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# A guide to social economy

How to influence public policies to transform emergency and social aid into development aid

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How to influence public policies to transform emergency and social aid into development aid

APRIL 2024

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# Słowniczek

**ES** - EKONOMIA SPOŁECZNA - SOCIAL ECONOMY

**JST** - JEDNOSTKI SAMORZĄDU TERYTORIALNEGO - LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

**CIS** - CENTRUM INTEGRACJI SPOŁECZNEJ - SOCIAL INTEGRATION CENTRE

**KIS** - KLUB INTEGRACJI SPOŁECZNEJ - SOCIAL INTEGRATION CLUB

**ZAZ** - ZAKŁAD AKTYWNOŚCI ZAWODOWEJ - PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE

**PS** - PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWO SPOŁECZNE - SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

**PES** - PODMIOT EKONOMII SPOŁECZNEJ - SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTITY

**OWES** - OŚRODEK WSPARCIA EKONOMII SPOŁECZNEJ - SOCIAL ECONOMY SUPPORT CENTRE

**WTZ** - WARSZTATY TERAPII ZAJĘCIOWEJ - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WORKSHOPS

**OPS** - OŚRODEK POMOCY SPOŁECZNEJ - SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE

**ZKZL** - ZARZĄD KOMUNALNYCH ZASOBÓW LOKALOWYCH - MUNICIPAL HOUSING RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BOARD

**PUP** - POWIATOWY URZĄD PRACY - LABOUR OFFICE

**AA** - ANONIMOWI ALKOHOLICY - ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**SAN** - SPOŁECZNA AGENCJA NAJMU - SOCIAL RENTAL AGENCY

**PFRON** - PAŃSTWOWY FUNDUSZ REHALIBILITACJI OSÓB NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNYCH - STATE FUND FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE DISABLED

**PL** - PARTNERSTWO LOKALNE - LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

**OPP** - ORGANIZACJA POŻYTKU PUBLICZNEGO - PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATION

**NGO** - ORGANIZACJA OBYWATELSKA - NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION,

**IPWB** - INDYWIDUALNY PROGRAM WYCHODZENIA Z BEZDOMNOŚCI - INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMME FOR GETTING OUT OF HOMELESSNESS

# A word of introduction

For over thirty years, the Barka Foundation for Mutual Help has been developing an approach that involves people with life difficulties in social and professional life, in the local community, in the neighbourhood, and in local partnership. This is a very important pillar of social policy and employment policy, which helps improve the fate of people struggling with serious problems, such as unemployment, social exclusion, mental disorders, addictions, disabilities or other problems that make it difficult to cope effectively with reality.

The solutions developed in Poland - social integration centres, various forms of social enterprises established by civic organizations and local governments - are a tool that helps break the system in which people are only service recipients. These new experiences create conditions in which a person also contributes to improving his situation. This is how his sense of self-worth and agency is born.

The tools existing in the public procurement system are also very important, such as social clauses, which allow local governments to reserve public procurement only to social economy entities. These tools shape a supportive local market and a local environment that is socially responsible.

In this publication, we would like to show new solutions in the field of social policy both to organisations and local governments in Poland and to our friends from Ukraine, because we believe that these are universal tools.

A natural consequence of the war and the first need of the post-war era is the reconstruction of infrastructure. We hope that the presented solutions will provide local governments and local communities with the opportunity to take up the challenges of restoring human capital, rebuilding the path of life - through crises, traumas and disabilities, to finding one's place in the local community, one's role in social services and working for other people.

**The solidarity economy is a great opportunity for all of us.**

# What is social economy?

The social economy (ES) covers a wide range of activities that aim at social integration, strengthening local communities, supporting solidarity and creating equal opportunities for all members of society.

In accordance with the Act of August 5, 2022 on the social economy, ES should be understood as the activities of social economy entities for the benefit of the local community in the field of social and professional reintegration, creation of jobs for people at risk of social exclusion and the provision of social services, carried out in the form of a business activity, public benefit activity and other paid activities.

In Poland, social economy entities (PES) include:

- social cooperatives,
- occupational therapy workshops and professional activity centres,
- social integration centres and social integration clubs,
- worker's cooperatives, including disabled people's cooperatives, blind people's cooperatives and agricultural production cooperatives,
- non-governmental organisations,
- religious legal persons and organisational units,
- associations of local government units,
- joint-stock companies, limited liability companies and sports clubs which are companies that do not operate to make a profit and allocate all income to achieve statutory objectives and do not allocate profits for distribution among their shareholders, stockholders and employees.

The features that distinguish social economy entities from private and public entities are: putting service to members or the community above profit, autonomous management, democratic decision-making process, primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of income.

# History of social economy in Poland

The beginnings of social economy in Poland date back to the Middle Ages, when various forms of social organizations based on the principles of community and solidarity were created. During this period, there were guilds, craft guilds, as well as various types of brotherhoods and corporations that were tasked with both protecting the interests of their members and supporting the poor and people in need.

With the development of capitalism and industry in the 19th century, the social economy in Poland gained in importance. Various types of cooperatives, foundations and charitable associations were established, the aim of which was to provide care for the poorest layers of society. The precursors of the cooperative movement in Poland were: Stanisław Staszic, Fr. Piotr Wawrzyniak, Edward Abramowski, priest. Wacław Bliziński, Maria Orsetti, Stefan Żeromski, Stanisław Wojciechowski, Teodor Toeplitz, Franciszek Stefczyk, Romuald Mielczarski, Jan Wolski, Stanisław Thugutt. The cooperative movement was based<sup>1</sup> on the ideas of self-help, cooperation and solidarity. During the partition period<sup>[1]</sup>, cooperatives played the role of a defender of national identity, unparalleled in any other European country - its development during this period was related to educational and cultural activities aimed at strengthening national identity and building community.

After Poland regained independence in 1918, the social economy developed dynamically, supported by the state and various social organisations. The adoption of the first Polish act on cooperatives in 1920 by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland contributed to its successful development. It is estimated that at that time every fifth adult Polish citizen was a member of a cooperative, and 1/5 of savings deposits were placed in cooperative banks and Stefczyk cooperatives (a form of savings and loan cooperative). In 1937, there were a total of 12,860 cooperatives, bringing together 3,016,000 people. members, including: 3,383 agricultural, commercial and consumer cooperatives, 1,804 consumer cooperatives and 1,408 dairy cooperatives. These cooperatives were associated in many economic and audit unions<sup>[2]</sup>.

[1] Partition was the occupation of the Polish state by Austria, Russia and Prussia in the years 1772–1918.

[2] See Rural cooperatives, National Cooperative Council, Warsaw 2014, p. 41.

# History of social economy in Poland

After World War II, during communism, the social economy in Poland was limited due to the centralization of the economy and the domination of the state sector. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, many social organisations continued to work, supporting those in need and promoting solidarity values.

After the political transformation in the 1990s, the social economy in Poland was revived, opening up to new opportunities and challenges. The basis for the reactivation of SE were social problems related to the political transformation, such as structural unemployment and the phenomenon of social exclusion, which are one of the effects of the introduction of market mechanisms to the Polish economy. New cooperatives, foundations, associations and social enterprises were established and engaged in various areas of social and economic life. The legal and strategic framework for the functioning of this segment of socio-economic life was developed, and a financing system was created to support the development of social economy entities.

The Republic of Poland also became an active participant in the cooperative movement and social economy at the international level, engaging in various projects and initiatives.

Currently, the social economy in Poland is strong and diversified. It includes both traditional forms of activity and modern initiatives. Cooperatives, foundations and associations play an important role in creating jobs, supporting socially excluded people and promoting sustainable development. At the same time, the challenges of poverty, social exclusion and environmental protection require continuous commitment and innovation in the field of the social economy.



# Polish legal solutions in the field of social economy

The legal foundations of the social economy are created by several acts. The key ones include:

- Act of August 5, 2022 on social economy,
- Act of April 24, 2003 on public benefit activities and volunteering,
- Act of June 13, 2003 on social employment,
- Act of August 27, 1997 on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons,
- Act of April 27, 2006 on social cooperatives,
- Act of September 16, 1982, Cooperative Law.

Additionally, attention should be paid to the elements supporting the development of SE in the Public Procurement Law Act of September 11, 2019.

A brief description of selected legal acts is presented below.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a dynamic development of civic organisations that focused on direct actions for people marginalised by political changes. These activities were based mainly on the traditional model of social assistance, consisting in the distribution of benefits and services, largely social ones. However, some organisations had already introduced an economic and integration component to their activities. This was associated with a high risk because there were no legal regulations giving any preferences to organisations undertaking paid and economic activities, as well as procedures for granting and settling subsidies for the implementation of public tasks.

That is why the adoption of the Act on public benefit activities and volunteering in 2003 was so important. It created the basis for cooperation and partnership between civic organisations and authorities at all levels.

[1] One of such organisations was Barka Foundation for Mutual Help, which, while running community homes for people in crisis of homelessness, also launched the production and implementation of services for the local communities where these homes operated.

# Act on public benefit activities and volunteering

The Act regulates, among other things, the rules for conducting public benefit activities by non-governmental organisations in the sphere of public tasks and cooperation between public administration bodies and non-governmental organisations. The regulations apply to the conduct of unpaid, paid and economic activities, which is of key importance in the context of the process of economisation of civic organisations.

Public benefit activity is not an economic activity (with certain reservations, discussed below) and may be conducted as unpaid activity or as paid activity. We deal with unpaid activities when entities carrying out public tasks do not receive remuneration for them. Entities conducting unpaid activities are classified as social economy entities, but not social enterprises. To obtain Social Enterprise status, you must conduct paid and/or commercial activity.

Paid public benefit activity include:

- 1) activities carried out by entities specified in the Act in the sphere of public tasks, for which they receive remuneration;
- 2) sale of manufactured goods or provision of services in the field of:
  - social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons in accordance with the principles set out in the Act on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons, or
  - professional and social integration and reintegration of people at risk of social exclusion, referred to in the Act on Social Employment and the Act on Social Cooperatives,
  - sale of donated items.

Income from paid public benefit activities is used exclusively to conduct public benefit activities.

# Act on public benefit activities and volunteering

Paid public benefit activities of entities listed in the Act constitute economic activity if:

- the remuneration referred to above is, in relation to the activity of a given type, higher than that resulting from the costs of this activity, or
- the average monthly remuneration of a natural person for employment in the performance of statutory paid public benefit activities for the period of the last financial year, and in the case of employment lasting less than a financial year - for the period of this employment, exceeds 3 times the average monthly remuneration in the enterprise sector announced by the Chief President of Statistical Office for the previous year.

You cannot conduct paid public benefit activities and commercial activities in relation to the same subject of activity.

# Act on social employment

At the same time, the Social Employment Act was passed, enabling the establishment and operation of such reintegration entities as the social integration centre (CIS) and the social integration club (KIS). The idea of the act was inspired by the activities of the Barka Foundation for Mutual Help which conducted educational and vocational workshops for individuals at risk of social exclusion in Poznań. Since 2003, the Act has been amended several times, the last amendment entered into force on February 15, 2022.

Social employment is understood here as providing people at risk of exclusion the opportunity to participate in classes conducted by CIS (Social Integration Centre) and KIS (Social Integration Club)

CIS implements professional and social reintegration through the following services:

- 1) developing skills enabling the fulfilment of social roles and achieving social positions available to people who are not subject to social exclusion; these services may be provided to employees of social enterprises referred to in the Social Economy Act;
- 2) acquiring professional skills and vocational training, retraining or improving professional qualifications.
- 3) learning how to plan one's life and meet one's needs through one's own efforts, especially through the possibility of generating one's own income through employment or business activity.
- 4) teaching the ability to rationally manage one's funds.

Whereas, KIS may organise in particular:

- 1) activities aimed at helping in finding a job for a fixed period, full-time or part-time with employers, providing services under civil law contracts and preparing to take up employment or start a business in the form of a social cooperative,
- 2) socially useful work,
- 3) public works,
- 4) legal advice,
- 5) self-help activities in the field of employment, housing and social matters,
- 6) internships.

# Act on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled people

Since the end of the 1990s, it has been possible to create occupational therapy workshops (WTZ) and professional activity centres (ZAZ) (based on the Act of August 27, 1997 on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled people).

ZAZ carries out two activities:

- 1) service and rehabilitation: social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people,
- 2) business activity.

The role of ZAZ is to implement three types of rehabilitation:

- professional, understood as preparation to perform activities at a given job position, equipping the employee with the necessary skills and, if possible, professional qualifications (e.g. authorisations, certificates),
- therapeutic, by ensuring access to rehabilitation services (equipment and professional staff) on the premises of the facility,
- social, by helping them find their way in a new role, perform various social roles, everyday functioning, and improve the quality of life.

Occupational therapy provided by WTZ aims to develop:

- 1) ability to perform everyday activities and personal resourcefulness,
- 2) psychophysical abilities and basic and specialised professional skills enabling participation in vocational training or taking up work.

Forms of therapy in WTZ:

- occupational therapy,
- exercise classes,
- general fitness classes,
- social communication,
- psychological therapy

# Act on social cooperatives

The Act specifies the rules for establishing and running social cooperatives. The aim of the social cooperative is to promote the social and professional reintegration of members and employees of the cooperative.

Social reintegration is understood here as the reconstruction or acquisition and maintenance of the ability to participate in the life of the local community and perform social roles at work, residence or stay, including rehabilitation of disabled people.

Professional reintegration, on the other hand, means acquiring new qualifications, competences, knowledge and skills in order to rebuild or obtain and maintain the ability to independently perform work on the job market and professional advancement, including vocational rehabilitation of disabled people.

A social cooperative may conduct unpaid, paid and commercial activities under its statute. Statutory activities include, among others, activities in the field of social and professional reintegration.

# Act on social economy

The legal system concluded with the adoption of the Social Economy Act in 2022.

The Act regulates, among others:

- 1) organisation and principles of operation of a social enterprise,
- 2) rules for obtaining and losing the status of a social enterprise and supervision of a social enterprise,
- 3) social enterprise support instruments,
- 4) principles and forms of supporting the development of the social economy by administrative bodies

In parallel to legal solutions, systemic solutions were introduced to support the construction of the social economy environment, such as national and regional SE development programs, national and regional committees for ES development, a network of social economy support centres, and the ES financing system.

Thanks to the legal acts mentioned above, as well as systemic and financial solutions, there has been a dynamic development of the social economy in Poland.

# Types of social economy entities

Social economy entities (PES) include:

- social cooperatives,
- occupational therapy workshops and professional activity centres,
- social integration centres and social integration clubs,
- workers' cooperatives, including disabled people's cooperatives, blind people's cooperatives and agricultural production cooperatives,
- non-governmental organisations,
- religious legal persons and organizational units,
- associations of local government units,
- joint-stock companies, limited liability companies and sports clubs which are companies that do not operate for the purpose of making a profit and allocate all income to achieve statutory objectives and do not allocate the profit to be distributed among their shareholders, stockholders and employees.

Only some PESs (social economy entities) can obtain the status of a social enterprise (PS):

- social cooperatives,
- workers' cooperatives, including disabled people's cooperatives, blind people's cooperatives and agricultural production cooperatives,- non-governmental organisations,
- religious legal persons and organisational units,
- association of local government units.



# Types of social economy entities

To obtain social enterprise status (PS), these entities must meet, among others, the following conditions:

- conduct paid public benefit activities, business activities or other paid activities;
- The State Treasury, a local government unit, a state or local government legal person or a natural person do not have control or decisive influence over a given PES. Social cooperatives established by legal persons are excluded from this condition;
- the activities of PS serve local development and are aimed at: social and professional reintegration of people at risk of social exclusion or the implementation of social services;
- the entity employs at least 3 people under an employment contract or a cooperative employment contract for at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  full-time working time;
- in a PS operating for the social and professional reintegration of people at risk of social exclusion, at least 30% of the total number of employees must be people at risk of social exclusion, employed for at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  full-time work;
- in the case of each employed person at risk of social exclusion, for whom a job was created with subsidy support, PS must develop and implement an individual reintegration plan for a period not shorter than the period of employment of this person required in connection with subsidy support);
- PS has a consultative and advisory body composed of all persons employed in this enterprise; if there are more than 10 employees, then the body consists of representatives of these people in a number of not less than 3;
- PS does not allocate the profit or balance sheet surplus obtained from its activities to be distributed among its members, shareholders and employees.
- joint-stock companies, limited liability companies and sports clubs that are companies that do not operate for profit and allocate all income to achieve statutory objectives and do not allocate profits for distribution among their shareholders, stockholders and employees,
- units constituting social economy entities.

# Local partnerships for social inclusion

Local partnerships (PL) is usually understood as a platform for cooperation between partners representing various areas of socio-economic life, who in a lasting and systematic way design and implement specific activities aimed at developing the local environment and building the identity of the local community. The partnership's activities may concern any area of life, as well as any area where specific social problems occur. This results in a large variety of partnership activities that undertake social, economic, cultural, educational, sports, etc. initiatives.

The process of creating and operating a partnership must take into account certain principles, including: voluntary participation, equality of all partners, transparency of action, democratic decision-making, mutual respect and tolerance. It is also advisable to adopt the principle of being apolitical.

Each partner brings its competences and resources to the partnership, and also bears - evenly distributed - costs of action and possible risks related to the action taken.

The desired factors are the long-term nature and multi-sectoral nature of the partnership. Sustainability enables the development of an action programme not only related to solving current problems, but above all to defining work directions (strategic goals) taking into account a longer time perspective. Multi-sectoral nature, which means that partners come from different sectors of socio-economic life, is a strong advantage of the partnership, as it enables increasing the effectiveness of its operation and integrating the entire local community.

Barka Foundation for Mutual Help animates local partnerships for the development of the social economy in municipalities throughout Poland. During regular meetings, partnership members are educated on social problems and solutions around social economy, participate in study visits to functioning local partnerships, and then take part in workshops during which they develop a local SE development programme. In the programme, the partnership determines the directions of development of SE in its commune, including the creation of new entities, i.e. social integration centres/clubs or social enterprises.

# Local partnerships for social inclusion

The next step is to implement the programme. Partners obtain external funds thanks to which they launch CIS/KIS or PS. This increases the availability of social services for the local community. People at risk of social exclusion can join a reintegration program at a centre or club and then take up employment in a social enterprise. The role of the municipal government is to create, together with partners, safe conditions for the creation and operation of the new PES. The local government unit can provide premises on preferential terms, acquire business partners, and commission services for a fee, thanks to which the entity will gain financial stability. The local government may commission services using social clauses in public procurement.

Representatives of local business are an important member of local partnerships. Thanks to their experience and resources, local companies can make a significant contribution to the development of the social economy. Already at the stage of developing the ES development programme, they help to analyse what products or services can find recipients in the commune and which ones are worth introducing to the CIS or PS offer. However, at the implementation stage, companies can:

- organise internships for CIS participants,
- employ CIS/KIS graduates,
- buy products and services from CIS and PS,
- support PES as part of corporate social responsibility,
- conduct mentoring for PS leaders.

# Socio-professional reintegration activities

Civil organisations play a key role in conducting reintegration activities aimed at people at risk of social exclusion. They can do it as part of their statutory activities, unpaid or paid, as well as business activities.

## **Social integration centres and social integration clubs**

The most comprehensive reintegration programmes are offered by social integration centres (CIS) and social integration clubs (KIS).

A social integration centre may be established by budgetary units, non-governmental organisations, social cooperatives and religious legal entities. Applications for granting the CIS status are submitted to the voivode, who is authorised to exercise control over these units. CIS status is granted for a period of 5 years, if you want to continue operating before the end of this period, you must submit another application.

The establishment and operation of CIS and KIS may be financed from the funds of the establishing entities or from subsidies for equipment from the voivodeship's own income intended for the implementation of the voivodeship program for preventing and solving alcohol-related problems. The marshal of the voivodeship's may grant a subsidy for equipment to a social integration centre or club and grant the centre a subsidy for its operations for the first 3 months.

The source of financing for the operation of the centre may also be:

- manufacturing, commercial or service activities conducted by CIS. It should be emphasised that this is not a business activity, but may be conducted as a statutory paid public benefit activity,
- subsidies from local government units,
- funds from the European Union,
- subsidies from the state budget from departmental programmes dedicated to CIS and KIS.

The period of participation in CIS may last up to 12 months (including the first month as a trial month), but it is possible to extend this period for another 12 months. The participant stays at the centre for no less than 30 and no more than 40 hours per week.

CIS participants receive a monthly integration benefit in the amount of 120% of the unemployment benefit, which is financed from the Labour Fund. The participant may also be awarded an incentive integration bonus, which may not exceed 100% of the amount of the integration benefit. The bonus is not financed from the Labour Fund, it usually comes from CIS revenues obtained from its activities.

# Socio-professional reintegration activities

During the period of participation in classes at CIS, the participant is entitled to 6 days off from classes (in the event of extending the period of participation - an additional 6 days).

Clubs may be run by the same entities that may run CIS. To establish KIS, you must submit a notification to the voivode. The sources of financing are also similar.

The condition for participation in KIS is the implementation of the social contract referred to in the provisions on social assistance. The period of participation in KIS is determined individually. KIS participants do not receive integration benefits.

## **Occupational therapy workshops and professional activity centres**

Entities specializing in the reintegration of people with disabilities include occupational therapy workshops (WTZ) and professional activity centres (ZAZ).

### **Occupational therapy workshop**

The workshop is an organisationally and financially separate facility that provides disabled people unable to work with the opportunity for social and vocational rehabilitation in terms of acquiring or restoring the skills necessary to take up employment. WTZ may be organised by foundations, associations or other entities.

WTZ participants may take part in unpaid internships with an employer, including a social cooperative or a social enterprise referred to in the Social Economy Act, for up to 15 hours a week for a period of up to 3 months, with the possibility of extension to 6 months.

The costs of establishing and operating workshops are co-financed from PFRON funds (State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled) and from the district government funds (in the amount of at least 10% of these costs) or other sources.

The workshop's activity is non-profit. Any income from the sale of products and services provided by workshop participants as part of their rehabilitation and therapy programme is used, in consultation with the participants, to cover expenses related to the participants' social integration.

# Socio-professional reintegration activities

## Professional activity facility

A professional activity facility (ZAZ) is not a legal entity and functions as a separate unit within the institution or organisation that established it. ZAZ may be established by: a commune, a district, a foundation, an association or another social organisation whose aim is the social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people. The decision on granting the status of a professional activity establishment is issued by the voivode.

At least 70% of employees in the plant must be disabled people (in particular those referred by the PUP (District Job Centre):

- classified as a significant degree of disability,
- classified as moderately disabled, diagnosed with autism, mental disfunction or mental illness, and the employment status of these persons cannot be higher than 35% of all employees.

The regulations require the ZAZ organiser to sign employment contracts with employees. ZAZs were intended to be an intermediate stage between entities such as occupational therapy workshops or community self-help centres and the open job market, but the legislator did not specify the maximum period of employment in ZAZs, therefore, for at least some people with disabilities, employment in a company may be the final destination of work.

ZAZ may use the co-financing system from PFRON and local government funds. PFRON may finance not only the costs of establishing a ZAZ, but also its running (excluding the costs of business activity), in particular:

- rehabilitation activities,
- remuneration for employees (up to 130% of the minimum wage).

The organisation running the ZAZ is exempt from taxes in the scope of the ZAZ's activities.

Reintegration programmes can be implemented by civic organisations as part of various types of projects, including those financed from national sources, e.g. from the Civic Initiatives Fund, as well as from European Union funds. Currently, you can take part in calls for applications carried out under regional operational programmes (e.g. European Funds for Greater Poland) or national operational programme - Funds for Social Development.

# Testimonies of people from Ukraine participating in Social Integration Center, internships and taking up jobs at social enterprises

## **Oksana Mykhasiuk, kitchen worker**

When the war broke out, I had to leave for Poland with my two small sons. First thing the Barka Foundation helped me with was finding a place where we could stay. We settled in a multiple room's apartment with other families. Then I was admitted to the Social Integration Center, run by Barka, to a catering workshop. I had not worked in a kitchen before, but experience at home and the training at the Social Integration Center and the support of the team helped me to regain my faith in myself! I like my work schedule because it gives me time to bring and pick up my children from the kindergarten. A single mother can't work night shifts or during the weekends. Working at Social Integration Center doesn't bring in a lot of income, but there is mental and social support, I attend



On the Photo: Oksana Mykhasiuk (first from the left)

# Testimonies of people from Ukraine participating in Social Integration Center, internships and taking up jobs at social enterprises

## **Olga Makarenko, accountant**

Finding a job in another country was difficult because I instantly had to deal with language issues and some differences in tax law and labor law in accounting.

In addition, I am a mother of three children. The youngest at the time of our arrival in Poland was two years old. I completed an accounting course at the Accountants Association in Poznan and Polish language courses and I was qualified for the internship programme. The Barka Foundation found a company that agreed to take me on as an intern without any experience as an accountant in Poland. After the three-month internship, I proved to be a good specialist and I was hired on a permanent basis. Thanks to the internship program, I am again working in my preferred field of interest, I do earn my own income and I am part of a team. I feel needed and can develop my skills all the time.



On the Photo: Olga Makarenko



# Testimonies of people from Ukraine participating in Social Integration Center, internships and taking up jobs at social enterprises

## **Liubov Maksymiv, caregiver, paramedic**

In January 2022, two tragic events happened in my life within one month: On January 8th my mother died, and 2 weeks later my husband, who was a great friend to me, also died. They passed away in my arms about the same time, and needless to say, it was a traumatic experience for me. A month later, our national tragedy began, which left no room for personal feelings, and forced me to mobilize all the reserves of my body and soul and commit myself to work. On March 3rd, I registered myself with a group of women who needed assistance on the way to Poland. People who were sick, after operations, pregnant women with children - this was our group. Upon arrival, we received a lot of help and support from Ms. Grazyna Stachowiak from the Social Cooperative "Escape Dysphoria". We got united, prayed and did not lose hope. It was not my intention to stay here, but I understood that this was a place where I was much needed.

I am a teacher (68 years old old), but I completed the M.14 course in Poland and became paramedic. I work as a medical caregiver with the elderly and children with disabilities in the Social Cooperative 'Escape Dysphoria'. I contribute and help as much as I can, but without the help I had received in Poland, I wouldn't have been able to do as much as I did. During my stay here I obtained a lot of support from ordinary people and from the authorities. I am grateful to God that I am in a place where I am needed and have the opportunity to help my homeland!



On the photo: Liubov Maksymiv

# Mutual Help Community “Emmaus-Oselya”

Mutual Help Community “Emmaus-Oselya” was established in Lviv in 2003. This was a time when many people found themselves in difficult life circumstances, ending up on the street, there were many unemployed. And at the same time, there was a prejudice that homeless were vermin, alcoholics and in general people who had no rights and no place in society. Olesia Sanotskaya was a professional artist, but she had a very keen sense of justice and started to run drawing sessions with people in difficult life circumstances (now called art therapy). Gradually she became familiar with the ideas of the international Emmaus movement. She attended a conference on the occasion of the opening of the Barka community in Marszewo. After that, she visited Barka in Poland and the Emmaus Community in Lublin many more times. This gave her the boost to create inclusive communities and help homeless people. Oselya's mission is to help homeless people find dignity in society and to help society accept each individual.

The Foundation keeps records of those who have undergone resocialization in the community, as well as statistics of those who turn up in the support center. The core value of the organization is that everyone who lives in the community works and does as much work as their condition allows. Work restores a sense of dignity, as a person who has lived on the street has low self-esteem and numerous complexes. Society tries not to pay attention, not to notice the homeless, to avoid them. In order to rehabilitate such a person, it is necessary to give him the feeling that he is needed and that he has equal rights. So, working together, performing a common task, a person learns responsibility once again, restores confidence in his strengths and abilities, and gets a sense of self-respect.

Sometimes we understand charity as a good deed of a rich person who shares with the poor. This is not the case here. All people are seen as equals: we need you, we need your help to deliver food, open a support center, sort things, help others go to the hairdresser or show them where to shower for free. In this way, a person transforms from an object that needs help into an entity that provides it. The person who came to get a hot meal yesterday and received that food is now clean, dressed and trimmed - he stands to help others, and this gives life a new meaning.

# Mutual Help Community “Emmaus-Oselya”

In the community, previously homeless people are called “companioni.” Everyone receives a self-development card and an exit plan from homelessness, a plan of what they would like to change in their lives, focusing not on the past, but on the future. The community has companioni, staff and volunteers. There is a communal farm, social training, addiction treatment, collective recreation and team-building meetings, showing that it is possible to enjoy life without alcohol, and everyone is committed to help those poorer than themselves. The Foundation was the first in Ukraine to distribute food to the homeless in the heart of Lviv. For the past 20 years, every Thursday at 2 p.m., next to the Gunpowder Bastion, Oselya's car has brought food and distributed it to the homeless. The main goal is not to feed the homeless, but to show them that there is a way out of their plight, that they are thought of, cared for and that there is a readiness to welcome them into the community. This is the first contact with homeless people who are invited to the Support Center. This is a sanitary and hygienic day center, where there is a hairdresser, a doctor, a shower, and you can wash your clothes.

Oselya began its activity by organizing a Christmas Eve dinner for the homeless. Everyone who was lonely and did not have the means to buy the essential supplies was invited to the Christmas table. After all, it's a family holiday when people go to visit their parents and friends. For the past 20 years, Oselya has gathered about 300 people to celebrate together.

During the time of the pandemic, when people had to stay in their homes for their own safety, the homeless were left out. Therefore, the house increased the number of beds to accommodate more people, began to work actively and help even more, as people did not even have access to drinking water.



Now there is a new challenge - war, sorrow, despair, loss - and one cannot prepare for it. Thousands of internally displaced people needed help because they had no clothes, no place to live and had lost their possessions. So the door opened for IDPs.

# Mutual Help Community “Emmaus-Oselya”

They work to earn their own living. The main way is to sort used things. In Lviv there are containers where people leave unnecessary things. These can be clothes, books, toys, shoes, accessories. Things are sorted and distributed further. Comfortable, warm clothes are donated to the Support Center, where people in difficult life circumstances can choose everything they need for free. Dresses, skirts, high-heeled shoes, toys, handbags and jewelry are sent to two charity stores where companiononi work.

For those who wish to donate to the charitable cause of Osleya, they can buy items and thus support the organization. Profits from the charity stores are used to purchase food for the homeless, hygiene products, community maintenance, etc. Many items are also sent to eastern Ukraine - to victims of war and organizations that help internally displaced persons.

The metal scrap, cotton, polyethylene, tarps and glass are sent for recycling. This also provides additional funds for community maintenance. In this way, not only social work is done, but also the work for the environment.

Oselya runs a workshop which fixes used furniture. Companiononi repair and refurbish old items. You can order this service to fix your own furnitures or donate unwanted furniture, which will be refurbished and donated to people or sold in charity stores.

Social shelter is the final stage of resocialization. For example, young people who are in a position to work, to start family life and to support their livelihood independently, reside apart.

The premises belong to the Lviv City Council and are rented on preferential conditions. The building was renovated with grant funds because its condition was completely uninhabitable, and it is now being used as a community shelter.

# Mutual Help Community “Emmaus-Oselya”

Barka representatives visited the Oselya Community in Lviv on April 8-11, 2024. During the visit, a film about its activities was shot. The premiere is planned for June 14, 2024 in Poznan, during the Barka conference.



A 14 people delegation from Ukraine, will participate in the 5-day study visit. They will be delegates from civic organizations and local governments from 5 municipalities: Ivanofrankovsk, Vinnitsa, Kyiv, Lviv and Mykolaiv. They are interested in expanding the Oselya concept while making the most of the system experience developed in Poland.

Oselya's role is very important. Thanks to its study visit to Poland, together with the delegates of 5 Ukrainian municipalities, it will strengthen its position to start a dialogue with public authorities that are difficult to convince to undertake cooperation with NGOs.

The municipal authorities will see public procurement solutions with social clauses in Polish local governments, which could also encourage them to undertake cooperation not only on the basis of a grant to NGOs, but also on the basis of a contract signed for the provision of services to municipal residents. A visit to Barka will enable them to learn about social economy solutions that have embraced not only Polish citizens, but also UA citizens who have not been doing well in our country.

# Mutual Help Community “Emmaus-Oselya”

## Valentyn, the cook

He has been in the Oselya community for three months. He is originally from Donetsk. His mother abandoned him in the hospital, so he never met his birth parents, only his foster parents, who adopted him when he was 5 years old. Later he found his family - his mother, numerous brothers and sisters - but he never dared to meet them. His foster parents evicted him when he turned 18 and told him he had to look after himself. He entered the Donetsk Vocational High School of Food Processing Industries to learn the baking and confectionery trade. He got a room in a dormitory and was on a waiting list for to be offered a free apartment.

The war changed Valentin's life. In 2015, his dormitory was hit by a shell and destroyed, and he had to look for a new roof over his head. In Kiev, he first worked in the kitchen at the Lavra, and when the covid began, he was a cook at the charity organization of the Missionaries of Charity (the Sisters of Mother Teresa). In 2023, the organization reduced its activities and fate forced Valentin to look for a new place. He heard about Oselya from Father Sebastian and decided to give it a try.

Here he has found not only a roof over his head, a job and a friendly team, but also the feeling of home, care and warmth he has dreamed of since childhood. Now he is needed by people in need, and this gives his life a new meaning. And the “residents” enjoy the wonderful food and cakes that Valentyn skillfully prepares for everyone in the community kitchen.



On the photo: Valentyn

# Promotion of various forms of housing (training apartments, assisted living and residence through a Social Rental Agency)

## Training or assisted living

Training or assisted housing is granted to an adult who, due to the difficult life circumstances, age, disability or illness, needs support in daily functioning, but does not require 24-hour care. Among those who may apply for such housing are people with mental disorders, homeless people, people leaving foster care, a youth education center, a correction center, a home for detained juveniles, as well as foreigners who have obtained refugee status in the Republic of Poland.

These apartments are form of social assistance which, thanks to the support of the specialists, prepares their residents to lead an independent life or support these people in their daily functioning.

Housing can be run by:

- any social welfare unit,
- non-governmental organization.

There is a distinction between the forms of support in both types of housing. The training apartment provides subsistence services, social work and learning to develop or consolidate independence, perform social roles in integration with the local community to enable independent living.

The assisted apartment provides subsistence services, social work and assistance in performing activities necessary for daily functioning and realization of social contacts in order to maintain or develop a person's independence at the level of his psychophysical capabilities. Assisted living is intended in particular for:

- a disabled person or a person with mental disorders,
- an elderly or chronically ill person.

# Promotion of various forms of housing (training apartments, assisted living and residence through a Social Rental Agency)

Training and assisted housing should meet the minimum standards for support and minimum standards for premises, including adequate floor space, living and sanitary conditions, and equipment, as specified by law.

Support in a training apartment is granted for a limited period of time. Support in assisted housing is granted for a limited period of time, and in the case of persons who have a severe or moderate disability certificate, and in particularly justified cases for other persons, it may be granted for an indefinite period of time.

The basis for granting support in training or assisted housing is a decision called a "housing contract", concluded between the entity directing to this form of support, the entity running the training or assisted housing and the person applying to stay in this housing.

The eligibility of an applicant for a stay in a training or assisted living facility is based on documents proving that the prerequisites are met.

The provision of support in training or assisted housing run by non-governmental organizations is based on a civil law contract concluded with the person benefiting from a stay in such housing or his legal representative, the organization and the public entity supporting the operation of the housing.



## Social Rental Agency

In Poznań, the Social Rental Agency (SRA) is run by the Board of Communal Housing Resources. The SRA's offer is for the people in the so-called "income gap," i.e. those earning too much to get a communal apartment and, at the same time, too little to buy an apartment on credit or rent it commercially on the market.

The Social Rental Agency will act as an intermediary between rental housing owners and people whose income or life circumstances make it difficult to rent an apartment under market conditions.

The agency is exploiting the potential of privately-owned apartments that, for various reasons, are not being rented by their owners, because, for example, someone has inherited them and lives in another city, or the property is waiting for children to grow up and move in, or the owner is concerned about rental problems, such as unreliable tenants or possible damage to the property. Under the Social Rental Agency, 100 apartments have been made available.

Private owners presenting themselves at SRA sign a contract with ZKZL, and it is the city co-partnership that is responsible for ongoing payments and any repairs to the units.

A public partner such as ZKZL is a reliable counterparty for owners, which is a guarantee of stable and regular rent. Owners of apartments - in addition to guarantees of timely payment throughout the rental period, receipt of the premises in an undamaged condition and the absence of any obligations related to contacts with the tenant - also gain the exemption of their rental income from income tax and VAT. The overall management of the property will be handled by ZKZL.

Interested applicants who meet income criteria, which depend on the number of people in the household, can apply for a unit from the SRA. In addition to the lower-than-market rent and secure tenancy, tenants will be able to apply for monthly rent subsidies.

The subsidy amount depends on the size of the apartment and the number of tenants. For a multi-person household, it can exceed as much as PLN 1,000, and for a larger studio apartment and three occupants, it can be PLN 400-500 per month. A rent subsidy calculator can be found on the program's website.

Another advantage of participating in the SRA will be the chance to earn additional points when applying for a public housing unit in the future.

Those interested in renting an apartment under the Social Rental Agency must download an application for participation in the program from [www.san.poznan.pl](http://www.san.poznan.pl). The document should be printed, signed, scanned and sent via the above-mentioned website or delivered in person to the ZKZL.

The recruitment of housing units for the program is conducted on a continuous basis, through [www.san.poznan.pl](http://www.san.poznan.pl).

# GOOD PRACTICE

## Various forms of housing implemented by the Barka for Mutual Help Foundation

### Available individual housing with ecological materials (clay and straw)

Zbyszek Ściana's dream was to have a home of his own. As a homeless person, he lived in the Barka Community in Marszewo, which he led for many years, helping others in need. As part of the Jacob's Ladder award funded by the Barka Foundation, he received a parcel of land to build his own home and a 94,000 zloty interest-free loan from the Habitat for Humanity Foundation. When someone asks Zbyszek about his way out of homelessness, he says: build yourself a house! I used clay and straw for this, making bricks. The structure of the house is wooden. Volunteers from all over the world helped me in filling it with bricks of clay and straw.

Building a house was a new beginning for our family, allowing us to fulfill a dream and solve the problem of homelessness. However, I am convinced that living in a community setting must be preserved," says Zbyszek.



On the Photo.: Zbyszek with his family, community members and volunteers during the construction of the house.

# GOOD PRACTICE

## Various forms of housing implemented by the Barka for Mutual Help Foundation

### **Housing built by a social enterprise. An example of a Deaconess Employment Company (DEC).**

Deaconess Employment Company (social enterprise with PBO status) employs 28 workers, 50% of whom are from groups at risk of exclusion. It produces specialty containers and workwear for Volkswagen.

Profits earned in a social enterprise must be reinvested in social purposes. In this case, it was spent on building eight apartments for the company's employees, who were formerly homeless residents of the Barka Community. The municipality allocated a building plot for this purpose. The apartments house two families and six individuals. Their area ranges from 25 to 34 sqm; they belong to DEC.

The residents sign a contract with DEC. They pay monthly rent and the cost of water, electricity, heating. They participate in the support program and assisted by a social worker employed by the Deaconess Employment Company.



On the Photo: Construction stages.

# GOOD PRACTICE

## Various forms of housing implemented by the Barka for Mutual Help Foundation

### **Social housing. Partnership for Darzybor Estate**

The Poznań local government has allocated 20 hectares of land for an intensive social housing development on Darzyborska Street. The Barka Foundation formed a partnership with the City of Poznań, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego and the Ministry of Housing to build the Darzybor Estate. Each partner contributed financially to the project (Barka obtained 150,000 euros from a Netherlands donor). As a result of this cooperation, 32 social houses were built. Construction was completed in 2005.

The plan of construction of the settlement was designed with the most vulnerable groups in mind and had a model, pilot character. The construction of the Darzybor Estate was carried out with the active participation of socially excluded people at all its stages, both at the planning and execution levels. This participation was educational and rehabilitative in nature. The City of Poznań introduced an employment clause. Contractors for various construction works employed people from excluded groups.

Those referred to live in the settlement had previously participated in various reintegration and activation programs organized by NGOs. They took part in a training housing program, where they learned basic skills for managing their own housing.



# How to start a self-help community

A community home is a place to live and work, aimed to restore the dignity of the homeless, lonely, poor, disabled, women, men and children of all ages. The home provides not only temporary or permanent residence, depending on the needs and possibilities of independent functioning, but, above all, a development path - from exclusion to integration into the community, family, environment and professional activation.

In a community house, members are motivated by the ideas of self-help and mutual aid, each member has specific roles and functions. All community members share responsibility, work, benefit and loss.

Residents of the community house may be families and individuals at risk of homelessness and social exclusion (disabled, sick, elderly, single and homeless, addicts, unemployed), people who support the activity of the community and anyone willing to live the ideals of the community.

The main purpose of running the community is not only to provide places for temporary or permanent residence, but to shape community life on the principles of the self-help and mutual help leading to ethical growth and socio-professional integration of its residents, shaping conditions that enable them to become active, work on abstinence, teach social roles, responsibility for themselves and the community as a whole.

To establish a community house you need an organization (association or foundation), which is the founding body. It selects the leader of the house, an individual who wants to live in the community, or someone who has experienced life's difficulties, dealt with them and, based on personal experience, helps others in need. This person forms a cohesive team with the home's residents to carry out programs that affect the ethical, social, professional development and integration of the home's residents under the principles of self-help and mutual help.

# How to start a self-help community

Community homes are used for:

- social and educational programs;
- therapeutic programs (educational and informational meetings, groups of support, AA groups, individual therapy);
- programs of professional and social reintegration through community activities and/or participation in social integration centers, social integration clubs, vocational therapy workshops, vocational activity establishments;
- programs to develop vocational activity and self-employment;
- mutual help programs involving both community members and the local community;
- learning to take responsibility for the group by assigning duties of social work, such as caregiver - a person selected among the residents, on duty, responsible for safety and providing appropriate assistance especially at night; service workers - such as cook, storekeeper, laundry worker, driver, cleaners, caring for the environment of the house, etc..;
- learning independence and rational management of resources;
- to conduct charitable activities towards the local community and others in need.

Community house team:

- leader - the person who manages the community, is in charge of fulfillment, the psychological well-being of individuals and the development of the community house, etc.,
- accounting - an external company that manages the finances of the house,
- social worker / psychologist (volunteer or civil contract),
- lawyer - from an external company (indication to the homeless person of the addresses of institutions where free legal advice is provided) or or employed under a civil law contract,
- volunteers,
- donors and supporters from the local area or other communities.

# How to start a self-help community

Community homes implement their mission according to certain ideas, guaranteeing independence, distinctiveness and autonomy, based on a system of universal values, where the common good is put above particular interests. Members of the community house co-determine the functioning of the house, its character and the activities undertaken, determine together with the staff, volunteers, friends the directions of development of the house, render account for the undertaken actions before this body.

Barka's communities gather in a Cooperation Network, where general education programs, the so-called Folk High-School, formative, integrative meetings are held, enabling them to determine the direction of the communities in the changing reality, as well as the relations between the communities.

The association rents, buys or receives by donation a house (usually for renovation), which is gradually renovated by future residents. People are referred by the OPS-Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej (Social Welfare Center), rehab centers, prisons, or come by their own will and need. In the initial stage, small communities of no more than 15 people are suggested. Only when the community gains experience can one think of enlarging it. Individuals arrive gradually, at intervals, so that newcomers become accustomed to the rules of community life and gradually internalize them.

One of the vital elements of community life is work. It is important that next to the house there is also space for a small workshop for work, a garden, an agricultural building that allows animal husbandry, so that the community can work out funds for basic living costs in the framework of paid public benefit activities. The association can also enter into cooperation with private companies that buy services and products from social economy entities. Individuals referred by the OPS can receive statutory support to cover their living expenses. However, all residents participate in community work to the extent of their health and ability. Those who become independent take jobs in private companies or social enterprises. They may also form small living and support communities.

# How to start a self-help community

The community remains abstinent from alcohol and other psychoactive drugs. If abstinence breaks down, the community holds a disciplinary conversation, refers the person to an AA group or to individual therapy. If this doesn't work, the community encourages the person to participate in inpatient therapy at an addiction treatment center. After the treatment, the person can return to the community. In the case of people who notoriously break the rules of abstinence or do not engage in the life of the community, it is also practiced to change the place of residence - moving to another community.

Outcome of the activity:

- provision of long-term and round-the-clock shelter to people at risk of homelessness and social exclusion,
- implementation of homeless people to work, duties, responsibilities, activities on behalf of both the house community and the local community,
- creating jobs for members of the community and the local community,
- to create a market for the products and services produced by the community,
- to integrate members of the community house into the local environment and give it the significance of an animator of social life, especially in small towns,
- building a new image of the homeless and socially excluded by promoting their talents, skills,
- integrating the local environment and building partnerships to solve local community problems,
- to develop the local community through the development of social cooperatives, organic farms, etc.,
- to involve institutions and surrounding organizations and the local community in cooperation with the community.



# How to start a self-help community

## 1. Conditions for the implementation of the program:

- single and double living rooms, at least 5 m<sup>2</sup> per person with equipment,
- bathroom with running hot water,
- toilets: separate for men and women and at least one toilet for people with disabilities,
- kitchen facilities to prepare meals for everyone, equipped with furniture and equipment, and conforming to sanitary regulations,
- a dining room where community members can eat meals together, meet at a common table to discuss current issues and problems of the community house, conduct support groups, educational and therapeutic groups,
- storage rooms,
- laundry areas with laundry facilities,
- three meals a day prepared on site, usually with the involvement of community members,
- a room for conducting social work, educational activities,
- a first aid kit.

## 2. Cooperation in the carrying out of the support:

- NGOs and institutions working in the field of social assistance,
- city and municipal offices,
- emergency management departments,
- municipal establishments (management of municipal housing resources, municipal housing management company, etc.),
- local communities (representatives of schools, kindergartens, neighborhood councils, private entrepreneurs, etc.),
- settlement councils,
- health services,
- therapeutic clinics - addiction treatment facilities,
- Churches,
- others.

# How to start a self-help community

## 3. Service documentation:

### THE MINIMUM OF THE DOCUMENTATION MAINTAINED AT THE FACILITY

- statute of the facility, rules of operation of the community,
- resident's card,
- register of residents,
- journal of reports,
- registration book,
- sanitary-epidemiological station documentation,
- documents due to the application of regulations: accounting, labor code, construction law, fire regulations.

## 4. Costs and Funding:

### Sources of financing:

- means from the municipality for the operation of the institution (possible co-financing from more than one municipality),
- the own contribution, funds worked out within the framework of paid public benefit activities of the organization/institution and private domestic and foreign donors,
- anti-alcohol fund (Municipal /Municipal Programs for Prevention and Solving of Alcohol Problems),
- contributions to the house's coffers for statutory purposes.

### Standing costs:

- maintenance of the facility (operation): rent, tax, charges for consumption of water, electricity, gas, central heating, etc., current repairs,
- salaries for substantive and administrative staff (in the case of a community center where people are employed).

# How to start a self-help community

## Other costs:

- equipping the facility in accordance with the relevant regulations of the Construction Law and the Law on Fire Protection of Buildings, Other Structures and Grounds,
- furnishing of utility rooms (living rooms, kitchens, sanitary facilities, etc.),
- repair and adaptation works,
- purchase of food,
- purchase of bed linen and personal apparel,
- purchase of detergents and personal hygiene products,
- purchase of medicines for the first aid kit,
- services, e.g., career counselling, psychological counselling, therapeutic counselling.

## 5. Monitoring and evaluation of service performance:

### Indicators for the study:

- number of people living in community homes,
- number of social cooperatives,
- number of workplaces,
- number of community activities undertaken,
- type of community activities undertaken
- number of people who have undertaken therapy,
- number of people who completed therapy,
- the number of cooperating entities,
- number of cooperating entities under a formal agreement,
- number of activation/support projects implemented,
- type of activation/support projects implemented,
- number of people participating in the activation/support project,
- number of people implementing Individual Programme to Get Out of Homelessness,
- number of persons admitted as a result of the Police and Municipal Police intervention (treated as cases of saving health or life),
- The number of available places,
- the number of persons made independent,
- level of satisfaction with services offered.
- 

### Evaluation:

- municipality - on the basis of semi-annual reports, annual reports on the performance of the task and control,
- the leading organization on the basis of annual self-evaluation - self-evaluation protocol.

# Conclusion

## Dear Friends!

We are giving into your hands a Handbook on Social Economy, which allows to shape the bonds and relationships between different social groups in local environments.

This is an important publication presenting tools that allow to permanently lead out of life difficulties and crises not only individuals, but also whole environments. For such changes to occur, a systemic approach is needed.

We recommend that solutions of the social economy are presented to interested circles. So that local communities learn what the social economy is about, what instruments it has, what changes it introduces, what is needed for such tools to exist in a new territory. Then representatives of this environment are invited to make a study visit to institutions, organizations that will show how social economy instruments function in practice.

The next stage is the formation of an inter-sectoral local partnership, which consists of representatives of local government, public institutions, private companies and civic organizations. All important actors are invited to join the partnership, and together they create a plan for the development and implementation of inclusion tools in their area. These partners will shape together a friendly, inclusive local environment that ensures that social economy institutions are established in the area. Their role is also to support these entities through socially responsible purchasing, ordering services, purchasing products from social economy entities or social enterprises operating in the local community. It is also extremely important to promote these entities and raise public awareness - by buying a product or service there, we not only receive material value, but also participate in transforming the fate of specific people, improving their social, mental and professional condition. Based on Barka's many years of experience in implementing social economy solutions in Poland, we recommend introducing our methods first into local policies, and once there are more good examples in a given area, the solutions can be subsequently recommended at the regional and national levels. It is worth to organize a meeting, conference or a study visit to social economy entities, to which deputies, MPs, members of social policy committees and employment committees, among others, will be invited, in order to present the model and influence the introduction of legal acts enabling the development of social economy in the broad current of social and professional integration, social cohesion and sustainable development of local communities.

**See you on the way!**

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