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**Social forces in the process of digital inclusion of seniors
(based on the project Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities)²**

It is estimated that about 12 million Polish citizens have experienced digital exclusion (Batorski, 2015, p. 335). Such people are not able to take advantage of possibilities and resources that are hidden from them in the virtual space. A small part of this group uses some e-opportunities in a mediated way, thanks to help from other people. As for Poland, inability to participate in the virtual space is less and less connected with insufficient funds to buy digital equipment or pay for regular Internet access. Most often, it results from lack of motivation to use electronic media and inadequate level of digital competencies. Thus, e-inclusion of the digitally excluded seems to be one of the challenges of modern society based on information technologies. The use of ICT is noticeable in almost every area of life and it enables more comfortable, faster and – in many cases – more cost-effective management of daily tasks (Jasiewicz et al., 2015, p. 3). With these facts in mind, digital exclusion has been included as one of the objectives of social policy and considered as one of the priorities related to improvement of the level of human capital (Stawicka, 2015, p. 13).

It needs to be emphasized that attempts to minimize digital exclusion in Poland have been implemented for about 20 years. The first attempts at minimizing the phenomenon of digital division were introduced as far back as in the late 1990s. In this initial stage of information society development, most of them involved providing households and institutions of all kinds with computers and Internet access. Modeling digital competencies and encouraging to “be online” were secondary in this period. In the following years, there was a regular development of various institutional forms of education of the digitally excluded, among them: senior clubs, universities of the third age, libraries, foundations, culture centers, e-centers, Orange Academy, businesses and a range of non-governmental organizations involved in increasing the level of digital competencies and raising funds for this type of activities from external sources (see Bucholtz, et al., 2015, p. 4).

The example of Cities on the Internet Association (Stowarzyszenia Miasta w Internecie, SMwI) analyzed in the paper, a non-governmental body responsible for digital inclusion of generation 50+, presents new aspects and opportunities of civic engagement in social policy processes, development of human and social capital and, first of all, supporting active ageing and old age. Activities of several hundred volunteers-

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educators point to the significance of human and social potential to transform lives of disfavored individuals.

As emphasized by A. Naumiuk, social activity is a complex process and its multi-threaded and multi-dimensional analysis that included factors like: motivation among the beneficiaries, ideas supporting the activities and organizational aspect, provides an answer to questions about practical sphere of the phenomenon. In order to understand the phenomenon of voluntary work by Lighthouse Keepers of Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities (Latarnicy Polski Cyfrowej Równych Szans), we need to consider several layers of a complex social activity mechanisms connected with the process of engaging social forces to advance digital inclusion of people in their late adulthood (see Naumiuk, 2007, p. 71–74).

Due to the fact that social activities are still not very popular form of leisure activities and the effects of such work are not always visible in a local environment, the attitudes of Lighthouse Keepers of Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities should be particularly promoted. Thanks to stubbornness and consequence of these educators-activists, the number of digitally excluded in Poland decreases, and their social participation destroys the myth of impossibility of mass volunteer engagement in quick and effective response to civilizational changes (see Naumiuk, 2011, p. 108–109). Thus, Lighthouse Keepers contradict some common opinions about modern citizen not willing to get involved in social activities, seniors not being open to new technologies, lack of motivation in local communities to embrace changes and hermetic local resources not open to collaboration with other institutions or volunteers. Activity of Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities also sets new ways of social practices based on education, and points social educators towards deeper analysis of the key concepts in social pedagogy and andragogy, referring to modernization, social change and human capital.

Programs based on the concept of education in a local community are the answer to the needs of such communities and provide efficient and relatively cheap solution to problems in the area of social inequalities. In this case, education of the excluded takes on the form of social initiatives, support groups formed bottom-up as a response to the needs of disfavored groups (Jurgiel, 2007, p. 28).

Poland has a rich tradition of pro-social activities as well as non-formal and environmental education. This type of human and social capital requires that social policy creators on local, regional and national level consider, understand and appreciate such solutions as Digital Poland of Equal Opportunities program, if they want to continue with social transformation that would respond to general social needs – the needs determined by on-going technical, social cultural, administrative and economic changes.

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