
Social activism of persons with disabilities in Poland - development and the current state of new social movements

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Abstract

Political changes taking place in Poland since 1989 after the collapse of communist meta-narration held a promise of building a democratic, pluralistic society. Moreover, the issues which so far had been neglected or presented in a biased way due to monocentric social order and political censorship now stand a chance of coming into public discourse. Due to democratization, a large number of minorities have been given the possibility to articulate their needs and fight for their rights. Developing democracy together with its institutions and mechanisms based on the idea of human rights and equal opportunities for various social groups have led to the occurrence of the phenomenon of discourse of diversity, identity and the politics of voice.[1] The socio-political transformation which started in early 90s has also activated social movements of persons with disabilities the philosophy of which was based on the concept of Independent Living. These social movements have played a key role in introducing changes to Polish legislation so that the idea of integration, normalisation, equal opportunities for education and employment as well as active participation in social life and culture could become possible.

The objective of our presentation is to provide a description and analysis of social movements of persons with disabilities in Poland. We'd like to focus on their diversity, goals, assumptions as well as discuss some of the ongoing projects in Poland. The analysis consists of two dimensions:

1. the presentation of socio-political and cultural conditions underlying the formation of social rights movements of persons with disabilities in the light of political changes (from socialism to democracy)
2. the presentations of the aims of current social rights movements of persons with disabilities in the context of UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by Poland in 2012; ongoing social campaigns and change demands for the new, conservative government.

See e.g. Gustavsson, A., Zakrzewska-Manterys (Eds.), *Upośledzenie w społecznym zwierciadle* (Disability in the Social Mirror), Warszawa 1997, 'Żak'.

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