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The importance of social economy practice for the development of social capital of local self-governments in the perspective of labour market security

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Abstract: The development of local communities, the future of the Republic of Poland is a matter requiring the integration of hands, hearts and minds, a sense of rights and obligations of all citizens. With this awareness and the need for action to rebuild ties in local communities, the General Meeting of the Beskidzki Association of Ecological Production and Tourism BEST PROEKO in 2014 adopted a resolution on statutory actions to counteract the spreading

social pathology and social exclusion of the unemployed and disadvantaged people, which resulted in the creation of the first Social Integration Centre in the district of Żywiec in Jeleśnia. It is a coherent, integrated and coherent measure that fits into the Development Strategy of the Silesian Voivodeship «Śląskie 2020+» in the area of social economy and fulfils the mission to create a necessary platform for cooperation for local partnership in order to improve the quality of life of persons in need of comprehensive support on the way to return to decent living and to social and professional activity. The Beskidzki Congress of Social Economy had the task of bottom-up evaluation of the activity of social economy entities of the Polish Social Economy and analysis of conditions and needs in terms of legal and organizational changes to improve their functioning in a coherent and integrated local partnership in the space of socio-economic life of the inhabitants of the Podbeskidzie region.

Keywords: social economy, social reintegration, labour market, social security.

Introduction

Nowadays, many institutions all over the world try to fight the problem of social exclusion and related professional exclusion, which in the literature on the subject is

described as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon [1], as the first to use this term was used by politicians [2]. The Equality Dictionary states, after Silver, that exclusion is a phenomenon whose source is the breaking of individual ties with society and economic diversification in society [3]. One can also find proposals that try to balance exclusion with discrimination [4]. Certainly, discrimination as a wide-ranging phenomenon can be considered as one of the factors significantly influencing the exclusion process. However, although discrimination is a phenomenon that must be condemned in all respects, it gives a person, especially nowadays, the opportunity to defend himself or herself with the support of various public institutions or other members of society. Awareness of this problem is greater than ever before. An important element distinguishing discrimination from the ordinance of exclusion is the very fact of social awareness, including that of the discriminated or excluded individual.

1. Awareness of exclusion and social economy

Man as a social being should be guided by the observance of certain social norms adopted by the general public [5]. Awareness of these norms results from education and socio-cultural environment, whose task is to shape human attitudes de facto in the process of development, but nowadays also during lifelong learning [6]. On the basis of scientific observation [7] it can be concluded that the discriminated person will be aware of the situation in which they find themselves, while the excluded person may not be aware of this awareness or have it to a lesser extent, i.e. that the perception of the situation in which they find themselves will be limited due to the socio-cultural perspective in which they have developed or are still developing. The Polish legislator recognises two basic types of action against social and professional exclusion, i.e. social and professional reintegration and reintegration into employment [8, 9]. One could conclude that vocational reintegration fills in and hardens the effects of social reintegration by hard vocational competences. The real tools of reintegration are social economy entities, which include [10]:

- Social Integration Centres
- Social Integration Clubs
- Establishments of Professional Activity Social cooperatives
- Occupational Therapy Workshops
- Social enterprises
- Invalidity cooperatives
- Non-profit limited liability companies.

In the analyzed article the Social Integration Centre in Jeleśnia was analyzed. Therefore, the legislator required that they carry out their missions on the basis of tasks aimed at:

- Education of skills enabling them to perform social roles and achieve social positions accessible to people not subject to social exclusion;
- the acquisition of professional skills and apprenticeship, retraining or upgrading of professional qualifications;

- learning to plan for life and meet needs through their own efforts, in particular through the possibility of generating their own income through employment or economic activity;
- learning the skills of rational management of possessed funds. (“Social Employment Act”). (Article 3.1 of the Social Employment Act).

1.1. Dimensions of social economy for local self-government

Social and professional reintegration is an extremely important issue for local government. The investment potential of a given region depends not only on the location and infrastructure of the area, but also on the social potential represented by a given locality. It is obvious that human capital can be obtained from other areas, but it is often an expensive procedure that significantly increases the cost of maintenance of a given investment. Therefore, local government, wishing to offer attractive investment conditions, must also take care of potential employees for target investment partners such as entrepreneurs. For several years now in Poland there has been a problem with a shortage of employees on the labour market. This phenomenon has also begun to be described as the «employee market», because people wishing to take up or change jobs now have greater opportunities in this area. There are also opinions that this phenomenon is wrongly described and should be referred to as «inefficient entrepreneur» [11, 12]. As shown by the profession barometer for the district of Żywiec for the year 2019, among the professions in short supply one can find professions that concern physical work, such as: hairdresser, bricklayer, carpenter, electrician [13]. Many people affected by social and occupational exclusion used to work in professions that are nowadays referred to as deficit professions. An extremely important feature of any local labour market is its uniqueness, which is ensured by potential employees, who can be acquired either through transfer from another organisation or as fresh fry from among graduates or the unemployed. Poor policy on the dispersal of branch high schools or universities results in the fact that local labour markets loses its unique value. This is because many universities in a given area offer the same area and discipline of education, often one whose graduates enlarge the catalogue of registered unemployed persons or persons working in a profession other than that taught at university. There is also a lack of proper promotion of branch schools run by district and towns with the rights of district. I would give branch schools hard competences in a specific profession, and in a branch school of the second degree also the possibility of obtaining the secondary school-leaving certificate and further intellectual development during studies. The importance of the tasks of social economy entities is enormous because it has two dimensions:

- cultural dimension, which will determine the change in the attitude of the society towards excluded persons, including greater empathy towards these persons in the area of supporting their way to return to full communion with the society,
- economic dimension, which will determine the investment of public funds in restoring excluded persons to full communion with the society in order to increase the attractiveness of the local labour market for potential investors as well as for human resources support for already operating entrepreneurs.

The two dimensions of activities of social economy entities mentioned above result from the definition of social capital, which is defined as the sum of economic capital and cultural capital [14], Social and professional reintegration increases the value of social capital of the local labour market also due to the increase in the possibility of implications of diversity management practices in enterprises employing people reintegrated into the society. Enterprises that implement diversity management practices, especially those resulting from the integration paradigm [15, 16] in the long run may expect development towards international cooperation and cooperation, because the diversity of human capital will make the organization more open and easier to understand the needs of a foreign partner. It will be possible because of the greater openness to the need to understand the other person, which is represented by people experienced in life, including reintegrated people. These issues could also be considered in the area of flexicurity policy [17] whose main objective is to secure jobs and ensure continuity in terms of the efficiency of the organisation's operations. Many people described as excluded may seek some stability in their professional life. Of course, this is related to the fact described by Abraham Maslov in his Needs Theory. The need for security and belonging will therefore be the sphere of the human psyche that will require stimulation both during the reintegration period as well as in the period after supported employment, which is the result of social and then professional reintegration. The term 'incompetent entrepreneur' can have an interesting meaning for stimulating workers. This incapacity may be considered as a failure by the entrepreneur to provide security related to job stability or working conditions. Therefore, education of attitudes developed by persons excluded in social economy entities in cooperation with employers is undoubtedly an added value for local governments, because apart from increasing the attractiveness of social capital, they also gain additional profits in the form of activities carried out during workshops and intervention works carried out by persons undertaking the effort of social and professional reintegration.

2. Analysis of data from the Beskidzki Congress of Social Economy

2.1 General overview

During the Beskidzki Congress of Social Economy, which was held in November and December 2017, discussion panels exchanged views on combating social exclusion within the framework of the hitherto undertaken forms of reintegration activities. The discussion was attended by representatives of such circles as: non-governmental organizations, including associations and foundations, local government administration, parliamentarians, police, universities, entrepreneurs, participants of CIS and senior citizens. The subject of the meeting was the activity of Social Economy Entities, especially Social Integration Centres, which are «kindergartens – kindergartens» introducing the long-term unemployed or people in difficult life situations to the open labour market and integrating them into the life of local communities.

Congress participants were acquainted with the activities of the Centre for Social Integration in Jeleśnia (short form: CIS) and shared their experiences and comments.

All data included in the research part were prepared on the basis of annual reports of the Centre for Social Integration in Jeleśnia (CIS).

Social Integration Centre in Jeleśnia operates under the Act on Social Employment 2003 with later amendments and the CIS status granted in 2014. It is also based on the Local Partnership Agreement signed by the BEST PROEKO Association, local governments of the county office and Żywiec municipalities, District Labour Office, District Family Support Centre and Youth Career Centre, local employers and with the help of the BARKA Mutual Aid Foundation from Poznań.

The local partnership agreement was the basis for the decision of the Silesian Voivode to establish the CIS. CIS cooperates on an ongoing basis with the OWES Social Economy Support Centre in Bielsko-Biała and the Regional Social Policy Centre of the Regional Social Policy Centre of the Silesian Voivodeship. Social and professional reintegration in CIS is carried out within the framework of repair and construction workshops, tourist services, agricultural and handicraft workshops. In addition, CIS runs an information point on the Carpathian Convention, which also includes tourist information, promotion of the commune, county and region. Out of concern for the common good and building civic awareness in people, BEST PROEKO in CIS implements grants for pro-ecological activities and civic education and organizes open days and intergenerational events, e.g. family picnic during the Feast of Creation in 2017. It also organizes study meetings and trainings aimed at promoting good practices and developing local communities by building employee-employer, farmer-consumer, intergenerational and family relations, as well as therapeutic and psychological counseling.

2.2. Data Analysis

In the period from June 2015 to December 2017 participated in social and professional reintegration in CIS in Jeleśnia 85 unemployed people referred by the Municipal Social Welfare Centre from Jeleśnia commune and from neighboring communes of Żywiec district, so that CIS is still about 30 people community able to maintain and secure the proper functioning of CIS. Among the participants in this period:

16 people graduated from CIS and acquired rights to employment on the open labour market, took up supported employment or a contract of employment on the open labour market,

28 people graduated from CIS and acquired the right to work on the open labour market and made efforts for employment on the labour market by registering in the District Labour Office.

2 persons resigned during the project, some of them work on the open labour market, including 2 persons abroad.

29 people did not complete the CIS /3 people died/. 26 people breaking the CIS rules or refusing to take up therapy and reintegration into professional practice were deleted from the list of CIS participants.

In total, 54 people in CIS benefited from assistance and strengthened their motivation or skills to become involved in the social and economic life of the local community and to build proper relations in their communities.

Participation in CIS may last 12 to 18 months at the most and during this period persons directed to socio-vocational reintegration receive integration benefit in the amount of unemployment benefit and are insured and pay contributions to the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS), therefore the period of participation is included in the length and continuity of work.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

For proper, coherent and permanent social and professional reintegration of the weakest link in the local community, i.e. the unemployed, people in a difficult life situation and threatened by social exclusion, it is necessary:

1. Verification and creation of coherent and transparent legal norms and strategies for creation of PES financing policy and implementation of social assistance projects in such a way that would ensure organisation and implementation of continuous education of adults threatened by social exclusion in the scope of hard professional competences.

2. Introduction of an effective system of monitoring persons covered by social assistance by the state. To this end, it is proposed to de-bureaucratize Social Welfare Centres and to increase the competence of social workers to control the actions of their clients.

3. Promotion of Social Economy Entities (PES), including CIS, social and student cooperatives and change of regulations concerning the implementation of municipal tasks by such entities operating in the territory of a given commune or povit.

4. Introduction to the education system in schools of common subjects such as volunteering and education to entrepreneurship. It is also important to include children from pathological families in the active attention of school pedagogues and family assistants.

5. Introduction of educational content from building intergenerational relations in society and preparation to life in the convention of family, social and civic rights and duties – reconstruction of EKO attitudes, not EGO.

6. Promoting higher values of love, mutual respect, solidarity, selfless help, subsidiarity and justice in society through school and university programmes and actions in the media.

7. Organization of Intergenerational Centers and Partnership Center of Public Benefit Organizations in economically and demographically liquidated school facilities, which could complement the governmental SENIOR+ program. Such Municipal Centres would provide employment for unemployed teachers, educators and people with qualifications and skills in writing projects to obtain EU and national funds.

8. Grants and competitions for entrepreneurs promoting corporate social responsibility within the framework of economic activation of people at risk of exclusion and at pre-retirement age.

9. Creating CIS in each commune as a budget unit is the most effective and cost-effective form of social and professional reintegration of the weakest link in the local community, i.e. the unemployed and people threatened by social exclusion, as well as

a strong tool for counteracting social pathology. It is a proven model of reconstructing relations, providing social services, providing community service and community service and preparing people for community work and co-responsibility for the common good. It is also the first stage of effective organization of PES, social cooperatives. Social economy pays off.

10. Promoting Social Cooperatives of two legal entities, including Municipalities and e.g. Voluntary Fire Brigades as economically and socially justified PES, and social cooperatives of natural persons as the next stage after Participation in the Centre for Social Integration.

11. Verifying the local activity of the Chambers of Agriculture and Rural Circles in rural communes and enforcing commitment to implement projects to reactivate agriculture and support farmers, e.g. “We change lawns into traditional vegetable gardens” or “We exchange lawns for mulberries and hornbeams, plums and apple trees”, “Who has sheep, who has what he wants” – these programmes could be implemented by the People’s University financed by EU grants and RDP, the Ministry of Education (important for the restructuring of education and training and the management of empty school buildings).

12. Make efforts to ensure integrated verification and updating of the Development Strategy for the Silesian Voivodeship in the area of social economy and rural community development and to strengthen opportunities for access to European Social Funds.

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