

SUMMARY

This dissertation has thoroughly examined the current state of personal data protection in selected local government units in Poland. The analysis, both theoretical and practical, focused on the scope of public services provided to determine whether Polish local governments can effectively protect sensitive information, namely, citizens' personal data. The author sought to answer the question of how local government institutions protect the personal data they hold, what measures they take to ensure its secure storage, and whether these measures are sufficient. Considering the current challenges and opportunities arising from the digital transformation of public services, the study aimed to identify potential gaps and shortcomings in the current public administration system to seek ways to eliminate them. This corrective goal guided the author of this dissertation. To achieve it, information was gathered through a multifaceted analysis of the research problem. The analysis included various perspectives – broadly defined – highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of personal data protection issues in local government units.

The dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first chapter presents a spectrum of issues from various fields that converge on personal data protection. The aim of this approach was to demonstrate that the security of personal data is an issue considered within the security sciences but also within many other scientific disciplines, indicating the complexity and multifaceted nature of the topic. Thus, the stereotype of discussing data protection solely from an IT perspective was broken. By presenting the perspectives of security sciences, as well as political science, administration and law, sociology, psychology, ethics, economics, and communication sciences, we can see that personal data security is one of the most important issues for information societies today. It is a significant topic, and with the advancing digitization, it is becoming part of nearly every aspect of modern human life. Therefore, when we talk about the real protection of personal data, we address a range of issues from private life to administration, legal, ethical, economic, cultural issues, and many others. We are also aware that with further digital development, this complexity will increase and become even more complicated.

The second chapter focuses on the legal dimension of personal data protection in Poland and beyond. It presents the legal regulations for personal data protection, both national and those mandated by the European Union for Poland. In this chapter, we define personal data, the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016 (GDPR), discuss the supervisory and control bodies resulting from these

regulations, legal responsibility, and compare the EU personal data protection system with those of other countries.

The third chapter discusses the organization and structure of local government bodies in Poland. This discussion serves as an introduction to the fourth chapter – the key theoretical part of the work – which addresses the responsibilities of local government bodies resulting from GDPR, imposed by the state as part of public administration tasks. This topic is also presented in the context of public services in the fifth chapter of the dissertation.

In the fourth chapter, the role of local government bodies in personal data protection is discussed, particularly their cooperation with other entities and the conduct of training to enhance the qualifications of administrative personnel.

The separate fifth chapter is dedicated to local public services, such as educational, health, infrastructure, environmental, social, cultural, and security services. Their connection to personal data protection is undeniable, as the principles of legality, fairness, transparency, data minimization, purpose limitation, storage limitation, integrity, and confidentiality should apply in the provision of public services.

The contribution to the understanding of personal data protection issues in Poland was made through conducted research. The methodology of this research is discussed in the sixth chapter. The main research problem, which the empirical part of this work is based on, concerned the impact of local government bodies' actions on personal data protection in the context of providing public services, as well as the factors influencing the effectiveness of these actions. During the detailing of the research problem, the following hypotheses were formulated: (1) do local government organizations that invest in training and educating personnel on personal data protection achieve a higher level of compliance with regulations and effectiveness in data management? (2) does coordinated action and cooperation between local government bodies contribute to more effective personal data protection? (3) does transparent communication with citizens about the processing of their personal data increase trust in local government bodies? (4) do local government organizations that invest in the development and implementation of effective data security systems reduce the risk of personal data protection breaches? (5) to what extent do local government organizations that strictly adhere to personal data protection regulations avoid serious legal consequences related to violations of these regulations?

The collected material allowed for the verification of the hypotheses posed in the dissertation, and the conclusions from the research and theoretical analysis were formulated in the final part of the work.