

# **SOCIAL REINTEGRATION EXEMPLIFIED BY THE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION CENTRE IN SANOK**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Modern societies are always different, regardless of their social and economic level. On the one hand, there are individuals who succeed in the labour market, fully participating in both social and political life. On the other hand, many people are unable to meet their basic, existential needs and they are marginalised in society due to circumstances beyond their control. Social exclusion and the problems connected with it represent a significant challenge for current social policy in all countries in the world.

The term “social exclusion” is used and it definitely should be defined. In literature on the subject there are many attempts to define what social exclusion (Dowling 1999: 245-261, Szarfenberg 2010) exactly is. However, the definition of S. Golinowska and P. Broda-Wysocki seems to be the simplest. They noticed that social exclusion is defined in two contexts. The first one is related to non-participation which means that an individual, a family or a group does not participate in social life (lack of participation); while the other context is related to impoverishment. In the latter context, social exclusion is used interchangeably with poverty (Golinowska, Broda-Wysocki 2005: 32). Without further considering the terminology, in the present text it has been adopted that social exclusion means a deprivation of the basic social needs of, or an unsatisfactory place in, society.

However, combating social exclusion requires cooperation, which means not only from a trans-sectoral partnership (the public sector, the non-governmental sector, the business sector and the private sphere of families and communities), but also cooperation between the individual areas of policies, services and their institutions: employment policy and vocational integration, social work, youth policy, educational policy, family policy and others (Evers, Przeddecka 2012: 54). Building a social infrastructure becomes a significant challenge, especially at the local level which provides social services. A trans-sectoral partnership is favourable for both sectors i.e. the public and non-governmental sector. A lack of cooperation between them

can lead to many problems. On the one hand, truthful information about social problems occurring at the local level can be unavailable to the public sector. On the other hand, the non-governmental sector may not be able to bear the costs of creating and operating social entities. Cooperation at the local level is particularly needed at the local level as it allows the ability to look not only at the needs expressed by a certain group of people but also at the mechanisms for satisfying their needs (Błęadowski 2002). An assessment of needs at the local level is an opportunity to properly identify local needs and adapt forms of action to local circumstances. It is also the most suitable way to take action aimed at preventing and combating social exclusion (Błęadowski, Kubicki 2006).

In Poland, according to social employment law (2011), there are social groups that risk being excluded from social life i.e.: the homeless, the long-term unemployed, people addicted to drugs and other psychotropic things, people with mental disabilities, disabled people (Act dated 20.06.2003). Due to the particularities of operations undertaken with the inclusion of these kinds of people it is necessary to construct an adequate social infrastructure. Centres for Social Integration (SIC) are one of the entities of that infrastructure and they are set out in social employment law (Act dated 13.06.2003).

The main aim of these entities is professional and social reintegration, for example through: developing skills that allows persons who are vulnerable to risk of the social exclusion to take an active role in society, acquiring professional skills and vocational training, learning how to plan life and meet the needs of one's own effort, skills concerning the rational management of money.

However, in Poland the creation of SICs is facing many barriers. They are described in K. Kietlińska's report, i.e.: the undefined status of the SIC as an employer, lack of adequate management, lack of adequate staff that can achieve the social and professional reintegration, difficulties in obtaining funds to start up an activity, complicated law concerning the funding sources of a SIC (Kietlińska 2010: 173).

## THE AIM

It is difficult to determine the efficiency of the actions taken by SICs in Poland. It would need to conduct vast research in the country. This article, however, has a restricted target – to present how the Social Integration Centre in Sanok operates. These kinds of organizations are usually established by municipalities, but the SIC in Sanok is rare as it is established by the district. This article is also an attempt to determine whether an analysed element of

social infrastructure contributes to the solving of local social problems and the reintegration of selected groups of the population. This research can be taken as a contribution for further discussion about the social and professional reintegration of selected groups of the population.

## **METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF THE RESEARCH**

In order to collect empirical material, the following was incorporated:

1. an analysis of current documentation, i.e. SIC – Sanok activity reports, the rules of participation in SIC – Sanok, press releases, documentation of SIC projects e.g. *Model of implementation of services with specified standard in the district and the SIC* pursued by the district of Sanok and fully financed from EU funds;
2. an individual interview with Mr Marcin Marcinkowski –head of the Social Integration Centre in Sanok;
3. a survey carried out in a group of 26 participants who were supported by the SIC in Sanok.

The interview conducted with the head of the SIC in Sanok was standardized (Gruszczyński 2002: 58-63). The partially free statements of some questions have been retained (Gruszczyński 2002: 60). During the interview questions and requests for detailed explanations of statements which were inadequate or incomplete have been used (Babbie 2004: 292). The interview was carried out on 9 May 2014 and included questions about function of SIC – Sanok.

However, the mentioned survey was conducted on 12 May 2014. The questionnaire included 23 questions (closed, open and semi-open questions). The questions were organised in a way that not only assured a quite high standardisation of the assembled empirical data, but was also not very restrictive for the respondents when replying. The questionnaires were given to 20 participants but only 13 completed questionnaires were returned. The whole data was analysed qualitatively and statistically to some extent. This allowed obtaining empirical data which was sufficient enough to meet the goal.

## **THE RESULTS**

The Social Integration Centre in Sanok has been in operation from October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, however, according to the head of the SIC, *the idea of creating a Social Integration Centre had started much earlier. The beginning of the SIC can be dated from the Barka Foundation project. Mrs Barbara Sadowska was*

*its representative and she was visiting local authorities in the Subcarpathian region discussing and promoting social economy (The head of SIC – Sanok: 1). The process of establishing the SIC was not easy, and is confirmed by the following statement, it was not easy because SICs were established by municipalities, but in Sanok the founder was the district so we were the first and we had to overcome official impediments not just once (The head of SIC – Sanok: 1).*

The essential challenge in creating a local infrastructure is to raise funds in order to begin activity. There was a similar situation in this case. As the head of the SIC notes, *the first year of the centre's activity was financed under a model of implementation of services with a specified standard in the district and the model of the SIC (The head of SIC – Sanok: 3). The following table shows the amount of funds collected for the centre's activity.*

**Table 1. The source of funds for the creation and functioning of the SIC in Sanok**

<b>Years / The source of funds</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>In total</b>
EU-HCOP	169 352 zł	255 014	Lack of external funds, personal income only	424 366 zł
Provincial Marshal's office in Rzeszow	300 000 zł	0		300 000 zł
District Governor's office in Sanok	0	20 000 zł		20 000 zł
Overall	469 352 zł	275 014 zł	0	744 366 zł

Source: Own study

This means that in the years 2012-2013 the activity of Social Integration Centre was significantly financed from external funds (over 740000 zł). Such a high level of expenditures can be partly explained by the cost of purchasing equipment for the workshops. The SIC situation became particularly difficult in 2014 when external funding ceased, i.e. from the EU. The head of the SIC discusses this situation very distinctly, (...) *at this moment we are self-funding [Are there currently enough personal funds to maintain SIC activity? – P.F.] ...of course not, in relation to the financed period we had to reduce the number of activities and many experts agreed to work for less money in order for the SIC to survive. In the meantime, we have been looking for additional funds by signing further agreements with other municipalities as well as preparing another project (The head of SIC – Sanok: 3).*

In the above-mentioned centre there are classes where socially excluded people can learn abilities to become both independent and efficient in performing social roles, and being self-reliant in the labour market. Gaining new skills is aimed at the social inclusion of participants and helps them become employed. The following table shows the types of classes relating to social integration.

**Table 2. Types of classes at SIC – Sanok related to social integration**

Classes	The classes' contents
therapeutic classes	There are workshop methods where people addicted to psychotropic drugs can assure deficits in their personalities;
educational classes	These classes particularly include people who have difficulties with literacy – the reading and understanding of simple texts or forms
classes with a psychologist	They improve communication skills, assertiveness, interaction in a group, raising motivation, and finding out participants' strengths
support groups	During activities with a psychologist, one optional support group was created for people who want to give up smoking
proffessional counselling	They are carried out in three groups or individually. The aim is to learn professionals skills, the proper attitudes related to seeking employment and moving into the labour market, including consulting documents and application forms, and preparing for interviews with future employers, etc.
information technology	The participants gain basic computer skills and the ability to use modern technology related to seeking employment, including setting up electronic mail, sending a CV electronically, and visiting websites related to work, etc.

Source: Personal study on the basis of SIC – Sanok data

The classes concerning professional integration are also carried out in the form of both theoretical and practical learning skills in the various workshops i.e.:

- gardening and cleaning workshop – including, i.e. emptying rubbish bins, cleaning buildings, general cleanup, clearing thickets etc.
- catering workshop – preparing meals for SIC participants, catering service during some events etc.
- renovation and builder's workshop – renovation works e.g. the renovation of the hospital in Sanok (toilets), the renovation of a school's boiler house.

Examples of people who can be classified as participants in such workshops can be found in social employment law. The following table shows the groups of people who can be classified as participants of the SIC.

**Table 3. Categories of people who can take part in Social Integration Centres**

No.	Categories of people who can take part in social integration centres
1	Individuals who are coping with homelessness and are trying to realise an individual project, within the meaning of the social welfare law
2	people addicted to alcohol who have finished psychological therapy in a rehabilitative institution,
3	people addicted to drugs or other psychotropic things who have finished therapy in a health care institution,
4	people who are mentally ill, within the meaning of the mental health law,
5	the long-term unemployed, within the meaning of the promoting employment and labour market institutions law,
6	people who are released from penal institutions and have difficulties with social integration, within the meaning of the social welfare law,
7	refugees who realise individual integration projects, within the meaning of the social welfare law,
8	disabled people who are socially excluded and are not able to meet their basic needs through their own effort due to their life situation and their poverty caused by social, professional and family impossibility, within the meaning of the professional and social rehabilitation and employment of the disabled law;
9	in addition, other reasons for being sent to a SIC, i.e.: poverty, the protection of motherhood, large family, domestic violence.

Source: Personal study on the basis of SIC – Sanok data and social employment law (13th of June 2003).

At SIC – Sanok, long-term unemployment was the main reason for people's social employment.

**Table 4. The reasons for qualifying people to people to participate at SIC – Sanok between the years 2012–2013**

The reason for accepting participants at SIC – Sanok	The number of participants*	
	In total	Women
1	2	3
Unemployment	41	19
Poverty	36	12

1	2	3
Alcoholism	6	2
Disability	4	2
Exiting Penal institution	1	0
The protection of motherhood	1	1
Large family	1	1
Long-term illness	2	2
Domestic violence	2	2

\* participants could be at the SIC for many reasons. Source: Personal study

There were relatively few people who could be socially employed due to a disability, domestic violence or leaving a penal institution. Each participant was enrolled in the Individual Social Employment Program (IPZS). This program includes adequate forms of professional and social integration. All participants have the following rights:

- to participate in social reintegration classes according to IPZS,
- to participate in professional reintegration classes according to IPZS,
- to participate in conditions which are both safe and hygienic and relate to personal protective measures, health and safety training, suitable medical examinations,
- accident and death insurance coverage during their stay at the centre,
- proper working attire which is given after a one month probationary period,
- one complimentary meal per day,
- job search assistance,
- a proper integration benefit,
- bus tickets to get to classes,
- four free days (with full benefits) at the participant's request,
- to determine the way of sharing one's own image at the SIC which may be recorded as photos, videos or other materials (Regulations of CIS – Sanok: §4).

Social employment is restricted by time, which is confirmed by the following statement, if the participant desires to complete a SIC certificate he/she needs to participate in the IPZS for a minimum of 6 months. The maximum time one can participate in the SIC is an 18 month period. Participation is usually 12 months, with the possibility of extending this period for a further 6 months at the participant's request or the request of a SIC expert. These experts attempt to personalise activities for all participants in order to give them ability to survive in labour market after leaving the SIC (The head of SIC – Sanok: 2-3).

In the years 2012-2013 most of the participants of social employment were people between 25-50 years of age, which is in the best period for working age (see. tab. 5).

**Table 5. The age of participants at SIC – Sanok in the years 2013-2014**

People under 25		People between 25–50		People over 50	
7		24		14	
W	M	W	M	W	M
2	5	16	8	4	10

Source: Personal study

The effectiveness of social and professional reintegration can be verified by the monitoring of former participants. However, this is not easy, as the following statement relates, [Is it possible for the SIC to monitor what has become of its former participants? – P.F.] *It is possible, but only partially. There is the goodwill of participants, those who keep in touch with us or those who return to social welfare. If they return, we can cooperate with social workers and that way we know what is happening with them. However, there are people who go abroad or move to other cities and do not benefit from a social centre so we do not possess any information on them* (The head of SIC – Sanok: 3). The conclusion must therefore be that there is lack of reliable methods of monitoring, and as a result there is difficulty in ex-post evaluation of all social and professional integration processes. Ex-ante and interim evaluation is also more difficult (Szarfenberg 2009: 132-133). The ex-ante evaluation of social programs is very important since it is meant to show the requirement of specific actions before their implementation. In this case we do not know if the significant requirement of this kind of entity existed in the local environment. The ex-ante evaluation of social projects was described further in literature on the subject, for example in the works of Jacob Marschak, Petra Todd, and Kenneth Wolpin (see Marschak 1953: 1-26; Todd, Wolpin 2006).

The essential element of the research process was to try and learn the participants' opinion about the effectiveness of social and professional reintegration. As a result of the conducted survey it turned out that currently there are mainly people between 20-29 years (28.5% of the total), in their fifties, and over 50 (28.5%) who are in social employment at SIC – Sanok. It may mean that in the local labour market, young people starting their professional

activity and the elderly are in the direst situation. Most respondents were residents of rural areas.

The majority of respondents earned their living from social welfare assistance or from the payments of social employment (12 persons- earnings from the SIC, 1 person had earnings from social welfare, 1 person from an occupation). The respondents and their families' incomes were extremely low, below the income criteria described in the Social Welfare Act.

The following table presents the greatest burden to the household budget for people remaining in social employment.

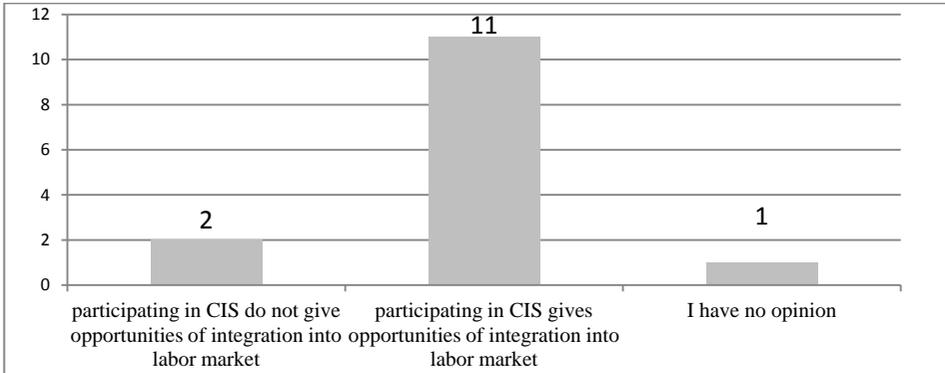
**Table 6. The greatest burdens to the household budgets in respondents' opinions**

No.	The greatest burden to the respondents' household budget	Numbers of indications*	%
1	expenditures on food	6	30
2	rent and others compulsory fees	11	55
3	clothing purchases	1	5
4	medicines and costs of medical treatment	2	10
5	others (what) ...	0	0
Total		20	100

\* numbers of indications ≠ numbers of respondents, as the people surveyed could choose several options. Source: Personal study

The survey has indicated that expenditures on food and some fees are the greatest burden to the household for people with low income. At the same time, almost all persons have declared that the assistance from social welfare was insufficient. Respondents determined their health as average, only 3 persons had disabilities.

Thanks to the conducted questionnaire it can be claimed that participants of SIC – Sanok had been long-term unemployed (11 to 14 respondents) and had been actively seeking employment before they took up social employment. As many as 12 persons indicated that a social worker had informed them about social employment, while only 2 persons indicated that they had received information about it from their acquaintances. The assembled empirical material allowed us to notice that most respondents thought that participation in some reintegration forms offered by SIC – Sanok could give them the opportunity of integration into the labour market (see. chart 1).



**Chart 1. Respondents' opinions about opportunities for integration into the labour market thanks to participating in SIC – Sanok**

Source: Personal study.

It was possible to identify weaknesses in participating in social employment at SIC – Sanok (see. tab. 7).

**Table 7. The respondents' opinions about the weaknesses of social employment at SIC – Sanok**

Lp.	The weaknesses of social employment	Numbers of indications*
1	- the social exclusion of the participants is pointed out	1
2	- low earnings	8
3	- poor planning of the activities at SIC – Sanok	5
4	- no comment	2
Total		16

\* it was an open question, respondents could indicate a maximum of 3 options.

Source: Personal study.

The participants usually emphasised low earnings from social employment and poor planning of the activities at the Social Integration Centre in Sanok.

## CONCLUSIONS

Combating social exclusion is a significant challenge for modern social policy. It requires cooperation between the public, non-governmental and private sectors. This kind of partnership is essential during the creation of local social infrastructure. Recently, in Polish legislation a number of new

entities responsible for social and professional reintegration of selected social groups that risk social exclusion have appeared. One of these entities is the social integration center.

The presented research results are not comprehensive; however, they can form the basis for further discussion about the social and professional reintegration of some groups of people and about the effectiveness of social policy entities.

The empirical studies showed that the creation of social integration centres requires the collection of substantial funds as local authorities are not able to cope with such costs without external assistance e.g. from the European Union. Even after start-up it is difficult to balance the functioning of the social integration centre in an economic meaning.

Forms of social and professional activities at SIC – Sanok are various and they provide the necessary social and professional skills to the participants of social employment. The opinions of SIC participants have proven this. Almost all respondents have admitted that participation in some forms of reintegration offered by SIC – Sanok gave them the opportunity to integrate into the labour market.

It is worrying that the material status of participants of social employment is very poor, and that social employment earnings at SIC – Sanok are so low that they cannot improve that situation in any way.

Most respondents have indicated low earnings as the reason for their reluctance to take up social employment.

In the process of analysing the results of the study it turned out that long-term unemployment was the main reason to qualify persons for social employment. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that SIC – Sanok could contribute to solving local social issues, for which the long-term unemployed state is essential. However, there is small number of people being supported by this entity.

At the same time it is difficult to clearly claim that the activity of SIC – Sanok in the field of social and professional reintegration is effective and efficient. This is impossible due to organisational barriers which include, i.e. a lack of reliable monitoring methods of the fates of former SIC participants and a lack of properly constructed social indicators which can verify achievement of the target. What is more, these barriers make it effectively impossible to pursue any sort of evaluation (ex-ante, interim, ex post) of such social projects at the Social Integration Centre in Sanok.

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### Summary

Modern societies are always different, regardless of their social and economic level. On the one hand, there are individuals who succeed in the labour market, fully participating in both social and political life. On the other hand, many people are unable to meet their basic, existential needs and they are marginalised in society due to circumstances beyond their control. Social exclusion and the problems connected

with it represent a significant challenge for current social policy in all countries in the world. Building a social infrastructure becomes a significant challenge, especially at the local level which provides social services. A trans-sectoral partnership is favourable for both sectors i.e. the public and non-governmental sector. A lack of cooperation between them can lead to many problems. The main aim of these entities is professional and social reintegration, for example through: developing skills that allow persons who are vulnerable to risk of the social exclusion to take an active role in society, acquiring professional skills and vocational training, learning how to plan life and meet the needs of one's own effort, skills concerning the rational management of money.

**Key words:** social reintegration, social problems, unemployment