

Examples of social economy initiatives in Poland

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Bałtów – Jura Park

- In 2002, in response to growing unemployment rate in the local community, the inhabitants registered the Association „Bałt”. Together they have started to look for a way to effectively use the region’s landscape values which would attract tourists and rejuvenate the locality. Some of the ideas seemed to be absurd – like creation of Jurassic park or organization of water-rafting tours on Kamienna River, which at that point was heavily polluted ‘sewer’. However, thanks to such brilliant ideas, determination and courage of local people the dream came true: the creation of Jurassic Park offers the region’s inhabitants jobs and creates an opportunity of independent development.

Results

- 20 employees, especially for long-term unemployed people.
- Decline of unemployment rate in locality from over 30% in 2001 to 4% in 2009.
- Construction of tourist infrastructure; 5 hotel-catering facilities, 25 agro-tourist farms, 5 one person farms.
- Social infrastructure rebuilt: places for social and cultural activity, open air events.
- Bałtów is visited by several thousands of tourists (over 500 thousand tourists in 2008 and 2009).

Source: www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl, www.baltow.info

Mutual Help Association „Flandria”

- The Mutual Help Association ‘Flandria’ in Inowrocław aims to create an alternative to the often-lacking public health service by increasing accessibility to scarce specialized medical services through the help of medical professionals and voluntary help.



Mutual Help Association „Flandria”

- The mission of ‘Flandria’ is to make sure that money is not a barrier to instant care. Each of the 9,000 or so members of the mutual help association ‘Flandria’ pay a subscription fee of PLN 2 (€ 0.5) each year. They are also entitled to purchase an individual discount card which gives 10 % discount in pharmacies managed by the association and partners of the organization as well as 30 % in private specialists offices which cooperate with the association and 15 % in rehabilitation and orthopedic equipment stores and rental shops.

Results

- Improving access to medical services and nursery care – each year several thousands people use the professional medical service.
- Mutual help association ‘Flandria’ has 5 territorial branches and stores in Inowrocław, Toruń, Bydgoszcz, Włocław, Poznań, Gdynia.
- 50 people working full time and over 100 permanent voluntary workers.

Source: www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl, www.flandria.pl

Social cooperative „Secret Garden”

- The “Tajemniczy Ogród” or “Secret Garden” is a social cooperative that offers landscaping services in the local housing estate. Formed by locals from Poznan’s Piatkowo district who have been seeking work to no avail for a while, it is highly regarded in the area due to the high quality of work and attention to detail of the workers.



Social cooperative „Secret Garden”

- The “Secret Garden” Co-op was formed in 2007 by 5 participants of workshops for the unemployed who specified interest in gardening and landscaping. During the workshops they had already done similar work in the neighborhood, so forming a co-op seemed like a natural continuation. With CIS’s help, the co-op soon became autonomous and independent. During the first year of function a CIS instructor was the supervisor of the cooperative. CIS also helped all the co-ops learn to function as an autonomous business with financial advice and business structure information.

Results

- Tajemniczy Ogród hires 6 individuals, 5 of which went through workshops for long-term unemployed
- One of the workers already cleared his rent debt; the other 5 are on good track to do so in the near future.
- The mentality of the housing estate's residents has changed regarding unemployed individuals.

Source: www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl,
www.tajemniczyogrod-poznan.pl