

## **Life Windows in Poland**

*He who saves but one life... saves the entire world.*

*Life Window (Okno Życia)* - like we call baby box in Poland – is the place where the parents who are unable to raise their babies can use it anonymously. Life Window has a very good connotations in Polish. People understand that Life Window is a place which is open for new opportunity, it's a place, where one can find a hope. Most of Life Windows in Poland have been opened under an umbrella of Caritas which is the biggest charity organization of Catholic Church in Poland and one of the most recognizable and reliable charity organization in Poland.

First Life Window in Poland was opened on 19th of March 2006 in Cracow, in the house for single mothers. The Life Window was opened as a tribute to Pope John Paul II, who was Polish and died a year before. He was the great life defender. Since then the next windows are opened as possibility to save child's life. Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth are looking after the house and the life window in Cracow, Poland. 18 babies was saved in that window, so far.

For the last 12 years over 60 Life Windows have been opened in 55 cities in Poland. Year 2009 was unique. 34 Life Windows were opened. The motto of pastoral work in Catholic Church in Poland: „Let's take care of life” was a inspiration for that action in 2009. For that reason, in 2009 Life Window was opened in 34 of 44 local/diocesan Caritas in Poland.

90% of Life Windows in Poland are under the wings of Caritas. The rest is opened thanks to inspiration of private person, the city council or local hospital. Usually people or institution who wants to create Life Window, asks Caritas for help and patronage.

Two thirds of all Life Windows in Poland are located in the female congregation house and nuns take care of it. 15 percent of Life Windows are located in hospitals. The rest is located in children's homes, in the buildings of house for single mothers or welfare centres. Most of that places are the Catholic Church property or are run by Church.

In each of that place there is a professional care, even though people (e.g. nuns) are not formally prepared for such activity. Their competence in this field is unquestioned, because it arises from the spiritual care and the sacrifice one for another. That's why they keep watch over Life Windows all the time, night and day. The most valuable award for that effort is a satisfaction of saved children's life.

For the last 12 years (2006 – 2018) over 140 children were abandoned in Life Windows in Poland. 18 children were found in Cracow, where the first window was opened. 17 children were abandoned in Warsaw, which is the biggest city in Poland (the capital). In the region of archdiocese of Łódź – 8 children were found in 4 Life Windows from 2009 to 2016. Most of the abandoned children were the newborn ones. Usually they were in a good health condition, well dressed, often with the extra baby clothes and nappies.

The main reasons why parents leave their children in Life Windows in Poland are: parent's poverty, parenthood immaturity, fear of social rejection, chance for better life for a child, taint of single motherhood, mother's young age, no support from child's father, lack of flat and work for parents, child's illness, mother's illness, unwanted pregnancy.

The most often criticism of Life Windows in Poland is that it can increase the number of parents who do not fulfil their basic obligation to raise their children, when parents know that they can leave their baby in Life Window. Some say that it can promote isolated childbirth which is dangerous to mothers and children. Some critics say that it may violate a child's right to know its origins, as well. But the social opinion of many people in Poland is that Life Windows save children's life. There is positive social feedback more often than negative one. The fact is it is a real way to prevent abandonment or deaths of children.

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