

Professional Services of Employment for Social Economy and the Third Sector

E-learning course
'Social Economy – modern
instruments of labour market' –
selected topics from
discussion forums

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Introduction

This material presents a selection of the most interesting topics discussed during the e-learning course conducted as an integral part of the *Professional services of employment for social economy and the third sector* training programme.

We hope it will be helpful for those who prepare similar courses that aim at: firstly, familiarization with different notions of social economy and secondly, demonstration of numerous initiatives and endeavours which prove that social economy is not only possible but also worthy of 'trying out'.

What was the e-learning course about?

The six-weeks course was preceded and followed by a training session in order to familiarise the participants with the e-learning platform and the subject matter (session 1) and to give the e-tutor an opportunity to summarize the entire course (session 2).

The programme of the e-course consisted of three modules of topics during which e-tutors were presenting the participants with different issues of social economy.

- Module I – introduction to social economy
- Module II – social economy and local development
- Module III – entities of social economy

Participation in the course was compulsory. Completion of a written assignment for each module, contribution to discussions on the forum and taking the final test were required to pass the course. The e-tutor was supervising the participants during the whole course through the e-learning platform helping them with assignments and putting forward discussion topics in accord with each module.

Selected topics

Between the stationary sessions, participants were discussing issues related to social economy, the third sector and cooperation between sectors on the forums supervised by e-tutors. This text attempts to present the issues which were both the most interesting ones and most frequently debated by 19 different tutorial groups.

Module I of the course was concerned with introduction to the concept of social economy. The participants were presented with, inter alia, different definitions of social

economy [SE] commonly used in Poland and the European Union. The problem discussed under supervision of the e-tutor was the position of social economy in the field of services of public employment. Here are some of the participants' comments:

"The problem of unemployment, growing distance between people perceived as 'wealthy' and those with very low income is still very significant. These and other issues are of interest to the SE. I believe that social economy will contribute to the betterment of the quality of life in the society, if not now then in the future. I'm convinced it has to succeed."

"The obstacles on the way to application of SE in my local environment are mainly connected with lack of knowledge about SE. It is something new and novelties are often slowly accepted and applied in real life. The concept has to be spread among public administration: city halls, commune offices, employment agencies. There is a lack of information on social cooperatives. There is a lack of people specialized in the field, leaders who could work on the development of SE. It's necessary to organize tutorials for administration workers and the unemployed informing about SE and social cooperatives."

There is a lack of cooperation e.g. between District Employment Offices and NGOs. There is a lack of legal, organisational, educational and financial support for creation and functioning of SE entities."

There is a need for campaign for SE by development of a system providing advice and assistance for SE initiatives. Rules of public funds support for the SE institutions need to be set. Good practice and exemplary solutions should be promoted."

"Looking at how my own institution works I realise how difficult it is to break down the monopoly of Public Employment Services as far as fulfillment of regulatory tasks is concerned. Especially the tasks that, according to the bill on promotion of employment and labour market institutions, could be successfully accomplished by NGOs which have statutory regulations related to the field of promotion of employment. For me it is a litmus test of government institutions interest in cooperation with NGOs and their support of social economy initiatives. However, it seems to me that monopolising the distribution of Labour Fund resources suits our government institutions quite well. I leave out the EU resources since the projects co-financed by the European Social Fund tend to emphasise the element of partnership."

"A Centre for Social Integration is present in my area. I think that CSIs can work in any area where people endangered with or facing social or labour exclusion can be found. (...)

I think that in my area, due to my job I refer to an area of a magistrate and land district, one Centre for Social Integration and three Social Integration Clubs is definitely too little. The needs of local community in those kinds of districts are much larger."

The activity of CSI and SIC is restricted to their own commune. In other communes there is still too little of this kind of activity which is related most probably to the lack of knowledge on the topic. In effect there are no initiatives."

"Social exclusion generates a series of grave consequences of social and mental nature, it also leads to a physical breakdown. There is a great need for creation and support of the institutions that could aid those who are socially marginalized, excluded. (...) I am convinced that creation of a CSI is needed in my area. People affected by long lasting unemployment are often poorly educated, have little or no income and manifest a limited level of social and civic activity. Additionally, due to a long period of exclusion from a professional life they become demotivated. A chance for bringing those people back to social life, through their professional activation, and in consequence their normal conduct in family life would help not only them, but first of all their children whose living in a 'healthy' family wouldn't copy any pathological patterns of behaviour."

"Helping the socially excluded is not only about paying the dole and from time to time checking whether the family had spent it on alcohol.

Centre for Social Integration's primary job would be to first of all encourage those 'in need' to work somewhere which is difficult in the case of for example homeless, addicted to alcohol or drugs or mentally ill persons.

Staying in touch with a psychologist or a professional advisor would be of great significance here. As in the case of 'Cistor' CSI, beneficiaries could learn how to rebuild and sustain their ability to participate in social life during trainings concerned with social skills, rationalising the household budget and efficient ways of job searching."

"For me social economy is a very important factor but also something new in my work. The labour market forces public services of employment to develop tools and methods applied in their work with people affected by long lasting unemployment and the economically inactive. New forms and instruments that allow to re-include those people to the labour market, such as the tools of social economy, become increasingly important. One of the very important functions is raising the level of employment and helping with social integration of the excluded that follows it."

"Now, after the tutorial (especially after listening to the people who work in societies and foundations) social economy seems to be something which is focused on the human being in 100% and makes it possible for both sides to help each other out. The one that can give, offer something and draw satisfaction from doing that and the other, which needs our help. Both parties complement each other and draw benefits in their own way."

"The word 'economy', to use a medical expression, gives fair promises. After all, economy is a science of rational money management. What else do we need in actions addressed to people excluded from the labour market if not rules of good money management? Economy is about money. It can be wisely gained and spent. And if it's used for the greater good – outplacement of the helpless – it's like a dream come true."

"Speaking in terms of furniture-placing, to me SE is like a filler (an assimilating object) that fits the holes in the economy in which profitability and calculating gains are the main factors in decision-making, SE comes as an alternative (fitting the niche), a rocking chair or a bar stool, SE becomes an opportunity of achieving goals not covered by electric chairs or standard office stools. So not being shocked by a thousand volt is effective but group-oriented, requires adjustment to its needs and taking action – as a whole this constitutes the power of 'curios of the furniture industry'."

Module II of the e-learning tutorial was concerned with social economy in the context of local development. The concept of 'socially responsible territory' was discussed in this part of the course. Exemplars of good practice in small, local community-oriented endeavours of social economy were taken as examples and basis of discussion on the possibilities of participation of work agencies in local initiatives.

"Any successful activity in the field of social economy is in my opinion heavily dependent on the society's interest in the public affairs and a sense of responsibility for common wellbeing."

"As a District Employment Office employee I recognise the need of providing greater support to the socially excluded and discriminated on the labour market, especially people addicted to alcohol, long-term unemployed and ex-convicts. (...)

During an internship preparing for the job of social worker in a Local Social Welfare Office, I noticed a significant problem of the unemployed addicted to alcohol. Today, as a worker of such Office, I find this group to be even larger and it is no longer a concern of just LSWOs, all kinds of local institutions, of municipal and commune level, have to be included in these actions. The goal of such cooperation should be to counteract the effects of social exclusion of the long-term unemployed, people with alcohol problem, by taking actions for social and professional inclusion that can make them self-sustainable and independent of the social welfare system. (...)

By creating a Centre for Social Integration and giving a chance for the socially excluded to recover, we help not only them, their relatives (spouses and children), but also the local community – all of us. Beginning with the local 'positives' it manifests on the global scale. We have to help each other – to live better and with dignity."

"As a District Employment Office worker I realise that the Office, despite being an institution presented with tasks and means concerned with the support of this kind of people, it should be stated clearly that, employment offices are unable to provide such group with comprehensive aid that could bring the long-awaited results: making them generally active again. One doesn't have to remind that this group, being conflict-prone, untrusting and lacking any motivation, is especially difficult to work with and the employment offices do not have a specialised staff (counselors and tutors) that could prepare professional training activities with such group. That's why I see a chance for them in creating a Centre for Integration in my area (...)"

"Our task is to give those people hope and confidence that the office is able to offer aid to those, who expect it. There are many elements of cooperation that should be perfected, but I'm glad to see that the participants of Social Integration Club (especially CSI within the municipal LSWO) are more aware of their abilities, more active (even if just for a period of time), interested of their own accord in our training offer. Many of them has already been trained, they work or look for a job. And that's what it's all about."

"For the disabled persons participation in the life of a local community is essential. We all exist in relation to the society. Therefore the idea of participation in Occupational Therapy Workshops or Institutions for Professional Activity presents them with a chance of integration and social and professional inclusion. (...) For the sake of socio-economical profits gained by rehabilitation of the disabled through work, flexible and enduring attitude of support for the process should be created within the public institutions."

During Module III of the course, e-tutors presented the legal possibilities of activity of the social economy entities in Poland. The question of social economy in the context of social enterprise was also discussed. Deepened examples of good practice in the field were presented by e-tutors. On the forum, participants discussed the possibilities of cross-sector partnership creation, especially between the employment offices and social economy entities:

"Real partnership, through which the excluded can be motivated to act, may result in for example creation of social cooperatives in our area. Those people will begin to work and not just wait for the state to help them out. This is very important from the perspective of their moral and mental condition. Our task is to create an adequate way to function, show them the way and after that they can often manage on their own."

"In creation of CSI an important if not crucial role is played by the cooperative and local partnership factor i.e. cooperation between inter alia District Employment Office and Local Social

Welfare Office especially when it comes to locating those in need. After all, beneficiaries of CSIs are our mutual clients (...)"

"I personally think that often not knowing the problems those people struggle with we treat them with indifference and sometimes aggression. And those people just have problems (alcoholism, family violence etc.). Working on offers I cooperate with municipal and commune LSWOs and CSI and I think that it really brings good effects. Very often, looking at the thousands of unemployed in the registry we treat them as object not really knowing the problems those people have. I know you can't help everyone, but if just a few is to be satisfied, I think it's worth it."

"There are good specialists at DOE. They also have too much on their heads. People burn out professionally and run away or stay and grumble about how difficult things are. Is anything going to change in this matter any time soon?"

It's evidently a big problem. Maybe cooperation with other institutions within the SE framework will be a good solution. Simply splitting the tasks, fulfilling them cooperatively. There is still a lack of for example professional advisors, counselors, middlemen in the offices. Perhaps in this area support is needed."

"Very good idea – 'Simply splitting the tasks, fulfilling them cooperatively.' We have to learn to work together. That which I don't have time to do can be done by 'another entity' and vice-versa. And the support of external staff is in fact necessary. There is no psychologist in 'my' office and clients often ask about for example psychological tests. Of course I send them to another institutions, like Voivodship Employment Office for example, it's a good way of cooperation but not the kind we speak about while discussing SE."

"The majority of 'our' long-lasting unemployed are 'regular visitors' of municipal LSWOs and until it doesn't pay off for them to work (because their flats, dinners, medicines etc. are being paid for) they will continue to visit Offices 'to have it signed'. Without any thought about what is work, what other than material profits it gives and why is it worth to cooperate with the Office. Don't get me wrong – I don't mean to 'punish' the unemployed, have their dole taken away by the LSWOs due to their lack of good will in cooperation with DOEs – what I mean is rather to tighten cooperation with social workers who know those under their care, their families and living conditions. It's a repository of knowledge about our mutual client. Thanks to this kind of information, advisor or middlemen can adjust the method of work with unemployed."

"(...) that which I miss the most is close cooperation in exchange of information about a mutual client. For me sending a client from LSWO to DOE 'to activate' is not a cooperation but a mere substitute."

"As a professional advisor I do tutorials with the unemployed. Increasingly often clients turn out to be people suffering from long-lasting unemployment so if not yet socially excluded then for sure endangered by it. Trainings I the employment office are meant to prepare a client directly to enter the labour market. I admit that I have a great sense of discomfort and helplessness because often clients require definitely different kind of help which I call 'first aid' (...). The offer of employment services is not sufficient or maybe inadequate in the moment, to the client's needs.

Those client require comprehensive aid. Employment offices with their offer of 'job-studies' related actions are at the end of the chain. Basic needs have to be tackled with first. (...) In my opinion, an opportunity for that is created by CSI where one can learn soft skills first (conscientiousness, everyday life management, sense of time, regains a proper attitude towards oneself) and then learns professional skills."

"Instruments of help for those defavourised groups have been out of DOEs' reach so far. There wasn't and there isn't any legal basis making the employment office viable to try to work on social inclusion. Regulations of the bill on promotion of employment allow support only in the case of professional activation and only the professional advisory institutions could inaptly try to reach the social and psychological aspect of their clients although in this field also it has been done rudimentarily so to speak. Only merging of competences of two institutions such as employment office and social welfare office will make a comprehensive aid to the defavourised possible."

"(...) I try to think on the global and act on the local scale. Work in the public employment services despite the hardship creates opportunities of development and as for the labour market we know well what's going on (...). I think that lack of cooperation and partnership (...) slows the local development down."

Since the participants were free to propose their own topics, discussions on the forums also referred to such questions as:

- social economy as a known but previously 'unnamed' subject:

"The last couple of years has been a time of a SE craze. It seems to me as if it has just appeared when it's been around for centuries, applied on purpose and with awareness with the same goal as today. More and more often I wonder just how much of what is happening is a matter of fashion or a way of making a political career or is there a purposeful, methodical promotion aimed at a concrete public benefit"

"For many people social economy is an alien notion, I'd thought that as well until the day I began a tutorial on the matter. It

turned out that each and every one of us is incorporated into the concept and is, to a degree, participating in it."

"Browsing the database I realised how many examples of social economy I know. The range of actions and what is this for. Only no-one has yet called it 'social economy' everyone was doing their job."

"The concept of social economy is a very broad one and there are many definitions of this sector. Every definition is written in a different way, what is common is that through social economy you can help people. All in all, I think that social economy is all around us and we are in it even though we often don't call it like that."

- the role of an animator or a leader in a local community:

"What's important in the animator's actions is that s/he's a source of change. That's why it's important what kind of skills, knowledge, values the animator has. I think that anyone, regardless of age or sex can be an animator but has to possess certain feats that discern a socially engaged person.

Feats the animator should have:

- acceptance towards oneself and others,
- knowledge of one's own cans and can'ts,
- ability to adjust oneself,
- inventiveness and creativity,
- ability to live within a group,
- responsibility and maturity,
- ability to concentrate on the group's needs and goals,
- impartiality,
- interpersonal development skills,
- fatigue and stress endurance."

"'Heart of the local community' – that's how one can define the animator's tasks. This phrase underlines multidimensionality and scale of emotional engagement carried by the notion. It combines professional approach with emotional engagement that is characteristic to a social activist. Animator is a dynamical personality, full of restless energy. S/he's open, impulsive, often nervous. Animators love to set and approach challenges, concrete results being their most important goal. (...) It is a sensitive, social person able to boost morale and aware of the moods in the team s/he's working with. It's a good listener and a diplomat, loyal to the group, likeable and gentle. Instinctively reacts to new concepts in order to develop them rather than search out imperfections. Following functions of an animator in the field of social economy can be listed: Engagement, Facilitating, Educating, Encouraging, Strengthening, Equalising Opportunities, Evaluating."

"In my opinion, the ideal animator of social economy initiatives has to possess two feats that seemingly rule each other out. I mean courage and a realistic perspective. Courage,

because promoting SE initiatives sometimes requires taking risky, unconventional decisions. Not to be afraid of risk, remain open to new, interesting proposals and ideas. But one has to be a realist, knowing one's region, local society and its character, potentials and chances."

"(...) – we find ourselves to be leaders in many different situations by our own will or not, in many events we have to become leaders for a moment and then we don't ponder whether we'll manage, whether we are fit – the situations has simply decide for us;

*- often we are leaders because of our roles in life, chosen consciously or posed by fate – after all a decision about creation of a family puts us in a position of its leader or at least we become leaders to our children – it's a huge and responsible task;
- at work, in informal situations, among friends and acquaintances – we become leaders of a given situation just like that and we manage with quite well."*

- **the position of SE entities (including NGOs) on the free market:**

"SE actions are not charity, they must include profit that is imprinted in their essence."

"Considering that the main rule of SE is to put social interest before profit one may think that SE has nothing to do with traditional economy(...). After all, traditional economy is inseparably associated with profit. Despite many differences one may find between traditional economical enterprises and the social ones, there is something that links them. It is the market with its rules. Summing it up, SE sets social interest as its main goal but nevertheless it operates on the market and has to obey its rules just like the traditional economic entities. (...) It is also worthy of mentioning that SE entities are not 'parallel' to other entities but engage in all kinds of interactions with them. Sometimes they compete and sometimes cooperate, complement each other."

"I think that an NGO financing its actions solely thanks to donations and not being economically active can be a SE entity – if it meets the SE requirements:

- ❑ *purpose of activity – serving its members/community, not only for profit,*
- ❑ *possession of non-profit resources (voluntary service, donations, grants),*
- ❑ *democratic process of decision-making."*

"I think that the use of word 'economy' is decisive here; if it's so, then for an organisation to be included among SE entities it's necessary to be economically active, of course with the support of public funds, tax preferences and other subsidies, if it doesn't meet this condition, it belongs to the third sector."

"The reconciliation of those two aspects – the social and the economic – of the social enterprises requires in my opinion several steps to be undertaken:

- ❑ *provision of free of charge counseling support (even for a short period of time) from institutions (organisations) from the field of enterprise management, which will secure a smooth and efficient entering and functioning on the labour market (financial security of the enterprise will guarantee the accomplishment of the social tasks);*
- ❑ *those in charge of the enterprise should have a possibility to allocate a specific part of income on development;(...)"*

"I think that the main reason behind the fact that so few NGOs is economically active or has a profit-oriented social enterprise is the bureaucracy with which it would be forced to 'struggle' having decided for such activity, uncertainty of national economy that doesn't guarantee a sale of commodities and services being produced. Some of them may be afraid that economic activity can cross the line of statutory goals of social benefit and concentrate on tasks different than those mentioned in the organisation's statute. Many organisations are convinced that NGOs should not be concerned with economic enterprise because it doesn't lie in their area of interest of this kind of organisations."

"Preferential conditions – yes, definitely, but coupled with a policy of activation. Over the top, uncontrolled preferences can lead to a trap of inertia. I have some doubts whether EU funds in the new perspective will act as a lever for betterment or just an ersatz."

"Does SE needs preferential conditions I don't know, but for sure it needs an 'equal starting point'. If there is a problem with gaining financial capital for institutions of SE, why not care more for development of regional and local credit funds and guaranteed funds. This would at least level the chances of different entrepreneurs."

"(...)I think that preferential conditions of public procurements would definitely be a helpful factor when it comes to SE institutions' chances of recognition and sustenance on the market, as long as it supports such institutions in the early phase of development, in longer perspective this solution may lead to excessive dependency on external support and weaken it, which is hardly the goal. SE institutions are expected to function on the 'normal' market and compete with 'normal' enterprises, so – in my opinion – granting access to public procurement on preferential conditions to SE institutions in the long run would turn into unfair competition. Apart from that, it could cause public discontent and dislike for this kind of initiatives."

"When it comes to economical activity: money is needed to, for example, rent an office and working space, pay the workers' salaries, purchase fixed assets. If money from the income is

used 'solely' to sustain the enterprise and make it accomplish its tasks then I'm definitely pro!"

"(...) the question of full-time employment should be only a reason for joy. After all, apart from other advantages, it's creating employment which – considering still difficult situation on the labour market (especially in the field of office employment) – is an asset. The numbers speak for themselves: 65 thousand jobs (counting full-time contracts)."

"It's hard to find people ready to associate with an organisation for a long period of time to work on its tasks without being paid. It's not a secret that we all need money to live – to eat, to drink, to buy clothes, to support a person depending on us. That's why full-time contracts are definitely needed in the third sector."

"There is nothing wrong with generating income, it's actually necessary in the present situation, if the SE organisations are to develop and honestly work on accomplishment of statutory tasks. I think that a profit-oriented economic activity of public benefit gives SE entities a chance to affirm their position and be recognised as strong and rightful partner for inter alia the public administration."

- ideas of application of the concept of social economy have also appeared:

"My idea is a project for activation of old age pensioners that additionally benefits the rest of the local community. I think it would be wonderful to transform the isolated, lonely and very often idle elderly persons living in the blocks of flats (I live in one myself) into people who are helpful and friendly towards families which are professionally active. The project designs a neighbourhood meeting place for younger children who after school could safely and pleasantly spend time there, till their parents' return from work. The group of professionally inactive persons taking care of the project could also look after plants on the block, do small maintenance works etc. The project should aid the elderly in their integration with the society and also help the children, their parents and all living in the neighbourhood."

"In our busy times attending the youngest is just as much of a problem as caring for the elderly. I know these problems myself, I also think that this kind of needs will become gradually more important, after all we live longer, but often help is necessary – of different nature and intensity. Institutions (care provided by the social welfare) do not meet these needs, that's why it would be good to create a social co-op, which could accept procurements from the self-government institutions and in addition provide care services. It could be something special that one can't expect from a social welfare carer (for example going for a walk, to church, to a doctor, reading books or newspapers,

weekend care). A voluntary service could work with such co-op within which young people (and not only them but also the people with spare time) would help those in need. It would be a chance to create jobs for people with low qualifications; to attend some of the tasks a completion of a carer's course would be sufficient."

"Ecological Village

Task description

- ❑ adapting an old mill in the village centre for a store selling local handiwork.
- ❑ organisation based on cooperation with other regions of commercial handiwork fairs,
- ❑ implementation of a complete heating system (local bioplant) for the whole village based on the utilisation of biomass bought by the commune government as agricultural and garden waste from the villagers (surplus sold for profit to the nearby town),
- ❑ initiation of an experimental solar energy heating system of school,
- ❑ opening a centre of ecological training as a result of an initiative of the local community (...)."

"My self-sustaining project is a social cooperative with a main task to activate persons aged 50 and older.

Members of the co-op are all after 50s and long lasting unemployed: carpenters with qualifications – 4 persons, an accountant (would have to do a course in independent accounting at DOE) – 1 person, salesman/saleswoman – 2 persons (would have to do a course in retail systems and cash register use at DOE), one person would have to have a B-class driving licence, tailor – 1 person.

Main tasks include service and retail activities:

- ❑ collecting old furniture: tables, chairs, sofas, beds, armchairs etc.
- ❑ renovation and repair of old furniture,
- ❑ sale of fixed furniture in the shop.
- ❑ servicing individual and company commissions, for example:
- ❑ stairs, installing panels, making a wooden fence, wooden constructions etc."

"What is characteristic about unemployment in my region is the fact that the time of joblessness becomes longer with age. This phenomenon is even more concerning since it leads to social and economic marginalisation. It has a negative influence on their mental aspect causing frustration, apathy and a lowering self-acceptance level. Household chores (80% are people living in the country) or lack of possibility to move to another region, turns their life into a grey vegetation and leads to professional and social deactivation with many pathologies to follow in the future(...)

A CSI would not struggle with low absorptivity of the labour market on the contrary – it would follow a VISION of SOCIAL

rather than economic RECOVERY of invested effort. Its activities would not only lead to material benefits of one person, but would also create, sustain and develop the local social bonds. Positive influence such actions would have on the public opinion, which would help to promote the region as friendly to modern ways of entering the labour market, may be considered the 'external' success. It would also influence the atmosphere surrounding the creation of similar NGOs in our area."

"The project we want to realise is creation of a point (or points) of legal advice on: applying to institutions, Social Insurance Institution (a widespread problem of pension-retirement matters, application of the bill on social and professional rehabilitation of disabled persons), social aid, taxation (Personal Income Tax forms) and inheritance matters. It's all about quite simple issues. We already have an office free of charge, a retired solicitor, a retired social activist, a law student. The point is gaining pace, we write for funding to Stefan Batory Foundation. There is a chance of a partial solution to the problem of difficult access of the indigent persons to basic counselling."

"My idea for creation of a self-sustaining project is organising a kindergarten-like centre. A major social problem with which affects most of mothers is the impossibility of return to the labour market after having a baby. The salary of a working woman is still very low, it only covers the costs of taking care of the baby. Employers are not very eager to engage a young mother. My idea is to create a kindergarten in which young mothers will take care of each other's babies free of charge, adjusting their working hours so that each mother can work and take care for the group of toddlers. In order to remain on the market I propose signing half-time contracts which will allow the mothers to keep in constant touch with labour market, the changing situation and fulfill the maternal duties. Women, who will work for 4 hours per day, for different employers, on different shifts, will be able to set the right schedule of babysitting. Children will have good care and mutual company and the mothers will have a chance for professional and private development."

"(...) A park, which was supposed to be a landmark for commune, gives a fair picture of how bad the situation is – benches are occupied by the so called 'frequent patrons' (hardly mothers with small children or grandmothers with grandchildren) who are persons of different age, spending the day collecting cans and bottles to buy cheap wine and in the state of intoxication survive until the next day. (...) Many times I've been thinking about a way to help those people and I got an idea. I realised that they could help the elderly persons, who constitute a large percentage of the community (mainly retired people and pensioners). Even the most basic activities, as shopping or cleaning the flat before a holiday, present difficulties to the elderly persons. So there is a demand for aid that could be provided by the unemployed. Psychological counseling would be necessary for

those people and then showing them a way towards the better future through provision of small services (depending on the needs) for elderly persons who could pay for that, and so, for example: 2 zlotys for shopping for Mr. Kowalski, 5 zlotys for cleaning the windows at Mrs. Zawadzka's flat etc. But a someone who could organise and manage all this should be found – a local animator, who would control everything and everyone. As the first step actions should be arranged in order to show the unemployed just how much they can change in their lives, show that their fate is important for others. For sure one can count on the help of the families of the unemployed and that's really a lot. A new social economy entity could be created. The animator I've mentioned before could be its precursor and the families would join as members. Birth of this new entity would mean a necessity of certain expenditures linked to its activities and generation of income. Its work could be funded by income gained from donations (not only from the local community) and the services should have their price as well. If only the right people would be appointed to this job I feel that it could really work out – I wish that to myself and them (people from the small town)."

"I would like to draw special attention to the problem of the youth. In Tarnow, in the suburbs as well as in the centre there are many block of flats neighbourhoods inhabited in large part by young people (...). It would be good to integrate the youth, give them a common goal. In many neighborhoods – also in the largest neighbourhood of my city to which I wanted to draw special attention – there are unoccupied buildings owned by the housing co-op. They could be used to organise a meeting place for the youth.

In the early stage one can't speak of self-sustenance. It's important to bring the youth back to the society, show them a new ways of living help them out with defining their predispositions, elimination of bad habits. After that they can be motivated to make use of their abilities for the good of the local community. Young people could participate in maintenance works on the block (caring for plants, playgrounds, general tidiness, recycling), helping the elderly (shopping for a small charge), taking animals for walks, renting the room for events (birthday parties, small wedding showers, concerts). Thanks to this project the life of the local community would gain a new quality, children would feel safe, adolescents would have their spare time organised and would have an opportunity to gain first professional experience."

"My idea for creation of a social economy enterprise will aim to professionally activate the women of the Chrzanow district, especially those who can't return to the labour market because of having a baby or being over 45.

A group of women over 45 could found a social enterprise together which would provide services as babysitting, caring for the elderly people and the disabled.

Unlike the industrial mass production that is mainly based on benefits of scale, many services may be produced for one's own use or provided for individuals. And so, in the case of social services sensitivity and emotional warmth of people caring for those in need (children, elderly or disabled persons) make up for the management efficiency of free market companies."

"Social Cooperative created with women in mind is the 'All Yummies' Co-op. A group of five would found the cooperative that would aim to open up an inexpensive bar with home-made products. These would include: home lunches, desserts, pierogi, pancakes, croquettes, stuffed cabbage etc. With the gained money a place could be rented and renovated. The remaining money could be used to buy necessary accessories and equipment such as refrigerators, ovens, dishes, tables etc. The bar would be placed in the centre of Osiek village where the Commune Office, Fire-station, Healthcare Centre, Kindergarten, Junior Secondary-school, Grammar School, Youth Club and many private companies. The cooperative could sign many contracts for catering services with those institutions."