

Report from a business trip to Barka UK Center From 14th August 2007 to 19th August 2007

Day I – 14.08.2007 – Arrival to London and participation in organizational meeting of workers of the project “12 Disciples”.

In the meeting took part Marek Kania, Tomasz Flinik, Tomasz Sadowski, Ewa Sadowska, Katarzyna Zagrodniczek and Maria Starzewska who is a candidate for the position of coordinator of Migrants' Day Center which is being organized in Dublin. Programme's activities carried up to now and its outcomes were summarized during the meeting. An English support system for the homeless organized by the British and a scope of mutual cooperation aiming at settlement of systemic solutions for bigger and bigger flood of migrants from the, so called, A8 countries were submitted to diagnosis once more. It was agreed that the project goes in a proper direction and all given tasks are being realized. Tomasz Sadowski described once more all guidelines and plans for the next quarter, turned staff's attention to emerging danger and described precisely the whole process putting stress particularly on focusing on and settling strong and stable partnerships of institutions and organizations because only common activity guarantees success meaning efficient aid to homeless fellow countrymen in Great Britain. This assumption comes from so called “good practices” developed during establishing local partnerships in Poland. At the same time successful functioning of Center in Dublin is depending on efficiency of settlement such a partnership with local institutions and organizations.

In the second part of the meeting we discussed initial assumptions of the project's extension – entrepreneurship and self-employment of Polish migrants. There were presented initial guidelines of diagnosis of British work market and legal environment allowing to employment of Polish migrants. There were discussed the purpose of my visit and principles of transfer of Polish social entrepreneurship model into British conditions.

Day II – 15.08.2007 – Trip to Broadway organization where every day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. homeless Poles may have a hot meal, a bath and may use a toilet.

Introduction to arriving Poles and carrying out a background interviews aiming at a diagnosis of reasons of our countrymen's failures causing effectively homelessness and alcoholism.

Too weak knowledge of the language was the most commonly given failures' reasons and barriers; official barriers; lack of ability to obtain a tax identification number and insurance number; lack of ability to open a bank account; low qualifications – lack of recognition of professional licenses obtained in Poland; lack of knowledge of law including the local labour law; unreliable employers; unreliable job agents; lack of funds for renting a flat. All these cause alcohol addiction, co-addiction, deepening consciousness of a failure and homelessness (living in the streets or in squats what eventually eliminates them from social and professional life).

Against all appearances it refers to the people usually with high professional qualifications, professionals, who did not find work in Great Britain owing to the above mentioned barriers. Additional obstacle is also a lack of possibility of passing an exam confirming their licenses and qualifications, carried out in English.

Following conversations confirmed these observations what contributed to the creation of certain rules determining failures of our countrymen and what strengthened my conviction that systemic solutions, such as yet in Poland previously organized groups of the unemployed, for instance in a form of social cooperatives, would protect the unemployed from the failure.

In the another part of the day Tomasz Flinik, Iwona Kawa and me we went to the arranged meeting with Mrs. Justyna Błaszczyk, the owner of registered in Great Britain job agency “JUSTCONNECT”. The meeting took place in a head office of the agency in St.

Alban near London. In the very beginning of the meeting we were informed that the agency changed the scope of services with an intention of looking for highly qualified Poles with engineer – technical education, especially in a construction industry, who are being referred to work to Great Britain and Ireland, but also to Saudi Arabia, where remuneration is tax – free. During the conversation we presented a model and solutions of social entrepreneurship successfully implemented in Poland – Centers for Social Economy, Centers for Social Integration, social co-ops and a structure on base of which we establish new entities often containing 80% of well professionally qualified persons but who had got confused for various reasons. It follows from our experiences that if those people are supported and organized in certain forms they become as efficient as people with work experience of several years. We presented that in sectors, about which we were talking about, social co-ops provide services successfully in Poland and may provide them in Great Britain as well, often cheaper, more professionally and employing Poles who had failed, among others. Finally we agreed that this model may provide a platform on which we can start cooperation and render services in construction and gardening branches. This offer was sent to us.

A common supper with a married couple - Joe and Lee Batty - in the Barka's Home. Among others, a purpose of my visit and first conclusions were presented. We discussed Polish model of economy of inclusion and solutions which were enthusiastically received.

Day III – 16.08.2007 – Trip to centre of Broadway organization and conversations with next countrymen.

Having a conversation and agreeing common conclusions with Broadway Charity executive Mrs. Kirsty Telford who assumed that the social entrepreneurship model offered by us, which can solve currently diagnosed problems of finding permanent employment by Poles in London, has many interesting aspects and it is fully supported by her organization. Mrs. Telford expressed willingness to collaborate in above mentioned field, especially in cooperation with district board of Hammersmith & Fulham. In the next stage there was initiated a conversation with Mrs. Anna Majcherek who serves as an interpreter and an agent helping to find work for Poles in London. The conversation turned into discussion where Mrs. Anna turned attention to numerous barriers and hedges in the field of employment in England.

Subsequently there were carried on conversations with Poles preparing themselves to come back to Poland about new opportunities and prospects of self-employment and reintegration and about the future opportunities of coming back to London and rendering services there within frames of organized, legally registered in Poland entities – social cooperatives.

Conversation with potential employer of Polish migrants Mrs. (Cleaning Enterprise... ..) running service activity in a branch of cleaning offices and houses in the centre of London. The lady appreciated a lot quality and efficiency of Polish employees' work but finally she resigned from employing Poles owing to the language barrier – her strategic clients had signaled lack of understanding between a mandator and a contractor and impediments following that. We commonly agreed with the conclusion that an efficient animator of such a group who speaks Polish and English may solve such problems. Employment of such a person – serving to even several of entities employing Poles – facilitating business communication was signaled by us and taken under consideration.

During the afternoon picnic took place conversation with vicar Bruce about creating a model of local partnership which is a supportive factor for social co-ops as a good solution in a field of self-employment and render of services by Polish migrants. The vicar mentioned also that the model may be interesting for housing co-op functioning in the neighborhood which is a probable customer and it is possible to establish cooperation with it.

Day IV – 17.08.2007 – Trip to the centre of Broadway organization and preparation to departure of next group of Poles coming back to Poland. Common meal, greetings etc.

Arrival of David Fisher, a representative of Hammersmith & Fulham, aiming at issues of an extension of the partnership and inclusion of a new entity, which is being created at the Broadway Center in a form of a limited liability company and aims at consulting services for the unemployed, to common realization of tasks. We would like to engage it as well in our activities which are, according to Mr. Fisher's opinion, very innovative and worth to include into certain systemic solutions of the support system not only for Poles but also for the homeless and unemployed British. In the meantime Mr. Alistair Mordey, a representative of a Haga Charity type organization acting in the other district of London - Haringate, joined the conversation and was extraordinarily interested in establishing collaboration with our organization for the reasons of innovative solutions and an attitude towards our countrymen not known earlier. He was interested as well in copying the model of partnership for the development – hostels, Centers for Social Integration, Centers for Social Economy, social enterprises and social co-ops cooperating together.

In the afternoon took place a goodbye meeting with the countrymen ready to come back home. After the meeting took place a conversation with Mr. Sebastian Adamczyk, a representative of ST. Mungos, considering matters of improvement of certain mechanisms supporting the homeless in reintegration with the London's society.

Day V – 18.08.2007 – Summary of working days and meetings in London; drawing up an initial report from the stay in London.

Day VI – 19.08.2007 – Departure to Poland.