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## Fait-based charities in Poland in quantitative perspective

Although faith-based social work in Poland has very long history, research on this issue is a matter of last few years. An important role in founding research on faith-based organizations in Poland played the Institute for Catholic Church Statistics (ISKK). In 2006 in cooperation with Polish Central Statistical Office it started scientific project on the methodology of third sector statistics which was directed by W. Okrasa<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this article is to present the most important results of ISKK studies on Catholic charities in Poland.

### 1. Historical background of charitable activity in Poland

Christian charitable activity in Poland was initially implemented primarily in conjunction with monasteries and bishoprics and was temporary. Bishops hugs to their ownership of peasants who lost their land. The wicket monastic distributed alms. Gradually Benedictine monasteries created the first forms of not only relief, but the organized and institutional charitable support<sup>2</sup>. Since the end of the thirteenth century church charitable works become independent from the monasteries. The first mention of non-monastic charity comes from 1279, when the synod legatine council recommended pastors to encourage faithful to give alms. Later some symptoms of abuse occurred and begging became a kind of a way of life. Among the beggars there were some who are

<sup>1</sup> Okrasa Włodzimierz, 2008, *Sektor trzeci jako przedmiot badań statystyki publicznej. Wybrane problemy*, „Biblioteka Wiadomości Statystycznych” 57; Okrasa Włodzimierz, Herbst Jan, Lange Rafał, Kotowska Olga, Sadłoń Wojciech, 2007, *Metodologia i kierunki badań statystycznych sektora trzeciego, Raport dla GUS*, Warszawa: ISKK (manuskrypt); Okrasa Włodzimierz, Herbst Jan, Zdaniewicz Witold, 2010, *Organizacje, wspólnoty i instytucje społeczne Kościoła katolickiego – potencjał i specyfika kościelnego trzeciego sektora w Polsce*, [w:] Sławomir Nałęcz, Małgorzata Goś-Wójcicka (red.), *Stowarzyszenia, fundacje i społeczne podmioty wyznaniowe w 2008*, Warszawa: ISKK i GUS, ss. 202-230.

<sup>2</sup> K. Dola, *Opieka społeczna Kościoła*, [w:] *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, t. I, cz. 1, Pallotinum: Warszawa-Poznań, 1974, s. 169.

actually able to work. Therefore parliament in 1496 obliged the city and parish priests in villages to determine which beggars really needed support.

A breakthrough in the development of Christian charity work was done in the time of the Reformation, which caused disruption of charitable activity of the Church and, consequently, initiated the process of municipalization of charity. Although still in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Church in Poland was almost the only institution conducting charitable activities. In the seventeenth century important charity religious congregations arrive to Poland: Brothers Hospitallers and Congregation of the Sisters of Charity (Charity) and Trinitarian Order.

A new approach to poverty appears at the end of the eighteenth century, when new social initiatives of „social economy” occurred. This innovative enterprises employed vagrants and beggars. In 1774. Sejm appoints a committee consisting of representatives of the hospital church (Primate, bishops) and the government (provincial governors, castellany). The group entered the Commission for vetting and Hospitals Commission of Good Order. As a result of the work of this committee began to distinguish beggars who really needed help from those who have actually been able to work<sup>3</sup>. In times of partitions of Poland not only dissolution of the monasteries, but also taking over of charities by the partitioning powers limited strongly development of Christian charity. In the Austrian partition welfare system, although based on church institutions, was actually subordinated to the state. Despite this, the nineteenth century gives birth to many valuable social initiatives. In 1844, anti-alcohol actions were started by Rev. John Aloysius Ficek. Rev. Joseph Sebastian Pelczar assumed in Krakow Brotherhood of the Queen of the Polish Crown, which gave the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart. In 1906. Archbishop Bilczewski recommended that children preparing to the First Holy Communion should consist promises of abstinence till the age of 20. At the turn of the century many so called „social priests” were active on the territory of Poland, eg. Rev. Wacław Blizinski in Lisków, Rev. Antoni Tyczyński in Albigowa.

July 23, 1940 the Nazi occupiers solved all charities across the country and gave all their property under the administration created Central Welfare Council. On the territories annexed to the Reich Church was deprived of legal personality, which made it impossible to carry out any charities. In the General Government worked diocesan Caritas primarily on the parish level. Caritas Krakow in the last months of 1944. Has provided grants in the amount of 1

<sup>3</sup> K. Dola, Opieka społeczna Kościoła, [w:] Historia Kościoła w Polsce, B. Kumor, Z. Obertyński (red.), t. 2, cz. 1, Pallotinum: Warszawa-Poznań, 1979, s. 344.

million. In December 1944 it was issued more than 100 thousand. meals, 500 pairs of shoes, 1,000 pieces of clothing, bedding 1,200 units, 20 tons of food, 65 tons of coal. In addition, monasteries Krakow appeared about 15 thousand meals a month<sup>4</sup>. In June of 1945. Was appointed National Central Caritas, based in Krakow, which has worked with 25 diocesan Caritas associations, religious orders and other charitable organizations. In 1946. Caritas led 751 of the total care facilities (crèches, orphanages, etc.) And the 1020 partial care facilities (nursery, day, night shelters). In 1950 state authorities closed down the National Central Caritas. Since then, the Church ran only 16 fisting - social welfare homes. In the ,80s the Catholic Church to help distribute the charity, which was getting into Polish from abroad. Only in 1981 the Charity Commission of the Polish Episcopate gifts hit a total weight of 13907 tons in 1982. 72 172 tons in 1983. 31 369 ton<sup>5</sup>. Since 1989 the Catholic Church has full freedom of establishment and conducting charitable activities.

## 2. Methodology of the research

The main problem of research on faith-based activity is its great diversity and dispersion, as well as the lack of precise terminology and unambiguous naming of ecclesiastical charity. Faith-based social work could be called also „charitable” or „volunteer”. Another problem that has been encountered in the course of the study was that charity is very often understood as undertaken without external source of financing.

From theological point of view, social work is a part of the core mission of the Church (*diakonia*) but includes also elements of religious education (*martyria*). *Diakonia* of the Catholic Church is defined in number of ecclesiastical documents, especially: Code of Canon Law (c. 298-329), and one of the last documents - Motu proprio of Benedict XVI *Intima nature Ecclesiae* (2012). Faith-based activity in Poland is also organized by civil law, especially: *Act of the Relations between State and Catholic Church in Poland* (1989), *Law on Associations* (1989), *The Act on public benefit activity and volunteerism* (2003).

According to Wiesław Przygoda charitable activity of the Catholic Church

<sup>4</sup> K. Śmigiel, Życie i działalność Kościoła, [w:] Historia Kościoła w Polsce, B. Kumor, Z. Obertyński (red.), t. 2, cz. 2, Pallotinum: Warszawa-Poznań, 1979, s. 176, ss. 172-187; E. Firlit, Działalność charytatywna Kościoła, [w:] Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918-1990, L. Adamczuk, W. Zdaniewicz (red), Główny Urząd Statystyczny i Zakład Socjologii Religii SAC, Warszawa 1991, s. 276..

<sup>5</sup> E. Firlit, Działalność charytatywna Kościoła, [w:] Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918-1990, L. Adamczuk, W. Zdaniewicz (red), Główny Urząd Statystyczny i Zakład Socjologii Religii SAC, Warszawa 1991, s. 277-286..

is „a group of tasks and actions resulting from God’s commandment of love and adequate to the needs of people suffering from physical or spiritual poverty, aimed at reducing and removing any deprivation of people’s lives and provide them with the necessary assistance to satisfaction of basic material needs and achieve an adequate personal development”<sup>6</sup>. This definition emphasizes above all the motivation and purpose of the action. In statistical research motivations are not directly accessible, and therefore it is necessary to adopt more simple and direct definition. In stead of motivations, the organizational link with Catholic Church is accepted as a crucial criterion for faith-based social activity within Catholic Church. This link is understood as a direct connection to the institution of the Catholic Church. That is why such activities which are undertaken outside the institutions and organizations of the Catholic Church but which are inspired by Catholic values are skipped (eg. civil foundations referring to Christian values).

Faith-based charitable activity carried out by the Catholic Church overlaps with two different forms of social activity: social policy of the state and spontaneous (private) pro-social activities. With this first one charity of the Catholic Church is connected primarily through a common goal which is helping people in need, with the other through motivation (good-will).

Charitable activity of Catholic Church includes: assisting the elderly addicts, the disabled, the homeless, refugees, emergency aid, carrying food aid and rental of medical equipment, counseling and family, provision of medical services. The ministry of charity applies to some extent also of children and young people (except education) and the unemployed (mainly social and professional activation).

Charitable activity in Poland is conducted not directly by all Catholic entities such as dioceses, parishes or monasteries but by institutions and organizations delegated by this institutions to charitable activity. There are in fact four types of such entities:

1. Legal persons of the Catholic Church, which are acting on the basis of the *Act of Relations between the State and the Catholic Church in Poland* from 1989. The most important examples of this category are: dioceses, monasteries, parishes and also Caritas Poland.
2. Religious institutions which are obtaining legal personality on the basis of legal persons of the Catholic Church (eg. diocesan and religious foundations).
3. Social institutions and associations established as a secular civil entities

<sup>6</sup> W. Przygoda, *Posługa charytatywna Kościoła w Polsce. Studium teologiczno-pastorlane*, KUL, Lublin 2004.

but „accepted” by Catholic Church according to regulations from *Motu proprio* of Benedict XVI *Intima Ecclesiae Life* from 2012.

4. Faith-based organizations, which are local, and do not have legal personality and operate primarily within parishes according to Church law (parish organizations).

From operational point of view these types of institutions and organizations could be classified into two major levels of such entities: (1) registered faith-based social institutions or organizations referring to Catholic Church erected upon denominational civil law and (2) in-formal organizations or activities of Catholic Church. The first category is composed with entities that have legal personality and are registered in the Register of National Economy (REGON). In the second category there are entities which are not officially registered but which operate within other legal religious entities such as parish or monastery.

There are different categorizations and classifications which are used in case of faith-based charitable activity. According to W. Przygoda the range of faith-based charitable activities include<sup>7</sup>: casual assistance, casual financial assistance, spiritual help, home help bedridden patients, running clinic for alcoholics and drug addicts, educational assistance to families, point of feeding the homeless and the poor, hospices, courses for the unemployed. It could be also categorized by beneficiaries: victims of accidents, wars and natural disasters, poor families, children and youth, the sick, the disabled and old, people socially maladjusted, education<sup>8</sup>. Classification used by Caritas Poland includes different categories: parish and diocesan dispensaries clothing, points of „ad hoc” assistance, equipment rental rehabilitation, nursing stations Caritas, sociotherapeutic, eating houses, nursing homes, night shelters, hospices and stationary, medical clinics, baths for the homeless, orphanages, medical care facilities, houses for victims of domestic violence, homes for single mothers, pharmacy, social integration centers for the unemployed, fixed facilities for addicts. There are also classifications which are used by international institutions. For example United Nations Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions<sup>9</sup> includes such classification of social work activity, which is implemented also into Polish national statistics: conducting or supporting nurseries, orphanages, foster families, adoption services, running clubs, other social services aimed

<sup>7</sup> W. Przygoda, *Posługa charytatywna Kościoła w Polsce. Studium teologiczno-pastorlane*, KUL, Lublin 2004, s. 263.

<sup>8</sup> „Education” in Polish has wider meaning than in English, it includes also „up-bringing”.

<sup>9</sup> Handbook on Non-Profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts, United Nations, New York 2003.

at children and young people; activities supporting the family (including many children and single parents with children) are in a difficult financial situation, inefficient educational assistance to victims of domestic violence; help the poor; help the homeless, including running shelters; help addicts and their families, prevention of addiction; help for refugees; assistance to disabled persons, the sick and the elderly; mountain rescue, water, assistance to victims of natural disasters, catastrophes, etc.; rescue fire; organized distribution of gifts of property, clothing and food (n. Food Banks) and financial support (eg. Benefits); other. Polish Central Statistical Offices includes also two classifications which is used for distinguishing forms of activities: organizing free time; therapeutic work; guidance and counseling; teaching; training and courses; help feeding; treatment, rehabilitation; provision of care services, nursing; material aid; financial assistance; crisis intervention; rescue; provision of shelter; spiritual support; other. The same classification used also for statistics on faith-based organizations includes also beneficiaries typology: persons of retirement age; dependents, chronic and terminally ill; homeless; victims of violence; unemployed; poor; coming out of addiction and their families; children and young people; single parents; other.

### 3. Faith-based third sector in Poland

Current state of research on Catholic charities allows for a detailed description of the two major types of religious entities. The first of these are entities that have a distinct personality civil law, known as „Catholic social institutions”. While the second type includes grass-roots organizations within parishes of the Catholic Church that are not subject to registration under state structures and are called „parish organizations of Catholic Church”.

In terms of the number of organizations parish organizations of Catholic Church in Poland outweigh the Catholic social entities. In 2014 there were 1,8 thousand registered faith-based social entities. The vast majority of them work in the framework of the Catholic Church (96%). In turn, in 2013 the number of parish organizations of Catholic Church was 61 thousand.

In recent years there has been a stabilization of the religious entities of the third sector in Poland in terms of numbers. The number of social institutions between 2010 and 2014 and parish organizations of Catholic Church between 2008 and 2013 did not changed. In contrast, a marked increase in the number of faith-based institutions parish organizations of Catholic Church was observed in previous years (in 1998 the number of parish organizations of Catholic Church does not exceed 40 thousand., while the number of faith-based institutions in 1997 was estimated to be about 1 thousand).

Almost all (98%) faith-based institutions have been formally established by

the ecclesiastical entities (religious). Most of operating in 2014 parish organizations of Catholic Church (52%) were founded alone by parish priests. A much smaller proportion (29%) were established by parish priests together with the laity. Only 13% of them was initiated by lay persons only.

Faith-based charities have strong local embeddedness, especially parish organizations. 12% of them work within the portion of the parish and 66% of the entire parish. Also, 40% of faith-based institutions operate within the neighborhood or town (11% within the neighborhood, and 29% - one municipality). On the other hand, faith-based institutions much broader fall in its operations outside the local area: 19% work within the county, 18% of the province, 20% of the entire country and 4% outside the country.

The informal nature of parish organizations of the Catholic Church is designated by the fact that the vast majority of them do not belong to any formal structures (42%). Only every fourth organization (24%) belongs to the formal structures at national level and 22% to informal structures. International formal structures should be 8% of the organization.

Among parish organizations it is not easy to identify clear date of its origine. In some cases, the creation of the organization assumed even date of establishment of the parish. Incomplete data show that since 198 an intense process new entities is observed.

Differences between faith-based institutions and parish organizations are visible in the scope of their activities. Faith-based organizations operate mainly in the field of social services - education (50%), social services (36%) and healthcare (14%). Strictly religious activity represents only 24% of their activity. In turn, the major part (83%) of activity carried out by parish organizations is strictly religious. In addition to religious activity, largest part of activity of parish organizations is focused on education (31%), arts and culture (23%), sports, tourism, recreation and hobbies (21%), social, humanitarian and rescue (18%). Parish organizations of Catholic Church provide primarily spiritual support (81% of organizations) and organize leisure and recreation (29%). 18% take the material assistance, 15% and nutritional assistance. As a rule, they do not lead payable statutory activity.

Faith-based institutions conduct a more diversified activity. Half (48%) of them leads only unpaid statutory activities. Payable statutory activity declares 46% of them, and economic activity 8% of them. 44% leads both paid and unpaid statutory activities. Unpaid statutory activity connected with a economic activity conducts 7% of subjects, and a free and a paid statutory activity and economic activity 2% of them.

#### 4. Catholic charitable activity

According to research conducted by ISKK in 2014, there are 835 charitable institutions of the Catholic Church in Poland. Most charitable entities of the Catholic Church are led by female religious orders (432 - 52%). Also the number of entities carried out by male institutions is larger (249 - 30%) than diocesan (19%, 154). However, the organization of charitable activities in dioceses is much more centralized than charitable activities of religious orders.

*Tab. 1. The structure of charity institutions by the authority conducting the entity*

Authority	N	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Diocese	154	18,5
Male religious order	249	29,8
Female religious order	432	51,7

835 charities runs about 5 thousand. various works of charity. In terms of diocesan structure of Church in Poland charitable activity is not regularly distributed. Clearly dominating are urban centers, and dioceses, in which dominate religious congregations.

*Tab. 2. The number of charity institutions by the diocese (estimated)*

Diocese	Numer of activities
<b>Total</b>	<b>5158</b>
białostocka	114
bielsko-żywiecka	64
bydgoska	7
częstochowska	56
drohiczewska	17
elbląska	29
elcka	23
gdańska	234
gliwicka	59
gnieźnieńska	20
kaliska	54

katowicka	307
kielecka	248
koszalińsko-kołobrzeska	143
legnicka	620
krakowska	40
lubelska	118
łomżyńska	33
łowicka	38
łódzka	164
opolska	159
pelplińska	40
płocka	104
poznańska	79
przemyska	45
radomska	316
rzeszowska	14
sandomierska	102
siedlecka	50
sosnowiecka	53
szczecińsko-kamieńska	219
świdnicka	65
tarnowska	68
toruńska	221
warmińska	24
warszawska	450
warszawsko-praska	321
włocławska	114
wrocławska	93
zamojsko-lubaczowska	11
zielenogórsko-gorzowska	216

Number of beneficiaries of Catholic charitable institutions is estimated to be approximately 2.9 million. This number should not be confused with the unit

persons<sup>10</sup>. In terms of beneficiaries the biggest group is composed by children and adolescents. Also helping the homeless and casual assistance which primarily consist of various types of night shelters and soup kitchens is an important category of charitable activity of the Church.

*Tab. 3. Charitable activities by category (estimated)*

Beneficiary group/activity category	Numer of activities
<b>Ogółem</b>	<b>5158</b>
Dzieci i młodzież	1372
Bezdomność	897
Pomoc doraźna	861
Niepełnosprawność	494
Pomoc żywnościowa	457
Usługi medyczne	416
Osoby starsze	404
Uzależnienia	146
Bezrobotni/aktywizacja zawodowa	82
Migranci i uchodźcy	29

In terms of numbers of beneficiary, the largest segment of Catholic charitable institutions provides casual assistance, which in 2014 were addressed to 1 116 thousand beneficiaries and food aid. Significantly fewer beneficiaries profit from developed infrastructure of medical services (442 thousand). Catholic charity in 2014 in Poland reached to 286 thousand children and adolescents, 203 thousand homeless people, 121 thousand disables, 91 thousand elderly people, 23 thousand addicted persons, 6 thousand unemployed and 5 thousand migrants and refugees.

<sup>10</sup> The number of beneficiaries has been calculated as the sum of individuals benefiting from individual activity separately. This means that the same persons may be counted several times in the same category or the same persons may exist in different categories (eg. A diner received by same person every day).

*Tab. 4. The beneficiaries of charities by category (estimated)*

Form of help	Number of beneficiaries
<b>Total</b>	<b>2992883</b>
Casual help	1162191
Food aid	650595
Medical services	442298
Children and youth	286241
Homelessness	203962
Disability	121496
Elder people	91133
Addiction	23005
Unemployed / professional activation	6401
Migrants and refugees	5561

Catholic charity institutions employees (on contract basis) about 33 thousand persons, on average 41 employees per one institution. The number of volunteers was estimated to be 88 thousand in 2014, on average 112 volunteers per institution. The total number of social work of these volunteers is estimated at 2.8 million hours.

*Tab. 5. Employees, volunteers and the number of hours of volunteer work in Catholic institutions (estimated)*

Category	Number	Average
Employees	33014	41,39
Volunteers	88384	111,81
Number of hours of social work	2891588	3625,48

The largest category of income of Catholic charitable institutions are the funds transferred from local government (24%). Equally often the institutional Church's charitable activity uses non-public funds (eg. The donation and collections) (23%). 15% of income sources are the funds coming directly from the government administration (government). 14% of the income sources are the means of deduction from the tax, 7% of public collections. 4% are measures of economic activity, 2% of European funds.

Tab. 6. Sources of income of Catholic charitable institutions

Income resources	N	%
Total	2205	100,0%
The funds transferred from local government sources (municipal offices, district labor offices, social welfare centers)	533	24,2%
Funds from non-domestic sources (including donations, rebounds in the parish)	497	22,5%
The funds transferred to the sources of national government administration (central offices, regional offices)	329	14,9%
Means of deduction from the tax on natural persons (ie. 1%)	302	13,7%
Public collections	151	6,8%
Measures of economic activity	85	3,9%
European funds	53	2,4%
Other	255	11,6%

When Catholic parish organizations are concerned, about 12% of their activity is charitable.

Tab. 7. Activities of parish organizations in 2008.

Category	Total
	N=1878
	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Prayer and liturgy	52,5
Charitable activity	11,8
Organizational activity in the parish	11
Religious formation	9,2
Cultural activities	7,5
Organisation of leisure time (including pilgrimage)	6,4
Publishing	0,7
Other	0,9

Apart from youth parish organizations are aiming their activities primarily to people in need: the poor (16%), retired (14%), dependent persons and patients (12%), single parents (10%), unemployment (9%), coming out of addiction (7%) and homeless (6%).

Tab. 8. Beneficiaries of parish organization in 2008

Beneficiaries	N	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1280</b>	<b>100%</b>
Children and youth	217	17,0%
Poor people	200	15,6%
Retired people	178	13,9%
Dependent people, chronically or terminally ill	147	11,5%
Single parents	125	9,8%
Unemployed	117	9,1%
Facing with addiction and their families	94	7,3%
Homeless	78	6,1%
Victims of violence	43	3,4%
Other	81	6,3%

According to the study from 2013, there are 665 thousand people who are engaged in charitable parish organizations, including 454 thousand of active members. In the activity of charitable parish organizations participated about 662 thousand persons not belonging to the organization and. As shown by the study of parish activity from 2011, the number of ill people benefiting from the parish aid during the year amounted to 668 thousand, but this figure includes also people addressed with spiritual assistance (eg. Holy Communion). The overall participation of women in organizations in the parishes is as high as 66%, while in the charitable activities of 50%. Among the parish organizations that undertake the ministry of charity are those which are exclusively charitable activities. They can be divided into two types:

1. Organizations providing casual aid
2. The organizations acting as support groups and providing psychological help

Among the organizations providing emergency aid the largest is Caritas Parish Team and Caritas School Team, which operate within 4.9 thousand parishes in Poland and associate 63 thousand members.

Tab. 9. Parish organizations providing casual aid in 2013

Name of organization	Number of parishes	Number of participants
<b>Total</b>	<b>5182</b>	<b>69418</b>
Parish Caritas Team	4406	48870
School Caritas Team	560	14774
Voluntarism	127	3069
Disabled groups	9	304
Parish nursery	9	294
Family counseling	7	100
Association of Disabled Adults	7	320
Maltese Medical Service	6	128
Diakonia of Charity	5	58
Association of Charity	3	41
Association for the Disabled	6	384
Other	37	1076

Among parish organizations acting as support groups and providing psychological support most common is Alcoholics Anonymous (312 parishes) and family counseling (98 parishes).

Tab. 10. Parish organizations acting as a support groups in 2013

Name of organization	Number of parishes
<b>Total</b>	<b>456</b>
Alcoholics anonymous	312
Family Counselling	98
Volunteers Suffering	18
Brotherhood of Sobriety	16
Community of Sobriety	6
Sobriety Association	6
Catholic Family Assistance Center	6
Psychological clinic	5

Community of People Living in the non-sacramental Associations	5
Amazon	5
Gamblers anonymous	5
Support Group for Parents of Children Lost	5
Patients Support Group	3
Narcotics anonymous	3
Adult Children of Alcoholics	3
Brotherhood Trzeźwościowe	3
Sexaholics anonymous	3
Brotherhood Prison	2
Community Disabled Children	2
Other	13

Research carried by ISKK is a first attempt to make up for missing knowledge of the Catholic and general faith-based charities in Poland. From the methodological point of view, the study was carried out at a low level and allows only general estimates of the scale and scope of charitable activity. However the study confirmed that charitable activity of Catholic Church takes place on two relatively independent levels: institutional and local level - especially the parish. During the year the activities of charitable institutions of the Church includes more than 800 institutions, 5 thousand. all kinds of works and nearly 3 million beneficiaries, while at the parish level goes to more than half a million people. Charities are very diverse, both in terms of legal and operation. Provided by aid mainly includes casual aid and is aimed at children and adolescents. Charities rely heavily on paid staff. It is also worth noting that there is a small group of entities which, although sometimes associated with the Catholic Church deliberately prefer functioning as an institution outside the Church. Parish organizations however are based on prayer and spiritual help, include also charity. Parish organizations help over 600 thousand people, especially in casual way and as support groups. They are based almost entirely on volunteers. In summary, it raises the important conclusion that the Catholic Church can no doubt be considered as the biggest charitable institution and the successor of the long history of social work in Poland.

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