

SUMMARY

The first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was a blow to the Polish and global economies. It was also undoubtedly a difficult test, not only for the government but also for the public. Over a year ago, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki imposed several restrictions on civil liberties, starting a lockdown that left its mark on the functioning of the Polish economy. The restrictions on social and economic life, in varying degrees of severity, are still in place today.

Poland was not the only country that decided to shut down its economy – other European countries also decided to take a similar step – but it was in Poland that restrictions were among the most restrictive. Interestingly, they were introduced when the daily number of infections was very low compared to many other countries.

The effects of these decisions can still be seen today in almost every sector of the economy. Hundreds of thousands of people are often employed in the areas affected by the crisis – the restaurant industry alone accounts for some 76,000 firms, employing almost one million people. Many of them have partially or completely lost their livelihoods, which can lead to a spiral of debt for them. Closing down the economy also means less revenue for the state budget since it leads to the reduced amount of taxes paid by entrepreneurs, but also paid by employees or indirect taxes, such as VAT or excise duty, which are associated with an inevitable decline in consumption.

The pandemic has got negative consequences in Poland, not only economically, but also from the perspective of rule of law. The period from March 2020 to the present day abounds in a huge number of amendments to the law, which are introduced at a very fast pace, disregarding the accepted and established standards reflected in the provisions on the principles of legislation and implementation of legal acts. Public consultations are omitted, and justifications for laws are written laconically without specifying the specific purpose of a given law. All these activities contribute to the fact that Poles' trust in state authorities is weakening month by month.

Poland was not prepared for the crisis that befell us as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis should be a lesson to those in power that the neglect in the vital areas of the public sector (which are consistently singled out by experts and civil society) always has its price. The current crisis has shown that sometimes you have to pay this price while you're still in office. This should be a warning to every government.