

Cash Benefits Granted Under Social Assistance System

Social assistance is one of the institutions of the government social policy that provides cash and non-cash benefits. In the cash benefit category there are permanent benefit, temporary benefit, purpose-specific and special purpose-specific benefits, and business start-up benefits. The social assistance responsibilities and forms in which it is provided to the beneficiaries is regulated in Poland by the Social Assistance Act of 12 March 2004¹. Practice shows that the most desirable form of social assistance by the beneficiaries are cash benefits.

Tasks under the Polish social assistance system are either own tasks or delegated by the government administration. All three levels of local government – municipality, county and province perform social assistance tasks as their own tasks, and additionally municipalities and counties perform social assistance tasks delegated by the government administration. The performance of government delegated tasks is financed under the Social Assistance Act (Art. 18 par. 2 and 20 par. 2) by the state budget.

The provisions of Social Assistance Act and their practical application have to be analysed from an angle of general principles and social assistance objectives that cannot be omitted when analysing specific benefits.

The first general principle is a subsidiarity principle under which a person claiming a benefit should first and foremost take advantage of aid from other sources, and only in the event of their absence rely on the aid of relevant social assistance body. The second general principle is the activity principle, which manifest itself in the obligation of the beneficiary to act jointly with the social assistance centre personnel. The above two principles are followed by a third general principle, viz. customisation principle, which implies that the social assistance body adapts type, form and size of assistance to each individual case. This implies that the social assistance body may customize a solution under the forms and means of assistance stipulated in the Act.

The granting of cash benefits under social assistance system will be analysed on the example of a municipality with a population reaching almost one million and will involve system audit and performance audit.

¹ Journal of Laws of 2008, No 115, item 728.