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## **FAMILY POLICY AS A POSTULATE IN THE POLISH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN 2015**

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### **POLITYKA RODZINNA JAKO POSTULAT W WYBORACH PREZYDENCKICH W 2015 ROKU**

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**Abstract:** An important element of the existence of each country is caring for the proper functioning of the family. As a result, family policy becomes an important element of the social policy pursued by the public authorities at all levels of the organization, and providing adequate conditions for the operation, modification of existing solutions, and demands for changes in this area are part of many election programs, also for the office of the President of the Republic of Poland. The aim of this study is to assess the degree of interest in family issues of all candidates in the presidential elections 2015 based on an analysis of program documents, which are available on the websites of all candidates, as well as on data obtained from other sources including European Commission data, as well as government websites.

**Keywords:** family policy, social policy, presidential elections, the President of the Republic of Poland.

**Streszczenie:** Istotnym elementem istnienia każdego państwa jest dbałość o właściwe funkcjonowanie rodziny. W efekcie polityka rodzinna staje się ważnym elementem polityki społecznej realizowanej przez władze publiczne na wszystkich szczeblach organizacyjnych, a zapewnienie odpowiednich warunków funkcjonowania, modyfikacje istniejących rozwiązań, i postulaty zmian w tym obszarze są elementem wielu programów wyborczych, także na urząd Prezydenta RP. Celem niniejszego opracowania jest ocena stopnia zainteresowania problematyką rodzinną wszystkich kandydatów w wyborach prezydenckich 2015 roku w oparciu o analizę zarówno dokumentów programowych dostępnych na stronach internetowych kandydatów, jak i danych pozyskanych z innych źródeł, m.in. danych Komisji Europejskiej, a także danych ze stron rządowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka rodzinna, polityka społeczna, wybory prezydenckie, Prezydent RP.

## **1. Introduction**

The state responsible for the welfare of its citizens is an idea which, according to many authors, is an important approximation point of economic and social policy

[Firlit-Fesnak, Szyłko-Skoczny (eds.) 2008]. Prosperity means ensuring a certain level of income for citizens, while protecting their needs in the area of social policy. The level of social life is considered to be the basic criterion of rationality of all the activities and policies of the State [Skawińska 2013]. On the one hand, linking economic development and national prosperity growth with a positive change in the quality of life is reflected by, among others, Sustainability Index which in the case of Poland (study for 2014) is at a relatively high level [Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych 2015]. On the other hand, modern social policy – in practical terms – aims at providing social security to citizens, while mobilizing people to work, as well as activating their entrepreneurship and sense of responsibility for their own future. This means shaping the economic reality in other appropriate working conditions and livelihoods of the population [Koral 2014], which in turn has a direct impact on the economic situation.

One of the main objectives of social policy is to create development-oriented social structures. This means that a significant emphasis is placed on an integral part of social policy – family policy. This policy can be understood both narrowly – as all activities aimed directly at families, and more broadly – taking into account other spheres of social life affecting the family in an indirect way [Balcerzak-Paradowska (ed.) 2009]. So it includes issues related to the creation of both the family and its functioning under appropriate conditions, which is often closely linked to the level of welfare of citizens.

It is worth noting that the passwords concerning the creation of the welfare of citizens, *inter alia* by providing them with certain benefits and services that improve quality of life, are an important element of election campaigns at all levels of the organization. The passwords appear both in the case of candidates who apply for the office associated with decision-making power, as well as in those whose powers have a slightly different character. This happens, among others, before the presidential elections, when the candidates comprised a lot of promises regarding the multiple areas social and economic activity. The problem, however, is the actual implementation of these promises for winning the elections, due to their discrepancy items with the powers assigned by law to the President of the Republic of Poland. Nevertheless, the fact that the candidates present certain views, they declare specific changes, it can provide relevant information regarding the policies pursued in the future, including, *inter alia*, the legislative initiative.

The aim of this study is to assess the degree of interest in social issues, with a particular emphasis on family, all candidates applying for the office of President of the Republic in the 2015 elections. It was assumed that family policy is the main element in the programs of all candidates applying for the presidential office in 2015.

In order to verify the hypothesis primarily there were used: a method of analysis of program documents which were available on the websites of candidates, as well as data obtained from other sources including European Commission data, or government websites. In the article there were also used a descriptive and comparative method, which allowed to achieve the aim and draw the conclusions.

## **2. The model of the family in the programs of candidates applying for the office of President of the Republic of Poland in 2015**

According to the letter of the Polish Constitution, “The State in its social and economic policy takes into account the good of the family” [Konstytucja RP z 2 kwietnia 1997]. This means that the family, its stability and appropriate operating conditions must become a top priority for the public authorities at all levels. The rationale for this approach is primarily treatment of the family as a link between an individual and society. As a result of the good functioning of the family on the one hand is a chance for harmonious operation of society, but on the other hand, all the problems affecting the family directly reflect on the wider community [Przybyłka 2010].

Records indicating the proper treatment of the family can also be found in international law, including in the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 Strategy, as well as in the other documents (for example: directives and communiques). It should be emphasized that in case the European Union on supranational level, it is possible to talk more about Community support concerning, *inter alia*, issues such as: maternity, family benefits, institutional childcare, protection of the family, education, health care, housing and intergenerational solidarity than with common, universal actions of members of the European Union. Identifying the areas of social policy related to the functioning of the family it is worth to recall the demands of the Europe 2020 Strategy which indicates the necessity of activation actions for families and children, including in areas such as education and health care. On the other hand – to meet the challenges of the proper functioning of national economies – the Strategy is in favor of active labor market policy, which allows for a balance between family life and work, as well as the presence of both parents in the labor market.

The referred issues indicate the changes that have taken place and make the functioning of the family. It is changing the current (or acceptable) family model. It is changing the roles of family's members, their needs and expectations, with the result that there are new challenges facing the modern family policy. One of the challenges is certainly changing model of the family. By analyzing data from the censuses of 2002 and 2011 it can be seen that for over 10 years, the percentage of people who are married has decreased, while there has increased the percentage of divorced people and people remaining in partnerships – in the latter case significantly.

Analyzing the demands of the candidates in the presidential election in 2015 concerning the family model, it is possible to notice some variation. The subject of discussion is essentially the legal status of partnerships. Among the candidates, who in general have addressed to this issue, we can distinguish two clearly opposing groups. On the one hand, Paweł Tanajdo spoke in favor of legalizing civil partnerships. In his opinion, at the moment there are regulations that make this possible, and any existing barriers in this area, because of the consistency, should be absolutely abolished. The candidate called for the possibility of a joint settlement

with the tax [*Program wyborczy Pawła Tanajdo*]. Similarly Janusz Palikot in the presidential campaign in 2015 called for the legalization of civil partnerships and the introduction of legislation that would give basic rights including the right to adopt the biological child of one partner [*Palikot: Podatek liniowy...*].

The opposite view was presented by Jacek Wilk, who thought that the family should be strengthened through the protection of marriage, understood as a union of man and woman, and through the elimination of bureaucratic interference in the education and upbringing of children. The candidate did not preclude the functioning of the various forms of cohabitation, even though in his opinion these forms should not provide a solution equivalent with respect to traditional marriage [*Program wyborczy Jacka Wilka*]. In a similar meaning spoke Grzegorz Braun, who believed that defending the family is the foundation of national survival, the basis of life that should be protected at all stages of existence. The President should uphold the three cardinal values to which he included: faith, family and property. Their safety should be guaranteed by the new constitution [*Program wyborczy Grzegorza Brauna*]. According to the candidate it is unacceptable for public education to bring up children and young people in disinformation (e.g. the dogma of global warming, the teaching of history in the narrative of revolutionary) and demoralization (e.g. abortifacient pills, gender ideology).

Speaking of the family model it is worth to refer not only to the status and granting or not granting certain rights in the socio-economic trade partner, but also to family size. A regularity characteristic not only for Polish, but for the most European countries, is moving at the time the decision to start a family, what is closely related to the issue of the appearance of the first child. Besides, increase the average age of women giving birth first child – in the case of Poland it is now 26.9 years (for comparison – in 2000 the age was less than 24 years). This in turn affects the fertility rate which is one of the basic demographic indicators. It should be noted that in Poland this ratio is about 1.3, while the volume ratio necessary to achieve the replacement of generations is set at 2.1–2.15. The demographic crisis is a major challenge that faced the candidates in the presidential election.

For Adam Jarubas it was important to take an action to stop the demographic crisis and influence the increase in fertility of Polish families. The candidate called for the execution of tasks that would have prompted migrants to return home. Therefore he proposed simplification of business regulations, lower tax burden and higher wages. According to him large families in Poland should be especially cared for – they should not pay income tax, and single mothers should be given “Card of Single Mother”, as it is in the case of large families (“Card of the Big Family”). Very important is also the education and upbringing of promoting good cultural patterns, i.e. multigenerational family support [*Program wyborczy Adama Jarubasa*].

### 3. Program proposals of the candidates concerning specific areas of functioning of a family

Taking care of the family – apart from ensuring conditions for its appearance and determining its character – is also, and perhaps above all, creating the conditions for its functioning in the long term. That means – from the point of view of program proposals – a reference to both the issues related to the education of children of different ages (for example: parental leave, institutional care for young children, educational institutions) and certain public services directly and indirectly focused on the family (housing, health, employment).

For Bronisław Komorowski, next to the competitiveness of the economy, security, good law, modern patriotism and dialogue, the family was one of the six main objectives in the presidential campaign in 2015. The president emphasized that countering the negative demographic changes is one of the biggest challenges for the economy and society. Balancing and mitigation of adverse trends there have to be based on intergenerational solidarity, both in the family and in society as a whole. Family policy must be regarded as an investment in the future. It is necessary to take care of education, employment, health and to lead such a migration policy that will support the development and intergenerational solidarity [*Program wyborczy Bronisława Komorowskiego*].

In the 2015 campaign Bronisław Komorowski recalled that in response to the demographic crisis in the Office of the President of Republic of Poland there was created the first comprehensive family policy program “Good Climate for Families” which has already been implemented. Among the 44 recommendations there were included such as: dissemination of “Card of the Big Family”, strengthening the independence of housing of young families, greater accessibility to places of education and care for children under 12 years of age and friendly to parents organization of working time. It is worth noting – as demonstrated, *inter alia*, Social Diagnosis 2013 – that the difficulties in reconciling work and family life are indicated as an important reason for the lack of procreation plans of the Poles or the reason for their total resignation [Kotowska (ed.) 2014; *Program polityki rodzinnej Prezydenta*].

In particular, the President called for continuing consistent implementation of solutions to facilitate raising children. The President proposed, *inter alia*, strengthening various forms of childcare by creating a market for care and educational services and the introduction of bills co-financing the cost of health care. It is very important because the European Commission’s report shows that as many as 37% of Polish children before going to the “Class 0” do not attend a kindergarten. It is the worst result in Europe, where for this age group the average is only 11% [European Commission 2013].

An important element in the campaign in 2015, which is also a priority in the program “Good Climate for Families,” was also the issue of housing. Bronisław Komorowski emphasized the need for strengthening the area of housing, proposing

the development of the construction of apartments for rent with moderate, regulated rent. In addition, the President called for the development of a modern model of education – shaped by a variety of school and extracurricular education initiatives, open to students and parents, supporting talents and equalizing educational opportunities for youth and promoting modern patriotism and knowledge about security. An important direction of change should be progressive digitalization of education, modernization of vocational training and improvement of the quality of higher education. According to B. Komorowski, unfavorable demographic changes that will take place on the Polish labor market, must be compensated by a good use of creativity and knowledge of young people and the experience and skills of older workers. At the same time we have to take care of the preparation for the requirements of the labor market and activation of the disabled and socially excluded. It is necessary to create conditions for further development of business, investment and job creation – it is a key of economic activity, reducing unemployment, providing opportunities for development. It is particularly important to ensure a better start for the young generation of Poles and caring for the growing number of Polish families for which work would be the basis of economic autonomy.

The aging of the Polish population requires a special emphasis on the maintenance of intergenerational solidarity. From the standpoint of families the priority is to continue to reform the pension system, which without increasing the burden for generations of working Poles in the future will provide an income to protect the elderly against poverty and to ensure decent living conditions. Besides the gradual raising of the retirement age it is worth considering the introduction of not only age criterion, but also the criterion of period of contribution. Moreover, a more efficient and safer system of additional voluntary saving for retirement should be created, which would be available not only for wealthy individuals. Public authorities leading migration policy, at both central and local government level, should be properly prepared to manage migration processes and migratory movement should be included in a defined framework, so that this inevitable phenomenon brings the greatest benefit and the least risk.

Also Andrzej Duda in the presidential campaign 2015 treated the strengthening of the family (in addition to jobs, security and dialogue) as one of four key objectives for the future presidency. Since the proper functioning of the family is affected by various factors, widely understood social policy and the labor market in the coming years should be reformed, and relations between other things: housing, health care, education system, culture, social assistance or pension system, should be improved.

The proper functioning of the family should be strengthened, *inter alia*, by increasing the tax-free amount to 8 thousand PLN, the granting of family allowance of 500 PLN for each child starting from the second, and for families with the lowest incomes for each child, to improve the availability of free nursery or modification of the health care system and eliminate the National Health Fund (NFZ). It also should be necessary to introduce the changes in the educational system and return



to the system of primary school – 8 classes, plus 4 classes of secondary school, to reactivate school-based physicians' and dentists' cabinets and to move away from testing of knowledge by a tests system. In addition, in matters relating to improving the functioning of the family Andrzej Duda also advocated for the withdrawal of the act which raised the retirement age to 67 years of age, creating a pension system for people devoting themselves to caring for family, and working out solutions that would provide seniors a decent pension. In his program Andrzej Duda placed such issues as:

- the state taking care of the family,
- demography (aiming to increase the number of inhabitants),
- a decent wage for work,
- housing development, especially in terms of units available for medium and low income earners,
- state taking care of seniors, including changes in the current pension legislation and ensuring safe and decent pensions,
- changes in the education system so as to teach, educate and give chances to a good start, as well as enable parents to make decisions concerning their children's education,
- other issues (health care reform, fair credits, identity, culture and national heritage) [*Program wyborczy Andrzeja Dudy*].

In the presidential campaign in 2015 Paweł Tanajdo also proposed the provision of 500 PLN for each child in the family. He had made the calculation and after this he said that after 25 years the investment of the state in one child would amount to an average of 150 thousand PLN, but owing to series of charges to the state by citizens, it would return after 6 years. In his opinion annual expenditure would not burden the state budget because the candidate proposed the Polish National Bank, which cannot finance the budget deficit, to lead intergenerational-lending activity. Intergenerational lending activity would be repaid as cash flow from taxes paid only after the entry into production period citizen [*Program wyborczy Pawła Tanajdo*].

The new solution aimed at improving family functioning was also suggested by Adam Jarubas, which initiated the creation of the Law on family businesses and crafts. In the 2015 campaign, the candidate spoke in favor of promoting entrepreneurship for so called endangered professions, among others: craftsman, journeyman and master [*Program wyborczy Adama Jarubasa*].

In an indirect way the family affairs during the presidential campaign also addressed Magdalena Ogórek. She proposed a welfare state, market economy and more freedom for citizens. By creating a system of guarantees and insurance, and the introduction of tax-free amount to 20 thousand PLN the candidate wanted to support especially young people in starting business and obtaining mortgage. In her opinion, changes of the model of education should also be made by increasing the emphasis on training, which would enable young citizens to find work quickly and therefore it would have a positive impact on the functioning and development of families [*Program wyborczy Magdaleny Ogórek*].

Raising the tax-free amount of income to the level of 6500 PLN per year was also proposed by Janusz Palikot. According to the candidate, these expenditures would return to the market and they would fuel the economic growth. Out of all cases in a way that indirectly would impact the functioning of families the candidate particularly treated cultural affairs, health, labor market and education system. The educational model which is functioning at present, focused on tests and on individual memorizing, should be amended. By the time of the matriculation exam schools should develop the ability of self-critical thinking, ability to work in a team and to achieve common goals. Higher education should be only a period of creativity and competition [*Program wyborczy Janusza Palikota*].

Janusz Korwin Mikke in tax matters has gone further than other candidates and proposed elimination of income tax from the purchase and sale and a substantial decrease in the other, which would reduce prices. From the point of view of the family significant was also the demand for the abolition of coercion pay for social insurance, which should be replaced by the Pension Fund [*Program wyborczy Janusza Korwin-Mikkego*].

Also Marian Kowalski commented on economic issues, and one of his postulates was prosperity of Polish families. The candidate also proposed changes in the system of education (at all levels) focused on science, morality, and education (in cooperation with parents). Referring to the issues related to the increase in the proportion of older people in society, Marian Kowalski called for changes in the pension system, including, *inter alia*, the introduction of a guaranteed social pension and opportunities for citizens to decide for themselves about how additional saving for the future retirement benefits will be done [*Program wyborczy Mariana Kowalskiego*].

In the election programs of some of the candidates for the office of the President of the Republic of Poland in 2015 there have been raised also issues causing social discussions, and relevant from the point of view of family functioning such as, *inter alia*, in vitro method. Janusz Korwin Mikke, like Jacek Wilk, advocated the introduction of the in vitro method, but on two conditions. First, these treatments could not be paid from public funds, and second, the number of embryos should be limited to one [*Program wyborczy Jacka Wilka*]. According to Paweł Kukiz, in vitro insemination is a “very complicated” matter and because of this difficult situation a nationwide referendum should be conducted [*Paweł Kukiz...*]. A similar approach showed also Paweł Tanajdo. He came up with the postulate that “Matters concerning women we should leave women” [*Program wyborczy Pawła Tanajdo*]. The opposite view had Grzegorz Braun, who believed that in vitro is a “dishonorable procedure, because there is no in vitro without selection” [*Grzegorz Braun...*]. According to the candidate, the consent to the selection of life at such an early stage causes that our opposition to abortion and euthanasia loses a logic. Janusz Palikot was a supporter of in vitro methods. In his opinion in vitro method should not be limited to married



couples and also the number of embryos that can be used should not be limited. Andrzej Duda in the campaign initially said he was skeptical about this method, but he understood the parents wishing a child. Further he indicated that his opinion was “consistent with the position of the Episcopal”. During the debate on TV he said that the president could sign a bill on in vitro only if it were consistent with the Constitution and eugenic selection of embryos did not guarantee the protection of life. Bronisław Komorowski advocated artificial means while praising the government program refunds in vitro, as well as the work on the law comprehensively regulating the use of this method [*Wybory prezydenckie 2015...*].

#### 4. Conclusions

For thousands of years a family has been the basis for the functioning of the community. In connection with the population decline observed in many countries, which entails other detrimental effects, inter alia, economic, or cultural, in recent years, family policy more than ever has begun to gain importance. Its complexity and diversity requires that the dilemmas and difficulties facing it are solved in a comprehensive manner, taking into account the diagnosis of problems and needs of residents that are of interest and other detailed policies of social policy. First of all, we are talking about education policy, labor market, housing, and social support.

Alarming is the fact that at present in Poland participation of citizens in solving social problems, including family, still remains negligible, and the authorities of both state government administration and local governments often make decisions on their own, without hearing the views of interested parts. These statements, among others, are confirmed by the strategic documents prepared in local government units at different levels. For example, many communal strategies for solving social problems, even on the declarative level of consultation with residents, lack adequate diagnosis of their needs. Moreover, nowadays, actually conducted family policy rather should be based on the paradigm of mobilizing, not a transfer of funds, which may be only a tool to achieve the goal, not an end in itself.

So how do the candidates for the office of President of the Republic of Poland in the elections 2015 years have seen the implementation of family policy? From this article it is clear that a comprehensive approach to solving problems of family policy showed two candidates – Andrzej Duda and Bronisław Komorowski. They proposed solutions to both activating and supporting financially, which referred to several key areas. They talked about the changes in the tax system and reliefs for children, changes in the education system, amenities in the acquisition of housing among young people, and reducing unemployment. They talked about the need for changes in the pension system, the activation of the elderly, assistance to families with many children, incomplete, or people with disabilities. They showed that modern politics must be directed to the families at all stages of their development. The other candidates have proposed more selective ideas, ideas that could support

the implementation of these goals, and do not provide a real basis for the introduction of a new quality of family policy. The research hypothesis which was placed at the beginning of the article has been verified negatively, because not all candidates treated the family policy in a special way.

This article was intended only to indicate the degree of interest in social issues, with a particular emphasis on involving family, of all candidates for the office of President of the Republic of Poland in the 2015 elections. Obvious is the fact that the actual execution of the tasks of local governments, and the president, among other things, thanks to the initiative of adopting resolutions, may set the vision and direction of changes. The fact is that in the first round of presidential elections held on 10 May 2015, citizens decided that to the second round moved candidates who treated the matter of the family as a priority. So we can hope that in the next few years the family policy will be appropriate.

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