

CENTRE OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION AS A TOOL OF PROFESSIONAL REINTEGRATION OF THE PERMANENTLY UNEMPLOYED IN CZESTOCHOWA

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Abstract: The article discusses the subject matter of the functioning of the Centre of Social Integration (*Polish abbreviation:* CIS), presenting the objectives of this institution, as well as the functioning of the Centre in practice, based on the example of the City of Czestochowa. The role of the CIS, which can be met as a tool of professional activation of the group of the permanently unemployed residents, is being analysed. The article widely refers to the cooperation between the Municipality of Czestochowa and the Department of Housing "TBS" Ltd. as well as its effect on the improvement in the housing outlook of socially excluded people, with simultaneous professional reintegration of this group of people.

Key words: Centre of Social Integration, professional activation, social and professional exclusion, work for rent

Introduction

The purpose of the article is to present the institution called the Centre of Social Integration as a versatile tool for the reintegration of the socially excluded or those who are threatened with exclusion, with special emphasis on the opportunities that the participation in the CIS opens up in terms of meeting the housing needs of those people. The housing stock of municipalities is created and maintained in order to satisfy in particular the housing needs of the economically weaker group of residents, in which there is a significant percentage of unemployed, sick or resourceless people. The economic crisis has exacerbated these phenomena, which results in an inability to pay rents and a threat of losing one's living space. The CIS is therefore a valuable tool which enables to improve the collectability of rent receivables, to maintain the premises, and at the same time to activate professionally the economically weakest members of the local community. These issues are presented on the basis of practical solutions and effects of the functioning of the CIS, created by the government of Czestochowa.

Definition and objectives of the action of the centre of social integration

The idea of the centre of social integration (CIS) is a response to the problem of social marginalization and exclusion of those who are persistently jobless, homeless, those who have taken alcohol or drug treatment, those who have served imprisonment, the disabled, the mentally ill and others who cannot overcome the difficult situation, in which they find themselves, on their own.

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Activity in the field of social and professional integration is one of the elements of the model to help such people, in addition to preventive measures, social emergency service or crisis intervention sort of activity. [3] A key element of this model is work and professional activation correlated with other factors such as education, assistance and psychological support, as well as shelter – housing (including the standardization of units). [9]

The centre of social integration is an entity which implements tasks of occupational and social reintegration. Implementation of these tasks is done by providing services within the scope of the following:

1. developing skills which enable to perform social roles and achieve social positions available to people who are not subject to social exclusion;
2. acquiring vocational skills and apprenticeship, retraining or improving one's professional qualifications;
3. learning to plan one's life and meet the needs with one's own effort, especially by means of the possibility to earn income through employment or business activity;
4. learning the skill of rational management of one's owned financial means [1].

Services conducted by the centre of social integration should therefore aim at the emancipation of people subject to social exclusion, as the basic premise lying behind the functioning of the CIS is to help the socially excluded individuals or those at risk of exclusion to overcome difficulties connected with independent functioning on the labour market, as well as with the participation in everyday family and social life [1].

Creating the Centre of Social Integration

The creation of centres for social integration was enabled by the Law of 13 June 2003 on social employment (i.e. Dz.U. (*The Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*) of 2011 No. 43, item 225, as amended). The Law regulates the matter of social employment, and its provisions are applied particularly to: the homeless, people addicted to alcohol and drugs, the mentally ill, the permanently unemployed, people released from penal institutions, the refugees, the disabled. Provisions of the Law shall not apply to the aforementioned people if they are entitled to some doles or benefits from the state or from the social insurance fund. Tasks specified in the act are implemented via social employment, which ought to be understood as providing the aforementioned people with the possibility to take part in activities conducted by centres for social integration, clubs of social integration and of supported employment.

Centres of social integration can be created by local government units, non-governmental organizations and by entities carrying out public benefit activities. The centre created by a local government unit may take the form of a budgetary unit or a local budgetary establishment.

The procedure for creating the Centre of Social Integration begins when the forming institution submits an application for granting the status of the Centre

to the governor that is competent with respect to the seat of the Centre. The statutorily specified deadline for submitting the request is the period from 1 April to 30 April or from 1 September to 30 September of a particular year. Submitting the application for granting the status of the Centre must be preceded with making a thorough insight in terms of the needs and opportunities of the functioning of the Centre as well as with the detailed planning of its activity.

The scope of action of the CIS should be adjusted to the specific needs of the municipality, the county, the local community. The initiative to create the CIS should be consulted with the County's Labour Office and with the Municipal Social Welfare Centre, because due to the customers of the centre (socially marginalized and unemployed people, and thus the beneficiaries of both these institutions), they are natural partners of this initiative. If the CIS is formed by a non-governmental organization, it should also be consulted with the local government, for it may finance its activity. The CIS can also implement special programmes for people with disabilities [6].

Granting the status of the Centre of Social Integration takes place under the administrative decision of the governor. The period for which the status of the centre is granted is 5 years; however, at the request of the forming institution, the governor may prolong this status for another such period.

Granting the status of the Centre by the governor is equivalent to an entry in the register (kept by the governor) of organizational units that were granted the status of the Centre.

Obtaining the status of the Centre involves an obligation to inform the governor of changes in the data contained in the request for the establishment of the Centre, to submit statutorily to the indicated entities the annual report containing the settlement of grants along with the budget estimates for the current year, and to specify the effects of the substantive activity.

Similarly – the minister responsible for social security receives from governors an aggregate report from the information obtained from individual Centres of Social Integration that operate in its area.

The principles apply to the Centre of Social Integration created by both non-governmental organizations and by local government units. However, the differentiation occurs in reference to the Centres' forms of action, established by non-governmental organizations and by units of the local government. While in relation to the form of action of the Centre created by NGOs, the Law on social employment states quite generally that it operates in the form of a unit that is organizationally and financially distinguished in a way that allows an adequate identification in terms of organization and finance, to the extent which enables to determine revenues, costs and results, bearing in mind the accounting principles, then for the Centre created by a local government unit it explicitly reserves the form of a budgetary unit or a local government budgetary establishment.

Financing the creation and activity of the Centre of social integration

When considering the financial aspects of the centre of social integration, one should pay attention to certain differences between financing the process of creating the centre and financing its activity.

Financing the establishment of the Centre of social integration is varied, depending on the forming unit, and thus:

1. in case of the Centre created by a local government unit, it takes place on the principles laid down in the provisions of the public finance [18],
2. in case of the centre formed by a non-governmental organization, the sources of funding are as follows:
 - resources of the forming institution coming from collections, donations or other sources,
 - subsidies for the first equipment, from the municipality's own revenue allocated for the implementation of the municipal programme to prevent and solve alcohol problems,
 - other than the specified above own revenues of the local government unit.

Under the terms specified in the agreement established with the forming institution, a subsidy for the first equipment and a subsidy for the activity for the first three months may be granted to the Centre by the marshal of the Voivodeship, from own revenues of the provincial government allocated for the realization of the provincial programme of prevention and solving alcohol problems.

The Centre is funded by:

- the subsidy coming from own revenues of local government units, including those which are allocated to the implementation of the programme to prevent and solve alcohol problems (it does not apply to the Centre operating in the form of a budgetary unit),
- income received from the Centre,
- funds from the European Union (European Social Fund).

The Centre created by a non-governmental organization can also be financed from resources of the forming institution derived from collections, donations or other sources.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Law on social employment (Article 7), the sources of income of the CIS are funds obtained from the units of local government (municipality, Voivodeship), subsidies from the labour fund and PEFRON, resources from own manufacturing, trading and service, as well as funds gained for the implementation of projects that are co-financed by the ESF. The statement of earnings of the CIS for the period 2008-2011, made on the basis of reports submitted to provincial governors, indicates that in 2010-2011, the item referred to as „other –ESF funds” was the most significant source of acquiring finance for the current activity of those entities (2011 – 38,3 % of total revenues) [8].

In the case when the Centre fails to follow the guidelines set out in the application to acquire the status, to the extent that makes it impossible to provide services defined in the Law on social employment or in case of detecting any

irregularities of the financial settlement provided for by the law, having an impact on the financial result, the voivode ex officio or at the request of local government bodies which grant subsidies or the forming institution, issues a decision on the loss of the status of the Centre.

As part of the occupational reintegration, the Centre of Social Integration may engage in manufacturing, commercial activity or service and the manufacturing activity in agriculture, which are not a business activity as defined in the regulations on economic activities [5].

The above-mentioned manufacturing, commercial activity or services are not economic activities within the meaning of the provisions of the Law of 2 July 2004 on the freedom of economic activities (Dz. U. of 2010 No. 220, item 1447 and No. 239, item 1593) and may be conducted as a statutory payable public benefit activity as defined in the regulations on public benefit activity and on voluntary work.

The basic criterion that allows to direct the persons covered by the Law on social employment to the Centre of Social Integration is their social exclusion. Such a referral may take place at the own request of the person who fulfils the conditions to participate in the Centre or at the request of his/her legal representative, at the request of a rehab clinic, a county family assistance centre, a social welfare centre, a non-governmental organization or a club of social integration, upon the consent of that person or their legal representative.

The person who meets the statutory conditions may also be referred to participate in activities conducted by the Centre by the social welfare centre that is appropriate for the person's place of residence or their whereabouts or, in case of the long-term unemployed, by the county employment office, with the notification of the social welfare centre that is appropriate for the person's place of residence or their whereabouts.

Professional activation in the Centre of social integration in the practice of the City of Czestochowa

The history of the social integration centre in Czestochowa dates back to 2006, when this institution was created by the Catholic Action of the Archdiocese of Czestochowa. Positive results of the cooperation of the Centre with institutions which implement tasks in the field of social assistance and the fight against unemployment led to the reactivation of the Centre in 2011.

Regardless of that, in September 2012, the Czestochowa City Council adopted a resolution on creating on 1 January 2013 a local government budgetary unit called the „Centre of Social Integration in Czestochowa” [11]. The tasks of this entity are defined in the statutory framework of professional and social reintegration of people threatened with social exclusion. The source of revenue for the Centre is the performance of payable tasks ordered by public institutions, NGOs, economic entities and private persons. The resolution has provided the Centre with the components of the property of the Municipality of the City of Czestochowa, necessary to perform its tasks, and the first equipment purchased

with the funds from subsidies of the provincial government. With another resolution, the City Council of Czestochowa elaborated on the regulation related to the action item of the Centre, deciding that it will fulfil its role through the realization of tasks concerning in particular:

1. maintaining cleanliness and order in the areas of parks, green spaces, in median strips, in the areas adjacent to allotments,
2. maintaining cleanliness as part of the actions organized by the Municipality of the City of Czestochowa,
3. comprehensive care of war graves,
4. providing care services [12].

A separate resolution of the Czestochowa City Council determined a unit rate of the object subsidiary for the CIS, initially at the level of 803,57 zlotys [13]. Quite wide range of activity of the CIS resulted in the fact that it began to gain more and more importance as an entity of social economy, but also clearly economic importance for the municipality of Czestochowa. The character of the Centre is determined by its organizational structure, adopted under the organizational regulations in force within it, and in particular a list of substantive positions, connected with the implementation of programs carried out by the Centre. Within these positions, the following function in the Centre: experts – trainers and service coordinators, a psychologist – therapist, employment counsellors and social workers [10].

The interest in the activities of the CIS from the cooperating entities, systematic development of its business and real economic benefits arising from the activity of the CIS have necessitated several amendments to the resolution on the rate of the object subsidy for the Centre. Such arguments appear in justifications of subsequent draft resolutions of the City Council of Czestochowa, which amend Resolution No. 627/XXXIV/13 [19].

Special significance of activity of the CIS can be observed in the context of the cooperation that has been established between the Department of Housing TBS Ltd. in Czestochowa and CIS. The problem of professional exclusion is closely associated with the matter of financing the housing stock of the Municipality, which is managed by the Partnership. Especially in the face of the economic crisis of recent years, problems with self-financing of the resource from rents paid by the tenants have occurred [2]. Premises which constitute the housing stock of the Municipality, and particularly social housings, are inhabited by the economically weakest group of residents. Lots of them are in arrears with rent payments for the period of even several years, which leads to the implementation of eviction proceedings. During these procedures the willingness to work off one's debts was reported, arguing that they had arisen due to the inability to find work.

Starting with November 2011, the Department of Housing TBS Ltd. implemented the programme of cooperation with the CIS. As part of this scheme, the debtors were selected and then they were given written invitations to take part in the programme.

Figure 1 shows the number of invitations sent. In the first months of 2001, associated with the start of the programme, there were 140 invitations sent. The following year, 349 debtors received invitations, and in 2013, 320 invitations were sent.

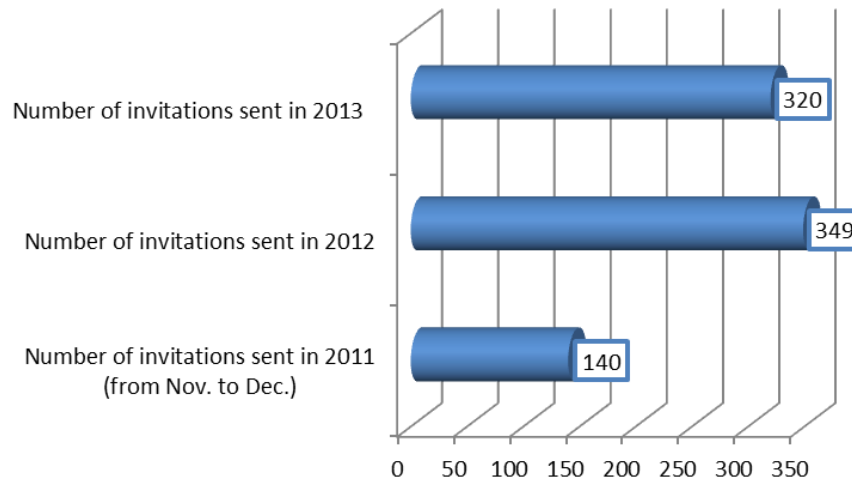


Figure 1. Number of invitations to participate in the CIS scheme directed at people with rent arrears in 2011-2013

Source: own study

Figure 2 presents the number of people who benefit from the opportunities offered by the CIS programme. The duration of the scheme was set at twelve months with a possibility to extend it to 18 months. In the last 2 months of 2011, 37 beneficiaries started to participate in the scheme. In 2012 the number of participants in the programme increased to 155. Similar values were recorded in 2013, when the number of scheme participants was 156.

As part of the described CIS programme, in addition to making professional activation possible to the tenants, the following other effects have been achieved:

- discharging the participants of the programme from rent arrears,
- withholding the procedures for eviction from the premises – beginning one's participation in the scheme meant the suspension of procedures for the termination of the lease agreement or eviction if these were implemented against the participant,
- concluding agreements by the participants of the programme in terms of the repayment of the rent debt in instalments,
- directing the stream of money allotted by the Partnership for works connected with the maintenance of the housing stock (maintenance work, snow removal, minor renovations) directly to the repayment of the rent debts that are difficult to collect.

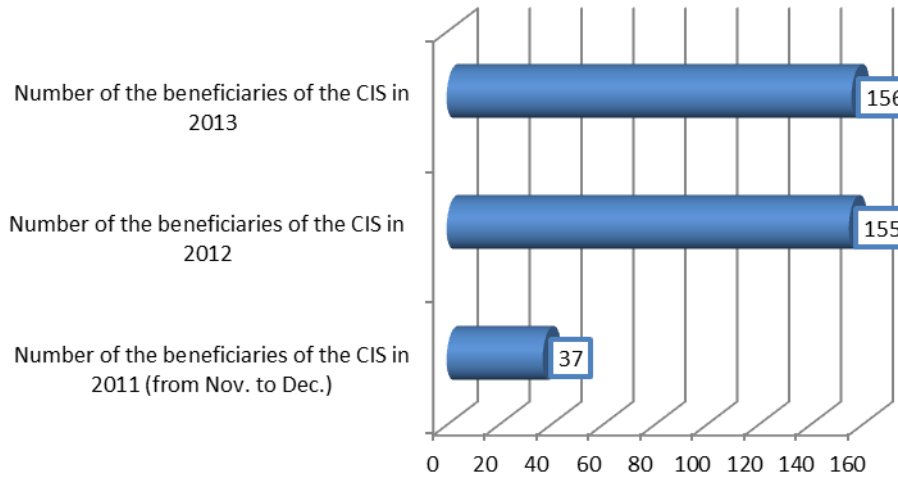


Figure 2. The number of the beneficiaries of the CIS programme over the period 2011-2013

Source: own study

Figure 3 shows the amount of rent receivables repaid by the beneficiaries of the CIS programme, carried out by the Department of Housing TBS Ltd. At the start of the scheme in 2011, this amount was about 4 000 zlotys. Then in 2012 it was about 102 000 zlotys. A similar value was in 2013, when the amount of about 105 000 zlotys was repaid.

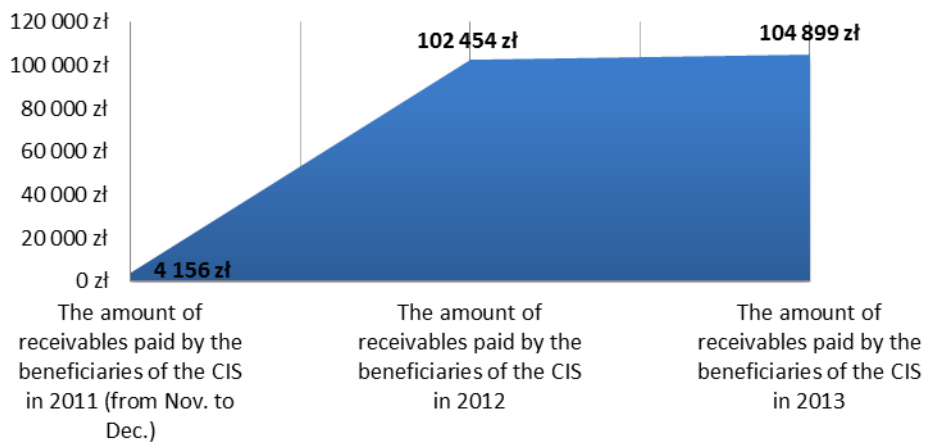


Figure 3. The amounts of rent receivables paid by the beneficiaries of the CIS in 2011-2013

Source: own study

These amounts are not very high in relation to the number of the programme participants, however, as it was indicated, it also pursued other equivalent objectives, such as occupational activation of the permanently unemployed tenants and awarding bonuses to them by strengthening the sustainability of the tenancy.

The CIS programme and simultaneous activities connected with the exchange of premises of the indebted tenants into smaller ones in return for the repayment of rent arrears, as well as faster and more rigorous implementation of recovery procedures towards the debtors who are not willing to cooperate, allowed to notice a reduction in the percentage of outstanding debt in the last three years, as shown in Figure 4.

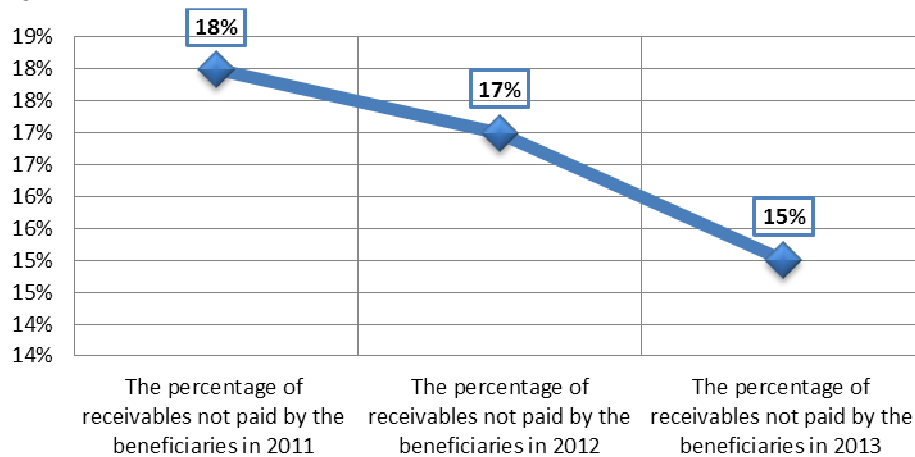


Figure 4. The percentage of unpaid rent receivables in 2011-2013 (in percentages)
 Source: own study

Summary

The Centre of Social Integration is one of the most important entities of social economy. The programme of the Centre is focused on social and occupational integration, correlated with such factors as education, psychological support and providing a roof over one's head. Adjusting the scope of operation of the Centre to specific needs of the local community in an appropriate way allows to obtain significant results in terms of including the socially excluded or people threatened with such exclusion into the labour market. Activation and professional reintegration of people affected by exclusion, leading to an improvement in their economic situation, enables them to fulfil financial commitments, including rental commitments related to the occupation of the residential premises. This in turn facilitates the creation and maintenance of the municipal housing stock, intended for the housing needs of economically weakest sections of the population. The CIS is therefore a valuable tool that enables to improve the collectability of rent

receivables, to maintain premises, and at the same time to activate professionally the economically weakest group of tenants.

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CENTRUM INTEGRACJI SPOŁECZNEJ JAKO NARZĘDZIE REINTEGRACJI ZAWODOWEJ OSÓB TRWALE BEZROBOTNYCH W CZĘSTOCHOWIE

Streszczenie: Artykuł porusza tematykę funkcjonowania Centrum Integracji Społecznej (CIS), przedstawiając cele tej instytucji, oraz funkcjonowanie Centrum w praktyce, na przykładzie Miasta Częstochowy. Analizowana jest rola CIS, którą może spełnić jako narzędzie aktywizacji zawodowej trwale bezrobotnej grupy mieszkańców. Artykuł szeroko odnosi się do tej współpracy Między Gminą Częstochowa a Zakładem Gospodarki Mieszkaniowej „TBS” sp. z o.o. oraz jej wpływu na poprawę perspektyw mieszkaniowych osób wykluczonych społecznie, przy równoczesnej reintegracji zawodowej tej grupy osób.

Słowa kluczowe: Centrum Integracji Społecznej, aktywizacja zawodowa, wykluczenie społeczne i zawodowe, praca za czynsz.

中心的专业重返社会的永久失业的琴作为一种工具的社会融合

摘要: 本文讨论主题事项的社会融合中心的运作情况 (波兰语缩写: 独联体, 提出这一机构的目标和在实践中, 中心的运作基于示例的琴城。正在分析的独联体, 能够满足作为集团的永久失业居民专业激活的工具, 作用。文章广泛指琴自治市与房屋署'TBS'之间的合作有限公司以及其对社会排斥的人, 与这群人同时重新融入专业房屋中改善的效果。

关键词: 中心社会融合、专业激活、社会和专业排斥、租金的工作。