

THE STATUTORY ACTIVITIES OF THE FOUNDATION «AID TO POLES IN THE EAST»

The Foundations are one of the forms of activity of non-governmental institutions in Poland. In addition to the foundations, Polish legislation also has two legal forms for the creation and operation of non-governmental organizations. These are associations and organizations that operate on the basis of separate acts. The legal basis for the operation of such organizations in Poland is regulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in Article 12: «The Republic of Poland ensures freedom for the creation and operation of trade unions, socio-professional organizations of farmers, associations, civic movements, other voluntary associations and foundations [2, 3]». And also in Article 58 paragraph 1: «Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of association [2, 11]». That last article is very important because the Constitutional freedom of association is the basic principle of freedom in civil society [1, 203]. The first Polish legal act regulating the creation and functioning of the foundation was the decree of 7 February 1919 on foundations and the approval of donations and subscriptions. Actually, the law on foundations applies from April 6, 1984. There is one exception when it comes to qualifying the foundation for a non-governmental organization. Foundations established by the State Treasury are not a non-governmental organization because it is difficult to recognize that they are independent organizations. This is the case for the foundation for which this article is dedicated. The Foundation *Aid to Poles in the East* Foundation was established in 1992 as a strategic Treasury Foundation subject to substantive supervision by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The main objective of the Foundation is to «help and support Poles living in the former Soviet Union (USSR) and the former communist bloc in Central and Eastern Europe [3, 1]». When you consider why such foundations are founded, the answer lies in the Constitution. Because culture is one of the sources of national identity. According to Article 6 paragraph 1 of the Polish Constitution, culture is also the source of the duration and development of the Polish nation. The state's constitutional duty is to help «Poles living abroad in maintaining their relations with the national cultural heritage». The order is important for shaping their identity and feeling of bond with their homeland [4, 105].

The Foundation is not established for a limited time. It has a legal personality. The headquarters of the foundation is in Warsaw [8]. Actually, the President of the board is *Mikołaj Falkowski* and He is the head of one of the three bodies of the Foundation. The Foundation's Board is the executive body and represents the Foundation outside. The next organ is the Foundation's Council. It is responsible for overseeing, giving opinions and making decisions about the Foundation's decisions. The last body is the Presidium of the Council of the Foundation. It is a control body. In financial matters, it looks like that from the statutes it follows that the foundation's assets are 1 million PLN contributed by the State Treasury, but income may also come from e.g. donations, inheritances, subsidies, public collections and also public events. However, what is important. Raised money by the foundation can be used only for statutory purposes.

Therefore, I am allowing to present the main objectives of the activity of the described foundation. The main tasks of the foundation include:

- Dissemination of Polish language, Polish culture and national traditions among Poles living in the east;
- Improvement of the social, professional and material situation of the Polish ethnic group;
- Creating a friendly atmosphere between Polish communities and the nations of eastern countries where Poles live;
- Getting communities in the East to cooperate in helping Poles in the East;
- Transfer knowledge about Polish experiences of social, economic and political transformation to those nations of countries where Poles live;
- Acquiring Polish communities to cooperate in the promotion of Polish economic interests;
- Protection of Polish cultural heritage in the East and Central Europe;
- Promotion of Poland and Polish culture;
- Protection of the rights of the Polish minority in the East and Central Europe;
- Supporting and promoting regional and international cooperation.

The Foundation carries out activities in many fields. The first field is support the development of Polish-language education at all levels. Can pay attention to the following initiatives: Summer Language Course dedicated to teachers who teach Polish and in Polish in Belarus and also Latvia. The next one is scientific funding for cathedrals and foreign language classes in 5 eastern countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Ukraine, Macedonia and Russia). Furthermore, the textbook for learning Polish for Polish youth students in Belarus *A to Polski właśnie*, made by the Foundation. Moreover Foundation was organized since 2013, in cooperation with the Comenius Institute, a series of trainings for pre-school teachers in Lithuania, which are to increase competence in methods of working with children. An important element is also a special, annual scholarship program for people from Polish origin who study abroad. Secondly, the Foundation organizes help in the economic activity of Poles in the East. For example, the last project «Vilnius Business Academy» was aimed at experienced owners of local companies as well as beginning entrepreneurs and students interested in management, economics and finance not only from Lithuania, but also entrepreneurs from Russia, Belarus and Central Asia. The participants learned about the methods of stimulating creativity, and also development strategies and effective marketing tools. Thirdly, the promotion of Polish culture takes place thanks for the organization of many festivals and gigs, the popularization of Polish movies, literature and music in events like for example *Babie Lato Filmowe* is an international film festival organized since 1993 by the Culture Club of the Public Utilities Society in Trinec, mainly for the Polish audience in Zaolzie [5]. The next one initiative is The International Poetry Festival *Maj nad Wilią i Wisłą* in Vilnius [6]. Moreover in September 2016 in Lithuania, in cooperation with the Foundation with the Sejny Heritage Society and the local Lithuanian association and Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, was organized 100th anniversary of Henryk Sienkiewicz death. Took place as part of the celebrations a two day historical-literary scientific conference. An important part of the ceremony was the opening of the Memorial Park of Henryk Sienkiewicz in Wodokty. The Foundation also working strongly to support Polish-language media promoting Poland in the East,

that is the project of the *Pro Media - New Quality for the East*. It is a continuation of the Foundation's long-standing activities to maintain and strengthen Polish media in the former USSR countries. Other Foundation's initiatives to activities supporting the development of Polish in the East are, for example, the W. Hulewicz Award for writers coming mainly from the East [7] or Inventory of Polish cemeteries in Podole. There are a lot of initiatives under the direction of the Foundation, only some have been mentioned. There are also other initiatives that activate socially, culturally and professionally Poles living in the East. They provide financial assistance to Poles in difficult living conditions. They cooperate with other foundations and institutions for the benefit of Poles in the East and act to protect the rights of the Polish population living in the East. Normally, the foundation operating on its own initiative, but on the foundation's website it is possible to download forms for co-financing various projects. Summarizing, looking at the foundation's activity, can think that it works properly. They perform statutory tasks very conscientiously. The Foundation is a great support for Poles who lives in the East, usually they are countries from the former communist bloc. The life of these people does not always look as they would like. They can not always come back to Poland. Thanks to the support of their homeland they have the opportunity to hold Polish tradition and history, help in the protection of their rights and also financial support. Aid to Poles in the East Foundation is not the only one foundation that helps Poles in the East. There are some Foundations like this one. It is should be evaluated positively. Any type of help for compatriots who are abroad is good. Thanks for this, these people can feel like a real patriots related to Polish tradition, language and history no matter where they live.

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