A review of the book:


by Beata Słobodzian

Publication on the topic of the economic self-government regime in Poland deserve special cognitive attention. The book _The Civil bill on Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Poland_, edited by Stanisław Wykrętowicz – expert and researcher of these issues – is the result of years of research conducted by research centres (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Wrocław University of Economics, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, University of Gdańsk) and cooperation between circles of researchers and the representatives of chambers of commerce and local government practices.

Political transformations initiated in the nineties of the 20th century “forced” to give a new shape of self-government – as the decentralised entity of public authority. At that time the legislator created local government at a basic level (municipal), professional self-government (medical chambers, bar association, etc.), but authorities didn’t establish the economic self-government, which the chambers would have the status of public-law corporations with mandatory membership and administrative control. Repeated attempts to regulate the legal status of chambers of commerce and trade have finished unsuccessfully. Only in 2007 the author’s team which developed the text of _The Civil bill on Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Poland_, was appointed (constitution of the team: footnote nr 22, p. 17).

In the first part of the book (Stanisław Wykrętowicz, _Theoretical basis of The Civil bill on Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Poland_), the author explains the basic concepts, the essence of self-government business. It resembles medieval origins of the development of the economic self-government (chambers of commerce) as associations of merchants, artisans, commercial fleet owners. The first mention of such corporations – a union of merchants in Barcelona – comes from the ninth century. To the French Revolution (1789) various corporations of merchants and guilds have had the status of private-law “corporations”, out of local reach; they had had no an administrative ruler ship – what according to the theory of administrative law did not qualify them as chambers of self-government. The overthrow of the feudal absolute monarchy and the introduction
of the principles of democratic citizenship regime based on freedom and equality of all people and the Industrial Revolution led to the establishment of a liberal market economy (p. 8). As a result, the chambers of economic self-government were created. The author presents the “Polish” way of the formation of economic self-government institutions – chambers of commerce and industry from 1918 to the present. He points out that: “in the Third Republic of Poland, there is still no political will on the establishment of the economic self-government. Government bureaucracy is defending centralized monopoly of power ...” (p. 16). Thus was born the idea to take the social legislative initiative with the support of the author’s team which developed the text of *The Civil bill on Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Poland*. The authors of the bill imitated the self-government legislation of the Second Republic of Poland and legal solutions functioning in France and Germany, which give wide powers to the newly created chambers of commerce and trade.

Robert Kmieciak in the chapter *The legal system of chambers of commerce and trade in the light of Civil bill*, described the legal system of chambers, discussed the nature of chambers as a public-private partnerships, which should be included in the institutional system of public administration (p. 26). According to the authors of the bill, the institutions of economic self-government should be independent of each other and independent under general law, Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the National Council of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Membership in those organizations of the self-government should be mandatory and should include all persons which are conducting a business activity. In addition, the author describes in detail the structure and the operating mode of chambers of commerce and industry (p. 28–32).

In the next chapter, the author Miroslaw Grzelak (*Sources of funding-chambers of commerce in light of Citizens-bill*) presents the sources of funding chambers during the interwar years of the twentieth century. He points out the similarities and differences historically conditioned, he gives an estimated size and structure of contemporary budgets of new chambers (for example: VAT charges, membership fees, fees for services provided by the Chamber) and effects of these for the State.

Kazimierz Kubiak (*Self-government chambers of commerce and industry as an environment giving rise to the development of innovation and competitiveness of Polish enterprises*) presents the characterization of chambers of commerce and industry as the environment, which creates innovativeness of Polish enterprises. He pointed out that domestic enterprises are characterized by their ability to innovate. Difficulties in conducting innovative activities are caused
by the lack of adequate financial resources, limited cooperation with other enterprises and so-called “business support institutions” and underdeveloped delivery channels of products. According to the author, the Chambers of Commerce and Industry would play the role of a link between entrepreneurs and their companies. The modern form of economic cooperation are so-called clusters – modern economic development policy and method of administration, supporting innovation and competitiveness of enterprises and regions. The author pointed out the diverse typology of clusters (p. 52–57) and suggested the Polish experience (p. 59–60).

Marta Balcerek (Institutional determinants of business innovation), continuing innovation issues, pointed out that: “institutional determinants of business innovation rely on the analysis of transaction costs which are the result of the social-economic coordination of prowess in the market”. These costs depend on the quality of institutions. Therefore, chambers of commerce and industry (mandatory membership, administrative ruler ship) are able to guarantee growth in the number of market transactions with out in creasingtheir costs.

Economic activities of public entities can lead to misunderstandings and disputes, which should be resolved by courts. Author Jacek Sobczak (Tasks chambers of commerce and industry in the field of conciliation procedure and economic arbitration) believes that all disputes among civil actors should be dealt with by putting the matter into arbitration judgment and the Chambers of commerce and industry could be a mediator in economic issues (p. 89).

In the example of the Court of Arbitration Economic Chambers and Organizations of Wielkopolska, the next author Adam Mazurek (Tasks of the Court of Arbitration Economic Chambers and Organizations of Wielkopolska, p. 119–124) discusses the essence of this court, analyzing the similarities and differences in comparison with the ordinary courts. He argues the need for creating such courts under the economic self-government institutions.

An important matter for the effective functioning of the economic self-government are people – their knowledge, experience, skills, qualifications, leadership and managements kills. Hence the need to identify this group of people (the elite) distinguished by their knowledge and social trust, who would become an important factor in creative, determining the economic development of the country (p. 99). The problem of creating Polish economic elites, who come from small and medium-sized enterprises organized in the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was described by Jan Sikora in his article: The role of chambers of commerce and industry in the development of the economic elite in Poland, (p. 91–100).
Katarzyna Walkowiak (*The Chambers of commerce and industry and the education of professional personnel for the Polish economy*) explains how important for the knowledge-based economy is continuing education, including vocational education. Following the example of Western solutions (France, Germany), the author points to the role that could be played by the Chamber in the education process: restoration and modernization of vocational education, helping to ensure proper technical background of schools, providing expert professional staff, helping in the cooperation between educational institutions and entrepreneurs. The author states that meeting the challenges of a knowledge-based economy requires the involvement of a civil factor.

In addition, the book contains reflections on the initiation of cooperation between the chambers of trade and foreign entities (Zdzisław W. Puślecki, *Tasks of the chambers of commerce and industry in establishing business contacts with foreign entities*), comments, suggestions, demands concerning the bill (Karol Dąbrowski, *Commentson The Civil bill on Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Poland*) and description of a model of a social market economy with social responsibility, based on the German solutions (Marta Balcerek, *Ortoliberal concept of the social market economy in Germany – years 1949–1963*).

The intention of the co-authors of the publication was to explain the issue of the economic self-government and its legal system. The development of *The Civil bill on Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Poland*, aimed at mobilizing public authorities to address the problem as quickly as possible and start the legislative procedure.

This publication deserves to be popularized because, among others, it promotes the concept of functioning of economic self-government, which proved to be right in the political system of the Second Republic of Poland; contains a number of analysis and example solutions for chambers of commerce and industry, which would have a “counterbalance” for the current centralized government administration.