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## Educational Activities for Developing Social Entrepreneurship

**Abstract:** The purpose of this article is to analyse educational activities undertaken in the area of social entrepreneurship. The main conclusions are that respondents do not know about social entrepreneurship and social initiatives are undertaken only to a minimal extent; education for social entrepreneurship is at an unacceptable level. Thus, education in economics in Poland should be enriched with social economy and social entrepreneurship. An essential element that can positively affect the development of social entrepreneurship is the support of social activities undertaken by young people within a broader debate about the social dimension of our lives.

**Keywords:** educational activities; entrepreneurship; social economy; social entrepreneurship; social initiatives

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## Introduction

The concept of social entrepreneurship is inextricably linked with the developing social economy that aims to create social enterprises and a new culture of social entrepreneurship. (Kraśnicka, Wronka, 2010). A social entrepreneur “combines passion, a social mission with the image of business discipline, innovation, and determination” (Abu-Saifan, 2012; Dees, 1998). Therefore, this study aims to analyse educational activities undertaken in social entrepreneurship. The research questions that were asked are as follows:

- How do social enterprises function in Poland and Europe?
- What is the state of educational programmes for the development of social entrepreneurship in Poland?

- What are the educational initiatives (programmes) undertaken in Poland to support the development of social entrepreneurship?

To achieve this aim and answer these questions, the researchers analysed both Polish and foreign literature, reports and statistical data. Besides these, research in the form of a survey based on an original questionnaire was conducted aimed at identifying the level of knowledge of social entrepreneurship and educational programmes in society. This questionnaire was a tool for getting to know facts and opinions on the research problem to discover the level of knowledge concerning initiatives taken on social entrepreneurship. The research was of a pilot nature and based on Małopolskie Voivodeship. An added value of the article was an attempt to develop a model approach to educational programmes for the development of social entrepreneurship in Poland.

### Social entrepreneurship – a definitional review

Many economists and academics support the fact that the concept of entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, is becoming a critical factor in the development and well-being of societies. Entrepreneurial activity supports the economy and its effectiveness, and it can, therefore, be concluded that entrepreneurship offers competition, and as such, promotes improved efficiency and a healthy economy (Abu-Saifan, 2012; Furman, Porter, Stern, 2001).

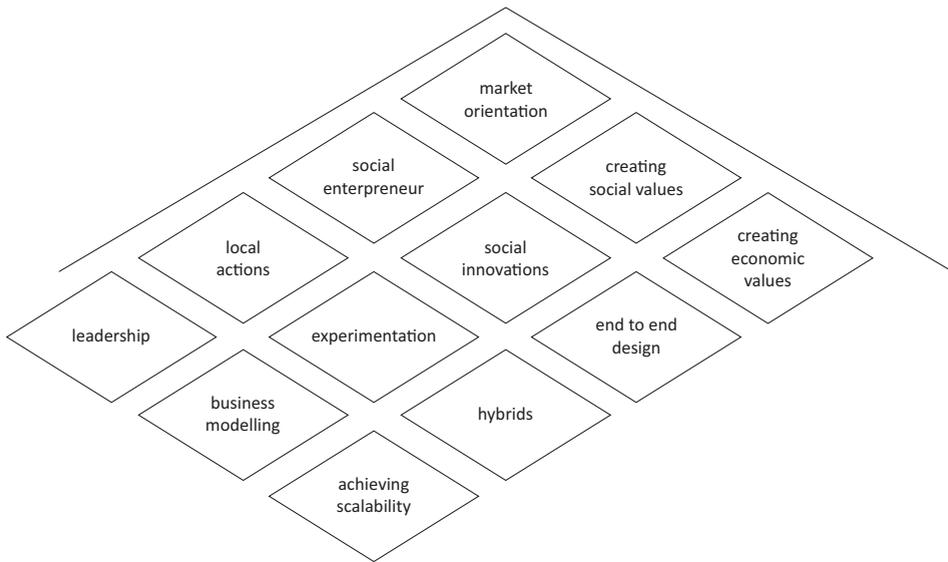
Social entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon, but it is not clearly defined (Abu-Saifan, 2012; Dees, 2001; Dees, Anderson, 2006; Phillips et al., 2015) and is often treated as self-sufficient and innovative (Certo, Miller, 2008; Harding, 2004; Johnson, 2000; Mulgan, 2006). Other researchers note that social entrepreneurship focuses on transforming society, creating social value, solving social problems and improving the performance of society (Abu-Saifan, 2012; Drayton, 2002; Hartigan, 2006; Johnson, 2000; Roberts, Woods, 2005). Determinants of its emergence show that it offers a unique view of opportunities and how to seize them.

Dimensions include social missions, social changes, activities, innovations, accountability, adaptation and learning, and these are a starting point for research. Other research by A. Rey-Martí, D. Ribeiro-Soriano, J. Sanchez-García (2016) reveal dimensions that focus on social awareness, social business, and social responsibility. Therefore, for this study, social entrepreneurship will be defined as the activity of entrepreneurs, including social entrepreneurs, who treat the pursuit of profit as a secondary target. In contrast, their main activities focus on investing in social enterprises that facilitate development. In the literature, there is the phrase “*hybrid*” *social entrepreneurs* (Douglas, Prentice, 2019) which means that there is a positive attitude to profit, regardless of their primary social objective.

The concept of the “umbrella of social entrepreneurship” by S. Sengupta, A. Sahay, F. Croce (2018) is an exciting proposition.

The umbrella of social entrepreneurship shown in Figure 1 should be understood as a programme – an incubator – that will help in its emergence and implementation. Mthembu and Barnard (2019) also emphasise elements of the umbrella which condition the emergence of internal entrepreneurship pointing out that a cursory look at world affairs should convince every thoughtful and caring person, regardless of political ideology, that there is plenty of room for improvement. Market orientation relates to the operationalisation of an

Figure 1. The umbrella of social entrepreneurship



Source: authors, based on Sengupta, Sahay, Croce (2018)

organisation's idea and reflects its extent. R.E. Morgan and C. Strong (1997) define a market-oriented enterprise as one which considers that understanding current and potential customer needs is fundamental to deliver greater value to customers.

Another factor is a social entrepreneur who differs from an individual (corporate) one in the implementation of the goals for which he/she works. Financial reasons guide the second group who see opportunities for achieving large profits; social entrepreneurs, however, are guided by the opportunity to act for the benefit of others (altruistic reasons). As T. Piecuch (2014) claims, a social entrepreneur is motivated to seize opportunities by anger or sincere concern for others, as well as compassion or willingness to help. Character traits are not without significance including the presence of a need to monitor the environment, frequent experimentation, tolerance of uncertainty, risk and errors, self-sufficiency, readiness to overcome difficulties, and tolerance of unclear and ambiguous situations (Sternberg, Lubart, 1999); to additionally focus on achievement, individual responsibility for decisions made, average risk level, and willingness to learn about the specific results of the work (McClelland, 1967). The social entrepreneur introduces innovations in the way social problems are solved. Therefore they must be innovative and creative in the way groups of stakeholders are brought together. According to G. Mulgan (2006), the process of social innovation is still under-researched, while commercial innovation has been the subject of numerous academic studies.

The authors point to severe deficits in social innovation and note that they stem from the social organisation. The background outlined leads to the conclusion that transformational leadership, experimentation and the emergence of hybrid entrepreneurs is required. This category includes cases where entrepreneurial initiatives are undertaken in parallel and in addition to full-time employment and are treated as fundamental. This, in turn, in the cause-effect chain, means that new business models are created in which

the social entrepreneur is perceived as a primary and indirect force of change made by a private entity. In consequence, it has a positive impact on revival and change in the functioning of the public sector and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) (Short, Moss, Lumpkin, 2009).

These considerations can be supplemented with a discussion on creating social and economic value. S. Abu-Saifan (2012) states that interest in social entrepreneurs results from their role in solving many critical social problems aimed at improving the quality of life of those affected. P. Auerswald (2009) notes that while both social and conventional entrepreneurs generate new models of human activity, the difference is that the conventional focus is on creating financial value, while the social focus is on creating social value. Thus, social entrepreneurs challenge the status quo and solve critical social problems by pooling resources in new ways to create social value by exploring and harnessing opportunities to meet social needs. According to J. Mair and I. Marti (2006), it is possible thanks to combining commercial success with social progress, and the primary organisations stimulating the creation of social value are non-profit ones. The specificity of these organisations is that they carry out charitable activities, providing social goods that are not adequately supplied by the market, and strengthening communities. Therefore, social entrepreneurs operate in enterprises ranging from profit-oriented to non-profit, but with a particular emphasis on introducing social changes into the community in which they operate (Bagnoli, Megali, 2011; Borzaga, Defourny, 2001; Muralidharan, Pathak, 2019; Nyssens, 2006).

## Social enterprises in Poland and Europe

Social enterprises are a relatively recent phenomenon and were first identified in Italy at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the literature, many definitions and approaches to social entrepreneurship can be found, but no universal approach has been developed and adopted. However, they all have one thing in common: they are organisations which carry out activities whose primary purpose is social, not remuneration (Chaves, Monzón, 2012). J. Hausner (2008) defines a “social enterprise” as an organisation that combines two attributes: “entrepreneurship” and “community”. J. Stanienda, A. Gądek, M. Płonka (2017) indicate that social entrepreneurship in Poland shows features of the initial phase of growth, characterised by a discussion about what terminologies to use, how to define the boundaries of concepts, and what methods are to be used to expand the new field of knowledge. The authors divide social economy entities into non-profit social organisations and not-for-profit social enterprises. Social organisations are those that conduct neither economic activity nor paid-for statutory activity. In the authors’ view, social enterprises are oriented towards running a business, or their regulations include paid-for activities. However, the profits obtained are allocated for social purposes.

When analysing reports it can be seen that in Poland in December 2018 there were about 26 000 foundations and 117 000 associations registered (in total 143 000 social organisations) (*Liczba NGO w Polsce*, 2019; *Stowarzyszenie Klon / Jawor*, 2019). The report *Cooperatives and social enterprises: work and employment in selected countries (Czy Europa potrzebuje...)*, 2020), prepared in 2019, states that “social enterprises should be promoted at the European Union level and in individual countries and regions as carriers of socio-economic development”. Social enterprises are known for their resilience to

cyclical and structural economic changes and their ability to influence local and regional economic development, including social integration.

The Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (*Czy Europa potrzebuje...*, 2020) prepared a report in which its authors stated that social enterprises are carriers of socio-economic development. Essential for the development of social entrepreneurship is its inclusion in mainstream education in the field of entrepreneurship and business. Young people should have opportunities to make informed choices when it comes to social entrepreneurship and decide to build a career there or develop a business. There is a need for an EU-wide analysis of what (if anything) young Europeans can learn about social entrepreneurship in schools and universities (including accredited business academies). Achieving social goals requires unique management skills. Therefore, another critical area should be support for the improvement of specific management skills. In order to support activities in the field of social entrepreneurship, the European Program for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) has been founded.

### Knowledge of educational programmes for the development of social entrepreneurship among the inhabitants of southern Poland

In Poland, the concept of social entrepreneurship in practice does not exist. Facts are little known; more often, myths are reproduced, and in general, the concept works more in theory (*Przedsiębiorczość społeczna...*, 2016). The idea of social entrepreneurship is not very popular among Poles who often do not know what it is (*Raport na temat...*, 2017). The leading organisation in Poland that promotes and helps in the development of social entrepreneurship is the Ashoka Foundation whose motto is: "Everyone can change the world".

The organisational and systemic foundations of the social economy in Poland have been gradually created since the 1990s (formal and organisational regulations). Distinguishing between commercial enterprises and social enterprises in Poland, it is challenging to indicate which group a given example belongs to. For instance, associations are defined as social enterprises, but many of them do not carry out economic or paid-for statutory activities. It is also worth noting that since 15 December 2008 (i.e. 12 years already), the draft law on social enterprise and supporting the social economy has still not been passed. A report has stated (*Raport na temat...*, 2017) that the idea of social entrepreneurship is not popular among Poles.

For these reasons, this part of the study analyses the educational activities that are undertaken in Poland to support the development of social entrepreneurship and are supplemented with the authors' questionnaire research. The question "What is the level of knowledge of educational programmes among Polish society?" aimed to discover the answer. The research was of a pilot nature and was conducted mainly among young people (university students) living in Małopolskie Voivodeship.

When analysing issues of education in the field of social entrepreneurship, attention should be paid to the National Program for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023 (in Polish – KPRES) (Departament Ekonomii Społecznej i Solidarnej, 2019), which presents the directions of public intervention along with areas and priorities. The main objective and the more specific ones defined in the program concern the essential issues related to the social economy both in socio-economic activity and in public policies.

The implementation of these goals will contribute to strengthening the potential of social economy entities, and will also cause changes in the environment in which they operate, allowing for a deepening of multilateral cooperation.

The framework for educational activity in social entrepreneurship is also determined by long-term regional action plans for the promotion and the dissemination of the social economy, developed at the level of each voivodeship. Stanienda, Gądek and Plonka (2017) show that educational initiatives serve primarily to disseminate this issue among various social groups. They emphasise the role of social enterprises in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes and socio-economic development and serve to increase knowledge and competences in social enterprises themselves. In this context, it is worth emphasising that educational activities regarding social entrepreneurship, according to the KPRES and individual regional plans, in particular result from the condition of the social economy in Poland, which still seems to be poorly rooted in Polish socio-economic reality.

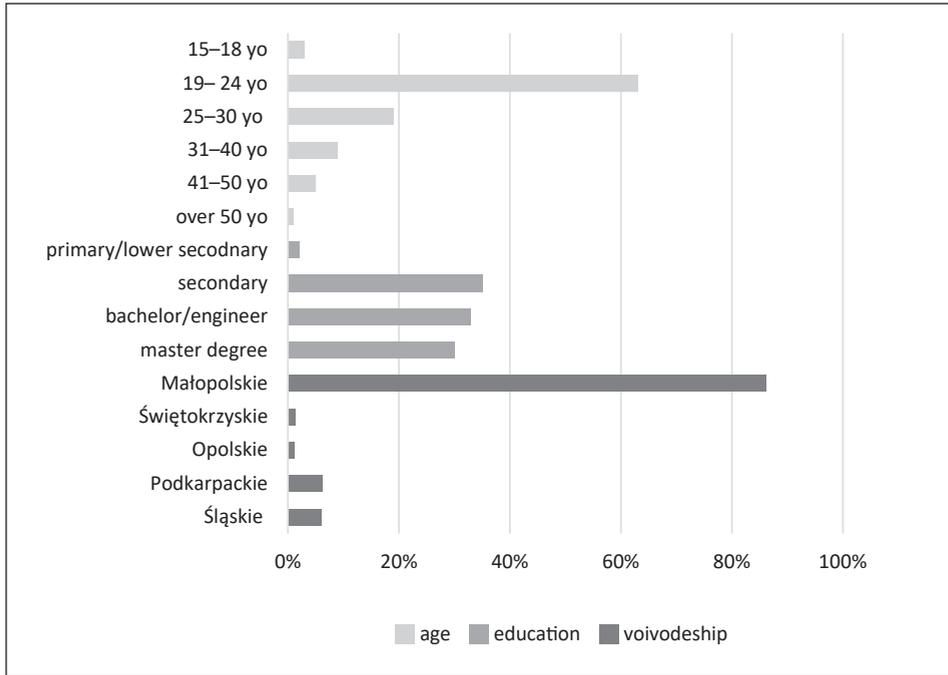
The conducted analyses allowed us to proceed to the next stage of research (of a pilot nature), in which the questionnaire was used. It consisted of questions on the origin that allowed the research sample to be determined and the central part concerned with citizens' awareness of their activity in education for social entrepreneurship. The questionnaire was placed on Google Drive and sent electronically to university students and employees of public administration (municipal offices). One hundred forty-two questionnaires were correctly completed, of which 38 (26.8%) were from men and 104 (73.2%) from women. The breakdown of the respondents by age, education, and area of residence is shown in Figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, the highest number of respondents (86%) were residents of Małopolskie Voivodeship aged 19–24 (63%) and 25–30 (19%), among whom education was divided into secondary education, bachelor/ engineer, master's degree. Only 2% had just primary or lower secondary education, and 75% were students (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> – degree level).

The questions in the central part of the questionnaire concerned the respondents' knowledge of social enterprises, social entrepreneurship and NGOs as well as educational activities for social entrepreneurship in Poland. The results concerning knowledge of the terms and the formal and legal conditions regarding support for social entrepreneurship are presented in Figure 3.

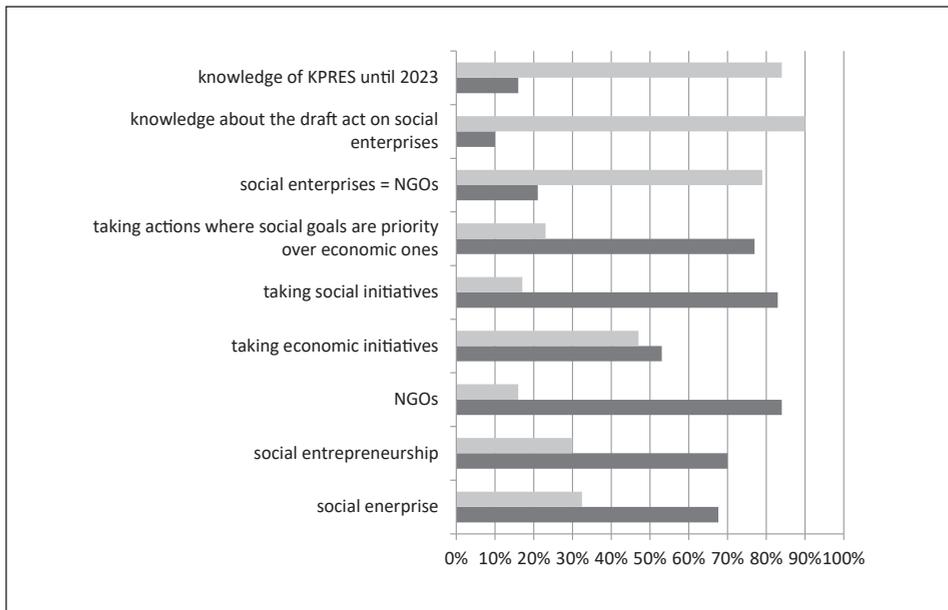
When analysing the data presented in Figure 3, it can be stated that nearly 70% of the respondents answered that they knew the terms “social enterprise” and “social entrepreneurship”, while 84% declared that they knew the concept of NGOs. In the next question on the definition of social entrepreneurship, it can be seen that 83% of the respondents stated that it was undertaking social activities; a wrong definition but an answer correct for NGOs. Slightly less, 77%, stated that it was taking actions where social goals were above economic ones. The answers to the question about the definition of social entrepreneurship were subject to a detailed analysis which showed that only 12 people, i.e. 8.5% of respondents, provided the correct definition of social entrepreneurship, that it undertakes activities where social goals are above economic ones. Fifty-nine (about 42%) people gave all the answers, which means that they cannot distinguish between such terms as NGOs, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the notion of social entrepreneurship is unknown among the respondents and that they do not see a difference between social entrepreneurship and NGOs. Thirty-nine people

Figure 2. Characteristics of respondents



Source: authors based on research

Figure 3. Poles’ awareness of social entrepreneurship (SE)



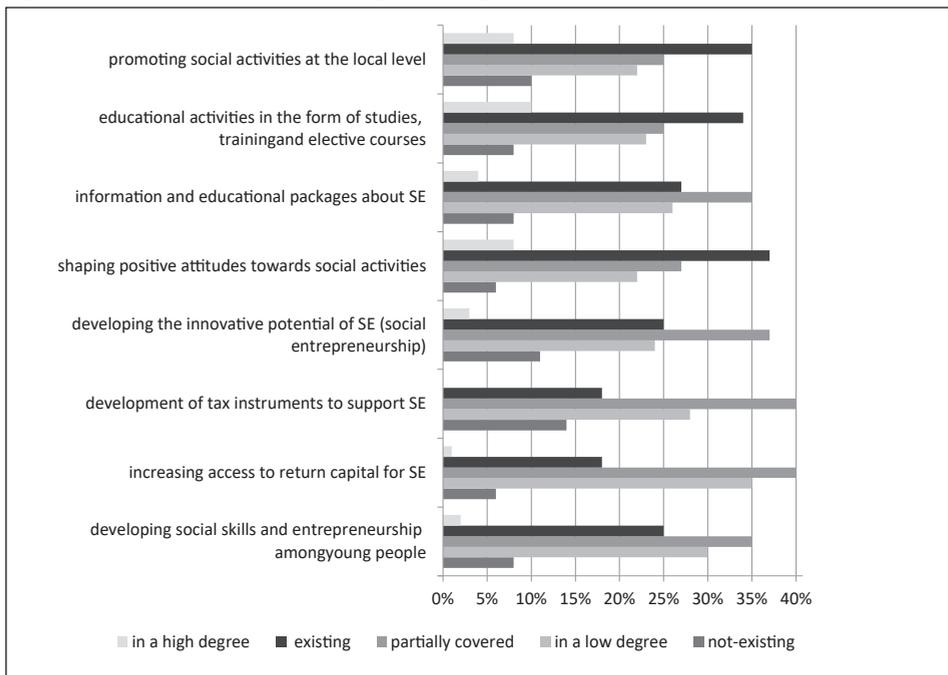
Source: authors based on research

(about 28%) drew a parallel definition of NGOs and social entrepreneurship, though the respondents indicated that they were familiar with the discussed terms. What is more, 79% of the respondents, stated that NGOs are not the same as social entrepreneurship.

As for knowledge of the draft act on social enterprise and supporting the social economy and the National Program for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023, about 80–90% of respondents stated that they had not heard about these programmes. The next question concerned taking action in education for social entrepreneurship. Respondents answered based on a five-point Likert scale, where one meant none being taken and five being taken to a considerable extent. The results are presented in Figure 4.

When analysing the list presented in Figure 4, the conclusion is that no action in education for social entrepreneurship is being taken in the opinion of the respondents. Activities such as shaping positive attitudes towards social activities, educational activity in the form of study, training and optional classes, and dissemination of social activity at the local level were assessed as being taken by approximately 44% of respondents. In comparison, approximately 25% stated that they were only partially taken. Development and dissemination of information and education packages on social entrepreneurship were assessed by about 31% as being present, 35% stated only partially, while 34% had an unfavourable opinion. Other activities such as developing social and entrepreneurial competences in young people, increasing access to capital for social entrepreneurship, developing tax instruments supporting social entrepreneurship, and developing innovative potential based on research results, can be assessed as absent (approximately 40–45% of the respondents said so).

Figure 4. Actions taken for social entrepreneurship (SE)



Source: authors based on research

The last question concerned the respondents taking social initiatives, and here the results do not indicate that social entrepreneurship is widespread among citizens either. Only 9.9% stated that they often undertook social initiatives, and 4.9% very often, so that only 14.8% of the surveyed young people undertook social initiatives – an unsatisfactory result; 4.9% never take action in the area of social initiatives, 31.7% – rarely, while it was ‘sometimes’ for 48.6% of the respondents.

## Summary and conclusions

The analysis made it possible to achieve the aim of the article and to provide answers to the research questions. Social entrepreneurship was defined, the way social enterprises in Poland and Europe function was presented, and conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship in Poland were set out. The assumptions of the National Program for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023 were discussed. The analysis made it possible to conclude that educational initiatives in the field of social entrepreneurship primarily serve to disseminate this issue among various social groups. They are also to emphasise the role of social enterprises in shaping entrepreneurial attitudes and socio-economic development. Moreover, they serve to increase knowledge and competences in social enterprises.

The research makes it possible to conclude that activities related to education in social entrepreneurship, according to the formula resulting from KPRES and individual regional plans, are not popular among citizens. The conclusion was also drawn that the respondents do not know the concept of social entrepreneurship or the essence of the functioning of social enterprises, even though they define social enterprises as not being the same as NGOs. The analysis also showed that such activities were not undertaken, that the respondents did not know the draft law on social enterprise and KPRES, and that they did not embark on social initiatives.

It can, therefore, be concluded that current education in the area of entrepreneurship faces challenges, including economic ones. The Polish educational system requires an intensification of economic education, and an increasing number of experts have raised this issue. An essential element that may have a positive impact on the development of social entrepreneurship is the support of social activities taken by young people and a broader debate on the social dimension of life.

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