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ANALYSIS OF LEGAL-ORGANIZATIONAL SOLUTIONS OF THE PARTICIPATION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS OF A RESCUE CHARACTER IN THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

A key part of the crisis management system in Poland is an executive subsystem, whose primary task is to provide immediate assistance for people harmed and waiting for support in situations of crisis, threat, failure, disaster or cataclysm. The executive subsystem includes: specialist services, guards, inspections and non-governmental organizations of a rescue character. The most important non-governmental organizations of a rescue character are: Voluntary Fire Service, Voluntary Water Rescue Service, Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue, Tatra Volunteer Rescue, the Rescue System of Polish Red Cross. It is estimated that in case of a crisis situation, catastrophe, natural disaster, help for victims can be provided by about 220 thousand social rescuers who annually participate in nearly 80 thousand actions, so it is a potential which is an essential element of the crisis management system.

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In order to counteract the contemporary security threats in Poland there has been built a crisis management system as an essential component of the national security system. The system was built based on public administration structures which function in the country, and its legal bases are based on legal regulations defining the competences of the highest state bodies, departments, public administration and other institutions in the field of security and defence, and the acts on states of emergency. Tasks and competences of particular components of the system result mainly from *the Act on crisis management*, but they are also scattered,

among others, in the Act on: the Council of Ministers, government administration departments, universal duty to defend Poland, provincial, county and municipal self-government, government administration in the province, fire protection, infectious diseases and infections, or crops protection. The purpose of the built system is not to allow a crisis situation to develop, and in the case of its occurrence, to take effective actions to avoid or reduce losses, both human and material, and to lead at least to the state existing before the crisis situation or an improved state due to taking into

consideration conclusions referring to the causes and the course of the crisis situation.

In the crisis management system in Poland two subsystems are distinguished: a management subsystem, and a subordinate to it executive subsystem. **The management subsystem** is formed by bodies of the public government and administration (central and local government) with serving these bodies offices and supporting structures (of consultative-advisory and coordination-executive nature) with the necessary infrastructure. The role of this subsystem relies on joining all the elements and links of the crisis management system at the level of state, province, county and municipality (city) into a single, effectively functioning unit, enabling the implementation of crisis management tasks. The management subsystem ensures the continuity of making decisions and taking actions to maintain safety of the country and it is to ensure: prevention of risks, monitoring sources, types, directions and a scale of threats, responding to a created crisis situation and removing the results of a crisis situation.

However, the basic task of the **executive subsystem** is to provide immediate assistance for people harmed and waiting for support in the situation of misfortune, danger, failure, disaster or cataclysm. The executive subsystem is widely understood rescue, evacuation and assistance in various situations in life, social, and technical situations, and other measures taken to protect and save humans' life, health and property, as well as the environment¹.

The executive subsystem includes: specialist services, guards, created inspections, **non-governmental organizations of a rescue character**² and

citizens. Non-governmental organizations of a rescue character are a voluntary association of citizens who devote their time and work to carry out tasks connected with rescue, civil protection and assistance to victims of calamities and disasters. They do not work for profit. They are an important component of the executive subsystem, working closely with public administration bodies in the sphere of rescue and providing the population with safety. They complement the territorial distribution of professional rescue services in connection with the types of local or regional threats. Non-governmental organizations of a rescue character carry out rescue tasks under the laws scattered in various acts³, but the basic tasks were defined in the *Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit activity and voluntary work* which, among others, include tasks in the sphere of:

- rescue and civil protection,
- protection and promotion of health,
- public order and safety,
- assistance to victims of catastrophes, natural disasters, armed conflicts and wars in the country and abroad.

Although non-governmental organizations of a rescue character operate within rescue systems such as the National Rescue-Firefighting System, or the State Medical Rescue, they have independent organizational structures and may also independently conduct rescue operations. They also carry out the tasks going beyond the scope of rescue systems activities, for example: Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue, Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue are the main subjects in the area of mountain rescue and Voluntary Water Rescue Service

organizations, or NGOs in English: Non-Governmental Organizations.

³ These organizations operate, inter alia, on the basis of: the Act of 7 April 1989 - Law on associations, the Law of 24 April 2003 on public benefit activity and volunteer work, the Act of 24 August 1991 on fire protection, the Act on the safety of the persons on water areas, the Act on safety and rescue in the mountains and organized ski areas.

¹ See: K. Ficoń, *Inżynieria zarządzania kryzysowego. Podejście systemowe*, Warsaw 2007, p. 259.

² In the literature of the problem, " **non-governmental organizations of an emergency nature**" are also known as: non-governmental rescue organizations, social rescue

conducts rescue operations for people who have been injured or are exposed to the danger of losing life or health in the area of water. Therefore, non-governmental organizations of a rescue character are important rescue subjects in the crisis management system.

The most important non-governmental organizations of a rescue nature include: Voluntary Fire Brigade, Voluntary Water Rescue Service, Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue, Tatra Voluntary Search and Rescue, the Rescue System of Polish Red Cross. It is estimated that in Poland in the case of a crisis situation, catastrophe, natural disaster, help for victims can be provided by about 220 thousand social rescuers who annually participate in nearly 80 thousand actions⁴, so it is a potential which is an essential component of the crisis management system.

Non-governmental organizations of a rescue nature have legal personality, their activity is based on voluntary work of their members, they are not dependent on the state, but in rescue actions their forces and resources are subordinated to the manager of the action. They have a diversified personal potential in terms of quantity, training, mobility, and an organizational structure. A similar situation is with rescue equipment (boats, medical, firefighting, communication equipment, vehicles and other) as well as a premises infrastructure (rescue stations, garages, etc.). Carrying out rescue tasks, they perform all the activities ranging from receiving a notification, giving a qualified first aid, carrying out rescue actions, evacuation of people being in danger of catastrophes and natural disasters, ending with transporting victims to Hospital Emergency Departments.

In order to coordinate cooperation with a volunteer rescue service at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Council for Voluntary Rescue has been established⁵. The Chairman of the Council is the Secretary of State or Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Internal Affairs responsible for the matters of crisis and rescue management, and the Council is composed of representatives from: Voluntary Water Rescue Service, Mountain Volunteer Search, Rescue, Tatra Voluntary Search and Rescue, and other non-governmental organizations invited by the Chairman. The Council is an advisory forum of Minister of Internal Affairs and a forum of exchanging experiences in the area of rescue operations undertaken by non-governmental rescue organizations and opinions on legislative solutions in this area, operational procedures, unification of equipment, volunteer rescuers' training, the rules of cooperation with other rescue subjects and public administration bodies or coordination of rescue operations.

Voluntary Fire Service, is an association acting based on *the Law of 7 April 1989 - Law on associations* and *the Act of 24 August 1991 on fire protection*. Voluntary Fire Brigade is a uniformed unit, possessing specialized equipment, designed especially to fight fires, natural disasters or other local dangers, and its tasks and organizational structure are defined by the statute of each unit. Statutory purposes of Voluntary Fire Brigade include:

- performing activity aimed at fire prevention and cooperation in this area with the State Fire Service, local government authorities and other subjects,

⁴ See: R. Grosset, *Rola organizacji pozarządowych w zarządzaniu bezpieczeństwem*, [in:] *Zarządzanie bezpieczeństwem – wyzwaniem XXI wieku*, ed. M. Lisiecki, Higher School of Management and Law, Warsaw 2008, p. 380.

⁵ *Directive No. 18 of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration dated 4 July 2000 on the establishment of the Council for Voluntary Rescue Service at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration*, with further amendments.

- participation in rescue actions carried out during fires, environmental hazards associated with environmental protection, and other disasters and events,
- informing the public about existing dangers of fire and environmental hazards as well as ways of protection against them,
- performing tasks arising from the regulations on fire protection,
- actions to protect the environment.

Voluntary Fire Brigade has an important place and role in the crisis management system not only due to the performed tasks but also the potential, which is about 140 thousand volunteer firefighters and about 16.5 thousand units, of which in the framework of the National Rescue and Firefighting System, there are about 3900 units of Voluntary Fire Brigade⁶ and about 7800 fire trucks. According to the *Directive of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 14 September 1998 on the scope, specific conditions and procedures for inclusion of fire protection units to the national rescue and fire fighting system*, National Rescue-Firefighting System could incorporate volunteer fire brigades which have met certain requirements. The requirements included possessing:

- at least two medium or heavy fire trucks,
- trained rescuers in the number ensuring full staffing of at least two fire trucks,
- an efficient communication system of notification and alerting,
- communication equipment in the radio network system for the needs of rescue operations.

In addition, the unit must remain in constant readiness to undertake rescue

operations. Incorporating a unit of Voluntary Fire Brigade into the National Rescue-Firefighting System is preceded by conclusion of an agreement between the right local commandant of the district County Fire Service and an Voluntary Fire Brigade unit, which specifies in particular:

- forces and means of the unit to be used in the system,
- rescue tasks for units within the system,
- a required number and training level of rescuers in the unit,
- the way to maintain the readiness of a unit for rescue operations, in particular, in terms of: technical efficiency of fire-fighting vehicles and their equipment, rescuers' preparations for action, progress and ways of alerting the unit.

It should be emphasized that the current main area of Voluntary Fire Brigade rescue, fighting fires, gradually is being transferred to other types of rescue like fighting fires and other natural disasters, technical rescue, chemical rescue, ecological rescue or medical rescue. Wider and wider incorporating Voluntary Fire Brigade into the National Rescue-Firefighting System has an influence on the above mentioned activity. In order to properly prepare volunteer firefighters to perform rescue tasks, there are organized trainings for members of the Voluntary Fire Brigade, led by the State Fire Service. The organization of the training includes basic, specialized and command training. This training includes both units incorporated into the National Rescue-Firefighting System and those not functioning in this system.

The purpose of the basic training for firefighters rescuers of Voluntary Fire Service is to prepare them for efficient and safe performance of firefighting and rescue tasks, including independent performing basic operations within a host.

⁶ See: T. Serafin, S. Parszowski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczności lokalnych: programy prewencyjne w systemie bezpieczeństwa*, Difin, Warsaw 2011, p.191.

However, the purpose of a specialized training is to prepare firefighters rescuers of Voluntary Fire Service to perform activities with the use of technical equipment which requires skills that go beyond the basic training, and to prepare them to give medical first aid. Acquisition of specialized skills allows them to conduct rescue operations with the use of specialized equipment, in which Voluntary Fire Service is equipped, in accordance with the type of hazards occurring in their own area of operation and the performance of rescue operations within the framework of specialized rescue groups.

Command trainings are intended for commanders of the lowest level and they prepare them to command tactical units at the intervention level. They are designed for chiefs and commanders of municipal Voluntary Fire Brigade.

According to the *Act of 24 August 1991 on fire protection*, costs of the Voluntary Fire Brigade units are covered from: the state budget, local government budgets, income of insurance institutions and their own resources. A municipality bears the costs of equipment, maintenance, training, except that run by State Fire Service, and it ensures the combat readiness of Voluntary Fire Brigade. However, the state budget participates in operating costs of these Voluntary Fire Brigade units which operate under the National Rescue-Firefighting System. Funds from the state budget are transferred to the Main Board of the Voluntary Fire Service Association of the Republic of Poland by the Minister of Internal Affairs based on the annually concluded agreement⁷.

Voluntary Water Rescue Service is a specialized nationwide association,

⁷ In 2013 it was 31 247 000 PLN, which was allocated, among others, for: the purchase of uniforms, fire trucks, water pumps and technical rescue equipment, and other fire-fighting equipment, organization of sports-fire fighting competitions, participation in the organization of construction and renovation of 235 voluntary fire stations.

conducting rescue operations of people who have been injured or are exposed to the danger of losing life or health in the area of water. Voluntary Water Rescue Service operates under the provisions of *the Act of 18 August 2011 on the safety of persons residing in the areas of water*, *the Act of 7 April 1989 - Law on associations*, *the Act of 24 April 2003 on public benefit activity and volunteer work*, *Act of 8 September 2006 on State Emergency Medical Services* and the Statute of this organization. Statutory purposes of Voluntary Water Rescue Service include⁸:

- organizing, managing, coordinating and conducting rescue operations;
- participation in or conduct of rescue operations during common threats, natural disasters or technical failures, including floods and fires in the waters;
- cooperation with public administration and other subjects interested in the state defence, common security and public order as well as civil and water environment protection;
- monitoring risks in terms of safety of persons residing in the areas of water and transferring this information to the proper municipal council⁹;
- issuing expert opinions in the field of water safety, including those for the measures useful in water rescue;
- providing services from the sphere of water rescue.

⁸ Statute of the Voluntary Water Rescue Service (a uniform text after amendments introduced on the basis of Provisions of the District Court for the Capital City of Warsaw, XIII Commercial Division of the National Court of 25 May 2012 - the signature case WA.XIII NS-REJ.KRS/008369/12/413 - in connection with Resolution No. 7 of the Extraordinary Congress of the National VWRS of 26 February 2012 on amendments to the Statute of Voluntary Water Rescue Service).

⁹ It should be noted that under *the Act of 18 August 2011 on the safety of persons residing in the areas of water* **ensuring safety in areas of water is the responsibility of the municipality.**

As part of rescue operations, Voluntary Water Rescue Service elements perform tasks involving, among others:

- receiving a notification of an accident or hazard;
- reaching the place of the accident with appropriate rescue equipment;
- providing a qualified first aid;
- securing the place of an accident or threat;
- evacuating people from the place posing a threat to their life or health;
- transporting people who have been injured or are at risk of losing their life or health in the area of water to the places where it is possible to take up the rescue by units of the State Emergency Medical Services system;
- search for missing persons in the area of water¹⁰.

Voluntary Water Rescue Service has a serious human potential as well as equipment possible to be used within the crisis management system in Poland. It has about 86,000 members, 96% of which possess authorized rescue and instructor qualifications in different categories. It has at its disposal specialized floating equipment capable of conducting action on water in the amount of 1,265 boats including 617 units with stern drive engines with 5 to 60 horsepower which include¹¹: motor boats, water ski jets with a platform, hovercrafts, rowing - motorized boats and rescue canoes. Moreover, it also has equipment which enables maintaining contact with other subjects conducting rescue operations, transport means, rescuer's basic equipment and medical equipment for basic medical rescue operations.

The organizational structure of Voluntary Water Rescue Service is consistent with the administrative division of the country and the authorities and bodies of the association function at the central, provincial, field levels.

At the central level the highest authority of Voluntary Water Rescue Service is National Assembly, which takes place every five years. In the period between the meetings Voluntary Water Rescue Service activity is managed by the Board of Voluntary Water Rescue Service. Between meetings of the Board of Voluntary Water Rescue Service, work of the organization is managed by the Executive Committee of the Board of Voluntary Water Rescue Service. At the head of the Executive Committee of the Board of Voluntary Water Rescue Service is the Chairman who makes decisions between meetings of the Executive Committee of the Board of Voluntary Water Rescue Service.

Provincial Voluntary Water Rescue Service units operate in the area of a province and have legal personality. The highest authority of provincial Voluntary Water Rescue Service units is a general meeting of delegates or members, and in the period between the meetings the Regional Board of Voluntary Water Rescue Service. In provincial Voluntary Water Rescue Service units work Operational Groups appointed to perform the tasks of water rescue in specific conditions and to participate or conduct rescue operations during common threats, technical failures and natural disasters including flood and fires in water areas. Operational Groups of Voluntary Water Rescue Service have a diversified organizational structure and staffing from a dozen to several dozen rescuers¹².

¹⁰ See: *Act of 18 August 2011 on the safety of persons residing in the areas of water* (Coll. Laws of 2011 No. 208, item. 1240), Art. 13.

¹¹ According to the state on 31.12.2012, see the source: www.wopr.pl.

¹² For example, the Operational Group of Lower Silesia Voluntary Water Rescue Service has about 80 members and is composed, among others, of water, medical, diving sections as well as a dog section and the Operational Group of Voluntary Water Rescue Service Plock has 19 members.

In the province, field Voluntary Water Rescue Service units which have the legal personality can act with the approval of Voluntary Water Rescue Service provincial authorities. Field Voluntary Water Rescue Service units form Intervention Voluntary Water Rescue Service Groups of a similar purpose and structure as the Operational Voluntary Water Rescue Service Groups.

The basic unit of Voluntary Water Rescue Service operating at the lowest level is a Voluntary Water Rescue Service team, which gathers members of Voluntary Water Rescue Service in a particular place at organizations and institutions. Tasks of Voluntary Water Rescue Service teams include, among others:

- organizing help and rescue of those who have been injured or are exposed to danger of losing life or health in the water,
- patrolling assigned waters,
- providing first aid in accidents on land and water,
- organizing temporary bathing in the places where a professional rescue service does not work,
- securing mass events organized in the water or in its immediate vicinity in terms of rescue.

In Voluntary Water Rescue Service there is a system of specialist trainings preparing rescuers to work in especially difficult conditions and with the use of specialized rescue equipment. Specialist water rescue involves training in the area of: rescue in fast-flowing waters (flood waters), ice rescue, water rescue using motor-boating equipment (motor boats, jet-skis), cooperation with **Maritime Rescue-Searching Service** or a qualified first aid.

Powers and measures of Voluntary Water Rescue Service are used for rescue operations based on including them in the

crisis management plans of the municipal and county levels. At the same time a number of agreements in the sphere of conducting rescue operations, training and collaboration with departments and institutions responsible for widely understood security were signed¹³. The main areas of the concluded agreements are: carrying out rescue and humanitarian operations, training, technical support, liquidation of threats to property and the environment, conducting prevention in the sphere of safety near water, or control of vessels and bathing.

Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue and **Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue** are specialized non-governmental organizations of mountain rescue¹⁴. These organizations operate based on the *Act of 18 August 2011 on the safety and rescue in the mountains and in organized ski areas*, the *Act of 18 January 1996 on physical education*, the *Act of 7 April 1989 law on associations and their statutes*. The aim of their actions is to provide help in the mountains for people whose health or life is at risk, prevention of accidents in the mountains, protection of the mountain environment in the area where each organization operates.

¹³ These agreements include: *the Agreement with SAR dated 17 October 2008*, *the Agreement with the Chief of Police dated 20 June 2007*, *the Agreement with the State Fire Service of 21 April 2006*, *the Agreement with the Minister of National Defence of 20 January 2003*, *the Agreement with the Government Protection Bureau of 27 November 2002*, *the Agreement with the Border Guard of 3 November 2010* and *the Agreement with the Polish Association of Scuba Divers dated 29 November 2012*.

¹⁴ The **mountain rescue** means organizing and providing help to those who have been injured or are at risk of losing life or health in the mountains and transporting bodies from the mountains. Source: *The Act of 18 August 2011 on the safety and rescue in the mountains and in organized ski areas* (Coll. Laws of 2011 No. 208, item. 1241, the 2013 pos. 7), article 2.

Within the mountain rescue, these organizations undertake rescue operations which, in particular, include¹⁵:

- receiving a notification of an accident or another incident;
- reaching the accident place with rescue equipment;
- giving a qualified first aid;
- securing and evacuation of people staying in the mountains from the areas which pose a threat to their life and health;
- transporting people who have been injured or are exposed to the danger of losing life or health to the point where it is possible to take medical rescue operations by units of the State Medical Rescue system;
- search for missing persons in the mountains;
- transport of bodies from the mountains.

At the same time, they may lead evacuation of people from cableways designed to transport people, secure, in the scope of mountain and ski rescue, sport and tourist events at the request of the organizer of the event, and take part in rescue operations outside the mountains with a particular consideration of natural disasters and catastrophes on the request of the competent services and crisis staffs.

In terms of preventive activities, Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue and Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue exercise control of complying the safety conditions by people staying in the mountains, and they lead prevention activity in this respect. Their competences also include identification of hazards and applying for their removal to the managers of leisure, sports, recreation and tourism facilities and equipment, and to event organizers in the field of physical education,

recreation and sport, as well as to local authorities and managers of national parks. In case of threats to people's health and life, Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue and Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue are entitled to request from the organizers and managers of facilities and equipment to resign from the event or going to the mountains, and also to close the facility or equipment¹⁶.

The region of Tatra Volunteer Search and Rescue operation is the area of the Tatra Mountains. According to the statute of GOPR, basic organizational units are regional groups which conduct independent activity on their territory under the terms defined in the statute. These include: Beskidzka Group, Bieszczadzka Group, Jura Group, Karkonoska Group, Krynicka Group, Podhalańska Group, Wałbrzysko - Kłodzka Group.

Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue conducts rescue operations based on 7 Central Stations, in which round-the-clock rescue shifts are performed (Szczyrk, Sanok, Podlesice, Jelenia Góra, Krynica Zdrój, Rabka Zdrój, Wałbrzych) and 37 Rescue Stations, where shifts are performed, in this 25 all-year-round stations and 12 seasonal. Rescue stations are usually located at hostels, larger ski stations and places of increased tourist traffic. Mountain Volunteer Search and Rescue employs 102 full-time rescuers who are supported by 1,345 voluntary rescuers and 204 candidates for rescuers.

Polish Red Cross operates under the *Act of 16 November 1964 on the Polish Red Cross* and the Statute approved by the order of the Council of Ministers on 20 September 2011. In accordance with the Statute, the tasks of the Red Cross, among others, include:

- providing assistance to victims and harmed people in natural disasters and catastrophes in the country as

¹⁵ See: the *Act of 18 August 2011 on the safety and rescue in the mountains and in organized ski areas* (Journal of Laws of 2011 No. 208, item. 1241, of 2013 pos. 7).

¹⁶ T. Serafin, S. Parszowski, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczności lokalnych: programy prewencyjne w systemie bezpieczeństwa*, Difin, Warsaw 2011, p. 188.

well as abroad, and preparing the public for appropriate behaviour in case of their occurrence,

- acting for the good of people's rescue and civil protection, conducting training in this area and first aid training,
- acting for the good of improving family ties broken as a result of armed conflicts, natural disasters and migration.

To accomplish the mentioned above rescue tasks in the frames of Polish Red Cross, the **Rescue System of Polish Red Cross** was organized. It consists of Polish Red Cross Rescue Groups which are specialized in medical, road, altitude, water-diving rescue, as well as search and rescue operations. These groups cooperate with the system of the State Medical Rescue and National Rescue-Firefighting System. In accordance with the *Regulations of the Rescue Group of the Polish Red Cross*, a group must meet the following conditions:

- consist of minimum 10 people who have completed a qualified first aid course, in accordance with the applicable regulations,
- possess rescue and logistics equipment necessary for the operation of the Group,
- have a system for alerting and informing members of the Group in the event of mass events, disasters and other events,
- be registered by the Board at which it operates and notified to the Central Registry of Emergency and Rescue Groups of Polish Red Cross led by the General Manager of the Board of Polish Red Cross.

The aim of the Red Cross Rescue Groups is, in particular: providing assistance to victims of accidents, disasters, catastrophes, supporting professional and volunteer rescue services, premedical or

medical security of events and mass gatherings, and disseminating first aid among the public, among others, through organization of training, lectures and demonstrations. Fixed assets and equipment which belong to the Groups are purchased with funds of Polish Red Cross, can be obtained free of charge, or on a contract of lending¹⁷.

The Polish Red Cross Rescue System currently consists of 23 Rescue Groups, spread throughout the country, including 15 Groups cooperating with the State Medical Rescue system. The Groups embrace in their ranks almost 500 Polish Red Cross rescuers, including doctors, nurses, paramedics and specialists in various rescue fields. These groups are adequately trained and equipped to support professional rescue services on site of catastrophes, or during combating natural disasters. The purpose of all Red Cross Rescue Groups is to conduct comprehensive rescue operations involving giving a qualified first aid directly at the disaster site, and conduct these activities in the long term. Training a Rescue Group of Polish Red Cross is aimed at providing medical help in conditions and places where standard units of the State Medical Rescue are not able to provide it. Professional competences and qualifications possessed by the members of Rescue Groups of Polish Red Cross allow them to give their medical aid on the spot of disasters to people who were in the state of sudden life hazard. This is particularly important in situations where evacuation to a safe zone has to be postponed in time. Rescue Groups of Polish Red Cross are also prepared to conduct in the places of catastrophes and natural disasters evacuation points and points of medical assistance in case of difficulties in transporting a large number of victims to hospitals, or the need for

¹⁷ *Rules of the Rescue Group of the Polish Red Cross*, Annex No.1 to the Resolution No. 72/06 of the Main Board of the Red Cross on 09.06.06.

long-term care in the area of a natural disaster¹⁸.

It should be noted that non-governmental organizations of an emergency character fill niche areas of widely understood rescue, in their actions they represent an increasing level of training and they have more modern rescue equipment. In addition, a relatively large number of volunteers are interested in this type of activity, and it is even possible to observe that the number of these organizations has increased. However, despite the fact that these organizations have the potential extremely useful in crisis situations, especially during floods, the legal system in Poland does not provide for mandatory use of forces and means of non-governmental organizations of a rescue nature within the system of the crisis management. This is realised on the basis of bottom-up initiatives which led to signing agreements between local authorities and Chairmen of local Voluntary Water Rescue Service units. Therefore, a legal unification seems to be appropriate¹⁹, preferably within the framework of revision of *the Act on crisis management* of the rules for participation and operation of these organizations in the crisis management system.

At the same time non-governmental organizations of a rescue character, unfortunately, face financial problems, including low share of state budget funds in their current activity, not always high quality of rescue actions, or a reluctant attitude of many self-governments, and not treating them as an equal partner in the process of crisis management. Eliminating these negative phenomena would greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of non-governmental rescue organizations, which

would have a particular importance in relation to the events of a mass nature and natural disasters. This can be achieved by harmonizing the training activity, adopting standards for equipment and rescue equipment for all those involved in rescue operations, and developing optimal funding mechanisms.

Unifying training activity should be improved through developing training programs common for professionals and volunteers, taking into consideration the level of technical advancement of rescue equipment and new threats to which rescuers must respond. In the process of rescuers' training and improvement, the teaching staff from universities and training centers should be taken into account, and e-learning methods in the implementation of training programs for the staff of both professional services and non-governmental rescue organizations should be used. Training activity of rescue subjects should also be coordinated at the appropriate levels of the crisis management system, which would allow their local coordination, adaptation to existing hazards, and taking into account existing priorities of rescue activity.

Improving the effectiveness of rescue services depends, to a large extent, on defining standards of equipment and rescue equipment of all the subjects participating in rescue activities, as well as modernization of equipment. Especially important is making the disparities between professional and social systems of rescue smaller. This will improve the possibilities of rescue subjects and their cooperation, but it will also generate costs. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the areas which need funding, and improve the mechanisms of financing modernization and conducting rescue operations by rescue subjects, both professional and non-governmental. This improvement should take into account the diversity of funding sources, from the state budget, the European Union

¹⁸ See: *Program Ratownictwa i Ochrony Ludności na lata 2014-2020*. Draft dated 2013-12-19, pp. 13,14.

¹⁹ See also: M. Mamojka, *Stabilita práva ako determinant reglementačného progresu: Mílniky práva v stredoeurópskom priestore*, Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského, 2007, pp. 335-338.

funds, means of the national and regional operational programs, to private means.

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