

# DEVELOPMENT OF PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION TO COUNTERACT SOCIAL EXCLUSION PHENOMENA. TO START... WHY PARTNERSHIP?

*Partners are co-workers, thinkers and dreamers. To work as partners we put away our comfortable, safe and tested professional rules and to start co-operation, which is a very demanding creative process, we give up our controlling position.*

Michelle Evans

## INTRODUCTION

It is easy to speak about partnership, but it is much more difficult to live it. Lately, partnership has become a strong element of our reality. The word partnership has become very fashionable and popular. It has many meanings and it includes various relationships, connections, networks and types of organisations.

The idea of intersectoral partnership within the framework of which authorities representing units of local government, economic entities and third sector organisations cooperate to solve complex local and regional problems is winning many supporters. Partnerships are initiated by companies, non-governmental organisations or public institutions and act at a local, regional, national or global level. Intersectoral cooperation rarely becomes an easy and quick solution to problems. Partnership undertakings require determination, perseverance and courage. Each party brings different experiences and skills thanks to which intersectoral co-operation can become sustainable, efficient and effective in a condition that it will be properly designed and managed.

In Poland, favourable conditions for the idea of intersectoral partnership developed after 1989. There are various reasons for the creation and functioning of this form of cooperation resulting mainly from the development of a citizen society in the 1980s and 1990s and further social and political transformation. Increasing liabilities of the public finance sector resulting in searching for alternative financial resources and an implementation of patterns adopted in other European countries became further impulses for changes.

## DEFINITION OF PARTNERSHIP

In recent years, partnership has become very important. So what is it? Sociologically is a modern model of relationships between partners including: coacting and cooperation, the same rights and obligations, respecting autonomy and difference, and tolerance. Formally, partnership means agreement between particular institutions, organisations, economic entities and sometimes physical persons.

According to the PWN Polish Language Dictionary partnership is defined as: *co-participation in something, being a partner [...]. Partnership cooperation* (Dubisz 2003: 373). Jerzy Bralczyk's '100 thousand Necessary Words Dictionary' defines partnership as *the equal treatment of each other* (Bralczyk 2008: 539). According to David Wilcox, partnership means financial support, coacting, co-deciding, consulting and informing. Whereas, according to the definition of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy partnership, it is the cooperation of various partners who together, in a systematic and constant way, using innovative methods and means plan, design, implement and implement certain activities and initiatives which are aimed at the development of the local, social, and economic environment and the building of the local identity of members of a given community. So we can say that the concept of partnership is very close to the concept of partnership and is very close to the concept of cooperation (coacting).

It is worth quoting the definition of intersectoral partnership formed by the United Nations Organisation according to which: *Partnership means the optional and cooperative relation of various parties in which all the participants (partners) agree to work together to achieve a common goal or initiate a specific task and share risk, responsibility, resources, and competences* (Kwartera, Bukowska 2009: 7). In the context of the adopted definitions, partnership should be understood as a specific type of cooperation characterised by a common goal, voluntary participation, sharing risk, profits and responsibilities, and by common work.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION – DIMENSION

A few years ago social exclusion was a foreign concept (Belcer 2013: 9). Lately, the word *excluded* became fashionable and extremely popular (Wojnarowska 2013: 187). At the moment, it is one of the most popular and most frequently used words in everyday life, media, publications, in the area of activity of non-governmental organisations, in sociology and social policy (Belcer 2013: 9).

So, what is it? Who is an excluded person? It seems that everyone is able to answer such questions. Social exclusion is associated with poor people, the homeless, and the handicapped. But the concept of *exclusion* is much wider and can concern various groups of people. So which groups of people are endangered with social exclusion? Who can be defined as excluded? Relevant literature indicates that helpless people, the poorly educated, migrants, foreigners, the homeless, the unemployed, the handicapped, children from large families, children from single parent families, the elderly, inhabitants of ex-state agricultural farms, drug addicts, alcoholics, young people leaving care and educational facilities, and people leaving correctional institutions are particularly vulnerable to exclusion.

The popularity of the concept of exclusion is easy to explain as it describes the phenomena as old as the world itself using a word which is more appealing to modern society. People who were not able to fully participate in social life probably existed in each historical period. Beggars, moochers, slaves, the mentally ill, the intellectually handicapped, or the whole army of unemployed people characterised by the industrial period – various forms of poverty, and in modern times, exclusion. It is no coincidence that they were associated with having a very low social status (Belcer 2013: 10).

The concept of social exclusion was created not by René Lenoire<sup>1</sup>, high ranking official of French bureaucracy but by the publisher of his book in 1974. It does not mean at all that in such a way a new social phenomena was noticed or known, but an earlier unknown category of social structure emerged – people *excluded* in some respect. Just the opposite, these phenomena were described by classics of European and American sociology. Social historians and ethnologists dealt with *social marginality*. This issue was also examined by Polish social sciences. The essay of Stefan Czarnowski *O ludziach zbędnych* and the work of his disciple Nina Assorodobraj – *O ludziach luźnych* (Frieske 2005: 55).

The concept of social exclusion was for the first time used in a document of the European Commission of 1988. One year later this term was used in the preamble of the European Social Card which claimed that opposing social exclusion is very important because it maintains social solidarity. The concept of social exclusion was accepted in Europe and replaced the concept of poverty. In the 1990s the concept of exclusion became even more important on both the national and international level (Golinowska, Broda-Wysocki 2005: 33).

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<sup>1</sup> Author of *Les Exclus*.

## SOCIAL EXCLUSION – DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Reference books present a wide range of exclusion concepts and definitions. According to the definition presented by Pasi Moisió: *social exclusion means that an individual, family, or even a whole group are excluded from a way of living, resources and the usual conditions of life accepted for a given community* (Golinowska, Broda-Wysocki 2005: 40). According to Jordie Estivill: *social exclusion can be understood as the cumulative and complex process of gradually leaving the central areas of the economy, politics and society resulting from processes taking place in such areas connected with the gradual isolation of people, groups, communities and territories, placing them in an inferior position with respect to development/possibilities, resources and dominating values* (Golinowska, Broda-Wysocki 2005: 40). The definition accepted by the National Strategy for Social Integration presents exclusion as *the lack or limitation of the possibility of participation, influencing and using basic public markets and institutions which should be available for everybody, and especially for poor people* (Narodowa Strategia Integracji Społecznej dla Polski 2004: 22).

Groups vulnerable to exclusion are as follows: children, young people from neglected communities, children raised outside families, single women raising children, women outside the labour market, victims of family life pathology, poorly educated people, the unemployed, the handicapped, the chronically ill, the mentally ill, the elderly who are alone, people leaving correctional institutions, immigrants, and those belonging to the Roma ethnic minority. Individuals from a marginalised social group are considered to be inconvenient and threatening. That is why they are kept at a distance, isolated, encircled, oppressed and excluded. Children face the difficult challenges of modern social reality (Żeromska-Charlińska, Śniadkowski 2010: 144-145). Social exclusion not only means present effects but effects in the future. Social exclusion *today* means diminished possibilities in changing the situation by subsequent generations, as it very often happens that children of excluded people become excluded themselves. Society creates division lines between those who are excluded and those who are not (Golinowska, Broda-Wysocki 2005: 41). Observation of social life presents more and more children and young people that are socially excluded and are not able to fully participate in cultural, political and economic life. It has been estimated that every fifth child in Poland is threatened with exclusion. In 2004, the National Strategy for Social Integration in Poland considered *children and young people from neglected and poor communities* and the impoverished as the category of the people primarily threatened with social exclusion (Narodowa

Strategia Integracji Społecznej dla Polski 2004: 63-67). The 2003 State Strategy for Young People for the years 2003 – 2012 deals with counteracting the marginalisation of the younger generation, enabling the same start into adult life, equal educational opportunities for youth from various communities, from rural areas, unemployed youth, handicapped youth, youth from neglected and poor communities which exist outside the education and labour system.

According to A. Belcer, *socializing processes are more difficult for children raised in poverty. Such processes considerably influence their school achievements and later on their life career as their adult life will depend on their education. Children and young people from families threatened with marginalisation very often are prematurely removed from the education system and finally rarely become university graduates. In such a willy-nilly way they inherit the status of their parents* (Belcer 2013: 17).

## PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN – EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTORAL CO-OPERATION

*Society based on knowledge can become much more exclusive than the industrial society for those who will have no chance to meet its requirements. It concerns as well and maybe most of all children and young people living in poverty and hardship.*

Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska

The idea of partnership cooperation is commonly accepted and valued (Hurrell, Hussain-Khaliq, Tennyson 2010: 3). More and more often we can observe the cooperation of non-governmental organisations within various sectors: local governments, entrepreneurs or other organisations. During previous years many examples of good intersectoral practices have emerged.

Activities of the *Wspólna Droga* United Way Poland Foundation<sup>2</sup> are an interesting and worthy of mention example of intersectoral cooperation. It is a public benefit organisation, an independent member of an accepted international charity organisation joining business people, people of science, and culture and art with the idea of supporting people in difficult situations. The goal of the Foundation is for every person living in poverty in Poland to get

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<sup>2</sup> Foundation United Way is one of the oldest international charity organizations in the world, which has been operating in the United States for 126 years and in Poland called *Wspólna Droga* United Way Poland for last 17 years.

professional and effective help. The mission of the Foundation in Poland is to initiate and co-create a movement of partnership cooperation of people of all social circles to increase the living standard of people in difficult conditions. One part of the foundation's activity is the long-lasting personal social program 'Partnership for Children' which was founded in 2006 and is the answer to huge social problems such as the poverty and hardship of Polish children. The goal of the programme is to equal the developmental and educational opportunities of children threatened with social maladjustment and marginalisation, children from poor families with many problems, or those educationally inefficient to enable them fully participating in social life (Mularczyk 2008: 19). Street pedagogues and streetworkers managed to find children needing support and led them *from the street to the club-room*, they gave the children the opportunity to catch up at school, start their educational aspirations and believe in their own potential, discover their individual talents and skills, and first of all, help them to get out of a difficult situation.

Children and youth, on their own and without any adult supervision, cease going to school, and are unable to make up for their absences resulting in them leaving school early. Without a hope for better future, they mainly spend their free time with their friends in the streets, in backyards, and in shopping malls where they are very vulnerable to various types of influence and threats. Low self esteem, low aspirations, and as a consequence, dropping out of the educational system are results of a lack of patterns and school arrears. Help for such children becomes a good and lasting *investment* in their lives and the lives of their families and the lives of the whole society. Projects based on intersectoral cooperation join the possibilities and effectiveness of various circles: nongovernmental organisations, local government, business, national administration, and scientific centers and the media.

Within the framework of the Partnership for Children Programme the foundation cooperates with thirty non-governmental organisations from all over the world<sup>3</sup> such as: Humanitary Action *Życie* (Life), Caritas of Radom Diocese, Caritas of Toruń Diocese with their seat in Toruń (Działdowskie Caritas Centre), Caritas Warszawa Praga Południe, Caritas Warszawa Targówek, the Centre of Mission and Evangelisation of Evangelical – Lutheran Church in the Polish Republic, the Centre of Prophylaxis and Social Education PARASOL (UMBRELLA), the Dr Clown Foundation, the Generation Foundation, Foundation *Miasto Aniołów* (City of Angels), Foundation of Social Changes *Kreatywni* (Creative), KARAN, the Catholic Foundation for

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<sup>3</sup> Foundation co-operates with 147 organizations and it has 30 non-governmental organizations as partners within the framework of Partnership for Children Programme.

Children in the Parish of St. Peter and Paul Apostles, the *17tka* (Being 17) Association, the *Miłość w Działaniu* (Love in Action) Association, *Serduszko dla Dzieci* (Heart for Children) Association, *Wspólne Podwórko* (Common Backyard) Association, the Association of Social Animators and Pedagogues, the Association Group of Pedagogy and Social Animation Praga Północ, the Association of Social Initiatives *Wiatrak* (Windmill), the Mierz Wysoko (Fly High) Association, the Association for Children and Young People Program Stacja (Station Programme), the Association for Children, Young People and Family Development *Pomocna Dłoń* (Helping Hand), the Association of Alternative Pedagogy, the Association of Pedagogues and Animators KLANZA, the Friends of Sociotherapeutic Centre *Wspólny Dom* (Common Home) Association, the Kazimierz Lisiecki *Grandfather* Association of Friends of Children, the Association of Friends of Children Warszawa Praga Południe, the Association of Friends of Children Warszawa Praga Północ and the Association of Friends of Children Warszawa-Targówek.

The Partnership for Children Programme is supported by many companies, namely: Amgen, Atos, Bricoman, FedEx, Johnson&Johnson, Mattel, TNT Express, and Société Générale S.A. Branches in Poland<sup>4</sup>. The institutional partners are as follows: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Masovian Provincial Office, the Main Statistical Office, local governments, and the Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Pedagogy in Warsaw.

The programme includes strategy aimed at the equalisation of developmental and educational opportunities for children in three areas such as: direct help for children, enhancing the welfare system and the activation of local communities to help children.

## DIRECT HELP FOR CHILDREN

*A child, because of its physical and mental immaturity, requires special care and concern including proper legal care, both before and after birth.*

Declaration of Children Rights

Foundations cooperating with non-governmental organisations from all over Poland aim at the equalisation of educational and developmental chances of children from families of a low material status. The Academy of Common Way realises the first area of direct child support – the formation of

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<sup>4</sup> Only companies co-operating with the Foundation within the framework of Partnership for Children Programme were mentioned, but the Foundation cooperates with many more companies within the scope of other programmes.

social skills and taking care of basic needs through three groups of activities: education, development and social engagement. Direct help means paying for out-of-school activities, a school catching up programme, and children's participation in street pedagogy projects or in activities of the *Światoteka* open club<sup>5</sup>, which thanks to intersectoral co-operation has become a model example worth dissemination.

Each man needs safety, unconditional love, and acceptance to fully experience the joy of life which motivates personal development including education and work. Such basic values helping to create a happy life are normally satisfied by a family. It creates a positive motivation for a child or young person. A child brings their image, sense of themselves, and self-acceptance to every area of life shaping their concept of life and world views (Szuścik 2006: 375). Unfortunately, there are families that are unable to supply proper care; just the contrary quarrels, alcohol, physical and mental violence, and a lack of care and safety are reasons for children escaping to the streets. Then the street supplies the value system and becomes a home for them, becoming their tutor, their school of life, a place to earn money, a place to spend free time during the school year or even during holidays. These children have no other *place on earth* which could support them and where they would feel safe and loved (Belcer, Wojnarowska 2012: 99). The word *street* is a key word in fact, as here street means the whole surroundings of a child, space or all places where children stay or can stay, places they can treat constructively or destructively. So it can be a street literally or it can be a backyard, staircase, basement, attic, residential district with huge blocks of flats, gate, deserted building, railway station, trackway, bunker, old factory or heating duct (Szczepański 2005: 107). And there in the streets street pedagogues find them, to show them other forms of spending free time and teach them how to build relations and function in society in a better way.

Gradually, children in small groups start dealing with the realisation of common artistic or sport projects, preparing an exhibition of self made

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<sup>5</sup> *Światoteka* is a small club for children of worse chances where they can develop their interests and talents and learn thanks to a close-based, full confidence relationship with a pedagogue. The name *Światoteka* is a neologism referring to the goal of its activity – presenting the world in a modern, attractive, approachable and engaging form. Very often *Światoteka* is the first place where young people meet non-governmental organisation offers. It carries such activities as: meeting interesting people, art classes, computer lessons, photography, cooking, creative thinking classes, common film watching followed by discussions, educational games and plays, skill games, logics games, doing homework, and learning support. At the moment three *Światotekas* are operating: two in Warsaw and *Biblioteka-Światoteka* (Library *Światoteka*) in Wrocław. Each year a new group of on average 15 children age 9–17 is formed.

photographs, paint graffiti, learn dancing, or make a film about the footballers of their favourite club. They organise trips to interesting places together.

The result of such activities are as follows: the increase of self-esteem, improved team cooperation skills, improvement of relations with family and peers, gradual acceptance of bidding social standards, and giving up destructive behavior. Every year the Foundation co-operates with the implementation of a few different projects and transfers the financial means for their realisation. It as well encourages organisations from various towns to operate according to a street pedagogy method to start common projects<sup>6</sup>.

Parents of children from poor families are usually unable to pay for extra out-of-school activities and very often do not recognise the need for such activities. Few free of charge activities stimulating child development are available and such a situation is one of the factors causing differences in the development of children from wealthy and poor families.

That is why the Foundation aims at the equalisation of opportunities by financing additional classes within the framework of so-called microsolarships,<sup>7</sup> which help to catch up at school, develop interests and talents, and widen knowledge. Dancing, sports, acrobatic, art, foreign language and school catch up classes are most popular among the participants of the programme. Regular participation in the classes teaches perseverance and improves a child's self-esteem, educational ambition and development of talents.

## ENHANCING THE CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEM

An improvement of the situation of children threatened by marginalisation is only possible thanks to the cooperation of many units acting in favour of children at the national and local level. Non-governmental institutions connected with street pedagogy and local institutions create local coalitions for the support of children, organise training for street pedagogues and carry out analyses and research using personal research tools.

The scale of the marginalisation of children from low material and low cultural status families and the importance of the problem are so high and

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<sup>6</sup> Projects are realized in many cities in Poland among others in Częstochowa, Gdynia, Katowice, Krakow, Radom, Rybnik, Warszawa, Wrocław, Wyszów; during first five years of the programme 71 projects with 951 beneficiaries were realized in 16 Polish towns.

<sup>7</sup> Annually, the Foundation supports about 30 children from non-governmental organisations in such a way. Thanks to the means transferred by its Partners in the years 2007–2011 the foundation could finance 226 microsolarships for 155 children. At the moment, 100 children participate in a scholarship programme. In 2014 the foundation has already granted 40 microsolarships.

the existing social care system is so inefficient that efficient solutions to this problem should be more local than global. Locally, a given child and their family are more clearly visible, and relatively low funds can cause significant and lasting change in their lives.

Common Way encourages the creation of local coalitions to help children threatened with social marginalisation including local authority units, social care units, non-governmental organisations, judicial institutions, companies, the media and academic circles. The goal of such a coalition is to prepare a model of consistent, integrated activity aiming at the limitation or total elimination of threats which can result in the marginalisation or social exclusion of children from poor families, educationally inefficient families, and families threatened with pathology. The Foundation encourages local communities to cooperate and coordinate the activities of particular units, to exchange information, and to look for solutions that are optimal for a given child, and to create scholarship funds for children based on local company funds and individual funds.

The Foundation supports the child care system as well by training street pedagogues from non-governmental institutions in the whole country. It is a specific kind of work requiring vast knowledge, qualifications and mental toughness and that is why interpersonal training, sociotherapeutic training and a system of supervision while working with children are important elements of such an education.

## **ACTIVATING LOCAL SOCIETY TO HELP CHILDREN**

The third area of activity is the stimulation of the local community within the framework of which employee volunteer work is organised. The Foundation encourages private people, including employees of companies, to take care of the development of children living in poverty and in families where the only form of participation in culture is watching TV and reading free of charge newspapers. Common Way appeals as well to the idea of social solidarity with human sensitivity and empathy, and encourages support of the development of such people through material aid or by offering the time and skills as volunteer work.

The Foundation is trying to direct the attention of society to the situation of children and to the possibilities of help in organising campaigns in the media, the exposition of posters and banners and distributing leaflets. Until now, thanks to the disinterested help of the advertising agencies McCann Erickson and Saatchi&Saatchi, four campaigns have been organised in the

media: *So boring*,<sup>8</sup> *Children are not rubbish – let us collect them from the streets*,<sup>9</sup> *The street will not teach the children*,<sup>10</sup> and *Drag children away from the streets*<sup>11</sup>. The foundation also reaches society by way of the internet page [www.dziecipragi.org.pl](http://www.dziecipragi.org.pl), which presents projects realised through the method of street pedagogy, and updated information about the realisation of the programme.

Common Way prepares conferences, training and publication concerning dissemination of model solutions and research results for specialists and employees of social care institutions, non-governmental institutions and employees of municipal offices.

Cooperation with companies transferring the financial means necessary to support selected programmes is flourishing. Also: Société Générale helps with scholarships, educational and artistic projects and with *Światoteki*; TNT Express with scholarships, media projects and campaigns; FedEx with projects; and the companies Amgen, Atos, Bricoman, Johnson&Johnson and Mattel provide goods such as cosmetics, school supplies, books and Christmas boxes. PTC S.A. and Carrefour Polska joined the group of partners who ask their clients to offer places that can be used for preparing and serving food to children, and supply educational means and microsolarships within the framework of their own loyalty programmes.

Supporting individual employee volunteer work by creating possibilities to organise leg-up programmes, photography workshops, dancing workshops and team voluntary projects (redcoration of facilities, and the organisation of common trips and events) constitute other forms of activities of Common Way. Every year, business companies give school supplies and Christmas presents to children from the Common Way partnership organisations through *Pierwszy dzwonek* (First School Bell) and *List do Mikołaja* (Letter to Santa) projects.

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<sup>8</sup> This is the first media campaign with a provocative title: *So Boring*, which was carried by the means of large posters, advertising leaflets, and radio and TV spots.

<sup>9</sup> The goal of this campaign was to support a child care system for children from devalourized communities and to equalise the opportunities for children threatened with marginalisation and social exclusion. A strong and emotional title attracted attention to the problem of children left without any care, appealing for help; the campaign was based on standard means such as posters, advertising leaflets and radio spots.

<sup>10</sup> The campaign realised in 2009 emphasised the possibility and need to use the potential of young people. The campaign was visible all over Warsaw thanks to citilights, leaflets and advertisements in trams.

<sup>11</sup> The campaign was realised in conjunction with 11 non-governmental organisations which prepared local campaigns in their areas based on materials transferred by the *Common Way* Foundation United Way Poland.

Nowadays, more and more examples of effective partnerships come out. The cooperation of the Foundation with local government, the business sector, and other non-governmental organisations proves that initiating partnership cooperation can bring lasting effects and end up with strong and effectively functioning cooperation. According to Ros Tennyson *for a partnership to operate effectively and effectively solve problems, it has to be supported by the strong engagement of partners in the development of cooperation and by a strong belief that only partnership cooperation can lead to an appointed goal* (Tennyson 2003: 13).

What are the results of participation in partnership? For children it means catching up at school, increasing self-confidence and an increase of educational aspirations, positive change in family relations, improvement of social functioning and the development of interests and talents. For local community participation in partnership means the possibility of using research tools and model solutions of child support including street pedagogy. For companies it means the possibility of building a coherent and long lasting strategy of social engagement of a company and its employees, building a positive image of the company in the local community and the integration of employees thanks to their volunteer work.

## CONCLUSION

The efficient functioning of intersectoral partnership depends on many factors. The most important ones are the proper level of organising and coordinating partnership cooperation, common values and rules, common goals, efficient and transparent management procedures, favourable external conditions.

Ros Tennyson writes in the Partnership Guide: *Partnerships are born as visions in our minds finally becoming history topics presented in various places all over the world. The journey from the idea to realisation starts in our imagination. It is not enough to create a vision – even a very brave one, it is necessary to present it to the others in a way exciting interest and enthusiasm. [...] A story about partnership is a story about adventure, about striving to achieve a goal which is both unique and universal [...] Intersectoral partnerships are not everyday phenomena. True partnership deserves to become the subject of inspiring stories. [...] Talking about partnership we do not have to use flowery language and pompous phrases, still achievements should not be reduced to bare facts. Let your listeners admire your achievements. Show them that partnership is really an ideal you try to achieve* (Tennyson 2003: 34).

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### Summary

The idea of intersectoral partnership within the framework of which authorities representing units of local government, economic entities and third sector organisations cooperate to solve complex local and regional problems is winning many supporters. Partnerships are initiated by companies, non-governmental organisations or public institutions and act at a local, regional, national or global level. Intersectoral cooperation rarely becomes an easy and quick solution to problems. Partnership undertakings require determination, perseverance and courage. Each party brings different experiences and skills thanks to which intersectoral cooperation can become sustainable, efficient and effective in a condition that it will be properly designed and managed.

**Key words:** non-governmental organizations, intersectoral partnership, social problem