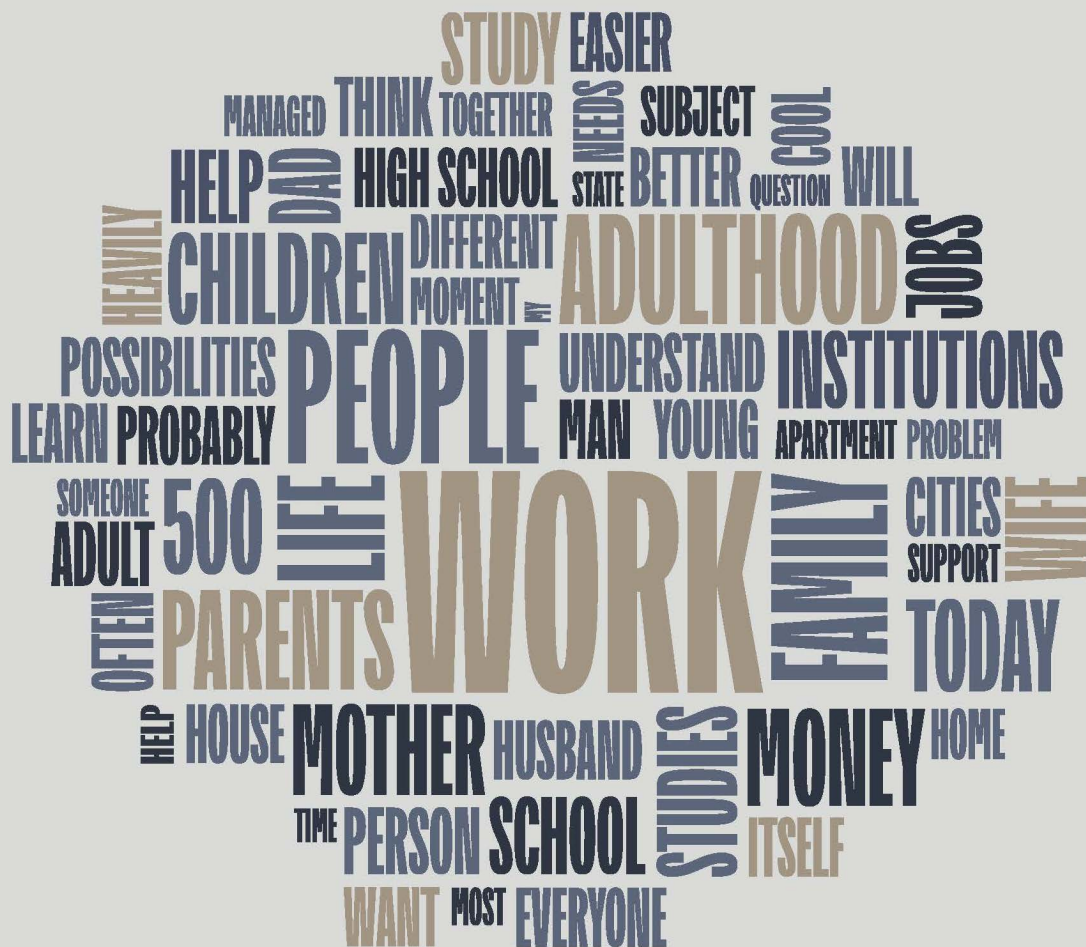Jolanta Grotowska-Leder
Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn
Marcin Gońda
Marcin Kotras

Completed adulthood
& public policies

How institutional and policy instruments
facilitate the educational, vocational, family
and civic life of Polish young adults?

Completed adulthood & public policies

Jolanta Grotowska-Leder
Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn
Marcin Gońda
Marcin Kotras

Completed adulthood & public policies

How institutional and policy instruments
facilitate the educational, vocational, family
and civic life of Polish young adults?

Jolanta Grotowska-Leder (ORCID: 0000-0001-5034-0511)
– Warsaw University of Social Life, Institute of Sociological Studies & Pedagogy
Department of Sociology, 02-787 Warsaw, Nowoursynowska 166 St.

Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn (ORCID: 0000-0002-5716-0086)
Marcin Gońda (ORCID: 0000-0003-0940-8849)
– University of Lodz, Faculty of Economics and Sociology, Institute of Sociology
Department of Applied Sociology and Social Work, 90-214 Łódź, Rewolucji 1905 r. 41 St.

Marcin Kotras (ORCID: 0000-0002-8939-3685)
– University of Lodz, Faculty of Economics and Sociology, Institute of Sociology
Department of Sociology of Politics and Morality
90-255 Łódź, Polskiej Organizacji Wojskowej 3/5 St.

Contents

6 Contents

8   Contents

Introduction:
About the problem of achieving adulthood and the project

The subject of analysis in this book is the transition into adulthood of young Poles, a process as weighty as it is problematic from the perspective of the functioning of individuals and entire societies. Adulthood is multidimensional and a very complex phenomenon. In subjective terms, it means achieving the identity of an adult. In objective terms, it means meeting social expectations related to fulfilling the key social roles of an adult, i.e., completing education, having a permanent job, and starting a household and family. When members of the young generation enter the roles of adults, they become responsible for themselves and others, autonomous and independent, and they contribute to realising the common good. It is important to create conditions in society for young people to develop their demographic and economic potential.

Achieving adulthood is an important stage in human life and has always been the subject of social reflection. Arrangements regarding adulthood - how it is defined and when it is achieved - change and are discussed because the transition into adulthood is closely connected with the stage of social development. Adulthood, like the other phases of life, is defined by social activities and is determined by institutional and legal norms that result from gender-based cultural, religious and moral norms. Since the beginning of the modern age, this stage of life has been integrated around two social roles: the professional role and the family role, undertaken in linear order. The period of achieving adulthood did not last very long, and human biographies were predictable and stabilised the social order. Achieving adulthood is the attainment of socio-economic status by finishing education and entering the labour market, which influences the individual's further development and integration into other aspects of social life, as members of their own family, citizens and consumers.

The transition from a modern to a postmodern society is a time of fundamental changes in terms of values, available opportunities and life choices, and achieving adulthood emerges as a separate life stage with a unique role and distinctive features (Arendt 2004; Brzezińska, Syska 2016). In the postmodern stage, the patterns of entering adulthood have changed as a result of individualisation, economic crises

and the deregulation of the labour market. The transition into adulthood should lead to socio-economic and political maturity, defined by full participation in social life, which René Bendit (2006) calls *completed adulthood*. However, this stage of life has become a time of experimenting when making career choices, building intimate relationships, undertaking various social activities, building one's own identity and shaping one's attitudes. It has also become the period for solving crucial dilemmas regarding commitment to stable relationships, partnerships or social isolation (Erikson 1968). It offers individuals an opportunity to gain a better insight into their personal needs and development, and to build self-esteem and control over their life. There is also growing social consent for young people to postpone the completed adulthood for the sake of greater self-fulfilment, satisfactory identities and choices. All these experiences delay becoming fully adult. Young people stay longer in the school system; they later find a job that allows them to live independently; they leave the family home later, entering into permanent relationships and then deciding to have a child later (i.e. Arnett 2004; Bendit 2006; Slany 2006b; Jensen, Arnett 2012; Côté, Bynner 2008; Kotowska et al. 2016). This stage of biography has become destandardised and has ceased to be linear, and the subjective criteria that determine adulthood are becoming more important. The new emerging paths of transitioning to adulthood make this stage an increasingly differentiated and unpredictable reality, and the situation of young people is becoming problematised in scientific and journalistic discourse.

It is not only the stage of development that determines the pace and patterns of reaching adulthood but also the type of society and its economic condition. In more economically developed societies, young people become independent faster because they enter the labour market faster and their jobs are more stable. In economically less prosperous and less stable societies, the position of young people in the labour market is worse; they are at risk of losing their jobs, they earn less, and their paths to independence are getting longer (Szafraniec 2012b).

This book presents the results of a project entitled "*Public policies for completed adulthood. The case of Poland*", conducted between 2015 and 2020.[1] The objective of the project was to identify pathways of achieving completed adulthood by young Poles who were aged 18 in 2004, the year of Poland's accession to the European Union (EU). It also aimed to expand the knowledge about the influence of institutional and policy instruments on their transitions into adulthood. Most recent research that deals with the process of achieving adulthood concentrates on individual, psycho-sociological and structural conditions and less often on economic and political factors. What makes analysis presented in the book more full and applicable is that it also considers the institutional and policy factors that shape the process.

---

1   For a selected project findings, see previously published articles by project members (Jolanta Grotowska-Leder, Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Marcin Kotras, Marcin Gońda, Iwona Kudlińska-Chróścicka) in the References.

To reconstruct the complex process of young Poles becoming adults and their access to support during this time, the research process was framed by the adoption of four theoretical perspectives. From the concepts of *life course* and *life course institutionalisation,* it was assumed that individual life courses reflect key characteristics of socio-economic and political changes, that people construct their lives actively, and that both informal and formal social networks influence their life courses. It was also assumed that life course is institutionalised, meaning that a set of rules regulate at what age a person is obliged to take up key social activities like finishing education, starting a permanent job and setting up a family to fulfil specific functions for the benefit of society (Kohli 1986) and that there is a differentiation of life-course patterns according to gender and for different segments of the social structure (i.e. Bertaux, Thompson 1993).

The transition into adulthood comprises a few important processes that concern various dimensions of life which should be supported by the state. In shaping the paths to independence that are available for different segments of society, elements of state regulations of family and housing policy play a key role, along with key principles and institutional arrangements of education and labour market policies. The influence of public policies on the patterns of transitions into adulthood available to young people was framed by *the concept of life course policy,* understood as a set of instruments that purposely address the structure of the life course, both with the intention to change it and with no intention to change it (Leisering 2003; Leibfried 1992).

According to *the constructivist approach,* the creation and implementation of institutional solutions in public policy depend mainly on the social definition of groups and categories that require support or control (Ingram et al. 2007). The approach to social policy also assumes that policymakers manipulate social constructs in building their political position through the state redistributing resources. The actual support (benefits) granted to social groups and categories results from their image as "deserving", which highly correlates with their access and impact on political power (Schneider, Ingram 2008). In order to reconstruct young Poles' pathways to achieving completed adulthood and the influence of Polish public policies on the patterns of transitions into adulthood, the research included young adults aged 25-34. At the age of 25, people are at a special moment in life when (usually after completing formal education) they make important decisions related to professional and private life. Meanwhile, the upper limit of 34 years is used in public statistics and some legal regulations aimed at young Poles. It also corresponds with demographic criteria for determining young people, since people aged 30-35 are also considered young in various studies (cf. Szafraniec 2012a; Golinowska 2015; Piotrowski 2013).

To achieve the project's aims, multi-method (employing a mostly qualitative approach) and multi-sited research was conducted. There were used desktop analysis of secondary data and qualitative collection methods (FGI and IDI

interviews with groups of young adult and regional and local administration representatives who deal with the labour market, education, family or housing). The analysis also covered Polish legal acts concerning young people, official statistics, official documents and strategic documents formulated at the national and local levels of administration in selected two communities (the Lodz and Zdunska Wola provinces).

The project did not provide for the publication of monographs to present the research results. Thus, twenty-four papers were presented systematically at international and national conferences, as well as seventeen articles were published in scientific journals and chapters of collective works. This book was created in response to the interest in the problem of achieving adulthood and young Poles' transition into adulthood formulated during discussions at conferences. The content of the book includes some previously published analyses. They are mainly fragments concerning the theoretical and methodological framework of research and analyses on some of the categories of young adults surveyed (i.e. residents of a large city, women, people leaving foster care) in terms of their professional activity and life paths, as well as opinions formulated by young adults on solutions in social policy in the context of the transition to adulthood. These fragments of the considerations are annotated.

In the monograph, these key analyses are embedded in the full empirical material. The completely new issues presented in the book primarily concern the macro structural contexts of young Poles' transition to adulthood, their understanding of adulthood, and the paths they pursue in achieving the key roles of an adult: educational, professional, independent and family roles, as well as institutional solutions within the framework of public policies to support the process of achieving adulthood.

The book consists of three main parts, covering nine chapters, short Conclusions, References and The List of Tables and Appendices. The first part, entitled "*Conceptual and methodological framework*", contains a brief justification for researching the transition into adulthood, general information about the project, and the theoretical and methodological framework of the research. In the first chapter, "*Transition into adulthood – theoretical frameworks*", the considerations concern the understanding of adulthood from three key perspectives: sociopsychological, institutional and constructivist. It also characterises markers of adulthood and presents the concepts of the transition into adulthood and selected empirical patterns of entering adulthood. The second chapter, "*Research methods and procedures*", presents the methodology (i.e. the qualitative and quantitative approaches used, the research tools and the research sample), as well as the characteristics of the collected empirical material and comments on the course of the research.

The next two parts of the book are based on the empirical study. Part two titled "*The transition into adulthood in the experience of Poles*" (Chapters 3-8)*,* analyses the life paths implemented by Polish young adults at the stage of their transition to adulthood. It also presents the characteristics of the contexts – cultural,

structural and political – which determine young Poles' possibilities and their choices of life paths. Chapters 4-6 present the educational, professional and family paths of young adults revealed in the course of the qualitative research. The analyses of the young Polish adults' educational, professional and family situations are exemplified by the results of research conducted among a deliberately selected group of 60 thirty-year-olds. The vast majority were born in 1986 (residents of the Lodz and Zdunska Wola provinces), although there were some born a few years later, who had left foster care. Each of these parts also contains official statistics that document phenomena indicating a prolonged process of reaching adulthood for young Poles.

Four transition paths to adulthood are distinguished and described, which recognise a relatively stable position in the labour market and starting a family as key stages on the way to completed adulthood: *completed adulthood, career-oriented adulthood, unstable adulthood* and *unanchored adulthood*. These paths document the diverse multidimensional experiences of young Poles in this phase of life (Chapter 7). Special attention is paid to those who left foster care as a category that more often experiences multiple deprivations, limiting their freedom to successfully follow favourable pathways into adulthood and whose life courses are highly institutionalised. An important aspect of the analyses is the problem of the solutions aimed at young adults in the programmes of regional and urban development strategies and Polish political parties. It is discussed with young Poles' opinions on their presence in politics and civic engagement in Chapter 8.

Studies of the transition into adulthood sporadically refer to legal regulations created as part of social policy. Such analysis is taken up in the last part of the book, "*Public policies for completed adulthood in Poland. Conclusions and discussions*". Chapter 9 presents the state of public policies in Poland and the most important policies that are significant for the process of entering adulthood. Subchapter 9.3. titled "*Mapping public policies for young adults*", presents various types of support and facilities directly or indirectly addressed at young adults in Polish public policies in areas of life crucial for reaching adulthood, i.e. education policy, labour market policy, housing policy, family policy and social policy.

The last part of the book, the Conclusions called "*Proposals concerning social policy*" contains the proposals, which point out that it is necessary to rebuild the Polish system of social policy so that it better meets the needs not only of those young adults who are in a difficult life situation (traditional groups who require support from public institutions) but also those who need support tailored to their needs to allow them to smoothly enter the path of completed adulthood.

* * *

* * *

While carrying out the field research, we cooperated with the authorities of Lodz and the Zdunska Wola county. Thanks to their organisational support, it was possible to efficiently conduct our research.

This book is based on in-depth interviews (IDIs) with Polish young adults and focus group interviews (FGIs) with employees of local institutions involved in organising support for residents, including young people. The greatest thanks go to our respondents. Without their help, and the fact that they agreed to find time for the research team in their busy schedules, we could not have brought this project to fruition. We are very grateful that so many young people shared their experiences, thoughts, and reflections on their transition to adulthood. Final thanks go to the staff of the support institutions which organise help for young people in this period of life.

The Project team

PART I

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1
Transition into adulthood – theoretical frameworks

Adulthood has long been treated intuitively and was not problematised (Glanc 2011), and its criteria have been regarded as unambiguous. The definitions and characteristics of adulthood were first discussed at the dawn of post-modern society, a stage of violent changes in terms of values, social relations, and life choices. Adulthood itself is a biological and psychological process, but the meaning of being "young" or "adult" is socially and culturally constructed.

1.1. Understanding the complete transition into adulthood

1.1.1. Adulthood as a stage of psycho-social development

In developmental psychology, adulthood is one of the developmental phases of an individual. It is described in terms of the development of psycho-social abilities, and it occurs in a linear order after the periods of childhood and adolescence. Robert Havighurst, the author of the developmental task concept, defines adulthood through developmental tasks related to age and maturity, i.e. problems that an individual faces in a given period of life (cf. Czerka 2008; Gurba 2011). According to Havighurst, an adult is characterised by (emotional and financial) independence and the implementation of social roles related mainly to family and professional life (Brzezińska, Piotrowski 2010: 18). It is the longest phase in human development, lasting six to seven decades on average, and it is heterogeneous in terms of the human biopsychosocial changes that take place. It starts at the age of 17-18 and consists of three-four phases.[1] Sets of development tasks for each phase result from social expectations formulated for people in a given age range.

---

1 According to Erik Erikson, Barbara Harwas-Napierała, Janusz Trempała, Anna Brzezińska, there are three phases of adulthood: early and middle adulthood and late maturity.

At the stage of early adulthood, the set of developmental tasks includes: choosing an occupation, selecting a life partner, starting and raising a family, managing the home, undertaking civic responsibility and finding a congenial social group. The tasks that an individual has to perform at the stage of middle adulthood (the phase of generativity, Erikson 1968) include managing one's own professional development and achieving professional stability, family stability and caring for other people (mainly dependent family members, e.g. children or ageing parents), as well as the affirmation of creativity when organising spare time. At the later maturity stage, a person should adapt to lower physical fitness, a lower income, changes in family structure and social contacts with peers (cf. Mazurek, Stępień 2017: 5-7; Appelt 2005: 526).

1.1.2. Adulthood as a social phenomenon/institution

The course of human life from birth to death is regulated by institutions – relatively permanent social systems of ways and rules of behaviour sanctioned by social norms. They include the education system, the labour market and the pension system, as well as informal sets of rules and conventions, e.g. the division of roles between men and women (Kohli 2007) and the younger and older generations in the family and in society. The institution is also a "life course", with a traditional tripartite division into the time of studying, the time of professional activity and the time of retirement. Through legal norms and regulations, the state defines and structures the course of human life, i.e. it determines at what age a person is socially obliged to perform certain activities and fulfil specific functions for the benefit of society. In this way, a homogenisation of life stages takes place (Dannefer, Settersten Jr. 2010, as cited in Zapędowska-Kling 2017: 64), i.e. "childhood", "youth", "adulthood" and "old age" gain a universal meaning. Adulthood, like the other phases of life, is defined by socially defined social activities, based on norms passed on in the process of cultural transmission. In contemporary societies, it is integrated around two social roles: the professional role and the family role (Kohli 2007: 254-256), undertaken in linear order (succession) at a certain time (moment in life). It is determined by institutional and legal norms, norms resulting from cultural, gender, religious and moral norms, which makes human biographies predictable. This is essential to stabilise the social order while limiting individuals' well-being and freedom to make decisions in the context of age-related norms and beliefs about what is "appropriate" or not at a given age.

However, Daniel Levinson indicates four phases: young, early, middle and late adulthood (Dubas 2009; Brzezińska 2013).

1.1.3. Adulthood as a socio-cultural construct

Cultures imbue age with meanings. There is no universal age when a person is no longer considered young. The socio-cultural definition of being an adult is based on what a culture normatively views as being the required criteria for adulthood, which in turn influences the lives of individuals within that culture. The perception of adulthood as a social construct differs depending on the society and social group: it is perceived differently in traditional societies, modern societies, demographically old and demographically young societies, in the imagination of young people, and in the imagination of adults themselves, but always in relation to the culturally shaped personal model of an adult recognised in a given society, and as a set of desirable features and properties. Cultures treat their adults differently and attach different values to adult age, which also results in an individual interpretation of age.

The social construction of adulthood has gained new dimensions in postmodern society, at the stage of fundamental changes in terms of values, available opportunities and life choices. Against the backdrop of an increasingly differentiating and unpredictable reality, adulthood is constructed by the individual as an active and reflexive subject (cf. Arnett 2004), through the prism of "the process of experiencing one's own adulthood" (Dubas 2015: 11). According to this constructionist approach[2], adulthood has become an individual project which draws on a large range of possibilities, opportunities and ideas that flow from people's individual needs, social fashions or global tendencies. At the same time, the boundaries of adulthood have become fluid, and crossing them is difficult to determine.

1.1.4. Models of understanding adulthood

Currently, three co-occurring models of understanding adulthood are indicated. According to the static concept, adulthood is understood as the social state that an individual achieves at some point in his life. Adulthood is determined by objective factors such as biopsychological changes and age, which determine the assumption of new socially important roles and responsibilities (e.g. that of a parent, employee or citizen). From a dynamic perspective, adulthood is considered a process of mental development or a socio-cultural process, which is a constant process of "becoming". It means that it is subject to change, and adulthood is treated as a lifelong process of becoming an adult, moving towards maturity, and it is determined by subjective rather than objective factors (Malewski 1990). In the postmodern

---

2   According to constructionism, people perceive reality through the prism of their culture and experience, assigning certain meanings to what they see. Thus, no one can observe an objective reality, detached from given meanings and contexts. From this perspective, a human being, as a closed cognitive system, is not able to know reality; they can only construct it (i.e. Berger, Luckmann 1967; Burr 2003; Miś 2008).

model, adulthood has become a relative and ambivalent category. The relativity of categories reflects the behaviour of older adults who pursue the lifestyle of young people, or the behaviour of adolescents who want to enjoy the privileges of adulthood (e.g. make decisions about themselves and their lives) while postponing taking on tasks traditionally assigned to them and not being willing to take responsibility for their lives (Dubas 2015). In post-modern society, the stage of adulthood is characterised by variability, exploration and self-conviction (cf. Glanc 2011).

1.2. Criteria and markers of adulthood[3]

Adulthood is a multidimensional and interdisciplinary phenomenon, which is reflected in the set of criteria that define it (see Table 1). Almost all adulthood researchers (e.g. Hogan, Roberts 2004; Reitzle 2006; Luyckx et al. 2008, as cited in Brzezińska et al. 2011; Piotrowski 2013) distinguish between objective and subjective markers of adulthood.

1.2.1. Objective criteria for adulthood

The objective criteria for defining adulthood include characteristics that constitute observable biological and social facts. Being an adult is associated with biological changes in the body: breast development and the first menstruation, which mark the beginning of the reproductive period in girls; a sharp increase in body weight and testosterone as well as body development in boys (Lew-Starowicz, Skrzypiec-Plinta 2010). The transition to adulthood as a turning point for the individual and society is publicly symbolised in the form of rites inscribed in the systems of different cultures, and it is also legally regulated. In the light of this perspective, the ritual of becoming an adult means the acquisition of the status of an adult with the corresponding rights and duties. The legal definition stipulates that an adult is a person who has reached the age at which they are considered responsible for their own actions and are therefore legally accountable.

According to the objective, classic approach, adulthood represents demographic and social criteria[4], called the "*Big Five*" in academic papers (Havighurst 1981;

---

3   The reflections presented in this and subsequent parts of the chapter draw on previous studies conducted by the team members. See, in particular: Grotowska-Leder et al. (2016), Grotowska-Leder, Kudlińska (2018) and Kudlińska-Chróścicka (2019).

4   The role of biological factors as determinants of the transition to adulthood has diminished. In traditional societies, reaching physical and reproductive maturity simply coincided with the assumption of adult responsibilities.

Bendit 2006; Settersten 2011; Wiszejko-Wierzbicka, Kwiatkowska 2018). These include performing social roles normatively assigned to adults, i.e. completing education, taking up the first job, leaving the family home, living independently and running one's own household, and building a lasting intimate relationship, including getting married and having children (cf. Bendit 2006; Havighurst 1981). In studies on reaching adulthood, such social markers are the most commonly used indicators when recognising an adult (Zacares et al. 2015).

Table 1. Typologies of adulthood markers by different approaches

	Adulthood markers
Biological and physical	▪ For girls – breast development and first menstruation. For boys – voice change, rapid increase in body weight (including genitalia) and testosterone
Cultural	▪ Rites of passage related to entering adulthood, e.g. bar mitzvah in Jewish culture, the sacrament of confirmation (taking a new name) in Christian culture and some Papuan Tribes, or Quinceañera in Latin American culture ▪ Initiation rites (e.g. *sikhebo*, a circumcision ceremony of the Bukusu tribe, or the painful procedures of incising the penis, tearing ears and nose, and pulling a few teeth in Aboriginal people)
Legal	▪ Reaching legal age (the legal status of an individual as defined by civil law after reaching a given age: usually around 17-18, 18 in Poland). Reaching the age of majority can be accelerated in exceptional situations (e.g. in Poland, based on the court decision, young women can be treated as adults after the age of 16 by entering into a marriage) ▪ Acquiring civil rights (as a result of reaching the age of majority) in the sense of entitlement to various privileges, e.g. employment under an employment contract, voting in elections, the legal use of certain substances (cigarettes and alcohol), possession of firearms, independently travelling abroad, obtaining a driving licence and marriage ▪ Leaving parental custody (as a result of reaching the age of majority) in the sense of terminating parental responsibility for the child
Objective/ demographic and social/social role criteria	▪ Moving out of the family home/living independently ▪ Completing education and/or acquiring professional qualifications ▪ Regular employment ▪ Building a lasting relationship, including marriage ▪ Having children
Subjective/ self-perception/ psychological criteria	▪ Readiness to take responsibility for oneself and others ▪ Emotional independence, feeling free to choose and make decisions independently ▪ Sense of being an adult

Source: Grotowska-Leder, Kudlińska (2018).

1.2.2. Subjective criteria for adulthood

Activities indicated as objective markers of adulthood are undertaken later nowadays, and they no longer create a normatively imposed linear course of life, e.g. completing education does not mean taking up stable employment, starting a family does not mean running one's own household, and taking up the first job does not mean economic independence. Therefore, in addition to objective markers of adulthood, it is proposed that "subjective adulthood" be included as a criterion (e.g. Arnett 2000; Barker, Galambos 2005; Benson, Elder 2011). Apart from the important issue of the satisfactory implementation of social roles, the subjective sense of being an adult is a very important element of an adult's identity both for the individual and their social environment (Côté 1996). Subjective indicators of adulthood include the following competencies that characterise an adult: independence, autonomy, independent decision-making, self-reliance and readiness to face the consequences of one's own choices, the ability to build lasting relationships, a sense of responsibility for others and a sense of adulthood (Brzezińska et al. 2011; Gurba 2011). Psychological markers mean reformulating traditional indicators of adulthood into a narrative of reconstructing an independent, adult, mature self (Silva 2012; Bellah et al. 1985; Illouz 2008). In a subjective, otherwise therapeutic approach, being an adult is confirmed by defining oneself as an independent person and being responsible for oneself and for loved ones and the choices they make (cf. Brzezińska, Syska 2016; Arnett 2004; more broadly on this topic Kudlińska-Chróścicka 2019).

Objective and subjective perspectives should be treated as complementary, not mutually exclusive, as both objective (social) and subjective (mental) adulthood criteria are applied in adulthood research (Bendit 2006; Oleś 2011[5]). Research reveals that the sense of adulthood is strongly related to the individual's age and current life situation (education, professional activity and having a partner) (Brzezińska, Piotrowski 2010). Young people often do not put their own adulthood into the context of objective and straightforward chronological and legal attributes, but into the context of an adult person's characteristics, individual features such as the ability to support the family (not only having a family), financial independence (not only having a job), and psychological characteristics such as acceptance or responsibility (Gurba 2011).

---

5   Piotr Oleś (2011) used three criteria to recognise someone as an adult in his research: the type of life tasks performed (primarily starting a family and starting a professional activity); taking responsibility for oneself and other people; and emotional independence (a sense of freedom of choice and independence in decision-making).

1.3. Theoretical approaches to the transition into adulthood

1.3.1. Life course and life course regime

Human life includes various events and experiences from birth to death. In the classical life cycle approach, every person goes through the same sequence of phases: youth, adulthood, and old age. These stages are closely related to age, i.e. biological and physical development, but they vary little across time and place. With the beginning of the 1960s, a more dynamic approach to analysing the course of individuals' lives was formed. The new category of life course underlines more the importance of changing external factors, which with individuals' biological and psychological transformations, condition individuals' lives (cf. Elder 1998; Giele, Elder 1998; Dobrowolska 1992). The life course category (or trajectory or biography) refers to the dynamics of an individual's life, i.e. to the sequence and intensity of events, experiences or experiences that accompany the implementation of various "careers" (educational, professional, family, marital, civic), and ultimately forming a certain type of biography (Rysz-Kowalczyk, Szatur-Jaworska 2004: 2). Sociology looks at individual life courses not as expressions of an unfolding personality but mostly as regularities "produced" by institutions and structural opportunities[6].

Martin Kohli, the author of the concept of the institutionalisation of the life course (1986, 2007), states that the life course is a relatively autonomous institution of modern society governed by its own internal logic. Its individual phases and careers, especially occupational and family careers, are subject to the processes of integration (Kohli 2007: 256). A normatively conceived biographical pattern is associated with implementing two fundamental roles: a family member and employee, and also roles assumed in leisure time. This way of managing life, which is a product of modernity, defines several processes relevant for analysing the transition to adulthood (Kohli 1986: 272): temporalisation, i.e. the growing importance of time as a dimension of life in general, and chronologisation, i.e. the standardisation of the normative pattern of the life course based on its successive phases (childhood, adolescence, adulthood). In the light of this approach, the construction of the life course is based on gainful employment, which signifies a crucial phase for the subsequent stages of life in the life course model.

Until the 1970s, social scientists showed that most demographic events that mark adulthood occurred early, within a relatively limited time span, and usually in sequential order – people left home and entered the workforce, got married,

---

6   In contrast to the sociology of the life course, the psychology of lifespan development refers primarily to the internal development of individuals, namely psychological functioning and the development of an individual's psychological features (for more on the category of life course and life cycle in sociological and psychological approach, see Diewald, Mayer 2008).

and became parents a few years later (Hendry, Kloep 2007). Most young adults married in their late teens or very early twenties and had their first child about a year later. Before getting married, they lived with their parents, and a relatively small proportion obtained higher education (Arnett 2000). Assigning key social responsibilities (education, employment and starting a family) according to an individual's age is a rational basis for society and individuals to plan activities and evaluate actions taken in the institutions of social life as well as individuals' life plans and biographies (Kohli 1986, as cited in Brzezińska et al. 2011: 72-73). The life course defined in this way made age and generational affiliation one of the most important dimensions of social differentiation in both economic and gender terms. In industrial societies life course patterns for men and women differ, and the corresponding patterns of "education-work-family" and "education-family-work" differed somewhat in different segments of the social structure.

Researchers indicate that in recent decades, the life cycle and life course patterns have changed significantly against the backdrop of the formation of post-modern society, the growing dynamics of development processes in various spheres of life, and increased life expectancy. The linear programme of development priorities is losing its significance in favour of individualistic choices (Czerka 2008). The three main phases of life are fragmented[7], and the transition between them is becoming more complicated. The life course is becoming more flexible, and the normative corset of closely determined stages of life is loosening (Kohli 2007). The pattern of a "normal professional biography" – typical of the post-war socio-economic order and characterised by the permanent and full-time employment of men and the short-term, part-time or episodic employment of women (wives and mothers) – is changing. The observed deconstruction of the model of biography organised around professional and family roles implemented in a specific temporal order is the result of the individualisation of life[8].

The process freed human biography from fixed relationships and made it dependent on individuals' own decisions (Beck 2002: 202). An individual, as *homo optionis,* must now decide about every aspect of his life for himself and try to construct his identity and life paths. Life stories become "biographies by choice", "reflexive biographies", or "experimental biographies" (Olcoń-Kubicka 2009)[9]. Ulrich Beck associates these changes with the disintegration of the key structures

---

7   The phases of life have an inner structure e.g. youth covers childhood and adolescence, adulthood covers early, middle and late adulthood, while old age comprises the young old, the middle old and the very old.

8   There are two phases of individualization: the first dated to the end of the nineteenth century, the second to the 1970s (Olcoń-Kubicka 2009). According to Beck, the process of individualization is a structural fact, imposed on people by the system, regardless of their will (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2002).

9   It is assumed that successes and failures in life do not result from external factors but an individual's actions and decisions. Illness and the loss of a job are identified as the inability to manage one's life. Prophylaxis and regular medical check-ups, as well as timely retraining, minimise such risks (cf. Olcoń-Kubicka 2009).

of social security, namely the family, but also the labour market and the welfare state, which were shattered by the economic crisis. In his opinion, despite these processes, the life paths shaped by individuals show many similarities, as biographies undergo globalisation due to the development of contemporary media and the strongly accentuated idea of personal development and personal fulfilment (Beck 2002; Olcoń-Kubicka 2009). Kohli, in turn, emphasises the superficiality of the changes and the limited standardisation of the contemporary life model. According to him, the life course, as a social institution, is a determinant of individual biographies. However, Kohli leaves room for interpretation and activity and even a certain normative imperative of openness to the "biographisation" of life as a project. In this sense, individualisation does not necessarily lead to the disintegration of the social order at all; it actually leads to the formation of new institutional patterns (Kohli 2007: 255).

Analysing the risks faced by the contemporary individual, Gosta Esping-Andersen points to the "life course risk" as a different possibility of independence in the sense of ensuring one's own means of subsistence, which varies depending on age/stage of life (2010). Therefore, social policy activities have been reoriented towards building a life course policy that aims to manage the life course as an important sphere of public life (Chevalier 2016). The life course regime leads to "the establishment of an institutional structure and criteria for the organisation of social life that will enable each generation to be optimally synchronised at each stage of life: biological, psychological and social time" (Rysz-Kowalczyk, Szatur--Jaworska 2004: 231). It involves, among other things, identifying and removing barriers to satisfying those needs whose absence may distort the course of subsequent phases. Actions must be timely so that conflicts between the needs of people at different stages in life do not disrupt the rhythm of successive generations and/or prevent the use of the potential that is inherent in each phase of life for the common good (ibid.).

Implementing the approach requires, first and foremost, an assessment of the living conditions and causes of the difficult situation of social groups at a given stage. It also requires an explanation of the reasons for their "weaknesses", an identification of opportunities for them to overcome difficulties, and a reconstruction of the institutional and political framework of biographical processes (Leisering 2003; Bovenberg 2007; Zapędowska-Kling 2017). Examples of such actions include instruments targeted at the youngest groups in terms of education and healthcare, or at selected groups of adults, e.g. the elderly. In a sense, some social policy regimes constructed around strongly problematised social phenomena refer to this way of thinking. The gender regime has to do with, e.g. securing entitlements to benefits at different stages of life (Connell 2010)[10], while the labour

---

10   A gender regime refers to the state of play of gender relations understood as practice which shapes various patterns of femininity and masculinity (via e.g. curricula, social security mechanisms such as the retirement age, entitlement to paternity leaves, benefits for mothers, etc. (Connell 2010).

market regime helps people to move into work, keeps people close to the labour market, and moves them back into work as quickly as possible (Gooderham et al. 2015). The persistent high risk of youth unemployment is commonly problematised (in Poland e.g. Giermanowska 2001; Kiersztyn 2015).

The need to secure the transition to adulthood as important phase of biography leads to the formation of a transition regime, i.e. to ensure a smooth transition by social policy institutions. More precisely, these are sectoral policies that target education, the labour market (employment support programmes and the fight against unemployment among the youth) and social welfare. On the one hand, these regimes imply that young people are perceived as one common target group with collectively defined needs and priorities. On the other hand, these regimes refer to processes of individualisation and fragmentation since young people come from different backgrounds, are of different genders and have different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, they are subject to different regulations and are addressees of different, specific forms of intervention.

The shaping of the welfare regime, including the life course policy, takes into account discourses and relationships between the individual and society, and assumptions about what is the standard of social life – what is seen as "normal" (Chevalier 2016).

1.3.2. Concepts of entering adulthood

Economic and cultural processes (unfavourable economic conditions, the segmentation and flexibilisation of the labour market, the individualisation of life and the accompanying transformation of values and norms) have influenced the life course of young people in recent decades. Against the backdrop of difficulties in the labour market, young people started investing in secondary and higher education to achieve professional success and fulfilment in their private life. It resulted in postponed entry to the labour market and starting a family later on. Continuous changes, relativity, a lack of anchoring (of identity, values and capital), and the sense of uncertainty (Bauman 2006; Urbaniak 2014), which are all typical of liquid modernity, have resulted in an increasingly common strategy undertaken by young people to postpone adult decisions and choices and to postpone taking on socially-expected social roles. In the last two decades, it has been increasingly argued that the transition into adulthood has become much more complex, diversified, and prolonged than ever before (Jensen, Arnett 2012).

Conceptions of the emergence of a new phase of life between youth and adulthood are built in response to the above-mentioned changes. This new stage of life is referred to differently, e.g. *prolonged psychosocial moratorium* (Erikson 1968), *prolonged adolescence* (Béjin 1983), *post-adolescence* (Béjin 1983; Galland 2003), *emerging adulthood* (Arnett 2004), *young adulthood* (cf. Hartmann, Toguchi Swartz 2006; Gurba 2011), *emerging adulthood* (Côté,

Bynner 2008), *deferred adulthood* (Brzezińska et al. 2011), and the *deregulation of the life cycle* (Trempała 2006) – and it is broadly defined as the age between 18-20 and 35-40[11].

The new phase of life has become the subject of intensive scientific exploration. Socio-economic studies have paid more attention to the structural causes and consequences of delayed entry into adulthood, while demographic studies tried to understand the causes of the timing of parenthood. Three major perspectives were applied in sociological analyses of the transition to adulthood (Corijn 2001). First, the transition to adulthood was mainly treated in terms of the onset of multiple careers, and the start of dual-career investments, in particular, namely investing in work and the family (Goldscheider 1997; Buchmann 1989, as cited in Corijn 2001). It is treated as a highly intense period of status changes compared with other life course phases (Rindfuss 1991, as cited in Corijn 2001). It involves abandoning old roles, taking on new ones, and making (sometimes extensive) adjustments in biographical trajectories (Modell 1989, as cited in Corijn 2001).

A second perspective focuses on the structural constraints on the life course and societal mechanisms, which impose order and constraints on lives. It concentrates on institutional shifts, state interventions and regulations, cumulative contingencies and collective cohort conditions (Mayer 2009, as cited in Corijn 2001). According to Buchmann (1989, as cited in Corijn 2001), it is necessary to examine and understand how societies organise the transition to adulthood and how people manage and give meaning to their own biographies. The third perspective, which is more of a developmental psychological nature, describes the transition from dependence to independence, managing on their own or coming of age. Through a series of important role transitions, a dependent adolescent becomes a productive and reproductive adult who has changed his/her position of economic dependence and membership in the family of origin to economic independence and forming a family of procreation (Marini 1985; Modell 1989; Klijzing 1995, as cited in Corijn 2001).

In a normatively and chronologically defined life cycle organised around professional work, the first stage was education, then professional work, followed by economic self-reliance, marriage and parenthood. According to many researchers, the transition to adulthood is a multidimensional institutionalised process of changing statuses and acquiring social roles (entering the labour market, living on one's own and starting a family) and the development of an individual towards acquiring adult status (cf. Jones, Wallace 1992; Elder, O'Rand 1995; Hogan, Astone 1986). However, the modern model is being replaced by the post-modern model, which introduces destandardisation, deinstitutionalisation, and dechronologisation. Life paths are increasingly diverse, but also uncertain and unpredictable. As

---

11 Such a broad age range is because the criteria that define adulthood have become less unambiguous. However, as Krystyna Szafraniec (2012b: 103) observes, they cannot be so, as the pluralisation and hybridisation of age categories that are entrenched in social and economic reality and culture make it very difficult to define the moment when people cease to be young and become adults.

noted by Biggart et al. (2004: 9, as cited in Czerka 2008: 111): "Post-adolescence is a phase in which the young person may experience different jobs, living arrangements, have different partners, etc. In other words, post-adolescents are young people who may be independent in some aspects of their life, while in other ways, they may not have achieved adult status. For example, they may be living on their own, but still in education or have a job while still living with their parents".

Jeffrey J. Arnett, the author of a term *emerging adulthood*, explains that the distinct phase between adolescence and young adulthood is not simply an "extension of adolescence" since, during its duration, there is more independent exploration. Neither is it "early adulthood", as most twenty-year-olds have not made commitments related to adult status, such as marriage or parenthood. They also usually do not feel that they have reached the stage of adulthood (2004). For Arnett, the trait that distinguishes this group from adolescence and adulthood is the great effort to "explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews" (2000: 469). He borrows notions from the theories of Erikson and Levinson, emphasising instability, conflict with society, and the search for one's identity as crucial to this stage. Arnett admits that it is culturally specific, diverse, and not available to everyone, but throughout his writings, emerging adulthood and its accompanying identity searches are described as the new indication of a healthy young person and a representation of the advancement of an industrially developed society. For some critics of Arnett's concept, emerging adulthood, as a new stage of the life course, better explains the changes in economic conditions that lead to a lowering of the social status of the youth, which contributes to increasingly precarious trajectories. According to Côté (2006), emerging adulthood is a concept with a better explanatory value than a universal psychological, free-choice model. Irrespective of the terminology used by sociologists or psychologists, scholars point to the characteristics of this stage: its transitoriness and the related uncertainty, a plurality of choices, and the destandardisation and diversity of life patterns in terms of the timing of events and the sequence of the transition to adulthood (Shanahan, 2000). The attainment of full adulthood, i.e. socio-economic and political maturity, and full participation in social life, are preceded by an indeterminate period of exploration and experimentation in finding a career path of satisfactory activities, building intimate relationships and taking on social roles, as well as building one's own identity and attitudes (Bendit 2006).

1.3.3. Patterns of entering adulthood

Based on the above analysis, one may conclude that adulthood exhibits the following characteristics:
1) It ceased to be demographically normative and became less determined by external religious, moral, institutional and legal, as well as gendered norms (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Sennett 1998; Giddens 2013).

2) It became the individual project of each individual, drawing on a wide range of possibilities, opportunities and ideas that flow more from individual needs and global uniformity than from the ties created by institutions such as the traditional family, labour market, religion, the legal system and morality (Liefbroer, de Jong Gierveld 1995).

3) It has "fluid" boundaries; it is almost impossible to determine when the boundary is crossed. Young people appear to be in-between youth and adulthood; they are both young and adult, and neither young nor adult (Walther et al. 2001).

4) Reaching comleted adulthood takes longer and ends later (Bendit 2006). This is true of almost all young people, except for those from underprivileged backgrounds, as the legal and institutional system, in the absence of family resources and low social capital, "pushes" young people who are not ready for adult obligations into adulthood, especially those brought up in institutional foster care (Hogan, Astone 1986).

5) Entering adulthood, which follows a symbolic transition from youth to adulthood, has become a separate life phase with its own characteristics. This emerging adulthood is a time of exploration and experimentation in terms of seeking a professional path, building intimate relationships, undertaking satisfactory activities and social roles, and building one's own identity. It is a time full of a multitude of opportunities, choices and paths, tensions and conflicts[12], as well as (axiological) uncertainties (in the area of activities and one's own identity).

6) Young people become adults under difficult conditions. During childhood and adolescence, they are socialised into entering important social roles (partner/spouse, parent, employee, citizen and consumer) in a socially accepted manner, according to a specific "scenario", i.e. rhythm and timeliness. However, fulfilling these roles takes place with a vast array of possible paths and activities and growing cultural consent to experiment.

7) Increasingly often, the strategy that young people implement in the project of their own maturity is to delay "adult" decisions and choices and postpone entry into socially-expected social roles. According to Anna Brzezińska, there are two scenarios of transition to adulthood (2016):

---

12 Barbara Stauber and Andreas Walther identified three categories of conflict experienced by young people at this stage: a) divided lives – young people experience different aspects of life ascribed to both youth and adulthood, oscillating between freedom and responsibility; b) pending lives – young people do not want to be youths or adults. They do not accept the status of youth, as it has lost its clarity and the real goal of achieving full adult status. They do not perceive themselves as youths, but at the same time, they do not wish to become adults in the conventional sense; c) swinging lives – young people try to oscillate between different biographical phases, for example: young parents who cling to their youthful lifestyle, or thirty-year-olds living with their parents or moving back in with them when they become unemployed (Biggart, Stauber, Walther 2001).

a) Postponed adulthood, which is a conscious strategy to avoid making the most important life choices in favour of experimentation and testing various possibilities and paths. Adulthood is a challenge, a part of one's own life project. Young people interpret the moratorium on adulthood offered to them by their loved ones as the right to self-determination and free choices;

b) Delayed adulthood by external factors, mainly economic and structural ones, i.e. limited access to resources and support networks. Barriers include "the lack of (financial, emotional and cognitive) support from the surrounding, possible physical or health limitations, resources of the individual resulting from the quality and timeliness of their emotional, cognitive and socio-moral development to date, as well as the effect of this development in the form of various competencies" (ibid.: 25). Adulthood is seen as a risk and is avoided as long as possible.

As Benson and Furstenberg (2007) pointed out, young members of the middle and upper classes tend to focus on personal fulfilment, while the lower classes pursue traditional paths of entering adulthood (Silva 2012: 508). Young people from the lower classes tend to identify adulthood with finding a job and starting a family, while those with a higher socio-economic status from larger cities are more inclined to perceive adulthood as multidimensional and emphasise psychological factors (cf. Plug et al. 2003).

The life scenarios of young people are different not only due to their personal ambitions and experiences, but also the characteristics of the social system that frames them. Cecile van de Velde (2008, as cited in Wiszejko-Wierzbicka, Kwiatkowska 2018) studied young people from Denmark, the UK, France and Spain and outlined four models of entering adulthood due to the conditions in which the transition takes place. In the Scandinavian model, the independence of young people is guaranteed by the state, which offers diverse forms of financial support (e.g. scholarships). They foster the mobility of young people, starting with the stage of education, and they create conditions for independent living and running a household, as well as flexibility in combining professional career and education. These safeguards mean that young people enter adulthood earlier and do not experience a sense of insecurity at this stage of their lives. The British model emphasises individual emancipation and very early independence from the family and the state. In the French model, which de Velde perceives as the most normative, great importance is attributed to meeting professional ambitions by obtaining a university degree. In the southern/Mediterranean model, adulthood is confirmed by starting a family. Strong family ties and solidarity, as well as high unemployment and underemployment rates, restrict social welfare, and other financial difficulties lead to prolonged co-residence with parents and late marriage and parenthood (Iacovou 2010). In societies that follow the latter two models, young people face barriers to reaching an advanced professional position, experience unemployment relatively

often, and occupy worse positions in the labour market compared to older age categories.

Studies of patterns of transition into adulthood are undertaken in European countries (e.g. Corijn, Klijzing 2001; Walther et al. 2002; Iacovou 2010) and in Poland (e.g. Kowalska, Wróblewska 2001; Slany 2006b; Krzaklewska 2010, 2014; Matysiak 2011). Researches showed that the Polish economic reforms in the 1990s created great uncertainties as to young adults' labour market opportunities and resulted in a deterioration of the situation of large groups of young people (Kowalska, Wróblewska 2001). In Polnad, a hybrid model of entering adulthood has developed (Wiszejko-Wierzbicka, Kwiatkowska 2018: 172). Young Poles postpone fulfilling social roles traditionally considered to be markers of adulthood, i.e. the 'big five', and it is the psychological factors that decide about their adulthood (ibid.[13]). Young adult Poles revealed that they feel mentally mature (as declared by over 85%) but do not associate it with legal criteria (i.e. having an ID or a bank account) or fulfilling a social role (of a spouse, parent or employee). They associate adulthood with the sense of being able to make their own decisions and possessing social and emotional skills (e.g. providing for themselves). They believe that of the five traditional markers of adulthood, running the household is the most important one. Only one in four young Poles indicates permanent employment, and one in ten indicates having children as the main markers of adulthood. Many young people fear entering adulthood and do not treat this stage as more attractive than childhood. Young adult Poles implement strongly diversified strategies for entering adulthood: the strategy of a professional (achieved through a professional and financial career, supporting oneself and one's family); a self-made man (aiming at autonomy and independence in life); a stay-at-home person (achieved through building close relationships); a responsible person (achieved through inner development: knowledge of everyday life and the ability to make decisions and bear their consequences) and an easy-going person (graduation and postponing serious decisions) (ibid.). The sequence of events related to the transition to adulthood has also changed. More and more young Poles start their first job before graduation. Moreover, several people cohabitate before getting married (Mynarska 2010; Kotowska et al. 2016: 11).

Despite being grounded in universal psychological needs (competences, autonomy and relationships), the process of entering adulthood in Poland is separate from the four models distinguished by Van de Velde. The model of entering adulthood in Poland, as in other post-communist countries, is additionally shaped by factors that have determined the situation of young people during the political transformation: devaluation of the importance of higher education and its inadequacy

---

13 The study on psychosocial determinants of late entry into adulthood was carried out in 2016 on a sample of people aged 18-29, differentiated by the level of education and place of residence (Wiszejko-Wierzbicka, Kwiatkowska 2018).

to the needs of the labour market, high unemployment and employment below competences, deregulation of labour relations and pushing young employees into civil law contracts without social security benefits, as well as a significant reduction in state childcare, which made it even more difficult to combine professional and family roles (Długosz 2016; Kiersztyn 2015; Piszczatowska-Oleksiewicz 2014; Szafraniec et al. 2017).

To sum up, the biographical stage of entering adulthood is a scientific concept which includes a set of statements to explain this social phenomenon. Its main thesis is that the contemporary model, which normatively and chronologically defines the life cycle, i.e. education as the first stage, then professional work followed by economic independence, marriage and parenthood, is being replaced by the post-modern model, which introduces destandardisation, deinstitutionalisation and dechronologisation. Life paths are becoming increasingly diverse, but also uncertain and unpredictable, thus increasing the importance of reflexivity and the need for conscious life management (Beck 2002; DuBois-Reymond, López Blasco 2003; Bauman 2006; Walther 2006; Giddens 2013; Zielińska 2018).

Perceiving early adulthood as a separate stage of life is a new way of thinking about young people in terms of an object and subject of social care. This life stage is shaped by the socio-economic, cultural, as well as political and legal conditions in which young people function (e.g. Galland 2003; Walther 2006). However, it is also constructed by specific policies, institutions and legal regulations. This stage is shaped by young people themselves, as they adopt various strategies and make life decisions in specific historical circumstances. In this sense, young people are both the "object" of various influences and the "subject", managing their lives on their own (Grotowska-Leder et al. 2016: 93-94).[14] The revealed tendencies in the process of transition to adulthood are of significant importance to society, as postponing the decision about finding a permanent job, running a household, starting a family and especially having children affect the labour market, economy, demographic structure, structure of public expenditures, redistribution of social assistance and the tax system, among other things.

Young adults are an important group of consumers and voters. Public policies should therefore address them as an influential group in the public sphere, as they

---

14 The analyses of young adults as the subject and object of social policy were undertaken in Poland as early as in the second half of the 1980s. The Central Program of Basic Research entitled *Polityka społeczna w Polsce* (Social Policy in Poland) (PBP 09.09) addressed the topic of living and working conditions of the then young generation. The characteristics of the situation of this category of young people included their lack of satisfaction with meeting basic needs (e.g. low wages and limited access to housing) and unfulfilled professional ambitions (e.g. the discrepancy between professional qualifications and the job performed). Attention was also drawn to the "privatisation" of their lives, i.e. sticking to small groups and minding their own business, as well as the lack of interest in joint actions aimed at improving their situation (cf. Grotowska-Leder 1991).

constitute a great potential in developing of important processes in global society. Depending on the shape of the life course policy, young adults will either become a problematic group for the system, requiring support, or an independent, self-determining category that supports development. The meaning of the transition to adulthood as a stage in one's biography should therefore serve the development of a policy in the sense of a set of activities undertaken in order to achieve a certain desired state for this life stage, which arises from the belief that public institutions can influence an individual's life course.

Chapter 2
Research methods and procedures

In order to achieve the project's aims, a multi-method and multi-sited research investigation was conducted, employing a mostly qualitative approach. Desktop analysis of secondary data and qualitative methods of collecting and analysing primary (empirical) data gathered in purposely selected communities in the Lodz region was considered the most appropriate for reconstructing young Poles' pathways to completed adulthood during great social change.

The analysis of the secondary data involved a critical review of scientific literature on social policy models, life course policy models, as well as the concepts of young adults and completed adulthood. It allowed to reconstruct the dominant concepts of young adults as the target group for public policies and institutional arrangements to secure their transition into adulthood in contemporary societies. Since the study was based on the assumption that reconstructing a comprehensive and reliable map of life course policy aimed at young adults in Poland required a bottom-up approach, the categories that emerged from the analysis conducted during this stage of the project were used in subsequent phases. And thus, as a reference point for further reconstruction of the Polish legal, political and institutional agenda aimed at young adults, the study was supplemented by a review of other existing materials (official statistics, documents and strategic documents formulated at national and local levels of administration). Particular attention was paid to analysing legal acts concerning young people so that the responses of various institutional actors (such as national and local administration representatives that deal with the labour market, education, family or housing) and the coherence of various policies towards young adults' needs could be reviewed. It was followed by an analysis of political party documents and manifestos, charters, petitions, open letters, websites and social media content created by young adults to improve their life quality and opportunities.

This part of research was supplemented by a discourse analysis of media statements on young adults. The understanding of discourse was based on Teun van Dijk's proposal (1993), which defines it as a form of social action that takes place in a specific context. This allows the discourse to be treated as a marker of one's views

and by which ways of interpreting the information are provided and suggested to members of the community. Discourse on young adults, in particular, that which relates to their position in the social structure, their rights and the obligations imposed on them, also specifically draws attention to its normative dimension. Thus, among its participants, the tendency to moralise each other becomes apparent. The analysis included statements containing descriptions, justifications, and reasoning for the role of young adults in the public and political sphere. Another criterion applied was intertextuality, i.e. the reference of individual texts or statements to each other. The statements included texts published as part of press debates, as well as posts published in online forums and social media.

The purpose of analysing media statements was to identify discourses and describe the practices of framing the role of young adults in the public and political sphere. Framing means selecting specific elements from a perceived reality and constructing a message that partially suggests how to find links between these elements. The framing process can also work as a narrative scheme. It is used to give the public not only interpretative frames but also action frames to mobilise the message recipients and encourage them to undertake a certain type of activity (Franczak 2014). Therefore, the framing can be assigned three basic functions: identifying the problem, indicating how to repair it and motivating people to act. It is used to define an issue, diagnose causes and identify the entangled organisations/entities. It is a kind of interference with the autonomy of readers, including the community's normative systems. That is why it can be regarded as one of the key areas of power (Entman 1993). The analysis of framing practices focused on searching texts for different types of rhetoric, characteristic vocabulary, keywords, typical examples or analogies. All these categories referred to one of the research problems – the presence of young adults in the public agenda. The analysis also highlighted how the media statements justified the need to take certain actions from the perspective of the policy of change or the policy of continuation.

In the next step, the research team focused on gathering young people's individual pathways of entering adulthood through individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) with elements of biographical interviews so that the processual aspects of this experience, as well as motivations while making strategic decisions at the subsequent stages of this transition, could be better seen. For the IDI scenario, see Appendix 3.

In total, the study conducted in 2016-2019 included 60 individual IDIs with young Polish adults. Most of them (44) were people born in 1986, i.e. those who formally achieved adulthood (18 years) at the time of Poland's accession to the EU (and, thus, when it adopted unitary social policy measures). Due to difficulties in finding people of the same age, a few of the interviewees were born in 1987. Furthermore, for those with experience of childhood in foster care institutions, who earlier enter adulthood than their peers who grew up in families of origin, people born between 1986 and 1991 were also interviewed. The interviews were aimed at reconstructing the expectations and needs of young adults concerning the transition into adulthood itself, as well as particular elements,

such as the transition from education into the labour market and establishing their own household and a family.

In order to deepen the knowledge of the similarities and differences of these experiences, two socio-demographic features were taken into account in the sampling procedure: the place of residence (a large city and less urbanised area) and the type of environment they grew up in (i.e. family or foster care institutions). This diversification of the sample group was intended to ascertain what life paths were undertaken by young people turning to adulthood and what non-formal and institutional actors intervened in their transition into adulthood. Thus, among the purposefully selected interviewees, there were 30 inhabitants of a large city (Lodz), 16 residents of less urbanised areas of the Zdunska Wola county (*powiat*) in the Lodz province, and 14 people who had left foster care institutions. Lodz is a large academic city and is an example of a place with easy access to education, including higher education, and many opportunities in the labour market. This is contrasted with the young adults from Zdunska Wola and those who had experienced foster care, who had a less privileged position in the context of achieving adulthood through education and work (and who faced other structural conditions of achieving completed adulthood). The interviewees were accessed utilising the snowballing technique that, especially in the case of the interviewees from Zdunska Wola and the foster care institutions, was supplemented by support from local institutions (i.e. job centres and social welfare agencies). Consequently, there was homogeneity in terms of the educational and job situation of the groups of interviewees (i.e. higher education and better jobs for the inhabitants of Lodz, which reflects the general tendencies observed in the region). For a detailed list of interviewees, see Appendix 1.

Finally, the project aimed to reconstruct the structural, institutional and political framework of the studied phenomena. In order to further contrast individuals' statements and, thus, objectify the conclusions, the collected IDIs were supplemented by the analysis of focused group interviews (FGI). Using FGIs enabled us to explore opinions and patterns of thinking, judging and behaving, and to reconstruct social meanings and group experiences. When participants interact with each other, they show greater activity and creativity, and they express their emotions more openly. Additionally, during the discussion, they verify their views, often reaching a common conclusion, increasing the accuracy of the information obtained. For the FGI scenarios, see Appendix 4.

In total, 16 FGIs were conducted, bringing together 136 participants, including 79 from Lodz and 57 from Zdunska Wola. Among the FGIs, nine interviews were conducted with purposely selected members of the "1986 cohort" who had grown up in families (three FGIs in Lodz and 3 FGIs in Zdunska Wola) and in foster care institutions (3 FGIs) so that the individual stories could be confronted with those delivered in the group situation. Stakeholders representing the relevant public policies at the local level (including social welfare agencies, the Provincial Labour Office in Lodz, and various units of the City of Lodz Office or the City and

Province of Zdunska Wola) participated in another four FGIs (two in Lodz and two in Zdunska Wola) to gain a better insight into policy framework and the actual consciousness of policy actors in these communities. The final three FGIs (one in Lodz and two in Zdunska Wola) brought together young adults who are active in the public sphere (local councillors, members of political parties and NGO members). It enabled us to reconstruct their involvement in policy formulation and implementation. Focusing on young Poles' public involvement was based on the conviction that they are not only a target group of public policies but also policy actors engaged in creating and implementing political, legal and institutional measures to support the transition into adulthood. For a detailed list of interviewees, see Appendix 2.

While conducting this qualitative research, an interview guide was used, i.e. a list of issues to be explored during the IDI and FGI scenarios. Among other things, the interviewees were asked to describe the process of reaching adulthood in biographical order, i.e. what the pathway looked like step by step from approximately the age of 15, taking into account their educational and professional career, family situation, personal development and identity formation; the expectations and needs that define completed adulthood; and the shape of social networks, including support networks during the transition to adulthood.

The topics discussed (which concerned very personal matters, often very difficult and unpleasant life experiences) and the characteristics of the participants (their psychosocial profile, including their attitude towards their own life, relatively low level of education, generally low language competences, or willingness to undertake emotional and intellectual effort to tell their life story) required specific ethical measures and the empowering approach with the respondents, i.e., establishing a relationship based on respect, empowerment and trust. All interviews were conducted by members of the research team, who are very experienced researchers. The respondents were reliably informed about the purpose of the study, its course and the rules applicable during the interview. They were asked for their consent to participate in the interview and for it to be recorded. Each interview was preceded by a casual conversation with the respondent in order to gain his/her trust and openness and to build his/her self-esteem. The IDI respondents were informed about the importance of their life experiences for the research and that the information obtained would be secured by data anonymisation at every stage of the research and would be unavailable to third parties. Additionally, all people who recruited the participants, in line with legal requirements, deleted all sensitive data on them. The data obtained from the IDI and FGI participants were archived on data carriers without access to the Internet and without third-party access.

The analysis of the extensive empirical data collected was computer-assisted using NVivo software. All 76 interviews (FGI and IDI) were transcribed following the Jefferson approach. Altogether, over 1500 pages of transcribed interviews were analysed (regular IDIs lasted between 45 and 120 minutes, while the

FGIs were between 120 and 180 minutes). As part of the multi-stage analytical procedure, the analytical work started with open coding (generating labels that broadly describe the respondents' statements) through selective coding (labelling around a specific category of greater theoretical importance) in order to create the final map of theoretical categories (Konecki 2000). Due to the comprehensive character of the empirical material obtained, the analysis in this book covers selected study findings, particularly those that proved to be the dominant ones for the young adults interviewed.

PART II

THE TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD IN THE EXPERIENCES OF POLES

Chapter 3
Context and determinants of the process of entering adulthood in Poland

The study of the life course, including the transition from youth to adulthood, is located in the context of globalisation, which is influenced by historically shaped national institutional and social structures. Thus, sociologists look at young adult Poles, placing the socialisation of young people in the "inevitable" context of post-modernity and global culture, which also began to define the framework of individual and collective life in post-communist countries in the 1990s (Szafraniec 2017: 73). *The Młodzi 2011 report* ("2011 Youth Report") (Szafraniec 2011) presents a multidimensional diagnosis (including cross-country comparisons) of the situation of the young generation of Poles. It also presents a systematised corpus of knowledge about the youth defined as individuals aged 20-35. It outlines the most important areas of young people's lives, including education, work and the process of entering the labour market; community life and intimacy (marriage, families and alternative choices); consumption, leisure, and new media (the areas of status manifestation and creating one's own self); opinions, attitudes and presence in the public sphere; health and risky behaviours; social connectivity (the solidarity of generations). According to Polish psychologists studying young adults, our local determinants of entering adulthood are a derivative of global changes called globalisation trends that affect areas such as economic, political and ecological transformation, and transformation in world security, demographic, anthropological, informational and cultural tendencies (Ledzińska 2012: 14-15). Globalisation changes that affect the entry into adulthood in a given country are important, especially from a sociological perspective.

In the case of Poland, the context of the systemic transformation of the 1990s is of great diagnostic and analytical importance for research on the functioning of young adults in the contexts indicated above. This transformation is responsible for "changes in the logic of action of individual and group actors, forms of organisation and institutional rules" (Domalewski, Szymborski 2017: 27) and clashes of two rationalities – the rationality of globalisation, defined by the centre of the world system, and the rationality of adjusting to this centre of peripheral and semi-peripheral states, such as post-communist countries. This

globalisation-and-transformation perspective is complemented by the integration perspective, which is related to Europeanisation. Although accession to the EU in 2004 brought Poland closer to the centre of the European and global system, it did not eliminate the "asymmetry of rationality" resulting from country-specific conditions (ibid.: 28-29). Contemporary young adult Poles grew up under the two aforementioned rationalities, drawing on the patterns of adult life from developed countries and confronting them with local, often limited, possibilities to implement them. Also, due to the broadly described cultural conditions of the post-transformation reality, Poland is described as a "two-speed" society based on two versions of globalisation and corresponding lifestyles: "the vanguard of change" and "the excluded underclass" (Jacyno 2012: 295-296). Thus, development in various areas of social life, which were proceeding at different paces, had different dynamics and effectiveness, which had consequences for how young adults function in post-transformation Poland.

For the project, it has been synthetically assumed that Poles aged 25-34, and in particular, individuals born in 1986-1987, entering adulthood, were influenced by globalisation, transformation and integration. They can be analysed through the prism of three main contexts of cultural, structural and political transformation, which helped shape the patterns and paths of entering adulthood in Poland to varying degrees at the beginning of the 2000s (see Table 2).

Table 2. Post-2004 contexts of young Poles entering adulthood

	Type of transformation	**Manifestations**
Cultural	transformation of values	▪ greater importance of post-materialistic values (secular-rational and focused on personal fulfilment)
	generational change	▪ growing individualisation of the lives of the generation born in the 1980s and 1990s
	changes in lifestyles	▪ development of consumer and hedonistic attitudes
	civilisational and technological changes	▪ domination of digitalisation in personal, professional and social life
Structural	demographic changes	▪ greater number of young adults as a result of a baby boom echo of the 1980s
	educational changes	▪ greater educational ambitions (as regards higher education) and meritocratic tendencies
	changes in the labour market	▪ development of the market economy and intensification of migration ▪ slow transition from the employer's market to an employee's market
	transformation of stratification	▪ more private entrepreneurs and freelancers offering services and fewer farm owners

Political	transformation of the political system	▪ progressive Europeanisation of rules, democratic institutions and public policies
	transformation of public space	▪ development of civil society, gradual increase in citizens' participation in public/ social life

Source: Authors' elaboration.

3.1. Cultural context

In order to describe the cultural context, one may cite the results of extensive research (e.g. comparative international studies such as the *World Value Survey* and *European Value Study*) in which sociologists thoroughly analyse the axiological system of Poles. The study of values takes into account the evolution of the system of values ranging from material ones (traditional values related to the needs of physical and economic safety) to post-material ones (modern values related to the needs of affiliation, recognition and affirmation). This evolution is treated as an obvious modernisation process.

Poland was surveyed for the first time in 1990. During the first decade of the transformation, Poles differed from other Europeans due to greater appreciation for family values, the importance of work and religion, and less importance attributed to friends and acquaintances, leisure, and politics, which was quite typical of societies with a lower level of economic development at the time. During the second post-transformation decade, Poles' system of values started to approximate the hierarchy of values recognised by Europeans. However, in the first decade of the 21st century (Jasińska-Kania 2012: 327), their values were still more traditionalist than those that prevail in prosperous Western European countries. During the third post-transformation decade, materialist values still prevailed over post-materialist ones and traditionalist values over secular-and-rationalist ones. From the point of view of life course studies, it is noteworthy that older, less educated people with lower incomes and lower social status had a more materialistic orientation focused on survival than young and better-educated Poles with higher social status and living in big cities. They were post-materialistically oriented towards personal fulfilment and self-expression. This individualisation of values suggested (until 2015) that attitudes based on rationalism and the pluralism of worldviews would develop in Poland. Hence, hopes were pinned on young people with regard to their role in the country's social and economic modernisation. They are perceived as a developmental potential and political force, as well as a tool of social change, which is reflected in sociologists' metaphor of the generation of the "change of guard" (Szafraniec et al. 2012).

Perceiving young adults against the backdrop of generational categories is nothing new. The systemic transformation was possible thanks to the political and intellectual potential of the "generation of the great change", i.e. people brought up in the days of the communist Poland who built democracy and the foundations of the free market economy in Poland when they were young adults. Despite rapid changes in the mid-1990s, research on young Poles did not reveal differences compared to findings about the youth at the end of the 1980s. They focused on traditional values and life patterns such as stabilisation, family, friends and work. It was not until the second half of the 1990s that a change was noted in the form of higher education and status aspirations, longing for a comfortable life, pragmatism, a strong focus on success, and ambivalence towards having a family and children (Szafraniec 2012: 290). The youth that grew up under the changed political conditions were "naturally familiar with the reality of transformation; they were more ambitious, more pragmatic and had a more consumerist attitude to life" (Szafraniec 2012: 293).

However, one should not forget that the time of social changes was also a time of postmodernity, with the concepts of individualisation and detraditionalisation, which are typical of the new, increasingly consumerist lifestyle (Szafraniec 2012: 297-299). Growing economic and social inequalities in Poland, along with the country's economic development, shaped two forms of lifestyle: the lifestyle of the poor and the lifestyle of the middle class. They were characterised by opposite patterns of activity, perceptions of their potential, concepts of social reality and their place in it (Palska 2007). Entering adulthood was often accompanied by economic deficits, which did not allow young people to fully satisfy their consumer needs.

The lifestyle category covers not only the cultural practices that are typical of a given generation or social class, but also the latest technological transformations in the form of the mediatisation and computerisation of young adults' everyday personal and social life. Given that the Internet in Poland began to function in the early 1990s (when the surveyed young adults were children), one can speak of digitalisation or informatisation of young people's lifestyles, as evidenced by the fact that the 25-34 age category is, at 86%, the age group most advanced in terms of using modern technologies (computers, the Internet, mobile phones, smartphones), smaller only than the 16-24 age category that exceeded 94% in 2013 (Leszczyńska 2019: 112). This bears consequences for the way young adults participate in educational, market, social and political processes, which distinguishes them from previous generations.

3.2. Structural context

The analytical structural context proposed for the study of young adults includes a broad spectrum of changes, including demographic changes, which in Poland are similar to the trends observed in the EU (depopulation and a low fertility rate, increasing life expectancy and population ageing). In statistical terms, young adults aged 25-34 constitute a significant proportion of both the working-age population and people at the "most optimal" reproductive age. They also constitute a remarkable proportion of the country's overall population structure, i.e. about 15% (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2018).

The cultural context and demographic perspective had a particular impact on the educational transformation in Polish society in the 1990s, which translated into a higher number of university students and graduates over the decade. This was influenced by changes in the educational system and higher education, introduced successively after 1989. This applies in particular to the 1999 reform of the educational system and the reforms of higher education in 1990 and 2005, the two key systemic factors that shaped the educational paths of young adults. These policy decisions were driven not so much by an appreciation of the importance of higher education as they were an intention to delay young people's entry into the labour market at a time of rapidly rising unemployment in the 1990s.

Thus, demographic factors were not the key factor that resulted in the increase in the number of students in the 1990s. Greater educational aspirations were associated primarily with the intensification of meritocratic tendencies related to the more favourable situation of people with higher education in the labour market (cf. Domański 2006: 46). This is due to the fact that, compared to the days of socialism, the transition to a market economy resulted in a higher educational premium for well-educated employees in high-skilled occupations. For this reason, the percentage of respondents surveyed by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (Pol. *Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej*, CBOS) who believe that it is worthwhile acquiring higher education grew from 76% in 1993 to 93% in 2004 and 2007 (Lis, Skuza 2015: 51).

In such a pro-meritocratic atmosphere, a comprehensive educational reform was carried out in 1999, which included transforming the school system (the introduction of a 3-year middle school following a 6-year primary school, replacing the 8-year primary school system). Therefore, people born in 1986 were the first generation to experience the effects of this change. In 2002, large numbers (over 70%) of the first middle school graduates chose secondary schools over basic vocational schools (16%), while graduates of secondary schools and secondary vocational schools were more interested in further education at universities (35%) compared to the period prior to the reform (Zahorska 2009: 120, 128). After a 3-year study period at secondary general-education schools, the 1986 birth cohort reached the moment of the greatest boom of university education, when the effect of the baby boom echo was visible, i.e. the highest percentage of individuals

aged 19-24 acquired tertiary education (3.96 million in 2004). As a result of the 1990 higher education reform, the number of higher education institutions increased more than four times, which led to an almost 5-fold increase in the number of students in 2005 compared to the period before political changes.

In addition, a new law on higher education was introduced in 2005. Among other things, it introduced a 3-tier system of education as a result of implementing the requirements of the Bologna process in EU member states. From a formal point of view, a bachelor's degree is a higher education degree. At the same time, such a path is shorter than the one that leads to a master's degree. Hence, both paths were popular among young adults (GUS 2013: 37).

Undoubtedly, the entry into adulthood by individuals born in the 1980s was influenced by the effects of the systemic transformation connected with the development of the market economy in Poland. The privatisation of state-owned enterprises and the restructuring of the public sector in the late 1990s and the early 2000s intensified the segmentation of the Polish labour market. The employment rate in the private sector was growing, but it did not make up for redundancies in the public sector, which resulted a dramatic growth of unemployement. When those born in 1986 reached the age of majority in 2004, Poland had one of its lowest total employment rates (51.7%) and one of the highest total unemployment rates (19.5%). The drop in the employment rate was influenced by various factors, including the extended period of studying and professional inactivity of the unemployed discouraged by their failure to find work. Analyses of the social structure of unemployment in 1995-2002 showed that the unemployed were mainly women, younger people (especially those up to 24 years of age), people with a lower level of education (especially those with primary and basic vocational education) and the long-term unemployed (who constituted around 50% of the total number of the unemployed in 2002).

As a result of Poland's accession to the EU in 2004, the situation in the labour market gradually started to improve. Implementing the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and then the Europe 2020 strategy, subsidies from the European Social Fund entailed changes in the labour market, namely its gradual deregulation and emergence of new flexible forms of employment. Therefore, the situation of young adults in the labour market is influenced, in particular, by the form of employment, which affects the certainty or uncertainty of professional life. The underprivileged segments of the labour market – referred to today as precarisation of work – did exist in Poland before 1989. However, the construction of a capitalist free-market economy deepened labour market segmentation, which caused not only an increase in the unemployment rate but also the appearance of new, often low-paid jobs, a decline in real wages, limited access to social security for the unemployed and a huge decline in unionisation (Mrozowicki, Maciejewska 2016). In Poland, permanent employment contracts prevail (about 70% of permanent contracts are for an indefinite time). Fixed-term contracts or work without a contract and casual work are the most widespread forms of employment among the youngest age group (Kiersztyn 2014). A preliminary analysis suggests that, despite the

labour market boom, as many as one in three graduates in Poland will experience protracted problems finding stable employment under contracts for an indefinite time by 2020 (Kiersztyn 2020).

Changes in the economy and labour market are closely related to the form of social structure (or, to be more precise, the socio-professional structure), reflecting the declining importance of agriculture and industry, and the growing importance of services over the last three decades. Therefore, changes in the social class structure between the last decade of communist Poland and the first decade of the Republic of Poland are significant from the point of view of shaping young adults' living conditions. In the post-communist period, entrepreneurs, managers and experts occupied top positions in the hierarchy of financial prosperity and access to various resources. Managers, the self-employed, as well as technicians and office workers, occupied middle positions, while skilled and unskilled workers, together with farmers, were at the very bottom.

In terms of the objective social position (determined by the level of education, professional status and income) and the psychological dimension (resulting in attitudes towards the market and liberalised views), the gap between the "top" and the "bottom" of the social hierarchy widened (Janicka, Słomczynski 2014: 70). To illustrate these long-term trends, it is worth comparing the role of selected categories in the socio-occupational structure between 1988 and 2018. The share of farm owners and agricultural workers fell from 19.0% to 10.3% (8.5% in 2010), while the share of business owners and the self-employed outside agriculture rose from 3.0% to 6.6% (8.8% in 2010). In addition, service-related categories grew significantly: the percentage of lower-level white-collar workers (including employees involved in services and trade) increased from 31.6% to 37.5%, while senior managers and specialists rose from 7.2% to 13.0% (Domański 2020: 284). The 2020 CBOS survey on the perception of one's place in the social structure shows that it largely depends on one's level of education and income, as well as the socio-professional category of middle- and senior-level employees. Interestingly, respondents aged 25-34 (*Postrzeganie własnego…* 2020) represent the age category which perceives itself in the most positive way comes to social structure. They are also among those who most often declare that they belong to the upper class (29%) and the middle class (22%) (*Klasa niższa, średnia i wyższa…* 2020).

3.3. Political context

As regards the political context, Poland's EU accession played a significant role in shaping the conditions of young Poles' entry into adulthood, which resulted in a significant institutional transformation in the economy, politics and social life. After Poland's accession negotiations, which started in 1998, the level of support for EU membership

fluctuated between 50% and 60%, although one month before the referendum in 2003, it increased to 66%. Eventually, 77% of citizens voted in favour of the EU accession in the referendum, with a turnout of 58.9% (Tomasik, Zieleńska 2012: 452-453, 472-473). According to CBOS surveys, since 2006, the percentage of supporters of European integration has been over 80% (except for 2012-2013, when it dropped to 72%). Economic benefits, including an improved financial situation, were indicated as the greatest benefits of the integration (*15 lat członkowstwa w Unii Europejskiej* 2019).

Europeanisation, understood as the adaptation of Polish institutions to the requirements and expectations resulting from EU membership and the adaptation of policies and political processes to EU standards, which intensified with the accession in 2004, had an undeniable impact on the lives of young people in Poland. By harmonising laws, Europeanisation opened the labour market (migrations to Western Europe) and unified educational standards (the Bologna process). It was also supposed to strengthen the development of democracy and civil society. When Poland joined the EU, it suffered from a deficit of democracy and civic attitudes, inherited from the previous regime. However, despite the integration and the accompanying expectations related to democratisation and civicism, democratisation has not yet reached a level typical of Western European countries. According to CBOS surveys, support for democracy in Polish society fluctuated between 60% in 2004 and 73% in 2020 (*Polacy o demokracji* 2020), yet the quality of Polish democracy has not improved significantly. If we refer to the democracy index used by 'The Economist', Poland did not reach full (consolidated) democracy between 2006 and 2018, and it gradually fell into the category of flawed democracy (Tyrała 2020: 102-103).

Similarly, the condition of civil society was poorly assessed. Poles' "public apathy" is evidenced by data from 2002-2012 on the "civicism deficit", i.e. the limited civic activity of Poles including political activity (low voter turnout) and social activity (limited participation in activities in various types of organisations) (Kinowska 2012: 4). Nevertheless, a recent CBOS study (*Poczucie wpływu na sprawy publiczne* 2020) shows that since 2004, the sense of agency as regards national issues has grown from 15% to 39% in 2020. A similar increase – from 34% to 58% – was registered for the sense of agency in terms of influence on local issues. The aggregate index of involvement in community work (for the benefit of one's own community or people in need as part of civic organisations and/or one's own activity) also increased from 36% in 2005 to 51% in 2019 (Bożewicz 2020).

Trends such as globalisation, transformation and integration, which influence young Poles' entry into adulthood, were presented in cultural, structural and political contexts. The proposed analytical framework aimed to indicate and systematise the multitude of interrelated factors that influence Poles' transition to adulthood, i.e. the factors that have shaped their paths towards reaching adulthood in the last three decades. The analysis of the main spheres of life of contemporary thirty-year-old Poles is presented in subsequent chapters and focuses on education, work and family life. It will enable a more in-depth description of the importance of the aforementioned determinants.

Chapter 4
Schooling and adult education

The young adults described in the book belong to *Generation Y*, also known as *millennials*[1]. They are overwhelmingly well-educated people (as of 2017, 39% had completed higher education; 40%, secondary education; and as few as 15% had completed vocational education). This is partly because the parents of millennials are much better educated than the parents of older generations, which can be considered a civilisational leap forward (ibid.: 31).

The improvement in the level of education in Polish society has undoubtedly had an impact on parents' educational aspirations for their children from the millennial generation, which has been confirmed by research conducted by Polish education sociologist Mirosław Szymański and researchers from the Institute for Educational Research (Pol. *Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych*, IBE) and long-term analyses conducted by CBOS. In 1992 (when the millennials who are now young adults finished their pre-school education), a study involving the parents of first-graders revealed that those with higher education were very ambitious regarding their children's education. The researchers also paid attention to the great importance of the family's cultural traditions that resulted from their social background, i.e. grandparents from a certain socio-professional group (Szymański 1992: 20). A 2014 IBE study (Kozłowski, Matczak 2014: 73) shows that, while having a degree is the factor most often associated with parents' desire for their children to obtain higher education (99%), living in a city is also conducive to this desire (88%).

Over a period of 24 years, although the majority of Poles (about 70%) wanted their children to continue on to higher education (i.e. obtain a bachelor's, engineering or master's degree), the educational ambitions of the respondents were closely related to their own level of education. However, dynamic changes during that period meant that the differences between the educational aspirations of groups with

---

1   These individuals were born between 1980 and 2000, and they can be divided into older (1980–1989) and younger millennials (1990–2000). According to the Human Capital Study (Pol. Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego, BKL) millennials are a group that represents the education boom (Jelonek, Kasparek 2019: 28-29).

different educational backgrounds decreased significantly (CBOS 2009; 2017). In 2017, the model of education reproduction was typical of Polish adults with higher education, i.e. these respondents wanted their children to obtain the same level of education as they did (85% in the case of daughters and 83% in the case of sons). Respondents who were not university graduates themselves mostly wanted their children to attain a higher level of education than them (89% in the case of sons and 91% in the case of daughters).

In Poland, the average age of completing formal tertiary education[2] is around 24 (BKL 2017: 37), which is the age when people reach the age of young adulthood. This means that young adults (25-34 years of age) have usually completed formal education. The small proportion of adults who have not graduated from primary or middle school have the opportunity to complete their formal education at schools for adults (Eurydice 2015: 29-30). A separate category is people who participate in adult education and training.

4.1. The education situation of young adult Poles in public statistics

Analyses of statistical data concerning the education of young adults show differences connected with the age categories used in Eurostat databases and the national public statistical summaries. In general, young adults are well educated. According to 2019 Eurostat data[3], among people aged 25-34, both in the EU (27) and in Poland, there is a preponderance of people with at least secondary education – in the EU 84.5%, in Poland 94.1%. More detailed data reveal that only 6.0% in Poland and 15.5% people in the EU had less than primary or primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2). The majority of young adults had upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4) – 45.1% in the EU, 50.6% in Poland. People with tertiary education (levels 5-8) constituted a large group – 39.4% in the EU and 43.5% in Poland[4].

---

2   The term "formal education" should be understood in the sense of public statistics, which indicate three forms of education. Formal education is defined as education in the school system from primary school to doctoral-level courses. Non-formal education includes educational activities that do not result in a change in the level of education but are conducted by a lecturer, teacher or instructor. Informal education is self-directed learning outside a school or in a non-school setting (GUS 2022).

3   Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%) - main indicators, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_03&lang=en

4   According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), there are nine education levels, from level 0 to level 8 (tertiary education is more detailed). The lower levels (non tertiary) include: early childhood education (0), primary education (1), lower

Two categories of young adults are of particular interest for this study: people with the lowest and highest education. Therefore, the analysis focuses on the statistics for these two groups.

This sub-chapter presents selected information that most often shows two age ranges: 25-29 and 30-34. Below, data from Eurostat studies are first discussed.

To characterise selected aspects of young adults' education, Eurostat temporal data are presented below (see Table 3). The figures also allow for comparisons of selected indices with the EU mean values. As regards education levels attained by individual age groups, the figures refer to the highest level of education attained for men and women, respectively.

Table 3. Population by educational attainment level (tertiary education),[5] age and sex in Poland, 2004-2019 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total								
25-29	25.3	37.9	43.2	43.0	42.2	41.1	41.1	40.0
30-34	20.4	32.8	42.1	43.4	44.6	45.7	45.7	46.6
15-74	12.2	17.4	22.7	23.3	23.9	24.8	25.5	26.2
Men								
25-29	19.3	29.2	33.6	32.8	31.8	31.0	31.0	30.2
30-34	17.8	27.3	34.2	35.1	35.6	36.3	36.3	37.2
15-74	11.1	14.7	19.1	19.4	19.8	20.6	21.1	21.8
Women								
25-29	31.5	46.8	53.4	53.8	53.2	51.8	51.6	50.2
30-34	23.2	38.4	50.2	52.0	53.9	55.5	55.5	56.4
15-74	13.3	19.9	26.2	27.0	27.8	28.9	29.7	30.5

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2022a, 2022b.

Between 2004 and 2019, the percentage of people with higher education in Poland (tertiary education (levels 5-8)) visibly rose, as it did in the EU (see Table 4). For Poles aged 15-74, it rose from 12.2% to 26.2% (approaching the EU-28 level of 28.2%). The biggest increase was among people aged 30-34. As far back as 2014, Poland reached the goal set in the *Europe 2020* strategy, i.e. at least 40% of people in this age group with higher education (in 2018, this figure reached 45.7%, while the EU-28 mean was 40.7%). At the same time, in 2018, 50.9% of young adults (people aged 25-34) attained upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (levels 3 and 4), and only 5.6% had less than primary or

---

secondary education (2), upper secondary education (4), post-secondary non-tertiary education (5).

5   Data on the highest level of education (tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5-8: short-cycle tertiary education, bachelor's or equivalent level, master's or equivalent level, doctoral or equivalent level)) successfully completed by the individuals of a given population.

primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2). The percentage of women aged 25-34 with higher education was higher than that of men by approximately 20 percentage points.

Table 4. Participation rate of young people in education and training by age in Poland, 2004-2019 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total								
25-29	14.0	14.6	11.8	10.7	10.6	10.6	12.4	10.2
30-34	7.7	6.2	5.3	4.5	5.0	5.0	7.1	6.3
15-34	42.5	39.9	35.1	34.3	33.4	33.0	34.2	33.1
Men								
25-29	12.6	14.5	11.2	10.5	10.4	10.1	12.1	9.7
30-34	6.0	5.2	4.7	4.1	5.0	4.9	6.7	5.9
15-34	40.7	38.4	32.7	32.0	31.4	31.1	32.5	31.6
Women								
25-29	15.3	14.6	12.5	10.9	10.8	11.2	12.7	10.7
30-34	9.5	7.2	5.9	4.9	5.0	5.2	7.6	6.7
15-34	44.3	41.4	37.6	36.7	35.5	35.0	35.9	34.7

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021d.

Between 2009 and 2018, the participation rate of young adults in education and training was approximately ten percentage points lower than the EU-28 average. For instance, for the 25-34 age group in Poland, it was 9.6% in 2018, while the EU-28 average was 17.8%. As Eurostat figures show, almost twice as many people aged 25-29 participated in formal and non-formal education and training compared with the 30-34 age group. They more frequently include employees than unemployed people; women prevail over men.

EU statistics provide information on the decline in participation of young adults in formal training. In 2004, the participation index in Poland was higher than in the EU (Poland: 8.3%, EU: 7.9%), but in 2018, it dropped to 4.4% (EU-28: 9.0%). Public statistical data concerning the education of adults show a decrease in the participation of young adults in formal education, which may indicate a drop in interest in school forms of education, including higher education studies. GUS data (*Mały rocznik statystyczny Polski* 2005, 2010, 2015, 2019) indicate that between 2004 and 2018, the percentage of trainees and students decreased almost by half (from 10.2% to 5.6%).

There is a phenomenon that presents a social problem: a category of young people called NEET (*Not in Education, Employment, or Training*)[6]. Table 5 also includes people up to 34 years of age, divided by gender.

---

6   According to the information included in programme documents of the European Social Fund, the NEET challenge concerns people aged 15-24. In Poland, in line with the Act of 14 March 2014 on the Promotion of Employment and Labour Market Institutions, the NEET concept refers to people aged 15-19, i.e. adolescents and young adults (Tomczyk et al. 2018).

Table 5. Young people neither in employment nor in education or training by age and educational attainment level (NEET rates) in Poland, 2004-2019 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total								
25-29	28.8	20.5	21.2	20.5	18.9	18.0	17.2	17.7
30-34	25.0	18.3	19.7	18.4	18.2	17.6	17.3	16.5
15-34	20.8	15.1	16.7	15.8	15.1	14.3	13.7	13.4
Men								
25-29	22.2	12.8	14.8	15.0	11.8	9.8	8.8	8.7
30-34	18.0	10.2	11.9	10.7	10.9	9.5	8.9	7.4
15-34	17.2	10.5	12.7	12.0	10.8	9.1	8.2	7.5
Women								
25-29	35.6	28.2	28.1	26.4	26.4	26.6	26.0	27.1
30-34	32.3	26.4	27.7	26.4	25.7	26.0	26.2	26.0
15-34	24.5	19.7	21.0	19.7	19.7	19.8	19.5	19.5

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021e

Between 2004 and 2019, the percentage of NEETs dropped by ten percentage points (from 27.1% to 17.1%), although in 2019, it was still slightly higher than the EU-28 average (16.6%). No significant difference was observed between the 25-29 and 30-34 groups, but a large difference was noticed between the two sex groups. In both the EU and Poland, NEETs include mostly women; their participation in this population group was at least ten percentage points higher than that of men.

The Central Statistical Office (Pol. *Główny Urząd Statystyczny* – GUS) presents population data for the following age groups: kindergarten education (3-6), elementary education (7-12), lower secondary education (13-15), upper secondary education (16-18), and higher education (19-24). Public statistics concerning adult education, however, usually treat this group as a whole, i.e. people aged 24-64 (GUS 2021). The figures for the participation of adult Poles in formal, non-formal and informal education show that in 2009, 2011, and 2016, 50.3%, 56.0%, 53.5% of people aged 25-29, and 44.4%, 49.3%, 49.8% of people aged 30-34 years, respectively, took part in any of those forms of education. These groups include mostly working people and people with higher education (GUS 2009, 2013, 2018). More than one-third of people in each of these age categories used informal forms of education (32.2%, 38.3%, 35.4% of people aged 25-29, and 30.4%, 35.5%, 35.8% of people aged 30-34, respectively), while more than one-quarter used non-formal forms of education (26.6%, 28.9%, 27.8% of people aged 25-29, and 25,4%, 27.3%, 26.8% of people aged 30-34, respectively). Much fewer young adults participated in formal forms of education (18.1%, 18.2%, 16.3% of people aged 25-29, and 8.1%, 7.0%, 6.0% of people aged 30-34, respectively). The figures for 2016 (just before the interviews with young adults were carried out) show that the percentage of young adults who declared that they were in formal education was lower than in previous years, which may suggest a decline in interest in school forms of education, including higher education.

Education structure data show that Poland is a leading European country in terms of national education. In 2020, Poland was in 11th place among EU countries regarding the education of people aged 30-34 – 47.0% of people had higher education (6.0 percentage points above the EU average). According to the estimates of the United Nations Human Development Report Office, the mean number of years of formal education for people aged 25 or older was 12.3, which put Poland in 9th-12th place among the 27 EU Member States (GUS 2021).

Less optimistic data on the education of young adults come from a panel study entitled *Diagnoza społeczna. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków* (Social diagnosis. Life conditions and quality of Poles) (Czapiński, Panek 2015). According to that study, in 2015, 13.8% of people aged 25-29 and only 3.3% of people aged 30-39 used education services in school and out-of-school forms. However, it does not change the fact that young adults' competencies (according to the Human Capital Balance results) are higher than those of older people (Jeran 2016: 11), which results from their greater readiness to attend further education programmes compared with people who turned 40.

4.2. Selected theoretical reflections and results of empirical studies of educational careers

Education is an important part of the life plans and biographies of individuals. In particular, from the perspective of the contemporary lifelong learning approach, education can be roughly divided into three phases: 1) preparatory (childhood), 2) productive (period of employment), and 3) phasing out (retirement). In this way, it is possible to link educational biography with life course, as it forms part of a complete biography (Segiet 2021). In turn, the division into phases of adulthood made by psychologists, pedagogues or andragologists implies the adoption of a thesis about different life tasks performed during each phase. Consequently, these tasks generate specific attitudes (expectations) towards education and differentiate the readiness to participate in the education process. The educational activity of adults is influenced by the content and nature of their professional work, duties within the family and parental roles, the amount and structure of spare time, aspirations and lifestyle (Malewski 2013).

Although there are numerous studies devoted to adult education in Poland, there is a lack of publications focused on the young adult category. The available analyses deal with the statistical portrait of adult education in general (Nawrat 2014), including the context of human capital investment (Szulc-Obłoza 2017), the biographical approach (Jurgiel-Aleksander 2013; 2015), or they focus on older adults (Gromadzka 2014).

Therefore, when analysing the educational situation of young adults from the life course perspective, both the period of school education (part of the school

system) and the period of adult education (part of higher education and continuing education) should be taken into account. When studying educational biographies, it is important to look at the determinants of educational decisions (IBE, 2014). With regard to educational decisions concerning minors, the influence of the family of origin and household situation, as well as access to educational facilities, were analysed. In the case of adults, educational decisions are linked to plans and the course of professional work, which allowed researchers to provide explanations based on the theory of rational choice. Thus, researchers assume that a rational actor makes educational decisions based on their knowledge and the available options. Researchers went beyond the commonly known term *homo economicus* and added the notion of *homo sociologicus,* to emphasise the importance of a network of social relations, norms, rules, institutional constraints and interactions with other individuals (IBE 2014: 238-239).

In terms of the theoretical foundations for the characteristics of young adults' educational biographies, two types of capital play the most significant role. Among the determinants of educational activity in the period of school education, cultural capital comes to the fore. It is rooted in the family environment, which equips the individual with cultural capital by influencing their educational choices not only at school age, but also in adulthood. In the later period, the concept of human capital is applied to the individual in the working environment. According to Pierre Bourdieu's classical approach, cultural capital, together with social capital and economic capital, is part of symbolic capital. The amount of symbolic capital is determined by the extent of the influence and amounts of current and potential sub-capitals, which can take different forms. In social practice, this means that people representing the highest levels of sub-capitals are predestined to occupy higher positions in social stratification. Bourdieu's (1986) theory points to the reproduction of social structure (and social inequalities) through education.

The concept of human capital, in turn, is associated with the perception of education as a necessary asset to achieve success in the labour market. It explains the belief that people who study longer (achieve higher levels of education and have better grades) generally have better opportunities in the labour market, i.e. they obtain employment more often and earn higher wages than people with limited educational experience (Pallas 2003: 166). The classical theories of human capital are based on the assumption of the individual rationality of *homo economicus*. Thus, individuals invest in education expecting its utility, i.e. the rate of return (Czapiński 2008: 6).

Data from the 2002 European Social Survey indicate that human capital (understood as education and years worked) is a factor that determines individual differences in material well-being. It is more difficult to defend the thesis about the institutional character of this capital as a factor that differentiates the level of wealth of societies in the macroeconomic dimension (ibid.: 7). However, as early as the 1990s, the impact of the educational level on GDP per capita was noted, as was the impact of human capital on economic growth due to greater

labour productivity and capacity of a given economy to produce and absorb innovations in various fields (Herbst 2009: 21-22). For this reason, the link between human capital and economic growth, especially in the light of a knowledge-based economy, lies at the heart of the development policy of the EU and its Member States (their strategic thinking about growth). Hence, there is a specific goal measured by an indicator under the Europe 2020 strategy in the field of education policy, i.e. there should be at least 40% of people aged 30-34 with tertiary education (Zgliczyński 2010: 74).

Taking into account both the potential influence of cultural capital formed in young adults' family of origin and the human capital associated with their own educational and professional decisions, four main phases were distinguished in the educational biographies of the interviewees: (1) general education (kindergarten/reception class, primary and middle school); (2) secondary education (secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary school); (3) higher education (first (undergraduate), second and third cycle degree programmes, postgraduate studies); (4) adult education (work-oriented continuing education: training, courses, self-study courses). Phases (1) and (2) are poorly represented in the empirical material due to their retrospective character; phase (3) is described in detail by the interviewees, as it covers the most intensive period of their educational activity; phase (4) is rarely mentioned by the interviewees due to their age, as they have recently completed, or have been involved in the educational activities from phase (3).

4.2.1. General education

The collected empirical material contains few references to pre-school education. Primary and middle school experiences are mentioned more often. However, kindergarten plays an important role in the child's educational biography due to its specific goals and educational functions. It is the first educational institution for a child preparing for school, and it also makes it easier for working parents to combine professional and parental roles (Szymczak 2010). It is noteworthy, however, that in the early 1990s, which coincided with the pre-school age of the interviewees (born in 1986), there was a fundamental change in educational policy regarding pre-school education. In 1991, pursuant to Ustawa z 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty (the Act of 7 September 1991 on the Education System), the management of the education system was decentralised, and public kindergartens and compulsory annual reception classes for six-year-olds came under the control of municipalities. This decision resulted in a drastic cut in the number of kindergartens and restricted access to pre-school education, especially for children from rural areas. Between 1990 and 1993, nearly 20% of pre-school facilities were closed down, and the number of children admitted decreased by almost 14%. These changes affected rural areas most heavily, with the number of children admitted to kindergartens falling by 17% (Szymańczak 2010).

The following example refers to the parents' decision to take their child out of kindergarten. This was possible since the mother (of three children) was a house-wife who was not working professionally at the time. Due to this parental decision, the interviewee was deprived of the experience of going to kindergarten, which fulfils the function of an institution preparing a child for schooling.

> *I have an older sister and a brother who is eight years younger than me. My mother gave up her job when we were little. She took care of the house and us; only my dad worked, and, I would say, religious education and education, in general, were quite important. I would describe my parents' approach as rather conservative and with a focus on these areas of life. I went to kindergarten. I went there for a while, but I don't think I felt comfortable there because I knew that my parents could take me out of there, and they did, because, for example, I would cry a lot; I didn't… I didn't want to go there, so I took my first steps within the education system only in primary school.* (IDI/L/R23)[7]

Due to a lack of sufficient information about pre-school education in the collected interviews, it can only be concluded that in the early 1990s, access was limited for systemic reasons, which could potentially affect the paths and careers of the inter-viewees at further stages of their education.

In the 1990s, the interviewees who reached school age in 1986-1987 experi-enced significant changes in the educational system during their school years. In 1999, a comprehensive education reform was carried out, including changes in the school system. It introduced a three-year middle school following a 6-year pri-mary school instead of the previous 8-year primary school. Compulsory school-ing was set to last nine years, i.e. one year longer than previously. The reform that introduced middle school was meant to reduce inequalities among young people from rural and urban areas, from more and less privileged backgrounds (Zahorska 2009). Undoubtedly, the education reform affected the way the interviewees func-tioned under the new organisational conditions.

The interviewee below points to the complex but positive experience related to the education reform:

> *Yes, primary school. I was that first year, just like all the others from this age cohort, that went through educational changes; I think it's interesting that even in grades 1–3, I was involved in a novel curriculum that did not use grades, which wasn't widely used at the time. A descriptive evaluation, which is now obligatory, was introduced back then; we were the first experimental year. So, I was the first experimental year at all levels of education, both in middle school and later in secondary school, which was three years instead of four, and also the change of the university system from the five-year uniform system, right? Also, all the educational levels were new, and I'd say it was quite chaotic; ten-sions could be felt. I remember that I found out in the sixth grade, for example, that I wouldn't be going to the seventh grade anymore, but there would be an exam at the end of the year. As a result, it meant changing schools, moving to a different building, and this was also a big event, because my primary school was very close to my home, and the middle school was a bit farther away, so this was also a sign of something new, a big change and a breakthrough.* (IDI/L/R23)

---

7   The quotes are coded as follows: IDI - Individual In-depth Interview; FGI – Focus Group In-terview; L or ZW – the name of the city or county (L – Lodz, ZW – Zdunska Wola); FCI – foster care institutions; I1 – interview number; R1 – respondent number (see Appendices 1 and 2)

Similarly, another interviewee highlights the uniqueness of the "experimental year" of his age group at school:

> *Primary school, then middle school – fortunately, when it comes to middle school, I was the first year of middle school that was supposed to be taught in the new way, but I was actually taught the old way. So, what did it teach me? I can think independently. Then I went to secondary school, and it was the same; it was supposed to be a new type of secondary school, but the old professors taught us the old way. I remember the first day of my first year, the beginning of the year in secondary school. A man with a microphone approaches me and asks, 'What do you feel as a first-year student at a new secondary school?' I say, 'The same as in middle school'. 'Can you elaborate?' 'We're an experimental year, but we will be taught new materials in the old way, so there is nothing to be afraid of, and you have to survive it anyway.'* (IDI/L/R28)

The interviewees were seemingly unaware of the social aspects of the reform of middle school. However, scientific analyses of its initial effects indicate that the changes in schooling at that time exacerbated urban-rural inequalities. Middle school consolidated and increased inequalities among primary school graduates. In larger cities, differences in the quality of education in middle schools increased. Sociological qualitative studies carried out in 2000, 2003 and 2006 showed huge inequalities among schoolchildren in terms of their positions at school and attitudes to education. Schoolchildren from disadvantaged social backgrounds were often at risk of dropping out of the education system or embarking on an unfavourable educational path: they entered the voluntary labour corps, special schools or not very prestigious basic vocational schools (Zahorska 2009). The results a later analysis also indicate that school location affects students' educational achievements (Długosz 2018). Despite the initial reduction in the impact of status factors on school achievement noted in the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey, their impact was still pronounced (Smulczyk, Dolata, Prokropek 2019).

4.2.2. Secondary education

Apart from the tertiary education reforms, the 1999 reform of the schooling system should be considered one of the two most important systemic factors that shaped the educational paths of young adults. These paths resulted from educational choices at successive levels of education, i.e. the choice of secondary school, which affected the chances of passing the second selection threshold and choosing the type of higher education institution (Domański at al. 2016: 69, 87). Research into the education reform highlighted two educational channels of transition from middle school to secondary school: one transition channel for well-performing students, mostly from "good families", and another for the rest. Social selection divided students into those entering secondary and technical secondary schools and those enrolled in basic vocational schools (Zahorska 2009).

Among the interviewees, a linear path of schooling was most common, although one interviewee discontinued education at middle school and went back to school as a young adult in order to be a good role model for his small daughter:

Answer: Well, at the age of 16, after my dad died, my brother took me on a family, a legal guardian, not a foster family but a legal guardian. And because I wanted to help my family as much as possible, school was put on the back-burner, and I decided that I needed to do something about the situation. However, from the moment I turned 16 and my dad died, two years later, I went to the employment agency as a person of legal age, so to speak, and at that time, I also decided to move out, which was impossible otherwise. And it took me 15 years to finally decide to go back to school.
Question: So when did you discontinue your education?
A: The second grade of middle school. (IDI/L/R15)

Another interviewee shared a similar experience of discontinuing his secondary education at some point, albeit for less obvious reasons (a passion for skateboarding and the lifestyle associated with it). At the time of the interview, he was preparing for his General Educational Development (GED). He returned to secondary school for professional reasons.

A classic example of discontinuing upper secondary education is that of a woman who became pregnant at the time:

Well, primary school was first; that's six grades. Later there was middle school, moving from primary school to middle school. It was then that they cancelled the exam for us. We didn't have to take it because we were the first year after the reform. After middle school, there was a vocational school to become a chef; then there was hairdressing, which was discontinued because I got pregnant and got married (…) My son was two or three years old when I went to secondary school (…) Yes, I got my GED and went to university. (IDI/L/R10)

Apart from social factors that result from family status influencing young people's educational decisions, the interviews also highlight the randomness of choices made under the influence of peers, as well as the interviewees' interests and hobbies. However, there were also statements about uncertainty in educational choices which resulted from a pragmatic approach to education.

(…) Everyone feels lost at the age of eighteen or twenty. I mean, the majority, the vast majority, are all at sea because, in reality, a secondary school graduate – what does a person really know? They know nothing. Having graduated from secondary technical school, I can say, OK, I know the ropes; I can always find a job. (…) I had a teacher; she had a workforce readiness project for students, and so on and so forth. She said that if someone wanted to go to work, she would be happy to help. She was involved in job interviews. I didn't take advantage of it because I generally had such a job that, if I told her, she'd probably want to get it herself, so there was no point. As I say, it is helpful, although this topic isn't raised that often. If we take into account the education system – six and three years, or in fact, six and four years, in my case – it's a system that, in middle school, people are treated like children. And in fact, that's already the point at which that person should have direction. Otherwise, this person graduates from secondary school and, in fact, knows nothing about life, about work, about anything. (IDI/L/R14)

On the other hand, the young adults surveyed also showed an attitude of determination about starting studies, bearing in mind their overall personal development.

> *I studied in a class with an extended curriculum in mathematics and physics, which comprised an equal number of boys and girls; the girls were all ambitious and didn't want to be inferior to the boys. And I had this feeling, and then became fully aware, that the females in our class had such strong personalities. And none of us could imagine a life other than that of a university graduate who invests in their personal development. Whether it was going to be a strictly corporate career or a scientific one, we knew we were going to study at university.* (IDI/L/R30)

The issue of educational choices is particularly important in the case of people with higher education, because it was the choices at the first stages of education that often determined the further path, culminating in studies or even doctoral studies. Based on the interviews, it is difficult to indicate the socio-economic status of the respondents' families, as there were no direct questions on this subject. For example their parents' education or their professional situation were mentioned sporadically in their answers. The collected material does not allow us to directly conclude that parents' education and place of residence (large city, small town) had an impact on their children's educational status, i.e. higher education, are confirmed. The parents' socio-economic status was not the subject of this study.

4.2.3. Higher education

In the collected material, experiences related to higher education stood out in particular. At this stage, the pragmatic attitudes of the respondents towards education and the instrumentalisation of education in terms of a path leading to better work and financial benefits, were of particular importance. Interestingly, they perceive education from the perspective of their whole life, which allowed us to identify several important threads for educational biographies: the influence of parents and other people on educational decisions (or the lack of such influence), the determinants of educational decisions (taking or giving it up), combining educational and professional activity (effective or not), general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the chosen educational path, and expectations of facilitation (or a lack thereof) from state institutions (cf. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2019).

The influence of parents on educational decisions was visible primarily at the stage of school education, especially in relation to private schools. Although it decreased with subsequent levels of education, in the case of higher education, parents tried to direct their children both to take up any studies and to take up future-proof studies.

In some cases, this impact was reinforced by parents funding extramural studies.

> *I studied extramurally, both BA and MA courses. To be honest, this was not in line with my expectations as a teenager. It was related to the fact that I actually studied (…) I didn't pay for university myself; my parents did, and I was a bit pressured by them. I was in a hurry (…), so they weren't really*

the courses I would have chosen. I wouldn't have made the same decision today; I would have chosen a different subject. And I must say that I would have chosen a different university course than the one I graduated from. (IDI/L/R4).

The interlocutors also had experience of studying abroad, which allowed them to compare foreign systems with the Polish higher education system.

I was in an Erasmus programme in Slovakia, and it seemed like there shouldn't be much difference, but there was a huge difference in the attitude of the lecturers, so I decided that I didn't want to study in Poland, and I went to England for my MA. I did a Master's Degree in Engineering at Newcastle University, renewable energy management, and then after graduating, I came back to Poland. And I can say that it wasn't really my own choice; it happened that I had a girlfriend here. (IDI/L/R2)

The young adults surveyed definitely consider higher education in instrumental categories, i.e. as a necessary stage on the way to full professional activity, and they expect it to be capitalised in the form of a well-paid job.

(…) but you never know, there are ups and downs. When we were studying, they kept telling us, "When you start designing, you will have to rake banknotes aside to get through to your keyboard." But when I finally got a job in a design office, it was a tragedy… we were just having one of those downs. (IDI/L/R5)

On the other hand, they are aware of the shortcomings of higher education. The analysis of the interviewees' experience in higher education confirms the benefits of higher education, although they are largely determined by the type of university, field of study, degree and mode of study (Jelonek 2015).

4.2.4. Adult education

In the analysed material, information about involvement in adult education appeared sporadically, which corresponds to the statistical data that shows the decreasing participation of young adults in education and training. One of the interviewed women with higher education was critical of further education, although talked about informal education:

At first, no, I was… I was fed up with learning. There was a stage that I had to rest a bit, let's say. Then the flashes were some kind of MBA or something directional, but I know from research and market observation that it often gives nothing and that a thick briefcase of diplomas or certificates is not always, let's say, respected. It will not open more doors, so no, no, no, no. (…) I try to read various publications that will develop me technically towards my work, because I am also a team leader, so technical skills are also needed as well as interpersonal ones, so I try to read. (IDI/L/R12)

Nevertheless, the respondents' statements also displayed the pragmatism observed with regard to obtaining higher education, and they mentioned training in both hard (accounting or linguistic) and soft fields. Training not only helped them improve their qualifications, but it was also sometimes enjoyable:

So yes, I did these courses, and at the end of my maternity leave, I started looking for a job in this direction. If not strictly in accounting, then at least in some administration, in an office, to get step by step to this dream accounting job because… in fact, during these courses, I discovered that it is something that gives me great pleasure, in which I can drift away. (IDI/L/R20)

As the interviews were conducted several years after graduation, the respondents perhaps did not feel the need to supplement their qualifications or retrain.

4.3. Young adults' educational paths

Young adults' educational paths are treated here as a sequence of events, situations or states that take place within school education (including higher education) or training (Doray et al. 2009: 12). However, the sequence is not necessarily linear. The concept of the "path" makes it possible to show an individual's particular interests through their motivation, choices and limitations, and also in the macrostructural context (Pallas 2003: 168). Based on the collected empirical material, questions about the elements of educational biography helped identify very diverse experiences. They can be presented as dichotomous educational fate trajectories: linear (continuous)/intermittent (with returns), vertical/horizontal, designed/spontaneous. Based on these characteristics, 12 paths have been distinguished:

1) *Minimalist approach* (stopping at the lower secondary education level and functioning outside the labour market - pension, benefits, including the "Family 500+" programme);
2) *Return to school* (supplementing lower secondary education, linking it with work);
3) *Towards vocational education* (stopping at the basic vocational school level and considering trying to achieve a secondary education level);
4) *Secondary education only* (stopping at the secondary education level and functioning outside the labour market);
5) *Secondary education supplemented vertically* (linking it with work, not necessarily officially);
6) *Secondary education supplemented horizontally* (linking it with work and using it for work purposes);
7) *Post-secondary education* (stopping at the post-secondary education level and working);
8) *Between secondary and higher education* (stopping at the secondary education level, considering taking up / taking up studies, giving up studies);
9) *Bachelor degree* (completing higher education - first-cycle, part-time programmes, staying outside the labour market);

10) *Master degree* (completing higher education - first-cycle and second-cycle programmes, working while studying or immediately after completing studies);

11) *Doctoral educational career* (pursuing doctoral programmes, working while studying);

12) *Achieving academic degree* (completing doctoral programmes, work).

In order to organize the experiences that make up the above-mentioned paths, they were grouped into three categories, taking into account the level of education obtained.

4.3.1. Paths of stopping at the level of primary education

This category applies to completing primary school and attempts at education in basic vocational or secondary schools.

Minimalist approach

The minimalist approach is based on stopping at the lower secondary education level and functioning outside the labour market - pension, benefits, including *Rodzina 500+ program* ("Family 500+" programme). This path was most characteristic of women from small towns who care for children (pension, benefits, including the "500+" benefit). An important reason for completing middle school was giving birth to a child before reaching the age of majority, and then giving birth to a second child:

> *Well, in my case, I had a child at the age of 16, so I finished… it was the last year of middle school. I was already pregnant.* (FGI/L/I6/R6)

One of the interviewees (IDI/ZW/R14), a mother of two children, finished her education at middle school, did not plan any further education, and did not work because of the health pension. Her husband did not work either; they lived on her pension, social benefits and the "Family 500+" benefit.

Return to school

The characteristic features of this path include supplementing lower secondary education and linking it with work. The educational careers of young adults in the earliest stages of education were often influenced by family conditions that made it difficult for them to follow the typical linear trajectory. However, after some time, the interviewees undertook activities aimed at continuing and supplementing their education. This demonstrates the value of education in their lives – mainly due to its pragmatic (professional) dimension.

The fate of one of the interviewees, a foster care leaver, shows the difficulties in obtaining an education at the middle school level (IDI/FCI/R11). He failed to get promoted to the next grade twice due to health problems and decided to graduate from a middle school that was part of a Vocational Training Centre. Subsequently,

he graduated from a vocational school. In this story, the advice of the teacher and colleagues was characteristic and led to the decision to change school to one in which he had the opportunity to train for a profession (electromechanics).

Another interviewee's graduation was also influenced by teachers, relatives and friends (IDI/FCI/R12). The man had a problem due to truancy, but at the time of the interview, he was about to finish school at the Vocational Training Institute and planned to continue his education at a vocational school (in the profession of a mechanic). He mentioned that he was not planning to go to high school because he was afraid that he would not pass his high school exams and would be without a profession. However, he did not reject plans for further education, treating the end of vocational school as the most important or the starting point:

> *Because I still have two years ahead of me… I have wasted three years… so at the moment, I am not thinking about a different school. So, for now, I am focusing on the professional one… I want to finish the professional one, register with the national vocational agency if I can, and become a mechanic. And if I want to… because knowing me, my life plans can change… I may go to another school, to continue my education, but this profession is the basis. Well, if I manage, it will be fun because mechanics are in high demand.* (IDI/FCI/R12)

There was one such case among the respondents. He was a professionally active man (IDI/L/R15) whose difficult life situation at the age of 16 forced him to quit his education in the second year of middle school. His motivation to complete his education was his little daughter (he did not want her to have a father who had not graduated from school).

> (…) *as for today, I am not saying that I will not go to school any more, because it's possible, the more so because there are good conditions for people who work. There are extramural schools, there are also evening schools. (…) there is also a high school here, but I do not know if I will continue… I mean, I'm not thinking of gaining some additional school experience, but improving my qualifications and, in the future, maybe changing my job.* (IDI/L/R15)

This example illustrates young adults' openness to further education, but also their awareness of the opportunities that the education system offers to people who work.

Towards vocational education

This pathway is based on stopping at the basic vocational school level and considering trying to achieve a secondary education level. In some interviews, there were references to the idea of continuing education – mostly by women, but the family situation (having a child) made it difficult to implement these plans. Sometimes the reason for not graduating from secondary school was the lack of support from those around them, as evidenced by the example of a woman who had grown up in an orphanage (IDI/FCI/R14). She started studying at a vocational school (focusing on commerce) but stopped her education, explaining that no one was looking out for her.

Secondary education only

This path also characterised women who care for children (stopping at the secondary education level and functioning outside the labour market).The arrival of children had a huge impact on the educational fate of a woman who worked as a waitress and attended an evening secondary school. At the end of school, she became pregnant, and after a year, she became pregnant again and ultimately did not take her final exams.

> (…) *when I entered the final stage of high school, I was pregnant with my eldest son. (…) As I was pregnant, the teachers were kind of lenient, and I was somehow promoted from one grade to another (…). But I didn't take my final exams (…). With small children (…), with the second one born just one year after the first, it was hard to get down to exams.* (IDI/L/R21)

This person also studied at a hairdressing technical college, but left. With two children, however, she declared her willingness to take her secondary school final exams and continue her education in the field of cosmetics.

4.3.2. Paths of achieving secondary education

This category covers graduation from secondary school, but also supplementing it and graduating from post-secondary education while combining education with work.

Secondary education supplemented vertically

This pathway includes supplementing secondary education (vertically), linking it with work (not necessarily officially). In these cases, it was mostly women who completed secondary education after breaks. However, an interesting example of supplementing secondary education is the story of a male former foster child (IDI/FCI/R13) who generally had a complicated educational path from the very beginning. He had not gone to kindergarten; he started primary school but was transferred to a special school after the first grade. After graduating from the special primary school, he attended a middle school and then a vocational school, but failed to graduate. At the age of 18, he decided to go to work, and after a few years, he started studying at an extramural high school, combining it with professional work. He was going to complete his education and take high school final exams, but in the end, he failed (problems with mathematics).

Secondary education supplemented horizontally

The other pathway of secondary education is horizontally supplementing, linking it with work and using it for work purposes. An interesting case involved a young man with a secondary technical education studied to complete his education at the same level. This man had a high school diploma, but he needed vocational education and justified it as follows:

> (…) *this high school is not enough for me. I need to push this education a little bit forward in order to be able to earn more so that I don't have to worry about whether I'll be able to make ends meet…* (…) *you need to learn a little bit more because I would like to… in this company… I could do more…, I would like to do more, but the level of my education does not allow me to do that, so I am where I am. (IDI/L/R17)*

He obtained the title of ICT technician (after two years of study) at the Vocational Training Centre, and after two years, at the time of the interview, he was continuing his education to obtain a second title – IT technician (also two years of study). He justified taking the second course with the needs related to his professional work in an IT company and that during the first course, he did not learn programming, which was part of the second course. He also thought about undertaking higher education, but practical considerations prevailed, and he contented himself with secondary education:

> *Q: Tell me, please, have you thought about college?*
> *A: My wife keeps motivating me. Maybe it has crossed my mind several times, but if I confront this idea with how I sometimes feel on Friday evenings, then I'm convinced I'd not be able to do it. Sometimes I come back home at 3 am, and at 7.40 I'm already leaving. So… you see.*
>
> *Q: But are there also extramural studies?*
> *A: That's true, but I've realised how much learning it takes. Here I will learn the basics, I know how much is required of us, I know what system this school operates in and in fact, I just learn to get the title of technician. And for extramural studies, I would have to devote extra time at home to studying, and that would be much more than I do now. And in high season, I sometimes work from 4 p.m., i.e. I leave home at 3 p.m. and come back at 2 or 3 a.m.* (IDI/L/R17)

This particular example demonstrates that higher education is not always a natural consequence of developing an educational path, i.e. this person's educational career is not linear.

Post-secondary education

The next pathway is based on stopping at the post-secondary education level and working. These people remained in post-secondary school and did not plan to study. An interesting example is a person who took advantage of such an educational opportunity but was not satisfied with it:

> *In fact, after I graduated, I don't know, I guess I finished 3 or 4 post-secondary schools, I wouldn't want to work in any of those professions. It's because of the teaching methods, the teacher's approach to the students…* (FGI/L/I6/R4)

This educational path also includes courses, as in the case of a woman who completed a certified course in accounting and planned further levels (IDI/L/R20).

Between secondary and higher education

In this case, there is stopping at the secondary education level, considering taking up studies. Among the interviewees, there were several examples of people

undertaking studies, interrupting them, changing the field or area or returning to studies after a break.

> *I started the College for Social Service Workers, which was then supposed to be like a school of higher education, connected with the Faculty of Economics and Sociology. I quit after the second year. (…) Then I came back after a few years, which was very difficult for me because I had to re-start learning. Then I started my BA in Pedagogy, so it was all very hard for me to come back to.* (IDI/L/R11)

In general, the young adults included in the study often thought about starting studies, but family, professional or economic conditions (in the case of extramural studies) made their attempts to improve their level of education difficult.

4.3.3. Higher education paths

Bachelor degree

This pathway includes completing first-cycle, part-time programmes of higher education and staying outside the labour market.

Graduating from university did not always guarantee the status of an employed person at the time of the research. One woman with a degree was registered as unemployed during the research, although she had worked before and during her studies. She completed extramural undergraduate cultural studies and completed an internship at the Cultural Centre in her town. She later worked at a McDonald's restaurant but was unemployed at the time of the interview. She said about her studies:

> *These studies will not guarantee you a job everywhere, true.* (IDI/ZW/R5).

On the other hand, she was satisfied that she had graduated from that faculty because she had always been interested in that subject. She did not plan to start a master's degree programme as it was not offered in her town.

Master degree

The master degree pathway is based on completion of studies (first-cycle and second-cycle programmes), working while studying or immediately after completion of studies.

Many people had combined studies with work, as demonstrated below.

> *And it was quite difficult because additionally, I was trying to earn some extra money. When I was studying, I also worked as a waiter to earn money for all this and to earn a living. And it was quite difficult. Well, finally, I somehow managed to juggle it all.* (IDI/L/R1).

An interesting example of interleaving studies (also abroad) and work is a woman who had studied management and accounting:

> *First, I was at the university. I studied in Lodz while living with my parents. I went to the Netherlands for a year, came back and finished my studies, I took a job in Lodz, and then I left for Wrocław.* (IDI/L/R12)

Another woman had two graduate degrees and was planning to pursue doctoral studies.

> *Yes, at one point, when I studied philosophy, I also attended courses at the Faculty of Economics and Sociology, and I defended my philosophy dissertation two years after the initial deadline … I finished Spatial Economy on time, probably, or with a 6-month delay, something like that.*
> *(…) I thought for a moment about a PhD in Economy, but I decided that it is not really my dream, like doing projects, sending them to competitions, scoring points, and so on and so forth… that was not what I wanted to participate in.* (IDI/L/R24)

Doctoral educational career

In this case, there is attending doctoral programmes, working while studying. Doctoral studies were combined with work inside or outside the university. For example, after graduating, one interviewee worked as an academic teacher at the university:

> *(…) it turned out that doctoral studies were not as demanding as… maybe I even dreamed that I would get really involved or I would commit myself without limitation. But in the end, it took last place in the hierarchy of needs, in the ladder of needs. And because they were not too difficult to complete, I managed to juggle my studies and work. I did care about those studies very much, but I did not treat them as a priority, as the professional things involved me much deeper. (IDI/L/ R23)*

In this case work was strictly related to doctoral studies, so perhaps it was possible to combine both.

Achieving academic degree

The last pathway includes completion of doctoral programmes and work.

Among the respondents, there were cases of young women characterised by a linear educational path that ended with a doctorate and working at the university.

One young woman graduated from high school, having completed an extended programme in science. Then there was a five-year study programme in economic relations and, finally, doctoral studies with a successful defence of her PhD dissertation. At the same time, she worked in her profession and studied abroad in London:

> *It was a five-year study programme, followed by four-year doctoral studies* (…), *and in the meantime, I was already working in Warsaw at the National Bank of Poland.* (…) *Later, the possibility to continue my doctorate appeared, to go to London for a year, to study at King's College, to work a little bit on this doctorate.* (IDI/L/R29)

This example illustrates a linear educational path, although it was combined with work and a study experience abroad.

To sum up, school experiences of young Polish adults date back to the times when education was highly valued in Poland (it served a meritocratic function). Therefore their educational aspirations were high – subject to their family roots and social and economic status.

In short, the education paths followed by the interviewees are generally linear, i.e. individual education levels are completed one after another; less often education is continued after a break. A common feature of education paths of young Polish adults is linking education with work, both at the secondary education level and while studying. Some young adults showed a minimalist approach, i.e. they stopped their education at the lowest levels. Most of them have searched for their own education and professional paths – with diverse results. Many have graduated from schools of higher education and successfully pursued their professional duties at work. Only few have followed educational trajectories staring from elementary education and ending with a doctoral degree. Educational histories of the interviewees include breaks in education (also at lower education levels), as well as returns to education and attempts to achieve new qualifications, linking or interleaving education with work. The offer of the Polish educational system with a variety of opportunities enhanced the elasticity of choosing subsequent education paths of young Poles. Their decisions were predominantly based on pragmatic issues; yet sometimes they stemmed from interests and passions or suggestions given by other people (family members, friends or – least frequently – teachers). Instrumental approach to education was particularly visible in the group of young adults with higher education, especially those from large cities. School histories of this group of young Poles included both relatively linear paths (secondary school, studies, work or even a doctoral degree) and – much more frequently – interleaved paths (education linked with work, subsequent or overlapping educational attempts, not always finalized). (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2019). As regards small-town young adults, they relatively less often followed linear paths. If they graduated from a school of higher education, this was frequently achieved through an extramural study system where education was often linked with work.

The categorisation of paths proposed above shows a diversity of educational experiences of young adult Poles, affected by many factors. Undoubtedly, the educational careers of young adults are conditioned by the family roots (cultural and economic capital) and the place of residence (big-city vs small-town young adults).

Chapter 5
Finding work and building a career

The professional biographies of contemporary Polish young adults have been shaped by different labour market trends. They entered the labour market when there was high unemployment, fewer jobs and worse job offers, and employers formulated requirements for professional competence and work experience. Access to employment was facilitated by a *flexicurity* policy.[1] The simplification of legal regulations on the establishment and termination of employment relationships and flexible forms of employment (fixed-term work, part-time work, telework, contract work, job sharing, contracts of mandate and contracts for specific work) favour the creation of jobs (cf. Kryńska, Kwiatkowski 2010). They facilitate a smooth transition from education to work and successive jobs after periods of unemployment. In Poland, *flexicurity* mainly refers to employment flexibility and primarily concerns those involved in non-standard forms of work (Kryńska 2009)[2]. This policy improved young people's access to employment. However, it did not eliminate many unfavourable phenomena such as the mismatch between the educational profile, qualification and the professional expectations of the labour market (the problem of practical professional skills and soft non-vocational skills), limited access to financial capital due to the low

---

1   The *flexicurity* policy, launched in 1990 in Denmark, was recommended to all EU member states as part of the European Employment Strategy. Its guiding principle was to ensure access to employment through flexibility and security. Flexibility in the employment relationship is about hiring, firing and working time, work organisation (e.g. replacement employment, multi-skilling), and wage structure. Security is about protection against dismissal, maintaining employability through retraining, and income (benefits, social security) (Nowak-Lewandowska 2015). *Flexicurity* is ensured by four prinaciples, i.e. high flexibility of employment contracts, active labour market policies, lifelong learning and modern social security systems (Kryńska 2009).

2   Some principles of the model were applied in *Ustawa o łagodzeniu skutków kryzysu gospodarczego dla pracowników i przedsiębiorców* (the Act on Mitigating the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Employees and Entrepreneurs) (2009) (*Journal of Laws*, 125, item 1035). Apart from regulating the duration of fixed-term contracts, the settlement period was extended to 12 months, and rules regarding the individual work time schedule were established.

creditworthiness of young people as bank customers, or the low effectiveness of labour market programmes aimed at young people (cf. Kryńska 2003). Flexible forms of employment are abused by employers, which very often reinforced the feeling of insecurity and deprived many young adults of access to protective mechanisms guaranteed by the Labour Code and social security system.

The analysis of the professional situation of Polish young adults and the course of their professional paths during their transition to adulthood are based on labour market statistics of young Poles aged 25-34 and the results of own qualitative research on the professional biographies of respondents.

5.1. The labour market of young Poles in public statistics

Both national and European young adult labour market statistics focus mainly on the access of people under the age of 24 to employment. In the last few years, however, it has been noticed that difficulties in the labour market also affect those a few years older, so the category of young people has been expanded to include another five-year age cohort. In *Ustawa o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r.* (the Act of 20 April 2004 on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions), amended in 2014 (*Journal of Laws* 2014, item 567, 598, 1146), people aged 25-29 were added to the groups under greater risk of limited access to employment. The change also occurred in the EU's *Youth Guarantee programme*.[3] Based on the regulation, employment agencies are obliged to ensure access to quality employment offers, further education, apprenticeships or traineeships also for that group of young people upon completing formal education or job loss.

The analysis of statistics documenting the labour market situation of young adult Poles aged 25-34 between 2015 and 2019 covers two five-year age cohorts. These figures are compared to those from 2004 (the year of Poland's accession to the EU and when the country started to implement EU social policy regulations) and 2009, when the first consequences of the 2008 financial crisis were observed. These events also shaped the labour market situation of today's thirty-year-olds. Based on analyses published by Polish Central Statistical Office (Pol. Główny Urząd Statystyczny, GUS) and Eurostat, the situation of male and female young

---

3   The *Youth Guarantees* is a program formulated in the EU Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 addressed to the European Union countries. It calls for young people up to the age of 25 (or up to 29), including those who are neither employed nor in education or training (NEETs), a high quality employment offer, further education, or an apprenticeship or traineeship within 4 months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The EU Council Recommendation 'A Bridge to Employment – Strengthening the Youth Guarantee' was formulated in October 2020.

adults in the labour market is compared to that of the total population of Poles based on key labour market indicators: activity and employment rate, temporary employment, part-time employment, unemployment and inactivity.

5.1.1. Economically active young adults

25-34-year-olds comprise the most numerous group of employed Poles who are in the most favourable situation in the labour market. Young adults already possess qualifications and professional experience, and they can count on more stable employment, especially since they are more predictable and responsible, because of their family situation, among other things, as many of them already have children and loans (*Wiek jako determinanta*… 2018: 10). However, the situation in the labour market requires high mobility because a job is not given for life. One has to adapt to changes and continuously acquire new qualifications (Anderson, Herriot 2001). Also, at this stage of life, it is necessary to accumulate resources for independent living.

Labour market statistics of young adult Poles aged 25-29 and 30-34, both men and women, document an improvement in their professional situation after 2004 (see Tables 6, 7 and 10), as activity and employment coefficients increased and the unemployment rate decreased. However, their access to employment has changed less dynamically than that of all Poles. Between 2004 and 2019, the employment rate[4] of the two cohorts of young adults increased less than for all Poles (see Table 6), although the activity rate[5] of young adult Poles are still much higher than the total working-age group. However, in the period analysed, there was a decrease in the share of the employed in each of the two categories of young adults, except for men aged 30-34. Meanwhile, for the total number of Poles, there was a significant increase.

Table 6. Employment rate of Polish young adults aged 25-29, 30-34 and population aged 15-64 by sex, 2004-2019, Q4 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics 2019 2004=100
Total									
25-29	67.0	74.3	75.3	76.3	78.7	78.7	79.6	79.7	18.8
30-34	74.1	80.2	81.1	80.8	81.0	82.3	82.6	83.0	11.2
15-64	52.4	59.4	62.6	63.7	65.1	66.4	67.3	68.5	30.7

---

4   Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference week or were temporarily absent from such work. The employment rate is the percentage of employed persons in relation to the total population. (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/lfsi_esms.htm).

5   The active population (labour force) is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed persons. The activity rate is the percentage of active persons in relation to the total population. (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/lfsi_esms.htm).

Table 6 (cd.)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics 2019 2004=100
Men									
25-29	74.7	81.3	81.9	82.3	86.4	86.7	88.2	88.9	19.0
30-34	83.1	89.4	88.1	88.8	89.1	91.1	92.0	93.5	12.5
15-64	58.4	65.9	69.2	70.1	71.7	72.3	74.4	76.1	30.3
Women									
25-29	59.2	67.4	68.3	70.0	70.6	70.2	70.6	70.2	18.6
30-34	64.7	71.0	73.0	72.5	72.6	73.1	72.9	72.2	11.6
15-64	46.5	53.0	56.0	57.2	58.5	59.4	60.3	60.9	31.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2020h.

Table 7. Activity rate of young Polish adults aged 25-29, 30-34 and population aged 15-64 by sex, 2004-2019, Q4 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics 2019 2004=100
Total									
25-29	84.8	83.6	84.8	84.6	84.9	83.2	83.4	82.9	- 2.3
30-34	86.5	85.6	87.3	83.2	85.6	85.5	85.5	85.3	- 1.4
15-64	64.1	64.9	68.2	68.5	69.0	69.5	70.0	70.6	10.1
Men									
25-29	92.5	90.9	91.5	91.1	93.0	92.1	91.9	92.0	- 0.5
30-34	94.4	94.5	93.9	94.3	93.9	94.3	94.5	95.0	0.6
15-64	70.4	71.9	74.9	75.3	76.0	76.8	77.2	78.2	11.1
Women									
25-29	76.9	76.2	77.7	77.7	76.5	73.9	74.5	73.5	- 4.4
30-34	78.5	76.7	80.5	77.7	77.7	76.2	76.0	75.2	- 4.2
15-64	58.0	58.2	61.5	61.7	62.0	62.3	62.9	63.0	8.5

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2020a.

The position of young adults in the labour market is determined by sex. The percentage of economically active and employed young women is significantly lower than that of men. Moreover, during the analysed period, the differences in employment and activity rates increased to the disadvantage of women.

5.1.2. Young adult temporary and part-time employees

Post-modern labour force flexibility correlates positively with younger age (Strzelecki et al. 2015: 132-133). Temporary employment is more common among young Poles aged 25-34 than among all employed Poles (see Table 8), whereas part-time employment is at comparable levels (see Table 9). At the same time, there are more temporary or part-time employees among young female employees

compared to young men employees. In 2019, two to three times more young women were part-time employees than young men. In the same year, about 28% of young women and 23% of young men were temporarily employed. In the analysed period, the percentage of temporary employed did not change among young female employees, while among all young employees, young men employees and all those who work aged 15-64, it significantly decreased (by over 10%, 19% and 14%, respectively). At the same time, data on changes in employment in the form of part-time work are more optimistic. Both among all Polish young adult employees and among all working Poles, the percentage of part-time employees decreased significantly, much more among men than female employees.

Table 8. Temporary employees as a percentage of all Polish young adult employees aged 25-34 by sex, and population aged 15-64, 2004-2019, Q4 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics 2019 2004=100
25-34	27.9	30.0	35.9	35.2	33.4	31.8	29.3	25.0	-10.4
M	27.9	29.3	34.6	33.5	31.6	30.2	26.9	22.7	-19.6
F	27.8	30.9	37.5	37.3	35.6	33.6	33.2	27.7	-0.5
15-64	23.9	26.4	28.9	27.8	26.7	25.5	23.2	20.5	-14.2

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2020b.

Table 9. Part-time employees as a percentage of all Polish young adult employees aged 25-29 and population aged 15-64 by sex, in 2004-2019, Q4 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics 2019 2004=100
25-29	8.5	5.7	6.6	6.1	5.6	4.9	4.8	5.6	-34.1
M	5.6	3.3	4.1	3.5	3.2	3.0	2.7	3.2	-42.9
F	12.2	8.8	9.9	9.5	8.7	7.4	7.6	8.7	-28.7
15-64	10.0	7.4	6.9	6.7	6.6	6.4	6.3	5.9	-41.0
M	7.3	4.8	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.7	3.2	3.2	-56.1
F	13.3	10.5	10.2	10.1	9.8	9.8	9.5	9.3	-30.1

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2020c.

Poles aged 25-34 are most often employed under employment contracts, lew a small percentage work under contracts of mandate (only 2.4%, compared to 12% in the 15-24 age category) (GUS 2019a: 51; GUS 2020d: 48-49). However, the labour market position of some of them is not stable. Research shows that between 2011 and 2018, among all young workers (25-39 years old), regardless of gender, the percentage of those who:
a) moved from a fixed-term contract to a contract for an indefinite time was very low and decreased (from 9% to 5% respectively),
b) moved from part-time to full-time employment decreased (from 15% to 12%) (Eurostat 2020d, 2020e).

Remuneration of young adults

Basic livelihood at the stage of entering adulthood is determined by income from work.

As a result of the educational boom of the 1990s, the average income of young Poles began to increase (Szafraniec 2012b: 114-115), but it is still lower than average. According to the Sedlak & Sedlak National Salary Survey, the average earnings of young people in two age groups (18-25 and 26-30) were below the average for all respondents. In 2018, they amounted to slightly over 3500 PLN (Polish zloty), approx. 4300 PLN and 4500 PLN, respectively. However, for the 31-35 years category, it was 5,000 PLN (Jurczak 2019). According to data from 2019, people with short seniority earned much less than the median salary – 3500 PLN and 4785 PLN, respectively (Hajec 2020). According to the GUS data, the average monthly gross wage and salary in the enterprise sector was in 2018-2019 visibly higher - over 4850 PLN and over 5170 PLN, respectively (GUS 2019b; 2020c)[6]. Relatively better salaries are earned by young people in human resources (in 2017, the gross average monthly salary was about 4500 PLN with allowances) and in the research and development sector (over 3700 PLN). By contrast, it was worse in the marketing industry (about 2900-3600 PLN), and many young people who work in gastronomy and trade earn much less.

5.1.3. The unemployed and inactive young adults

Young adult Poles entered the labour market when the unemployment rate among young people was one of the highest in the EU. After 2004, the risk of young adult unemployment decreased significantly, although unemployed people aged 25-34 were still the largest group among the total number of unemployed – 28% in total in 2019 (GUS 2019a: 77) although people aged 25-34 constitute 14% of the total population (Demographic Yearbook of Poland 2020:139). Young Polish women were still at a much greater risk of unemployment than young men, and between 2004 and 2019, the decline in the unemployed rate of young women in both young adult cohorts was slower than that of men, especially among young women aged 30-34 (see Table 10).

---

6   Available data on remuneration in Poland should be treated as estimates due to the methodological assumptions made. Statistics Poland uses the median remuneration of employees in large enterprises employing at least 10 people on a full-time basis. Unlike Sedlak & Sedlak's survey, these data do not include employees of micro-enterprises.

Table 10. Unemployment rate of young Polish adults aged 25-29, 30-34 and population aged 15-64, by sex, 2004-2019, Q4 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics 2019 2004=100%
Total									
25-29	20.9	11.0	11.2	9.8	7.3	5.4	4.5	3.9	-83.1
30-34	14.5	6.4	7.1	6.3	5.4	3.7	3.3	2.6	-82.1
15-64	18.3	8.0	8.2	7.0	5.6	4.5	3.9	2.9	-84.2
Men									
25-29	19.2	8.6	10.5	9.7	7.0	5.8	3.9	3.4	-83.3
30-34	12.0	6.1	6.2	5.9	5.2	3.5	2.6	1.6	-86.7
15-64	17.0	7.6	7.7	6.9	5.5	4.5	3.7	2.6	-84.7
Women									
25-29	23.1	10.0	12.1	9.9	7.7	4.6	5.5	4.5	- 80.5
30-34	17.6	6.9	8.2	6.8	5.7	4.1	4.1	4.0	-77.3
15-64	19.8	8.4	8.8	7.2	5.7	4.7	4.1	3.2	-83.3

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2020f.

An important backdrop to explain the decreasing risk of unemployment among young adults aged 25-29 and 30-34 is the significantly growing economic inactivity of young women since 2015. The percentage of e inactive (classified neither as employed nor as unemployed) young Polish women is three or four times higher than that of young men, and between 2004 and 2019, it visibly increased in comparison (see Table 11). As other data show, among the inactive people aged 25-34, the majority – two-thirds – were those who remained outside the labour force due to family obligations, over 16% due to illness, over 8% due to education and qualification development, and slightly over 4% due to being discouraged as a result of the fruitless job search (GUS 2019b: 23).

Table 11. Inactive young Polish adults aged 25-29, 30-34 and population aged 15-64 by sex, 2004-2019, Q4 (%)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics2019 2004=100%
Total									
25-29	15.2	16.4	15.2	15.4	15.1	16.8	16.6	17.1	12.5
30-34	13.4	14.4	12.7	13.8	14.4	14.5	14.5	14.7	9.7
15-64	35.9	35.1	31.8	31.5	31.0	30.5	30.0	29.4	-19.1
Men									
25-29	7.5	9.1	8.5	8.9	7.0	7.9	8.1	8.0	6.7
30-34	5.6	5.5	6.1	5.7	6.1	5.7	5.5	5.0	-10.7
15-64	29.6	28.1	25.1	24.7	24.0	23.2	22.8	21.8	-24.6

Table 11 (cd.)

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Dynamics2019 2004=100%
Women									
25-29	23.1	23.8	22.3	22.3	23.5	26.1	25.5	26.5	14.7
30-34	21.5	23.3	19.5	22.3	23.0	23.8	24.0	24.8	15.4
15-64	42.0	41.8	38.5	38.3	38.0	37.7	37.1	37.4	-11.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2020g.

The statistics of economic activity, employment and unemployment provided by Statistics Poland and Eurostat document that the labour market of young Poles aged 25-34 shows positive tendencies. However, the assessment of the employment situation of a significant proportion cannot be unequivocally optimistic as:

- almost one in five people of this age – and almost one in three women – is neither working nor seeking a job;
- one in six – and one in four women – is not working;
- one in four men and one in three women is employed temporarily.

The situation of young adults in the labour market compared to the total number of the employed population reveals that, in the period under analysis, the social policy seemed to focus on improving access to employment for those up to age 29 than aged 30-34.

5.2. Selected theoretical and empirical analyses of professional careers

In this part of the considerations, attention is focused on the dynamics of the professional experience of the studied thirty-year-olds. The presentation of the results is preceded by a short reference to selected theoretical and empirical achievements on this subject. The changes that accompanied the transition to a postmodern society led to an increased interest in professional careers in research (e.g. Hall 2004; Arthur et al. 2005), including in Poland (e.g. Miś 2006; Bohdziewicz 2010; Mrozowicki 2016; Piorunek 2016). As a result of the fundamental economic-social transformations, in the area of work relations, there were frequent changes of employer, flexible forms of employment, changes in the scope of responsibilities and changes in the place of residence associated with changing employer (cf. Kozek 2001: 148).

5.2.1. Categories describing the course of professional life

The course of professional life has been analysed with reference to different concepts: career, career path, professional path, as well as employment path, professional development and labour market strategy (cf. Mrozowicki et al. 2018; Pikuła 2017; Pocztowski 2007; Suchar 2010; Giermanowska 2001). These categories are applied to describe and organise individuals' professional experiences according to formal criteria.

The term "career" denotes the course of a person's life through phases of their employment (Domecka, Mrozowicki 2008: 138) or, in other words, the course of professional life (Wołk 2009: 274). Objectively, the concept covers those aspects that are observable, i.e. positions, posts and functions, competencies and responsibilities, activities and occupational decisions. In subjective terms, it is about interpreting work-related events, feelings about work, aspirations, expectations and level of satisfaction. When assessed positively, a "career" is understood as promotion, professional success, high position, etc. The assessment is negative if a "career" means a lack of promotion and success, even if an individual pursues a career by fair means or foul (cf. Krauze 2012: 9). When changes in an individual's working life involve rising through the ranks, we speak of a vertical career; when they take place in the area of specialisation, it is a horizontal career (Penc 1997: 186). A career in the traditional, structural sense is an attribute of a profession or organisation (Miś 2006: 478). Its course is planned and determined by the hierarchy of positions in an institution/organisation. Now, the pattern of a processual career, or a flexible and interrupted career developed by individuals based on their preferences, goals and abilities while adapting to changing conditions, is becoming widespread (cf. Mrozowicki et al. 2018). Today's employees are characterised by high mobility, changing organisations and specialisations, and requalifying often. A career becomes the property of an individual, of the person who develops it (Miś 2006: 478). These changes are the result of the pluralisation of ways of life that are shaped by individualism, reflexivity and consumerism, as well as the increased freedom, randomness and unstructuredness of human activities that characterise postmodernity (cf. Marody 2014: 160).

The relatively short professional biographies of young adults justify the use of a less formal category than a career (Suchar 2010). The professional path is understood as a sequence of events that occurred until the current stage of an individual's life, covering professional plans and ways of seeking employment, the very fact they started work and the moment that it happened, changing job (sector, company and form of employment), and interrupted work history and the reasons for it.

Age is one of the most important criteria in distinguishing stages of professional life. In addition to the length and content of professional experience, age helps reveal a general life perspective that shapes an individual's perception of professional experiences (Suchar 2010: 24). According to Donald Super (1984), in

early adulthood, an individual should fulfil two developmental tasks in the sphere of professional activity. They should specify their initial professional preferences (age 18-21) and implement these choices by completing education and assuming a professional role, i.e. the transition stage from school to working life, taking up a position in a chosen occupational field and striving for professional success (age 21-24). The next developmental period should be stabilising one's professional position (age 24-44).

The postmodern labour market is characterised by a "deconstruction of the three-stage career progression, i.e. education to labour market participation, active labour market participation and the post-work stage have no clear temporal order and linear character" (Piorunek 2016: 85). Life paths become increasingly differentiated and less predictable. Initial stages of professional careers become longer, but young professional biographies include the two stages indicated earlier: 1) seeking a job/preparing for a career and 2) starting professional life, taking on the first job. The second stage is usually one of high involvement in the job and verifying professional choices (cf. Szałkowski 2002: 77-80; Pocztowski 2007: 305-310).

5.2.2. Types of career paths

Today's career paths are characterised by variability, diversity, multi-directionality and unpredictability of work experiences, with a focus on individual activity, agency and search for new professional opportunities[7]. Careers within one or several organisations with linear employee mobility are less frequent nowadays (Bohdziewicz 2010: 3). Of the many empirical career typologies, it is worth recalling those that apply to studying the career paths of young people.

Researching professional biographies of workers and business people in Poland after 1989, Markieta Domecka and Adam Mrozowicki distinguished the two most frequently pursued professional paths: the patchwork career and the construction career (2008: 136-155). The former involves successive jobs or parallel professional activities that have little in common in terms of competencies required or the industry in which the individual works. These occupational choices are accidental rather than conscious. They are situationally driven, dependent on external conditions, and there is little control over one's own fate. Individuals are convinced that they can count only on themselves, have no support from institutions and other people, and they can achieve minimum occupational stability by accepting a heavy workload and showing forced labour flexibility (ibid.: 144-147).

The latter usually consists of a series of vertical and horizontal changes within one/several organisations and turning points that alter its course, accelerate it and open up new career opportunities. The individual plans to occupy higher positions, accumulating resources to improve their occupational position and life situation.

---

7   Careers are described as "limitless" (Grabowska-Lusińska 2014), "a portfolio", "a kaleidoscopic", "a mosaic": (Piorunek 2016).

These career paths are followed by ambitious, innovative, risk-taking people. At the initial phase of their professional activity, they manifest an instrumental approach, and their subsequent promotions mainly serve to accumulate and convert capital. Later on, the career becomes a value in itself, a source of satisfaction and personal fulfilment; its development becomes more important than the resources accessed thanks to it (ibid.: 147-149).[8]

The third career type that Domecka and Mrozowicki distinguished – the anchor career – is pursued least frequently. The employment biography encompasses a relatively narrow spectrum of positions and activities, usually limited to one company or industry, defined by an individual's professional competencies, which they can improve and change, but not abandon in favour of completely new ones (ibid.: 144).[9]

According to Ewa Giermanowska (2001), the restructuring in Poland in the 1990s formed two strategies related to the professional activity of young people: "make a career" and "avoid unemployment", i.e. acquire a high level of education as a pre-condition for finding a prestigious job and making a career combined with considerable material gratification. The other strategy focuses on finding any job and additional sources of income to reduce the risk of poverty and social malaise. Ewa Grzeszczyk's study shows that twenty- and thirty-plus-year-old Poles at the turn of the century most often followed the professional path of a pragmatist working out of obligation and life necessity. The least popular paths were the path of working for pleasure ("a man of leisure") and the path of working to achieve non-material values ("post-materialist") (2003: 177-210). According to Michał Dobrołowicz, the professional biographies of young people today are more a *do-it-yourself biography* created on an ongoing basis and adjusted to the current situation rather than a biography of a *self-made man,* which is oriented towards achieving a well-defined goal (2020: 100).

However, young people do not completely reject socially accepted institutionalised ways of developing their career paths in their professional strategies. Instead, they modify goals and the ways of achieving them from the perspective of their own interests and skills.[10] Young employees pursue exploration or predictability

---

8   The construction career is based on the belief that planning one's career requires agreeing to deferred gratification, that long-term gains are more important than short-term benefits (Domecka, Mrozowicki 2008: 149).

9   Anchoring is the pinnacle of career aspirations for individuals with unstable occupational biographies. If anchoring does not match the individual's aspirations, it may be accompanied by a sense of being overwhelmed by external constraints, restrained promotion and the feeling of being "stuck" in the organisation. When combined with identity construction, the career becomes a value in itself (cf. Domecka, Mrozowicki 2008: 144).

10 Michał Dobrołowicz (2020) analysed professional careers of young people within the framework of Robert Merton's concept of anomie. Some young people have internalised the professional success as their life goal and try to reach it by adapting to the rules that govern the labour market at an early stage of their professional careers (conformists). Ritualists try to reach a high position in the labour market by acquiring formal qualifications, although they

strategies. The first strategy means openness to new tasks, additional duties, new professional roles, cooperating with many people and job changes. The latter strategy involves implementing a predictable scheme of professional career development and is characteristic mainly of young people connected with the formally administered labour market (budgetary sphere) (ibid.: 175-178).

Donald Super, the author of a widely known concept of life career stages, pointed out gender differences in career paths. An individual following one of the many possible paths through stages of acquiring education, entering the world of labour and professional career pursues a career in connection with role factors, situational factors and developmental tasks that result from life stages (1953: 60, as cited in Pikuła 2017:4). He distinguished four basic career types: stable, conventional and unstable career patterns, and multiple attempts. According to Super, the male version of a stable career involves entering a full-time professional role without a trial period, and it continues for many years. Meanwhile, the female version is to enter employment after graduation.

In the conventional career pattern, the period of experimenting with work and employment is prolonged, and the time of occupational stability is less certain. Women that follow this pattern start work after high school. They continue to work after they get married and do not stay at home. Unstable careers involve subsequent employment, representing short-term periods of job stability. In the male version of this pattern, if subsequent jobs do not satisfy the individual, he continues to search for a different career path. Women tend to sign fixed-term employment contracts and discontinue work when the family's financial situation allows that. Super identifies three additional career path patterns for women that result from their involvement in housework. The dual-career is pursued by women who entered the workforce and achieved professional success; however, the start of a family makes it necessary to slow down their professional development and find a balance between work and engagement in housework. An intermittent career is when a woman does not resign from her job but has to interrupt or significantly reduce her work commitment due to her family situation. The home career pattern is when a woman is not successful at work and resigns in favour of running the home (Pikuła 2017).

---

are aware that education is not a guarantee of professional success. Innovators achieve their career goals by cooperating in groups that facilitate career progression. Rebels are driven by their own career goals and try to change the workplace; when they do not achieve the goal, they change their workplace. Some young people withdraw from the labour market due to illness or when their financial situation allows them to do so (2020: 188).

5.3. Young adult career paths

The professional biographies of the studied young people indicate that all of them were active in the labour market in the sense that they earned money from a few years to more than a decade. At the time of the research, a decisive majority of them were employed,[11] mainly in services, but also in manufacturing. Several (11) were on maternity or parental leave or had student status, and several (7) were formally unemployed. Their narratives reveal that those who were unemployed, studying or on child-care leave also included those who were earning an income from their work. Among all those who were obtaining income from work, three-fifths (31) were part-time employees, while the minority (18) were temporarily employed on the basis of a contract of mandate. They were involved in home-based work or worked occasionally, relatively often in the black market. A relatively large group – two-fifths – worked under a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period, and slightly fewer worked under a fixed-term contract. A few (4) were self-employed.

The qualitative empirical data provided an insight into the young adults' professional plans and the course of their professional life. Their professional biographies during their transition to adulthood were analysed using the concept of a professional path. The path was understood as a sequence of events that occurred until the current stage of their professional life, covering their job plans, ways of looking for employment, when and how they started their first job, job changes (sector, company and form of employment) and breaks in employment. When analysing their transition into adulthood, it was important to establish when they entered the labour market, i.e. after completing formal education (a linear/timely transition) or earlier/later (non-linear transition). It was also vital to ascertain whether employment provided them with relative life stability and helped them fulfil other adult roles, i.e. whether it gave them relative financial independence that was conducive to starting a family and securing its needs. The analysis of the professional paths also took into account the differentiation in terms of gender, family of origin and family of procreation, as well as their place of residence (big city, smaller town).

5.3.1. Job plans

The uncertainty in the labour market increases the number of young Poles who have no career plans (Kubów, Sipurzyńska-Rudnicka 2018). In retrospect, the young adults generally did not verbalise their career plans when they entered demographic adulthood, although they were about to graduate from secondary

---

11   They were employed, ran their own businesses in sectors other than agriculture, or assisted (without remuneration) in running a family business.

school and make a decision about whether to seek employment or further education. Some interviewees from families with higher social capital did mention their professional plans. Their professional choices were made under the influence of their family tradition or suggestions from relatives and friends, but they emphasised that choices were subsequently modified.

> *I knew* [I would be working at the university] *from kindergarten* (…). *It was something obvious* (…). *My parents worked at the university after all* (…). *I didn't know it could be otherwise* (…) *a thought crossed my mind when I was studying at the university that I could* [work elsewhere]. *That's why I moved to Warsaw* (…). *I also worked in a bank there, so that's why I had the idea about trying something else* (…). *I imagined that I would be a businesswoman* (…) *that I would be travelling around the world and negotiating some trade contracts. It looks a bit different now.* (IDI/L/R29)

The professional projects of some of the interviewees were related to their interests and hobbies. The owner of a company that produces horse-riding clothes, and who had practised equitation since childhood, said:

> *I knew what I wanted* (…). *I had my own view of life* (…); *it is not a coincidence that my business is based on my passion* (…). *I've always repeated that I want to run a company related to my hobby.* (IDI/L/R9)

Some interviewees made decisions about their educational profile and future profession by eliminating other options:

> *I knew what I didn't want and what I did want, what I liked. It turned out completely different anyway* (…). *Film school was out, medical university was out, the technical university was out.* (IDI/L/R8)

Many interviewees did not have career plans when they were at secondary school. They admit that they only started building career plans after graduating from university:

> *I had no idea about my future career* (…). *I had my diploma in hand.* (…). *I came back* [to Poland] *when the school year had already started* [she had been working as a babysitter and did further training in the USA] (…), *so it was difficult to find a job as a teacher straight away* (…) *I was left without a job, but with an idea for life after I got back home* (…). *At the time, I was dreaming about a non-public kindergarten.* (IDI/L/R23)

Career choices of people raised in families with low economic and social capital, in particular, dysfunctional families (i.e. family members suffering from alcohol addiction, individuals suffering from violence and neglect), were mostly accidental. None of them verbalised their career plans. In contrast, they recounted that those decisions about work and educational profile were made quickly, with limited access to education and the pressure of having to find financial resources to satisfy basic needs. Unable to count on the support of their families, they usually obtain secondary education and get a paid job.

5.3.2. Ways to look for a job

The young adults started their first job at a time of high uncertainty in the labour market and increasing demands. They revealed difficulties in accessing the labour market when they were younger but noticed an improvement nowadays and stressed that it is no longer difficult to get any job, it is difficult to get a good job. They said that, although it was not always easy, they managed to find employment. Family members and friends were supportive. One of the interviewees stated:

> If you don't have a friend, you won't get a job. (IDI/L/R4)

The importance of informal contacts in access to work was emphasised more often by interviewees from smaller towns and those with lower professional qualifications:

> In small towns, you get a job mainly through connections (…). There are (…) no institutions or offices which could help. I don't know, the Marshal's Office is probably still doing some training, but I've never looked into it. (IDI/ZW/R1)

Young adults criticised the public employment agencies. One of those who were registered unemployed said:

> I found a job very quickly myself (…). I did not have time for the training they offered (…), and training courses were not a priority for employment agencies anyway (…). Employment agencies should provide more support for young people who are looking for a job (…). There are no institutions in Poland (…) to help young people find a job. Well, some employment agencies exist, but they deduct money from salaries [that the employee gets], so it is also a bit unfair. (IDI/ZW/R1)

The interviewees' narratives about their job search reflect their high agency. Many had looked for employment themselves, writing CVs, searching for employers and submitting job applications. One respondent described her experience of looking for her first job as follows:

> The Internet was not that popular at the time. I simply wrote my CV and walked around shopping malls with a printed copy (…). I decided that it would be the easiest thing to do (…). They needed someone straight away, and job interviews were held right away, on the spot… and to my great surprise, I was employed and that was how my career as a salesperson began, which, one could say, continues, because I have anchored myself in the trade for longer. (IDI/L/R20)

Many of the young people who were registered as unemployed did not expect a good job offer but to get health insurance and access to professional activation instruments aimed at young people (i.e. graduate traineeships, training vouchers and subsidies for the self-employed). One of the interviewees mentioned:

> They were recruiting for a programme to facilitate the employment of the unemployed and enable them to start their own business (…). I decided to take part in such a programme and open my own business. (IDI/L/R23)

Only a few received a job offer from the labour office and stabilised their work situation for several years. One of them said:

> *I registered as an unemployed person (…). A week later, I got a job offer in a company. At the company, of course, I was immediately referred for a medical examination and started work in three days (…) I still work in this company.* (IDI/L/R15)

As life became computerised, the Internet became a common source of information about job offers, namely the *pracuj.pl* and *praca.pl* websites, as well as company websites. Those who had specialist qualifications found work quickly. One of them said:

> *I found a few companies on the Internet (…) that dealt with renewable energy sources (…). I sent my CV to a few companies. Over half of them invited me for a job interview (…) Actually, I was able to choose between different offers (…). There were not too many companies of this type, but out of the ones I talked to, virtually everyone wanted me.* (IDI/L/R2)

5.3.3. Timing and linearity of entering the labour market

According to the concept of life cycle institutionalisation, the transition to the labour force should take place after graduation and having acquired professional qualifications. Nowadays, the transition from the education system to the labour market is increasingly blurred and complicated.

The young adults who participated in the study entered the labour market in one of three ways:
1) after completing their formal education (linear/timely transition);
2) during their schooling (simultaneous transition);
3) they did not enter the labour market immediately, or they entered the labour market without completing the schooling stage (non-linear transition).

Although a few experienced a timely transition to the labour market, the majority entered the labour market in a non-timely way. The vast majority started their first job before obtaining formal qualifications and completing a certain level of education, combining education and work. Some of them discontinued their studies. However, a few did not take up work for some time after graduating.

The analysis determined that the work experience of the studied young adults lasted from a few years to over a decade and covered two stages which are not easily distinguishable: the stage of the first job and the stage of professional work after completing formal education and obtaining professional qualifications.

5.3.4. First professional experience

Almost all studied young adults started earning money before reaching demographic adulthood: mostly at secondary school, and in a few cases, at primary school. Early earning (aged 15-19) was characteristic of young Poles at the turn

of the century. Productivity and the labour force flexibility policies implemented in Poland at the time (Golinowska 2018: 90) favoured such choices and decisions of the young. Pupils and students took advantage of job offers in non-standard employment forms, allowing them to combine work with education.[12] However, interviewees from both the big city and smaller towns verbalised difficulties in the labour market when they were students:

> *I remember that in those days, the Lodz labour market looked awfully "poor", while the requirements… well, in a nutshell, they were looking for a student with ten years of experience, right? And I earned 1500 zlotys.* (IDI/L/R10)

> *When I was 21, the European market was just opening. It was very difficult to get a job* (…) *even in a shop or anywhere else. Those were really much harder times than nowadays.* (IDI/ZW/R3)

They usually worked on a casual, seasonal basis, occupying the lowest ranks in various sectors, e.g. working in catering as dishwashers, cooks' helpers, waiters and bartenders; as sellers, couriers and warehouse workers in trade; as fruit pickers in horticulture; as security guards in the entertainment sector; as DJs, hostesses and leaflet distributors in advertising companies. They tutored school children and worked at construction sites as bricklayers' helpers. The young people were quite often employed without any legal grounds, formal contracts or rules defining their duties. One of the interviewees recalled his experiences at the time as follows:

> *It was some kind of contract, flexitime* (…), *so I would go to work not knowing what time I would get back* (…) *Sometimes I went to work at 6.00 a.m., and I would only work until 10.00 a.m. On other occasions, I would be working even until 9.00 p.m., until 11.00 p.m., from the early morning.* (IDI/ZW/R9)

The participants said that they undertook work at that time for various reasons: mainly the need to have one's own financial resources for a holiday, consumption in terms of clothing, leisure and hobbies due to material limitations in their families of origin. They also built financial self-reliance (less frequently) independence. Respondents justified their decisions in the following ways:

> *I was seventeen* (…). *I simply wanted to have some money for travelling, which* (…) *resulted from skateboarding because, at that time, my friends and I used to go to the Czech Republic, for example.* (IDI/L/R13)

> *I worked on a construction site during my vacation* (…). *I earned money for a PlayStation console* (…) *treats, as I said, whims.* (IDI/L/R28)

---

12 According to research on students of the last year of full-time second-cycle studies in selected universities in three Polish big cieties, more than 90% of students indicated that they had been employed for some time during their studies, of who 57% were currently working. Almost half were employed under a civil law contract, 21% under a fixed-term employment contract and more than 10% on the basis of a permanent employment contract (Kubów, Sipurzyńska-Rudnicka 2018: 104).

Many respondents earned money during their school years not only by choice, but out of necessity. They wanted and had to help their parents by earning money. For some, it was the only way to satisfy their needs. Some of them recall:

> *My parents started (…) to recover from a financial crisis (…) at the end of my primary school (…) I actually had to work (…) my father ran a wholesale warehouse (…) I remember us unloading big lorries with deliveries.* (IDI/L/R3)

> *During my vacation, I worked on a construction site (…) things were not always easy at home (…) to earn some money, just to buy shoes and go on holiday.* (IDI/ZW/R1)

The majority of the interviewees who combined education with work did not perceive it as a stage in their professional career.

> *I was thinking more about what I would get there in a fortnight, what money, than really about my career.* (IDI /L/R1)

But for some interviewees, this short-term, often accidental way of earning money was an opportunity to pass the apprenticeship required by employers.

> *I had no plan (…) to select the kind of work accordingly (…). It was about financial needs and also a line in my CV. (*IDI/L/R24)

> *I wanted to gain some experience; I wanted to study and work at the same time, more or less in accordance with my qualifications (…) I managed to keep the job for half a year to be able to put experience on my CV.* (IDI/L/R22)

For many participants, it was an important period when they learnt about the rules and chances in the labour market. An English graduate said:

> *My girlfriend (…) worked in a reliable company (…); they had a horrific translation from English into Polish (…). I translated a pile of documents and, well, I worked like that for 3 days, and I took no break, and I earned 13,000 zlotys* [approximately €2890]. *I thought: well… perhaps I shall not go to work but earn money like this from time to time (…). Then I took a decisive step to do something more and… work for myself, not for the company that employed me (…). I'm considering a couple of things. I may do simultaneous interpretation. I did it already in the past, and I'm good at it (…). I would travel around Poland, interpret, and earn big money doing virtually nothing (…). I thought about going to school – my friend runs it – and seeing how adults are taught. (…) I thought I could go and teach* [in a college]. *I have an engineering degree, and I think it might be cool for them to be taught by somebody who knows more than just English (…). My girlfriend does tattoos (…). I might do marketing for her; help her spin up the business.* (IDI/L/R6)

Some interviewees had stayed in the business where they started for several years.

> *A permanent job (…) almost right after secondary school. My mother's friend's son asked if I would like to take his place and work in a warehouse. He was leaving, and that's how my first job started (…). I worked… probably for a year, a year or two years (…). At first, it wasn't permanent* [it was a short-term employment contract] *but later on, I managed to get an employment contract and I also got the next job through friends in a similar position, and it was immediately a permanent contract, and I worked there for seven years.* (IDI/L/R17)

A non-linear transition to the labour market was experienced by young women. Some discontinued their education due to pregnancy and did not start working, while others planned a gap year after graduation. Below is an excerpt from an interview with a graduate of a university in Lodz:

> *Upon graduating from X, I thought about taking a break. I decided not to try hard to find a job because… because I didn't feel like it (…). I defended my thesis in the autumn, and I thought I would take a break until the end of the year and start looking for a job when the new year begins (…). Unfortunately, my plan got a bit mixed up due to (…) post-surgery complications (…) not that I could not find a job, I was not really looking for it (…). It was my idea (…). I found a job upon completing treatment. At the beginning, it was a* [paid graduate internship]. (IDI/L/R8)

A linear transition to the labour market is rare. It is characteristic of those who concentrated on their education and did not have to or did not want to work while studying. The following statement illustrates such choices:

> *I'm doing my bachelor's degree in re-socialisation pedagogy. I'm about to start working* (…) *as a social worker in X* (…) *it's a full-time job* (…) *I did not work earlier at all because I believed that you should either study or work.* (IDI/L/R11)

A linear transition to work was also experienced by those young people who completed secondary general education without obtaining specialist professional qualifications and had no plans for further education.

5.4. Young adults' professional pathways – between traditional and postmodern pathways

The professional choices and experiences of the young adults are characterised by high dynamics and diversity. Several perspectives have been applied in the search for patterns in young adults' professional paths: the intensity of changes; interrelations between professional activity, competencies and personal fulfilment in the professional sphere; and chances for professional and life stabilisation.

The analysis made it possible to identify two main types of professional pathways pursued by the young adults in the study: *the relative stability career* and *the permanent mobility career*. The relative stability career is a postmodern modification of the traditional bureaucratic career that is linked to an institution/organisation. The permanent mobility career corresponds to the post-modern processual career.

5.4.1. The relative stability career

This professional career is a linear transition to the labour market with a few very short episodes of work while studying. A positive work experience during an education-related internship or apprenticeship, as well as interest in the job and a good working environment, influenced the decision to take up employment in a company/institution and achieve professional stability for several years. The following excerpt from an interview with a social worker illustrates such a career:

> *I did my internship after graduation* (…) *here in the centre, so I could see right away how it was* (…). *Thanks to my colleagues, I could go out into the field* (…)*, see things and meet people* (…). *It was nice to listen to them; I found it interesting.* (…) *I was there for three months or so* (…) *I did not work for one month. And then they called me and said they would try to open new positions and asked whether I would be willing to join them. Obviously, I was willing, and now it has been 11 years already* (…) *I felt it was a cool and interesting job.* (IDI/ZW/R15)

Those respondents who follow this pathway usually work for more than a few years in one organisation. Employed under a full-time employment contract for an indefinite time, they did not feel at risk of losing their jobs. These professional biographies are predictable in terms of possible positions and levels of promotion within the organisation. These are the career paths of a young academician and secondary school English teacher, a welfare officer, occupational health and safety specialist, industrial grid designer, data analyst and security guard. The respondents that followed this pathway changed positions within the organisational structure of their institution/company, and some of them were even promoted to lower-level management positions. These young adults verbalised professional fulfilment and the need for a change in their careers in terms of professional development. The pathways that they realised often combined work and improving their qualifications. When planning professional advancement, they are ready to change their workplace and form of employment, but still as part of their profession. An indoor plumbing designer said:

> *I've worked here for seven years, but I think it's time to change something* (…). *I started thinking about changing the company because I need to work for some time with a contractor to get a certificate* (…) *and then* (…) *I can open my own company and be an entrepreneur.* (IDI/L/R10)

In contrast to traditional bureaucratic careers, if the young people were not able to achieve their goals within the organisation they worked in, they looked for opportunities elsewhere and extended their professional activity by taking on additional tasks outside the organisation. The following statement by one of the respondents documents attempts to create better conditions for personal fulfilment in the organisation:

[Having worked seven years in the company] *I realised I should look for something else (…). First, I tried (…) to make my boss hear me, listen to my ideas, give me the green light to execute them. If not, would he have any idea to upgrade my position or promote me in a different way since my ideas don't evoke enthusiasm? Nothing happened for three months, so I realised that my future career in the company would look like that, that I was stuck. So I decided it was time… time to change my working environment (…). I thought that after nearly seven years, it would be good to raise the bar and try (…) to take my future into my own hands.* (IDI/L/R8)

This is mainly career of respondents who work in line with their learned profession, professional competencies generally obtained through higher education, who have already established a stable relationship, but less often a family. They emphasise the sense of security provided by employment under a contract, which is important for fulfilling the subsequent roles of an adult: being economically independent and being a parent.

I was about to graduate from X, and I started thinking about further steps, about office work, to take advantage of the knowledge I acquired at university (…). They were good job offers that offered stability, employment contracts for an indefinite time, often with an option of a low-interest loan and so on and so on, and some kind of an annual bonus. (IDI/L/R4)

I'd rather earn less but get a regular salary. It's better than being able to afford a trip to Dubai one day – as my husband jokes – and not being able to afford bread the next. (FGI/L/I2/R6)

Many of them work hard. They have a permanent job, but their earnings, even with their partner being employed, do not suffice to fulfil their aspirations in terms of living standards or secure an adequate standard of living for their family. They earn extra money after hours. One of the interviewees, married with one child, justified the need for additional work as follows:

Each of us works eight hours, 8:00-16:00, me and my wife. We have to pay the rent and bills and pay back a bank loan. (…). We earn too little to live our life the way we want to. I know we could live without certain things and buy a flat in an older building instead of a new one – our bank loan would be smaller… - well, this was our decision. We wanted it. We decided on (…) a nursery. OK, it was our whim, a private nursery, all right, not a whim but a decision, so we knew we would have to have money for it (…). I would like to spend my holiday in Crete; I don't want to just go to the countryside (…). When we plan a weekend in Wrocław, I don't want a hostel with a communal bathroom in the corridor. I want to rent an apartment for three days, a nice and clean place (…). So I need money for that, and I work to earn it. (…). We have extra jobs after hours. (IDI/L/R5)

The basis for the professional anchoring of young adults following the path of relative professional stability is full-time employment, a sense of competence that results from work that is consistent with their learned profession. These young employees have expectations related to their place in the company, their work organisation and their relationship with their supervisors, and they try to realise them.

5.4.2. The permanent mobility career

The neoliberal reality has produced new subjectivities, referred to as the *enterprising selves*, *flexible citizens*, *choosing subjects* or *mini-corporations* (Makovicky 2014: 7). Today, flexibility is even fetishised; it is treated as an opportunity to open oneself up to new situations.

The permanent mobility career is pursued by the vast majority of interviewees. It involves numerous changes of workplaces and numerous breaks from work, changing forms of employment, and migration between sectors. Such an employment pattern is normalising and increasingly accepted (Mrozowicki 2016).[13] The surveyed young adults are also not afraid of a change and did not verbalise the risk of losing their job:

> *I did not worry seriously that I would not be able to find a job* (…) *I needed three months to find a job.* (IDI/L/R10)

This career was implemented by interviewees who usually sought better employment opportunities, i.e. greater autonomy, personal fulfilment but also higher salaries and better life arrangements in the non-professional sphere. The young people who pursued such a career pathway gradually strengthened their sense of agency and control over their professional situation. They were employed under atypical contracts (contract of mandate, contract for specific work, temporary employment) or were self-employed. Such professional biographies were a choice, a conscious decision, but also a necessity when no other job offers were available (cf. Róg-Iglicka 2015). One of the focus group interview participants recounted:

> *It isn't difficult to find a job. When I had to* (…) *I could find a job within one week. And in fact, I changed jobs quite frequently. I was mainly concerned about salaries. To be honest, I can earn more taking on different assignments, being a freelancer rather than working full-time.* (FGI/L/I2/R5)

Based on the analysis of these highly mobile professional biographies of the young adult interviewees, three empirical patterns of professional biographies at the stage of reaching adulthood were identified: *the hobby capitalisation career*, *the swing career* and *the precarious professional mobility*. The last two paths are the most common among young people.

---

13 Between 2000 and 2015, the percentage of those employed under a fixed-term contract increased from about 5%, to 28%, the highest percentage in the EU (Social Diagnosis 2015, ETUI 2015: 29). About 6% were self-employed, 3% were on civil law contracts, while 2-3% worked without any formal contract. According to the 2014 Statistics Poland survey of atypical forms of employment in Poland, 4.4% of all employed Poles were mainly employed under civil law contracts. More than half of the self-employed adopted this form of employment under pressure from the employer (GUS 2016: 4).

The hobby capitalisation career

This is a path of dynamic professional development which is built on interests and hobbies. It was pursued by a few interviewees who grew up in families with social capital. They started with a job in an organisation, with stable employment, but went on to analyse their prospects in the labour market, and built their own business. Their career is at the core of their life, continuously improving their specialised professional skills, focusing on professional development, satisfactory work and personal fulfilment. Their choices are autonomous and guided by a sense of professional and material success. They are creative, recognise opportunities and take action, work hard, strive for success and are proud of their achievements.

The hobby capitalisation career is pursued by the owner of an equestrian clothing company. She had her first hobby-related job (earning money for riding lessons) as a secondary school student and took on her permanent professional job when she was still a university student. She worked in a corporation and successively held the positions of sales representative, medical representative and leisure instructor. She developed her professional competencies by systematically studying in the field closely related to her work profile. When she was made redundant from her corporate job, she decided to start her own business.

> *It was a snap decision, with no budget, nothing really, no support. I had to open my business quickly and make a decision straight away. It is the first company* [of that type] *in Poland.* (IDI/L/R9)

She developed her company from a start-up. She financed her first projects with the little money she had and then started to build a team, creating an infrastructure using internship programmes, financial leasing options and reaching for EU funds. She told how she built her company based on her passion:

> *I've turned my passion into a business. As far as I can remember, I've always wanted to run my own business, a company closely related to my passion (…). I believe we are creators of our life (…). I'm amazed by my own creativity and intuition (…). I started with no capital whatsoever, without a single penny in my pocket (…). The lack of money forced me to be creative and to manage the available resources properly, to coordinate sales and everything (…) Where there's a will, there's a way (…) when everything is there in front of you…, I have the impression that young people are no longer hungry for success; they expect things to be handed to them on a platter. And me (…) I had no such option. I took steps to reach out, and at a certain point, I stopped counting on external factors, third people or the state.* (IDI/L/R9)

She had developed her competencies, completing a three-year study programme in line with her business profile. She and her employees have also participated in various business-related training courses. She has ambitious professional plans to build a house and a training centre, set up a website related to her passion, and promote professional life based on passions. She dreams of being an investor.

Another example of such a career is that of a wind farm specialist who built his professional competence by studying at university abroad. His goal was to set up his own company in Poland, and he purposefully managed the subsequent stages

of his professional life. He started to work as a manager in a state-owned wind farm. At that time, he decided that he was not yet prepared to run his own business. Then he founded a company and cooperated with an enterprise. When he realised that renewable energy sector in Poland was not prospering, he decided to change his business profile. He started to build his own company, subordinating his life to the new project. He started applying for funds from various sources and moved back in with his parents to save money for the new investment.

By talking about their professional successes, these young adults compensated for the lack of stability in family life.

> *Work absorbed my private life* (…). *I didn't have time for anything else, but I was doing what I liked* (…). *My private life is in tatters* (…) *When I have some spare time, I look for cheap air tickets and fly somewhere every weekend* (…). (IDI/L/R1)

> *My company, my people, are my family.* (IDI/L/R9)

These respondents verbalised great professional satisfaction; they had a good material position and material independence.

Swinging career

This professional career often starts at university, when the desire or need to combine studies with work is not conducive to stable, full-time employment with rigid working hours and professional commitment. Instead, young people take on short jobs in the afternoons and evenings.

The path involves continuous experimentation. Such professional biographies generally include shorter periods of work and longer/shorter periods of discontinued employment. The course of a professional career is full of twists and turns that generally result in changes in his/her professional situation. The participants who followed this path either sought better working conditions or simply took advantage of various opportunities in order to earn money. This career is followed by people that usually had no family commitments. They are open to new work experiences, new jobs, and even migration for economic purposes. They did not identify with the company or institution they worked for. They made decisions quickly and looked for new employment opportunities when, for some reason, their working conditions did not suit them or when their contract or the project in which they were involved came to an end. They balanced between different forms of employment. The pathway is well illustrated by the biography of a bank clerk with a mosaic of jobs held in the past and turning points in her job biography:

> *My first job was that of a hostess in a perfumery* (…). *Afterwards, I did some children's entertainment, several workshops for children, and I liked that because I like teaching people and communicating with others. Later on, I worked* (…) *because I had to pay for a retake exam, so I worked for two months* (…) *part-time* (…). *I worked in a palm house. I worked in a cafe in an art museum* (…). *I even had an employment contract at some point* (…). *Next, in chronological order, more or*

less (…) I worked as a volunteer (…); it was such a cool project made by the Art Factory. I worked without a contract there. And I guess a year later, I worked at the Light Move Festival, temporarily, during one of the festivals (…). Then I worked in client services, but I did something different; I wasn't on the phone but writing. It was a different type of communication and work but for better money. Now, for nearly half a year, I've been dealing with loans. (…) At first, I had a contract for specific work, then another contract for specific work; well, it was not promising. Next, I got an employment contract, I got it through an agency, but I worked very far away (…). Afterwards, I worked closer to the city centre, at X street, and got an employment contract (…). Not only less commuting (…) but also better money. (IDI/L/R24)

This career also means a transition from a huge workload even to the stage of professional inactivity. There are transitions between professional stability (full-time employment and permanent remuneration) and redundancies or discontinuation of employment; through part-time jobs (higher earnings, also economic migration abroad) to the next stage of employment under contract (sometimes combined with acquiring new professional skills), but with lower earnings. One of the interviewees described it as follows:

My first job was under an employment contract, a legal one (…) an internship (…) in a district administration office. Then there was another year under an employment contract (…) I was dismissed. I was not really ready for that (…) so I had to act quickly (…) and quickly find a new job (…). I worked as a bouncer in a bar (…) occasionally, during weekends, but they paid me well (…). Later on, a friend of mine offered me a job as an upholsterer (…). Nothing special, 9 hours a day (…). At the beginning, I had to learn things but later (…) after a month and a half, I started doing upholstery by myself (…) [I worked there] *until I left for England. I worked in catering there; I did different things (…) and my salary was decent (…)* [After returning to Poland] *I became an upholsterer again, in the same company (…). I had knee surgery and did not work for half a year (…). I started working as a postman with* [Polish Post] *afterwards (…). I was paid peanuts, but (…) it is a state-owned institution, and they always pay on time. You don't need to worry that you'll learn on the 10th that you'll be paid in 3 instalments because the private owner is short of money.* (IDI/ZW/R1)

Such a path also means a pendulum between running their own company and earlier subordinate positions:

I worked in 44 different companies, shops, bars and so on (…). My salary was sometimes good and sometimes bad (…). I worked in a factory for seven years. I did not plan that (…), but it happened and my situation was quite stable. I had an employment contract. Seven years later, I decided to establish my own company. The employment agency gave me subsidies to start my own business (…). Everything was fine for half a year, but I suspended my business activity half a year later… and came back to the factory. Then I restarted my business, but I did not respond to the market needs appropriately (…). It was a pity. Next Monday I start working in a shop (laughter). I'm back to the previous methods of earning money (…), but I've decided that I'll be my own boss and I'll most probably start my own business again. Quite soon. Well, this is my plan. That's it. (FGI/L/I2/R2)

As can be seen, this category of young adults also includes individuals who oscillate professionally between contract work and flexible forms of employment, between less and more intensive work.

Precarious mobility career

The precarious[14] mobility career means working mainly in services, predominantly trade and catering. The path involves continuous horizontal changes in the occupational situation, with no pay rise, no job stability and no improvement of occupational skills. Those respondents who pursued such pathway entered the labour market in a non-linear way when they discontinued education due to a lack of progress or, in the case of women, pregnancy. Their narratives reveal that they are aware of insecurity in the labour market, and they put much effort into keeping a job.

These work experiences were typical of low-educated respondents from families with low social capital. They were mainly biographies of young adults who grew up in foster care and whose process of becoming independent began at the age of metrical adulthood in less favourable conditions, without family support, and within the framework of legal regulations.[15] As one participant of a focus group interview said:

> *I went through a lot of internships. One office, six months of internship and goodbye. Six months of internship and goodbye again (…). So you put these internships on your CV and look for a job, and they give you another job for 1000 zlotys* [approximately €225] *(…). These junk contracts do not protect you in any way (…). And so you go from one place to another, the same job but in a different place.* (FGI/L/I4/R2)

Precarious career mobility included temporary jobs, often without an employment contract, usually for no longer than three months, and rarely with prospects of extension.

> *The three-month trial contract (…) was not extended because they decided that I was better suited for customer service than sales (…). So I was wandering for six months, just like that, looking for a job; it was difficult. I found something. It was a company where I was supposed to do sales calls. I was supposed to sell companies a tool for entering debtors into the BIK* [Bureau of Credit Information] *system. (…) The pay wasn't good again (…). The idea was that the first contract with them would be a contract of mandate, and the employment contract would be signed three months later. However, I did not get that contract. I didn't like it there; I quit (…) and went to another company (…). In three months, my contract will expire.* (IDI/L/R16)

---

14 Analyses of precarious work, the precariat and precarious life started to appear in the early 21st century, and they reveal the ambiguity of this category (cf. Pałęcka, Płucienniczak 2017; Poławski 2012; Standing 2014). In a narrow sense, precarious work only refers to non-standard forms of employment. In broader terms, it is characterised by a low level of job security (regardless of the form of employment), a low degree of employee control over the organisation of their work, a low degree of social security and low income, and a continuous feeling of a lack of security, constancy and stability (Rodgers, Rodgers 1989: 5; Sowa 2010; Standing 2014). Campbell and Price (2016) identify several interrelated layers of the phenomenon: (1) the precarity of employment, (2) the precarity of work, (3) precarious employees, (4) the precariat as a class, and (5) the precarity of existence.

15 Foster children's transition to adulthood is regulated by *Ustawa z 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej* (The Act of June 9, 2011 on Family Support and Foster Care) (*Journal of Laws* of 2011, No 149, item 887). A separate subsection (8.4) of this book is devoted to the transition to adulthood of this category of young adults.

Young precarious employees have to work more to earn a living, but it happens that they give up such work. One interviewee said:

They offered the national minimum wage, and I worked 12 hours a day (…). It was dark when I left the flat in winter, and it was already dark when I got back (…). So I survived six months there. (IDI/L/R16)

An "insecure position" in the labour market is not always seen as a disadvantage (Kiersztyn 2015). Sometimes it is a strategy of choice (Ross 2006). It can be characteristic of young people caught up in the day-to-day struggle to make ends meet, but it is also an attitude to work in general. One of the interviewees who have to pay child support said:

I mainly work [in the black market] *because I have huge debts (…). If I were to work normally, legally, a debt collector would take most of my salary (…) I have to keep looking for a job. It's a recurrent problem. If I don't go, they don't pay me. I didn't go today. Somehow I didn't get up (…). I visited my friend yesterday (…), we smoked, and I found it difficult to get up in the morning.* (IDI/FCI/R12)

The precarious mobility job path is the experience of low-skilled young women who are pregnant or caring for children. A married mother of two said:

[I worked] *as a hairdresser, later on as a shop assistant. I worked for half a year (…) I got sick and took sick leave (…), and I went back (…) I was put on the cash register, but I couldn't manage and had to take several days' sick leave again (…) When I got back I was instantly dismissed (…) I got employed as a helper later on, but soon I got pregnant with my eldest daughter. I took maternity leave and childcare leave (…). I had two other jobs later on that I should not talk about because I did them without any contract. In one job, I had to be on my feet all day long, and I had no contract. It lasted for a year, in fact (…), illegal work (…). And later on (…) I had to work on Sundays, I had no days off (…). I had no contract, so I simply quit. Later on, I was employed as an assistant because* [the owner] *needed me again. For some time, I was an accountant's assistant. Then again, I covered for another person. She signed a part-time contract with me, and I could spend time with my child (…) The contract expired, and I came back to work after all these leaves. It was a sequence of working and being on leave, and then as a shop assistant again. I worked there for three months, and then the company was shut down.* (IDI/ZW/R12)

Temporary work results in precarity. One interviewee put it this way:

You'd work for 180 hours and earn 1500 zlotys [approximately €330] *(…) The salary was just enough to pay the rent and buy food. It was really difficult. There were moments when I could hardly make ends meet.* (IDI/L/R13)

To conclude, the concept of transition that is characteristic of post-industrial society (cf. Walther 2006; Du Bois-Reymond, López 2003; Heinz 2009) can be applied to the professional biographies of nearly all the interviewees. Their professional pathways were individualised, heterogeneous, and involved many changes, sometimes returning to earlier, less favourable states (e.g. unemployment, another internship) than a more stable form of employment. The CVs of the young adults were characterised by looking for work and better working conditions, as well as

a sense of agency, despite the adversities experienced by some. Their professional biographies generally did not have a reference point in the form of previous professional plans. At the first stage of entering adulthood, they used the available earning opportunities; in the next stage, they tried to implement their own professional ideas, adapting to the changing conditions of the environment.

5.5. Profesional career of young women – between professional and family roles

The increasing pace of work and the demands of employers, consumption patterns and patterns of intimate relationships affect professional and family life, including maternal choices (cf. Handy 1999: 28). Extending maternity leave is, of course, beneficial for mothers, but it limits their access to employment and career development. Despite the progressive egalitarianisation of childcare responsibilities, legal regulations perpetuate the cultural patterns that care, especially for a small child, should be exercised mainly by the mother.

The interviewees, both men and women, had internalised the pattern of being economically active and having a family, although the female respondents were more likely to verbalise procreation plans. Fathers were generally less involved in caring for their children; instead, they focused on working to meet the family's needs. Many Polish women are afraid to become pregnant due to job loss and career interruption because many are employed on employment contracts (Kotowska et al. 2016).

Women's professional biographies revealed that during the transition to adulthood, they pursued one of four professional pathways distinguished according to the criterion of combining a professional role with a family role:
1) focus only on the professional role, without family plans;
2) focus on the professional role, starting a family, and planned procreation;
3) combining professional, family and procreational roles;
4) focus on the family role, the instrumental treatment of the professional role (Grotowska-Leder 2020).

All the women in the study were interested in a professional career, but to varying degrees. Professionally successful women concentrated on work and postponed their procreation plans. Those whose professional position was less prominent focused on motherhood and childcare responsibilities and justified their limited professional engagement by being preoccupied with those responsibilities.

The first indicated pathway of a young woman's professional life is through building a career and professional status. The women who followed this path talked about their professional achievements and further career plans. They lived alone and were convinced that people have the right to decide about their own

way of life. They focused on what they like. They have well-defined interests and hobbies, and they lead an intensive way of life. They organised their working life according to their own plan, and at that stage of life, it did not include the intention to start a family. Some emphasised that a family would limit their professional development. This group includes women who run their own businesses, a graduate of cultural studies who work at a cultural centre, occupational health and safety specialists and bank clerks.

The second pattern was followed by young women – both university graduates and those with secondary education – with career ambitions, who were interested in professional activity and who consistently pursue their goals. They were pursuing dynamic career paths within organisations, which defined their subsequent career stages. They had not yet decided to have a baby because at this stage of their lives, it was more important for them to develop professionally, stabilise their professional situation and achieve their professional goals. They stated that the role of the mother is important and extremely time-consuming. One of them justified her decision in the following way:

> *A child is also a big challenge, and I want to be well-prepared for it.* (IDI/FCI/R5)

Such a career path was pursued by a scientist, a secondary school English teacher, an indoor plumbing designer, a data analyst, shop assistant and the owner of a sewing room. One of the young women talked about her professional development:

> *Right from the very beginning, I dealt with MDM* [master data management] *and supply chains* (…). *I acquired vast knowledge there that I applied in* [another company] *afterwards. Now I'm part of the MDM team in an international company* (…) *I'm managing people for the first time in my life* (…) *I have a good position here, satisfactory conditions, I wake up with a smile on my face, and I feel I've reached personal fulfilment* (…). *In the meantime, it seems, I plan* (…) *to have a child because the house will not be ready until 2020* (…). *In the meantime, I'll have a baby, and then bringing up this little thing to be a good human being is the next stage.* (IDI/L/R12)

The majority of the young women followed the third indicated path. The women in this group followed simultaneous and intermittent career paths, and they decided to be mothers and housewives rarely (cf. Super 1953: 60 as cited in Pikuła 2017: 4). They combine work and childcare-related family obligations with great effort. More attention was given to them, as their situation should be of special interest to social policy-makers.

Mothers with at least secondary education tried to achieve a work-life balance to derive satisfaction from both roles. Those with higher education pursued a parallel career with a break for maternity leave. They rarely decided to take three-year childcare leave. They worked full-time and even upgraded their professional qualifications. They coped with family and childcare tasks by reaching out for support to family members and limiting procreative plans. One of the interviewees told us:

> *I had an* [employment] *contract until I gave birth* (…). *It was a temporary contract* (…). *After childbirth, I received an attendance allowance from the Polish Social Insurance Institution* (…) [After maternity leave], *I was unemployed. It was also difficult for me* (…) *at that time, of course. I continued to study* (…). *I graduated from college* (…). *I did my BA when the child was still small. When she was two, I started working* (…). *But before that, I hadn't been working, I was dependent on my husband, and I felt very uncomfortable, unfortunately. No money of my own* (…). *I felt inferior and I hated the fact that I wasn't professionally active.* (IDI/L/R11)

She was employed under a full-time contract. She stated that she was not planning a second child.

> *I don't want to have another baby* (…), *not because I am selfish and egoistic* (…), *I just think that, first of all, our flat… we have two not very big rooms, and I would like my child to have the best possible conditions* (…). *I have a lot of* (…) *goals which I would like to pursue* (…). *I started work which absorbed me a lot* (…). *I could achieve personal fulfilment* (…), *and this gave me some happiness and a desire to continue working* (…). *It gave me some stability; I am doing what I like professionally, I have a child – I am a happy mother.* (IDI/L/R11)

She was trying to minimise conflicts between and within each work and home activity. She summarised her situation in the following words:

> *Home is home, work is work; not necessarily everything is always ideal* (…), *but I manage to balance things.* (IDI/L/R11)

The young mothers with professional ambitions experienced ambivalent feelings. They stressed that professional work is important to them both for personal and financial reasons, but they also appreciate the time spent with their children. One respondent, an accountant, talked about childcare and professional decisions in the following way:

> *I'm not a person who can sit at home all the time; this is a problem.* (…). *It is cool* (…) *a year spent with a child is amazing. I had the opportunity to see my baby's first steps. It would be impossible if I worked. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford not to work. The mortgage had to be repaid, and so on; I couldn't afford it.* (…). *I had been thinking about changing* [job] (…). [but I have two children] *I felt safe enough* (…) *work in a corporation has its advantages, big advantages* (…) *it was very convenient. Then I got promoted, so I didn't want to change my job anymore because I had some goals and so on, because there were these ambitions in my head.* (…) *I came back after a vacation, and it turned out that the contract was not going to go ahead* [that I have no job] (…). *That was the moment I decided that I had to take matters into my own hands* [and look for a new job]. (IDI/L/R22)

Young working parents tried to solve childcare problems by asking for support from relatives and friends and by adjusting their responsibilities and career plans. One of the respondents said:

> *My wife* (…) *spent a year with our baby* (…). *She had to go back to work* (…) *and then my mum helped us. She is a teacher, and at that time, she had* (…) *sick leave to recover, a whole year* (…). *In August, both of us collected our days of vacation, and in September, she* [daughter] *went to nursery* (…). *I am ready* [to have another child], *but my wife would rather work a little. She wants to be around people. She is worried that we might not be able to afford another child* (…). *But if we have*

another child (…), we will have even less time for the additional work that we now do at night (…). When the child goes to sleep at 9 p.m., we just throw ourselves at our computers (…). My wife works until 2 a.m., and I work until 3 a.m., and the next day, one of us gets up earlier so that the other person can get some sleep. So there are some sacrifices. (IDI/L/R5)

Some young mothers were advancing their professional competencies while they took care of their children, being more competitive after maternity leave. A mother of two, employed in a corporation, told us:

I was on sick leave during my first pregnancy. When I went to the doctor, I cried when he gave me sick leave. (…) He said that I couldn't work like that (…). I slowed down, and it was a very good time for me. I also feel good being with my children, although I think it makes no sense to sit with them at home and not go to work (…). With my second child, I enrolled at the university during maternity leave… It was also quite difficult because my daughter was six months old when I started studying. And now I'm on childcare leave because I want to graduate (…). I want to have many children, but I really want to develop professionally. And I'm pressed for time. I'm changing sectors, so I'd like to have (…) another child now, and then I'd like to work a little bit in this industry. I don't want to go to work for six months and miss everything again (…). I think that having children excludes you from many different opportunities. (IDI/L/R25)

Focusing on childcare tasks was characteristic of a relatively large group of the young women studied, mostly those with basic vocational education. Their professional paths were most often interrupted by periods of maternity and childcare leaves. Those who were in stable relationships underlined that it was not reasonable to work at that stage of life because of the cost of commuting to work and the risk of losing social benefits. A young mother living in the countryside assessed an offer of an internship in the following way:

Looking realistically at today's prices in shops, at today's salaries, if I am offered an internship worth 1,000 zlotys [approximately €225], and I have to commute every day, you have to spend about 300 zlotys [approximately €67] a month on petrol. To earn 700 zlotys [approximately €158] per month, it is impossible to live on 700 zlotys and do an internship, even if there was one. (IDI/ZW/R3)

Those young mothers who gave up work to take care of their children emphasised the importance of the role of the mother:

Sitting at home, with all these social benefits, it feels a bit awkward (…). However, I stay at home so that I can be with my children. (IDI/ZW/R8)

I wanted to be with my child, my first child, so I wanted to stay with him at home before he went to kindergarten. So I stayed with him for three years.. (IDI/ZW/R4)

Some of these young mothers were interested in being professionally active for financial reasons. They talked a lot about great difficulties finding a job and combining work and childcare:

When I submit my CV, I always get a refusal because I have children. They ask me how old the children are. I don't have anybody to help me with the children. (IDI/ZW/R12)

Now my youngest daughter goes to kindergarten, but I can't go back to work yet. We have three children, and each of them starts at different times, so I'm really unable to go to work. (IDI/ZW/R7)

Mothers with school-aged children also talked about difficulties finding employment.

I asked [about a job in a shop], *but they also asked me to work all day long, from nine until six. But how are you supposed to take care of the children? My husband is away all day, so a full-time job doesn't suit me, unlike in the past.* (IDI/ZW/R12)

The everyday life of a working mother was a struggle, with too many duties and the threat of losing a job. The interviewees very seldom said that they could count on their employer's support.

I worked for a year. Every month I had to go and renew my contract (…). I worked three shifts. It would often happen that after my night shift, I'd take my child to the kindergarten, then do the cleaning, tidy up, clean up (…), prepare everything, so to speak, and get back to work. (FGI/L/I6/R9)

I took this job to earn more. My husband works in shifts, so I said [to my employer], *"You have to adapt to my schedule because if you don't, I won't be able to accept this job." I found people who were so understanding that they arranged everything in such a way that it was perfect for me.* (FGI/L/ I2/R5)

Some of the young mothers revealed why they had decided to work part-time:

I have no one to leave my children with (…). I work part-time because I'm unable to work full-time (…). Children often get very sick at this age, right? I put my child in the nursery, and she was there for a week, and the rest of the time, she was at home, right? And employers complain that you are constantly on sick leave. They say you might be dismissed. (FGI/L/I6/R9)

Single mothers focused on the family role and treated the professional role instrumentally. They tried to be economically active, but most eventually gave up their job. A single mother of three talked about the logistical challenges of combining childcare and work:

I worked (…) in a chain store, a clothing store. (…) all the time quickly (…), a very high turnover of employees (…). When I got a schedule, it was totally chaotic, and there were situations that someone dropped out from the schedule, and the superiors would call you and ask you to substitute them (…). When I got my work schedule, I developed another one: a [childcare] *schedule (…); later, it was easier because there was kindergarten. Before that, I had the support of my family* [mother and father] *(…). There was a friend of mine whose daughter was one month older than my child. And we simply helped each other. So there was one schedule, then another one, which I put on the fridge, where, when and how we were going to take care of* [the children] *(…). It was getting more and more complicated in the company (…), and this had an impact on my relationship with my child because you have to react at some point (…), and I handed in my notice. Another job in a chain of smaller shops also resulted in dismissal.* (IDI/L/R20)

Some of the young mothers said that work is an important source of income for their families and it is also an escape from everyday household chores. One of them told us:

I would go out for a few hours; I didn't have time to think about the baby, I didn't talk about the baby, I just talked to adults about adult things. It was wonderful. (IDI/L/R20)

The mothers who stayed home with their children negotiated their return to the labour force with their partners. One of the options is to work in shifts, which makes it possible to share household chores between parents. Two of them said:

[My husband] *is going to apply for a job with shifts in the mornings and afternoons, and it'll be easier for me to find a job, too. I need to work in shifts as well. Things will change. We will be able to share the responsibilities somehow. He'll take on some responsibilities and I will, to be with children. Each of us will be able to spend time with the children.* (IDI/ZW/R4).

The career paths of nearly all the young women revealed their interest in a professional activity for various reasons. Those with higher educational capital pursued career aspirations and followed paths of more or less dynamic professional development. They achieved professional success or pursued parallel careers, trying to reconcile professional ambitions with family life. Those with worse material situations were determined to work, although many of them – especially the young mothers – were less interested in work. They limited their job activity due to procreative tasks and childcare obligations.

5.6. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important determinant of the quality of life. A job can be perceived as beneficial or detrimental to the individual, i.e. they assessed whether the job enables them to satisfy important needs in the instrumental or autotelic sense (cf. Dobrowolska 2010; Sowińska 2014). Factors most strongly correlated with job satisfaction include salary, valued commitment, independence and autonomy at work, and a good rapport with superiors (Biesok, Kuwik 2014: 19). Young people are interested in professional activity, but they also value achievements in other spheres of life (e.g. interests, hobbies and family life). Research shows that Polish young employees are generally not satisfied with their work. Their biggest problem is the low salary and a lack of development opportunities and professional stability. Women additionally complain about the lack of recognition by superiors and employment instability (ibid.: 23).

Many of the young adults who participated in the study had already adapted to the uncertain situation in the labour market, and some stabilised their professional position and developed professionally. The young people said that it is now easier to find a job in comparison with a few years ago, so they perceived their work situation as optimistic. The majority of them said they were interested in a job that was satisfactory in terms of pay, but a significant proportion of young people did not have high earning aspirations. For those with low educational capital, residents of small towns, mothers with small children and individuals raised in foster care,

being employed is positively assessed as a means of subsistence. A mother of two, who works in the black market, stated:

> *I have to work; it's very important for me (…); otherwise I would not be able to make ends meet. I would not be able to survive, to give my children what they need.* (IDI/FCI/R7)

Those respondents whose work corresponded to their personal needs, who work in line with their educational profile, talked about job satisfaction. They pursued paths of relative professional stability and hobby capitalisation. They mentioned opportunities for professional development as an important and positive aspect of their work:

> [After returning to work] *my situation improved, first of all in terms of personal satisfaction. Now I feel that I am doing something, I have a mission, I need to go out, I need to look good (…). [Work] has absorbed me. Even though this job is not particularly financially rewarding, (…) it gives me a lot of satisfaction (…). For me, this is very important.* (IDI/L/R11)

> *I chose a profession that gives me lots of satisfaction, and I'm not complaining. I just wanted to [do it]. I knew that you have to do something in life that would give you satisfaction in order to avoid frustration (…). Financial aspects are not everything. If you do something, you should do what you like (…), and it has worked out for me.* (IDI/L/R28)

For some, job satisfaction means engagement and fulfilling ambitions:

> *I worked (…) as a salesperson, and I achieved great results (…). I did things they didn't even expect (…) I was always engaged (…). When I left them after four years, I was a guy who was a PR and marketing manager, and I did super cool projects (…). It was such a great success for me (…). I felt, for the first time in my life, I felt that I really wanted to do it. (…). My dreams had come true (…). If you don't experience the taste of it, the taste of a dream fulfilled, well, you are a poor guy.* (IDI/L/R3)

The young want to be appreciated at work. When they are not, they negotiate the terms of employment. One of them described it as follows:

> *I worked for this one employer for ten years (…). A year later, I realised that what I was doing, I was doing well, and I was rewarded for it many times (…) with bonuses and certificates. It encouraged me to "go on doing it the way I did, since I did it well." (…). I decided to talk to the management about raising my salary or otherwise I would simply have to say goodbye. (…) Since there was no decision from head office, I had to leave the company because the money I was getting at that time was not the money that could in any way compensate for the work I was doing.* (IDI/L/R21)

In the uncertain postmodern world, young adults seek employment that would give them satisfaction. For many, it means taking any job that pays their bills; for others, they take a job that satisfies them in terms of career opportunities, autonomy and also financial conditions.

To sum up, the professional biographies of the selectede groups of young adult Poles fit the concept of transitions that are characteristic of a post-industrial society. Their professional paths are heterogeneous, mostly non-linear, more often horizontal than vertical, and full of twists and turns, including going back to

previous stages (e.g. no job, inferior forms of employment, or a previous sector or place of work). They ranged from searching for a more stable and more acceptable place in the labour market to a relatively stable professional position. All of the interviewees were open to new work experiences and adapting to the changing and uncertain situation in the labour market. They entered the labour market combining study with work. They built their career paths when there was high youth unemployment, and employers required a great deal of professional competence and work experience. They cope according to their abilities. Those who were better educated, with family resources, and from a big city were focused on professional development, self-realisation and satisfying work. They were already achieving professional success by implementing professional paths of dynamic development and more stability. Those who were less educated, without family facilities, from smaller towns, and especially those who already had children, struggled with an uncertain professional situation, often experiencing precarious work. Regardless of their professional situation, the young adults are accompanied by a sense of agency.

In the first stage of building professional paths, young Poles mainly used informal resources. Over time, however, they tried to reach for instruments of a professional active policy aimed at them (i.e. grants for telework, internship vouchers, employment vouchers and loans for starting a business[16]), especially those in bad living situations. Although the flexibility policy increased their access to jobs, it did not guarantee good job offers. To a small extent, however, the new resolutions introduced stabilised the professional situation of young people as a social group. Firstly, these instruments are addressed mainly to people who remain outside the labour market, and to a small extent, they support people already working (e.g. solutions for working parents, mainly mothers). Secondly, they expand employment in atypical forms, which exposes them to a greater risk of losing their jobs than work in typical forms, and it does not guarantee full social rights. Many young adults are therefore focused on gaining the best possible position in the labour market and postpone their decisions to start a family and have children.

---

16   These policies were introduced by *Ustawa z 14 Marca 2014 o zmianie Ustawy o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy i niektórych innych ustaw* (the Act of 14 March 2014 amending the Act on EmploymentPromotion and Labour Market Institutions and certain other acts, which entered into force on 27 May 2014) (*Journal of Laws* of 2014, item 598).

Chapter 6
Household and family formation

6.1. Household formation

As noted in the introduction to this book and in its first chapter, a normatively defined life cycle framed by traditional and chronological steps of finishing education, starting professional work and gaining economic independence, and getting married and becoming a parent, has ceased to be implemented in a linear order. Certain phases often overlap and, therefore, quick responses to new life challenges become more important than following the "typical" route. In postmodern times, the transition to adulthood is characterised by a lack of chronology and a de-institutionalisation of life paths. As a result, young people's biographies become fragmented and pluralised (Grotowska-Leder 2020; cf. Walther 2006). However, one of the analysed steps towards adulthood seems to be more resistant to this disorder of contemporaneity, i.e. the need to live independently from parents and establish a separate household. Setting up one's own household does not necessarily mean that young adults achieve complete independence and are able to live their own, however. In Poland, a relatively high number of young adults stay in their parents' homes (Eurostat 2018), which significantly determines their trajectories of achieving completed adulthood, especially marital and parental experiences. The subchapters below deconstruct these paths.

6.1.1. Household formation as a stage in achieving completed adulthood

The availability (i.e. affordability) of housing is not only a basic need but also a fundamental precondition for well-being. A good home is one that provides shelter and enough space for the inhabitants to live, eat, rest and maintain privacy. As with the other stages of people's transition to adulthood, there is a general tendency towards postponing establishing a household, irrespective of the existing structural preconditions in European countries. It results from economic and institutional

arrangements typical of different welfare regimes (social policies), as well as the impact of various cultural backgrounds that either accept or reject prolonged economic dependency on parents.

As noted by Hobcraft and Kiernan (as cited in Matysiak 2011: 50-51), it is not only access to suitable housing but owning a home that is seen as one of the five prerequisites for entering parenthood, along with being in a relationship, completing education, stable employment and a sense of economic stability. In a study on the first births of Polish women born between 1971 and 1981, Matysiak (ibid.) demonstrated that there was a strong and positive statistical correlation between home ownership and entering into motherhood. It was verified by Mynarska (2011), whose quantitative study conducted in Warsaw showed that parental plans are conditioned by owning an apartment or house (apart from completing education and working). In other words, people who plan to have a (first) child usually wait with this decision until they live in their "own place". Renting an apartment or staying with parents are definitely less attractive for Poles planning a child. Matysiak (2011) even observed a big increase in the possibility of conceiving the first child in the first six months after moving into one's own property (and a decrease thereafter). This effect is significantly weaker for those who rent. For the decision to become a parent, it is not only the possibility of independent living that is important (which could be provided by renting an apartment or staying with parents), but also other benefits related to own housing, such as the feeling of stability and psychological comfort.

Young adult Poles' access to housing is limited. The number of council apartments is insufficient and/or in poor condition, and purchasing one's own property requires a mortgage for a few decades. It often results in the decision to rent, which reduces their already modest household budget. As also observed in other European countries (cf. Mulder, Wagner 2001), difficulties with buying a home due to increased prices and/or limitations in obtaining mortgages are one of the reasons for fertility postponement in Poland (Matysiak 2011; Mynarska 2011). Moreover, in Poland, where accumulating economic capital is an important concern for families after the material deficits experienced through past centuries, home ownership remains one of the dominant status indicators (cf. Olcoń-Kubicka, Halawa 2018). This cultural necessity makes those housing aspirations even more embedded in Poles' strategies for achieving adulthood.

6.1.2. The housing situation of young adult Poles in public statistics

The income and living conditions survey carried out in the EU Member States (Eurostat 2018) showed the very ambiguous housing situation of Poles. On the one hand, more than half lived in houses, i.e. detached houses (50.2%) and semi-detached houses (5.6%). The average for the EU was 33.4% and 24.1%, respectively. Another 44% lived in apartments (41.9% in the EU). It would seem, then, that Poles' housing conditions are positive. However, the dominance of such dwelling

types is related to the relatively high number of people living in rural areas. At the same time, housing quality and living areas available remain quite poor. Nowadays, nearly four out of ten Poles (39.2%) live in overcrowded dwellings (15.5% for the EU). The problem dates back to Poland's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, when the state withdrew from housing construction and the housing rationing policy, which resulted in a substantial drop in the number of homes delivered (Matysiak 2011: 50). While about 217,000 dwellings were completed in 1980, in the late 1990s, the number was three times lower. Since then, there has been a gradual increase, with very dynamic growth in recent years. In 2019 207.000 dwellings were built (GUS 2020a: 1). Still, the excessive demand for apartments over their supply and the intensification of investment and speculative demand after Poland's EU accession led to a very high increase in real estate prices (Matysiak 2011: 50). Despite this, the state's support for people planning to buy property has been limited mainly to the poorest groups (i.e. housing benefits and social housing). There are no support measures for those with average incomes who could not yet afford to buy their own housing. The *Mieszkanie dla Młodych* (Apartments for young people) and *Mieszkanie+* (Apartment+) programmes that were implemented in recent years have not improved the situation of young people much (cf. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2018).

The housing situation of Poles also seems uncertain compared to other EU societies. Official data show that 72.7% of Poles lived in owner-occupied dwellings (42.8% for all EU countries). Mortgages and loans were not popular in Poland (11.3% of owners in Poland vs 26.5% in the EU). Just 16% of Poles lived in rented accommodation, either private or co-financed by local councils, compared to 30.&% in the EU. Eurostat statistics show that housing remains relatively cheap in Poland. The housing affordability indicator for 2018, which is the proportion of people living in households that spent 40% or more of their equivalised disposable income on housing, was significantly lower than the EU average (see Table 12) (Eurostat 2021f). Such a contrast in tenure status of Poles and other Europeans seems to be not only a consequence of the relatively low availability of mortgages (or, more precisely, the low number of people who meet bank conditions) and high renting costs in Poland but also, as noted above, the deeply grounded conviction among Poles that one needs one's own house to provide adequate conditions for one's well-being.

Table 12. Share of population spending 40% or more of their equivalised disposable income on housing in Poland and the EU in 2018 (%)

	Total	Owner-occupied with no mortgage or loan	Owner-occupied with mortgage or loan	Tenant, rent at market price	Tenant, rent at a reduced price or free
Poland	6.7	5.5	6.8	23.6	8.4
EU	10.4	5.9	4.7	26.3	13.7

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021f.

Analysis of the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey (Eurostat 2018) reveals that Poles' transition from a parental to their own home is difficult and long-lasting. The tendency to postpone the moment they leave their parents shows young Poles' economic dependency on the older generation. The phenomenon known as the *crowded nest* or *nesters* (cf. Boyd, Morris 1999; Bieńko 2020), which refers to adults' inability to lead an independent life or their reluctance to move out of the family home, is intensifying around Europe. They are named *bamboccioni* (big babies) in Italy, *boomerang kids* in the UK or *kidults* in Germany (Barszcz 2019: 37-38). Polish adults who live with their parents (without spouses and who are not parents themselves) are described as *gniazdownicy* (nesters) (GUS 2020b: 9; cf. Szlendak 2010; Piszczatowska-Oleksiewicz 2014; Bieńko et al. 2017). And so, the share of Poles aged 25-34 living with at least one parent was significantly higher than their peers in other EU countries. During the last few years, almost half of young Poles (44-45%) did not move to their own home (see Table 13). In the 25-29 age group, this ratio was much larger (58-59%). There were about 5.6 million people aged 25-34 in 2018, so the nesters accounted for about 2.5 million.[1] They mostly lived in rural or modestly urbanised areas. Men of this age also stayed in their parents' houses more often than women (43% and 29%, respectively) (GUS 2020b: 12).

Table 13. The share of young adults aged 25-34 living with parents in Poland and the EU, 2004-2018 (%)

	2004	**2009**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**
Poland	n.a.	40.1	44.1	45.7	45.5	44.7	45.1
EU	n.a.	27.3	28.6	28.7	28.6	28.5	28.6

Source: Authors' elaboration based on EU-SILC survey (Eurostat 2018).

What makes young adults' position even more complex is that there are also those who remain in the parental home with their partners/spouses and their newly established families. The intergenerational family model remains still quite popular in Poland, especially in rural areas, making people's individualisation strategies (including those related to establishing a household) less applicable.

---

1   Interestingly, the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) informs that the share of nesters among Poles aged 25-34 was slightly smaller (36%) in 2018 (GUS 2020b: 8). Unlike the EU-SILC sample survey, the GUS analysis is based on various administrative registers (e.g. the Social Insurance Institution, the Agricultural Social Insurance Fund, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the Ministry of National Education) to determine the spatial diversity and characteristics of young adults living with their parents. Thus, the GUS data may be more reliable. Still, in order to maintain the comparability of data presented in other chapters, we decided to present both EU-SILC and GUS sources.

Polish people also tend to leave their parental home later than other Europeans. The mean age was 27.6 compared to 26 for the whole EU (see Table 14). However, this indicator decreases faster in Poland year by year.

Table 14. Mean age of young people leaving the parental home in Poland and the EU, 2004-2018

	2004	**2009**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**
Poland	28.5	28.3	28.3	28.3	28.0	27.7	27.6
EU	26.4	26.2	26.2	26.1	26.1	26.0	26.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on EU-SILC survey (Eurostat 2018).

Men tend to be more dependent on the family of origin, leaving the parental home about 2.5 years later than women (see Table 15) (Eurostat 2018).

Table 15. Mean age of young people leaving the parental household by sex in Poland, 2004-2018

	2004	**2009**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**
male	29.5	29.3	29.4	29.4	29.2	28.9	28.8
female	27.5	27.3	27.2	27.1	26.8	26.5	26.3

Source: Authors' elaboration based on EU-SILC survey (Eurostat 2018).

Leaving the family home late makes Poles similar to South Europeans, e.g. Greeks or Italians, rather than Germans or Swedes. This tendency is also observed in other post-socialist countries, especially in Croatia, Slovakia and Bulgaria. However, the possibilities and willingness of young adults to live independently of their parents significantly differs between European societies. It seems it is not purely determined by young people's difficult entrance to the labour market, which was particularly visible during the global economic crisis in the late 2000s. Indeed, as noted by Barszcz (2019: 39-44), it may result from economic preconditions (e.g. in Greece or Spain, where young people were especially affected by unemployment) but also cultural reasons (e.g. in Italy, where the deep attachment to parents is present in culture and tradition), as well as diverse social policies implemented by particular states. Social policies may be targeted at young adults, as in the case ofe.g. Scandinavian welfare states that promote early autonomy through accessible study loans regardless of parents' financial situation or amenities offered to buy an apartment (cf. Zagórska et al. 2012). On the other hand, they may not be directly focused on their needs, e.g. in Poland, where social policy is aimed at other age cohorts or specific people in need, like the unemployed ones (cf. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2018).

6.1.3. Paths to getting one's own housing

The collected qualitative data show that the interviewees see the moment of being able to move out of a family house and start one's own household as a real threshold to adulthood. Having a place to live was not necessarily related to project-based

thinking in terms of short-term periods (as in other stages of achieving adulthood) but as the default basis for being an adult. However, it is also typically associated with entering the job market, as achieving some economic autonomy is a prerequisite for renting an apartment (or buying it later).

When the interviewees were asked when they felt they were adults, several noted that the formal moment of turning 18 and getting their own ID could not be associated with being an independent person. Leaving the parental home as the "true" step into adulthood was especially underlined by those who had faced problems establishing and maintaining an independent household for good, e.g. for financial reasons, like the interviewee below:

> *Probably like most people at the time, I considered myself an adult when I turned 18 and received an identity card. But now, from today's perspective, I think that such a step into independence is living independently, apart from the parents, and then the first job; the ability to get by. I think this is mainly the symbol of entering adulthood for me now.* (IDI/L/R16)

This stance was also confirmed by other interviewees, like one from Zdunska Wola:

> *A feeling of independence is related to living alone and dealing with bills, with doing everything alone. And doing it away from the family.* (IDI/ZW/R3)

However, the paths that lead young Poles to start their own households can be very bumpy, which is reflected in the interlocutors' stories. There were 46 interviewees who had managed to start an independent household, including 13 singles living alone and 33 living with their spouses (19), partners (14) or friends (1). Another 14 interviewees still lived in the family home, mostly with parents (9), but also with great grandparents (3) or a sibling (1). In one case, an interviewee lived with a partner and a parent in the family home. The interviewees with children tend to form separate households, but in five cases, they still shared a home with their own parents. Among those who lived separately from the family of origin, 20 interviewees were (co-)owners of the property they lived in (mostly thanks to bank loans or an inheritance from family members), 14 rented an apartment from private owners, and 12 were living in council apartments. Analysis of the empirical data reveals a few paths of starting a household by young Poles (irrespective of the legal form of inhabiting a property) and the difficult experiences of those who had not yet separated from their family (nesters). First, we look at those who achieved housing independence.

Family support in achieving own housing

In almost every case, the family of origin (not only the parents but the extended family in general) is the primary source of support for young Poles to reach housing independence. As evidenced by several interviewees, parents usually do not insist that their adult children leave home. However, once young adults decide to move out (due to the growing need to live independently or because they have intimate relationships) their parents either contribute to the rent in the first period or co-finance the purchase of a property. As noted by one of the interviewees:

We bought this apartment with the financial help of my parents. It was due to the fact that we could live in an apartment owned by my parents for a while and save some money. We tried to save systematically, and indeed, we had enough money set aside to get a reasonable loan. The money that my parents gave me to buy this apartment was also a great help. So, in fact, we bought our first apartment with their support (…). Last year was terrible, because we had a renovation, preparing it all. But in the middle of the year, when we moved in, it was a great relief, and I really appreciated that we could count on my parents again in this matter, because it made it so much easier for us. (IDI/L/R30)

Several interviewees from Lodz also inherited apartments or houses (or the rights to use a council house) from their parents or, more often, grandparents. The studied group might be one of the first generations to massively inherit property, as during the communist period, their ancestors gained broad access to state-owned flats that, after 1989, were privatised and taken over by the inhabitants. Their transition to adulthood during times of rapidly growing property prices seems to be easier, which the interviewees agreed with:

I have everything given just like that; I didn't have to make much of an effort. I appreciate it, but I admit it. We lived with my parents, they had an apartment for rent, and when my partner and I wanted to live together, my parents simply told us we could live there (…), so we live there free of charge. Well, we just need to pay the basic bills. And now we have been building our own house for two years, so shortly we will move there and become independent. (IDI/L/R25)

Renting an apartment

There are two reasons why young Poles decide to rent an apartment after leaving their parents' nest. For example, it might be a rational calculation related to the uncertainty of their personal and professional developments. Today's job market requires high mobility and the ability to move to other locations to work. People entering the labour market may not be interested in sticking to one place, especially if it would entail certain loan obligations to buy their own home. In this sense, their housing strategies resemble those of their Western European peers. More often, however, renting an apartment is due to a lack of funds for other housing options. It is the only possibility rather than a matter of choice. A young woman from Zdunska Wola is a good example of the lack of such opportunities to stabilise their housing situation:

Now we are renting an apartment. First, we rented for four years, then we stayed in my parents' house for maybe half a year, then we rented an apartment ourselves, and now we are renting another one. We are looking for some other options. I even tried to ask in the City Hall if they have an apartment to renovate. I'm trying to find one because there is no other way out; there is no chance to save some money. (IDI/ZW/R12)

Council housing

Interestingly, the young adults living in Zdunska Wola were more often forced to rent an apartment (or stay in the family home) than those from Lodz. In both locations, they mostly rent relatively expensive apartments on commercial terms as the offer of cheap council housing is very limited or of poor condition. The

interviewee from Zdunska Wola detailed her efforts to be granted and then reno-
vate her council house:

> There was a competition for one dilapidated apartment. It was so badly damaged, and I had to
> repair everything – the windows, the door, everything. Then I had to build the bathroom, because
> there was no bathroom either, and make a kitchen with a corridor, as there was no kitchen either.
> There was only a corridor and a large room. And that's what I had to do myself. Now I'm waiting
> for the council commission to come and see if they will accept it and grant me this apartment.
> (IDI/ZW/R9)

One of the interlocutors in Lodz faced similar problems:

> Here we had to renovate the whole room, but Foundation X also helped me a lot. Their people
> helped us, so to speak. They just came here and repaired everything that was the most expensive…
> that I was most afraid of. But once we did it all, it got easier later on; we managed financially. The
> worst thing is the heating, because when it is winter, -20 degrees Celsius, we pay almost 700 zlotys
> for electricity; it's simply a nightmare. And it's a council house, so I was asking at the local Social
> Welfare Centre for some benefit, to get coal, but I can see I will probably not get it this year, only after
> the new year. (IDI/L/R21)

Mortgages

Once a person's financial situation becomes stable, an expected life goal is to buy
one's own property. When financial support from family members is not available
and buying a property with cash remains almost impossible, a mortgage is the only
way to get it. As already noted, about 10% of property owners in Poland had to co-
finance the purchase with a mortgage (Eurostat 2021f). However, as of 2016, more
detailed data show that for one-third of Polish households run by people aged
16-34, such a purchase was dependent on a bank's financial instruments. Young
adult loans amounted to 150,000 PLN per family in 2016 (Olcoń-Kubicka, Halawa
2016). Interestingly, only a few interviewees followed this path. However, one of
them explained that signing a bank loan agreement was her last step in achieving
adulthood:

> First, I was at university. I studied in Lodz while living with my parents. I moved to Belgium for
> a year, came back, finished my studies and started a job in Lodz. Then I went to Kraków. And
> I think that the last point of adulthood is signing a home loan agreement with a bank [laughter].
> (IDI/L/R12)

The statement regarding financial obligations to banks as a clear mark of adult-
hood is also seen as a generational experience. Sometimes it is a privilege to im-
prove one's housing situation, or even to invest in the real estate market, but more
often, buying a property – any property – is a necessity on the way to becoming
independent. It is reflected in the popular saying of young Poles that "the most
binding factor for couples today is mortgage rather than a legal confirmation of
their relationship".

6.1.4. Prolonged stay in a family home (nesters)

Among all 60 interviewees, there were 14 that had not managed to start an independent household and remained in a family house. A handy analytical framework to study their experiences is Piszczatowska-Oleksiewicz's findings on Polish nesters. She distinguished four types of life strategies of people remaining in such a *crowded nest* (cf. Bieńko et al. 2017: 15-16): *tenants by choice*, *hostages*, *the shiftless* and *forced residents*. In the studied group of young adults, all four strategies are represented.

Tenants by choice

According to Piszczatowska-Oleksiewicz, *tenants by choice*, strive for comfort and to meet basic needs, but, at the same time, they are afraid of moving out of their parents' house due to loneliness. They work and contribute to the household budget but are satisfied with the lack of other "adult" responsibilities. Their parents strengthen this relationship due to the fear of their own loneliness once a child moves out, which happens once he or she finds a partner (cf. ibid.). Several tenants by choice were interviewed, and the reasons behind their voluntary decision to stay with their parents differ.

A good example was one participant who lived in the family house with his parents, but in a separate part of it (and to live separately) to save money and invest it in his own business. He had a positive relationship with his parents, and they were happy to live with their son, but familial affiliation was not the main determinant of his decision to still live in the house he had grown up in. Since he was single and had not established any long-term relationship, this housing situation met his current needs:

> *I simply took advantage of the fact that my family and I have separate parts of the house. I took over part of the house and have a separate apartment in my family home (…). I actually rented an apartment in the city centre for some time, but then I came back home because I work on my own. I have my company, and I'm developing it, so I decided that it wasn't good to invest money and buy an apartment and have some big financial obligations when I knew that I could use that money better and multiply it somewhere.* (IDI/L/R2)

Hostages

Hostages are forced to live with parents as they feel responsible for them (for health or financial issues). They do not have money to get by, or they do not work. Once the parents are ill, they devote much time to taking care of them at the expense of their own private life. They have then a sense of commitment to their parents and are emotionally dependent on them. Thus, they do not consider changing their current lifestyle (cf. ibid.).

Several interviewees became hostages in their family homes. Some felt responsible for the health of relatives and decided to remain with them or move back after a period of relative independence, even though it impacted their private and professional lives greatly. However, sometimes their decision to stay with their

family was also motivated by their and/or their parents' poor financial situation. The combination of both motives was visible in the case of a single man from Lodz, who explained that he had to move back from Warsaw and help financially and take care of his newly widowed father:

> *There were two main motivations for coming back from Warsaw for me. I worked in a company there for three months, and the money was terrible, and I decided that I would either find a room for myself because I would not be able to afford the whole apartment anymore… so either I would rent a room, let's say for 800 or 900 zlotys, or I'd just go back to Lodz. Well, there was no point in sharing an apartment with some strangers so I thought I would come back. And my mother had just died at that time, so for my father's sake, I returned to Lodz because he had a small pension, so he couldn't pay for this apartment. And due to the need to maintain this apartment in the way that my mother had fought for all her life, because we lived in an apartment that was given by a state company that employed my parents in the 1980s. It was promised that every employee of the company would get an apartment, and it was supposed to be the same here, because we lived in such an apartment all these 25 years. But then the company asked my parents to move out because they were no longer employees. In the end, my parents received this apartment, so it was as if my mother had been fighting for this apartment all her life, so I didn't want to lose it. And I still live there with my father to this day.* (IDI/L/R16)

As he later clarified, low wages, the sense of commitment towards his father and the need to maintain family property resulted in him withdrawing from any far-reaching plans that would allow him to escape from this housing trap:

> *In this company where I work now, I don't earn much, so I'll probably work there as long as my father lives, until he dies, which I do not wish on him, obviously (…). I even thought that one day I would sell this apartment and find some studio apartments for me and my father, but he is almost 70 now, so I think that it would be logistically difficult. You have to live somewhere while moving out. I can share a room with my friends, but for my father… So the situation will probably last like that, unless I win millions on the lottery.* (IDI/L/R16)

The shiftless

Another group of young people who live in their parents' homes are the shiftless for whom living with their parents is a way of life. They are not planning to leave home as they do not have any specific long-term goals, qualifications, or willingness to work, and they do not want to change their current lives or are unable. They are usually unemployed and completely dependent financially on their parents (cf. ibid.). This attitude was reflected in the perfunctory and nonchalant answers of one of the interviewees:

> *Question: Has something ever happened that you could say, "Oh, I'm an adult now"?*
> *Answer:*
> *Q: No?*
> *A: I don't know.*
> *Q: No expectations or needs. Well, I asked you a little about this fate of education, this job, and whether you live with your parents at the moment.*
> *A: I just live with my parents, yes.*
> *Q: Have you ever lived outside your home?*
> *A:*

Q: So you live with both parents, yes?
A: Yes.
Q: And private life, so to speak? Some partner, kids?
A:
Q: I am asking because we have situations here… And any plans related to this, any plans for family life?
A: Well, I would definitely like to find a nice gentleman [laughter]
Q: So, single at the moment.
A: Right now, yes. (IDI/ZW/R5)

And when asked about future plans, she mentioned she would like to live in Los Angeles:

Question: So, where did this idea about Los Angeles come from?
Answer: I don't know. It would be really fun. It would be great to live there for a while.
B: And the language?
R: Language, okay. I always knew the English language well.
B: What would you be doing in Los Angeles?
R: Walking around… [laughter] *I don't know what I would like to do there. Maybe meet some nice people…* (IDI/ZW/R5)

Young adults who have difficulties in social (re)adaptation due to being brought up by foster families, incarceration, alcohol and drug addiction, or psychological problems also have specific housing needs. Family members are often the last resort to finding a place to survive. It was the case for one interviewee who was raised in a foster family and has faced serious problems since then. He revealed that he did not feel as if he were an adult:

I haven't reached this stage yet. I'm still having fun, I'm still living my life to the fullest, and I'm fine with it. Well, I live with my mother, she gives me dinner, so I'm not going to change it, right? I mean, I have a family, a daughter, a girlfriend; we even lived together for a while, but, well, it's not for me right now. I don't control what I do, and I have problems because of it (…) I'm aggressive. I'm prone to theft. For as long as I can remember, I've stolen things. Well, I hope it will change someday, it's hard to live that way (…) I have problems with alcohol. I try to solve it somehow, but when the weekend comes, I'm like a bomb (…). I live with my mum in an apartment of 14 square meters with her partner, and there are constant fights, and this is how it ends. Most often, I come back home and I'm drunk, and I say something wrong to my mother's guy and I'm afraid I will kill him one day (…). I don't have a place to live. That's why I live with my mother. I'm homeless. I don't have an apartment because I got into debt (…). I'm not going to live with my mother all my life. I'm going to move out, and I hope it will be soon. I'll just find a friend who wants to half-rent an apartment, or I'll rent a room somewhere, because it's hard to live with my mother in 14 meters – three people, a cat, it's hard. The toilet is downstairs, but the shower is upstairs. (IDI/FCI/R1)

Forced residents

Living with parents is also seen as a life failure rather than a purposeful strategy towards adulthood. The *forced resident* type covers people who live with parents because their poor financial situation does not allow them to move out. They are not emotionally attached to their parents and try to be independent in making

decisions (or even move away). However, once financial problem appears again due to a job loss or a bad relationship, they are forced to return (cf. ibid.). It was the case for one interviewee whose difficulties in the labour market made him stay in the family home. As he admits:

> I am 31 old and I live with my father. It is just sad because my professional career is very disturbed. I haven't worked anywhere for longer periods, so I can't get a mortgage. It's sad that a man in his thirties, whose first thoughts should be to secure things such as an apartment, have some money to get by and so on, is not able to have his own apartment, live alone, or even be in some kind of relationship. It is still difficult. (IDI/L/R14)

His housing situation frustrated him, but he noticed that difficulties in getting a separate apartment were a generational experience. He bitterly explained that the availability of housing for young people (i.e. the possibility of ownership) was not about effort and hard work but access to family economic capital (i.e. inheriting property). He also claimed that his peers, whose access to having their own houses is conditioned by mortgages, are in a worse position than earlier generations who received their (council) apartments from the state during communist times:

> I have a friend who says he bought an apartment with cash, because he is 28 or 29 years old (…). For ten years he has been working in the same company; he doesn't need much money, he doesn't spend a lot of money, he's a man who works in a warehouse, earns more than I do in a bank, drives a car that is worth 40,000 zlotys and has his own apartment. Nice that he saved that money, but, unfortunately, he comes from a family where money was not an issue, so he had the possibility that from the age of thirteen to eighteen, he did not have to work, and then he went to work and he still works there. If you save 1000 zlotys a month for ten years you can easily buy an apartment, as long as you can save 1000 zlotys a month. It's sick that my parents, my dad got apartments, my aunt and uncle, they all got apartments there, and we… if you want an apartment, take a loan. My generation is the generation waiting for the death of the previous generation to inherit their properties. (IDI/L/R14)

Another interviewee who lives with his parents complained that the cost of rent was too high for the average young person, even for one living in provincial locations like Zdunska Wola. For him, leaving home at the age of 19 was the real step towards adulthood:

> An important decision for me was to leave home and rent an apartment myself. It was the first such important decision for me. Because most 19-year-olds do not think about leaving home and renting an apartment at their own expense. I took such a risk, and I had no regrets. It was an important experience. (IDI/ZW/R1)

He lived alone for four years, but later, due to growing unemployment, he moved to the UK. After a few years, he returned to Poland, but his job position did not improve much, so he had to stay in his parents' house:

> I help my parents as much as I can. My dad didn't always have a job, so I helped them financially. The prices of an apartment in Zdunska Wola… renting it is simply a mockery, because I earn 2,000 net, and the rent itself is 800 to 1000 zlotys, plus food, cleaning products, petrol for the car, car repairs. Well, it's unrealistic to survive. (IDI/ZW/R1)

6.1.5. Perception of the state's support

Regardless of the interviewees' present housing status, a common need is to change it in the near future. Some declared that they wanted to improve their living conditions, mostly due to the enlargement of their own family (e.g. giving birth or children growing up). Depending on their financial resources, some planned to remodel the present property, including ones inhabited with parents, as was the case of a young divorced father of two children living with his mother in a council apartment:

> *We plan to buy this apartment with mum someday (…). This is a three-room apartment, and you can easily make two rooms from the large room, so everyone will have their own living space. And besides, mum is getting weaker, she helped me for so many years with the children. She will not expect help, although I suspect that she will need help. I will always help, because that is what family is about, this is the quintessence of the family.* (IDI/L/R28)

Others buy a new property, such as another interviewee from Lodz:

> *Our apartment is 38 square meters for four people, so it is a bit compact – very compact. We are thinking about moving out. The air in Lodz is not good, so we are thinking about moving to the outskirts of Lodz, but there was also an idea to escape to the seaside.* (IDI/L/R22)

It might seem that, apart from those who inherited property or earned enough to pay off bank instalments (mostly among Lodz residents), the investigated group should express some expectations regarding the state's involvement in fulfilling their housing needs. And indeed, some called for state support in accessing cheaper and better-standard council housing and co-financing mortgages. For instance, when one interviewee was asked about a preferable instrument of public policy aimed at young adults, he said:

> [There is a need] *to launch a state housing programme, because an apartment is the foundation of everything. If someone already has one, then he will easily cope later.* (IDI/FCI/R11)

Interestingly, most of the interviewees had heard about the *Rodzina na swoim* (Family on its own) preferential mortgage programme for 2007-2013 and the *Mieszkanie dla młodych* (Apartments for young people) partial loan repayment programme after 2014. However, they did not apply for them as they failed to meet those programmes' criteria (i.e. they mostly earned too much) or there was a lack of information available. Moreover, it seems that those who were more interested in state-funded possibilities were those who were doing relatively well and, thus, in fact, were often not eligible to enrol, especially those living in Lodz. At the same time, they argued most about the lack of an effective policy in this area. On the other hand, those who supposedly belong to the target group of those policy measures were, to a great extent, unaware of these policy measures.

To sum up, the current housing situation of young Poles is very complex. They leave their family homes later than most Europeans, and the ratio of those living

with parents is higher, including nesters and those who have started a family of procreation. Young Poles' access to housing is also difficult – the number of council homes is insufficient or of a poor standard, and purchasing their own property requires a mortgage over several decades. Although properties in Poland remain relatively cheap (compared to the EU average), they are often beyond the reach of young Poles, which necessitates the renting of housing on commercial terms. At the same time, they do have housing aspirations, as home ownership remains a dominant status indicator. Thus, having a mortgage has become a generational experience.

Young Poles view starting their own household – alone or with a partner – as a condition for reaching completed adulthood. In some cases, it is even seen as the final stage of such a transition. What is most important, then, is to achieve some stability in this domain (not necessarily property possession) so that other stages (e.g. starting own family) could also be achieved. Most interviewees had managed to reach this life stage and moved out of their family home. However, their housing position is strongly determined by the place of residence, as well as the social and material status of the family of origin. The situation of the Lodz residents is relatively good. Higher education and professional qualifications, as well as access to better-paid jobs, allow them to rent an apartment or apply for mortgages. Some of them also inherited property from family members. The residents of Zdunska Wola county are in a more difficult situation. Since they are less educated and often benefit from social care, they are forced to stay in the family home or rent expensive private-owned apartments. The family of origin plays an important role in becoming independent in housing, as it offers financial or organisational support in obtaining their own apartment (e.g. repaying part of a mortgage, helping with repairs, or assisting when rights to council housing expire). Regardless of the place of residence, the interviewees speak about the need for state support in accessing cheaper and better quality council housing and/or in repaying readily available housing loans.

6.2. Family formation

Since young people postpone creating their own household, either because they are not yet interested in stabilising this sphere of life or, more commonly, they have limited possibilities to start one, starting their own family and having children are becoming even more complicated. As noted already, entering into adulthood is not linear anymore. Due to the prolonged education and more flexible labour markets, the various stages of young people's lives and the social roles they undertake intertwine (cf. Wyn, Dwyer 2002; Biggart, Walther 2006; Kohli 2007). However, unlike having a place to live away from parents, which seems to be a condition for adult

life, starting and raising a family are not always seen as a necessity. As noted in earlier chapters, this ambiguity results from a variety of related processes, including the modernisation of the economy and the accompanying changes in the labour market towards highly competitive, insecure and flexible forms of employment, Europeanisation, i.e. the diffusion of European values and lifestyles, and the individualisation of life, which is typical of postmodern times.

Young adults are, on the one hand, characterised by prolonging economic dependency on parents and, on the other hand, driven by the need for psycho-sexual emancipation (Bendit 2006: 51-52). The growing educational and consumption aspirations, developed primarily thanks to greater access to Western patterns of life after Poland's accession to the EU, together with the dominant discourse that promotes the *self-made man* attitude and orientation towards freedom of life choices, make the cultural obligation to fulfil the traditional social roles of a spouse or parent not entirely binding any more. They are followed by the growing professional interests of women and a general social acceptance of not limiting one's activities to procreative functions (Grotowska-Leder 2020). These tendencies are also reflected in the rising interest in alternative patterns of family life, including postponing the establishment of a family or deciding to stay single (cf. Slany 2006; CBOS 2019d).

6.2.1. The family situation of young adult Poles in public statistics

Data on public statistics, opinion polls and sociological analyses give a very diverse picture of young adults' paths of family formation in Poland. They also clearly show differences between their expected and actual procreative behaviours.

The family has always been deeply embedded in the value system of Polish people. As indicated in a public opinion poll, family happiness is invariably the most important value that Poles say they cultivate in their daily lives (80%) (CBOS 2019c: 5). The Poles seem to follow a very precise family pattern. According to another survey in 2019, for decades, the two-generation nuclear family, i.e. parents and children, has remained the dominant family type (49%). However, other types of families have also remained quite stable in recent years. People living in extended, multigenerational families accounted for about 22% and were more common in rural areas and among respondents of lower income, whereas childless marriages accounted for 11%. One in ten people lived alone (10%). Those who declared that they live with a partner accounted for about 3%, while 1% of respondents lived in non-heteronormative relationships (more often declared by people 25-34 years old). Another 1% of respondents were single parents (CBOS 2019b: 5).

Marriage is still seen as the basic and normatively appropriate family type. The findings of the last census in 2011 show that 60% of Poles aged 20 and more (30.3 million people) were legally married (see Table 16). This rate amounted to more than 62% among men and almost 57% among women. Over 2% of the

population declared they were in partner relationships (consensual unions) at the time. The proportion of men and women aged at least 20 who had never married accounted for 22% (27% for men and 18% for women). Those who had terminated their relationships accounted for over 5%, including divorced people (4.7%) and those who had separated (0.6%). Over 10% of this part of the population were widowed (3% of men and 16% of women, with this divergence increasing among older age groups).

Table 16. Polish population aged 20+ by marital status in 2011 (%)

Marital status	%
married	60.1
never married	21.6
widowed	10.4
divorced	4.7
partner relationship	2.1
separated	0.6
not declared	0.4

Source: Authors' elaboration based on GUS 2013.

Poles' attitudes towards marriage and family are changing slowly but steadily. Eurostat statistics for 2004-2018 show that they still follow more traditional patterns of family formation compared to other Europeans. However, in recent decades, marriages are contracted at a later age, while the popularity of non-traditional (non-normative) family forms, especially consensual unions, is increasing. When planning their adult life, young Poles tend to focus first on education and professional development, and then on the family and expanding it. It is reflected in changes in marital and procreative behaviours. The durability of marriages is decreasing as they are increasingly dissolved by divorce or separation. Women delay the decision to give birth to their first child, and they give birth less and less. Additionally, more and more often, there are extra-marital births. As a result, the fertility rate has fallen below the sub-replacement fertility level (the value of 2.1 children per woman of 15-49 years). There is also a growing diversity of family life forms experienced in the course of life (Zajkowska 2020). Traditional family orientations are loosening and slowly adjusting to the European mean. We will have a closer look at these tendencies.

There were 183,000 marriages in 2019, a number that is decreasing year by year. The share of people getting married in the past fifteen years has generally remained stable at around 5.1-4.8 (per 1000 people), with a slight increase in 2009 when it was 6.6 (see Table 17). The crude married rate for all EU states also remains stable, at around 4.3 in 2019 (Eurostat 2021a). Interestingly, between 2006 and 2017, the number of church weddings decreased by 11%. In 2017, over 62% of marriages were religious (99% performed in Roman Catholic churches). The drop is due to the general secularisation tendencies observed in Poland, but also the regulation of

the Roman Catholic church, which forbids religious marriages following a divorce (second marriages were around 20% of all religious and non-religious weddings) (Szukalski 2020).

Table 17. Crude marriage rate (per 1000 people) in Poland, 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Poland	5.0	6.6	5.0	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.1	4.8
EU	n.a.	4.5	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.3

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021a.

At the same time, despite the significant increase in the age of Polish newly-weds, they still get married earlier than other Europeans (see Table 18). In recent decades, the average age of the first marriage has increased by more than five years (from 22 for women in 1990 to slightly under 28 in 2019, and for men, from 25 in 1990 to over 30 in 2019). Interestingly, in the early 1990s, over half of married men and 73% of married women were under 25 years of age.

Table 18. Mean age at the first marriage in Poland, 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
male	27.5	28.3	29.1	29.3	29.5	29.6	29.8	30.1
female	25.1	25.9	26.7	26.9	27.1	27.3	27.4	27.6

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021a.

The number of marriages that were dissolved has also remained stable in recent decades, and was around 63,000 in 2018. The rate of divorces per 1000 people (1.7) is slightly lower than in other EU countries (1.9) (see Table 19). It means that one in three Polish marriages was terminated in recent years. At the beginning of the 1990s, the rate settled at around 1.1 (see Table 20).

Table 19. Crude divorce rate (per 1000 people) in Poland, 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Poland	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
EU	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021a.

Table 20. Divorces per 100 marriages in Poland, 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Poland	29.4	26.1	34.9	35.6	32.8	33.9	32.7	35.6
EU	n.a.	42.7	43.4	43.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021a.

Progressive ageing and the postponement of marriage have had a negative impact on the number of births. During the period of the political transformation, a strong decline in the number and intensity of births was observed, which shifted Poland from the group of high fertility countries to the one with very low fertility (Matysiak 2011: 50). Thus, it follows the negative demographic patterns observed in most developed countries. These tendencies are often explained as having been conditioned by systemic changes, i.e. the transformation from a planned economy to a capitalist system (cf. Kotowska et al. 2008; Sobotka 2011). They led to changes in how the labour market function, a decline in employment stability, an increase in the individual's responsibility for his or her economic situation, as well as the withdrawal of the state from providing services for the family. Some of these factors, especially those related to labour market changes, have been widely discussed, and their impact on reproductive behaviour has been empirically verified (cf. Baranowska 2009).

The results of a public opinion poll on the causes of the fertility decline indicated that in 2017, Poles complained about a lack of financial stability and uncertainty of the future (59%), poor housing conditions (44%), women's fear about losing a job (42%), the popularisation of the financially independent woman model (27%), expected difficulties with reconciling family and professional duties (26%) and a sense of a lack of support from the state regarding upbringing, education and medical care for children (23%) (CBOS 2017). Thus, the decision to postpone having the first child is, above all, due to a lack of a sense of stability, in particular, the lack of stable employment for both partners (i.e. a safe financial situation) and the lack of a stable housing situation. It is also important for women whether or not they are married. Marriage makes it easier to decide about having a child while living in an informal relationship makes it difficult (cf. Mynarska, Styrc 2014). These factors do not play such an important role in planning subsequent children. In this case, the "costs" of motherhood (raising other children) that block further procreation plans seem to be more important (Sikorska 2021: 4).

Parents' lack of stability and support from the state needs additional comments as it refers to the empirically proven relationship between family policy strategies and fertility recuperation. As noted by Zajkowska (2020: 100), in the Polish reality of the shortage of educational and care services for children, it should be expected that women will take care of children longer on their own, thus, maintaining their professional deactivation. For this deactivation to be only temporary, a discussion should be undertaken on policies that support the return of women to the labour market and the greater involvement of fathers. Doepke and Kindermann (2015) indicated that policies to reduce the time burden on mothers with caring responsibilities were much more effective than financial support for families. On the other hand, Kolm and Tonin (2015) argued that the success of the Nordic family policy model was based on linking child benefits with the professional activity of women[2].

---

2   For more about developments of Polish family policy after 1989, including familiarization and the introduction of different policies aimed at linking measures oriented towards free market and family issues, see Kotowska 2019.

As a result of these unfavourable tendencies, in 2018, around 388,000 births were registered (crude birth rate of 10.2‰) in Poland. Although the number of births has grown in recent years (in 2003, it was 351,000, the fewest in the post-war period), it has decreased by over 40% compared to the early 1990s, when about 550,000 children were born annually and is almost half the size recorded in the last demographic boom in the early 1980s. Over the last three decades, the low number of births has not guaranteed a simple generation replacement. In 1990, the total fertility rate (live births per woman) was 2.06, whereas in 2004, it was around 1.32, growing slightly to 1.44 in 2019 (see Table 21). It was one of the lowest rates in the whole EU (1.53 on average).

Table 21. Total fertility rate in Poland and the EU in 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Poland	1.23	1.40	1.32	1.32	1.39	1.48	1.46	1.44
EU	1.50	1.61	1.58	1.58	1.60	1.59	1.55	1.53

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021c.

The young generations' choice to focus on education and economic stability first and then start a family have resulted in an increase in the age of women at childbirth. As in the whole EU, Polish women have fewer children while they are young and more children later. In Poland in recent decades, there has been a shift in the highest female fertility from the 20-24 age group to the 25-29 age group. There is also a significant increase in the fertility rate for older groups (see Table 22).

Table 22. Fertility rate by age cohort in Poland and the EU in 2019

Age cohort	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-49
Poland	0.009	0.047	0.098	0.086	0.039	0.008
EU	0.009	0.038	0.086	0.102	0.057	0.013

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021c.

The mean age of Polish women at first birth was 27.6 in 2019, lower than in other EU countries (29.3) (see Table 23).

Table 23. Mean age of women at birth of first child in Poland and the EU, 2004-2019

	2004	2009	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Poland	25.5	26.2	26.9	27.0	27.2	27.3	27.4	27.6
EU	n.a.	n.a.	28.8	28.9	29.0	29.1	29.3	29.4

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021c.

At the same, the rate of extra-marital births is growing, which is the result of the increasing number of families created by cohabiting couples and single parents. The share of live births outside legal marriage has increased from 12% in 2000 to 26.4% in 2018 (see Table 24).

Table 24. Live births outside marriage (share of total live births, %) in Poland and the EU, 2004-2019

	2004	**2009**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Poland	17.1	20.2	24.2	24.6	25.0	24.1	26.4	25.4
EU	31.9	37.1	n.a.	41.5	42.0	42.2	42.5	42.7

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Eurostat 2021b.

This proportion signals new patterns of family formation and, thus, the progressive secularisation of the society, although it remains one of the lowest in the EU, where 42.8% of children were born outside marriage.

6.2.2. Forms of family life

The collected empirical material presents a large variety of forms of young adults' family life. Among all 60 interviewees, the majority were in permanent relationships, either married (19) or in partner relationships (15), although there were also single people without children (16) and single parents (10). Within the group of Lodz residents (30), the largest groups were married people (12) or singles (10), whereas from Zdunska Wola (16), the dominant groups were people in partner relationships (6) or married (4). Similar tendencies were noted among the interviewees who grew up in foster care institutions (14) – six interviewees were in partner relationships, and three were married.

The normative pattern of starting and expanding a family is determined by the following stages: from informal through (not always) legally confirmed relationships to giving birth to children and raising them. These stages were deconstructed below in a processual manner so that the paths of family formation are presented, starting from single people who managed to start their own household, through formal or informal full families (marriages and partner relationships) living together, and ending with various non-normative (alternative) family patterns. Since the stages of being single and, especially, being a parent were the most discussed by the interviewees, these forms are presented in more detail. It seems it is due to the fact that the interlocutors were aware of cultural obligations to fulfil the traditional social roles of becoming a spouse and a parent (cf. Grotowska-Leder 2020). If they had not yet achieved that stage, they had to "justify" themselves in front of the interviewer. On the other hand, young parents had to "explain" how they managed to meet these traditional expectations.

Singles

In this study, singles (over 1/4 of all interviewees) were understood as all those who live alone (i.e. they created a separate household or lived with the family of origin), irrespective of their previous and current marital status or maintaining an intimate relationship with other people.[3] Furthermore, those parents who did not

---

3   In other words, if someone was in a long-term intimate relationship but has now split up or still maintains those close ties but living in separate households, he/she was seen as single (cf. Ochnik 2012).

maintain contact with children (1 case) and lived alone were also categorised as being single. But if they raise their children in one household, they belonged to the group of single parents (see below).

Being single is normally perceived as a transition step towards forming one's own family. Few interviewees were in permanent relationships, and together with their partners (who lived separately), they went through the next transition phases, including starting their own household together. More often, however, after leaving home and setting up their own household, the interviewees finally focused on looking for a partner they could live with. The interviewees did not discuss this stage of their mature life in terms of lacking intimate relationships. They focused on professional development, broadening hobbies or simply daily duties. One interviewee tried "not to think about it and live a normal, everyday life" (IDI/ZW/R1).

Sometimes that transition stage may be unexpectedly prolonged because too extensive work obligations make it impossible to establish or maintain a relationship (cf. Rosińska, Gońda 2019). As one interviewee noted, despite his willingness to follow his brother's good example of starting a family, he failed to do the same due to his commitment to work:

> *It seemed to me that at the age of 26, I would have everything sorted out. I would be watching my kids grow. Unfortunately, my job changed all of this (…) My brother lived with his fiancée, his current wife, from the age of 20, and so everything looks perfect for him: two children, a house near the city, a great job, a happy wife, everything's great. Such a model family life. And it seemed to me that I would do the same. I was trying to follow in his footsteps. And it turned out to be different, unfortunately…, Well, maybe fortunately? I don't know… (IDI/L/R2).*

He also added:

> *When it comes to material issues, I think I've achieved 110% of what I planned. I didn't even think I could achieve that. So in this area, I realised everything. But when it comes to these family issues, unfortunately, it is a disaster, because of work, because I am practically away from home all the time… Well, one day, I came home to find all my bags were packed, and I had to go because I was not really there for three weeks a month (IDI/L/R2).*

Such large workloads made the linear pattern of achieving the final stage towards adulthood (i.e. starting one's own family) impossible. The interviewee went back to a single household (where he had been years earlier) after breaking up with his fiancée. Returning to earlier life stages or situations (and remaining in constant motion) is similar to the *yo-yo transition* mentioned in many studies on transitions towards adulthood. It means that the achieved progress towards autonomy in one area (e.g. education or job) is accompanied by returns in other spheres (cf. Biggart, Walther 2006; Du Bois-Reymond, López Blasco 2003; Winogrodzka, Sarnowska 2019).

The young adults were aware that it took time to make stable intimate relationships with people with whom they would eventually form a household. They knew the cultural expectations of having their own family as a stabilisation factor in

their life and were ready to follow these normative patterns. However, they were not looking for that partner intensively. They were convinced it would become true sooner or later.

However, other interviewees were awaiting the moment to establish their own family. Some argued it was difficult to have a relationship that would be satisfactory but also based on mutual understanding. And so this issue was much discussed by the above-mentioned entrepreneur who saw forming a family as the final condition for becoming an adult:

> *I knew that the only important thing I couldn't get is money, but in the following years, I've noticed that money is not that difficult to get, and that there are other more important things that define it if we are ready for this life or not (…). I don't have a family for the time being, but I feel ready to have one… But on the other hand, I do not know if I will succeed, because until I have it, I won't be able to say if I'm able to take care of family and function in the family (…). I see it as the next stage, a kind of development of my life. It seems to be the most important stage in life, the next and very important phase that would be worth accomplishing… and in fact, I think that I should, and I want to do it* (IDI/L/R2).

In another part of the interview, he further explained that his partner had left him as he had been too committed to work (and, consequently, not committed enough to his private life):

> *It seemed to me that it would be easier to start a family, that it would be a simple step. And the older I am, the more difficult it is. Every day, I think it's harder than I thought because it's hard to get along with people in general. Sometimes you don't understand yourself, so how can we understand other people? (…) Well, wouldn't it be better to go on holiday three times a year and have a rest? And I'm slowly beginning to understand that this is probably what you should do (…) I've noticed now that my partner was probably right after all. I mean, you have to find a good solution, you can't quit everything and just follow the "carpe diem" principle, because you have to take care of everything, and you cannot overdo it, but you probably just have to live your life as well* (IDI/L/R2).

A similar longing to start their own family was also openly expressed by other interviewees. Interestingly, such arguments are mostly raised by young men rather than women. The family is seen as a basic value that one has to achieve, as in the case of another young male interlocutor:

> *I'd love to have a smiling wife and three children. Of course, I think about kids. Of course, I thinking about a relationship. And I really need it. Having a family, in general, for me is such a value… that's somehow in the very centre of my future plans, so of course I want to have it* (IDI/L/R3).

A lack of one's own family can also be a cause of a void that suddenly appears in a single's life after achieving other steps in the transition to adulthood (i.e. a stabilising job situation and establishing their own household). It cannot be compensated for by professional success or other achievements, as in the case of the next single young man:

I don't have a child or a wife (…) I'm a terrible materialist. In general, it's been like this for years, all the time… Well, because now I'm at the stage of buying an apartment, and I feel some emptiness, and that I could be with someone permanently. It's not that I discovered it today because (…). Everything was always about money. But suddenly, I saw that something had changed in my head, and I jumped more into these emotions. It changed automatically, because I saw that… it is very important after all, right? This is the most important thing in life, not money, right? (IDI/L/R7).

Only a few interviewees admited they did not plan to form their own family, at least in the near future. In their understanding, being single is not necessarily a transition step towards creating one's own family but an already achieved adulthood stage. This choice is most often made in order not to interrupt their career or the specific lifestyle they undertake (cf. Rosińska, Gońda 2019). A good example is a single entrepreneur who combines her work with her passion for animals and is not ready to limit the scope of her company to raise children. She rejects "the pressure" of having a baby that society imposes upon women:

My company is my family, but the pressure to have children is terrible, especially for women. The pressure of the family, or the pressure from other people due to the fact that traditionally women always looked after the children and the husbands worked. I mean, it was like that in my whole family. For now, however, I suppress these stupid ideas of my family. But I can honestly say that, although I said a few years ago that I couldn't imagine my life without a child and so on, now it is totally… At this moment, it is so unnecessary, as I do not feel I am lacking something. In general, I'm satisfied with what I'm doing at the moment. Well, I do such things that having a child… well, it would limit me a bit. And maybe I'm a bit of a degenerate because I put myself above kids, but honestly… there are so many children around to be loved that I really don't feel… that I have to do it too (IDI/L/R9).

Other single interviewees also claimed that due to bad experiences in previous relationships, they were not able to give up their personal independence that had already been restricted by their partners. At least for the time being, they were not ready to sacrifice it again and "*invest* [their] *own feelings*", as one interlocutor declared (IDI/L/R7), in a new intimate relationship or having a child.

Traditional marriage

According to public statistics, the dominant normative model of the family in Poland is still based on traditional marriage. It was also verified in the studied group as almost 1/3 (19 cases) of the collected interviews were given by young married adults. Although we can assume that in large urban areas there is a tendency towards the postmodern de-institutionalisation of young adults' life cycle, including their relationships (cf. Kohli 2007), in the investigated group, there were more married interviewees in Lodz (1/3) than in Zdunska Wola (1/4).

Interestingly, the married interviewees did not consider their marital status an issue that required deep deliberations. When they decided to discuss the importance of a marriage certificate, they referred to the experience of cultural pressures associated with their family's expectations regarding the need to formalise their relationship. Thus, the young adults treated marriage as an "obvious" or "default" means of confirming their relationships, in contrast to those who were

in non-normative relationships who, like the singles, felt obliged to justify their "unusual" approach to family (see the subchapter below). Despite several questions from the interviewers, there were only a few examples of people who openly referred to "traditional" (i.e. Catholic) values that were the foundation of their relationships, as in the case of a male resident of Lodz:

> *I come from a traditional, Catholic and historical family. These values were also given to me, and they are valuable, and I don't subconsciously stick to them. And with age, I also came to the conclusion that it's really… that there are values I want to follow and that I want to represent, and they are good. They are not only short-term, but they are applicable for many generations… so yes, I feel connected to this traditional family model* (IDI/L/R4).

Non-normative families

Although Poles remain more traditional in their matrimonial choices than their European peers, there is a clear trend of liberalisation in terms of family life patterns, which increasingly resemble European ones. At the same time, the scope of the term "family" has expanded. There is a growing acceptance for people who remain in partner relationships (and raise children together) or in other non-normative forms of family (Slany 2006; CBOS 2019d). Partner relationships (with or without a child) are becoming almost as common a practice as the "traditional" family models, especially in larger cities. The routinisation of cohabiting couples thus contributes to normalising this type of relationship in society. The patchwork model, when people who are currently in a partner relationship bring up children from previous relationships together, is also more often considered a family (CBOS 2019b: 1). Non-heteronormative couples are trying to stabilise their family lives and, despite it not being legally possible, they aspire to have children together (like interviewee IDI/FCI/R6). Consequently, starting a family is not necessarily perceived as the final stage of achieving completed adulthood but as an available life possibility (although unnecessary and not determined by cultural obligations).

Among the interviewees, there were 15 people in partner relationships (in contrast to general tendencies, there were proportionally more in Zdunska Wola than in Lodz). Some were about to legally confirm their relationship and get married. This was mostly due to the cultural pressure of their immediate family (especially when the couple had children). However, in a few cases, it was also done for more pragmatic motivations, such as the need to apply for a mortgage on preferable terms for married people, income tax reliefs, or inheritance issues. There are also opposite motivations to remain in informal relationships, as children of single parents get preferential treatment in getting access to public nurseries or preschools.

There is also a growing consent to other non-normative forms of relationships at this stage of life, including being undecided and prolonged "testing" of different consecutive relationships in the search for the "real one". It was the case of one single male interlocutor, for whom his first intimate relationship "*was the reason to separate from* [his] *parents*". It did not last long, and in subsequent years, he

frequently "*changed girls*" (although they lived together every time). Still, his distant aim is to stabilise his life and have "*more than one kid*" (IDI/L/R13). However, there were also individual examples of people in partner relationships who declared that a marriage certificate would be just a burden or even "*a redundant piece of paper*" that does not have any meaning when people love each other.

6.2.3. Parenthood in achieving adulthood and stabilising family life

The tendency to prolong education and the increasing focus on professional career development desynchronises young Poles' pathways towards adulthood (cf. Winogrodzka, Sarnowska 2019). The observed intertwining of various undertaken social roles (previously conducted separately in particular life stages) also results in them postponing when they form a procreative family.

The delay in the birth of the first child is especially evident when we look at how many children people have in particular age cohorts. The CBOS survey of 2019 showed that about 99% of the youngest respondents (18-24 years) declared that they did not have children (87% in 2013). In the 25-34 age group, 45% had no children, which was also more than in 2013 (41%). About 30% of Poles aged 25-34 had one child, and 18% had two (23% in 2013). Among the respondents between 35 and 44, more than two-fifths have two children (42% compared to 36% in 2013). Almost one in three has one child (30%), and 13% have three children (19% in 2013). Almost a quarter of people aged 45-54 (22%), more than a third in the 55–64 age group (35%) and two-fifths (41%) of those aged 65 and over have more than two children (CBOS 2019b: 8).

No matter how many children Poles have, the desire to raise children is almost universal and permanent in time. The fertility rate is falling, but Poles' declarations regarding the preferred number of children remain essentially unchanged. Since the mid-1990s, about half of the respondents would like to have two children (50% in 1996 and 47% in 2019). Additionally, the number of people who would be happy to raise three children has recently increased (23% in 1996 and 28% in 2019), while those who would prefer one child fell (13% in 1996 and 6% in 2019). Only two out of 100 Poles do not want to have children at all (CBOS 2019a; cf. Garncarek 2017). There is a big discrepancy between (quite optimistic) procreation plans and realizing them (Kotowska 2019; Sikorska 2021).

The broader image of young Poles' procreation plans was given by the residents of Lodz and Zdunska Wola. One interviewee claimed that having children was a matter of natural instinct (and, thus, longing) that people follow, even if it required big sacrifices:

> *Having children is… it is such a strong human instinct that it would have to be a really tragic situation for you to decide not to have one, even though it is one child. But if you want it, I am able to make the sacrifice and have one* (IDI/L/R4).

However, once the young adults decide to start a family, in general, they follow a well-trodden path. It is mostly a highly reflective but also strictly planned decision, conducted once other stages are completed, i.e. after getting a job and establishing own household. As noted by another interviewee, when young Poles feel satisfied and their professional and household situation is stable, they start to consider the next adulthood stage – having a child:

> We are now in positions where, perhaps, we have finally completed some of our renovations, as if we have just achieved this housing stabilisation, there will be no more changes in this respect, so maybe now we will start thinking about enlarging the family. We just feel some kind of stability, security, I don't know how to call it, but we don't have to worry about it so much anymore (IDI/L/R10).

The birth of a child is seen as a milestone In the transition to adulthood, or even the final and ultimate stage of this process. It refers both to the actual as well as the expected arrival of the child, and it is mostly related to being responsible not only for themselves but also for the newborn. One interviewee noted:

> I do not quite feel that I am an adult, and in fact the moment of adulthood, I believe, will come when you start your own family. Because as long as you are self-dependent, life is simple. So I don't yet consider myself an adult (…). [You become an adult] when you are responsible for another person (IDI/L/R2).

Another interviewee was more precise and added that legal indicators of adulthood (i.e. getting an ID or voting rights) are not as important as the feeling of responsibility for another vulnerable person:

> The first moment that I felt grown-up was a trivial thing – collecting my ID card. But it took me some time, because I was 19 when I got it [laughter]. Another big turning point, I think, was taking part in the elections for the first time. It was a presidential election in 2010. I felt grown up; I felt that it was my civic duty and that it was important. But I felt emotionally grown when my first child appeared (…). During pregnancy, I felt the responsibility for this second life, and it was very significant and, most of all, a great responsibility, right? But I really realised it when this child was there and when this child fell ill for the first time. When I had to decide about his life and health, right? With different situations that appeared, which were new… this is how you grow up, learn new challenges and responsibilities, and I was surprised that adulthood looks like this, that it is primarily responsibility, responsibility and responsibility again (IDI/L/R20).

Having a child is perceived as an anchoring factor in a person's life. It makes other needs, such as those related to professional self-realisation or undertaken lifestyle, less important. One mother-to-be noted that once a couple decided to have a child, other plans had to be either realised before a child was born or to be postponed for a few years**:**

> We have plans [to have a child]. So that is why I have already started to limit my extra professional activities, because, for instance, I could return to this extra job in a bank in Warsaw and try to combine it somehow with this job here in Lodz. Due to these family plans, it is the last chance to finish some courses; then it will be too late (IDI/L/R29).

The need to suspend professional ambitions was mostly mentioned by young adult women, who are supposed to take care of a newborn baby. However, men were also aware of the new parental roles. One of the interviewees noted that the birth of his child made him anxious and afraid of the future. However, in the end, it became a stabilising factor after troublesome life experiences and various bad decisions he had made as an "immature" person:

After the birth of my child, it was a really big clash with reality. In 2015, I was 29, right? And it was a huge shock for me. Before that… life was different. I was a free man, both from work and in various ways. Anyway, the situation with us was also different than now, because, to be honest, it has improved a lot. Well, from that moment on, my life turned 180 degrees (…) It's hard for me to talk about these feelings then, because as a father… Now when I have some relationship with my child, I feel some joy, right? And before that, when it was such a small child, the joy was also there, but there was also fear of whether I would manage or be able to do it. Especially since my decisions earlier had not always been correct and sometimes led me into difficult situations. But finally, it turned me on the right track [laughter], *so a big, positive impact* (IDI/L/R19).

Since in still-patriarchal Polish society raising a child remains more of a responsibility for women (cf. Dzwonkowska-Godula 2015), they are also more vulnerable in the labour market and, as a result, they can see having children as a burden, especially for their professional position.[4] The fact that young mothers are financially dependent on their husbands and lack proper job protection when returning to the labour market was broadly discussed by one interviewee:

Unfortunately, I had a job contract until the birth of my child. It was a temporary contract, so after the birth, my contract was terminated, and I just got an allowance from social security. It ended after that because it was still when… I don't remember exactly when it was, but this allowance was given for a shorter time than now. After that, unfortunately, I was unemployed. It was difficult for me because it was when my daughter was two years old, and at that time, I was continuing my studies and I got my BA, and then I started my MA, so my child was still small. And at the age of two, she went to nursery, when I started working. But until then, I didn't work. I was dependent on my husband, which for me was such a discomfort. No resources of my own. I felt inferior. Even though I really didn't have time to eat sometimes, I felt worse that I was not professionally active (IDI/L/R11).

Another female interviewee pointed to dilemmas that young Polish women have, either to have children or to focus on professional development:

When I went to the doctor when I was pregnant, I cried when I got sick leave because he said I couldn't work. But then it turned out that it was one of the coolest periods for me. And I had such a slowdown, a slower pace in general, and it was a very good time. And I feel good with children too, although to stay at home with them and not go to work, I think it makes no sense (…). I want to have a lot of children, but I also want to develop professionally, and my time is running out because I changed my job. I would like to have another child but also to develop in this new job. Well, I think that having children excludes you from many possibilities and access to many resources, money, support, whatever… (IDI/L/R25).

---

4   The difficulties with combining childcare and work, especially for women, as well as attempts to maintain a work-life balance were presented in detail in chapter 5.

There are also several other obstacles that prevent young people from having first (or subsequent) children. One of the most important is the lack of proper accommodation, just like the interviewee below:

> *Today, I don't feel the need to have a second child. Not because I'm selfish, maybe that's not the point. I just think that, first of all, I should have better living conditions to have a child. Now we have an apartment, where we have two rooms, not too big. After increasing the family, it would not be spacious anymore. Maybe my job would allow me to do it; I have a permanent job contract. My friends get pregnant with their second or third child, and it is no problem for them to return to their profession, right? It is very important too. However, I am so scared that I won't be able to have another child. That these children will have only basic, existential needs satisfied, and there will be no higher needs. Because… Now we go to the cinema once a month, once a month for pizza. So this is just a celebration. But I don't know what would happen if I had a second child. I don't feel confident enough to be able to make such a decision* (IDI/L/R11).

As already noted, a relatively high number of young Polish couples live with their parents. It is often because they are unable to buy their own apartment within a certain time. Therefore, with the growing consumption aspirations of Poles, the formation of a family while still living with parents will become less and less acceptable, which in the situation of persistent difficulties in acquiring an apartment may lead to a further delay in the decision on parentage (Matysiak 2011: 51).

6.2.4. Split families and single parenthood

Living without a partner or spouse is not always the result of a fruitless search for that one true love or the desire to live alone. It might be the need to remain safe with the children, which might be caused by previous bad experiences of running households with partners who, despite having children together, do not fulfil initial expectations or, more often, harm other family members. In most cases, it is the mother who raises a child alone. In the investigated group, there were nine women (two divorced and one widow) and one man (divorced) who lived alone with their children.

Among the collected stories, only one interviewee claimed to have separated from the father of her children due to incompatible characters, life views or values. In this case, her decision to form a new household was a rational choice rather than a necessity:

> *Once I said to myself, "Now, I'll have fun, and then I'll calm down and focus on normal life." And as a result of that fun,* [child's name] *appeared, so actually, I really had fun* [laughter]. *Because from the beginning, the relationship was really based on the fact I was pregnant. It was such a loose relationship, from which* [child's name] *was created. However, unfortunately, when he was six months old, I also decided that it didn't meet our expectations, it didn't work as it should, and now I know that it was really a fantastic decision, because since then, he became incredibly involved in the upbringing of my kid. After some time, of course, the emotions have cooled down, and we can get along and support each other… We have completely different temperaments. There is no way we can get back together, just two different characters, and that would only cause conflicts and some unpleasant*

situations. So I think it's pretty good. Especially since [child's name] *doesn't know any other situation, like the fact that Daddy is there, I'm here, but he spends this time equally well with us. He is very close to Dad and, as I say, we support each other.* [the child's name] *doesn't hear any arguments, doesn't see unhealthy relationships. Well, he doesn't see how a family should function, but I guess I prefer it to be this way than violent situations, right?* (IDI/L/R20)

Sometimes separating from a partner is necessary. It might be, as in the case of a woman who raises three children alone, due to their "*partner's immaturity and inability to fulfil the role of a father*" (IDI/L/R20). In a few cases, the women decided to leave and establish a separate household with their children because of their partner's heavy drinking, often combined with physical and psychological violence. Several women shared such experiences:

I was afraid of this divorce, even though I knew I had to do it. There was no way out because my ex-husband was beating me, my child, abusing alcohol, causing accidents driving a car without a driving license. So, it was a difficult time. I didn't know what would happen to me. I had to move out because it was his mother's apartment (IDI/ZW/R10).

And then [after getting married], *I was working and had some home duties. It wasn't easy, right? Because it turned out, after three years, that he was an alcoholic, right? And after ten years, I was so tired, because later it was a pity for the children because year after year I just got pregnant. Well, I felt sorry for the children. But after those ten years, I mobilised myself, and I decided that the children cannot look at it, and finally, I moved out with my children* (IDI/L/R26).

6.2.5. Perception of the state's support

Both public statistics and the interlocutors' narrations show a need for targeted public policies to support young adults in family building and parenthood. In recent decades, a number of instruments within the pro-family policy have been implemented, including the Rodzina 500+ *(Family 500+)* programme, a one-time childbirth allowance (the *"becikowe"*), tax reliefs for parents, and extended maternity and parental leave (see chapter 10; cf. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2018; Kotowska 2019). They were mostly aimed at creating conditions to combine work with reproductive and caring tasks, including increasing women's professional activity.

Public opinion polls show that pro-natalist and pro-family policies should be comprehensive and include measures aimed at improving the financial and living situation of families, and help combine family and professional responsibilities by supporting mothers of young children in the labour market and increase the availability of institutional forms of childcare. The respondents proposed several solutions to increase fertility:
- support for young married couples in getting an apartment,
- low fees for kindergartens and nurseries,
- childcare benefits for families with children up to 18 years of age,
- tax reliefs for those bringing up children and assistance in returning to work or finding employment for mothers of young children,

- increase the number of nurseries and kindergartens,
- annual parental leave (CBOS 2016).

Interestingly, the young adults, both parents and those who intended to be parents, did not have many expectations regarding state support in starting or enlarging families. This may be due to the conviction that raising children is based mostly on the support of the immediate family, not on the state's involvement. Despite the lack of expectations towards the state, when asked in more detail, the only complaints were about the limited access to state-funded nurseries and kindergartens. Some interviewees were also unsatisfied with the insufficient and unavailable care service for their children; thus, they looked for private (non-public) care institutions:

We go to a nursery, but a private one. I mean, our kid would be accepted to the public nursery, so I can't complain that it's impossible to get there, because some people complain. I know we could get in because they called me. However, it was our decision, that we wanted our child to be in a group of ten children, not thirty, as it is in the public one. Because there are two ladies here for ten children. Let's say that in kindergarten, we would look at it differently due to the fact that the child is already bigger and will cope better. (IDI/L/R5)

On the other hand, parents of young children appreciated money transfers received monthly within the Family 500+ programme and other financial schemes. However, they did not agree it had an impact on their procreation plans:

No [it did not impact our procreation decisions], *we would have a second child anyway. It's only a question of when. You know, if it could be reduced to the issue of Rodzina 500+, we would have one now, because actually for the 500 zlotys it is… we already have all the accessories for children, we have prams, because we had our first child before, so it is always said that the second child is cheaper than the first. Well, because the first child, you have to buy everything, and then for the second, you already have many things.* (IDI/L/R5)

This ambivalent understanding of the state's (lack of) activity in supporting parenthood seemed to be "socialised" by Polish people after the state's partial withdrawal from social policy in the 1990s. Young Poles expect non-formal support, both material and non-material, from family members in bringing up children, especially their parents, or they rely on some non-public measures, like private kindergartens or extramural activities (e.g. swimming, art courses, or language courses).

To sum up, the next stage of achieving completed adulthood, i.e. starting a family and having children, is full of traps and barriers. Although the young adults articulated strong family values compared to their European peers, and have strongly internalised socio-cultural expectations related to formalising relationships and having children, the model of family they prefer is clearly changing towards increasing acceptance of partner relationships (with or without children), including non-heteronormative relationships. It is an example of liberalisation and conforming to European family patterns. This is especially true for metropolitan

environments, where households are not necessarily based on long-lasting relationships (which are less and less confirmed by marriage) and raising children in full nuclear families.

However, young adults' concerns about whether establishing a family and then having children interfere with professional development or their chosen lifestyle make the decision to live alone or delay having a child increasingly popular. These decisions are the result of transformations in young people's behaviour. They first invest in the professional sphere and only then do they start a family and enlarge it.

Regardless of the family model accepted, young Poles recognise that having children is a key experience (a milestone) in reaching full adulthood. They expect financial and organisational support from the state in implementing the procreative role by providing childcare (including tax reliefs and increasing access to care institutions). Since the state's support is insufficient, the non-formal support (both material and non-material) from family members remains a crucial resource in the transition to adulthood.

Chapter 7
Young adults in the public and political sphere

When studying young Poles' pathways to achieving completed adulthood and the influence of Polish public policies on the patterns of transitions into adulthood, attention was also focused on the presence of young adults in public space. The structure of analysis presented in this chapter takes into account three perspectives. First, it concerns the programme documents of the relevant political parties used in the 2015 parliamentary elections and 2016 local government elections. It was important to check the extent to which the issues related to young adults are present in the programmes of political parties seeking to take power and design the framework of public policies. In addition, regional and urban development strategies of the Lodz province and the city of Lodz were included in the analysis. Second, we analysed the public discourse conducted by the symbolic elite concerning the issue of the place of young adults in the social structure and their attitudes towards involvement in public and political matters. In this case, the aim was to ascertain how the image of young adults is socially constructed in public discourse, especially regarding the perception of this group within the framework of contemporary power relations. Third, there were studied the opinions of the young adults expressed in FGI and IDI interviews to recreate the attitudes of young adults in the public and political sphere.

It was important to see the extent to which this category could be described as an important subject within the framework of political relations and the process of constructing public policies. The findings and conclusions based on the FGIs with young adult activists (members of NGOs, political parties and local government) allowed to collect data relating to issues of young adults' political subjectivity and agency. The IDI interviewees made very limited statements about their political activity. More often, they criticised the political sphere as a whole. This section is also preceded by brief reflections on the political participation of young adults presented in the literature.

7.1. Young adults' issues in political parties' programmes and manifestos

Problems concerning entering adulthood were rarely the content of social debates. They emerged incidentally in the post-transformational political discourse in Poland. These issues were usually marginalised in the public debate and were not included in public or institutional agendas of relevant political institutions like governmental institutions or mainstream political parties. Matters concerning entering adulthood and young adults' biographies were neither identified nor categorised as crucial social and political problems that must be properly recognised and publicly discussed. Hence, they can be described as "*somebody else's problem*" which means cancelling a certain group of problems in public discourse (Czyżewski et al. 2010). In a representative CBOS survey title "Who has the hardest time living", young Poles (including the category of young adults) were not listed by respondents as a group of citizens affected by difficult living conditions. The respondents listed categories that can be considered typical social policy target groups, including people with disabilities, poor people, homeless people and those suffering from mental illnesses (CBOS 2018).

Public policy proposals that could be regarded as directly addressed to young adults were seldom presented in the programmes of political parties. Thus, young adults were not mentioned directly in public policies as a social category that needed state support, or that should be a leading and dominant group in welfare programmes. Public policy measures most often applied to young adults indirectly, which means that they were neither the main nor the only social category that would benefit from the proposals contained in the programmes. Analysing the political programmes presented during the 2015 parliamentary elections and 2016 local government elections confirms this. Issues that could be considered as being addressed to young adults (alongside other groups and social categories) referred to social benefits and transfers, family support, changes in housing policy, new labour market regulations, a reduction in fiscal burdens, improvements in the educational system, decreasing the migration (especially from rural areas) and measures for climate protection.

In the programmes of Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (*Law and Justice* – PiS), the most important example of a proposal that could be profitable for young adults was the *Rodzina 500+ program* (Family 500+ programme). It was a political game-changer that significantly helped PiS win the election in 2015. Its characteristics were primarily about changing negative demographic processes. But to all intents and purposes, it was used as a money transfer to strengthen Polish families' budgets and pull some of them out of poverty. It was also characteristic that the recipients of this programme were families (without pointing to other criteria, e.g. the wealth or age of the parents). The only condition was to have two and more children (one child from 2019) under the age of 18.

PiS's election programme also included the idea of introducing a *Young Entrepreneur's Card*, which would facilitate access to office space, allow people to participate in training, or give discounts on purchases of equipment and items necessary to run a business. It was expected to encourage young people to start their businesses and spread entrepreneurial attitudes. The party's documents described young Poles as struggling with a housing problem, which is why PiS presented The *Mieszkanie+* (Apartment+) programe, with the involvement of state funds (coordinated by the Ministry of Treasury). The party also proposed creating a register of municipal or state housing, which would be available to young families in need. Other measures concerned the problem of emigration (with the co-occurring brain drain effect), as well as the transfer of young people from smaller centres to metropolises. Anti-emigration programmes would be agendas to support entrepreneurship (e.g. a tax reduction for young entrepreneurs) or the creation of appropriate infrastructure in small towns, e.g. educational institutions and venues, which would make the public space more attractive to young people. The proposals, therefore, mainly concerned the redistribution of financial transfers, primarily to families with children and disadvantaged groups.

It was different in the case of the proposal of Platforma Obywatelska (*Civic Platform* – PO), whose programmes had a more activating character and were aimed at people in the labour market. Their programmes included proposals that corresponded with the idea that social policy should be organised in the family-oriented model, with parent-friendly offers like annual parental leave and the subsequent development of a network of nurseries and kindergartens (in 2015, there were 2700 such institutions in Poland). They would help young mothers return to work more easily. They also proposed measures to help parents simultaneously raise a child and study, providing discounts on additional hours in kindergartens, free school textbooks, and subsidies to employers who organised childcare for their employees.

The changes that were intended to improve the labour market regulations were connected with the slogan *Fair Poland*. It was all about respect for young Poles entering the labour market so that their first experiences at work would allow them to think positively about their future. One of the money transfer tools to enhance the position of young adults in the labour market was *The Grant to Start* programme. It was a grant for marketers, which provided funding of 45,000 PLN to young entrepreneurs at the beginning of their business activity. In terms of the labour market, PO's programme also presented general demands to deregulate selected professions, provide free legal advice to young people, which would be available in municipalities, and give vouchers to young unemployed people up to 30 years of age to spend on upgrading their qualifications and improve the quality of education. The labour market should also be more digital, requiring young Poles' digital competencies to be improved. An important declaration for young adults concerned the minimum wage as a mandatory salary for a worker, regardless of the type of work contract. PO also announced general statements concerning the

rental housing market, including the need to launch a housing programme for younger citizens.

Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe's (*Polish People's Party's* – PSL) programmes contained general proposals about improving the living conditions of Polish families (especially young Poles). It would be achieved through a family-oriented social policy (especially for families with children). The proposed amendments concerned a system of tax credits and the gradual extension of parental leave. In its election programme, PSL reported on a parental benefit that was to start being paid from the beginning of 2016. This is the so-called *Kosiniakowe* (named after Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, the leader of the party who was deputy prime minister at the time). *Kosiniakowe* is a benefit addressed primarily to parents who do not receive maternity allowance or maternity pay. They include students, unemployed people or people working based on civil law contracts.

The PO and PSL coalition also started the programme *Złotówka za Złotówkę* (Złoty for Złoty), which implemented the resolution that social programme beneficiaries did not lose the money transfer if their income was higher than the financial programme limit. The payment decreased only for the amount that was higher than the established threshold.

In its programmes, Kukiz'15 proposed devolving the decision-making process as close to the parents as possible. Primarily, the idea was to increase the subjectivity of young adults. They should have a greater impact on their children's education, using, for instance, an educational voucher that could be spent in private, social, or public educational institutions, or even for homeschooling if this was what the parents wanted for their children. Kukiz'15 also required the liquidation of labour offices and, simultaneously, a voluntary contribution to social insurance. The programmes also included references to the problem of reducing air pollution in Poland. Kukiz'15 also called for the organisation of citizens' panels, which would strengthen co-decisions on local politics. This cooperative model of decision-making was intended to prevent society from intergenerational conflict.

The leading idea in the programmes of Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (*Democratic Left Alliance* – SLD) was to prevent young people from becoming "the lost generation". The most important ideas that would help them in their everyday life included stable employment contracts, free education to get the competencies required in the market and making it easier to buy or rent an apartment. SLD wanted a more active state policy in the labour market. The state should be a secure insurance contributions payer, which would encourage company managers to employ young people. SLD also wanted to develop the housing market, e.g. The *Mieszkanie za 500 PLN* (Apartment 500 PLN), the development of occasional rental, and financial help for people with credits in Swiss francs.

SLD's political programmes also contained ideas for free local nurseries and kindergartens for a minimum of 8 hours per day. The educational system should offer daycare for primary school students and free meals, including lunch, in schools.

There were also proposals to facilitate access to culture, especially in smaller cities and in rural areas. Young adults could also be beneficiaries of some of the measures presented in the family policy. The party offered to keep and rationalise money transfers to Polish families, including some types of care allowance and social assistance, especially for dysfunctional families. The party also wanted to pay structural pensions in the countryside to support young farmers. The programme's documents also referred to sexual education, which should enable young people to enter consciously into adulthood, and declarations related to climate and energy policy, e.g. fighting smog.

The political programme of Razem (*Together*) focused on the problem of an equal society. The party wanted to halt the outflow of young people from rural areas and villages to larger cities. Therefore, the state should create similar living conditions for all young citizens in both larger and smaller centres to stop depopulation. Razem also referred to the housing policy, which must not be limited to state funding for programmes such as Rodzina na swoim (Family on its own) lub *Mieszkanie* + (Apartment +). Subsidising bank loans and credits was categorised as help for developers and financial markets, not as a real solution to the problem of homelessness and the difficulties young people have in accessing relatively affordable apartments. Buying an apartment or house is still expensive and pushes them into long-term credit obligations. Razem proposed increasing the amounts allocated to the housing budget and the municipal housing construction programme allowing young people to enter adult life. Affordable apartments and well-developed rental markets will allow young Poles to start a family and a career. They also proposed launching a social housing development programme, with financing instruments delivered by the Domestic Holding Bank and restored National Housing Fund. The programme also contained statements about repairing the labour market to increase work stability and strengthen the position of employees.

In the programme of Nowoczesna (*Modern*), proposals that could be addressed to young adults were mainly presented in the part called "Safe Family". The measures were general and were similar to the ideas proposed by other parties. Nowoczesna wanted to improve the kindergarten network to help young parents, especially when they want to return to work. The party also proposed developing the rental apartment market and cooperating with developers. The result would have been an increase in the number of apartments for a reasonable price, and that were affordable for young families. These measures would have made it possible to decrease burdens for parents. Nowoczesna proposed rationalising social money transfers, like the *Rodzina+* programme, only for people with a job contract; for the rest, there would be help from social services. Their programme also included public financing for fertility treatment and in vitro procedures. The party also proposed new social policy measures, as they believed that the social service system should be more individualised, which is why the institution of the family assistant would be helpful. Nowoczesna also proposed that, after graduating, young people should be exempt from paying social security for two years.

In the ideological declaration of the Korwin party, it was explicitly written that they reject any forms of state intervention or etatism. They considered liquidating the social justice rule as necessary. There were no public policies in their programme, and the party strongly supported delegating as many decisions as possible to individuals and families.

All parties called for a reduction in the taxation of the lowest earners, as well as an increase in the tax-free amount. Except for Kukiz'15 and Nowoczesna, they also advocated raising the minimum wage (usually the first salary that young adults receive).

Moving on to self-government at the regional and municipal level (with the example of Lodzkie Voivodeship and Lodz), in documents like the city or regional development strategies, the category of young adults appeared sporadically. The strategies were prepared according to generally accepted patterns to meet the expectations of funding institutions, in particular, that they be compatible with programmes and development models prioritised in the EU institutions.

The development strategy for Lodz, for instance, contained a list of development barriers. The problems could be described as typical in Poland: difficult access to health care, low salaries in the labour market, serious housing situation, problematic access to credit, early motherhood, a lack of nurseries and kindergartens, a person requiring care in the household and alcohol as a social relationship bond. These problems mostly affected the groups identified as at risk of poverty, excluded, marginalised, or, more broadly, disadvantaged.

The public policies presented in the strategy were designed especially for children and young people (up to 18 years of age) and older people (seniors, usually 65 plus). Young couples with children were mentioned in the context of being at risk of negative social processes. This category was also discussed regarding revitalisation programmes in Lodz. It referred to apartments that would be located in the city centre, and the price would allow young couples to buy or rent one. The actions listed in the strategy that may have an impact on young adults were slowing down and reversing unfavourable demographic trends, especially halting the outflow of young people from the region, strengthening civic attitudes, activating the labour market (including setting up a business, especially by people with disabilities and the unemployed) and counteracting social exclusion.

One of the municipal programmes introduced in Lodz was *Młodzi w Łodzi* (The young in Lodz). It is aimed at young people, most often students, who are encouraged to tie their future to the city. The initiative includes a scholarship programme and support for students' professional careers, and it provides entrepreneurs and potential investors with highly qualified staff. Since 2016, the city has also subsidised in vitro procedures for couples trying to have a child. One of the most important problems in the city was the need to intensify activities related to preschool and nursery care, among others, to enable non-working people to return to the labour market – a large number of unemployed people had at least one child up to six years of age.

All of the public policy proposals presented both in programmes and regional or municipal strategic documents contained measures that would be appropriate for young adults. Nevertheless, they were fragmented, and formulated as a part of the public policy sectoral approach. The ideas were not integrated into one cohesive programme that could be an example of an adulthood regime in public policy. Within public policy, young adults are not seen as a social category that needs tailored social policy programmes.

The idea of diversified public policy, where all social categories are public policy beneficiaries, even those that are not typically categorised as needy people, should be related to the concept of social citizenship (Marshall 1950). The understanding of social citizenship is moving away from the formal and legal perspective to a complex description of the status of an individual in the political community. Full community membership needs social rights, not only in a legal meaning but mostly in a sociological one. Every member should have access to services provided with public policies, but firstly the state should be able to create and implement public policies that are appropriate for different social categories. There should be no inequality in access to public services, so no group or social category should be excluded. If a social group is being constructed and categorised in public discourse as being not in need of help or as not deserving of support, it is unjust for them and means that they are unable to be granted all the entitlements from social citizenship. The negative impact on social citizenship had the discourse of discretion and the discourse of merit because they can result in categorising entire social groups as being unworthy of public policy support (Theiss 2018: 279-290).

7.2. How young adults are presented in political discourse

Young adults can be identified as absent and salient actors in the public sphere and public space. Especially in the mainstream discourse, they are categorised as politically indifferent. There is no institutionalised political representation of young adults in the political system that would be an efficient "input" organisation, able to exert pressure on "output" institutions, like the government, to make them allocate material and non-material assets in a way that considers young adults' needs and interests (Easton 1957, 1975).

The mainstream discourse was understood as the dominant set of opinions and explanations in the public sphere, which was used to define reality. It has a privileged position in public discourse and is perceived as the correct description of reality with no alternatives. During the socio-political transformation, Polish mainstream discourse was characterised by a clear dominance of neoliberal language registers (Kubala 2019). As a result, it also featured the modality of certainty

that involves planning the course of life with the achievement of material success. The public sphere was described as an area of discursive activities anchored in language, which is a tool for coordinated communication. At the discursive level, there was a process of legitimising (or delegitimising) not only the problems but also the programmes and tools that were used to solve them (Nowak, Pluciński 2011). Public space was understood physically as an area accessible to different communities (ibid.: 14).

Below there are presentd examples of discourse and rhetoric as typical argumentation strategies that could be observed in mainstream and social media. "The absence of young adults" was one of the main topics in the public debate during social protests against judicial reform in 2016. Many Polish citizens went out on the street to demonstrate against the judicial system reform introduced by PiS and to defend the sovereignty of the courts in Poland. The breakthrough that started the debate on young adults' involvement in the public sphere was a sequence of publications on social media. After that, "the young adult issue" also emerged in old or traditional media. The speakers (discourse participants) in the media debate divided into two groups. The first group, the external group, represented the older generations of symbolic elites. The second one, the internal group, represented the younger generations of symbolic elites (including young adults).

The debate participants from the external group divided into two groups: censors and supporters. The censors used the rhetoric of guilt, and young people were accused of inactivity and a lack of courage to stand, side by side, with the "real democratic forces". The youth were categorised as politically indifferent, which made them responsible for the dismantling of the democratic system. They were usually described negatively, as a group that sacrificed the democratic system for "a little peace and quiet", "uninhibited consumption", "spending winter holidays in the Swiss Alps", or "driving an SUV". The censors also used the rhetoric of shame, accusing young adults of being uninterested in defending freedom or protecting *Solidarity*'s values. The younger generations were presented in the censors' statements as selfish (focused on self-indulging), for whom their pleasures were at the top of the hierarchy of values. The rhetoric was saturated with great resentment of younger people. The censors demanded more commitment from young people in protests, and generally in politics, to protect democratic social order. The expected active attitude during demonstrations was also described as a form of expressing gratitude to older generations, to parents and grandparents, for the freedom that they had fought for:

> *Do you like living in this country? Not bad, huh? A nice little car, "staples" from a boutique, often your own bachelor pad with a home cinema, snowboarding in Sölden in winter, an adventure club in New Zealand in summer. This didn't come from nowhere. You owe it to someone. To your parents or to others of their generation. People who, unencumbered by the luxuries that have become nothing unusual for you, took to the streets 30 years ago to fight against the "commies" for a free Poland, for the country you live in. Still.* (Nawrocki 2018).

Young adults were described as uncommitted to community concerns and unconcerned about the destruction of the democratic regime's institutions. They were labelled as being devoid of civic values and a lack of institutional memory. The rhetoric was also an accusation that young adults started the intergenerational conflict and situated themselves as the opposition to the Third Republic's[1] symbolic elites (usually older people). The younger generations had no respect for their fathers and grandfathers, and they wanted to replace the old social order with something undefined but different. Agata Bielik-Robson explained the "against attitude" using the intergenerational conflict scenario:

> *Young people, and it does not matter if they are from the Left or the Right, define themselves against the intelligentsia generation of the founding fathers of the Third Republic. This is like a generational war inside a dysfunctional family that was shifted to the scale of the whole of society. In Freudian terms, it is the Oedipal murdering of fathers to take their place. To dethrone the creators. In this situation, there is no place for inter-generational negotiations. There is aggression and brutality, which translates into the language of the young generation, who are convinced that all the places have been taken, so they have to win them for themselves* (Pawlicka 2018).

One of the best examples of the censors' rhetoric was the article by Dorota Wellman, a journalist for the commercial channel TVN, published in 2018, at a time of mass protests against governmental reforms of the judiciary system. In her opinion, there was a noticeable absence of young people. Moreover, political activity and acting for political reasons were presented almost like a genetic feature. She presented it provocatively and claimed that it is in the blood of older generations, not the younger ones:

> *In my day, a long time ago, because I am 57 years old, young people were involved in public affairs. They did care. They fought, conspired, went to demonstrations, read books, discussed, had views. And they got a baton on their backs. And sometimes they went to prison. Now, at protests, I most often meet people my age and older. I think they have commitment in their blood, and so it will stay forever. And they are not afraid (…). What must happen to wake you up from your lethargy? Do you have to run out of soy milk latte? Do they have to switch off the internet? There won't be free Wi-Fi? Won't they let you sit on the banks of the Vistula? Will they take their passports? Will Netflix stop working?* (Wellman 2018)

However, the second external group, the supporters, framed the problem of young adults' political engagement differently. They used the compassionate rhetoric of shame, which was different from the censors. The speakers referred to the social morality of older generations, mainly those who could be described as the transformation's beneficiaries. The central topic of discourse was about leaving younger generations alone, without any significant institutional help that would enable them to achieve full adulthood. As a consequence, the younger generation became the abandoned generation:

---

1   The Third Republic of Poland was used in the Constitution of 1997 and referred to the Polish state, after significant reforms as part of the political transformation that began after the end of the 1980s.

Who has been telling young people for these nearly 30 years that the most important thing is to manage yourself? And if someone was weaker, it was his fault. Was this supposed to be the beautiful lesson in solidarity that we now demand? Who introduced religion to schools and neglected civic education? How do young people know something about the constitution, the division of power, and that it is important? Who agreed that their brains and souls would be shaped by poorly paid and frustrated teachers? (Wajrak 2018)

This compassion rhetoric was an example of a different type of reasoning for young adults' lack of political engagement. Older generations, especially the social order constructors, were categorised as responsible for the young adults' complicated biographies. They did not try hard enough to make the institutional environment friendlier and cultural expectations more approachable for younger generations. The supporters used the compassionate rhetoric to categorise young adults not only as an abandoned but also as a deceived generation. This is because they have been subjected to a process of socialisation in which they have been specifically instilled with a belief in the need for educational success that will result in professional success. Their entering into adulthood was accompanied by the narrative about a good, well-paid job that awaits properly educated people. However, that promise was not kept, and even university degrees did not guarantee such jobs in a highly competitive and deregulated labour market. Young people were deceived by older generations, and they can still be stuck in an educational trap. As Agnieszka Fatyga explained:

Who talks with them about shrinking job offers on a global scale? That work is more and more privileged, not a curse or slog. Meanwhile, there is still an anachronistic pursuit, supported by parents and other "experts", of mythical studies that can give security for all time (Sowa 2018b).

The compassion rhetoric also used arguments about the lack of significant civic experiences. The current situation might be not clear for younger generations because they did not personally participate in democratic training. Jacek Raciborski noted:

The situation is abstract for them. They have no generational life experience of a repressive political regime. It is impossible to tell them about it, and it is impossible to teach civic attitudes ex-cathedra. They should spring from social movements, in the action (Sowa 2018b).

In the weekly *Polityka* Agnieszka Sowa described the Polish youth as shaped by a "good enough" living philosophy that could result in a "good enough generation". In her analysis young people in 2012 had no common past experiences, aspirations, or motivations, and they were convinced about their helplessness. They believed that society was based on a pact that should be profitable for all its participants, so there was no point for them to engage in the public sphere and exert pressure on politicians (Sowa 2012).

The supporters argue that young adults may be described as "Generation NO!":

The new generation has grown up. They are not going to adapt to the systemic conditions, but they want to execute their rights. They do not want to work for a dime, hoping that the situation will get better. Will this strategy be profitable for them? (Sowa 2017)

The "NO!" strategy could encourage young adults to create different (better?) social and power relations, even if it means initiating a generational conflict with older generations. First, it was the first post-transformational generation that explicitly said "No!" at work. They do not want to sacrifice themselves at work because it has stopped being the most important thing in their lives. They need work that will satisfy them not only financially but also give them a chance for self-realisation and after-work activities. Second, they were also pioneers in saying "No!" to consumerism. Logos and brands are significantly less important to them, apart from laptops and smartphones, their fundamental life companions. They do not desperately need to possess goods, perhaps because they are the first generation that can rely on their parents to take care of them. Third, they said "No!" to the state and, more precisely, to the "shoddy" state that avoids responsibility for its citizens. They want to be treated seriously. Just like they were market advisors for older generations when they were helping to choose proper products and services in the digitalised market, they want to be partners and advisors for the state when it comes to creating public policy. That is why the young medics' protest in 2017 could be categorised as a generational rebellion in the name of a better health policy. Fourth, they said "No!" to rigid customs and respect for institutions. They started questioning social reality to make society more custom-made, younger people-made. They have a choice now, and Poland is not the only place to live for them. They got rid of the Eastern European mentality and can realise their biographies abroad, selling their competencies to foreign employers. Fifth, they said "No!" to constant adaptation and adjustment. They want to define the core values by themselves. For instance, they want to establish new standards for their jobs (Sowa 2017).

The anti-ACTA protests in 2012[2] were evoked as an example of "the new opening" in young people's political engagement. However, this kind of political participation was not about demanding new measures and programmes included in public policies. It was connected with their feeling of freedom, and it was a single-issue, one-point programme movement that focused on the anti-ACTA demand (Jurczyszyn et al. 2014). The demonstrations were organised following the "no-logo" rule – no party or any other political organisation's logo was allowed. The protest organisers were also likely to build temporary alliances just for the demonstration, and the participants came with different motivations and interests.

---

2   These were protests in January 2012, which took place in a dozen Polish cities (the largest in Krakow and Warsaw). Their participants opposed Poland's ratification of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. Although the agreement concerned the fight against infringements of other people's intellectual property, it was perceived in many countries (including Poland) as violating freedom of speech on the Internet and interfering with users' privacy.

Thus, they were unable to create a community model of the movement and transform it into something permanent (Kalukin 2017). The anti-ACTA protests had a chance to be a generational experience that could lead to increased activity of young adults. This principle was realised only partially but the protests also showed something very interesting. Protesters acted like pragmatics who knew the mechanisms of the decision-making process and power relations. They were also discovering their civic rights thanks to practising the social role of a client or consumer every day. They become better and better educated, enabling them to analyse election programmes of political parties, and they gradually applied the strategy "I chose – I demand" (Jurczyszyn et al. 2014).

In the rhetoric of both groups, the censors and the supporters, the "Me Generation" category was used to describe contemporary young adults. The personal pronoun "Me" symbolised their separation from the public and political sphere. It was described not as a temporary or accidental phenomenon but increasingly as a generational attitude. However, the issue was justified by two competing narratives. The censors presented it as a pejorative label and explained it as a general life attitude towards the common good, democracy, and individual freedom. The supporters used contrary explanations and clarified that young people were self-oriented because they had been left alone by the older generation and pushed into self-made-man biography paths.

Young adults, who were internal group members of the symbolic elites engaged in public debate, referred to the issue of political activity and participation differently, although with some similarities to the censors' rhetoric. The accusation that they were politically indifferent was described in their statements as anti-effective rhetoric and as an example of the older generations' counter-rhetoric, which was an illustration of generational cleavage. Describing young Poles as intentionally, instrumentally, and non-reflexively self-excluded from politics showed that older generations misunderstood the logic of becoming an adult, independent, and self-contained in Poland with the ongoing transformation. In young adults' rhetoric of guilt, the older generations were accused of forgetting that their biographies and aspirations were realised in different systemic conditions. Furthermore, the young generations did not have an opportunity to design and construct the new order of a democratic state, but they were told to uncritically adapt to the unfriendly constructed social order.

Young adults categorised themselves in public discourse as the "generation of discord". They abandoned political engagement entirely because politicians, including all mainstream parties, were not interested in their fate. Young adults also objected to legitimising the post-transformational social order in Poland. In their opinions, it was the inequitable system that situated them in difficult living conditions and inside a highly competitive labour market with no state support or social security coverage:

Your generation has built us a world where we do not have the right to live, to safe working conditions, where a thirty-year-old can dream of a contract of employment and insurance. You do not know such a world, you are safe, and we have to work our butt off 7 days a week at several jobs (Sowa 2018a).

This type of rhetoric can also be recognised as the rhetoric of disappointment. Young adults had been let down by older generations, and instead of receiving understanding, they were patronised. They felt they were being instructed on how to organise and plan their lives in a transforming and competitive world. They did not want to be taught what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. Young people want their demands and needs to be recognised.

The Third Republic forgot about economically excluded people, who had trouble making ends meet, and whose social promises PiS is driving to the ballot box. It will be similar for women, who had enough when their civic rights were severely curtained, or the non-heterosexuals, who hear that there is no atmosphere for civil partnerships. If the "older" generation does not understand that ignoring the needs of another social group will bring about catastrophe, they will only have themselves to blame (Beczek 2018).

The disappointment also concerns the problem of the Third Republic's social order. Young adults attributed the responsibility for the unfairly constructed system to the older generations' symbolic elites and criticised the law and rules that organised a deregulated and precarious labour market. They accused the transformation's architects of a lack of systemic and holistic support for people entering adulthood, which should be rooted in public policies. In young adults' opinions, the absence of legal protection in the market has led them to precariousness and, consequently, to the collapse of their careers and housing problems: "They are not 'our' – young people's – times. These are the times of a handful of people who had luck, contacts, and family and have comfortably settled into the post-transformation arrangement. And they don't want to move from their place. For years, you have imposed on us your pampered perspective and ignored our voice. You'd prefer to give your newspaper columns to musings about soya lattes and picnics by the Vistula river than to real problems which the majority of the public was trying to struggle with every day" (Staśko 2018).

Young adults rejected accusations of a lack of interest in politics and passivity in the public and political spheres. They listed many examples of public actions where young people played a leading role. Their current position on the sidelines is not an instrumentally chosen social attitude, but the effect of the indifference of the state and older generations to young adults' everyday life. Moreover, they stated that the cultural codes of the *Solidaność* (Solidarity) generation were unattractive to them because they did not consider issues that directly influence young adults' lives in the contemporary competitive society. The discourse of disappointment concerned the problem of the older generation's neoliberal seduction, which led to an unjust social order. The young adult's narrative is parallel to the idea that beneficiaries of the transformation easily forgot about the subsequent generations, and

instead of holding the ladder, they kicked it away so they themselves could reach higher social positions (Chang 2002).

> *Where have you been, Mrs Dorota* [Wellman], *for the last few years, when twenty-year-olds were fighting the privatisation mafia. Where were you when young people from urban social movements were sued by the Warsaw oligarchy? Where were you when we were speaking about the degradation of the natural environment by politicians* (…) (Śpiewak 2018).

Apathy and the reluctance to engage in civic affairs were among the negative outcome of the culture of work in Poland. Polish employees are overworked and stressed, with no spare time which could be used to be active citizens. Sometimes one job was insufficient, so workers took overtime or went to a second job to increase their income. They also tried to stop or avoid the precariousness of their jobs and life. Similar explanations and life story examples could be found in Marek Szymaniak's book titled "Urobieni" (*Overworked*). In an interview, he spoke about his biography: "I'm 30 years old and have not been employed on a contract for a single day. And this is a common experience of my friends" (Gruszczyński 2018).

The attribution of responsibility is related to the unjust and onerous measures implemented in the labour market during the transformational process, which were based on capitalistic logic: "Polish capitalism has hurt almost everyone, and success is at the expense of health and family. After 30 years of blind belief in the trickle-down theory and 'the tide that raises all the boats', we have the result – the rebellion of the people, and the PiS government" (Szymaniak 2018).

The opinion repeated in mainstream discourse that the state should be limited in the economy because it is an obstacle, not a change-booster, resulted in young adults' sceptical attitude towards civic engagement. A permanently repeated phrase that the state is an incompetent and a bad manager and that public is worse than private resulted in self-made-man driven narratives that categorised the state as an opponent or a limiter, not as a partner or an enabler for young people: "Unfortunately, the dominating narrative for 30 years was: you are the master of your own destiny. Everyone looks out only for their own interests, and as a result, we are pulverised as a society. Polish people forgot that freedom was won thanks to the workers' movement, thanks to the solidarity written with both a small and a capital letter" (Gruszczyński 2018).

In the discourse about young adults' biographies during the transformation period, the category of "the culture of submissiveness" also appeared. Jarosław Kuisz from "Kultura Liberalna" (*Liberal Culture*) argues that contemporary young adults might be the first generation that has a chance to disengage from this type of culture. Their reality has been shaped "in their own country", which fundamentally differs from the older generations' social order. Young people have the opportunity to either develop their narratives about the social order or use existing narratives – they have a choice. The "Round Table"[3] generation fizzled out,

---

3   The "Round Table" is a symbolic name for the negotiations between the communist government and the democratic opposition that took place from February to April 1989 and which made it possible to start the Polish political transformation peacefully.

and there is a chance that a new generation that grew up in a different cultural context will reorganise the institutional system in Poland: "The pattern of 'regaining independence' in our country, coded inside that culture, was translated into an eternal strike-out of past achievements and 'starting everything anew'. Only in this way can we understand, for example, the simultaneous occurrence of uninterrupted economic growth in the Third Republic with the slogan 'Poland in ruins'" (Kuisz 2018).

The crucial dimension of contemporary social divisions might be a generational one. It can both substitute or develop the existing splits, especially those that concern attitudes towards modern Polish history: "Young Poles who are interested in politics are astonished by the progressive degradation of the former anti-communist political opposition's ethos, marginalising the language necessary for the common resolution of problems in the public debate, the partisanship of the institutions of the Republic allegedly in the name of 'higher rations', mutual contempt or the mere lack of personal culture in some older generation politicians. The burning-out of the Round Table generation, the symptoms of which became noticeable in 2015" (ibid.).

Michał Sutowski and Agnieszka Wiśniewska of "Krytyka Polityczna" *(Political Critique)*, a left-wing think tank, were sceptical about young people being interested in state issues. They doubt if we can claim that the young adult generation has been liberated from the culture of submissiveness and are now shifting from submission to agency: "The younger generation 'untainted by the culture of submissiveness' is a rather problematic glimmer of hope. Open borders combined with communication in social bubbles and cultural-class segregation favour not so much an exit from the romantic paradigm but an ignoring of the state in general. (…) instead of hysterical criticism, which is characteristic of older generations, in the younger generation is dominated for the time being by disengagement or indifference – evidenced on the one hand by voter absenteeism, and on the other hand, the gap between mobilisation against state interference in private and interpersonal relationships (the black protest[4], Free Courts[5]) and the willingness to engage in 'holistic' projects. Those young people (…) who have the state (not coincidentally, usually the underground one) on their banner and t-shirt, do so in a paradigm of subordination squared" (Sutowski, Wiśniewska 2018).

---

4 The term refers to the events of 2016 October 3rd 2016, the so-called Black Monday. On that day, mass protests were held in 147 cities in Poland, whose participants opposed the tightening of the abortion law. The demonstrations were organised by Ogólnopolski Strajk Kobiet OSK (the All-Poland Women's Strike). Participants in the protests were dressed in black (this is the colour of mourning in Poland) and carried black umbrellas.

5 Free Courts is a civic initiative established in 2017 on the wave of public protests against the judicial reforms introduced by the PiS government, threatening, according to the protesters, the independence and apolitical nature of the courts in Poland. In the initial period of protests, it was mainly about the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Tribunal.

Krzysztof Mazur from the "Jagiellonian Club", a conservative think tank, directs attention to the need to reformulate the political offer, for which a social rebellion – a rebellion of the young – may be necessary: "We must, therefore, wait a little longer for a generation of independent liberals – independent of the old masters and patterns of thought. However, we need such a libertarian voice (…). Freedom can stop being an empty slogan (…) if it is based on certain institutions, cultures, systems. On the other hand, they need to be reinvented, sometimes clearly criticising the achievements of the former masters" (Mazur 2018).

The question of young adults' political participation was also occasionally present in internet discussions, e.g. under texts concerning this problem or in some Facebook posts or on the Twitter profiles of people who were writing about young adults' issues. The authors of the posts and comments reminded young people that they could take advantage of many opportunities that the older generations did not have, e.g. open borders, a flexible labour market, an open educational system, and, the most important value of all – democracy. In the discussions, the lack of involvement in public affairs was explained by suggesting that young people closed themselves in their private life and chose consumption rather than political participation. Young adults' attitudes demonstrated that they were immature, irresponsible, egoistic, selfish, and ungrateful. Moreover, they were accused of "being bought" with money from the *Family 500+* programme. On that basis, they were categorised as having been seduced by PiS, which resulted in their turn from freedom to holy peace. Another accusation painted young adults as being unable to take full responsibility for their lives, which is why the people who published the posts used the category of the immature generation.

A significant majority of the posts (or comments under the posts) were critical of young adults' attitudes. The negative opinions were focused on the young adults' expectations of public support (opinions usually were not evidence-based but rooted in common knowledge). It was called "the improper claim", "a lack of entrepreneurial attitude", and "proof of being lazy". Young people were categorised as "the demanding generation" in general. Therefore, the young adults' objections and criticisms concerning the unjust logic of transformation were called "pretensions and grievances", as a kind of infantilism ("you're like children, talking about your grievances with us"), and above all as a lack of resourcefulness and the inability to take responsibility for their own life.

7.3. The political participation of young adults

Political participation has been considered one of the most important indicators of democratic citizenship (Youniss et al. 2002). The young generation had a status in society as significantly less politically and socially active than older groups, and

experts enumerated fundamental reasons to explain their lower level of civic participation (Kimberlee 2002).

First, there are the course-of-life explanations, which means that when young people enter adulthood, they have to struggle with "startup difficulties", and civic issues are simply less important at this stage of their biography. Secondly, there are politics-focused explanations that spotlight the poor matching between what young people need and what political parties offer. There are also arguments connected with negative opinions about politicians and political agendas. Moreover, young people believe their voices are irrelevant in the decision-making process in politics. Third, there are alternative-value or post-material-value explanations. Young people are interested in politics only when it enters into their lives. Their participation can take the form of the politics of protest (single-issue politics), product boycotts (political consumerism), or signing petitions. Young generations are less and less interested in traditional form politics, especially regarding the institutional dimension. Fourth, there are generational explanations that focus on specific needs and concerns typical for young people (e.g. labour market problems or actions to improve housing conditions) and may discourage them from participating in politics.

Young people's political participation can be identified as a reluctance towards formal political affiliations. Therefore, few are members of political parties or trade unions. Party politics seem "dirty" to them and unrelated to the real problems of their daily lives. Moreover, the political offer of traditional parties is seen as not diverse enough, which opens the space for social movements and sometimes radical forces. They feel like they are being reduced to the role of a potential electorate, which becomes important and "useful" only during the run-up to an election. A low level of knowledge about policy mechanisms, including the logic of democratic institutions, may also be an obstacle to engagement. It can be difficult for young people to see the connection between their daily lives and politics. Scholars also mention the lack of a collective experience in the workplace, where self-problem solving rather than cooperation with others is more often rewarded. However, most attention is paid to the links between educational experience and political engagement. Educational success followed by a work career can be transformed into faith in social action and positive changes that political processes can bring (Furlong, Cartmel 2007).

Political participation was described as an important factor in the process of entering adulthood, helping to increase awareness of the functioning of democratic institutions. It also enables the identification and understanding of complex political problems and how they correlate with the category of an individual or group interest. Political participation helps people belong to a community and organise and hierarchise social norms and values, particularly the salient concerns and the most relevant issues (Herzog 2016).

The political participation model in contemporary society is changing. It is constantly shifting from elite-directed forms (like voting, partisanship, and

volunteering in campaigns) to elite-challenging forms (like signing a petition, taking part in protests, acting in NGOs, or other citizens-rooted organisations). It means that traditional paths of participation are still important, but they are being complemented or substituted by new, challenging forms (Inglehart 1999).

An interesting type of political participation is political consumerism. If a consumer chooses a product and producer based on ethical and political considerations, it may result in them taking the position of a primary agent in democracy (Nonomura 2017). This kind of political participation can be treated as an opportunity for a new form of engagement for often-disinterested citizens. The question is, will it take them back to the conventional participation model, or will it remove them from traditional politics for good? Nevertheless, political consumerism has the potential to reveal an entirely new way to present young people as citizens. It may also encourage them to engage in other forms of political participation, allowing them to incorporate a sense of citizenship into their everyday life.

7.4. Conventional political participation

Patterns of contemporary political participation have changed and are related to lifestyle politics, political consumerism, and the culture of protest. They focus more on single issues that allow them to construct temporary associations and networks or even lifestyle coalitions (Giddens 2013). However, traditional indicators still can be considered important when estimating and describing the level of public and political activity. One of the most common forms of traditional political participation is voting in elections. Assessing young adults' electoral activity can be based on the turnout rate taken from the declaration in exit polls and representative quantitative research. For many years, the number of young voters in Poland was significantly lower than in older groups (there were some exceptions, like the parliamentary elections in 2007), and they did not regard voting as a normative (and repeated) social practice (Boguszewski 2019). Citizenship is more than just participating in elections, but voting is a sine qua non condition of a cohesive community. When few citizens vote, the disintegration of a community can be observed.

Young voters made up the smallest percentage of stable and consistent voters, no matter the election type (the highest number is for presidential). In 2014, only 12% of Polish young voters declared that they vote regularly. Poles in the 18-24 age group were one of the least interested in politics and public issues. They shared the belief that politics deals with less important topics that are not relevant to their daily concerns and routines. They were also disappointed with all Polish governments, and these negative assessments were correlated with the increasing popularity of the opinion that undemocratic governments are more needed and better than democratic ones (Zbieranek 2015).

Electoral absenteeism in Poland was inversely proportional to categories like age, educational grade level, population, and household wealth. It was also connected with difficulty in defining and explaining political views. The lowest declared turnout in the 18-34 age group was usually in the European Parliament elections, as in 2004, when it was only 19.2%. In parliamentary elections, it was significantly higher, at around 50%. For instance, in 2011, in the 18-24 age group, it was 54%, and in the 25-34 age range, it was 52%. However, it was still lower than the other age categories (CBOS 2011). In the 2015 parliamentary elections, 48.2% of Poles aged 18-24 did not vote, nor did 43.5% in the 25-30 age range. Young people aged 18-29 voted most often for the PiS (26.6 %; voters aged 30-39 also voted for PiS mostly), which was followed by Kukiz'15 (20.6 %) and Korwin (16.8%). PO (which had governed from 2007 to 2015) was supported by 14.4% of young voters. Summing up the results of the anti-system parties, they achieved 37,4% of votes from the 18-29 age group. Razem exceeded the 5% threshold in elections only among the 18-29 and 30-39 voter groups (*Parliamentary Elections 2015. IPSOS Exit Poll* 2015).

The support for an anti-system or anti-mainstream party could be recognised as a signal that some younger voters expected change, and they rejected the social order and political system that had existed so far. Young voters might have been seduced by anti-system parties that used expressive and clear messages, but their voting patterns could be treated as a warning that something is wrong with the system and it needs to be rebooted.

In the 2018 local elections, according to the IPSOS exit poll, 13% of the youngest voters supported small parties or non-party local committees. Turnout in the 18–29 age group was 34.8% (for the whole population, it was 51%) (*Local Elections. IPSOS Exit Poll 2018* 2018).

Another traditional indicator of public and political conventional participation is civic organisation activities. According to Eurostat's (2015) "Active citizen" research, 7.3% of Polish citizens over 16 years defined themselves as active citizens engaged in different types of entities. It is less than the EU28 average (11.9%) but the highest among Eastern European countries (Eurostat 2017).

Referring to the results of the 2018 CBOS representative survey, Poles were mostly involved in the activities of educational organisations, e.g. parental committees, parent councils, and educational societies. This was the most frequently declared type of action by young adults who engaged in the public sphere. In 2018, 10.3% of Poles declared their activities in such institutions and it has grown steadily since 2004, the year of Poland's accession to the EU (2004 – 4.2%, 2008 – 4.8%, 2016 – 10.6%). A relatively small percentage (3.6% in 2018) declared they took part in actions for local (or district) governments. Although the level was higher than in previous years (2004 – 1%, 2008 – 0.9%, 2016 – 3%), it is hard to say that participation in local governance was a common attitude. Social work for civic organisations was declared by 45% of young people aged 18-24, and 35% in the 25-34 age range. The respondents were also asked about their social work for the

environment or people in need, e.g. helping civic organisations or working alone as volunteers or doing different types of free-of-charge social jobs. Almost half (48%) declared such involvement, which was similar across both age groups – 18-24 (51%) and 25-34 (47%) (CBOS 2018b).

In another CBOS representative poll "*Trade unions in Poland*" the respondents mentioned their activities for trade unions much less frequently, and trade union membership was relatively low, at 6% (although it does not mean they were active participants). The highest rate was in 2005, when 9% of respondents confirmed membership. The average age of trade union members in 2018 was 47; thus, they were more likely to represent the older generations than young adults. Nevertheless, younger people expressed positive feedback on their activities. Among those aged 18-24, 61% had a positive opinion of trade unions, and 40% were convinced they were effective, e.g. in wage negotiations (CBOS 2019e). In 2018, according to findings of the project *Future of workplace relations: opportunities and challenges for trade unions in Europe* (Matysiak et al., 2018), trade union membership was declared by 11.2% of Poles. In the 18–24 age group, it was 10.3%, and in the 25-34 age group, it was 14.8%. These two age groups were more likely than the other groups to believe that trade union activities and operations are beneficial to the country (77.6% and 79.5%, respectively). In both groups, more than half (53.4%) believed that trade unions should have more influence on how the social and political system works. The results contradict the stereotypes that young adults have a negative attitude towards the trade union movement.

The activity mentioned least often by young people undertaking actions for a political party (2018 – 0.9%, 2016 – 1.1%, 2008 – 0.4%, 2004 – 0.7%), and the number of members of political parties, regardless of age, are also low. PSL has the most members – 100,320 in 2016; PiS have far fewer – 37,409 in 2018, PO had 33,500 in 2018) and SLD had 33,554 in 2018 (Szymczak 2019).

7.5. Reasons for the low level of political participation

The issue of young adults' involvement in political and public affairs was covered in the FGIs with young adult members of NGOs, political parties and local government[6]. The main reason for the low level of political engagement that the participants mentioned was the weak position of young adults in the labour market (i.e. low incomes and the need to take a second job). Young adults must accept

---

6   This issue was also addressed in the article *Młodzi dorośli łodzianie i zduńskowolanie zaangażowani w sferę i przestrzeń publiczną w procesie osiągania pełnej dorosłości* (Kotras 2019).

their unfavourable situation in the labour market and admit that such working conditions are typical (Mrozowicki described biographies of Poles using the category of the normalisation of precariousness, 2016). The mainstream discourse was dominated by a narrative about the need for hard work and flexibility to increase competencies and worker value in the labour market. They had to rely on themselves rather than get institutional support, which would strengthen their social security.

Krystyna Szafraniec, in the Młodzi 2011 (*Young 2011*) report, proposed that young people's predilection for rebellion and opposition has been replaced by the gradual adaptation to existing social conditions and the implementation of mainstream values in their biography plans, in particular, material aspirations. Their everyday life was free of politics, especially the traditional model, because it only briefly and incidentally becomes part of their concerns and interests. Szafraniec also wondered how to understand the attitudes of young people in the public sphere. Is it still possible to talk about some potential for rebellion, or have young people become significantly politically indifferent? (Szafraniec 2011) The apolitical attitude was also explained as a consequence of young people having a fatalistic view of their social position. It was particularly the problem of citizens who were 18 years old in the year 2000 (which means that they are young adults now) (Messyasz 2015).

In the opinion of the FGI participants, young adults' sense of security is decreasing as a result of the widespread form of civil law contracts (rather than employment contracts)[7] in the labour market. They believe that the changes in the labour market did not take into account the interests of young people. Excessive deregulation in the world of work allowed young Poles to enter the labour market, but mostly on unfavourable terms. Therefore, they believe that young people should be involved in social consultations, and their interests should be better represented. However, the representation of this social group, which is not an organised group, might be an obstacle. If they cannot count on help from the state, they can only rely on the help of their family and closest relatives. According to Marek Nowak (2015), greater social involvement of citizens is usually supported by socio-economic models based on welfare economics and institutions of the welfare state. A model of political culture incorporating ideas of collectivism and cooperation complemented by beliefs that it will be more important for Poles, as members of society, to commit to non-personal goals than to expect financial transfers, would reinforce civic activism. The low level of Poles' social involvement, which the author calls "social immobility", is a consequence of modernisation by private markets and the mimetic nature of the transformation. The cultural and political context separated young generations from the public sphere.

---

7   Contracts of this type were for a fixed period. In addition, they were exempt from social security contributions and were denied a number of other rights to which employees with contracts of employment are entitled (e.g. vacation or sick leave).

The FGI interviewees also added that the defective social order, including the labour market, had an important impact on the disadvantaged position of young adults within the social structure. The resulting lack of security and irregular (intermittent) careers are seen to distract young people from the public and political sphere and successfully redirect their attention to daily efforts and improving household budgets.

Regarding their public and political commitment to the sphere and public space, the social and political activists who participated in the FGIs mentioned some of the most important issues. First, they pointed out the social environment and the context of socialisation as crucial factors for public and political engagement. They indicated that the most stimulating factor is growing up in a social group that worked and acted in the context of the culture of protest. It means that members of that group questioned the social order, as well as its basic principles and standards. Therefore, both family traditions and acting in the activist community (in high school or college) could have a positive impact on the political engagement of young people. It does not matter if the participation was irregular and short-term; the crucial fact is that they participated.

> For me, it's a bit of a result of my work… it started with work, a little bit of what we learned at home because there was always something happening, something we can do socially… One person in the family gets involved (…), and the whole family also has to get involved. So it's somehow a little out of habit. (FGI/ZW/I1/R3)

The pattern of commitment in the public sphere and space can transform from "alternately active or inactive" to "systematic and long-lasting participation" after groundbreaking events, which became an important turning point in creating and defining the role of the social activist. Experiences like these were a rite of passage in the young adults' biographies. All of the FGI participants mentioned a significant event in their biographies that pushed them to public and political engagement. They mentioned, for instance, the disappointment of election results, the implementation of discriminating or unfair laws, attending a conference with challenging ideas or street protests.

When the FGI participants were explaining the problem of the low level of young adults' political participation, they used the category of 'peripheral cities'. They said that the inhabitants of a town like Zdunska Wola or Szadek (although some also mentioned Lodz) were forgotten and left alone. They had to deal with economic and social crises by themselves without any holistic public policy programmes to prevent them from poverty and unemployment. From the perspective of Warsaw, these people's problems were often invisible and not understandable. An experience of peripherality (understood both as a place of residence, as well as alienation and marginalisation) created a periphery attitude that led to them taking a step backwards into family life rather than commitment in the public sphere. Moreover, the stagnation of small cities, particularly those with an economic monoculture, had a direct influence on young people's migration to bigger cities

or abroad. Therefore, there were few young adults left who would like to engage in political matters or organisational activities. For these reasons, the consolidation of the young adults' environment was very challenging and unsuccessful.

Furthermore, many opinions expressed during the FGIs concerned culturally defined criteria of life success. In the interviewees' opinions, mainstream narratives defined what being a successful adult means – achieving financial and material success (especially individually). Another problem was the lack of social solidarity. In their opinions, it was uncommon for people to feel responsible for others, and the young adults did not understand what it means to be obliged to engage in the public sphere or space and act for the common good:

I mean, the problem is also a lack… that is, I observe it… of social solidarity. For example, people work very hard, have very low salaries they must take some kind of extra work to earn some extra money, well…, they hear, for example, that they should support people, whether they're unemployed or just homeless, or that there are some financial and material resources for these people. Well, there's just a giant… such a howling of outrage. "But how can that be?! I am here, a normal, normal person, working hard. I would like to have a child, for example, but cannot afford one, and the money is spent on those dossers." (FGI/L/I1/R1)

But we are the generation after 89. Such a generation, where having your own home and car were elements that were seen as a luxury. We are the generation that was raised in the fact that finally, something is not state-owned, that finally, something is mine, and I did it on my own. The state? Who cares about the state? (…) They want to have their own, a house in the suburbs, and the same with the car. I don't criticise this attitude, because it's kind of natural for this generation. (FGI/L/I1/R4)

Selfishness – it's something that I observe when it comes to young people's attitudes. I do not know if it is… it is not a generalisation, but it is much more common than fifteen or twenty years ago. Such an attitude results, perhaps, from learning rivalry, competing for… for better places in school, better results at high school and getting a better place when it comes to university rankings. (FGI/L/I1/R6)

During the interviews, the participants pointed out the deprecation of social work as it was not a "real job" in others' opinions. They gave examples from their biographies when they were underappreciated for working as a social activist. This kind of engagement was not socially valued and did not bring high salaries, which were expected not only by young adults but also by their families.

In the interviewees' opinions, young adults' everyday issues were seldom discussed in mainstream political discourse. They were presented in public discourse occasionally and within the background of family-oriented social policy. Nevertheless, young people entering adulthood need more diversified public policies. The interviewees explained that many do not have children yet, so family-oriented measures would be only available for them in the future. They could not also enrol in programmes like Housing+, because it was designed especially for young couples and young families. They believed that the problems of young adults were also absent in media discourse. Their concerns were hardly ever discussed, and they were not noticed or considered as important by the media audience.

The reasons for the low level of social engagement were also prosaic. The interlocutors mentioned communication barriers, like public consultations being held too early, when everybody was at work. Therefore, young adults treated public consultations as a "sham", which had to be organised due to it being written in a project's description or because "it looked good" in the project timetable.

According to the FGI participants, the political participation model they described that was based on their experiences can be identified as asymmetrical or consultative. The predominant side in this process is the state or local government, not the citizens, who were very seldom asked about their suggestions. It would be better if political participation represented the delegation model, i.e. the decision-making process had a bottom-up direction with the significant role of inhabitants as deliverers of expected solutions (Olech 2012). The young adult activists believed that this type of participation is more likely to happen in smaller centres (like a village or small town).This model is strongly correlated with an open and deliberative attitude of a local leader. The participants were also asked to present an example that illustrated a clear connection between the involvement of local political leaders and resident activism. One of the most interesting examples concerned a village head who made citizens jointly responsible for infrastructural changes in the village. After this activity, they started to participate in local activities regularly, viewing it as an important social bond enhancer between members of the local community.

7.6. Young adults' attitudes towards politics and policy

The studied young adults considered politics and policy to be an area that is external and non-compatible with their existing problems. In their narratives they did not refer to social policy solutions or programmes that would positively affect their entering into adulthood.

Most of the interviewees located themselves outside both the politics and policy sphere, especially regarding traditional political participation. In terms of conventional forms of political participation, the IDI interviewees claimed that they usually voted in elections, of all types, although they did not mention different forms like deliberative elections or referenda. Some of the participants from Lodz declared that they had voted for proposals in a participatory budget. Only one IDI participant mentioned being involved in the actions of an NGO. It was directly related to her sexual identity and taking part in protests for the equality of sexual minorities. However, when she found herself among other activists, she also started to act in the Open Cages association, a pro-animal rights organisation.[8]

---

8   The Open Cages association formed in 2012. They conduct activities aimed at improving the fate of farm animals, especially limiting their suffering. They oppose, for example, cage breeding. The organization has submitted a bill banning this type of breeding to Parliament.

The IDI interviewees did not indicate the connection between systemic political measures and their social location. They mainly spoke about private, not public, paths of dealing with adversities and obstacles on the path to achieving full adulthood. They saw their living conditions as being the result of individual efforts with some help from their families, relatives, and friends, but without significant or noticeable institutional support. The exceptions were adults who had been the clients of social welfare institutions. Those who participated in social programmes, especially young, unemployed single mothers, or who were under the custody of foster care institutions, more often gave examples of institutional help that they received (usually money transfers). However, it does not mean that they regard these actions as sufficient or appropriate.

Politicians were perceived as a group that did not know the current situation of young adults, so they are not able to offer anything valuable to them. Politicians' actions were described as accidental, non-continuous and focused on the ad hoc benefits of political parties rather than on solving systemic problems. Importantly, this applies to all the political parties, not particular ones. Politicians were categorised as creators of social divisions who, instead of governing, were focused on playing society. The interviewees regarded "politics" as bothersome rather than helpful. In their opinion, it was associated with impotence rather than agency.

I don't think anyone is interested in people my age. I have experienced nothing like this. Even after graduating, I think these young people should have something for the start – "Listen, you have a job for a year, you will have to work hard, but you have an opportunity to show what you have learned." And there's a chance that such a man will get this job if he is good at it and he stays, right? And now these people are spilling out, like me. I just flew in a completely different direction, right? There was nothing like this; no one supported me (…) *I could not count on support or financial or material or any other support. There was no such thing.* (IDI/ZW/R2)

The young adults, especially those from smaller centres, pointed out that they would need investments in infrastructure. This kind of policy-making would show that the authorities are interested in young adults' needs. They talked about both large investments like hospitals (the women complained about a lack of maternity clinics), and small ones, like a playground in the district:

(…) *the government is not carrying out any reforms to help people like me. I don't know… There used to be workplaces, and there were kindergartens in workplaces like this. And there were more facilities. And in the countryside, there is not even a playground. Here we talk about roads, highways, about various investments… and there is not even a playground to go to with my child.* (IDI/ZW/R3)

There is no interest. No one thinks that in five, ten years, these young people… they will all leave and it will be a problem, a really big one. There is a shortage of employees, and what will there be in five, ten years? No one thinks about it. (IDI/ZW/R1)

The studied young Poles also stated that support should be given to people who worked for it and earned it, who could prove that they had done something which needs recognition and gratification (e.g. scholarships). Public policies should not

be addressed to people who want help for nothing, just because they found themselves in poor living conditions.

> *Without beating about the bush, I'm not saying we should sponsor everything and everyone, because it is an exaggeration. It will give only boneheads to society (…). Well, certainly to some extent, the support would be needed, scholarships or… where it is known that we deserve it due to our assessments and we can be relieved of paying tuition (…). Well, everyone should be in charge of his destiny. At least members of society will know how to deal with life; they will not cut corners and expect to be led by the hand all the time.* (IDI/ZW/R16)

Most interviewees had poor opinions about the county labour office's programmes and what it offers young adults. The respondents mentioned useless courses that had been proposed to them (i.e. they were poorly matched to labour market expectations). Job offers were not interesting and they usually went with low salaries. They visit the labour office only if they have to, for instance, if they want to keep their social insurance and unemployment benefit. Financial support from the labour office was improperly designed and missed its target. Some interviewees mentioned situations when a friend had received financial support from an activity grant, but after the obligatory year of running the business, they shut it down. Some respondents did not feel competent to apply for this type of grant, saying they were not confident enough to start their own business. The risk was too high for them, and in their opinion, running a business was related to specific personal features and a proper education, which many of them did not have. This type of support, money transfers from grant programmes to potential entrepreneurs, was viewed as a facade, a kind of alibi for the authorities.

The young adults who were not social welfare institution clients said that they did not ask for institutional help. The same was true of the church – only a few respondents said that the church had helped them on their life path. They presented a passive attitude – if there were public policy programmes they could benefit from, they just took them for granted, like the Family 500+ programme. They did not actively seek social service measures or pressure the government. According to other research data, the lowest level of ability in decision-making process is amongst the 25-38 age group. They are unlikely to cooperate with the local government or confront the authorities with their suggestions and opinions (Olech, Kotnarowski 2012: 155).

Generally speaking, institutional help was described as inaccurate and insufficient. Most interlocutors, especially young women from smaller towns, said that their everyday life was a lonely fight against adversity and a struggle to maintain a balance between being available in the labour market and being a mother to their children.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the most important public policies they think would be most needed for them to reach completed adulthood. Almost every participant suggested that public policies should enable an independent and self-contained life. State or local government programmes should include

a housing policy, financial support (direct money transfers or tax relief), facilitating procedures in the labour market, and help in childcare (e.g. guaranteed access to kindergartens childcare for several hours a day). The majority of them spoke about an accessible and affordable loan or credit that, in their current life situation, is difficult to receive. Financial institutions usually expect a reliable credit history and decent salaries, which they do not have. Some also mentioned free legal assistance. They need it, especially as support when dealing with employers and when they need to negotiate with the bank for a mortgage. The respondents agreed that institutional support should, first and foremost, be channelled to those who want to change their life and live better. If someone could prove that he or she had tried to improve their living conditions, he or she should receive institutional help. Support could then be delivered to those young adults who had stagnated and who did not meet society's expectations. Interestingly, even if the young adults received some kind of institutional support, they did not view it as a form of social policy, e.g. scholarships, internship programmes (coordinated by the labour office), or free additional hours at kindergarten. They treated this kind of support as money or a service transfer that is a fundamental feature of their lives.

In their narrations, the young adults did not use a generational perspective or perceive young adults as community of shared practices. They seemed to have got used to the idea that public policy is a result of government decisions usually aimed at target groups that they do not belong to. They preferred to wait than demand state support. In their statements, however, they hardly ever express bitterness or regret. In their biographical stories, they talked about accepting their life situation and adapting to the conditions in which, as young adults, they were stranded. For some IDI participants, it was enough if the state did not disturb their daily life or alter their biographical plans. However, in the young adults' opinions, rather than being a help, government regulations were regarded as limitations and obstacles.

"Citizenship deficit" is not only the result of young people's low interest in the policies and public affairs of young people but, above all, it is the outcome of prolonged periods of precarity and struggling for financial stability and independence (Szafraniec 2011: 280). The opinion repeated in the mainstream discourse that the state should be limited in the economy because it is an obstacle, not a change-booster, resulted in young adults' sceptical attitudes towards civic engagement. A permanently repeated phrase that the state is an incompetent and bad manager and that public is worse than private resulted in self-made-man-driven narratives that categorised the state as an opponent or a limiter, not as a partner or an enabler.

It is also important to recognise the diversified expectations of people living in a large city, small town, or country. The FGI respondents pointed out that the gravity of public policies should be moved from central programmes to those implemented at the local level. The financing policy and evaluation process should also be independent of the governing party and free from ideological pressure. The respondents described current procedures as arbitrary and subjective.

The young adults' rhetoric can be identified as the rhetoric of self-reliance. They did not perceive or recognise themselves as either a concern of state public policies or as a subjective category that was or could be relevant in the decision-making process. Young adults were not present in the political or social sphere in a traditional way. Their participation is decidedly more context-driven, with them more likely to engage in single-issue protests than be active members of an organisation. Their readiness to contribute to developing democratic institutional order can be defined as moderate.

The style of political engagement is usually connected with how people imagine power relations. In the "old style", they seem to be politically dormant, which can also be identified as political indifference. They view politics as the domain of other people. In the "new style", people assume that they have enough knowledge about politics, and that is the reason that allows them to reject it (Riesman 2011: 220-222). The interviewees presented both styles, and it can also be concluded that in some cases, adequate living conditions allow them to be politically indifferent. They did not expect state support; but generally, they agreed that governing politicians (at the central and local levels) should have programmes to enable people to enter adulthood.

However, the young adults were not precise in their expectations. When asked about their needs and concerns, they answered that better housing policy, improved childcare and protection in the labour market were the most important and urgent. However, they were not resolute and determined in their demands, and they described their lives as satisfying. So this is a paradox that, on the one hand, there is a need for a new model of implementing public policy, and on the other hand, young adults do not formulate demonstrable expectations.

The FGI participants from various institutions (local administration representatives that deal with the labour market, education, family or housing, i.e. job centers, social welfare agencies) had more specific opinions regarding public policy. They listed help for young people in buying an apartment (e.g. easier access to affordable credit/loans, and council apartments), increasing the number of kindergartens, which should have low fees, child or maternity benefits (e.g. *Family 500+* programme), tax credits for people raising children, help for young mothers to return to work, flexible working hours for parents and state salaries paid for women who chose to stay at home with a child. Interestingly, most of the ideas regarded families, or at least couples; they were not appropriate for singles. Certainly, the status quo in public policies (no formulated expectations, low pressure on governments from young adults) seems to be acceptable, particularly for politicians and political institutions. Young adults have never been a traditional or typical group included in public policy programming, and the lack of permanent pressure will probably not cause any significant changes in the public policy domain.

Tu sum up, public policy needs to be designed with adjustment to the biographical approach. Politicians should take into consideration that the process of entering adulthood is connected with specific life stages (biography periods) and social

roles assigned to them. Nevertheless, this idea is highly challenging because it is hard to combine the theoretical project of adulthood regime public policy, which stands for a coherent social policy towards this phase of life, in order to support the process of reaching adulthood comprehensively and taking into account the diverse problems of young people, with political practice and its financial, cultural, and ideological limitations. However, the conclusion that young adults' issues are not present in public policy in Poland is not true. It is possible to find examples of policies that consider young adults' problems. However, rather than be cohesive and have a coherent form with adulthood regime approach, they are disorganised and distributed in different areas of public policies, like family, education, housing, work, parenthood, or health.

Young adults' lack of subjectivity in the public and political spheres is largely a consequence of them adapting to systemic conditions (which was consistently required of them when entering adulthood). In addition, young adults function "on the sidelines" of systemic solutions within the framework of public and social policies, and they do not demand measures that benefit them in a decisive way. They also have little knowledge of options available to them, and they focus primarily on their capabilities and independent efforts to provide themselves and their families with the best possible standard of living. Finally, they are accompanied by a lack of faith that they can influence political programmes and policies, which also translates into the fact that they rarely clearly articulate their needs.

Chapter 8
Paths to reaching adulthood

The socially accepted path into adulthood determines the desired rhythm and timeliness, i.e., starting new social roles (the process of role-taking) should occur at the right time and in the right order. Despite its differences in defining adulthood, its key roles, i.e. economic and family autonomy (including procreative), are part of completed adulthood. Meanwhile, in psychological terms, responsibility for one's own choices and autonomy and subjectivity are its determinants. In this chapter of the book Polish young adults' understanding of adulthood and their concepts of entering adulthood are presented. There are also identifed pathways to adulthood that characterised the biographies of the interviewed young adults both from typical families and from foster care institutions[1].

8.1. Young adult markers of adulthood

The studied young adults answering the question "what is adulthood?"[2] they most often mentioned responsibility for their lives/for themselves and for others. Next, but far less frequently, they mentioned independent living (just over 30% of those interviewed), independent decision-making (25%), caring for family members, independent living, financial independence and starting a family (16%). The least frequently mentioned by interviewees were problem solving and bearing the consequences of their own choices and having a job (13%). It is noteworthy that interviewees were clearly more likely to indicate subjective-psychological markers of adulthood (accounting for more than 60% of all responses) and less likely to

1   The reflections presented in the chapter draw on previous studies conducted by the team members. See, in particular: Grotowska-Leder, Kudlińska (2018), Grotowska-Leder, Kudlińska-Chróścicka (2021) and Grotowska-Leder, Kotras (2021).
2   The empirical basis of this part of the analysis are data from 9 FGI interviews, whose participants were the young adults (3 conducted in Łódź, 3 - in Zdunska Wola and 3 with foster care leavers).

indicate objective-demographic-social criteria (around 30% of indications). Subjective/conscious/ psychological characteristics were not only more numerous but also more diverse. Various character traits were indicated (e.g. firm, disciplined, assertive, predictable), attitudes towards oneself and others (responsibility for one's life, responsibility for oneself and others), life orientations (having own plans for life, setting goals, fulfilling dreams) and aspects relating to the sphere of consciousness (being aware of threats and dangers, freedom and the ability to choose).

Objective criteria for defining adulthood included reaching a certain stage in life and taking on specific social roles (e.g. starting a family, having a job, having a child). They relatively often also included duties that resulted from those roles (e.g. taking care of family members, and duties and sacrifices for family and loved ones). Although objective criteria were mentioned by young adults less often than subjective ones, all markers analysed in the literature on the subject included the "Big Five". Young adult Poles' definition of adulthood in objective terms, i.e. in terms of adult social roles, should be interpreted as strong socialisation of the image of this stage of life and its obviousness for respondents from the point of view of social tasks assigned to adulthood. On the other hand, their responses referred more often to the subjective characteristics of adulthood, which may indicate the tendency for them to "psychologise"/"therapise" life, and view their own life in terms of a project of self-improvement, as well as autonomy.

8.2. Young adults' concepts of entering adulthood

The young adults interviewed grew up to adulthood in similar institutional and legal conditions, with universal access to cultural patterns of adulthood in the era of globalisation through the mass media and the Europeanisation of living conditions in Poland. Thus, they can be treated as common features and components of their vision of entering adulthood. However, from the perspective of the life experiences of those who grew up in biological families and those who were brought up in foster care institutions, the process of entering adulthood is different.

Adulthood in the opinions and imaginations of the interviewees brought up in biological families was characterised by features such as processability, normativity, timeliness, linearity, and multidimensionality. For this group of young adult Poles, adulthood is a process that:

1) is long-lasting (longer than in their parents' generation) and ends later. The approach is illustrated by the statement of a person who grew up in a biological family:

> *It is such a long process that* (…) *hardly anyone tells himself at any particular moment that he is now an adult, that it has happened. A lot of things add up to that, a lot of situations, it's a long process. For some, it is a job, a responsibility; for others, it is a child. You can't say, "Yes… I sat down in a chair, and I'm an adult." Only that it is a long process.* (FGI/L/I3/R1)

2) is multifaceted. It covers events that are important for young people in various spheres of life, and at the same time, they are individualised and experienced in psychological terms. This construct includes statements that indicate both the represented attitudes and mental condition, as well as behaviours, i.e. *Responsibility* (FGI/L/I1/R3), *Consistency* (FGI/L/I1/R4), *Emotional independence* (FGI/L/I1/R3), *Noticing love for another human being* (FGI/ZW/I1/R8); *Own family. To have a family, children. And not to worry about providing them with a future* (FGI/ZW/I2/R1); but also *to have your dreams* (FGI/ZW/I3/R5).

3) proceeds in a traditional normative model that runs linearly: graduation–stable work–financial independence–starting a family:

The perfect path to entering adulthood? Something has to happen one by one, at the right moment, age? Well, I think that socially it is already established. This is already a stereotype. (FGI/ZW/I1/R4)

School, then studies, then wife, then child… (FGI/L/I1/R1)

4) runs at the desired rhythm and at the right time; entering subsequent roles should take place at the right moment of life and in the right order:

Now I feel such pressure that I'm already 30, and I don't have children yet. (FGI/L/I2/R3)

I thought that there are such stages in life: up to 25, I will finish my studies, then from 25 to 30 it will be this stage, let's say, a career, let's say, where I will have a career, and at the end of my studies, I thought that I would be a director or manager. Well, after thirty, I thought that this is such a stage for… a wedding and a child. (FGI/L/I2/R4)

For the young interviewees brought up in foster care institutions, adulthood was a different experience. They conceptualised this stage of life by emphasising its situational context, potential trajectory and institutionalisation. Their statements were arranged in four different constructs. For them:

1) Adulthood is a process that is simultaneously shortened and accelerated. Two statements are representative of those who thought in this way:

Many people would prefer to stay [in an orphanage]*, for example, someone who wants to learn, would prefer to stay in such a house because he is always provided with a roof over his head, food, and education. And if someone moves out on his own, he will no longer live peacefully.* (FGI/FCI/I1/R2)

Is this faster adulthood? If there are no parents, then yes. Because then life is taught to us by life, by the environment. (FGI/FCI/I3/R9)

2) The moment rather than the process is limited in time:

This is the problem that at the age of 18, they are already trying to push everyone out, but they should take into account whether someone is ready to leave this house or not. (FGI/FCI/I1/R2)

3) A process with trajectorial and crisis potential appeared as an experience of loneliness, mainly due to the feeling of a lack of preparation to undertake an independent life, outside the institution and without any help:

I started looking for a job, a roof over my head, because I didn't really have anyone, parents, who I lost as a child... siblings behind bars, you can only count on yourself. And quickly start work, rent, and then I met my current partner, and... you live. (FGI/FCI/I2/R5)

Probably the most difficult moment is when you finish your studies and you have to start serious work, and it is sometimes difficult to find it. This is the moment when you run out of all the extras, and suddenly you are left with nothing. Whether you will live normally or end up on the cobblestones all depends on whether you manage to find a job, right? (FGI/FCI/I1/R2)

4) Adulthood is a stage of life that is organised and institutionally determined. Its formal course includes selecting a guardian of independence, developing an individual programme of empowerment, and informal preparations for adulthood/independence (although they are still within the institution).

This guardian of empowerment is only on paper so that you can deal with it yourself, man. (FGI/FCI/I1/R2)

It is not known why this caregiver was really there. For example, when I picked up the apartment, the contact with the caregiver ended. (FGI/FCI/I1/R4)

8.3. Young adults' pathways into adulthood

The result of interviews with young adults was the identification of four pathways that lead to different stages of adulthood:
1) completed adulthood,
2) career-oriented adulthood,
3) unstable adulthood,
4) unanchored adulthood.

There are four corresponding types of young adults: complete adults, professionally progressive singles, struggling with adulthood, and permanent experimenters[3].

Completed Adulthood

The first category is the complete adults. They occupy a well-established position in the labour market (usually employees working on an indefinite or fixed-term

---

3   The typology was presented previously in the article by Jolanta Grotowska-Leder and Marcin Kotras *Normative and non-normative paths of reaching adulthood by young Poles at the stage of transition from modern to postmodern society* (2021).

contract), and they describe their work as satisfactory. Their family status is also stable; they set up their household and live in a permanent relationship (procreation family) that can be both formal (marriage) or informal. They also have children, usually one or two. Therefore, they can be described with a balanced model of professional and family role connections. They are as focused on family life as they are on developing their careers.

Their transition into complete adulthood was supported by families of origin. The respondents repeatedly mentioned the support given by close relatives, usually their parents, but also grandparents, siblings, and other relatives. First, they mentioned material support in the form of transferring an apartment within the family's resources or financial assistance when taking out a loan to purchase an apartment. Families also donated money to renovate the apartment, buy a car or pay for their children's education. Young adults could also count on emergency financial assistance to improve household budgets, especially if it was expenses related to raising children. The help of grandparents in caring for children was also very important (all young adult parents used this form of support). Secondly, family emotional support was vital, e.g. acceptance of life choices, strengthening subjectivity and self-esteem, and encouragement to study. This process can be called the assisted transition to adulthood. It was particularly evident in young adults from a large city, whose families of origin had high material and cultural capital and used culturally defined definitions of success in the socialisation process.

Complete adult biographies were relatively timely and linear and answered the demands of the normative social order (first education, then work (sometimes simultaneous activity in both areas), then the establishment of a household and a procreative family). The vast majority have higher education, and they usually started and finished their studies on time. Between the ages of 25 and 28, they moved out of the family home and started their own household. Their life partner had a similar social position, and they usually met at university. Around the age of 28, they became parents. At this life stage, they usually changed their job for better ones with higher salaries, although the financial conditions at the current workplace could have been improved. The income from work is intended to enable the timely repayment of the mortgage and to increase the level of consumption (e.g. funds for foreign holidays and leisure).

Complete adults can be categorised as resourceful in life, setting themselves achievable goals and priorities, which they actually, according to their plan, manage to implement. In their professional decisions, they were guided by the protection of material needs, but also by job satisfaction and a guarantee of time for the family. They aspire to a high standard of living, but they want to achieve this goal through a harmony of family and professional goals. After the birth of the child, they began to search for a larger apartment, which was most often associated with taking out a mortgage. Such plans are also available to those complete adults who still have credit obligations regarding the current apartment. Nevertheless, their material situation, possession status, and the declared assistance of the family

allow them to take such a step. They also took additional, well-paid contracts or even worked "off the books" to repair their home budget.

When formulating further career goals, they clearly state that they do not want to achieve them at the expense of family life. Some gave up on the offer of better-paid work that involved being separated from their partner and child. Complete adults comprise the vast majority of employed workers who do not experience unemployment.

Some of the complete adults had migration experiences (mainly to the UK). They returned, as the bond with their family and place of residence was so strong that it did not allow them to migrate permanently. Today they are also accompanied by the thought of migration, but their stabilised life and professional situation make it less and less likely that they will realise these plans. The 30-year-olds on the path to completed adulthood use different public and commercial instruments, e.g., they take money transfers from the *Rodzina 500+* (Family 500+) programme, benefit from tax credits (e.g. for married couples), take out mortgages and consumer loans, and some pointed to their studies, which allowed them to acquire competencies that strengthened their position on the labour market.

The interviewed complete adults did not explicitly verbalise expectations of extensive material support or expanded public policies delivered by the state. They claimed that the use of various programmes within the public and social policy can be judged as proof of a life failure, as presenting a "demanding" attitude, and as a lack of resourcefulness. In other words, complete adults do not fully see themselves as legitimate recipients of social programmes. However, they do demand properly constructed public policy measures for young adults. In particular, they mentioned assistance in daycare for children (flexible hours, leaving the child for one or two hours), differentiation of educational offers for children, support for access to credit (partial guarantees, partial payment of interest by the state), support for setting up and running a business (from information and education to the simplification of procedures and loans and grants that you can use). Complete adults presented themselves as satisfied with their lives, from their position in the social structure and accepting their previous biography.

Career-Oriented Adulthood

The second category concerned professionally progressive singles, who focus on professional success. This group is dominated by the inhabitants of a big city. When entering adulthood, they could count on moderate material family support, but most relevant was the transmission of cultural capital. Describing family relationships, they drew attention to the consistent emphasis on values such as independence and responsibility for their actions and choices. These values enable early emancipation (setting up an own household) and entering the labour market (also through a family company). Professionally progressive singles judge their parents' life paths as unattractive and not worth following, e.g. stable but boring and low-paid jobs, procreational mothers' decisions

at a relatively young age. They distanced themselves from these patterns and found them both uncomfortable and limiting to their own development and careers.

Professionally progressive singles are characterised as self-centred and that they subjugate life to the development of their careers (often in their own companies). They emphasise their agency and that their social position is a result of individual efforts. Metaphorically, their process of entering adulthood is constant climbing. A distinctive feature of progressive professional singles is independence. Their life activity is focused on building a professional biography and launching further projects related to their career, e.g. developing their own company or a higher position at work. Another important part of their biography is the development of interests and passions.

At this stage of life, they did not think about having a child or raising a family. It would be the turning point in their career that could cause a "slowdown" in their professional life and entry into the phase of stagnation. They would also need to limit passion and hobbies. They did not problematise about building long-lasting intimate relationships with the revealed experiences at the stage of entering adulthood. When asked about their plans in this social life area, they were aware of cultural expectations to start a family; thus, they claimed that they were looking for a partner, but had not yet found the right one. For progressive singles, their friends are important, and their relationships with them make it possible to believe that at this stage of their lives, friends replace family. Some claimed that the team they had created in their company was their family.

At the age of thirty, they continued to invest in themselves, e.g. they began further studies, learned foreign languages, and gained further certificates to strengthen their position in the labour market. Their work brings them a relatively high income and, most importantly, satisfaction. Their financial and housing situation is stable enough to allow for risks associated with a change of job or increased investment in their own company.

Professionally progressive singles are forward-looking and claim that their main achievements are ahead of them. For them, already achieved professional success confirms their resourcefulness, independence, and responsibility in the process of entering adulthood. They criticise public policy instruments in the form of financial transfers (e.g. the *Rodzina 500+* (Family 500+) programme). They believe that people should be supported, but it should not be a simple redistribution of funds. They expect reinforcement for young adults through programmes to facilitate their start in adulthood, i.e. advice on career choice (e.g. career tutoring) or business start-up assistance (e.g. easy access to grants and loans).

Unstable Adulthood

The third pathway was called unstable adulthood, and those who followed this path struggled with adulthood. At the start of adulthood, they had much more modest resources than the young adults who belonged to the two previous types.

Those struggling with adulthood usually come from poorer families, often with dysfunctional characteristics, e.g. divorce, alcoholism and sometimes domestic violence. They become independent because they move out of the family home quite early, but the reasons for these decisions were varied. More often, it was the desire to live with a partner and "cut themselves off" from family trauma. Less often, there were conflicts with parents, and in a few cases, bereavement and the need to live with a new caregiver. The material and cultural capital of their families of origin were low, so they did not receive support on the way to adulthood. They entered the labour market early, usually taking low-paid internships that did not guarantee continued employment. They live in smaller towns and villages, generally in rented, municipal or social flats, and often with a legal status that is not fully regulated or clear. Sometimes they live in premises which were lent by friends or family. They have been in permanent relationships for several years – informal or formalised – and they try to be good parents.

Young adults who struggle with adulthood seek to protect and secure the living conditions of their procreation families, acting in a situation of professional and housing instability. Their steadied family situation seems to compensate for uncertainty in other areas. The life path of this group fits into a family model in which the main, but not always the only, breadwinner is the man – the husband and father – and the activity of the women – the wife and mother – focuses on domestic and caring responsibilities. Therefore, these 30-year-old young adults can be categorised as being on their way to complete adulthood. Their position in the labour market is labile but with a tendency to stabilise.

On the one hand, the men's professional activity is generally characterised by shorter breaks in employment and returns to the labour market, usually in the form of fixed-term employment (with the lowest salaries and sometimes extra money paid "off the books"). Women, on the other hand, especially after having a child, relatively often stay at home and benefit from financial transfers in the form of childcare benefits and allowances.

Some register as unemployed with the employment office, while others decide to take undeclared work (e.g. in a family business or carrying out renovation work). Struggling with adulthood is generally characterised by a precarious existence, permanent adaptation to changing living conditions, constant worry about keeping a job, scrimping and saving, and efforts to improve their families' standard of living. Professional work was not a key value when they were problematising entering adulthood. Work is, above all, a source of income that gives their families a sense of stability. The exception is people who, because of their qualifications and skills, periodically find a well-paid job that allows for longer periods of material stabilisation.

Struggling with adulthood is often connected with life resourcefulness, which is manifested primarily in the use of various public policy programmes and instruments, including payments from the *Rodzina 500+* (Family 500+) programme, rent subsidies, start-up grants, internship programmes, and employment office support.

They also try to improve their qualifications, by participating in training courses to supplement their education, even if these courses are only sham activities, caused by the desire to benefit from a grant in the form of an education voucher for adults entering studies. They treat the funds they receive as a regular addition to the household budget, so they calculate whether and in what form they should take up work so as not to lose their entitlement. Such decisions also include some women receiving mother benefits. Some do not return to the labour market for this reason. Struggling with adulthood can be described by an unwillingly accepted routine of instability. Their biographical experience is characterised by their temporary and continuous efforts to overcome the deficits in living standards. Nevertheless, they define their economic situation as relatively stable and do not feel threatened by long-term unemployment or social exclusion. However, they live "from paycheck to paycheck", and their consumption structure is simplified.

Unanchored Adulthood

The fourth category is related to the young adults who are still experimenting, whose transition into adulthood can be called unanchored adulthood. As they came from families with low material and cultural capital, they did not have the resources to start in adulthood. Moreover, they have not achieved normative stability in any of the key areas of life. They often still live with their parents or other close relatives (e.g. grandparents or siblings) and their unstable and part-time employment does not guarantee an income that will allow them to achieve material independence. They have not built a relatively long-lasting intimate relationship, and they live alone without a partner.

The young adults who are still experimenting began to work as teenagers. They claimed that they took work primarily to earn money for their own "cravings", so short periods of employment with little income were enough. Their transition into adulthood was characterised by fragmentation in each of the three key areas of life, i.e. professional, material independence, and intimate relationships. They reproduce the pattern of the yo-yo transition (Walther 2006). They move out of the family home (to a new partner; because they could temporarily handle the cost of independent living), and after a while, they return to their parents (sometimes due to the need to care for them). The same scenario was repeated in subsequent attempts to run a household. Many times they entered and left the labour market, experimenting with different jobs such as salespeople, warehouse workers, in shops, in gastronomy, wholesalers, or on a construction site – mostly low-paid professions. In general, there were usually short periods of professional activity, and in some cases, they worked only until they earned enough money for one or two months of spending.

Yo-yo transition also characterises their intimate relationships. They entered into a close relationship, which fell apart after a while, and they returned to being single. The main reason for breaking up was the housing problems (e.g. lack of conditions for a shared living) and financial issues (they did not want to be

treated as someone else's/partner-dependant). A lack of timeliness also characterises the biographies of those who were still experimenting. They interrupt education (although sometimes they continue it later in adult schools), move out of the family home without conditions for independent living or running a household, and build intimate relationships without having a stable position in the labour market. Unanchored adulthood can also be observed in situations like the decision to move in again with parents, resigning from a job or splitting up with a partner. They try to rationalise these kinds of life decisions, pointing out problems at work caused by co-workers or employers, the need to reduce expenses or being willing to have no obligations to others.

The experimenters are critical of the institutional state support system. They believe that the forms of assistance they have received (transfers and financial benefits, training and courses at the labour office) are inadequate and insufficient to change their living conditions.

8.4. Foster care leavers' pathways into adulthood

Young people permanently or temporarily deprived of suitable care in their biological families are placed in various types of facilities provided by the state, such as educational care centres, family-type children's homes, emergency shelters, socialisation facilities, as well as foster homes. This group of young adults in comparison with young people who grow up in biological families, faces more difficulties reaching adulthood. Foster care leavers have less access to family and social resources, they cannot take the same advantage of the opportunities and freedom of choice, their possibilities to build their own lives are more limited, and they make their life choices less freely, but more within the framework set by the care system. State regulations that shape the stage of reaching adulthood play a more important role in the lives of foster children than those growing up in biological families. Through its legal and institutional means, the state shapes foster children towards the form of adulthood traditionally understood as the stage of reaching economic autonomy and starting a family.

Foster children reaching adulthood is highly institutionalised in Poland. Through instruments aimed at supporting the process of becoming independent, the state controls the life course of young adults, making this stage in their lives and the achieved pattern of adulthood predictable. This pattern involves adulthood that focuses on social, mainly professional and family, roles in their traditional sense as key determinants of adulthood.

Polish care leavers reaching adulthood have access to several means: assistance for further education, financial independence assistance, a one-time financial resettlement allowance and assistance finding suitable accommodation. To receive

support for further education or independent living, a foster child who comes of age must have an approved individual transition plan.[4] The plan imposes an obligation on the care leaver to take action and change their behaviours and life situation to adjust to the status of independent living outside the care setting. The independence supervisor can offer emotional and social support to a young person, who naturally fears the future. However, interviewees tended to perceive their individual transition assistance plans as a bureaucratic tool rather than a developmental task, and a challenge that can be useful in acquiring the skills of independent living and fulfilling life goals. Some of them, when asked about the supervisor, stated: "*No, there was someone on the paper…* [laughter]" (FGI//L/FCI3/R2).

Foster care leavers are more vulnerable and threatened with social exclusion during childhood and adolescence. They very often experience multiple deprivations like poverty and negligence, discrimination and stigma, seriously limiting their freedom to choose and successfully follow favourable pathways to adulthood. Their adult life is more often characterised by limited educational attainment, poor housing with the risk of homelessness, economic instability with the risk of long-term unemployment or precarious employment, unplanned parenthood, health (including mental) problems, public assistance dependence and involvement with the legal system (Barth 1990; Cook 1994; Courtney et al. 2001; Needell et al. 2002)[5]. In the transition to adulthood, foster care leavers are "both accelerated and compressed into a short space of time" (Biehal, Wade 1996: 443) with a trajectory and the potential for crisis. They usually became adults faster. According to Lee and Berrick (2014: 78), "youth exiting foster care, however, typically have rigid, policy-driven timelines within which they must exit and few options to extend their transition timeline, or return to care during times of need."

The studied young foster care leavers focused on traditional "adult" activities relatively early in their biographies, e.g. taking up gainful employment, starting a family and being economically independent. They became mothers/fathers early, often under the age of 20, and regularly started earning a living as teenagers. Independence (living without biological family and state support or social assistance) in taking on these social roles is usually both theirs life goal and a need to cope with difficult life circumstances. Their opportunities to pursue less standard

---

4   The plan is developed by the teenager together with his/her independence supervisor (foster parent in foster families) and should be appointed at least one year before his/her 18th birthday. It specifies the scope of cooperation between the supervisor and the teen.

5   Polish studies on the process of entering adulthood of foster children concentrate on the scale and dynamics of mature foster care leavers of both family and institutional foster care and those who benefit from the independence programmes. Few studies generally include expert opinions on the implementation of foster children transition programmes, and even less often, the experiences of mature care-leavers who participate in these programmes (Mickiewicz-Stopa 2016; Jerszow 2019). The project on young Poles entering adulthood attempted to look more in-depth at the fate of foster children after leaving foster care on their transition to adulthood.

lifestyles are sometimes limited, but this traditional pattern of living is rewarding for almost all of them.

Two main transitions into adulthood emerged from the analysis of interviews with foster leavers: the transition from education to the labour market and establishing one's own household and a family. In these two dimensions, four theirs paths of entering adulthood were revealed.

8.4.1. Pathways of transitioning from education to the labour market

The foster children are encouraged to acquire qualifications in order to enter the labour market. State support for transitioning from foster care via school to stable employment is a priority because stable employment is crucial for gaining material independence and autonomy. Foster children from children's homes participate in programmes preparing them for adulthood, which includes issues related to finding a job (e.g. writing CVs, job searches and job interviews). However, such training sessions are not offered to everyone. As a rule, heads of foster care facilities send young people with good grades and no behavioural problems to such training[6], so other students suffer from double exclusion. Young care leavers have access to assistance for further education. Every foster child who continues education is entitled to a form of "scholarship" until the age of 25. However, the resources make it impossible to reach the intended goal. Taking into account the cost of living, the amount of aid is insufficient and does not constitute the majority of the young adult's personal budget. The care leaver has to find a job and earn money. It is impossible to combine full-time study and employment, reducing their motivation to continue studying. Due to school failures in childhood, many foster children show little interest in further education, and they often treat obtaining this cash benefit as a goal in itself and not a means of achieving autonomy. From the point of view of fulfilling an occupational function, foster care leavers followed one of two major paths to reaching adulthood: *the transition into adulthood via education* and *the transition into adulthood through employment.*

The transition into adulthood via education

The first path was relatively rarely implemented by fostr leavers' respondents, because young adults leaving foster care system generally have more problems learning, and it is more difficult for them to achieve educational success than young adults from biological families. It is hard for foster youth to see the intrinsic value of education and to follow a preconceived educational career path. Learning takes significantly more effort and sacrifice from them to get educated compared to their

---

6   Such training sessions are organised by NGOs whose limited resources only make it possible to enrol a dozen or so participants.

peers who have greater cultural capital. Interweers followed the path go through periods of interrupted and resumed attempts at studying. Those respondents who consistently strived to obtain education created opportunities for themselves to complete even higher education. As one of the care leavers said:

> *My* [foster] *mother took great care of my (…) education. Thanks to her, I graduated from high school and went to college, I chose pedagogy (...) just like my mother (...) I finished my studies, but (...). My* [foster] *parents (…) thought I should stay home and take care of* [them] *(…). And since my character is to do things despite everything (…), I insisted that I'd finish my studies, that maybe I could get a job, and that I'd move out.* (IDI/FCI/R2)

This path was more often chosen by respondents who were brought up in foster families, where (as opposed to children's homes) resources, capital and the belief in the value of education are greater, and opportunities for an individual approach to developing abilities and talents are more real.

The transition into adulthood through employment

The other path to adulthood for those who had experienced foster care led through employment. It was far more frequent because the only capital that most care leavers have is time, motivation and perseverance. They had been forced to take on a job very early in their lives.

> *I had to put work above school, so I failed my high school exam, and now it's still a problem that I can't go on studying, and somehow (…) I'm gonna have to get myself together and improve my high school exam.* (FGI/L/I2/R8)

Most of the foster leavers earned money by working part-time or in a side job, including on the black market. Their generally low earnings did not allow them to secure their daily expenses. Without family support, they cought only rely on themselves and were almost unable to earn a living and pay for their homes. Foster leavers did not have much opportunity to look for a more satisfactory job. Only some worked under a contract of employment. Those who wanted a better standard of life worked harder, and sometimes they also tried to complete their education. Combining education with work in such a case was almost impossible, so they often gave up education for work, although it was not conducive to educational or professional success.

> *I mean, some people choose to learn, right? Only because there is a possibility that they are subsidising us for this study. It's just that these amounts* [of money] *are so ridiculous that you have to stop learning anyway. At least it was so in my case. Maybe I would have gone further along this path of education, but unfortunately, it is hard to make a living for 600 zlotys [about €130] a month.* (FGI/L/I1/R7)

> *I started my first job at the age of 16, a side job in a small sewing room at weekends and in the afternoons, on the recommendation of my friend. When I turned 18, I told the lady* [the owner] *that she was either hiring me or I was going to look further because I needed a permanent job. And I got a contract job. I started studying at a beauty school because it was free of charge. However, I didn't*

finish because [it] *was expensive as you had to buy all the products for the profession yourself, a lot of studies, and moreover, it was not in line with my interests, so I quit my studies. I concentrated on my work. In the sewing room, on a contract.* (IDI/FCI/R4)

Former foster children usually join the unemployed or working poor (have precarious, temporary, low-paid jobs with no social security). Those who were unsuccessful were more likely to reproduce dysfunctional life paths and rely on social assistance. Female care leavers often became housewives whose main task was to raise children. They live on social assistance, their partner's income and maintenance, and temporally work in side jobs.

8.4.2. Pathways to establishing one's own household and starting a family

The transition to "making one's own nest" and starting a family is supported by Polish state in the form of resettlement allowance, monetary independence assistance and assistance with finding suitable accommodation granted to care leavers. Nearly all foster leavers are eligible for financial assistance, although in varying amounts depending on the length of foster care experience. Assistance with finding suitable accommodation is usually granted them in the form of the right to use residential premises available from the municipality. In practice, it is not easy to get such support. First, the waiting time for housing may take several years after the teenager reaches the age of 18. If a young person, after reaching 18, continues education, he/she can stay in a foster care facility or find a place of residence independently. As one of the care leavers said:

For me, young people… If parents can not buy and give, or for example, if we have a grandmother, aunt, an uncle who is not able to bequeath something, well, then young people from orphanages have no start, either for renting or buying their own flat. I don't know, there should be more support since the state wants us to stay here in our country and grow and have babies and everything… (FGI/L/I1/R3)

Second, when the official decision is made, and the right to residential premises is granted to a care leaver, further problems arise. Such premises are usually located in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the flats are small, and the living conditions are very poor. The flat often needs a major renovation that the municipality does not provide. Moreover, the young people have virtually no furniture or necessary appliances. If independence assistance is granted prior to obtaining the right to a flat, the money is often already spent. As another interviewee said:

It's a start, but it's not for everyone. Let me tell you, when my son was two years old, and I wanted to take up a job, go for an internship, they paid 500 zlotys [€117]*, and I had to rent a flat by myself. At that time, the rent of flats was also 500 zlotys* (…)*, I don't know what the amounts are now, and I asked what I should do with this internship, with this amount.* (FGI/L/I1/R7)

Care leavers tend to enter their first intimate relationships when establishing their own household. These relationships often result in pregnancies, often prematurely, which further complicates their poor financial situation. The young people decide to start a family. Foster care leavers followed one of two major paths to reaching adulthood via family roles: *reaching adulthood via parenthood* and *the heroic combination of parental and other adult social roles*. These paths were more often taken by young women (male care leavers assume occupational roles more often than new family roles).

Reaching adulthood via parenthood

Taking the first path to reaching adulthood via family roles was related to women idealising the role of mother, and it resulted in them withdrawing from the labour market. Their source of subsistence was either the *Rodzina 500+* (Family+) (€117 per month per child) and other benefits or dependency on a partner. As one of the interviewed women noted:

> *I have always dreamed about starting my own family. I've always been a kind of babysitter. When new little kids came to the orphanage, they always got to me, under my wings, right? Maybe because I didn't have a real family, I've always dreamed about a family of my own, kids (…). At 17, I got pregnant and had my first child. I really wanted it. I got the apartment very fast because I was threatened with a single mother's house, so our director from the orphanage did everything he could to prevent this from happening (…). He knew that I would manage (…). I got independence assistance and resettlement allowance (…). I had to renovate the flat, and the administration renovated it too, because I got my apartment after it had been completely gutted by fire, so it was terrible, but it was the only available flat (…). It was 30 meters in total, which was really such a big place (…). I really was lucky and got a lot of money; really, everything was renovated. The neighbourhood was not safe, opposite the sobering-up room, but it was really great.* (IDI/FCI/R7)

The heroic combination of parental and other adult social roles

Another path to reaching adulthood via family roles was a "heroic" combination of parental and other adult social roles. Against the backdrop of modest support networks and low wages, this path is fraught with difficulties. However, it is a source of satisfaction related to being a fully grown-up, responsible and independent person who coped with a foster care past and achieved self-fulfilment. As some interviewees explained:

> *After leaving the orphanage, I was afraid (…) I would not have a job, I would not find a job (…), I would have nothing to pay for (…) a flat. And when I got a flat, that I would not be able to cope living alone.* [I was] *always in a group, always with someone, and then suddenly a man appears (…). It was so hard. Honestly, I was afraid that I would also fall into alcohol, like my siblings (…). I am fighting for another place because I have difficult living conditions, and I'm afraid they will take my child to an orphanage (…). When it was established on the social profile that I had finished school in the* [educational] *centre, they started to tease me (…), and I stopped my employment (…). Instead of supporting us, they are killing us. I know that not everyone from an orphanage goes straight. Well, why use one measure for everyone?* (IDI/FCI/R3)

I became a sales manager, and after a year, I became the manager of the whole restaurant. I met my current husband… We lived with our parents a bit before the wedding; then he went to the army (…). I was left alone again for a year. It was an attempt at survival. So I stayed at my parents' place (…). When I got married, we got this little 20-square metre flat. A main room, a kitchen, a bathroom, with everything. There were plans that (…) when we work, and I graduate, I would get pregnant. But one day I went to work (…), and I broke my arm. I was made to write that it was my fault because I had bad shoes. I came home – I was in my 4th year of college – I came home and told my husband, "I don't know how you're gonna do it, but I'm not going back there." I said, "I'm gonna finish this full-time course, but I want to get pregnant." I was telling him we can do it, we can do it. To prove to the whole family who were telling me that I cannot figure out [how to combine] *studying and my new family, that I am not gonna graduate. So it was to prove to them…, but I was already five weeks pregnant.* (FGI/L/I1/R4)

For young people leaving foster care, establishing a household and entering parenthood happen relatively early in their biographies (especially considering their financial capabilities and employment situation) compared to their peers growing up, who at that time can explore intimate relationships, self-development and social roles. As a result, foster care leavers seem to be more adult, mature and independent, and they do it earlier. Fulfilling family roles often gives meaning to the lives of these young people who themselves come from neglected families. Although the fulfilment of these roles can be heroic, these roles are most often fulfilled following social expectations.

To sum up, the Polish foster care leavers transition into adulthood seems to be a shortened, accelerated moment in life rather than a long process, with limited access to resources.

PART III

PUBLIC POLICIES FOR COMPLETED ADULTHOOD IN POLAND. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Chapter 9
Public policies for completed adulthood in Poland
Conclusions and Discussions

The analysis of public policies for achieving completed adulthood of young adult Poles is divided into four areas. The first presents the relation between public policy and life course approach. The second presents post-transformation models of Polish social policy, primarily pointing to their discontinuous and limited nature. The third part proposes mapping public policies that affect young adults for core areas such as education policy, housing policy, and labour market policy. The section also presents a table showing the programmes and instruments within the public policies that are partially addressed to young adults. The fourth part presents comments and opinions of the interviewees on the current measures in social policy and how effective they are in meeting the needs of young adults.

The whole consideration ends with an editorially separated short subcontracting in the form of a postulates. They stress the need for a turn towards a coherent and cohesive social policy that accurately diagnoses the problems of young adults and can better support the process of transition to adulthood of young Poles.

9.1. Public policy and the life course approach

In broad terms, public policies are defined as long-term systemic structured activities of the state and its citizens undertaken on the basis of objectified knowledge to solve key collective problems (Zybała 2015: 9). These problems are normatively anchored in the notion of the "common good". Although they are important from the point of view of social philosophy, the context of the public policy highlights their institutional, technical-and-expert nature (Anioł et al. 2016: 13). In academic discourse, public policies are identified with public governance, which determines the way they function (Hausner 2007). They are also associated with public administration as a system of entities implementing them (Izdebski 2018). In the narrow understanding of public policies used in Poland, they are most often shaped

through legal regulations, i.e. they are limited to legislation as the main tool for policy formulation and implementation. Instrumentalisation of the law is also observed, i.e. problems are targeted in an *ad hoc* way while continuous amendments to the laws seem to be implied when a given piece of legislation is adopted (Zybała 2015: 270-271).

Due to the worsening of collective problems in the contemporary world and the adoption of a specific model of socio-economic development by individual states – in Poland, the model is typical of Western European states – the last three decades have seen an unprecedented proliferation in the number and types of public policies, both targeted policies and topic-specific policies (Zybała 2015: 17-18). Given the lack of coordination, the increasing multiplicity and diversity of policies usually lead to the fragmentation of public initiatives and a lack of a holistic approach to collective problems and challenges related to the country's socio-economic development.

The transition to adulthood is a very complex phenomenon and is associated with broadly defined social policy, i.e. policy as a public activity (of the state or other public bodies) to shape the living conditions of the population and interpersonal relations (especially in the living and working environment). In this understanding, there are important goals to achieve, different actors involved and ways to achieve these goals, resources required to achieve the goals, processes of transforming resources into benefits and services for society and its groups, and the impact of these benefits and services on those who use them and their social environment (Szarfenberg 2018: 26). Social policy as the state's public activity that aimed to shape the living conditions of the population should include policies that target population groups at different stages of their life cycle (Golinowska 2015), including young adults (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2018). It is therefore important to examine whether and to what extent policies that target young adults in Poland address the observed problem of deferred adulthood, accompanied by a narrative of risk and the need for collective action (Grotowska-Leder 2020), and whether this problem is treated as an important social issue (that requires supportive instruments and actions) that induces development.

The social policy oriented towards the life course affects how this policy, or more broadly, public policies, is designed, implemented, evaluated and reformed. According to Richard Settersten (2003), most social policies focus on problems and seek to improve or eliminate an existing negative condition. The life course approach introduces a framework through which researchers who focus on improvements, as well as policymakers and analysts, can better address the overlapping areas of social development and social policy. In this way, social policy (and other public policies) can promote desired life course patterns, prevent destructive life patterns or reflect on emerging patterns to meet development needs.

Various aspects of the lives of young adults in their transition to adulthood presented above refer directly to traditionally identified policies in different areas of social and economic life, i.e. education policy, labour market policy, family and housing

policy, as well as civic policy[1]. These policies (most frequently sectoral policies) are crucial for entering adulthood and reaching complete adulthood. It is important to put them in a broader context, that of a development policy[2] which, due to Poland's EU membership, was influenced by the EU's development strategies (Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 Strategy) and supported by huge assistance funds. The Europeanisation of public policy required that national policies be aligned with the patterns of actions undertaken at the EU level and that the results of public policy in a given country be compatible with European standards (Zybała 2018: 146).

By way of introduction to the detailed analysis of the measures aimed at young people that are relevant to this stage of their transition to adulthood, it is also worth mentioning the social policy models implemented in Poland. According to Esping-Andersen's well-known, theoretically grounded typology of social policy models, there are five types of welfare state regimes – the Scandinavian, the Anglo-Saxon, the continental, the Southern European and the Eastern European models. Poland belongs to the last model. In general, it is characterised by *ad hoc* actions caused by the deep economic recession that accompanied the early period of the systemic transformation in Poland after 1989. The transformation made it difficult for Central and Eastern European countries to go beyond the initial phase in terms of social policy reforms. Measures that are typical of all models of welfare state regimes are present in Polish social policy, although it mostly resembles the conservative model. Due to the importance attached to satisfying the basic needs of citizens in the labour market and, at the same time, providing state assistance to individuals and families with lower incomes, the model in Poland is also referred to as a hybrid paternalistic market model (Księżopolski 2018: 509-519, 523).

9.2. The post-transformation models of Polish social policy

The social policy models and measures applied in Poland have changed over the past 30 years as the ruling parties changed. The social and economic order formed in the initial period of Poland's political transformation reproduced an order that

---

1   The notion of "civic policy" is less popular compared to other abovementioned policies. Still, it is possible to identify state's activities in this area and draw conclusions about the evolving civic policy after 1989 and boundary conditions for its development and implementation that have emerged during the next decades (Arczewska 2018).

2   According to the Act on the Principles of Development Policy of 6 December 2006, development policy is defined as "*a set of interrelated activities undertaken and implemented to ensure sustainable and balanced development of the country, social-economic, regional and spatial cohesion aimed at boosting competitiveness of the economy and creating new jobs on a national, regional and local scale*" (Zybała 2015: 179).

is characteristic of neoliberal doctrine. One of the results was the withdrawal of the state as an active actor that organised an inclusive and effective social policy. The state gave up its role as an arbiter introducing transparent rules of cooperation between the world of capital and the world of work. It expected citizens to consistently adapt to changing economic conditions.

Social policy was, therefore, not an area of interest of the decision-makers of that time, and the state limited its role to managing social problems. From the beginning of the political transformation, models of social policy in Poland were not holistic, coherent or long-term. A method of reactive, selective action was chosen to minimise the negative consequences of economic reforms for social groups at risk of exclusion. There was a lack of programmes and organised actions that could be considered a long-term and strategic approach to social policy. The state withdrew from some social services, and social problems were shifted to the private sphere of citizens. This also applied to the process of entering adulthood, which was not treated as being linked to the social system, but as an individual process perceived from the perspective of one's workplace and household. Young adults were, therefore, not the subject of a social policy that treated this social category as one that required support or the protection of their interests.

When new social security measures were introduced more than two decades ago, as part of the reforms of Jerzy Buzek's government (1997-2001), one of the groups that would benefit was young adults. However, even during the initial implementation period, the information policy on the reform was improperly conducted. The private sector was largely involved, trivialising the essence of the reform and reducing it to the banal formula of "a happy life for pensioners", but only if they became clients of one of the institutions running open pension funds. They did not use the opportunity to introduce the problems of the financial security of the then young generations into the public agenda. Regarding the current legal status, the measures introduced in the reform have now been completely deconstructed and abandoning this partially commercial model can be considered the right change of direction. Again, public institutions have largely become the guarantor of the insurance policy, with financial institutions playing a supporting role in the framework of employee equity plans (a voluntary long-term savings system for employees, created and co-financed by employers and the government).

The point at which the state's social policy was finally included in a coherent framework was when Poland joined the EU. At that time, as part of the EU measures, following the community's development goals contained in key strategic documents, the focus was on the issue of employment, including professional activation, support for entrepreneurship and levelling civilisational differences (based on macroeconomic indicators), using tools to finance the relevant development goals of the EU Member States (e.g. European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund). Some of the changes introduced at that time resulted from the need to adapt public policies to the standards and expectations of the EU institutions. Political decisions made in this area were not always associated with trouble-free adaptation due to the different cultural background in Poland.

Social policy during the PO-PSL coalition, which ruled between 2007 and 2015, was closely related to the financial policy, which involved reducing the budget deficit (which was related to the introduction of a stabilising spending rule in the EU countries). This was a very important stage in implementing social policy measures after accession to the EU, when it was crucial to adapt public policies to the measures used in the EU.

As a result, spending on social policy programmes has been reduced (e.g. a decrease in expenditure on the Labour Fund since 2010), which has particularly affected people in disadvantaged social situations. The tools and programmes were more often addressed to people present or entering the labour market. However, at the same time, there was also an increase in expenditures in the area of family and parental benefits. Child allowances introduced by the previous governments were maintained, and parental benefits for uninsured parents were introduced. A network of kindergartens was developed, thanks to which the number of places in early childhood education institutions has increased (with co-financing from the state budget). Thus, the level of pre-education, i.e. the percentage of children in kindergarten, increased. During the PO-PSL coalition, the Labour Code was made more flexible to facilitate the access of young people to the labour market. Unfortunately, the consequence of this step was the abuse of flexible forms of employment by employers.

With the EU support (also in the form of appropriate financial instruments), the Youth Guarantee scheme was implemented (extending its scope to people up to 30 years of age). The government decided to raise the retirement age for both women and men, which was, in general, socially unpopular. The idea was to better link the number of pensions with seniority and extend the contribution period for the employee. The PiS government dropped these changes, restoring previous measures.

The impact of the EU could also be seen in the redirection of funds towards programmes to compensate for gender inequalities and safeguard individual rights. Examples include parental leave (with one month for a parent), procreative rights (early abortion pill, in vitro fertilisation), and measures to improve the quality of youth employment. During the PO-PSL coalition, the measures were often driven by the current political context, resulting in frequent modifications of social policy and thus the lack of a long-term vision and strategy.

The social policy of the PiS government (after 2015) is largely based on an extensive list of financial transfers for citizens (primarily families with children). The basic instruments are large and expensive programmes financed from the state budget, such as the *Rodzina 500+* (Family 500+) programme, and smaller activities carried out within the framework of sectoral policies. Once again, there is a lack of systemic continuity within the framework of the social policy pursued by the predecessors. The PO-PSL government sowed the seeds of action, especially regarding policies aimed at families, but it was not accompanied by sufficient funding. The PiS government decided to shift the burden of social policy to financial transfers. However, they are not accompanied by a long-term policy of developing public services, especially for early education, professional activation and care services. Even when the

government continued programmes launched by its predecessors (e.g. *Maluch* (Toddler), currently *Maluch+* or (*Senior-Vigor*, currently *Senior+*), it was not accompanied by an increase in funding, and some of the measures have also adopted a competition and design character intended for local governments.

In addition, the redistribution rules of financial transfers favour certain social groups, mostly large families. Thus, the effectiveness of such a social policy is limited, and it is not progressive but quite conservative. Social policy based mainly on transfers is largely used to gain and maintain power by the ruling party. It is also worth mentioning the increase in the restrictiveness of solutions in the field of reproductive rights and women's rights. This constricting law was supposed to be balanced by the "For Life" programme (its main goal is to support women experiencing complicated pregnancies and families with newborns who were diagnosed with severe and irreversible impairment or an incurable life-threatening disease during prenatal or childbirth). However, the results of this programme are less than satisfactory.

The social policy does not safeguard the interests of young people, especially women, in the labour market, especially if this is accompanied by care for dependent people. It is also difficult to conclude that its current shape is conducive to social mobility and increases the pool of possible life choices for young Poles. In social policy, the development of social services is consistently neglected. In addition, most benefits have not been valorised since 2016 (except for changes in the *Rodzina 500+* (Family 500+) programme to include every child, not just the second one). Thus, the real purchasing value of benefits and financial transfers, which are usually used by young families on a general basis, is falling. Financial transfers are the fastest and simplest solution that can improve the life situation of young people. However, with changing economic indicators (such as inflation) and the limited availability of public services, they became short-term solutions that do not systemically solve social problems.

9.3. Mapping public policies for young adults

The analysis revealed that the Polish people at the stage of entering adulthood faced several obstacles that made it difficult for them to achieve independence in life. To ascertain activities are undertaken within public policies to facilitate this transition step, the institutional framework of this process was conducted (cf. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Gońda 2018). Recent strategic documents and legal acts were reviewed in relation to several aspects of entering adulthood by young Poles (education, job situation, housing, starting a family). The analysis covered documents of vital importance for public policies at both national and local levels, as well as public documents that focus particularly on young people (see Table 25 at the end of the chapter).

One strategic document that comprehensively addresses the issue of Poles' troubling start into adult life is *Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020* (the Human Capital Development Strategy 2020) (2013). The difficult transition from education to the labour market forces young people to postpone the decision to become independent, start a family and have children. In view of the unfavourable demographic trends, these problems are considered to be the main challenge in the coming years, as they constitute a barrier to increasing the innovativeness of the economy. What solutions does the Polish state have to challenge such threats? And what are its plans to use the potential of young adults?

9.3.1. Educational regulations

Promoting and raising the accessibility of education for adults is part of Poland's development policy. *Krajowy Program Reform* (The National Reform Programme) emphasises that Poland faces the challenge of introducing an educational offer that would be "closer to the requirements of the knowledge-based economy" and that the graduates would be "equipped with the skills and competencies desired on the labour market" (2014: 45). In turn, *Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020* (The National Development Strategy 2020) (2012) indicates the need to transform the curricula into more practical directions of key importance for the economy and to deepen the cooperation between educational institutions and the socio-economic environment.

Strategic documents diagnose problems of the education system primarily in the context of how it is adapted to the requirements of the labour market. However, they do not concentrate on the issue of direct support for young adults in the area of education that would help them reach completed adulthood. Legal acts (primarily *Ustawa z dnia 17 lipca 1998 r. o pożyczkach i kredytach studenckich* (The Act of 17 July 1998 on Student Loans and Credits)) (Journal of Laws of 1998, No 108, item 685) propose only partial solutions. The purpose of the regulation was to create conditions to allow people to exercise their constitutional right to education, which in the future may help them become independent and achieve full adulthood. No group is privileged, as the beneficiaries of the programmes may be any of the groups mentioned in the documents. More detailed instruments are aimed primarily at students who are in a difficult financial situation, who achieve outstanding academic results, or who are from outside the city where they started their education.

On the one hand, there are organisational aids (e.g. having individual study programmes or being allowed to leave when they need to combine studying with family duties). On the other hand, there are various benefits (e.g. financial rewards for good achievements, special scholarships for the disabled, allowances etc.). Students can also benefit from a 50% discount on fares and – based on *Ustawa z dnia 17 lipca 1998 r. o pożyczkach i kredytach studenckich* (The Act of 17 July 1998 on Student Loans and Credits) (Journal of Laws of 1998, No 108, item 685) (1998) – preferential loans and credits (for people under 25 years of age).

9.3.2. Labour market regulations

The *National Development Strategy 2020* (2012) emphasises that building an innovative economy is not possible without the development of human capital, which in turn is associated with increasing the professional activity of Poles. This requires actions to support quick entry into the labour market, creating conditions for flexible forms of employment and improving graduates' competencies. The *Human Capital Development Strategy 2020* (2013), in turn, indicates the need to increase employment through effective activation of the unemployed and jobseekers, access to high-quality education that adapts to changes in the labour market, promote entrepreneurial attitudes, enable vocational education combined with a developed system of apprenticeships and internships, and facilitate the possibilities of combining work and childcare.

Young Poles are seen as crucial for the country's economic development and, therefore, the scope of legal regulations regarding their position in the labour market is much wider than in other areas. However, an analysis of labour market regulations showed that there is no coherent policy to support young adults in the area of the labour market, although there is coherence within specific legal acts. The process of entering adulthood and the need for increased assistance in the labour market area for young people is mostly provided in *Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy* (The Act of 20 April 2004 on employment promotion and labour market institutions) (Journal of Laws of 2004, No 99, item 1001) (2004), which mentions two groups: people under 25 and 30 years of age and those young people who are burdened with parental responsibilities (i.e. unemployed with underage children). The legislator works in two ways to support at-risk groups in the labour market. It creates a system of incentives for employers who employ a given group (e.g. reimbursement of the employer's social insurance costs for people taking up their first job).

Additionally, there are incentives aimed at the general public, i.e. 12-month internships for the unemployed, and a system of vouchers for internships, training or employment. The support (e.g. loans for setting up a company) is available for final-year students and graduates of schools and universities within two years of graduating. Unemployed people between 18 and 30 could be considered a privileged group. An additional factor favouring may be raising a child (especially up to 6 years of age). Some instruments are aimed at parents, such as grants for teleworking and reimbursement of childcare costs. However, there is no gender gap in this case. The disadvantaged group of the young adults, that is, for which there are no addressed public policies and social policy instruments, is unemployed people over 30 years of age, especially when it comes to lonely, childless people.

The most comprehensive solutions targeted at young people in the labour market were introduced in the EU's *Youth Guarantee programme* of 2014. Its addressees are people aged 15-29 who face difficulties entering or staying in the labour market, including those who prematurely leave education, are looking for a job

after finishing school or university, or remain outside employment, education and training. When it comes to the unemployed aged 25-29, the programme includes, among other things, a diagnosis of a young person's professional and personal situation, and vocational counselling and mediation. It also issues training, internship and employment vouchers, loans for setting up a business, and it provides support in creating jobs that would enable them to share family life with work. So far, almost 950,000 young people have benefited from these instruments (*Plan realizacji…* 2014).

To sum up, while the public policy measures aimed at entering/returning to the labour market are mostly targeted at people up to 30 years of age and people with family obligations, people over this age are ignored in legal regulations. Meanwhile, as already underlined, the process of entering adulthood continues to get longer. If young adults do not belong to other groups distinguished, for example, due to having children, they can only count on general labour market instruments.

9.3.3. Housing regulations

Although *nesting* is directly related to the unavailability of housing for young people, this problem seems to be the least present in the analysed strategic and legal acts. The *Constitution of the Republic of Poland* (1997) obliges the government to support citizens in obtaining their own accommodation. This issue is developed further in the *Human Capital Development Strategy 2020*, which proposes expanding the rental and council housing system for the benefit of young people. The legislation provides a few forms of support for young adults in this respect. *Ustawa z dnia 27 września 2013 r. o pomocy państwa w nabyciu pierwszego mieszkania przez ludzi młodych* (The Act of 27 September 2013 on state aid in the purchase of the first apartment by young people) (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 1304) introduced the Apartments for Young People programme, which replaced the earlier initiative Family on its own. It aimed to increase the availability of flats or houses to young people who buy them for the first time but do not have sufficient creditworthiness. The programme provided co-financing of future homeowners' own contribution (to a loan granted for the purchase of a flat or house), the repayment of part of the loan (e.g. in case of the birth of a third or subsequent child) or reimbursement of expenses incurred for the purchase of building materials.

Preference is given primarily to young people up to 35 years of age (this is a slightly higher limit than, for example, labour market regulations, where the legislator usually refers to the age limit of 30). However, the legislator had not introduced other significant restrictions regarding, for example, marital status, which allows us to talk about a potentially wide range of recipients of these programmes. The limited financial resources directed to implementing these programmes also caused their availability to be limited for the young adults.

9.3.4. Family regulations

In the light of unfavourable demographic forecasts, the Polish state increasingly recognises the need to intensify support activities addressed to people raising children. Their goal is not only to increase the fertility rate of Polish women, but also to facilitate the entry/ return of parents to the labour market as well as material support for families and raise their standard of living. The *Human Capital Development Strategy 2020* indicated that the measure to increase the professional activity of young people should have promoted a partnership model of the family in which household duties and professional activity would be equally distributed among partners. The *National Reform Programme 2020* emphasised the need to make it easier for parents to combine work and family life by improving access to nurseries and kindergartens. Meanwhile, the *Krajowy Plan Działań na Rzecz Zatrudnienia na lata 2015-2017* (National Action Plan for Employment for 2015-2017) (2014) proposed developing a care system for children up to 3 years old as part of the *Maluch+* (Toddler+) programme for the development of childcare institutions.

In the case of family policy law, the legislator focuses mainly on families in difficult financial and social situations, especially families with many children, the single parent families and those with disabled children. In this case, the age of the parents is not mentioned. However, the legislator specifies the age of children, which indirectly indicates young adults as public policy addressees, because, as already shown, they most often decide to start or enlarge their family. After the financial aid for parents introduced in previous decades (such as the one-time childbirth allowance (*becikowe*) paid since 2006 or the tax relief after childbirth since 2007), another measure to increase the fertility rate and improve the financial condition of Polish families is the Family 500+ programme. It provides benefits for families bringing up children. It is one of the few support programmes for all families with children, regardless of their financial situation (Gromada 2017). Another parental benefit (*kosiniakowe*) is aimed at parents with low incomes and who do not receive maternity allowance or maternity pay (e.g. students, the unemployed or people employed on civil law contracts).

There is also *Ustawa z dnia 28 listopada 2003 r. o świadczeniach rodzinnych* (The Act of 28 November 2003 on Family Benefits) (Journal of Laws of 2003, No 228, item 2255), which provides for family allowances and other benefits. The payment depends on the income, the number of children, or if children are brought up by a single parent. In the case of an employed woman who decides to become a mother, the *Labour Code* provides 20-week maternity leave for the first child (and annual maternity allowance for the unemployed, farmers or students) and 32-week parental leave. It is also possible to partially combine these leaves with work. In turn, *Ustawa z 4 lutego 2011 r. o opiece nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3* (The Act of 4 February 2011 on the care of children

up to 3 years of age) (Journal of Laws of 2011, No 45, item 235), i.e. the *nursery act* (2011) extended the group of entities entitled to receive state subsidies for running a nursery and introduced new forms of incentives to employ day carers. The privileged categories include families in a difficult financial situation, single parents, large families, and families with disabled children. The legislator did not refer to the age of single parents.

9.3.5. Other public policy instruments

Regulations in the field of social assistance are addressed to the recipient who is in a specific life situation in connection with reaching the age of majority and leaving the institutions listed in the regulations. They are addressed to people who might have difficulties in the process of becoming independent due to the special life situation in which they found themselves. In this case, it is difficult to discuss privileged or disadvantaged groups. One example is foster care institutions. The situation of their adolescent pupils is regulated by *Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej* (The Act of 9 June 2011 on Family Support and the Foster Care System) (Journal of Laws of 2011, No 149, item 887) (2011). However, some forms of assistance would be available only to people who decided to undertake certain activities, e.g. continue their education, and in this sense, they can be referred to as a privileged group.

Legal regulations regarding taxes and social security show that there is no policy to help young people in this respect. In the area of social security, privileged groups should be considered to be people starting a business for the first time and taking up gainful employment immediately after graduating from school or higher education, although the randomness of the regulations and their extremely narrow scope should be mentioned. In the field of taxes, only people raising children can count on pro-family relief for support.

Public health regulations should be considered insufficient in terms of any supporting policy for young people. The documents note the category of "youth", "younger generations", and "young adults", mainly in the context of preventive health care in connection with the implementation of compulsory education. However, these are not groups that would be treated as a priority in terms of entering adulthood and becoming independent. Due to insufficient regulations in the area of health, it is difficult to distinguish privileged categories among young adults. This is an area that requires special attention from the state authorities.

To sum up, Polish public policies offer various types of support and instruments that directly or indirectly target young adults (25-34 years old). However, their optimal impact on reaching full adulthood is hampered by the lack of a common age criterion that takes into account a later start into adulthood and the lack of synchronisation between the areas of support.

Table 25. Polish public policy instruments aimed at young adults

Benefit	Nature and amount of the benefit	Access criteria
Labour market		
The first business support	Maximum 84 months (good financial conditions with a loan of 100,000 PLN for 84 months; interest instalments are approx. 1600 PLN). A loan to start a business. A loan to create a workplace.	Support for young people who are unemployed in the regional labour market – subsidies for starting a business. Students of the last year of first- and second-cycle studies, long-cycle master's studies, graduates of schools and universities looking for a job, up to four years from graduation or obtaining a professional title, unemployed people registered with the office until they reach retirement age, carers of disabled people – family members caring for a child with a disability certificate or a disabled person, not receiving a nursing benefit or care allowance. Government programme.Cooridinated by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego BGK.
Relief for the start/The Grant to start	A six-month exemption from paying social security contributions. From 04.2018 (Entrepreneurs' Law Act).	New entrepreneurs, or starting after a long break.
Young people to start	One-time start-up grants up to 23,500 PLN. Current expenses (within six months of the company's operation). Training support to acquire/broaden qualifications in terms of setting up and running a business and support for its launch and running. Support in the regional labour market	Up to 30 years of age. Economically inactive, unemployed and not registered in the labour office. European Social Fund (under the "Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development" programme). Distribution by Regional Development Agencies.
Youth Initiative		Since 2017. People up to 30 years of age. From training and expert support to co-financing the establishment of a business. Financed from EU funds.

Housing market		
Apartment for young people programme	Assistance in buying the first apartment; the programme replaced another "Family on their own"	September 2013 – 2018. During this time, 110,000 properties were purchased. Beneficiaries up to 36 years of age (the exception was when the family raised three children). Married couples, people in informal relationships and singles. Restrictions on the area and the price of the apartment (loan in PLN). It was not possible to have a title to other premises. In Warsaw, the loan subsidy could amount to 28,000 PLN. Currently, if someone is a beneficiary of the "Apartment for the Young" programme and has received co-financing of their own contribution, they can apply for additional financial support in the form of repaying part of the loan. Condition: within five years of signing the contract to purchase an apartment or house under the Apartment for Young People, a third or another child appeared in your family (born or adopted). In total, you must raise at least three underage children or adults who are still in education. The Ministry of Development is responsible
Aparment+ (Pol. *Mieszkanie+*)	Increasing the number of available apartments on the rental market.	Construction of apartments for rent on market terms. It is necessary to have rental capacity.
Apartment to start (Pol. *Mieszkanie na start*)	A rent subsidy programme. Social and investment objective: help for households having difficulties in meeting their housing needs on their own, the second – incentive to implement investments that involve the construction of apartments for rent	Non-refundable financial support for renting an apartment.

Table 25. Polish public policy instruments…

Benefit	Nature and amount of the benefit	Access criteria
Apartment without your own contribution	As part of the guaranteed housing loan, the state will guarantee a maximum of 100,000 PLN of the future home-owner's contribution for those taking out a loan without the financial resources for their own contribution. The amount of funding will depend on the number of children in the family –20,000 PLN in the case of the second child, 60,000 PLN for the third and each subsequent child. To reduce the risk of price increases, a maximum price level will be introduced per 1 m2 of property that will be eligible for the programme.	In total, the "Apartment without your own contribution" programme will be available to approx. 80,000 families a year.
Taxes		
No Personal Income Tax (PIT) for the Young	Exempt from income tax, introduced on 1.08.2019.	Age up to 26 years. Annual income not exceeding 85,528 PLN. The beneficiaries are to be young adults present in the labour market. Around 2 million young workers benefit from the programme.
Relief for the middle class (part of the "Polski Ład") ("Polish Order")[1]	Compensation for increasing the health premiums (as part of tax settlements)	It applies to people whose monthly salary ranges from 5,701 PLN to 11,141 PLN per month
Raising the amount of the first threshold in the tax scale and the tax-free amount.	Redistribution within the tax system.	From the tax year 2022/2023, the first tax threshold will go up to 120,000 PLN (currently 85,000 PLN). Increasing the tax-free amount to 30,000 PLN (currently 8,000 PLN).

Relief for families with four (or more) children (increase in the tax-free amount)	Income tax exemption. Increasing the income of large families.	The sum of revenues exempt from tax under the relief for 4+ families, relief for young people, relief for return and relief for working seniors may not exceed 85,528 PLN per year.
Child benefit		
One-time childbirth allowance	One-time payment of 1000 PLN (so-called *becikowe*)	Since 01.2013, the income criterion is 1922 PLN (per capita income in the family)
Child benefit	Partial coverage of expenses for raising a child. 95 PLN for a child up to 5 years old, 6-17 years – 124 PLN, 18-24 years – 135 PLN	Income criterion 674 PLN (it is about the monthly family income per person; parents/guardians and child/children). After exceeding the income criterion, the zloty for zloty rule (introduced from 1.01.2016. Article 5(3) of the Family Benefits Act). In the case of a single parent, the receipt of child benefit is conditional on receiving maintenance.
Supplements to child benefit		
Childbirth allowance	Childbirth allowance 1000 PLN once	The condition is to receive child benefit. The application must be submitted before the child reaches the age of one. It is for the mother of the baby, who was under medical care no later than from the 10th week of pregnancy to the day of delivery. The certificate is issued by a doctor or midwife.
Single Parent Allowance	Allowance for raising a child alone is 193 PLN per child per month; in total, for all children, no more than 386 PLN Plus 80 PLN, when the child has a certificate of disability or a certificate of severe disability, its amount increases by PLN 80 per child. The allowance for this reason can be increased by a maximum of 160 PLN.	Single parent father/mother who is the actual or legal guardian of the child
Allowance for the beginning of the school year	To partially cover expenses related to the beginning of the school year, one year of preschool preparation 9100 PLN	Having a child of school/preschool age

Table 25. Polish public policy instruments…

Benefit	Nature and amount of the benefit	Access criteria
Allowance for raising a child in a large family	95 PLN Monthly	The allowance is granted for the third and subsequent children entitled to child benefit.
Allowance for the education and rehabilitation of a disabled child	Monthly PLN 90 for a child up to 5 years old; 5-24 years – 110 PLN.	Necessary certificate of disability for the child.
Child's school allowance outside the place of residence	113 PLN per month when living where the school is located (outside the place of residence) 69 PLN when commuting to school outside the place of residence	School-age child, schooling outside the place of residence
Childcare allowance during parental leave	400 PLN per month	For the mother or father (or guardian) for 2 years, or 3 years if caring for more than one child born at the same birth, or 6 years if caring for a child with a disability certificate or a severe disability.
Care benefits		
Nursing benefit	1971 PLN per month (while receiving this benefit, a person cannot collect others).	Registering with the district employment office as a job seeker or having the status of unemployed does not affect the entitlement to the nursing benefit. It is granted after resigning from work to care for a person who has a disability certificate. The nursing benefit from January 1, 2021, is 1971 PLN per month. Nursing benefit for resigning from employment or other gainful employment is given to: 1) the mother or father, 2) the guardian of the child, 3) a person who is a related or foster family, within the meaning of the Act of 9 June 2011 on family support and the foster care system, 4) other people who, in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 25 February 1964 – Family and Guardianship Code, are subject to a maintenance obligation, except for people with severe disabilities.

Attendance allowance	215.84 PLN per month from 1.11.2019 for caring for a person unable to live independently	Requirements: a disabled child; a disabled person over the age of 16, if he or she has a certificate of severe disability; a disabled person over the age of 16 with a certificate of moderate disability, if the disability arose before the age of 21; a person who is at least 75 years old (it is not available to people covered by the care allowance and located in a place covered by round-the-clock fully-paid care)
Special care allowance	620 PLN per month from 1.11.2018.	Special care allowance is granted to people who, in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 25 February 1964 – Family and Guardianship Code, have a maintenance obligation, as well as spouses if: (1) they do not take up employment or other gainful employment or (2) resign from their job or other gainful employment
Parental benefit (so-called *Kosiniakowe*)	1000 PLN monthly for 52 weeks (1 year) in the case of the birth of one child or 65 weeks in the case of twins. Introduced 1.01.2016	A person who has given birth to a child and does not receive maternity allowance or maternity pay, i.e. unemployed (regardless of registering or not with the employment office), students, farmers, as well as those performing work under civil law contracts [there is no income criterion, not taxed]. You cannot receive maternity benefits or a salary during this time. Since January 2016. They are collected by those who are not entitled to maternity benefits. Therefore, the unemployed will be entitled to receive this benefit (regardless of whether they are registered in the Labour Office or not), students, farmers, as well as people employed based on civil law contracts. People employed or conducting non-agricultural economic activity may also apply for the benefit, provided that they do not receive maternity benefit. It is not dependent on the income criterion (52 weeks with one child, 64 weeks with two children).
Parental benefit		
Maternity allowance	From 2021, 115.05 PLN per day for 52 weeks for one of the parents	Necessary employment under a contract of employment or voluntary payment of sick pay by a person employed under a mandate contract or conducting business activity. Employer/Social Insurance Institution

Table 25. Polish public policy instruments…

Benefit	Nature and amount of the benefit	Access criteria
Income tax settlement together with a child for a single parent	In force until 2021. According to the New Deal, it is to be replaced by a write-off for a child of 1500 PLN.	The possibility of a joint PIT return by a single parent with a child. It was replaced by tax relief.
Family Care Capital (part of the 'Polish Order')	Improving the financial situation of families with two (and more children). Encouragement to have more children.	From January 2022 (for parents of children from 12 to 36 months of age) –12,000 PLN for the second and each subsequent child. Without income criteria and independent of the 500+ paid.
Family 500+ programme	From 04.2016, 500 PLN per month for the second and next child under 18 years of age; from 2019, for every child of this age.	Increasing fertility and improving the financial situation of families with children.
Good start	300 PLN once for a child studying at school until the age of 20, for a disabled child, learning at school until the age of 24.	Support of 300 PLN for parents of a student child. To receive support, you must apply. This can be done by the mother, father, legal guardian of the child or the guardian of the child (the guardian is the person who has custody of the child and who has applied to the guardianship court to adopt the child). An application for the benefit for children who are in foster care is submitted by a foster parent, a person running a family children's home, or the director of the care and educational institution. From the school year 2021/2022, the benefit is paid by ZUS in a non-cash form (transfer to the account). The good start benefit is granted once a year.
Toddler+	Nursery care (increasing the expenditure to 450 million per year). Support for crèche care (from 1 January 2022, 400 PLN for families not covered by the Family Care Capital)	It supports the development of childcare institutions for children up to three years of age – crèches, children's clubs and day-care providers. Beneficiaries of the programme may receive funding for the creation and operation of places of care. 'Toddler+' is an annual programme. A municipality, province or voivodship (module 1), as well as natural and legal people (module 2), may apply for co-financing. Funding is related to maintaining places created for care.

Large Family Card	A system of discounts and entitlements for families with three (or more) children. Act of 5 December 2014 on the Large Family Card.	Depending on the policy of the municipality and the policy pursued by organisations such as schools (including social and private)
Foster leavers' benefits		
Assistance for further education	Act on Family Support and Foster Care System	Granted without an income test if the person continues education at school or university, undertakes other courses in line with the individual independence assistance plan, or undergoes vocational training. The assistance is granted as a monetary benefit, not less than €117 per month, for the duration of education until the care leaver reaches the age of 25
Financial independence assistance	Act on Family Support and Foster Care System	Depends on the duration of staying in foster care. It may be granted as a lump sum or in instalments before the care leaver reaches the age of 26. If a care leaver receives educational assistance, independence assistance aid is usually paid out after the education assistance has been discontinued.
A one-time financial resettlement allowance	Act on Family Support and Foster Care System	A one-time financial resettlement allowance granted to a care leaver before the age of 26 of not less than €370, and for a care leaver with certified moderate or severe disability – not less than €740
Assistance with finding suitable accommodation	Lies with the entities obliged to offer this type of assistance	The assistance can be offered in the following forms: a) full or partial reimbursement of expenses related to renting a room; b) help in obtaining subsidised social housing from municipality resources; c) allocating a room in a dormitory or school boarding house before a care leaver completes education, or d) full/partial reimbursement of accommodation expenses for a care leaver studying at a university

Source: Authors' elaboration based on www.gov.pl, www.bgk.pl, www.biznes.gov.pl, www.funduszeeuropejskie.gov.pl, www.ec.europa.eu

A cohesive social policy regarding the labour market seems justified because stable employment with a salary that guarantees an adequate standard of living is the most important variable that determines the normative nature of achieving full adulthood. It would therefore be important to introduce regulations relating to "junk contracts" in the labour market. The idea is also that the decision to become self-employed should be an expression of the employee's will and not the result of pressure from employers. It would also be reasonable to consistently make forms of employment more flexible for young families with young children so that they could reconcile professional work with educational tasks.

9.4. Interviewees' evaluation of social policy

The process of entering adulthood is significantly (if not decisively) influenced by the material status of the biological family and family resources. Other important factors are the place of residence and the level of education achieved. Entering adulthood is much smoother (trouble-free and ending with the achievement of complete adulthood) if the person comes from a family with a stable financial position (e.g. they have their own flat), lives in a large city, and has parents with a university degree. Such people, as far as our interviewees are concerned, did not refer in their biographical accounts to public policies as tools to support the transition into adulthood. The lack of formulated expectations and judgements regarding public policies was largely due to the fact that for their entry into adulthood (starting a family, housing stability, starting a career) they were treated as irrelevant and indifferent.

When asked specifically about the support addressed to them from the state, they mentioned the Family 500+ programme. If they spoke about expectations, in this case, they more often pointed to public services such as support in childcare, high-quality educational services or an extensive career counselling system. The interviewees from smaller cities and those in an unsatisfactory financial condition much more often used institutional support. For them, social benefits were an important component of household budgets. Instead of increasing the number of social benefits (they considered it acceptable for them to be left at the current level), they expected an increase in the availability of public services, such as childcare (including daycare), access to public health care (paediatricians) and access to educational institutions (including early childhood education, i.e. kindergartens and crèches). On the other hand, they considered the lack of a stable and well-paid job to be the biggest obstacle to life stability.

Young adults have not been defined in Polish social policies as a group in need of institutional support, and they also do not categorise themselves in this way. Residents of large cities attribute their social position mainly to individual efficiency,

actions taken by them, and self-developed life plans. In fact, they refer to the discourse of agency, which is characteristic of post-transformational Poland, in which ideas about permanently adapting to changing economic conditions prevailed. The young adults from smaller cities were less likely to use this kind of argument. They were more often clients of social welfare institutions, and they treated the programmes and financial transfers addressed to them as a basic level of support.

In most cases, the studied young adults could count on the support of family and loved ones (i.e. family-based support), although again, this more often referred to those living in metropolitan areas. While reconstructing their biographies, the young adults rarely referred to social policy measures being in any way relevant to their entry into adulthood. It may also be a consequence of the fact that young adults are not interested in politics while also claiming that politicians (regardless of party affiliation) are not interested in their situation. The opinions expressed about contemporary politics were dominated by disappointment, especially in the way state institutions operated and how social policy did not address their needs and problems.

For large-city interviewees, the use of social support, such as benefits and financial transfers (outside the *Rodzina 500+* (Family 500+) programme), shows that they have failed in life, and it is associated with helplessness and lack of life skills. In their opinion, the use of support tools (in particular, financial transfers) confirms that the process of entering adulthood did not proceed in a proper, normative way. Less critical in their assessments were residents of smaller towns, for whom the status of a client of social care institutions is a much more common experience, so they treat it as a natural part of their biographical efforts on the way to adulthood.

In general, the young adults suggested maintaining the existing financial transfers, and they drew attention to the need to develop public services. Particularly important for them would be childcare help (e.g. daycare and an extensive network of care and educational institutions), as well as expert and institutional support in choosing the right career path or the right financial tools when setting up their own business.

Statements of young Polish adults allow us to suggest that they did not believe in the effectiveness of the state as an institution that consistently and effectively supports them on the way to complete adulthood. The interviewees, more often those living in metropolitan areas, are characterised by an increase in aspirations in various areas: education, social status, and standard of living. However, these aspirations are associated with their activity (especially in the labour market) and family support. Therefore, they do not perceive the process of entering adulthood from an institutional and systemic perspective but from an individualised one.

The statement also shows that young Polish adults describe their lives as a project – their biographies take the form of implementing specific projects (that can be potentially supported by bank loans or credit). The entry into adulthood of the interviewees from families of lower capital often took the form of "the adaptive drift". By contrast, those from families with higher material status and greater

cultural capital were more likely to perceive their biographies as relatively controlled. A common feature of the interviewees was the short- or long-term experience of uncertainty and instability, which primarily concerned securing their material needs and plans related to establishing a family.

Based on the analysis of the public discourse about young adults, three potential scenarios can be distinguished that may affect the way they function and are present in the public and political spheres. The first concerns the self-exclusion of young adults from the political and public sphere. They do not see that there are issues that are important to them concerning their needs; thus, the possibility of realising their interests seems to be impossible. The second scenario is to gradually adapt to existing systemic conditions and to benefit from those social policy programmes that (most often indirectly) include young adults as beneficiaries. Typically, they are financial transfers that strengthen their home budgets or increase their creditworthiness (primarily to take out a mortgage). This may also include active citizenship attitudes caused by issues that directly affect young adults (e.g. citizenship issues, human rights, procreation problems, minority rights). Adaptation may also include the normalisation of precarity and the acceptance of the fragmentation and untimeliness of biography in terms of important life events, such as starting a family, having a child, having a first permanent job, or living independently. The third scenario is an anti-system rebellion, questioning and rejecting the existing order. It could result in pressure for a gradual reconstruction of the public and political sphere. This scenario, however, is the least likely.

Conclusions
Proposals concerning social policy

The Polish social policy system needs to be rebuilt because its current form is not sufficiently adapted to the needs of young adults. Therefore, one of the key tasks in its future planning should be to diagnose, identify and problematise the needs of young adults. The aim should be to formulate appropriate programmes to safeguard the process of entering adulthood and address these group proposals for specific public services, complementing better-targeted financial transfers. A good solution would be to integrate national social policy into the objectives of the EU policies for young people entering adulthood. Current social policy can be described as incoherent and non-innovative and as a selective policy of the course of life. It is mainly young people or seniors who can count on institutional support, while the situation of young adults can be described as institutionally unsupported.

A new paradigm of social policy with a more holistic and coherent approach is therefore needed to make it possible to move towards an investment social policy model. The holistic social policy model is based on the life course approach and, therefore, also includes young adults, regardless of their social position. The category of innovative social policy is associated with recognising young adults as a pro-development age category that needs conditions to develop its potential in the professional, family and consumer spheres. Therefore, it is necessary to reconstruct groups that require systemic support, taking into account the category of young adults. They should be treated not only as a target group in need of support but, above all, as development agents who need investment programmes within the framework of social policies.

The target group of the social policy does not have to be only those young adults who are in a difficult life situation (usually indicated as traditional groups requiring support from public institutions). It could also include those who have some socially and economically required capabilities and who need support tailored to their needs (not necessarily financial ones) to allow them to smoothly enter the path of complete adulthood. Young Polish adults are characterised by different paths of entering adulthood. They have variable family commitments and institutional support, and a wide spectrum of problems and challenges that they are

forced to face. The task of social policy designers should be to identify these paths and, based on them, determine the necessary courses of action. This would allow for a shift away from sectoral social policy towards a new social policy model within the framework of the adulthood regime.

Rebuilding social policies for young adults may require improving communication so that the setting of objectives is more bottom-up than top-down. Changes should occur in programmes aimed at the labour market so that the beneficiaries are not mainly unemployed people, but those who, at a given biographical moment, require systemic protection and security. It is important that the discussion on the social policy concerning young adults should go beyond the sphere of experts and academics. It should become the subject of political and media discussions, with wide participation of young adults and people from various backgrounds, with different needs. At present, social policy is redistributive rather than forward-looking, especially regarding programmes that are most often used by young adults on a general basis. As a result, social policies do not respond to the diverse needs of young adults. Improving communication activities (in both the social and political spheres) would have a positive impact on raising the level of social knowledge about social policy, which in turn would make it more suited to the needs of young adults.

Such changes are needed because young adults, as a social category, do not have the relevant advocates to represent their interests in the decision-making process. It was widely assumed that this is unnecessary because an adult (even someone who has just become one) should be resourceful and able to take care of his/her own needs and interests.

The changes should also lead to the decentralisation of public policies to take greater account of local specificities related to the labour market or infrastructure problems that are specific to young people's locations. In this case, the principle of subsidiarity can be used, and the organisation and implementation of social policies can be transferred to the local government level to a greater extent.

References

Anderson N., Herriot P. (eds.) (2001), *International Handbook of Selection and Assessment*, New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Appelt K. (2005), *Środkowy okres dorosłości. Jak rozpoznać potencjał dojrzałych dorosłych?*, [in:] A. I. Brzezińska (ed.), *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka. Praktyczna psychologia rozwojowa*, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.

Arnett J. J. (2000), *Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens Through the Twenties*, "The American Psychologist", 55, 469-480.

Arnett J. J. (2004), *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from Late Teens through the Twenties*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Arthur M. B., Khapova S. N., Wilderom C. (2005), *Career Success in a Boundaryless Career World*, "Journal of Organizational Behavior", 26, 177-202. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/job.290

Badora B. (2019), *Komunikat z badań nr 138/2019. Związki zawodowe w Polsce*, Warszawa: CBOS.

Baranowska A. (2009), *Decyzje kobiet u progu wejścia w dorosłość: inwestycja w karierę zawodową czy rodzinną? Rola kapitału ludzkiego i uwarunkowań instytucjonalnych*, [in:] I. E. Kotowska, U. Sztanderska, I. Wóycicka (eds.), *Kulturowe i strukturalne uwarunkowania aktywności zawodowej kobiet w Polsce*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 175-196.

Barker E. T., Galambos N. L. (2005), *Adolescents' Implicit Theories of Maturity: Ages of Adulthood, Freedom, and Fun*, "Journal of Adolescent Research", 20 (5), 557-576. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558405274872

Barszcz P. (2019), *Zjawisko gniazdownictwa w krajach Unii Europejskiej – skala, przyczyny, skutki. Casus Polski*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica", 69, 35-51. https://doi.org/10.18778/0208-600X.69.03

Barth R. P. (1990), *On Their Own: The Experiences of Youth after Foster Care*, "Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal", 7 (5), 419-440.

Bauman Z. (2006), *Płynna nowoczesność*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Beck U. (2002), *Społeczeństwo ryzyka. W drodze do innej nowoczesności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Beck U., Beck-Gernsheim E. (2002), *Individualization. Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences*, London: Sage.

Beczek W. (2018), *"Młodzi są po prostu głupi". "Niech pani dorośnie". Czytelnicy krytykują, Beczek odpowiada*, https://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,161770,23793639,m-Lodzi-sa-po-prostu-glupi-niech-pani-dorosnie-czytelnicy.html

Béjin A. (1983), *De l'adolescence à la post-adolescence: les années indécises*, "Le Débat", 25, 126-132.

Bellah R. M., Sullivan W. M., Swidler A., Tipton S. M. (1985), *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bendit R. (2006), *Youth Sociology and Comparative Analysis in the European Union Member States*, "Papers", 79, 49-76.

Benson J. E., Elder G. H. (2011), *Young Adult Identities and Their Pathways: A Developmental and Life Course Model*, "Developmental Psychology", 47 (6), 1646-1657. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023833

Benson J. E., Furstenberg F. F. (2007), *Entry into Adulthood: Are Adult Role Transitions Meaningful Markers of Adult Identity?*, "Advances in Life Course Research", 11, 199-224.

Berger P. L., Luckmann T. (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Anchor.

Bertaux D., Thompson P. (eds.) (1993), *Between Generations: Family Models, Myths, and Memories*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Biehal N., Wade J. (1996), *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Care Leavers, Families and Change*, "Children and Youth Services Review", 18 (4-5), 425-445.

Bieńko M. (2020), *New, Precarious Adulthood: Kidults in the 'Crowded Nest'*, "Studia Demograficzne", 2 (176), 43-69. https://doi.org/10.33119/SD.2019.2.3

Bieńko M., Kwak A., Rosochacka-Gmitrzuk M. (2017), *Wciąż jeszcze w gnieździe rodzinnym? Socjologiczne spojrzenie na młodych dorosłych*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej.

Biesok G., Kuwik A. (2014), *Satysfakcja z pracy w opinii młodych pracowników*, [in:] E. Skrzypek (ed.), *Zasoby ludzkie a sukces organizacji w nowej gospodarce*, Lublin: Wydział Ekonomiczny UMCS w Lublinie.

Biggart A., Walther A. (2006), *Coping with Yo-Yo-Transitions. Young Adults' Struggle for Support, between Family and State in Comparative Perspective*, [in:] C. Leccardi, E. Ruspini (eds.), *A New Youth? Young People, Generations and Family Life*, London: Routledge, 41-62.

Biggart A., Stauber B., Walther A. (2001), *Avoiding Misleading Trajectories: Transition Dilemmas of Young Adults in Europe*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 4 *(1)*, 101-118.

Boguszewski R. (2018), *Komunikat z badań nr 28/2018. Aktywność Polaków w organizacjach obywatelskich*, Warszawa: CBOS.

Boguszewski R. (2019), *Aktywność obywatelska i postawy prospołeczne*, [in:] M. Grabowska, M. Gwiazda (eds.), *Młodzież 2018*, Warszawa: CBOS, Krajowe Biuro ds. Przeciwdziałania Narkomanii, 140-152.

Bohdziewicz P. (2010), *Współczesne kariery zawodowe: od modelu biurokratycznego do przedsiębiorczego*, "Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi", 3-4.

Bourdieu P. (1986), *The Forms of Capital*, [in:] J. E. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc.

Bovenberg A. L. (2007), *The Life-Course Perspective and Social Policies: An Overview of the Issues*, "Modernising Social Policy for the New Life Course", 23-73.

Boyd M., Morris D. (1999), *The Crowded Nest: Young Adults at Home*, http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/11-008-XIE/2003001/articles/6552.pdf

Bożewicz M. (2020), *Komunikat z badań nr 37/2020. Aktywność Polaków w organizacjach obywatelskich*, Warszawa: CBOS.

Bryant R., Knight D. M. (2019), *The Anthropology of the Future*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brzezińska A. I. (2013), *Becoming an Adult – Contexts of Identity Development*, "Polish Psychological Bulletin", 3 (44), 239-244.

Brzezińska A. I. (2016), *Dorastanie do dorosłości: odraczane czy opóźnione*, [in:] A. I. Brzezińska, W. Syska (eds.), *Ścieżki wkraczania w dorosłość*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo UAM, 23-47.

Brzezińska A. I., Piotrowski K. (2010), *Formowanie się tożsamości a poczucie dorosłości i gotowość do tworzenia bliskich związków*, "Czasopismo Psychologiczne", 16 (2), 265-274.

Brzezińska A. I., Syska W. (2016), *Dorastanie do dorosłości: odraczane czy opóźnione*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo UAM.

Brzezińska A. I., Kaczan R., Piotrowski K., Rękosiewicz M. (2011), *Odroczona dorosłość: fakt czy artefakt?*, "Nauka", 4, 67-107.

Buchmann M. (1989), *Script of Life in Modern Society: Entry into Adulthood in a Changing World*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Burr V. (2003), *Social Constructionism: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge.

Campbell I., Price R. (2016), *Precarious Work and Precarious Workers: Towards an Improved Conceptualisation*, "The Economic and Labour Relations Review", 27 (3), 314-332.

CBOS (2011), *Jak głosowali młodzi. Refleksje powyborcze*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K_148_11.PDF

CBOS (2016), *Program "Rodzina 500 plus" jako element systemu wspierania rodzin i dzietności*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_025_16.PDF

CBOS (2017), *Opinie i Diagnozy nr 37: Rodzina PLUS. Sytuacja polskich rodzin i oceny polityki prorodzinnej*, Warszawa: CBOS.

CBOS (2018a), *Komu żyje się najtrudniej*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2018/K_106_18.PDF

CBOS (2018b), *Aktywność Polaków w organizacjach obywatelskich*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2018/K_029_18.PDF

CBOS (2019a), *Alternatywne modele życia rodzinnego w ocenie społecznej*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_042_19.PDF

CBOS (2019b), *Preferowane i realizowane modele życia rodzinnego*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_046_19.PDF

CBOS (2019c), *Rodzina – jej znaczenie i rozumienie*, Warszawa: CBOS: https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_022_19.PDF

CBOS (2019d), *15 lat członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_059_19.PDF

CBOS (2019e), Związki zawodowe w Polsce, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2019/K_138_19.PDF

CBOS (2020a), *Postrzeganie własnego miejsca w strukturze społecznej*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_016_20.PDF

CBOS (2020b), *Klasa niższa, średnia i wyższa. Charakterystyka w oparciu o autoidentyfikacje Polaków*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_061_20.PDF

CBOS (2020c), *Polacy o demokracji*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_095_20.PDF

CBOS (2020d), *Poczucie wpływu na sprawy publiczne*, Warszawa: CBOS, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_027_20.PDF

Chang H.-J. (2002), *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective*, London: Anthem Press.

Chevalier T. (2016), *Varieties of Youth Welfare Citizenship: Towards a Two-dimension Typology*, "Journal of European Social Policy", 26 (1), 3-19.

Connell R. W. (2010), *Reżimy płciowe i porządek płci*, "Biblioteka Online Think Tanku Feministycznego", http://www.ekologiasztuka.pl/pdf/f0095connell.pdf

Cook R. J. (1994), *Are We Helping Foster Care Youth Prepare for Their Future?*, "Children and Youth Services Review" 16 (3-4), 213-229.

Corijn M. (2001), *Transition to Adulthood: Sociodemographic Factors*, [in:] M. Corijn, E. Klijzing (eds.), *Transitions to Adulthood in Europe. European Studies of Population*, Dordrecht: Springer.

Corijn M., Klijzing E. (eds.) (2001), *Transitions to Adulthood in Europe. European Studies of Population*, Dordrecht: Springer.

Côté J. E. (1996), *Sociological Perspective in Identity Formation: The Culture-identity Link and Identity Capital*, "Journal of Adolescence", 19, 417-428.

Côté J. E. (2006), *Emerging Adulthood as an Institutionalized Moratorium: Risks and Benefits to Identity Formation*, [in:] J. J. Arnett, J. L. Tanner (eds.), *Emerging Adults in America*, Washington: American Psychological Association.

Côté J., Bynner J.M. (2008), *Changes in the Transition to Adulthood in the UK and Canada: The Role of Structure and Agency in Emerging Adulthood*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 11 (3), 251-268.

Courtney E. M., Piliavin I., Grogan-Kaylor A., Nesmith A. (2001), *Foster Youth Transitions to Adulthood: A Longitudinal View of Youth Leaving Care*, "Child Welfare Journal", 80 (6), 685-717.

Czapiński J. (2008), *Kapitał ludzki i kapitał społeczny a dobrobyt materialny. Polski paradoks*, "Zarządzanie Publiczne/Public Governance", 2 (4), 5-28.

Czapiński J., Panek T. (eds.) (2015), *Diagnoza społeczna. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków*, Warszawa: Rada Monitoringu Społecznego.

Czarnik S., Jelonek M., Kasparek K., Antosz P. (2018), *Bilans Kapitału Ludzkiego 2017: raport z badania ludności w wieku 18-69 lat*, Warszawa: Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości.

Czerka E. (2008), *Polityka społeczna krajów Unii Europejskiej wobec kwestii wkraczania młodych ludzi w dorosłość*, "Studia Gdańskie", V, 109-122.

Czyżewski M., Dunin K., Piotrowski A. (eds.) (2010), *Cudze problemy: O ważności tego, co nieważne: analiza dyskursu publicznego w Polsce*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne.

Demographic Yearbook of Poland (2020), Statistics Poland, Warsaw.

Diewald M., Mayer K. U. (2008), *The Sociology of the Life Course and Life Span Psychology: Integrated Paradigm or Complementing Pathways?*, "Discussion Paper", 772.

Długosz P. (2016), *Pokolenie przegranych? Kondycja psychospołeczna młodzieży w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, "Zeszyty Pracy Socjalnej", 21 (2), 77-90.

Dobrołowicz M. (2020), *Drogi buntu i konformizmu. Strategie młodych na rynku pracy*, Rozprawa doktorska, Wydział Socjologii UW, http://depotuw.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/item/3982/3500-DR-SOC-153522.pdf?sequence=1

Dobrowolska D. (1992), *Przebieg życia – fazy – wydarzenia*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", 2, 75-88.

Dobrowolska M. (2010), *Związek satysfakcji z pracy i kosztów psychologicznych pracowników tymczasowo zatrudnionych*, [in:] B. Kożusznik (ed.), *Psychologia w zarządzaniu*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 229-248.

Doepke M., Kindermann F. (2015), *Bargaining over Babies: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications*, "American Economic Review", 109 (9), 3264-3306.

Domalewski J., Szymborski P. (2017), *Strukturalne wymiary transformacji ustrojowej*, [in:] K. Szafraniec, J. Domalewski, K. Wasielewski, P. Szymborski, M. Wernerowicz, *Zmiana warty. Młode pokolenia a transformacje we wschodniej Europie i Azji*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 25-66.

Domański H. (2006), *Wpływ wykształcenia na zawód*, [in:] H. Domański, A. Ostrowska, P. Sztabiński (eds.), *W środku Europy? Wyniki europejskiego sondażu społecznego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 27-49.

Domański H. (2020), *Zmiany w stratyfikacji społecznej w Polsce*, "Ekonomista", 2, 286-305.

Domański H., Federowicz M., Pokropek A., Przybysz D., Sitek M., Smulczyk M., Żółtak T., (2016), *Ścieżki edukacyjne a zdolności i pozycja społeczna*, „Studia Socjologiczne", 1 (220), 67-98.

Domecka M., Mrozowicki A. (2008), *Robotnicy i ludzie biznesu. Wzory karier zawodowych a zmiana społeczna w Polsce*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 4 (1), 136-155.

Dubas E. (2005), *Andragogiczne poszukiwania rozumienia dorosłości*, [in:] E. Dubas (ed.), *Człowiek dorosły – istota /nie/znana?*, Płock: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Novum.

Doray P., Picard F., Trottier C., Groleau A. (2009), *Educational Pathways: Some Key Concepts*, Montréal: The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Dubas E. (2009), *Etapy dorosłości i proces kształcenia*, [in:] A. Fabiś, B. Cyboran (eds.), *Dorosły w procesie kształcenia*, Zakopane: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji.

Dubas E. (2015), *Przygotowanie do dorosłości – być i stawać się dorosłym*, "Edukacja Dorosłych", 1 (72), 9-21.

Du Bois-Reymond M., López Blasco A. (2003), *Yo-yo Transitions and Misleading Trajectories: Towards Integrated Transition Policies for Young Adults in Europe*, [in:] A. López

Blasco, W. McNeish, A. Walther (eds.), *Young People and Contradictions of Inclusion: Towards Integrated Transition Policies in Europe*, Oxford: Policy Press, 19-42.

Dziedziczak-Foltyn A., Gońda M. (2018), *Młodzi dorośli jako postulowani adresaci polityki społecznej*, "Polityka Społeczna", 7 (532), 38-43, https://polityka-spoleczna.ipiss.com.pl/resources/html/article/details?id=201547

Dziedziczak-Foltyn A., Gońda M. (2019), *Instrumentalizacja i kapitalizacja edukacji w postawach wielkomiejskich młodych dorosłych*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 15 (4), 62-83.

Dzwonkowska-Godula K. (2015), *Tradycyjnie czy nowocześnie? Wzory macierzyństwa i ojcostwa w Polsce*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Easton D. (1957), *An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems*, "World Politics", 9 (3), 383-400. https://doi.org/10.2307/2008920

Easton D. (1975), *A Re-Assessment of the Concept of Political Support*, "British Journal of Political Science", 5 (4), 435-457.

Elder G. H. Jr (1998), *The Life Course as Development Theory*, "Child Development" 69, 1-12.

Elder G., O'Rand A. (1995), *Adult Lives in a Changing Society*, [in:] K. Cook, G. Fine, J. House (eds.), *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*, Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 452-475.

Entman R. M. (1993), *Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm*, "Journal of Communication", 43, 51-58.

Erikson E. H. (1968), *Identity, Youth, and Crisis*, New York: Norton.

Esping-Andersen G. (2010), *Społeczne podstawy gospodarki postindustrialnej*, Warszawa: WSP TWR.

ETUI (European Trade Union Institute) (2015), *Benchmarking Working Europe 2015*, Brussels: European Trade Union Institute.

Eurostat (2017), *Are you an active citizen?*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products--eurostat-news/-/DDN-20170914-1

Eurostat (2018), *EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC)*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions

Eurostat (2020a), *Activity rates by sex, age and citizenship (%)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_argan&lang=en

Eurostat (2020b), *Temporary employees as a percentage of the total number of employees, by sex and age (%)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_etpga-&lang=en

Eurostat (2020c), *Part-time employment as a percentage of the total employment, by sex and age (%)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_eppga&lang=en

Eurostat (2020d), *Transition from fixed term contracts to contracts for an indefinite time by sex and age – annual averages of quarterly transitions, estimated probabilities*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do? dataset=lfsi_long_e09&lang=en

Eurostat (2020e), *Transition from part-time work to full-time work by sex and age – annual averages of quarterly transitions, estimated probabilities*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsi_long_e08&lang=en

Eurostat (2020f), *Unemployment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_urgan&lang=en

Eurostat (2020g), *Inactive population as a percentage of the total population, by sex and age (%)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_ipga&lang=en

Eurostat (2020h), *Employment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_ergan&lang=en

Eurostat (2021a), *Marriage and divorce statistics*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Marriage_and_divorce_statistics#Fewer_marriages.2C_more_divorces

Eurostat (2021b), *Live births outside marriage*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Live_births_outside_marriage,_selected_years,_1960-2019_(share_of_total_live_births,_%25)_May_2021.png&oldid=528161

Eurostat (2021c), *Fertility statistics*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Fertility_statistics

Eurostat (2021d), *Participation rate of young people in education and training by sex, age and labour status (incl. NEET rates)*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_18&lang=en

Eurostat (2021e), *Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates)*, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_20

Eurostat (2021f), *People in the EU – statistics on housing conditions*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Archive:People_in_the_EU_-_statistics_on_housing_conditions&oldid=458859

Eurostat (2022a), *Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%)*, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfs_9903&lang=en

Eurostat (2022b), *Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%) – main indicators*, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_03&lang=en

Eurydice (2015), *Adult Education and Training in Europe: Widening Access to Learning Opportunities*, Eurydice Report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Franczak K. (2014), *Perspektywa framing analysis – oferta analityczna dla badań nad dyskursem?*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", 63 (3), 135-156.

Furlong A., Cartmel F. (2007), *Young People and Social Change: New Perspectives*, Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Galland O. (2003), *Adolescence, Post-Adolescence, Youth: Revised Interpretations*, "Revue française de sociologie", 44, Supplement: An Annual English Selection, 163-188.

Garncarek E. (2017), *Podejmowanie decyzji o dobrowolnej bezdzietności w kontekście jakości relacji małżeńskiej*, "Dyskursy Młodych Andragogów", 18, 373-387.

Giele J. Z., Elder G. H. Jr. (eds.) (1998), *Methods of Life Course Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Giddens A. (2013), *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

Giermanowska E. (2001), *Między karierą a bezrobociem*, [in:] B. Fatyga, A. Tyszkiewicz (eds.), *Normalność i normalka. Próba zastosowania pojęcia normalności do badań młodzieży*, Warszawa: OBM ISNS UW, 214-238.

Glanc Z. (2011), *Obraz dorosłości w dobie ponowoczesnej. Mozaika wymiarów dorosłości*, "Edukacja Dorosłych", 1 (64), 24-43.

Goffman I. (2009), *Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Aletheia.

Golinowska S. (2015), *Polityka społeczna adresowana do grup ludności w cyklu życia. Wyzwania dla teorii i praktyki*, "Problemy Polityki Społecznej. Studia i Dyskusje", 28 (1), 15-43.

Golinowska S. (2018), *Modele polityki społecznej w Polsce i Europie na początku XXI wieku*, Warszawa: Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego.

Gooderham P. N., Navrbjerg S. E, Olsen K. M., Steen Ch. R. (2015), *The Labour Market Regimes of Denmark and Norway – One Nordic Model?*, "Journal of Industrial Relations", 57 (2), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274236013_The_labour_market_regimes_of_Denmark_and_Norway_-_One_Nordic_model

Grabowska-Lusińska I. (2012), *Migrantów ścieżki zawodowe bez granic*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Grabowska-Lusińska I. (2014), *Społeczno-ekonomiczne efekty migracji międzynarodowych Polaków: kariery zawodowe i kapitał ludzki*, "Studia BAS", 4 (40), 81-103.

Gromada A. (2017), *Rodzina 500+ jako polityka publiczna*, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Zaawansowanych.

Gromadzka M. (2014), *Doświadczenia edukacyjne studentek w wieku średniej dorosłości*, https://depotuw.ceon.pl/handle/item/676

Grotowska-Leder J. (1991), *Zróżnicowanie warunków materialnych*, [in:] W. Warzywoda-Kruszyńska (ed.), *Młoda generacja w społeczeństwie polskim w momencie przełomu formacyjnego*, Łódź: Instytut Socjologii UŁ, 48-76.

Grotowska-Leder J. (2019), *Wprowadzenie. Innowacyjna polityka społeczna – nowy paradygmat analizy przezwyciężania problemów społecznych*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Sociologica", 71, 5-12.

Grotowska-Leder J. (2020), *Praca czy rodzina? Aktywność zawodowa młodych kobiet na etapie wchodzenia w dorosłość*, "Rocznik Lubuski", 46 (2), 249-263.

Grotowska-Leder J., Kotras M. (2021), *Normative and Non-normative Paths of Reaching Adulthood by Young Poles at the Stage of Transition from Modern to Postmodern Society*, "Sociology and Society", 6 (1), 3-21.

Grotowska-Leder J., Kudlińska I. (2018), *Wchodzenie w dorosłość w wybranych koncepcjach teoretycznych i w percepcjach młodych dorosłych w Polsce*, "Polityka Społeczna", 45 (532), 31-37.

Grotowska-Leder J., Kudlińska-Chróścicka I. (2021), *The Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood in Poland*, "Population Review", 60 (2), 118-134, https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/836704

Grotowska-Leder J., Rek-Woźniak M., Kudlińska I. (2016), *Polityka przebiegu życia – teoretyczne i metodologiczne ramy badań nad procesem osiągania dorosłości*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", LXV (2), 83-104.

Gruszczyński A. (2018), *Autor książki "Urobieni": Mam 30 lat i ani jednego dnia nie byłem zatrudniony na umowę o pracę. Rozmowa z Markiem Szymaniakiem*, https://weekend.gazeta.pl/weekend/7,177333,23622085,autor-ksiazki-urobieni-mam-30-lat--i-ani-jednego-dnia-nie.html

Grzeszczyk E. (2003), *Sukces: amerykańskie wzory – polskie realia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.

Grześkowiak K. (2020), *Pomiędzy teraźniejszością a przyszłością: Niepewność i samozarządzanie bezpieczeństwem w czasach koronawirusa*, "Lud", 104, 279-298.

Gurba E. (2011), *Wczesna dorosłość*, [in:] J. Trempała (ed.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 287-311.

GUS (2005, 2010, 2015, 2019), *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny Polski*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/maly--rocznik-statystyczny-polski-2022,1,24.html

GUS (2009), *Kształcenie dorosłych*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/WZ_ksztalcenie_doroslych.pdf

GUS (2013a), *Ludność. Stan i struktura demograficzno-społeczna – NSP 2011*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/ludnosc-stan-i-struktura-demograficzno-spoleczna-nsp-2011,16,1.html

GUS (2013b), *Kształcenie dorosłych 2011*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/ksztalcenie-doroslych-2011,3,2.html

GUS (2016), *Pracujący w nietypowych formach zatrudnienia*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/rynek-pracy/pracujacy-bezrobotni-bierni-zawodowo-wg--bael/pracujacy-w-nietypowych-formach-zatrudnienia,21,1.html

GUS (2018), *Kształcenie dorosłych 2016*, Gdańsk: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/edukacja/edukacja/ksztalcenie-doroslych-2016,3,3.html

GUS (2019a), *Wybrane aspekty rynku pracy w 2018*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ynek-pracy/zasady-metodyczne-rocznik-pracy/wybrane-aspekty--rynku-pracy-w-2018-roku,4,2.html#

GUS (2019b), *Obwieszczenie w sprawie przeciętnego miesięcznego wynagrodzenia w sektorze przedsiębiorstw bez wypłaty nagród z zysku w 2019 r.*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/sygnalne/komunikaty-i-obwieszczenia/lista-komunikatow-i-obwieszczen/obwieszczenie-w-sprawie-przecietnego-miesiecznego-wynagrodzenia-w-sektorze-przedsiebiorstw-bez-wyplaty-nagrod-z-zysku-w-2019-roku,61,7.html

GUS (2020a), *Budownictwo w 2019 roku*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary--tematyczne/przemysl-budownictwo-srodki-trwale/budownictwo/budownictwo-w--2019-roku,13,5.html

GUS (2020b), *Pokolenie gniazdowników w Polsce*, Warszawa: GUS, https://warszawa.stat.gov.pl/publikacje-i-foldery/ludnosc/pokolenie-gniazdownikow-w-polsce,11,1.html

GUS (2020c), *Obwieszczenie w sprawie przeciętnego miesięcznego wynagrodzenia w sektorze przedsiębiorstw bez wypłaty nagród z zysku w 2020 r.*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/sygnalne/komunikaty-i-obwieszczenia/lista-komunikatow-i-obwieszczen/obwieszczenie-w-sprawie-przecietnego-miesiecznego-wynagrodzenia-w-sektorze-przedsiebiorstw-bez-wyplaty-nagrod-z-zysku-w-2019-roku,61,7.html

GUS (2020d), *Badania organizacji i rozkładu czasu pracy w 2019*, Warszawa: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ynek-pracy/pracujacy-bezrobotni-bierni-zawodowo--wg-bael/badanie-organizacji-i-rozkladu-czasu-pracy-w-2019-roku,20,2.html

GUS (2021), *Kapitał ludzki w Polsce w latach 2016-2020*, Warszawa, Gdańsk: GUS, https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/inne-opracowania/inne-opracowania-zbiorcze/kapital--ludzki-w-polsce-w-latach-2016-2020,8,8.html

GUS (2022), *Pojęcia stosowane w statystyce publicznej*, https://stat.gov.pl/metainformacje/slownik-pojec/pojecia-stosowane-w-statystyce-publicznej/1_27,dziedzina.html

Hajec M. (2020), *Ogólnopolskie badanie wynagrodzeń w 2019 roku*, https://wynagrodzenia.pl/artykul/podsumowanie-ogolnopolskiego-badania-wynagrodzen-w-2019-roku-obw

Hall D. T. (2004), *The Protean Career: A Quarter-century Journey*, "Journal of Vocational Behavior", 65, 1-13.

Handy Ch. (1999), *Głód ducha*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.

Hartmann D., Toguchi Swartz T. (2007), *The New Adulthood? The Transition to Adulthood from the Perspective of Transitioning Young Adults*, "Advances in Life Course Research", 10, 255-289.

Harwas-Napierała B. (2012), *Dorosłość jako spełnienie. Drogi i zagrożenia rozwoju człowieka w okresie dorosłości*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Libron.

Havighurst R. J. (1981), *Developmental Tasks and Education*, New York: Longman.

Heinz W. (2009), *Youth Transitions in an Age of Uncertainty*, [in:] A. Furlong (ed.), *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood. New Perspectives and Agendas*, London: Routledge.

Hendry L. B., Kloep M. (2010), *How Universal is Emerging Adulthood. An Empirical Example*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 13 (2), 169-179.

Herzog P. S. (2016), *Sociology of Emerging Adulthood. Social Changes and Pathways to Adulthood*, The University of Arkansas.

Hogan D. P., Astone N. M. (1986), The Transition to Adulthood, "American Sociological Review", 12, 109-130.

Iacovou M. (2010), *Leaving Home: Independence, Togetherness and Income*, "Advances in Life Course Research", 15 (4), 147-160.

IBE (2014), *Uwarunkowania decyzji edukacyjnych. Wyniki pierwszej rundy badania panelowego gospodarstw domowych. Raport tematyczny z badania*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych.

Illouz E. (2008), *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Inglehart R. (1999), *Postmodernism Erodes Respect for Authority, but Increases Support for Democracy*, [in:] P. Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 236-256.

Ingram H., Schneider A. L., DeLeon P. (2007), *Social Construction and Policy Design*, [in:] P. A. Sabatier (ed.), *Theories of the Policy Process*, Boulder: Westview Press, 93-126.

Integrated Development Strategy for Lodz 2020+, https://bip.uml.lodz.pl/files/bip/public/miasto/dokumenty/BSM_strategia_ang_20131018.pdf

Jacyno M. (2012), Style życia, [in:] A. Giza, M. Sikorska (eds.), *Współczesne społeczeństwo polskie*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Janicka K., Słomczyński K. (2014), *Struktura społeczna w Polsce: klasowy wymiar nierówności*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", 63 (2), 55-72.

Jasińska-Kania A. (2012), *Zmiany wartości Polaków a procesy transformacji, europeizacji i globalizacji*, [in:] A. Jasińska-Kania (ed.), *Wartości i zmiany. Przemiany postaw Polaków w jednoczącej się Europie*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 318-341.

Jelonek M. (2015), *Jakość pracy po studiach jako stopa zwrotu z wyższego wykształcenia*, [in:] J. Górniak (ed.), (*Nie)wykorzystany potencjał Szanse i bariery na polskim rynku pracy. Raport podsumowujący V edycję badań BKL z 2014 roku*, Warszawa, Kraków: Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, 59-77.

Jelonek M., Kasparek K. (2019), *W poszukiwaniu millenialsów: pokolenie Y w świetle danych BKL*, [in:] *Aktywność zawodowa i edukacyjna dorosłych Polaków wobec wyzwań współczesnej gospodarki. Raport podsumowujący VI edycję badania BKL w latach 2017-2018*, Warszawa: Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, 28-57.

Jensen L. A., Arnett J. J. (2012), *Going Global: New Pathways for Adolescents and Emerging Adults in a Changing World*, "Journal of Social Issues", 68 (3), 473-492. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2012.01759.x

Jerszow M. (2019), *Usamodzielnienie pełnoletnich wychowanków pieczy zastępczej*, "Kwartalnik Kolegium Ekonomiczno-Społecznego: Studia i Prace", 1 (37), 77-91.

Jones G., Wallace C. (1992), *Youth, Family and Citizenship*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Jurczak K. (2019), *Podsumowanie Ogólnopolskiego badania wynagrodzeń w 2018 roku*, https://wynagrodzenia.pl/artykul/podsumowanie-ogolnopolskiego-badania-wynagrodzen-w-2018-roku

Jurczyszyn Ł., Kołtan J., Kuczyński P., Rakusa-Suszczewski M. (eds.) (2014), *Obywatele ACTA*, Gdańsk: Europejskie Centrum Solidarności.

Jurgiel-Aleksander A. (2013), *Doświadczenia edukacyjne w perspektywie andragogicznej. Studium biograficzno-fenomenograficzne*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Jurgiel-Aleksander A. (2015), *Jaka edukacja i dla kogo? Biografie edukacyjne dorosłych i ich społeczny wymiar*, "Rocznik Andragogiczny", 22, 79-100.

Kalukin R. (2017), *Jak młodzi chcą uczestniczyć w polityce?*, "Polityka", 32.

Kiersztyn A. (2013), *Niepewność zatrudnienia*, Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk.

Kiersztyn A. (2014), *Niepewność zatrudnienia. Kto jej doświadcza? Czy to stan chwilowy?*, Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Warszawa.

Kiersztyn A. (2015), *Niepewne uczestnictwo – młodzi na polskim rynku pracy w latach 2008-2013: wybrane wyniki Polskiego Badania Panelowego POLPAN 1988-2013*, Warszawa: Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii PAN.

Kiersztyn A. (2017), *Niepewne uczestnictwo: młodzi u progu kariery*, [in:] A. Kiersztyn, D. Życzyńska-Ciołek, K. Słomczyński (eds.), *Rozwarstwienie społeczne. Zasoby, szanse i bariery. Polskie Badanie Panelowe POLPAN 1988-2013*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 107-136.

Kiersztyn A. (2020), *Niepewność zatrudnienia młodych dorosłych: analiza sekwencji karier zawodowych*, "Studia BAS", 2 (62), 73-90.

Kimberlee R. H. (2002), *Why Don't British Young People Vote at General Elections*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 5 (1), 85-98.

Kinowska Z. (2012), *Kondycja społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w* Polsce, "Infos: zagadnienia społeczno-gospodarcze", 22, 1-4.

Kohli M. (1986), *Social Organization and Subjective Construction of the Life Course*, [in:] A. B. Sorensen, F. E. Weinert, Z. R. Sherrod (eds.), *Human Development. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, New York: Taylor & Francis, 271-292.

Kohli M. (2007), *The Institutionalization of the Life Course: Looking Back to Look Ahead*, "Research in Human Development", 4 (3-4), 253-271.

Kolm A., Tonin M. (2015), *Benefits Conditional on Work and the Nordic Model*, "Journal of Public Economics", 127, 115-126.

Konecki K. (2000), *Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Kotowska I. (2019), *Uwagi o urodzeniach i niskiej dzietności w Polsce oraz polityce rodzinnej wspierającej prokreację*, "Studia Demograficzne", 2 (176), 11-29. https://doi.org/10.33119/SD.2019.2.1

Kotowska I. E., Jóźwiak J., Matysiak A., Baranowska A. (2008), *Poland: Fertility Decline – A Response to Profound Societal Change and Transformations in the Labour Market?*, "Demographic Research", 19 (22), 795-854.

Kotowska I. E., Matysiak A., Mynarska M. (eds.) (2016), *Od opuszczenia domu rodzinnego do przejścia na emeryturę. Życie Polaków w świetle danych z badania ankietowego "Generacje i Rodziny"*, Warszawa: ISiD, Kolegium Analiz Ekonomicznych, Szkoła Główna Handlowa w Warszawie.

Kotras M. (2019), *Młodzi dorośli łodzianie i zduńskowolanie zaangażowani w sferę i przestrzeń publiczną w procesie osiągania pełnej dorosłości*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 15 (4), 154-182.

Kowalska I., Wróblewska W. (2001), *Transitions to Adulthood in Poland*, [in:] M. Corijn, E. Klijzing (eds.), *Transitions to Adulthood in Europe*, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 257-277.

Kowalski R. (2013), *Polityka społeczna w Polsce wobec przemian europejskiego modelu społecznego*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Krakowie", 902, 85-106.

Kozek W. (2001), *Rekonstrukcja rynku pracy 1989-2009*, [in:] M. Bucholc, S. Mandes, T. Szawiel, J. Wawrzyniak (eds.), *Polska po 20 latach wolności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 137-149.

Kozłowski W., Matczak E. (2014), *Aspiracje edukacyjne rodziców w stosunku do własnych dzieci*, "Edukacja", 1 (126), 66-78.

Królak B., Rączka M. (2017), *Ustawa o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej. Komentarz*, Warszawa: C.H. Beck.

Kryńska E. (ed.) (2003), *Elastyczne formy zatrudnienia i organizacji pracy a popyt na pracę w Polsce.* Warszawa: IPiSS.

Kryńska E. (ed.) (2009), *Flexicurity w Polsce. Diagnoza i rekomendacje. Raport końcowy z badań*, Warszawa: Ministerstwo Pracy i Polityki Społecznej.

Kryńska E., Kwiatkowski E. (2010), *Polityka państwa wobec rynku pracy: idee ekonomiczne i rzeczywistość*, "Polityka Społeczna", 5-6, 1-7.

Krzaklewska E. (2010), *Nowe wzory wchodzenia w dorosłość młodych Polek – redefinicja znaczenia pracy i rodziny*, [in:] U. Świadźba, E. Budzyńska (eds.), *Rodzina i praca między tradycją a współczesnością*, Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, Wydawnictwo Gnome.

Krzaklewska E. (2014), *Odrzucanie dorosłości czy nowa dorosłość? Dylematy i dyskusje w badaniu procesów wchodzenia w dorosłość*, "Societas Communitas", 2-1 (18-1), 47-68.

Kubala K. (2019), *Racjonalność w dyskursach o pracy w Polsce (po)trasnformacyjnej*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Kubów A., Sipurzyńska-Rudnicka K. (2018), *Aktywność na rynku pracy oraz plany zawodowe młodzieży kończącej szkoły wyższe*, "Społeczeństwo i Ekonomia", 2 (10), 91-113.

Kudlińska-Chróścicka I. (2019), *Stawanie się osobą dorosłą w czasach płynnej nowoczesności w doświadczeniu wielkomiejskich młodych dorosłych*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 15 (4), 34-60.

Kuisz J. (2018), *Uwaga, nowy podział pokoleniowy!*, "Krytyka Polityczna", https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/spiecie-kultura-liberalna-uwaga-nowy-podzial-pokoleniowy/

Ledzińska M. (2012), *Młodzi dorośli w dobie globalizacji. Szkice psychologiczne*, Warszawa: Difin.

Lee Ch., Berrick J. D. (2014), *Experiences of Youth Who Transition to Adulthood out of Care: Developing a Theoretical Framework*, "Children and Youth Services Review", 46, 78-84.

Leibfried S. (1992), *Towards a European Welfare State? On Integrating Poverty Regimes into the European Community*, [in:] Z. Ferge, J. E. Kolberg (eds.), *Social Policy in a Changing Europe*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag.

Leisering L. (2003), *Government and the Life Course*, [in:] J.T. Mortimer, M. Shanahan (eds.), *The Handbook of the Life Course*, New York: Springer, 205–225.

Leszczyńska E. (2019), *Polacy w sieci. Analiza przemian użytkowania Internetu*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMCS.

Lew-Starowicz Z., Skrzypiec-Plinta V. (2010), *Podstawy seksuologii*, Warszawa: PZWL.

Liefbroer A. C., de Jong Giervelt J. (1995), *Standardization and Individualization: The Transition from Youth to Adulthood among Cohorts Born between 1903 and 1965*, [in:] J.C. van den Brekel, F. Deven (eds.), *Population and Family in the Low Countries 1994*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 57–80.

Lis S., Skuza K. (2015), *Zmiany edukacyjnych aspiracji Polaków w okresie transformacji systemowej*, "Optimum. Studia Ekonomiczne", 3 (75), 46-60.

Local Elections. IPSOS Exit Poll 2018 (2018), IPSOS.

Makovicky N. (ed.) (2014), *Neoliberalism, Personhood, and Postsocialism*, *Enterprising Selves in Changing Economies*, Farnham: Routledge.

Malewski M. (1990), *Andragogika w perspektywie metodologicznej*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

Malewski M. (2013), *Dorosłość – kłopotliwa kategoria andragogiki*, "Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja", 3 (63), 27-28.

Marcia J. E. (1980), *Identity in Adolescence*, [in:] J. Adelson (ed.), *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 159-187.

Marody M. (2014), *Jednostka po nowoczesności. Perspektywa socjologiczna*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Marshall T. H. (1950), *Citizenship and Social Class. And other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt18mvns1

Matysiak A. (2011), *Posiadanie własnego mieszkania a rodzicielstwo w Polsce*, "Studia Demograficzne", 1 (159), 38-55.

Matysiak M., Ostrowski P., Owczarek D. (2018), *Związki zawodowe w odbiorze społecznym. Raport z badań ankietowych w sześciu krajach,* Instytut Spraw Publicznych, https://www.isp.org.pl/pl/publikacje/zwiazki-zawodowe-w-odbiorze-spolecznym

Maxwell J. A. (1996), *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Mazur K. (2018), *Liberałowie, zbuntujcie się wreszcie!*, "Krytyka Polityczna", https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/spiecie-klub-jagiellonski-liberalowie-zbuntujcie-sie-wreszcie/

Mazurek E., Stępień T. (2017), *Kompendium wiedzy koniecznej na etapie edukatora dorosłych*, Wrocław: Politechnika Wrocławska, https://pwr.edu.pl/fcp/cGBUKOQtTKlQhbx08SlkTWwRQX2o8DAoHNiwFE1wZDyEPG1gnBVcoFW8SBDRKTxMKRy0SODwBBAEIMQheCFVAORFCHzY/80/public/docs/projekt_lowe/kompendium_wiedzy_koniecznej_edukatora_doroslych_.pdf

Messyasz K. (2015), *Postawy polityczne młodzieży polskiej w świetle badań empirycznych*, "Władza Sądzenia", 7, 56-79.

Michalewska-Pawlak M., Moroń D., Klimowicz M. (2019), *Realizacja inwestycji społecznych w Polsce w kontekście założeń polityki społecznej Unii Europejskiej*, "Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne", 62, 78-96.

Mickiewicz-Stopa K. (2016), *Problemy usamodzielniania wychowanków pieczy zastępczej*, "Polityka Społeczna", 10, 26-30.

Miś A. (2006), *Kształtowanie karier w organizacji*, [in:] H. Król, A. Ludwiczyński (eds.), *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi. Tworzenie kapitału ludzkiego w organizacji*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 477-496.

Miś L. (ed.) (2008), *Praca socjalna skoncentrowana na rozwiązaniach*, "Zeszyty Pracy Socjalnej", 14, 27-47.

Mrozowicki A. (2016), *Normalisation of Precariousness? Biographical Experiences of Young Workers in the Flexible Forms of Employment in Poland*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 2 (12), 94-112.

Mrozowicki A., Maciejewska M. (2016), *Segmentacja rynku pracy, prekaryjne zatrudnienie a strategie związków zawodowych na poziomie branżowym: przypadek Polski*, "Prakseologia", 158, 361-391.

Mrozowicki A., Karolak M., Krasowska A. (2018), *Lost in Transitions?: Biographical Experiences and Life Strategies of Young Precarious Workers in Poland*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", 4 (62), 69-89.

Mulder C. H., Wagner M. (2001), *The Connections between Family Formation and First-time Home Ownership in the Context of West Germany and the Netherlands*, "European Journal of Population", 17, 137-164.

Mynarska M. (2009), *Individual Fertility Choices in Poland*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.

Mynarska M. (2010), *Deadline for Parenthood: Fertility Postponement and Age Norms in Poland*, "European Journal of Population", 26 (3), 351-373.

Mynarska M. (2011), *Kiedy mieć dziecko? Jakościowe badanie procesu odraczania decyzji o rodzicielstwie*, "Psychologia Społeczna", 63 (18), 226-240.

Mynarska M., Styrc M. (2014), *Preferencje i ograniczenia. Czynniki determinujące intencje posiadania pierwszego i drugiego dziecka*, [in:] A. Mynarska (ed.), *Nowe wzorce formowania i rozwoju rodziny w Polsce*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Szkoła Główna Handlowa, 54-76.

Nawrat D. (2014), *Jak uczą się dorośli? Wybrane uwarunkowania uczenia się dorosłych*, [in:] E. Skibińska, H. Solarczyk-Szwec, A. Stopińska-Pająk (ed.), *Teoria i praktyka edukacji dorosłych w procesie zmian. Materiały z II Zjazdu Andragogicznego Toruń, 15.-16.05.2013 r.*, Warszawa, Bydgoszcz: Akademickie Towarzystwo Andragogiczne, Wyższa Szkoła Gospodarki w Bydgoszczy, 309-320, http://www.ata.edu.pl/pliki/Publikacja-pokonferencyjna-II-zjazd-andragogiczny-torun.pdf

Nawrocki T. (2018), *Do polskiej młodzieży, licealistów, studentów, już pracujących*, https://www.facebook.com/theo.nawrocki

Needell B. et. al. (2002), *Youth Emancipating from Foster Care in California: Findings Using Linked Administrative Data*, Berkeley, CA: Center for Social Services Research, University of California at Berkeley, School of Social Welfare, http://cssr.berkeley.edu/childwelfare/pdfs/youth/ffy_report.pdf

Nonomura R. (2017), *Political Consumerism and the Participation Gap: Are Boycotting and 'Buycotting' Youth-based Activities?*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 20 (2), 234-251. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2016.1206861

Nowak M. (2015), *Teoria nieracjonalnego działania: Socjologiczne studium na temat wolontariatu i społecznego aktywizmu*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza.

Nowak M., Pluciński P. (eds.) (2011), *O miejskiej sferze publicznej: Obywatelskość i konflikty o przestrzeń*, Kraków: Korporacja "Ha!art".

Nowak-Lewandowska R. (2015), *Regulacja i deregulacja rynku pracy w Polsce a wzrost gospodarczy*, "Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach", 213, 185-196.

Ochnik D. (2012), *Znaczenie i problemy definicyjne pojęcia "singiel" w naukach społecznych*, "Studia Psychologiczne", 50 (1), 63-74.

Olcoń-Kubicka M. (2009), *Indywidualizacja a nowe formy wspólnotowości*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Olcoń-Kubicka M., Halawa M. (2018), *Making a Living: How Middle-class Couples in Warsaw Start and Practice a Household*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", LXII (4), 91-111.

Olech A. (2012), *Modele partycypacji publicznej w Polsce*, [in:] A. Olech (ed.), *Dyktat czy uczestnictwo? Diagnoza partycypacji publicznej w Polsce*, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 25-52.

Olech A., Kotnarowski M. (2012), *Gotowość mieszkańców do partycypacji*, [in:] A. Olech (ed.), *Dyktat czy uczestnictwo? Diagnoza partycypacji publicznej w Polsce*, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 151-175.

Oleś P. K. (2011), *Psychologia człowieka dorosłego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Parliamentary elections 2015. IPSOS Exit Poll (2015), IPSOS.

Pallas A. M. (2003), *Educational Transitions, Trajectories, and Pathways*, [in:] J. T. Mortimer, M. J. Shanahan (eds.), *Handbook of the Life Course*, Boston, MA: Springer, 165-184.

Palska H. (2007), *Trwałość i zmiana stylów życia*, [in:] A. Kojder (ed.), *Jedna Polska? Dawne i nowe zróżnicowania społeczne*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM PAN.

Pałęcka A., Płucienniczak P. (2017), *Niepełnosprawne zatrudnienie, lęk i działania zbiorowe. Trzy wymiary prekaryjności*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", 4, 61-81.

Paszkowska-Rogacz A. (2003), *Psychologiczne podstawy wyboru zawodu. Przegląd koncepcji teoretycznych*, Warszawa: Krajowy Ośrodek Wspierania Edukacji Zawodowej i Ustawicznej.

Pawlicka A. (2018), *Mordowanie ojców*, Newsweek.pl, https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/agata-bielik-robson-mLodzi-ludzie-w-kontrze-do-ojcow/psmlxm6

Penc J. (1997), *Leksykon biznesu*, Warszawa: Agencja Wydawnicza "Placet".

Pikuła N. G. (2017), *Czynniki różnicujące przebieg kariery zawodowej kobiet i mężczyzn – z perspektywy osób starszych*, "Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja", 20, 2 (78), 95-111.

Piorunek M. (2016), *Poczucie koherencji w konstruowaniu kariery (kontekst całożyciowego rozwoju jednostki)*, "Studia Edukacyjne", 40, 21-38.

Piotrowski K. (2013), *Wkraczanie w dorosłość. Tożsamość i poczucie dorosłości młodych osób z ograniczeniem sprawności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Piszczatowska-Oleksiewicz M. (2014), *Polscy Gniazdownicy. O powodach, dla których dorosłe dzieci mieszkają z rodzicami*, "Pogranicza. Studia Społeczne", XXIV, 181-207.

Plug W., Zeijl E., DuBois-Reymond M. (2003), *Young People's Perceptions on Youth and Adulthood. A Longitudinal Study from the Netherlands*, "Journal of Youth Studies", 6, 127-144.

Pocztowski A. (2007), *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi. Strategie – procesy – metody*, Warszawa: Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne.

Poławski P. (2012), *Precarious Generation on the Polish Labour Market*, "Polityka Społeczna", 1, 15-22.

Riesman D. (2011), *Samotny tłum*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Vis-à-vis/Etiuda.

Rodgers J., Rodgers G. (eds.) (1989), *Precarious Jobs in Labour Market Regulation: The Growth of Atypical Employment in Western Europe*, Geneva: ILO.

Rosińska A., Gońda M. (2019), *Single, but Not by Choice – On Deprivation of Relationships among Polish Corporate Employees*, "Kultura i Społeczeństwo", 4 (63), 35-68. https://doi.org/10.35757/KiS.2019.63.4.3

Róg-Ilnicka J. (2015), *'Career by Choice' or 'Career by Chance.' The Determinants of Flexible Professional Biographies*, [in:] A. Mrozowicki, E. Kolasińska, J. Róg-Ilnicka (eds.), *Social*

Boundaries and Meanings of Work in the 21st-Century Capitalism, "Forum Socjologicz-ne", Special Issue, 1, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 213-223.

Rysz-Kowalczyk B., Szatur-Jaworska B. (2004), *Polityka społeczna wobec cyklu życia. Faza starości*, [in:] J. T. Kowaleski, P. Szukalski (eds.), *Nasze starzejące się społeczeństwo. Nadzieje i zagrożenia*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 229-239.

Schneider A., Ingram H. (2008), *Social Constructions in the Study of Public Policy*, [in:] J. Holstein, J. Gubrium (eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, New York: Guilford Publications, 189-212.

Segiet W. (2021), *Edukacja i biografia*, "Biografistyka Pedagogiczna", 6 (1), 295-314.

Sennett R. (1998), *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, New York: W.W. Norton.

Settersten R. Jr (2011), *Becoming Adult: Meaning and Makers for Young Americans*, [in:] M. C. Waters, P. J. Carr, M. J. Kefals, J. Holdaway (eds.), *Coming of Age in America: The Transition to Adulthood in Twenty-first Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 169-190.

Shanahan M. J. (2000), *Pathways to Adulthood in Changing Societies: Variability and Mechanisms in Life Course Perspective*, "Annual Review of Sociology", 26, 667-692.

Sikorska M. (2021), *Czy zwiększenie dzietności w Polsce jest możliwe*, "IBS Policy Paper", https://ibs.org.pl/publications/czy-zwiekszenie-dzietnosci-w-polsce-jest-mozliwe/

Silva J. M. (2012), *Constructing Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty*, "American Sociological Review", 77 (4), 505-522.

Slany K. (2006a), *Alternatywne formy życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego w ponowoczesnym świecie*, Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy "Nomos".

Slany K. (2006b), *Socjo-demograficzny "syndrom opóźniania" i jego konsekwencje dla polityki społecznej*, [in:] A. Michalska (ed.), *Obrazy życia rodzinnego z perspektywy interdyscyplinarnej*, "Roczniki Socjologii Rodziny", Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 13-19.

Sobotka T. (2011), *Fertility in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989: Collapse and Gradual Recovery*, "Historical Social Research", 36 (2), 246-296.

Sowa A. (2012), *Wystarczy być*, "Polityka", 29, 14.

Sowa A. (2017), *Pokolenie NIE*, "Polityka", 47, 16.

Sowa A. (2018a), *Młodzi, o co chodzi?*, "Polityka", 35, 12-15.

Sowa A. (2018b), *Pokolenie JA*, "Polityka", https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1761612,1,pokolenie-ja.read

Sowa J. (2010), *Prekariat – globalny proletariat w epoce pracy niematerialnej*, [in:] J. Sokołowska (ed.), *Robotnicy opuszczają miejsca pracy*, Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, 100-133.

Sowińska A. (2014), *Zadowolenie z pracy – problemy definicyjne,* "Studia Ekonomiczne", 197, 45-56, https://www.ue.katowice.pl/fileadmin/_migrated/content_uploads/04_Sowinska_Zadowolenie_z_pracy.pdf

Standing G. (2014), *Prekariat. Nowa niebezpieczna klasa*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Staśko M. (2018), *Obudzicie się, gdy przestanie wam działać przywilej? [Staśko odpowiada Wellman]*, "Codziennik Feministyczny", http://codziennikfeministyczny.pl/obudzicie-sie-gdy-przestanie-wam-dzialac-przywilej-stasko-odpowiada-wellman/

Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Ludzkiego 2020 (2013), Warszawa: MPiPS, https://archiwum. mrips.gov.pl/download/gfx/mpips/pl/defaultopisy/7616/1/1/Strategia%20Rozwoju%20 Kapitalu%20Ludzkiego%202020.pdf

Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020 (2012), Warszawa: Sejm RP, http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/Druki7ka. nsf/0/7938232EA0AAD4F2C1257AD00052A8F6/%24File/972.pdf

Strategia Rozwoju Województwa Łódzkiego, https://rpo.lodzkie.pl/images/konkurs_2.3.1_ cop_28122015/SRWL_2020.pdf

Strzelecki P., Saczuk K., Grabowska I., Kotowska I. E. (2015), *Warunki życia gospodarstw domowych. Rynek pracy. Diagnoza Społeczna 2015*, "Contemporary Economics", 9, 132-133.

Suchar M. (2010), *Modele karier: przewidywanie kolejnego kroku*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo C.H. Beck.

Super D. E. (1984), *Career and Life Development*, [in:] W. D. Brown, L. Brooks (eds.), *Career Choice and Development*, San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 192-234.

Super D. E. (1994), *A Life Span, Life Space. Perspective on Convergence*, [in:] M. L. Savickas, R. W. Lent (eds.), *Convergence in Career Development Theories*, Palo Alto: CPP Books, 63-74.

Sutowski M., Wiśniewska A. (2018), *Czasem zmiana narracji nie wystarczy i wtedy potrzeba zmiany radykalnej*, "Krytyka Polityczna", https://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/czasem-zmiana-narracji-nie-wystarczy-i-wtedy-potrzeba-zmiany-radykalnej/

Syed M. (2015), *Emerging Adulthood: Developmental Stage, Theory, or Nonsense?*, [in:] J. Arnett (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Emerging Adulthood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 11-25.

Szafraniec K. (2011), *Młodzi 2011*, Warszawa: Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów.

Szafraniec K. (2012a), *Dojrzewający obywatele dojrzewającej demokracji. O stylu politycznej obecności młodych*, Warszawa: Instytut Obywatelski.

Szafraniec K. (2012b), *Młodość jako wyłaniający się problem i nowa polityczna siła*, "Nauka", 1, 101-122.

Szafraniec K. (2016), *Główne obszary polityk społecznych wobec młodzieży. Ustalenia i refleksje socjologa*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", LXV (2), 57-81.

Szafraniec K. (2017), *Konteksty socjalizacyjne i orientacje życiowe młodzieży*, [in:] K. Szafraniec, J. Domalewski, K. Wasielewski, P. Szymborski, M. Wernerowicz, *Zmiana warty. Młode pokolenia a transformacje we wschodniej Europie i Azji*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 67-99.

Szafraniec K., Domalewski J., Wasielewski K., Szymborski P., Wernerowicz M. (2017), *Zmiana warty. Młode pokolenia a transformacje we wschodniej Europie i Azji*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Szałkowski A. (ed.) (2002), *Rozwój pracowników. Przesłanki, cele, instrumenty*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Poltex.

Szatur-Jaworska B., Rysz-Kowalczyk B., Petelczyc J. (2021), *Perspektywa cyklu i biegu życia w polityce społecznej*, Warszawa: Elipsa Dom Wydawniczy.

Szlendak T. (2010), *Socjologia rodziny. Ewolucja, historia, zróżnicowanie*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Szukalski P. (2015), *Od normatywnego modelu przebiegu życia do polityki przebiegu życia*, "Polityka Społeczna", 42 (2), 1-5.

Szukalski P. (2020), *Małżeństwa wyznaniowe*, "Demografia i Gerontologia Społeczna – Biuletyn Informacyjny", 8, 1-6.

Szulc-Obłoza A. (2017), *Kształcenie osób dorosłych w Polsce jako forma inwestycji w kapitał ludzki*, "Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu", 489, 405-415.

Szymaniak M. (2018), *Urobieni. Reportaże o pracy*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne.

Szymańczak J. (2010), *Edukacja przedszkolna w polityce oświatowej*, "Studia BAS", 2, 125-152.

Szymański M. (1992), *Edukacja w okresie przemian*, "Edukacja", 2.

Szymczak J. (2019), *Partie jak ekskluzywne kluby, należy do nich tylko 0,8 proc. Polaków. To fatalny wynik na tle Europy*, Oko.Press, https://oko.press/partie-jak-klubiki-dla-elit-n-alezy-do-nich-tylko-08-proc-polakow-to-fatalny-wynik-na-tle-europy/

Szylko-Skoczny M. (2009), *Rynek pracy w warunkach kryzysu gospodarczego*, [in:] M. Księżopolski, B. Rysz-Kowalczyk, C. Żołędowski (eds.), *Polityka społeczna w kryzysie*, Warszawa: IPS UW, 97-107.

Śpiewak J. (2018), *Pani Dorota Wellman popełniła wyjątkowo głupi tekst*, https://www.facebook.com/janekspiewak/posts/10155461042081533

Theiss M. (ed.). (2018), *Lokalne obywatelstwo społeczne w polityce społecznej: przykład wychowania przedszkolnego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Tomasik M., Zieleńska M. (2012), *Polska w Unii Europejskiej*, [in:] A. Giza, M. Sikorska (eds.), *Współczesne społeczeństwo polskie*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 441-480.

Tomczyk Ł., Maćkowicz J., Wyżga O., Curyło P., Pietryga-Szkarłat B., Mróz A., Duda A. (2018), *NEET – młodzi dorośli poza rynkiem pracy i systemem edukacyjnym*, "Edukacja Dorosłych", 1, 133-146.

Trempała J. (2006), *Deregulacja cyklu życia w planach życiowych młodzieży*, "Polskie Forum Psychologiczne", 1, 108-120.

Turska E. (2014), *Kapitał kariery ludzi młodych: uwarunkowania i konsekwencje*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Tyrała M. (2020), *Wpływ kultury politycznej na proces funkcjonowania demokracji w Polsce w latach 2006-2018*, "Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne", 1, 97-113.

Urbaniak M. (2014), *Gorzki posmak płynnej nowoczesności. Wybrane zagadnienia z filozofii społecznej Zygmunta Baumana*, "Kwartalnik Naukowy Uczelni Vistula", 4 (42), 5-27.

van Dijk T. (1993), *Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis*, "Discourse and Society", 4 (2), 249-283.

Wajrak A. (2018), *Zawaliliśmy edukację, wychowanie. Zamiast narzekać, zacznijmy pomagać tym młodym ludziom, którzy chcą coś robić*, "Wysokie Obcasy", https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,100865,23779353,adam-wajrak-zawalilismy--edukacje-wychowanie-zamiast-narzekac.html

Walther A. (2006), *Regimes of Youth Transitions: Choice, Flexibility and Security in Young People's Experiences across Different European Contexts*, "Young", 14 (2), 119-139. https://doi.org/10.1177/1103308806062737

Walther A., Heil G., Jensen T. (2001), *Youth Transitions, Youth Policy and Participation*, http://www.iris-egris.de/yoyo/pdf/YoyoWP1StateofArt.pdf

Wellman D. (2018), *Naprawdę wszystko wam jedno, w jakim kraju żyjecie? Obudzicie się, gdy przestanie wam działać Netflix?*, "Wysokie Obcasy", https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,127763,23758052,wszystko-wam-jedno-obudzicie-sie-gdy-przestanie-dzialac-netflix.html?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=SM&utm_campaign=FB_Gazeta_Wyborcza

Wiek jako determinanta popytu na pracę w warunkach ożywienia gospodarczego i "rynku pracownika" (2018), Łódź: Regionalne Obserwatorium Rynku Pracy w Łodzi.

Winogrodzka D., Sarnowska J. (2019), *Tranzycyjny efekt jojo w sekwencjach społecznych młodych migrantów*, "Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej", 15 (4), 130-153. https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8069.15.4.07

Wiszejko-Wierzbicka D., Kwiatkowska A. (2018), *Wchodzenie w dorosłość. Ogólnopolskie Badanie młodych Polaków w wieku 18-29 lat*, "Studia Socjologiczne", 2 (2290), 147-176.

Wołk Z. (2009), *Kultura pracy: etyka i kariera zawodowa*, Radom: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Instytutu Technologii Eksploatacji – PIB.

Wood D., Crapnell T., Lau L., Bennett A., Lotstein D., Ferris M., Kuo A. (2018), *Emerging Adulthood as a Critical Stage in the Life Course*, [in:] N. Halfon, C. Forrest, R. Lerner, E. Faustman (eds.), *Handbook of Life Course Health Development*, Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47143-3_7

Wyn J., Dwyer P. (2002), *New Patterns of Youth Transition in Education*, "International Social Science Journal", 52 (164), 147-159.

Youniss J., Bales S., Christmas-Best V., Diversi M., McLaughlin M., Silbereisen R. (2002), *Youth Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century*, "Journal of Research on Adolescence", 12 (1), 121-148. https://doi.org/10.1111/1532-7795.00027

Zacarés J. J., Serra E., Torres F. (2015), *Becoming an Adult – A Proposed Typology of Adult Status Based on a Study of Spanish Youths*, "Scandinavian Journal of Psychology", 56, 273-282.

Zagórska W., Jelińska M., Surma M., Lipska A. (2012), *Wydłużająca się droga do dorosłości*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.

Zahorska M. (2009), *Sukcesy i porażki reformy edukacji*, "Przegląd Socjologiczny", 3, 119-142.

Zajkowska O. (2020), *Pieniężne instrumenty polityki rodzinnej a dzietność i aktywność zawodowa kobiet*, "Studia Demograficzne", 1 (177), 61-105. https://doi.org/10.33119/SD.2020.1.4

Zapędowska-Kling K. (2017), *Zastosowanie perspektywy cyklu życia w polityce społecznej i pracy socjalnej*, "Problemy Polityki Społecznej. Studia i Dyskusje", 36 (1), 63-74.

Zbieranek J. (ed.) (2015), *Młodzi wyborcy po wyborach w 2014*, Toruń: Centrum Studiów Wyborczych Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu.

Zielińska M., Wróbel R. (2018), *Socio-demographic Aspects of „Emerging Adulthood" in the Context of Cultural Changes in Poland Compared to Europe*, "Rocznik Lubuski", 44 (1), 15-32.

Zybała A. (2013), *Państwo i społeczeństwo w działaniu: polityki publiczne wobec potrzeb modernizacji państwa i społeczeństwa*, Warszawa: Difin.

Zybała A. (2015), *Polityka publiczna wobec teorii i jej praktyki w Polsce*, "Wrocławskie Studia Politologiczne", 18, 28-43.

Legal Acts

Konstytucja Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej (The Constitution of the Republic of Poland) (1997).

Krajowy Plan Działań na Rzecz Zatrudnienia na lata 2015-2017 (The National Action Plan for Employment for 2015-2017).

Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty (Dz. U. 1991, nr 95, poz. 425) (the Act of 7 September 1991 on the Education System (Journal of Laws 1991, No. 95, item 425)).

Ustawa z dnia 6 marca 2018 r. o Centralnej Ewidencji i Informacji o Działalności Gospodarczej i Punkcie Informacyjnym dla Przedsiębiorców (Dz. U. z 2018 r., poz. 647) (The Act of 6 March 2018 on the Central Register and Information on Economic Activity and the Information Point for Entrepreneurs (Journal of Laws 2018, item 647)).

Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 2017 r. o zmianie niektórych ustaw związanych z systemami wsparcia rodzin (Dz. U., poz. 1428) (The Act of 7 July 2017 amending certain acts related to Family Support Systems (Journal of Laws, item 1428)).

Ustawa z dnia 4 kwietnia 2014 r. o ustaleniu i wypłacie zasiłków dla opiekunów (Dz. U. z 2020 r., poz. 1297) (The Act of 4 April 2014 on the Determination and Payment od Allowances for Carers (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 1297)).

Ustawa z dnia 27 września 2013 r. o pomocy państwa w nabyciu pierwszego mieszkania przez ludzi młodych (Dz. U. z 2013 r., poz. 1304) (The Act of 27 September 2013 on State Aid in the Purchase of the First Apartment by Young People (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 1304)).

Ustawa z dnia 12 października 2012 r. o zmianie ustawy o świadczeniach rodzinnych (Dz. U., poz. 1255) (The Act of 12 October 2012 amending the Act on Family Benefits (Journal of Laws, item 1255)).

Ustawa z dnia 9 czerwca 2011 r. o wspieraniu rodziny i systemie pieczy zastępczej (Dz. U. z 2011 r., nr 149, poz. 887) (The Act of 9 June 2011 on Family Support and the Foster Care System (Journal of Laws of 2011, No 149, item 887)).

Ustawa z dnia 27 sierpnia 2004 r. o świadczeniach opieki zdrowotnej finansowanych ze środków publicznych (Dz.U. z 2004 r., nr 210, poz. 2135) (The Act of 27 August 2004 on Health Care Services Financed from Public Funds (Journal of Laws 2004, No. 210, item 2135)).

Ustawa z dnia 28 listopada 2003 r. o świadczeniach rodzinnych (Dz. U. z 2020 r., poz. 111, z późn. zm.) (The Act of 28 November 2003 on Family Benefits (Journal of Laws of 2020, item 111, as amended)).

Ustawa z 4 lutego 2011 r. o opiece nad dziećmi w wieku do lat 3 (Dz. U. z 2011 r., nr 45, poz. 235) (The Act of 4 February 2011 on the Care of Children up to 3 Years of Age (Journal of Laws of 2011, No 45, item 235)).

Ustawa z dnia 6 grudnia 2006 r. o zasadach prowadzenia polityki rozwoju (Dz. U. z 2006 r., nr 227, poz. 1658) (The Act of 6 December 2006 on the Principles of Development Policy) (Journal of Laws of 2006, No 227, item 1658)).

Ustawa z dnia 27 lipca 2005 r. Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym (Dz. U. z 2005 r., nr 164, poz. 1365) (The Law on Higher Education) (Journal of Laws of 2005, No 164, item 1365)).

Ustawa z dnia 20 kwietnia 2004 r. o promocji zatrudnienia i instytucjach rynku pracy (Dz. U. z 2004 r., nr 99, poz. 1001) (The Act of 20 April 2004 Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions) (Journal of Laws of 2004, No 99, item 1001)).

Ustawa z dnia 28 listopada 2003 r. o świadczeniach rodzinnych (Dz. U. z 2003 r., nr 228, poz. 2255) (The Act of 28 November 2003 on Family Benefits) (Journal of Laws of 2003, No 228, item 2255)).

Ustawa z dnia 13 października 1998 r. o systemie ubezpieczeń społecznych (Dz.U. z 1998 r., nr 137, poz. 887) (The Act of 13 October 1998 on the Social Insurance System (Journal of Laws 1998, No. 137, item 887)).

Ustawa z dnia 17 lipca 1998 r. o pożyczkach i kredytach studenckich (Dz. U. z 1998 r., nr 108, poz. 685) (The Act of 17 July 1998 on Student Loans and Credits) (Journal of Laws of 1998, No 108, item 685)).

Obwieszczenie Ministra Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 4 listopada 2020 r. w sprawie wysokości świadczenia pielęgnacyjnego w 2021 r. (M. P. 2020, poz. 1031) (The Announcement of the Minister of Family and Social Policy of 4 November 2020 on the amount of care benefit in 2021 (M. P. of 2020, item 1031)).

Obwieszczenie Ministra Rodziny i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 26 lipca 2021 r. w sprawie wysokości dochodu za 2020 r. z działalności podlegającej opodatkowaniu na podstawie przepisów o zryczałtowanym podatku dochodowym od niektórych przychodów osiąganych przez osoby fizyczne (M. P. z 2021 r., poz. 706) (The Announcement of the Minister of Family and Social Policy of 26 July 2021 on the amount of income for 2020 from taxable activities under the provisions on flat-rate income tax on certain revenues earned by natural persons (M. P. of 2021, item 706)).

Obwieszczenie Prezesa Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego z dnia 22 września 2021 r. w sprawie przeciętnego dochodu z pracy w indywidualnych gospodarstwach rolnych z 1 ha przeliczeniowego w 2020 roku (M. P. z 2021 r., poz. 877) (The Announcement of the President of the Central Statistical Office of 22 September 2021 on the average income from work in individual agricultural holdings from 1 ha of conversion in 2020 (M. P. of 2021, item 877)).

Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 31 lipca 2018 r. w sprawie wysokości dochodu rodziny albo dochodu osoby uczącej się stanowiącego podstawę do ubiegania się o zasiłek rodzinny i specjalny zasiłku pielęgnacyjnego, liczby świadczeń rodzinnych oraz wysokości zasiłku dla opiekuna (Dz. U., poz. 1497) (The Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 31 July 2018 on the amount of family income or income of a learner constituting the basis for applying for family allowance and special care allowance, the number of family benefits and the amount of carer's allowance (Journal of Laws, item 1497)).

Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 27 lipca 2017 r. w sprawie sposobu i trybu postępowania w sprawach dotyczących przyznawania świad-

czeń rodzinnych oraz zakresu informacji, jakie powinny być zawarte we wniosku, za-świadczeniach i oświadczeniach o ustalenie prawa do świadczeń rodzinnych (Dz. U., poz. 1466) (The Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy of 27 July 2017 on the manner and procedure of proceedings in cases concerning the gran-ting of family benefits and the scope of information to be included in the application, certificates and statements for determining the right to family benefits (Journal of Laws, item 1466)).

Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 28 września 2017 r. w sprawie sprawozdań rzeczowo-finansowych z realizacji zadań w zakresie świadczeń dla opiekunów (Dz. U. z 2017 r., poz. 1810) (The Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy of 28 September 2017 on material and financial reports on the implementation of tasks in the field of allowances for carers (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1810)).

Rozporządzenie Ministra Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej z dnia 28 września 2017 r. w sprawie sprawozdań rzeczowo-finansowych z realizacji zadań z zakresu świadczeń rodzinnych (Dz. U. z 2017 r., poz. 1811) (The Regulation of the Minister of Family, Labour and Social Policy of 28 September 2017 on material and financial reports on the performance of tasks in the field of family benefits (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1811)).

Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 14 września 2010 r. w sprawie formy opieki me-dycznej nad kobiety w ciąży uprawniającej do dodatku z tytułu urodzenia dziecka oraz wzoru zaświadczenia potwierdzającego pozostawanie pod tą opieką (Dz.U., nr 183, poz. 1234) (The Regulation of the Minister of Health of 14 September 2010 on the form of medical care for a pregnant woman entitling to the childbirth allowance and a model certificate confirming remaining under this care (Journal of Laws, No 183, item 1234)).

Rozporządzenie Ministra Zdrowia z dnia 30 października 2019 r. zmieniające rozporzą-dzenie w sprawie formy opieki medycznej nad kobietą w ciąży uprawniającej do dodat-ku z tytułu urodzenia dziecka oraz wzoru zaświadczenia potwierdzającego pozostawa-nie pod tą opieką (Dz.U. z 2019 r., poz. 2229) (The Regulation of the Minister of Health of 30 October 2019 amending the Regulation on the form of medical care for a pregnant woman entitling to the childbirth allowance and the model certificate confirming that she remains under this care (Journal of Laws of 2019, item 2229)).

List of tables

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of interviewees (IDI)

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/ source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
1.	IDI/L/R1	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	Laboratory analyst, work income	Living alone, owner (mortgage), renting out apartments	Single, no children
2.	IDI/L/R2	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, self-employment	Entrepreneur, work income	Living with parents, separate household in a family house	Single, no children
3.	IDI/L/R3	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, self-employment	Entrepreneur, work income	Living alone, owner (mortgage)	Single, no children
4.	IDI/L/R4	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	Clerk, work income	Living with family, owner (inherited property)	Married, 1 child
5.	IDI/L/R5	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment, side jobs	Construction engineer, work income	Living with family, owner (mortgage)	Married, 1 child
6.	IDI/L/R6	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, temporary job	Language teacher, work income	Living with a partner, owner (inherited property)	Partner relationship, no children
7.	IDI/L/R7	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, self-employment, B2B	Quality manager /auditor, work income	Living alone, hired from family	Single, no children
8.	IDI/L/R8	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment	OHS specialist, work income	Living with parents	Single, no children
9.	IDI/L/R9	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, self-employment	Entrepreneur, work income	Living alone, hired flat	Single, no children
10.	IDI/L/R10	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment	Construction engineer, work income	Living with family, council flat	Married, no children

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/ source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
11.	IDI/L/R11	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment	Social worker, work income	Living with a partner, council flat	Partner relationship, 1 child
12.	IDI/L/R12	Lodz/the Netherlands	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	Data analyst work income	Living with a spouse, council flat	Married, no children
13.	IDI/L/R13	Lodz	M	1987	Family of origin	Primary	Active, temporary job	Chef assistant, work income	Living with a partner, hired flat	Partner relationship, no children
14.	IDI/L/R14	Lodz	M	1987	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Call centre worker, work income	Living with parents	Single, no children
15.	IDI/L/R15	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Primary	Active, fixed-term employment	Shop assistant, work income	Living with family, council flat	Married, 1 child
16.	IDI/L/R16	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Call centre worker, work income	Living with parents	Single, no children, non-heteronormative
17.	IDI/L/R17	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	IT specialist, work income	Living with family, owner (state's subsidiary programme)	Married, no children
18.	IDI/L/R18	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Unemployed, side jobs on black market	Construction site assistant, work income	Living with family, owner	Married, 1 child
19.	IDI/L/R19	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, temporary job	Warehouse worker, work income	Living alone, hired flat	Single, 1 child

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/ source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
20.	IDI/L/R20	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Non-active, maternity leave	Child support payments, allowances, benefits	Living alone, owner (inherited property)	Single, 3 children
21.	IDI/L/R21	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, temporary job	Cleaning services, work income, allowances, benefits	Living alone, council flat	Single, 3 children
22.	IDI/L/R22	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	Accountant, work income	Living with family, owner (mortgage)	Married, 2 children
23.	IDI/L/R23	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment, side jobs	Academic teacher, work income	Living alone, hired flat	Single, no children
24.	IDI/L/R24	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment	Clerk, work income	Living with friends, hired flat	Single, no children, non-heteronormative
25.	IDI/L/R25	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, parental leave, side jobs	Transnational corporation employee, work income, benefits	Living with family, owner (inherited property)	Married, 2 children
26.	IDI/L/R26	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Bank employee, work income	Living with partner, owner (inherited property)	Divorced & Partner relationship, 1 child

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
27.	IDI/L/R27	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Non-active, maternity leave	Allowances, benefits	Living with family, hired flat	Married, 2 children
28.	IDI/L/R28	Lodz	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Manager in security company, work income	Living with parents (and own children), council flat	Divorced, 2 children
29.	IDI/L/R29	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Doctorate	Active, full-time employment	Academic teacher, work income	Living with family, owner (bought by parents)	Married, no children
30.	IDI/L/R30	Lodz	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment	Academic teacher, work income	Living with family, owner (bought by parents)	Married, 1 child
31.	IDI/ZW/R1	Zdunska Wola	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Postman, work income	Living with parents, council flat	Single, no children
32.	IDI/ZW/R2	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Registered unemployed, side job	Pension of grandmother, partner's income, allowances, benefits	Living with grandparent, council flat	Partner relationship, 1 child
33.	IDI/ZW/R3	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family f origin	Secondary	Non-active, caring for a sick child	Partner's income, allowances, benefits	Living with parent and partner, council flat	Partner relationship, 1 child
34.	IDI/ZW/R4	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Register unemployment, parental leave	Partner's income, allowances, benefits	Living with parents, council flat	Partner relationship, 2 children

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
35.	IDI/ZW/R5	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Register unemployment	Parents' income	Living with parents	Single, no children
36.	IDI/ZW/R6	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, full-time employment, side jobs	Clerk, work income	Living with partner, owner (mortgage)	Widow & partner relationship, 1 child
37.	IDI/ZW/R7	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Basic Vocational	Register unemployment, parental leave	Partner's income, allowances, benefits	Living with partner, own property (inherited)	Partner relationship, 3 children
38.	IDI/ZW/R8	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Non-active, parental leave	Social worker, partner's income, allowances, benefits	Living with sibling	Widow, 2 children
39.	IDI/ZW/R9	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Basic Vocational	Non-active, maternity leave, side jobs on black market	Hairdresser, work income, allowances, benefits	Living alone with 1 child, social flat	Divorced, 2 children
40.	IDI/ZW/R10	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Active, temporary job	Clerk – debt collector, work income	Living with partner and 2 children, rented flat	Partner relationship, 2 children
41.	IDI/ZW/R11	Zdunska Wola	M	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Register unemployment, side jobs on black market	Construction worker, work income	Living with partner and 1 child, owner	Partner relationship, 1 child
42.	IDI/ZW/R12	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Vocational	Register unemployed, side jobs on black market	Clerk, work income, allowances, benefits	Living with family, rented flat	Married, 2 children

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
43.	IDI/ZW/R13	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Basic vocational	Register unemployment	Allowances, benefits	Living alone with 2 children, rented flat	Single, 2 children
44.	IDI/ZW/R14	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Secondary	Non-active, maternity leave	Pensioner, allowances, benefits	Living with family, rented flat (subsidised by local government)	Married, 2 children
45.	IDI/ZW/R15	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	Social worker, work income	Living with family, owner (state's subsidiary programme)	Married, 1 child
46.	IDI/ZW/R16	Zdunska Wola	F	1986	Family of origin	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	Language teacher, work income	Living with family, rented flat	Married, no children
47.	IDI/FCI/R1	Lodz	M	1994	Foster care institution	Basic vocational	Active, side jobs on black market	Construction worker, work income	Living with parent	Single, 1 child (no contact)
48.	IDI/FCI/R2	Lodz/Zgierz	F	1990	Foster care institution	Tertiary	Non-active, parental leave, side jobs	Pedagogue, work income, allowances, benefits	Living with family, owner	Married, 1 child
49.	IDI/FCI/R3	Lodz	F	1993	Foster care institution	Secondary	Side jobs on black market	Make-up artist, work income, allowances, benefits	Living with partner and 1 child, social flat	Partner relationship, 1 child
50.	IDI/FCI/R4	Lodz	F	1991	Foster care institution	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment, B2B	Sewing, work income	Living with partner, partner's house	Partner relationship, no children
51.	IDI/FCI/R5	Lodz	F	1993	Foster care institution	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Shop assistant, work income	Living with partner, rented flat	Partner relationship, no children

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
52.	IDI/FCI/R6	Lodz	F	1992	Foster care institution	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Street worker, work income	Living alone, council flat	Partner relationship, no children, non-heteronormative
53.	IDI/FCI/R7	Lodz	F	1992	Foster care institution	Basic vocational	Non-active, side jobs on black market	Hairdresser, partner's income, allowances, benefits	Living with family, council house	Married, 2 children
54.	IDI/FCI/R8	Lodz	F	1988	Foster care institution	Secondary	Active, side jobs	Warehouse worker, allowances, benefits, work income	Living alone, council flat	Single, 1 child
55.	IDI/FCI/R9	Lodz	M	1990	Foster care institution	Secondary	Active, fixed-term employment	Cleaner, work income	Living with partner, rented flat	Partner relationship
56.	IDI/FCI/R10	Lodz	F	1991	Foster care institution	Tertiary	Active, fixed-term employment	IT specialist, work income	Living with family, owner (mortgage)	Married, 1 child
57.	IDI/FCI/R11	Lodz	M	1998	Foster care institution	Primary	Non-active, side jobs on black market	Student of vocational school, pension of grandmother, work income	Living with grandparent, council house	Single, no children

No	Code name	Place of residence	Sex	Year of birth	Growing up environment	Education level	Labour market situation/form of employment	Profession/ source of income	Housing situation	Marital status and children
58.	IDI/FCI/R12	Lodz	M	1999	Foster care institution	Primary	Non-active, side jobs on black market	Student of vocational school, pensioner	Living with sibling, council house	Single, no children
59.	IDI/FCI/R13	Lodz	M	N.A.	Foster care institution	Primary	Active, fixed-term employment	Delivery man, work income	Living alone, council house	Single, no children
60.	IDI/FCI/R14	Lodz	F	1989	Foster care institution	Basic vocational	Active, parental leave, side jobs on black market	Shop assistant, allowances, benefits, work income	Living with partner, council flat	Partner relations, 2 children

Appendix 2. List of interviews (FGI)

No	Code name	Place where interview was conducted	Year of interview	Number of partici-pants	Professions/activities conducted by participants
1.	FGI/L/I1	Lodz	2016	8	Young adults (1986 cohort)
2.	FGI/L/I2	Lodz	2016	8	Young adults (1986 cohort)
3.	FGI/L/I3	Lodz	2016	10	Young adults (1986 cohort)
4.	FGI/FCI/I1	Lodz	2016	8	Young adults (1986 cohort), growing up in foster care institutions
5.	FGI/FCI/I2	Lodz	2016	9	Young adults (1986 cohort), growing up in foster care institutions
6.	FGI/FCI/I3	Lodz	2016	10	Young adults (1986 cohort), growing up in foster care institutions
7.	FGI/ZW/I1	Zdunska Wola	2016	11	Young adults (1986 cohort)
8.	FGI/ZW/I2	Zdunska Wola	2016	9	Young adults (1986 cohort)
9.	FGI/ZW/I3	Zdunska Wola	2016	11	Young adults (1986 cohort)
10.	FGI/L/I4	Lodz	2017	8	Local administration official (housing department); local administration official (housing department); local administration official (entrepreneurship department); local administration official (city strategy department); social welfare official; job service official (city level); job service official (regional level); job service clerk (regional level)
11.	FGI/L/I5	Lodz	2017	11	Local administration official (social welfare department); local administration official (housing department); local administration official (housing department); social welfare official; local administration official (entrepreneurship department); local administration official (city strategy department); social welfare official; job service official (city level); vocational education official; job posting agent; job service official (regional level);
12.	FGI/ZW/I4	Zdunska Wola	2017	8	Local administration official (healthcare and social welfare department); county council member; social welfare official; head of local administration; vocational education official; social welfare official); local administration official (housing department); job service official (regional level)

13.	FGI/ZW/I5	Zdunska Wola	2017	9	Local administration official (development department); local education official, job service official (regional level); pedagogue in child care home; social worker in child care home; social welfare official; job service official (regional level); county council member; local administration official (education and sports department)
14.	FGI/L/I6	Lodz	2018	7	NGO member; city council member; NGO and political party member; NGO member, NGO member; local administration official; local administration official
15.	FGI/ZWI6	Zdunska Wola	2018	6	NGO member and city council member; NGO member and city council member, NGO member and city council member; NGO member; NGO member and city council member; NGO member
16.	FGI/ZW/I7	Zdunska Wola	2018	5	Enterpreneur and NGO member; local administration official; NGO member and cultural centre worker; local administration official; local administration official

Appendix 3. In-depth interview (IDI) scenario

Public policies for completed adulthood. The case of Poland
Task 5 "Strategies for reaching completed adulthood by young people"

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW (IDI) SCENARIO
(with people brought up in biological families and in foster care)

Issue area	Questions
Adulthood	1. Please tell us when you felt like an adult? What was that experience like? *What happened, and when did it happen? What did it involve? What made you feel like an adult at the time?*

Perceptions and expectations at the threshold of adulthood	2. Please tell me how you imagined your adulthood when you were 15-18 years old, that is, when you started making your first decisions about your future life (e.g. choosing a school or your first job).
	 Please tell us more about your life at the dawn of adulthood:
	 3. Have you made any plans for your future? If so, what kind?
	
	 Follow-up questions for people raised in foster care:
	    a. *Were these plans written in the form of an individual empowerment programme?*
	    b. *If yes, how was it created? Did you write it yourself, or did someone help you? If yes, who and how?*
	    c. *Did you find your empowerment programme helpful in achieving the goals you set for yourself?*
	    d. *Who was your guardian? Who decided that this person and not another person would be the guardian?*
	    e. *Were you satisfied with your interactions with him/her? If yes, why? If not, why not?*
	    f. *What do you think a caregiver/a guardian should be like? How supportive?*
	    g. *How would you rate the empowerment programme? Was it helpful? If yes - why? If not - what should the process of becoming independent for FCI alumni look like?*
	    h. *What feelings did this stage in your life involve?*
	    i. *Did you have to behave in any particular way at the time? Did you have to change anything in your life as a teenager?*
	
	 4. What were your expectations and needs when becoming a full adult?
	 5. Were you free to choose your life path? If not, what stood in the way?
	 (gender, place of residence, education, professional situation, family situation, financial situation of family of origin, sexual orientation, etc.)?

Issue area	Questions	

The process of entering adulthood	6. Please tell us about your further life. What was the process of entering adulthood like for you (from the age of about 18)?
	  a. *How did your education progress?*
	  b. *How did you search for your first and subsequent jobs?*
	  c. *Did you come to live independently? If so, how and when?*
	  d. *How was the path to starting a family shaped?*
	
	Follow-up question for people raised in foster care:
	  a. *What was the first thing you did after leaving your foster care institution?*
	  b. *How did you feel at the time?*
	
	7. What influenced your decisions? Were there any events that accelerated or delayed your entry into adulthood? What were they?	

Support	8. Who assisted you in reaching adulthood?
	9. What was the support you received from others on your journey to adulthood?
	  a. *What type of support was provided? Please give examples.*
	  Informal: instrumental, informational, material, emotional support from relatives and others
	  b. *How did you receive support: did you apply for it yourself? Did someone offer it to you?*
	10. Whose support did you value most and why?
	11. Is there a person from whom you would expect more support but did not receive it? Who is that person, and what type of support would you expect?
		12. What institutions assisted you in reaching adulthood?
		13. What was the support you received from institutions on your journey to adulthood?
		  a. *What type of support was provided? Please give examples.*
		  Formal: loans (student/housing/cash), scholarships, nursery/preschool support, benefits, health services, employment offices and agencies, employers
		  b. *How did you receive support: did you apply for it yourself? Did someone offer it to you?*
		14. Whose support did you value most and why?
		15. Is there any institution you would expect more support from but did not receive it? What is that institution, and what type of support would you expect?

Facilitation in your life and the life of your generation	16. Is there anything in particular that made it easier for you to reach adulthood? If so, what was it? 17. For whom do you think is easier to enter adulthood? What kind of people, who are they, and how do they live? Why? What do they have that makes it easier to become an adult? Who helps them (family, school, "the state") and how?	

Issue area	Questions

Difficulties in your life and the life of your generation	18. Is there anything in particular that made it difficult for you to reach adulthood? If so, what was it?
	  a. *How did you cope with your difficulties?*
	  b. *Who, what helped you do this?*
	19. Who has the hardest time entering adulthood? Which people, who are they, how do they live? Why? What makes it difficult to become an adult? Who helps them (family, school, "the state") and how?

Young people as political actors	20. Who do you think should support young people in reaching adulthood, and how? 21. Are young people's issues important to others? 22. How would you rate the legal arrangements that governed young people as you reached adulthood?
Summary	23. Do you consider yourself a full adult? *If not, what else would you like to accomplish to make that happen?* 24. Have you implemented your dreams/visions from your time at the dawn of adulthood? What has been successful, and what has not? Follow-up question for people raised in foster care a. *In your opinion, is adult life difficult? Why? How is it different from life as a teenager?*

METRIC

Gender	Woman Man
Year of birth	
Educational level	Less than primary Primary Basic Vocational Secondary General Secondary Vocational Postsecondary Bachelor's degree or engineer Master's or doctor's degree PhD or higher
Employment situation	A salaried employee Self-employed An employer Does not work
Type of employment (if an employee)	A permanent (full-time) A fixed-term contract A temporary employment contract An internship contract or as a trainee Other (what kind?) …………………………………………………

Total monthly income from all sources (per person in household)	Below the minimum wage (2100 PLN gross=1530 PLN net) More than the minimum wage but below the average income in the province of Lodz, i.e. between 2100 PLN and 4213.76 PLN Above-average income in Lodz voivodship (4213.76 PLN)
Assessing financial situation	Satisfied Moderately satisfied Unsatisfied Hard to decide
Housing situation	Lives alone Lives with family or friends Lives with parents/parent Lives with parents/parent and partner/wife/husband Lives with partner/wife/husband Lives with partner/wife/husband and child/children Other, what kind? ………………………………………………………
Family situation	Single In an informal relationship since ……… (year) Married since ……… (year) Divorced Widower/Widow
Children	No Yes, how many and what age?…………………………………………………
How can we reach you for audit purposes?	Phone number: ………………………………………………… E-mail: …………………………………………………

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE RESEARCHER AFTER THE INTERVIEW

1. Date and place of interview	
2. Interview duration	
3. The interviewee's attitude toward the interview (friendly, not very interested, impatient, hostile, etc.).	
4. Interference during the interview	
5. Likely causes of interference	
6. Difficult questions for the interviewee	
7. Interviewer's suggestion to rephrase the question	
8. Presence of other people	
9. Comments	

Appendix 4. Focus group interview (FGI) scenarios

Public policies for completed adulthood. The case of Poland
Task 2 "Young adults and their concepts of entering adulthood"

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (FGI) SCENARIO
(with people brought up in biological families and in foster care)

Subject/Theme	Questions
I. Introduction	Welcoming participants, presenting the focus of the study, basic information about the project, the meeting format, its duration, and expectations for respondents, informing about recording, confidentiality, asking participants to turn off or mute their mobile phones, asking the FGI participants to introduce themselves (including checking that they meet the research sample requirements).
II. Adulthood	*Recently in our country, there has been a discussion about the situation of young people, especially concerning the period when they become adults. We would like to talk about it with you first, because, in our opinion, you are the experts in your own case and can best tell us about your life.* 1. What is adulthood? Is it the same as being successful? 2. What does it mean to be an adult these days? (at a certain age/ mature/independent, autonomous/responsible/not dependent on anyone/having a family, job, education, profession) 3. What spheres does it include? Which are the most important? 4. Where is the line between youth and adulthood? 5. What are social expectations towards young people? 6. What are your visions of adulthood? What would you like your adult life to look like? 7. Have your visions of adulthood changed over time? If yes, how and what influenced these changes?
III. The process of entering adulthood	1. What are the possible paths into adulthood? 2. How should this pathway proceed, step by step, in your opinion? Is it changing? How did it use to be (in your parents' time)? 3. What were and are your expectations and needs in order to become a full adult? Is it changing? How did it use to be (when you were 15-18 years old)?
IV. Opportunities and barriers	1. What are the chances of such achieved adulthood in our country? 2. Is it changing? How did it use to be (in your parents' time and when you were 15-18 years old) – better? Worse? Why? 3. Did you have freedom of choice? If not, in what way (gender, place of residence, education, professional situation, family situation, financial situation of family of origin, sexual orientation, etc.)? 4. What (other) barriers do young people face? 5. What concerns did/do you have?

	6. For whom is easier to enter adulthood? Which people, who are they, how do they live? Why? What do they have that makes it easier to become an adult? Who is helping them (family, school, "the state") and how? 7. Who finds it most difficult to become an adult? What kind of people, who are they, and how do they live? Why? What makes it difficult to become an adult? Who is helping them in this process (family, school, "the state") and how? 8. Are young people and their problems important for politicians in your opinion? Why? 9. Who/what institutions help young people? 10. Who should be responsible for what? 11. What should "the state" help and how? 12. What should schools help and how? 13. What should the family/children's home help with, and how? 14. What should we take care of? What should we do ourselves?
V. Completion	Concluding and summarising the interview. Acknowledgement of participation.

Public policies for completed adulthood. The case of Poland
Task 3 "Reconstructing the political and institutional framework
of the process of entering adulthood"

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (FGI) SCENARIO
(with representatives of social policy institutions and administration
at the local level)

Question

1. There has been a lot of discussion recently about the changes that affect young people. What do you think about the current changes affecting young people and the phenomena reported by the mass media: longer education, later entry into the job market, later family formation and leaving the family home, or low interest in participating in social life? Is it so? Do you agree with these assessments? In your opinion, are these phenomena positive or negative? For whom? Are these phenomena socially acceptable?
  a. What are the reasons for these changes and trends? Do state institutions somehow guide or supervise these phenomena, e.g., when entering the labour market or starting a household? Should they supervise, and if so, which institutions and to what extent?
  b. Are these phenomena felt at the local level? What specific problems related to entering adulthood are revealed at the local level?

2. Do institutions/institutional actors support young adults in reaching full adulthood? If so, which ones?   a. What institutions should address young adults' concerns? Why exactly those ones?

Question

3. How do your institutions support young adults in reaching adulthood? What specific activities are implemented/implemented by your institutions? Are these activities undertaken within the framework of certain programmes (EU, national)? Do the institutions themselves call for such programmes? Is there cooperation with the addressees of these activities, with institutions within and outside the sector? Do institutions cooperate with each other for the benefit of young adults, and if not, what is the reason for the limited or lack of cooperation? If yes, with whom and to what extent? If not, what do you think such cooperation should look like?
  a. What actions are taken to support young adults in gaining job skills?
  b. What actions are taken to support young adults in getting and keeping stable jobs?
  c. What actions are taken to support young adults in starting a family and independent household?

4. Are there groups/categories among young Poles who, because of their professional, health, or material situation, are the focus of public institutions? What exactly are these groups? Can you point out such groups which are not in the field of interest of institutions but should be? Why are they not, and why should they be?

5. Should actions taken toward these groups be inspired from the bottom up, or is this the role of the state?
  a. In your opinion, is there an appropriate atmosphere or structures (which ones?) at the local level for such activities?
  b. Do you think there is a specific local capacity for young adult activities? If yes, how do you understand it?
  c. Are/should these activities be carried out in cooperation with young adults or not? What, if any, should such cooperation look like?

6. Are the existing legal arrangements that govern the work of the institution you represent sufficient to implement social policies for/support young adults?   a. Is lobbying done on behalf of young adults? What are the activities and who does them? Are efforts being made to introduce appropriate legislation?
7. Which ongoing tasks at your institutions are the result of delegation from the central level?
8. Do your institutions refer to programmes such as Youth Guarantees, Housing Plus, Support to Start in their efforts to serve young adults?

**Public policies for completed adulthood. The case of Poland
Task 4 "Young adults as actors of the life course policy"**

**FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW (FGI) SCENARIO
(with young adults active in the public sphere: Lodz
and Zdunska Wola county)**

1. There has been a lot of discussion lately about transitions affecting young people. What do you think about the contemporary changes affecting young people and the phenomena reported by the mass media: longer education, later entry into the labour market, later family formation and leaving the family home, or low interest in participating in social life?
Is it so? Do you agree with these assessments?
In your opinion, are these phenomena positive or negative? For whom? Are these phenomena socially acceptable?
 	
   a. What are the reasons for these changes and trends? Do state institutions somehow guide or supervise these phenomena, e.g., entering the labour market or starting one's own household? Should they supervise, and if so, which institutions and to what extent?
   b. Are these phenomena felt at the local level? What specific problems related to entering adulthood are manifested at the local level?
 	
     What actions are undertaken to counteract depopulation in Lodz? [FGI Lodz]
     As we can read in the Plan to combat depopulation in the Lodz Province, "the negative migration balance in the province has the highest value in the 25-39 age group, which proves the low attractiveness of Lodz as a place to work, live and start a family for young people". What is done to keep young people in the city and to attract them from other places?

2. Who do you think should be most supportive of young adults, i.e. 25-35-year-olds?

3. Do institutions truly support young people in reaching completed adulthood? If so, which ones?
   a. What institutions should address young adult concerns? Why exactly those ones?
   b. Do the institutions named by the respondents finance their activities from local and national resources, or do they also reach for EU funding sources?

4. How do your institutions support young adults in reaching adulthood? What specific activities are implemented by your institutions? Are these activities undertaken within the framework of certain programmes (EU, national)? Do the institutions themselves take the initiative in developing such programmes? Do the institutions cooperate with the addressees of these activities? Do institutions cooperate with other institutions within and outside the sector? Do institutions cooperate with each other for the benefit of young adults? If not, what is the reason for the limited or lack of cooperation? If yes, with whom and to what extent? If not, what do you think such collaboration should look like?   a. What activities are in place to support young adults in gaining vocational skills and obtaining and maintaining stable employment?

b. How are young people supported so that they can get and keep a job in the creative industry? Because, as the strategic documents of the city and the province indicate, the goal is "to increase the high quality of creative human capital, professionally active in all age categories and to mobilize unused labour resources." (Łódzkie Voivodeship Development Strategy 2020).

c. How is youth unemployment being addressed? Are there any city programmes?

d. Has a Community Consultation Point been created in the Szadek municipality in accordance with the provisions of the Development Strategy of Szadek Municipality and Town for 2014-2020? According to the principles of the Development Strategy, a Consultation Point would have an advisory function in terms of formal requirements for running and establishing a business and obtaining funds for development. [FGI Zdunska Wola]

e. What activities are in place to support young adults in starting a family?

f. What measures are taken to promote pro-family policy, including childcare?

In terms of pre-school education, the Lodz region clearly stands out from other EU regions. The share of 4-year-olds enrolled in pre-school education in this age group is, on average, over 90% in the EU, while in the Lodz Province, it is only about 61%. (Lodz Voivodeship Development Strategy 2020)

Additionally, the Plan for Counteracting Depopulation in the Lodz Province assumes that "The basic aim of the support is to improve the living conditions of members of families with many children. (…) The actions taken will therefore reduce the risk of social exclusion of members of these households and will be undertaken at the national, regional and local level." What specific actions are undertaken in Lodz? [FGI Lodz]

Unemployment among young people is particularly high in Zdunska Wola and Zapolice. In the Zapolice Municipality Revitalization Programme for 2016-2023, 1/4 of all registered unemployed people were aged 25-34, while people under 35 accounted for nearly half of all unemployed. On the other hand, in the Development Strategy of Zdunska Wola County for the years 2007-2020, at the end of 2009 in the County Labour Office in Zdunska Wola, 39% of those registered were people aged 18-24, and another 27% were people aged 25-34. [FGI Zdunska Wola]

5. What activities are in place to support young adults in establishing an independent household?

What specific actions does the city take to meet the housing needs of residents, especially supporting young people? (e.g. Does the city's tenement programme for students continue? Are other city programmes operating?)

The strategic documents clearly note these needs:

"Lodz needs a significant stock of affordable rental housing" [FGI Lodz].

"Efficient and waste-free management of the municipal housing stock. Creating conditions for renting municipal housing by people with average incomes".

"Possible recommendations for implementation concern the use of the region's existing municipal housing stock and the facilitation of access to housing located in the resources of public authorities, e.g., through temporary preferential reductions in rent and utility payments, tax breaks and in the purchase of housing with the commitment of the tenants to settle in the Lodz Province."

What specific actions are currently being taken to promote housing in our city?

What exactly are the possibilities of providing nursery care? According to the draft Local Revitalisation Programme for the city of Zdunska Wola until 2020, the percentage of children in nursery in the city is relatively low compared to the region and other cities in Poland. At the same time, among the expected revitalization activities, the same document mentions supporting private and public undertakings, which should increase the percentage of children covered by care in nurseries. [FGI Zdunska Wola]

In the Zapolice municipality, there is not a single nursery with more than 130 children under three years of age, as noted in the Zapolice Municipality Revitalization Programme for 2016-2023. The same document also notes the very low rate of children covered by pre-school education compared to the country (59% in 2015). [FGI Zdunska Wola]

In the Draft Local Revitalization Programme for the city of Zdunska Wola until 2020, the implementation of activities "Together for the Family" and "Debt Free Housing" by MOPSCOS in Zdunska Wola is planned for 2017-2020. Have these actions started? Are the recipients also young adults? [FGI Zdunska Wola]

6. Which of your institutions' current tasks are the result of delegation from the central level?

7. In their activities for young adults, do your institutions refer to such programmes as Guarantees for Youth, Apartment+, Apartment for the Young?

8. Are there any groups/categories among young Poles who, due to their professional, health, or material situation, are the focus of interest of public institutions? What exactly are these groups?
    Could you identify any such groups that are not in the field of institutional interest but should be? Why are they not, and why should they be?

9. Who should inspire actions to support young people? Should they do it themselves, from the bottom up, or is it the role of the state?

10. In your opinion, is there an adequate climate/appropriate structures (what?) at the local level to undertake such activities?

11. In your opinion, is it possible to talk about the local specificity of young adult opportunities, and if so, how do you understand it?

12. Are/should these activities be undertaken in collaboration with young adults or not? What, if any, should such collaboration look like?

13. Are the existing legal solutions that regulate the work of the institution you represent sufficient for the implementation of social policy for young adults?
    a. Are lobbying efforts being made on behalf of young adults? Are efforts being made to introduce appropriate legislation?
    b. What are these activities, and who is undertaking them?

14. What do you think needs to change for young people to reach adulthood faster? (concluding)

Jolanta Grotowska-Leder
Professor of social sciences, for 45 years associated with the Institute of Sociology of the University of Lodz, since 2019 with the Department of Sociology, Warsaw University of Life Sciences. Vice-chair of the Committee of Demographic Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Former Vice-President of the Social Welfare Council at the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Policy. Her research interests include: sociology of social problems, in particular contemporary processes of pauperization and unemployment, recently problems of the young generation. She combines sociological and social policy reflection in her scientific research. She is a co-founder of the Lodz school of research on poverty and social assistance.
ORCID: 0000-0001-5034-0511

Agnieszka Dziedziczak-Foltyn
University Professor in the Department of Applied Sociology and Social Work at the Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz. Her research interests include public policies, in particular higher education policy and higher education reforms. In this area, she cooperates with the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP). She is interested in the development of academic teaching, especially university tutoring.
ORCID: 0000-0002-5716-0086

Marcin Gońda
Assistant Professor in the Department of Applied Sociology and Social Work at the Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz. He is a Head of Centre of Migration Studies, University of Lodz. He also cooperates with the Centre for Migration Research, University of Warsaw. His research interests cover migration and diaspora policies, educational migration, internationalisation of higher education, and social inequalities.
ORCID: 0000-0003-0940-8849

Marcin Kotras
Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology of Politics and Morality at the Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz. He is interested in socially constructed social divisions in contemporary Polish society, the impact of public discourse on relations in the world of politics, and social communication in its broadest sense. He is a member of the editorial board of the scientific journals „Folia Sociologica" and „Władza Sądzenia".
ORCID: 0000-0002-8939-3685

The monograph is concerned with the phenomenon of transition to adulthood of young Poles and reaching the stage of completed adulthood, i.e. being economically and socially independent. The study is the first comprehensive presentation of this complex process in Poland by applying a sociological perspective, public policies analysis, assessments of young adults and representatives of institutions providing support for various life difficulties. The monograph is based primarily on qualitative (narrative and group interviews) and quantitative (statistical) data. The publication has a scientific and applied character. The book may be of interest to both academics, mainly sociologists, demographers and social politicians, as well as young people and practitioners involved in organising support for young people who experience difficulties in their everyday life during the transition to adulthood.

This is a pioneering book on the process of transition to stabilised/completed adulthood, socio-economic and family conditions and effects in a Poland undergoing profound economic, political and socio-cultural changes.
From the review by prof. Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska

The reviewed work emanates originality and a non-standard approach both to the theory, the research itself and the presentation of results. Reading this monograph [...] leads to the conclusion that there is no similar work in Poland, and one may risk a thesis that there is no similar work in the EU, and it is good that it will be published in English, inspiring researchers and analysts to [...] reflect on life at different stages of development within the human life cycle.
From the review by prof. Krzysztof Czekaj

The book is also available as an e-book

9 788382 209860