The concept and nature of civil protection

The concept of civil protection is one of the vaguest in Polish security studies. Researchers do not agree on its definition, as well as relations with such categories as crisis management, rescue services and civil defence. Achieving a consensus in this respect is not conducive to legislative disarray, which is a consequence of the existence of many different legal acts in Poland regarding de facto identical issues, and adopted at different periods, addressed to different entities, using a different conceptual grid and with a different scope of regulation.

Among the definitions of civil protection that appear in the literature in the field of security, the position expressed by W. Kitler is often cited. The author states that ‘civil protection covers all activities of all entities of state law, each depending on its legal status, aimed at ensuring the safety of society, property, national heritage and the environment in facing natural and man-made disasters, including war’. The indicated researcher also formulated another definition of this concept, in which its multi-phase nature was emphasized, recognizing that civil protection is ‘a complex of activities related to preventing direct threats to human life and health, property, environment and cultural heritage (prevention), preventing their effects (reaction, including rescue) and removal of consequences (reconstruction) after the threat and its effects have subsided.’

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The above broad definition gives the picture of civil protection as an integrated activity of many entities, which is conducted both in the state of peace and war and covers all phases of activity, i.e., prevention, response and reconstruction. W. Kitler treats rescue as an element of responding to civil protection. However, he does not refer to crisis management in his definition; in particular, he does not identify these concepts. There are also fundamentally different views in the literature on how to understand civil protection. The concept of civil protection is also equated with crisis management. There seems to be no consensus among science representatives on security, which is, to some extent, the result of a lack of comprehensive legal regulation that would define the concept of civil protection and related terms, determining their mutual relations. If such legal acts were adopted, the authorities and entities of the civil protection system would be obliged to comply with them and researchers could not overlook such legal and factual status. This would lead to some harmonization of views. Unfortunately, the issues currently described are regulated fragmentarily and chaotically in many different legal documents.

The protection of the population is currently referred to, to some extent, by the Act of 21 November 1967 on the general obligation to defend the Republic of Poland, which states that ‘The civil defence is aimed at protecting people, companies, publicly used facilities and culture heritage, saving and providing assistance to people suffering from war and cooperating in order to combat natural disasters, environmental threats and to remove their negative consequences’ (Article 137). Therefore, based on this rudimentary regulation, it should be recognized that, by the will of the legislator, civil protection is one of the objectives of civil defence in Poland.

The current considerations prove that one of the key concepts in the field of national security has no comprehensive regulation on the part of the legislator (and, as a result, is the subject of dispute in the field of security studies). This was also noticed by the legislator and resulted in the creation of a draft law on civil protection and civil defence, which introduces the definition of the term into the Polish legal system. Article 2(1) of this legal act states that civil protection means ‘the integrated activity of the public administration authority competent in matters of civil protection as well as other entities carrying out tasks aimed at protecting the life and health of the population residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland, protection of property, cultural heritage and the environment natural, in situations of natural or human-made threats. Civil protection is implemented during a state of peace, crisis and emergencies and during the war, with its implementation during martial law or war being understood as civil defence’. This definition describes the concept of civil protection understood in a similar way to the previously presented definition of W. Kitler. However, in the area of civil protection, it distinguishes civil

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5 Dz.U., 2016, item 1534 as amended.
6 The draft of the act on civil protection and civil defence of 22 December 2016.
defence, which is civil protection implemented during the war. Therefore, it can be seen that the draft law firstly literally regulates the relationship between civil protection and civil defence, and secondly, it does so in a different way than it results from the current law on the universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland.

Education for safety — the legal basis

By imposing the obligation of universal defence of the Republic of Poland on citizens, the Act also specifies the tasks that Polish citizens should carry out under that obligation. In accordance with Article 4(2)(5), one of them is education for safety. The principles of conducting education for safety are specified in Article 166 of the Act on a universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland. This provision in paragraph 1 states that ‘Students of primary and upper secondary schools: general secondary, technical and vocational secondary school, except for students of adult schools, are subject to the obligation of education for safety’. This school subject is compulsory in the schools mentioned above, one hour per week (Article 166 of the Act on a universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland).

Details on how to implement education for safety are set out (based on the statutory delegation from Article 166(3) of the Act on a universal obligation to defend the Republic of Poland) in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 28 August 2009 on how to implement education for safety. This document currently sets out two regulations for the subject in question. In the first paragraph, it specifies that during the lessons where the exercises in providing first aid are conducted, classes with over thirty students should be divided into smaller groups. The division into smaller groups is allowed with the consent of the school’s governing authority. Individual or integration schools or classes are the exceptions. In this case, the division into groups applies regardless of the size of the class, whereby each group should include at least five students.

The second paragraph of the Regulation of 28 August 2009 establishes the possibility of running specialized training and recreation camps in the field of education for safety. These camps should be organised:
— during the winter break — for the eighth-grade students of primary schools and the first grades of upper secondary school,
— during holidays — for students who have completed the grades as mentioned earlier.

As can be seen, the provisions of the Regulation of 28 August 2009 do not generally relate to the issue of education for safety in the substantive context. Issues in this area are regulated in two other executive acts:
— Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on the core curriculum for pre-school education and the core curric-

7 Dz.U., 2009, No. 139, item 1131 as amended.
ulam for general education in primary schools, incl. for students with moderate and severe intellectual disability, and for general education in first-grade sectoral vocational schools, general education in individual schools preparing for employment, and general education in post-secondary schools;\(^8\)  
— Ordinance of the Minister of National Education of 30 January 2018 on the core curriculum for general education in general secondary school, technical secondary school, and stage II sectoral vocational school.\(^9\)

**Education for safety and civil protection — pre-school education**

The subject of education for safety as a separate teaching unit is carried out based on applicable regulations from the fourth grade of primary school. The analysis of the Regulation of 14 February 2017 shows that tasks in this area, in a certain form, limited and adequate to the level of child development, are also carried out earlier: at the stage of integrated education in grades I–III, and even at the preschool level. Concerning the latter, it can be noted that the regulation mentions ‘Creating situations conducive to the development of habits and behaviours leading to independence, caring for health, mobility and safety, including road safety’ among the tasks for the kindergarten and ‘When the child’s environment changes and phenomena occur which affect their safety and harmonious development, systematic supplementing, with the consent of the parents, may be used to introduce new issues and educational content’.\(^10\)

Undoubtedly, it is difficult to expect safety awareness from a preschool child but starting education in this field at such an early stage already builds some awareness as to what threatens the environment can generate and how to act to prevent them and also how to react in the event of their fulfillment. The ordinance establishing the core curriculum for pre-school education does not specify what safety aspects should be covered by kindergarten education. However, it seems that it is the rescue subsystem and civil protection that is the sphere in which citizens’ awareness should be shaped the most and included as a part of education conducted from an early age.

To justify the thesis presented above, the position of civil protection in the national security system should be presented. W. Kitler places the civil protection in the universal security subsystem (in which the protection of the health and life of citizens, as well as public property against the effects of factors threatening these values, is guaranteed), which in turn is a part of national security. Moreover, as Kitler notes, for both subsystems the civil protection is a crucial sphere of implementation. Contemporary

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\(^8\) Dz.U., 2017, item 356.  
\(^9\) Dz.U., 2018, item 476.  
\(^10\) Appendix 1 to the Regulation of 14 February 2017.
security conditions carry all non-military and internal threats. They can be countered primarily within the framework of the rescue and civil protection system, especially when it comes to activities that may be undertaken by civilians.  

Consequently, public education in the field of security should also include issues related to civil protection. The testimony of the truth of this thesis is the mere fact of replacing civil defence training with education for safety. The previously taught subject, strictly pro-defence, has been replaced by more general education, in which reacting in cases of threat to life or health plays a significant role. The teaching of topography and weapons training elements was abandoned in favor of the subject of medical rescue and behaviour during a crisis. It is difficult to question the legitimacy of such a solution. The civil defence training was mainly a thing of the past, going back several decades when it was recognized that it was more important for young people to wear a gas mask or shoot a weapon in the event of a state attack from behind the Iron Curtain than to know how to give first aid for an accident victim.

More to the point of the core curriculum for education for safety, it should be recognised that whenever this document refers to more vague security, it should be understood primarily as a protective subsystem, including mainly a rescue and civil protection. This applies to both the example of pre-school education, which provided the basis for this thesis, and to all subsequent levels at which education for safety is carried out.

Referring to safety education at the earliest stage of education, it is worth noting what specific ways of implementing the core curriculum are proposed in the literature; these are:
— safe movement on the street,
— dangerous products and materials, and knowledge of how to handle them,
— preparation posters that will warn other children about the danger,
— knowledge about the principles of safe contact with animals and with strangers,
— jointly defining group security rules.

The presented issues allow noticing that it is the protection of the population that is the subsystem in which the foundations of knowledge at the pre-school stage are most widely built. The children shape the knowledge of what materials or situations can be dangerous for them and others, how to warn others of danger, and how to behave in a crisis.

11 See: Biała księga bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, p. 67. In the sphere of internal security, actions are also taken, e.g. in the security and public order subsystem, but the role of the population is much more limited there, p. 58.


Education for safety and civil protection — primary school

The next stage of a child’s education is teaching in a primary school. In grades I-III (the so-called early school education), it is implemented in the form of integrated education, i.e. without individual subjects. References to security issues can be noted in the core curriculum. ‘Systematically supplementing, with the consent of the parents, the implemented educational content with new issues resulting from the appearance of changes and phenomena important for the child’s safety and harmonious development’ and organisation of classes ‘supporting children’s activities, developing habits and behaviours adequate to the values learned, such as: own and group safety, physical fitness, resourcefulness, independence, responsibility and a sense of duty’\textsuperscript{14} were literally indicated among the school’s tasks at the stage of early school education.

An educational institution at the stage of early school education is primarily intended to shape habits and behaviours conducive to the safety of the child and the group. Also, educational content should be supplemented with safety issues that appear in the child’s environment. As in the previous case, the ordinance does not specify the scope of issues that should be presented to children as part of security-related classes, but it seems that it mostly covers the issues of the civil protection subsystem. The considerations made above when discussing pre-school education remains relevant here.

The importance of safety issues at the early school stage is evidenced not only by the tasks mentioned above but also by the learning objectives, among which there are many references to safety. One of the goals of educating children at the early school stage in terms of their social development is ‘the ability to take care of their safety and other group participants, including safety related to communication using new technologies and safety of participants in road traffic’.\textsuperscript{15}

Many safety-related issues also appear among the specific requirements for an early child’s education. According to the regulation of 14 February 2017 on the core curriculum, not only student achievements in the field of rest, safety, protection of human health and life functions should be included but also:
— presenting the characteristics of selected professions, including firefighters, doctors, nurses and police officers, as well as understanding the essence of work in medical and uniformed services;
— handling of emergency numbers;
— formulating messages to call for help;
— using personal data in the event of threats to life or health in contacts with relevant services;
— reacting with appropriate behaviour in the event of a threat to the safety of a child or another person;

\textsuperscript{14} Appendix 2 to the Regulation of 14 February 2017.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
— observing safety regulations in public places in public transport and
the field of road traffic;
— applying safety rules at school, finding the escape route, recognizing
signs and danger symbols, applying safe play rules depending on the
season of the year and prevailing conditions;
— being aware of the existence of threats resulting from the natural
environment: sudden changes in weather, hurricanes, heavy rains,
storms, drought and the consequences of these phenomena, namely:
floods, fires, lightning. The student should also be able to determine
the correct way of human behaviour in these circumstances.

An analysis of the general and specific educational objectives indicated
above stipulates that — although the term ‘civil protection’ has not been
used literally — many issues belong to this area. Early school education
focuses on education in the child’s awareness of threats and reacting in
an emergency, including communication with the relevant rescue services.
Shaping such attitudes is part of the objectives of civil protection. The
youngest students are building an attitude that will make their behaviour
complement (as far as possible) the actions of public entities to ensure
the safety of people, property and other goods in the face of threats. It is
worth noting that education at the level includes issues such as the appli-
cation of safety principles and awareness of threats, as well as emergency
response and alerting. These activities are part of the idea of prevention
and response stages appropriate for civil protection.16

The subject called ‘Education for safety’ is implemented in a primary
school in grades IV-VIII. Its purpose is to prepare students for appropriate
behaviour and to educate them on appropriate reactions in situations that
pose a threat to life and health. According to the core curriculum, it covers
‘a variety of educational content in the field of national security, content
on the organisation of rescue operations, health education and first aid’.17

The Regulation of 14 February 2017 states that state security within
the meaning of this document should be understood as an area of knowl-
dge explaining the mechanisms of guaranteeing order and stability of
human communities, as well as the accompanying methods, concepts
and forms of conduct. Education — being part of the preparation for ac-
tion in emergencies — is interdisciplinary, focused on practical action and
dealing with individuals in situations of specific threats. The core cur-
riculum literally indicates that one of the necessary skills that a student
should acquire at school is the ability to provide first aid. It was also poin-
ted out that students at the early stages of education should learn about
health and life protection issues, including assessing the safety of the pla-
ce of the accident, recognising potential life threats based on symptoms
and effectively calling for help and undertaking initial rescue operations.

Analysis of the scope of the subject of education for security, allows us
to see that the issues highlighted there are in the vast majority in the area

16 Kitler W, Ochrona ludności jako podstawowa..., op. cit.
17 Appendix 2 to the Regulation of 14 February 2017.
of the civil protection system. Protection of life and health against natural and human-made threats emphasized in the core curriculum is also the essential element indicated in the cited definitions of civil protection. Emphasis on first aid skills that primary school students should possess is part of the rescue that is rightly considered to be the ‘first line of civil protection’.

The core curriculum for classes IV-VIII of primary school contained in the regulation sets out the following general educational objectives in the field of education for safety:
— to educate students about the essence of state security,
— to prepare them for action in the event of extraordinary threats, such as catastrophes and mass accidents,
— to develop students’ skills in the basics of first aid,
— to develop individual and social attitudes conducive to health.

The core curriculum also indicates the detailed requirements for the issues that the student should assimilate in the course of education in grades IV-VIII. These requirements were included in four thematic groups, which correspond to the objectives mentioned above.

In the thematic group of issues related to state security, three requirements for security, in general, were included (knowledge of general concepts, geopolitical conditions of Poland’s security, and the role of international organisations in providing it).

More space is devoted to issues related to acting in an emergency. In this respect, a student leaving primary school should:
— know examples of extraordinary threats,
— be aware of the principles of warning the population,
— present obligations of the population in the event of an evacuation,
— discuss the roles of individual services and other entities,
— list environmental hazards, including knowledge of the rules to be followed in the event of a traffic accident, fire, flood threat, and others.

Another thematic group in which the detailed requirements for primary school students are included is the basics of first aid. Within this category, 14 detailed and comprehensive requirements were formulated. Students leaving primary school should, among others:
— understand the importance of first aid activities and the role of a witness of an incident,
— know the rules of conduct at the scene in detail,
— present methods to ensure the safety of themselves, the injured person and the environment,
— recognise a person in a life-threatening condition,
— call for help in the right way,
— know the rules of dealing with an unconscious person, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, help with limb injuries, or help in burns.

It can be summed up that two out of four learning objectives in the field of education for safety and the corresponding groups of detailed educational requirements mentioned above relate entirely to issues in the field of rescue and civil protection. Preparing students to act in the event of extraordinary threats, as well as developing their skills in the basics of first aid, helps to build security within the described subsystem. Students are prepared to supplement the activities of relevant services, both preventive and related to the sphere of response, including rescue. This can be achieved through students’ knowledge of threats. Thus, the chance to ensure the adequate protection of the population increases.

The core curriculum of the subject education for safety also defines the conditions and manner of implementation of this subject in classes IV-VIII. In terms of preparing students for participation in emergencies, attention is drawn to the need to participate in a simulation of a school evacuation. The role of getting help from emergency services as part of caring for safety is also emphasized. Concerning teaching the basics of first aid, the importance of developing practical skills in this field is highlighted, not only concerning responding but also recognizing threats. Developing a sense of responsibility for the quality of first aid is mentioned in the core curriculum as an essential element of education.

**Education for safety and civil protection — secondary school**

The ordinance of 30 January 2018 provides for three separate core curricula: for general and technical secondary schools, for stage II sectoral vocational school completed after junior high school and for stage II sectoral vocational school completed after primary school. Below we will discuss solutions based on the first of these programs.\(^{19}\)

The core curriculum for general and technical secondary school formulates four general learning objectives that are the same as those already presented when discussing primary school, *i.e.*:

— educating students in understanding the essence of state security,
— preparing them for action in the event of extraordinary threats, such as catastrophes and mass accidents,
— educating students about necessary first aid skills,
— developing individual and social attitudes conducive to health.

The document also lists the detailed requirements for the issues that the student should acquire while studying in the general or technical secondary school. These requirements were included in four thematic groups, which correspond to the content of the objectives mentioned above.

In the group of issues related to state security, it was indicated that the student should first and foremost be familiar with the state’s defence structures. Also, several detailed requirements in this field were

\(^{19}\) Appendix 1 to the Regulation of 30 January 2018.
formulated. According to them, a student graduating from upper secondary school should, among others: identify security challenges, know the tasks of the most essential public authorities in the field of defence, the structure and armament of the Polish Armed Forces, etc. Generally, it can be assumed that as part of the first thematic group, the issues related more to a defence subsystem than to civil protection are presented to students.

The second group of issues is to prepare students to act in emergencies. Within this group, specific learning objectives are included in three subgroups:

— protection of the population and civil defence, including:
  • ability to explain the basic principles of international humanitarian law,
  • knowledge of the functioning of the bases for civil protection and civil defence in Poland,
  • knowledge of the principles of functioning and role of the State Fire Service and State Emergency Medical Services,
  • knowledge of voluntary emergency services and entities,
  • knowledge of the duties of a pedestrian and a driver when an emergency vehicle crosses,
  • identifying objects bearing symbols of the protection of monuments,
  • recognition of threats, their sources and rules of conduct during fires, flood threats, traffic accidents, etc.,
  • recognition of typical threats of natural disasters,
  • knowledge of rules to be followed in the event of a breakdown,
  • knowledge of the principles of people and animals evacuation,
  • knowledge of the rules for supplying water to evacuate people or animals,
  • knowledge on fire hazards at home, school and the surrounding area and knowledge of firefighting equipment,
  • the ability to designate a safety zone,
  • the ability to justify the need to counteract panic,
— sources of nuclear radiation and its effects; in this respect, the core curriculum also lists several detailed requirements, e.g. knowledge of labelling of toxic substances, the effect of radioactive substances on living organisms, ways of protecting food against contamination, etc.,
— warning the public about threats; here too, the core curriculum formulates several detailed requirements, such as the ability to recognize alarms and alarm signals, rules of behaviour after an alarm is announced, etc.

In the group of issues described above, preparing students to act in the event of extraordinary threats, only one subgroup was described as ‘civil protection and civil defence’. However, the other two subgroups, i.e. issues classified as ‘sources of nuclear radiation and its effects’ and ‘alerting the public to threats’ also fall within the scope of civil protection. In the first case, it will be protecting the population in terms of a
specific threat, which are radioactive substances. In the second, it will be protecting the population in terms of one of its actions, i.e. warning about threats.

The third group of issues set out in the core curriculum for high schools is first aid. In this respect, the regulation provides eighteen detailed and comprehensive teaching guidelines. According to them, a student graduating from general or technical secondary school should know the role of individual systems in the body, the importance of first aid, the principles of its provision, rules of conduct at the scene of an accident, calling emergency services, dealing with an unconscious person, etc.

Once again, it can be seen that of the four education objectives in the field of education for safety and the corresponding groups of specific educational requirements set out above, two relate entirely to issues in the field of rescue and civil protection. The comments formulated concerning education at the grades IV-VIII of the primary school remain valid in this respect.

The core curriculum also defines the conditions and manner of implementation of the subject of education for safety in upper secondary schools. It draws attention to the need to develop students’ habits and rules of rescue operations, both in the event of extraordinary threats and concerning elementary first aid.

**Conclusion**

The conducted considerations allow stating that civil protection is the most crucial part of education for safety. Elements of this subsystem can be seen already at the stage of pre-school and early school education. At further levels of education, four primary goals of the subject can be identified, two of which cover issues related to rescuing and civil protection. Children and young people are taught, according to their level of development, how to prevent threats and counteract their effects. At the same time, students will learn the principles of first aid and rescue in general. The knowledge provided allows them to perceive threats and alert the relevant services, as well as carry out all the necessary activities themselves at the time of their arrival, including assisting victims. Thus, the effectiveness of the entire civil protection system increases significantly. It is worth noting that the described changes are a complete novelty. Although education for safety was introduced a decade ago, the described ordinances on core curricula were adopted in the past and this year. It, therefore, remains to be hoped that the postulates contained therein will be implemented in Polish educational institutions, significantly contributing to the improved level of security.
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Keywords: protection, civil, safety, education

Summary: The presented article aims to show the role of the subject ‘education for safety’ in the field of civil protection. This subject almost a decade ago replaced the previous one called ‘civil defence preparation’. Along with the changing conditions of Poland’s security, it became necessary to depart from strictly pro-defence education, emphasizing the military area of security in favor of issues related to protection against threats, preparation for disaster management, or first aid. The question that the author tries to answer is: to what extent does the subject currently taught involve problems related to civil protection? At the same time, the author assumes the hypothesis that issues in the field of rescue and civil protection form the foundation of education for safety. Contemporary youth acquire knowledge and attitudes that make their actions complement the activities of civil protection entities, both in terms of prevention and response.