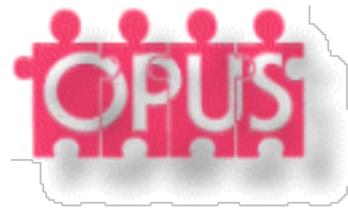


## **AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)**

### **Poland and the World at the Dawn of 2015 Report of a New Year's Listening Post**



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

#### **Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES.**

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives', that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

#### **Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

In Part 2 the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following interrelated themes:

##### **THEME 1: INCREASE IN THE NUMBER AND QUALITY OF SOCIAL INITIATIVES**

We are increasingly disgusted with the quality of political life. The aftermath of the political scandals we witnessed in 2014 is the decline in sense of security that the state institutions act on our behalf. We have reached the conclusion that if we do not change something ourselves then we cannot expect anyone else to do it for us. We have the need to increase our impact on what is happening not only in our private but also in the social life. This is why it is more and more frequently the case that we gather around issues vital for the quality of our life and for the community we live in. Aware of our needs and capabilities we engage more efficiently in social actions which have a growing force to shape the social and political life and deliver required results. The dialogue between various communities or public bodies has been revived. Space for discussion, exchange of experience, joint thinking and designing the future in critical aspects has been freed up. It is not only the co-operation in the NGO circles that is picking up but also between the public sector and NGO as well as between the citizens and social movements. Awareness of the needs is growing on individual level too. We want to take care of ourselves more not only in the professional context. We brood over what success depends on. We look for answers, which gives us happiness and fulfilment. Many of us notice that we succeed in things we used to regard as difficult to carry out.

## **THEME 2: WOMEN RULE**

We have noted the increasing role of women in social and political life. Political parties communicate growing demand for women's participation in politics. We are beginning to appreciate those feminine qualities which foster implementation of changes, we as society expect, related to the ability to engage in dialogue, build relations and form associations. Compared to the declining power of men, the power of women is rising. Men have left as if "empty seats" which women begin to take along with responsibility for creating a reality according to their own values and priorities. The growing power of women is a response to the needs of the world related to forming relationships and bonds, the skills highly developed in women which the world begins to miss. Feminine elements leading towards softening of relations (carefulness, awareness) are appreciated. We, women in particular, begin to sense the lack of these qualities in relations with our dear ones, families and friends. This is the reason why they started to feel the need to exist, express and develop oneself, prove one's own power, associate on the outside and to look for bonds with other women. At the same time it results in the growing competition among women who begin to outshout. Along with the increase in women's activeness a new discourse in public space comes to being, one to which men no longer fit. For them the new language is incomprehensible. Partially of their own will and partially due to their helplessness towards the new state of affairs men prefer to step back and look on from the sidelines.

## **THEME THREE: MID-WAY SOCIETY**

We feel we are the "mid-way society", affected by emotional ambivalence. We are both somewhat embarrassed with the quality of political life and proud of what we have managed to achieve so far as a society. We have made our everyday life real. We know where we are and at the same time we know how much we still need to do to be where we strive to be as a society. The need to change is stronger than frustration with the present state. Thus it is our driving force. We feel more confident as Poles; some take pride in being Poles. We feel as a partner for Western Europe rather than its younger brother. We note that changes in perception of our reality result also in changes in large social structures stagnant until now. The Catholic Church begins to engage in a different form of dialogue. What is more, the change also concerns the attitude towards education which is welcoming new forms and methods indispensable at this stage of our development.

## **THEME FOUR: SENSE OF THREAT**

Political situation in Europe related to the political situation, conflicts,

border changes is for us a major source of concern. Conflict in Ukraine has increased our sense of threat resulting from geographical location of Poland between two superpowers. The fear caused by the loss of the sense of safety and the imposed political correctness "tie our lips", force us to omit these subjects in our conversations and not to engage.

### **Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and, developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the members were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world. Their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them. The resulting analysis has been distilled into the following two interrelated hypotheses:

#### **Hypothesis 1 SOCIAL SENSE OF AGENCY AS A RESPONSE TO THE FRUSTRATION RELATED TO THE INCOMPETENCE OF THE STATE**

Overpowering frustration and anger at the indolence and incompetence of state structures result in the need of the society to take responsibility for the shape of our state.

We have lost trust and support in state institutions which no longer work for our good and shared interest. This is the reason why we take matters in our own hands, start to act focused on results. The sense of joint agency is growing. We believe that we can influence and shape our reality. Due to the fact that we feel we have satisfied our own individual needs we have obtained a certain peace and space for thinking in a wider social context. We felt ready to act to the benefit of others, to invest our energy in social matters. We feel the time running fast. For fear of vanishing we make our abilities real and start to engage in issues meaningful for us. Owing to this we satisfy the element related to the need of self-expression.

#### **Hypothesis 2 SEARCH FOR SOCIAL BONDS AS A RESPONSE TO THE DEFICIT OF CLOSENESS AND RELATIONS**

Relationships with men have ceased to satisfy vital for women need related to creating closeness, establishing bonds and sense of safety. Due to the lack of satisfaction and continuous deficit, women start to look for bonds, closeness and safety on the outside forming associations with other women. Thanks to the ability to build social networks the power of women is growing and men are being slowly "pushed out" and "disappear" from the social space. Entering the now

empty spaces which used to belong to men, women intend to prove to men that they can organize the world in a better way. Women see their power and potential. In relationships they become to a greater extent partners in building a safe environment for both sides, rather than individuals in need of someone who would protect them.

**Convener: Iwona Soltysinska**