EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

FOURTH SECTION

DECISION

Application no. 16464/06
Roman SPRYSAK
against Poland

The European Court of Human Rights (Fourth Section), sitting on 10 September 2013 as a Committee composed of:

David Thór Björgvinsson, *President,*
Vincent A. De Gaetano,
Krzysztof Wojtyczek, *judges,*
and Fatoş Aracı, *Deputy Section Registrar,*

Having regard to the above application lodged on 7 April 2006,

Having regard to the declaration submitted by the respondent Government on 30 April 2013 requesting the Court to strike the application out of the list of cases and the applicant's reply to that declaration,

Having deliberated, decides as follows:

THE FACTS

The applicant, Mr Roman Sprysak, is a Polish national, who was born in 1957 and lives in Łańcut.

The Polish Government ("the Government") were represented by their Agent, Mr J. Wołąsiewicz, succeeded by Ms J. Chrzanowska, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The facts of the case, as submitted by the parties, may be summarised as follows.

On 18 June 2001 the Social Security Board (*Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych* – "the SSB") granted the applicant the right to an early-retirement pension for persons raising children who required constant care (the so-called "EWK" pension) in the net amount of around 875 Polish zlotys (PLN).

On 14 June 2002 the SSB reopened the proceedings, revoked the initial decision granting a pension and eventually refused to award the applicant the right to the EWK pension. The payment of the pension was discontinued with immediate effect.

The applicant appealed against the respective decisions divesting her of the right to an early-retirement pension. On 22 January 2003 the Rzeszow Regional Court (*Sąd Okręgowy*) dismissed the appeal.

The applicant appealed against this judgment. On 22 June 2005 his appeal was finally dismissed by virtue of the judgment of the Rzeszów Court of Appeal (*Sad Apelacyjny*).

On 14 December 2005 the Supreme Court (*Sąd Najwyższy*) refused to entertain the cassation appeal lodged by the applicant.

COMPLAINT

The applicant complained under Articles 6 and 14 of the Convention and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention about the reopening of the social security proceedings which had resulted in the revocation of his right to the EWK pension.

THE LAW

By letter dated 30 April 2013 the Government informed the Court that they proposed to make a unilateral declaration with a view to resolving the issue raised by the application. They further requested the Court to strike out the application in accordance with Article 37 of the Convention.

The declaration provided as follows:

> "(...) the Government hereby wish to express – by way of the unilateral declaration – their acknowledgement of the violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention stemming from the sudden revocation of the applicant's EWK pension which placed an excessive burden on the applicant incompatible with that provision.
>
> Consequently, the Government are prepared to pay to the applicant the sum of EUR 9,000 (nine thousand euro) which they consider to be reasonable in the light of the Court's case law. The sum referred to above, which is to cover any pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage as well as costs and expenses, will be free of any taxes that may be applicable. It will be payable within three months from the date of notification of the decision taken by the Court pursuant to Article 37 § 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the event of failure to pay this sum within the said three-month period, the Government undertake to pay simple interest on it, from expiry of that period until settlement, at a rate equal to the marginal lending rate of the European Central Bank during the default periods plus three percentage points.

> The Government would respectfully suggest that the above declaration might be accepted by the Court as 'any other reason' justifying the striking out of the case of the Court's list of cases, as referred to in Article 37 § 1 (c) of the Convention (...)"

In a letter of 27 May 2013 the applicant expressed the view that the sum mentioned in the Government's declaration was unacceptably low.

The Court recalls that Article 37 of the Convention provides that it may at any stage of the proceedings decide to strike an application out of its list of cases where the circumstances lead to one of the conclusions specified under (a), (b) or (c) of paragraph 1 of that Article. Article 37 § 1 (c) enables the Court in particular to strike a case out of its list if:

> "for any other reason established by the Court, it is no longer justified to continue the examination of the application".

It also recalls that in certain circumstances, it may strike out an application under Article 37 § 1 (c) on the basis of a unilateral declaration by a respondent Government even if the applicant wishes the examination of the case to be continued.

To this end, the Court will examine carefully the declaration in the light of the principles emerging from its case-law, in particular the *Tahsin Acar* judgment (*Tahsin Acar v. Turkey*, [GC], no. 26307/95, §§ 75-77, ECHR 2003-VI; *WAZA Spółka z o.o. v. Poland* (dec.), no. 11602/02, 26 June 2007; and *Sulwińska v. Poland* (dec.), no. 28953/03).

The Court has established in a number of cases brought against Poland its practice concerning complaints under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention about the reopening of the social security proceedings which had resulted in the revocation of the applicant's right to the early-retirement pension (see, for example, *Moskal v. Poland*, no. 10373/05, 15 September 2009; *Antoni Lewandowski v. Poland*, no. 38459/03, 2 October 2012).

As regards the issues raised by the applicant under other provisions of the Convention, the Court would recall that in all the previous similar cases examined to date it held that the complaint under Article 6 did not require a separate examination (see, for example, *Moskal*, cited above, § 83; *Antoni Lewandowski*, cited above, § 88). It sees no reason to depart from this conclusion in the present case. Having regard to all the material in its possession, and in so far as the matters complained of Article 14 are within its competence, the Court finds that the applicant has failed to substantiate her complaints. It follows that this part of the application must be rejected in accordance with Article 35 §§ 3 and 4 of the Convention (see also, for example, *Moskal*, cited above, §§ 100 and 101).

Having regard to the nature of the admissions contained in the Government's declaration, as well as the amount of compensation proposed – which is consistent with the amounts awarded in similar cases – the Court considers that it is no longer justified to continue the examination of the application (Article 37 § 1 (c)).

Moreover, in light of the above considerations, and in particular given the clear and extensive case-law on the topic, the Court is satisfied that respect for human rights as defined in the Convention and the Protocols thereto does not require it to continue the examination of the application (Article 37 § 1 *in fine*).

Accordingly, it should be struck out of the list.

For these reasons, the Court unanimously,

Takes note of the terms of the respondent Government's declaration under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention and of the modalities for ensuring compliance with the undertakings referred to therein;

Decides to strike the application out of its list of cases in so far as it relates to the above complaint in accordance with Article 37 § 1 (c) of the Convention;

Declares the remainder of the application inadmissible.

Fatoş Aracı
Deputy Registrar

David Thór Björgvinsson
President