. The other field means to ensure the e-participation of government institutions and local governments and adapting their communication methods to the young generation's communication practices. Preventing e-exclusion is an element of government strategies and sectoral documents are prepared mainly in the following ministries: [Digitalisation](#), [National Education](#), and [Family, Labour and Social Policy](#). [IT education](#) beginning in the first year of primary school is compulsory. It is provided during all years of compulsory education (till the age of 18). The improvement of IT education quality at all education levels and its usefulness is being widely discussed.

The aforementioned e-participation of government institutions involves activities aimed at increasing the social communication of governmental and non-governmental institutions by using social media. All of the main government institutions have their own websites. There is one common web system for all government institutions which is called the [Bulletin of Public Information](#) (*BIP -Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej*). It consists of unified public records online, collected in a system of standardised pages created with the general public in mind. Institutions whose participation in the BIP is compulsory are: public authorities, local government units, self-regulatory organisations (SRO – profession or industry based), courts and tribunals, trade unions, political parties and all institutions performing public tasks financed from public funds.

Data made available on the BIP is regulated by the [Polish Law on Access to Public Information passed](#) on 6 September 2001. It is based on Article 61 of the Constitution of Poland which provides for the right to information and authorises the Polish Parliament to enact laws enshrining this right. The Law became effective in January 2002. BIP gives access to public information, public data and public assets held by public bodies, private bodies exercising public tasks, trade unions and political parties. Requests regarding specific items can be made either orally or in writing. Requests must be replied to within 14 days. Information regarding all vacancies in public administration must be announced in the BIP system; which is important from the viewpoint of young people. The introduction of e-administration in Poland is quite an advanced process, however, there are still some coverage gaps.

[Regulations](#) adopted in 2012 obligate all public administration units and all entities performing public tasks to the full adaptation of their websites to the needs of people with disabilities. The adaptation process should be performed in accordance with the rules of the WCAG 2.0 standard. A [report](#) by the Supreme Audit Office shows that the majority of audited websites partly fulfil accessibility requirements, however, only about 10% pass all of the specified parameters. [Other sources](#) state that a high level of accessibility is evident only on the websites of central institutions.

Issues of preventing e-exclusion are also dealt with by non-governmental organisations. Their aim is to ensure free access to online resources to all citizens regardless of their age, disability, affluence, equipment and software. [The Foundation "Visible"](#) (*Widzialni*) monitors the measurement of access to the networks of various social groups and implements projects aimed at those who are potentially at the biggest risk of e-exclusion - the project ["Accessible to you!"](#) (*Dostępni dla ciebie!*) may be considered an example of such activities. Its aim was to provide motivation to disabled youth as part of the [Digital Competences Centre](#) (*Centrum Cyfrowych Kompetencji*).

## 5.10 Current debates and reforms

Currently, the establishment of a national system of youth representation is being debated. [The Children and Youth Council](#) operating under the authority of the Minister of National Education have prepared a bill regarding youth representation. Other proposals of how to solve the issue have been put forward by non-governmental organisations included in the [Polish Council of Youth Organisations](#), as well as other groups of young activists. The way in which a system of youth representation is to be appointed and its competences are a moot point. The organisations that are involved in the dialogue are trying to provide answers to the following questions: should the representation be composed of organisations or youth councils or maybe just student governments? Should the council be independent or operate under the auspices of a government agency? who should finance it and how? etc. The debate also includes the council's competences and tasks, especially going beyond the consultative form, and obtaining authorisation to initiate legislative procedures concerning youth. Increasing the competences of youth councils affiliated with local government units and the legalisation of the activity of youth representation bodies at regional (i.e. provincial) levels is another matter on the agenda. The Parliamentary Group Supporting Youth Councils Operating within Local Government Units ([Parlamentarny Zespół ds. Wspierania Młodzieżowych Rad przy Jednostkach Samorządu Terytorialnego](#)) is also involved in the debate.

## 6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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The legal basis for education in Poland is laid down in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland which states that:

- every person has the right to education
- education is compulsory until the age of 18
- education in public schools is free of charge
- parents are free to choose schools other than public schools for their children
- public authorities shall provide citizens with general and equal access to education.

The main state bodies responsible for the [education system in Poland](#) are the Ministry of National Education ([Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej](#)) and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education ([Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego](#)).

Full-time compulsory education (to be received in school) covers children and young people aged 6–16 years, whereas part-time compulsory education (to be provided either at school or at the employers' premises) concerns young people aged 16–18 years. Full-time compulsory education includes the final year of pre-primary education, 6-year primary education and 3-year lower-secondary education. Nursery schools (przedszkole) and primary schools (szkoła podstawowa) are administered by commune (gmina) authorities. Upper-secondary schools, which are not compulsory, are attended by the vast majority of the population in the age group 16–19/20 years and are administered by district (powiat) authorities. Autonomous higher education institutions offer mainly first-, second- and third-cycle programmes (long-cycle Master's degree programmes are available only in a few fields of study). Adult education is provided by public and non-public schools for adults, public and non-public HEIs, continuing education centres, practical training centres and further and in-service training centres.

## 6.1 General context

### Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

The school year 2017/18 was the beginning of the education reform introduced by the Act of 14 December 2016 - Law on School Education ([Ustawa z dn. 14 grudnia 2016 r. Prawo oświatowe](#)) together with the Act of 14 December 2016 - Provisions introducing the Law on School Education ([Ustawa z dn. 14 grudnia 2016 r. Przepisy wprowadzające ustawę - Prawo oświatowe](#)). The main assumption of education reform is the elimination of lower secondary schools and return to the eight-year primary school, as well as the modification of vocational education by replacing basic vocational schools with stage I sectoral vocational schools and in the future also stage II sectoral vocational schools. The objective of the reform is also to extend the cycle of education in general secondary schools from three to four years, and in technical secondary schools from four to five years.

According to Statistics Poland, ([Główny Urząd Statystyczny](#)) education expenditure from the state budget and local government budgets reached PLN 71,9 billion in 2017, representing 3.6% of GDP. The educational part of the general subvention transferred to schools through local government units amounted to PLN 41,9 billion. The state budget earmarked PLN 4,2 billion for education and educational care.

As of 30 September 2018, 86.4% of children aged 3-6 participated in various forms of pre-school education, but despite a significant increase in the value of this rate, it is still below the average for OECD countries and the European Union. As in previous years, children under the age of 6 living in cities much more often attended preschool facilities than their peers in rural areas.

The number of primary schools increased by 7.1% in comparison with the previous school year. There is a constant, although insignificant rise in the share of primary schools governed by private institutions. A total of 2 657 000 pupils and students were enrolled in primary schools for children and youth. In the 2017/18 school year, the number of primary schools for adults increased by 100 establishments on the school year 2016/17 due to liquidation of lower secondary schools which concentrated 1 200 students.

As a result of the education reform assuming a gradual liquidation of lower secondary schools, the number of schools of this type decreased to 1 941 in 2017 (7 706 in the previous year). In the 2017/18 school year, there was no recruitment to the first grade and students of grades two and three continued education in phased-out schools or in lower secondary school sections conducted by other types of schools (711 400 people in total at this level of education).

Statistics Poland, ([Główny Urząd Statystyczny](#)) informs that general secondary schools have been the most popular type of upper secondary schools for years, chosen by 47.8% of lower secondary school graduates in the 2017/18 school year. The vast majority of

general secondary schools for youth were public, unlike general secondary schools for adults. In the 2017/18 school year, there were 3 717 general secondary schools (by 201 fewer than in the previous year) with a total of 617 700 students, including 58.2% women.

Over the last 13 years, there has been a gradual increase in the number of special job-training schools. In the 2017/18 school year, there were 510 such schools teaching 10 500 students.

In the 2017/18 school year, basic vocational schools were transformed into stage I sectoral vocational schools. Grade 2 and 3 students attended basic vocational school sections at stage I sectoral vocational schools. There were 1 504 stage I sectoral vocational schools with a total of 155 800 students (by 10 400 fewer than in basic vocational schools in the 2016/17 school year). The most popular fields of education were the engineering and engineering trades narrow field and personal services.

The number of technical secondary schools in 2017/18 decreased by 0.8% compared to the previous school year, while the number of students dropped by 0.5%. This type of school was chosen mainly by men (60.4% of students of technical secondary schools). Students of these schools mostly studied the narrow fields of personal services and engineering and engineering trades.

In the school year 2017/18, a decrease in the popularity of post-secondary schools was recorded. 235 400 students were enrolled in these schools (by 5.0% fewer than in the previous school year). This trend is due to the broad availability of higher education offering also 2-, 3- year first-degree programmes.

Teaching languages of national and ethnic minorities and regional languages is offered across all levels of primary and upper secondary education. In the 2017/18 school year, 64 800 students participated in this type of courses. Most of the students taking the language of the national and ethnic minority or the regional language during the matriculation examination, chose the standard level examination.

Each stage of education ends with examination testing the effects of education. In the 2017/18 school year, the lower secondary schools provided final examination to their graduates. The graduates of general secondary and technical secondary schools sat the matriculation examination, whereas vocational examinations were held in basic vocational schools and technical secondary schools. These examinations are carried out by the Central Examination Commission together with the Regional Examination Commissions in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education.

344 500 people took the lower secondary school final examination in April 2017. The best results were obtained by students from cities with over 100 thousand inhabitants. Higher results were scored in humanities (average score: 69% - Polish language and 59% - history and social studies) than in mathematical part (average score: 47% in mathematics and 52% in natural science subjects). 258 000 upper secondary school graduates, including 64.3% graduates of general secondary schools, sat the matriculation examination in May 2017. The pass rate was 78.5%, by 1.0 percentage point lower than in the previous school year, reaching 84.4% in general and 67.9% in technical secondary school.

509 800 thousand teachers (full-time equivalents) were employed in schools in the 2017/18 school year. Teachers of primary schools made up the largest group - 43.7%. Most teachers worked as chartered teacher (55.4%) and appointed teacher (21.6%).

## **Organisation of the education and training system**

The structure of the Polish school education system comprises the following types of schools:

- 8-year primary school: compulsory for all pupils;
- post-primary (secondary and post-secondary) schools, including:

- 4-year general secondary schools;
- 5-year technical secondary schools;
- 3-year stage I sectoral vocational schools;
- 3-year special schools preparing for employment;
- 2-year stage II sectoral vocational schools (where those finishing a 3-year stage I sectoral vocational school can continue their education);
- post-secondary schools with programmes of up to 2.5 years for those who have completed secondary or sectoral vocational secondary education.

The school system which is now being implemented will provide for two external examinations: the eighth-grader exam and the maturity exam. The functions of these exams will not change as compared to the lower secondary school exam and the maturity exam in the pre-reform system.

In accordance with the School Education Act of 7 September 1991 (with further amendments), the school education system comprises nursery schools ([\*przedszkole\*](#)) and other pre-school education settings, primary schools ([\*szkoła podstawowa\*](#)), lower secondary schools ([\*gimnazjum\*](#)) (until they are abolished on 31 August 2018), upper secondary and post-secondary schools (until they are transformed into post-primary / secondary schools in the new school system), and art schools. Higher education institutions are not included and form a separate higher education system. However, the school education system comprises initial teacher training institutions, including teacher training colleges, foreign language teacher training colleges (phased out by 1 October 2016), and colleges of social work classified at the ISCED 5B level for international comparisons.

In addition to the above-mentioned schools, the school education system includes:

- education and care institutions where children and young people can develop their interests and talents and participate in various leisure and free time activities;
- continuing education centres, practical training centres and further training and in-service training centres where learners can acquire and broaden general knowledge, and vocational or professional skills and qualifications;
- art institutions: fine art centres which develop artistic interests and talents;
- counselling and guidance services (referred to as Psychological and Educational Support Centres), including specialised services which provide counselling (pedagogical and psychological support) to children, young people, parents and teachers, and guidance to children in the choice of the area of study or occupation;
- youth care centres, youth social-therapy centres, special schooling and education centres, special educational centres for children and young people requiring special organisation of education, methods of work and education, and centres providing compulsory education to children and young people with severe intellectual disabilities and intellectual disabilities combined with multiple physical disabilities;
- institutions providing care and education to pupils receiving education away from their home;
- in-service teacher training institutions;
- educational resources centres.

### **Compulsory education**

In accordance with the Law on School Education, as from 1 September 2017, full-time compulsory education is now again provided by the 8-year primary school, and young people pursue part-time compulsory education in public and non-public post-primary schools or in the form of vocational training at an employer's organisation. The reform of



the school system is being implemented in accordance with the Act of 14 December 2016, the Provisions introducing the Law on School Education. Still existing lower secondary schools will be phased out by 31 August 2019.

Currently, compulsory education is divided into:

- **one-year compulsory pre-school preparation;**
- **full-time compulsory education** (obligation to attend school) which starts at the beginning of the school year in the calendar year when the child reaches the age of 7 and lasts until the completion of education in the primary school ([\*szkoła podstawowa\*](#)) (until the completion of lower secondary education in the transition period) but not beyond the age of 18;
- **part-time compulsory education** until the age of 18 which young people may receive, in particular, in a post-primary school (or until completion of education in the lower secondary school in the transition period) or as part of vocational training at an employer's organisation.

Moreover, children and young people may pursue compulsory education in nursery schools or schools abroad and at foreign diplomatic missions in Poland. A student who has completed education in a post-primary school (earlier: a lower secondary school) before the age of 18 may also carry out the obligation to pursue part-time compulsory education by taking courses at a higher education institution (HEI).

### Home education

The Law on School Education of 14 December 2016 (art. 37) specifies that children can follow full-time compulsory education outside of school, e.g. at home where they are taught by their parents. This arrangement should be formally endorsed by a decision issued by the head of the school in a given catchment area upon parents' request. Parental request is accompanied by an opinion issued by a counselling and guidance centre and parents' declaration that they will secure the learning conditions suitable for the implementation of the core curriculum at the level corresponding to the child's age. No minimum qualification for educators is required.

The Law on School Education also specifies that a child educated at home receives yearly marks in subjects included in the core curricula for the relevant stage of education on the basis of end-of-year exams administered by the school, the head of which had authorized him/her to receive education at home. Parents are obliged to make sure that the child takes these examinations every year. The child's conduct is not assessed.

The school, the head of which authorizes a child to receive education at home, continues to support the child by offering him/ her a possibility to participate in some classes such as extracurricular classes, classes developing pupils' talents and interests, revalidation classes for pupils with disabilities as well as school counselling and guidance provision. The child is also provided with access to textbooks, learning materials, and teaching aids available at school and consultations preparing for yearly exams.

The home schooling arrangement is ended either at parents' request, or in the case of unjustified absence of the child during yearly exams, or exam failure.

### Higher education

In terms of the types and levels of programmes, higher education is divided into:

- first-cycle programmes: undergraduate programmes for applicants holding the maturity certificate, which provide knowledge and skills in a specific area of study and prepare for work in a specific profession, leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*);
- second-cycle programmes: graduate programmes for applicants holding a Bachelor's (*licencjat* or *inżynier*) degree, which provide specialist knowledge in a specific area of study and prepare for creative work in a specific profession, leading to a Master's degree



(*magister*) or an equivalent degree; second-cycle programme graduates may apply for admission to third-cycle programmes;

- long-cycle programmes: graduate programmes for applicants holding the maturity certificate, which provide specialist knowledge in a specific area of study and prepare for creative work in a profession, leading to a Master's degree (*magister*) or an equivalent degree; long-cycle programme graduates may apply for admission to third-cycle programmes;
- third-cycle programmes: doctoral programmes open to applicants holding a Master's or equivalent degree, which provide advanced knowledge in a specific area or discipline of science, and prepare for independent and creative research and for the award of a doctoral degree (*doktor*);
- non-degree post-graduate programmes: programmes for holders of a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) provide programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree (*licencjat* or *inżynier*), a Master's degree or an equivalent degree. These programmes are classified at ISCED 6-7 levels. Colleges of social work are classified in Poland at ISCED 5 level and are not included in the higher education system (they are part of the school education system).

HEIs may be:

- public institutions, established by the State represented by the competent authority or public administration body;
- non-public institutions, established by a natural person or legal person other than a legal entity administered by national or local authorities.

HEIs may be organised as:

- a university-type higher education institution (*uczelnia akademicka*): where at least one organisational unit is authorised to award doctoral degrees;
- a non-university institution (*uczelnia zawodowa*): which offers first- and second-cycle programmes or long-cycle programmes and is not authorised to award doctoral degrees;
- a military higher education institution: a public HEI supervised by the Minister of National Defence;
- a government service higher education institution: a public HEI supervised by the minister responsible for home affairs;
- a higher education for art studies: a public HEI supervised by the minister responsible for culture and national heritage;
- a medical higher education institution: a public HEI supervised by the minister responsible for health;
- a higher education institution for maritime studies: a public HEI supervised by the minister responsible for maritime economy.

HEIs may use the following names:

- 'university' if HEI organisational units are authorised to award doctoral degrees in at least ten disciplines, including at least two in (1) humanities, legal, economic or theological sciences, (2) mathematical, physical or earth sciences, or engineering and technology; (3) natural sciences, pharmaceutical, agricultural or veterinary sciences.
- 'technical university' if HEI organisational units are authorised to award doctoral degrees in at least ten disciplines, including at least six in engineering and technology sciences;

- 'university' together with an adjective or adjectives used to define the profile of a HEI if its organisational units are authorised to award doctoral degrees in at least six disciplines, including at least four in the areas which correspond to the profile of the HEI;
- 'university of applied sciences' if HEI organisational units are authorised to award doctoral degrees in at least six disciplines, including at least four in engineering and technology sciences;
- 'academy' if HEI organisational units are authorised to award doctoral degrees in at least two disciplines.

With regard to the mode or form of study and the organisation of higher education, programmes are divided into:

- full-time degree programmes: a form of study specified by the senate of an HEI, where the curriculum is implemented in the form of courses requiring direct participation of academic staff and students, with the course load complying with the standards defined for this form of study;
- part-time degree programmes: a form of study other than full-time programmes, specified by the senate of an HEI, complying with the standards defined for this form of study.

Programmes are divided into:

- academically oriented programmes (referred to as 'general academic orientation / profile'): comprising modules which are related to academic research conducted by a given HEI, and are based on the principle that more than 50% of the study programme, as defined in ECTS credits, covers courses / classes which enable students to gain more in-depth knowledge;
- practically-oriented programmes (referred to as 'practical orientation / profile'): comprising modules which enable students to acquire practical skills and social competences, and are based on the principle that more than 50% of the study programme, as defined in ECTS credits, covers practical courses / classes developing such skills and competences, including skills developed as part of workshop-type training / classes which are conducted by persons with professional experience gained outside higher education.

Additionally, HEIs may also validate learning outcomes achieved outside the higher education system. More specifically, this is a formal process verifying the learning outcomes achieved, where learning was organised within an institutional framework outside the higher education system or was not organised within an institutional framework, and which used ways and methods enhancing the body of knowledge, skills and social competences.

## **Main concepts**

### **Matura (bacalaureat)**

An external compulsory examination (set by the Central Examination Board, administered and assessed by the Regional Examination Boards) taken by pupils at the end of general and technical upper secondary schools. The written part includes the following subjects: Polish language, mathematics, modern foreign language and also a national minority language for those pupils for whom this language was the language of instruction. All these subjects are compulsory and are taken at the basic level. Additionally, for the written part, pupils have to choose 1 to 5 subjects from the list of optional subjects (extended level only). The oral part, prepared and assessed by the school teachers, consists of compulsory as well as additional subjects. Compulsory subjects are Polish language and a modern foreign language (as well as a national minority language for those pupils for whom this language was the language of instruction). This examination is not obligatory and gives access to higher education.

## National minority language

The following 9 national minorities have been defined in the legislation: Byelorussian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish. Their languages are considered to be national minority languages.

## Pupils' self-government

Pupils' self-government is a representation of all pupils of a given school elected in a direct democratic vote. The pupils' self-government represents all pupils in contacts with the school head, parents and education authorities. It issues opinions and should be involved in the decision making process at school. It receives support and advice from one of the teachers (elected by the pupils) who acts as its mentor.

# 6.2 Administration and governance

## Governance

The responsibility for coordination of educational policy rests with the Minister of National Education ([Minister Edukacji Narodowej](#)). Some ministers can administer public schools and other educational institutions.

As a result of the state administration reform and the education reform, only the national educational policy is developed and implemented centrally, whereas the management of education and the administration of schools, nursery schools and other educational institutions is decentralised. The responsibility for the administration of nursery schools (*przedszkole*) and primary schools (*szkoła podstawowa*) has been delegated to the communes (*gmina*). The management of post-primary schools (above the lower-secondary level until 31 August 2017), art schools and special schools has been delegated to districts (*powiat*) as their statutory responsibility. The self-governing provinces (*województwo*) administer only schools operating at regional and supra-regional levels. The responsibility for pedagogical supervision rests with the heads of the regional education authorities (*kurator oświaty*) in 16 provinces.

## Education administration at national level

## School education

The responsibility for the administration of the school education system rests with the Minister of National Education and his/her deputy ministers. The Director General is responsible for efficient functioning of the ministry as the institution supporting the minister.

## Structure and organisation of the ministry responsible for school education

Aside from the Minister's Political Cabinet, the structure of the Ministry of National Education comprises 15 organisational units (departments and bureaus); departments are sub-divided into units or divisions. Currently, the organisational units of the Ministry include:

1. Economic Department
2. Department for Structural Funds
3. Information and Promotion Department
4. General Education Department
5. Department for Textbooks, Curricula and Innovation
6. Legal Services Department
7. Policy, Qualifications and Vocational Education and Training Department
8. International Cooperation Department
9. Department for Cooperation with Local Government
10. Integration Education Department
11. Administration Bureau
12. Personnel and Training Bureau

- 13. Audit Bureau
- 14. Organisation Bureau
- 15. Internal Auditor (an independent position)

### **Responsibilities and powers of the minister responsible for school education**

The Minister co-ordinates and carries out the national education policy, co-operates in this respect with regional authorities/province governors (*wojewoda*) and other organisational units responsible for the school education system.

By way of regulation, the minister lays down arrangements, in particular, in the following areas:

- **Contents of the general and vocational education and textbooks:**
  - core curricula for pre-school education, general education and vocational education, and outline timetables;
  - classification of occupations for vocational education;
  - arrangements for schools and educational institutions to undertake activities maintaining national, ethnical, language and religious identity of pupils;
  - arrangements for teaching religion in schools;
  - rules for approving textbooks for use at schools;
  - procedures for providing local authorities with information required to determine the level of subsidy for the purchase of textbooks by heads of primary and lower secondary schools.
- **Pupil and student assessment:**
  - detailed rules for assessing and promoting pupils and students in public schools;
  - detailed arrangements for conducting the lower secondary examination (until the school year 2018/2019), the eighth-grader examination and the maturity examination;
  - arrangements for conducting extramural examinations;
  - arrangements for issuing certificates, diplomas and other school documents and templates for them;
  - establishment of regional examination boards and specification of their territorial jurisdiction.
- **Admission to public schools and other educational institutions:**
  - composition and tasks of an admissions board, rules and dates of the admission process;
  - rules for converting criteria into points for admission to public schools if the number of candidates exceeds the number of places available in such schools;
  - procedure of transferring pupils or students from one type of public school to another.
- **Governance and organisation of institutions within the school education system:**
  - requirements for schools and other educational institutions concerning measures necessary to create optimal conditions for education and care activities and other statutory activities, provide conditions for the development of each pupil or student,

- and improve quality of the school's or institution's activities and its organisational development;
- arrangements for the competition for the position of the head of the regional education authorities (*kurator oświaty*);
- requirements for persons holding the position of school head and other management positions, and arrangements for the competition for the position of school head;
- types of schools and institutions where the teachers' council, the parents' council and/or the pupils' or students' self-government are not established;
- organisational arrangements for practical vocational training;
- framework statutes for public schools and other public educational institutions;
- record-keeping methods concerning the teaching process and educational activities;
- rules and conditions for innovation and experimental activities;
- organisational arrangements for the school year;
- organisational arrangements and procedures for contests and competitions in specific school subjects;
- general safety and hygiene regulations for schools and institutions.
- **Pedagogical supervision:**
  - arrangements for exercising pedagogical supervision, including its forms;
  - a list of positions and qualifications required to exercise pedagogical supervision.
- **Pre-school education:**
  - alternative forms of pre-school education;
  - procedures for granting subsidies for pre-school education and related grant accounting methods.
- **Continuing education:**
  - types of public continuing education institutions and their tasks;
  - arrangements of adult education and training;
  - arrangements for providing vocational qualification courses;
  - methods for the validation of learning outcomes achieved in non-school settings;
  - conditions for granting and withdrawing accreditation for institutions providing adult education and training in non-school settings.
- **Initial and in-service teacher training:**
  - conditions and procedures for granting and withdrawing accreditation for non-public in-service teacher training institutions;
  - conditions and procedures for the establishment, restructuring and liquidation of, and organisational and operational arrangements for, in-service teacher training institutions;
  - rules and conditions for the establishment, restructuring and liquidation of colleges, their organisational and operational arrangements and teacher-training standards for colleges.

- **Additional activities, care, counselling and guidance for pupils and students with special educational needs (SEN), and measures to address such needs:**
  - organisational arrangements for public education and care centres for pupils or students with disabilities and maladjusted youth;
  - arrangements for counselling and guidance in schools and other educational institutions, and organisational arrangements for public counselling and guidance centres;
  - detailed arrangements for children and young people to follow individualised schooling and individualised study programmes and related organisational arrangements;
  - detailed arrangements for the education and care for children and young people with special educational needs;
  - arrangements for providing early support for children development;
  - timeframes for transferring to the communes grants for financial support for pupils and students, and methods for determining their level;
  - conditions for the organisation of leisure activities for children and young people;
  - rules and conditions for the organisation of tourist and sightseeing activities undertaken by schools and other educational institutions;
  - detailed arrangements for sport classes and schools and school for sport champions.
- **Matters related to education abroad and education for non-nationals:**
  - types of public and non-public art schools;
  - conditions and procedures for the admission of non-nationals and Polish nationals who completed previous educational stages in other education systems to public nursery schools, schools, teacher training institutions and to vocational qualification courses;
  - arrangements for additional Polish language classes, remedial classes in subjects covered by the curriculum, and classes in the language and culture of the country of origin;
  - levels of grants for beneficiaries who are not Polish nationals;
  - rules for the provision of education to Polish nationals' children temporarily staying abroad;
  - arrangements supporting the teaching of Polish history, geography, culture and the Polish language and other school subjects with Polish as a language of instruction to the Polish diaspora in schools abroad and in other forms of education provided by civic organisations abroad;
  - arrangements for the recognition (*nostrification*) of school and maturity certificates awarded abroad;
  - conditions for sending pupils and students abroad for educational purposes and teachers for in-service training purposes.

The **minister responsible for school education** (the Minister of National Education, *Minister Edukacji Narodowej*) establishes and administers schools, clusters of schools and school consultation centres at Polish diplomatic missions, consulates and military missions in order to provide education for children of Polish nationals temporarily based abroad, as well as public in-service teacher training institutions operating at national level. The



minister can also establish and administer public experimental schools and educational institutions and public continuing education institutions operating at national level.

The **minister responsible for culture and protection of national heritage** (the Minister of Culture and National Heritage, *Minister Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego*) establishes and administers public art schools and other institutions for students of art schools, as well as institutions for in-service training of art school teachers.

The **minister responsible for agriculture** (the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, *Minister Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi*) may establish and administer public schools of agriculture and agricultural institutions operating at regional and supra-regional levels, and establish and administer public in-service teacher training institutions for teachers of vocational subjects taught in schools of agriculture.

The **minister responsible for environmental protection** (the Minister of Environment, *Minister Ochrony Środowiska*) may establish and administer public forestry schools.

The **minister responsible for maritime economy** (the Minister of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterway Transport, *Minister Gospodarki Morskiej i Żeglugi Śródlądowej*) may establish and administer public maritime schools.

The **minister responsible for inland waterway transport** (the Minister of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterway Transport, *Minister Gospodarki Morskiej i Żeglugi Śródlądowej*) may establish and administer public schools of inland waterway transport.

The **minister responsible for fishery** (the Minister of Maritime Economy and Inland Waterway Transport, *Minister Gospodarki Morskiej i Żeglugi Śródlądowej*) may establish and administer public fishery schools.

The **minister responsible for health** (the Minister of Health, *Minister Zdrowia*) may establish and administer a public national-level in-service teacher training institution for teachers of vocational subjects taught as part of the training for the occupations which fall within the remit of the minister according to the Classification of occupations for vocational education.

The **Minister of Justice** (*Minister Sprawiedliwości*) may establish and administer public schools and institutions within youth detention centres and hostels for underage young people and public schools and institutions in penitentiary facilities and custody suites. Schools and institutions in penitentiary facilities and custody suites operate as part of their structures.

The legislation also reserves some powers for the **Minister of National Defence** (*Minister Obrony Narodowej*) and the **minister in charge of internal affairs** (the Minister of Interior and Administration, *Minister Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji*).

## Higher education

The remit of the minister responsible for higher education (as from May 2006, the Minister of Science and Higher Education) covers the development of research, degree programmes and the functioning of higher education institutions.

The structure of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education comprises the Minister's Political Cabinet and the following organisational units:

1. Budget and Finance Department
2. Department of Innovation and Development
3. Legal Services Department
4. Department of Science
5. Department of Higher Education
6. Department of International Cooperation
7. Director General's Bureau
8. Audit Bureau
9. Minister's Bureau

Additionally, specific types of higher education institutions are supervised by the following ministers:

- military higher education institutions: the Minister of National Defence;
- government service higher education institutions: the minister responsible for internal affairs;
- higher education institutions of art studies: the minister responsible for culture and protection of cultural heritage;
- medical higher education institutions: the minister responsible for health;
- maritime higher education institutions: the minister responsible for maritime economy.

### **Responsibilities and powers of the minister in charge of higher education**

The minister responsible for higher education supervises the activities of higher education institutions (HEIs) in respect of their compliance with the law, their statutes and the permit granted for the establishment of a non-public HEI, and proper use of public funds. The minister may request information and clarification from the governing bodies of an HEI and the founder of a non-public HEI, and may conduct inspections of HEIs.

The minister responsible for higher education lays down by regulation:

1. standards for degree programmes in each field and at each level of study in the case of so-called regulated fields of study;
2. standards for initial teacher training programmes;
3. requirements to be fulfilled by organisational units of HEIs in order to provide degree programmes in a specific field and at a specific level of study;
4. detailed requirements for the establishment and operation of a branch campus of an HEI, its basic organisational unit and teaching centre in another location;
5. arrangements for administrative and financial support services for the General Council of Science and Higher Education and the disciplinary committee at the General Council, and the levels of fees for their members;
6. the scope of information and data to be provided in an application for a permit to establish a non-public HEI;
7. the method for keeping the register of non-public HEIs and associations of non-public HEIs, and arrangements for access to the register;
8. detailed procedures for inspections in HEIs and associations of HEIs;
9. conditions for sending individuals abroad for research, teaching and training purposes, and their specific rights;
10. types of degree programmes and training courses open to non-nationals;
11. requirements to be fulfilled by non-nationals applying to follow degree programmes and training courses or to participate in research and development activities;
12. the method for determining the level of grants for students;
13. the method for determining the level of fees for degree programmes and training courses and for participation in research and development activities in public HEIs;
14. arrangements for the award of grants to non-nationals;
15. requirements to be fulfilled by HEIs established by foreign HEIs in order to provide programmes at a specific level and in a specific field of study;
16. conditions and procedures for non-public HEIs to apply for subsidies;
17. cost indices of full-time programmes in individual fields of study;
18. rules for the distribution of subsidies among non-public HEIs and related reporting responsibilities for non-public HEIs;
19. various arrangements concerning the remuneration of staff in HEIs (which are specified in the relevant legislation);
20. detailed rules and procedures for giving the minister's award;
21. requirements to be fulfilled by HEIs in order to provide distance learning courses;
22. types of degrees (referred to as professional titles in the legislation) awarded to first-, second- and long-cycle programme graduates;

23. conditions for the award of diplomas and specimens of diplomas, including diplomas awarded upon completion of programmes provided jointly by various HEIs and research institutions, incl. foreign institutions, and diploma and certificate supplements;
24. detailed rules and procedures for awarding the minister's grants;
25. the method for keeping study-related documentations;
26. detailed arrangements for the recognition (*nostrification*) of diplomas in cases where they are not automatically recognised; bodies conducting the recognition process; conditions for academic recognition of diplomas; types of documents to be submitted together with an application for recognition; timeframe for a recognition process; rules for charging fees for a recognition process; a specimen of a certificate issued upon completion of a recognition process;
27. conditions and procedures for the provision of third-cycle programmes, and arrangements for the award of grants and other types of financial support to doctoral students;
28. detailed procedures for enquiry and disciplinary proceedings;
29. regulations for health and safety at work in HEIs;
30. requirements for the description of a qualification, where each qualification should be assigned to relevant academic areas, domains and disciplines, and which should define learning outcomes for each academic area;
31. model learning outcomes for individual fields of study;
32. requirements to be fulfilled by organisational units of HEIs in order to provide degree programmes in a specific field and at a specific level of study, especially those related to staff;
33. requirements for a curriculum, including a description of learning outcomes and methods of their verification.

### Other bodies in higher education

The **General Council for Science and Higher Education** ([\*Rada Główna Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego\*](#)) is an elective representative body of science and higher education. It cooperates with the Minister of Science and Higher Education and other public authorities in developing national policies for higher education, research and innovation. In particular, the Council:

1. gives opinions on its own initiative and submits proposals in all matters concerning higher education, research and culture, and may also raise such matters with public authorities and HEIs, among other things, requesting clarification and information;
2. gives opinions on the matters presented by the minister(s) responsible for higher education and science, and other authorities and public administration bodies or on its own initiative;
3. gives opinions on draft legislation concerning higher education, development of research and innovation, and on international agreements concerning higher education and research concluded by Poland;
4. gives opinions on the section of the preliminary State budget which is managed by the minister responsible for higher education, and on the rules for the award of State-budget subsidies to HEIs;
5. gives opinions on activity plans and reports of the [National Science Centre](#) (*Narodowe Centrum Nauki*) and the [National Centre of Research and Development](#) (*Narodowe Centrum Badań i Rozwoju*); (a) gives opinions on the funding of research infrastructure and on reports on the use of these funds, taking into account links between the Polish research infrastructure and the European infrastructure; (b) gives opinions on the national standards for the so-called regulated fields of study;
6. submits to the minister responsible for higher education its proposals of model descriptions of learning outcomes for individual fields of study, assigned to relevant academic areas, taking into account the level and profile of programmes.

The **Polish Accreditation Committee** (PAC) ([\*Polska Komisja Akredytacyjna, PKA\*](#)) is an institution working for the improvement of the quality of education. It was established by

Decision of the Minister of National Education and Sport no. 54 of 28 December 2001, based on Article 38 of the Higher Education Act of 12 September 1990 with further amendments (amendment of 22 June 2001). Currently, it operates in accordance with the 2005 Law on Higher Education. The activities of PAC cover all HEIs operating on the basis of the Law on Higher Education.

PAC presents to the Minister opinions and proposals concerning:

- the establishment of HEIs and the authorisation for HEIs to provide programmes in a specific field of study and at a specific level of study;
- quality assessments of degree programmes, including initial teacher training programmes, and the compliance with the requirements for the provision of degree programmes.

PAC cooperates with national and international organisations which are involved in the assessment of the quality of education and accreditation.

University-type HEIs which represent jointly more than a half of the total student population in university-type HEIs may establish the [Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland](#) (*Konferencja Rektorów Akademickich Szkół Polskich*). Non-university HEIs which represent jointly more than a half of the total student population in non-university HEIs may establish the Conference of Rectors of Higher Vocational Education Institutions in Poland ([Konferencja Rektorów Zawodowych Szkół Polskich](#)). Both institutions have been established and are functioning.

The [National Agency for Academic Exchange](#) (*Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej, NAWA*) has the following responsibilities:

- Establishing a system of programmes supporting outward and inward mobility of students, including PhD students, and academic staff;
- Conducting programmes supporting the return of Polish researchers to the country;
- Developing a financial mechanism to support mobility (for example, scholarships, funding to cover or contribute towards the costs of education or subsistence);
- Launching projects to support HEIs in improving the quality of programmes offered;
- Undertaking broadly understood information and promotion activities concerning Polish higher education;
- Promoting the learning and knowledge of the Polish language abroad.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

The responsibility for coordination of educational policy rests with the [Minister of National Education](#). Some ministers can administer public schools and other educational institutions.

As a result of the state administration reform and the education reform, only the national educational policy is developed and implemented centrally, whereas the management of education and the administration of schools, nursery schools and other educational institutions is decentralised. The responsibility for the administration of nursery schools (*przedszkole*) and primary schools (*szkoła podstawowa*) (and, as from 1999/2000, lower secondary schools (*gimnazjum*) which are being phased out) has been delegated to the communes (*gmina*). The management of post-primary schools (above the lower-secondary level until 31 August 2017), art schools and special schools has been delegated to districts (*powiat*) as their statutory responsibility. The self-governing provinces (*województwo*) administer only schools operating at regional and supra-regional levels. The responsibility for pedagogical supervision rests with the heads of the regional education authorities (*kurator oświaty*) in 16 provinces.

At the regional level the head of the regional education authorities (*kurator oświaty*) exercises pedagogical supervision over school education institutions at regional level. The

head of the regional education authorities (REA) is appointed and dismissed by the Minister of National Education at the request of the province governor (*wojewoda*) and, thus, is part of the central government structure. Although the head of the REA is not directly subordinated to the Minister of National Education, the latter has influence on the outcome of a competition for the position of head of the REA by appointing three members of the competition board, and may dismiss the head of the REA also on his/her own initiative. Moreover, the Minister supervises heads of the REAs and coordinates their work in various ways (e.g. by organising meetings, training courses and conferences, and administering the online pedagogical supervision platform).

## 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

### National strategy

Poland has one of the lowest rates of early school leavers in the European Union. Since 2006 the percentage of early school leavers did not exceed 5.7% and since 2012 a steady decline in the number of early school leavers can be observed ([5% in 2017](#)). The National target for Poland to be reached in 2020 is 4.5%.

In Polish legislation there is no separate strategic document devoted exclusively to the problem of early school leaving, however this issue is tackled in the Strategy of Human Capital Development 2020 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020](#)) as well as in the Lifelong Learning Strategy ([Perspektywa uczenia się przez całe życie](#)) as preventing early school leaving needs coordinated actions of several areas: education, social policy, economy and health.

As far as early school leaving is concerned, the Strategy of Human Capital Development lists three main goals:

- preventing early school leaving from early childhood
- early stage identification of young people at risk of early school leaving
- compensating early school leavers and providing them with appropriate assistance

The strategy also lists the main threats that may contribute to early school leaving, such as for example:

- insufficient support for young people at early stages of education combined with lack of cooperation between the school and the parents
- difficult situation of multi-children families
- education and training insufficiently supporting the development of key competences necessary in social and professional life
- employers insufficiently involved in the process of formal learning
- low esteem and popularity of vocational education and training
- lost potential of the young generation (especially in the field of youth entrepreneurship)
- insufficient level of employment of disabled young people (caused by obstacles in accessing to education, training and support measures)

### Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

Strategy of Human Capital Development 2020 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020](#)) proposes the following measures with regards to formal education system:

- putting more stress on key competences acquisition in the formal education system;
- supporting the development of digital competences and skills;

- modernisation of external examination system in order to adjust them to the new curriculum;
- providing more individual approach in teaching, especially in teaching extraordinarily gifted pupils and students;
- developing and promotion of vocational education and training;
- creating the new model of teachers' training;
- increasing the prestige of teaching professions, enhancing teachers' efficiency and providing measures to keep the best teachers;
- introducing new system of schools' support and teaching quality system.

### **Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

Strategy of Human Capital Development 2020 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020](#)) proposes the following measures with regards to non-formal education:

- enhanced cooperation between schools, parents and social partners
- extra-curricular classes development
- better adjustment of vocational education and training to the needs of the labour market
- better training of teachers
- promotion of adult learning and on the job learning
- development of national system for qualification and competence validation (coherent with ECVET and ECTS)
- supporting the use of digital tools in education and training
- support for evidence-based educational policy
- promoting entrepreneurship among young people

### **Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

Strategy of Human Capital Development 2020 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020](#)) is implemented at the national level. With respect to young people, the ministries involved are the following: Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Science and Higher Education. It also involves actively schools at all levels and Voluntary Labour Corps.

The regional strategies are developed by the local authorities.

The main tool of monitoring the phenomenon of early school leaving in Poland is the Education information system ([System Informacji Oświatowej](#)).

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

### **Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

Validation of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal education is related to mechanisms applied in formal education. In Poland, intensive work has been underway for several years to introduce changes in these areas. They involve not only the development of a system for validation, certification and transfer of learning outcomes and, consequently, of qualifications, but also the revision and standardisation of terminology.



[The Act on the Integrated Qualifications System](#) came into force on 15 January 2016. The main instruments of the IQS include:

- the 8-level Polish Qualifications Framework providing information on knowledge, skills and social competences; and
- the Integrated Qualifications Register.

The Act defines concepts such as qualifications, full and partial qualifications, market qualifications and regulated qualifications. This will increase the transparency and comparability of skills acquired outside school.

The IQS aims to:

- ensure quality of the qualifications awarded;
- ensure recognition of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal education;
- enable the accumulation and recognition of achievements/credits;
- provide information on qualifications available in Poland;
- enable comparing qualifications acquired in Poland and other EU countries.

The responsibility for coordination of the IQS rests with the Minister of National Education.

With the vocational education and training system now being more open to learning in non-school settings (which concerns, in particular, adult education and training), effective mechanisms are being developed for the validation of learning outcomes achieved by adults, also through non-formal and informal learning.

The Polish Qualifications Framework describes eight levels of qualifications distinguished in Poland and referenced to the corresponding levels of the European Qualifications Framework, as defined in Annex II to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008. Qualifications in the PQF are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and social competences.

## Information and guidance

The information and guidance is provided via the website of the [Polish Qualifications Framework](#). Moreover, a [list of comprehensive publications](#) and reports is made available. The publication "[Encyclopaedia of qualifications framework](#)" is an example of an informative source of information on the subject.

## Quality assurance

Poland does not yet have a single coherent system for the validation of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal education. Existing procedures are applied in various sectors and related to various practices and validation processes. Some of them have been in place for many years now, others are innovations adopted from abroad, and still other have been introduced on a pilot basis.

In 2011-2012, the Educational Research Institute carried out a 'Study on procedures applied for the validation of learning outcomes achieved in non-formal and informal education' (commissioned to Coffey International Development). The study covered 5 areas: construction industry, ICT services, service industry, automotive industry and financial services. The procedures applied in this area were presented from the perspective of participants and their employers.

Extramural exams are one of the methods of validating learning outcomes achieved outside the formal education system. They enable validation of learning outcomes achieved in schools for adults at the level of primary, lower secondary and basic vocational schools (within the requirements laid down in the core curriculum for general education) and general upper secondary schools.

The bodies responsible for [formal procedures](#) related to these exams, their organisation and the publication of results are the Central Examination Board and Regional Examination Boards. The procedures specify technical requirements for the conduct of examinations.

The Law on School Education of 14 December 2016 has introduced changes in extramural exams. Some of them have been in place since 1 September 2017.

Pursuant to the Act on the Integrated Qualifications System, there will be institutions and entities which are authorised, by way of an administrative decision, to certify a given market qualification (i.e. a qualification which is not regulated by national legislation and is awarded as part of the freedom of economic activity). An entity engaged in economic activity may apply for such an authorisation if it meets certain requirements laid down in the Act. A certifying institution conducts the validation process in accordance with the provisions of the Act (accessed in July 2017).

## 6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

### Policy framework

Poland does not have a separate strategy for mobility or internationalisation at early childhood and school education or higher education level, and there are no separate national benchmarks for mobility.

However, internationalisation of higher education and research is incorporated into development goals of the Government's Strategy for Responsible Development (2016). The Strategy aims to provide conditions encouraging internationalisation of higher education, innovativeness and commercialisation of research findings; facilitate the employment of international scholars with research achievements at Polish higher education institutions (HEIs); and encourage non-EU students to take up studies in Poland. The Law on Higher Education and Science of 20 July 2018 places an emphasis on internationalisation of third-cycle / doctoral programmes and arrangements which facilitate the development and delivery of transnational joint programmes, with most aspects to be regulated by agreements between Polish HEIs and their foreign partners. Furthermore, internationalisation is currently one of the main areas addressed by mandatory programme evaluations / accreditation reviews conducted in higher education by the Polish Accreditation Committee

The [National Agency for Academic Exchange](#) (*Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej, NAWA*), established by the Act on the National Agency for Academic Exchange of 7 July 2017, has operated since autumn 2017. The overall aim of the Agency is to encourage internationalisation of Polish higher education and research. The Agency is modelled after the DAAD in Germany, the Dutch NUFFIC and Campus France in France. Its main responsibilities include:

- establishing a system of programmes which support outward and inward mobility of students, including doctoral students, and academic staff;
- implementing programmes which encourage the return of Polish researchers to the country;
- developing a financial mechanism for supporting mobility;
- launching projects supporting higher education institutions in improving the quality of education;
- undertaking information and promotion activities concerning Polish higher education;
- promoting the learning and knowledge of the Polish language abroad.

On 1 February 2018, the Agency took over from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education the responsibilities related to the recognition of higher education qualifications.

## Tools facilitating mobility

There are a number of arrangements and tools directly or indirectly supporting mobility at European level. These include, in particular:

- the **European Qualifications Framework** (EQF) providing a reference system which helps to describe and compare internationally qualifications obtained as part of lifelong learning in individual countries;
- credit systems, the **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System** (ECTS) and the **European credit system for vocational education and training** (ECVET), which enable accumulation, transfer and recognition of learning outcomes achieved as part of formal education in various institutions or non-formal education in different settings;
- a set of **Europass documents**, including, in particular, a Diploma Supplement for higher education diplomas and a Certificate Supplement for vocational qualifications, which describe qualifications obtained by individuals in a standardised and transparent way.

## Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

Learning mobility at different levels of lifelong learning takes place primarily within EU programmes in the field of education and training: earlier, the Socrates and Lifelong Learning Programmes and, currently, the Erasmus+ Programme. However, there are also multilateral, bilateral and national programmes (co-)funded by the Polish Government and / or other countries, or international organisations (see details in the next sections).

Moreover, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education provide funding for various initiatives supporting internationalisation and mobility. For example, since 2003, the MoNE has allocated national funding for projects supporting international cooperation and exchanges of children and young people. As part of the 'Ready, Study, Go! Poland' campaign, the MoS&HE, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System and the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) have organised since 2012 various actions supporting internationalisation of higher education and promoting studies in Poland. One of them is the multilingual portal Go Poland which provides information on the higher education system, including tuition fees and scholarships, practical information on entering and living in Poland, publications and promotional materials, etc. It also has a search engine for programmes by field and level of study and language of instruction.

### Institutions responsible for various aspects of internationalisation and mobility:

- Ministry of National Education ([Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej](#))
- [Ministry of Science and Higher Education](#); Department for International Cooperation ([Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego, Departament Współpracy Międzynarodowej](#))
- [Foundation for the Development of the Education System](#) managing EU programmes in education and training, including Erasmus+ and eTwinning, and other projects supporting international learning mobility;
- [Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange](#) (NAWA) inaugurated on 1 October 2017. Its main goal is to internationalise Polish science by supporting international research collaboration and academic exchange.

## School education

Currently, mobility takes place in the Actions of the [Erasmus+ Programme](#) (2014-2020) for the school education and vocational education sectors and for youth. The Programme is administered by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System.

## Erasmus+ Programme

In **Strategic Partnership** projects within Erasmus+ Action 2, pupils / students of all types of schools may participate in short- and long-term mobility. Short-term pupil / student exchanges, lasting 5 days to 2 months, are directly linked with the objectives of a given project; they are aimed at developing team work, intercultural, project planning and implementation and ICT skills and boosting motivation for foreign language learning. As part of long-term mobility stays, of 2 to 12 months' duration, students attend classes in a school abroad which is a project partner. The programme of activities / classes and the rules for recognition of a study period abroad are agreed before departure between the sending and receiving schools.

Within Erasmus+ Action 1, **Learning Mobility of Individuals**, vocational and technical school students may also undertake practical placements / internships in enterprises, NGOs or vocational education or training organisations abroad. This type of mobility, for a period of 2 weeks to 12 months, is intended to facilitate entry into the labour market for future school graduates. The programme of an internship and the rules for its recognition are agreed before departure between the sending and receiving schools.

As part of the PO WER Programme ([Program Operacyjny Wiedza, Edukacja, Rozwój](#)), financed by the European Social Fund, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, which administers the Erasmus+ Programme, provides funding for mobility projects involving vocational school students and graduates and school education staff (including teachers and school counsellors). Grants are awarded to projects submitted under Erasmus+ Action 1, Learning Mobility, which have successfully passed the assessment process but have not been approved due to a lack of Erasmus+ funding (a reserve list).

### National programmes

As mentioned above, each year since 2003, the Ministry of National Education has allocated **funding for international youth cooperation and exchanges**; for several years now, grants have been awarded on a competitive basis. For example, in 2017, the Ministry has allocated an amount of 685,000 PLN (about 163,000 euro according to the exchange rate of the National Bank of Poland in July 2017) for international youth exchanges with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Israel. The maximum grant per project is 60,000 PLN (about 14,285 euro). Projects are aimed at strengthening dialogue and mutual learning about culture and history, developing attitudes of tolerance, openness and responsibility, and overcoming language barriers. Each project includes at least one reciprocal exchange (at least one visit to Poland and to the partner country). Priority is given to projects which involve young people in civic activities, provide for follow-up activities after the end of the project, encourage young people's activity and develop their soft skills (e.g. creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurship).

Information about Call for Proposals is published on the [Ministry's website](#), and in the [Public Information Bulletin](#).

## Higher Education

Students participate in mobility primarily within the EU Erasmus+ Programme, but there are also multilateral and bilateral programmes and national programmes or initiatives. National initiatives are targeted at both Polish and international students. Within EU programmes, a study period or practical placement abroad is recognised on the basis of an agreement between the student and the sending and receiving higher education institutions (HEIs), and in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation (ECTS); in other programmes, the sending and receiving HEIs agree arrangements for recognition. Degrees obtained abroad are recognised on the basis of national legislation; see the introductory section.

## Erasmus+ Programme

Opportunities for Polish students to undertake a study period in EC countries emerged in 1990, when the European Community launched the TEMPUS Programme for Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In 1998, like other EU candidate countries, Poland joined the intra-Community Socrates Programme (Stage I: 1995-1999; Stage II: 2000-2006) where students could undertake a period of study within the framework of the Erasmus (sub-)programme. Between 2007 and 2013, Erasmus was part of the larger EU Lifelong Learning Programme.

The [Erasmus+ Programme](#) (2014-2020), administered by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, offers several mobility opportunities to students.

Within Erasmus+ Action 1, **Learning Mobility**, first-, second- and third-cycle students may undertake a study period of 3 to 12 months or a practical placement of 2 to 12 months in an enterprise or another organisation abroad. These types of mobility take place within mobility projects, based on agreements between students' home HEIs and higher education or other institutions / organisations abroad.

Student mobility may also be part of two types of projects, Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building in Higher Education, undertaken by HEIs within Erasmus+ Action 2. In both cases, mobility is closely related to the objectives of a given project. **Strategic Partnerships** may include intensive programmes for students, with a duration of 5 days to 2 months (e.g. summer schools), and blended mobility, combining physical mobility (a short stay in another country) and virtual mobility (participation in virtual learning). Like in Action 1, in **Capacity Building in Higher Education projects**, students may undertake a period of study (3 to 12 months) or a practical placement (2 to 12 months) abroad.

The latest statistics on learning mobility within the Erasmus+ programme are published regularly by the Polish National Agency of Erasmus+ Programme on a [dedicated website](#).

## Multilateral programmes

### Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, CEEPUS

[CEEPUS](#) is the first multilateral cooperation programme in the field of education in Central Europe, established on the basis of an international multilateral agreement. Poland has taken part in the programme since 1994; the Polish CEEPUS Office is the national contact point in the country. The other participating countries are: Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia, and Kosovo. The CEEPUS Programme supports mainly the establishment of inter-university networks where partners from at least three countries offer joint programmes and, in particular, doctoral programmes. Within this framework, the Programme offers scholarships to students and academic teachers based on the principle that each country is required to fund at least 100 scholarship months for inward mobility in each academic year. Scholarships are granted for short study visits, semester study periods and practical placements. Support is also provided for training seminars, language courses and specialist courses.

### International Visegrad Fund

The [International Visegrad Fund](#) was created in 2000 by the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary (V4 countries). Each of the four countries provides an equal contribution to the Fund. Additionally, the Fund is supported by other governments or government organisations, including Canada, Germany, South Korea, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

The fund awards grants for various projects and individual scholarships. The latter include scholarships for Master's degree studies and post-Master (PhD and post-doc) level research stays of 1 to 2 semesters or 1 to 4 semesters in the case of Masters studies. Scholarships are available to students from the V4 countries as well Albania, Armenia,

Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia and the Ukraine.

## Bilateral programmes

Poland has signed bilateral agreements on cooperation, including scholarship-based exchanges, and / or recognition of qualifications with 35 countries, including EU Member States, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Macedonia, Turkey, China, Mongolia, Japan, Vietnam, Israel and Egypt. As part of some of the agreements, the government of Poland and / or the partner country offer(s) a number of scholarships to academic staff and students. A full list of agreements is available on the website of the [National Agency for Academic Exchange](#).

Bilateral programmes include, in particular, the Fulbright Programme, funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the US State Department and offering scholarships to US and Polish students and graduates for studies and research stays in the US or Poland; and the Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme, funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation and awarding scholarships for study at Polish HEIs to students coming mainly from former Soviet Union countries.

## Other international and bilateral programmes

### Fulbright Programme

As part of the [Fulbright Programme](#), the Polish-US Fulbright Commission offers scholarships for studies and research stays funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the US State Department. Scholarships are awarded to, among others, graduates of Polish HEIs who plan to take up, or have been enrolled on the first year of, Masters or PhD studies at US institutions (9 to 10 months); PhD students preparing their doctoral theses at Polish higher education or research institutions for a research project to be carried out at an US institution (6 to 9 months); and to US citizens for postgraduate studies or research at Polish higher education or research institutions (9 to 10 months).

### Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme

The [Programme](#) was launched in 2000, and is funded by the [Polish-American Freedom Foundation](#), and administered by the [Leaders of Change Foundation](#). Scholarships (ca 50 per year) for studies at Polish HEIs are currently awarded to students from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia and the Ukraine.

## National programmes and initiatives

### Studies abroad for outstanding Polish students and graduates

A Polish government programme 'Studies for the Outstanding' (*Studia dla wybitnych*) was announced in 2015. It is designed to provide grants for studies at best international universities of the Shanghai Ranking (Academic Ranking of World Universities) for Bachelor's degree programme graduates and outstanding students who have completed the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a Master's degree programme. The programme was suspended in 2016, and the Government is working to improve application and selection procedures for the programme.

### Scholarship programmes / funds for international students

There are several government scholarship programmes open to students from Eastern Partnership and post-Soviet countries. They include, for example: the Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme; the Programme for specialist Eastern Studies students; and the Stefan Banach Scholarship Programme for second- and third-cycle studies.

A list of the main scholarship programmes for international students is available at:

- ['Go Poland'](#) Portal



- [Bureau for Academic Recognition and International Exchange](#):

The main two national scholarship programmes are the Stefan Banach Scholarship Programme for students from Eastern Partnership countries and the Ignacy Lukaszewicz Scholarship Programme for students from African and Asian countries. As part of Development Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa, students may follow a degree programme in Poland on a fee-free basis. Details about the programmes are available in the 'Go! Poland. Study in Poland' portal.

## Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

Bilateral programmes / initiatives support various forms of youth cooperation and exchange, for example:

### Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund

The Polish-Lithuanian Youth Exchange Fund ([Polsko-Litweski Fundusz Wymiany Młodzieży](#)), managed by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, awards grants for projects supporting cooperation between Polish and Lithuanian youth to establish friendly cooperation between the two nations. The Fund was created in 2007, based on an agreement between the Polish and Lithuanian Governments, under the honorary patronage of the Prime Ministers of the two countries; funding comes from the budgets of both countries. The Fund provides financial (calls for applications) and content-related support (a training system, consultations) for the implementation of ideas proposed by young people. It supports youth exchanges, and seminars and training activities, involving youth, leaders and tutors, which introduce participants to the topic of non-formal and intercultural education and train them on how to manage a youth project. Through the implementation of joint projects young Poles and Lithuanians discover their common roots and overcome national stereotypes, build an atmosphere of cooperation and strengthen the bond between the two nations.

### Polish-Ukrainian Youth Exchange

Polish-Ukrainian Youth Exchanges ([Polsko-Ukraińska Rada Wymiany Młodzieży](#)) take place as part of the Polish-Ukrainian Youth Exchange Council, are administered by the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, and are funded on a competitive basis. Projects include: preparatory and contact seminars which aim to help establish links with new partner organisations and develop new projects; youth exchanges, i.e. meetings for sharing thoughts and ideas, where non-formal education methods are used; youth meetings, i.e. organisation of events such as festivals, concerts and workshops; and information and promotion projects where participants develop products promoting Polish-Ukrainian cooperation.

### Polish-German Youth Cooperation (Jugendwerk)

The Polish-German Youth Cooperation ([Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk](#)) organisation has been involved in youth exchange since 1991. It aims primarily to initiate and facilitate new links between Polish and German youth and to support and strengthen existing cooperation. The organisation receives funding from the budgets of the two countries. Funds are used to support various exchange and cooperation initiatives and programmes involving young people from Poland and Germany, and to carry out the organisation's own promotion and training programmes. Since its establishment, the organisation has provided funding for initiatives involving more than 2.7 million young people.

## Quality assurance

The quality of cross-border learning mobility projects is to a large extent in the responsibility of the institutions involved: schools and higher education institutions. There is no centrally-managed scheme of quality assurance, however most of the mobility programmes have their own quality assurance methods.

## 6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

### Educational support

The national legislation does not define special educational needs. The term is, however, understood broadly as depending on individual needs of a pupil or student. The need to offer support may result from, for example, a disability, specific learning difficulties, social maladjustment, behavioural or emotional disorders, long-lasting illness, traumatic situations or special talents.

Psychological and educational support is offered to all pupils and students with special educational needs, as well as to their parents, both within nursery schools and schools and by other institutions in the school education system, including counselling and guidance centres. Aside from specific arrangements as part of special education (see below), support may include, for example, activities such as classes developing aptitudes, learning skills or emotional and social competences, corrective and compensatory or remedial classes, speech therapy classes, an individualised learning path or programme, and homebased learning.

Education for students with special needs is an integral part of the school education system. It is provided to the following groups of children and young people on the basis of a certificate recommending special education, issued by a counselling and guidance centre:

- students with disabilities: with mild, moderate and severe intellectual disabilities; deaf and with hearing impairment; blind and with visual impairment; with a motor disability, including aphasia; with autism, including Asperger's syndrome; and with multiple disabilities;
- students who are socially maladjusted;
- students at risk of social maladjustment.

At each stage of education and in any type of school, particularly gifted pupils may follow:

- an individualised study programme for one or more subjects / types of classes included in the school curriculum for a given year;
- an individualised learning path leading to completion of education in any school within a shorter period.

### Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Regardless of the education for students with special needs setting, pupils and students with disabilities – except those with a moderate or severe intellectual disability, and socially maladjusted pupils and students and those at risk of social maladjustment – follow the same national core curricula as their peers without disabilities for general education in preschool institutions, and for general and, where appropriate, vocational education, in schools at all levels. Pupils or students with a moderate or severe intellectual disability follow a separate core curriculum in primary schools and special schools preparing for employment. For those with a severe intellectual disability, mainstream nursery schools and schools may organise compulsory education in the form of group or individual rehabilitation-and-education classes. Pupils or students who are unable to attend a nursery school or school due to their health may follow an individualised programme.

Each pupil or student in education for children and youth with special needs has an individual education and therapy programme. It is based on recommendations made in the education for children and youth with special needs certificate for the pupil or student, and developed by a team of teachers and specialists, where necessary, in collaboration with a counselling and guidance centre. The programme specifies, among other things, special classes or activities, including, in particular, rehabilitation classes / activities for a pupil or student with disabilities, social rehabilitation classes / activities for a socially maladjusted pupil or student, or social therapy classes / activities for one at risk of social

maladjustment. The classes / activities are designed so as to improve the functioning of pupils or students and enhance their participation in the life of their nursery school or school and / or in the family and social environment. The programme is revised and adjusted, where necessary, on the basis of a periodic multi-faceted specialist assessment of the pupil's or student's functioning.

Rehabilitation classes for pupils or students with disabilities include therapy and rehabilitation activities. They may be conducted for a group or on an individual basis, depending on the pupils' or students' needs. The duration of such classes / activities in preschool institutions should be adjusted to individual needs. Where the new national outline timetables have been put in place as part of the school reform, the minimum duration of rehabilitation classes / activities in mainstream and integration classes of mainstream schools is 2 clock hours a week per pupil / student at all education levels. Based on the pre-reform outline timetables which are still in place in some schools or grades, the minimum number of class hours to be allocated to rehabilitation classes is:

- 190 hours per student in the 3-year education cycle in lower secondary schools and basic vocational schools;
- 180 hours per student in the 3-year education cycle in general upper secondary schools;
- 240 hours per student in the 4-year education cycle in technical upper secondary schools.

## 6.7 Skills for innovation

### Innovation in formal education

The Ministry of National Education has established the [new core curriculum for 2018/2019](#). According to the core curriculum and from the perspective of skills for innovation, the education in the primary school has the following objectives:

- fostering the development of competences such as: creativity, innovativeness and entrepreneurship;
- fostering the development of critical and logical thinking, reasoning, giving arguments and drawing conclusions;
- fostering the curiosity, interest and motivation to study;
- fostering comprehensive development of pupils that will allow them to understand the surrounding world.

In this respect the following skills are to be developed at the level of primary school education:

- effective communication in mother tongue and in other modern foreign languages;
- effective use of mathematics in everyday life and mathematical thinking;
- search, classification, critical analysis and use of information from various sources;
- creative problem solving using diverse methods including IT tools and coding;
- team work and social engagement.

According to the core curriculum and from the perspective of skills for innovation, the education in the secondary school has the following objectives:

- using knowledge as the basis for skills and competences;
- development of reason and language-related skills and competences such as: reading comprehension, formulating questions and problems, using criteria, giving arguments, explaining, classifying, drawing conclusions, defining, giving examples etc.;
- combining critical thinking with creative and imagination-related skills.

Since 2016 the Ministry of National Education introduced the [pilot project "Pilotaż programowania"](#) aiming at introducing coding at every stage of education, starting from the primary school. The project tested various solutions and methods of code teaching (based among others on the [new core curriculum for informatics teaching](#)) and provided broad support for teachers, including professional development opportunities.

Every school in Poland was eligible to take part in the pilot project. In total, the Ministry of National Education received applications from over Polish 2000 schools. Regional Innovation Coordinators ([appointed by the Ministry in 2016](#)) recommended 160 schools to take part in the pilot project out of which the selection committee selected 16 (one per region). The Foundation for the Development of the Education System and eTwinning Programme National Office were partners of the pilot project "Pilotaż programowania".

## **Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

There are no specific top-level measures to foster innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work.

## **6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media**

### **National strategy**

Although there is no one explicit strategy on media literacy and the use of new media by young people, the issue is high on the agenda of the Ministry of National Education ([Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej](#)) and the Ministry of Digital Affairs ([Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji](#)). It is also mentioned in key documents, namely:

- the Social Capital Development Strategy in Poland 2020 ([Strategia Rozwoju kapitału Ludzkiego 2020](#)) – focuses on ICT in education and in non-formal education, development of digital competences of the groups at risk of social exclusion, adapting the offer of the training courses to the needs of the labour market as regards the fundamental ICT competences.
- the Long-term National Development Strategy. Poland 2030. The third wave of modernity ([Polska 2030 Trzecia fala nowoczesności. Długookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju](#)), adopted by the Council of Ministers at the beginning of the year 2013. The document defined the fundamental courses of interventions, including developing digital competences of teaching personnel (e.g. teachers, employees of other educational and cultural institutions, employees of NGOs) and implementing common digital education as well as establishing modern infrastructure and educational resources.

The main actors involved in media education in Poland are the following:

- Ministry of National Education ([Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej](#) - responsible for the creation of the core curriculum. The Ministry also coordinated the Digital school programme ([Cyfrowa Szkoła](#)), which was running between April 2012 and August 2013 to pilot a future long-term policy aimed at developing pupil and teacher competences in ICT use in education. This policy has also been intended to foster informal education and self-education. The advisory body – Council of Informatisation of Education is also active by the Minister of National Education).
- Ministry of Digital Affairs ([Ministerstwo Cyfryzacji](#) - its mission is to develop broadband infrastructure, support the creation of web content and e-services and promote digital competences among citizens)
- Ministry of Culture and National Heritage ([Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego](#) - [supports projects](#) in the field of media education and information which are related to cultural education)

- National Audiovisual Institute ([Narodowy Instytut Audiowizualny](#)) digitizes and publishes archives documenting Polish national heritage. NInA implements projects aimed at digitizing and archiving of products of Polish culture, audiovisual recording of important cultural events, as well as making these products and archives widely available to the public. The Institute publishes teaching materials in the field of media education on a [dedicated website](#).
- National Broadcasting Council ([Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji](#)) as created as a constitutional regulatory body nominated to shape and monitor the broadcasting system. Because one of its primary aims is to guard the freedom of speech, the right to information and the public interest in broadcasting (Art. 213.1 of the Polish Constitution), it has been obliged, by the power of the [Act on radio and television broadcasting of 29 December 1992](#), "to promote media literacy (media education) and to cooperate with other state authorities, non-governmental organizations and other institutions in the area of media education." (art. 6 (2) (13))
- Polish Film Institute ([Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej](#)) was established in 2005 and since then has completed many projects dealing with film, animation and digitization, including those related to media education. Besides, thanks to numerous donations, PFI has supported a number of initiatives, such as funding scholarships for young people to make their own films and projects. [The School Film Library](#) project is one of the educational PFI projects, carried out in cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the National Audiovisual Institute. Packages of DVDs containing more than 55 feature films, documentaries and animated films were sent to nearly 14,000 schools in Poland.
- NASK Research and Academic Computer Network ([Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa](#)) is a research institute and a data networks operator offering state-of-the-art telecommunications and data solutions to business, administration and academic customers. Its research projects focus on telecommunications, data quality and security of IT systems. In 1991, NASK connected Poland to the Internet. Since 2005 it has been involved, together with [Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę](#), in implementing a European Commission programme [Safer Internet](#), aimed at improving the safety of children in their use of the Internet and new technologies. NASK also supports other awareness-raising initiatives towards the safety of the ICT network use targeted at specific user groups, such as young people, seniors and teachers.

## Media literacy and online safety through formal education

Media literacy education was introduced to schools of primary and junior high level in 1999 as part of the core curriculum as so-called "educational path", but the implementation of the curriculum proved inconsistent and the media education programme was given up in 2008. The result of this is the duality of media education in current core curriculum: on the one hand, it is not mentioned in the general education goals, but on the other, it is noticeable in all of the aspects of the core curriculum.

The core curriculum 2018/2019 ([Podstawa programowa 2018/2019](#)) lists the following objectives related to media literacy and the use of new media:

### Primary school

- fostering the development of critical and logical thinking, reasoning, giving arguments and drawing conclusions;
- providing pupils with skills that will allow them to have a mature and organised way of understanding the surrounding world.

In this respect pupils in the primary school should be able to:

- look for, categorise and analyse information from diverse sources;
- creatively solve diverse problems with a conscious use of IT methods and tools, including coding.

## Secondary school

- using knowledge as the basis for skills and competences;
- development of reason and language-related skills and competences such as: reading comprehension, formulating questions and problems, using criteria, giving arguments, explaining, classifying, drawing conclusions, defining, giving examples etc.;
- combining critical thinking with creative and imagination-related skills.

In this respect pupils in the primary school should be able to:

- creatively solve diverse problems with a conscious use of IT methods and tools, including coding;
- consciously use ICT, respect copyright and safe use of the Internet;
- look select and categorise the acquired information.

## Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

A number of projects related to media literacy and online safety of young people is provided by the following non-governmental organisations:

- Centre for Citizenship Education ([Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej](#))
- Polish Coalition for Open Education ([Koalicja Otwartej Edukacji](#))
- Modern Poland Foundation ([Fundacja Nowoczesna Polska](#))
- Empower Children Foundation ([Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę](#))
- [Centrum Cyfrowe: Projekt Polska](#)

## Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

Problems associated with media education has become a subject of discussion of many [scientific conferences](#). Among them are media education conferences organized mostly by state institutions, universities and academics. The most popular ones include:

1. Polish Research Symposium "People – Media – Education" organized from 1991 by Pedagogical University of Cracow, Department of Educational Media and Technology.
2. International Conference on Media Education organized from 1997 by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Department of Education Technology.
3. International Conference on "Communication – Media – Language – Education" organized from 2002 by Civitas Christiana in Toruń.
4. National Conference "Computer Science in Education" organized from 2003 by Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science.
5. Media Education Forum organized from 2008 by National Broadcasting Council.
6. The Media Education Congress organized from 2014 by The Polish Association of Media Literacy.

[Anna Brosch](#), researcher specialised in new media states that the primary goal and mission of these conferences is to encourage and promote research in the theory and practice of media education at the school, college and university levels of education. Members focus on media education theory and practices and research relating to 'knowledge societies' and critical analysis of strategies and policies. Additionally, media education is a wide discussed during single event conferences organized by Polish universities and state institutions such as the Polish Film Institute or Center for Citizenship Education. Although The issue of the media education is raised more and more often, the results of this debate hardly influenced the shape of education in Poland.



Moreover, [Brosch argues](#) that although media and information education has for years been the subject of academic debate and one of the priorities of the state, present in documents such as Social Capital Development Strategy 2020, there is still lack of answers to the question of what the media and information literacy is, what is the scope of its content and what specific skills should be developed. Therefore, the [Modern Poland Foundation](#) in cooperation with media and information literacy experts prepared Media and Information Literacy Competences Catalogue. It was approved by the Polish National Commission for UNESCO as a significant input into the Information For All international program. The first version of this catalogue was published in May 2012, as part of the Digital Future programme ([Cyfrowa przyszłość: Katalog kompetencji medialnych i informacyjnych](#)), and includes topics ranging from information literacy, media discourses and internet safety to economic, ethic and legal aspects of media competence. The competences catalogue is a tool that will allow for the construction of a comprehensive and coherent set of teaching materials for media and information education at different educational stages in the field of lifelong learning. The catalogue lists the following eight thematic areas in which competences are to be considered:

1. Use of information
2. Relations in the media environment
3. Language of media
4. Creative use of media
5. Ethics and values in communications and media
6. Safety in communications and media
7. Law in communications and media
8. Economic aspects of media functioning (Cyfrowa przyszłość: Katalog kompetencji medialnych i informacyjnych, 2012, pp. 12-23).

The Catalogue is based on the structure of a pyramid. It assumes that the person entering a given level of education already has the skills of the previous one, for example high junior school student has already mastered the knowledge and skills suggested for the primary school level in grades 4-6. Thus it was possible to focus only on new competences, characteristic for a given level. It should be also highlighted that the catalogue indicates the competences of students leaving school of a certain level, for example, in the category of high school we put the competences of a student leaving the 3rd, final grade. In 2014 was published a reviewed version of the Catalogue: "[Media, information and digital competences catalogue](#)" (2014).

## 6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

### Information providers / counselling structures

The main tool of non-formal education of young people in Poland are the scouting movements, international mobility programmes and non-governmental organisations.

The Polish Scouting and Guiding Association ([Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego](#)) is registered as an independent legal entity in Poland providing dynamic, values-based, non-formal educational and leadership training programmes for girls and boys between the ages of 6 and 25. Its activities are open to all young people, regardless of origin, nationality, race or creed. It aims to provide a safe environment for young people to develop their fullest potential as responsible and active citizens who participate in their local, national and international communities and all areas of society. Currently the membership of ZHP is about 110 000 girls and boys and leaders.

Scouting Association of the Republic, ([Związek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej](#)) is a [Polish Scouting](#) organization founded on February 12, 1989. At present, Związek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej has over 15 000 members. At present, Związek Harcerstwa Rzeczypospolitej is an associate member of the [Confederation of European Scouts](#).

[Foundation for the Development of the Education System](#) established in 1993 is the only institution in Poland displaying extensive expertise in managing European educational programmes. FRSE has been appointed the Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ Programme implemented in the years 2014-2020.

Eurodesk is an international nonprofit association created in 1990. As a support organisation to Erasmus+, Eurodesk makes information on learning mobility comprehensive and accessible to young people and those who work with them. With a network of national coordinators connected to over 1000 local information providers in 35 European countries, Eurodesk raises awareness on learning mobility opportunities and encourages young people to become active citizens. Eurodesk is the main source of youth information on European policies, mobility information and opportunities. It answers enquiries and provides guidance for mobile young people across Europe. Eurodesk updates and manages content on the European Youth Portal, it also answers enquiries coming from the Portal.

## Awareness raising initiatives

Awareness raising initiatives include [trainings funded by the Erasmus+ programme](#), i.e. on [youth work in rural areas](#) or trainings provided by FRSE for libraries, labour offices or voluntary labour corps. The trainings are provided by the [pool of trainers](#).

## 6.10 Current debates and reforms

### Overview of the education reform process and drivers

#### School education

Any changes of systemic character take place in the field of education on the basis of the following legislation:

- Act of 6 December 2006 on the rules for preparing the policy of development (Official Journal 2016.383 ) ([Ustawa z dnia 6 grudnia 2006 r. o zasadach prowadzenia polityki rozwoju](#))
- Act of 29 June 1995 on public statistics (Official Journal 2016, item. 1068 ) ([Ustawa z dnia 29 czerwca 1995 r. o statystyce publicznej](#))
- Act of 15 April 2011 on School Education Information System (Official Journal 2015.45) ([Ustawa z dnia 15 kwietnia 2011 r. o systemie informacji oświatowej](#))
- As a part of the document by the Council of Ministers (Polish government) on the 27 April 2009 „Systemic basis for management of the development of Poland”
- Act of 8 August 1996 on the Council of Ministers (Official Journal 2012, item 392, and 2015, item 1064) ([Ustawa z dnia 8 sierpnia 1996 r o Radzie Ministrów](#)).

For the programmes co-financed from the EU funds the key document is evaluation plan for the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development.

The Act on public statistics defines rules and gives basis for a reliable, professional and independent statistical research which results have an official status and it establishes the organisation and procedure for such research and related responsibilities.

Act on School Education Information System defines organisation and operational rules for the School Education Information System which's purpose it to obtain the data necessary for: 1) drafting and implementation of educational policy at the central, regional and local levels including support to school education management; 2) efficient functioning of

education financing at the central, regional and local levels; 3) analysis of cost effectiveness of public funds expenditure earmarked for educational purposes; 4) supervision and coordination of pedagogical supervision in the whole country and improvement of quality assurance. The system provides open access to information on school education.

Act on the Council of Ministers gives the ministers a right to establish at the post of minister various teams and bodies with opinion making and advisory capacity. The regulation by the minister further regulates the purpose, tasks, members and functioning of these bodies. For example in 2015 the Minister of National Education established a Team for Strategy at her post giving it a right to commission analysis, opinions or experts' work.

For information on reform process in higher education please refer to the text below (Current reforms of the higher education system).

## **Overall national education strategy and key objectives**

### **Education as an element of the Government Strategy Polish Deal (Polski Ład)**

Until 2020, the primary strategic document of the Polish government was the Strategy for Responsible Development. At present, the role of the main strategic program has been taken over by the Polish Deal, the outline of which was announced in June 2021. The Polish Deal includes a separate chapter on education entitled. "Friendly school and culture for the new century".

The strategy announces the establishment of a Child and Family Centre as an institution to support the development of children, learners and families expecting or raising children. Additionally, it announces a new model of psychological support and a psychological-pedagogical office in every school. The Polish Deal also announces a new post-pandemic COVID-19 equity programme.

With regard to the development of students' skills, the Polish Deal draws attention to the further development of students' digital competences and promises to increase the role of history in the curriculum.

Within the framework of the "Green School" program, the new strategy also announces thermal modernization of schools improving energy efficiency, equipping buildings with ecological heating systems, energy-efficient lighting and better ventilation systems.

The following strategic projects related to education have been identified in the Polish Deal:

- Child and Family Centre
- Psychological Support Program
- National Educational Equity Program after Covid-19
- Digital Core Curriculum
- Green School
- Day Care Centre Fund
- Youth Community Councils Fund
- Friendly and Accessible Schools for All
- Educational Workshop of the Future
- Student Loan
- Modern Skills Fund.

Information about the Polish Deal Program is available at <https://www.gov.pl/web/polski-lad>.

## Current reform of the structure of the education system

Current changes which take place in the Polish school education system were initiated in December 2016 when the Polish Parliament has approved an Act "Law on School Education". Transformation of the two-stage general full time compulsory education (6-year primary school + 3-year lower secondary school) into one stage general full time compulsory education (8-year single structure called primary school) is a central element of this reform. Consequently education at ISCED 3 level (upon graduation from single structure) will be prolonged by one year. At the same time compulsory education has been limited to single structure education (8-year primary school) as before it covered both primary and lower secondary school.

The above mentioned changes resulted in a necessity to elaborate a new core curriculum and new formulas for external exams. In the school year 2018/2019 the last cohort of pupils has graduated from the phased out lower secondary school in parallel with the first cohort of 8-year primary school graduates. In the school year 2019/20 both cohorts of pupils started education in general, technical and sectoral vocational secondary schools. This means that the reform has reached its transition stage when in which both graduates of lower secondary schools and 8-year primary school follow two different programmes in the same post-primary schools (general upper secondary schools and technika). In the school year 2021/2022 the third year of students will be educated according to the new program. At the same time, it is the last year of general secondary school education for graduates of lower secondary schools.

### Support to distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic

During the time of temporary closure of schools and education settings due to Covid-19 pandemic a [free internet platform with textbooks was made available in order to support distance learning](https://epodreczniki.pl/) (epodreczniki.pl), additional funds for purchase of computers and software were disbursed together with a VAT reduction for those who purchase equipment for schools. Free internet connections were open by commercial internet providers, and on-line training sessions for teachers were organised. Continuation of student support related to the COVID-19 outbreak is to be provided by the National Educational Equity Program after COVID-10, as envisioned under the Polish Deal.

## Current reforms of the higher education system

At present systemic changes in science and higher education are implemented in the framework of "Strategy towards scientific excellence, modern higher education, partnership with business and social responsibility of science" (*Strategia na rzecz doskonałości naukowej, nowoczesnego szkolnictwa wyższego, partnerstwa z biznesem i społecznej odpowiedzialności nauki*).

This process is implemented on the basis of three elements:

1. Constitution for Science (*Konstytucja dla Nauki*) (systemic changes in science and higher education)
2. Innovations for the Economy (commercialization of research and partnership with business)
3. Science for You (*Nauka dla Ciebie*) (social responsibility of science).

According to the approved basis, the following groups will benefit from these changes: academic and research community, children, young people, senior citizens, entrepreneurs, businessmen and women, investors, creative and ambitious persons, inventors, teachers, and NGOs.

## Higher education during the Covid-19 pandemic

### Temporary limitation of the functioning of certain higher education and science system institutions in relation to the prevention, counteraction and combatting of COVID-19

As a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland, a number of solutions were introduced to change the way HEIs operate, including:

- all administrative matters concerning students and doctoral students should be carried out using electronic means of communication, so that they do not have to come to the university personally,
- all bodies acting under the statutes of a higher education institution shall adopt resolutions by electronic means of communication, irrespective of whether such a mode of operation is laid down in the internal acts of the HEIs or in acts regulating the operation of these entities,
- higher education institutions and other entities providing education for students and doctoral students have been able to conduct classes using distance learning methods and techniques, regardless of whether this was provided for in the given education programme.

### The anti-crisis legislation package

The anti-crisis legislation package (Polish: *tarcza antykryzysowa*) includes a set of solutions developed by the government and aimed at preventing the negative impact of the coronavirus on various areas of state operation, including the functioning of higher education institutions. The new regulations are intended to improve, among other things, the functioning of higher education and science institutions during an epidemic. The proposed changes include the following:

- extending the validity of student and doctoral student cards, as well as the identity cards of academic staff without the obligation to confirm their validity for the duration of the restrictions on the operation of the HEI or the suspension of education and for a period of 60 days after its conclusion.
- granting hardship allowances to students and doctoral students without the obligation to apply the provisions of the Code of Administrative Procedure.
- at the borrower's request, submitted by the end of the 2019/2020 academic year, it will be possible to suspend student loan repayments for a period not longer than 6 months.
- HEIs have been able to conduct exams online, both end-of-term examinations and final examinations during studies, and also public lectures and examinations as part of the process leading to the award of the doctoral degree.

## 7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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As far as the health of young people is concerned the positive trends include: a decline in mortality rates, physical development of children and young people (increased body height), reduced prevalence of infectious diseases covered by the compulsory vaccination programme; significant improvement in treating cancer in children. On the other hand, Poland still faces several negative phenomena, such as for example obesity among young people, declining physical fitness levels, mental health problems, allergies or consequences of risky behaviours. A recent negative trend is anti-vaccines movement which results in an increased number of infectious diseases cases amongst young people. Long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the younger generation are not

yet fully known. However, it seems that it will exacerbate negative phenomena in areas of young people's mental health and fitness.

## 7.1 General context

### Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Statistical information coming from surveys conducted as part of the Public Statistical Data Survey Programme ([Program Badań Statystycznych Statystyki Publicznej](#)) both by the Central Statistical Office and individual sectors (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration) is the most important source of statistical data relating to the health of the Polish population. Administrative data and collective publications obtained from institutions operating in the field of health care are an additional source. Data concerning young people's health is drawn also from research done in school. It allows us to identify risk factors for civilisational illnesses occurring at a later age.

Lifestyle is a factor in civilisational illnesses, such as cardiovascular issues, diabetes, motile system disorders, which are occurring at a much earlier age. [Research done in Poland towards the end of 2018](#) shows that many risk factors of civilisational illnesses can be identified already among children and school youth. About 1/3rd of second year students in elementary schools (so 8-year olds) are overweight or obese, and only a slightly lower fraction of seventh year students (so 13-year olds). It needs to be noted that the percentage of obese and overweight 8-year boys has increased in a statistically meaningful way between years 2016 and 2018. Levels of physical activity are on the decline. In the 11 to 15 years age group, "over 80% do not fulfill expert recommendation" – that is the percentage of youth declaring less than an hour of mildly strenuous activity a day. Furthermore, physical activity decreases with age. It comes as no surprise, then, that "arterial systolic blood pressure above the norm has been noted in 24.6% second year students, and in 13.7% of them, results represented values of hypertension of the 1st or 2nd degree (...). Increased systolic blood pressure could be found in 12.1% of seventh-year students." One in five eight-years old, and a half of 13-year-olds do not eat breakfast daily in school, including 3% of younger students and 20% of older students who do not do so at all. Over half of children aged 11 to 15 drink carbonated sweet drinks too often, over two thirds of them eat sweets too often, and almost two thirds too rarely eat fruit and vegetables.

The conclusions of this research show that the "most common risk factor for future health issues, present in all researched groups, is an insufficient level of physical activity." This problem increases in age. Among young people, obesity and overweight are also problems, affecting around 30% of the researched population. However, "insufficient attention is paid to low body mass problems in the child population. It shows up in 14% of children aged 7-9 and among early adolescent youth (12-14 years), which compared to the referential value of 3 to 5% suggests a concerning result." Therefore, decision-makers are still facing lots of challenges to ensure that young people have the best possible conditions in which to develop their physical and mental health, and the young generation is still struggling with a number of problems in this scope.

The situation concerning vaccinations preventing infectious diseases is a good example thereof. [Health and Healthcare in 2017](#), a report authored by the Central Statistical Office, sees it in a positive light: *Free immunisation vaccines administered to Polish children and youth are still common. Infectious diseases, especially those affecting children, are no longer so dangerous and their prevalence has dropped. For example, since 2001 there have been neither diphtheria nor poliomyelitis cases caused by wild poliovirus. There have only been rare incidents of being infected by the virus contained in those vaccines (one case per year in 2009, 2010 and 2015).* [In the report for the year 2019](#), we read that "Free vaccinations among youth and children are still common. 9 out of 10 newborns with vaccination cards have been vaccinated against tuberculosis". However, Central Statistical Office's data indicates systematic decreases in the number of vaccinated children. For



example, in 2010, 93.4% newborns have been vaccinated against tuberculosis, compared to 91.7% in 2018. The percentage of youth and children vaccinated against croup/tetanus (the full basic vaccination) in 2010 was 95.6%, compared to 89.7% in 2018, against pertussis 95.6% in 2010 and 87.4% in 2018, and against measles/mumps/rubella: 98.2% in 2010 and 92.9% in 2018.

However, specialists are seriously concerned about a growing anti-vaccination movement - data provided by the [National Institute of Hygiene](#) shows that in 2010 there were as many as 3 437 parental refusals to have their children vaccinated, 16 689 in 2015 and up to 48 609 in 2019 (between January and October 2020, 50 088 such cases have been recorded). Even at the moment the percentage of children receiving recommended vaccines (that is non-compulsory ones, for example against chickenpox) continues to be very low. The above report states that: "the prevalence of diseases not included in the compulsory vaccination programme is still high. In 2011, there were over 18,000 cases of scarlet fever and almost 163,000 cases of chickenpox (an upward trend) in the population aged between 0 and 19". Specialists say that it does not end there as lowered vaccination ratios, for example against measles, will cause a multi-fold increase in the number of cases. It is also possible that as a result of lowered immunity certain forgotten diseases might be back, such as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and even polio. These concerns are confirmed by the National Institute of Public Health, according to which [an increase in measles cases](#) on Poland has been noticed since October 2018. In 2019, there have been 1492 diagnosed cases, a fourfold increase from 359 in 2018.

The condition of teeth is an important element of young people's health. In this respect, young Poles rank very low, also in comparison with the rest of Europe. The [survey](#) conducted by Woynarowska and Oblacińska proves that tooth decay is the most prevalent chronic disease in children and youth. It can start as early as in the first year of life and its prevalence and intensity will grow with patients' age. In 2012, only 14% of six-year-olds and 4% of eighteen-year-olds were free from tooth decay. [Research done in years 2016-2019](#) indicates a slight improvement in the area – the analogous values among 6-year olds have reached 18.4%, and among 18-year olds 6.8% percent. The prevalence of tooth decay in Poland, when compared with many EU countries, is still high. No comprehensive solutions are being applied to this important health issue (bad teeth constitute a significant risk that the whole body will be affected by more infections). For many years now, there has been no medical care (including dental care) provided in schools. There was, however, an unsuccessful attempt to solve this problem by introducing so-called *dentobuses* (dental van units). The Ministry of Health bought 16 specialist vehicles (one for each province, which cost in total PLN 24,000,000). They were supposed to provide dental care to children and young people under 18 years of age, thus facilitating the youngest children's access to that kind of service even in the most remote or deprived neighbourhoods. It turned out that the conditions offered failed to satisfy dentists and as a result, mobile dental surgeries did not significantly improve young people's access to dental care.

The system of health care for young people with mental problems leaves a lot to be desired. Most of the facilities where young people can get help are situated in big cities. There are fewer psychiatrists and psychologists than necessary, the effectiveness of prevention is poor, and the extent of the problem still fails to be reliably recognised.

The situation has not improved in many years, and may have even deteriorated. At the end of 2019, there were - depending on the source - between 379 and 441 practicing child psychiatrists in Poland. The population of children up to age of 18 in Poland is approximately 7 million (6 949 000 by the end of 2019). Therefore, there are 5 to 6 child psychiatrists per 100 000 minors in Poland, when the WHO standard is 10. Hospital admission takes at least a few months, hospital beds are being reduced, the hospitals themselves are overburdened and it is not uncommon for minors to be admitted to the so called "add-ons" (beds in hospital corridors). The situation is described by a report by the Citizen Network Watchdog Poland: Minor Psychiatry in Poland ([Psychiatria Dzieci i Młodzieży w Polsce](#)). This state of affairs has been confirmed in the Ombudsman's

statements and [interventions](#). A similarly negative opinion has been issued by the [Supreme Audit Office](#). Its report has pointed towards the insufficient number of children and youth psychiatrists, advancing age among current professionals (32% are over 55 years old, and promoting child psychiatry as a priority specializations has not led to wider interest in this career among medical personnel), and uneven distribution of psychiatrists and hospitals working with youth and children across the country (with the worst results in Lubuskie, Pokarpackie, and Podlaskie voievodships, and best in Łódzkie voievodship). As a result, psychiatric wards for youths and children are overpopulated. Even worse is the general availability of psychiatric help for youths and children in out-patient clinics, with average waiting period increasing from 44 days in 2017 to 56 days in 2019, which stems mostly from the low number of specialist staff employed (the number of patients per specialist has gone up from the average of 1091 in 2017 to 1124 in 2018).

A significant issue in psychiatric care for youth and children is the insufficiency of preventive care, which is hard to find in mental health clinics. This is justified by putting the burden of preventive care on schools (teachers or school psychologists), or on psychological-pedagogical clinics. However, as the SAO audit indicates, almost half of public schools of various types (44%) are not currently employing a psychologist or a pedagogue as a separate position, and where they are employed, preventive care is rendered difficult by the high number of students per specialist.

Currently, the Ministry of Health, in partnership with Warsaw's Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's University) is working on [a health system reform in the area of children and youth mental health](#). The project is to be enacted by June 2023 and is being financed under the Operational Programme for Knowledge, Education, and Development 2014-2020, with support by the European Social Fund. The reform assumes the need for urgent changes in protecting the mental health of youths and children. Its goal is to create a national, complex system that will provide support to young patients experiencing mental health disorders, as well as to their families. A side goal is to lower the regional inequalities and prevent oversteering psychiatric wards through developing support systems for patients on all levels of health systems. In 2019, the Ministry of Health has created the [position of the Plenipotentiary for the reform of children and youth psychiatry](#). The most important duties include initiating and coordinating actions working towards the reform, and the development of the psychiatric care system for youths and children.

A [new model of minor psychiatric health protection](#), introduces a three-tier care system. Its basic assumption is to attempt to diagnose minors in sites located as close to the patient as possible: in Local Psychological and Psychiatric Care Centers (which are to be established in every district, which do not have doctors on staff, only psychologists, psychotherapists, and environmental therapists, which do not require a doctor's referral, in December 2021 Level I services for child psychiatry were being given in 212 sites), and only afterwards in Local Psychic Care Centers (with a psychiatric doctor on staff, and including the possibility of providing day care) and Urgent Psychiatric Care Centers (hospital units).

The National Mental Health Protection Programme for 2017-2022 ([Narodowy Program Ochrony Zdrowia Psychicznego na lata 2017-2022](#)) includes a diagnosis which contains data referring to the 18-29 age group. The diagnosis shows that 2.1% of people from this age group (1.7% of males and 2.6% of females) have had a depression episode at some point in their life, and a total of 0.4% have been affected by persistent depressive disorder called dysthymia. However, it is quite likely that the data quoted is significantly underestimated, because police data shows that the highest percentage of suicidal attempts is in the group of 20-24-year-olds. In the same way, data referring to the percentage of people receiving treatment ought to be treated very cautiously. It was confirmed by the diagnosis which was contained in the Programme of Preventing Depression in Poland for 2016-2020 ([Program zapobiegania depresji w Polsce na lata 2016-2020](#)) which indicates that depression in young people may affect from 4-8% to 20% of their population. Depression in children and young people is still less clear than adult depression. In addition to that, a high Charlson Comorbidity Index is an additional

characteristic of childhood and puberty – from 30 to 75% of children with depression meet the diagnostic criteria for anxiety disorders. Therefore, it is not surprising that Polish school children quite frequently go for psychotropic substances not prescribed by doctors (for example sleeping pills or calming tablets). It refers to about 15% of 15- and 16-year-olds and about 18% of 17- and 18-year-olds. Girls are likely to use such substances twice as often as boys. The characteristics of youth depression are worth noticing. "It is inextricably linked to the difficulties of adolescence and development tasks of that phase (...) the clinical picture of the disease is often masked by tantrums, boredom and tiredness, as well as disruptive behaviour such as escaping from home, truancy as well as self-destructive and antisocial behaviour. The symptoms of depression are frequently accompanied by difficulties at school, cutting ties with peers, worse relationships with the loved ones and withdrawal. Growing depression symptoms in adolescents require special attention as they may lead to suicidal attempts or to suicide." In Poland, the rate of suicidal attempts among children and young people significantly increased over the last few [years](#). 2015 marked its highest level in many years - 481 attempts, including 12 by children under 12. In 2016 this rate was slightly lower - 475 attempts. The number of suicide attempts among minors was 772 for 2018 (including 26 for children age 7-12) and in 2019 there were 951 such attempts (including 46 by children age 7-12).

Currently, promoting mental health is one of the operational goals of the National Health Programme for years 2021-2025, but youth and children are not singled out as a special group of concern within that programme, and the term "depression" is not mentioned in the entire document. The aforementioned Depression Prevention Programme does not have a continuation as a separate action. Its parts have been picked up by the National Health Programme, but are not clearly designated within it. In the entire Programme, the word "children" is used three times, and "youth" appears twice.

## Main concepts

Young people's health is significantly influenced by how they take care of themselves. Education, upbringing and information campaigns able to instil a kind of behaviour resulting in fewer health problems in young people may be of key importance in this respect. The Health and Lifestyle of Polish Students report ([Zdrowie i styl życia polskich uczniów](#)) reveals that the awareness of health-improving steps among young people is poor. For example only 61% of teenagers ages 11 to 15 declares getting breakfast on all school days. More data concerning improper health-improving behaviour (coming from the 2019 report prepared by the Centre for Public Opinion Research and entitled Young People 2018 ([Młodzież 2018](#))) indicates that the percentage of youth age 18-19 that does not smoke tobacco is, as of many years now, stable and holds at around 60%. 18% of youth of that age smokes regularly. Alcohol is far more popular as a psychoactive substance than tobacco and narcotics. In the month preceding the research date, 74% of youth age 18-19 had drunk beer at least once, 62% vodka and other high proof spirits, 43% wine. In comparison to 2016 the percentage of youth drinking beer and wine increased (the last one is the only kinds of alcohol where a long-term increase trend in consumption since 2008 is visible), while the percentage of youth drinking high-proof spirits remained the same. A concern is the number of youth who in the month preceding the research had gotten drunk at least once - 44% (13% had gotten drunk at least three times in that period. [ESPAD research](#) done among schoolchildren in 2019 indicates very similar patterns of behaviour and levels of alcohol and tobacco use.

The report does not confirm young people's using drugs on an allegedly large scale - 83% said that within the year preceding the survey they had not experimented with drugs - on the other hand, it should be stressed that 38% of young people admitted to having ever used some kind of a drug. The most common ones are marijuana and hashish, as well as amphetamine and tranquilisers used without prescriptions from a physician. The number of young people experimenting with designer drugs decreased. The research shows that in 2018, 2.6% of youth declared having contact with those substances, indicating a rate similar to 2008, when they first appeared on Polish market.

The situation of young people being overweight or obese is not good, although better than in the rest of Europe. However, in 2018, up to 22% children of school age were overweight, and Polish children are among ["the most quickly becoming overweight in Europe"](#). Among other things, this situation is caused by bad eating habits. As the [newest National Public Health Institute's research](#) from 2019 shows, close to half of youths of ages 10 to 17 eat 4 meals a day, while most of the rest eat 3 or 5 (or more), but only less than 20% eat all meals at regular hours. As a result, over 60% of youths snack between meals. Young people often consume baked goods, usually white wheat bread. Vegetables are eaten daily only by less than 20% of young people, and so are fruits. Meat (especially poultry and ham) is commonly consumed, and fish is less common. Two fifths of young people sweeten their drinks and food with sugar (and over half of them do it at least once a day). Almost everyone eats sweets (and a third of them do so many times a week). Most young people drink sweetened carbonated drinks (one third a few times a week, and almost 10% daily), while almost two fifths eats "junk food" (mostly crisps and other salty snacks) several times a week.

Low level of young people's physical activity is another factor influencing the risk of obesity and the prevalence of other conditions: Even though [recent study](#) from 2018 shows that some 31% (fewer than two years ago) of surveyed young people declared to spend their free time practicing sport, still 25% prefers to play video games and 25% surfing the internet. "Doing nothing" was a favourite passtime for 29% of the surveyed youth and it is an activity chosen by increasingly large percentage of young people (a growing trend from 2013). On the other hand, 72% of boys and 55% declare physical activity (beside PE classes) at least once a week (mainly biking and individual exercise at home).

Polish youth shows insufficient levels of physical activity. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issue. [Research done in the summer of 2021](#) shows that the level of physical activity among young people has decreased. Currently, only 41% of youths of ages 10 to 18 declare an hour of physical activity at least 4 days a week, compared to 51% in 2019. Furthermore, the percentage of youth which limits its physical activity to 1 or 2 days a week has increased (29%), as well as the percentage of young people who are not physically active at all (9%). The intensity of physical activity has also decreased (the most common form being talking walks). Actions are being taken to reverse those negative trends, such as the educational campaign Returning to Shape! ([Wracamy do formy!](#)) and the Ministry of Sports School Sport Club programme that it is promoting.

## 7.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The way of shaping the health policy is regulated by two basic pieces of legislation: the Public Health Act ([Ustawa o zdrowiu publicznym](#)) and the National Health Programme for 2021-2025 ([Narodowy Program Zdrowia \(NPZ\) na lata 2021-2025](#)). The Act provides that "public health tasks are implemented by cooperating central government bodies (...), state organisation units including executive agencies as well as local government bodies, which implement their own tasks involving health promotion or protection, and (...) non-governmental organisations may participate in this implementation". It is also emphasised that "when implementing their tasks, municipal and county (powiat) level local governments may cooperate with provincial local governments". Task coordination lies with the minister responsible for health matters. The minister's responsibilities include: preparing a draft of the National Health Programme, monitoring task implementation and ensuring its consistency, reporting the necessity of taking certain actions, collecting, analysing and sharing information about the nation's health and the prevalence of risk factors, as well as preparing information about public health tasks implemented or attempted in a particular year, including their evaluation. The Public Health Council established under the Act provides its opinion and advice to the minister.

In 2019 an Act on student health care was passed, aimed at securing equal access to health care for children and students, regardless of their place of residence. All students are supposed to be included in preventive care (by the school nurse or hygienist) and dental care (by a stomatologist in school or in a dentobus, with parents retaining the right of choosing a different service provider). The Act makes it the responsibility of school supervising bodies (mostly local governments) to secure the conditions for such care.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

There are also other pieces of legislation applicable to the nation's health and wellbeing, which also refer to youth. They indicate bodies implementing public policies, such as the ministries of: sports and tourism, education, sometimes justice, and - just like the Public Health Act - local governments and non-governmental organisations. These documents, of course, are applicable to the whole nation and not to its particular age groups. The Sports Act ([Ustawa o sporcie](#)) is the first of them. It states: "the creation of conditions favouring the development of sport - including those relating to organisation - constitutes local government units' own task. By adopting a resolution, the authority of a local government unit can determine the conditions and mode of financing own tasks mentioned in paragraph 1 and indicate a public objective in the field of sport which the unit intends to achieve". Another important piece of legislation is entitled the Drug Abuse Prevention Act ([Ustawa o przeciwdziałaniu narkomanii](#)) which provides that "drug abuse prevention is municipalities' own task involving information, education and training work related to solving drug addiction problems, especially those affecting children and youth, including the provision of sports and recreation activities for school children, and activities linked to providing free meals to children participating in after-school programmes focussing on care, education and socio-therapy". The importance of central level organisations implementing the policy was also emphasised, that is the role of central government bodies and public units, including preschools and schools of all levels, health care entities, units of the Polish Army, Police and Border Guard, customs authorities, prison service, social support system institutions and the media. Therefore, the prevention of drug abuse may be considered a joint task to be carried out by both central government and local government bodies with the participation of other public services and social entities. The National Bureau for Drug Prevention accountable to the Minister of Health is a significant entity active in this field. In 2022, the Bureau will be joined with the State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems to create the National Center for the Prevention of Addictions.

## 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

### National strategy(ies)

Among other things, the operational objectives of the National Health Programme for 2021-2025 include "prevention of overweight and obesity". The minister dealing with health matters is the body responsible for the implementation of the Programme, in cooperation with ministers responsible for education and upbringing, physical culture, internal affairs, public finance, , national defence, as well as for the Ministry of Justice. The Programme describes numerous tasks and some of them deal with the importance of physical activity and correct nutrition. These tasks include: leading the national nutritional education center, promoting physical activity among children through supporting extracurricular forms of activity, promoting correct nutrition and physical activity among uniformed services, courses in correct nutrition and physical activity for professional groups engaged in the fight against overweight and obesity (employers, food industry, health managers, health professionals, teachers, healthcare workers, and National Sanitary Inspectorate workers).



## Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

The 2015-2016 Youth Participation Governmental Programme ([Rządowy Program Aktywności Społecznej Młodzieży na lata 2015-2016](#)) functioned between years 2015 and 2016. Currently, data is available only on sport activities organised as part of the National System of Youth Sport ([Systemu Sportu Młodzieżowego](#)) is available. The System was, however, intended only for "young sporting talents" It also identified competitors with high sporting potential who would undergo further training in the sporting establishments and national teams of Polish sporting associations in order to represent Poland in international sporting competitions in all age groups, especially in Olympic sports".

Another programme taking action on physical activity is entitled the Programme of Financing Tasks Relating to the Organisation and Conduct of Activities Supporting and Supervising Youth Sport financed by Fund of Physical Culture Development. ([Program dofinansowania zadań związanych z organizowaniem i prowadzeniem działalności wspierającej i kontrolnej sportu młodzieżowego ze środków Funduszu Rozwoju Kultury Fizycznej](#)). In last few years, it was financed by the Physical Culture Development Fund, implemented by external entities and monitored by the Minister of Sports. It mainly emphasised the training of young sporting talents and sports competition and was financed by the [Physical Culture Development Fund](#), remaining at the disposal of the Minister of Sports and Tourism. There is also a programme entitled All Children's Sports ([Sport wszystkich dzieci](#)) launched by the Ministry of Sports and "emphasising the dissemination of physical activity among children and young people, including the equalisation of their chances in accessing structured physical activity", and - in the long run - "the promotion of healthy and active lifestyle and changing social attitudes to physical activity".

The universality of the programme entitled All Children's Sports makes it worthwhile to have a closer look at the tasks that are financed as part thereof: (1) Local Sports Animator mainly focusses on "supporting the development of children and young people by boosting their physical activity leading to improved fitness, motor skills, health and the quality of life, providing opportunities (by equalising chances of access regardless of parents' financial situation) to the biggest possible group of children and young people to participate in organised, regular and attractive sport activities". Interestingly, the educational and preventive role of sports is emphasised here, as the Programme intends to "combat social pathologies, especially interpersonal violence and aggression, provide assistance to impoverished and socially excluded groups". The Programme involves the participation of local government units and economic communities, (2) "Supporting the organisation of sporting events for children and youth, promoting their physical activity and providing opportunities for participation in interdisciplinary sporting competitions" and, again, educational objectives such as "promoting fair play or reducing aggression and pathologies as well as removing inequalities in children's and young people's access to sport regardless of their parents' financial situation". Unlike the programmes mentioned before, the activities of this Programme are also intended for "schoolchildren who are less gifted athletes". The third financed task under the project, that is "supporting projects implemented by Polish sports associations to promote children's and young people's physical activity", is also seen in a broad social context. [Within the Physical Culture Development Fund, programmes directed towards schoolchildren \(School Sports Club\) and academic youth \(Academic Sport\) are being financed.](#) Physical activity is one of the methods of promoting social inclusion as presented in the document entitled Active Forms of Combating Social Exclusion - a New 2020 Dimension ([Aktywne formy przeciwdziałania wykluczeniu społecznemu – nowy wymiar 2020](#)) - one (optional) type of activities consists in health education understood as activities focussing on physical activity and sports, leisure, sightseeing and social tourism, including the organisation of rallies, orienteering and themed races.

The remaining activities promoting physical activity in line with broader social objectives, including those relating to health, are contained in the Act on Upbringing in Sobriety and Counteracting Alcoholism ([Ustawa o wychowaniu w trzeźwości i przeciwdziałaniu](#)



[alkoholizmowi](#)) which mentions the Fund for Sporting Activities for Schoolchildren and its objective - "financing schoolchildren's sporting activities provided by sports clubs operating as associations and other non-governmental organisations whose statutory activities include the implementation of tasks relating to the promotion of physical culture among children and young people as well as financing activities organised by local government units and tasks described in public health regulations relating to physical activity". Grants for sporting activities for schoolchildren which are awarded by the Minister of Sports as part of the task Sports for All ([Sport dla wszystkich](#)) provide for the promotion of schoolchildren's sports in concrete fields, such as winter sports, swimming classes for everyone and activities involving elements of corrective gymnastics and compensation exercises.

## Physical education in schools

The issue of physical education at schools is mainly defined in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education on Framework Teaching Plans for Public Schools ([Rozporządzenie ministra edukacji narodowej w sprawie ramowych planów nauczania dla publicznych szkół](#)) - Physical Education is a compulsory subject provided in primary schools in years 1-3 in an amount of three hours per week, in years 4-8 - four hours per week and in the case of general upper secondary schools, physical education involves three hours of classes per week throughout all four years of the programme and the same goes for technical upper secondary schools (their programmes go on for five years) and for industrial schools (three-year-long programmes). The percentage of pupils who do not take part in physical activity classes is high. This situation is mainly caused by monotonous character of these classes. Moreover, they are often an occasion for humiliating weaker students which influences the low participation rate even more.

Guidelines provided by the Ministry of National Education state that the "shaping of physical activity habits should be the objective of physical education classes at each stage of education. Therefore, physical education classes should develop school children's interests and attitudes and assist in creating a positive image of themselves as participants in physical activity of a recreational, sporting or tourist nature. It is for this reason that the core curriculum states that physical education offered by schools should satisfy school children's needs and interests as fully as possible while taking their capabilities into account".

## Collaboration and partnerships

Apart from the above diversified groups composed of entities implementing individual activities there are no uniform principles of cooperation and partnerships in the field of promoting physical culture and sport among young people. Most programmes generally focus on cooperation between local government units at different levels, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations and particularly - sports clubs.

## 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

### National strategy(ies)

The operational objectives of the National Health Programme for 2021-2025 promise, among other things, prevention of overweight and obesity, including promoting correct nutrition, courses in those fields for professional groups engaged in the fight with obesity and overweight, consumer research in the fields of nutritional preferences, pro-health fiscal politics aiding the fight against overweight and obesity, creating and managing nutritional principles, monitoring, early diagnosis and intervention in the cases of overweight and obesity or arterial hypertension in children, and research into the food and nutrition habits of the Polish population. . It is for this purpose that the National Centre for Food Education ([Narodowe Centrum Edukacji Żywnościowej](#)) was established on the initiative of the Institute for Food and Nutrition and because "it is necessary to disseminate knowledge about healthy eating and healthy lifestyles, make a positive change to eating

attitudes and habits, thus improving the health of Poles". In response to the population's need for access to free diet advice, the Centre runs an on-line nutrition advice centre - an on-line diet clinic where dieticians can be consulted individually.

## Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Until 2020, under the National Health Program for the years 2016-2020 ([Narodowy Program Zdrowia na lata 2016-2020](#)) programs functioned as its independent parts coordinated, implemented and monitored mainly by the Minister of Health serve the purpose of reducing the young generation's risky behaviours: The National Programme for Prevention and Solving Alcohol Problems; The Programme for Limiting Health Consequences of Using Tobacco and Related Products, The Act on Counteracting Drug Addiction. In the National Health Program for years 2021-2025 ([Narodowy Program Zdrowia na lata 2021-2025](#)), addiction prevention is enshrined as an operational goal, under which policies are designated, including the prevention of addictions to alcohol, psychoactive substances, and tobacco, as well as behavioral addiction. However, they do not have the status of independent programs. These policies refer to young people mostly with regards to integrated addiction prevention. Within each policy, youths are mostly targeted via health education and addiction prevention schemas (universal, selective, and directed), via monitoring and researching the situation in various kinds addiction, and via expanding and increasing the quality of services for children from families with an alcohol abuse issue (as well as children suffering from familial violence). Young people are not specifically mentioned under policy directed at preventing specific types of addiction. Similarly, they are only rarely mentioned with regards to the program's enactors (such as the Ministry of Education and Science or its various subordinate organizations), only in the context of actions taken in order to decrease the use of psychoactive substances. Without a doubt, under all these policies, work is done that is directed at youth as a part of the whole of society. Specific actions addressed to young people emerge then either from specifying policy enacted by the National Health Program for the years 2021-2025, or from separate legal acts. An example of the latter is the Minister of Health's [directive from the 23rd of November, 2021](#), regarding the pilot program of therapeutic action addressed to children and youth abusing new digital technologies, and their families. The program is predicted to run from the 1st of December 2021 until 30th of June 2023 and is supposed to decrease the symptoms of new digital technologies abuse.

Encouraging young people to live a healthy lifestyle and eat healthily may be recognised as the objectives of the 2020 National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i wykluczeniu społecznemu 2020. Nowy wymiar aktywnej integracji](#)) This new dimension required active integration. The document covered an action described as "*improving food safety*", which was recognised as one of the forms in which families, children and youth can be helped, which could be done among other things by introducing children and youth nutrition programmes, providing them with the right amount of nutrients of appropriate quality, as well as educational activities focussing on a healthy lifestyle, including healthy nutrition. As the social impact of the Programme is very complex, it was coordinated by the minister responsible for social security, minister dealing with education and upbringing as well as by local government units.

Education for Safety ([Edukacja dla bezpieczeństwa](#)), a subject provided in the core curriculum imposed by the Ministry of National Education, envisages education in public safety, including "the preparation for emergency response in cases of emergency (mass accidents and disasters), first aid fundamentals" and health-enhancing education. It also involves transferring the knowledge of civilisation diseases (hypertension, diabetes, lipid metabolism disorders, obesity), cancer, psychiatric diseases, those linked to risk behaviours and addictions, including their prevention and risk factors. Interestingly, the subject involves wide cooperation between schools and local police units, fire services, training centres, army units and non-governmental organisations such as Volunteer Fire Fighters, Polish Red Cross, National Defence League.

## Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Polish schools provide no regular and compulsory education focussing on relationships and sex. The Regulation of the Minister of National Education on Framework Teaching Plans for Public Schools ([Rozporządzenie ministra edukacji narodowej w sprawie ramowych planów nauczania dla publicznych szkół](#)) only proposes an optional subject, Family Life Education. However, while there is no number of hours specified, there is a reference to the provisions of the Act on Family Planning, Protection of Human Foetus and Pregnancy Termination Conditions ([Ustawa o planowaniu rodziny, ochronie płodu ludzkiego i warunkach dopuszczalności przerywania ciąży](#)) which provides that the minister will issue a regulation to determine the way of teaching and the contents of the subject

Polish young people needing support in crisis situations can talk to a free and anonymous helpline for children and youth by dialling [116 111](#) - a number that is the same all over Europe. It is run by the [Empowering Children Foundation](#), which responds to requests for moral support in difficult and crisis situations. The helpline is no longer financed by the State. At the moment it remains operative thanks to a business partner's support.

The Ombudsman for Children's Rights established in 2022 a helpline for children and youth – [800 12 12 12](#). The helpline is available 24/7 and includes a chat option.

## Peer-to-peer education approaches

No information available

## Collaboration and partnerships

Information campaigns focussing on healthy lifestyles and factors influencing health and well-being usually have a broader scope and are aimed at all age groups. Some campaigns, however, are addressed to families or parents, and to children and youth through them. An example would be Active From Childhood ([Aktywni od dziecka](#)), a campaign addressed to parents in order to draw their attention to the sedentary lifestyle of children and to encourage them to help children be physically active. A similar case is the Sweat Yourself ([Spoć się](#)) campaign, addressed to families and promoting increasing physical activity as a route to better physical and mental health. An example of a campaign addressed to specific social groups, including the youth, is Depression. You Understand - You Help ([Depresja. Rozumiesz – pomagasz](#)). It's goal is to promote knowledge about depression, its symptoms and possible treatments. One of its branches is the issue of language to use when communicating with people suffering from depression, and one of the groups it is addressed to are young people struggling with youth depression in adolescence.

## Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

The Ministry of Health supports projects realized under the program called Tooth Rot Prevention for the Youth, financed from the Operational Program Knowledge, Education, Development 2014-2020, Priority Area V: Support for Public Health. The programme is directed at young people aged 15-19. The goals of the programme are the following: to raise awareness on teeth hygiene among young people, raising awareness on the right eating habits, diet and healthy lifestyle as factors influencing the health of teeth.

## 7.5 Mental health

### National strategy(ies)

The Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 8 February 2017 introduced the National Mental Health Protection Programme for 2017-2022 ([Narodowy Program Ochrony Zdrowia Psychicznego na lata 2017 - 2022](#)) containing both medical (referring to sick people) and social objectives (addressed to the whole population). The Programme has three main

objectives: "providing people with mental disorders with multifaceted care adequate to their needs, conducting activities aimed at preventing stigmatisation and discrimination against people with mental disorders and the monitoring and evaluation of the Programme activities". The Programme targets the whole population. However, its specific objectives include one that is particularly dedicated to the young generation: "providing school children, parents and teachers with guidance and counselling". The Minister of Health is responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the document. However, it is the minister responsible for education that is authorised to act in relation to the above objective. It involves a task that is defined as "the preparation - in cooperation with the minister responsible for health - of institutional frameworks and principles of cooperation between mental health care units and educational institutions, especially with youth care centres". The Programme also contains a task that is delegated to the minister of justice: "ensuring that people in penitentiary establishments run by the criminal justice system, especially in youth offender institutions, have access to mental health care and counselling". It is also local governments that are responsible for the implementation of the Programme. At provincial level their tasks focus on updating provincial programmes aimed at improving availability and reducing inequalities in access to various forms of community mental health care, including Health and Mental Care Centres, and health care establishments for children and young people in individual provinces. Provincial programmes may be an element of regional mental health care programmes and local governments at county level are responsible for "the preparation of a local programme aimed at improving availability and reducing inequalities in access to various forms of community mental health care, including Health and Mental Care Centres, and health care establishments for children and young people in individual counties and municipalities". Under the Programme and as part of the above objective consisting in providing school children, parents and teachers with counselling and guidance, all local government units are expected "to support the development of children and young people through psychological and educational support centres providing school children, parents and teachers with psychological and educational assistance and to provide psychological and educational assistance to children and young people in nursery schools, schools and institutions".

The National Health Programme for 2021-2025 is another document already described. One of the operational objectives of the document consists in "promoting mental health". As mentioned before, the word "youth" is mentioned in the entire document twice. All the same, some of the tasks indicated in the objective regarding mental health touch on the youth as a part of society. These are tasks like enacting projects and programs that are educational, preventive, behavioural, and interventionist, as well as developing informational politics regarding suicidal behaviours and their risk and prevention factors, limiting access to ways of committing suicides to limit suicides across all age groups, and introducing preventive programs aimed at preventing suicides. They also include providing help for people in mental health crises (helplines etc.), creating and enacting standards of action in situations of suicide risk, and employee education. The Minister of National Education (currently the Minister of Education and Science) is one of the bodies responsible for this objective, alongside his subordinate organizations.

## **Improving the mental health of young people**

Previously Poland also operated the Programme for Preventing Depression in Poland in 2016-2020 ([Program zapobiegania depresji w Polsce na lata 2016-2020](#)). Although it targeted the general public, it also directly identified the most vulnerable groups, including women who have given birth and young people. The Programme was mainly focussed on prevention and raising social awareness of depression disorders. It was for this reason that the programme proposed a number of information and educational activities targeting school children and women in maternity wards. The document was adopted in 2016 and according to its authors, it was the first systemic nationwide programme for preventing depression. However, the program is not being continued.

EDDRA and the system of recommendations endorse programmes run by the State Agency for the Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems (PARPA) and the National Bureau for Drug Prevention (which will be joined together in 2022 into one body named National Center for the Prevention of Addiction), including (1) the Safer Into Adulthood ([Program Bezpieczniej w Dorosłość](#)) selective prevention programme for young people aged 13-19 at risk of drug addiction and social exclusion) (2) School Preventive Intervention ([Szkolna Interwencja Profilaktyczna](#)) (selective drug prevention programme for school children, proposed as brief intervention made by teachers and/or school pedagogues, (3) [FreD goes net](#) (early intervention programme for young people aged 15-21 occasionally using drugs or alcohol).

## 7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

### Policy framework

In Poland there is no integrated and universal tool for diagnosing and signposting young people facing health risks. Individual health conditions have their own statistics, which have not been provided in an integrated study. However, the [Polish Matrix on Physical Activity for Children and Youth](#) ([Polska Karta Aktywności Fizycznej Dzieci i Młodzieży](#)) launched in 2016 was also prepared for Poland as part of the activity of the Active Healthy Kids Global Alliance. It presents data relating to a number of indicators, such as overall physical activity, organised sports participation, active play and transportation as well as activities aimed at healthy weight maintenance. Interestingly, the data made it possible to put forward the thesis that there is no balanced attitude to supporting children's and young people's physical activity, and that the school is the best functioning area in this respect, as its activities focus on improving physical education classes and school facilities; one of the conclusions drawn on completion of the study was that it was necessary to constantly monitor changes to individual indicators of the Matrix and fill in gaps in research. The [last report](#) in Poland had been prepared in 2018.

### Stakeholders

Not applicable

### Guidance to stakeholders

Not applicable

### Target groups

Not applicable

### Funding

Not applicable

## 7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

It is impossible to indicate initiatives aimed at improving access to health care establishments in the case of a specific age group. The country operates the Accreditation Programme. Hospitals ([Program Akredytacji. Szpitale](#)). It contains a set of standards prepared in 2009 by the Centre for Monitoring Health Care Quality. But firstly, they refer to general friendliness and attention given to the standards of service and patients' access to hospitals. Secondly, they are not compulsory. There is also the Accreditation Programme. Primary Health Care. A set of standards ([Program akredytacji. Podstawowa Opieka Zdrowotna. Zestaw standardów](#)). It provides the rules of conduct towards all patients, such as respect for basic rights and needs, respect for dignity - in particular in cases of people with physical or mental disabilities, regardless of their health condition,



convictions and economic situation, ensuring privacy, freedom from embarrassment, secrecy, providing intelligible information about health, participation in making decisions about planned medical treatment. Some of those rules may be particularly important to young patients.

Improved access to health services was one of the tasks listed in the 2020 National Programme of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. The Programme was intended to improve the effectiveness of the health care system in all areas of health care (primary, outpatients, inpatients and addiction treatment) as well as to implement integrated health care and disease management.

[Patient rights](#), while generally referring to adult persons, in many cases give the right to information, decisions and consent to persons aged 16 to 18.

## 7.8 Current debates and reforms

In 2018 the Polish Vaccination Knowledge Association "STOP NOP" was the author of draft amendments to the Act on Prevention and Combating Infections and Infectious Diseases in People (Ustawa o zapobieganiu oraz zwalczaniu zakażeń i chorób zakaźnych u ludzi). It intended to waive the obligation of compulsory vaccination and make it voluntary. However, as the Chief Sanitary Inspector says, "from the perspective of public safety and citizens' health, each change likely to lower vaccination ratios exposes us to the return of diseases which are almost forgotten". The project for the Act was rejected in the fall of 2018, but the question of vaccination availability is still extant and returns to the public debate, especially in the context of the COVID-19 vaccine. There is a strong lobby in Poland fighting against any kind of preventive measures for the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as opposing mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations or preferential treatment for vaccinated persons. Many measures which are common in Western Europe are, therefore, not undertaken in Poland.

In 2020, with a Constitutional Tribunal's decree, the abortion is only legal in Poland in extreme narrow conditions, which has created a freezing effect. Issues linked to dependencies and addictions are also part of such discussions. Poland definitely prefers the paradigm of total abstinence from psychoactive drugs, which significantly hinders harm reduction activities. In the same way, mental and ideological limitations affect the issue of treating people carrying HIV. There are no uniform and universal medical procedures in relation to them. This is all the more important as new social phenomena are emerging, which are the cause of this and many other infections, such as prostitution of young males or so-called chemsex which means taking drugs or consuming alcohol to enhance sexual pleasure which, in turn, leads to a total loss of control and increased exposure to infection. In the recent years [increased sense of threat among LGBT+ youth](#) and an associated is observed in mental health issues, such as depression or suicidal thoughts.

Activities aimed at the protection of the young generation from sexual abuse and its consequences are the subject of a debate currently in progress. The withdrawal of public funding provided to activities conducted by the Empowering Children Foundation (among other things in relation to providing the helpline for children and youth already discussed) is a tangible result of that dispute. The Foundation aims to protect the youngest citizens from harm and minimise the consequences that result from experiencing violence. Sexual violence is one of the frequently indicated forms which has resulted in the emergence of this issue in public debates.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted negative phenomena regarding the psychiatric health of the youth, which intensified the debate on children psychiatry in Poland and the necessary changes. In the period of the pandemic, there is a marked increase in the number of young people seeking help on the Telephone Helpline for the Young 116 111.



During the pandemic, young people (18-24), have more commonly experienced feelings of helplessness, depression, exhaustion, or burnout than the general Polish average. Such feelings are their most prevalent in 20 years. Already in 2014 to 2018, the sense of peer group support had deteriorated, which has only worsened during lockdowns. The experience of domestic and peer violence has emerged as an important effect of lockdowns – it's been experienced by 27% of young people, with 9% having nowhere to turn for help. Peer violence has moved into the virtual realm. This all poses serious questions for the aftereffects of COVID-19 in the future, an issue which has not yet been properly engaged on in the public discourse.

## 8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

In Poland individuals aged between 25-34 and 15-24 years - represent the high percentage of people who consider culture as important (81.4 and 81.9 percent respectively), in the 15-24 age group was the highest percentage of people who read at least one book - 76.3 percent (in cities - 81.6 percent, in rural areas - 69.2 percent, however, it should be mentioned that often those are school or student textbooks and, as such, obligatory readings).

As far as the use of mass media is concerned, 65 percent of people aged 15 or over were reading newspapers, while in the youngest age group (15-24 years) - 48.3 percent (...) the most people listening to the radio were in the group of 25-34 years old - 89.8 percent, but on the other hand, the least radio listeners were recorded in the youngest group (15-24 years). When it comes to watching movies, young people relatively often go to the cinema (92.4 percent of the 15-24 years old group) but at the same time, the lowest percentage of viewers of the feature films (86.4 percent) was recorded in this group.

### 8.1 General context

#### Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

In Poland, research aimed specifically at the culture and creativity of young people is not regularly carried out. However, participation in culture is examined and some of the available reports indicate significant differences between the intensity and the forms of participation amongst the different age groups. From the outset, however, attention should be paid to the significant definitional discrepancies, which have a major influence on the assessment of this phenomenon. It regards the defining of the concept of participation in culture, which is sometimes described in a traditional, [narrow way, as doing something with cultural resources](#) - this approach is usually used in public statistics on culture and it simply means the use (consumption) of cultural resources created by various cultural institutions, possibly also the [amateur creation of such resources](#).

We are therefore dealing with an understanding of participation, which is almost exclusively seen through the prism of the individual's relationship with institutional culture. Subsequent approaches can be considered as progressively wider; some of them include not only reception, but also the creation and interpretation of various contents, while another, even broader approach, defines cultural participation as "individual participation in cultural phenomena - absorption of its contents, use of its resources, subjecting oneself to the existing norms and models, but also the creation of new cultural content and the reproduction and processing of existing ones."

A separate set of approaches results from a very broad anthropological definition of culture and can be characterised as a specific way of human living; as everything which makes a person live differently than other creatures, as a unique way of adapting to reality, a basic tool that provides people with an advantage over the animal and natural world. In this broad approach, the social context is also important - the fact that we live among the

creations of culture which significantly mediate interpersonal relations, because culture is a sphere surrounding human beings on all sides and humans are inherently "immersed" in it. It is also referred to as "being in culture", meaning having internal dispositions to understand cultural patterns and the human behaviours resulting from it, as well as an understanding of the products of culture, along with the ability to produce and process them, which results from acquired cultural competence. The characteristic of this type of understanding of participation in culture is its broad scope: contents, goods, norms, models and values of culture and all possible manifestations of culture, but paradoxically, the universality of this state means that the fact of "being in culture" is neither felt nor realised in everyday life. Another issue is the relation of cultural participation with common norms, models and values - participation is both the reproduction and processing of existing ones, as well as the creation of new ones. This broad social and moral context has a special meaning in the life of the young generation - it indicates that participation in culture, its frequency and daily practice has a significant importance in further life of young people, not only with regards to the narrowly understood participation in culture, but also relating to attitudes in later life, existence in society and professed values.

## Main concepts

Participation in culture may have, first and foremost, an institutional and reception-oriented dimension, as well as reference to broad spheres of life, include "non-mass and non-institutional phenomena into the analysis of contemporary culture", and define them as "a process of including and excluding individuals and groups, objects, ideas, behaviours and their configuration into specific situations (both everyday situations and special occasions) regulated culturally (...) [which] is possible due to human behaviour - therefore always, as [per definition](#), having an active character."

We are, therefore, dealing either with the participation in culture treated as receiving (reception), learning, using and consuming "cultural goods" produced by others (this is in line with the understanding of culture visible in the most important document in this respect, i.e. the Act on Organising and Running Cultural Activity ([Ustawa o organizowaniu i prowadzeniu działalności kulturalnej](#)) or with a complex dynamic set of cultural practices that can occur in various places, such as locations [described by Barbara Fatyga](#) as a "substitute (substitutive) cultural infrastructure, including objects and places in public spaces that were not originally conceived as performing (narrowly understood) cultural functions. They are particularly important in places where the existing and official cultural infrastructure does not meet integration needs and, often, the ludic needs of specific social groups or excludes them from the official participation. Examples of substitute infrastructure understood in this way include: a spot outside a local shop, stairwells and alleyways, obfuscated park benches, bus stops or staircases occupied by slackers or/and young people, uninhabited buildings and ruins, allotment gardens, nooks and crannies of stations and canals occupied by homeless people, et cetera". There is no specialised formal institution necessary to practice such understood participation in culture. Instead, in the typology of cultural activity and participation in contemporary cultural life, developed by Tomasz Szlendak, the "social circles" category manifests. These are "'hordes" of school or university friends. Young people going out together, visiting the gallery to see an exhibition before heading to the pub, or ending up in a cluster of people at an electronic music festival. People, especially young people, leave their homes because they want to meet their friends. This is their main need and motivation. Thus, they independently organise themselves into groups of people for whom collaboration and sociability are more important than artistic experiences."

[The Central Statistical Office](#) conducts a cyclic survey entitled: [Participation in Culture](#). The last one available is from 2019. They show that among young people - individuals aged between 25-34 and 15-24 years - represent the high percentage of people who consider culture as important (81.4 and 81.9 percent respectively), in the 15-24 age group was the highest percentage of people who read at least one book - 76.3 percent (in cities - 81.6 percent, in rural areas - 69.2 percent, however, it should be mentioned that often those are school or student textbooks and, as such, obligatory readings). Participation in culture

also means the use of mass media: 65 percent of people aged 15 or over were reading newspapers, while in the youngest age group (15-24 years) - 48.3 percent (...) the most people listening to the radio were in the group of 25-34 years old - 89.8 percent, but on the other hand, the least radio listeners were recorded in the youngest group (15-24 years). When it comes to watching movies, young people relatively often go to the cinema (92.4 percent of the 15-24 years old group) but at the same time, the lowest percentage of viewers of the feature films (86.4 percent) was recorded in this group.

That is all regarding the participation of young people in the institutional culture studied within the framework of public statistics. However, with regards to the preliminary considerations, it should be emphasised that young people for various reasons - material, social, and infrastructural – often cannot find their place in institutional culture. As Tomasz Szlendak writes in the previously mentioned typology we are dealing here with compulsory participation. The typology of cultural activity and participation in contemporary cultural life mentions another category of youth: "the children from the bus". These are "pupils and pre-schoolers who are brought to cultural institutions to watch plays, exhibitions and educational programmes/events, one of the most faithful and most numerous spectators and clients of Polish cultural institutions, who have no choice – they simply have to participate in artistic events. Without them, cultural institutions in Poland would certainly be empty".

Further data, which is helpful in the diagnosis of the way in which young people participate in culture, is brought by the report entitled: Youth and Media. New Media and Cultural Participation ([Młodzi i media. Nowe media a uczestnictwo w kulturze](#)), prepared by the SWPS Centre for Popular Culture Studies at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities. The Report concerns the impact of modern communication methods, often blamed for having a devastating effect, not only on the cultural activity of the young generation, but on any activity which they engage in. The authors put forward the thesis that states quite the opposite, because *the Internet at the level of young people's practices is not at all an individualistic and global medium. Its uses usually have a group character, shared by a circle of friends (who visit similar websites and communicate with each other through the same channels), and thus strongly local. The practiced 'co-internet' is closer and smaller than the abstract global network.* The authors of the report also point to the fact that the Internet is completing the gaps in the aforementioned institutional offer: *anti-hierarchical circulation of knowledge and cultural content challenges the world of institutions, both educational - because it facilitates learning outside of school, beside school and sometimes against school - and cultural. Once connected to the network, a computer becomes the basic interface for access to knowledge and culture. Regardless of whether it is about accessing texts needed to do homework, watching a favourite series or a theatre play, the most commonly used medium is not a book or television, but a computer screen. In times like this, when culture is digital or digitised, easily replicated and circulating in online exchange networks, the hierarchies separating the 'high' from the 'low' and the 'elite' from the 'popular' eventually collapse, and traditional cultural institutions suddenly start to operate in a completely new environment.* Increasing importance given by young people to their presence within the Internet, including in culturally creative spheres, leads to a [blurring between the boundaries of those "two worlds"](#): *Online and offline life for young people overlaps (...). There is no single way of thinking about it – for some, it is one world, for others, two different ones. Many think that online activities inspire offline ones, and vice-versa.*

It is impossible to talk about the participation of young people in culture without appreciating the role of the Internet and modern forms of communication. This is also visible in the previously quoted [Central Statistical Office research](#): the percentage of people using a computer at home every day is the highest (75.1 percent) among the youngest age group – 15-24 years. It is usually used for the entertainment purposes: streaming or downloading movies, music files, playing computer games or downloading games (this type of computer usage was declared by 59.5 percent of people from the 15-24 age group and 42.1 percent of people from the 25-34 age group). COVID-19 pandemic

has increased the use of paid streaming platforms – in 2021, [20% more Poles](#) have such a subscription compared to the previous year. The greater interest in the digital among young people has been noted in the past. The authors of the diagnosis prepared for the needs of the Social Capital Development Strategy 2020 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego 2020](#)) were also aware of this. It points out a very significant aspect of the self-awareness of young people, who are convinced (and it is hard to doubt the rightness of this conviction) that they are more modern than the older generation, better at multi-tasking, learn faster and are generally more creative. The diagnosis prepared for the current Strategy for the Development of Human Capital (Cooperation, Culture, Creativity) 2030 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego \(współdziałanie, kultura, kreatywność\) 2030](#)) does not refer to this issue at all. At the same time, it should be emphasised that patterns of participation in culture do not depend solely on age, but also on (often strongly correlated) geographical, economic, educational and technological factors (well-illustrated by the results of a [study conducted by Kantar Millward Brown](#), on behalf of the Warsaw authorities, which showed that in addition to age, the factor having the greatest impact on the use of the wider cultural offer in the Polish capital is material status - the higher the status, the more frequent the participation).

Youth subcultures also exist in Poland. One of the [definitions](#) assumes that the subculture is: “almost every group with a sufficient number of adherents, which has social beliefs, values, norms and a lifestyle which differ to the rest of society, can be considered a subculture. Subcultural models give the group a clear identity and style, which distinguishes it from the whole of society, of which it is a part.” Polish youth subcultures are most often associated with a specific type of music, for example heavy-metal or hip-hop. There is no indication that central authorities perceive this diversity and therefore create related documents.

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage ([Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego](#)) is the authority responsible for shaping the cultural policy at state level. The Ministry’s responsibilities include designing relevant elements in the national draft budget and supervising numerous areas, in particular, in the context of the young generation, cultural education (the Ministry supervises artistic education), amateur artistic movements and international cultural exchange.

The most important elements of the state policy aimed at cultural activities and addressed to the young generation include (1) urban, municipal and district culture centres (in some cases, these are combined with sports and recreation centres), which usually carry out extracurricular activities and educational and cultural initiatives; (2) youth centres run as institutions of culture, and also as care and educational institutions on the basis of regulations concerning the education system; (3) school libraries and libraries at other institutions within the education system, which implement curricula and programmes concerning education and care, cultural and information education for children and young people, as well as initial and in-service teacher training; and (4) the system of artistic education (which is separate from mainstream education), for example music, arts and ballet schools, schools for cultural animators and circus artists, experimental schools, education centres providing for the development of artistic interests and talents, as well as arts universities and colleges (the authority responsible for these institutions is the Department of Artistic Education at the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and Centre for Artistic Education (Centrum Edukacji Artystycznej)). It should be emphasized that the Ministry of Education and Science is also responsible for the operations of care and education institutions, which provide non-school education, namely youth centres, interschool sports centres, non-school work centres, children’s playgrounds and non-school specialist institutions.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage does not run any [programmes](#) that are strictly dedicated to young beneficiaries (the only information on the Ministry's website, in the tab School and university students, concerns artistic education). The programmes that are addressed to the young generation to the greatest extent include: Artistic events for children and young people ([Wydarzenia artystyczne dla dzieci i młodzieży](#)), aimed at supporting valuable and fully professional artistic events of regional, national and international significance, designed for children and young people under the age of 18, and arts education ([Edukacja artystyczna](#)), aimed at raising the standard of arts education in Poland by providing financial support to the most interesting projects addressed to school and university students, as well as arts school and university graduates. To a much lesser extent, the following programmes are addressed specifically to these age groups: Cultural Education ([Edukacja kulturalna](#)), with the goal of supporting activities in the field of cultural education which are important to the development of the social capital, and Accessible Culture ([Kultura Dostępna](#)), which supports activities aimed at facilitating access to culture, targeted at a wide range of beneficiaries and conducive to social integration.

Funding culture is one of the local governments' individual responsibilities, wherein the role of the state is limited to the principle of subsidiarity, which states that each level of government should carry out only those tasks, which cannot be effectively fulfilled by a lower level or by individuals acting within society as such. This state of affairs is the result of the administrative reform of 1998, which was one of the pillars of the political transformation in Poland. The reform has triggered many processes in the functioning of cultural institutions, for instance the denationalisation and socialisation of culture or the reorganisation of institutions based on market economy principles. This has given them independence, whilst depriving them of the state's patronage. With regard to the cultural functioning of the young generation, attention should be paid to the elimination of apparent actions and phenomena, the potential for cultural diversity (which has triggered a multitude of new initiatives and self-organisation within various environments, as well as the emergence of environmental pluralism and cultural minorities, including ethnic, religious, and ideological minorities, such as feminism, sexual minorities and alternative movements) and media pluralism. At the same time, the indispensable institutional networks have collapsed, making access to culture significantly more difficult for young people, especially those living away from large towns. According to sociologist Aldona Jawłowska culture has become *"an open area, which is developing in the course of ongoing negotiations that have not concluded with the implementation of some great new project, between the different partners of the cultural system"*. An outcome of these processes is a change within the structure of organising and funding culture, resulting in an increase in the resources involved by local governments. Furthermore, since 2006 there has also been a dynamic increase in the real spending on culture by households, which results from their higher incomes. In Poland, a rule is applied that the value of total expenditures on culture correlates with an increase in GDP. Among local governments, the largest share of these expenditures is displayed by municipalities and cities with county (*powiat*) rights.

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is no evidence of cross-sectorial cooperation in the field of culture with respect to young people.

## 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

### Existence of a national strategy

The most important document in this respect is the Strategy for the Development of Human Capital (Cooperation, Culture, Creativity) 2030 ([Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego \(współdziałanie, kultura, kreatywność\) 2030](#)), accepted in autumn 2020.



## Scope and contents

The main objective of the Strategy is the *increase in the quality of Polish social and cultural life*. Two of its specific goals directly address the importance of culture in social life. Goal 2 is strengthening the role of culture in building civic identities and attitudes, while Goal 3 is the increase of cultural and creative potential for national development. The strategy is one of the tools of the Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 (with an outlook towards 2030), and one of the nine horizontal, comprehensive development strategies for Poland. In this sense, it deals with the whole of society. However, the strategy does address children and youth, to a degree. They are included within the diagnosis, which notes that one of the challenges faced is the low quality of the artistic offer for the young members of the society, and general deficits in cultural competence. Developing cultural competence among children and youth is seen as one of the key factors for cultural life and social capital of future generations. Several challenges to successful cultural education among children are noted. They are parents who do not have high cultural capital, and so can't highlight the benefits that cultural activity brings. In effect, "high artistic quality of services on offer rarely is a factor in parent's choice – and sometimes it even contributes against that, as parents and guardians are more likely to choose commercial products without the most valuable elements and more ambitious content that, server appropriately, could well build artistic inclinations in the youngest members of the society, developing their imagination. As noted by experts, artistic events on offer for the younger generation are highly diverse. However, events of low artistic quality are still common. Commercial actors working within the field of artistic events for children maintain many advantages when it comes to marketing, which makes it easier for them to reach schools. Artistic work aimed towards young audiences is often treated instrumentally, as a source of profit, which means that most events on offer focus on fairy tale plays, popular books, and mandatory school readings. There is a lack of events answering the authentic needs of young audiences and contemporary works aimed directly at such an audience."

Importance of actions directed at children and youth is visible in task 2.1. (Creation of conditions and building competence for strengthening participation in culture) assigned to goal 2 of the Strategy (strengthening the role of culture in building civic identities and attitudes). It mentions the need to create a valuable and professional offer directed at children and youth that will take into consideration the needs and interests of those groups. This is also meant to happen alongside cultural education, which means that cultural education will be supported in order to stimulate creativity and creative activity of select social groups, with special consideration for children and youth.

## Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The implementation of the National Strategy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. They are also responsible for coordinating tasks that fall under the particular goals 2 and 3.

## Revisions/updates

The strategy was accepted on the 27th of October, 2020. It is a continuation and update of the previous Strategy for the Development of Social Capital 2020 (which was in effect between 2013 and 2020). The strategy is one of the tools of the Sustainable Development Strategy 2020 (with an outlook towards 2030), and one of the nine horizontal, comprehensive development strategies for Poland.

## 8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

### Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

There is no document that discusses the mechanisms for facilitating young people's access to culture and their participation in cultural events. An important instrument in this respect (albeit, like most government programmes, it is addressed to the general public) is the



Accessible Culture ([Kultura Dostępna](#)) portal funded by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, whereas the [National Centre for Culture](#) is responsible for staging a call for applications for the programme. The portal provides information on the most interesting events in the vicinity of one's place of residence and aims to popularise participation in culture as a way of spending one's free time. At the same time, it targets those users who cannot always afford to buy cultural services: admission to many of the listed proposals is free, whilst the ticket price of others does not exceed PLN 20. Moreover, accessibility icons mark the places that are friendly to families with children and people with disabilities. The portal also features a database of websites containing cultural resources, namely films, e-books and 3D museum exhibitions.

In addition, the National Centre for Culture runned the long-term grant programme; the Very young culture 2019-2021 ([Bardzo młoda kultura 2019-2021](#)). Its main goal was to strengthen the role of cultural education in Poland through enhancing and empowering the educational potential of culture. The programme was to build and support a system assuring that cultural activities shall contribute to shaping skills and attitudes such as for example creativity, innovativeness, cooperation, trust or media-related competences. This goal is to be achieved by creating and developing grounds for cooperation between the sphere of culture and the sphere of education. The programme supported organisational, information-related and integrational activities. In particular, this included the creation of regional information portals, and the organisation of conferences, meetings and presentations concerning activities in the field of cultural education, which also serve as an exchange of educators' experiences. The future of the programme is unclear. It is not being continued in 2022, but there are plans to start it again in 2023.

## Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

Potential sources of funding can be found in the programmes implemented under the Strategy for Responsible Development 2020 (with a 2030 perspective) ([Strategia na rzecz odpowiedzialnego rozwoju do 2020 roku \(z perspektywą do 2030 roku\)](#)). The Strategy defines one of its objectives as "strengthening the role of culture for economic development and social cohesion", and emphasises that "educating the beneficiaries and developing their cultural competences contributes to the development of culture and innovation", because "due to these competences and participation in culture, society develops its identity, respect for tradition, a sense of belonging to a community and its history on the one hand, and on the other its creativity, innovativeness, openness and tolerance". Among the planned activities, it is worth noting the topics, which the documents discussed so far have not identified in such a clear way, for instance "designing a system to support the development of the creative sectors: to provide conditions for the development of creative sectors in Poland, which will affect the development of the whole ecosystem of supporting culture. Another example is strengthening the identity, sense of community and intergenerational bonds through participation and broader access to cultural institutions and works of culture at all the levels, where communities operate (local, regional and national), as well as the elimination of 'blank spots' in access to culture". Furthermore, fulfilling all the goals of the Strategy for Responsible Development will necessitate *"the involvement of significant public (domestic and foreign) and private resources, which by 2020 are estimated at about PLN 1.5 trillion on the part of the public sector, and over PLN 0.6 trillion from private investments"*. The public resources are identified as a wide range of institutions and agendas subject to various ministries, which causes concerns as to the coordination of this undertaking.

## Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

There is no data on the level of knowledge of cultural heritage of young People in Poland. A [study](#) indicates that 74% of adult Poles is aware of the concept of "cultural heritage" and thinks it important, and 83% of Poles believe that it is vital to take care of heritage and protect it.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage runs the National sites of memory and permanent commemorations programme ([Miejsca Pamięci i Trwałe upamiętnienia w kraju](#)). It is however dedicated to the wider public, and not to young people directly.

## 8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

### Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Among the projects that support high-quality education and the building of young people's potential with regard to culture and creativity, it is worth mentioning:

1. The [Cultural Education grant programme](#), operated by the National Centre for Culture and commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The programme supports "projects that are based on cooperation with kindergartens and schools and aid the implementation of the core curriculum for mainstream education and teaching of arts-related subjects".
2. The National Centre for Culture's [Very Young Culture \(Bardzo Młoda Kultura\)](#) long-term grant programme which includes "the management of programmes designed to fund cultural education projects created jointly by representatives of cultural entities and educational institutions. The beneficiaries of these projects should primarily be schoolchildren and young people at schools, as well as education staff, parents and guardians". The programme was concluded in 2021, but its continuation is planned in 2023.
3. Strategy for Responsible Development 2020 (with a 2030 perspective) ([Strategia na rzecz odpowiedzialnego rozwoju do 2020 roku \(z perspektywą do 2030 roku\)](#)). In this strategy, culture is referenced in the context of stimulating the growth of human and social capital – "the area of culture will be strengthened through the implementation of programmes for the development of readership, citizen culture, the network of museums as well as organisation of the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Polish independence" (which took place in 2018).

### Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

The described documents above contain also a component related to the improvement of the competences of education, culture and youthwork professionals. In this context, of particular significance are the provisions contained in the Rules for Cultural Education grant programme with regard to "raising the qualifications of cultural institution staff and teachers, which develop their competences in the scope of undertaking animation and education activities and include an element of using the acquired skills in practice". Also noteworthy are the funding options for "training and workshop activities addressed to representatives of cultural and education institutions, including publishing training and methodological materials, organisation of workshops and training courses, in addition to consultancy and advisory activities", provided for in the Very Young Culture programme run by the National Centre for Culture.

### Providing quality access to creative environments

No data available

## 8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

### Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

The activities on the part of authorities aimed at strengthening entrepreneurial abilities by taking part in cultural activities, in addition to supporting entrepreneurs in the cultural and

creative sector in Poland are not addressed to young people as a separate age group. This does not change the fact that such undertakings are usually carried out by the youngest generations.

In the context of developing entrepreneurial competences in culture, it is also worth mentioning the aforementioned Strategy for Responsible Development for the period up to 2020 including the perspective up to 2030 ([Strategia na rzecz odpowiedzialnego rozwoju do roku 2020 z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)), where section 3 mentions the mobilisation of private capital for research and development and innovation activities, as well as increasing the market potential of the conducted research and the commercialisation of the results. This is to be achieved through a “package for creative industries aimed at supporting innovative products developed by the cultural and creative sectors. The package makes it possible to build a competitive advantage within the sector and counteracts the outflow of creative capital. The proposed measures include the introduction of incentives for the making audio-visual productions in Poland, the introduction of tax holiday for companies from the creative sector, and the establishment of the so-called ‘fast-track tax path’ for international productions in the audio-visual segment”.

Support for businessmen in the cultural and creative sector is an important aspect of the Strategy for the Development of Social Capital (Cooperation, Culture, Creativity) 2030 ([Strategii Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego \(współdziałanie, kultura, kreatywność\) 2030](#)). Its particular goal number 3 is the empowerment of socio-economic national development through culture and creative sectors. Culture and creative sectors are seen as important aspects for making the socio-economic growth of Poland more dynamic. One of the priority areas is the development of professional competence for the creative sector through professional education fit for the needs of the creative sector, adjustment of the educational possibilities to the needs of the labor market and increasing tempo of technological development, as well as strengthening the cooperation between art schools and businesses.

### **Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors**

In Poland, there is no specialised system of educating for the development of entrepreneurship competences in culture. A review of offers in this area leads mainly to identifying individual subjects and courses (at schools and universities) run on an ad hoc basis, usually by non-governmental organisations or institutions of culture. Currently paid, post-graduate courses (conducted online) in the field of Culture Management are available in the Center of Postgraduate Learning and Business Development in Łódź ([Centrum Kształcenia Podyplomowego i Rozwoju Biznesu w Łodzi](#)) and in the Institute of Culture of the Jagiellonian University Faculty of Management and Social Communication ([Instytut Kultury Wydziału Zarządzania i Komunikacji Społecznej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie](#)).

## **8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies**

### **New technologies in support of creativity and innovation**

Similarly to what has been described in the previous chapters related to culture, the discussed documents do not regard the young generation as the main target group of their provisions. Nonetheless, Strategy for Responsible Development for the period up to 2020 including the perspective up to 2030 ([Strategia na rzecz odpowiedzialnego rozwoju do roku 2020 z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)) has strongly highlighted the importance of human and social capital, especially the need for the increase in quality of formal and informal education, including popularizing the latter in all age groups. The authors of the strategy have highlighted the key importance of digital capacities (regardless of age) in the contemporary world. Important groups at which action is to be aimed are students, teachers and coaches. Education fit for the demands of the job market and development of particular skills, including creativity, has been indicated as a challenge for the

education system. Possibilities granted by information-communication technologies have been highlighted as one of the ways of increasing the quality of education. An important aspect of the document is also taking note of the need for continuous, life-long education - due to intense technological development, "technological skills should be trained in every stage of life".

## **Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

The issue of facilitating access to culture using new technologies (which, again, concerns the society at large, and not young people specifically) is addressed in the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage programme the Digital Culture ([Kultura Cyfrowa](#)), aimed at "facilitating access to digital resources for educational and scientific purposes, including publishing and digitizing the resources of cultural heritage".

Thus far, every country development strategy has referenced digital access to cultural resources. "Promoting participation in culture through open access to digital heritage resources and the development of cultural infrastructure and basic cultural competences, including digital media literacy among all citizens" was also stipulated as an objective of the National Development Strategy 2020. Simultaneously, in the Long-term National Development Strategy 2030, one of the courses of intervention was "to make available, in accordance with the developed standards of openness, the existing public resources in the sphere of education, science and culture, including public media resources and the public resources of cultural institutions, as well as the outcomes of public content digitisation programmes and of research and development institutions funded by the state, in accordance with copyrights held by them".

Digitisation and Internet access are also mentioned in the Strategy for Responsible Development 2020 with a 2030 perspective ([Strategia na rzecz odpowiedzialnego rozwoju do roku 2020 z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)), which includes the E-State area. This assumes, among other things, "the continuation of the processes related to the digitisation and storage of, as well as access to various types of digital heritage resources in Poland (in museums, libraries and archives, in addition to audio-visual resources and those concerning historic sights), also for the purpose of re-using the resources wherein digitisation should be understood as a modern form of conservation and preservation for the most valuable cultural resources".

## **8.8 Synergies and partnerships**

### **Synergies between public policies and programmes**

In Poland there is no system that fully integrates the topics pertaining to young people's participation in culture and their creativity. Effective (or at least specified as formal) bases for activities in this area are dispersed in a number of documents (e.g. the Strategy for Responsible Development 2020 with a 2030 perspective, the Social Capital Development Strategy, etc.), and additionally, they are not dedicated (apart from small fragments) specifically to the young generation, but to the general public. In this situation, it is impossible to talk about a synergy effect of such activities. Networking still remains a barely perceptible form of cooperation (especially to local authorities and institutions) – while grassroots thematic (hobby-related) networks are quite popular, the situation with the networking of staff in cultural entities is much worse. There are too little thematic workshops, industry meetings, etc.

### **Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers**

As of 2022, no evidence of such partnerships have been identified in the widely accessible sources of information.

## 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

### Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

Cultural activity as a tool for limited fostering of equality has been indicated in a few past programmes (eg. the programme entitled Active forms of counteracting social exclusion: a new dimension 2020 ([Aktywne formy przeciwdziałania wykluczeniu społecznemu – nowy wymiar 2020](#)), the ministerial programme: [Youth Joined in Action Programme for 2016-2019](#) ([Młodzież Solidarna w Działaniu na lata 2016-2019](#)). However, such ideas have all but disappeared from the current crop of those programmes.

### Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

As far as combating discrimination through cultural activities is concerned "The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Updated for 2021-2027, public policy for years up to 2030 ([Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu. Aktualizacja 2021–2027, polityka publiczna z perspektywą do roku 2030](#)) should be considered a key document organising issues related to combating youth exclusion. It is a continuation and update of the programme accepted in 2014: "[The National Programme for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2020. A New Dimension of Active Inclusion](#)" (Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Ubóstwu i Wykluczeniu Społecznemu 2020. Nowy wymiar aktywnej integracji). Among other things, the programme identifies measures for the social inclusion of migrants, which again, are not specifically addressed to young people, but due to the relatively highest social mobility of the young generation, may significantly impact on the situation of this age group. In particular, this concerns the education for migrants, mainly in area of Polish language.

As far as combating poverty through cultural activities is concerned it is worth to mention the [Guidelines on activities in the area of social inclusion and combatting poverty by using European Social Fund and European Fund for Regional Development 2014-2020](#) ([Wytyczne w zakresie realizacji przedsięwzięć w obszarze włączenia społecznego i zwalczania ubóstwa z wykorzystaniem środków Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego i Europejskiego Funduszu Rozwoju Regionalnego na lata 2014-2020](#)) prepared by the Ministry of Development and Finance. The document does not specify youth as a separate category and addresses the general public. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, some of the guidelines have been temporarily suspended, starting from 1st of February 2020.

## 8.10 Current debates and reforms

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised new questions about the accessibility to culture through the internet and models for its financing. Especially important is the question on how participation in culture will change and how the ability to consume culture without leaving one's home (paired with the lockdown experiences) will influence the work of artists and cultural institutions. Such discussions are currently conducted on the grassroots level, in the civic sector and among culture producers. Experiences of last two years among the creative community have shown that those worries were not baseless. Lockdowns and event cancellations have caused significant changes in the way those institutions function. However, alongside purely negative consequences, the pandemic has contributed to the discussion in how to make culture more accessible through providing hybrid forms of participation (e.g. in stage plays or film festivals).

## 9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

Young people's attitudes towards public matters is rapidly changing. The turnout in the 18-29 age group during the 2018 municipal elections was 37%, while during the first round



of the presidential elections in 2020 it reached 64.5% (and for the first time in years matched the average across the population, having been markedly lower in previous years), and then 67.2% in the run-off election, slightly below the national average. Young people are raised in an individualistic manner in school, but they also feel an increasing need for a community. Not finding sufficient channels for articulating their needs, they create new, grassroots forms of activity for themselves, particularly in the field of fighting the climate change.

## 9.1 General context

### Main concepts

In Poland, young people's public participation is considered mainly in the context of local governments as the activities of youth councils in municipalities (gminy), which are seen as important institutions for activating young people in municipal self-governments. However, at statutory level, this is regulated in very general terms, and is based on the statutory norms adopted by particular municipal councils. Many authors emphasise that schools are the first place where the mechanisms of participation in government should be implemented, and that schools are charged with great responsibility in this respect. Nonetheless, according to the report entitled *Student self-governance in the education system, student councils are "among the weakest and most neglected democratic institutions' in Poland"*. In this context, it is worth mentioning Polish initiatives that support self-governance in schools, for instance the Student councils ([Samorząd Uczniowski](#)) programme run by the Centre for Citizenship Education and Children and Youth Parliament (Sejm dzieci i młodzieży) currently run by the Chancellery of the Sejm in cooperation with the Ministry of National Education, Center for Education Development and the Institute of National Remembrance.

For many years Polish youth demonstrated the lack of widespread involvement in public affairs. According to the [Youth 2011 \(Młodzi 2011\) report](#), "general public issues, and especially politics, do not fit contemporary youth life. Involvement in public campaigns and taking part in elections were not a generational event. They were, in the young people's minds, a necessary response in defence of key values: freedom and keeping Poland within the civilisation circle that guarantees the effectiveness of the social system. Of key significance is the question concerning the quality of social capital and its foundation, namely the beliefs regarding the value of engaging in other people's affairs and the point of collective action". The report also accentuates the lack of a suitable formula that would attract young people and stimulate their readiness to engage in activism for the benefit of others. New research conducted in 2018 indicates that there is an increase of pride in Poland among the young people. The narrative of the need to catch up to the West is being replaced by thinking about what (and the need for) Poland to give to the world. It seems that the younger generation has a growing need for a national community, but also resists attempts at using it for political goals and appropriating it. The need for a community is matched by the desire for common ground based on respect. The young people's attitude towards public matters is rapidly changing: in the municipal elections in 2018, the turnout in the 18-29 age group was 37%, in European Parliament elections in 2019 just 27%, in the parliamentary elections in 2019 was around 46%, while in the first round of the presidential elections in 2020 it reached 64.5% (and for the first time reached the average across all age groups, having been markedly lower previously), then 67.2% in the run-off election, slightly below the national average. This shift has been noted in other analyses, for example in in Youth 2020 - in search of identity ([Młodzi 2020 - w poszukiwaniu tożsamości](#)): "over a time, it has become apparent that the traditional indifference of youth towards politics is changing (...) general dislike for participating in political parties remains on a steady level (with between 57% and 67% of young people stressing their distance for parties and politics). (...) more visible is the generational concern with environmental matters, or the climate catastrophe, than an interest in democracy or civil rights. However, new impulses do happen. Aside from the Youth Climate



Strike, they include women's rights, LGBT+ issues or organizations fighting for an independent judiciary and democracy (like "Akcja Demokracja"). They have brought young people to engage with problems and challenges of the contemporary world". It is not yet certain, however, that this engagement will be lasting. The 2020's Youth in Central Europe 2020: NDI's Research report ([Młodzi w Europie Środkowej 2020. Projekt badawczy NDI](#)) indicates that "since 2018, the general levels of involvement in practically all forms of political engagement have decreased. The most common form of engagement is voting, followed by less demanding forms of online activism, especially signing petitions and giving out donations."

## Youth interest in global issues

None of the projects specified above assume the participation of young people in the processes of creating, implementing and monitoring policies at global level. Neither has the concept of 'global problems' been given any binding definition that would be formally recognised by the Polish authorities. Based on literature of the subject, these problems can be generally regarded as referring to humanity as whole, occurring on a supra-state and supra-regional level, distinguished by great significance, and thus connected to the issue of humanity's survival. Methods of solving global problems must be based on joint actions of the entire international community. The most frequently mentioned issues relate to international conflicts (especially armed conflicts), as well as problems concerning demographics, ecology (threats to the natural environment), food, raw materials and energy (limited natural resources). To an equal extent, economic issues are also pointed out, such as disproportions in development (the rich and poor gap), international debt and the labour market, in addition to social problems, including diseases and addictions, international crime, terrorism and religious fundamentalism. These are accompanied by problems that are seen as relatively new, namely the negative consequences of the science and technology revolution, the information revolution and the migration problem.

Of ancillary nature is, perhaps, the [definition of sustainable consumption](#) provided by the Ministry of Economy, which reads: *Sustainable consumption is the optimal, conscious and responsible use of the available natural resources, goods and services at the level of individuals, households, local communities, business environments, local governments, national governments and international structures, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.* [According to the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology](#) the best description of the essence of the issue is sustainable development, as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in the 1987 report Our Common Future - "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

There is no clear information which would make it possible to diagnose the interests of young people in global problems. A key problem in this respect is the lack of a unified, consistent system of education on issues such as sustainable development, human rights, the UN Millennium Goals, green production and consumption (e.g. recycling, energy saving or hybrid drives) or entrepreneurship, employment, education and volunteering opportunities outside Europe. This does not change the fact that all the specified issues, being crucial to the future of humanity, can be seen as strongly related to the interests of young people, whereas among the eight Millennium Development Goals, the ones that specifically refer to the young generation in Poland are those concerning the promotion of a balance between women's and men's rights and the empowerment of women, combating AIDS, and ensuring the ecological balance of the environment. Sustainable growth goals outlined in Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ([Agenda 2030 na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju](#)), are similarly far beyond the scope of aforementioned millennial goals. An [interesting position on the issue of young people's involvement in the protection of human rights](#) was presented by the participants of the discussion entitled Human rights as seen from the perspective of different generations. According to Augusta Featherston, the participation of young people is crucial to human rights. However, contemporary democracy does not take any notice of young people or their priorities, does not address them, and treats them as the passive recipients of

decisions rather than new active leaders. It is, therefore, not surprising that young people are not interested in public life or in joining the democratic structures, despite having so many new inspiring tools to do so. Furthermore, "young people take human rights for granted. Only losing these rights can mobilise them. But we must seek a new code to reach young people with the message and explain what can be done", said Danuta Przywara. Another interesting conclusion was presented by Cristi Mihalache, who said that "young people were capable of responding. The key was a community-based message, the stories connecting the generations that were still valid today". Mihalache added that "watchdog organizations would always be needed, and that young people knew how to run them".

An awareness of the occurrence and significance of global problems is best revealed not in declarations, but in everyday behaviours. In this context, it should be noted that there is also a trend in Poland, which promotes life balance and harmony with nature. In other words, this is about a lifestyle focused on mental and physical wellbeing, the environment and personal development that does not disturb the ecosystem balance and social justice. [The trend](#) makes a direct impact on conscious consumption, with a particular focus on local products and services, including organic food, renewable energies, efficient transport, water and energy saving, green and passive construction, etc. . In this respect, an interesting contribution are the findings of Izabela Sowa of the Department of Consumer Research, University of Economics in Katowice. [Sowa's long-term research](#) on the behaviour of young consumers draws attention to prosumer attitudes which manifest in sharing knowledge, information and resources, for example contacting manufacturers or sellers online to suggest original product improvement ideas. There is no data that makes it possible to responsibly determine the actual extent, to which such attitudes are popular among and practiced by the young generation of Polish people. Furthermore, expert [analyses](#) show that "young people accept capitalist consumerist drive, in which brands shift to fit individual preference and create new commodities. Such a model of market relations gives young people a degree of agency, and is consistent on the identity level with their sense of originality and exceptionalism."

Climate issues seem to be what drives young people to public activity the most. In defense of climate and against the passivity of politicians, young people organize efforts such as the Youth Climate Strike or Extinction Rebellion, as described in [point 9.3](#).

## 9.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

For many years, there have not been any policy documents in Poland which have addressed young peoples' participation in development, implementation and follow-up of policy (including cooperation at global level). There was also no coherent policy in this respect, and consequently, no appointed main or responsible agency, with the exception of core curricula in formal education (see section 9.4) due to their universal application. There were many documents related to, for example, environmental protection or sustainable development, but these were created by very different ministries, and it is impossible to identify the chief manager of these topics. As in other areas of the youth policy in Poland, these issues are usually dealt with by non-governmental organisations.

The situation began to change in 2019, when the Council for Dialogue With the Young Generation ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)) was established. It was created as a response to the common demand to increase the participation of the young generation in governmental decision-making. In the second half of 2020, the position of the Government's Commissioner for Youth Politics was created, with the Commissioner having the position of a Vice-Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister ([Pełnomocnik Rządu ds. Polityki Młodzieżowej](#)). The main duty of the Commissioner is to coordinate the dialogue between government agencies and other partners in regards to youth politics, and to create a strategic document outlining the national youth policy.

## Cross-sectorial cooperation

Not applicable.

## 9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

### Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

Within the scope of formal and informal opportunities for young people to reach decision-makers with their opinions, there are certain activities aimed at supporting structured dialogue, namely EU initiatives for consulting with young people the most important directions for youth policy. According to the assumptions of these initiatives, the consulting process takes place at three levels: regional, national and European. EU debates with young people are organised, for instance, during the cyclic European Youth Weeks, wherein young people discuss the future, and the problems and challenges of the European Union with officials, politicians and experts. Structured dialogue activities in Poland are coordinated by the Polish Council of Youth Organisations ([Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych](#)). An opportunity for dialogue with decisionmakers is also provided by the Children and Youth Parliament, which has been operating since 1994 and was the first such initiative in Europe. The Parliament's goal is to promote parliamentarianism among young people. During most terms of office so far, the main topics have had little relation to global problems, tending to focus on national ones. There have been, nonetheless, some notable exceptions, for instance Europe, a dialogue of cultures (2002), Ecology, a choice for the future (2006) and My country in the face of globalisation processes. In recent years, there has been a notable tendency towards turning away from the issues of the future (and global matters) and towards the past and local, country matters (e.g. Sites of memory - material heritage of crucial events for local and national community in 2016, Parliament Members of the Second Polish Republic, their fates and activities during the Second World War and Occupation in 2019). The term of office is one year, and the only session in the year is held on 1 June, Children's Day. In 2018, there were some significant changes in this respect, the session was moved to September due to the ongoing strike of parents of disabled children. Due to a grass-roots protest, some of the participants of the the Children and Youth Parliament held their session outside of Sejm (on the grounds of the University of Warsaw). The 2020 sessions was called off due to concerns around the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, the tools for dialogue with decision-makers on local level, are the municipal youth councils described in section 9.1.

In the autumn of 2019, a Council for Dialogue with the Younger Generation ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)), was created, as a result of the update to the Act on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work ([Ustawa o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie](#)) from July 2019. The Council is an advisory body for the chairman of the Committee for Public Benefit. It's task is to provide opinions on acts and programmes that are relevant to the matters of the young people. It is also meant to support actions aimed at raising the level of civic participation among the young people. The Council consists of the representatives of various parts of the Government (of president, prime minister and some ministers), of the local governments, NGO and NGO alliances working with the young, and of youth municipality councils. In autumn of 2020, the position of Government's Commissioner for Youth Politics ([Pełnomocnik Rządu ds. Polityki Młodzieżowej](#)), with the Commissioner having the position of a Vice-Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. The main duty of the Commissioner is to coordinate the dialogue between government agencies and other partners in regards to youth politics, and to create a strategic document outlining the national youth policy. Youth councils function at some ministries, for example the Children and Youth Council at the Ministry of National Education, ([Rada Dzieci i Młodzieży RP przy Ministrze Edukacji Narodowej](#)) created in 2016. The Council is meant to give opinion and ideas relevant to matters of children and youth in the field of education and raising awareness of government action. In 2020, a Youth Council on

Climate ([Młodzieżowa Rada Klimatyczna](#)) was created at the Ministry of Climate and Environment, tasked with giving opinions on government policy in the field of climate and energy policy. At the same ministry a Youth Ecological Council ([Młodzieżowa Rada Ekologiczna przy Ministrze Środowiska](#)) was also established to give opinion on government policy in the field of forestry and hunting, and especially “showcasing views on planned policy, strategy and legal changes, and creating and popularizing attitudes of community engagement in the field of forestry and hunting among young people, with attendants increasing their knowledge of those fields.”

Ultimately, the tools for dialogue with decision-makers on local level, are the municipal youth councils. Those councils can be created on the basis of [article 5b](#) of the Act on municipal government, (introduced in an update in 2001), which allows for a creation of such a council based on a petition of the local youth. In 2018, the parliament voted down an amend that would make those councils mandatory in each municipality. The 2021 amendment also did not introduce that obligation. In 2021, acts on commune, county and voivodeship self-government have all been amended, as well as the activities of voluntary services and public benefit organizations (ustawa o samorządzie gminnym, ustawę o samorządzie powiatowym, ustawę o samorządzie wojewódzkim oraz ustawę o działalności pożytku publicznego i o wolontariacie). Those amendments have improved the previous legal framework on youth councils, introduced the possibility to establish them on county and voivodeship levels, and have endowed them with new, specific powers. Those changes have been enacted as a part of the European Union’s Youth Strategy 2019-2027, which involves supporting the participation of young people in civic and democratic life. [At the end of 2017](#) there have been 408 municipal youth councils in Poland (for about 2500 total municipalities in the country), which would mean that about 16% of municipalities have one. The bigger the municipality, the more likely it is to have a council - such councils function in almost 32% of urban municipalities, but only in 8% of rural ones. It is worth noting that in the Parliament, a [task group](#) for supporting municipal youth groups has been functioning since 2016.

Grassroots youth groups that are parts of global initiatives for climate are also present in Poland. Youth Climate Strike ([Młodzieżowy Strajk Klimatyczny](#)) is a social movement that is a part of the Fridays for Climate initiative. The group opposes the passivity of politicians in the face of the climate catastrophe and demands immediate action. It conducts protests, provides education and establishes communication with politicians. Meanwhile [Extinction Rebellion](#) is a part of a global grassroots movement which, through direct civil disobedience action, seeks to stop the mass extinction and climate crisis. An important demand of the movement is a creation of a Citizen’s Assembly which would work towards binding obligations for the country government.

## Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

There has also been a number of international events and activities that were, to varying degrees, accessible to by young people in Poland, for example:

- The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012. The outcome document entitled *The future we want* highlighted the importance of the active participation of young people in decision-making processes, as the [addressed] issues [were seen to] have a deep impact on present and future generations and as the contribution of children and youth [was perceived as] vital to the achievement of sustainable development. The conference participants also recognised the need to promote intergenerational dialogue and solidarity by recognising [young people’s] views.
- The United Nations initiative for young people who want to discuss global issues: [The Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\) Youth Forum](#), an annual conference providing a platform for young people to talk about youth issues and their solutions. During the conferences, young people share their concerns and proposals for solving global

problems and engage in political discussions concerning world development. Representatives of Poland do not participate in those conferences.

- The *World Youth Report* published biannually since 2003 (and, since 2011, based on online consultations with young people), which includes an overview of the major issues of young people worldwide. The importance of youth in the context of sustainable development is constant in documents and actions of the United Nations, eg. in World Youth Reports: 2018: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable [Development](#) or the newest one 2020: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 [Agenda](#).
- *Voices of Youth*, an online platform for young bloggers from all over the world who want to talk about issues, which are important to them and their environment.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs along with the Council for Dialogue with the Younger Generation at the chairman of the Committee of Public Benefit has conducted a competition for the [Young Representative of Poland to the UN](#). The chosen person will participate in the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Poland has been sending youth representatives to attend sessions of the United Nations since 2012.

## 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

### Formal, non-formal and informal learning

In the formal education sector, the process of consulting new core curricula has been completed and they are binding and monitored by decrees of the Minister of National Education. It has not provided for teaching young people about global problems as a separate subject, since these topics are included in a subject called [Civic Education] in secondary schools. [The basic \(obligatory\) and extended \(optional\) core curricula](#) now include the following topics: Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the context of the European Court of Human Rights; specific rights of national/ethnic minorities and regional language users in Poland; as well as the concept of globalisation and its effects on and challenges in the sphere of politics, culture and society.

As far as the analysed subject matter is concerned, Geography core curriculum at upper secondary general education and technical schools also applies. This involves topics such as the sense of and conditions for using the principles of sustainable development, including "the understanding of rational management of environmental resources and the preservation of cultural heritage". As far as students' practical skills are concerned, the core curriculum addresses a number of specific topics, for example "the understanding of the need for rational management in the geographic environment, according to the principles of sustainable development, protection of the natural and cultural heritage, as well as the need for recultivation and revitalization of degraded areas". In this respect the Ministry of Climate has prepared a [portal including lessons scenarios for teachers](#).

Before the new core curriculum became effective, the federation of Polish NGOs involved in international cooperation for development, supporting democracy, humanitarian aid and global education, [International Group](#), conducted an [analysis of the presence of global education in school \(Civic Education and Geography\) textbooks](#). The study covered the years 2014-2015 and found that despite there being global education content in all the analysed textbooks, much of the content was of a stereotyping nature, and often, "there [were] no descriptions that would explain the causes of the specific phenomena and their consequences, develop among students attitudes of openness and acceptance for diversity in the surrounding world, point to the existence of global interdependency networks or explain that individual actions, even at local level, and contribute to changes in distant parts of the world". The researchers have formulated recommendations in this respect, including greater emphasis on knowledge about the UN Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, which replaced the former in 2015.



According to the aforementioned UN outcome document *The Future we want*, the conference participants recognise that "the younger generations are the custodians of the future, and the need for better quality and access to education beyond the primary level. [The participants] therefore resolve to improve the capacity of our education systems to prepare people to pursue sustainable development, including through enhanced teacher training, the development of sustainability curricula, the development of training programmes that prepare students for careers in fields related to sustainability, and more effective use of information and communications technologies to enhance learning outcomes. [The participants] call for enhanced cooperation among schools, communities and authorities in efforts to promote access to quality education at all levels". The document also points to the importance of non-formal education (i.e. learning outside the formal education system in its broadest sense through a series of planned activities with specific objectives and support for learners) and informal education (i.e. learning which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time and support, including the acquisition of skills, which are often nonintentional, through work and other experience). However, in Poland this recommendation has not led to the emergence of widespread and structured support from the state and its agencies for non-formal education aimed at raising awareness of global problems. The following examples of such activities are separate initiatives undertaken, in most cases, by non-governmental organisations.

In the field of human rights, the activities of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights included the programme entitled Lessons on human rights delivered in cooperation with and in response to the needs of schools, libraries and other institutions working with young people aged 16-20. The workshop-based education programme was conducted until 2019 in the form of lessons for institutions from Warsaw and the surrounding area, and of webinars for recipients from other parts of the country. It encompasses topics pertaining to human rights and freedoms, refugee issues (foreigners' rights, counteracting discrimination based on origin, hate speech and hate crimes) and counteracting discrimination (the discrimination chain and discrimination matrix, the Allport pyramid, hate language, etc.). Furthermore, in the field of education on the sustainable use of resources, a noteworthy example is [Eat locally, think globally. From school gardens to sustainable food system](#) ([Jedz lokalnie, myśl globalnie. Od szkolnych ogrodów do zrównoważonych systemów żywnościowych](#)), a project delivered to students between 2015 and 2017 by the Alliance of Associations 'Polish Green Network'. The programme was also addressed to educators and aimed to *strengthen the potential of young people and teaching staff in the critical understanding of global problems and active involvement in their resolution*, with a particular emphasis on the contemporary model of food production and consumption in the context of environmental and social problems. The international project, cofounded by the EU, conducted among teachers and students from 12 EU countries. It referred to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and stressed the importance of various global problems, including the growing stratification of societies, climate change, migration, environmental degradation, the predominance of multinationals in economy and politics, depletion of natural resources, and the spread of civilisation diseases and their connection to the modern food system, including both hunger and food wastage.

## Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

Currently, there are also [educational and information activities](#) addressed to Polish society under the umbrella name Global Education, which aim to *explain the development problems of the modern world, as well as international development factors and their impact*. In addition to expanding knowledge, the programme also intends to *change attitudes by stimulating critical and conscious reflection on one's lifestyle and daily choices*, as well as *personal involvement in overcoming global poverty and participation in the process of building a global society based on the principles of solidarity, equality and cooperation* (the initiative also emphasises the need to *show people the effect of individuals on global processes and the impact of global processes on individuals*). The current global challenges specified by the programme include: ensuring peace and safety



in the world, improving quality of life in countries of the Global South, protecting human rights, ensuring sustainable development and building economic and social partnerships between countries of the Global North and the Global South.

Moreover, apart from the *Eat locally, think globally...* programme described above, the [Polish Green Network](#) has developed a reference book containing, among other things, [lesson scenarios](#) for creating gardens called Ecological school gardens (Ekologiczne ogrody szkolne), where gardens are treated primarily as an educational tool, and their creating and managing is linked to lesson scenarios on the principles of permaculture.

Support for educators is also an outcome of the programme Humanity in Action the [Academy of Human Rights and Civic Activism](#) namely the development of the reference book *Toolkit for Young Educators*, containing articles and lesson/workshop scenarios on human rights (it has not been made available in Polish).

Another source was the [e-learning educational programme](#) for teachers run by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights: Human rights every day, or how to teach about human rights in an interesting and factual way.

A separate [web portal](#), run by the [Centre of Citizen Education](#), is dedicated to global education. It provides teachers (e.g. of Biology, Chemistry, Ethics, Physics, Geography, History and Civic Education) and non-formal educators with access to information and numerous lesson scenarios. Furthermore, the Centre operates an [ecology portal](#), which also offers knowledge packages and lesson scenarios.

Information and scenarios for educators on responsible consumption and its importance to the environment can also be found on a [portal](#) run by the Buy Responsibly Foundation ([Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie](#)). As it can be concluded based on the above-mentioned resources, in Poland the largest number of support options for educators (both formal and all other persons involved in the dissemination of knowledge about global problems) is provided by non-governmental organisations, hence it is difficult to identify the leading funding sources for such activities. In most cases, being provided under public (state and local), business and private programmes, the sources are unstable and nonuniform (even within single projects).

A good example of activities in the non-formal education sector is the [Academy of Human Rights and Civic Activism](#) run by The Foundation Humanity in Action Poland ([Fundacja Humanity in Action Polska](#)). The Programme aims to prepare leaders of social change who are capable of effectively motivating others to take action and of initiating cooperation within various disciplines, economic sectors and regions of the world. To achieve this, the programme combines historical education with education about and promoting human rights, thus supporting young leaders from Poland and other countries in their public activism and creating an environment that is conducive to their activity in the form of a global activist network called the Senior Fellows Network (SFN). The programme consists in learning by doing, and thus developing skills (based on educational games, workshop and lesson scenarios and public campaigns) that will be helpful in future professional careers and public activity. At the end of the Academy programme, its participants can participate in the Humanity in Action annual international conferences, which are an opportunity to discuss current human rights issues in the field of international politics, and to share good activism practices. The Academy participants are a very diverse group that includes future anthropologists, doctors, engineers, filmmakers, political scientists and politicians, psychologists, sociologists, philologists and lawyers, as well as special needs educators, musicians, journalists, economists and historians, in addition to people still seeking their professional pathway. Within a year of completing the Academy, its graduates implement their Action Projects as SFN members from Poland and other countries where Humanity in Action is present. The Academy funding method is a good illustration of the aforementioned complexity and instability of funding for education on global social problems. Most of the Academies have been funded with the support of the German Foundation 'Remembrance, Responsibility and Future', whereas in 2014, the Academy was implemented under the Citizens for Democracy Programme (Program

*Obywatele dla Demokracji*) funded by the EEA Funds, and with the support of the Foundation 'Remembrance, Responsibility and Future' and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Other initiatives of this kind, which deserve a mention include the [Model United Nations](#) (MUN), a simulation of UN sessions organised by young politicians and available to participants aged between 16 and 21. During the sessions, young people discuss global problems and propose solutions, which they ultimately vote on. The aim of the project is to educate active and conscious citizens of the world who are willing to discuss and reflect on the global problems around them. The organisers also emphasize the MUN social goals, namely integration, culture clash and broadening horizons, and consider it a great opportunity to share opinions on current problems or to get to know other points of view. In Poland, such conferences take place in large cities, with the participation of university and/or middle class students. In Warsaw, since 2015, [POLMUN](#) (Polish Model United Nations) is taking place, as a continuation of the analogous event that has been taking place between 1992 and 2011 in Gorzów Wielkopolski. Also in Warsaw, since 2007, [WawMUN](#) (Warsaw Model United Nations) is taking place, meant for students of local high schools.

Another valuable project was the three-year international programme [Glocal Tour](#) funded by the European Commission and realised in Poland by the organisation Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service – Youth for the World ([Młodzi światu. Salezjański Wolontariat Misyjny](#)). Addressed not only to young people, but also to teachers, it fulfilled the role of educator support. The programme focused on topics related to the Millennium Development Goals, in particular to poverty, access to education, maternal and child health, combating diseases and the concept of sustainable development. Its main objective was to raise public awareness of global interdependencies and the problems of the modern world. Consequently, the Glocal Tour can be considered as one of the activities described herein, being a small information campaign on global problems. On a larger scale, similar activities have been performed under the social campaign: Development? No Harm ([Rozwój? Nie szkodzi](#)) dedicated to global education and the UN Sustainable Development Goals specified in the 2030 Agenda. Under this campaign, the [Polish Green Network](#) organises events for children, young people, university students and adults, to discuss various development models and the Sustainable Development Goals. The aim of the campaign is to build responsible citizenship among Polish people in reference to six goals, namely *No Poverty*, *Zero Hunger*, *Affordable and Clean Energy*, *Responsible Consumption and Production*, *Climate Action* and *Partnerships for the Goals*.

## Information providers

As regards information, in addition to the previously described portals run, for example, by the [Centre for Citizenship Education](#), an important action designed by the [UN Information Centre Warsaw](#) is the Public Platform: Sustainable Development Goals (Platforma społeczna: Cele Zrównoważonego Rozwoju), which provides resources to support educators, and contact details for the institutions in Poland that work towards the fulfilment of the Goals. An analysis of the tabs shows that these are mainly non-governmental organisations.

## Key initiatives

No data

## 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

### Green volunteering

Activities aimed at promoting green volunteering (understood as all voluntary activities dedicated to protecting, restoring or developing the natural environment, including wildlife) and the idea of green production and consumption (i.e. environmentally friendly

production and practices, and consumer activities aimed at recycling, energy saving, producing or purchasing hybrid cars and using environmentally friendly (private or public) transport) include:

- Ecological education ([Edukacja ekologiczna](#)), a programme run by the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management for the years 2015-2023. The programme operates as a grant competition to support educational initiatives that raise and affect ecological awareness and attitudes, in addition to disseminating knowledge in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development. The programme focuses on voluntary activities and shaping attitudes and behaviours, which are reflected in the description of specific objectives, both in the area of developing pro-environmental behaviours in the general public (including children and youth) and activating society, namely building a civic society in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development.
- A walker's guide ([Spacerownik](#)), a project run by the Buy Responsibly Foundation (in cooperation with Grupa eFTE, Warsaw, and Fundacja Ekorozwoju, Wrocław), which promotes places that are friendly to responsible consumers by creating a virtual guide to those, which *offer their customers high-quality products or services, whilst respecting the environment, promoting ecology-friendly behaviour, taking care of their employees and supporting human rights* (i.e. shops and cafés selling organic and Fairtrade products, shops selling recycled/handmade goods, services for exchanging/repairing utility goods, and other places that promote conscious and responsible consumption and operate to sustainable standards, including information cafés, venues offering free-admission workshops, cultural events, film shows, debate opportunities, etc.).
- Buy Responsibly Foundation ([Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie](#)) also creates an online guide Good Shopping ([Dobre Zakupy](#)) which includes a ranking of brands that are "environmentally friendly and socially responsible". The brands are ranked in those two fields and the result taken together establishes their position in the ranking.

## Green production and consumption

No data

## 9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

### Intercontinental youth work cooperation

In addition to the activities described in the chapter 9.5, of note are the cooperation are the activities of [AIESEC](#) in the field of intercontinental and development-related. These include the Global Volunteer programme for students, addressed to young people who want to develop their leadership attitudes and make an impact on the world's major problems by working towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The various activities in this area are carried out under the [Erasmus+ Youth programme](#). This includes three layers: Key Action 1 – Educational mobility addressed towards youth exchanges, Key Action 2 – Cooperation of organizations and institutions including shared programmes of organizations and institutions working with non-formal education, and Discover EU – experiencing free movement within the EU for educational travel throughout Europe.

### Development cooperation activities

No data

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

The refugee crisis and its consequences, concerning both the assessment of the EU migration policy in the last decade, as well as proposed solutions and Polish authorities' reaction to them, are a subject of a wide public debate in Poland.

Another important dispute concerns ecology, especially in the context of air pollution and the use of ecological energy sources (including limiting the use of traditional sources). The conflicts in this respect are caused by the question of pollutant emissions from car transport (a major problem in large cities), as well as the so-called 'low emissions' caused by combustion in domestic boilers (which particularly affects smaller towns and rural areas).

During the dispute, voices were raised indicating the need for greater representativeness of bodies that represent the youth, since they provide opinions on projects of legal acts. This is especially important with regards to the Children and Youth Parliament, which became a place for the young elites that seek to mimic the political debates happening in the actual Parliament, and whose sessions are sometimes attended by representatives of youth wings of political parties. The matters of representativeness are also infringed upon by the tendency for the top-down creation of various bodies (e.g. the Children and Youth Council at the Ministry of National Education). An alternative is found in giving room to grassroots activity in the non-governmental sector (e.g. the activities of the Polish Council of Youth Organisations PROM – [Polska Rada Organizacji Młodzieżowych PROM](#)) Another matter is the question of whether it is more appropriate to create councils dealing with general youth issues, or rather more specialized bodies dealing with certain issues, as the aforementioned Youth Climate Council. Such a solution would be less attractive to members of partisan youth organisations and would give a chance for discovering energy and potential of young socially engaged people.

Another important issue in youth discussions are the rights of nonheteronormative people. Young people accept homosexual people to a greater degree than the generation of their grandparents. In Poland, 60% of people ages 18 to 29 believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society, compared to 33% among Poles aged 50 and more. Such a generational split on the issue is rare among countries participating in [Pew Research Center research](#).

Another key issue is education. Main points of contention are the changes done by the Polish government to centralize the education system and to give more control to governmental agents (school custodians), and to decrease the influence of local governments and parents. It is accompanied by further alterations to school syllabi, e.g. the planned introduction of the new school subject History and the Contemporary, which is set to replace much of the extant civic education.

## 10. YOUTH WORK

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From 1990, Poland witnessed the growing activity of civic organizations, including youth organizations and further growing professionalization of the sector. At the same time the state initiative in youth policy was diminishing with time. The last Youth Strategy of Poland closed formally in 2012, but in practice much earlier, and the draft strategy Active Youth from 2014 was never enacted.

Additional turning point in youth work development was Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, and access to the European funding for youth projects. This promoted further within youth organizations and – to limited extent also within policy attempts – the perspective of youth-centered pedagogy: treating young people as partners, agents, and co-authors, not recipients of services. Still, it remains a marginal

approach. It as well allowed Polish youth workers to cooperate internationally and become mobile, what results in transfer of knowledge from abroad.

Nowadays, in Poland there exist a very diversified scene of youth work providers (from state institutions to youth initiatives, mass-youth organizations, school-based youth work, non-governmental organisations). There are no national policy initiatives that would be directed strategically at youth work sector as a whole, and youth policy is fragmented and scattered in between different ministries with little policy debate on concept and value of different ways of doing youth work.

## 10.1 General context

### Historical developments

In Poland, youth work has been usually associated with activities directed at youth of educational and upbringing character. At different times of the history, different elements of youth work [were accentuated](#). There were periods in the Poland's history where youth work was used instrumentally, in order to impact on young people's value systems and shape their attitudes. After the Second World War, the Communist regime had a very clear agenda for the youth work as an efficient way to propagating socialist upbringing. Youth work became associated with centrally-operated programmes within an extensive infrastructure, in the shape of youth palaces or cultural centers, or the creation of the Union of Polish Youth (ZMP). Nonetheless, in that period a large infrastructure was set up, some used until today.

Interestingly, also during the Communist regime, in 1960s and 70s the school became a space for youth work practice conducted by teachers linked to social support and occupation training (Sińczuch 2009). In the 1970s, as well the church and/or church related organisations became active in supporting youth groups (ibidem). Still today both of these institutions remain active providers of activities of non-formal character (e.g. religious organisations managing day care centers).

Since 1990, there appears a strand of activities which we could consider bottom-up activities, or youth initiative-based youth work. As Sińczuch (2009) notes this strand of activities was borne already in the 1980s, with a rise of Solidarity movement which activated the whole society: youth organizations independent from the Communist government were created, and there emerged multiplicity of youth subcultures. Also, during this period, some alternative ways of doing youth work appeared, performances, concerts, outreach work or street work. Some activities initiated in that period still continue to exist (e.g. WOSP - "the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Foundation", initiative aiming at engaging young people into the collection of money for charity). As Sińczuch suggests, this is in this period, that "young people had won their right to talk about important issues, sense of life, engagement and their world views." (2009).

From 1990, we witnessed the growing activity of civic organizations, including youth organizations and further growing professionalization of the sector. At the same time the state initiative in youth policy was diminishing with time. The last Youth Strategy of Poland closed formally in 2012, but in practice much earlier, and the draft strategy Active Youth from 2014 was never enacted.

Additional turning point in youth work development was Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, and access to the European funding for youth projects. This promoted further within youth organizations and – to limited extent also within policy attempts – the perspective of youth-centered pedagogy: treating young people as partners, agents, and co-authors, not recipients of services (Rodziewicz 2016). Still, it remains a marginal approach (Sińczuch 2009, Matyjaszyk 2014). It as well allowed Polish youth workers to cooperate internationally and become mobile, what results in transfer of knowledge from abroad.



Nowadays, in Poland there exist a very diversified scene of youth work providers (from state institutions to youth initiatives, mass-youth organizations, school-based youth work, non-governmental organisations). There are no national policy initiatives that would be directed strategically at youth work sector as a whole, and youth policy is fragmented and scattered in between different ministries with little policy debate on concept and value of different ways of doing youth work

## **National definition or understanding of Youth Work**

One common definition or common understanding of youth work in the country's official documents does not exist in Poland (Krzaklewska 2017). Youth work is translated in Polish as 'Praca z młodzieżą', which is used in youth policy documents as a direct translation of the term used at the EU level, but nevertheless it can be understood differently in different contexts. Similarly, there is no common empirical understanding of youth work other than a pull of diverse practices. One would list youth centres or youth clubs, and street work as an obvious examples, then also followed by youth organisations and movements. The diversity of forms of youth work is recognized in Poland similarly to the European level and there is no movement to integrate the work towards young people under one umbrella. Nevertheless, there is quite a strong connotation on the policy level of youth work concept with the social work with disadvantaged youth. Youth-directed institutions are supposed to compensate for the family or community dysfunctions and support them in care and education. Additionally, the vast youth organisations sector through their engagement in EU-funded projects identifies more and more strongly with a more general youth work concept which links the youth work agenda with a social development of youth people who participate in non-formal learning activities on the voluntary basis.

Summing up, this twofold aim of youth work in Poland was explicated in the report for the European Commission (Duda 2012) "Working with young people: The value of youth work in the EU. Country report: Poland", which concluded on the basis of interviews and desk-research that stakeholders in Poland define youth work as:

- "educational and upbringing activities, both formal and non-formal, based on voluntary participation of young people, covering areas such as education, upbringing, welfare, prevention, culture, rehabilitation, sports etc.
- Compensatory measures, carried out on a regular basis, which aim to level the social deficiencies of young people and address certain problems they face (e.g. pathologies, addictions, unemployment)" (Duda 2012, p.1)

The first part of the definition would include the work of non-governmental organisations that are directed to young people and/or which are managed by young people, youth movements (e.g. scouting), next to activities run by sport clubs, cultural centres, schools or religious/church organisations. The second part of the definition would relate to public social services operating Day Care Centers (Placówki Wsparcia Dziennego), also of street work or socio-therapeutic character. There are about 1900 Centers around Poland. Day Care Centers are run on the basis of public funding, they are mostly organised by social services, or non-governmental organisations/foundations, including Church organisations. There is a tendency not to use the formal name of Day Care Centers when approaching young people, as it is strongly connected to social services, but more inviting names such as: Youth Club, Center for development and activation of young people, Spot, Youth Academy and many others. Nonetheless, the centers activities are directed mostly at marginalised youth/youth at risk of social exclusion.

## **10.2 Administration and governance of youth work**

### **Governance**

There is no central body administering youth work (nor youth policy) in Poland (see chapter 1.4. Youth policy decision making). In practice, responsibilities are shared in relation to sectoral areas, e.g. the Ministry of Sport would be responsible for sport activities



(e.g. programme Klub), while the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy for the Day Care Centers. At the same time the operational responsibilities may be transferred to local government. For example, the Day Care Centers are run on the basis of the 2011 Law on supporting family and the foster care system [[Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej.](#)] mostly by organisations that are subcontracted by Local Governments (or run by Local government as such). While the national level does not engage actively in debate on youth work, there appear initiatives on the regional level, mostly in relation to general youth policy but including as well elements of youth work, particularly concerning work of youth organisations or supporting youth initiatives (see chapter 1.4).

In the recent developments, we could relate the youth organisations support to work of [The National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development](#), which was established in 2017. The Center approaches not only youth organisations, but civic society in general including non-governmental organisations, scout movement, fire-brigades troops, think-tanks etc. The Center gives funding for the development of Solidarity Corps (a long-term volunteering programme), the Civil Society Organisations Development Programme, and The Civil Initiatives Fund – which is a government grant programme for non-governmental organisations, under which projects aimed at increasing the involvement of citizens and non-governmental organisations in public life are subsidised. Also, much attention is played to scout movement, and in the Scout Movement Development Governmental Programme for 2018-2030, it is stressed the importance of scout organization as a partner of the state in activities for the development and upbringing of young people, as it “creates the possibility of comprehensive, modern and harmonious physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual development of children and youth”.

While there is little debate on youth work in Poland, some actors remain active within the field. One of the most active is [Polish Council of Youth Organisations PROM](#) (read more on PROM chapter 1.4), which advocates for creation of Youth Law, Youth Strategy and a central organ managing youth policy.

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

Establishing mechanisms for cross-sectoral cooperation is one of the most important challenges within youth work policy in Poland (Duda 2012). There have existed in the recent years a practice of establishing cross-sectoral committees or policy groups in relation to youth policy (see chapter 1.5). One example was, The Youth Policy Group ([Zespół ds. Polityki na Rzecz Młodzieży](#)) which operated within the Public Benefit Activities Council, which is an advisory body working for the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy. This year we have witnessed as well an establishment of Council for Dialogue with young Generation ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)) – Advisory Body created on the basis of the 2019 Law on Public Activity and Volunteering, but it is not yet sure if this will lead to more debate on youth work. This Advisory body consists both of representatives of youth organisations, as well as representatives of President of Poland, Children’s Ombudsman, Prime Minister, Ministries of responsible for sport, education, higher education, Public Benefit Activities Council, local government representatives, youth local councils, Parliament of Students of Poland.

## 10.3 Support to youth work

### Policy legal framework

There is no national youth work strategy, nor youth strategy that would include youth work as a theme. Also, there is no specific law that regulates youth work as such. As the sector is very diverse, different branches of ‘youth work’ in Poland may face different regulations, or lack of these. The only national level “regulation” is a description of a profession of youth worker, which suggests that such activities are related to free time organization, educational and prevention/socio-therapeutic activities, mostly directed at

marginalized youth, or youth at risk of social exclusion (see point 10.5). Similar approach is visible in the concept of Day Care Centers. Their functioning is based on the 2011 Law on supporting family and the foster care system. The families that have children in school-age, especially those families that have troubles in taking care of their children, might need support in organizing their children free time, dealing with school difficulties, or unwanted behavior. The access to the day care centers, that would support families, should be accessible not only those children that are directed by the social services, but also those directed by their guardians/parents. The Day Care Centers guarantees to a child (usually between 6-19 years old): 1) care and upbringing; 2) help in school duties; 3) organization of free time, fun and sport and hobby development. Beyond 67% of 'regular' Day Care Centers, there exist as well specialist Day Care Centers (23%), which additionally are aimed as well as at sociotherapy, correctional activities and programmes, and streetwork activities (10%), also of sociotherapeutic character. Some children may be directed to participate in activities of Day Care Centers by a court decision.

The legal framework for functioning of youth organisations is described in 5.6 Supporting youth organisations.

## Funding

It is difficult to track the overall budget for youth work due to scattered character of the sector. In general the funding may come from the central budget or from the local government expenditures. Below the examples of some sources of public funding for youth work programmes and activities:

- [Day Care Centers](#): In 2018, 38 475 children have participated in the activity of 1 822 day care centers led by local government (gmina) and 50 led by regional government (powiat). The cost of this activity was: 195 865 000 PLN (centers by local government) and 93 270 000 PLN (other).
- Youth organisations: There are no specific funds from the government to youth organisations (see more in 5.6 "Supporting youth organisations"). All non-profit organizations in Poland (as well as sport clubs, religious organisations and others), so as well those directed to young people or led by them, can apply for funding through [The National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development](#). The Center gives funding for the development of Solidarity Corps (a long-term volunteering programme), the Civil Society Organisations Development Programme, and The Civil Initiatives Fund which is a government grant programme for non-governmental organisations, under which projects aimed at increasing the involvement of citizens and non-governmental organisations in public life are subsidised. For examples, the Civil Initiatives Fund in 2019 have 6 mln PLN for grants for organisations (from 20,000 to 300,000 PLN per application). In 2018, 550 offers from organisations were funded with an overall budget of similar size.
- Scout movement: the Scout Movement Development Governmental Programme for 2018-2030: the yearly amount of the fund is 15 mln PLN
- Sport clubs: [Programme CLUB](#): PLN 41 mln in 2019 (directed to about 3700 small and medium-size sport clubs)

The EU funding is a very popular and desired source of funding, used by non-governmental organisations as well as other institutions that work with young people. E.g. in 2018, European funds (POWER/ESF) were used to support the Programme Młodzież Solidarna w Działaniu (Youth Joined in Action). It offered 20 mln PLN for projects developing young people's social skills in relation to their usage at the labour market. In particular, the grants were offered to fund work of youth organisations, bodies representing young people, activities of youth centers or voluntary activities (the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy) (read more 1.5). European funding is also used at the local government level to support youth work. Erasmus+ is another popular source of funding for youth organisations, e.g. youth workers may participate in the Youth Action 1. Mobility of youth workers.

## Cooperation

Not applicable

## 10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

### Quality assurance

There is no national system of quality assurance established by national authorities. Nevertheless, depending on the sector of youth work there are attempts to raise the quality of youth work. Some quality assurance processes can be seen within the procedures of receiving funding: such as project realization evaluation in connection to non-governmental organisations' funding, or in the procedures for funding Day Care Centers by the local governments (the commune president/mayor or ZARZĄD POWIATU is responsible for controlling the work of centers).

Day Care Centers need to adhere to the 2011 Law on supporting family and the foster care system – also in relation to safety of space where young people spend time. All Day Care Centers need to have a statute and organizational regulation; run documentation of their work, including programme of activities, statistics of users, individual register of a user, as well as provide a report from the activities. These reports – financial and relation to the programme - is obligatory in case of applying for subsequent funding. Specialised Centers need in particular to document the individual work with each young person in relation to sociotherapeutic, correctional or other type of therapeutic program.

Additionally, some local governments took initiatives to establish quality systems or tools to monitor this share of youth work activity more in relation to quality of activities and methods of working with young people (e.g. stressing more participatory approach in youth work). The example is City of Warsaw which run an [evaluation project](#) in 2013 directed at Day Care Centers as well as streetwork, leading to establishment of standards for functioning of these two types of youth work. In 2012, the city of Rzeszów published [the manual for NGO 'SUWAK'](#) describing innovative standards of working with young people in day care centers.

### Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

National authorities in Poland do not conduct nor fund research on youth work.

### Participate Youth Work

There are no specific ways to involve young people in the decision-making processes in relation to youth work (see information on the participation of young people in general policy making in section 5.4). As the expert interviews suggested that one of the important development in Poland should be a larger participation of young people in proposing measures or areas for youth work (e.g. through an advisory body) (Duda 2012). Some potential for initiative lies in a newly established (October 2019) advisory group The Dialogue Council with the Young Generation ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)), which is an opinion-making and advisory body of the Chairman of the Public Benefit Committee (Przewodniczący Komitetu ds. Pożytku Publicznego) in which representatives of youth organisations constitute a large share (see more in 1.4).

### Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

At the moment, there are no top-level policies or measures in relation to digital youth work. For general information on policies in relation to digitalization and young people, see 6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media. Nevertheless there is an activity in the thematic area, also in relation to Erasmus+ funding. Within the Polish Presidency in Berlin Process, Poland hosted the conference "Digital Youth Work and Innovation", Warsaw, 29-31 May 2019, directed mostly at youth workers.

In between 2011-2015, there was running a programme Youth club- Child-work for supporting children and families in a local community in years 2011-2015 [[Świetlica-Dzieci – Praca na rzecz wsparcia dziecka i rodziny w gminie w latach 2011 – 2015](#)] which aimed at supporting financially establishment and functioning of day care centers/youth clubs (100 centers received support of 4 mln PLN in 5 years). One of the area of support was to fund computers for usage in youth centers.

## 10.5 Youth workers

### Status in national legislation

The profession name 'youth worker' (pracownik młodzieżowy) is not commonly used in Poland, e.g. in Erasmus Plus programme youth worker is translated very widely as a person working with young people (osoby pracujące z młodzieżą). Nevertheless, youth worker is a profession included in the Classification of Occupations and Specializations for Labour Market Needs ([code: 235916](#)) prepared in 2014. More precisely this profession is named in Polish 'Animator czasu wolnego młodzieży (Pracownik młodzieżowy)', meaning "Animateur/organiser of free time of young people (Youth worker)". It is defined as follows:

*Youth worker supports, initiates and organizes free-time activities for young people who are at risk of addictions, crime, aggression, prostitution, missing parental care; she/he conducts workshops and activities in youth clubs, institutions of formal and non-formal education or on the streets; she/he collaborates with schools and local communities; she/he organizes support and help from social services and health services.*

The [professional tasks](#) include:

- diagnosing problems and needs of environments of young people that need support and organization of their free time (shopping malls, parks, beaches, railway stations with their surroundings, uninhabited buildings, building gates, staircases, courtyards etc.);
- getting into contact and developing relations with young people from the risk groups, reaching them with reliable information around the potential threats and places where they can receive help and support in developing youth initiatives;
- initiating and realizing interesting and emotionally engaging workshops and activities with young people at the risk of social exclusion;
- street work among children and young people „living on the streets”: np. organising getaways/trips to new unknown places, that allow to fully take advantage from those opportunities/adventures;
- organizing sport activities and cultural events building pride from one's values and achievements;
- developing motivations to alternative forms of spending free time and giving emotional support in case of life hardships;
- cooperation with school and local communities and organising support for youngsters from social services and health services;
- keeping records and gathering statistics about the conducted activities;
- taking part in the training concerning facilitation of activities for young people at risk of social exclusion.

[Additional professional tasks](#) include:

- activities in relations to youth policy for institutions that support young people at risk of pathology, such as: trainings, conferences, seminars etc., to exchange experiences and search for new solutions/tools in work with young people at risk of social exclusion;

- leading trainings for educators, volunteers and social workers work with young people at risk of social exclusion.

Commonly, the name of the profession would rather be used in relation to professional workers, often paid, within youth centers, in youth outreach, streetwork or social services. The volunteers in youth organisations would not be labelled with this name, rather being called activists, or NGO workers.

To comment this definition, the definition is strongly linked to supporting young people at risk of social exclusion, thus youth worker definition is narrower than the one shared by organisations in Poland or the one provided by the European institutions. The definition relates to professionals working in close relation to social services or other institutions providing youth work to vulnerable young people or street work. Thus, this definition does not sufficiently relate to youth workers in youth organisations providing non-formal learning nor professional educators, even if the [expertise](#) prepared for Ministry suggests to include in the definition as well leaders of youth organisations. The perspective directed at activation of young people, where they become responsible for the activities and where youth workers [remain rather facilitators](#) than managers/directors, is still at the stage of incubation is missing from the youth worker profession description. It is also worth stressing that the core description of the name relates to [spending free time](#) rather than to the professional role related to education or resocialization of a young person.

There are no general national criteria for youth worker profession as defined above. But, there are specific criteria to be a youth worker in day care centres, regulated by the 2011 Law on supporting family and the foster care system [Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej.], which defines the criteria for opening up a day care centre, criteria for the staff and very basic criteria for the work programme. This law regulates qualifications for employed with diverse functions in day care center. For a general youth worker there is a necessity for having a higher education degree in pedagogy, special pedagogy, psychology, sociology, social work, family studies, or a degree from a different faculty supported with additional education on the postgraduate level within psychology, pedagogy, family studies, resocialization or qualification courses from pedagogy of care, or upper-level education with at least three-year experience of working with young people or families. Additional criteria are set for a psychologist, pedagogue, therapist and child-carer working in such centers. All of those persons, have also fulfill three other rules:

- Not being now or in the past deprived of parental responsibility, and their parental authority is neither restricted nor suspended;
- fulfills the obligation to pay alimonies - if such an obligation is imposed on her by virtue of an enforcement order;
- was not convicted by a final judgment of an intentional crime or intentional tax offense.

## **Education, training and skills recognition**

Concerning the education and training of youth workers, there is no specific vocational education schools, or higher education programmes that grant a qualification/diploma of a youth worker. There exist some postgraduate courses (weekend-based) related to care for children and young people, psychology or pedagogy in relation to children and adolescents. There are neither top-level policies or guidelines in regards to youth worker education or learning, and there only exist rules applying to those employed in Day Care Centers (described above). There does not exist a specific procedure to validate competences gained by youth workers through non-formal and informal learning.

While the training is rather individual or organization agenda, there are some initiatives on national level to build capacity of organisations, including youth organisations. The training opportunities are funded through the [National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development](#). First, the organisations may [receive funding](#) through The Civil Initiatives Fund, which can be used for training for local leaders (Priority 2. Active society),

as well as directed at the strengthening of the potential of civic organisations, including trainings and networking between organisations particularly within federations or networks (Priority 4. Strong non-governmental organisations).

Secondly, the National Freedom Institute organizes learning events such as seminars, workshops and webinars through [NFI Academy](#).

Finally, much investment is also done in the training of scout leaders and managers (through [The Scout Movement Development Governmental Programme for 2018-2030](#)). Within this programme, funding can be granted at activities within Task 1. Support for education and programme activities in scouting organisations and Task 2. Institutional support for scouting organisations. Particularly, within task 1, the programme funds trainings of scout leaders in relation to methodology of working with young people as well as specialised training (e.g. medical, sport, management, logistics) and educational traineeships. Importantly, the training is not directed only at adult leaders, but also under-aged volunteers in order to build their leadership capital.

### **Mobility of youth workers**

When it comes to international mobility of youth workers, the opportunities are usually developed through European funding. E.g. In the Erasmus Plus, Polish youth workers may participate in the Youth Action 1. Mobility of youth workers. More information on mobility of volunteers see: 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes.

## **10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work**

### **Existing arrangements**

There is no specific national framework for recognition of the skills acquired through youth work. For general information see 6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning.

### **Skills**

Not applicable. Nevertheless, in the programme Youth Joined in Action ([Młodzież Solidarna w Działaniu](#)) the importance of social skills that can be gathered through civic activity, activity in decision making, volunteering was underlines, as of a great value at the labour market.

## **10.7 Raising awareness about youth work**

### **Information providers**

As the youth work is a very diversified sector, there are no general campaigns directed at promotion of this form of youth participation, or a coordinated information system at the national level. Nevertheless, there exist multiple strategies of different providers in relation to information provision, e.g. The Day Care Centers, operated by local governments, are usually promoted through social services websites and centers (e.g. [Krakow's Social Support Center website](#)). Often at the level of municipalities or local communes there exist centers of information on volunteering (e.g. in Warsaw), as well as a Eurodesk network of information centers in relation to European (see more in 2.6). Concerning the work of the NGOs, the very popular website for people engaged in the third sector is ngo.pl

### **Key initiatives**

There are no top-level authorities' initiatives to raise public awareness about the value of youth work. In relation to non-governmental organizations engaged in youth work, the creation of [The National Freedom Institute – Centre for Civil Society Development](#) in 2017 can be seen as a way to promote the activity of third sector in general. Among its activities,



within Scout Movement Development Governmental Programme for 2018-2030, one of the aims is to promote the scouting movement in the media.

## 10.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

Not applicable

### Ongoing debates

There are no ongoing policy developments or public debates in relation to youth work on national level. Some potential for initiative lies in a newly established (October 2019) advisory group The Dialogue Council with the Young Generation ([Rada Dialogu z Młodym Pokoleniem](#)), which is an opinion-making and advisory body of the Chairman of the Public Benefit Committee (Przewodniczący Komitetu ds. Pożytku Publicznego) (see more in 1.4). As described by Krzaklewska (2017) in the analysis of the situation of youth work in Poland: "The lack of a department/body on the national level responsible for youth policies and having a direct engagement with youth policy formulation and implementation at the local level, causes a lack of development of a general conceptual and strategic framework concerning youth work. There does not exist a national level debate on how to realise the aims of youth work. Nevertheless, we witness a strong practice of youth work at a local and organizational level. So the observed lack of 'centralization' has resulted in the pluralisation of a 'youth offer' and not an absence of a framework but in a multiplicity of frameworks. Such a situation proves on one hand beneficial, allowing a diversity of approaches and paradigms, but on the other hand, the problem of "reinventing the wheel" may occur. The need for more peer-to-peer exchange and search for representation is evident. On the regional level, representatives for youth policy have emerged and endeavored to gather and consolidate the youth work practice in the area, suggesting systemic changes. There is a need for more investment in employment of youth workers and local animators, and simultaneously in their skills development. Finally, the development calls for the more integrative approach to youth work, which would allow creation of more general-access youth spaces. There is a need also to direct more public funding for setting up youth centers, activities or organisations which are open to all young people from diverse backgrounds." The report to the European Commission (Duda 2013) suggested, beyond reiterating above-listed recommendations, to focus on monitoring the quality of service and development of performance standards. Additionally, there is a need to reconsider the reach of youth work to diverse groups, e.g. the report of the Stocznia Foundation on "[Youth in the rural areas](#)" (Strzemińska, Wiśnicka 2011), suggest the urgent need to create spaces for young people in the rural areas, such as open youth clubs.

## GLOSSARY

**Youth** - depending on the definition and context, in Poland there are several definitions of youth: it is a notion that initially included people aged 15-25. However, as a result of the implementation of new youth programmes, the upper age limit has now been raised from 25 to 29. Social policy programmes consider youth as people aged from 13 to 30. The lower age limit coincides with the time when children become "active participants shaping their environment by their own actions" and finish a certain stage of education when "they make important choices regarding their further education". The upper age limit is defined as the stage of becoming self-sufficient and setting up a household. However, under the Ombudsman for Children Act (Ustawa o Rzeczniku Praw Dziecka), "any human being is a child from conception to the age of majority", but "reaching the age of majority is regulated by separate provisions". In accordance with the above Act, the notion of "youth" could refer to people who have reached the age of majority and therefore, have

turned 18 or 16. It is also accepted that “young people” are those under 34 years old as it is difficult to pinpoint the age of passing from youth to maturity. The report “Youth 2011” describing young people’s situation in Poland applied the term “youth” to the age group of 15-29. It is this age range that is most frequently indicated when defining the notion of “youth”.

**Career guidance at Voluntary Labour Corps (*Ochotnicze Hufce Pracy*)** - Voluntary Labour Corps (OHP) are government-financed entities supervised by the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy. The target audience of the actions undertaken by OHP are:

- Minors (aged 15 to 17) from educationally malfunctioning backgrounds who are not fulfilling their schooling and educational obligations, have problems with graduating, and need to acquire vocational qualifications.
- Persons aged 18 to 25, including those who are looking for a job or want to be retrained, unemployed, school graduates, and students.

OHP, as labour market institutions, provide free services to young people, including job placement and career guidance and information services; conduct workshops on active job searching; organise training; and implement labour market schemes (e.g. under the Youth Guarantee Initiative).

**Compulsory education** in Poland is divided into:

- one-year compulsory pre-school preparation;
- full-time compulsory education (obligation to attend school) which starts at the beginning of the school year in the calendar year when the child reaches the age of 7 and lasts until the completion of education in the primary school ([\*szkoła podstawowa\*](#)) (until the completion of lower secondary education in the transition period) but not beyond the age of 18;
- part-time compulsory education until the age of 18 which young people may receive, in particular, in a post-primary school (or until completion of education in the lower secondary school in the transition period) or as part of vocational training at an employer’s organisation.

**National Youth Law** - Polish youth policy has no systemic solutions, nor is it operated and coordinated in a consistent way. Therefore, it is impossible to indicate one official document focussing on the needs and rights of young people and regulating issues relating to them (“Youth Law”). However, this does not mean that Polish legislation does not cover young people’s lives, rights and duties. Youth-related regulations are provided in various legal acts, such as the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, Family and Guardianship Code, Labour Code, Juvenile Proceedings Act, Education Law, Act on Higher Education, Post-graduate Placements Act or the Associations Act. For more information please see the chapter 1 Youth Policy Governance.

**National Youth Strategy** - the “State Strategy for Youth for 2003-2012” (Strategia Państwa dla Młodzieży na lata 2003-2012) (Strategy) prepared before Poland’s accession to the EU remains the only document determining the development and directions of Polish youth policy. Currently, there is no strategy in Poland directly relating to young people. The Strategy emphasises the links that exist between youth policy and legal regulations concerning education, social welfare, national defence, employment and combating unemployment, children’s living conditions in families, healthcare, as well as prevention of crime, drug addiction and alcohol abuse.

**Student Career Centres (*Akademickie Biura Karier*)** - Student Career Centres are entities whose mission is the professional activation of students and graduates of higher education, run by a higher education institution or a student organisation, whose duties include:

- providing students and graduates with information on the labour market and opportunities for improving professional qualifications,
- collection, classification and dissemination of job, internship and work placement offers,
- maintaining a database of students and higher education institution graduates interested in finding a job,
- assisting employers in obtaining suitable candidates for job vacancies and internships,
- helping with active job seeking.

In 2014, it was estimated that 346 Student Career Centres were in operation at 442 Polish higher education institutions. However, it should be emphasised that this is an indicative figure only.

**Volunteering** - deliberate, voluntary activity that goes beyond the ties of family, friends and colleagues" and, as a consequence, a **volunteer** is "any natural person who out of their own free will, voluntarily and for no fee provides services to organisations, institutions or individuals that go beyond the ties of family and friends"

**Youth Parliament** - There is no bona fide children and youth parliament in Poland operating as an institution elected by general election and thus possessing democratic legitimacy. The Children and Youth Parliament (*Sejm Dzieci i Młodzieży*) is a representative institution in name only. In reality, this is an educational project of the Polish Parliament Chancellery and is not an element of the legal system. Its nature is purely didactic, consultative and opinion-forming. In addition to the Polish Parliament Chancellery, the Ministry of National Education and several other entities, including non-governmental entities, participate in its organisation.

**Youth worker** - Youth worker supports, initiates and organizes free-time activities for young people who are at risk of addictions, crime, aggression, prostitution, missing parental care; she/he conducts workshops and activities in youth clubs, institutions of formal and non-formal education or on the streets; she/he collaborates with schools and local communities; she/he organizes support and help from social services and health.

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