

## Review: Strategia Rozwoju Kapitału Społecznego 2020 (Social Capital Development Strategy 2020) by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland

Klimczuk, Andrzej

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## REVIEW

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Andrzej Klimczuk

Warsaw School of Economics, Poland

The *Social Capital Development Strategy 2020* (SCDS) is the main document of cultural policy in Poland. The work on the strategy was carried out in 2009-2012, and it was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2013. The scope of the strategy was defined in the 2009 amendments to the Act of 6 December 2006 on the Principles of Development Policy that underlies the creation of a new strategic order in Poland. These principles were also alluded to in the report *Poland 2030* (Boni, 2009) that was produced by the Board of Strategic Advisors to the Prime Minister of Poland. This report described 10 challenges for the development of the country, including economic growth, demographic changes, and social and regional solidarity. In addition, it also defined the so-called "polarisation and diffusion model of development." This model is intended to support the most competitive sectors of the economy and urban centres in Poland (polarisation) as well as ensuring the diffusion of benefits (e.g., to rural areas and people in poverty). This diffusion requires strategic interventions in regional policy and involves the introduction of instruments and structures that will allow different configurations of institutions (stakeholders) involved in policy-making and co-ordination. Moreover, *Poland 2030* highlighted that the building of social capital is crucial to the delivery of the plan. This assumption is based on the observations from the European Social Survey and Polish panel research entitled Social Diagnosis (Czapiński & Panek, 2014) that identified Poland to have one of the lowest levels of generalised trust and other indicators of civil society amongst all of the European countries. According to Putnam et al.'s (1993) theory of social capital, these sorts of trusts, norms, and relationships are crucial to the cooperation and effective implementation of the complex tasks of groups and organisations. As such, the assertion of the *Poland 2030* report is that the cultural characteristics of contemporary Polish society are not supporting the socio-economic development, and the SCDS is intended to contribute towards changing this situation.

The SCDS was created as a part of the "integrated approach to development in Poland"

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(Ministry of Regional Development, 2011). This approach aims to (1) integrate the social, economic, and spatial dimension of development and (2) to facilitate the implementation of multi-level governance through the strategic use of the European Structural Funds in Poland that are related to the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission, 2010). The highest-level document in this strategic hierarchy is the Long-term *National Development Strategy - Poland 2030: Third Wave of Modernity* (Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2013). This document clearly refers to the emergence of post-industrial societies (Toffler, 1980) in order to suggest that it is time to end thinking about Poland as a state in transition so as to obtain new competitive advantages (such as digital goods and technologies) and avoid the risk of the peripheralization of Poland in the international arena. This strategy is complemented by the medium-term *National Development Strategy 2020* (Ministry of Regional Development, 2012) that describes the main concepts, trends, and aims that are believed to be central to the efficient and effective state; in particular in regards the competitive economy and social and territorial cohesion. This strategy is itself supported by integrated strategies coordinated by various ministries that focus on thematic areas such as innovation, the efficiency of the economy, human capital, transport, and regional development. The SCDS is one of these integrated strategies and is intended to be implemented by the central government with the cooperation of regional and local authorities in addition to various other stakeholders.

Although coordinating and overseeing the strategy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (MCNH), the same ministry is fully responsible for only two of the four specific objectives. Specifically, the MCNH is responsible for achieving Objective 3: streamlining the processes of social communication and exchange of knowledge, and Objective 4: the development and efficient use of cultural and creative potential. It is the Ministry of National Education that is responsible for Objective 1: development of attitudes favourable to cooperation, creativity, and communication, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for Objective 2: improving the mechanisms of social participation and influence of citizens in public life. This situation may be explained by the adoption of a horizontal approach to the cultural policy that means it is not only focused on art and culture or cultural and creative industries. Instead, the effective implementation of interventions related to the core issues of the cultural policy (Objectives 3 and 4) is linked or even depending on the actions undertaken in the fields of education policy (Objective 1) and social policy (Objective 2). As such, it appears to be assumed that the strategy will be implemented, programmed, monitored, and evaluated in accordance with the principle of partnership and the open method of co-ordination.

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Consequently, the autonomy of entities involved in these activities is underlined, and particular attention has been paid to local governments, non-governmental organisations, churches and religious associations, organisations of national and ethnic minorities, academia, labour unions, and employers.

The novelty of the SCDS is that it is the first strategy in Poland that in a comprehensive way aims to highlight the importance of social capital and the creation of trust in the citizen-state and citizen-citizen relations. Its strength lies in the identification of 28 directed activities with detailed descriptions of the planned interventions that they require. Some of these activities have been implemented systematically for years and may be seen as a continuation of the usual work of cultural institutions in Poland. For example, the development of cultural infrastructure; increasing the effectiveness of cultural institutions; the development of art education; and strengthening the promotion of Polish culture abroad. However, most of the proposed activities are innovative and so far have not been obligatory for cultural institutions in Poland. These have been formulated in such a way as to underline the need for cooperation across all areas of civil society and, examples include: disseminating teaching methods that foster creative attitudes; strengthening civic education, media education, and cultural learning processes; increasing the use of the local resources of public institutions for the development of active citizenship; the development of individual and corporate philanthropy and volunteerism; supporting the development of social entrepreneurship; increasing the availability of educational, scientific, and cultural content in the public domain; and the development of the system of support for the creative sector and cultural entrepreneurship.

However, for all of its strengths, there is also too little consideration of the risk factors that may limit its implementation. For example, there is no indication of the possible difficulties in coordinating parts of the policy between ministries and the difficulties in communication and cooperation with regional and local governments. Moreover, the discussion about alternative actions in case of ineffective implementation has been completely omitted. In addition, although the strategy has been prepared with extensive public consultation, many significant observations have not been taken into account due to the adoption of neoliberal assumptions (such as a contradiction of supporting communities and at the same time plans to implement the concept of the workfare state that was described in the *Long-term National Development Strategy 2030*).

Weaknesses aside, its explicit focus on building social capital through cultural policy means that the SCDS will, however, make interesting reading for policy-makers, cultural practitioners,

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and social activists in countries that are also characterised by a low level of generalised trust, such as Hungary, Slovenia, France, Bulgaria, and Portugal.

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