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STOP PATTERNS! JOINT ACTION BY SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND LABOUR MARKET INSTITUTIONS PROVIDED HELP TO LARGE FAMILIES¹ AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION: THROUGH A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO THEIR NEEDS, ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED THROUGH EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION MEASURES.

STOP Patterns! Joint Action by Social Assistance and Labour Market Institutions

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POLAND

“STOP Patterns! Joint Action by Social Assistance and Labour Market Institutions” was a pilot project, which aimed to offer coordinated help to families at risk of social exclusion due to long-term or generational unemployment.

The project used an innovative approach using a coordination-based method to look at the entire family situation of those at risk of social exclusion. It brought together several actors: social assistance and social integration institutions² and labour market organisations. Assistance was then provided to families through employment and education measures, social integration measures, and measures which improved their family’s circumstances and provided access to sport and cultural activities.

Name of the PES

Polish PES – Local PES Office in Nysa (Powiatowy Urząd Pracy w Nysie)

Scope of measure

Regional pilot project from 2013-15 in the town of Nysa. The experience of the pilot project led to the establishment of the “Centre of Promotion, Education and Family Therapy” which is continuing to carry out these activities based at the Diocesan Formation House³ in the town of Nysa.⁴

When was the practice implemented?

2013–15

What was the driver for introducing the practice? Was it internal or external?

The project was designed by the Department of Social Assistance and Integration in the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and implemented by the Human Resource Development Center. The aim of the initiative was to provide comprehensive assistance and support to the families in need in the district of Nysa. This pilot project was developed in response to the call for proposals. Before the proposal was prepared, the local PES office in Nysa held consultations with institutions operating in the area of social assistance and integration, to explore who would be interested in implementing such an initiative. Four institutions expressed their willingness to work on the project together with the local PES office in Nysa.

1 Large families include those which have at least three children under 18 or under 25, and where the children are still at school.

2 Social integration institutions are professional activity centres, occupational therapy workshops and other entities operating in the areas of social assistance and integration. They undertake a number of activities aimed at increasing the professional skills of disabled people and other groups at risk of social exclusion.

3 The Diocesan Formation House is, an ecclesial institution providing services to the local community e.g. family counselling, retreats etc.

4 The Centre for Promotion, Education and Family Therapy in Nysa is run by six partners including the five main programme partners (local PES office in Nysa, Nysa Local Family Aid Centre, Nysa Social Assistance Centre, Głuchołazy Social Assistance Centre, Łambinowice Social Assistance Centre), and the Diocesan Formation House in Nysa. During the pilot, the Diocesan Formation House in Nysa provided rooms for the Centre for Promotion, Education and Family Therapy as well as help to organise the activities carried out there. From the PES side the support was provided by career counsellors and employment advisers, and from the social welfare side by social workers. Support was also provided by psychologists, pedagogues, dietitians, and speech therapists.

The Centre operated from 1 June 2014 to 30 September 2015 (until the end of the pilot project). However, as a result of the pilot experience, the Centre still continues to operate with the involvement of the five main programme partners, and continues to carry out the activities which were initiated by the pilot project.

Families benefitting from the Centre’s current activities are jointly selected by the local PES office, Local Family Aid Centre and the social assistance centre.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

The leader of this project was the local PES office in Nysa.

The main project partners were:

- ▶ Nysa Local Family Aid Centre;
- ▶ Nysa Social Assistance Centre;
- ▶ Głuchołazy Social Assistance Centre;
- ▶ Łambinowice Social Assistance Centre.

Other institutions were also invited to cooperate in providing support to large families in the district. In total, 27 organisations took part. This included the labour office; social assistance; NGOs and social cooperatives; education institutions; large businesses; health care centres; and religious institutions.

The partnership was officially established during a conference entitled "Nysa District for Large Families" (Nysa, 17 July 2014), which produced a common agreement entitled "Nysa District for Large Families".

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

The target group included families who met all of the following criteria:

- ▶ Those with at least three children younger than 18 or 25 where at least one child was in full-time education;
- ▶ Those receiving benefits under the social assistance system;
- ▶ Those families that included at least one adult member registered at the Nysa local PES office as long-term unemployed; and
- ▶ Families that lived in the Nysa District in one of the three following communities: Nysa, Łambinowice, Głuchołazy.

What were the practice's main objectives?

The objective was to establish a coordinated and comprehensive aid system to address the needs of families at risk of social exclusion to help them to gain independence from the benefit system.

Specifically, the STOP Patterns! pilot project aimed to:

- ▶ Develop a mechanism of coordination and cooperation between labour market and social assistance institutions;
- ▶ Develop new occupational activation and social integration instruments; and
- ▶ Improve the cohesion of assistance and aid institutions in the respective fields of their support services.

What activities were carried out?

The STOP Patterns! pilot project was implemented in four phases, as outlined below:

- ▶ Establishing the Local Cooperation Coordination Team (PZKW), a task force composed by the main project partners (local PES office in Nysa, Nysa Local Family Aid Centre, Nysa Social Assistance Centre, Głucholazy Social Assistance Centre, Łambinowice Social Assistance Centre). The PZKW was in charge of the coordination of the pilot.
- ▶ Establishing the Mobile Interdisciplinary Group (MGI): The MGI was composed of vocational and placement officers from the local PES office and social workers. The MGI developed a catalogue of activities that were available to the families taking part in the project. This was called the Family Occupational Activation, Assistance and Integration Programme (RPA). Additionally, the MGI assessed families according to a number of indicators i.e. living standards, health, occupational life, integration into society. This helped to plan the professional assistance required.
- ▶ Providing large families with comprehensive aid: This step was the implementation of the planned measures. Each family could take advantage of an ad-hoc plan based on their specific needs. This included the following modules:
 - ▶ employment and education (20 measures), such as vocational training, language courses, tutorials for children with learning difficulties, etc.,
 - ▶ social integration (16 measures), such as family workshops, organisation of a Children's Day, family trips, etc.
 - ▶ family (19 measures), such as holiday trips to build resilience to crises and difficulties, purchase of necessary furniture, hiring of specialists to work with families (pedagogy, dietician, psychologist), etc.,
 - ▶ sport and culture (18 measures), such as: family workshops, tickets for sport and cultural centres, etc.
- ▶ Establishing the Centre for Promotion, Education and Family Therapy in the Nysa District: This step aimed to support families with ad-hoc specialist support, such as psychologists, pedagogues, dietitians and career counsellors. The Centre is a result of cooperation between six institutions: the local PES office, the Local Family Aid Centre, three social assistance centres and the Diocesan Formation Home.

What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?

In January 2014 all partners signed an agreement. This defined the basis of the collaboration as well as each partners' responsibilities.

What were the source(s) of funding?

The project was funded by the European Social Fund, in particular the Human Capital Operational Programme. The cost of the pilot project amounted to EUR 181 728.53 (PLN 783 886.03).

What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?

The main outputs⁵ of the programme included:

- ▶ 18 families (94 people) received aid;
- ▶ 17 people developed jobseeking skills;
- ▶ 21 people took part in measures aimed at occupational activation;
- ▶ 26 people gained certificates regarding their skills and qualifications;
- ▶ 59 people improved their social skills and competences;
- ▶ 12 children with learning difficulties took part in tutorials and improved their knowledge of specific disciplines (Polish, English, mathematics and science);
- ▶ 19 large families took part in the cultural activities;
- ▶ 10 large families were provided with necessary furniture to increase the families' living standards (e.g. wardrobes, desks, chairs, desk lamps, etc.).

These results were gathered via internal monitoring based on ex- ante- and ex-post questionnaires, which were disseminated to participants. In addition, data was gathered from internal activity reporting from the different training units.

The following materials were developed during the pilot project:

- ▶ The Local Interdisciplinary Cooperation Programme.
- ▶ The Family Programme for Professional Activation, Social Assistance and Integration.
- ▶ The model agreement for partnership with regards to large families.
- ▶ A sample form for the interdisciplinary diagnosis of large families.
- ▶ A tripartite family contract.

In addition, training materials were produced and disseminated to participants.

⁵ The sources of measurement included attendance lists at workshops; certificates and confirmations issued; records of provided tutoring; and reports from trainers who conducted classes with children and family workshops.

What outcomes have been identified?

The STOP Patterns! pilot project was deemed a success in the Nysa District as the main aim of the pilot project was achieved. The activities carried out ultimately led to the independence of the families, strengthened them and reduced or stopped their dependence on the benefit system. This was due to a multi-disciplinary approach that dealt with the families as a whole. The support provided was tailored to the needs of the family, not individuals.

The pilot project demonstrated that labour market and social assistance institutions can work together to provide comprehensive and multidimensional support to those in need. In particular, there was good cooperation between the Local Cooperation Coordination Team and MGI and this contributed to offering tailored support that addressed the ad-hoc needs of the families.

The experience of the pilot project led to the establishment of the "Centre for Promotion, Education and Family Therapy" which is continuing to carry out these activities. The Centre is run by the Diocesan Formation House, which provided the rooms during the existence of the pilot project and which decided to continue to carry out the activities of the pilot.

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

The project was innovative as it used a coordination-based method to look at the entire family situation for those at risk of social exclusion, instead of looking solely at individuals.

The partners agreed that working with such families should be a long-term, multi-faceted and comprehensive approach covering different aspects of a family's life. New instruments were developed during the pilot phase, such as a family contract, family occupational activation and social integration programmes.



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