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Social economy and household resilience²

Summary

The article presents the results of research on impact of the social economy entities on the development of resilience in the households and communities. The aim of this research was to determinate the conditions and patterns of action that help and support, or limit and inhibit the resilience of households in a difficult situation. The research was carried out as part of the international RESCuE project — *Patterns of Resilience during Socioeconomic Crises among Households in Europe* (2014–2017). The empirical basis was individual interviews, realized in research communities, with members of households affected by different types of life difficulties and crisis situations (e.g. poverty, unemployment, disability, etc.) and expert interviews. The article indicates the limited effectiveness of social economy entities operating in the investigated communities, which is largely due to the lack of its settling in the local community, either because of lack of social trust or lack of knowledge of community members about its activities or its potential for socio-economic development.

Key words: social policy, social economy, resilience, social justice, social resourcefulness

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Introduction

In recent years, the idea of Social Economy, has become increasingly known not only in the world of literature and theoretical considerations but also in daily practice. Social entrepreneurship has been accepted as an innovative and practical solution to the problem of unemployment, not only on the level of regulations and official policy discourse, but also in every day actions of more and more local municipalities and other socio-political actors.

The activities taken within the framework of social economy have big potential for stimulation of development. The social economy constitutes a broad range of activities which have the potential to provide opportunities for local people and communities to engage in all stages of the process of local economic regeneration and job creation, from the identification of basic needs to the operationalisation of initiatives (Molloy et al., 1999, cited in Amin et al., 2002, p. 1).

Helen Haugh (2005, p. 2) defines social economy as a “collective term for the part of the economy that is neither privately nor publicly controlled. It includes non-profit organizations as well as associations, co-operatives, mutual organizations and foundations. Social enterprises are included in the social economy, however they are distinctive from many non-profit organisations in their entrepreneurial approach to strategy, their innovation in pursuit of social goals and their engagement in trading”.

It is estimated that there are more than one million entities of social economy in the European Union, producing about 10% GDP in Europe, giving more than 11 million jobs (about 6% of labour market). It is a large sector and will be developing even faster in the European Union. The existing reserves of labour market in Europe include, among others, the sector of services and broadly defined sector of social services. The demand for these services is increasing (Rymsza, 2003, pp. 30–31).

“The social economy is not only the result of legal resolutions and acts. It is not only a question of social awareness, though public support is very significant. The social economy is a social movement that should lead to a new vision for Poland’s development. The social economy is a way of involving the third sector in Poland’s economic development” — Jerzy Hausner, former Minister of Labour and Social Policy and former Vice-Premier³.

In Poland, in recent years growing importance of the idea of Social Economy. This is followed by the development of social economy institutions and other manifestations of social entrepreneurship. This is, on the one hand, a reaction of requirements arising from the problems of marginalization and social exclusion on the other, an attempt to search for new solutions in social policy.

European Union as an institution plays an important role in promoting and developing the idea of social economy and social entrepreneurship. It defines Social Economy as 1) “founded on the principles of solidarity and collective involvement in a process of active citizenship”. 2) It hereby “generates high quality jobs and a better quality of life, and offers a framework suited to new forms of enterprise, work and responsible consumption”.

³ <http://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/x/433523> [access date: 15.09.2015].

3) It also seems to play “an important role in regional and local development and social cohesion”. Furthermore, they can be characterized by certain social responsibility, economic democracy and do their bit towards more stable and plural markets. Social Economy is also in the focus of the European Union as they expect a contribution regarding social cohesion, full employment and the fight against poverty, participatory democracy, etc. (Böckenhoff, 2016, p. 24, cited in the German National Report⁴).

The EQUAL Community Initiative was part of the EU’s strategy for creating more better workplaces and for ensuring broad access to them. EQUAL was a way to search for new mechanisms for solving the problems of discrimination and inequality in the labour market, through international cooperation. This initiative has also become an essential tool for the promotion and dissemination of knowledge on the concept of Social Economy (the new Social Economy) in Poland. Among the main activities of the social economy is combating social exclusion and marginalization in the labour market.

The aim of this article is to present the contribution of social economy entities to the resilience of vulnerable individuals, households and communities based on experiences and findings of the RESCuE project. We were concentrated on two from four cases where Polish research was conducted⁵. In this two cases (one rural one urban) we have found activities which could be describe as social economy entities. The starting point for the article is a short description of definitions of Social Economy and related terms. The second part of the text is the indication, based on the conducted research.

Basic definitions of Social Economy in Poland

Talking about social economy we face the lack of unambiguous understanding of this term as well as some related terms, such as community economy, community capitalism etc. Since the social economy oscillates between the idea of socially engaged capitalist economy on the one hand, and an alternative to capitalism form of community, non-market economic activity, on the other hand.

Piotr Sałustowicz suggests the possibility of interpreting social economy from several perspectives within which it will meet a variety of functions. And so:

- a. From the perspective of employment policy and the labour market — the social economy is seen as ‘jobmachine’ it is expected to create new job places, particularly for the marginalised people or endangered by social marginalization; it should provide services involving job training and other support which prepare unemployed for transfer to the primary/open labour market.
- b. From the perspective of social policy — the social economy can serve as compensation in the situation of failure of market mechanisms and the failure of the welfare state, by providing of social services for individuals and collectives or local communities,

⁴ Boost, M., Müller, J., Kerschbaumer, L., *Social economy and household resilience in Germany* (RESCuE project).

⁵ See: description of Polish fieldwork of research.

particularly where the public and private sectors are not able to meet the growing social needs.

- c. From the perspective of social integration — the task of the social economy is to accumulate social capital as a network of social relationships. In the framework of a group or community the resources available are available only to their members exclusively on the basis of the network of their mutual connections. The more extensive the connections the bigger chance for access/activation of the resources which are not owned individually.
- d. From the perspective of the democratisation process — the social economy is expected to draw individuals and social groups into the political decision-making process. This assumption is connected with democratic and participatory way of management of social enterprise. Thru such an experience individuals are expected to become more active as citizens and more involved in social and political life.
- e. From the perspective of social change — the social economy should be a place for creation of an alternative economic and social system (Sałustowicz, 2006, pp. 13–35).

But this perspective is not shared without certain doubts. J. Hausner more or less agrees with first three functions, but he is sceptical about the last two. At the same time, he states that: “The social economy clearly will not eliminate traditional social welfare, and is not a solution that will bring about professional activation for all persons from disfavoured groups. However, the task of social economy entities need not be exclusively to activate and integrate such people through employment. They assist the disadvantaged in many ways by providing them various types of services, including caretaker services, each time bringing them within a kind of community. In this sense as well, it is always worth considering whether that which is offered by social welfare could simply be provided more effectively by a social economy entity, particularly if it is also capable of earning its own funds. Looking at it in this way, social welfare in the broad sense becomes a perspective of public authority which, fulfilling its assistance function and guided by the principle of helpfulness, will perceive the social economy as a way to achieve social goals and solve problems” (Giza-Poleszczuk, Hausner, 2008, p. 16).

In the present wide-ranging considerations one can distinguish between the so-called old and new social economy. The term old social economy is used to define activities related to various forms of co-operatives, mutual insurance societies, etc., whose tradition dates back to the nineteenth century. It is estimated that in the Second Republic of Poland, every fifth adult citizen was a member of a cooperative. In economic terms, in 1938, in the retail trade, the share of the cooperatives was 4–5% of total turnover: in the procurement of agricultural products, according to various calculations, from 1.5% to 12%. Roughly one-fifth of savings deposits was placed in cooperative banks and *Kasa Stefczyka* — cooperative savings and loan (Piechowski, 2007, p. 45). In the socialist era, the activity that fits well with the idea of the social economy, as a movement of cooperation outside the institution of authority and its control, was undesirable and regarded as a potential threat to the socialist social and political order, and therefore had to disappear.

The new social economy means various types of social enterprises which aim to act for the growth of social cohesion within local communities (Kaźmierczak, Rymsza, 2007, pp. 93–126). Its primary goal is effective linking any social elements to economic ones. New Social Economy means rather various institutional and legal forms, such as social enterprises, social cooperatives, social integration centres, etc., whose primary purpose is to prevent social exclusion and professional activation of marginalized people in socio-economic terms. But also the business activities within the organization of the Third Sector (*ibidem*, pp. 175–176). Its primary task is to effectively combine the social with the economical.

It should be emphasized that “social economy is a significant factor of local development, creating jobs, providing more services allowing to better satisfy human needs. It may also create complex system of management (community economy), involve non-governmental organizations in the activities of local authorities and to affect establishment of local and neighbourly forms of economic cooperation and mutual support. The goal of development of such defined social economy is to create an inclusive local labour market, especially for people particularly threatened with social marginalization (see: Zybala, 2007). For some of them, it’s the only possible form of employment, and for the others — a form of temporary economic activity” (Niesporek, Wódz, 2009, pp. 156–157).

Current attempts to define the social economy are associated with the Charter of principles of social economy CEP-CMAF from 2002⁶. It says that: social economy organizations are social and economic entities operating in all sectors. They are distinguished mainly by their objectives and characteristic form of entrepreneurship. The social economy includes organizations such as cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations. These companies are particularly active in certain areas, such as social protection, social services, health care, banking, insurance, agricultural production, consumer issues, associative work, crafts, housing, supplies, neighbourhood services, education and training, and the area of sport culture and recreation.

In the context of the fight against social exclusion, the social economy is understood as initiatives in the field of labour market policy, in particular the socio-professional integration of socially excluded groups, opposing the unjustified polarization of income societies (Leś, 2005, p. 37). Polish institutions treated as social economy entities are: the Centres of Social Integration, Social Integration Clubs within the social employment and Social Cooperatives and Vocational Rehabilitation Facilities. To the above-mentioned institutions, the civil sector entities should be added.

Attempting to create a certain “ideal model” of social enterprise (by EMES⁷), we must pay attention to two kinds of criteria that such enterprise should meet: economic and social criteria.

⁶ Cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations (CMAF) deemed it essential to establish a permanent dialogue on European policies that are of common interest. In November 2000, they set up the European Standing Conference of Cooperatives, Mutual societies, Associations and Foundations (CEP-CMAF). In January 2008, the CEP-CMAF changed its name into Social Economy Europe, <http://www.socialeconomy.eu.org> [access date: 24.09.2018].

⁷ EMES European Research Network, www.emes.net [access date: 24.09.2018].

The economic criteria include:

- conducting permanent activity with a direct aim of producing goods and services;
- high level of autonomy — social enterprise emerges as a voluntary initiative of a group of people who manage it, they also decide whether it should continue or terminate its operation, although in terms of finance it may to some extent depend on public subsidies;
- considerate level of economic risk — the functioning of social enterprise depends on the efforts of its members and staff and their ability to acquire necessary resources;
- ability to use in its activity both paid and social labour.

The social criteria include:

- the operation of social enterprise must be focused on supporting and development of local community and promoting the sense of social responsibility on a local level and the production of goods and services should find its market niche;
- social enterprise comes into being as a result of collective activity of people belonging to a given community, sharing the same problems or goals;
- democratic management of social enterprise is not subordinated to owning capital shares;
- social enterprise may be both organisations which cannot redistribute their profits and entities like cooperatives which may distribute their profits only to a limited extent.

Functioning initiatives of social economy in Poland as well as in Silesian region get into a kind of stagnation and weakness in this respect in comparison with the euphoric interest in this subject and the initiatives taken in early 2006 when this form of activity was treated as a specific remedy for the problem of social exclusion. Later experiences connected with the introduction of legislative regulations in this respect as well as some problems resulting from practical attempts at pursuing this idea, with the lack of external support and favour on the part of local authorities led to a slow deterioration of some social cooperatives or to resignation from finalisation of the previously planned initiatives. Nowadays, one can see a revival of interest in this kind of activity. However, it concerns not only entities wishing to take action in the scope of social economy, and not, as it was the case before, organisations which were willing to support such actions. Underlined is the organisational weakness of the functioning social cooperatives, which is said to result from their fundamental assumptions provided by legal regulations, because 80% members of cooperatives should be people who are socially or professionally excluded or endangered with such exclusion. It follows that these are people who were not able in the existing economic and social conditions to solve their problems independently. However, the functioning of cooperatives requires numerous competences, characteristic of entrepreneurs, and some of the people lack them or lost them when they were out of work. Such initiatives are strong as long as they are undertaken, led and supported by a leader — social activist who, despite his not coming from a group which is endangered with social marginalisation, will support or coordinate actions in this scope. The leader's withdrawal from the activity often leads to a slow collapse of the whole initiative. Another frequent cause of breakdown of social cooperatives — was — inability of such entities to

function after they stopped being subsidised from the public resources at local, national level or within the framework of the EQUAL Community Initiative.

Summarizing the first period of development of social economy in Poland and Silesian province, it must be emphasized that despite the fact that the level of interest in it was quite high and it seemed that it might have become an important element of active social policy, the process of institutionalization of instruments of social economy was difficult due to emerging barriers. Such barriers were, among others: inappropriate to the requirements of legal structures regulating this sphere, lack of interest or limited willingness of self-governments or public administration to cooperate, which would not function effectively without the support of social economy entities of. Neither is the voluntary sector is prepared to take actions directly within the scope of social economy (Mandrzyś, Szpoczek, 2009, pp. 178–188).

Nowadays, we can see that the social economy entities in Poland are divided into two types of “pro-integration” (Vocational Rehabilitation Facility, Occupational Therapy Workshops and some of Social Integration Centres) and ‘economic’ (that is leading some kind of economic activity). The first in recent years are doing quite well, the latter even though still developing but their condition is weaker.

In the first period of implementation of “new” social economy idea, regulations of social cooperatives were very strict and difficult to cope with. For example, there was an obligation that at least 80% of members of social cooperative was from socially excluded groups. It created many difficulties and problems not only with running of this entities but also with successful implementation of it. Fortunately thru last year’s legislation was changed. Currently, members of the cooperative can also be people from outside the socially excluded groups, who, in legal terms, are called specialists, but their number cannot be greater than 50% of all members of the cooperative. The initiative to form can also be created by local government organizations, NGOs, or religious agencies. If that is the case, these organizations will try to limit their influence on the group and lead them to function independently. In this case, they are required to employ in a cooperative at least five members of the groups of people excluded or at risk of social exclusion. In the opinion of experts, this change in law was the basic factor for the development of social cooperatives over the last few years. It is evident that at present the biggest growth record social cooperatives of legal persons.

Most of local authorities (especially in bigger cities) seems to understand the importance of NGO sector for local development and social economy for solving social problems. The role of NGO sector is not only support for Social Economy entities. It is noted that now the strongest social economy entities are NGO which conduct economic activity for solving social problems etc. The importance of this entities is growing rapidly during last years. But in the same time, at the level of public opinion, it is the social cooperatives that are treated as the most important social economy entities. In the opinion of respondents, this situation is a heritage of EQUAL CI. Actions on the basis of EQUAL, which was a tool for social economy implementation in Poland were mostly concentrated on promoting social cooperatives as a form of activity.

It is emphasised that also on the regional and national level one can observe trials of creation of better political and legal environment for developing of Social Economy. Speaking about examples respondents mentioning establishing the National Programme for the Development of Social Economy. On the 12th of August 2014 the National Programme for the Development of Social Economy was adopted by the Polish Government. This government document shows the key directions for the development of social economy and social enterprises. It is addressed primarily to the public institutions responsible for creating and implementing policies but also to the people involved in the social economy sector. Their activities will be supported from the EU funds and the national budget.

As the respondents stressed, social economy gives huge possibilities and emphasises self-development of individuals and coping with new reality, it is also opportunity for integration of local community. Social economy initiatives are focused on cooperation and unity of communities, this is a significant function of social economy. In regional development it is an opportunity, which is to be aptly used. “The perspectives are enormous (...) the very fact that it appeared on such a wide scale. Non-government organisations won’t have to use informal ways in search of aid. They just get it. So, there are funds and instruments, you should simply use them (a representative of the Marshal Office of the Silesian Voivodship). We need to learn social enterprise”. To sum up, the respondents agreed that “it is going to be fine, as long as people want to work, it’ll be fine”. If social economy is to have any chances of developing there will have to be more stress put on informing society on the essence of social enterprise and opportunities that self-employment creates⁸.

Practice of social economy idea on local level and its influence on households resilience.

The rural case

In Poland, within the framework of EFRROW, Rural Development Programme for the years 2007–2013 has been executed, and Community Initiative LEADER+ has become a part of rural development programmes. It means that the Leader has become an approach, mechanism of achieving goals of these programmes. Such solution may enable to propagate Leader method, that is, carrying out innovative projects based on public partnership, social and economic sectors and grass-roots system of making decisions. On the other hand, functioning of Leader mechanism shall be more formalized.

Leader approach was a priority axis 4 PROW 2007–2013 and the following activities were conducted within its framework:

⁸ Based on empirical material collected by author during project: *Social Economy in the Silesian Region. Selected examples. Expertise* prepared for the Institute of Public Affairs, Warszawa 2008 (K. Wódz — head of the team, K. Faliszek, W. Mandrysz, A. Niesporek, B. Kowalczyk, M. Szpoczek). This research were partly repeated by author in 2015 with representatives of NGO sector and Social Economy entities.

- implementation of local strategies of development;
- implementation of projects of cooperation;
- functioning of local action group, gaining skills and activation⁹.

Local Action Group Association operating in rural space, where the research was conducted, was established in 2006 as a part of the so-called Scheme of 1st Pilot Programme LEADER+, executed within Sectoral Operational Programme Restructuring and Modernization of Food Sector and Development of Rural Areas. The main goal of establishment of Local Action Group in a form of three-sector partnership was to develop existing developmental aims with reference to this area, as well as promotion outside and among inhabitants. Integrated Strategy of Rural Development, has been worked out then, however, too high population density excluded Local Action Group from participation in the Scheme of 2nd Pilot Programme LEADER+. Despite modest financial and organizational resources, in the years 2006–2008, the Association carried out such initiatives as “Biesiada Śląska” for inhabitants of the area of Local Action Group, harvest festival and other events cultivating local customs and traditions, a review of bands from a commune.

Statutory tasks of the Association include:

- 1) activities in favour of sustainable development of rural areas;
- 2) stimulation of local community;
- 3) implementation of local strategies of development worked out by Local Action Group;
- 4) promotion of rural areas;
- 5) spreading and exchange of information about initiatives connected with activation of population in the communes being the members of the Association¹⁰.

However, an analysis of activities has shown that the main scope of activity of this Local Action Group is cultural and educational activity related to propagation of culture and tradition (both Silesian and local) or activities related to making local areas more attractive or taking actions within the scope of sport and recreation. These activities may deepen social integration and promotion of the area, however they do not translate directly into social and economic development of inhabitants or the whole communities. However, it can't be definitely stated that, based on these activities, there will not be conditions allowing sustainable development of these areas.

The members of the Association paid attention the fact that using different kinds of talents to improve financial situation is difficult due to excessive fiscal burdens related to conducting business activity and formalities connected with starting and conducting business activity, both on the open market or as an entity of social economy.

— J.Z.: “The biggest problem is to sell a product. When you conduct business activity, you must have fixed income etc.” (PL/R/E1).

⁹ <http://ksow.pl> [access date: 24.09.2018].

¹⁰ Based on analysis of the webpage of the investigated Local Action Group.

Referring to the option of taking activities within entities of social economy, the representatives of the Local Action Group also see some impediments which seem to be dominant.

— J.Z.: “The law in this respect is not good... and social insurance payments, you don’t have to pay too much in the beginning but what will happen later (...) trial period would be a good solution”.

— H.S.: “For a start-up”.

— J.Z.: “For a start-up. (...) to make it legal, type of protection because we all want to feel safe”.

— H.S.: “The tax office is merciless” (PL/R/E1).

Answering the questions about activities within the scope of social economy, the members of the Local Action Group emphasized limited opportunities of development of such initiatives due to limited market for products and services of social cooperatives. However, it may be concluded from their statements that they don’t have knowledge within this scope.

— J.Z.: “I read about cooperatives in a newspaper only once. I don’t know if it still functions”.

— H.S.: “I think it doesn’t because it was all about high payments. The game was worth the candle and (this region) has been visited by many groups of Poles from abroad and you can sell there everything, whereas, there must be conditions to establish such a cooperative, whatever the name to allow people who produce too much a chance to sell their products” (PL/R/E1).

The activities of the Local Action Group unintentionally lead to stimulation of individual resourcefulness of some of inhabitants related to activities aiming at improvement of financial situation, is finding an opportunity to earn money in the spheres of activity, which were treated before by these people as a way of spending free time, hobby or an option of non-profit, amateur artistic self-realization. Recognition of their talent and showing people that they may earn some money using these talents improves their self-esteem. It has considerably improved their financial situation.

“For example, it emerged here, on the basis of our actions, let’s say social and cultural, (...) handicraft. Ladies, who live here (...) do beautiful things. And, for example, one lady does the icons, painted eggs, she embroiders, but she did it just for herself and never thought about selling them. She has a difficult situation and money could be of use for her (...). Let’s say, thanks to our actions (...) she made a website and sells her products. She sells a lot of them and can earn some money. (...) We also have a sculptor here who receives orders this way, or a woman who makes pictures using cross-stitch — once they did it because they were bored, and now they earn some money doing it (PL/R/E1).

However, this example should be treated as the so-called additional effect. The main cause of establishing cooperation within the framework of KREATOR, according to the employees of Local Action Group, was social and cultural actions, promoting communes which belong to the Local Action Group referring to local tradition and culture and not

to social economy. The goal of the KREATOR was to find and make use of potential of local artists. However, it seems that on this basis, the representatives of Local Action Group may build potential to implement projects which will be fully in accordance with idea of social economy. The same conclusion can be drawn from an analysis of such cooperation and developmental goals.

The target group was entities (e.g. natural persons, informal groups, craftsmen, producers and others) which manufacture traditional and artistic handicraft products, for example, products made of wicker, beeswax, wood, leathercraft and handicraft works, crocheting, tablecloths, clothes, elements of clothes, culinary and food products (herbal teas, cakes and regional dishes), the works of local sculptors, painters, ceramics, paper products — notelets, ornament, toys etc. In the first stage of the project, these groups were examined in order to determine their basic characteristics. The majority of the artists in the examined are women — 82% of all respondents. The areas of activity include, above all: embroidery, crocheting, painting. The majority of them often combine a few fields. For all of them, artistic work is a passion/hobby, however, it is also a job for 7%, and additional money for 13%. They usually sell their products occasionally. The barriers for conducting business activity based on handicraft include: lack of time, advanced age, health problems, other sources of income, unprofitability, lack of money. The implementers of the project claim that these barriers are the result of lack of knowledge of the market, socializing only in their own environment. These people don't know that „it can be done differently” and demand may increase beyond local area — perhaps market is saturated in a place of residence¹¹.

On the basis of these results, the creators of the project defined as one of the goals for the future: making use of potential of people and establishment of a platform to exchange experiences and establishing contacts allowing development. Organization of legal and fiscal training and organization of sale for people of whom products are on the website.

The implementers of the project suppose that thanks to cooperation with the Local Action Group, and other craftsmen, gaining knowledge and experiences and promotion of local products, the artists will be able to start their own business activity¹².

The fragment quoted above shows that such potential can be used in individual cases, but in order to propagate such form of earning money, more organized activities are required.

Urban case

In the urban commune, where the research were conducted the entities of social economy operate rather dynamically as the Centre for Social Integration and the Social Integration Club.

According to the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in 2011, the 74 Social Integration Centres (54 formed on the initiative of the organization of the Third

¹¹ <http://kreator.lyskor.pl/idea-kreatora.html> [access date: 24.09.2018].

¹² <http://www.lgdkreatywni.pl> [access date: 24.09.2018].

Sector) were open. Social Integration Centres have been introduced in the Act on Social Employment as a proposal for the unemployed, “who are subject to social exclusion and because of their life situation cannot satisfy their basic needs on their own and are in a situation causing poverty and preventing or limiting participation in professional, social and family life”¹³. In the year 2011, 8410 people used this form of support.

Social Integration Clubs are not engaged in economic activity, they do not produce goods and services, but provide employment through the organization of socially useful works and public works. These works are carried out to improve the environment, its aesthetic appearance, adaptation of public buildings for persons with disabilities, the state of local roads, the development of services for residents, etc. In 2010, 286 Clubs operated.

The Centre for Social Integration organizes social and professional reintegration of people threatened with exclusion, and their social employment through: developing skills that would enable to fulfil social roles and achieving social positions available for people not socially excluded; developing professional skills and apprenticeship, reskilling or improving professional qualifications; teaching how to plan life and satisfy needs on her/his own, especially through employment or business activity; teaching how to manage money in a rational way¹⁴.

People who cannot benefit from aid offered by the Social Employment Act are people entitled to: unemployment benefit; early retirement allowance; social pension; structural pension; pension due to inability to work; retirement pensions.

In the recent years, the Centre for Social Integration has been executing projects for long-term unemployed people benefiting from social welfare and disabled people taking part in 6-month programmes of social employment. The main goal of the project was to improve their chances on the labour market and motivate for social and professional activity and to improve professional qualifications. Within the framework of the project, beneficiaries will have a chance to participate in one of three groups of vocational training: construction and renovation workers; grounds maintenance workers; tailoring; office workers. Moreover, individual professional and psychological counselling classes are part of the project. The participants of the project are entitled to integration benefits, health insurance, pension insurance, medical examinations, meal and work clothes¹⁵.

In 2013, the Social Integration Club has been established (as a part of the Centre for Social Integration) and its members can be unemployed or professionally inactive people. The main goal of the project was increase in social and professional activity of 240 (144 women and 96 men, including 20 people with a disability degree certificate) inhabitants of the communes threatened with social exclusion through participation in the actions of Social Integration Club. The maximum planned time of realization of all forms of support was 8 months.

The project consisted of two kinds of support — support of employment and integration. The activities supporting employment included: professional courses; language courses;

¹³ *Social Employment Act of 13 June 2003*, 2003 Journal of Laws.03.122.1143, article 1, point 2.

¹⁴ See: *Social Employment Act*.

¹⁵ Based on analysis of the webpage of the investigated Centre for Social Integration.

workshops of social skills; professional consultancy; financial consultancy; individual counselling (lawyer, psychologist); traineeship and other forms of employment. Integration activities included, among others: participation in festivities and picnics; trips; going to the cinema, theatre or zoo, sports, culinary and artistic classes.

Individual counselling, including professional consultancy and classes with a psychologist is provided both in individual and group form. These activities include mainly the analysis of predispositions, determining strengths and weaknesses of beneficiaries, increasing motivation and effective managing in difficult situations both in private and professional life. The effect of consultancy and individual appointments at the psychologist's is an Individual Plan of Activity based on individual predispositions and selection of professional courses adjusted to the needs of a participant of the project and local labour market.

These assumptions were not perceived so positively by all beneficiaries. The people with lower professional qualifications were able to considerably improve their qualifications, skills and competences, people having higher professional qualifications or higher education claimed that such support didn't give them too much.

"I went to the Social Integration Club to get traineeship or public works. In practice, they didn't help me too much. I didn't learn anything new on the courses. Conversations with employment counsellor or psychologist also didn't give me too much" (PL/U/13).

In order to improve professional qualification, the participants of the Social Integration Club could make courses adjusted to their individual needs. An additional convenience that the Club offered people having children at the age up to 6 is that they could leave them under professional care during a professional course.

The element that was appreciated the most by the beneficiaries was traineeships or other forms of employment after training cycle. For some of them, it was the most important, if not the only motivation for taking part in the project.

The participants of the Social Integration Club could also take part in a free German language course, unfortunately it was given during working hours of the Centre for Social Integration and people who were on the traineeship or performed public works could not take part in these courses.

"(...) and there was something fine... the Social Integration Club organized language courses for free. I would gladly attend such course to learn a new language etc. But they organize it during working hours of the Centre for Social Integration and I was on a traineeship then. So what was it for, for people who don't look for a job and stay at home? People like me can't benefit from it" (PL/U/13).

The Centre for Social Integration and the Social Integration Club are entities established by City Council and due to this fact they were treated with reserve just like other initiatives or municipal institutions. However, opening of them was well-publicized thanks to intensive promotion.

— M.: “Can you say something about the Social Integration Club as an inhabitant (of the district)? (...) What do you know about this club from? (...) Because some people said that it was not publicized at all”.

— R.: “It was. I found information about that on the Internet and in newspapers. Everything is fine. You can take courses, it is so... They give courses, certificates but they don’t pay. The Centre for Social Integration pas people, but it doesn’t courses issue certificates. It is so...”.

— B.: “How did you get there? You were at a building site and came to ask”.

— R.: “Yes, it was publicized, opening the Centre for Social Integration was publicized. I renovated this building... I registered and had to wait for one year. Only after a year...” (PL/U/06).

The respondents participating in the activities of the Centre for Social Integration and the Social Integration Club in urban Silesian space are usually satisfied with these activities. Especially those for whom motivation was to find traineeship or public works. They are usually people motivated to find a job.

“I went to the Social Integration Club only to find traineeship or public works” (PL/U/13).

They say that formula proposed by the Centre for Social Integration or Social Integration Club has some limitations, which do not allow to fully make use of potential capabilities. Apart from accusations concerning the limited scope of support for people having better qualifications or education, the participants would like to have skills and competences gained in the Centre for Social Integration documented, they complained about lack of certificates, etc.

“It’s not good that they don’t issue certificates. They would make courses and issue certificates at the end, but they don’t. But they don’t issue certificates at the end, only a diploma” (PL/U/06).

Both beneficiaries and employees of the Centre for Social Integration/Social Integration Club emphasized that they must be committed to their actions. People who treated participation in these projects as voluntary involvement giving them access to any form of employment were usually more motivated and effective. Whereas, people who were “forced” to take part in the activities of the Centre for Social Integration or Social Integration Club by other aid institutions such as various entities of Social Welfare were more passive and rarely achieved their goals.

— R.: “Yes. It’s good, you know, people have something to do. I always had a job but there are some people who got help. But not everyone, there are always people who... I don’t want to say [about the subject]”.

— B.: “How did you get there? He was at the building site and came to ask”.

— R.: “Opening the Centre for Social Integration was well-publicized. The renovation of this building... I registered there and had to wait a year”.

— B.: “Did other people who were on the courses find a job?”.

— R.: “It was hard, hard... He worked at a construction site but he didn’t get any certificate for this job? Half a year is not enough. What can you learn in half a year? Only basic things. And some people richtig can’t do anything, they come there” (PL/U/06).

The employees of the Social Integration Club said that they must devote more time to people who come there rather „under constraint”, not believing in positive change and often even without the will of improving their financial situation. They are often long-term beneficiaries of aid institutions and their main motivation was a suggestion from a social worker, unofficially obligating to participate in the project. The project helped some of these people, but many of them were not committed to their actions.

“To be honest, we devote too much time to people who don’t want to change anything, it’s just a waste of time. And we don’t have enough time for people who are motivated to change their life. Therefore, we have to settle for the first successes because we have to work with the others and we lose a chance for real change, real success” (PL/U/E6).

People participating in the actions of the Centre for Social Integration or of Social Integration Club pay attention to the fact that actions they take, courses, trainings, traineeships and public works do not give any effect if they don’t end with some form of permanent employment. Only small number of participants of these projects is able to remain on the open labour market. Many of these people return to the system and statistics of District Employment Agencies. Even if some of these people, even if most of them didn’t intend to find their place on the market, for some of these people it was just another disappointment.

— M.: “What municipal council should do to help you weather the crisis?”

— R.: “You can find now public works...”.

— B.: “Have you ever worked in such a way?”.

— R.: “Mhm, I worked in the Centre for Social Integration. (...) At first, public works then normal. But you know — only half a year, one year at the most. And I don’t a job again. Many people worked for half a year — they were happy but it is only half a year and then over. I went to the employment agency again and registered as unemployed because there was no job” (PL/U/06).

The employees of the Social Integration Club emphasize that the problem is a situation in which employers willingly employ trainees or make use of other forms of subsidized employment, because they can have an employee working for free due to the fact that their remuneration is refunded. However, many employers do not employ trainees when their period of employment is over and they look for other “free employees”. These employees believe this problem would be solved both by restrictions towards employers using such practices and supporting projects, in which courses and professional trainings would be conducted during a traineeship in a specific workplace in order to prepare an employee for working in a specific company on a specific position. It would mean that an employee makes courses and trainings not only adjusted to his/her abilities, needs and potential, but also adjusted to needs and place that he/she would be employed in. Such procedures may bind a trainee with a place and type of job.

Conclusions

The research on a sector of social economy conducted earlier have shown that with reference to potential of development of social economy, we should emphasize the role of grass-roots, local social activity as a factor generating the development of social economy and favouring stability of its institutional forms at the level of local community. In this context, social economy shouldn't be associated with social enterprises, social cooperatives or other institutionalized forms. As a result, less formalized activities are omitted such as neighbourly help, which require greater involvement of people at the level of local communities, based on acquaintance, trust, willingness to help and cooperate, defining and solving common problems. All these elements made up the support of entities of social economy and people who take such actions. Whereas, lack of support causes failure of such activities. Grass-roots social support and active cooperation and support from local authorities and public institutions give a chance for success for entities of social economy (compare: Faliszek et al., 2009, pp. 228–229).

Based on the analyses of the research material, it may be concluded that limited effectiveness of the entities of social economy results to a large extent from lack of social trust or even from the fact that community is not aware of activity of these entities. Lack of trust is sometimes a result of associating them with aid and local institutions (in case of Centres for Social Integration and Clubs of Social Integration), which in specific communities are often treated with dislike.

Isolation in own households or among neighbours makes people less eager to cooperate. Therefore, the degree of social activation in these communities is low.

Existing entities of social economy take actions supporting social and professional integration, but their actions are very often "uniform" and adjusted to the needs and competences of low-qualified people. The support can often be highly appreciated at introductory, training, motivating stage, which is good for a start, but at the stage of social and professional inclusion, the instruments that these entities possess are not sufficient. As a result, despite trainings, courses, traineeships or public works, it doesn't result in professional reintegration, it makes beneficiaries of these institutions frustrated and they are more and more dependent on the aid system.

There is a group of people who are able, thanks to support of entities of social economy, to improve their situation. The employees of these entities claim that they are people who demonstrated, creativity or resilience in the past. These people usually benefit from the participation in the activities of entities of social economy, but they content themselves with that, transforming them, looking for new solutions, activate additional resources etc.

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Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań dotyczących roli podmiotów ekonomii społecznej w budowaniu rezyliencji gospodarstw domowych i społeczności lokalnych. Celem badania było określenia warunków i wzorców działania, które wspierają lub ograniczają i hamują rezyliencję gospodarstw domowych znajdujących się w trudnej sytuacji. Badania zostały zrealizowane w ramach międzynarodowego projektu RESCuE — *Patterns of Resilience during Socioeconomic Crises among Households in Europe* (2014–2017). Podstawę empiryczną referowanych wyników badań stanowiły wywiady indywidualne przeprowadzone w badanych środowiskach lokalnych z członkami gospodarstw domowych dotkniętych różnymi typami trudności życiowych i sytuacji kryzysowych (m.in. ubóstwo, bezrobocie, niepełnosprawność itp.) oraz wywiady z ekspertami społecznymi. W artykule wskazano ograniczoną skuteczność działania podmiotów ekonomii społecznej w badanych społecznościach, która w dużej mierze wynika z braku ich osadzenia w społeczności lokalnej — bądź to z powodu braku zaufania społecznego, bądź braku wiedzy członków społeczności na temat ich działalności czy potencjału tych podmiotów dla rozwoju społeczno-ekonomicznego.

Słowa kluczowe: polityka społeczna, ekonomia społeczna, rezyliencja, sprawiedliwość społeczna, zaradność społeczna