

Recent developments concerning civil society - case Poland.

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How can we promote volunteering for sustainability?

3rd international workshop within the project:
Strategies for a successful communication of
sustainability in Europe.

1. Introduction. The establishment of civil society in Poland before 1989.

The idea of civil society:

- **ethical civil society** concept: promotes the participation of civil movements and citizens in public life, the so called changes „from down“ and transparency of policy
- developed by the dissidents from KOR (Defense Committee of Workers) and by catholic intelligentsia, implemented by **Solidarnosc** movement
- **civil society against the state**: as an alternative and opposition to the communist system

2. Rethinking the idea of civil society.

1989 – 1994:

- NGOs: boom, registration of 50.000 of organizations in the years: 1989 – 1994.
- The ethical dimension of the civil society idea slowly disappears because of fall of the communist system. The state is not anymore understood as an enemy but as a partner.
- The organizations start to specialize and to profesionalize themselves and to link to the local problems of communities.

2. Rethinking the idea of civil society.

- **1989 – 1997:**

Solidarnosc as well as catholic associations are getting systematically less meaningful in the civil society life. Many activists retire into the private sphere

- **1994 – till now:**

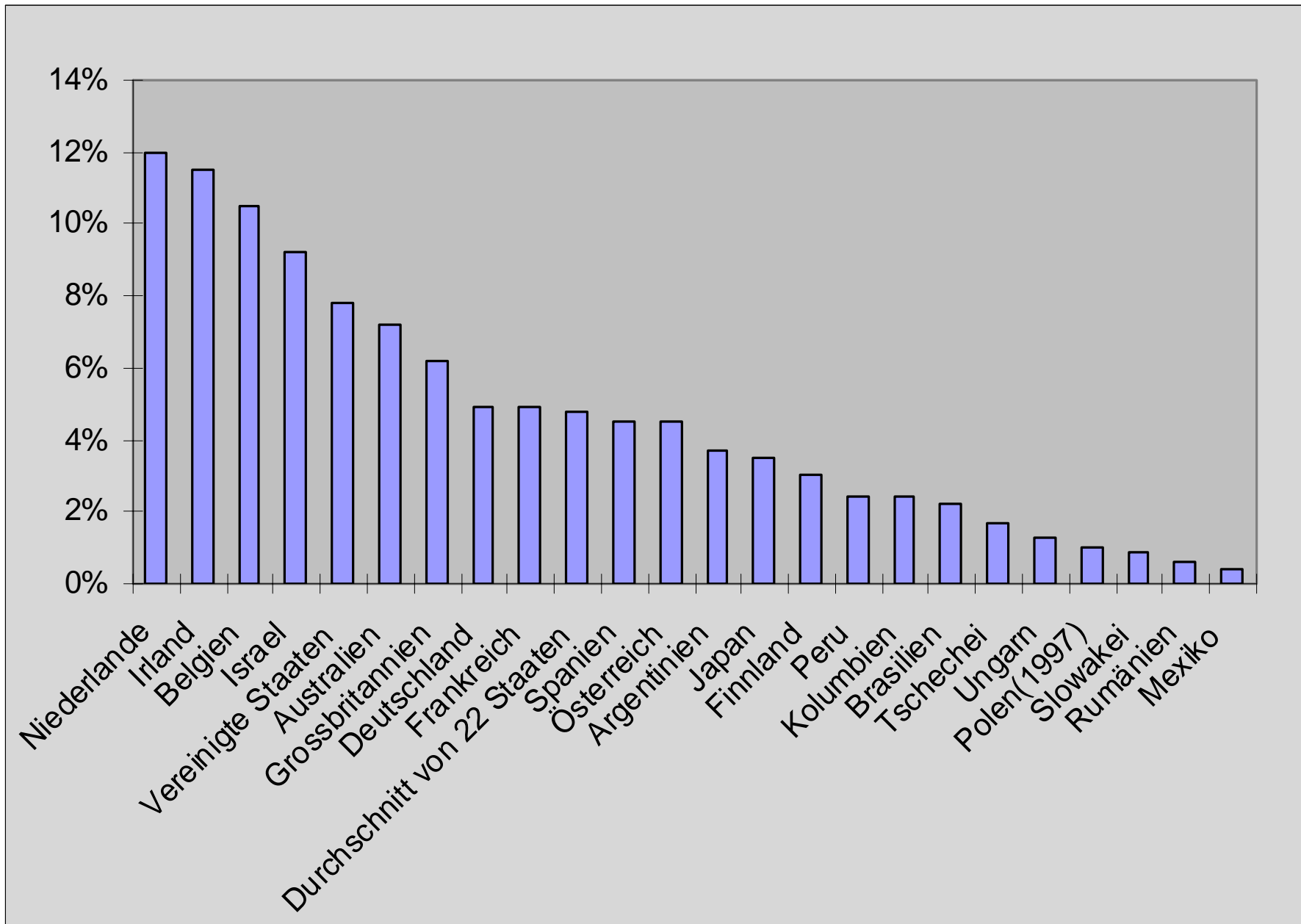
ups and downs of civil society organizations, recent mobilisation of civil movements against the centralisation policy of the Kaczynski brothers

3. The civil society bodies in Poland

- **Catholic Church:** about 5 % of the citizens are active in catholic associations (badly documented, probably much more), domination of Catholic Church in social and charity field
- **Solidarnosc and post–Solidarnosc initiatives:** in the 80's the Solidarnosc counted 10 million members, in 1998 only 1,7 million members
- **Trade unions:** 6 % of the citizens belong to trade unions; 18 % of all working people

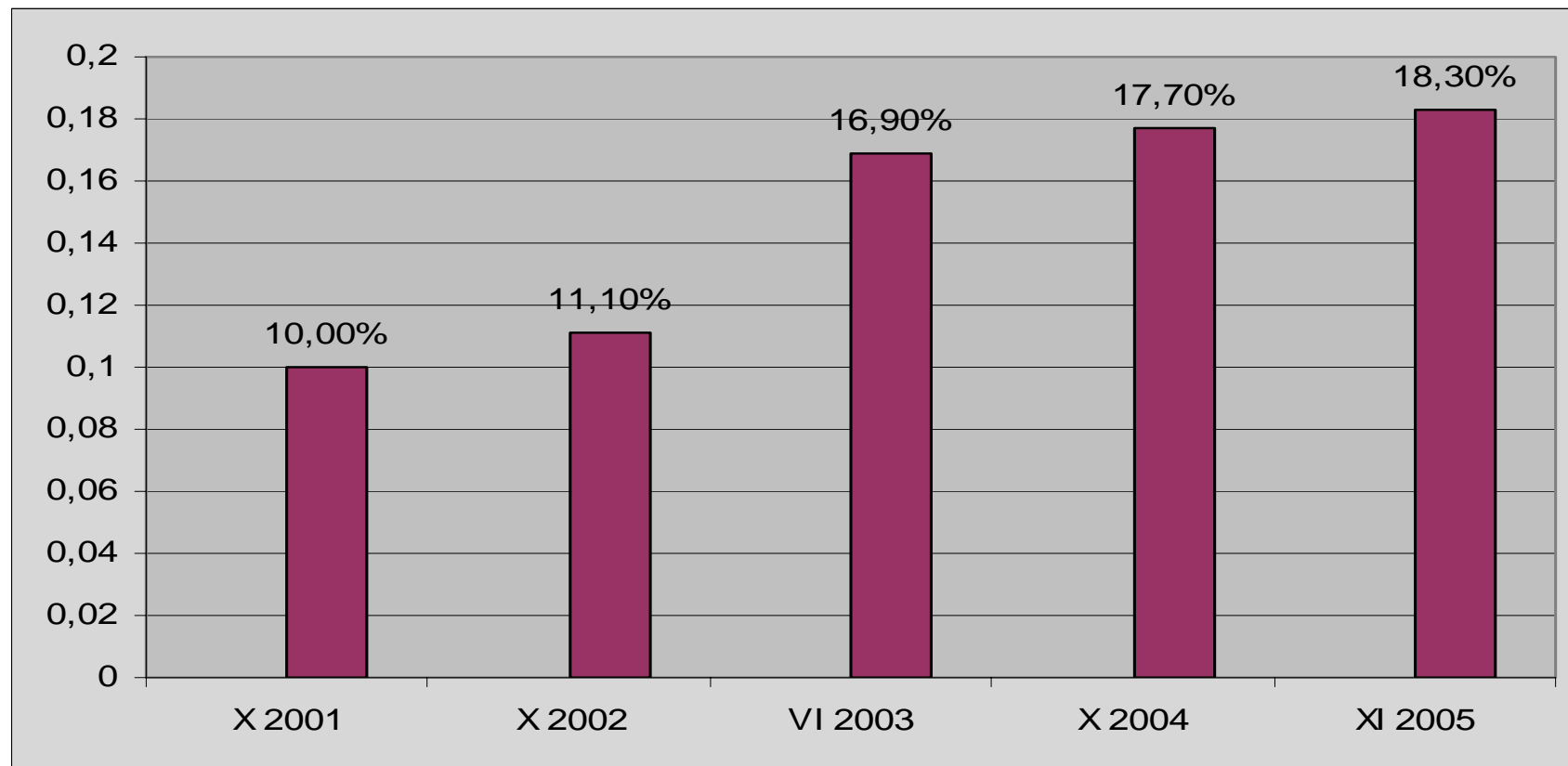
3. The civil society bodies in Poland

- **Employer and entrepreneur associations:** have about 99.000 members
- **NGOs:** registration of 50.000 organizations in the years: 1989 – 1994, now there are about 45.000 associations and about 7.000 foundations registered, with around 90.000 paid employees and 1 million volunteers. The employment rate in the NGO sector is around 1%



5.The volunteers in Poland

In year 2005 18,30 % of the citizens declared to work as volunteer.
(about 5,3 million Poles)



5. Volunteers in Western countries

- Poland: 18,30%
- USA: 44%
- Ireland: 33%
- Netherlands: 24%

6. The value of voluntary work and membership in the associations for Polish citizens

- **24%** declare to do voluntary work in their free time at least once a year and find voluntary work an important aspect in the community
- **55%** do not know any association which could be seen as representative for their interests
- **51%** declare the will to accede to an association which would efficiently represent their interests
- **76%** do not believe that civil participation has an influence on political and public decisions

7.The problems of civil society institutions /organizations

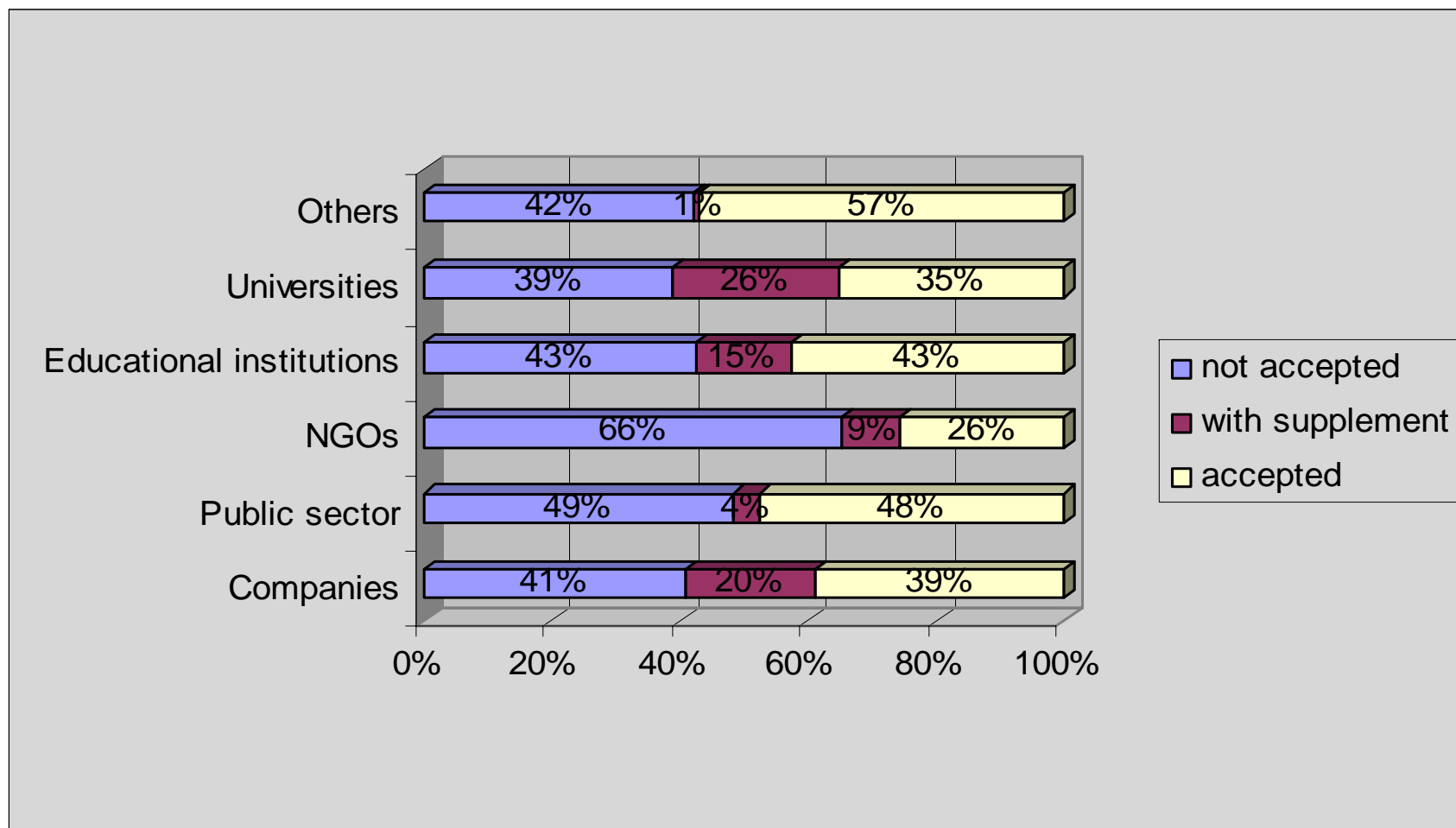
- **Lack of support from the state:**

The state agencies treat NGOs often as rivals.
Burocratization and information-chaos.
Presently; unfriendly climate for NGOs, see:
events in the last months in Poland.

7.The problems of civil society institutions /organizations

- **Financial problems:** Little financial stability. In average the yearly budget of NGOs is estimated around 4.000 – 5.000 Euro. The organizations have problems with the means management, with staff and equipment which influences the quality of the projects. Lack of experience in applying for European funds.

The status of application by ESF(European Social Fond)



7.The problems of civil society institutions /organizations

- **Image problems:** bad press, mistrust in the society, corruption affairs

8. Reasons for lack of participation among citizens in Poland

- **The poverty in the society:** the financial problems overlap the will for participating, after the so called shock therapy increase of unemployment (about 20% of the inhabitants)
- **The division between „we“ and „they“:** the mistrust to the political elite and lack of believe that „I as a single person can change something“
- **The big importance of family life ?:** the social networks and interests are fulfilled within a family
- **Lack of information:** small knowledge about civil society organizations and their activities, lack of professional campaigns.

9. The positive developments for civil society organizations

- **Act of law** (2003) about public benefits and voluntary work, which regulates the status of public benefits organizations, introduction of the possibility to donate 1% of taxes to support individually selected public benefit organizations
- Creating **information platforms**: www.ngo.pl
- The establishment of **Center for Voluntary Work** in Warsaw
- **EU – grants and programmes**

10. Possible directions of development:

- The **increase of meaning** of the civil society organizations, the rise of participation degree among the citizens
- The **centralization** process and the increasing role of the state in social and public life, the civil society activities are marginalized
- The **third way** (present?): weak state and weak civil society

11. How to promote volunteering and civil society?

- Creating **networks** and strenghtening of the co-operation between organizations
- More **dialog** with business and political sphere and medias
- Improvement of **quality**, better **project management**, better **conceptualization** of work

Thank you for your attention!