

Arkadiusz Karwacki

ORCID: 0000-0002-2857-7894

Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland

Marek Rymśza¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-8419-8813

Institute of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw, Poland

***Social policy with the citizen at the centre.
The Centre for Social Services as a new Polish
institution and an example of service-based
modernisation of social policy***

Abstract

The article presents the reform of the Polish social welfare system consisting of the introduction of a new institution – the Centres for Social Services (Pl. Centra Usług Społecznych, CUS). From 2020 Polish municipalities have the statutory option to: transform social assistance centres previously operating in each municipality into CUSs or create CUSs as a new institution based on the partnership of several municipalities. CUSs have become a kind of laboratory of changes, expressing a new formula for the operation of local social policy institutions. This new format of a local institution fits into contemporary trends in European social policy of mature welfare

¹ **Corresponding author:** Marek Rymśza, Instytut Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych, University of Warsaw, ul. Nowy Świat 69, 00-927, Warszawa, Polska; email: m.b.rymśza@uw.edu.pl.

© The Author(s) 2025. Open Access. This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made.



states (with a fundamental focus on the production, coordination and provision of tailor-made social services available locally). The article considers the presentation of reform processes in the social policy system by moving from protecting citizens in social crises to investing in the form of dedicated social services for the well-being of all citizens in local communities. CUSs are the subject of reflection on reform in modern welfare states: with exposure of potential and added value but also risks and resistance to change. The analyses and conclusions use data collected during a monitoring study focused on the experience of CUS operation including data found in municipality documents and CUS reports, data obtained from moderated group discussions conducted with CUS managers and specialists, and desk research. The Polish experiences analysed in the article can inspire other reformers in countries where similar reforms are planned.

Keywords: social services, Centres for Social Services, social welfare system, post-communist countries, the rhetoric of reaction

1. Introduction – investment in social services’ development as a social policy response to contemporary civilisational challenge

The development of social services is a nationwide trend and the new paradigm in social policies implemented in mature welfare states in response to the new challenges (Evers et al., 2011). This development means a change in the welfare infrastructure towards a three-pillar structure. The first pillar is the regulated labour market created as a result of the many years of civilising labour relations after the industrial revolution. The second pillar, so to speak encapsulating the first, has become the social security system. From this system, the key task of which are social transfers, the third pillar of the welfare infrastructure is gradually emerging – the system of public social services. The well-being of citizens in (post)modern societies increasingly depends on a universal access to effectively organised (one stop shop model – Lundberg, 2018), comprising tailor-made (personalised) service packages, appropriate to needs and of adequate quality, provided by professionals representing various helping professions (Rymśza, 2021). The growing demand for social services has to be seen as a civilisational challenge, linked to the extension of human life, changes in lifestyles and family functioning patterns. Such a well-developed service component – integrated, complex social services operating on a local level – reshapes welfare state into a new format: social investment welfare state (Morel et. al., 2012).

In the second decade of the 21st century an investment in social services became one of the UE social policy priorities. Especially the EU6 programming documents indicate the need to invest in the social sphere, and the priority for the 2021–2027 period is the development of comprehensive local systems of social services provided to the general population (Integrated Care and Support, 2021). Poland as the UE member state includes this priority in the programming documents². Providing access

² The most important is the Strategy for Social Services Development adopted in 2022.

to social services to all members of municipalities is precisely the mission of Centres for Social Services (Pl. Centra Usług Społecznych, CUS) – the newly created entities responsible for social policy issues at the local level.

The subject of the analyses in this article is the process (formally initiated in 2020) of reforming social welfare system in Poland through the implementation of regulations of the 2019 Act on delivering social services by a social services centre (hereinafter the CUS Act 2019)³. The new regulations created an opportunity (not an obligation) for local governments to establish social service centres (CUSs). The paper presents the concept of CUS and the most important findings on their functioning during the first phase of operation (2020–2022). The analyses are based on the data collected under the monitoring research conducted by the Expert Team of the Council for Social Affairs functioning within the National Development Council (NDC Expert Team). The text concludes with a presentation of potential risks and dilemmas faced by the CUS reform. The presentation of resistance to CUS dissemination is framed by the Albert O. Hirschman's (1991) concept of reactionary rhetoric.

2. Objectives for the reform and the concept of CUSs

The social welfare system that has been operating in Poland during last 30 years and it is a product of transformation. Its key element is the network of social assistance centres (SACs) established in 1990 to mitigate the social side-effects of the first stage of transformation – the rapid introduction of market mechanisms into the economy (Golinowska, 2013, 19). The SACs located in all municipalities performed a classic safety net function, addressing assistance of different kind (mainly cash benefits but also in kind benefits, social services and social work) to “reform failures”, persons and families finding it difficult to find their way in the post-market transition, ending up in long-term unemployment, falling into poverty and social marginalisation⁴. The safety net of SACs guaranteed a minimum of security and thus significantly limited social costs of economic transformation (Rymsza, 2014, 141–143). On the other hand, the selectivity of support and orientation mainly on delivering cash benefits resulted in severe stigmatisation of support recipients as social welfare beneficiaries were thought of as unable to cope with life. Another side effect was bureaucratisation of social workers operating in SACs more as providers of administrative procedures in aim to select individuals and families with income below the defined poverty thresholds as beneficiaries of cash transfers than professional frontline helpers specialising in social work (Rymsza, 2013).

After the key stage of political changes and Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, the model of social welfare became a dysfunctional one that did not meet changing social expectations and did not face new challenges. Especially SACs required changes and the redefinition of formula for action. While social welfare system was limited to

³ Journal of Laws. 2019, item 1818.

⁴ The creation of safety nets was a feature of the social policy of the Central Eastern European countries in the 1990s (Standing, 1996).

respond to the needs of the poorest, research by sociologists revealed the unmet needs of other social categories (e.g., the middle class – Karwacki et al., 2023), first of all, demanding an open access to social services based on the universal and not the selective (mean-tested) formula. Citizens who are not traditional clients of the social welfare system define the access to social services as the consumption of increased prosperity. So that social services are supposed to be delivered without the risk of stigmatisation. Due to a number of conditions, irrespective of the expert discussions regularly triggered, for many years the authorities did not decide on a general reform of the social welfare system, but only made amendments within the existing institutional order. A way to brake the impossibility and meet new expectations is the reform related to the transformation of SACs into CUSs.

The CUS concept was developed as part of the work of the National Development Council, an expert body under the President of the Republic of Poland⁵. In the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland, on the basis of the prepared assumptions, a draft law was created, which was then sent to the Sejm by President Andrzej Duda in November, 2018 as a presidential legislative initiative. In 2019, the law was, with the support of the government, passed by consensus by the Sejm and approved (also consensually) by the Senate, and its provisions came into force on January 1, 2020.

The adoption in the CUS Act 2019 the principle of optionality in the creation of centres is based on the concept of progressive system change, where the target solution is reached in three steps, taking into account (1) the years 2020–2022 which period is called pilot phase (experience of the first group of CUSs), (2) the years 2023–2025 as the innovation scaling phase (the second, broader group of CUSs, also created optionally using the experience of the first group) and (3) starting in 2026 the suspected wider dissemination of CUSs as a systemic solution (phase three). In addition, an important programme assumption was the construction of the CUS Act 2019 as regulations leaving space for the use of local know-how in organising the process of service provision and the cooperation of service providers.

By the end of December 2022, 51 such centres were established in Poland, with their launch hampered in that time due to the coronavirus pandemic. These centres were named in public discourse as the “pilot group”. A wider number of municipalities established CUSs or are on a way to establish CUSs in the second phase, of progressive social change, starting from January, 2023. Social policy programming documents guarantee these municipalities an access to the European Social Fund Plus resources to cover the cost of CUS implementation⁶.

Formatted by the provisions of the CUS Act 2019, the model of the new institution complies with the social policy priorities of the European Union such as (i) animating

⁵ The initial conceptual material of the NDC Social Policy and Family Section was published in: Rymśza, 2021, 365–375.

⁶ The SSC Act 2019 gives each municipality the option to establish SSC in two modes: either by transforming a SAC centre that was previously operating, or by establishing a joint inter-municipal SSC. During the years 2020–2022 only the first option was implemented.

the creation of a local offer of social services, (ii) coordinating the processes of providing citizens with tailor-made services and (iii) developing of community organising are three main tasks assigned to the CUS.

Social service centres face tasks consistent with the priorities expressed in institutional reforms and practices present in other EU countries:

- to contribute to the development, integration, and expansion of **the availability of social services** (see: Grossi & Reichard, 2016; Wollmann, 2018; Wollmann & Marcou, 2010);
- **to consolidate local government initiatives** aimed at integrating and coordinating social services as an expression of the practice of territorial self-government at the municipal level (see: Bauer & Markmann, 2016; Fuentes, 2020; Giubboni et al., 2017);
- to use local know-how in **organising cross-sectoral cooperation** involving local service providers (see: Grewiński, 2009; Kendall, 2005; Urmanaviciene et al., 2021);
- **to extend the provision of social assistance beyond poorer individuals and families** or those socially marginalised – an offer to resident-citizens who demonstrate needs for social services in the life cycle of individuals and families (Inglot, 2019; Siza, 2017; Stankowska et al., 2023);
- **to be an expression of social investment policy**, using infrastructure co-created by local service providers from the public, civic and private sectors (Hemerjick et al., 2023; Vanhercke et al, 2022; Van Vliet et al., 2021);
- to contribute to **strengthening NGOs** and social enterprises (Kitzman, 2015; Wevers et al., 2020);
- to be a place for **the development of social work methodologies** based on both individualised case-work management approach and community work with a bonding profile, using an approach referred to as community organising (Bunger, 2010; Christens & Speer 2015; Knox et al., 2022);
- to contribute to the development of **collaboration between different helping professions** (O’Daniel & Rosenstein, 2010; Reeves et al., 2017).

In the CUS model, social services enhance citizens’ quality of life and general well-being when easily accessible. Therefore, such services must not be an element of the market game (which limits the universality of access) but of a well-organised public system whose infrastructure is located close to people – in municipalities (Rymsza, 2021). At the same time, an important element of well-being is access to services on the basis of citizenship rights, i.e., without acquiring the status of a social assistance beneficiary (Gagacka, 2022). This was to be ensured by the transformation of SACs into CUSs whose offer of services is addressed to all residents – members of local territorial communities.

In the CUS model of service-oriented support, frontline workers play a leading role, representing various helping professions such as social work, psychotherapy, occupational therapy, family assistance, community work, specialist care, socio-cultural animation, and other. However, an important complement to the services provided by professionals is the development of self-help services provided by commune residents to other residents based on volunteering, self-help and

neighbourhood initiatives. Activating this potential is the task of the local community organisers (LCOs) employed in the CUSs (Bąbska & Skrzypczak, 2021).

The local service system based on CUS, in order to provide comprehensive and at the same time “tailor-made” support, is based on the activity of many local service providers, and its management must skilfully combine elements of fair competition with cooperation. In Poland, competition rules are regulated, but institutional incentives for cooperation are lacking. Strengthening the aspect of cooperation is precisely assumed by the CUS model (Waszak & Wejzman, 2021). The CUS “one-stop shop” model is used to manage service provision. Access to a package of services is possible by contacting one specialist – the coordinator of individual social service plans (ISSPs). The services included in the ISSP, however, are provided by specialists employed by various entities co-creating the local service system, coordinated by the CUS (Każmierczak & Karwacki, 2021). The more local co-operators there are in the system, the greater the possibilities to provide comprehensive services and at the same time ones tailored to the individual needs of specific residents.

3. The normative aspect of the CUS model

Dariusz Zalewski (2021, 14) points out that “the idea of creating Centres for Social Services is not only about the dissemination of social services in local communities but also about the transformation of the social welfare institution itself”. It is a transformation that strengthens local government territorial communities. The pro-self-government character is in the very construction of the Act, based on the pursuit “that the provisions of the Act, apart from the necessary technical adjustments, do not violate in any way either the existing system of municipal self-government, in particular, the sphere of its tasks, or the statutory regulations on various social services” (Każmierczak, 2021, 16).

The CUSs’ dissemination strategy based on optional decisions made by local authorities and building network of local service delivers based on cross-sectoral cooperation and voluntary involvement of civic sector organisations, social cooperatives, and social enterprises has to be seen as a processual innovation, contrary to the top-down approach dominant in Poland in implementing social policy reforms. In the works on the dissemination of the centres, the expert knowledge in the field of public policy programming was applied, taking into account the latest trends and directions in public policies, such as the empowerment approach, the concept of investment social policy or the governance mode in public management.

The normative basis for the delivery of social services by the CUS incorporates three main values: the state’s subsidiarity, the subjectivity of residents, and the cohesion of territorial collectivities, which are broken down into seven programmatically linked guiding principles in the CUS Act 2019 (cf. Box 1).

Box 1. Rules for the implementation of social services by social service centres

Article 14 (1) In carrying out its tasks, the Centre:

- 1) offers specific social services to all eligible persons (universality principle);
- 2) takes into account the welfare of persons using social services, in particular, the need to respect their sense of subjectivity and safety (subjectivity principle);
- 3) maintains quality standards of social services (quality principle);
- 4) aims to provide social services that meet the needs of the local community to the fullest extent possible, taking into account the different phases of life and the situation of families (principle of comprehensiveness);
- 5) cooperates with public administration bodies, non-governmental organisations, and entities [...], as well as natural and legal persons (cooperation principle);
- 6) taking into consideration the needs of the local government community, undertakes activities aimed at extending the offer of social services, using the potential of entities providing social services in the area of the Centre's operation (subsidiarity principle);
- 7) strives to strengthen social bonds and to integrate and develop the local government community (principle of strengthening social bonds).

Source: The CUS Act 2019, Art. 14.

The axiological backbone of the system of local social services coordinated by CUS legitimises and reinforces the idea of self-governance of municipalities as territorial communities in four ways.

- The principle of subsidiarity mentioned in the Act signifies the orientation of CUS towards building a service offer based on network connections with local service providers (Waszak & Wejcman, 2021). The logic of subsidiarity here draws a sequence in the delivery of services first by establishing cooperation with the existing service providers, and taking own action is the second step two when local service providers are scarce.
- Aiming to respond to the needs of residents by their own efforts fosters the diagnosis of both the needs themselves and the service potential of local actors (Bazun et al., 2021), which implies the activation of endogenous development factors.
- Community organising fosters the activation of non-professional social support potential (volunteering, neighbourly help, self-help), strengthening the community cohesion (Bąbska & Skrzypczak, 2021).
- The community is reinforced by the pursuit to agree on forms of support with the residents. It is difficult for the community to be empowered when its members are defined as dependant clients receivers of public social services.

4. Activity of social service centres – an analysis

By the beginning of February 2025, 108 CUSs were established in Poland⁷. CUSs are currently operating in municipalities in 15 out of 16 voivodeships (excluding Łódzkie Voivodeship), namely:

- sixteen CUSs in Kujawsko-Pomorskie (CUS Aleksandrów Kujawski, CUS Brodnica, CUS Chełmno, CUS Fabianki, CUS Golub-Dobrzyń, CUS Lisewo, CUS Lubanie, CUS Lubicz, CUS Mrocza, CUS Płużnica, CUS Rogowo, CUS Sępólno Krajeńskie, CUS Solec Kujawski, CUS Toruń, CUS Więcbork, CUS Włocławek⁸),
- fourteen CUSs in Wielkopolskie (CUS Czarnków, CUS Dopiewo, CUS Jarocin, CUS Kramsk, CUS Krotoszyn, CUS Pleszew, CUS Pniewy, CUS Rawicz, CUS Rokietnica, CUS Rychwał, CUS Swarzędz, CUS Szydłowo, CUS Śrem, CUS Trzcianka),
- thirteen CUSs in Mazowieckie (CUS Czarnia, CUS Grabów and Pilica, CUS Kozienice, CUS Milanówek, CUS Mława, CUS Mszczonów, CUS Słupno, CUS Sochaczew, CUS Wiązowna, CUS Wieniawa, CUS Zbuczyn, CUS Żabia Wola, CUS Żyrardów),
- twelve CUSs in Zachodniopomorskie, (CUS Będzino, CUS Goleniów, CUS Karlino, CUS Kołobrzeg, CUS Koszalin, CUS Łobez, CUS Mielno, CUS Pełczyce, CUS Polanów, CUS Police, CUS Resko, CUS Świdwin),
- eight CUSs in Pomorskie (CUS Cewice, CUS Chmielno, CUS Czarna Dąbrówka, CUS Czersk, CUS Krynica Morska, CUS Pruszcz Gdański, CUS Skarszewy, CUS Słupsk⁹), in Śląskie (Bojszowy CUS, Czeladź CUS, Golezów CUS, Łaziska Górne CUS, Mikołów CUS, Radzionków CUS, Ruda Śląska CUS, Woźniki CUS) and in Świętokrzyskie (CUS Górno, CUS Ługów, CUS Mniów, CUS Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, CUS Połaniec, CUS Starachowice, CUS Stopnica, CUS Zagańsk),
- five CUSs in Dolnośląskie (Głogów CUS, Jedlina-Zdrój CUS, Pieszyce CUS, Prusice CUS, Żmigród CUS), in Lubelskie (CUS Bełżyce, CUS Łuków, CUS Opole Lubelskie, CUS Świdnik, CUS Wojcieszków), and in Małopolskie (CUS Alwernia, CUS Klucze, CUS Myślenice, CUS Skawina, CUS Tarnów),
- four CUSs in Podkarpackie (CUS Adamówka, CUS Bukowsko, CUS Dębica, CUS Tryńcza) and in Warmińsko-Mazurskie (CUS Elbląg, CUS Górowo Iłowieckie, CUS Kurzętnik, CUS Srokowo),
- three CUSs in Lubuskie (CUS Międzyrzecz, CUS Szczaniec, CUS Zielona Góra),
- two in Podlaskie (CUS Łapy, CUS Stawiski),
- one CUS in Opolskie (CUS Gogolin).

Numerous municipalities are preparing to set up social service centres in the following years. The centres to be established will be able to benefit from ESF+

⁷ See the table with information of these 108 CUSs in justification of the Presidential legislative initiative changing the CUS 2019 Act sent to Sejm on 14th of March, 2025 (<https://www.prezydent.pl/prawo/wniesione-do-sejmu/inicjatywa-ustawodawcza-prezydenta-w-sprawie-cus,98757>).

⁸ CUS operates in the rural municipality Włocławek located around city Włocławek.

⁹ Actually CUS operates in the new created gmina Redzikowo, earlier a part of the Słupsk (rural) municipality.

support, as agreed with the European Commission by the Polish government and the voivodeship authorities¹⁰.

The municipalities that established CUSs between 2020 and 2023 can be divided into three categories/types of settlement. There are 24 urban municipalities, 45 rural municipalities, and 39 municipalities of an urban-rural and rural-urban character. The territorial distribution of the pilot CUSs is diverse, which is conducive to further dissemination of CUSs across the country as part of the second phase of the progressive system change.

The activity of the 49 of 51 social service centres¹¹ that were established between January 2020 and January 2025 was included in the analytical and research monitoring of the NDC Expert Team¹² (Rymsza & Karwacki, 2023). The authors of the article led this team and decided on the scope of research activities undertaken. The monitoring carried out in the period of May 2022–March 2023 consisted of four types of analytical and research work:

- 1) analysis of the data submitted in the reporting system by social service centres to the Ministry of Family and Social Policy;
- 2) analysis of the documents produced in the municipalities that launched the centres, including above all the Strategies for the potential and needs of local communities in the field of social services and the Municipal programmes of social services;
- 3) analysis of 14 moderated group discussions (MGD) conducted by the NDC Expert Team with the participation of professionals working in social service centres: directors of CUS, social service organisers (SSOs), LCOs, ISSP coordinators (ISSPCs), social assistance organisers, and experts.
- 4) a review of publications on CUS that appeared in the Polish scientific literature after the CUS 2019 Act came into force (desk research).

The concept of the monitoring study was carefully thought out and the methodology designed to take into account the various aspects of the centres' operation and the numerous available data sources (both in-situ and triggered data), and to perform the analysis using the triangulation method. At the same time, an effort was made to limit the risk of overinterpretation accompanying the study of start-up entities. In particular:

- For the quantitative analyses, reporting data provided by CUSs to the Ministry from three consecutive reporting periods were included: as at December 31, 2021, March 31, 2022 and December 31, 2022. The centres were established successively. The comparison of the activities of all centres on the basis of data from one reporting period would be subject to the error of “comparing the incomparable” as it is difficult to draw analogies between the activities of an entity that has just been

¹⁰ *Expresis verbis* provisions on supporting the creation of SSC from ESF+ funds were included in 15 of the 16 voivodeship programming documents (with the exception of the programme for the Mazowieckie voivodeship).

¹¹ Two CUSs were established at the end of that period and did not prepared reporting data that might be included in the empirical basis for the analysis.

¹² Research and analytical work under the CUS monitoring process was undertaken by Dobroniega Głębocka, Arkadiusz Karwacki (co-leader), Izabela Krasiejko, Barbara Kromolicka Marek Rymsza (co-leader), with the assistance of Grażyna Ancyparowicz, Anna Dudzik, Marek Kośny, and Ewa Leś.

established and one that has been operating for two years. Therefore, we have developed a typology of centres based on their maturity, distinguishing: (i) centres in the start-up phase, (ii) centres in the process of being established, and (iii) established centres that met a total of five maturity criteria in operation. In-depth analyses of service activities were narrowed down to this group of centres only.

- In the case of qualitative research, we did not use classic focus group interviews, but their “soft” version – moderated group discussions (MGD). In MGD, more freedom is left for the “self-directed” statements of the interviewees and, at the same time, there is an emphasis on ensuring a maximum sense of safety. The latter was served by the organisation of separate discussions for particular groups of CUS managers and professionals: directors, SSOs, LCOs, and ISSPCs. The comfort environment of MGDs was widely perceived by participants as an opportunity to exchange experiences and share both successes and problems. This allowed the NDC Expert Team to gather information not only about the activated potential of CUS but also on the implementation difficulties related to the “resistance” phenomenon.
- We also ensured a high saturation of the research sample: a total of 86 interviewees participated in the 12 MGDs conducted: 30 CUS directors, 10 SSOs, 23 LCOs, 23 ISSPCs. They represented more than one third of professionals and managers employed in the centres during the research period.
- The MDGs with CUS specialists were complemented by some additional discussions with various CUS stakeholders (officials at the central and regional level, experts, representatives of the community of social workers of SACs that have not transformed into CUSs). We treated the knowledge gained in this way as contextual knowledge to better understand and more accurately analyse MGD.
- Analysis of key local documents: “Diagnoses of the potential and needs of the local community in the field of social services” (potential and needs diagnoses – PNDs) and local Social Services Programmes (SSPs) we supplemented with the analysis of documents related to obtaining support in the implementation of the grant programme (41 out of 56 centres were concerned). This allowed us to analyse the dynamics of the process of intentionally induced social change taking into account the impact of what was called “project culture”.

The conducted monitoring studies have confirmed the great potential of CUS for the development and coordination of local social service systems. Below, we indicate the most important benefits that, in the light of our own research findings, the establishment of CUS brings to municipalities.

Firstly, an important change in the programming of local social policy is brought about by conducting PND, in accordance with the provisions of the CUS Act 2019. Carrying out this diagnosis results in the development of SSP (cf. Table 1), which constitutes the municipality’s service offer that responds to the so-far unmet needs of residents. Significantly, the SSP is distinguished from other local public policy programming documents by taking into account both the demand side (demand for social services) and the supply side (potential of local service providers). This allows for a socially relevant and, at the same time, economically efficient formatting of the service offer by CUSs. Previously strategic documents focused either on the demand

side (municipal strategies for solving social problems) or on the supply side (municipal development strategies). The second characteristic feature of PND is the extensive use of participatory diagnostic methods and techniques (e.g., individual and group interviews with key actors from local institutions and residents, world cafe method, participant observation).

Table 1. Diagnoses of the potential and needs of the local community and Social Services Programmes in 49 municipalities that established CUSs in the period 2020–2022

| | Status as of March 31, 2022 ready / in preparation | Status as of March 31, 2022 accepted | Status as of August 31, 2022 ready / in preparation | Status as of August 31, 2022 accepted | Status as of December 31, 2022 ready / in preparation | Status as of December 31, 2022 accepted |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| CUS under analysis | 48 | 48 | 49 | 49 | 49 | 49 |
| PND | 46 | 44 | 48 | 47 | 49 | 47 |
| SSP | 38 | 36 | 45 | 39 | 49 | 46 |

Source: Own calculations based on CUS reporting data at the disposal of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy.

The implementation of the standard of the development of SSP based on the PND means that municipalities with CUS apply a three-phased sequence of measures within local social policy:

(1) diagnosis of the potential and needs of the local community → (2) adoption of the Social Services Programme → (3) provision of new social services available to residents

This is an important step towards practising evidence-based local social policy.

Secondly, the broader targeting of service support – to residents in general and not only to social assistance clients – creates a new image of CUS in relation to the established image of the SAC in local communities. The new image fosters a broader interest in the CUS service offer from residents. The surveyed CUS managers and specialists (Rymsza & Karwacki, 2023, 77–147¹³) have repeatedly unanimously indicated that the CUS offer is used by numerous residents who “steered clear of the CUS”, not wanting to become social assistance beneficiaries. It can be seen that CUS meet the social expectations characterising the post-transition period, according to which social services should no longer be an element of social protection for the vulnerable but a manifestation of social well-being provided to the general public by the welfare state.

¹³ Chapters 5–8 of the Report by Rymsza, Karwacki, Krasiejko, and Kromolicka consecutively.

A good illustration of the demand for social services provided on a universal basis is the dynamic development of *specialist counselling services* in the CUS, especially psychological, therapeutic, family, pro-health, and vocational. The interest of residents in the use of specialist counselling is due to the safe formula of this support, which does not imply and does not activate mechanisms of social control, characteristic of assistance practices carried out within the SAC and, more broadly, social welfare institutions. The advantage of counselling is also that it does not activate the mechanisms of self-labelling, which means entering into the role of the dependent person. Indeed, counselling support is seen as a way of activating one's own coping potential in difficult situations.

The residents' demand for universal services is also indicated by the popular *mobile services* organisation, especially in CUS operating in rural areas with a widely dispersed population, i.e., assistance practices provided to residents at their place of residence, without the need to attend a specific facility (Rymcza & Karwacki, 2023, 59–64). Examples include service buses transporting specialists with specialised equipment to individual villages in the municipality or the provision of counselling services “in the field” using local facilities, such as village community centres. Mobile services are complemented by door-to-door transport services, which take residents with reduced mobility due to disability, illness or age, to and from places where the required services are provided.

While organising the offer of services available to the general public, the centres do not only target individual categories of residents based on specific needs. They also took into account the situation and needs of families, especially families with young children, people with disabilities and seniors in need of care. The service offer by CUS became an element of *local social policy towards families* exceeding “sectoral” measures (Krasiejko, 2021). Pro-family support includes, among others, support in fulfilling family roles (clubs for mothers with young children operating in the form of self-help groups) and assistance support addressed to dependent persons and their home carers (provision of rehabilitation equipment, personal assistance for persons with disabilities, respite care – Rymcza & Karwacki, 2023, 59–64). The activation of services aimed at families promotes the already-mentioned image change of CUS.

Thirdly, CUSs *promote cooperation with local partners from the three sectors (welfare mix)*, including NGOs and social enterprises providing social services (Rymcza & Karwacki, 2023, 94–105¹⁴). Municipalities with a well-developed civic sector infrastructure use local know-how in terms of intersectoral cooperation, and the novelty brought by CUS is related to crossing sectoral barriers in service delivery by associating elements of social support with cultural, educational, and healthcare activities. Where NGOs are lacking, efforts are made to animate them and include them in service and support activities. The ministerial grant competition played an important role here: the requirement to benefit from ESF support was to allocate a minimum of 30% of the ESF funds obtained for services to commissioning these services to civil sector entities.

The experience of the pilot group of CUS indicates that the condition for the development of local social services is not only the *diversification* of service providers

¹⁴ Excerpt from Chapter 6 of the Report by Karwacki.

but also of *sources of financing services* as the basis for the financial stability of CUS in the long term using all four available resources: (1) the state budget, (2) EU funds, (3) the budget of the local community, as well as (4) co-payments from residents paid directly when using services (Rymsza & Karwacki, 2023, 90–93¹⁵). The CUS Act 2019 stipulates that the conditions for the provision of social services by the CUS that go beyond the municipality’s statutory tasks are determined by local law – in the Social Services Programme. Local authorities may charge for the use of CUS services, subject to the statutory requirement that the services are not provided on a commercial (for profit) basis. Local authorities actively use this option, with the calculation of fees being in line with the EU formula for services of general interest as free of charge or for a fee under conditions that do not constitute a barrier to access. This formula is generally understood and accepted by residents.

Fourthly, *community work is developing* rapidly in CUS. The key here is the involvement of LCOs. At the end of December 2022, LCOs were working in 47 of the 49 reporting CUS. There were 51 in total, as five centres had two community work specialists each¹⁶. An important aspect of LCOs is to activate the potential of the local government community in terms of neighbourhood support, volunteering and self-help (Rymsza & Karwacki, 2023, 132–147¹⁷), which complement the CUS service offer implemented by helping professionals. Yet an important factor for change is also the openness of the personnel of CUS professionals to cooperation with LCOs, which was confirmed by MDGs with directors of CUS, SSOs and ISSPCs (Rymsza & Karwacki, 2023, 77–131¹⁸). Research has shown that LCOs, by being carriers of a new approach both in the community and in CUS itself, are gaining the status of “double-rooted” innovators, thus ensuring that community work methodology is permanently embedded in municipalities.

Fifthly, the monitoring research confirmed the *viability of the ‘one-stop-shop’ concept* of access in CUS to a package of services provided by different local service providers. The tool for making this concept a reality is the ISSP introduced by the CUS Act 2019. Their creation using the new service offer is handled by the ISSPCs.

For methodological reasons, our analysis of the development of the ISSP work method was limited to the group of solidly established centres. We described the developmental trajectory of the centres as moving from the start-up phase (type C), through the acquisition phase (type B) to reaching the solidification-in-operation phase (type A) (cf. Table 2). Centres meeting the following five criteria are considered to be solidly established: 1) functioning for at least 9 months, 2) preparation of a PND, 3) adoption by the municipality of the SSP defining new social services, 4) employment of new specialists in the CUS (SSO, LCO, ISSPC), 5) implementation of new social services, confirmed by structured CUS reporting. In short, reaching the stage of solidification in CUS activities is a state in which the centre’s activities are focused on implementing the service assigned to it by the CUS Act 2019, rather than

¹⁵ Excerpt from Chapter 5 of the Report by Rymsza.

¹⁶ The statutory requirement is employing one LCO in the centre.

¹⁷ Chapter 8 of the Report by Kromolicka.

¹⁸ Chapters 5–7 of the Report by Rymsza, Karwacki, and Krasiejko consecutively.

preparing to run them. Only then, as we have stated, do CUSs implement the ISSP method in a structured manner.

Table 2. Categorisation of CUS by phase of implementation in programme activities
The “solidification” process of social service centres

| Status as of | Centres solidified in operation (type A) | Centres in acquisition (type B) | Centres in the start-up phase (type C) | In total |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|----------|
| March 31, 2022 | 24 | 16 | 8 | 48 |
| August 31, 2022 | 32 | 16 | 1 | 49 |
| December 31, 2022 | 42 | 7 | 0 | 49 |

Source: Rymcza & Karwacki, 2023: chapter 4 by Rymcza, table, p. 35.

Table 2 illustrates the development dynamics of CUS in 2022. While at the end of March 2022, half of the CUSs had reached the solidification stage in their operation (24 out of 48 reporting), five months later approximately two-thirds of the centres (32 out of 49), while at the end of 2022 – four-fifths (41 out of 49), i.e., the vast majority.

The research confirmed the growing *potential of service support using ISSP* as a professional helping practice. At the end of 2022, 41 solidified centres employed 85 ISSPCs (an average of two per centre) who had prepared a total of 10,048 ISSP (an average of 118 ISSP per coordinator). The 10,000 completed ISSP placements are a sufficient basis for starting the work of methodically transforming the professional experience of ISSPCs into new professional helping practices.

Last but not least, *asset-based development approach* is practised in different ways in the centres. The asset-based methodology (c.f. Green et al., 2006) exists in CUS activities on three levels. At the casework level, this methodology can be found in widely developed specialist consulting services. Counselling, by its very nature, aims to mobilise the own strengths of those receiving support. At the community organising level, asset-based approach is realised by activating residents in voluntary, self-help and neighbourhood support activities. At the level of CUS management of the local service system, the work on resources is triggered by a participatory PND. The diagnosis makes it possible to take stock of and integrate the service resources at disposal. A side-effect of the fragmentation of the social services system characterising Poland, consisting in their dispersion in various mutually “invisible” support subsystems (Rymcza, 2013, 348–355), is the only partial utilisation of the resources held: premises infrastructure and specialist personnel. Coordination activities within CUSs make it possible to use these resources more effectively. This is a kind of bonus for the implementation of modern social service management.

Social service centres passed the test as coordinators of the ad hoc relief action aimed at war refugees from Ukraine. Organising the relief action, assuming not to locate them in closed camps but relocating them efficiently and providing them with comprehensive service support, led to the rapid appearance of refugees in a significant

part of the towns where CUSs operated. The centres proved to be *efficient coordinators of the community absorption of refugees*, activating and streamlining the cooperation of various local organisations (Rymśa & Karwacki, 2023, 73–76).

5. Reactionary rhetoric towards CUS – reformist dilemmas

57 new social service centres of the “second weave” have been appearing in Poland since January 2023 and large number of next municipalities have already decided to transform their previously functioning SACs into CUSs, creatively adapting to the regulation of the CUS Act 2019¹⁹. Analysts find it challenging to look at the conditions that may determine to what extent CUSs will become widespread in Poland, meeting expectations and responding to the needs of citizens. Therefore, this is a question about analysing the risks of the process of disseminating CUS’s.

Given the expected subsequent decisions of Polish municipalities to establish CUSs, it is important to note that the decision-making process takes place under conditions of trying to take into account multiple values embodied by members of different social groups with their own interests (Lindblom 1959, 82). And this is why substantive arguments and empirical evidence from comparative studies and monitoring research do not collect all important arguments (Frieske, 1990, 101–102). Public decisions are the results of the multidimensional influences, adaptation to the combinations of values, interests, factors, and determinants.

Thus, analyses of the potential for CUS dissemination (and decisions made in specific local government units) should also take into account several determinants beyond the characteristics of this new institution and the concept of its operation. Among the crucial aspects in triggering the change in the institutional order, we recognise the availability of financial resources to implement innovations but also the quality of human capital including key agents of change and decision-makers. Here, it is essential to provide information relevant to the dilemmas, doubts, and knowledge needs of those on whom decisions to establish CUSs ultimately depend (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). It is where we encounter resistance to change, questions, doubts, and discussed potential problems that may be caused by reform efforts.

In the course of analysing the discourse around CUSs, we were able to identify numerous risks, concerns, and problems related to the process of dissemination of this new institution (concerning the creation of further entities, the sustainability of processes in those already functioning, the implementation of tasks in accordance with the defined functions of CUSs). The perspective proposed by Albert O. Hirschman (1991) is considered a useful theoretical framework for structuring this resistance to change. This proposal refers to Thomas H. Marshall’s (1950) reflections analysing the emergence of European welfare states as a process of realising civil (18th century), political (19th century), and social (20th century) rights successively. While Marshall

¹⁹ Justification of the Presidential legislative initiative changing the CUS 2019 Act sent to Sejm on 14th of March, 2025 (<https://www.prezydent.pl/prawo/wniesione-do-sejmu/inicjatywa-ustawodawcza-prezydenta-w-sprawie-cus,98757>) .

displayed optimism, Hirschman exposes ideological reactions to successive stages of development and reconstructs three main ways of criticising the social solutions introduced, undermining their sustainability. These are: the perversity thesis of counter-effectiveness (Hirschman, 1991, 11–42) assuming that undertakings intended to improve particular spheres of collective life cause the problems they were intended to prevent. The unintended effects of reforms are central to this. The second is the futility thesis (Hirschman, 1991, 43–80), indicating that attempts at social transformation will ultimately prove futile and will fail. The third is the jeopardy (contradiction) thesis (Hirschman, 1991, 81–132), according to which the costs of change may prove greater than the benefits.

Hirschman's analysis of more than 200 years of social reforms was widely received. to illustrate resistance to specific reforms in public debate (the sustainability debate – Holden, 2010) or in academia (the dispute over business ethics – Brink, 2009). Of course, “reactivity” can be reduced to disputes between right and left or conservatives and progressives (Sunstein, 2023). Scholars bring in the cyclical nature of reactionary resistance; the rhetorical strategies of reactionism are repeated and reconstructed over time (Schargel, 2022). And it does not need to be a specific strategy based on a particular socio-political ideology. Richard Shorten (2015), in an attempt to fill in the gaps in Hirschman's proposal, points out that reaction should not be equated with the political right in a broad sense. It is more of a tool to capture and abstract the “rhetorical repertoire” of responses to the proposal to trigger a particular change. In public debate, it can be a set of arguments to challenge proposed reforms (Chater & Loewenstein, 2023), and it is often done without strong evidence support (and therefore as loose speculation) appropriate to those seeking immediate insights and absolute certainty (Sunstein, 2023). This is also how we treat the “reactionary rhetoric” – as a tool to structure arguments critical of the proposed reform in the Polish social welfare system related to the establishment of CUSs. It is a perspective that does not expose political divisions but structures institutional resistance in a solidified system in local environments, where the real power is held by representatives of groupings located on different sides of the political scene. Reactionary rhetoric thus becomes a tool for organising the voices collected by us throughout the study and rooted in their structure of interests, but also (and perhaps above all) for identifying weaknesses (gaps, risks, mistakes) in the first stage of implementing CUS as a new institutional formula.

The arguments questioning the creation of CUS in Poland can be assigned to the three reconstructed by Hirschman (see Table 3). It must be stressed that positive opinions and expressions of benevolent interest in the future of progressive systemic change²⁰ predominate in the literature. However, we focused on the critical voices, treating them as a “counterweight” to the activated elements of CUS potential already described above. Knowledge of the critical arguments, concerns, and reservations is essential. Only by being aware of the real and possible unintended effects and side-effects, as well as the strength of defence mechanisms against change, can rational

²⁰ An analysis of publications in the Polish-language scientific literature on SSC, cf. Rymśza & Karwacki, 2023, 148–153 (Chapter 9 by Karwacki).

adjustments to reforms be prepared. Such adjustments are, moreover, envisaged in the concept of progressive systemic change related to the dissemination of CUS. These voices, arguments, and problems presented in the Table 3 are of a different nature due to the fact that they are formulated by different actors. Ultimately, however, they constitute the “matter of resistance” and a set of reform risks.

Table 3. Reactionary rhetoric towards the dissemination and operation of CUSs

| Ineffectiveness due to: | Counter-effectiveness in form of: | Internal contradictions in form of: |
|---|---|--|
| too few municipalities choosing to establish a CUS (the change induced by the optional formula will prove marginal on a national scale) | widening inequalities between municipalities (in some, the offer of services for many groups of citizens will be developed, in others, there will be a shortage of access to services) | shortage of resources to cover social risks while incurring expenditures on universal access services (risk of losing sight of the problems of people in the most difficult social situation) |
| lack of knowledge of decision-makers about the investment character of social services (the perspective of the budget burden and shortage of funds is decisive) | raising citizens' expectations regarding the locally available support offer in the absence of a guarantee of the institution's survival and maintaining the scope of this offer | re-arrangement of the local hierarchy of institutions and dominance of CUSs (shortage of resources for the functioning of other entities) |
| lack of deadline of the target system solution and belief in the temporariness of the new institution | tensions generated in CUS teams (as tension between the team involved in the transfer of services and those staff who carry out established social assistance tasks) | lack of potential to respond to the identified needs (conclusions from the diagnosis do not translate into the services offered) |
| insufficiency of elements beyond the current scope of activity of the social assistance system institutions | employee burnout due to understaffing and extensive scope of responsibilities | pressure to co-operate from the institution's beneficiary who do not have the capacity to use the services effectively |
| lack of resources (service provider, services) to establish CUS | taking on too many tasks with a threat to the coherence of the institutions' activities (an attempt to respond to subsequent needs of citizens from various systems, e.g. health, social assistance, culture, and sport). | weakening of responsibility on the part of the state and local government (where the offer of services is not followed by activities that increase the potential of citizens to reach for services and come into contact with the institution) |
| failure of third sector organisations and social enterprises to build their service offer | involvement of the new institution in political conflicts (in the event of recognition of a new institution in relation to the authority that established it) | |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| lack of financial resources adequate to the scale of the institution's challenge for professional actions | inducing inequalities between local third sector organisations (in connection with contracts for the provision of services coordinated and commissioned by CUS) | |
| problems in accessing professional personnel (shortage of professional staff, inability to replace staff with more qualified ones) | stimulating the disclosure of the needs and aspirations of specific groups without a final response to them (e.g. thanks to regular and in-depth diagnosis, with restrictions in access to services in the context of the scale of demand for a specific service) | |
| problems in creating CUS as an institution free of the "stigma" of a SAC (consistent association of CUS as SAC by citizens) | | |
| infrastructure deficiencies (in the context of working conditions, also as a denial of institutional modernisation processes) | | |
| weakness in the process of distributing knowledge about CUS and its good practices | | |

6. Conclusions

The process of popularising CUS as a new institution focused on local provision of social services to citizens encounters many dilemmas, potential threats, and real problems. Regardless of the basis on which the idea of the reform is based and the needs and premises behind the initiative and the final shape of the legal provisions shaping the new institution, the above arguments should be taken into account and, consequently, through specific solutions, promotional activities or development conditions, they create the potential to disseminate, adaptation to achieve efficiency in response to citizens' needs. It becomes crucial to take into account emerging criticism in the consistent improvement of the change model by strengthening the conditions necessary for the effective implementation, mitigating side effects and preventing the deepening of problems that were supposed to be solved but also precisely communicating and responding to reported problems. This increases the chances of socialising decisions, reduces uncertainty around changes and gives the new institution a chance to have a real impact on local needs (adequacy, adaptation, coherence).

Nevertheless, the analysis of the activities of the first CUS group in 2020–2022 shows the potential of the CUS model in the development and coordination of local social service systems. The activation of this potential is facilitated by the framework provisions of the CUS Act 2019, which leave space for the use of proven practices and solutions that co-create local know-how in the provision of social services and inter-institutional and inter-sectoral cooperation, “directing” them towards the path of progressive systemic changes. However, numerous municipalities preparing to establish CUS are the surest confirmation at the level of social practice of the potential of the model of development and integration of local social service systems using CUS.

The monitoring study of the activity of social service centres to date allows us to identify some important findings related to the challenges of reform in the field of social policy. We mainly mean:

- The realisation through social practice of the needs/challenges postulated by researchers for the consolidation and coordination of local systems of social policy implementation as networks of inter-institutional links. These networks of interaction function on the basis of action strategies (this is the form the Social Services Programme takes), based on up-to-date diagnoses of the needs of citizens and potentials of the local community. Thus, we have examples of the occurrence of processes of networking of local inter-institutional relations and investment rationality by basing actions in the diagnosis (cf. Błędowski & Kubicki, 2014).
- Confirmed by subsequent investment activities, there is a growing local awareness of the necessity of developing a social policy based on social services. Municipalities where CUSs operate indicate that there is no single formula for this institution, but what they have in common is to give a primordial role to social services, treated as investments and not just costs. The experience of operating social service centres shows the potential in organising access to a wide range of social services provided in a “one-stop-shop” formula with simultaneous personalisation of service support. The day-to-day functioning of these institutions provides material reflecting the challenges, barriers and opportunities of implementing local social policy based on social services (cf. Grewiński, 2021).
- Legitimation through practical local action of policies in line with the empowerment model of activation, which we have advocated in our other studies (Rymsza & Karwacki, 2017; Karwacki & Rymsza, 2023). What we mean by this is to include in the practice of social service centres such assumptions as comprehensive understanding of the needs of citizens (comprehensive strengthening of the social roles performed, going beyond the experience of the social crisis), development of the idea of governance (also by involving the voice of citizens in the constructed strategies of action of institutions, active inclusion of social organisations in the processes of organising support), decentralisation and co-production of social services, building local social partnership and making the idea of case management more practical, development of community work and organising the local community (with emphasis on the role of volunteering), personalisation of support or orientation towards the effectiveness of the assistance provided.
- Exploring the potentials of community organising practices and community service as a policy expression for citizens and taking into account citizens’ potential for

self-help activities expressed through civic engagement. One of the key possibilities of a social service centre is the activity of community organisers.

- It is natural for resistance, opposition and doubts to emerge against triggered change in institutional systems that have had the opportunity to become entrenched in a particular operating model. This is a motivation to rethink ways of diagnosing critical arguments and doubts, forms of responding to these voices in order to create conditions for innovation to spread.

The next few years and the continued activity of social service centres will undoubtedly provide further arguments and evidence concerning the potentials and barriers to the development of social policy based on personalised social service provision dedicated to citizens and, at the same time, the modernisation of local social policy systems with the citizen (their needs and aspirations) located at the centre of interest and activity of local institutions.

References

- Bauer, H. & Markmann, F. (2016). Models of local public service delivery: privatization, publication and Renaissance of the cooperatives In H. Wollmann, I. Kopric, & G. Marcou (eds.), *Public and Social Services in Europe, Public and Municipal to Private Sector Provision*. (281–296). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bazuń, D., Frątczak-Müller, J., Jaskulska, M., Kwiatkowski, M. & Mielczarek-Żejmo, M. (2021). Diagnoza potrzeb i potencjału społeczności lokalnej w zakresie usług społecznych In M. Rymśza (eds.), *Centrum usług społecznych: od koncepcji do wdrożenia przepisów ustawy*. (263–290). IPISS.
- Bąbska, B. & Skrzypczak, B. (2021). Organizator społeczności lokalnej w centrum usług społecznych In M. Rymśza (eds.), *Centrum usług społecznych: od koncepcji do wdrożenia przepisów ustawy*. (213–234). IPISS.
- Błędowski, P. & Kubicki, P. (2014). Lokalna polityka społeczna wobec nowych wyzwań: od interwencji do aktywizacji. *Polityka Społeczna*, 3(2014), 34–38.
- Brink, A. (2009). Hirschman's rhetoric of reaction: U.S. and German insights in business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 89, 109–122.
- Bunger, A.C. (2010). Defining service coordination: a social work perspective. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 36(5), 385–401. doi: 10.1080/01488376.2010.510931
- Chater, N. & Loewenstein, G., (2023). The rhetoric of reaction, extended. *Behavioural Public Policy*, 7(3), 838–845.
- Christens, B.D. & Speer, P. W. (2015). Community organizing: practice, research, and policy implications. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 9(1), 193–222. DOI:10.1111/sipr.12014
- Evers, A., Heinze, R.G., & Olk, T. (eds). (2011). *Handbuch Soziale Dienste*. VS Verlag.
- Franz, H.-W., Hochgerner, J., & Howaldt, J. (2012). *Challenge social innovation. Potential for business, social entrepreneurship, welfare and civil society*. Springer.
- Frieske, K.W. (1990). *Socjologia w działaniu. Nadzieje i rozczarowania*. UW.
- Fuentes, F.V. (2020). Social and health care coordination: Towards a new culture of care. *Enfermería Clínica* (English Edition), 30(5), 291–294.
- Gagacka, M. (2022). Nowy ład instytucjonalny w pomocy społecznej w ocenie pracowników

- socjalnych. *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL*, 65, 4(260). DOI: 10.31743/znkul.14532
- Giubboni, S., Iudicone, F., Mancini, M., & Faiololic, M. (2017). *Coordination of Social Security Systems in Europe*. Study for the EMPL Committee.
- Golinowska, S. (2013). The Polish welfare state birth and twilight? In P. Michoń, J. Orczyk, and M. Żukowski (eds.), *Facing the challenges. Social policy in Poland after 1990*. (7–36). Poznań University of Economics Press.
- Green, M., Moore, H., & O'Brien, J. (2006). *When people care enough to act: ABCD in Action*. Inclusion Press.
- Grewiński, M. (2021). *Usługi społeczne we współczesnej polityce społecznej*. Elipsa Dom Wydawniczy i Handlowy.
- Grewiński, M. (2009). *Wielosektorowa polityka społeczna. O przeobrażeniach państwa opiekuńczego*. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej TWP.
- Grossi, G. & Reichard, Ch. (2016). *Variance in the institutions of local utility services: evidence from several European countries* In H. Wollmann, I. Kopric, and G. Marcou (eds.), *Public and social services in Europe: from public and municipal to private sector provision*. (297–312). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hemerijck, A., Ronchi, S., & Plavgo, I. (2023). Social investment as a conceptual framework for analysing well-being returns and reforms in 21st century welfare states. *Socio-Economic Review*, 21(1), 479–500. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwac035>
- Hirschman, A.O. (1991). *The rhetoric of reaction. Perversity, futility, jeopardy*. The Belknap Press.
- Holden, M. (2010). The rhetoric of sustainability: perversity, futility, jeopardy? *Sustainability*, 2(2), 645–659. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su2020645>
- Inglot, T. (2019). Social policy and the new middle class in Central and Eastern Europe. *Current History*, 118(806), 96–102. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2019.118.806.96>
- European Social Network. (2021). *Integrated care and support. Promoting partnerships across services, improving lives*. <https://www.esn-eu.org/publications/integrated-care-and-support-promoting-partnerships-across-services-improving-lives>
- Karwacki, A. & Rymśa, M. (2023). Empowerment and underclass management as two activation modes. An attempt to structure European activation policies, services and frontline practices, *Polityka Społeczna*, 1(19), 20–28. DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0054.1438
- Karwacki, A., Szlendak, T., & Lepczyński, K. (2023). The fragility of social status and the mediocrity of middle class life in social memoirs of the unemployed. *Polish Sociological Review*, 4(224), 441–461. DOI:10.26412/psr224.02
- Kaźmierczak, T. (2021). Refleksja o ryzyku fasadyzacji CUS-ów i znaczeniu jej następstw, *Wiadomości Społeczne*, 1(24), 16–19.
- Kaźmierczak, T. & Karwacki, A. (2021). Zarządzanie usługami w centrum usług społecznych. In M. Rymśa (ed.), *Centrum usług społecznych: od koncepcji do wdrożenia przepisów ustawy*. (195–212). IPiSS.
- Kendall, J. (2005). Third sector European policy: organisations between market and state, the policy process and the EU. Number 1. *Third Sector European Policy Working Papers*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29007/1/1TSEP.pdf>
- Kitzman, K. (2015). The need for cooperation between enterprises and non-governmental organizations. *Zarządzanie Publiczne*, 4(32), 313–324 doi:10.4467/20843968ZP.15.019.4765
- Knox, M., Esteban, E.E., Hernandez, E.A., Fleming, M.D., Safaeinilli, N., & Brewster, A.L.

- (2022). Defining case management success: a qualitative study of case manager perspectives from a large-scale health and social needs support program. *BMJ Open Qual*, 11(2), e001807. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-001807
- Krasiejko, I. (2021). Asystentura rodziny w centrum usług społecznych. In M. Rymśza (ed.), *Centrum usług społecznych: od koncepcji do wdrożenia przepisów ustawy*. (291–313). IPISS.
- Lindblom, Ch.E. (1959). The science of “muddling through”. *Public Administration Review*, 19, 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/973677>
- Lundberg, K. (2018). The welfare subject in the “one-stop shop”: agency in troublesome welfare encounters. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 2(2018). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.4098>
- Marshall, T.H. (1950). *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays*. Cambridge University Press.
- Morel, N., Palier, B., & Palme, J. (eds.). (2012). *Towards a social investment welfare state? Ideas, policies and challenges*. Policy Press.
- O’Daniel, M. & Rosenstein, A.H. (2010). Professional communication and team collaboration. In R.G. Hughes (ed.), *Patient safety and quality: an evidence-based handbook for nurses*. (Chapter 33). Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK2637/>
- Reeves, S., Pelone, F., Harrison, R., Goldman, J., & Zwarenstein, M. (2017). Interprofessional collaboration to improve professional practice and healthcare outcomes. *Cochrane Database Systematic Review*, 22; 6(6). doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD000072.pub3
- Rogers, E.M. & Shoemaker, F. (1971). *The communication of innovations: a cross-cultural approach*. Free Press.
- Rymśza, M. (2013). Social work and social workers in Poland. In P. Michoń, J. Orczyk, and M. Żukowski (eds.), *The communication of innovations: a cross-cultural approach*. (156–168). Poznań University of Economic Press.
- Rymśza, M. (2014). Polityka aktywizacji i programy aktywizacyjne w Polsce In A. Karwacki, T. Kaźmierczak, and M. Rymśza (eds.), *Reintegracja. Aktywna polityka społeczna w praktyce*. (137–170). Instytut Spraw Publicznych.
- Rymśza, M. (2021). Centra usług społecznych: krocząca zmiana systemowa. *Wiadomości Społeczne*, 1(24), 8–11. <https://ptps.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Wiadomosci-Spoleczne-124-2021.pdf>
- Rymśza, M. & Karwacki, A. (2017), *Między podejściem empowerment a zarządzaniem underclass. Dwa modele aktywizacji w polityce społecznej*. In A. Karwacki, M. Rymśza, B. Gąciarz, T. Kaźmierczak, and B. Skrzypczak (eds.), *Niezatrudnieniowe wymiary aktywizacji. W stronę modelu empowerment?* (15–62). Wydawnictwo UMK.
- Rymśza, M. & Karwacki, A. (eds.). (2023). *Centra usług społecznych. Potencjał intencjonalnie wywołanej zmiany w lokalnej polityce społecznej w Polsce. Raport*. Kancelaria Prezydenta RP. https://www.prezydent.pl/storage/file/core_files/2023/6/21/328fa974babac11086fa6da22c6491f3/11.%20Centra%20us%C5%82ug%20spo%C5%82ecznych.%20Potencja%C5%82%20intencjonalnie%20wywo%C5%82anej%20zmiany%20w%20lokalnej%20polityce%20spo%C5%82ecznej%20w%20Polsce%20-%20raport.pdf
- Schargel, S. (2022). Book review: the rhetoric of reaction. *Contexto Internacional*, 44(3). <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-8529.20224403e20210032>

- Shorten, R. (2015). Reactionary rhetoric reconsidered. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 20(2), 179–200. DOI: 10.1080/13569317.2015.1034466
- Siza, R. (2017). *Welfare for the middle class*. Conference: Social Policy Association Annual Conference. Belfast Metropolitan College.
- Standing, G. (1996). Social protection in Central and Eastern Europe: a tale of slipping anchors and torn safety nets In G. Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Welfare states in transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies*. (225–255). SAGE.
- Stankowska, J., Karwacki, A., & Leszniewski, T. (2023). Polityka społeczna dla klasy średniej – potrzeby i wyzwania w świetle pamiątek. *Polityka Społeczna*, 4(2023), 20–29.
- Sunstein, C.R. (2023). The rhetoric of reaction redux. *Behavioural Public Policy*, 7(3), 825–837. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2022.26>
- Waszak, Ł. & Wajcman, Z. (2021). Współpraca międzysektorowa w ramach centrum usług społecznych. In M. Rymśa (ed.), *Centrum usług społecznych: od koncepcji do wdrożenia przepisów ustawy*. (235–262). IPISS.
- Wevers, H.T., Voinea, C.L., & de Langen, F. (2020). Social entrepreneurship as a form of cross-border cooperation: complementarity in EU border regions. *Sustainability*, 12(20), 8463. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12208463>
- Wollmann, H. (2018). Public and personal social services in European countries from public/municipal to private and back to municipal and “third sector” provision. *International Public Management Journal*, 21(3), 413–431. DOI: 10.1080/10967494.2018.1428255
- Wollmann, H. & Marcou, G. (eds.). (2010). *The provision of public services in Europe: between state, local government and market*. Edward Elgar.
- Urmanaviciene, A., Chantzi, K., & Tambari, B. (2021). Challenges of cross-sectoral collaboration of social enterprises in the Baltic states. *European Journal of Social Impact and Circular Economy*, 2(2), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.13135/2704-9906/5487>
- Van Vliet, O., Bakker, V., & Van Doorn, L. (2021). From social protection to social investment: European responses to globalization, technological change, labour market flexibilization, and migration. In G. Fischer and R. Strauss (eds.), *Europe's income, wealth, consumption, and inequality*. Oxford. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3951093>
- Vanhercke, B., Sabato, S., & Spasova, S. (eds.). (2022). *Social policy in the European Union: state of play 2022. Policymaking in a permacrisis*. ETUI & OSE.
- Zalewski, D. (2021). Centra usług społecznych a reforma systemu pomocy społecznej. *Wiadomości Społeczne*, 1(24), 14–15. <https://ptps.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Wiadomosci-Spoleczne-124-2021.pdf>

Legal Acts

- Inicjatywa ustawodawcza Prezydenta RP w sprawie CUS, 2025. <https://www.prezydent.pl/prawo/wniesione-do-sejmu/inicjatywa-ustawodawcza-prezydenta-w-sprawie-cus,98757>
- Ustawa z dnia 19 lipca 2019 r. o realizowaniu usług społecznych przez centrum usług społecznych (Dz.U. 2019, poz. 1818).