HUMAN CAPITAL
NATIONAL COHESION STRATEGY

Voivodship Labour Office
in Rzeszów

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Final report - summary

within the scope of research

"Analysis of the project promoters' activity in the Podkarpackie voivodship, within the activities targeted at the persons threatened by social exclusion, under the Priority VII of HC OP, including the analysis of the social assistance institutions' activity (RCSP, SWC, PCHF) in terms of implementing activities co-financed by ESF."

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I. Research objectives

The main objective of the research was to recognize problematic situations in the implementation process of the Priority VII: Promotion of social integration in the Podkarpackie voivodship and to indicate preventive measures with reference to identified problems. The evaluation included two key types of entities: social assistance institutions defined in Social Assistance Act (Regional Centres of Social Policy - RCSP, Social Welfare Centre - SWC, Poviat Centres of Help to Families - PCHF) and other institutions, which according to the statute, deal with social assistance and are entitled to apply for the ESF resources under the Priority VII of HC OP. In the research there were used both qualitative (desk research, including the analysis of applications for co-financing, personal and group interviews, case studies, experts' panel) and quantitative research methods, such as Computer Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI).

II. Projects implemented in competition procedure within the framework of the Priority VII of HC OP in the Podkarpackie voivodship - results

The activity of beneficiaries

1. All competitions were popular with among project promoters. This interest was considerably exceeding the possibilities of financing the submitted projects - granted funds make not quite 15% of the total amount of application' and only 12% of submitted projects were granted financial aid.

2. The selection of Measure/Sub-measure by beneficiaries depends on the institution interests, its experience in a particular area and the self-assessment of potential chances for success. The minimal required value of the project is also of great importance. That is the reason why more project were submitted under the Sub-measure 7.3, thanks to which many less experiences project promoters wanted to implement small, local undertakings, and under the Sub-measure 7.2.1 – which enables the implementation of standard activities and under which the entities have more experience and feel more secure, than under the Sub-measure 7.2.2 concerning rather new area and under which there is a higher level of the required minimal project value.

3. The vast majority of applications were submitted by non-governmental organizations (NGO's), then by training companies and institutions. Under the Sub-measure 7.3 there is higher activity of gminas and poviats.

The institutions with their seat outside the Podkarpackie voivodship submitted 28 projects of total 132 submitted projects, 40 projects were submitted by project promoters from Rzeszów. Around 17% of all applications were submitted by project promoters from outside the Podkarpackie voivodship, the highest amount under the Sub-measure 7.2.2, the least under the Measure 7.3. 25% of applications were submitted by project promoters with their seats in Rzeszów. It is visible, that the activity of the entities from outside the centre of voivodship is relatively low.

4. Among 249 participants of the quantitative research, 38% has already participated in competitions under the Priority VII and among the rest, 88.4% have heard about the possibility of implementing projects concerning social and vocational integration of persons threatened by social exclusion, co-financed by ESF, but only 60% of them claim, that their institution could benefit from this possibility as an entitled entity. Almost 67% of polled is interested in participating in the competitions organized under the Priority VII of HC OP. There are no statistically significant differences between the types of entities. However, the entities that have already participated in the

competitions show more interest and the most interest arouse among those, who have already been granted the financial aid.

There is a connection between the activity within other funding sources and the activity under the Priority VII: almost 80% of entities applying under the Priority VII have also applied for other sources, among not applying entities it is only 45%.

5. The reasons for the lack of interest are complex and bureaucratic procedures and the weakness of own HR, as well as concerns about the great competition on the market.

6. A substantial part of the inactive entities do not show activity and initiative in getting to information and knowledge, despite high information needs. They only tend to expect the initiative from the public institutions. Overcoming the initial barrier of getting into the system does not often dispel all the concerns. The projects co-financed by ESF are so called "big projects", targeted at large and mature organisations. Small-size organisations fear the risk connected with the implementation of such project. The risk concerns the finance, possibility of implementation, dealing with the documents and problems with beneficiaries' recruitment.

7. The reasons for applying are the willingness of solving some socially crucial problems and the chance of using the knowledge and experience in this field. Moreover, a part of respondents emphasize that the objectives of the Priority are similar to those of their organisation and that there is a social need for a particular types of activities. Some entities see the competition as a chance of implementing already planned ideas.

8. The main source of information for the institutions applying for financial aid under the Priority VII of HC OP is a website of the Voivodship Labour Office (VLO) in Rzeszów, but not applying institutions use this source twice less often. It suggests that via the Internet it is possible to reach the institutions, which have already showed the interest in applying for the financial aid under the Priority VII of HC OP.

9. The meetings organized by the VLO are an important source of information. The research shows, that among applicants, nearly 91% knew about the meetings organized by the VLO (it is the result of visiting the VLO's website), although, only 72% of applicants attended them. Among not applying, only 38% knew about the meetings (although 50% of them visit the VLO's website), and only about 1/3 attended them. This means, that the information about the meetings does not reach all. One may say that it reaches only those, who are more active in its searching.

10. The people polled need more free of charge trainings related to formulating projects and applications, as well as trainings preparing for the project implementation, whereas this form of support arouses the interest of not applying entities. All are interested in free of charge counselling services and coaching related to rules of formulating the application. They expect that the information will be more accessible (concerning form and language).

Types of projects submitted in competition procedure and selected for financial aid

11. The vast majority of the projects submitted under the Measure 7.2 included in its scope of operation the whole voivodship and also among co-financed projects, the majority is implemented on this area. In case of the Measure 7.3, pursuant to its objectives, the projects come from the area of poviat or gmina, and the accumulation of the co-financed project is in the southern part of the voivodship.

12. Project promoters choose different forms of implementation under the Sub-measure 7.2.1. These forms are the courses and trainings, which enable to get qualifications, to improve or to change vocational competence; as well as psychological, psychosocial or vocational counselling leading to social and vocational integration. Under

the Sub-measure 7.2.2, these forms are trainings, which enable to obtain the knowledge and skills needed to establish and run the activities in social economy sector, promoting social economy and employment in this sector, counselling for social economy entities.

Target groups under the Sub-measure 7.2.1 include persons threatened by social exclusion and sometimes persons from their surrounding or employees of institutions of social integration system. However, it was difficult to detail the particular target groups within the quantitative analysis, in the majority of projects there is no information about it. The projects submitted under the Sub-measure 7.2.2 include – according to programme principles – social economy entities, institutions of social integration and labour market institutions together with their employees.

The analysis of the projects submitted under the Measures 7.3 shows, that local initiative is understood very widely by project promoters. The projects were targeted at the inhabitants of the implementation area, but it is difficult to define particular target groups.

13. All selected projects underwent qualitative analysis demonstrating that the applications were of average or poor quality. The weakest parts concern the justification of the project implementation need, in most cases it refers to readily available and very general information, and rarely directly to the area and supported group. Generally, there is no information which confirms a market demand for offered trainings and other forms of support. Typical results of these projects are course completion certificates and diplomas or 'participants' satisfaction with course attendance'. The analysis of evaluation prepared by the Project Assessment Group (PAG) suggests that the members of PAG fear the unconventional projects, and grant higher position on the ranking list to the simple, reproducible and routine projects. The analysis of the Assessment Forms confirms the fact, that the members of PAG attach great significance to technical and formal issues.

Factors of effectiveness

14. The effectiveness rate measuring the relation between the number of submitted and co-financed projects, amounted to 12%. About 30% of applications are rejected because of formal flaws (the most under the Measure 7.3; the least under the Sub-measure 7.2.2 – obviously the most experienced organisations apply under this Sub-measure). Among the project evaluated as formally correct, only 21% were evaluated positively in terms of substantive assessment.

Among applications rejected in substantive assessment, the most were rejected, because they did not meet the standard of minimal equal chances for women and men, and because of the weak diagnosis and characteristics of the target group.

15.The research showed, that the factors influencing the absorption capacity of entities entitled to participation in the competitions are: employment limits (at least 80% of organisations employ no more than 26 employees, while 80% of co-financed institutions employ up to 76 employees), the employees' level of knowledge about the Priority VII and about social integration (applying institutions have higher self-esteem of substantive competence) and – to a small extent – technical potential of the entity.

16. The inactive entities are more often training institutions; less often NGO's and church organisations. The inactive entities include also the institutionally weaker organisations – employing less employees (the inactive entities employ 22 employees on average, while the active entities 35 employees), rarely have room for personal meetings and have less computers. It has to be emphasized, that the differences, statistically important, are not

huge. The most visible differences consider the employees' knowledge and qualifications, so one may claim that the institution's employees exert the biggest influence on its activeness and effectiveness.

17. Among 29 entities, 11 had some problems during the implementation of the projects. The most frequent problem is the difficulties in keeping financial liquidity. The second problem included difficulties in the beneficiaries' recruitment and in organisation. However, it is important, that project promoters can expect help – projects' contractors have evaluated guidance given by VLO employees during projects implementation positively.

Projects selected in competition procedure - summary

The competitions generated interest exceeding much more the financial limit of the Intermediate Body (IB). However, it is hard to estimate the exact amount of the potential project promoters remaining outside the Programme, because the total amount of such entities in unknown. There were over 1000 entities identified during the research, which only or partly deal with the social integration issues within the scope of their status activities. However, it is not certain whether this is the full number. The existing entities registration systems and the data from other research do not allow identifying all the entities. The fact that for almost 1150 sent polls only 249 answers were received and a half of which was received from not participating institutions, shows the scale of lacking initiative demonstrated by the entities. For many of them, the subject is not interesting enough to participate in the research or they think that their answers cannot be interesting. In 2008, 173 entities submitted the projects, including 137 from the Podkarpackie voivodship, and 29 from local government units or their administrative units. According to that, one may claim that the activity of the entities helping the persons threatened by social exclusion in the Podkarpackie voivodship is very low.

According to the qualitative research, some locally active entities in the scope of social exclusion, know nothing about the ESF, or do not know 'only' about the possibilities of implementing the projects co-financed by this fund under the HC OP. Some entities, having general knowledge about such possibilities, believe that these funds are available for other entities (large, experienced), and not for them. This belief is so strong, that they do not even try to find out more about these possibilities. However, the qualitative research showed also that finding out about the ESF and the HC OP through the proposal of interview and meeting with a researcher, was valuable information source for some of the interlocutors and has drawn attention to the fact that they are within the scope of the HC OP. We want to emphasize that there are some entities, which need a direct incentive, an impulse in order to get the information. Moreover, during personal and group interviews we have noticed great needs in terms of the basic knowledge about the ESF, projects' formulation and implementation, and ever grater needs in terms of counselling support. Undoubtedly, there is a lot of space for the activity of VLO and RCSP, as well as of Regional Centre of ESF (RCESF).

On the other hand, in terms of the objectives of the Priority's implementation, more activity is not necessary – contract award procedure is performed systematically, the number of the projects' participants is significant, the projects cover the entire voivodship's area.

From the point of view of research objectives, the low activity in a part of local circles is striking – many institutions having their business existing near the potential project's participants and knowing their problems, do not use ESF funds, despite having high expenditures.

Fear is a reason why some institutions do not use the ESF and even do not plan to use it in the future – say the interested parties. The anxiety concerns expected difficulties in getting through the application and implementation procedures. Moreover, many local institutions believe that HC OP and the ESF are the chance to

act for the big, strong entities, and not for small-size organisations and small project. The reasons for these beliefs come partly from the experiences, and more often from the lack of knowledge and circulating unreliable information.

Part of institutions does not possess a suitable potential, which allows preparing projects and demand a lot from them, but whose chance of implementation is really low. The project preparation is a kind of future investment for many organisations – voluntary work of their members is essential and will be 'rewarded' in case of winning. The data about the amount of rejected applications in every competition (from beneficiaries perspective: because of trivial, formal reasons or completely not understandable reasons, such us unfulfilled horizontal criteria) confirm, that the chances of winning are low.

There is also lack of decent, objective, and easily accessible information - about available funds, for whom and on which rules. The official information about the possibilities of using ESF resources is written in a difficult way and 'demand' from project promoters to become familiar with a lot of even more difficult documents. These are significant discouraging factors. There is a lack of simple user's guide and practical trainings addressed to specific instructions, as well as a lack of counselling support. The way of spreading information makes that it is available only for those, who consciously are looking for it. Whereas the entities, which make such effort and learn how to function in this environment, will certainly submit new projects and win. The strong first league is being created and "the rest".

The process of assessment the projects shows that for many project promoters it is a problem to make a diagnosis according to the expectations (tough data, minimum standard) – and there is no place, where it would be possible to get such data or guidelines. Another question is whether it is right that the assessors demand the same scheme of the problem/diagnosis presentation in every case.

The entities' potential, understood as some source (of people, their knowledge, equipment, but also the ability to act), is average. However, the main success factor involves people and their attitudes, even more than their knowledge. Knowledge and experience are important, but the willingness to act, enthusiasm, readiness for cooperation (although not necessarily partnership), humility towards programme requirements are also important.

Under the Sub-measure 7.2.1, the attention is drawn by a tendency to simple, standard projects – regarded as safe in the process of assessment and implementation. Some of the project's activities, against their authors' intentions, strengthen stereotypical assumptions about the persons threatened by social exclusion and offer trainings which prepare for very simple jobs and occupations. The activities connected with shaping or updating key competences, teamwork habits, time management and general resourcefulness are underestimated. In the competition related to the Sub-measure 7.2.2, the IB was expecting rather big projects, which contributed to the lower number of applications. However, this did not disturb in contract awards. This area is unique, which completely justifies established approach.

The Measure 7.3 is problematic and it is not a specific problem of the Podkarpackie voivodship. However, this can be partly solved by choosing an approach. Namely, the term 'local/grassroots initiative' is not completely understandable for the majority of participants of implementation process (in case of both the IBs and project promoters). This grassroots activity contributes to special problems. A flexible demarcation line between the Measures 6.6, 7.3 and 9.5 is also a problem. Additional problem constitute the expectations of evaluators, who expect the project submitted under the Measure 7.3 to be as perfect as those submitted under the Sub-measure 7.2.2.

The problems encountered by the project promoters in the process of implementation are partly caused by the implementation system including the IB (mainly still too long, however systematically shortened, time devoted to evaluation and negotiation) and partly are the result of mistakes made by project promoters at the stage of formulation, as well as at the implementation stage (an excessive enthusiasm at the project creation stage concerning the recruitment principles and keeping the interest of the participants). It has to be emphasized that these problems are neither specific for the Priority VII, nor for the Podkarpackie voivodship.

There are no grounds to suppose that the higher activity of the entities entitled to participation in the competition would transfer to better, more effective projects. One may suppose that there would be more unique ideas, giving the Project Assessment Group (PAG) more choices. On the other hand, the PAG's tendency (showed in the research), to value rather technical advantages of applications over innovative and unique character, suggests that finally standard projects would be selected to implementation.

III. Projects implemented in the system mode under the Priority VII of HC OP in the Podkarpackie voivodship - results

Beneficiaries' activity in terms of applying for co-financing

1. In 2008 the systemic projects were implemented by 77 Social Welfare Centres (SWC) and 23 Poviat Centres of Help to Families (PCHF), whereas in 2009, 119 SWCs and 23 PCHFs. It means that during the first year half of SWCs did not implement the projects, whereas in the second year only ¼ of total gminas number. In case of PCHFs, at the beginning only one poviat did not join the programme, which is not going to implement the project also in 2010. The most active are urban gminas, the least rural gminas; however, the change which occurred between 2008 and 2009 is more visible in the group of rural gminas.

The research results show, that there are few chances of increasing the participation, because even if some new institutions decide to join the Priority, meanwhile some decide to back out.

2. The main reason for not implementing the project by some units is lack of suitable HR and foreseen problems with recruitment of assumed beneficiaries' number, whereas similar results were received in the similar research in other voivodships. The next reason for lack of interest in the systemic project implementation is seeing the possibilities to use support forms as inadequate to the problems affecting the persons threatened of social exclusion. Other given reasons include lack of money for own contribution and inadequate office space.

3. The evaluation of the co-financing process in all aspects (employees' competence, quality of received information and friendly contact) was positive, whereas the employees' competences got the higher position on the ranking list. The quality of information was evaluated relatively the worst (however still positive).

Types of project registered for co-financing and implemented in the system mode

4. The main form of offered support is social contract combining social work, financial support and aid in kind, as well as active integration instruments within its scope; only in few projects – socially useful works and in two projects – environmental measures. The use of local activity programme instead of social contract was anticipated only in one SWC (both in 2008 and in 2009). Some PCHFs use individual social programmes related to gaining independence, the other PCHFs prefer social integration programmes for disabled.

Among the active integration instruments dominant are the instruments for educational activation e.g. various courses trainings, enabling supplementing education, the classes enhancing the key vocational competences and services supporting further educational pathways such as vocational counselling and occupational therapy workshops. The majority of projects anticipate trainings of competences and social skills. Other forms are rare.

In case of some projects, the decision about trainings selection was planned just after the recruitment of participants and recognising their potential and expectations. However, in the majority of projects occupations chosen for planned trainings were previously listed. The most frequently listed occupations include a cook, a sales person (with knowledge of the cash register), a care assistant, a forklift truck and an industrial truck operator, a welder and persons with driving licence. Moreover, around 30% of projects listed computer trainings.

5. The majority of respondents (51.3%) claim that reasons for selecting the form of support were the beneficiaries' needs. The second frequent opinion was that selected type of support brings the best effects (is the most effective).

6. The qualitative analysis of applications for co-financing submitted by social assistance institutions indicates poor quality of the projects. The weaknesses are in every point of application. It is alarming, because in the second year the applications of some institutions were weaker than in the first one. Furthermore, the applications of the institutions included in the Programme for the first time in 2008 did not show any signs of learning from each other. The VLO's evaluation focused more on the technical aspect (the way of project presentation) than on substantive aspect (sense of activities).

Social welfare preparation for using the funds under the HC OP

7. HR of social assistance institutions has only general knowledge about the Priority VII. The main source of information is the IB's website; for directors the other sources of information are the contacts with the representatives of other institutions and trainings organized by RCSP, whereas for employees – trainings organized by RCSP and its website.

8. The willingness of enhancing the institution's influence and offering more effective support to beneficiaries, as well as the chance of getting additional funds for employing a new employee and better equipment, are the reasons for applying for ESF resources.

9. The implementation of the systemic project is a great challenge and workload for social assistance institutions. Many units employ only few employees (3-10), possess 2-3 rooms, perform all tasks included in the Social Assistance Act and sometimes provided in the Family Benefits Act. However, the research showed that the implementation of the systemic project may have an influence on increasing the potential of the social assistance institution – through the increase in employment of professional staff: over ¾ of institutions employ additional employees, because of the project implementation.

10. According to the managers of the social assistance institution, the employees are well-qualified in terms of substantive knowledge about social integration; the weakest point in this field is the experience in applying the active methods of social and vocational integration of the persons threatened by social exclusion. Knowledge about the active methods is the second weakest point. Knowledge about the beneficiaries' needs and the Priority VII of HC OP is high.

11. The employees are willing to participate in trainings, but a limiting factor is low budget of their institutions (whereas almost ¾ institutions have special funds for personnel training in their budget), so free of charge trainings are preferred. Institutions do not plan trainings and do not examine training needs.

12. The level of HR rotation in the institutions is evaluated as average (38%) or low (60%). Almost 94% of employees dealing with preparation and implementation of a project are satisfied with their job.

13. The manager of social assistance institutions shows that there is lack of HR in their institutions. There is lack of psychologists and vocational counsellors.

14. A definite majority of social assistance institutions (83%) collect information about their beneficiaries, but only half of them emphasize that these data is to support beneficiaries better. On the other hand, there is a real chance that it is the project implementation which forced the applying of monitoring procedures. The contractors more often evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

15. Over 1/5 of social assistance institutions' managers think that they do not have enough office equipment, not every employee has a computer and not every computer has the Internet access. In case of PCHF the situation is opposite – all respondents think that their office is equipped enough. 92% of employees, who work on the project implementation, have computers. Only few social assistance institutions have a special room for indywidual and group meetings with the clients, rarely they own a car, which restricts the possibilities of reaching the beneficiaries from outside the place of the SWC's and the PCHF's seat.

These small institutions, sometimes with no separate budget and the accounting department, did not have any organisational structure and complex procedures. The implementation of the project demanded introducing the appropriate for the HC OP procedures about the accounting department and settlement of expenditures, rules of marketing and personal data protection.

16. Regional Centre of Social Policy supports, within the scope of its implemented systemic project, the effective implementation of the projects. The beneficiaries, who use the RCSP's support, participated most often in trainings connected substantively with the implemented project (95%), and in trainings about project management (57%). The least institutions participated in counselling (39%). This support was evaluated as "very helpful" and "helpful", whereas the support usefulness in preparation of application was evaluated better than in case of support in the project's implementation.

The respondents claim that the RCSP's offer was lacking practical workshops about the preparation of application for co-financing (including the specific character of the systemic project) and applications for payment, counselling, and consultant's office hours. In respondents' opinion, it would be useful to publish the user's guide 'project implementation from A to Z', tips about frequent mistakes and good practice, as well as developing a set of documents useful in the implementation process.

17. 35% of examined institutions have used the Regional Centre of ESF support.

18. The directors and employees of the social assistance institutions declare a demand for trainings about project creation and preparation of application for co-financing, as well as for free of charge counselling and coaching. Moreover, the employees see the need for trainings about project's implementation. They claim that new institution can be encouraged by decreasing bureaucracy connected with the preparation and implementation of a project, as well as by sharing the information in more understandable form. An important argument would be establishing possibilities to consult an application framework during the preparation process and – in general – increasing the scope of counselling for institutions.

Summary

It is difficult to provide one evident evaluation and recommendation – whether to crave for the highest number of units which would implement the systemic project, or to observe and wait for the natural course of events. All projects of the social assistance units include 1000 participants – few project promoters of competition procedure will reach the same scope. The projects selected in competition procedure are – potentially - targeted at the same persons as the systemic projects, so there is no argument that some clients will lack support. The project promoters avoid some voivodship's areas (although many promise implementation in the whole voivodship) – but more often there are no systemic project on these areas and the IB has instruments used for drawing the project promoters' interest on the particular area and groups in form of specific criteria.

However, there is a group of centres extremely involved and willing to implement projects and this potential should not be wasted. The HC OP is a unique opportunity for changes in functioning of social assistance and its approach to services. Therefore, it is worth to implement systemic projects, however with some amendments, which are included in recommendations.

The social assistance institutions do not have enough potential to create and implement projects. A special barrier is the lack of enough employees and inadequate office space, which do not allow employing more people, working individually with a client and gathering huge project documentation.

The main problem that the project implementation has to face is recruiting and keeping beneficiaries in the project. It means that the persons selected for the projects are those, who guarantee that they will not resign before the end of the project. However, there is a risk of creaming - those who are the least active and not motivated, will be excluded from the implementation of the projects. It is important to draw attention to group processes – if there is a group recruited for the project, then it is necessary to have a few highly motivated persons in this group, who will motivate others.

In order to motivate and keep participants of projects, it is necessary to undertake motivating actions – e.g. offering attractive elements or organizing rehabilitation camps within the project. Unfortunately, the SWCs pay (benefits) for the participation in the project. There are two issues connected with this fact – paying causes that no inner motivation appears and the motivation level of those persons concerning the change of lifestyle will not occur. The important motivating factors are various courses away-from-home – it helps to change the current environment of the group.

Gaining independence by the clients of social assistance requires intense social work and support of their social skills. It is desirable that this support affect whole family, not only one person. However, according to respondents, VLO is not interested in this type of projects – it is hard to present the results and indicators.

Part of projects concentrates on vocational integration – however, without the support of social integration, the organizing of vocational courses will not change the situation of those persons permanently. What is more, the SWC's representatives emphasize that they have no competence in vocational activation. Poviat Labour Office (PLO) is better prepared in this aspect.

Projects last one year (few months in practice) and VLO is reluctant to recruit the same persons in the next projects (they are not included in the indicator measuring the stage of implementation of the Priority). It is impossible to integrate socially and vocationally a person, who has been supported by social assistance for many years, in a few months' projects. The support for such a person should last two – three years and should be personalized and complex – i.e. concern the entire social problems, but also provide support for the whole family (whereas the comprehensiveness like 'three instruments must apply for everyone' is artificial), be fixed on the

result - gaining independence by the person, which means that the support, especially counselling, should also be available after this person begins working.

The units need support in every stage – project preparation, its start, implementation and settlement and because of that, one should not resign from offering trainings within the systemic projects and from the project preparation counselling. However, the emphasis should be put on practice training in small groups (e.g. from one of few neighbouring poviats, which will contribute to establishing closer cooperation between gminas). The units which do not implement project cannot be omitted. They should be invited for trainings and informational meetings in order to encourage them to the future participation in the Programme.

There should be more emphasis put in the substantive trainings on shaping working skills according to modern social work concepts, which demand to stress the clients' potential and resources more than their weaknesses. This will enable preparation of well-aimed, attractive and effective projects. It is also necessary to indicate the chances and forms of work with the toughest groups of clients, motivating them to participation and staying in the project. The scope of substantive trainings must be correlated with the needs resulting from the evaluation of current institutions activities under the HC OP.

The most serious barrier for many centres is the fact that they do not have enough HR. Removing of this barrier is not within the competence of the IB and the interested parties. Only gmina's authorities can be helpful, however this matter goes beyond the IB's and RCSP's influence. Nevertheless, both institutions in cooperation with voivodeship executive board, took up activities, in order to enhance the role of the social assistance institutions in gminas and poviats. In order to achieve it, they use typical popularising activities, such as conferences and actions promoting the importance of the activities concerning social integration, but also more specific activities e.g. personal meetings with the gminas' and poviats' authorities.

IV. Social exclusion and the HC OP in the Podkarpackie voivodship

The poverty level in the Podkarpackie voivodship is higher than on average in the country. This difference is the highest in case of the relative poverty threshold. According to this measure, over 1/5 of persons in the Podkarpackie voivodship lives in households below the poverty threshold. On the basis of the analysis related to diversity of household budgets, one can distinguish the concentration of poviats, where the average level of equivalent income is the lowest, i.e. in south – eastern Poland, including 10 poviats of the Podkarpackie voivodship. The relatively high level of monetary poverty is characteristic for some poviats of the Podkarpackie voivodship.

Social exclusion is determined mainly by the situation on the labour market. Unemployed persons are much more at risk of poverty than working persons. However, such relations are observed on the level of the country's level. The analysis on the level of poviat indicates that the poverty level is not correlated so closely with the situation on the labour market as one could expect. It results from the vast amount of persons working on fragmented farms in some poviats with the higher poverty level. It means that persons working in agriculture become excluded from the consumption market because of the low work productivity level and low income level, although they are not excluded from the labour market (through the fact of working on a farm). It mainly concerns regions, where small farms dominate in the structure of agriculture. The place of residence also influences the poverty level – living in rural areas or in small towns increases a threat of poverty in a distinguishable way. Among other factors, which influence it as well, one can distinguish earning a living from agriculture or other low – paid jobs, having many children or disability of a family member.

The problem of social exclusion can be characterised by the fact that social risks occur jointly, which creates favourable conditions for the problem of poverty to increase and for unfavourable family situation to maintain. In the individual surveys, which were conducted within the research, the employees have given following answers to the question: 'What is the most significant social problem in your gmina?': alcoholism, joblessness (Harasiuki), unemployment, family inefficiency, alcoholism (Mielec), poverty, unemployment, disability, poverty in numerous families (Oleszyce), unemployment of both parents and addictions (Błażowa), poverty, not working pensioners (Głogów), unemployment and alcoholism (Wojaszówka), single bachelors over 40 years old living in rural areas (Jarocin), unemployment, poverty, inadequacy, addictions (Markowa), unemployment, older people, alcoholism (Baligród), having many children and inadequacy (Adamówka), inherited dependence from social assistance (Dzikowiec), numerous families and lonely older persons (Baranów).

The complexity of the social exclusion issues and its structural determinants may lead to the conclusion that a mere supplementing individual progress (e.g. lack of professional qualifications) cannot provide expected results, i.e. the permanent independence of the supported person. On the other hand, it is impossible to explicitly indicate what kind of interventions should be implemented within the social integration projects or in which areas. In practice, one can expect that in each poviat of the Podkarpackie voivodship the specific problems of social exclusion may occur and each project will be unique depending on the target group and selected model of activities. Furthermore, theoretical assumptions and conceptions of social integration accomplished through individual programmes, as well as local determinants and links may differ.

Based on the available data, it is also difficult to indicate the areas, where the social integration projects should be implemented – in our opinion there is no justification to limit assistance in terms of regions within the Priority VII.

Taking into account a huge diversity of projects, it seems possible to formulate a few guidelines concerning the form of the target projects.

First of all, an implementation of a project should be preceded by decent analysis of local social problems, which is mainly thank to social work made by employees of social assistance institutions/ social workers. However, what is meant here is not quoting detailed statistics concerning poverty level or unemployment structure, but the real recognition of groups, whose situation is the most difficult, as well as nature and determinants of their problems and difficulties.

The scope of indispensable assistance is an important aspect of the needs concerning social integration. As it was previously emphasized, social exclusion is strictly correlated with the situation on the labour market. Hence, it can be assumed that implementation of tasks with respect to professional activation is an effective way of counteracting the phenomenon of social exclusion. But it is also worth mentioning that deficit of professional qualifications is only one of the deficits characteristic for persons being in a difficult situation. The level of self – esteem and self – confidence influences one's position on the labour market to the great extent. Because of that, undertaken activities should at first involve tasks concerning the ability of overcoming own limitations and strengthening self – esteem. It can require intensive work with a psychologist and a career consultant, an individual and a group one. Activities aiming at strengthening self – esteem may also involve such unconventional activities as dentist treatment or consultations with a beautician.

Loss of social ties is the second element often combined with social exclusion. In this context the activities which enable integration of local communities have key meaning in terms of social exclusion level. On the other hand, a person has to be taught how to establish and maintain social ties, which often requires a long process of learning. Because of that, it is crucial to implement such forms of assistance within a project which support an establishment of a group and creating bonds and social norms within it, which will affect an individual.

The other element, which should be taken into consideration, is the complexity of assistance but combined with its individualization. As mentioned above, the problem of social exclusion is often correlated with many coexisting problems. This is the reason why it is necessary to offer such assistance which supports a person in an overall way, so e.g. combining psychologist's work, therapy, counselling, training courses, etc. However, it is worth mentioning that this complexity should be adjusted to the needs of an individual. It means that projects should be distinguished by high level of flexibility, so that a suitable individualization of assistance could be possible.

The impact of local communities and a family on an individual constitutes the great challenge for project promoters. The persons who take part in a project will forget very easily, what they have learnt if they return to the same environment after the project. Because of that the implemented project should consider the impact of a local community, address assistance to all members of a family and optimally to other members of a local community. Thank to these measures the changes may become more permanent. However, such processes last quite long – this is the reason why support within the project should be intended for a sufficiently long period of time.

V. Recommendations

1. <u>Problem:</u> considerable amount of potential project promoters have low or no knowledge about the HC OP and possibilities of raising funds to finance projects

<u>Recommendation for the IB:</u> it is necessary to prepare the information strategy, in which specificity of different target groups (including passive one, information has to reach them because they will not search for it) would be taken into consideration through selection of information channels and way of presenting the information. This strategy should involve more stimulating activities undertaken by the VLO.

The task of significant information channels is to send information about possibilities for applying within the HC OP to entities registered in the State Court Register, as well as to all gmina offices, poviat offices and other local public institutions with a request to put this information in a publicly available place. The Internet is another information channel. Internet announcement may appear on websites dedicated to such issues or specific for a particular type of institutions. The members of the Monitoring Committee (MC), especially representing milieus of NGO's, gmina offices, poviat offices and academic milieus, as well as the NGO Council can also be an information channel.

The specific fields of interests in particular institutions (e.g. institutions working with persons recovering from addictions, supporting children from the families threatened with exclusion or disabled persons, etc.) have to be considered within the information. It should present the HC OP as a programme corresponding to particular problems. The language of the information should be comprensible for an average recipient (not familiar with the language of the HC OP) and refer to further information, especially to the RCESF.

Within the strategy the RCESF should be obliged to put more effort on informing about its services.

2. <u>Problem</u>: many project promoters find it difficult to familiarise themselves with formal documents, including application documents, which discourage them from submitting applications and is the reason of problems on the realisation level.

<u>Recommendation for the IB/ the Managing Authority (MA)</u>: a set of simple guides concerning preparation and implementation of projects should be worked out to explain in an accessible way what types of documents are required. Through specific examples the guides should be adapted to suit the needs of different target groups. These documents should include basic information related to the rules of submitting applications and realisation of projects, together with references to more detailed information.

The user's guides should refer to more detailed information in other available sources and places and show 'a map' of the information sources in this way.

3. <u>Problem</u>: the process of project assessment indicates that the Project Assessment Group attaches excessive significance to technical/formal issues and simultaneously displays very basic knowledge about real problems of social exclusion, various aspects of disability, etc.

<u>Recommendation for the IB</u>: training of the PAG is not a solution (although the trainings concerning problems of exclusion appear to be reasonable). A new flexible approach to assessment, adjusted to a particular project, should be designed and the PAG should be instructed how to use it. It means that the PAG should resign from the assessment pattern (focusing on that, whether the statistical data have been given, hard and soft results have been differentiated, each objective and each result have been classified properly, all elements of project management have been listed, etc.) and focus on knowledge of problems, recognition of a target group and its specific segments, logic of interventions, innovation, real knowledge about possible difficulties within the project implementation, etc. It is necessary to stop thinking about the Priority realisation rates as about the objective of actions.

It also means the necessity of improving knowledge of the PAG members concerning problems of social exclusion and specificity of intervention forms. The possibility of organising internships for the VLO employees in Social Welfare Centres and the PCHF should be considered.

The RCSP should become part of the PAG.

4. <u>Problem</u>: the minimum standard has become a serious barrier limiting the willingness to submit projects; it also limits the effectiveness, which causes the critic of both the standard and the VLO.

<u>Recommendation for the IB, including the RCESF</u>: the campaign explaining the essence of the standard and possibilities of achieving it should be conducted. It should be aimed at project promoters, the PAG and the persons in information centres. All data and information available in voivodeship, which are indispensable to carry out the analysis of local needs within the minimum standard, should be published at the VLO's websites. Examples of 'good practices' in terms of using the minimum standard should also be indicated (or alternatively created) – separately in the projects under the Sub-measure 7.2.1, 7.2.2 and the Measure 7.3.

5. <u>Problem</u>: for many SWCs and the PCHF a project is associated with obligation, anxiety, problems, which is mainly caused by an administrative approach of the VLO towards the systemic projects, but also by attitude of local authorities.

<u>Recommendation for the IB, in cooperation with the RCSP</u>: a new formula of cooperation between SWC/PCHF by implementation of the systemic projects should be developed through change of communication methods (from

formal to less formal and more friendly one), creating the professional team of counsellors for institutions (in cooperation with RCSP), organising meetings with counsellors and regional meetings with SWC/PCHF, information reaching the institutions which do not implement the systemic projects (including invitations to the meetings).

The policies concerning courses involving project management should be continued. Budget appears to be a crucial issue, however it is important to underline that all training concerning budget needs to be organized in the form of workshops.

It is of great importance to realise the RCSP activities together with VLO. However, the trainers and counsellors of the RCSP have to be informed about the VLO's expectations towards project promoters.

6. <u>Problem</u>: applications submitted by SWC/PCHF are schematic, which does not satisfy both sides. In addition to this, there is a risk that submitted projects are ineffective. Social assistance institutions have huge problems with recruitment of participants and keeping them in a project.

<u>Recommendation for the IB, (in cooperation with the RCSP):</u> we suggest implementation of following modifications:

- The introduction of possibility to implement long–term projects, which will extend the perspective for undertaken actions, as well as enable to offer assistance for a sufficiently long period of time. At the same time, the abandonment of the rule 'three instruments must apply for everyone' towards participants in a subsequent year of project participation.

- The pressure to aim projects at the groups being in especially difficult situation. It means smaller groups of participants, higher rates of resigning from projects, more effort to integrate individual persons.

- An identification of 'good practices' and promoting them in the voivodeship. Promotion of interesting practices in other voivodeships – encouraging to expand used instruments, e.g. wider than before consideration of social work within projects.

- Developing environmental activities, aimed at families and local communities, so that activities implemented within a project could cause a permanent change of a beneficiaries' situation. Within projects, members of families should also be supported.

- The more emphasis should be put on social, educational and health integration of beneficiaries. The activities within the vocational integration (vocational trainings) should be preceded by reinforcement of social integration of the persons threatened by social exclusion. In information materials for SWC the attention should be directed to the groups which do not participate in activation initiatives (especially in vocational training courses) organised by labour offices. SWC should be encouraged to support such groups.

- Encouraging project promoters to implement instruments motivating the beneficiaries to stay in a project.

- It is necessary to involve teaching such skills as the ability of influencing and motivating activities into the training courses organised within the systemic project.

Moreover, it is essential to promote abilities of the SWC/PCHF employees in terms of development of clients' potential (instead of concentration on dealing with deficits).

7. <u>Problem</u>: the preparation of a project by the institution's HR constitutes a problem for centres – especially new in the system.

Recommendation for the IB/ the MA: Introducing the possibility of financing remuneration for extra employees from the moment of submitting applications.

8. Problem: vast majority of institutions entitled to apply for the competitions have no knowledge concerning the HC OP and the ESF and no preparation to do that.

Recommendation for the IB/ the RCESF: the promotion of the RCESF services, forcing RCESF to be more active in reaching new entities, as well as increasing competences of the RCESF in terms of services offered to new entities are necessary.

Additionally, we would like to emphasize that actions of the Managing Authority, which on the 11th of December announced the consultations about changing the Rules, giving only 5 days for reporting comments, do not reinforce the proper realization of the Priority VII. Proposed changes are minor, but significant and they should be known to institutions in November at the very latest, so that they could be considered at the project preparation stage. In the future the MA should prepare changes of the Rules by the end of 3. quarter of the preceding year and take into account consultations with interested parties to a greater extent.