



## SOLIDARITY ECONOMY REINTEGRATION ENTITIES IN WARMIA AND MAZURY

*Majka Łojko*

Faculty of Economic Sciences  
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4801-8069>  
e-mail: [majka.lojko@uwm.edu.pl](mailto:majka.lojko@uwm.edu.pl)

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**Key words:** social economy, solidarity economy, social reintegration, labour market reintegration, social economy entity.

### Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present solidarity economy reintegration entities and to analyse the actions they undertake for labour market reintegration and social inclusion of people at risk of social exclusion and for social and vocational rehabilitation of the disabled in the Warmia and Mazury region. The paper provides a review of the literature on the subject, based on an analysis of data from public statistics published by Statistics Poland, current studies of the Regional Centre of Social Policy in Olsztyn and scientific studies dedicated to the field of the social and solidarity economy.

The analysis has revealed that all solidarity economy entities operating in the region are focused on taking comprehensive measures aimed at counteracting social exclusion and promoting social and vocational reintegration of people who, for various reasons, are not able to perform their social and professional roles independently and effectively.

### PODMIOTY REINTEGRACYJNE EKONOMII SOLIDARNEJ NA WARMII I MAZURACH

*Majka Łojko*

Wydział Nauk Ekonomicznych  
Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie

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**Słowa kluczowe:** ekonomia społeczna, ekonomia solidarna, reintegracja społeczna, reintegracja zawodowa, podmiot ekonomii społecznej.

## Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie podmiotów reintegracyjnych ekonomii solidarnej oraz analiza podejmowanych przez nie działań na rzecz reintegracji zawodowej i integracji społecznej osób zagrożonych wykluczeniem społecznym oraz rehabilitacji społecznej i zawodowej osób z niepełnosprawnościami na Warmii i Mazurach. Artykuł o charakterze przeglądowym stanowi rezultat kwerendy literatury przedmiotu, analizy danych zastanych, których źródłem są dane pochodzące ze statystyki publicznej Głównego Urzędu Statystycznego, bieżących opracowań Regionalnego Ośrodka Polityki Społecznej w Olsztynie oraz opracowań naukowych przeznaczonych dla obszaru ekonomii społecznej i solidarnej.

Przeprowadzone analizy wykazały, że wszystkie funkcjonujące w regionie podmioty ekonomii solidarnej koncentrują się na podejmowaniu wszechstronnych działań ukierunkowanych na przeciwdziałanie wykluczeniu społecznemu i reintegrację społeczną i zawodową osób, które z różnych powodów nie są zdolne do samodzielnego i efektywnego odgrywania ról społecznych oraz zawodowych.

## Introduction

This paper focuses on issues related to the social economy sector (SE), understood as a specific and innovative way of strengthening social cohesion and building inter-institutional cooperation and, at the same time, as a special type of economy (Hausner *et al.*, 2006, p. 5, 6). This sector analyses economic operators oriented towards mobilising social capital, generating innovation and widening the market by including previously excluded persons (Pearce, 2003, p. 190). One of the directions of SE development is the solidarity economy, which focuses on issues related to professional activation and the social integration of people at risk of social exclusion.

In recent years, the issue of social exclusion has affected about 10 million inhabitants of Poland, experiencing various (with varying intensity) deficits; including, lack of financial resources, lack of access to material goods or access to jobs (*Krajowy program przeciwdziałania ubóstwu...*, 2020). Therefore, it becomes reasonable to ask how to support those who encounter difficulties in their daily lives so that they can avoid the consequences of the social exclusion process?

The literature offers various studies on the social and vocational reintegration of the people furthest from the labour market. However, publications on reintegration from the point of view of solidarity economy operators are scarce.

This article presents the main issues determining the role of SE from the perspective of reintegration entities of the solidarity economy. They represent the first link in the process of vocational activation for people in a difficult situation in the labour market due to disability, long-term unemployment, addictions or other difficulties (Rychły-Mierzwa, 2019, p. 18).

The main objective of the article is to present the scope of activities pursued by solidarity economy reintegration entities in Warmia and Mazury. This review used a literature study on the social and solidarity economy, and also used data

analysis as the research method, including an analysis of research results based on data from public statistics, published by Statistics Poland, current studies of the Regional Centre of Social Policy in Olsztyn and scientific studies dedicated to the area of the social and solidarity economy. In view of the multi-faceted and extensive nature of the subject, the analysis is limited to reintegration entities forming part of the solidarity economy, i.e. social integration centres (centra integracji społecznej, CIS), social integration clubs (kluby integracji społecznej, KIS), occupational therapy workshops (warsztaty terapii zajęciowej, WTP) and vocational activity establishments (zakłady aktywności zawodowej, ZAZ).

### **Social and solidarity economy: Theoretical discourse**

The title of this subsection first requires a clarification of the term “social and solidarity economy”, which is not an easy task, as this concept is defined in various ways and any attempt to synthesise these definitions encounters interpretation difficulties due to its multidimensionality (Łojko, 2019, p. 138). SE is neither a new phenomenon nor a new economic category (Defourny & Develterre, 1999, p. 3). The literature on the subject is abundant, with various approaches and interpretations of the concept referring to this sector, while the ways of defining the social economy are still debatable (Wielicka-Gańczarczyk, 2020, p. 134). On the one hand, it is still an insufficiently recognised research field dealing with the search for an appropriate form to bridge the gap between the public and the private sector by building on the social policy basis already developed to some extent by the so-called “third sector” (Grodowska *et al.*, 2008, p. 7). However, it encompasses a wide range of practices that clearly indicate its existence and distinctiveness (Nagel, 2013, p. 68). It is a type of undertaking whose purpose is to provide services or produce goods for a particular community, with human capital outweighing financial capital, a management system independent of the public sector and democratic operation (Vivet & Thiry, 2000, p. 11). The discourses concerning the ways of defining the SE sector are characterised by references to solidarity and social cohesion, responsibility and commitment, participation, autonomy and independence, aimed at meeting needs that cannot be met by other sectors (Roelants, 2002, p. 3).

Typically, SE encompasses a wide range of activities whose main objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of specific local communities and their individual units (Loxley, 2007, p. 39). It is also a response to the challenges of a competitive labour market, which is not always friendly to all its participants. One of the groups that may experience problems in finding their way in the modern labour market are individuals who, for various reasons, are at risk of social exclusion (Reichel *et al.*, 2021, p. 277).

In analysing the current evolution in the field of SE, its redefinition is evident, inter alia, by separating the concept of solidarity economy, whose key objective is to create jobs and socially reintegrate people at risk of social exclusion. Social exclusion is, therefore, an important area for generating forms characteristic for SE, as well as a criterion for distinguishing the solidarity economy (Lipowicz & Małecka-Łyszczek, 2020, p. 8). The solidarity dimension of SE is fulfilled by those entities which, as part of their activities, assume the function of creating jobs for the purpose of activating and socially reintegrating people at risk of social exclusion, providing social services of general interest and implementing public tasks in the field of local development (Chojnacka, 2020, p. 174).

The other set consists of civic organisations with a wide range of social activities (SE). Together, these constitute a certain unity that links the area of self-organised society with the economic sphere; the market (Skrzypczak, 2018). These actors are important for democratising access to social services and, by stimulating active participation in local life, facilitate the reconstruction of social ties (Graefe, 2001, p. 42).

The rest of the article focuses on the analysis of reintegration entities in Warmia and Mazury, with the aim of presenting the activities undertaken by these entities, building social awareness of the role and importance of the solidarity economy, as well as popularising and placing it in the focus of mainstream activities, especially carried out by local government authorities. As the literature shows, the common knowledge of the concept itself and of the basic forms of activity contrasts with the poor recognition of the scope of activities undertaken by the entities of the solidarity economy (Lipowicz & Małecka-Łyszczek, 2020, p. 7).

## Reintegration entities in the region

Warmia and Mazury is a region characterised by a vulnerable income situation of the population, a low material standard of living and the highest frequency of households assessing their situation as extremely difficult (Czapliński & Panek, 2015). For years, the region has recorded the highest rate of registered unemployment in the country. At the end of December 2020, the unemployment rate in Poland was 6.2%, but the region had a rate of 10.1% (GUS, 2021).

The wealth level of the inhabitants of the province significantly departs from the national average. This is attributable to a number of factors, including: the low level of the average monthly salary in the national economy, which in December 2020 amounted to PLN 4,828.45, and was one of the lowest in the country, with the average monthly salary in the enterprise sector in Poland amounting to PLN 5,973.75 (*Komunikat o sytuacji społeczno-gospodarczej...*, 2021). In turn, a representative study of household budgets in 2020 showed that in Warmia and

Mazury the average monthly disposable income per person in the household was lower than the average in the country and amounted to 1,896 PLN (monthly disposable income at that time was PLN 1,919) (GUS, 2021).

The province is also characterised by a significant number of people with a disability or incapacity certificate. In 2015-2019, a total of 182,877 disability certificates were issued, of which: 20,396 (11.15%) were for persons under 16 years of age and 162,481 (88.85%) were for persons over 16 years of age (*Wojewódzki program wyrównywania szans...*, 2020, p. 10).

This high number of people with a disability or incapacity certificate may indicate the disadvantageous situation of disabled people in the labour market. The employment rate among disabled people of working age in the province has almost always been below the average rate for Poland (Fig. 1). In 2010, a relatively large difference (6.7 p.p.) was recorded. In turn in 2016, this indicator was similar in Poland and in the analysed province (with the difference amounting to 0.2 p.p.). Despite the increase in the employment rate of people with disabilities in the following years in both analysed cases, the indicator for Warmia and Mazury in 2020 was again significantly below the average for Poland (27.1%) and amounted to 19.4%. The difference, in this case, was the highest, by as much as 7.7 p.p.

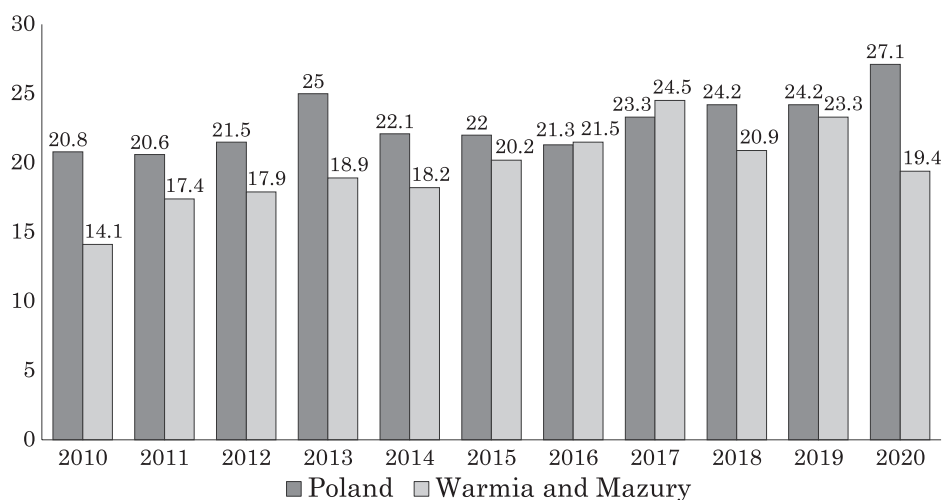


Fig. 1. Employment rate of disabled people aged 16-64 (as of Q4)

Source: own work based on data published by Statistics Poland for 2010-2020.

These issues have a direct impact on the phenomenon of social exclusion, which for years has been the subject of interest in the broader field of SE (Nosál, 2014, p. 36). The entities analysed in the SE sector in the region include those related to traditional forms of management (worker cooperatives, cooperatives of the disabled or blind) and reintegration entities. These include social integration

centres and clubs, occupational therapy workshops and vocational activity establishments. Although they belong to the social economy sector, they do not carry out economic activity in the strict meaning of the word. Manufacturing, trade or service activities are not their primary focus and are either an instrument or effect of the reintegration function (Wilimska, 2018, p. 6). This chapter, following the adopted objective, describes the functioning reintegration entities of the social and solidarity economy sector in Warmia and Mazury and describes the activities undertaken by these groups.

### **Social integration centres**

Social integration centres (CIS) are a relatively new legal form of SE entity. Introduced in Poland in 2003, they offered a great opportunity for professional and multi-faceted assistance to people at risk of social exclusion. The centres comprehensively prepare and carry out socio-professional activities for people at risk of social exclusion, the aim of which is to implement a full range of social employment programmes to counteract poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion. The idea behind their creation and activities is based on the concept of active social policy. The basic legal acts governing their operation include the Act on Social Employment (Ustawa..., 2003), the Act on Employment Promotion and Labour Market Institutions (Ustawa..., 2004) and the Act on Public Finance (Ustawa..., 2009).

According to the data published by Statistics Poland (GUS), in 2019 there were 186 social integration centres in Poland, which provided social and professional integration services to nearly 11.1 thousand participants, with 60 participants on average per centre. While the number of centres remained unchanged compared to 2018, the number of participants decreased significantly by 8.0% (12,100 people in 2018). There was also a considerable variation in numbers by individual provinces. Most CIS were located in the following provinces: Śląskie (25), Wielkopolskie (26), Pomorskie (21) and Lubuskie (18). The fewest were found in Łódzkie (2), Kujawsko-Pomorskie (3) and Mazowieckie (5) provinces (Fig. 2).

The activities of social integration centres are financed to a large extent from public funds (the budget of the provincial local government, the budgets of the municipalities and the Labour Fund). These entities may also apply for EU funding for their projects and their operation may also be covered from their activities (Subocz, 2017, p. 38). The profile and nature of the activities carried out over the years is unchanged due to the fact that social integration centres can only carry out certain activities, i.e. manufacturing, trade, services or agricultural production activities. Under the Act, the scope of permitted activities excludes such operations as the production and trade in products of fuel, tobacco, spirits, wine and beer, as well as other alcoholic products with an alcohol content of over

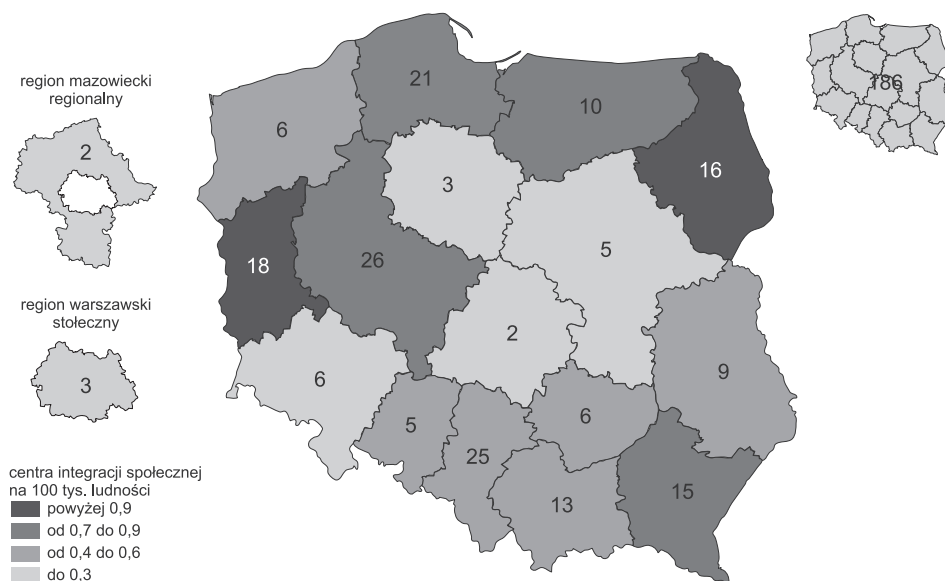


Fig. 2. Social integration centres in Poland by province in 2019

Source: based on *Centra integracji społecznej...*, (2020).

0.5% and products made of precious metals or with the participation of these metals (Act, 2003, Art. 9.1).

The number of social integration centres in Warmia and Mazury in 2015-2020 has stabilised at the level of ten entities. The activities of eight centres are carried out by NGOs and the other two by local government units (Tab. 1).

While offering social employment, the centres in Warmia and Mazury combine and simultaneously carry out activities in social and economic areas. Social integration centres in the region represent specialised entities whose main mission is to rebuild (and sustain) in these persons the ability to perform social roles independently and effectively, as well as to move independently in the labour market, leading to employment with an employer, on their own account or in social cooperatives. The list of CIS participants has remained unchanged for years; they are mostly people with primary, lower secondary or vocational education with the majority aged 25-50, mainly long-term unemployed, people released from penal institutions, alcohol addicts or homeless people. The centres organise: vocational workshops; assistance in transferring job offers; classes in self-employment or social cooperatives; participation in therapeutic activities and other social reintegration activities. CIS graduates can take advantage of assistance from the Labour Fund to start creating their own jobs (through self-employment or in the form of a social cooperative).

According to the data collected (Tab. 2), the number of participants in 2020 decreased by 66 compared to 2019, which may be directly related to the Covid-19

Table 1

## Social Integration Centres in Warmia and Mazury in 2020

District	Name of entity	Name of founder	Examples of business activity
Braniewo	Social Integration Centre in Braniewo	Braniewskie Stowarzyszenie Abstynenckie w Braniewie (Braniewo Teetotallers Association in Braniewo)	repair services, care services, recycling services for municipal waste sorting, maintenance of drainage ditches, cleaning of municipal areas
Elk	Social Integration Centre in Elk	Stowarzyszenie Inicjatyw Społeczno-Gospodarczych im. Króla Zygmunta Augusta (Sigismund Augustus Association of Social and Economic Initiatives)	catering, commercial, cleaning, office work and bookkeeping, construction work
Elk	Social Integration Centre in Elk	Stowarzyszenie Adelfi (Adelfi Association)	housekeeping, care services, office services and sponsorship
Giżycko	Social Integration Centre in Giżycko	Municipality of Giżycko	care services, cleaning and general construction work
Ostróda	Social Integration Centre in Ostróda	District Board of the Polish Social Welfare Committee in Ostróda, Polish Social Welfare Committee, the Provincial Board in Olsztyn	repair and cleaning services, catering services, care services for dependants
Pisz	Social Integration Centre in Biała Piska	Ewangelickie Stowarzyszenie BETEL (Evangelical Association BETEL)	care services, cleaning services
Pisz	Social Integration Centre in Pisz	Stowarzyszenie Kobieta na PLUS (Association for the Benefit of Women)	hairdressing, beauty services, tailoring
City of Elbląg	Social Integration Centre in Elbląg	Elbląskie Stowarzyszenie Wspierania Inicjatyw Pozarządowych (Elbląg Association for Supporting Non-Governmental Initiatives)	public services
City of Elbląg	ERKON Social Integration Centre in Elbląg	Elbląska Rada Konsultacyjna Osób Niepełnosprawnych (Elbląg Advisory Board for Persons with Disabilities)	care services, tailoring, computer services
City of Olsztyn	Social Integration Centre	Samorządowy Zakład Budżetowy m. Olsztyna (Local Government Budgetary Facility of the City of Olsztyn)	cleaning services, care services, repair services

Source: own work based on: *Raport o stanie ekonomii społecznej...* (2021, p. 14).



pandemic situation. In addition, the number of economically independent persons has decreased in 2019-2020. Over the past years, the largest group among economically independent CIS participants are those who have been employed by an employer without supported employment (approximately 90%) (*Raport o stanie ekonomii społecznej...*, 2021, p. 15).

Table 2

Number of social integration centre participants covered by social and professional reintegration between 2015 and 2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of participants who have completed activities in CIS	292	309	350	433	455	389
Economically independent CIS participants	121	112	164	199	187	115

Source: own work based on *Informacja na temat centrów i klubów...* (2020, p. 12).

## Social integration clubs

The activities of social integration clubs (KIS) are also aimed at social and professional reintegration. The participants of KIS operations may include persons who are socially excluded, due to their life situation, are not able to satisfy their basic life needs on their own, and are in a situation causing poverty and preventing or limiting their participation in professional, social and family life (Narodowiec *et al.*, 2010, p. 8).

In Poland, there are more than 260 such entities registered, which in the area of Warmia and Mazury in 2019 and 2020 included 48 social integration clubs, although only 42 clubs were active (social integration clubs in these three districts were not in operation: Działdowo, Gołdap and Ostróda). The entities running KIS clubs in the region are social welfare centres, municipalities and NGOs (*Wojewódzki program rozwoju ekonomii społecznej...*, 2020, p. 38). The largest number of registered KIS operates in the Olsztyn District (11), the Kętrzyn District (6) and the Iława District (5).

Social integration clubs provide psychological services, legal services, crisis intervention and correctional-educational programmes. Additionally, participants are offered job search assistance, as well as supportive and motivational discussions. Each of the above-mentioned forms of assistance is free of charge and can greatly facilitate the participation of these people in social life and in the labour market. After completing activities in social integration clubs, some participants are sent to perform community service works, public works and some of them take up employment with an employer (*Informacja na temat*

*centrów i klubów integracji...*, 2020, p. 30). Employment-oriented activities mainly include work for the benefit of the community. They are an important element of the activities of these entities, and they teach the rhythm of work and the associated systematic nature and responsibility; they activate and gradually allow a return to the labour market and they also provide concrete financial support (*Raport o stanie ekonomii społecznej...*, 2020, p. 19). In 2020, (due to the pandemic situation) the number of people receiving support through social integration clubs clearly decreased in comparison to the previous period: the number of participants in the social and professional reintegration programme was 1052; while in 2019 it was 2,761, and in 2018 – 2,337 (*Raport o stanie ekonomii społecznej...*, 2021, p. 16).

The main funding sources for social integration clubs are the municipal budget and funds from the District Labour Offices. Another important source of funding are EU funds. Some social integration clubs carry out projects co-financed within the Regional Operational Programme of the Warmia and Mazury Province, which are targeted at supporting people at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion by financing the functioning of social integration entities implemented under Priority Axis 11 *Social inclusion*, Measure 11.1 “Active inclusion, including with a view to promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability, *Sub-measure 11.1.1 Social and vocational activation of persons excluded and at risk of social exclusion*” (*Informacja na temat centrów i klubów integracji społecznej...*, 2020, p. 29).

It should be emphasized that the number of social integration clubs (42 active entities) does not correspond to the number of social integration centres (10 active entities), which should constitute another stage of including people at risk of social exclusion in the labour market. This situation disturbs the natural path of reintegration, rehabilitation and ultimately, the activity of their participants.

## **Occupational therapy workshops**

Occupational therapy workshops (WTZ) are another reintegration entity. It is an organisationally and financially separate institution, which offers social and vocational rehabilitation to disabled people who are unable to find employment in the open labour market. The implementation of activities for the acquisition or restoration of skills necessary for employment is carried out through occupational therapy, during which skills are developed to perform activities of daily living and basic and specific vocational skills to enable participation in vocational training to prepare for employment. There are over 720 workshops in Poland for 26,000 people with severe and moderate disabilities. Thirty-five workshops involving 1,500 participants operate in the province. Both the number of occupational therapy workshops and the list of beneficiaries have been stable for years.

People who become participants in occupational therapy workshops benefit from the assistance of such entities for many years. Changes here are negligible. Occupational therapy workshops are mainly run by foundations, associations and municipalities and their activities are financed by grants from the State Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled and from the resources of the district in which the given entity operates.

With regard to the relationship between occupational therapy workshops and vocational activity establishments, a significant disproportion should also be noted. Their number (35) does not correspond to the number of vocational activity establishments (9), which violates the natural and logical sequence of reintegration, rehabilitation and ultimately the socio-vocational activity of persons with disabilities.

## **Vocational activity establishments**

The most important forms of professional reintegration dedicated to people with disabilities include vocational activity establishments (ZAZ). These facilities are intended for people with severe and moderate disabilities and the aim is to give these people the opportunity to lead an independent, autonomous and active life through employment and social and vocational rehabilitation.

The key objective of activities carried out in the vocational activity establishments in the region is employment, the vocational and social rehabilitation of disabled people classified as suffering from a significant or moderate degree of disability, the creation of workplaces adapted to the potential and interests of people with disabilities, the building of positive social attitudes and learning independence in the workplace and beyond and cooperation with the families of employees with disabilities. These tasks are fulfilled by the ZAZs by creating and implementing individual programmes of social and vocational rehabilitation, teaching the principles of work at a particular position and adjusting the work mode to the abilities and possibilities of disabled employees.

While the number of vocational activity establishments in the region has been stable in recent years, it is worth noting that there has been a significant increase in the number of disabled people (with severe and moderate disabilities) employed in this type of facility in the region between 2015 and 2020 (Tab. 3).

The vast majority of the vocational activity establishments are institutions with numerous years of experience in the reintegration of people with disabilities, conducting both service and production activities, while purely production activities are rare. The most common activities include catering, laundry, tailoring and cleaning services. It is worth noting that vocational activity establishments are not limited to only one profile of activity. Almost all such establishments indicate activity in several sectors (Tab. 4).

Table 3

Number of vocational activity establishments and people with disabilities employed in those entities between 2015 and 2020

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of establishments operating in the Warmia and Mazury Province	8	8	9	9	9	9
Number of disabled persons employed	260	263	288	290	305	305

Source: Statistical data of the Regional Social Policy Centre of the Marshal's Office of the Warmia and Mazury Province in Olsztyn.

Table 4

Vocational activity establishments in the Warmia and Mazury Province by the degree of disability and profile of activity (as of 2020)

Name	Year of founding	Entity running the establishment	Business profile
1	2	3	4
Vocational Activity Establishment in Giżycko	2004	District Starost Office in Giżycko	laundry services, tailoring, carpentry and upholstery, metalwork
Vocational Activity Establishment in Kamionek Wielki	2003	District Starost Office in Elbląg	carpentry and upholstery, wickerwork, ecological laundry
Vocational Activity Establishment in Elbląg	2004	Elbląska Rada Konsultacyjna Osób Niepełnosprawnych (Elbląg Advisory Board for Persons with Disabilities)	catering and confectionery industry, publishing
Vocational Activity Establishment in Olsztyn	2002	Polski Związek Niewidomych (Polish Association of the Blind)	tailoring, artistic products, delicatessen, catering, confectionery, gardening
Vocational Activity Establishment in Biskupiec	2011	Polskie Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Osób z Niepełnosprawnością Intelektualną Koło w Biskupcu (Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability, Biskupiec Branch)	carpentry, production of firefighters, cleaning and gardening services
Vocational Activity Establishment in Ostróda	2014	Polskie Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Osób z Niepełnosprawnością Intelektualną Koło w Ostródzie (Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability, Ostróda Branch)	catering, handicrafts, manufacturing, cleaning and gardening, document disposal

cont. Table 4

1	2	3	4
Vocational Activity Establishment in Bartoszyce	2014	Stowarzyszenie Integracji Osób Niepełnosprawnych SION w Bartoszczach (Association for Integration of the Disabled in Bartoszyce)	maintenance of green areas, laundry services, handicrafts, food services
“Wieża” Vocational Activity Establishment in Pisz	2015	Pisz Commune	food services, cleaning of premises/green areas and handicrafts
Vocational Activity Establishment in Nidzica	2017	Polskie Stowarzyszenie na rzecz Osób z Niepełnosprawnością Intelektualną Koło w Nidzicy (Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disability, Nidzica Branch)	production of firelighters, cleaning services and care of greenery, catering

Source: own work based on *Raport o stanie ekonomii społecznej...* (2020, p. 23).

The establishment of such institutions in the region is the outcome of consistent implementation of the local social policy aimed at providing comprehensive support and assistance to the disabled. The province occupies a leading position among regions in terms of jobs dedicated to the disabled.

All of the vocational activity establishments in the region are of a hybrid nature, which means that they can be placed in the SE area as entities operating in two spheres (Sochańska-Kawiecka, 2017, p. 5):

- reintegration, serving the social and professional reintegration of people at risk of social exclusion;
- economic, consisting of non-governmental organisations conducting economic activity, the profits from which support the implementation of statutory objectives.

The costs of establishing and operating the vocational activity establishments are covered mainly from the funds of the State Fund for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (PFRON), the local government or from other sources (own economic activity, own funds of the organiser, sponsors or public funds obtained from sources other than PFRON).

## Conclusion

The main objective of the paper was to present the solidarity economy entities operating in the Warmia and Mazury region and their activities. Given the multi-faceted and extensive nature of the subject matter, the research was limited to reintegration entities.

The conducted analysis has shown that practically all types of solidarity economy reintegration entities operate in the province, conducting various activities aimed at the social and labour market reintegration of people at risk of social exclusion.

The key reintegration entities in the region are social integration centres and social integration clubs, which carry out comprehensive vocational and social reintegration. Their beneficiaries are mostly young people who experience difficulties in finding a job due to insufficient education and vocational training. Their business profile is diverse. Within the framework of vocational reintegration, participants become active and acquire qualifications in catering, care services, housekeeping, tailoring or repair work. Social integration centres and social integration clubs have become a particular bridge between the social welfare system and the labour market by creating various support opportunities,

Other important institutional elements of the system aimed at social and vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities include occupational therapy workshops and vocational activity establishments. As it has been demonstrated, vocational activity establishments in the province operate (similarly to social integration centres and social integration clubs) in various sectors. Generally, they are not limited to carrying out a single activity profile. However, the manufacturing and service activities carried out are of a subordinate nature in this case, as the main objective is to maintain and restore the working capacity of people with disabilities and prepare them for the open labour market. It is hard to disagree with the statement that disability “must not be (...) a factor that prevents the person affected from taking up employment. It entails certain individual limitations, greater or lesser, but it does not deprive a person with a disability of the ability to undertake and perform work, or of the skills, knowledge and competences necessary to perform the employment relationship” (Pietrzak, 2010, p. 27).

In line with the assumptions of the National Programme for the Social Economy Development until 2023, the Social Solidarity Economy (KPREŚ, 2019, p. 21) and the provisions contained in the draft Provincial Programme for the Development of the Social and Solidarity Economy for Warmia and Mazury 2021-2025 (WPRESiS, 2020, p. 7), it is expected that the upcoming years will bring an increase in the importance of the SE sector in the implementation of both social and economic objectives. In 2023, social and solidarity economy entities will have become an important element in activating and socially integrating people at risk of social exclusion, as well as providing public services and implementing local development tasks.

This text is an invitation to further discussion and research aimed at building public awareness of the role and importance of social solidarity economics at the beginning of the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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