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**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY WORKSHOPS
AND SOCIAL COOPERATIVES – TOWARDS A MORE
EFFECTIVE OCCUPATIONAL REHABILITATION
FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**WARSZTATY TERAPII ZAJĘCIOWEJ ORAZ
SPÓŁDZIELNIE SOCJALNE – KU BARDZIEJ
EFEKTYWNEJ REHABILITACJI ZAWODOWEJ
OSÓB Z NIEPEŁNOSPRAWNOŚCIĄ**

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Summary: The aim of the article is to draw attention to the factors which affect the occupational rehabilitation of participants of vocational therapy workshops, to discuss the role of these workshops in terms of social and occupational rehabilitation of the disabled, and present model solutions which enable the participants of the workshops to enter the labour market. Examples of good practice in the area of occupational rehabilitation in cooperation with the Institute of Vocational Activity (ZAZ) are presented as well as the model of social cooperatives of legal entities as innovative and alternative forms of support for vocational rehabilitation in relation to the ZAZ and Supported Employment Enterprise. The article presents also the opportunities that local government have to support the social cooperatives and the benefits thereof through the application of social clauses.

Keywords: occupational therapy workshops, social cooperatives, people with disabilities, vocational rehabilitation, vocational activation.

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na czynniki warunkujące efektywną rehabilitację zawodową uczestników warsztatów terapii zajęciowej oraz omówienie roli WTZ w zakresie rehabilitacji społecznej i zawodowej osób z niepełnosprawnościami, a także modelowych rozwiązań, które prowadzą do wejścia na rynek pracy uczestników/absolwentów WTZ. Przedstawiono przykłady dobrych praktyk w zakresie aktywizacji zawodowej realizowanej przez WTZ we współpracy z Zakładem Aktywności Zawodowej (tzw. rozwiązanie modelowe), a także inne rozwiązania promujące ideę zatrudniania osób z niepełnosprawnościami przez spółdzielnie socjalne osób prawnych będące innowacyjnymi i alternatywnymi formami wspierania aktywności zawodowej w stosunku do ZAZ czy ZPCH. Ponadto przedstawiono możliwości wspierania spółdzielni socjalnych osób praw-

nych przez jednostki samorządu terytorialnego poprzez stosowanie klauzul społecznych oraz korzyści z nich wynikających.

Słowa kluczowe: warsztaty terapii zajęciowej, spółdzielnie socjalne, osoby z niepełnosprawnością, rehabilitacja zawodowa, aktywizacja zawodowa.

1. Introduction

Originally (in 1991), occupational therapy workshops (Polish abbreviation – WTZ) were created for people with disabilities who were completely unable to work to earn living. While the workshop therapy was a form of social rehabilitation for them, the WTZs did not have within their scope of competence any activity to aid occupational rehabilitation. This was the case until 1997 when changes were made in the law regarding occupational and social rehabilitation and the employment of people with disabilities [Ustawa z 27 sierpnia 1997]. These changes imposed a new task on the WTZs, namely occupational rehabilitation, the aim of which was to help the disabled gain or regain skills needed to obtain work [Borek, Borek 2015, pp. 96, 97]. What is more, the WTZs already functioning had been founded with the focus on social rehabilitation of the disabled and now, as P. Stanisławski shows, the law failed to meet its basic premise according to which the WTZs were to be established primarily by Supported Employment Enterprises (Polish – ZPCH) and who were to find their future employees from among the people in the WTZs. In practice, not even a full 2% of the Supported Employment Enterprises set up WTZs. The Institutes of Vocational Activity (Polish – ZAZ) were meant to be another link in the Polish rehabilitation system – by premise a bridge between the WTZs and the Supported Employment Enterprises [Stanisławski 2005, p. 24]. The institutional system for the activation of the disabled includes Occupational Therapy Workshops, Institutes of Vocational Activity as a link to being able to work in a Supported Employment Enterprise or on the open market. It is important to note, however, while there was the possibility of going to work while skipping one or other stage, the fact remained that the Polish rehabilitation facilities were inadequate in terms of their number [Bobik 2017a, pp. 186, 187] and the site¹ of the enterprises and institutes does not allow for a smooth transfer of the “graduates” of the WTZs to them.

The aim of this article is to draw attention to the factors which affect the flow of occupational rehabilitation of the participants of WTZs. The role of WTZs in the area of occupational and social rehabilitation of the disabled is presented as well as model or innovative solutions which lead to the employment on the market of WTZ attendees. Examples of good practice are presented in WTZ vocational

¹ The disproportion between the numbers of WTZ and Institutes is still obvious, this makes the continuation of the process of occupational rehabilitation started in the WTZ impossible as there are too few Institutes of Vocational Activity. See [Pokrywka 2014, pp. 101, 102].

rehabilitation in cooperation with Supported Employment Enterprises (so called model solutions) in addition to other solutions promoting the idea of employment of the persons with disabilities by social associations of legal entities – the latter being an innovative and alternative form of supporting vocational activity with regard to Supported Employment Enterprises or the Institutes of Vocational Activity. The method of research used in this article is analysis of secondary sources such as the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (Polish – PFRON) reports and Supreme Audit Office (Polish – NIK) reports as well as studies regarding the subject and examples of good practice.

2. Evaluation of the activities of WTZs in terms of vocational activation

The activities of the WTZs in terms of vocational rehabilitation are the subject of criticism by representatives of various groups: the disabled themselves, practitioners and experts in social and vocational rehabilitation, namely that the WTZs focus on social rehabilitation while neglecting the activities that would lead to workshop participants finding employment. At the same time, it is worth noting that according to a report by the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons ca. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the participants of the workshops are intellectually disabled, found in nearly all of the workshops researched². Taking into account the specific disfunction of the WTZ attendees, it is necessary to deal with the dilemma of whether it is possible to judge the effectiveness of the workshops only through the prism of low levels of employment as a result (only 1.59% of all participants) [PFRON 2014, p. 157]³ or also make a judgement thereof based on the therapy sessions (see more in: [Godlewska 2010, pp. 32–39; Bobik 2017b, pp. 108–111]) which aim to rehabilitate the person socially, which is the foundation for their occupational rehabilitation.

It is important to note that the effects of the social rehabilitation should not be judged in terms of successful entrance to the job market, as it is also important that the participant overcomes barriers which had previously hindered them or limitations they had in daily activities for, as they become increasingly independent, they will take the pressure of care off their family members [PFRON 2004, pp. 60, 108].

Returning to the assessment of the workshops in terms of vocational rehabilitation, it must be noted, however, that the vast majority of activities carried out in this field are very general in scale and character, limited to the development of the generally understood basics needed in employment. Practically, this takes place during therapy sessions in the workshops. Unfortunately, it is only in a minority of centres that there

² Persons with intellectual disability were found in 98% of WTZs. See [PFRON 2014, p. 64].

³ The low level was confirmed in the research carried out in 2012 in Greater Poland – 2% [NIK 2012, p. 25], for the sake of comparison: in 2005 – 1.8%, in 2011 – 1.8%, and in 2012 – 1.4% [PFRON 2014, pp. 157, 158].

are lessons which are solely dedicated to the question of employment and even then, they are not for all participants, rather for chosen ones only. Of course, there exist workshops whose priority is occupational activation and whose activities are focused to reach this aim and whose participants are chosen as they show the possibility of working on the open market [PFRON 2014, pp. 103, 143]. Table 1 gives a detailed presentation of the character of activity and the percentage of participants supported by each.

Table 1. Selected activities in the field of vocational rehabilitation conducted by WTZs in the years 2011–2013

Activity	% of WTZs running the activity	% of participants in receipt of such support
Development of universal characteristics/skills needed in work carried out in the workshops	93	77
Training in preparation for starting work (job search/CV writing)	80	32
Group meetings with an advisor/specialist in occupational rehabilitation	44	20
Individual meetings with an advisor/specialist in occupational rehabilitation	42	14
Additional activation training on the job market/in job search (organised by outside organisations such as district job centres, NGOs, local government)	33	9
Free external work placements (organised by employers)	30	8
Free external work placements (organised by WTZs)	29	9
Additional job training (organised by district job centres, NGOs, local government)	26	5
Paid work placements and job preparation at the employer	12	2
Supported employment (trainer/work assistant)	7	1
Job fairs	9	1

Source: [PFRON 2014, p. 143].

However, WTZ are the object of criticism, not just because of the low efficacy in employment, but also because of the excessive concentration on care and recreational activities as noted by P. Stanisławski. An analogical allegation is made by G. Baczewski who claims that the WTZs should be connected to real work on the open market and not with painting and trips out [Stanisławski 2005, pp. 24–27; Federowicz 2015, p. 39]. Unfortunately, part of the families of the participants believe similarly; they associate the workshops, above all, with activity and development of their children who can actively spend their time there. In addition, in the parents' opinion, the workshops are a care home which takes the pressure of the parents for several hours while giving

the child the opportunity to acquire new skills (opinion of one parent interviewed) [PFRON 2014, p. 102]. Another problem worth noting which has not yet been solved is the low turnover of WTZ participants who, irrespective of whether they receive a positive or a negative prognosis regarding their rehabilitation, do not have the mechanism to end the rehabilitation process and be moved to a Community Self-help Centre for the persons with disabilities (Polish ŚDS) or to an Institute of Vocational Activity, Supported Employment Enterprise or to be employed on the open market. As well as this, neither the director nor the support staff of the WTZ programme, nor even the district Poviats Family Support Centre (Polish PCPR) are obliged to cross a participant off the list when they finish their rehabilitation process [Pokrywka 2014, p. 104]. Depending on the local network of support in place for the disabled, which can include day centres for the mentally disabled, residential homes (Polish DPS), community self-help centres, assisted living (or activation rooms) or nearby Institutes for Vocational Activity or social associations, a more effective occupational rehabilitation is possible. In the opposite case (without the above network) the stay in the WTZ is longer as there is nowhere to which the participant can be referred⁴. Taking into account the comments listed above which indicate that the WTZ are not effective in their work to rehabilitate participants socially and occupationally, it is worth mentioning examples of good practice and model solutions, which will be presented in the following section of this article.

3. Model solutions of cooperation between WTZs and Institutes of Vocational Activity (ZAZ)

The functioning and close cooperation between the WTZs and the Institutes of Vocational Activity, possible in local municipalities (or possibly poviats) where both centres are located is a model solution. An example of such is found in the city of Wrocław, on 10, Litomska Street. Here there is an Institute, funded by the local municipality, as well as an WTZ run by the Association “Ostoja” for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

The WTZs on Litomska Street have been functioning since 2004, and since 2008⁵ under the same roof as the Institute. From the very beginning of the Institute, the WTZ has been providing staff directly to the former. As E. Wójcik, director of the Wrocław Institute, states, close cooperation between both centres in that a part of

⁴ The possible decision by the director of the WTZ regarding the removal of a participant who does not show hope for making progress in social or occupational rehabilitation (not to mention its importance or difficulty) may be considered by the family as an arbitrary or unjustified decision, as the participant will be forced to either return home (where there is no other alternative to the WTZ) where a regression in the skills acquired will take place, or may find a place in a day centre for the intellectually disabled for which payment is required [PFRON 2014, p. 93].

⁵ The status of an Institute of Vocational Activity was granted by the Lower Silesian Provincial Governor, decision number D5/0001/08 z 29.12.2008 r. [<http://zaz.wroclaw.pl>].

the workshops within them are used to develop the skills of the trainees as a result of which those who are referred to the Institute are well prepared for work [Federowicz 2015, p. 38]. There are various workshops within the WTZs: gardening, housework, printing and computer workshop, and after graduating from the WTZ the trainees find work within the following departments: gardening and maintenance, gastronomy, and printing. The services offered by the Institute are: weeding, hedge cutting, clearing snow from pavements (in winter), serving a two-course meal daily, external catering service (in the gastronomy department) as well as printing business cards, Christmas cards and training materials (in the printing department). At present, the Institute employs 36 people with disabilities.

The participants of the Wrocław WTZ are in constant contact with the neighbouring Institute, first through visits there with their therapists to get to know the centre, then during work placements and finally when they find employment in the Institute. It must be noted that there is one other benefit to the participants of the centres being at the same address: namely, that they can always return to the WTZ should their placement or work fail in the Institute, for the WTZ is a “back door of security”. As Director E. Wójcik says, “when somebody comes from the WTZ to work for us, so another takes his place in the WTZ as ‘supply’ (i.e. temporarily). Should the new worker not be able to cope, have problems, then, even after several months, he has the right to return to WTZ...” [Federowicz 2015, p. 38]. The fact that the participants know the buildings and the people there is significant. It means that their anxiety about moving from one centre to another is lessened. Furthermore, the Wrocław Institute offers the disabled person support in their whole journey from WTZ through the Institute to employment on the open market support in the form of an employment trainer.

The cooperation between the two centres is exemplary. It is, however, a rarity in the local area. The framework of institutional cooperation is possible and can be realised on a local municipality level (where there are larger centres where an Institute of Vocational Activity is in operation) and on a district level, where the local government body (for example PCPR) could inspire cooperation between the centres.

4. Model of social cooperatives of legal entities as an alternative rehabilitation tool for the participants of WTZ

The following section will present two projects which promote innovative solutions in the rehabilitation of those people with disabilities who attend WTZs and who do not have the opportunity to be employed by an Institute of Vocational Activity (ZAZ) or a Supported Employment Enterprise (ZPCH), nor on the open market. These projects promote the model of social cooperatives of legal entities and an exemplary solution where the social cooperative where the social cooperative as a social enterprise created the Institute of Vocational Activity (ZAZ) – a solution without precedent.

The idea of creating a social cooperative of legal entities as a place of work for people with disabilities came about during a project entitled “Trójkąt pożytku

publicznego” (Triangle of Public Benefit), referred to below as TPP. The project was carried out between 2010 and 2013 by the National Supervisory Cooperative of the Association for the Disabled and the Association for the Blind. In line with the founding principle of the project, activities were undertaken to encourage the involvement of local government offices, NGOs, and local business in the process of promoting, initiating and organising social associations of legal entities as a new and effective form of limiting unemployment among persons with disabilities. This was carried out according to the premise “from occupational therapy to employment” and was addressed to non-governmental organisations and local government departments involved in the social and vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, in particular to those who were already running occupational therapy workshops or Institutes of Vocational Activity [Mizera 2017]. In the suggested model, the social association should come into being as a result of a contract between non-governmental organisations and the local government office. The act should be accompanied by a patron’s contract signed between local authorities, non-governmental organisations and local enterprises ensuring the social responsibility of the business [Mizera 2011, p. 35].

Within this model, the local business can support the social cooperative of legal entities both at the level of creation (advice regarding a business plan, profile of work) and at level of activity (as the recipient of services offered by the association) as a patron – and can be an example of the business’ social responsibility (Figure 1).

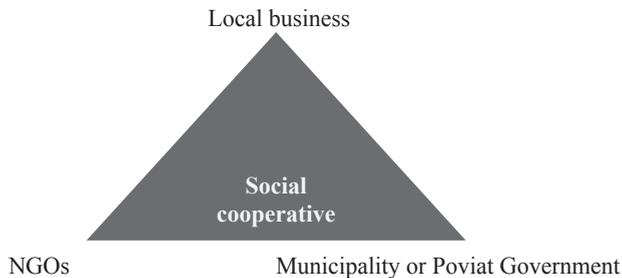


Figure 1. Formula TPP

Source: [Mizera 2011, p. 34].

Within this model, the local business can support the social cooperative of legal entities both at the level of creation (advice regarding a business plan, profile of work) and at level of activity (as the recipient of services offered by the association) as a patron – and can be an example of the business’ social responsibility. Further, the NGOs who run WTZs can, within this TPP model, become leaders in the organisation of social cooperatives for people with disabilities. They can use the knowledge and the actual experience of the WTZ participants to create for them and for other disabled people a place of work which is in surroundings that they already know. The role of the local government office is either to support the creation of the cooperative through

membership therein as one of the founders, or as the municipality as a member, all the while acquiring new tools to solve social problems at a local level. In addition, the local government may support the newly created cooperative in material and non-material ways. More on this can be found in section four of this article (cf. [Mizera 2011, p. 37, 38]). As Z. Wasiak, writing about the role of social cooperatives in the process of social and occupational rehabilitation by WTZ, emphasises, we may speak of a continuation of the rehabilitation process as, in accordance with the law regarding social associations, these centres work towards the occupational reintegration of their members through the building up and maintaining of skills needed to carry out work on the job market independently [Wasiak 2011, p. 51].

A second example of good practice is the model of social cooperatives tested in the project “Innovative model of occupational activation of WTZ participants” carried out by the Association for Social Cooperatives in partnership with the Regional Social Welfare Centre in Poznań and Konimpex LLC. The model assumes that the organisations running the WTZs receive support in creating social cooperatives which employ WTZ participants who have been suitably prepared. Thanks to this model, it is possible to continue and reinforce the effects of the workshops in a new form – through introducing their own system of accustoming people with intellectual disabilities to work [Pokrywka 2014, p. 105].

The cooperatives which were created during the project employed people who have experience in working in the area of activation of people with disabilities. These include trainers, therapists, instructors and WTZ volunteers who can take up the positions of assistants to the disabled or managers of the cooperatives [Pokrywka 2014, p. 107]. In addition, project leaders came from departments within social welfare centres and used their experience in working in the rehabilitation of the disabled to create solutions to use the previously unused social, cultural and business capital slumbering in the local community. The former WTZ participants employed in the cooperatives did not completely change their surroundings, worked among people they knew and trusted, which most certainly had a positive effect on the level of stress caused by leaving the workshops. The cooperation took place on an organisational level too. Some of the WTZs profiled their workshops in line with the activities set up by the social cooperatives, thus enabling the WTZ participants to be successful in their future employment within the cooperatives [Necel, Wasielewska 2015, pp. 98, 99]. The local government offices play a very important role in the introduction of this model as their involvement in the creation (as a founder) of cooperative means that unemployment among the disabled can be more effectively limited, lowering, in doing so, the negative effects that unemployment has in the social, economic or psycho- societal level. The benefits coming from the municipality’s or district’s involvement allow for the improvement of local social policy which therefore reduce local government expenditure on welfare benefits.

Seven social cooperatives have been started as a part of the project in the Greater Poland county: in Rakoniewice, Kościan, Wągrowiec, Gajewo, Koło, Gołuchów and

Poznań. In the cooperative “Serce” in Rakonowice, the workers make matches (in winter) and garden maintenance (in summer). The cooperative “K.O.S.S” in Kościan maintains the green spaces in the city between April and October, commissioned by the council offices. It employs 16 people (nearly all being former workshop participants) and cooperates with the company Raben (in labelling and packaging products)⁶. The cooperative in Wągrowiec called “Wspólny Sukces” was founded by the local government offices, the Wągrowiec municipality and district and offers maintenance of green spaces, renovation and building work. It receives its commissions from the offices and, furthermore, carries out orders from the company El-Cab (cutting connectors for electric cables) [Pokrywka M., 2014, pp. 110, 111]. The local government office also opened a second social association “Równe Szanse” in Gajewo with the local council in Czarnków and the Association for the Mentally and the Intellectually Disabled “Empatia” from Trzcianka. The cooperative produces ceramics for their longstanding client Kęпка Group and has been organising work placements for WTZ participants from Trzcianka, Gębica and Wieleń since January 2017⁷. The social cooperative “Aktywni” in Koło is supported by the local government office who commissions them to maintain the green spaces in the city, clean offices, factories and flats. Additionally, the cooperative offers co-packing, packing by hand, labelling and assembling of packaging (working in cooperation with international industrial company Saint Goban HPM Polska LLC) and runs the private pre-school “Kraina Magii”⁸. The social cooperative “1979” in Gołuchów received financial support from the European Union fund to open the “Gołuchów Soap and Scent Factory AD 1558” thanks to the support of the local authorities and the director of the district Local Welfare Centre who helped write a business plan for them. The president of the cooperative is an employee of the Local Welfare Centre and the staff and the families and acquaintances of the Centre are clients of the Factory⁹. The obvious involvement of the Welfare Centre at creation and in running of the cooperative is an example of engagement and substantive support. The last of these social cooperatives “Dobra” was founded in Poznań and runs “Dobra Kawiarnia” café in which six former participants in WTZ have found work in preparing and serving meals¹⁰. In the majority of cases, the local government offices have let the cooperatives have the premises in which their HQ are located for free (Rakonowice, Kościan, Gajewo) or have permitted them to use of the premises at a very low rent (Wągrowiec). In two cases, the cooperatives were created by local government offices (Wągrowiec and Czarnków) while the remainder were founded by NGOs.

⁶ See more: [<http://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/wiadomosc/1422325.html>] and [<http://www.koss.spoldzielnie.org/>]

⁷ Cf. [Pokrywka 2014, p. 112; <http://www.rowneszanse.spoldzielnie.org/>].

⁸ See more: [<http://aktywni.spoldzielnie.org/>].

⁹ See more: [<http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22194627,dobra-spoldzielnia-kawiarnia-i-restauracja-ktore-zmieniaja.html>].

¹⁰ See more: [<http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22194627,dobra-spoldzielnia-kawiarnia-i-restauracja-ktore-zmieniaja.html>].

As well as the two examples given of good practice, it is worth also mentioning the other possibilities of job activation of persons with disabilities, former WTZ participants. A different example will be presented here, founded on cooperation between local government offices and NGOs but with a different form. Firstly, the social cooperative is called into being (not as an alternative to Institutes of Vocational Activity) as a dual solution, for such an Institute is founded alongside the already functioning cooperative. In the case described, two NGOs founded in 2009 a social cooperative "OPOKA" and then in 2012 the first Institute of Vocational Activity to be opened by the cooperative. Both organisations have years of experience in working with the persons with disabilities. The Association for Balanced Social and Economic Development "Klucz" runs the Community Self-help Centre for persons with disabilities (ŚDS) in Kolbark and Charitable Christian Charity Association runs the WTZ in Klucze. Both organisations receive substantial support from the authorities. The Klucze municipality has been acting for the good of persons with disabilities in their area for over a decade¹¹. The authorities gave a building to the cooperative which those therein then renovated. The cooperative offers construction and catering services as well as craft and training. The cooperation assigned 100,000 PLN to the foundation of the Institute of Vocational Activity (possible due to the surplus that the cooperative had made), the local government office assigned further PLN 170,000 and the Marshal's Office subsidises the mandatory costs in the Institute, i.e. medical care and job instructors. The founders, having experience in running WTZ (CHSD), admitted that the Institute – as an organisational unit of the cooperative – is the missing link in the local system of support for people with disabilities. After 2 or 3 years, former WTZ participants could find employment in the cooperative or on the open job market¹². Due to the fact that the cooperative OPOKA has had its greatest successes in gastronomy, the Board made the decision to train workers in their Institute in this field as cooks, kitchen porters and waiters/waitresses. The Board is considering education in the field of construction in the future. The cooperative works alongside the local Welfare Centre in their social action in a campaign feed the hungry¹³, which was commissioned by the Welfare Centre. On the other hand, the local municipality authorities note the benefits which come from the activities of OPOKA which help eliminate unemployment and also benefit, along with other private firm, including from Krakow from the low prices for the catering services offered. As the above example shows, cooperation of the cooperative and the local government office in a local level can have measurable benefits for all sides, especially those disabled persons who had previously been inactive in terms of employment.

¹¹ In 2007 the municipality won a POPON competition "Lodołamacze" for its mature policy regarding the disabled and their consideration of the needs of these people in the activities undertaken by the municipality. See more: [<http://www.niepelnosprawni.pl/ledge/x/18945>].

¹² See more: [<http://www.ekonomiaspoleczna.pl/wiadomosc/787828.html>].

¹³ The cooperative does not earn any money from such activity.

5. Forms of local government support for the social cooperative

It is important to note in the discussion on local government office support for the cooperatives that these social cooperatives for legal entities can meet the needs of the local government in the following ways:

- in terms of local economy (renovation services, cleaning and conservation services),
- in terms of service to the community (catering services to the departments under government offices – for example for schools, offices and institutions),
- in terms of care (care for the elderly or the disabled, running a pre-school).

In addition, the local office may loan premises or other assets which may be withdrawn without causing a loss to the estate nor will they be in any way depleted (cars/equipment). It is also possible for a worker to be delegated by the office to be part of the Board or Advisory Board of the cooperative he founded [*Spółdzielnie socjalne...* 2015].

Another form of governmental office support for the cooperative worth mentioning is the application of clauses in Public Procurement Law. The office may stipulate that the terms of reference that the right to participate in proceedings of public procurement may apply:

- to executors/contractors whose main aim is the social and occupational integration of persons with disabilities;
- in dividing the order into smaller sections (art. 36aa of the Public Procurement Law) – several cooperatives are interested in carrying out the commission/order (no one single cooperative has the potential to carry out the order/commission in full);
- in excluding the application of the Public Procurement Law in “in house” orders – the possibility to commission tasks for public use without it going to tender must be under two conditions: The local government office exercises full control over the cooperative and the cooperative carries out a large part of its activities for the benefit of the office, which does not exclude the possibility of providing other commissioned services [*Spółdzielnie socjalne...* 2015, pp. 33, 105].

6. Conclusions

Analysis of the conditions which affect the occupational rehabilitation and effectiveness of participants of WTZ finding employment and the examples of good practice regarding social cooperatives has enabled me to come to the following conclusions.

- Within the framework of the present occupational rehabilitation system for the disabled, not many WTZs carry out an effective job activation. Therefore, the encouragement to increased efforts seems justified – these efforts may take the form of increased financial resources for the workshop when a participant

takes up employment in the “sheltered” market of the Institute of Vocational Activity or Supported Employment Enterprise or also on the open job market, or perhaps for the participant of WTZ himself as he takes up employment outside the workshop.

- A system of premiums for effective workshops may be beneficial for district governmental offices, who, financing a minimum of 10% of the costs of the WTZ activities, would be more motivated to create a local activation system for people with disabilities by, among other things, founding one together with the municipality or NGO.
- Checks by the Poviats Family Support Centre should put the emphasis on support regarding job advice, increasing the cooperation between the Polish Job Centre in organising training for participants of the Occupational Therapy Workshops.
- The development of social cooperatives of legal entities would be a viable alternative to Institutes of Vocational Activity which are costly to maintain.
- The local government office plays a key role in the support of social cooperatives by the application of clauses, benefitting their financial state while also solving the problem of long-term unemployment.
- It is also vital to raise employers’ awareness of the situation as participants of the WTZs are forced to a long stay in the workshop rather than the three years it should be because of the lack of opportunity to move into employment.

In summary, it must be stated that in spite of the criticism of the activities of the workshops in terms of vocational activation, the disabled in many regions of Poland do have limited access to job reintegration services (Institutes of Vocational Activity or Supported Employment Enterprises). It is therefore difficult to make an unequivocal judgement regarding their work, especially because of the uneven distribution thereof. In the author’s opinion, the workshops still play a significant role in social and occupational rehabilitation and the promotion of the model of social cooperatives of legal entities for the graduates of WTZs gives persons with disabilities the opportunity to be employed and gain satisfaction from the work they do.

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