

# Role of Dialogue in Public Policies

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## Abstract

*In Poland, both corporate and civil society partners are engaged in many types of dialogue on public issues (public policies of the state). Those types largely correspond to the models of dialogue held in Western Europe. The author puts forward a claim that development of dialogue in Poland is hampered not by structural (legal and organisational) arrangements, but by its low level of advancement, at least in some dimensions. Its intensity is reduced by small amount of expertise circulating within its mechanisms, by imperfect methods of argument presentation, low level of mutual persuasion (confrontation) or limited access of social partners to participation in decision-making in the state (due to statist model of the state functioning).*

*The application of dialogue mechanisms in public policies in Poland remains limited due to numerous barriers stemming from a variety of sources. They result from the way of functioning of some social life structures (statism and clientism) and political life institutions (strong politicisation), as well as from long term cultural factors (lack of the dialogue culture in the past).*

**Keywords:** social dialogue, civic dialogue, public policy, public policy actors, policy analysis

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## Introduction

In Poland, various types of dialogue have been practiced for many years. They largely correspond to the models of dialogue developed in Western Europe, but they are less intensive, with less deliberation and exchange of evidence-based arguments, etc. Dialogue between the state authorities and the society prevails. At the same time, another type of dialogue, which strongly determines the abovementioned one, has a limited scope. It is the dialogue within the society, i.e. between social groups with conflicting interests (in general, I will not discuss this dialogue in this paper). This dialogue has not been the subject of many analyses and conceptualisation by researchers.

I would like to list the main types of dialogue and discuss their relevance for public policy in the country in selected fields. I treat trade unions and employers' organisations as public policy actors, and define public policy as a series of public actions, based on objectivised knowledge and covered by strategic plans of the government (and the society). Policy actors include politicians, state institutions, as well as corporate entities (trade unions and organisations of employers and business) and citizen entities.

The division into social dialogue and civic dialogue is specific for Poland. It is rather untypical for developed countries. There are separate dialogue institutions (Tripartite Commission and Public Benefit Councils), separate mechanisms for dialogue financing, support, etc. This is due to specific conditions. It is difficult to predict how those two types of dialogue and their actors will further develop; there is currently no interest in their convergence. This is the consequence of the model of the Polish society which is significantly internally divided and in which social groups use every occasion to highlight their separate identity and create various related facts and phenomena.

Some arguments support the claim that tripartite social dialogue' remains the most important forum. It seems the most important due to the ability of its actors,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the definition of the International Labour Organization 'social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy'. Social dialogue includes also bipartite relations between labour and management (or trade unions and employers' organisations). Dialogue is understood as 'harmonisation of interests' at various levels, national, regional or at enterprise level.

i.e. corporate actors being the members of the Tripartite Commission (three trade union federations and four employers' organisations), to influence the authorities and their programmes/policies. The significance of this dialogue forum stems also from the importance of issues discussed with the authorities.

The dialogue of corporate partners in the Tripartite Commission is defined relatively wide, so that it goes far beyond labour relations (it may be claimed that it goes increasingly beyond labour relations). It concerns virtually all public policies of importance for the society (which does not mean that all are discussed to the same extent), although labour relations (in particular labour law) remain the main area of dialogue (particularly in crisis situations). Corporate actors participate in designing the labour market policy (e.g. minimum wage) and selected elements of the social policy (e.g. revaluation of benefits). The Tripartite Commission discusses sometimes the selected plans of reforms submitted by the authorities to the Commission (usually if they refer directly to corporations of employees and employers).

Corporate actors also participate in other forms of dialogue, apart from the Tripartite Commission. They influence public policies by participating in:

- consultative dialogue, related to legislative process (based on the regulations of the Council of Ministers, the Act on trade unions, employers' organisations);
- dialogue on development issues (dialogue fora provided for in the Act on the principles of development);
- dialogue on public policies (in particular with regard to decision-making process on planned reforms);
- civic dialogue (participation in decision-making, mainly at the local level);
- regulatory dialogue (on various types of regulations drawn up in public institutions).

## Social and Civic Actors

I wrote above that social dialogue actors from the Tripartite Commission are still the group that can exert the greatest influence on actions of the authorities (decision-making). However, the scope and actual influence of individual dialogue actors should be more precisely defined. It is not true that civic dialogue entities have no influence at all. In my other publication, I pointed out that the role of civic sector in public policies is not systemic yet, but there are examples of its significant influence (Zybała 2013). The impact of this sector is particularly marked in the sphere of

social policy (formulating and implementing actions). The role of non-governmental organisations was taken into account in the key acts – in their sections referring to the partnership principle in social policy programming (e.g. strategies of social problem solving, partnership in reintegration measures) and performance of public tasks. Large non-governmental organisations (e.g. Barka Foundation for Mutual Help in Poznań, St. Brother Albert Aid Society from Wrocław or MONAR Association) were treated as important actors co-creating the strategic framework of the system. The entities implement systemic projects which generate substantial knowledge resources and concepts of actions for communities at risk of social exclusion<sup>2</sup>.

There is a strong emphasis on the role of the third sector in the provision of social services, particularly reintegration services. Non-governmental organisations run social cooperatives, social integration centres or social integration clubs, although there are claims that third sector entities perform the tasks which local government institutions do not want or are unable to perform. Jakub Wygnański stated that the ‘division of labour’ between non-governmental organisations and the state needs revision (Wygnański 2010: 227). Third sector organisations are active in the environmental protection policy. They also contribute numerous interesting proposals of programmes for that policy. Magdalena Arczewska writes: ‘Non-governmental organisations not only take part in formulating environmental policies at individual levels of local government, but also participate in issuing environmental approvals. They constitute one of the main instruments influencing the form of the planned projects and the organisations perform a protective role in the process of their issuing’ (Arczewska 2010: 10).

In recent years, civic organisations and groups have had a marked impact on the education policy. Under pressure of those entities, the government put off the reform consisting in introducing compulsory schooling for six-year-olds (from 2009 to 2014). Activities of the third sector in the health policy are also worth mentioning. Patient organisations were behind amendments to numerous legal regulations on the access of patients to health care services and medications. At the time where the media coverage of disastrous quality of health care services was the most extensive, the Minister of Health undertook to carry out remedial actions and the Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Foundation undertook the role of a guarantor.

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<sup>2</sup> This is evidence by the participation of non-governmental organisations in the systemic project 1.18 ‘Forming and developing service quality standards in social assistance and integration’ in terms of standardisation of work with homeless people and actions taken to develop the ‘Gmina Standard for Getting Out of Homelessness’.

## Dialogue Versus Statist Model of Public Governance

It is difficult to estimate the influence of social and civic dialogue partners. In my opinion, reference to public governance models could be useful for the estimation. It would give a chance to answer the question about the actual role of social and civil partners in public decision-making (public policies). In other words, the question is whether in Poland we have a pluralist (network) governance model which provides numerous actors with an opportunity to be involved in decision-making or a statist model of governance (in particular of decision-making) (see: Table 1).

**Table 1. Models of public governance**

Public governance model	Characteristics
Étatist	Government is the principal actor in governance, takes action unilaterally or selects actors to cooperate. It usually relies on its administration for formulating and implementing policies.
Liberal-democratic	The state plays a preeminent role and can choose the partner to which it will grant influence on governance. This system has a weaker administration (bureaucracy) and relies on parliamentary institutions instead.
State-centric	The state is the most dominant actor, but it also must establish institutionalised relationships with the most powerful societal actors (such as business associations and trade unions) with which it enters into agreement on the policies concerned. The system is called corporatist.
Dutch governance school	The state relies on social networks to govern. Many members of the networks influence governance and the government is merely an element of the network.
Governance without government	Societal actors are more powerful and carry more legitimacy for public actions than the state itself. The state merely provides an arena where other actors come together to decide and implement policies. Consensus is the basis for formulating policies. No actor has authoritative power over others. In this system, administration (bureaucracy) is weak and lacks powerful analytical capabilities.

*Source:* Fazekas, Burns 2012: 25.

In the latter case, the conclusion would have to be that the authorities have a tendency to unilaterally decide about public policies and that dialogue is only a background in the state decision-making process. In my other paper, I provided

arguments in favour of Poland having a well-established statist model (Zybała 2013a). This does not have to mean a complete marginalisation of dialogue, the more so since there are continuous attempts at its animation and enhancement in various situations. However, this identification of the model entails specific consequences. This claim finds confirmation also in literature. Dariusz Zalewski believes that dialogue in terms of decisions on public policies is not well-established, but it plays a more significant role in the political system itself (Zalewski 2011: 190).

Some Polish authors point, with various degrees of emphasis, to superficiality of dialogue or a real risk that its aspects reveal this superficiality (Zalewski 2011; Zybortowicz, Sławski 2006: 16). They refer mainly to dialogue in the form stipulated in the Act on tripartite commission and voivodeship social dialogue commissions. A. Zybortowicz and M. Sławski point out that in Poland mechanisms involving violence prevail over those referring to dialogue in the state decision-making.

It should be noted that no all barriers to effectiveness of the dialogue result from the statist model of governance in Poland. Dialogue partners have low capacity to take part in interest bargaining in the form of e.g. participation in deliberation. Susan D. Phillips aptly defines factors determining influence on public policies with which dialogue problems experience some problems (Phillips 2007):

- the ability to create programme ideas and effectively present them (policy capacity);
- network capacity to combine resources;
- capacity to produce services required by citizens.

## Dialogue in Public Policies

It should be emphasized that dialogue is not a standard topic discussed in the public policy literature. It is usually not analysed *per se*, but is not ignored either. It is thoroughly analysed in specific contexts or groups of topics. Dialogue often appears in the context of policy network and policy community (Hudson, Lowe 2004). Social dialogue partners are treated here as public policy actors or stakeholders. They are considered to be an interest group or an expert community, a network or an advocacy group. They participate in policymaking to influence public decisions. They generate arguments and evidence supporting a specific solution to a given problem.

Since the beginning of 1990s, an extremely popular approach is to think about policies and their actors in the category of network they create during formulation and implementation of their actions. Various types of networks in terms of structure,

norms, relations with their surroundings, etc. are identified. They are usually considered to be formed by actors with diversified (also conflicting) interests. The networks are the place of changing interactions. This notion allows to analyse both their conflicting interests and their common denominator, i.e. all that they have in common (e.g. how they react to phenomena that affect them, such as globalisation, economic crisis, technological change).

The notion of 'network' also facilitated the analysis of democratisation of public policies. It became apparent due to a clear tendency towards increasing participation of non-governmental (including corporate) actors in decision-making processes of the state. It also allowed to notice that even stakeholders with conflicting interests may jointly solve some public problems (DeLeon, Varda 2009: 61). The notion of 'network' also facilitates the discussion on participation of non-governmental and corporate entities in decision-making in the state.

I will now discuss dialogue in public policies, despite the above reservations. The question arises whether it is dialogue with participation of corporate partners from the Tripartite Commission or also with civic society partners (third sector). I do not distinguish between the two, but I have in mind mainly organised groups representing specific interests, usually trade interests. I understand dialogue in policies as purposeful influence of organised interest groups on:

- decision-making processes in the state;
- diagnosis of public problems;
- formulation of concepts for their solving;
- execution of adopted solutions;
- evaluation of the results of public actions.

I also consider participation of organised groups in deliberation on complex public problems, in designing and providing public services, to constitute elements of dialogue. Instruments of dialogue in policies are a separate issue. Actors participate in dialogue through such instruments as:

- participation in activities of consultation, advisory, expert councils;
- policy analyses (e.g. publication of green papers with concepts of public actions or description of collective problems);
- participation in public debates, deliberations;
- participation in round-table debates and negotiations.

It would be extremely difficult to explicitly formulate a reliable opinion on the quality or intensity of dialogue within the above meaning that the authorities hold with respect to their actions and public policies, and even more difficult if we want to

take into account also dialogue within the society, between groups with conflicting interests. There is no sufficient literature in this regard. It seems that we must rely only on certain observations.

Despite numerous well-grounded reservations, dialogue is an instrument used by the authorities and other major social life actors. In 1993, a social pact was signed on key economic policy issues at that time. However, it has not been repeated in subsequent years, despite the attempts by some governments. Some elements of the dialogue concerned the so-called four reforms of the coalition government of the Solidarity Electoral Action and the Freedom Union (e.g. pension reform of 1999). Those in power sometimes react to crisis situations by proposing dialogue e.g. in the form of a round table. A round table was initiated in 2008 on health policy, before important changes were introduced to the health care system. But no binding arrangements were made and the government implemented the reforms according to their plan. The government initiated a round table also in spring 2014 to engage the carers of adult disabled persons in the dialogue. However, when this article was written, the dialogue in this form proved to be rather inconclusive (Bakalarczyk 2014). Multilateral dialogue was held in the past on the issues related to labour market, agriculture and restructuring of individual sectors. Furthermore, consultative dialogue with corporate and third sector actors takes place on an ongoing basis (more on consultative dialogue below).

However, the persistent problems include low intensity of dialogue, the scale of its conclusiveness, its impact on decision-making and on public deliberation, etc. But this is also strongly related to imperfect forms of dialogue. However, attempts to develop a set of dialogue instruments fail. The instruments widely used in the West, such as publication of green papers (describing public problems and concepts of their solutions), organisation of expert events preceding decision-making (e.g. in France recognised experts are entrusted with the mission to analyse the problem which is to be subject to public actions – *mission de réflexion*), summing up the studies on problems to be decided by the authorities, are not applied on a wider scale in Poland.

Governments everywhere tend to treat dialogue as a means to their own ends and use it when it is advantageous in the current situations. In Poland, such undertakings as round tables are sometimes organised when the authorities do not have a clear idea of how to solve disputes with influential stakeholders or when they do not have any idea on how to solve problems that become increasing pressing, in particular due to extensive media coverage. Dialogue is then used as a waiting game, a method to delay or blur the picture.



Cultural conditions for dialogue on policies in Poland are undoubtedly extremely difficult. There is no tendency to create effective dialogue fora, to deliberate public dilemmas, share knowledge, exchange objective arguments or build methods of problem analysis, etc. (Sowa 2012). The barriers result from the existing structure of political life and its aspects, for example strong confrontation between political parties which does not leave room for neutral debate.

## Consultative Dialogue

I would now like to discuss the selected elements or spheres of dialogue, starting from consultative dialogue. It involves dialogue on draft legal acts drawn up by the authorities with a view to carry out reforms and other public actions. This is an extremely important type of dialogue, since it can influence the formulation and implementation of public policies. It is all the more important, as public policies in Poland are implemented mainly through formulation of legal regulation and thus their quality is essential.

Corporate actors from the Tripartite Commission participate in consultation on the majority of draft legal acts and their contribution is very valuable. They are often represented by sectoral structures. This means that they are ready to actively participate in public policy formulation. However, their participation is not always fully professional due to its quality and form, as I stated above.

Corporate actors are particularly strongly involved in consultative dialogue on legal acts which have a direct impact on the situation of employees and employers. As I have already mentioned, they are mainly interested in labour law issues (flexible forms of employment) and administration of the Labour Fund. In 2013, the trade union part of the Tripartite Commission got involved in the pension policy. In this case, they were totally against the government. The government decided then to extend economic activity age to 67 and to introduce equal retirement age for women and men. The partners from the Tripartite Commission also participated in the decision-making on the pension policy reform in 1999. A certain consensus was reached at that time on the decision on commercialisation of a part of the pension system (introduction of a commercial pillar to manage a part of pension contribution), although the entire reform proved to be impermanent (in 2013 the government decided to reduce the commercial pillar in the pension system).

Consultation on the health care system reform, initiated in spring 2014, provide an interesting example. The reform provides for a number of major changes to the system, including in particular its modifications to facilitate the access to specialists for persons with suspected oncological disease. The number of comments submitted under the consultation amount to 81. They were sent by medical universities, trade unions, national and voivodeship consultants, medical associations Polish (Polish Oncological Society), some patient organisations, local government organisations (Polish Poviats Union), organisations of pharmaceutical companies, hospitals and business chambers (e.g. Polish Chamber of Insurance). One opinion from a citizen was received. The partners of dialogue within the Tripartite Commission formulated their positions. In general, the number of opinions received was relatively high compared to other reforms. But it is still low in comparison with the number of opinions submitted in the United Kingdom.

It should be noted that the authorities provided only a month for submission of comments. Nevertheless, some comments included constructive remarks on the assumptions for the reform. Many proposals for amendments to the draft were presented, starting from requests to abandon some provisions to important solutions. Some, for example the Polish Chamber of Physicians and Dentists, criticised the method of reform consultation, since it lacked a stage of dialogue on assumptions for the reform. Comments could be submitted to the complete drafts of legal acts. Key stakeholders of the health care system, related to the physicians community, were generally united in their criticism of the concept of the reforms.

In the case of the said reform, the problem was the lack of opportunity for direct deliberations, exchange of arguments, presentation of various data and evidence in support of submitted comments.

Literature contains ambivalent opinions on consultative dialogue. Governments not always know how to use the consultation capacity. It can be used to expand knowledge about the issue subject to the legislative process, it may also be a tool for motivating the actors of a given policy to support public actions planned in the legislation.

The problem is that consultative dialogue is often routine, its statutory rules (e.g. duration of consultation) are breached, it lacks the atmosphere of open deliberation on problems and strengths of draft legal acts (Bednarz, Szczesniak, Bąk 2011: 24). Corporate and civil society actors relatively seldom present their positions extensively and address them not only to the government, but also to the society. This is certainly the reaction to the way in which the government holds consultation. The authorities usually formulate reform proposals addressing them to their largest partners. The

proposals are seldom addressed to the society which is the final recipient of the results of the government's actions.

It should be noted that there is a major educational barrier reducing the quality of consultative dialogue, as the studies show that 75% of the society do not understand the meaning of the term 'consultation' (*Raport końcowy...: 71*). Even the public administration employees have problems with understanding this notion. They think that consultation is provision of information about the decisions of the authority, social research which they do not associate with asking for opinion, exchange of opinions within an institution, cooperation between public units, commissioning of public tasks to non-governmental organisations along with grants, all contacts with citizens, including the organisation of promotional events, festivities, etc.

Sometimes, even key policy actors do not formulate a transparent position in consultation on reforms (e.g. reform of the labour market policy in mid 2014). Actors often focus only on weaknesses of reforms and do not formulate any positive proposals. Open consultation usually bring very few opinions, while e.g. in the United Kingdom, thousands of opinions are submitted during consultation. The comments submitted in Poland come mainly from the strongest organisations representing sectoral interests, which employ many experts. There are very few opinions submitted by representatives of weaker social groups.

However, it should be noted that the authorities undertake some action to strengthen consultative dialogue, but they are not coherent or comprehensive and to date have failed to improve the quality of consultation. A number of documents and guidebooks were drawn up presenting the methods of consultation. Good examples include recommendations of the Ministry of Economy on the method of consultation included in the document entitled 'Principles of consultation held when drafting government documents' (2009) or consultation standards developed at the Ministry of Administration and Digitalization. The problem lies in the ability to put the principles into practice. It should be noted that the authorities adopted a solution that could improve the regulatory dialogue (or even more broadly understood dialogue, i.e. dialogue on concepts of public actions/policies). A procedure entitled 'regulatory test' was introduced. It is a form of presenting the assumptions for planned legal acts. The test is carried out before a draft legal act is formulated. The ministries are to present main assumptions on which the draft legal act is based in the test and public consultation is to focus on those assumptions. The problem is the insufficient quality of the assumptions. Dialogue partners wait for the drafting of the legal act anyway. Not all ministries formulate the test before drawing up a draft legal act.

At the end of this section, I will present an interesting example of the situation when actors successfully co-created a key public policy. It concerned a serious economic threat, when in 2009 an approaching economic crisis (slowdown) loomed over Poland. The crisis had already affected numerous European countries. In this situation, corporate actors of the dialogue proposed a package of actions which they considered important for protection, in particular for protection of jobs during the crisis. Those actions were later deemed 'an anti-crisis package'. The government implemented numerous ideas, formulated and agreed by actors during bilateral dialogue (Dryll 2010).

## The Problem with Deliberation

I would like to continue the abovementioned subject concerning the barriers impairing the dialogue capacity to boost the decision-making process in public policies/actions. Full deliberation, i.e. situation when public problems are extensively discussed and analysed in a number of forms and at the level comprehensible for the society in general (at least for its well-educated members) hardly ever happens in Poland. The average citizen must find deliberation to be virtually non-existent. They probably think that the government makes decisions unilaterally, or perhaps negotiates certain compromises with the most powerful actors. Deliberation is also a problem at the expert level, since analytical infrastructure is insufficiently developed and politicians have a reluctant attitude to analyses.

In today's world, the quality of public policies and public actions in general is strongly determined by the exchange of knowledge and opinions on planned reforms. In the United Kingdom, researchers pay much attention to knowledge brokers or policy brokers (Phipps, Morton 2013). The brokers are entities whose task is to professionally initiate discussions, review and analyse the presented arguments, identify the fields of knowledge, data, evidence that should be supplemented. They organise meetings of the authorities and experts (policy summits), sum up policies, popularise public issues, etc. In Poland, this phenomenon is only beginning to emerge. Fortunately the number of expert institutes, but their capacity is still low. The development of expert centres is hampered by cultural and political barriers. If those barriers are not eliminated, it is unlikely that the quality of dialogue will improve and, first of all, there is no chance for overcoming the weaknesses in public governance.

Dialogue is not a value in itself. It is important, because it is an instrument for better management of the public problem solving processes.

In Poland dialogue is perceived as a phenomenon related to interest bargaining, but with a strong emphasis on their dissimilarity or conflict, which is treated as a sort of ill-fate (there is no way out of confrontation of conflicting interests). Jacek Sroka presented a different opinion several years ago. He stressed that social dialogue mechanisms could gradually abandon their confrontation features and incorporate a deliberation component to a greater extent. 'Deliberation is a public process of communication, based on persuasion and targeted at identifying good arguments which correspond to the public interests and, on its behalf, lead to solving the problems which are important for the community' (Cohen 1997: 75, 76). In the process of deliberation, group interests are presented in a way corresponding to the general interest. The parties get to know their group points of view on individual issues and learn about each other. They discuss openly, not keeping the debates secret. The essence of so understood deliberation is to achieve consensus on the discussed matters. The assumption is that deliberating parties are able to reinterpret their needs and change their attitudes and preferences, all due to conducted debates' (Sroka 2008: 48). Sroka pointed out, however, that social partners would have to acquire a new language, new codes to better communicate. They would have to move from 'defending entrenchments' (group interests) to multilateral deliberative communication. 'This would mean the ability to change attitudes, preferences, as well as the style and content of communication. This would demonstrate the real understanding and effort to address challenges faced by the entire civil community'.

Increased deliberation in the dialogue mechanisms would allow to avoid numerous imperfections in the functioning of public policies. The OECD Territorial Review of Poland states that problems in this policy result from weaknesses in developing solutions based on partnerships between public, social and private sectors (OECD: 28). The OECD recommends enhancing cooperation across levels of government, local governments and private and social actors. Social dialogue should be considered an important element of the functioning of the state as such.

## Pragmatism in Dialogue

Dialogue in public policies should be mainly understood pragmatically. It is definitely not a romantic act resulting from emotions, sudden discovery of the sources of unity

in the society (such approach is sometimes encountered in Poland). Pragmatism is visible in the functioning of dialogue institutions in the West. Dialogue is organised there to develop patterns of benefit distribution among the actors. They include group benefits, as well as benefits for the entire community, resulting from the possibility to quickly introduce certain changes and reforms. Thus, dialogue allows to mitigate the informal power of veto which various actors have. It consists in the ability to block actions undertaken by the government or other actors (Meardi 2011). The dynamics of dialogue comes from the observation that today we deal with advanced interdependence of social life actors. The realisation of interests of one social group requires at least some consensus on the part of other groups.

An assumption must be made that dialogue actors aimed at maximising their utility. This does not stand in contradiction to the idea of common good that the dialogue is to lead to. Common good may be understood as stability and development accepted by all. Dialogue is to generate solutions that can be accepted by group actors, since they satisfy their interests. The general assumption in public policies is that actors are utility maximisers and therefore acting in one's own interest cannot be criticised. However, the question is to what extent the actions of individuals or groups assume that the costs of generating the benefits will be incurred by other actors.

Poland made a relatively good start in this regard after 1990. In 1993, the 'Pact on State Enterprises in Transformation' was signed, though with some difficulties (Hausner 1995: 297). In line with the Pact, in return for their agreement on further economic reforms, employees obtained the possibility to co-decide about ownership transformations of enterprises. According to J. Gardawski, it was a typical pact providing for exchange of certain benefits (Gardawski 2006: 26). However, later on such pacts were not signed anymore.

The benefits also consist in the possibility to obtain a greater synergy between actions taken by various social groups within the framework of public actions (obtaining better methods of coordination in the society and the economy where it is necessary). What more does dialogue give? Here are several other benefits of dialogue:

- more authority and legitimacy for policies initiated by the government;
- increasing the interest in public problems;
- increasing the operational knowledge resources, useful for public actions and their evaluation;
- identifying conflicting aspects of public actions (e.g. if during designing of public actions, conflicting or even mutually exclusive objectives are planned);

- enhancing the subjectivity of policy actors in the actions taken, creating conditions ensuring that actors have a sense of co-ownership of rules of the policy in which they participate.

Dialogue improves the understanding of policies as a result of deliberation. A question may be asked about when we understand a public policy? We understand a policy when we understand arguments put forward by stakeholders of this policy, their notions and meanings of words they use in public debates. This is facilitated by dialogue.

The issue of subjectivity must be emphasized, since it constitutes a major problem in Poland. Research shows that in 2013 less than one fifth of Poles believed that they had some influence on the country (19%). 79% of Poles believed they had no possibility to influence public affairs (in 2012, approximately 30% declared that they had some influence) (CBOS 2013).

An advantage of dialogue is that it can enhance deliberation on problems, which may result in deeper understanding of public problems and a greater common denominator of a given policy stakeholders. The importance of deliberation is highlighted by the so-called argumentative turn in the policy analysis. The term ‘deliberative policy analysis’ has been defined. It was a reaction to ‘epistemological limitations of “neopositivist” or empiricist policy analysis and the technocratic decision making practices to which it gave rise’.

- According to G. Majone (1989), argumentation is a process where:
- citizens and decision makers carry out moral assessments and choices in the area of politics;
  - knowledge, experience and interest of numerous persons are mobilised;
  - ‘every participant of the debate may change his/her opinion, or even change his/her beliefs as a result of mutual persuasion’.

## Conclusions. Dialogue in a Country ‘Working Its Way Up’

Researchers and participants of public life agree in general that Poland has a huge need for dialogue in virtually all of its forms (Gardawski 2009). It is needed in the field of industrial relations and labour law and in numerous public policies, in particular those influencing the welfare of labour force and the conditions for business.

There are many reasons for the need of dialogue. It should be remembered that historically the Polish society was deeply divided in various aspects. This is confirmed in the publications of numerous historians (Antoniewicz, Arnold, Bruckner, Dobrzycki 1928–1933). This was evident to Western travellers, e.g. at the time of King Stanisław August Poniatowski (Zawadzki 1928–1933), or to Western philosophers who attempted to describe the Polish reality (Rousseau 1966). Many historians describe great imbalance during the time of class society. Deep divisions ran through aristocracy, gentry, the bourgeoisie and peasantry, with a destructive impact on development of the country. The consequences were abundant. It blocked opportunities for development and adjustment of the country to its surroundings (e.g. to defend itself). The inability to mutually moderate interests resulted in an archaic economic structure, hampering the transition to capitalism and free market. The development gap of Poland grew larger.

Currently the society is also strongly divided according to various criteria. It is characterised by a high level of income disproportions between citizens and regions. Inequality is also visible on the labour market, e.g. in terms of protection of jobs. A large group almost without any employment protection emerged, though there are groups that are extremely well protected in this regard. Divisions between urban and rural areas, between large cities and small towns in terms of access to culture, public services, etc. persist and are still numerous. A deeply divided society, without some consensus in this regard, is at risk of numerous development difficulties. It is more difficult to create effective governance instruments, since the divisions enhance confrontation.

The development today requires such elements as the ability to obtain a certain level of coherence, the ability to collaborate, create positive network relations allowing to combine resources and generate synergies. Contemporary states need to undertake increasingly complex and difficult actions (e.g. to adapt the society to technological change, to tackle climate change, to ensure social cohesion). They require long-term cooperation between a wide range of public policy stakeholders. The result may be a chance for obtaining an appropriate level of empowerment of the society, i.e. the ability to mould oneself with a view to adequately react to the developments in our environment.

Stanisław Ossowski proposed an apt term – collective agreement order. It is based on a continuous moderation of mutual relations and building consensuses. It accurately reflects the trends in various societies, also in Poland. However, such an order may be established to varying extent. Sometimes its elements are visible.



Ossowski deemed this system to be the most desirable from among the types of social order he distinguished (Ossowski 1967: 82–89). This eminent Polish sociologist identified three types of orders and in addition the above collective agreement order:

- **collective representations order** – order where actions of social entities are determined by traditions from the past. Their actions consist in instinctive or mindless submission to the community (it is an order characteristic for primitive societies);
- **monocentric** (autocratic) – an entity dominating the social life regulates the behaviour of others. This order is characterised by a strong hierarchy of entities;
- **polycentric order** (pluralist) – social actors have similar influence on each other's behaviour. They compete for influence on collective decisions, in line with the law safeguarded by the state.

Ossowski did not elaborate on his concept of collective agreement order. He wrote about it in the 1960s. He probably did not see a great chance for its implementation in Poland and as a model for other countries. Even today it is difficult to declare that such an order is dominant. The concept of the above order was then discussed in the Polish social sciences. L. Gilejko used the term 'social agreement order' which is to be based on inter-group arrangements and alignment of interests (Gilejko 2005: 321).

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