



New
Direction



FAMILY 500 PLUS – THE POLISH WAY OF PROVIDING FAMILY SUPPORT

REPORT AND ANALYSIS ON A FLAGSHIP PROGRAM TO COMBAT
EUROPE'S DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS

BARTŁOMIEJ HAWRYLAK

New Direction



Founded by Margaret Thatcher in 2009 as the intellectual hub of European Conservatism, New Direction has established academic networks across Europe and research partnerships throughout the world.



Bartłomiej Hawrylak

lawyer, clerk, interpreter.

Graduate of the Faculty of Law and Administration at the University of Warsaw. During his studies an activist and member of the board of the Independent Students' Association at the university and national level, honorary member of the organization. His professional career is strictly connected to transport and strategic planning as well as corporate analysis of legal, competition and economic environment.

1	INTRODUCTION	7
2	POLISH FAMILY POLICY UNTIL 2015	9
3	FAMILY POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION IN 2015	13
4	THE ORIGINS OF THE „500 PLUS” PROGRAM - THE 2014 ELECTION PLATFORM OF THE LAW AND JUSTICE	15
5	FIRST FORM OF THE PROJECT UNTIL JULY 2019. - FAMILY 500+	17
	KEY ELEMENTS	17
	COMPLIANCE WITH EUROPEAN POLICIES - BENEFITS FOR POLES ABROAD	19
	DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM	19
	AMENDING CHANGES	22
	FIRST YEARS OF FUNCTIONING	24
6	CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM AS OF JULY 1, 2019	25
	POLITICAL BACKGROUND	25
	DOBRY START – GOOD START	26
	CHANGES IN THE „FAMILY 500 PLUS” - PRESENT STATE	26
7	DELIVERING „500 PLUS” - 5 YEARS OF GOOD PERFORMANCE	29
8	SUMMARY	33

1

INTRODUCTION

The following report aims to provide an overview of the process behind the creation, implementation and execution of one of the flagship projects carried out in Poland since 2015 - Rodzina 500 plus, English: „Family 500 plus”. The project of a Polish party with conservative and Christian values - Law and Justice (*Pol. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) - has become a symbol of a different approach in Poland to the basic social unit - family - and a turnaround from years of stagnation in social and pro-family policies. This report aims to provide a factual perspective and to assess the advisability of implementing large social programs amounting to billions of zlotys (euros), in order to better understand and learn about possible ways out of one of the biggest crises currently affecting highly developed parts of the world, especially Europe - aging population and low birth rate.

The report intends to show the construction of the Program, its evolution over time, political context before and during the implementation of the Scheme, as well as the effects on the areas established at its basis.

Finally, an answer will be provided to the question of whether the „Polish 500 plus” construct has lived up to the initial expectations and whether it can be a model to be followed by other countries that inadequately implement their family policies. Presentation of historical provisions of the Program and its final version is also aimed at showing errors or omissions that occur naturally in such large and cross-sectional government projects, so that they can be avoided in the future by other governments that may follow the example of Poland.



2

POLISH FAMILY POLICY UNTIL 2015

In late 2014 and early 2015, Poland faced a number of key demographic problems - low fertility rates, declining birth rates, high risk of child poverty, high incidence of extreme poverty among children and youth, and an increasing number of Poles emigrating from the country. These problems were the result of years of economic and strategic negligence starting from the moment of the political transformation in the 1990s. Over 20 years of lack of real instruments of family support resulted in the accumulation of problems with each passing year, the aging of society and the outflow of young capable people.

A clear summary of this period can be found in the report summarizing the audit conducted by the Supreme Audit Office (*Pol. Najwyższa Izba Kontroli; ab. NIK*) regarding the coordination of family policies in Poland in 2015 covering the years 2012-2014¹. NIK clearly indicates that the Polish state has not developed a comprehensive and long-term family policy, focusing its activities on ad hoc solutions introduced without ensuring adequate coordination. The framework of family policy has not been defined and its goals and related activities have not been specified. It was also noted that there was no systematic analysis of the effects achieved in relation to the incurred expenses. At the same time, it is pointed out that the demographic problem had

been very well known since the beginning of Poland's political transformation in the 1990s, and a broad knowledge was available in the academic and social sphere, which was not used by the government to create and conduct an effective and efficient family policy.

The above problems paralleled, at the same time, the belief that family policy is equivalent to the implementation of social policy, and any funds allocated for this purpose by the state are a non-refundable cost and as such are generally considered undesirable. Expenses on the family were only recognized in terms of budget limits, and the priority task "Supporting the family" was removed from the State Multiannual Financial Plan in 2013, the year that was simultaneously proclaimed by the government as the "Year of the Family" (the term "Decade of the Family" was also used to refer to the following years)². In the end, the Multiannual Financial Plan defined only one measure in a limited scope. As a result, the allocation of financial resources in the Multiannual Plan did not adequately reflect family policy and support for it, as the Polish State has been declaring for years. NIK also pointed out that there was no system of evaluation of the use of public funds with respect to achieving set public goals, which resulted in inefficient use of public funds and

¹ „Koordynacja Polityki Rodzinnej w Polsce”, Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, KPS-4101-003-01/2014, Nr ewid.67/2015/P/14/046/KPS

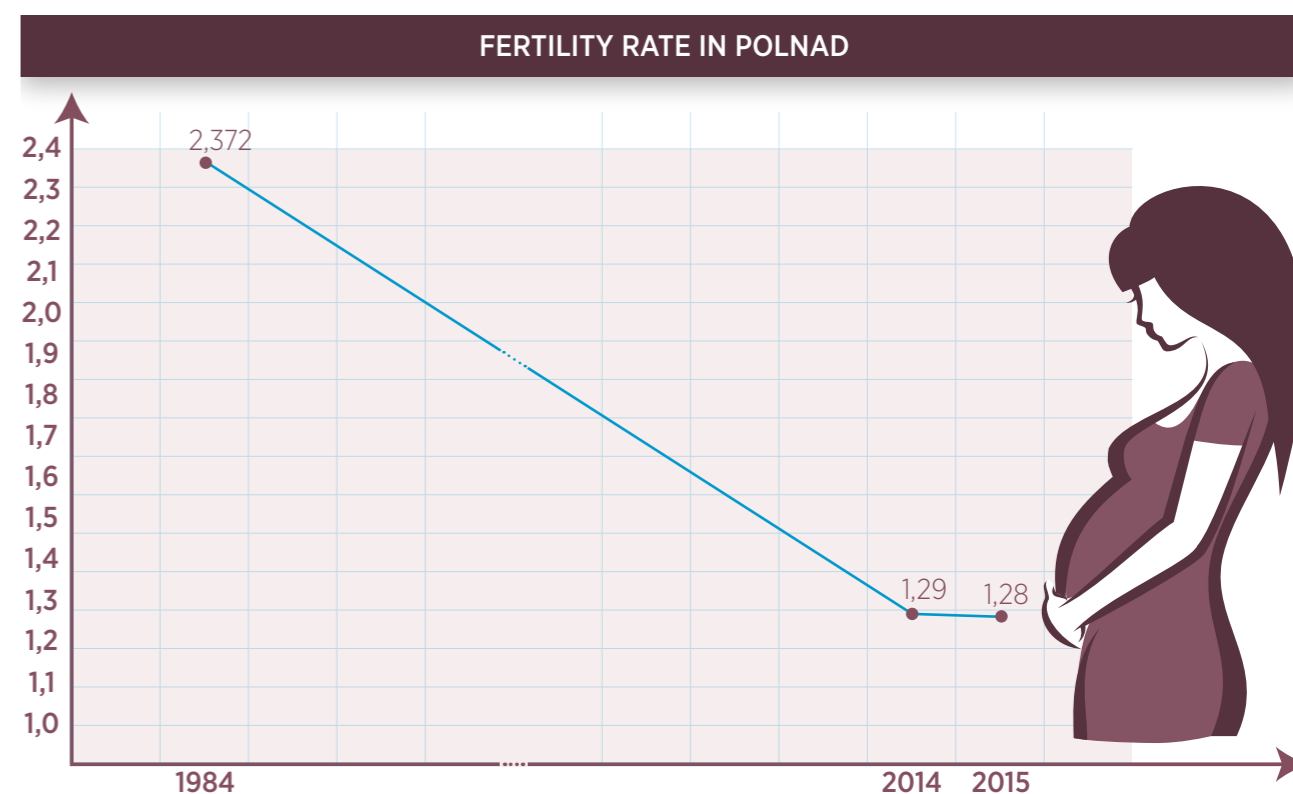
² <https://archiwum.premier.gov.pl/mobile/wydarzenia/aktualnosci/rok-rodziny-kongres-ojcow-na-stadionie-narodowym.html> [10.04.2021 r.]

low effectiveness of implemented policies. The fiscal approach to spending on families is best illustrated by the percentage of GDP allocated to this purpose in 2015, which was only 1.78%³.

THE PERCENTAGE OF GDP
ALLOCATED TO FAMILY
SPENDING IN 2015 IN POLAND

1,78%

Emigration, which mainly included young Poles, was also a negative trend. According to the Statistics Poland (*Pol. Główny Urząd Statystyczny, ab. GUS*), in 2015 as many as 2.4 million Poles emigrated for temporary residence, which was an increase of more than 65% compared to 2005, when 1.45 million Poles had emigrated⁴. In 2015, there was a significant increase in the number of Poles residing in Germany and the United Kingdom, respectively by 7% and 5,1%⁵. The growth in those two destinations was caused, among other factors, by the low unemployment rate in Germany - 4.6% and in Great Britain - 5.3%. - while in Poland this indicator reached 7,5%⁶.



An additional important factor indicating the low level of development of family support instruments is the poverty rate, including the poverty risk rate and the extent of extreme poverty among children. In 2015, the at-risk-of-poverty rate among children was 25.6% and was only 1% below the average of the 27 European Union countries⁷.

At the same time, ahead of Poland were, among others, Slovakia, Estonia, the Czech Republic or Slovenia, not counting the highly developed countries of Western Europe. The second indicator - the extent of extreme poverty among children was as high as 9% in Poland in 2015⁸.

Likewise, the key indicator of fertility for 2014 and 2015 did not inspire optimism. The index has seen its regular decline since around 1984, when it stood at 2.372 - 30 years later, in 2014 it stood at just 1.290 and in 2015 at 1,289⁹. Such a dramatic drop in fertility among Polish women has been an unsolved civilizational problem for almost 30 years.

The lack of a coherent family policy until 2015 and the poor demographic situation did not escape the public eye. NIK commissioned a survey in 2014,¹⁰ which indicated that the public does not perceive the state's activities aimed at helping families as being carried out as part of a coherent system. The survey showed that 69% of the public negatively assessed the state's activities aimed at encouraging people to have children. The reason for such negative results were undoubtedly changes of regulations and legislation in the years 2012-2014 unfavorable for families regarding payments of allowances for caretakers of disabled people and a childbirth benefit, the so-called „becikowe” (*Eng. baby's sleeping bag benefit*). Additionally, no adequate valorization of income thresholds authorizing families to receive family benefits was ensured, which resulted in directing these benefits to a narrow range of the poorest families¹¹.

³ <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wszystko-zaczyna-sie-w-rodzinie-warto-w-nia-inwestowac> [12.04.2021 r.]

⁴ Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004-2019, GUS, 19.11.2020 r.

⁵ Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004 - 2015, GUS, 5.09.2016 r.

⁶ Total unemployment rate, TPS00203, Eurostat (UNE_RT_A).

⁷ People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex, EU-SILC, ilc_peps01, Eurostat.

⁸ Ubóstwo w Polsce w latach 2015 i 2016, GUS, Warszawa 2017, p. 6.

⁹ <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/struktura-ludnosci,16,1.html> [12.04.2021 r.]

¹⁰ „Koordynacja Polityki Rodzinnej w Polsce”, dz. cyt. p. 39-53.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 18.

FAMILY POLICIES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION IN 2015

Poland in 2015 struggled with issues of unorganized and ineffective family policy, lagging behind most of the European Union countries at the same time. In 2015, as many as 20 European Union and European Economic Area Member States provided child benefits regardless of family income¹². Among these countries were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The benefits granted ranged from PLN 450 to 700, applying the average 2015 EUR-PLN exchange rate of 4,2:

- Austria - a benefit for each child until the age of 18 or 24/25, if the child continues education. The amount of the monthly payment was EUR 109.70 (about PLN 460).
- France - the benefit depended on the number of children up to the age of 20. Support began after two children. Family with 2 children received EUR 129 per month (PLN 543), with 3 children EUR 295 (PLN 1 239), with 4 children EUR 460 (PLN 1 932), the allowance for each additional child was EUR 165 (PLN 693).

- Germany - the benefit depended on the number of children; the age threshold was 18 or 25 if the child continued education. The benefit was granted for the first child, for whom the amount of EUR 188 per month (PLN 789) was paid, the same amount was paid for the second child, while the amount for the third child was EUR 194 per month (PLN 814), and for the fourth and subsequent children – EUR 219 per month (PLN 919).
- Sweden - the benefit was granted for each child until 16 years of age or until completion of compulsory schooling. The benefit amounted to EUR 114 per month (PLN 478).
- Norway - a benefit for each child up to the age of 18. The paid amount was 970 Norwegian crowns, i.e. about EUR 107 (PLN 449).

In almost all of the 20 countries applying these types of benefits, in addition to the basic benefit, there was a range of additional allowances depending on the age of the child, the total number of children in the family and the presence of both parents (single parents could count on additional support). Additionally, 10 EU/EEA countries granted income-dependent benefits: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Spain, Iceland, Greece, Italy,

¹² <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/zestawienie-swiadczen-na-dzieci-w-ueeog1> [12.04.2021 r.]

Portugal, Slovenia¹³. Supplementary benefits were also emerging in these countries, with the level of payment depending in later stages on the total number of children in the family.

The fact that universal financial support for families, paid directly per child, existed in more than half of the European Union Member States justifies the statement that the lack of a similar system in Poland and the proposal to introduce it was not a populist invention, but rather an attempt to introduce and maintain the standards of other European countries and a responsible approach to family policy.

13 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/zestawienie-swiadczen-na-dzieci-w-ueeog1> [12.04.2021r.]



4

THE ORIGINS OF THE „500 PLUS” PROGRAM - THE 2014 ELECTION PLATFORM OF THE LAW AND JUSTICE.

Since 2007, Poland had been ruled by the liberal Civic Platform (*Pol. Platforma Obywatelska, ab. PO*) party over the course of three formed governments in coalitions with the Polish Peasants' Party (*Pol. Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, ab. PSL*) - a party with a centrist and agrarian orientation. During the 8 years of PO and PSL governments, they

implemented only one real financial instrument aimed at supporting families - the so-called “becikowe”. It was a single payment of PLN 1,000 upon the birth of a child. It was additionally dependent on the family's income and the time spent by the mother under medical care, which had to be proven - a provision added in 2008, coming into force in 2009¹⁴.



14 Ustawa o świadczeniach rodzinnych z dnia 28 listopada 2003 r., Dz.U. 2008 Nr 237, poz. 1654.

At the same time, since 2010, Bronisław Komorowski, a politician with close ties to the Civic Platform, had been sitting as president.

In 2015, parliamentary and presidential elections were to be held. The Law and Justice (*Pol. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, ab. PiS*), a conservative party that had been in opposition since 2007 adopted its new electoral platform in February 2014, which was expected to lead to a double victory in 2015¹⁵. One of the flagship election proposals of the Law and Justice party was the introduction of a universal monthly family allowance of PLN 500 (in 2014 at an average exchange rate around EUR 120) for every second, third and subsequent child in the family, the so-called “500 plus”. On the other hand, it was decided to introduce an income criterion - families with the highest income were not to be covered by the universal program, and families with the lowest income were to receive the money starting from the first child¹⁶.

This was one of the key promises of the victorious PiS presidential candidate Andrzej Duda. It was estimated that „500 plus” was one of the main reasons for his victory, and PiS was to be consistent in this regard also in the parliamentary elections¹⁷.

The 2014 Law and Justice platform did not provide more details regarding „500 plus” nor did it specify the exact name of the Program. It did, however, point to the need to make the rigors of using the European Social Fund more flexible so as to be able to raise direct funds for family support in future years. It was pointed out that financial support for families should be a general obligation of the European Union, which should allocate appropriate funds for this purpose in order to avert a Europe-wide demographic crisis¹⁸.

The „500 plus” proposal was consistently upheld during the parliamentary election campaign, being one of its strongest pillars - the first big and detailed announcement took place at a meeting in the suburban town of Józefów, where future Prime Minister Beata Szydło announced that „500 plus” would be the first project she would implement in her new position^{19 20}.

The Law and Justice Party won the 2015 parliamentary elections, and from that moment the full implementation of the „500 plus proposal” began.

5

FIRST FORM OF THE PROJECT UNTIL JULY 2019. - FAMILY 500+

Key elements

The basic principle adopted by the Program was to grant an unconditional benefit for the second and each subsequent child in the family. The unconditional character of the benefit from the second child onwards became the subject of criticism from the opposition parties, which accused the Scheme of selectivity and of dividing the society, indicating that the Law and Justice did not properly fulfill its election campaign promises²¹ (despite the fact that the party’s 2014 platform mentioned the criterion of the second child from the very beginning). At the same time, the Program also provided benefits for the first child in the family, but with certain conditions.

The first issue in constructing conditions for benefits is the appropriate definition of “first child,” which will serve as the benchmark for determining the number of offspring in a family. The “first child” is defined as the only or oldest child in the family under the age of 18. The age criterion (18 years) is equally applied to the second and each subsequent child. At the same time, a “child” was not limited here to biological offspring only, but also included adopted children.

Following the definition of the first child, it was necessary to define the “family” as well - it was decided that the program should not discriminate against any social structure or human relations, so its recipients in the “family” category included families with married parents, single-parent families, parents in informal relationships, as well as legal guardians (in cases where, for example, grandparents or another person have been granted such a right by the court). Thus, the benefit was extended to a wide part of the Polish society, without making the support dependent on formal relationships, marital status, or biological relations.

The third basic element defining the Program was the determination of the benefit period, which is the length of time during which a person will be entitled to the PLN 500 payment. The Program was introduced on April 1, 2016, and the first benefit period covered the time from April 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017²². By design, the benefit periods were to last for one year, therefore subsequent periods covered the timeframe from October 1 to September 30²³.

15 Program Prawa i Sprawiedliwości 2014, <http://pis.org.pl/media/download/528ca7b35234fd7dba8c1e567fe729741baaf33.pdf> [14.04.2021 r.]

16 Ibidem, p. 108.

17 <http://pis.org.pl/aktualnosci/jesli-pis-zwyciezy-wybory-premierem-bedzie-beata-szydlo> [14.04.2021 r.]

18 Ibidem, p. 108-109.

19 <http://web.archive.org/web/20150904142630/https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/500-zlotych-na-drugie-dziecko-pierwszym-projektem-beaty-szydlo,573711.html> [14.04.2021 r.]

20 http://web.archive.org/web/20150926182230if_/https://www.polskieradio.pl/5/3/Artykul/1498412,500-zl-na-dziecko-Beata-Szydlo-pierwszy-projekt-jaki-zrealizuje [14.04.2021 r.]

21 <https://finanse.wp.pl/platforma-obywatelska-proponuje-500-zl-na-kazde-dziecko-6114667811300993a> [14.04.2021 r.]

22 Przegląd systemów wsparcia rodzin, Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, Marzec 2017, p. 10.

23 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/pytania-i-odpowiedzi-dot-programu-rodzina-500-plus> [14.04.2021 r.]

In its first stage, the unconditional benefit covered only the second and subsequent children. The first child in a family could receive the benefit only under certain income conditions. Income earned in the calendar year preceding the period for which the right to the benefit is established was taken into account. From the beginning of the Program's operation, the threshold amounted to PLN 800 net monthly per person in a family or PLN 1200 net per person in a family with a disabled child²⁴.

The program also identified situations where a claimant (or their child) fell within the general criteria of the definition, but had special characteristics that prevented them from receiving the benefit. These were situations where²⁵:

- the child was married,
- the child was placed in an institution providing round-the-clock care or in foster custody (for these cases a separate benefit of the same value of PLN 500 have been established)
- a child who is an adult has an established right to a parental benefit for his/her own child;
- a family member is entitled abroad to a benefit of a similar nature for a child, unless the provisions on the coordination of social security systems or bilateral international agreements on social security state otherwise.

At the same time, the „500+” benefit was not included into family income when applying for other benefits, thus it did not exclude the possibility of applying for other programs. The „500+” benefit functioned (and continues to function) as an additional cash injection to the family budgets.



24 Ibidem.

25 Ustawa z dnia 11 lutego 2016 r. o pomocy państwa w wychowywaniu dzieci (Dz.U. z 2016 r., poz. 195, z późn. zm.), art. 8.

Compliance with European policies - benefits for Poles abroad

As indicated in the above chapters, cash support paid on a monthly basis simply by virtue of having children in the family, was and is a widely observed practice in Europe. The planned and introduced program „Family 500 plus” was and is consistent with the EU practice of coordination of social security systems.

At the same time, one of the basic problems arising in such schemes is to determine the possibility of using the benefits by citizens living outside the country where the benefit was introduced. The “500 plus” program limits cases of undue use of the benefit by persons living abroad. The 500 plus Act²⁶ stipulated that the benefit would not be available, if a family member was entitled to a benefit of a similar nature to the „500 plus” allowance abroad, unless the regulations on coordination of social security systems or bilateral international agreements on social security provided otherwise.

The above provision was motivated by the prohibition of accumulation of family benefits, which meant the lack of entitlement to receive the full amount of family benefits and parental benefits in two Member States, introduced by Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

In practical terms, if one applies for family benefits in any EU or EEA Member State or in Switzerland, it is the duty of the local authorities to inquire about the collection of a similar benefit in Poland (a similar obligation also applies in the other direction - the Polish administration has to investigate in other Member States). This way the potential beneficiary will receive the highest benefit of the two “competing” ones²⁷.

Development and implementation of the Program

The Council of Ministers adopted the schedule of the work necessary to launch the “Family 500+” program on December 1, 2015^{28 29}, just 15 days after new Prime Minister Beata Szydło took office on November 16, 2015. According to the schedule, the Program was to enter into force on April 1, 2016. The government conducted a series of public consultations, during which ministers visited all 16 voivodeships over the course of January 2016, spending more than 36 hours talking to concerned citizens in a total of approximately 2,200 people^{30 31}.

The adoption of the Program became a fact with the Act of 11 February 2016 on state aid in raising children (Journal of Laws of 2016, item 195, as amended). The „Family 500+” began its operation on April 1, 2016, that is 136 days (just over 4.5 months)

after Beata Szydło took office, in accordance with the previously adopted schedule.

According to the provisions of the Act, the implementation of the Program was to be the responsibility of local authorities. The municipality, i.e. the head of the commune, the mayor or the president of the city, and the voivodship marshal with respect to the parental benefit itself (precisely with respect to coordination of social security systems). The county, on the other hand, was to be responsible for the additional child care allowance and the lump-sum supplement - this refers to the possibility of transferring the benefit to children who live in family care institutions (all forms of family foster care and orphanages)³².

26 Ustawa z dnia 11 lutego 2016 r. o pomocy państwa w wychowywaniu dzieci (Dz.U. z 2016 r., poz. 195, z późn. zm.), art. 8 pkt 4.

27 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/ogolne-zasady2> [14.04.2021 r.]

28 <https://www.rp.pl/Praca-emerytury-renty/312019901-Harmonogram-prac-nad-programem-wsparcia-rodzin-500.html> [14.04.2021 r.]

29 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/500-swiadczeniem-stalym-i-gwarantowanym> [14.04.2021 r.]

30 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/konsultacje-rodzina-500-plus-w-16-województwach> [14.04.2021 r.]

31 Przegląd systemów wsparcia rodzin, dz. cyt. p. 12.

32 Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, (Dz.U. 2011 nr 149 poz. 887), art. 115 ust. 2a.

- The additional child care allowance was due for each child placed in a foster family or a family orphanage, regardless of the income criterion. The allowance was granted upon application of a foster family or an orphanage supervisor.
- On the other hand, family-type care and educational institutions received a supplement amounting to the „500 plus” benefit, for each child placed in the institution, to the lump-sum of financial resources meant to cover the costs of keeping the child in the institution. In this case the application was submitted by the director of the institution³³.

Because of the role of the Program’s implementer only (not its sponsor), local authorities had to prepare adequately for this task and obtain appropriate funds for its implementation. The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy (*Pol. Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, ab. MRPiPS*), within a week of the publication of the Act (which took place on 17 February 2016), provided funds to local authorities for organizational preparation to the introduction of the Program, i.e. hiring new employees, equipping workstations, staffing issues³⁴.

A number of new administrative and fiscal duties in the field of social policy fell on the local authorities in a short period of time by virtue of the Act - therefore, in order to better organize the whole process within short deadlines (deadline of April 1), MRPiPS prepared an over 40-page document

“Manual for local authorities - granting child care benefits”, which was made publicly available on the Ministry’s website³⁵. Moreover, two days after the law was signed by the President, on February 19, 2016 the Ministry started a series of workshops for employees of municipalities on the new responsibilities of implementing the Program in all voivodeships in the country,³⁶ a total of almost 3,800 local government employees were trained³⁷.

It must also be stressed that the local authorities, along with new obligations, also received permanent financial support to manage the Program - a 2% commission on benefits paid out, which was to decrease to 1.5% in subsequent years³⁸.

Another dimension of the informational support, this time with emphasis on the civil side, were the “Families 500+” hotlines launched from March 1, 2016. One helpline was operated by the Ministry itself, the others were launched in all 16 voivodeship offices³⁹ 40. A further expression of the communication process was the so-called project “500plus buses”, which took off on April 1, 2016 and toured all over Poland for the next 3 months. The buses were operated by employees of voivodeship offices and reached all municipalities. During the campaign, officials provided interested persons with information, helped to fill out applications and distributed additional information materials - according to the Ministry, a total of almost 6,000 people received assistance in filling out applications and 138,000 written instructions in this regard were provided⁴¹.

The wide availability of the benefit was to be ensured by a range of application options:⁴²

- Via the Internet:
 - via the “Emp@tia” Information and Service Platform operated by the Ministry,
 - via the ICT systems of domestic banks that offer this possibility (negotiations with banks to enable their customers to apply to the „500 plus” program began even before the Program was enacted; in July 2016, 21 banks joined the Program)⁴³,
 - via the Electronic Services Platform of the Social Insurance Institution,
- In person at the municipality office on a filled in form.
- Sending a filled in application form to the municipality by Poczta Polska (*Pol. Polish Post*).

Applications submitted via the Internet, after three months of the Program’s operation, accounted for approximately 20% of the total number of applications submitted, i.e. about 550,000⁴⁴.

Another important element that determined the accessibility of the Program was the formalities that had to be fulfilled by the potential beneficiary, in addition to the form mentioned above. If the applicant applied for benefit for the second and subsequent child, he or she was not required to submit additional documents, however, it is necessary to point out that the local authorities had a certain discretion in this respect - depending on the circumstances of an individual case, the municipality could require evidence of other circumstances important to correctly grant the benefit. At the same time, this rule was mitigated by

allowing the above evidence to be provided only in a form of a statement by the beneficiary-to-be (in this case the usual rigor of criminal liability for making false statements was applied)⁴⁵.

When applying for the benefit for the first child, an issue of meeting the income condition arised. It was then necessary to prove that the applicant was within certain limits through one of the ways:

- statement confirming the amount of income not subject to personal income tax, concerning family members who generate such income,
- a confirmation from the tax office containing data on taxation of activities subject to taxation on the basis of the provisions on lump-sum income tax from certain incomes earned by individuals - registered lump-sum or tax card, concerning family members generating such income,
- a statement about the average size of an agricultural property, concerning family members who own an agricultural property,
- other documents (including statements) confirming the loss or gain of income in the case of any changes.

The final stage of the entire Program was naturally the payment of the benefit, and the manner of the payment depended on the established methods of social benefits payment in a given municipality. As a rule the benefit was paid by a bank transfer into the account indicated by the beneficiary or by other convenient method provided by the municipality⁴⁶. If the application was filed before the 10th of a given month, the benefit was transferred/paid until the end of that month. If the application was filed after the 10th of the month, the money was received until the end of the following month with compensation for the previous month.

33 Ibidem.

34 Przegląd systemów wsparcia rodzin, dz. cyt. p. 13.

35 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/podrecznik-dla-samorzadow> [14.04.2021 r.]

36 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/rodzina-500plus-szkolenia-dla-samorzadow> [14.04.2021 r.]

37 Przegląd systemów wsparcia rodzin, dz. cyt. p. 13.

38 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/rodzina-500plus-szkolenia-dla-samorzadow> [14.04.2021 r.]

39 <https://www.rdc.pl/informacje/rusza-infolinia-dotyczaca-programu-rodzina-500-plus/> [14.04.2021 r.]

40 Przegląd systemów wsparcia rodzin, dz. cyt. p. 14.

41 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/podsumowanie-akcji-bus-500-plus> [14.04.2021 r.]

42 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/pytania-i-odpowiedzi-dot-programu-rodzina-500-plus> [14.04.2021 r.]

43 Raport Rodzina 500+, Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, Warszawa, 13 lipca 2016 r., p. 5.

44 Ibidem, p. 10.

45 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/pytania-i-odpowiedzi-dot-programu-rodzina-500-plus> [14.04.2021 r.]

46 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/pytania-i-odpowiedzi-dot-programu-rodzina-500-plus> [14.04.2021 r.]



Amending changes

Over the course of June and July 2017, Minister of Family, Labor and Social Policy Elżbieta Rafalska announced the first statutory changes to the Program, which after a year of operation needed to be tightened up and cases of abuse of the benefit eliminated. A number of issues were indicated to be corrected, including^{47 48}:

- People in informal relationships declared that they were raising a child on their own - intentionally omitting the income of a co-partner in order to fit into the limit allowing for granting the benefit.
- Alternating custody - parents share custody when they already have children from a second relationship. A situation in which the first child from the subsequent relationship would be treated as the second child in the family should not be allowed in the Program along with alternating custody.
- Lump-sum self-employed individuals intentionally understated their income.
- Some people were laid off from their jobs and re-employed so that they could more easily fit into the income limit calculated over that period.

On October 1, 2017, an amendment to the „Family 500 plus” program went into effect⁴⁹. Among the most important elements that changed were a number of regulations to tighten up the program and prevent its abuse.

First, a requirement was introduced to establish child support from the other parent in the case of a single parent applying for the „500 plus” benefit. Art. 8(2) was added to the Act, which stipulated that the PLN 500 benefit is not due for a child if the single parent has not been granted child support from the child's other parent. At the same time, inherent exceptions were introduced so as not to unduly exclude a number of persons with particular family situations - the exceptions were the following situations:

- the child's other parent is deceased;
- the father of the child is unknown;
- the claim for alimony from the other parent was dismissed;
- the court has ordered one parent to bear the entire cost of supporting the child and has not ordered the other parent to provide alimony for the child;
- the child, according to a court decision, is in alternate custody of both parents for comparable and repeated periods.

The second change was intended to stop the aforementioned practice of re-employment with the same employer to more easily fit within the salary limits of the Program. The amendment covered Art. 7 of the Act, which excluded application of the

provisions on loss and gain of income in a situation where the applicant or a member of his/her family loses income from employment or other paid work (including self-employment) and within 3 months from the date of the loss of income obtains it again from the same employer (employer/contractor) or resumes self-employment. This meant that determining family income would not account for breaks in the employment period assuming the above circumstances.

The third change concerned the so-called “lump-sum taxpayers” and was also contained in Art. 7. From the beginning of the Program's operation, the applicant declared income from activities subject to taxation under the flat-rate income tax regulations only in the form of a declaration. After the amendments this income is calculated on the basis of the income published by the minister competent for family affairs by way of a public notice, taking into account the data arising from an individual certificate of the head of the tax office, which must be attached to the documents in the process of applying for the „500 plus” benefit.

The fourth amendment revised the Program's definition of family for purposes of better reflecting the system of calculating income compared to the actual situation of families. Henceforth, a child counted as a family member of families of both parents at the same time if, according to a court order, the child was in the custody of: alternation of both parents-divorced or living apart or separated - carried out over comparable and recurring periods. This change allowed, among other things, for a family's income to be divided among more individuals and both parents could apply for half of the benefit, i.e. PLN 250 each.

However, the changes were not just aimed at tightening up the Program, but also continued to make the benefit more accessible to those in need. The fifth change was a concrete expression of this, as it introduced the possibility for the applicant to submit a declaration concerning untaxed income and the size of an agricultural property for individual members of his or her family. Until now, the declaration had to be filled out and signed by all individuals whose details were covered by the declaration.

„500” AFTER THE FIRST 3 MONTHS

2,61 MM
applications submitted

2,23 MM
issued decisions

85%
of applications
processed

9,81 MM
benefits paid

PLN 4,89 B
has made its way to the families

CHILD CARE ALLOWANCES AND LUMP-SUM ALLOWANCES

47,7K
applications submitted

142,5K
benefits paid

70,5 MM
has already made
its way to the families

47 <https://dziennikzachodni.pl/500-plus-zmiany-2017-rodzina-500-plus-nowe-wnioski-zmiany-program-rodzina-500-plus/ar/11936324> [14.04.2021 r.]

48 <https://www.tvp.info/32883049/sejm-o-zmianach-w-programie-rodzina-500-plus-i-opiece-nad-maluchami> [14.04.2021 r.]

49 Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 2017 r. o zmianie niektórych ustaw związanych z systemami wsparcia rodzin (Dz.U. 2017 poz. 1428)

First years of functioning

The Program has proven to be a success right from the start, with a total of one million applications submitted within the first week of its launch⁵⁰. By July 1, 2016, a total of 2,230,423 decisions had been issued, which meant that approximately 85% of applications had been processed amounting to almost PLN 5 billion of benefits - out of which about PLN 70.5 million went to children in foster care and institutions⁵¹.

The main beneficiaries of the Program are, of course, children - after three months of the Program's functioning as many as 3.2 million of them were covered by „500 plus” payments. This constituted 47% of all children under 18 in the whole country⁵². The highest percentage of children covered by the Program was recorded in the following voivodships: kujawsko-pomorskie, warmińsko-mazurskie, podlaskie, lubelskie, świętokrzyskie, and podkarpackie.

Given these good results, the Program's operation continued - by June 30, 2018, after 820 days (more than two years) from the launch date, the “Family 500 plus” covered 3.74 million Polish children up to

the age of 18, accounting for 54.1% of all children in Poland (in rural areas the percentage was 61%, in urban municipalities 47%, and in urban-rural municipalities 55%). From the beginning of 2018 until June of the same year, PLN 11.3 billion was allocated for payments to over 2.4 million families⁵³.

One important fact to note is the extent to which the Program helped the poorest families. The aforementioned condition of receiving the benefit for the first child was connected with a specific income limit in a family - maximum PLN 800 net monthly per person in the family or PLN 1200 net per person in a family with a disabled child⁵⁴.

According to the reports, as of June 30, 2018, families that met the condition for the first child benefit comprised about 54.5% of all „500 plus” benefit recipients, that is, about 1.3 million people. Of this number, about 120,600 families were families with a disabled child⁵⁵. The numbers above show the scale of real help that the Program has provided and indicate its continued popularity with the public.

6

CHANGES TO THE PROGRAM AS OF JULY 1, 2019.

Political background

The criticism of the “Family 500 plus” program from the opposition parties, mentioned in the first chapters of the report, focused mainly on the fact that the unconditional benefit was available only from the second child, which was seen as an expression of discrimination against the remaining “first-born”⁵⁶. The objections raised by the opposition at the beginning of the Program, continued throughout its later period. Moreover, in August 2017, the Civic Platform announced for the first time its “counter” to the “Family 500 plus” program, proclaiming that it wanted to allow unconditional benefits for the first child in the family as well. On the other hand, however, it proposed a firm limitation of the Program's reach, proposing that such a benefit should only be granted to working (employed) parents⁵⁷. At the same time, the Civic Platform did not present any suggestions as to the sources of financing the modified benefit. The Law and Justice party, following the Civic Platform's declarations, was put in the uncomfortable position of defending its flagship Scheme. It has been pointed out that the Civic Platform's proposal would entail additional costs of PLN 19 billion, whereas with the additional assumption of an increase in fertility

rate (which “Family 500 Plus” assumes from the beginning) the costs of the Program would almost double⁵⁸. Nevertheless, the government was looking into the possibility of extending the Program also to the first child and dedicated its efforts to finding a source of financing for such a solution.

The next parliamentary elections were to be held in 2019. In February 2019, at the Law and Justice party convention, the party's chairman Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki announced that the “Family 500 plus” program was to be expanded to allow for benefits to be provided as early as for the first child without an income criterion. These changes were to take effect on July 1 of the same year. At the same time, it was indicated that the cost of such a change would amount to an additional PLN 20 billion or so - in line with previous calculations from 2017. It was pointed out, that the introduction of the Program in 2016 became a driving force of the economy, and the money from „500 plus” brought about the development of services, the stimulation of local markets and higher budget revenues from VAT^{59 60}.

50 Raport Rodzina 500+, Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej, Warszawa, 13 lipca 2016 r., p. 5.

51 Ibidem, p. 9.

52 Ibidem, p. 11.

53 Raport Rodzina 500+ Stan na 30 czerwca 2018 r., Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej.

54 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/pytania-i-odpowiedzi-dot-programu-rodzina-500-plus> [14.04.2021 r.]

55 Ibidem, p. 5.

56 <https://finanse.wp.pl/platforma-obywatelska-proponuje-500-zl-na-kazde-dziecko-6114667811300993a> [14.04.2021 r.]

57 <https://polskatimes.pl/program-rodzina-500-plus-oto-zmiany-500-zl-juz-od-pierwszego-dziecka/ar/12077654> [14.04.2021 r.]

58 Ibidem.

59 <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/500-plus-na-pierwsze-dziecko-wypłaty-rusza-1-lipca-2019-r-6352697350846081a.html> [14.04.2021 r.]

60 <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/435198-prezes-pis-stawka-wyborow-jest-polska-sprawdz-program> [14.04.2021 r.]

In the Law and Justice party's 2019 updated manifesto, the "Family 500 plus" program was put at the forefront of family and social policy measures. It states that from the start of the Program in 2016 to July 2019, almost PLN 77 billion has already been transferred to Polish families, and confirms that

due to the improvement of the economic situation, the income criterion has been eliminated (allowing unconditional benefit from the first child), so that more than 6.8 million Polish children could be covered by the Program⁶¹.

Dobry Start – Good Start

On May 30, 2018, the Council of Ministers established a new, additional program as a form of extension, which built on the successes of the "Family 500 plus" program - this scheme was called the "Good Start" (*Pol. Dobry Start*)⁶². The program is designed as an investment in the education of Polish school children through a one-time payment of PLN 300 to all children starting the school year. Families receive this support regardless of income. The age limit for children has been raised, however, in comparison to

"500 plus", to 20 years of age - with the condition to continue education in school (24 years of age in case of disabled children). A great number of instruments and solutions have been carried over from the experience and design of the "Family 500 plus", e.g. the forms of the application; the channels through which it can be submitted; the deadlines for the processing of the application; or the entities handling the application. The program covers approximately 4.5 million Polish children attending schools⁶³.

Changes in the "Family 500 plus" - present state

The above-mentioned changes announced by the Law and Justice were enacted on 26 April 2019 and, as promised, took effect from 1 July 2019. PLN 500 benefits were then introduced for every child up to the age of 18, regardless of income⁶⁴. Thus, the Law and Justice thwarted one of the key proposals of the opposition, which they had intended to carry into the 2019 elections. Faced with such a turn of events, the Civic Platform (as well as the majority of other opposition parties) focused on declarations about not abolishing the "Family 500 plus" program, thus having no major ideas for the Program's further possible modification⁶⁵.

of families applying for the support. The length of the application form itself was reduced, as well as the length of the report that local governments have to submit to the central authorities on the implementation of the Program. Moreover, in order to relieve the administration, the benefit periods were moved from October-September to June-May, a more favourable period, as numerous other social programs require applications to be submitted at the same time, i.e. in the months between October and September, e.g. Dobry Start, family benefits, alimony fund benefits.

At the same time, the removal of the income requirement significantly relieved local administration officials who no longer had to determine the income

Another important change in the April amendment was the abolition of the requirement to establish alimony. As of now, granting the right to PLN 500 benefit is no longer dependent on the determination

of child support from the other parent in the case of applications submitted by single parents. This was a change that undid the previously described 2017 amendment, thereby expanding the group of recipients of the Program and eliminating, in addition to the income limit, further conditions.

Another noteworthy change was an additional extension of the Program recipients with respect to children in special care and educational centers. Previously, there were two supplementary instruments similar to that scope: the child care allowance which was granted for each child placed in a foster family or a family-type orphanage, irrespective of the income criterion, and in the case of family-type care and educational institutions - an allowance equal to the "500 plus" benefit, for each child placed in that institution, to the lump-sum of financial resources intended for keeping the child in that institution⁶⁶. The amendment introduced financial support in the form of a child care allowance equal to PLN 500 for children placed in:

- socialization-type care and educational institutions,
- intervention-type care and educational institutions,
- specialised and therapeutic-type care and educational institutions,
- regional care and therapeutic institutions,
- intervention pre-adoption centers,
- nursing homes.

In accordance with past practice and structure of the Program, applications for the new actors may be submitted by the director of the institution to the county family assistance center in charge of the area where the institution is located.

A significant change has also occurred in the dates used for calculating the entitlement to the benefit. Previously the „500 plus” benefit was payable from the month in which the application was filed; thanks

to the amendment, parents (but also legal and de facto guardians) have 3 months from the date of the child's birth to file the application for the benefit. If they manage to file the application within that time, they will be guaranteed to receive the PLN 500 with compensation from the day of the child's birth⁶⁷.

A rather distinctive and particular change was the appropriate regulation of the death of a parent who had been receiving the benefit or had filed an application and died before the application was processed. In the original version of the Program in the event of the death of a parent for whom a decision granting the „500 plus” benefit was issued, the right to the granted benefit ceased to exist on the day of that parent's death. This was due to the specific nature of Polish law and the fact that "500 plus" was qualified as a personal benefit, inalienable and not subject to inheritance. The consequence of this was that, due to the death of the "500 plus" beneficiary, the benefit did not pass by law to the other parent, who was forced to apply for a completely separate and new benefit, which was granted from the month of his or her application. The April 2019 amendment made it possible for such a 'new benefit' to be granted from a deceased person to the second parent while maintaining continuity which is of great importance - however, the second parent must still submit the relevant application within 3 months of the first parent's death.

It should also be noted that the "Good Start" program, mentioned in the previous chapter, not only drew on the solutions of the "Family 500 plus", but also served as somewhat of a test basis for eliminating the legal way of deciding on the granting of the benefit in the form of an administrative decision. The April amendment to "500 plus" introduced, following the example of the "Good Start", automatically generated information regarding the benefit which is then sent to an e-mail address. Naturally, if electronic communication is not possible, the information can still be collected in person. Moreover, failure to collect the information on granting the benefit does not entail any negative consequences. The PLN 500 will still be transferred to a specified bank account (or will be paid in another way preferred by the beneficiary).

61 <http://pis.org.pl/media/download/d11362ba5b8df458ba7d5873a4aac4f2d015c7a7.pdf> [14.04.2021 r.]

62 Uchwała Nr 80 Rady Ministrów z dnia 30 maja 2018 r. w sprawie ustanowienia rządowego programu "Dobry start" (M.P. poz. 514)

63 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/dobry-start> [14.04.2021 r.]

64 Ustawa z dnia 26 kwietnia 2019 r. o zmianie ustawy o pomocy państwa w wychowywaniu dzieci oraz niektórych innych ustaw, (Dz.U. 2019 poz. 924)

65 <https://businessinsider.com.pl/twoje-pieniadze/wybory-parlamentarne-2019-r-obietnice-wyborce/9etqb5q> [14.04.2021 r.]

66 Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej, (Dz.U. 2011 nr 149 poz. 887), art. 115 ust. 2a.

67 Rozwiązanie dotyczyło dzieci urodzonych po 30 czerwca 2019 roku.

7

DELIVERING “500 PLUS” - 5 YEARS OF GOOD PERFORMANCE

April 1, 2021 marked exactly 5 years since the launch of the “Family 500 plus” program. According to the report of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy⁶⁸ between April 2016 and the end of February 2021, excluding administration costs, a total of more than PLN 141.1 billion was spent on “500 plus” benefits, with about 6.6 million children covered by the support - statistically, this gives about PLN 6 thousand per year per child, or PLN 108 thousand from birth to the age of 18. The administration of the Program has cost the state about PLN 1.7 billion.

The “500 plus” program, along with other social programs such as “Good Start”, 13th pension, income tax exemption up to the age of 26, and “Mama 4+” a parental supplementary benefit, has been instrumental in improving the economic situation in Poland and the household budgets of Poles. According to a 2019 survey by Statistics Poland (*Pol. Główny Urząd Statystyczny, ab. GUS*)⁶⁹ the material situation of households in Poland had improved significantly. The average monthly household income in 2019 was PLN 1819, when, by

comparison, in 2015 it was PLN 1386 and in 2014 PLN 1340⁷⁰. As the GUS indicates, the “Family 500 plus” benefit was responsible in 2019, on average, for 12.7% of disposable income per person in households receiving this benefit. Moreover, the percentage of households assessing their material situation as „rather good” or „good” has increased (48.6% of households in total, compared to 44.0% in 2018) and the percentage of households viewing it as „rather bad” or „bad” has decreased (7.0% compared to 8.1% in 2018). Year over year, household dwelling areas are increasing with newer furnishings accompanied by a decrease in older furnishings⁷¹. The above GUS data goes hand in hand with the indicators that the “Family 500 plus” program expected to improve back in 2016.

First of all, the overall percentage of GDP that was allocated by the state for family spending increased, in 2015 it was only 1.78%, while in 2017 it reached 3.11%⁷².

68 „Rodzina 500+ 5 lat programu”, Ministerstwo Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej, <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/raport-5-lat-programu-rodzina-500> [14.04.2021 r.]

69 Budżety gospodarstw domowych w 2019 r., GUS, Warszawa 2020.

70 Ibidem, p. 19.

71 Ibidem, p. 20.

72 <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/wszystko-zaczyna-sie-w-rodzynie-warto-w-nia-inwestowac> [12.04.2021 r.]

THE PERCENTAGE OF GDP ALLOCATED TO FAMILY SPENDING

IN 2015

1,78%

IN 2017

3.11%

The demographic policy also includes emigration - in 2015, there was a significant increase in the number of Poles residing in Germany and the UK, by 7% and 5.1%⁷³, respectively, while in 2019, in line with 2018, there was a decrease in both Germany and the UK, where the number of Poles decreased by about 17,000 (2%)⁷⁴.

These directions of emigration were chosen in 2015 due to the low unemployment rate compared to Poland - 4.6% in Germany, 5.3% in the UK. Whereas in Poland this indicator reached 7.5%. It is also worth noting that in 2020 the unemployment rate reached a record low of 3.2% in our country⁷⁵.

We can consider as one of the most important indicators, which was taken into account during the introduction of the “Family 500 plus” program, the one concerning the risk of poverty among children. In 2015, a year before the introduction of “500 plus”, this figure amounted to 25.6% in Poland and was only 1% below the average of 27 European Union Member States. In 2019, after 3 years of the functioning of the Program, the indicator reached only 15.2%, with the EU average of 27 countries at 21.8%⁷⁶. This means a decline of 10.4% over 3 years of the “Family 500 plus” program functioning. Worse results than Poland were reported by Norway (16%), Austria (19.1%), Switzerland (21.6%), France (21.8%), or Sweden (22.7%), among others. In 2019 Luxembourg (26%) was at the level Poland was at in 2015.

The second key indicator that the “Family 500 plus” aimed to improve in 2016 was the extent of extreme poverty among children, which in Poland was as high as 9% in 2015⁷⁷. In 2019, after 3 years of the “500 plus” program, that figure dropped to only 5% (continuing its decline from 2018 when it was at 6%)⁷⁸.

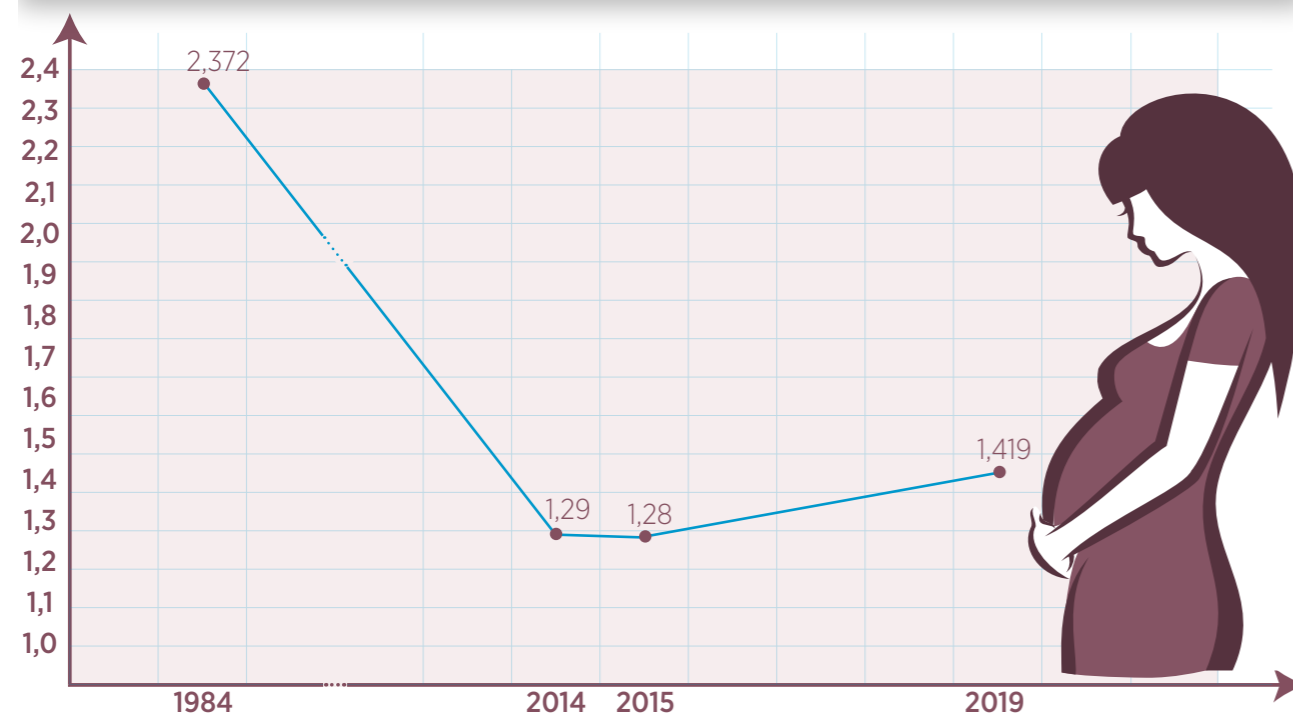
The last major factor was the fertility rate, which has seen its regular decline since around 1984, when it stood at 2.372 - 30 years later, in 2014, it already sat at 1.290, and in 2015 at 1.289. In 2017, the rate crossed the 1.3 mark - for the first time since 1998, coming in at 1.453. By 2019, it was already at 1.419 - an increase of 0.130 in 4 years, compared to 2015⁷⁹.

Naturally, the above statistics cannot be attributed one hundred percent as the effect of the “Family 500 plus” program alone, but said Program, along with other social and family schemes introduced over the years 2015-2020 has been instrumental in increasing the quality of life of families in Poland

including children. As experts point out, family benefits, only during the first two years of the Program’s operation, were almost three times less costly and similarly effective in relieving extreme poverty. Additionally, it is indicated that families without income from employment are especially protected from poverty of both types if they are single parent families with 2 or 3 children⁸⁰.

The “Family 500 plus” program is said to contribute to stable and sustainable economic development. Long-term impact and ensuring a sense of security for families are mentioned as one of its main assets in this context. The Program’s goal is not actually achieved by supporting individual families or individuals. As experts point out, the beneficiaries of expenditures from “500 plus” are not only parents, but the entire society - because their children pay for everyone’s pensions, they become an element of the entire economy, balancing benefits and costs between the parties⁸¹.

FERTILITY RATE IN POLAND AFTER 5 YEARS OF “500 PLUS”



73 Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004 – 2015, GUS, 5.09.2016 r.

74 Ibidem

75 Total unemployment rate, TPS00203, Eurostat (UNE_RT_A).

76 People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex, EU-SILC, ilc_peps01, Eurostat.

77 Ubóstwo w Polsce w latach 2015 i 2016, GUS, dz. cyt., p. 6.

78 Zasięg ubóstwa ekonomicznego w Polsce w 2019 r., GUS, 30.06.2020 r.

79 <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/struktura-ludnosci,16,1.html> [12.04.2021 r.]

80 Ryszard Szarfenberg, „Dwa lata Programu 500 Plus a ubóstwo rodzin i dzieci”, Rodzina w społeczeństwie – relacje i wyzwania, red. Elżbieta Osewska, Józef Stala Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie, Kraków 2019, p. 75–97.

81 <https://www.bankier.pl/wiadomosc/500-ma-pozytywny-wplyw-na-gospodarke-7672807.html> [14.04.2021 r.]

SUMMARY

The “Family 500 plus” program, born during the 2014 election campaign, was a natural step that Poland had to take in terms of responsible family policy of a mature European country. Family support is hardly new to Europe, as shown by the presence of such benefits in EU and EEA countries, and the proper design of the entire system and the benefit instrument is key to achieving positive demographic and social outcomes

It is not a great effort to spend money from the state budget in a certain amount, over a certain period of time, under certain conditions, as was the case with, for example, the so-called “becikowe”. The challenge is to create a comprehensive system that provides a regular and long-term network of support for the basic social unit - family.

Proper organization, finding funds and correct construction of relations between complementary social programs was the task set by the Polish government in 2015. From the perspective of 5 years of the “Family 500 plus” program, it can be said that

the “Polish 500 plus model” has been designed and implemented successfully with a significant (and positive) impact on the indicators and statistics projected in 2015. The Polish example can serve as a model for other countries, in the context of how an effective pro-family policy should look like and how a multi-billion euro project should be implemented - that is not an investment in infrastructure, housing, fuel or industry, but in people and the most important long-term investment that every country in the world and every society can make - children.

Although the number of births or the costs of supporting a family are influenced by many different factors, with the recent COVID-19 pandemic disrupting normal trends and tendencies in society and the economy - in such difficult times of the “covidian” crisis, the certainty of receiving the monthly benefit of PLN 500 for each child is a valuable contribution to the sense of security of Polish families and may serve as a guide for similar actions by other countries that are more severely affected by the coronavirus crisis.



newdirection.online



[@europeanreform](https://twitter.com/europeanreform)



[@europeanreform](https://www.instagram.com/europeanreform)