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### *The Influence of Interest Groups on Health Policy in Poland after 1989*

In this doctoral thesis, the author concentrated particularly on the influence of interest groups connected with healthcare on the political system. The author posed the question, 'How and by what means lobbying takes place in health care industry?'. In addition, he asked several complex questions, such as:

- how do the health care industry interest groups, including pharmaceutical concerns, pharmacists, doctors, nurses, midwives and paramedics benefit from obeying the law?
- how and by what means, do the surveyed groups influence on the parliamentarians and the senior state officials by using illegal methods?
- assuming that the majority of decisions is taken illegally, how does the profitable for the groups concerned decision-making process works? Does the corruption appear there? or is there any dividing line between legal and illegal actions?
- to what degree, do lobbies and other groups influence on the parliamentarians and the state officials?
- do other institutions, such as public hearing, protests and strikes apply to them? Are these methods effective?

The above research questions enabled the author to make the following hypotheses:

The main hypothesis assumes that because of low effectiveness of the legal lobbying regulations in Poland, the doctors, pharmacists, the representatives of pharmaceutical companies, nurses, midwives and paramedics are encouraged to use the illegal path. They enter into this client oriented relationship, as part of vertical structure which exists within

political system. This kind of relationship is socially acceptable as a consequence of past political and cultural system in Poland.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the influence of interest groups and lobbying on the health care industry. The research led the author to the following conclusions:

First of all, it should be emphasized that the health care's industry business is represented in a very specific social and institutional context focused around strong political class and civil society. The electorate is often faced with the choice between real politicians and interest groups connected with the health care industry. Usually, the lesser evil is chosen.

Unfortunately, development of the interest groups does not impact the legislative process so the social costs of lobbying, including opportunity costs, increase. The interest groups decide how to spend the opportunity costs.

From the social welfare point of view, lobbying is irrational so the legal forms of lobbying are unprofitable. Owing to this fact, the interest groups follow the illegal or semi-legal paths. The factors mentioned above led the author to the conclusion that the legislative process reflects the preferences of interest groups, who are ready to bear any costs, as long as they are able to influence or force the decision – making process.

The situation seems to be acceptable for the politicians, who are aware how precious the interest groups can be during the election process. It is a silent agreement deal between them, as both groups wish to benefit from the situation.