

Krystyna Górnicka  
Uniwersytet Zielonogórski  
Wydział Nauk Społecznych  
Praca doktorska napisana pod naukowym kierunkiem:  
Dra hab. Mariusza Kwiatkowskiego, prof. UZ  
Promotor pomocniczy: Dr Joanna Frątczak-Müller

### **The most difficult indicator. Barriers to job creation in the social economy sector. A sociological study**

The paper is a sociological empirical study of a relatively new social practice, namely social economy. Its attribute is the implementation of social goals by economic means, including through the creation of jobs for disadvantaged people in the market. The paper contains a description, interpretation and evaluation of the social economy system in Poland prepared for the implementation of EU funds in the 2014-2020 perspective from the point of view of its capacity to create jobs. The study used three types of methods - content analysis, content analysis and survey. Reactive research was conducted with representatives of three types of entities (stakeholders) - managing or intermediary institutions (MA/IP), regional centres for social policy (RCSP) and social economy support centres (SESC).

The main objective of the research was to identify, describe and explain the barriers to job creation in the social economy sector. The main problem was formulated as a question: *What are the fundamental reasons for limiting the effectiveness (barriers) of job creation activities in the social economy sector?*

There are several reasons for taking up this topic using sociology perspective and tools. Firstly, the topic of the study is part of the traditional stream of research on relations between the social and economic spheres. The social economy (SE) is a sphere of socio-economic activity developed in Poland in the last two decades, financed mainly from the European Union (EU) funds, which is supposed to complement or correct the deficiencies of the market economy and at the same time strengthen citizens, society and democracy. Secondly, the work fills the cognitive gap in terms of research on the effectiveness of the support system, and thus on the effectiveness of activities in the field of social and professional reintegration of people excluded or at risk of exclusion. In the 2014-2020 financial perspective, more than PLN 1 billion were planned to support the social economy in the regions under the regional operational programmes to create permanent and high quality jobs in the social economy sector. In accordance with the provisions of the National Programme for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023 in Poland should be created more than 20 thousand jobs, however

observing the dynamics of changes in the indicator we can assume that there will be just over 11 thousand jobs. The paper attempts to identify the reasons for this discrepancy. Thirdly, it was assumed that the identification and explanation of barriers to job creation will be possible through the adoption of an institutional perspective, which manifests itself, in the form of an analysis of the support system at the level of assumptions (legal acts, strategic documents), organisational forms (organisation of the support system in the regions) and working methodology (work with beneficiaries).

The paper consists of five chapters. The first one is theoretical, the second is devoted to methodological issues, while the remaining three make up the empirical part. The first chapter presents the key theories, approaches and concepts in the field of the discussed issues and describes the essential elements of the examined system. Two aspects are particularly relevant to the aim of the thesis. First, locating the core problem in the context of the reintegration function of the social economy. Second, characterisation and justification of the chosen theoretical approach (sociology of the public sphere) and interpretative framework (new institutionalism). The second chapter presents the methodological assumptions of the work and contains a description of the research intention, which is a response to the identified cognitive gap. The findings made in the first two chapters provide a reference point for the data and interpretations presented in the empirical part of the thesis, which consists of three chapters. The aim of the first chapter is to present and discuss the potential factors that limit, impede or significantly increase the cost of job creation as a result of the assumptions of the support system. These include: (1) disturbances of continuity in the functioning of institutions responsible for the process of construction and implementation of the SE development programme, (2) incompatibility and variability of provisions in programming documents, (3) inconsistency between national and regional programming. The fourth chapter is devoted to barriers resulting from the assumptions of support organization and identifies and discusses: (1) heterogeneous principles and concepts of Center of Support the Social Economy functioning in the regions, (2) ambiguous employment indicators, and (3) the predominance of animation activities and social activation over vocational activation. The last chapter, is devoted to barriers resulting from the concept and direct work with clients. Methodological factors include: (1) difficulties in obtaining final beneficiaries, (2) low prestige and poor recognition of social cooperatives, and (3) limited ability to formalize cooperation.

The conclusion synthesises the main findings, addressing each research problem in turn. It also presents the author's interpretation of the identified barriers and formulates several

recommendations addressed to public institutions responsible for the support system, postulating changes whose introduction seems necessary in the light of the presented findings.