

# WELCOME TO THE 5<sup>TH</sup> POLISH FORUM FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES

It has already become tradition that every three years the meeting of representatives of civic organizations from all over Poland takes place in Warsaw. We arrive here for many reasons.

**W**e meet at the Polish Forum for NGO Initiatives for the fifth time. The First Regional Forum for NGO Initiatives was held in Gdańsk 14 years ago, while the first Polish Forum – 12 years ago, when we also enjoyed the hospitality of the University of Warsaw. Since then, hundreds of meetings have been organized in different cities, all nevertheless referring to the ideas of the Forum for NGO Initiatives. The goal of each meeting always remains the same: it is a time and place for integration, discussion within the NGO environment and at the same time for presenting its actions to others – first of all to the local community – in order to show that the scattered non-governmental activities make up a comprehensive and heterogeneous whole.

The Forum is not a “May Day” Parade, nor an Olympic opening ceremony, the organization of which is prepared in every detail. It is rather an appreciation of the diversity of activities that have one common denominator - the spontaneity of citizens’ actions. The participants of the Forum share the conviction that one can and even should engage in public affairs, whether they be local or global, and that the state or the market do not offer solutions to all the problems, and even if they did – this would not be a world they would like to live in. Civic initiatives are not and should not be only a response to the deficiencies or limitations of the remaining sectors. In its deepest sense they arise from the pleasure and satisfaction resulting from work in and for a community.

What can we expect of the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum for NGO Initiatives? Similarly to the previous Forums, there will be a two-day conference, and a presentation of selected organizations on the streets of Warsaw. Polish Forums for NGO Initiatives have always been a chance to discuss the most fundamental issues for the NGO sector, such as federalization, ethic principles, the Public Benefit Work Act, or, finally, the Strategy for the Support of Civil Society Development. The latter will be also debated during the “Res Publica Civilis” conference that will be held during the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum.

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Polish Forum we proposed the basic aims for such a strategy. While they are all present in government documents, there still remains a need to discuss the way in which they should be accomplished. It is also worth remembering that the government may help develop civic society, nevertheless the NGOs should have the priority to act. While the first day of the conference will be devoted to these issues, on the second day numerous sessions proposed by different organizations will take place.

On the second day we will also present dozens of selected organizations on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. We would particularly like to show actions addressed to the general public, the aim of which is to engage as many participant groups as possible. For a long time one of the main problems of the NGO sector has been a small number of people who would disinterestedly engage in their activities. It is undoubtedly one of the most serious dangers, as well as challenges facing the NGO sector. Without roots, the

organizations lose their basic source of energy, they deprive themselves of authenticity and reliability.

This year’s Forum differs, however, from the previous ones, as there are two additional elements to the program. The first one is a seminar for Members of Parliament and Senators, organized together with the Parliament, relating to the condition of civil society and to the hearing of opinions concerning the assumptions of the Citizens’ Petition Act. The second difference will be most obvious for the citizens of Warsaw. For the first time the Forum will be accompanied by the Citizens’ Week, organized jointly with the City of Warsaw Municipal Office. During the Week there will be nearly 100 (!) different events addressed to Warsaw citizens and organized mainly by the city NGOs. We strongly believe that this is the way to inspire other cities to enrich the form of their local Forums.

We are anticipating about 1,000 guests from Poland and abroad to take part in the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum for NGO Initiatives. We hope that this year’s event, similarly to the previous ones, will be an occasion for celebration within the whole NGO sector.

This is what I wish to us all.

On behalf of the organizers,  
Kuba Wygnański

# ONE MORE LOOK AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The 4<sup>th</sup> Polish Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives went down in history as the one that adopted its own sector-wide strategy for the development of civil society, associated with the activity of citizens, their communities and organizations, and the context in which they work, i.e. a civil state and a social economy.

PIOTR FRĄCZAK

Civil Society Development Foundation

Let us recap: At the 1st Forum, a Charter of Rules for Organization Activity was adopted, at the 2nd — a memorandum regarding the sector, at the 3rd it was decided that a nationwide federation would be created, and at the last forum, a strategy was discussed. The time was right — the discussion on European fund allocation for 2007-2013 was underway — and we succeeded in taking advantage of this opportunity. The following remarks are intended as an opening voice in this discussion.

## **Governmental strategy — small steps in the right direction**

An undoubted success on the part of our sector is the government's Strategy of Support of Civil Society Development. Many analogies to the solutions described at the 4th Forum may be found there, although (if one were to only take into account the opinions of the community that were not accounted for during consultations) it is far from perfect. The success of the adoption of the Strategy cannot obstruct the need of its constant verification.

## **"Social economy" — towards an independent strategy**

The need for such a strategy is evident. Suffice it to mention the point "social economy". When compared with the 2005 proposals, it seems *not badly* written. But if we take into consideration how much work has progressed on finding solutions to issues in this field (see "Rekomendacje dla rozwoju ekonomii społecznej" – "Recommendations for the development of social economy", Warsaw 2008), it turns

out that we are now closer to creating a new, separate strategy.

## **Citizens — waiting for the tide to turn**

Although the Strategy stresses that citizens should be the basis and the subject of all actions, this is the area in which the least has been done. Only the services offered by citizen advice bureaus have earned support from the Human Resources Development Operational Program, however one should not expect that this will revert negative tendencies, in which citizen activity, public confidence, and voluntary involvement are on a down slope. This situation demands quite radical changes that can only happen through the cooperation of all sides, including the national and local administration.

## **Communities — positive forecasts**

The local communities that show the greatest hope of development are those that already have the necessary legal and financial tools to create civil society. But have local authorities understood that they are more a part of this community than the national administration? And has the central administration understood that the decentralization of local government does not stop at the regional level? It is also a question of the consciousness of officials and the strength of local communities.

## **Organizations — a new opening is mandatory**

Organizations, as a sector, have also gained much: potential sources of funding, opportunities for institutional participation in public life (e.g. via representa-

tives in monitoring committees). Is this enough for them to be able to agree upon their common interests and choose mutual cooperation in order to take advantage of the possibility of influencing the socio-political system? Are they able, for the common good and for long-term benefits, to give up day to day competition? Contrary to what it may seem, the enormous amount of funds has not yet resulted in a decrease of intra-sectoral competition.

## **The civic state — still just a plan**

The idea of good governance and the partner state, while highly prioritized in declarations, in reality remain a hope rather than a promise of change for the better. Much depends upon the citizens themselves, their communities and their organizations. Can they mount a common offensive (along with their other public partners) to increase their role in decision-making, proposal consultations and participation in problem-solving and fulfilling needs?

## **Time to act**

Just as it was (and still is) in the case of social economy, tangible action is necessary in the remaining areas of the strategy drafted in 2005. Much, however, depends on political good will. We can either lose our social momentum in conflicts and competition, or we can use it for the good of us all. It is important to properly define the rules of cooperation, on the one hand, and on the other — to work out a strategic way of thinking about our common goals. The 5th Polish Forum For Non-Governmental Initiatives will be an excellent occasion.

# CIVIL SOCIETY FOR OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN – CHANGES, FORECASTS, AND CHALLENGES

The government should approach the development of civil society in a strategic and long-term fashion. It does, however, remain our responsibility. It is mainly non-governmental organizations that should feel obligated to ensure the best possible state of Polish civil society.

JAKUB WYGNAŃSKI

Association for the Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives

The words spoken by Lord Dahrendorf in the early 1990s, according to which countries undergoing transformation would need 6 months to change the political system, 6 years to rebuild the market, and 60 years for a change of attitudes, ring true nowadays. We are 1/3rd of the way there, which is a good occasion to stop and think. We should realize that the true measure here are not years, political terms, or planning periods, but entire generations. We must accept this humbly and understand that the consequences of our activities (and lack thereof) will affect our children and grandchildren.

The non-governmental sector functions in a defined environment — it is partially determined by it, but can also, to a certain degree, influence it. Much depends upon whether particular organizations and the sector as a whole properly recognize changes that are underway and that can benefit or hinder their work. Ignoring changes can lead to the loss of the ability to strategically “navigate” among anachronistic organizations that remain content with an opportunistic form of activity lasting from one project to the next. More and more associations and foundations function well in technical and procedural terms. At the same time, the question “what for?” becomes ever more pertinent. The question of goals is especially relevant for non-governmental organizations; as opposed to public administration and business, the point of their activities is not apparent. Being as they are institutions with a mission, they must regularly ask themselves this question. Without understanding the environment and the undergoing changes,

the answer will remain unknown. The responsibility for drawing conclusions from this rests foremost upon the leaders of the organizations and is a gauge of their maturity.

It is possible to adapt to the new challenges posed by the quickly changing world. But it is also important to shape the world surrounding us. We can attempt to realize certain scenarios and prevent other ones.

Changes are underway in a range of fields; first of all, in the field of politics. The way in which political goals are formulated is changing, as are particular policies and the way in which they are conducted. There are changes going on in models of governance and the providing of public services. Traditional, hierarchical bureaucracy and the direct providing of services by the administration is being increasingly replaced by network models; much is said about motivation, while the providing of public services is being entrusted to other entities (including organizations).

Models for representing interests are changing as well. The role of so-called intermediary institutions is decreasing. The result of this may either be an improvement of quality in democratic mechanisms, or their deterioration.

Secondly, the economic environment is changing. The non-governmental sector is becoming economized, making greater efforts to achieve ties to the global economy, their existence is reaching the consciousness of consumers and influencing their behavior, and the border be-

tween sectors and institutions is becoming blurred.

Thirdly, we are witnessing an enormous social shift. The demographic and employment structure is changing, the demand for services is rising (especially public services). The traditional model of the welfare state is failing, and the necessity of mobilizing non-state actors is becoming obvious. Now, the need is for a so-called “welfare society”, in which a balance must be struck between services and obligations. It is unattainable without taking joint responsibility for one’s own fate, the fate of individuals and their families, and for that of society. Despite growing wealth, poverty still affects specific social groups (in Poland, especially families with many children). Help should increasingly be targeted not at individuals, but entire communities that are unable to escape the situations in which life has put them.

The job market is changing. In Poland, unemployment is becoming more of a qualitative issue (finding a good job) rather than a quantitative one (finding any job at all). We also have the EU’s lowest handicapped employment rate.

The level of social capital is alarmingly low. The fundamental barrier in the development of civil society is no longer institutional, but lies in the lack of elementary social cooperation skills, as well as the decay of civic virtues and the attachment to common good. It is a question of every day social interaction — how we speak to each other, how we agree on basic issues that we share, how we overcome our differences, and whether we

can accept that these differences do not always have to divide us into those that are right and those that are wrong. We are witnesses to a type of civic apathy. There is a decrease in the rate at which new NGOs are founded, and a lower eagerness towards voluntary work.

Technological changes, especially those associated with the internet, have an immense affect on our lives. The internet is democratizing access to information and offers the opportunity to present our opinions. Many activities hitherto reserved for direct interpersonal communication have been transferred online, where unique and geographically dispersed communities are cropping up.

The non-governmental sector is changing as well. Members of organizations and volunteers are being replaced with paid employees, an effect of the sector becoming more professional. The sector is using (becoming dependent on?) public funds to an increasingly greater degree. It is taking up public tasks and developing service functions.

Structural funds do not always have a positive effect on the non-governmental sector. The way in which they are distributed is often disappointing — spending is not associated with concern about the factual results. We are in danger of “consuming” our chance without building anything permanent.

The non-governmental sector, concentrated as it is on procuring public funds, often disregards its role as a spokesperson. Although many organizations are growing as institutions (in the material sense), and are becoming important employers, they are nevertheless incapable of motivating citizens towards disinterested activities, unable to organize debates, or even take part in them. Furthermore, transparency and credibility of organizations is becoming an increasingly serious challenge.

Even the division into three sectors is not as adamant as it once was. The non-governmental sector is not as “non-governmental” as it used to be, nor as “non-profit” as it was recently. The common view of the nature of NGOs is a far cry from how they function in reality.

We have a lot to think about. The Polish Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives will provide a chance to merely touch upon these topics. The rest will be our homework.

PANEL	Civil society for our children and grandchildren – changes, forecasts, and challenges
ORGANIZER	Association for the Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives
WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 10:45 - 12:00
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, A. Mickiewicz Room

# HOW CITIZEN-LIKE ARE WE? THE CLASH OF PERSPECTIVES

The 5<sup>th</sup> Polish Forum For Non-Governmental Initiatives [OFIP] is a great opportunity to reflect on the present situation of civil society. “Res Publica Civilis” will be the first plenary session and will be devoted to this matter.

MARZENA MENDZA-DROZD  
Non-governmental Initiatives' Forum

There is a need for citizens in a civil society. Aware and active citizens constitute local communities, successful non-governmental organizations and finally the civil society. “Citizenship” is the key term to the OFIP panel discussions – it will be present in the keynote and will set the final conclusions.

This discussion requires obtaining opinions of other sides. Even if there is a tendency among non-governmental organizations to pass over the idea that active citizens belong to their milieu, it is difficult to defend this position. There are many more kinds of citizenship, a citizen is not only a social activist, a volunteer, or a member of non-governmental

organization. It is beyond all doubt that a citizen is a voter. It is also easy to promote the idea that a citizen is a self-aware consumer. In contrary to this, the role of a trade unionist or a representative of the employers' organization arouses doubts if these are forms of citizenship. However, these last two forms of citizenship play the most cru-

cial role nowadays in consulting, negotiating, and making decisions about all of us. Although the world is changing around us, it seems that the changes do not concern the fixed mayor-state forms which might be helpful however in a different social and economic situation. In the struggle for the employees' rights in 19th century there was a fixed opponent. Nowadays there is a significant change: it is not only the employer who is responsible for the working conditions in the company, but the government as well, which is responsible for the Treasury, and finally it is the whole administrative system which employs office workers, teachers, policemen etc. The struggle between trade unions and the state is not so crucial for private companies as it is for consumers. However, consumers do not take part in this debate. The most important decisions, strategic from the point of view of the government, are discussed and negotiated in the Trilateral Commission, where membership is given according to representation. Representative (in number) trade unions and the labor organizations along with government, discuss the matters which influence people who do not belong to any of these institutions. Other organizations, including consumers' associations, do not meet the requirements, therefore they are dependent on their representatives. By way of consolation they participate in the public consultations, which is rather a mere formality.

This situation is also present at the national level - during meetings announced by the government, as well as at the local level. How many (even well-organized) activists in the commune councils complain that their role is reduced by the local governments to serve only their own communes? The few exceptions to this rule, on the national scale, are not enough to say that the relation between citizens and the state authorities is based on partnership. If the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act, which stresses the collaboration between state authorities and organizations, does not change the situation, what will change it?

There are many institutions representing ordinary people and each of them may carry out a mandate - from general election, or issued by law. However, it evokes questions. Does this system indeed grasp the complexity of the actual situation of the citizens? Is the multidimensional citizen - employee, voter, employer, activist, consumer - well-represented and is his or her vote taken into account? Does the fully aware and active citizen in the days of the Internet, rapid and broad access to information, have any chance to present his or her own opinion, view or standpoint? And even if the citizen gives credit to an organization, does his or her mandate really matter?

This panel is going to bring up this question. Probably it is even better to

ask if each of us is able to take advantage of any institution to become an active citizen. All members of parliament, local governments, trade unions and labor organizations are welcome to join the meeting. The presence of representatives of mass media is also important - they can speak in the name of citizens and present a political power. We would like to discuss if there is enough place for non-governmental organizations among institutions influencing state decisions. Do the current political players feel their own, inborn, limits in the matters for which they are responsible? Non-governmental organizations assert their rights to decide in crucial matters. Is it only their problem? Do the former decision-makers feel responsible for their decisions?

These tasks seem to be shared by organizations, trade unions, employers, members of parliament, and councilors. How to improve the efficacy of the state and local representatives? How to improve consultations and negotiations? How to make the votes of activists matter? These are important tasks and questions. If we do not find answer to them, or at least if we do not understand them well, it will be difficult to talk about civil society and above all, it will be difficult to solve more and more complex social problems.

PANEL	How citizen-like are we? The clash of perspectives
ORGANIZER	Association For The Forum For Non-Governmental Initiatives
WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 12:15 - 13:30
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, A. Mickiewicz room

# ACTIVE, CONSCIOUS CITIZENS

We would like to invite you to discuss what non-governmental organizations can do in order to increase citizens' participation in public life and to promote good practices of civil society participation.

## STEFAN BATORY FOUNDATION

The debate concerning Polish civil society is rich in various points of view and positions, but nearly everybody agrees that one of the most crucial deficits is little interest in public matters. Such opinions are present both in the non-governmental sector ("A Voice in the Discussion Concerning the Vision of Civil Society in Poland"), and within the government ("Report on Intellectual Capital in Poland"), where the problem of low civil society activity figures among one of the important obstacles in the country's modernization. It is difficult to contradict such opinions, especially that they are corroborated with facts and figures.

Poland has the lowest elections turnout in Europe. It is true that in 2007 53% of Poles went to cast their vote but otherwise, apart from the 1989 elections, the turnout did not exceed the threshold of 50%. The lowest turnout is recorded in local government elections, not to mention elections for community councils. According to the Klon/Jawor Association, last year only 6% of voters contacted a politician or an official. Another sphere of Poles' public activity is equally problematic: only 1.7% declare participation in a political party or a civil group and only 1.4% took part in a public demonstration. The commitment in non-governmental organizations' actions is falling. In 2007 13.2%, that is 4 million people, devoted some of their time to voluntary work, in 2005 the percentage was much higher (23%). Membership in as-

sociations is now declared by 4 million people, while in 2006 the number was 6.7 million.

The causes of this state of affairs are attributed to the historical and cultural context (the time of partitions of Poland and of communism), and to the currently dominating lifestyle (a large portion of time is devoted to professional work while leisure time is spent on consumption). The recent drop in commitment to civil activity among Poles may be attributed also to seasonal economic migration, often taken up by the most energetic persons. What is also mentioned, although less often, is the choice of the modernization model after 1989 - promoting the individual and his success first and foremost, which is accompanied by a lack of convincing community projects. Apart from what may be said about the causes, at present a much more important question is whether and how we can counteract such negative phenomena.

Non-governmental organizations - due to their place in the social sphere - have an especially important role to play. They have also achieved much success. Last year a joint action of a dozen of non-governmental organizations gathered in a coalition called [www.21pazdziernika.pl](http://www.21pazdziernika.pl) encouraged 3 million Poles to vote in Parliamentary elections (20% of those who went to cast their vote). Every year in January fundraising events organized by the Great Orchestra of Christmas

Charity Foundation (Wielka Orkiestra Świątecznej Pomocy) engage thousands of volunteers. Another example of a success is the movement of support for the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, and for democratic reforms in Belarus (with the participation of many young people). Dozens of other successful undertakings may be mentioned here, but we will pay attention not only to what we have done so far, but also to what we have not done and what mistakes we have made. We will try to present the experience of other countries and reflect on solutions that may be useful for Poland.

The discussion will concentrate on three aspects of civil participation:

- **participation in elections**- how to encourage Poles to participate in elections; how we can help in order for Poles to be conscious whom and why they are voting for, and in order for them to be able to verify whether those elected realize their pre-election promises.
- **participation in civil actions**- what to do in order for Poles to actively manifest their opinions, to take part in actions of support and protest, demonstrations, public gatherings, and also how to make them sign open letters and calls.
- **participation in non-governmental organizations' activities**- how to increase the number of organizations' members, make them take part in actions, and pay contributions. What volunteers we need and what we can offer them.

PANEL	Active, conscious citizens
ORGANIZER	Stefan Batory Foundation
MODERATOR	Anna Rozicka, Stefan Batory Foundation
WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 15:15 - 17:15
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room D

# ACTIVE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Research in local communities, both qualitative and quantitative, presents a picture of civil society that is completely different from the one created on the basis of the so-called "generalized confidence" research.

ANNA GIZA-POLESZCZUK

„Stocznia” Laboratory of Research and Social Innovation (Pracownia Badań i Innowacji Społecznych „Stocznia”)

One of the major misunderstandings in discussions concerning Polish "civil society" is having recourse to quantitative research results pointing to low level of so-called "generalized confidence" – which is supposed to be key evidence of social capital weakness. In fact society is something more than opinion distribution in statistical mass – society is composed of live, active local communities functioning on various levels which cannot be presented in a random sample. Generalized confidence is only one of the many possible indicators of cooperation potential.

Research performed at the level of local communities, both qualitative and quantitative, present a picture that is utterly different.

## Informal social networks

First of all, in Poland, especially in the neighborhood communities (communes, districts, little towns) there are active, developed, informal social networks. Even in a big city (research in one of Warsaw's districts), most citizens can count on somebody's help, e.g. in case of illness, financial problems, search for employment or a need for somebody to look after a child<sup>1</sup>.

Secondly, many local communities in Poland take up series of actions for the common benefit of the community on a spontaneous and independent basis. It concerns not only small communities, but also neighborhood communities in cities. Thirdly, a series of successful projects have been and are being realized in Po-

land - they are focused on activation and support for local communities.

## Make use of the potential

Therefore, in Poland the main problem does not concern people's passive attitude. The problem concerns the skill to make use of the existing, tremendous potential. Local authorities, and even non-governmental organizations often "can't see" neither citizens' spontaneous activities nor the existing social support networks. There is no monitoring system (or any other information gathering system) concerning such initiatives, recognizing social networks, that might need support and the range of which can be widened.

## People have their needs, not only problems

The adjective "social" in strategic documents appears usually next to the noun "problem". Communities are seen through the mirror of problems that are present there, and not with the resources and positive needs in mind: people who want to have a nice lawn are not a social problem, they express a social need! Non-governmental organization activities have to fit such pre-defined "tasks" of the self-government who organizes competitions or commissions services. What is more, in general, authorities cannot see "community" at all, what they can see are single persons or families at most, usually with a problem (e.g. unemployment, drug addiction, alcoholism). I do not deny the importance of these problems, but they make it impossible to see local community and its needs, e.g. safe and practical public space.

I do not want to discourage actions aiming at solving these problems, I want to draw attention to the fact that what is important is to make sure, that they aim not only at providing aid to passive "beneficiaries", but also at engaging and empowering communities and groups. The philosophy behind the new social economy aims exactly at this direction.

What stems from the above-mentioned issues are simple recommendations:

- the need for introducing a system of recognition of local social needs and potential (including social capital) of concrete communities
- creating mechanisms of describing the quality of life in local communities in a complete and multi-dimensional way (exceeding purely economic indicators). Capacity to identify local communities which are in need of external support, and creating mechanisms for providing such support
- providing local communities (local authorities, non-governmental organizations, citizens' groups, schools, municipal libraries) with simple tools for expressing their needs, inventory work and taking advantage of local social resources and cooperation models among given actors
- withdrawing from rigid budgets (in local governments) for the benefit of greater openness in designing projects
- promoting a modern, holistic way of thinking about territory, not as an administrative "unit", or a collection of people and institutions, but as a community, a network of intertwined actors
- better synchronizing of programs concerning broadly understood technical infrastructure and economic development with social and environmental programs on the national, regional and local level.

<sup>1</sup> Klon/Jawor research conducted in March 2008 on representative samples of 3 communities (Debrzno, Cieszyn, Praga Północ – the district of Warsaw)

PANEL	Active local communities
ORGANIZER	„Stocznia” Laboratory of Research and Social Innovation
MODERATOR	Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, „Stocznia” Laboratory of Research and Social Innovation
WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 15:15 - 17:15
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room A

# ACTIVE AND STRONG NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Polish Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives in Warsaw we will again be discussing the present state of the Third Sector in Poland, and perspectives of its further development.

KRZYSZTOF LEOŃCZUK

The Network of Information and Support for Non-Governmental Organizations SPLOT

**FORCE** - noun, feminine  
(1.1) phys. physics, vector quantity of physical interaction among objects;  
(1.2) energy, effort capacity  
(1.3) capacity to interact, ability to exert influence  
(1.4) usually pl., plural, a group of people capable to exert influence

Source: Wikisłownik,  
<http://pl.wiktionary.org/wiki/si%C5%82a>

In Poland, since 1989, together with system transformation, civil society transformation – or rather „growing up” – has taken place. During this period of time, organizations went through all stages of development: from citizens' spontaneous engagement in casual actions, without any concrete skills, resources for the activities, often intuitive or helpless, to full professionalization, full engagement and partnership in social life and in constructing civil society.

Today the transformation has come to an end, and non-governmental organizations are confronted with a dilemma of choosing proper direction for the years to come.

The maturity of non-governmental organizations triggers reflection concerning their future and their role in society. The above presented definition of force, in at least three out of four explanations, reflects the way the non-governmental sector works. That is why during our session at the 5th Polish Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives we will discuss how the

way we understand the non-governmental organizations' force becomes a warranty of their efficiency and credibility for other sectors' partners and for society, for the benefit of which non-governmental organizations work in the first place.

An additional reason to take up the above-mentioned discussion is the project of the Strategy of Support of Civil Society Development for 2007-2013, prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy – a document that has been consulted since 2005, and without any explicit stance on the part of the non-governmental sector, may remain at this stage for a long time.

## What is the present reality of non-governmental organizations in Poland?

According to Klon/Jawor Association research, in 2007, for the first time since the system's transformation, the number of non-governmental organizations' and other social movements' members plummeted drastically. When compared to 2006, organizations lost a staggering 2.7 mln members. The number of volunteers dropped nearly by half. Moreover, according to REGON data, fewer new non-governmental organizations are being set up.

The sector's stratification is also deepening. The less affluent non-governmental organizations have at their disposal financial means comparable to the level from 2005 (half of the organizations have revenues lower than 18 thousand PLN/

year), the richer – considerably higher (in 2005, 5% of the richest organizations had at their disposal over 700 thousand PLN of revenues, in 2007 this amount reached over 1.3 mln PLN).

## Topics for discussion

Even though the demography of active members of the organizations is decreasing, associations and foundations tighten domains of their influence, professionalize their actions, present more and more concrete products, reach well-defined target groups. Their efficiency is growing.

There are many models of how an active and strong non-governmental organization should function. One of the presented here definitions says that force is “a capacity to interact, ability to exert influence”. From this point of view, an organization's size and its yearly budget are no longer decisive, they become only one element out of many others.

Non-governmental organizations' force rests on several fundamental elements: people, activities, relationships with partners, resources for activities, and those elements do not have to be available simultaneously.

An organization's force stems not from the actions it undertakes, but from the results of these actions as well as from the change that is achieved.

The invitation to a discussion panel concerning active, strong non-governmental organizations, is at the same time an invitation to a discussion concerning the most effective way of using our Force for active participation in the social life of our country. What should be done to transform us into a credible, active, and strong subject, and first of all a partner who will create the reality in the coming years?

PANEL	Active and strong non-governmental organizations
ORGANIZER	The Network of Information and Support for Non-Governmental Organizations SPLOT
MODERATOR	Krzysztof Leończuk, The Network of Information and Support for Non-Governmental Organizations SPLOT
WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 15:15 – 17:15
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room C

# CIVIL STATE, GOOD GOVERNANCE

The implementation of mechanisms enabling an effective influence of citizens on state and local policy is fundamental to higher citizen activity.

KATARZYNA BATKO-TOŁUĆ, KRZYSZTOF IZDEBSKI  
Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups

The directives to the 2007-2013 National Cohesion Strategy include: the improvement of the quality of developing legal system, enforcement of standards and ethics in public life and in administration, improvement in the functioning of justice administration, improvement of the quality of state and local administration personnel as well as promotion of dialogue and partnership between institutions. There is no point in discussing good governance without taking into account citizens - the most important agents, subjects of such government.

It is worth considering whether competent authorities and effective NGOs guarantee good governance. We would like to discuss the above-mentioned issue during this year's session, entitled "Civil state, good governance". We will consider whether we should not follow Jürgen Habermas in replacing the rather vague concept of "civic society" with the notion of "society of citizens".

From the citizen's point of view, the most important aspect of good governance is participation, more precisely, the right to express one's opinion and to influence the authorities. Such "participation" is on top of the list of indicators of good governance prepared by the World Bank. Let us consider whether the activities of authorities at different levels

bring us closer to the ideal of good governing. The statute of the Capital City of Warsaw will serve as an example: it provides for the citizens to have legislative initiatives, yet the minimum number of required signatures (15,000) effectively prevents the citizens of Warsaw from influencing the development of their city. The lack of consultation law is a problem as well: in consequence, the authorities are the ones who usually decide when to hold consultations, not to mention the doubtful quality of the latter.

The authorities usually explain that the delay of the decision processes is pointless, as the citizens do not wish to engage in public activity anyway. While accepting this argument, it is worth considering what the reasons behind such "citizen apathy" are. Analysts of modern democracy claim that it results mainly from the fact that citizens do not feel they can influence state or local issues, which has been confirmed by a survey conducted in January 2008 by Public Opinion Research Center, which showed that 65% of citizens share this opinion. Jeffrey M. Berry argues that increasing the possibility of influencing present politics would lead to a higher level of citizen engagement in public affairs. It will be argued during the meeting, therefore, that it is necessary to introduce mechanisms enabling effective citizen influence on state and local politics, as it is the main con-

dition of higher citizen activity. It is not only our opinion, but a specific commitment of the Member States of the Council of Europe, expressed in the Warsaw Declaration: "Member states must therefore maintain and develop effective, transparent and accountable democratic institutions, responsive to the needs and aspirations of all".

We will consider how the authorities respond to the actions undertaken by citizens, whether those who have great interest in public life have a chance to implement the principles of good governance, whether good governance is a meaningless phrase or a daily practice of Polish politics. Actions undertaken by the inhabitants and individual citizens will serve as examples to discuss. We will also review the experience from the action "Transparent Poland" - whether anything has changed in Poland as a result of this action, whether the communities taking part in it actually meet the standards of good governance or they only treat such participation as an opportunity to obtain another certificate, not backed up by any actual actions.

And maybe it is so, as Jose Ortega y Gasset envisaged in the "Revolt of the Masses", that excessive participation may lead to the paralysis of the governing bodies, because allowing citizens to participate in management fosters the demise of the State. Do not particular groups of citizens, in formulating their postulates which are often contrary to one another, move away from the notion of the "common interest"?

The matter is worth discussing...

PANEL	Civil State, Good Governance
ORGANIZER	Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups
MODERATOR	Katarzyna Batko-Toluć, Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups
WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 15:15 - 17:15
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room B

## CENTRALLY OR LOCALLY: WAYS OF PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Certainly, either of the approaches mentioned in the title, with appropriate standards and procedures, can successfully support non-governmental organizations (we are intentionally using the terms of „supporting” or “assisting” instead of “maintaining” while speaking of non-governmental organizations).

Grant programs funded by the European Union, Polish and foreign foundations, governmental and local governments' sources are aimed at triggering off a particular subject, looking for good practices or inspiration to act; not at the financial maintaining of organizations. Many of them even rule out or reduce the chances of re-support for the same subject and restrict possibilities of covering the administrative expenses.

Since we are on the subject of activating and inspiring, we should also mention the needs to which we respond with an interesting idea, a project or a campaign. At this point we are facing another dilemma: who assesses social problems better? A grantor or a grantee?

Maybe grantors should not determine the scope of supported activity so strictly? Yet is it possible on the central and national level?

The local government diversifies communities in respect of social problems, wealth, human and social capital etc. It is more and more common that a local context entails different solutions for different areas. From this perspective local grant programs seem to be more effective.

On the other hand, there are some social

problems (like health care or security) which need centrally administered programs. The majority of the programs are addressed to particular social groups (e.g. people suffering from the same disease or children using the Internet).

There are some challenges which cannot be taken up without non-governmental organizations involved in the process e.g. building civil society - one that would actively participate in electoral and consulting processes, establish non-governmental and self-help organizations, and develop both volunteering and philanthropy. The non-governmental sector is needed here as a frame. Unfortunately, the number of both people committing themselves to society and recently registered organizations is decreasing (research conducted by the Klon/Jawor Association; a report „The Intellectual Capital of Poland” prepared by a team of strategic advisers to the Prime Minister). Are grant programs and contests good tools supporting the development of civil society? What kinds of programs are needed? How to hold up the stability and self-sufficiency of organizations without maintaining them, just by making good use of grants?

PANEL	Centrally or Locally: Ways of Providing Financial Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations
ORGANIZER	Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland
MODERATOR	Paweł Łukasiak, ADPP
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 - 11:00
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room A

## EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Szpitalna NGO Center and the Ministry of Regional Development are inviting for a session dedicated to the access of non-governmental organizations to the EU funds. The aim of the panel is to show the potential applicants the specificity of implementation of the projects financed from structural funds; to spread the knowledge of successful applications for the funds and implementation of the projects funded from them. We will also try to explain how to account for the costs. We would like to point out both the problems which organizations can come across while implementing the projects and the ways of dealing with them.

The session will be held as a dialogue between the representatives of both public administration whose particular institutions are responsible for implementation of EU funds in Poland, and of organizations which are experienced in carrying out projects financed from structural funds in the period 2004-2006.

On the basis of experience gained in this period we will present the range of participation of organizations in the process of implementation mentioned above. The meeting will be mainly dedicated to the Human Resources Development

Operational Program which, during the years 2007-2013, will be the main source of funds for non-governmental organizations. Three stages of carrying out a project will be discussed in details – application, implementation, settlement and closing.

Every participant will be given a special package of informational materials dedicated mainly to non-governmental organizations. The package will include: documents connected with the Human Resources Development Operational Program, an analysis of the implementation period 2004-2006, and a brochure containing information about activities expected to take place as part of the Program. A report recapitulating the way non-governmental organizations use structural funds can also be found in the package.

PANEL	European Union Funds Available for Non-Governmental Organizations
ORGANIZER	Szpitalna NGO Center, Ministry of Regional Development
MODERATOR	Michał Olszewski
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 - 11:00
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room C

## ECONOMIZATION OF THE THIRD SECTOR – MONEY: THAT IS, THE COIN

### Obverse

Financial institutions serving the third sector in Italy and France offer a surprising service: a loan for establishing an organization or a social cooperative. People who want to establish a non-governmental organization give thought to the way they will raise funds for the realization of their ideas. Then they establish their own business and start to act. A loan, usually taken for ten or fifteen years, can be paid off part by part by all the founder members. It is of additional benefit. Firstly, an installment divided between the members is rather small. Secondly, if one pays, one makes an effort. There is no problem with the activity of members. Its genius is its simplicity.

Local government grants constitute the main source of income for organizations in Poland. In practice, there is no third sector without these funds. Workers for voluntary causes think that a borough leader or a mayor is obliged to do this and that. Dependent on officials and local authorities, the third sector lacks funds. I know an organization which vaunted acting at little cost – as soon as the president was missing, the activity was finished. I know, not only from research, that an average Polish volunteer or a member of association runs a business at a loss and does not even get reimbursement of costs incurred. Due to this the third sector cannot be attractive. Thus, we should not be surprised by the decreasing number of volunteers and organizations.

### Reverse

On the reverse side there are organizations which do plan their actions. Due to this they raise funds much easier. There are many opportunities for financing – 11 billion euro from the Human Resources Development Operational Program, payable activity or enterprise, and the increasing amount of money from making over 1% of tax. Just in the area of Silesia there are over 160 organizations with budgets exceeding 1 million PLN. There are also about 100,000 employees. This number of work places is provided by the postal service, the railway, and the bank sector. There are still some areas not taken over by anyone: kindergartens, nursing care, lifelong learning, and fair trade. It is up to organizations how much of this space they will take up. We have to be aware that it is not possible to defeat the business and administrative competitors without bearing the costs and employing payable staff. In Europe, there is social economy which combines good service with the commitment of volunteers' and members' of the organization. "No" for profit does not mean „for free”!

PANEL	Economization of the Third Sector – Money: That Is, the Coin
ORGANIZER	The Civil Initiatives Development Centre (a member of the Network of Information and Support for NGOs SPLOT)
MODERATOR	Piotr Mastowski (CRIS)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 – 11:00
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room B

## CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS – A FASHION OR A NEW MODE OF MANAGING THE SOCIAL ACTIVITY OF A COMPANY?

There are several dozen of Corporate Foundations in Poland. The growing number of non-governmental organizations established by corporations is something new in the third sector. More and more corporations agree that it is easier to solve social problems by establishing one's own foundation.

During the panel experts gathered by the Responsible Business Forum together with Corporate Foundations representatives, will try to find out what benefits are provided for the company from developing its own foundation. The

questions we would like to raise are: Where is the place of such a foundation in the structure of a corporation? Where are the limits of their interdependence? How and when is it beneficial for the company? Does it influence human resources management e.g. through attracting attention to social investments? What kind of companies establish their own foundations and why? We will introduce the results of the Donators Fund research which examines the corporations' engagement in social problems and provides ranking of the companies on their financial and non financial sup-

port in the community work (under the CEENEGI project).

Watching the activity of some Corporate Foundations, many foundations and associations ask if these new business entities are their prospective partners or competitors. Will they decrease cooperation between corporations and existing foundations on the market? The 1% tax free income evokes an ethical dilemma. Shall transnational corporations have the possibility to get the status of non-profit organizations and use their privileges?

The partnership of non-governmental organizations with the business sphere is complicated, however the general trends show that by all appearances, two different spheres are getting closer - more and more companies do care about global social problems, organizations become more professional in using business methods.

PANEL	Corporate Foundations – a fashion or a new mode of managing the social activity of a company?
ORGANIZER	Responsible Business Forum
MODERATOR	Mirella Panek – president of the Responsible Business Forum
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 – 11:00
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room D

## SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND MODERN TECHNOLOGIES

The development of modern technologies gives a number of new opportunities in the area of communication, access to information, and business development. Computer skills and the knowledge of new forms of communication are nowadays considered one of three civilization-related skills, in addition to the skill of driving a car and speaking a foreign language. Nevertheless, access to modern technologies and the ability to use them effectively is quite varied in Poland, depending on such factors as place of residence, salary, age, and education.

There are computers in 45% of the households, where students and employees live. Having a computer at home also depends on salary and age – as many as 94% of 17-year-olds use a computer, while 81% of people over 55 do not know how to use it. The place of residence is equally important – 60% of those living in cities use a computer, while in the countryside only one person in five does so.

26% of households declare to have Internet access. Young people are the most frequent users of the Internet: 75% of those

under the age of 24 declare to use the Internet, and nearly 50% of those between 25 and 34 years of age do so.

The fewest Internet users can be found among people over 55 years of age – merely 7%.

What needs to be done in order to guarantee equal access to opportunities offered by modern technologies for all social groups and environments in Poland? Perhaps the rapid growth of ICT aggravates the technological exclusion and deepens social division?

During the panel we will try to answer these questions. We will also discuss the barriers in access to new technologies and the possible effect of this on the development of Polish society. We will try to define effective instruments which will ensure equal opportunities and guarantee the possibility of active participation of all in the information society.

PANEL	Social divisions and modern technologies – opportunities and challenges facing local communities
ORGANIZER	Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland, UPC
MODERATOR	Tomasz Schimanek, Academy for the Development of Philanthropy in Poland
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 – 11:00
WHERE	former CIUW building, room 106

## CIVIL DIALOGUE IN POLAND

Relations between non-governmental organizations and public administration, on the level of both government and self-government were an important subject of the third sector's activity after 1989. Until that time there was rather talk about cooperation with public administration. The term "partnership" was also mentioned, but most frequently it meant a joint implementation of particular undertakings or even public administration commissioning non-governmental organizations to complete the tasks.

Today we speak about "civil dialogue" more and more often. This term started to be used at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the process of Poland's integration into the European Union. Initially, it was used only in the context of processes of integration. In Poland the term of "so-

cial dialogue" (meaning the relations between the government, employers and trade unions) had been consolidated a few years before. Non-governmental organizations timidly tried to become part of this dialogue, though without any success. Working on the Public Benefit and Voluntary Work Act provided a strong impetus to speak about civil dialogue. At the end of 2002 a government policy document "The Rules of Civil Dialogue" was passed by the cabinet. The document states that the widely understood "social dialogue" involves "civil dialogue". Thus structured forms of relations between the government and non-governmental organizations were involved too. Public Benefit Works' Council, which has been active for over four years now, was to be the main institution of civil dialogue. Except for the Council there are also oth-

er mechanisms which already are or can easily become forms of this dialogue.

The question whether those mechanisms really work and give non-governmental organizations an opportunity to hold an open dialogue with the authority remains unanswered. If the mechanisms do not work, what can be done in order to change that? And, first of all, what should non-governmental organizations do to reinforce the mechanisms of civil dialogue and their role in it?

We would like to discuss these issues during the session on civil dialogue in Poland. In the first part we would like to show and assess a few crucial mechanisms of civil dialogue. In the second part, together with the representatives of non-governmental organizations which take part in the dialogue with the public administration (Public Benefit Works' Council, Committees Monitoring structural funds, and the "Zagranica" Group), we would like to give thought to what could be done by non-governmental organizations to reinforce the civil dialogue and increase our impact on decisions taken by the public administration.

PANEL	Civil Dialogue in Poland
ORGANIZER	The Polish National Federation of NGOs (OFOP) The Institute of Public Affairs
MODERATOR	Agata Wiśniewska (OFOP), Marek Rymsza (IPA)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 14:40
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room D

## PRIVATE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Polish Donors Forum (PD) invites everybody for the panel during which funding possibilities from the associate organizations of the FD will be presented on specific examples. At the same time it will be an opportunity to get information on what aid is given to the applicant, and what requirements and criteria he has to meet.

The members of the FD act in aid of the scholarship holders by taking care of clear and easy application procedures. On the example of The Batory Foundation we will present the conditions of granting people a scholarship by inde-

pendent organizations, including the criteria for project evaluation, the scope and the type of received support, as well as the sorts of partnerships between funding institutions and the scholarship holder. The long experience of associate companies the Forum shows that there are no projects which would provide the same outcome in every milieu. The most important condition to make the project successful is to focus it on local needs and problems. The Polish Children and Youth Foundation helps organizations to see local needs before implementing a project. A description of actual needs gives a

chance to act rationally, and to select the right tools to achieve one's aims. During this part we will show how to carry out a statistic analysis, and discuss its role in project implementation.

We are going to discuss how to conduct project evaluation and monitoring. We will try to find out whether monitoring is just control and supervision or if it is helpful to organizations. Using the examples of the schemes aided by The Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe we will show how to develop objective judgment by adding parts of monitoring and evaluation to the project.

PANEL	Private Funds available for non-governmental organizations
ORGANIZER	Polish Donors Forum (PD)
MODERATOR	Piotr Szczepański, FD, Rural Development Foundation
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 - 12:50
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room C

## THE ROLE OF NGOS IN SHAPING AND CONDUCTING FOREIGN POLICY

Every since such terms as "social diplomacy" or "NGO diplomacy" permanently entered the language of international relations, the participation of civil society institutions in the shaping and conducting of foreign policy, as well as effective cooperation with non-governmental organizations, seem to be essential in conducting successful foreign policy, especially in such fields as public diplomacy and development assistance.

In Poland, despite many attempts, there is still a lack of a uniform code of best

practices in the area of cooperation between NGOs and government institutions. The twofold nature of these organizations — both as institutions offering assistance, as well as monitoring and influencing Polish foreign policy — necessitates debate on the normalization of the shape of this cooperation.

The debate entitled "The role of NGOs in shaping and conducting foreign policy" will be a voice in the discussion on the possibilities and hurdles facing the cooperation between the first and third

sectors. Participants of the meeting, representing both the side of the government and the "citizens", will consider the extent to which it is possible to retain independence while realizing activities financed by government institutions, to keep organizations from losing their "watchdog" function. The debate will also touch upon the issue of the government participation in the financing of research institutes that shape and give opinions on Polish foreign policy while remaining uninvolved in its conduction.

The debate will be held as part of the program titled "Monitoring Polish Foreign Policy", financed by the CEE Trust.

PANEL	The role of NGOs in shaping and conducting foreign policy
ORGANIZER	The Center for International Relations (CSM)
MODERATOR	Eugeniusz Smolar (CSM)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 - 12:50
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room B

## DONATE OR UTILIZE? THE ECONOMY OF ASSISTANCE, OR A DISCUSSION ON VAT

Producers, wholesalers, and farmers help non-governmental organizations by donating food products. However, they have to pay high taxes on such donations.

We know the paradox: on the one hand, there are millions of tons of food waste utilized and on the other hand there are people who are undernourished and in poverty.

From the ethical point of view there are no doubts that it is necessary to give food relief. The question appears only when we begin to view the donation as an incurred cost.

In 2007 each Polish Zloty spent for the benefit of Food Banks in Poland bought food worth 24 Zlotys. Food is obtained, free of charge, by the Food Banks and delivered, free of charge, to charities which

render assistance to the undernourished and the poor locally.

We invite all who are interested in the solutions decreasing the income tax on the donations of food (VAT) to the panel "Donate or utilize? The economy of assistance, or the discussion on VAT". We will discuss, together with the invited panelists, the following topics:

- Polish and EU legal solutions currently in force
- The practical application of the procedures and laws (case study)
- Practical solutions in selected EU countries

We wish to draft specific economic solutions for producers, wholesalers, and farmers which will facilitate them the rendering of food assistance to the needy.

PANEL	Donate or utilize? The economy of assistance, or a discussion on VAT
ORGANIZER	Food Bank SOS Foundation in Warsaw, Food Bank in Cracow, The Federation of Polish Food Banks
MODERATOR	Dominika Sawczuk, Food Bank SOS Foundation in Warsaw
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	The Institute of Sociology, S. Nowak Room, ul. Karowa 18

## NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN MONITORING ACTIVITIES – HOW MANY ORGANIZATIONS, HOW MANY CITIZENS?

How to act so as to successfully attract citizens to effectively control power? People choose their representative to become involved in governing. Do they have enough competence to understand the motives of the narrowly specialized governing bodies? The question is whether citizens, individually or cooperating with others, in formal or informal structures, may act effectively?

The Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups and Association 61 are searching for the answers to these questions, and

so invite you to the discussion. Should the role of civil society organizations be educating people to independent authority controlling within their own scope or should the organizations be middlemen in these activities?

We have invited people and organizations who aim for the clarity of public life in Poland to participate in this session.

Among others, we will present the 'whistleblower' idea, i.e. a public clerk who – often by accident – uncovers acts

of corruption or violation of rights inside his or her own institution; the activity of ecologists from an organization which controls the decisions of self-government affecting ecosystem; the activity of big non-governmental organizations dealing with corruption prevention.

There will be four commentators, experts examining or influencing the directions of watchdog activities in Poland or being subjects of such activities: a decision-maker in an institution subsidizing watchdog organizations, an investigative journalist, a watchdog organization examiner, and a public clerk.

PANEL	Non-Governmental organizations in monitoring activities – how many organizations, how many citizens?
ORGANIZER	The Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups and Association 61
MODERATOR	Igor Janke (Salon 24)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 – 14:40
WHERE	The Institute of Sociology, S. Nowak Room, ul. Karowa 18

## THE THIRD SECTOR – PARTNERSHIPS

The partnership, one of the basic principles of the European Community, is accepted with difficulties in our country. Most of the partnership initiatives have been brought about as a result of tender requirements. They have been treated instrumentally, as “unavoidable evil” and the access to EU funds. The genuine partnership, such as one resulting from maturity, the comprehension of social questions and the benefit of cooperation happens rarely and is usually preceded by many unsuccessful, individual attempts to raise funds. The undertaking of the efforts to create a partnership is a value in itself.

Many valuable projects have failed because partners were not ready to play

their roles. Other initiatives have not come to light at all because of the lack of prospective thinking and cooperation culture or due to the egoism and ambitions which impede the common interest. Consequently, we do not avail of the chance the EU gives us.

Partnerships allow to reduce outlays and to reach the best of possible effects in accordance with the “win-win” principle, where benefits are not gained only because someone loses. It is a difficult challenge, but possible to realize. What is needed is the willingness to cooperate, knowledge and skills, favorable legal and economic environment, and good social ambiance.

During the panel we will discuss the following issues:

- Partnership and the development of the civic sector – which gives greater chances for the development of the third sector: competition or the joint action approach?

- Partnership and local development – does an extensive cooperation between organizations and other sectors enable the use of the potential to the full extent, does it “pacify” identity and originality in non-government activities?

- Partnership and financial efficiency – is investment partnership a manifestation of a reasonable distribution of tasks or only a joint action to “get the money from the bank”?

We will present both the partnership philosophy and the legal conditions, as well as examples of successful initiatives undertaken at home and abroad. We will discuss different types of partnerships - from investment (tactical) ones to partnerships in local environment (strategic), including the Pomeranian concept of ESF implementation (district partnerships) and the Gdańsk Network of Local Partnerships, based on the civic potential of the city quarters.

PANEL	The Third Sector – partnerships. Chances for the development of the third sector through participation of organizations in partnerships and their influence on local development.
ORGANIZER	Regional Information and Support Centre for NGOs (SPLIT Network)
MODERATOR	Beata Matyaszczyk (RC Foundation)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	Institute of Romance Philology, The Śląska Hall, ul. Oboźna 8

## NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS – CHANCES AND CHALLENGES

In the digital world of the 21st century no organization, whether it is a commercial company, a unit of state administration or a non-governmental organization, can successfully function without using information technologies, at least at a basic level. A stormy development of new technologies, which has taken place in the last few years, makes achieving new, unknown levels of ac-

tion effectiveness possible, but also issues many challenges that need to be met.

The activities of non-governmental organizations are unique. Usually, it is visible at the level of mission realization, and sometimes in the way of acting, internal work organization as well as processes and organizational culture.

Does this specificity mean that using modern computer solutions in the third sector is different from using them in other subjects? We can easily say that new technologies are necessary both for efficient and effective action of non-profit organizations and those which work for profit. Therefore, where and how non-governmental organizations may improve their activity using the newest technologies? What kind of challenge awaits behind it? We will try to find the answers for these and other questions during the panel discussion with representatives of the non-governmental sector, a sociologist, and IT specialists.

PANEL	New technologies and non-governmental organizations – chances and challenges
ORGANIZER	Second Hand Bank Association
MODERATOR	Michał Mach, Second Hand Bank Association
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	former CIUW building, room 106

## LEADERS OF COMMUNITY CHANGES IN POLAND – WHO ARE THEY AND WHERE ARE THEY HEADING?

The word “leader” is associated with the yellow t-shirt of the Tour de France. Welcome to the session which goes far beyond the stereotypical way of perceiving leaders.

Leadership is a vast subject of extreme importance to community life. Since 1994 The School for Leaders Association deals with educating community leaders, researching different aspects of leadership, and improving the methods of community leaders' development.

During the 5<sup>th</sup> Polish Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives we encourage

those interested in the subject of leadership to take part in the discussion on who the leaders of community changes in Poland are, what is their characteristic and where they head for in their community activity.

During the session, together with the panelists, we will consider the issues which frequently arouse doubts, such as:

- Can one be thought leadership?
- Does the situation or personality play the main part in the making of a leader?
- What is the difference between a leader and a manager?

• How do leaders set their goals - what is their vision as for the changes that they are planning to implement in their environment?

To begin the discussion we will present the results of research conducted on the participants of one of the programs run by The School for Leaders Association. The aim of the research was to analyze the needs for the growth of the leaders and getting to know what they think of their own development.

We have invited panelists with different experiences of leadership to attend this session. We will see it from the perspective of a social scientist and also an expert in the field of leadership in business, and many experienced community leaders. We hope that their reflections will allow the participants of the session to expand their understanding of leadership.

You are welcome to attend the panel!

PANEL	Leaders of community changes in Poland – who are they and where are they heading?
ORGANIZER	The School for Leaders Association (SSL)
MODERATOR	Przemysław Radwan-Rohrenscheff, SSL
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	Old Library Building (Old BUW), room 205

## SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

We warmly invite everybody to join the discussion about the European social integration policy fighting against poverty. Our membership in the European Union calls for National Social Responsibility and an Integration Strategy, as well as State Action Plans. Nevertheless, there is hardly any partnership or social dialogue to implement these projects. Is it a result of a lack of information or a lack of belief in the final effect? Is the open coordination a sufficient method in com-

binning civil policy at the European Union level? Is it possible to execute needs and rights of individual social groups in Poland through accredited organizations (as it is happening within the 'old' members of the European Union)?

These are crucial questions that will be discussed by speakers. Everyone is welcome to join the debate, especially the members of institutions and organizations which deal with discrimination.

We will introduce to you crucial matters of the European Public Policy, as well as the results of expert analysis of the most significant Polish core curriculum of the European Commission.

The organizer of the plenary is The Polish Committee of European Network for Fighting Poverty (EAPN Poland). More information: [www.wrzos.org.pl](http://www.wrzos.org.pl)

PANEL	Social Integration in the European Context
ORGANIZER	The Polish Committee of European Network for Fighting Poverty
MODERATOR	Małgorzata Lełonkiewicz, Polish Committee of European Network for Fighting Poverty
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	Old Library Building (Old BUW), room 207

## LEGAL STATUS OF INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED CITIZENS – A CHANGE OF SOCIAL AWARENESS

The adults with intellectual disability meet difficulties in making use of liberties and rights that each person is entitled to. Often, due to their disability and lack of social understanding they meet discrimination in access to civil rights. Social stigma put on these people leads to their social and legal exclusion. However, granted that they get appropriate support, people with intellectual disability are ready and able to actively participate in civil life.

The Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap has for many years acted towards changing social awareness

and propagating the idea of abiding by the human rights of disabled people. It has also helped in legal and civil education of adult people with intellectual disability, and their families.

On 13 December 2006 United Nations passed the Convention on Disabled People's Rights. In Poland attempts to create an act concerning all aspects of rights and responsibilities of disabled people, as well as their participation in social life, are being taken. Due to that, it is crucial to direct the social attention to the issue of independence and freedom of adult people with intellectual disability.

The following issues will be discussed during the session (with participation of intellectually disabled people, parents, professionals and volunteers):

- the intellectually disabled people's awareness of their rights,
- social attitudes towards independent functioning of the intellectually disabled,
- realization of intellectually disabled citizen's legal status,
- forms of legal support for the intellectually disabled – alternatives to incapacitation,
- the way to independence and parent's anxiety

The Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap strives to spread the idea of equal treatment of intellectually disabled people in each aspect of life. We aim at breaking stereotypes. The organizers of the session want to prove that the integration of intellectually disabled people into civil society is possible.

PANEL	Legal status of intellectually disabled citizens – a change of social awareness
ORGANIZER	Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap
MODERATOR	Monika Zima, Polish Association for Persons with Mental Handicap
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday) 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	Dom Spotkań z Historią (The History Meeting House), ul. Karowa 20

## IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING WITHIN THE FIELD OF CULTURE TO COOPERATE AND WHAT CAN BE GAINED FROM THAT?

Every third non-governmental organization in Poland declares that culture, the preservation of cultural heritage is one of the most important areas of their activity. Even a cursory overview of press articles confirms this activity of numerous associations, foundations as well as informal groups - it is owing to them and with their participation that there are many exhibitions, theatre performances and folklore fairs taking place, let alone significant artistic events.

Such an aim gives quite a lot of possibilities to the organization, but also poses a great deal of difficulties. It is caused by dispersion, multitude of ideas and missions, by the lack of interest of the community: artistic associations and animators connected with high culture propose

different ideas than the regional folklore associations or mass culture organizers. Different experience is also in the way: in addition to organizations with several decades of experience there are some new ones, prepared to collect various funds. All this makes it difficult to take a joint stand and hinders an effective dialogue, not only between individual organizations but also with public administration or a potential donor.

Now that non-governmental organizations promoting culture are more and more often competing against one another, being rivals of cultural institutions, can they become equal and full-value partners? Can they act as self-aware and active participants in creating legal regulations and a system of mutual cooperation?

The debate will be one of the ways of seeking consensus. There is no escaping the question what sort of administration the organizations need and what the administration expects from organizations. We need to think over also the condition of organizations dealing with culture, their image, and the way they are perceived by the general public. Is there any information system which would allow NGOs to get to know one another and share their knowledge? Can we sufficiently use more abundant resources, including those from the EU, and are we able to appear trustworthy to businessmen? Finally, are we in the position to convince tax payers that their one per cent of tax is worth deducting to save culture?

Non-governmental organizations in the culture area contribute to reinforcing national identity, tradition, culture, as well as a sensitivity necessary to build a future vision for our country. The condition of organizations, their ability for creative actions is not only their problem, but a great civic task as well.

PANEL	Is it possible for organizations to operate in the field of culture and what can we gain from that?
ORGANIZER	Foundation for Silesia, The Polish National Foundation of NGOs (OFOP)
WHEN	20 September (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room A

## PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY – OBSTACLES, BARRIERS, AND CHALLENGES

Poland's accession to the European Union may have caused favorable legal changes leveling women's and men's status but the situation of women has not improved much. Even though women do formally have equal rights with men, and some of them even occupy high positions, their interests as a social group are not fully represented. Their partici-

pation in the development of civil society is also limited.

In 2009 we will elect a new European Parliament. New EU commissioners will be appointed. Will it be men again to take key functions in the EU Parliament? Europe embarks on a parity campaign for the sake of increasing women's partici-

pation. Will the Polish society be mobile in this range too?

### Our arguments:

The activity of women's organizations in Poland is dying out, women's circles are being excluded from social consultations, the level of absorption of the EU assistance resources is considerably lower with women than with men.

What limits women, and what motivates them to act? How to pursue their civil rights?

PANEL	Women's participation in the development of civil society – obstacles, barriers, and challenges for the future
ORGANIZER	Polish Women's Lobby
MODERATOR	Renata Berent – Mieszczanowicz i Małgorzata Tarasiewicz, Polish Women's Lobby
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 – 12:50
WHERE	Old Library Building (Old BUW), room 107

## THE LEGAL ENVIRONMENT OF POLISH NGOS – PROJECT OF THE AMENDMENT TO THE PUBLIC BENEFIT AND VOLUNTEER WORK ACT

When in April 2008 the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy opened the project of the amendment to the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act (UDPPW) to public consultation, many concerns were raised about the proposed changes. The basic question is, if and what manner the status of public benefit changes the functioning of NGOs. What were the goals of the authors of the bill when they defined the status and public benefit? Have they been achieved?

During the consultation, representatives of organizations asked about the directions of development of the UDPPW. Should the UDDPW be concerned with all of the spheres of activity of NGOs (e.g. the Civic Initiatives Fund, public-private partnerships), or just public benefit organizations. There were concerns about the sense of the status of public benefit organization (PBO), the new definition of NGO, statutory activities, and the criteria according to which PBO status is obtained.

The question of the definition of voluntary work returned. Is it still considered volunteer work, or is it merely a way of getting into the job market? The amendment proposes introducing a ban on volunteer work for member of associations who work for their organizations. Is volunteer work performed by a member of an association one of many forms of voluntary work, or is it another type of community involvement? And, most importantly, do such distinctions mean anything in the actual work done by NGOs?

PANEL	The legal environment of Polish NGOs – the project of the amendment to the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act
ORGANIZER	Foundation for Social and Economic Initiatives (FISE)
MODERATOR	Anna Sienicka (FISE)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 – 14:40
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room B

During this session devoted to the legal environment, we would like to discuss the above matter. Representative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and NGOs will be present.

## MODELS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

During the meetings devoted to cooperation, when one looks into the role of local authorities and non-profits, it turns out that the first and the latter struggle for the better quality of life of the residents. The aim of their activities is therefore synonymous; however the potential and working methods are completely different. How to make these – doomed to each other – partners cooperate well for the sake of residents?

Programs of cooperation determine the cooperation of local authorities with non-governmental organizations. They represent different values, but the worst of it is that these programs do not come to life and the so called “cooperation” has its own, unchangeable style. Thus not only the high importance of the program documents matter, the practice is equal-

ly important. In these fields where cooperation is well developed, its efficiency shows – activities, projects and money are plentiful. And in the areas lacking in cooperation not much happens. Can we afford to waste time and resources?

The Network of Information and Support for Non-Governmental Organizations SPLOT has been promoting the system of cooperation between local authorities and non profits for many years. They see this cooperation as a permanent setting of the organization in the scheme of activities taken up by local authorities, and achieved through proper legislature and a good practice of cooperation based on the rule of assistance. By making use of this system we aim to indicate how to cooperate on the regional level, setting as an example the Warmia-Mazury Region.

It is important for the local authorities to promote effective solutions, because these practices are often followed by local governments and authorities.

Cooperation which is not cemented by the values of equal importance to the partners falls apart. How can The Card of Principles for Non-Governmental Organizations (accepted incidentally during the 1st Polish Forum for Non-Governmental Initiatives) influence the quality of such cooperation? Ostróda is the example of a commune where the document was appreciated, and made good use of.

Cooperation without a dialogue is impossible. But the local authorities count as one, while there are tens and hundreds of organizations, each of them representing different needs and interests. What can be done to implement the dialogue between such different partners in a wise and effective way? The Forum for Social Dialogue sets a good example.

Successful cooperation of local authorities and organizations is an ongoing urgent need, and accessible UE funding can help to establish it. We should make use of it.

PANEL	Models of cooperation between local authorities and non-governmental organizations
ORGANIZER	Elbląg Association to Support Non-Governmental Initiatives (SPLOT Network)
MODERATOR	Arkadiusz Jachimowicz, Elbląg Association to Support Non-Governmental Initiatives
WHEN	20 September (Saturday), 13:10-14:40
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room C

## WE WANT TO OPERATE OPENLY AND TRANSPARENTLY

NGOs know how to provide social services most effectively. They are willing to operate more openly and transparently. On the one hand the market of social services is expanding, while on the other hand competition is increasing. Representatives of the business sector appear in the areas hitherto reserved for NGOs. The overlap of their activities becomes more and more visible, for instance as regards the support of the socially excluded. Many such services become an attractive market for business entities. The experiences of particular EU countries indicate that the answer is positive.

In what way can NGO and business offers be compared? Should it be done in terms of capital, highly skilled, well paid experts, organizing potential, or perhaps social engagement, familiarity with local problems, and developed volunteer sector? What criteria should determine the results of tenders, competitions for implementation of public procurement, competitions for the implementation of the European Social Fund projects?

The introduction, adjustment, and popularizing of standards have been the tasks added to Strategic documents referring to structural funds. An increasing

number of Polish public institutions introduce quality standards. The requirements for NGOs increase. The question is whether they will be able to meet this challenge. Will they be able to propose their own methods of evaluation of effectiveness of their activities. Is the introduction of ISO a way to strengthen their position? Or perhaps maintaining high ethic norms will be more important?

The quality culture gains strength in Poland, the world is shifting to “competence culture”. Perhaps the best way is to search for the solutions that would enhance first of all the competences of people engaged in rendering social services. Is this the way to be taken by NGOs? Is the introduction of service standardization a good solution? Or perhaps the focus should be on competences?

We will try to answer these and other questions during the discussion panel.

PANEL	We want to operate openly and transparently
ORGANIZER	Polish NGO Federation, NGO Support Network SPLOT, Working Community of Associations of Social Organizations (WRZOS)
MODERATOR	Rafat Kunaszyk, Food Bank Association, Cracow
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 – 14:40
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room A

## THE YOUNG ACTIVE CITIZEN, OR HOW TO MAKE THE YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC LIFE

It is often said that Poles are not sufficiently involved in public affairs. This passive attitude is exemplified by the low election turnout, small number of demonstrations, relatively low local community activity, lack of the habit of monitoring of the local authorities etc. In other words, we find it difficult to see ourselves as citizens.

We want to devote this meeting to civic education, which aims to create a platform for young people to take civic actions, i.e. training in involved and competent citizenship. Nowadays this method

of education is developed not by institutions aiming at formal education, such as schools, but by non-governmental organizations, which create and coordinate innovative projects thanks to which young people can act as citizens participating in public life.

During the session we would like the organizations working in this field to get to know each other and start to communicate on good practices of non profits activities aimed at increasing civic participation of the youth.

The public activity of the youth will be possible once the adults create designed especially for young people channels of participating in public life, which will give them opportunity to practice the role of citizens. However, it is up to non-governmental organizations to influence institutions such as school or local authorities and cooperate with them to allow the participation of young citizens in decision making processes concerning their communities.

During the meeting we will share experiences of The Civic Polonus Foundation in running projects aimed at getting the youth involved in the life of their communities. We will present and discuss methods of introducing young people into the public sphere on the local ground (such as youth councils) and at schools (activity of students).

PANEL	The young active citizen, or how to make the youth participate in public life
ORGANIZER	The Civis Polonus Foundation
MODERATOR	Joanna Pietrasik i Olga Napiontek, The Civis Polonus Foundation
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 - 14:40
WHERE	Old Library Building (Old BUW), room 107

## HOW TO FIND AND KEEP A BUSINESS VOLUNTEER?

The volunteer movement is witnessing an influx of employees from large companies. Since 2002, the Volunteer Center has conducted a program titled "Business Volunteering", along with partners. Thanks to this program, many organizations and institutions open to cooperation can count on additional help in terms of knowledge and finances.

Companies allow their employees to undertake community activities during work hours, offering material help as well as logistic or financial support for

the employee to realize his or her own volunteer project.

Volunteers feel the presence and involvement of their company and are motivated to invest their time, skills and money in important issues. They integrate with others, get to know them, and their satisfaction with their jobs increases, as does their motivation to fulfill their everyday duties. They gain social and interpersonal skills, while breaking negative stereotypes about the handicapped or people afflicted with sickness or addic-

tion. This experience changes their existing perspective on their company and their surroundings, strengthens their emotional ties to their company, coworkers, and others. Organizations that make use of such help benefit from a change in image and an increase in professionalism.

During our session, we would like to talk about employee volunteering as a form of voluntary work, especially with regards to the following issues:

- Why do we need voluntary work?
- How do we gain volunteers?
- How do we keep these volunteers?
- Benefits stemming from cooperation with business volunteers,
- Ideas for fruitful cooperation.

More on: [www.wolontariatpracowniczy.pl](http://www.wolontariatpracowniczy.pl)

PANEL	Employee volunteering for local communities – how to find and keep business volunteers?
ORGANIZER	Volunteer Center Association (SCW)
MODERATOR	Izabela Dyakowska (SCW)
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10-14:40
WHERE	ISNS, A. Podgórecki Hall, ul. Nowy Świat 67

## INTERNET, INTERNET USERS, AND ORGANIZATIONS – HOW TO GET AND GIVE SUPPORT ON-LINE?

Active citizenship requires much energy and self-determination. Often it is not possible to get involved in noble ends – the day-to-day existence does not allow us to find as much time and strength to voluntary service as we would like to. Because of our financial situation often we cannot make a donation to any organization or campaign. Sometimes it is even hard to leave the house for the local community picnic. Sometimes it is

hard to be active as much as we would like to.

What if we find out that we can change the world staying in one place and it will only take a few minutes per day? Thanks to the Internet we can get rapid access to the information system. The world watches changes which come with Internet-shops, banks, offices, all of them appear in the “virtual space”. Are there any non-

governmental organizations in this new world? The answer is “yes”, of course there are. What is more, many of them come into being thanks to the Internet which provides rapid communication on a large scale. The Internet and people using it for social activism give us a chance to be active in the most convenient way. If we are not able to engage straight out and directly, we still have millions of opportunities to do it using our computer and the Internet. It is enough to click the right web address, to write a few words on a computer keyboard - we do not have to be computer scientists because the ability of using an Internet browser will be sufficient.

We warmly invite all people which would like to change the world (literally!) from their own house.

PANEL	Internet, Internet users, and organizations – how to get and give support on-line?
ORGANIZER	Second Hand Bank Association
MODERATOR	Michał Mach, Second Hand Bank Association
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 – 14:40
WHERE	former CIUW building, room 106

## THE QUALITY OF EVALUATION IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Evaluation, as a term closely related to the functioning of democratic society, came to Poland not long ago. An interest in it is systematically increasing. Also the number of research carried out on this subject is rising.

However, situations when the results of evaluation can be disappointing occur repeatedly. Research is often not particularly useful – it does not provide new information and, in comparison with the needs, is carried out too late.

A few reasons for this state of affairs can be identified. Among other things, it is the lack of a sufficient number of evaluators. Also people who order and those who realize evaluations differ in terms of

their professional preparation. Very often a mistake is made while estimating the cost and the time of research. There are still not enough sources of information about evaluation in Polish, and those available concern a limited area – mainly research carried out for the needs of public administration as a part of structural funds' implementation.

Due to the realization of projects financed from structural funds, more and more organizations see that an appropriately carried out evaluation can positively influence and improve their work.

During the session our guests will discuss the factors specific for non-governmental organizations; those which have

both positive and negative effect on the quality of evaluations held in the third sector. Ways of improving the quality will also be discussed. In order to do that the results of the project “Creating the standards of evaluation in Poland together”, realized by Polish Evaluation Society, will be presented.<sup>1</sup>

Higher standards are the result of work of the many groups dealing with evaluation – representatives of public administration and non-governmental organizations; employees of companies carrying out the research, academic institutions and independent consultants. Those standards were created on the basis of experience gained mainly in the process of evaluating projects financed from public funds. However, the standards find application in the process of internal evaluation, and in both non-governmental and private sectors.

<sup>1</sup> Project financed from EU funds as a part of Transition Facility 2005 Programme „Building the Evaluation Capability of Public Sector”. Budget line: TF2005/017-488.01.02.06

PANEL	The Quality of Evaluation in Non-Governmental Organizations
ORGANIZER	Polish Evaluation Society
MODERATOR	Justyna Ratajczak, Polish Evaluation Society
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 – 14:40
WHERE	Old Library Building (Old BUW), room 207

## WHY DO WE STILL NEED YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS?

Young people today have nearly effortless access to the many attractions offered by the modern world. Life rarely demands any effort. It is organized by television, the internet, extracurricular activities, malls, sports centers and foreign language schools. Young people have a lot to choose from, therefore they become impatient, if what they desire is not immediately obtainable. Their access to knowledge, entertainment and various forms of spending free time is virtually unlimited. Faced with such seemingly endless possibilities, they must make more difficult choices, associated with their education and the shaping of their personality. These choices decide on the

quality of their future lives, quality that is not necessarily only material.

Is there any place for building permanent relationships in this astounding-ly quick decision-making process? Can young people, especially those in big cities, slowly work towards a set goal? Do they understand the words "service", "helping others"? Besides choosing everyday from amongst the goods offered them by the market, do they undertake any challenges not backed by expensive marketing campaigns?

The Scouts' Association will hold a session devoted to youth NGOs. Together

with the panelists, we will attempt to answer the question whether there is still a place in modern Poland for youth formational organizations that aim to not merely entertain, but to bring up young people according to certain ideals. Ideals that assume stability and permanence in participation, and which demand activity on the part of their members. We will reflect on whether such organizations are capable of fulfilling the needs of young people today. Can they define these needs, and how do they respond to them? What kind of people do they raise? Which values do they stress? Which of these values are appealing to its members?

We have invited representatives of public organizations geared towards children and youth, and a social scientist who has conducted research on youth for many years. The session is under the patronage of the Deputy Minister of Education, Krzysztof Stanowski.

PANEL	Why do we still need youth organizations?
ORGANIZER	The Scouts' Association
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:20 - 12:50
WHERE	ISNS, A.Podgórecki Hall, ul. Nowy Świat 67

## CIVIL SOCIETY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Owing to Poland's membership in the EU, our society is becoming more and more differentiated and heterogeneous. Poland as a country which has been homogenous so far, in which almost all the citizens practice the same religion, and national and ethnic minorities account for a scant percentage of the society, may quite soon face new social problems.

An influx of foreigners may, which is observed in other EU countries, cause tensions. Economic immigrants from developing countries – discriminated against in employment, access to goods and services, social welfare, health protection and education - are the party whose po-

sition is weaker in this possible conflict. Poland's membership in the EU means, among other things, that Poland has joined the debate on the rights to non-discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual orientation – the topics which have been practically non-existent in Polish public discourse before.

Negative phenomena connected with the discrimination of specific individuals or social groups may be counteracted effectively by legal actions undertaken by civic organizations. Such actions include, for instance, joining court proceedings related to the equality and non-discrimination matters, preparing the so-called

opinions of the "Friend of the Court", taking part in public hearings, and engaging in legal consultancy. Social organizations may also raise the issue of effective application of law in the debate on equality and non-discrimination.

During the panel discussion we will consider the role and prospects of specialized non-governmental organizations (e.g. Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law) in conducting the debate on the law of non-discrimination on the basis of sex, race and ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, or religion and denomination.

We will present the most important assumptions of the non-discrimination law. We also wish to point out new challenges for non-governmental organizations in the scope of contributing to the improvement of the legal situation not only of an individual – a victim of unequal treatment, but also of entire social groups experiencing similar difficulties.

PANEL	Civil society against discrimination. New challenges for non-governmental organizations.
ORGANIZER	Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law
MODERATOR	Karolina Kędziora, Polish Society of Anti-Discrimination Law
WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 13:10 - 14:40
WHERE	Dom Spotkań z Historią (History Meeting House), ul. Karowa 20

# HEARING OF OPINIONS ON THE PETITION BILL

**H**earing of opinions on the petition bill is to be a special event. Its main organizer is the Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations under the aegis of the Speaker of the Senate Bogdan Borusewicz. Its form is also unusual. In its course, all the rules of public hearing will be observed. MPs and Senators will be the hearing party, and all the interested, after a prior formal application, will get the chance to submit their opinions and comments on the bill.

The hearing of opinions planned during the 5th OFIP is one of the first steps to settle procedures of submitting and considering petitions. It is worth remembering that the citizens' right to petitions is laid out directly in article 63 of the Polish Constitution, where it also says that a separate law will determine a precise course of action. In reality, there is no such regulation as yet and attempts being currently made try to fill up that constitutional discretion.

Despite the lack of formal regulations, petitions do function - in their own way - in Polish public life. They exist in the language sphere: a petition is commonly understood as a category of written request, proposal or demand addressed

to public authorities, as well as, for example, during demonstrations or rallies, which often end up in petitions being handed in or read out publicly. Yet the popularity of petitions is still very low, as is Poles' engagement in non-party political activities. European Social Survey data show that petitions are signed by only 5,5% (five point five per cent) of Poles, whereas across Europe the rate is as high as 25% on average. The intensity of contacts with local or central government politicians amounts in Poland to just 6%, and in Europe 13% on average. It is also worth pointing out that Poles do not think highly of their actions having any effect on public affairs, as only one out of three Poles believes that he or she really influences what is going on in Poland.

A legal regulation for petitions will be an essential completion of public dialogue procedures, which are still unsatisfactory. What is still missing is clear lines of public consultations and the course of action for civil legislative activities (it is actually reserved for very strong groups). It is an outdated solution, and also undemocratic in a sense, as it deprives quite a number of people of the right to publicly express their opinions.

The setting in motion of petition procedures can also boost the culture of

public debate. Selected issues submitted in the form of petitions could become a subject for a debate on-line as well as - in individual cases - a parliamentary one. Some of them could also give an opportunity to start the determined procedures of public hearing. Thus it would not be reserved for discussions on bills being ready by that time.

A legal guarantee of the right to civil petitions, submitted by both individuals and groups may turn out to be a crucial solution to the above-mentioned problems. Detailed regulations within this area will be discussed during the hearing of opinions. During the two-hour meeting we hope to gather arguments and opinions concerning the desirable form of drawing up petitions (including e-petitions), their subject and object scope as well as designating institutions responsible for its initial consideration. We also hope to work out an effective way of making public the petitions submitted, and also of close monitoring of the submitted requests. Some proposals will be presented in the guidelines on the petition bill, which will be accessible before the hearing. Basic dilemmas and questions requiring settlement will also be pointed out. They also ought to be the subject of opinions delivered during the hearing.

PANEL	Hearing of opinions on the Petition Bill
ORGANIZER	Parliamentary Group for Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations
WHEN	20 September (Saturday), 9:00 - 11:00
WHERE	Staszic Palace, The Mirror Hall

# EVENTS ACCOMPANYING THE "RES PUBLICA CIVILIS" CONFERENCE

## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS FAIR

During the „Supporting Organizations Fair”, organizations working for the third sector will present themselves. Visitors will be given the opportunity to obtain information on the grant and training offers available, and also to get acquainted with the publishing offer.

During the whole day the representatives of several support organizations will be giving advice and answering questions concerning the programs under implementation.

WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), 11:00 – 18:00
WHERE	The Square in front of Audytorium Maximum, Warsaw University Central Campus

## EUROPEAN UNION FUNDS' INFORMATION CENTER

Twentythree stands (including those presenting the offers of particular voivodships) will be offering information on possibilities of receiving EU funding in particular regions, as well as in specific subject fields. Representatives of institutions responsible for the implementation of particular operational programs, as well as of the European Social Fund regional centers will be informing about the opportunities of receiving additional project funding. The EU Funds' Information Center is organized under the auspices of the Minister of Regional Development and is financed from the State Budget as well as the EU funds.

WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 – 15:00
WHERE	The Square in front of Audytorium Maximum, Warsaw University Central Campus

## LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING ADVICE

On Saturday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, the Szpitalna NGO Center will be giving legal and accounting advice to all interested.

Representatives of the organizations can receive information concerning such issues as: difficulties with the registration or filing amendments with the National Court Register, registration of the status of an organization as a public benefit organization, access to public information, labor law, and the responsibilities of an organization as an employer, as well as the application of the Public Benefit and Volunteer Work Act.

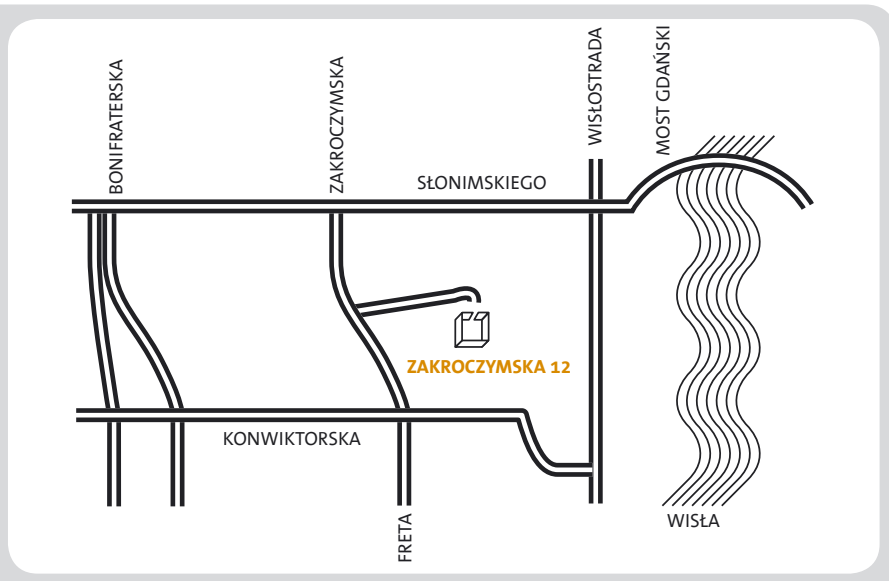
Accounting advice will involve basic information concerning book-keeping, keeping documentary records in the organization, obligations towards various offices, reporting duties, gratuitous and non-gratuitous public benefit work or taxes concerning the organization.

WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 9:00 – 15:00
WHERE	Audytorium Maximum, room E

## EVENING MEETING AT THE FORTECA RESTAURANT

All participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum for NGO Initiatives are welcome to join the evening meeting and party in the Forteca Restaurant (ul. Zakroczymska 12, Traugutt Park, between the New Town and the Gdańsk Bridge). Entry with the Forum badge, or a special invitation.

WHEN	19 September 2008 (Friday), from 19.30
WHERE	Forteca, ul. Zakroczymska 12



# CITIZENS' WEEK

The Citizens' Week will take place from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008 in Warsaw. We would like to show how many interesting and diverse events are organized in the capital for its inhabitants and with their participation. During the Citizens' Week we would like to present a civically active character of Warsaw.

The Week will begin with the Social Advertising Review in the Muranów Cinema. This will be accompanied by several photo exhibitions on civic matters: in the Central Railway Station we will show how diverse are the Non-Governmental Organizations activities, on the Wiecha Passage there will be an opportunity to meet active inhabitants of Warsaw – citizens who want to change their city out of their own initiative, on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street we will remind you of the history of civic activity. Furthermore, there will be a chance to take part in city games, spectacles, concerts, workshops or participate in meetings organized in numerous Civic Cafes. Employees of Non-Governmental Organizations as well as volunteers are particularly welcome to take part in a hero-playing field game FABEX: for three days you have the unique opportunity to lead a “double life”. The game will be an ideal chance to get to know oneself better and to facilitate integration of the environment. The Citizens' Week will close on the 20<sup>th</sup> September with a Picnic of Non-Governmental Organizations.

## II SOCIAL ADVERTISING REVIEW

The Social Advertising Review is the only event in Poland dedicated exclusively to social advertising, where representatives of different sectors meet. During the Re-

view the most interesting social campaigns from all over the world will be presented. The Review is also an excellent opportunity to see how social problems are presented and dealt with in advertising in other countries, as well as how particular campaigns are being organized.

WHEN	13 September 2008 (Saturday), 10:30 - 16:00
WHERE	Muranów Cinema

## CIVIC CAFES

This is a joint action of NGOs and Warsaw cafes and café clubs that organize different cultural and social events on a daily basis. We give the citizens of Warsaw an opportunity to participate in various discussions, meetings and workshops. Approximately 20 cafes in Warsaw will host us and the meetings are arranged by almost 50 city associations and foundations, which have prepared a varied program, aimed at people of all age groups. Several agencies from the City of Warsaw Municipal Office have also joined us by proposing meetings devoted to such issues as the social strategy of Warsaw, crime prevention, the future of the Vistula River.

The meetings will be accompanied by many artistic events, including exhibitions, concerts, a slam, a Belarusian poetry evening, slideshows and film projections.

Civic Cafes include: Cafe Prózna, Kafeteka, Opary Absurdu, Po drugiej stronie lustra, Kolonia, Kępa Cafe, Tawerna tuż za horyzontem, Tarabuk, Szczotki Pędzle, Plan Be, Obiekt Znaleziony, Kluboksięgarnia Serenissima, Cafe tuż za horyzontem, kawiarnia Urzędu Miasta (4 Jezuicka Street), Plac Zabaw, To Lubię, Zwiąź mnie, Chłodna 25...

WHEN	13-18 September 2008 (Saturday-Thursday)
WHERE	Warsaw cafes and club cafes – a detailed program of events and the addresses are available at <a href="http://www.ofip.org.pl/kawiarnie">www.ofip.org.pl/kawiarnie</a>

## PICNIC OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

On the last day of the Citizens Week, on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2008, on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, a Picnic of Non-Governmental Organizations will be held, during which dozens of Non-Governmental Organizations of all Poland will present themselves. The presentations will take place both in the tents set up on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street and on common yards created especially for this purpose, where the invited organizations will present their programs. They have also prepared workshops, fun and games, competitions, etc.

The Picnic will be accompanied by other events, such as the ART-NGO Review, meetings with people with passion at the “Living Library”, contests and sports shows.

WHEN	20 September 2008 (Saturday), 11:00 - 18:00
WHERE	ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście (between ul. Świętokrzyska and ul. Królewska)

**Additional information about the Citizens' Week are available at: [www.ofip.org.pl](http://www.ofip.org.pl)**

# HOW MUCH CIVIC ACTIVITY IN POLAND?

Social activity gives the person involved much happiness and fulfillment. To feel it, you need to organize an event, join a group, fight your fears, reach your intended goal.

MARTA GUMKOWSKA

The satisfaction of taking part in a social activity comes, for instance, from the belief in the value and significance of the project you participate in. It also comes from the joy of working together with other people and belonging to a group, as well as from the satisfaction of overcoming ones helplessness or reaching an intended goal. Social workers and volunteers talk about such “profits” when asked about their motives. It seems, however, that most of us are not aware how much is to be gained in return for our time and engagement. Hence, it is worth describing and presenting the advantages of participating in public life or even making it fashionable. Examples are inspiring, stir the imagination and give rise to emotions.

It is also worth referring to the hard research data, due to which one is able to estimate the scale of particular phenomena, evaluate their meaning in comparison with other countries, as well as trace the changes. Perhaps the numbers, percentages or figures will not be a direct inspiration for social engagement, nevertheless, in favorable conditions, they will interest the decision-makers and the media, whose strategic support is essential for the development of civil society.

A good case in point may be the report on “The Intellectual Capital of Poland” prepared recently by a team of strategic advisers to the Prime Minister. There the state of our civic engagement is presented under a telling title “How to increase citizens’ awareness?”. The last part of the report outlines an optimistic scenario for Poland in 2030. It includes information on how the advisors of the Prime Minister envisage local communities - “full of life, with events organized by citizens in their residential areas and districts, where one can spend enjoyable time among neighbors and friends, where nobody is left alone”. Life in a friendly environment is yet another benefit of civic engagement.

While supporting the realization of the above-mentioned vision, let us review the data configuration presented below, reflecting the civic activity of Poles. And then, instead of sitting with our fingers crossed, let us get down to work, because 22 years is not such a long period of time after all, and the data indicate there is much work to be done.

## Voter turnout and political activities

The basic indicator of civic participation is the voter turnout. In Poland it has been very low for many years (in the 1997 Parliamentary elections it was 43%, in 2001 – 46%, 2005 – 40%). Even though it relatively increased in recent elections – 53% of the eligible population voted in 2007 – Polish voters are still a small group when compared to other European countries (see chart below).

In comparison to Europe, Poles are neither very much engaged in non-party political activities, such as signing petitions (5,5% with the European average of 25%), contacting the government or local politician (6% and 13% respectively), participating in demonstrations (1,4% and 6,2%)\*.

## The number of NGOs and their growth dynamics

The number of active NGOs can also be seen as evidence of social activity. Taking into account that the willingness to act is lower, it is not surprising that in the last five years the number of newly established organizations has been systematically decreasing. Over 4,000 new associations and 900 foundations were registered in 2003, with only 3,000 associations and 650 foundations registered in 2007, showing a drop by almost 25%.

## Membership of the organizations

Not only are fewer organizations being established, but the number of Poles who would actively engage in their activities is decreasing as well. This was particularly visible in 2007 when the number of people declaring membership in NGOs, groups, social or religious movements decreased significantly. Merely 13%, i.e. 4 million adult Poles admits to participating in one of the above-mentioned forms of social life. This means that, in comparison with 2006, the organizations lost as much as 2.7 million members (*Volunteers’ Work, Philanthropy, 1%. 2007 Research Report, Klon/Jawor Association, Warsaw 2008*).

Chart 1

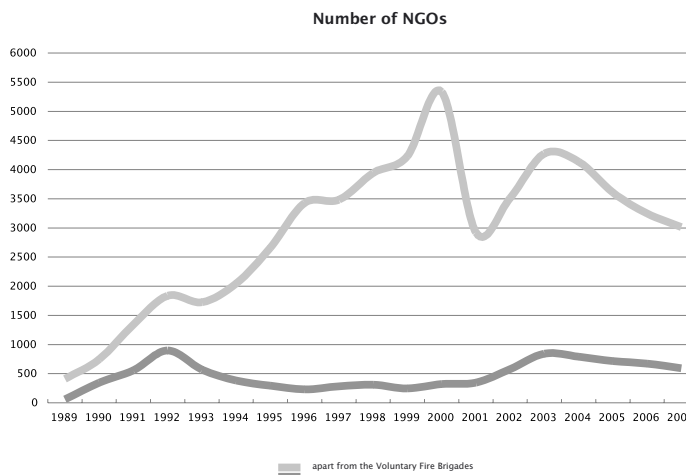
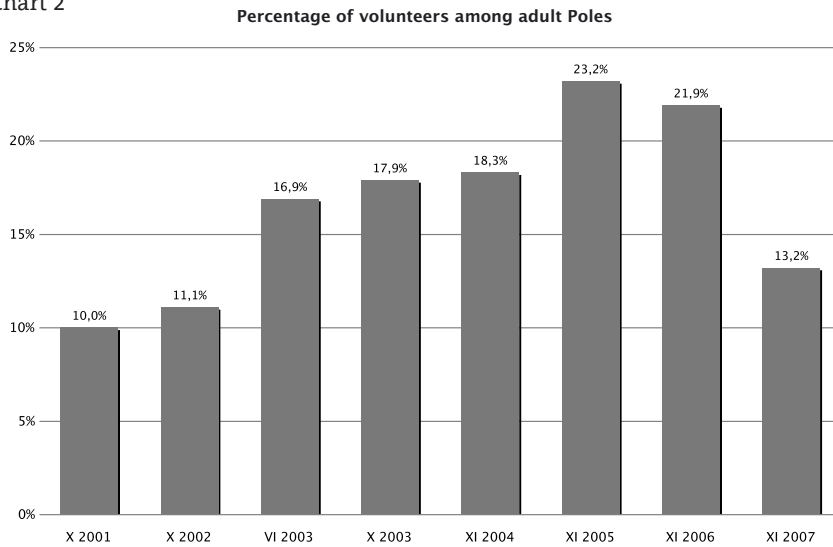


Chart 2



**Volunteer engagement**

The study conducted by the Klon/Jawor Association has also recorded a decrease in the engagement of Poles in volunteer work. During one year only the percentage of volunteers fell by half (*Volunteers' work, philanthropy, 1%. 2007 Research Report*, Klon/Jawor Association, Warsaw 2008). It is not surprising, therefore, that 51% of NGOs complain about the lack of people willing to engage in their activities.

The above-quoted data indicate that we are unwilling to associate and that we rarely engage in organization activities. Neither do we exercise our basic civil rights – only one in two participates in elections, we do not try to influence the situation in the country in other ways: signing petitions, participating in demonstrations or contacting politicians. The obvious question is “why?”. The answer is evidently complex – it lies partly in our history, culture, traditions, current eco-

nomical and structural conditions, as well as the dominating attitudes and systems of values. Information on the latter may be also found in research reports, and it is worth quoting a few of them.

**Declared and actual identification with the state**

Low social activity undoubtedly results from low levels of identification of Poles with the state. While it is true that in surveys we declare that we have a strong bond with the motherland: 85.3% of Poles identify with Poland, 80.2% with the nation, 77.1% with the local town or village, while 69.6% with the region (Report “*Social Bonds and Mutual Help*”, CBOS - Public Opinion Research Center, February 2008), nevertheless the data from the 2007 Social Diagnosis reveal that it does not translate into caring for common interest. More and more Poles accept unauthorized use of public goods (the percentage of answers allowing such behavior

has increased from 2005 to 2007 for each type of action – see chart below).

**The feeling of having influence on national and local issues**

It is hard to engage in public issues, if we are convinced that a change in this respect does not depend on us. This is why the feeling of having influence is so important. Research shows that only 30% of citizens believe that they have any influence at all on what is going on in the country (Report “*Do Citizens Have Influence on Public Matters?*”, CBOS - Public Opinion Research Center, January 2008). The feeling of having influence on local matters is slightly higher - 39% of Poles agree with the sentence “People like myself have effect on their local town/district matters” (CBOS, January 2008).

**Finally – some good news**

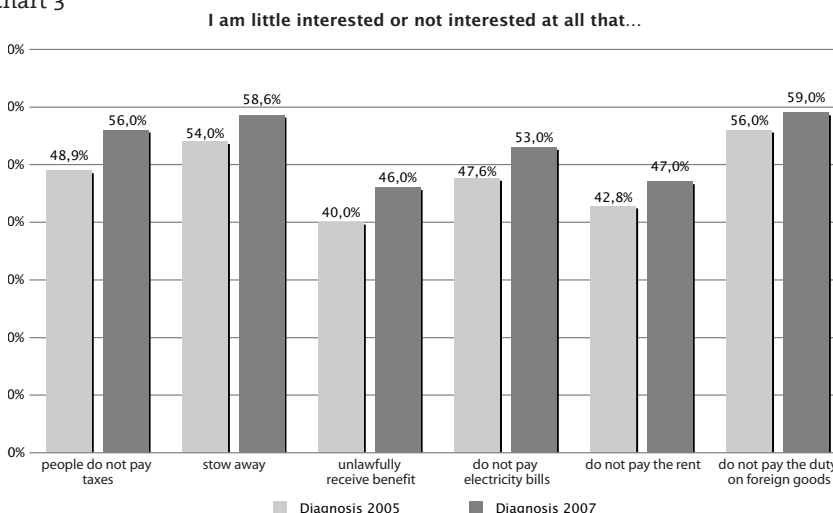
While the data concerning the social activity of Poles (or rather its lack) are neither optimistic nor do they give any hope of positive changes, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

The above-quoted CBOS research results concerning the feeling of having impact are not very optimistic, however - if one reads them in the context of analogous research results from previous years – the matter looks somewhat better. For it turns out that the number of Poles convinced that they have influence both on state and local issues has been systematically growing since 1992 and it has increased several times. The research also indicates that young people (who were born just before or after the 1989 elections and have spent most of their lives in free Poland) have a much stronger feeling of participation in decision making regarding state matters. It is possible therefore that in the nearest future the feeling of having influence on state and local issues will become more widespread. Certainly this does not mean that all of us will take the opportunity to influence our environment, as apart from the belief that something can be changed, one must simply want to do it, and transform this wish into action.

Co-operation: Maja Mozga-Górecka

\* the data comes from the 2006 European Social Survey

Chart 3



# A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGET IN OUR MUNICIPALITY

Although the topic of participatory budgeting (PB) is garnering increasing interest in Poland, there is still much to be learned and much to be discussed regarding the possibility of using it in our local governments.

DARIUSZ KRASZEWSKI

There are many benefits of using a participatory budget. This is illustrated by the dynamic spread of this idea in successive cities. It began in 1989, in the far-away Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. It was there that PB was first introduced in the city budget planning process.

## **Citizens discuss and decide**

Participatory budgeting is a novel approach to local government financing. In PB, the citizens of a given city hold regular meetings at the street, neighborhood, borough, and even city-wide level, devoted to such topics as education or health care, and discuss which associated investments should be realized. Citizens are given the opportunity to share their needs, their opinions regarding services provided by the administration, as well as any ideas they may have on solving pressing issues. At such meetings, a list of investment priorities is compiled. This list is adopted by voting preceded by a discussion. The priorities are arranged from most important to least pertinent. Participants also choose delegates who will represent them during the further stages of the budget proceedings. The list of priorities instructs the delegates what to demand. Delegates are obligated to represent the opinions and arguments of the citizens. During further work with the participation of the citizens' representatives, city officials and council members, a budget is prepared. Finally, the city council votes on the budget, while the administration implements it, often in cooperation with the citizens.

The above is a general scheme of participatory budgeting. It should be noted, however, that the formula is rather broad and depends mostly on the local context in which it is employed.

## **A practical school of citizenship**

The introduction of participatory budgeting mechanisms results in many positive changes in the life of the local community. The most important is the increased openness and transparency of public finances, and in result, an improvement in the effectiveness of their use. The participation of citizens in the life of the community increases, as does their responsibility for the development of the city. Thanks to such a system of budget planning, there is an increase in the level of investments in poorer areas of the city as well as an increase in the range of investments addressed to less fortunate social groups. PB is considered to be an effective tool for fighting poverty and social exclusion, which was expressed during the Fifth European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, under the Austrian Presidency of the EU. By including citizens in the process of setting priorities and allocating funds, local governments can more respond more effectively to the needs of their communities.

## **A thousand cities worldwide**

The benefits of participatory budgeting were quickly appreciated. It is estimated that over a thousand cities worldwide are now experimenting with various versions of this mechanism. What they all

have in common is that the city budget is no longer discussed behind closed doors, but publicly, with citizens. The models and methods of these discussions vary, but most importantly, these events are repeatable, and not one-off. Whether or not an implementation of PB succeeds is decided by the repeatability of the process, both in the course of one budget cycle (many meetings), as well as in the subsequent years.

Participatory budgeting has made its way to Europe, as well. As in other parts of the world, it has experienced dynamic growth here. While in 2000, only six European cities were experimenting with PB, there were over fifty in 2005, and the number is currently over one hundred. Cities in Spain, Portugal, France, and Great Britain top the list. PB is also developing in Italy, Germany and Sweden. European cities attempting to implement the PB formula include Lisbon, Paris, Rome, London, Seville, and Cordoba. In large cities, these activities are conducted at the borough level, while smaller cities have implemented PB citywide.

## **To trust one another**

PB has seen its greatest successes in Spain and Portugal. In Portugal, participatory budgeting has been implemented in twenty-five cities. Most of these are small towns, with populations of 5 to 30 thousand. However, PB is making its way towards such large cities as Lisbon and Prague. Proponents of PB in Portugal and other European countries aim primarily narrow the gap between

elected representatives and citizens, and to rebuild mutual trust between them.

Great Britain has had much success in implementing PB. The successes and benefits of the participatory method of budgeting was noticed by the British government, which prepared a Draft Na-

**There can be no PB without information** What about Poland? What are the possibilities of implementing PB in our country? Over a year ago, the Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups started a program called “The Budget Monitoring Laboratory” (BML), the goal of which was to observe to what degree citizens can participate in the process of shaping the

and active citizen is an additional and substantial source of power for the development of a municipality. They forget that their role is to fulfill the collective needs of the citizens. It is no secret that in order to fulfill someone’s needs, one must first get to know them. These needs can become known by including citizens in the discussion regarding the municipal budget.

**Local governments’ auxiliaries, the lowest units of local administration comprising a village, an estate or a district are the essence of self-government. Participatory budget research highlights the fact that institutions and structures that already exist are very important. In Poland it is the auxiliaries which are a perfect basis for introducing a participatory budget. All we need is to notice its merits.**

tional Strategy on Participatory Budgeting, in which it stated the goal of implementing PB at the local level by 2012. The first British city to try PB was Salford in 2002. Since then, the growth of PB in the British Isles has been dynamic. In Great Britain, experiments in PB began with the so called “small grants” — small amounts of money, often donated by sponsors instead of the city, the use of which was decided upon by citizens during meetings. With time, these amounts grew, and local authorities became more eager to allocate funds for public budgeting.

budget in municipalities, and what the legal possibilities are for implementing PB in Polish local governments.

Experiences gained in the BML have showed us that local authorities in many Polish municipalities are uninterested in stimulating civic activity. This is evident in their attitude to the most basic element that stimulates community activity and participation — public information. Local authorities do not seem to understand that access to information plays a key role in local development. They are unaware of the fact that a well-informed

#### **We have the right to participate**

Constant communication between citizens is one of the basic methods of stimulating their activity and their participation in the issues of the municipality. Systems of communication between local governments and constituents in Polish municipalities are in a sorry shape. There is a lack of clear information policies and procedures with clearly defined channels and methods of communication. No analysis is conducted on whether the information conveyed to the public is comprehensible, interesting and appealing. The stock answer to the above arguments is: “Why should we do that if people don’t care anyway?” The reply is simple: to give a chance to those citizens who wish to get involved, but don’t know when and what goes on in their city. Citizens have the right to participate in the public life of their municipality, and it is their choice whether or not to use this right. It is the right of the authorities, on the other hand, to secure these rights by providing relevant information on the current affairs of the municipality via all available channels.

**Either they don't want to, or they don't know how**

A legal analysis of the possibility of citizen participation in the decisions made by authorities clearly shows that there are no counter-indications for the participation of citizens in joint decision-making in the widest possible degree.

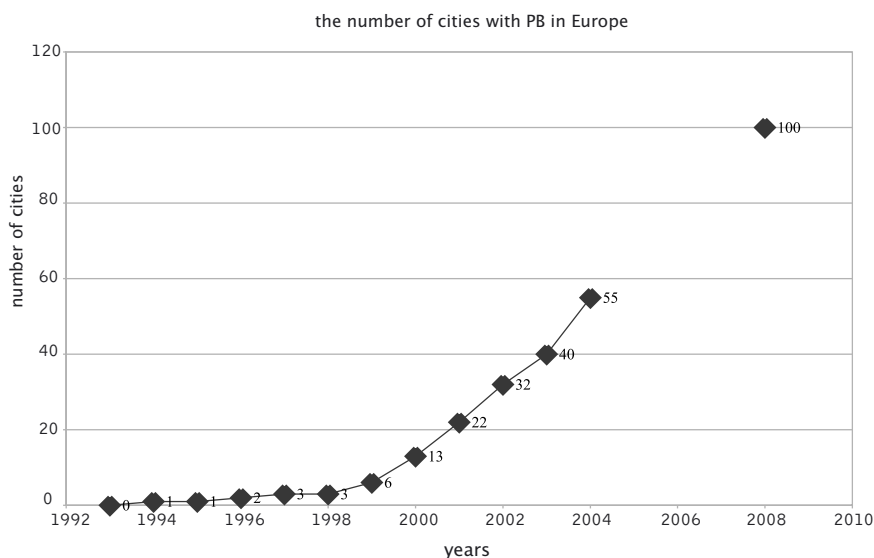
Unfortunately, the level at which the mechanisms of public consultation is implemented remains very low. Although the laws regarding municipal governments state that measures should be taken to promote local governance among citizens and that authorities should consult with citizens on issues that are important to the life of the municipality, they do so in a manner that defeats the very purpose of such consultations. One might get the impression that they have never even heard of such basics as rules and conditions of conducting successful consultations. Nor have they heard, apparently, of promotion, education, and presenting citizens with reliable information on the consulted issues.

Unfortunately, our council members, municipality leaders, mayors and city presidents fail to see the benefits resulting from a well-organized system of dialog between the authorities and citizens. We are stuck with the fallacy that active citizens are nothing but additional work and trouble. It would be better if they could just mind their own business, leaving the organization of the local government to their representatives and officials.

**Introducing a participatory budget results in many positive changes in the life of local communities. The most important is increasing the openness and clarity of economy. It leads to increasing the effectiveness in using public funds. Both the participation of the citizens in the life of community and their responsibility for the development of the city are increased.**

**The essence of self-government**

If we look at the work done by local governments, we often notice that the assistant municipal units (sołectwa and neighborhood councils) do not function at all. This level of local government is often completely unclear and underfunded, although, as Prof. Michał Kulesza notices, the assistant units are the essence



of self-government. Those studying PB stress that existing institutions and structures have a significant impact on its development.

Fortunately, citizens are becoming increasingly interested in what is going on around them, and there are more and more open-minded council members who want to cooperate with organizations and citizens, and who see the benefits stemming from such a form of governance. There is a growing amount of materials to help organize meetings with citizens, consultation, and information policies in municipalities. All of the above give hope for

Participatory budgeting has a good chance of becoming reality in Polish local governments. All that is needed is a little good will, courage, openness and knowledge of its rules among local authorities, citizens and community organizations. It is not too early implement and experiment with this form of developing participatory democracy in Poland by taking advantage of existing structures of assistant units. NGOs have a large role to play by assisting local authorities in organizing the work of assistant units, or jointly procuring funds for small grants for local communities, to stimulate community participation. One way or the other, participatory budgeting is a highly interesting and promising formula for transforming how local democracies function.

the future of PB in Poland. People are simply starting to demand respect. They pay taxes and want to have a say in what happens with their money. A government that respects people is one that listens to them, encourages them to voice their opinions, invites them to discussion and takes into account the voice of the citizens. It is a partner of civil society.

DAREK KRASZEWSKI — works at the Association of Leaders of Local Civic Groups. Coordinator of the Budget Monitoring Laboratory. Webmaster of a site devoted to the Zapatista movement in his free time. Active in several libertarian organizations. Founder of a citizens' group, "Svoboda", in his local community.

# EUROPE DECIDES

In many places around Germany or Great Britain making decisions with the use of participatory democracy rules is a commonplace. Examples show that involvement of citizens helps to plan activities, which remain crucial to local community.

BEATA SZCZEŚNIAK

Keighley is a relatively small town, with the population of over 50,000 inhabitants, located in the north of England. In this town, following the example of more than a hundred of towns in Brazil, the first community consultations in the region (concerning the issue of allocating financial resources from the Neighborhood Renewal Fund) were organized. The residents could directly decide how to spend 130,000 £ while voting. In a research project, which commenced in May 2006, 400 participants were asked what the most urgent initiatives were: those regarding youth education, environmental conservation, or health service. Thanks to the conducted surveys and latter open meetings held with the residents, priority activities were established and posted to non-governmental organizations and informal groups from Keighley.

## Voting for a project worth supporting

Based on research, 50 projects concerning the needs of the local communities were conceived, with the overall cost exceeding the available budget of 130,000 £. Thus the next step was to organize a meeting under the name "Keighley Decision Day", during which the residents could vote particular projects they were willing to support. Over a thousand people took part in the action. The idea was approved by the community of Keighley and the opportunity to ask coordinators of particular projects questions directly was especially favored. Projects presented by their authors in five sessions were later voted. Chosen activities received funding from the local budget.

Consultations of this kind are a commonplace in Great Britain. Local communities can directly influence the subject of projects under construction, indicating which problems they see as the most acute ones and then decide which ac-

tivities should be funded from the local budget.

## Participating the German way

In Germany the first to influence the shape of their local budget were the inhabitants of North Rhine-Westphalia. By the end of the last century the regional Ministry of Internal Affairs in cooperation with Bertelsmann Foundation initiated the project called "Participatory Budget" in which six towns took part. The

**Solutions proven in cities of North Rhine-Westphalia are successfully practiced in other regions of Germany e.g. in Lichtenberg district, Berlin, where the 2010 budget debates are already in progress. Debates are held through meetings with citizens, a website, and surveys sent to people's homes.**

chief aim of the project was to promote the idea of a greater participation of the community in drawing up the local budget. The first part of the project concerned informing the residents clearly about the spending: Where does the money come from? How is it spent? What is the overall financial state of the region? During the second part the residents took the opportunity to give their suggestions as for planned expenditure. Accepting particular solutions was up to the town council. On final approval of the budget, local authorities had to explain to the residents what had happened to their suggestions, what the decision of the council was and why it was taken.

## How to balance Emsdetten's budget?

The example of Emsdetten shows the first-hand experience. To begin with, the administrative authorities present-

ed the budget in a clear way by publishing a brochure available also on the website. Then the town residents were given the opportunity to take part in a discussion concerning planned expenditure through filling in questionnaires, visiting the website and participating in public meetings. Additionally, about 2,000 of them (a representative sample) were invited to attend the debate. 90 people were willing to take part, ultimately 76 appeared. The aim of the debate was to

consider various possibilities of balancing the budget, e.g. through retrenching working expenses, reducing the spending on culture and sport, decreasing support to service sector, increasing taxes, obtaining credit and selling estates. The majority of the participants of the debate indicated selling estates. The town council and the local parliament approved of the proposal.

## First tell me how much money you have

Hamm - another town in North Rhine-Westphalia - accepted its first participatory budget in the years 2003-2004. To do this, 50,000 households were sent brochures including information about the draft budget. Additionally, some citizens chosen at random were asked to indicate the main problems their town faced. The survey showed that the issue of the

transport infrastructure (state of the roads, lack of bicycle tracks) was the most vital for the majority of the participants. Meetings of the town residents' forum, as well as the results of the questionnaire, showed that attention should be drawn to the above issue. Thus it was decided to focus on this very subject during the consultations to follow. The residents gave their suggestions posting them on the website and then the town council decided which proposals would be taken into account. Unfortunately, due to the lack of sufficient funding, many interesting ideas could not be implemented, which caused discontent and frustration. The experience shows that while holding consultations of this kind, it is necessary to inform in the first place how much there is to spend and later suggest and discuss solutions possible to be implemented, given the funding available.

#### **Hildopoly – the budget game**

An interesting visual method of explaining budget structure to the town residents was applied in Hilden (also North Rhine-Westphalia). In February 2003 the inhabitants were invited to take part in a monopoly game on a large scale, called Hildopoly. The set of rules was as follows: each space of Hildopoly represented the tasks which were the responsibility of the local council. While the game proceeded the councilor responsible for particular activities answered the questions. This method helped the town residents to get to know the structure of the budget and give their opinions as well as make suggestions.

At present the solutions which were successful in North Rhine-Westphalia are also successfully implemented in the other regions in Germany, e.g. in Berlin

in the Lichtenberg district, where consultations on the 2010 budget are in process. They are held as meetings with the residents, using the website and also through questionnaires which are sent to households. 50 proposals of possible actions and investments are posted on the website <http://www.buergerhaushalt-lichtenberg.de>, including a short description and potential cost. The town residents can make comments on the proposals and vote those which they favor most. Moreover, the most interesting projects are chosen during local summits of the residents. In November 2008 ten projects recommended by the Internet users and five chosen during the conference will be voted by 25,000 residents of the district (a representative sample). Selected investments will be financed from the 2010 budget.

#### **Planning space**

Berlin is also a good example of a city, where community consultations deal with investments regarding the change of the city space. Each year a dozen of projects of that kind are discussed. The dialogue with the residents was crucial to urban planning of the space remained after the fall of the Berlin Wall - Alexanderplatz (the square in the city centre with the characteristic television tower) and many city parks. The most common way to hold consultations is to use the website, where various ideas on how to plan the space are presented, and also organize meetings with the residents. One example of this type of activity is a discussion on the Gleisdreieck Park located in the centre of Berlin. In the spring of 2005 a survey was conducted among the residents, along with a discussion in focus groups, devoted to the suggested planning of the green space. What is more,

the portal <http://www.gleisdreieck-dialog.de> gives an opportunity to share opinions on the possibility of arranging the square. In May 2006 the residents could make comments on 11 projects which scored highly in the planning competition. Simultaneously with the on-line dialogue workshops and meetings were organized in the park itself. Many visitors took advantage of this method of interaction. As a result a project which appealed to the residents was selected in the planning competition.

#### **More ideas**

Similar solutions concerning urban planning are also implemented in other localities in Germany. Not long ago, in June 2008, community consultations regarding the plans to reconstruct the cathedral square in Hamburg (<http://www.hamburg-domplatz.de/>) were closed. It is worth mentioning that not only vast and hence controversial investments, such as building a motorway or an airport, are subject to discussion, but also local activities, which directly influence the surrounding of the vicinity. I encourage those interested in good practices concerning participatory democracy to go to [www.e-participation.net](http://www.e-participation.net) for examples from Great Britain, Austria or Germany, and [www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk) for examples of good practices from Great Britain.

BEATA SZCZEŚNIAK – spent a few years in Germany working in The International Environmental Transfer Center ITUT eV in Leipzig and The German Society for Nature Conservation NABU in Berlin.