

Close interpersonal relations, which are shaped over the lifetime, are an important part of each person's life. Law makes extensive references to interpersonal relations, moulding them in a specific way. In order to describe relations between people, the legislator uses terms such as "close person" or "closest person", and so a question arises whether a person who is "close" under the law is also "close" in the sphere of actual relations and everyday life. The categories of individuals the legislator labels as "close" are such irrespective of the actual dimension of interpersonal relations. In determining the scope of individuals falling into the category of "closeness", the legislator refers predominantly to family relations, and to a lesser extent of actual relations. However, modern reality is primarily about actual bonds and facts, which the law does not always manage to keep abreast with (e.g. status of single-sex relationships, the development of new technologies – status of humanoid robots, surrogate motherhood, so-called families of choice). While the popular meaning of "closeness" suggests a certain degree of intimacy and a special character of the relation between people, the legislator distances himself from that, instead emphasising verifiability of bonds. Paradoxically, this may lead to a situation when a person who is actually "close" may turn out to be a stranger under the law and vice versa (between the sphere of facts and law). It should therefore be considered what vision of "closeness" the legislator shapes and based on what criteria. The category of closeness goes far beyond single references in legislation, it is a sort of "channel" through which the legislator shows what values he considers to be important and close in people's lives. By collecting all the "bits and pieces of closeness", as created by the legislator, one can establish the concepts of interpersonal relations in law. The legislator uses different terms to describe interpersonal relations. These do not make up a homogeneous category and include notions such as "close person", "closest person", "next of kin", "closest family", "person in a close relationship", "having a particularly close relationship", "close ones". They can be divided into defined ones and undefined ones. The scope of the former is determined e.g. by persons such as the descendants, ascendants, spouse, relatives, or persons actually living in cohabitation. The terms that determine the scope of "closeness" are in most cases undefined, which causes interpretive discrepancies. In case of undefined terms, a question arises as to what sources and reference materials to look up in order to determine the meaning of "closeness": language of the law, legal language, or perhaps general language? Another question to be answered is whether, given the social changes that are taking place, the legislator should redefine the existing terms denoting "closeness" or whether it is up to the practice of application of law to give them their current meanings. Furthermore, the legislator treats the categories of "close" and "not-close" ones differently, and grants the former a number of rights and obligations. In the light of the above, it should be considered what values determine the special treatment of relations regarded as "close".

The first stage of the research encompasses collection and analysis of terms directly expressing "closeness" and of equivalents of the term "closeness". Once this is done, the subjective and temporal scope of "closeness" as well as the criteria through which the legislator defines "closeness" will be determined. More specifically, it will be established whether these criteria are repetitive, and in what configurations they appear (identification of types of closeness and criteria preferred by the legislator). In addition to the above, reasons for the introduction of different formulas of "closeness" will be determined through comparison of the various existing formulas (examination of the purpose of introduction of different formulas of "closeness"). Given the specific nature of regulations, through which the legislator refers to "closeness", it is necessary to carry out an analysis of *ratio legis* of legal regulations using the category of "closeness". The results of this analysis will be the basis for reconstruction of the vision of "closeness" in legislation and case-law, which will be supplemented with remarks as to the law as it now stands and postulates as to future legislative solutions. Thus reconstructed concept will be complemented by an analysis of how normative "closeness" affects the quality of life of individuals.

The final stage of the research will encompass reconstruction of "closeness" from the perspective of evolution in time. Law cannot regulate interpersonal relations independently of social realities. At the same time, the legislator must be attentive to what happens between people. If we need closeness to live, then law should regulate it in such a way as to ensure that it positively affects the quality of life. Reflections on "closeness" go beyond the analysis of the law as it now stands; instead, they also encompass past and future perspectives.