

# GENERATION

E L D E R L Y P E O P L E M A G A Z I N E



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## GENERATION

EDERLY PEOPLE MAGAZINE

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# INTRODUCTION

Bartłomiej Głuszak

Here comes a special issue of the Generation monthly. It is exceptional because it deals with the subject of foreign cooperation of non-governmental organizations. Why this topic?

Organizations participate in the development of the community of the Warmia, Mazury and Powiśle regions by carrying out activities for the elderly, the disabled, children and youth, inhabitants of rural areas, the unemployed and many other groups. I have always repeated what is obvious to me and many, but unfortunately not to everyone, that we all - administration employees, organizations, residents, entrepreneurs - constitute a local government. By acting, we develop our local government, that is, our community.

The specificity of organizations' work entails activities based on voluntary and social commitment, as well as economic activity, external funds, most often projects, but also fundraising. Their strength lies in the fact that they are rooted in local communities. They know their communities, have been with them for a long time and, unlike many external entities, they do not disappear once the project is completed. Oftentimes, regardless of whether funding is obtained or not, the organizations continue their work, e.g. activities for children or cultural activities.

It is hence reasonable that we, the organizations, are looking for partners and various solutions. One of the areas of this search concerns partners from outside our country. For that reason, foreign cooperation very often serves the development of our activities, and consequently the development of our region, it is part of it. Having potent partners, we introduce new solutions, build various facilities serving our recipients, help residents more effectively, enable them to contact citizens of other countries, and develop our region, local communities and local governments.

Helping in the other direction, where we share experiences, but also provide help, is also a very important



President of the Federation FOŚa – Bartłomiej Głuszak

aspect. The best example is the current situation in Ukraine. Our organizations have become involved in helping the people of Ukraine on a large scale, both in our region and in Ukraine. They have very often used existing contacts, but they have also built new ones.

Another important area is the promotional dimension. We promote our region and build its positive image on the international stage, both in terms of tourist attractiveness and intercultural openness.

To sum up, organizations act as partners in regional development in many dimensions, also internationally. On the pages of Generation you will find many specific examples of such cooperation in the civic, educational, senior, cultural, humanitarian and many other areas. To me personally, it is another example that community workers are people with empathy, who create an open world for all those who need support and respect other people.

**Bartłomiej Głuszak.** Redaktor naczelny "Generacji", prezes Federacji FOŚa.

# IT'S WORTHWHILE LOOKING AROUND THE WORLD

Arkadiusz Jachimowicz

**I was asked to write down a few reflections on the value of transnational cooperation in the development of an organization. Some people may scoff - what can project tourism do!? Well, it can. Let's take a look at the example of my organization ...**



Arkadiusz Jachimowicz, photo: Association archive

My first study visits abroad got off to a good start - I visited the United States twice. The first time was related to the idea of local funds or foundations, collecting endowment capital from donations from local donors, investing it in safe financial instruments, and allocating the income from this capital to social activities of various local organizations. It was then that the Elbląg Foundation was established, the endowment of which currently amounts to over a million zlotys. It is a lot and a little, but it is a good start.

However, this is not the end. We, the ESWIP Association, are starting works on our own endowment capital, on different principles, in different circumstances, but it is worth starting some time than never.

The second visit to the United States referred more to social economy: examples of associations and foundations that conduct business activities in conjunction with social activities. Well, because if we want to help weaker people, since this is the mission of the organization, we cannot only count on someone's pity, but we can give them, for example, decent employment - that is, we start a business and create these jobs ourselves. It's obvious especially there. This thinking is very close to us as the Social Economy Support Center. An encounter with advanced solutions opens plenty of space to thinking, whether in advising other organizations or in our business. We are also a social enterprise.

Meanwhile, I happen to think it was Belfast, Northern Ireland, where we saw actions - let's call it - calming and integrating the feuding sides. Older people remember planting bombs ... Various types of club rooms, meeting houses, etc., often located near fences entwined with barbed wire... How to work in difficult and crisis situations. It was a great lesson. This skill is very much needed by each and every organization, especially now.

Next, it was Western Europe (the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Sweden) where we were in various social enterprises, the common denominator of which was concern for the weakest, but also business calculation. There, we noticed a solution that does not exist



Photo: Association archive

in Poland - shops run by social organizations, dealing with the acquisition, renovation and sale of goods obtained from local residents. And giving jobs to the weaker people at the same time. Thus, we established a repair and reuse center in Elbląg, based on the Social Integration Center, which is our 'social store.' We transfer the income from its sales to the Grant Fund which we use to finance social activities of groups of residents and organizations (but this is probably our original idea).

What have we noticed lately? A number of European solutions are already present in Poland. Nay! Many a solution of Polish organizations can be an example for the ones in the West. But this is not the end of cooperation. We are switching to in-depth partnership relations. A good example is the Rich'ESS association of Saint Briec, France, to a great extent our counterpart in supporting social economy. We carry out joint activities in, for example, support tools for newly established social enterprises. We develop models of activities and adapt them to our needs. It is no longer about simple learning from the experiences of others, it is about developing solutions that are intere-

sting both for us and our partner organization. And what about the other way round? What are we giving? It is harder to impress Europe, but we used to teach Russians how to write projects for EU cross-border programs, we taught Ukrainians how to cooperate with local governments, we hosted a number of study visits from less advanced countries.

It is worth looking at what others are doing, what cool ideas and great solutions they have. Then our longings and aspirations are awakened. It is worth sharing our knowledge and experience with others. Wake up their longings and inspirations. For the common welfare.

**Arkadiusz Jachimowicz.** President of the Association's Management Board ESWIP. Expert in non-governmental organizations, public administration cooperation with non-governmental organizations, editor-in-chief of the magazine of community activists of Warmia and Mazury - NGO.

# SOCIAL ANIMATION, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND OAKS...

Zbigniew Mieruński

'Pohorela' is the local name of a 300-year-old oak forest located near the bank of the Dniester river in the village of Dubasarii Vechi. The largest project implemented by Stowarzyszenie Gołdapski Fundusz Lokalny [Gołdap Community Foundation Association – hereinafter the GFL] in 2019 was associated with this forest, unique both in Moldova and abroad.



Celebration of the oak grove revitalization, photo: GFL archive

All of it had started four years earlier with a series of trainings/workshops under the name 'Academy of Local Development.' It was conducted in Chisinau by Wioletta Anuszkiewicz and me, Zbigniew Mieruński - the trainers of GFL, and attended by representatives of 16 Moldovan local governments and non-governmental organizations. Two editions of the Academy were organized by the Solidarity International Foundation local office. Their participants, who attended the workshop, learnt about the ABCD (Asset-Based Community

Development) model, i.e. community development based on resources and the LAC methodology - local activity centers. The Academy served as a training program which enabled its partakers to acquire knowledge and skills in the field of local community development, diagnosing resources and needs, creating a cooperation network - coalitions and local partnerships, designing social change, and implementing local development initiatives. The series of training sessions was attended by groups of three people from one locality, representing

various sectors (non-governmental organizations, local government institutions and entrepreneurs), who also participated in study visits to Poland.

During these trainings, the trainers of the Gołdap Community Foundation Association met representatives of the Dubasarii Vechi commune from the east of Moldova, inhabited by about 6,000 dwellers. The economy of the commune is focused on agriculture, trade and small scale industry. Dubasarii Vechi is famous for growing tomatoes. Annually, about 150,000 tons of tomatoes, peppers and other plant products require tents and greenhouses.

In 2016, the Gołdap Community Foundation Association and the 'IEDERA-Dubăsarii Vechi' Community Association signed a cooperation agreement, and in 2017 they implemented a joint project entitled Socio-cultural development of Dubasarii Vechi (Moldova) based on resources.

A participatory development plan for the Dubasarii Vechi commune was developed as part of the project. It defined the goals and directions of social, cultural and tourist development, and took into account the resources and potentials of Dubasarii Vechi. Several project ideas were also developed to achieve the operational goals defined in the plan. One of these ideas was to use the potential of Dubasaria Vechi, a unique oak grove, which consists of more than 150 oaks and several dozen other trees that are Moldova's natural heritage. Most of the trees are 200-300 year old.

- This oak forest has fascinated me since the first time I saw it - says Zbigniew Mieruński, the president of the Gołdap Community Foundation Association - despite the fact that it was much neglected as well as it was a dump of rubbish, furniture and debris. The huge oaks looked monumental, phenomenal and had a huge development potential. At that time, together with our Moldovan partners, we decided to take measures to protect the forest and make it available to the inhabitants, and this is how the idea for another project was born.

The Gołdap Community Foundation Association, in partnership with the local government of the Dubasarii Vechi commune, submitted an application to the Polish Development Aid program and obtained almost half a million zlotys in 2019 for the implementation of the project in Moldova. Their activities were supported by the IDERA Association and the Moldsilva Agency which is the central administrative body in the field of forestry.

During the project, the oak grove was revitalized and made available to tourists and residents. It got enriched with a fence, walking paths, benches and bins, as well as an educational thematic path called 'Birds' alphabet', presenting the birds living in this area. The protected oaks (143) were inventoried and described on special boards installed within the grove. In addition, the area was provided with an access road and a parking lot to accommodate buses/coaches.

The premises of the library in Dubasaria Vechi were refurbished and a tourist information center opened. In addition, a series of trainings and workshops was conducted on the development of rural tourism as an alternative source of income for residents. The most active dwellers representing local authorities, entrepreneurs, local government institutions and non-governmental organizations took part in a study visit to Masuria and Suwałki Region. The participants learned about Polish experiences in the field of rural tourism development and the role played by Polish local governments, non-governmental organizations and entrepreneurs in this field.

The revitalized oak grove was officially opened in October 2019. The ceremony was attended by Mr. Bartłomiej Zdaniuk, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Chisinau. Several representatives of local government authorities and social organizations as well as inhabitants of the town attended the event, too. It turned out, yet in the first months, that 'Pohorela' became a new tourist attraction on the map of Moldova.

The COVID-19 epidemic has severely limited the implementation of international projects, but the authorities and organizations from Dubasaria Vechi continue to invest in the development of tourism in their area. This year, for example, the tomb of the Donici family, which the famous astronomer Nicolae Donici hails from, has been revitalized. This idea arose earlier, during one of the workshops conducted as part of the partnership project.

The scope of activities of the Gołdap Community Foundation in Moldova is not, however, limited to the Dubasarii Vechi commune.

- We are pleased to see the continuation and development of our activities, which we have been implementing in Moldova since 2015 - says Wioletta Anuszkiewicz, a GFL trainer - Not only the project carried out at Dubasaria Vechi. Plenty of partici-

pants of our training courses and study visits have been actively developing their communities to this day. We watch and cheer them on through social media. Several Moldovan local governments have established cooperation with Polish municipalities, incl. the ones from the administrative districts of Giżycko and Węgorzewo. Thanks to this cooperation and the donation of fire engines and equipment by Polish municipalities, for example, three new volunteer fire brigades were created in Moldova. The cooperation continues. In 2021, leaders and employees of local government cultural institutions learned about the Polish model of local activity centers and planned to implement this method in their institutions. The Moldovan partners disseminate their knowledge, skills and experience in the territory of Moldova and the separatist Transnistria.

'Soft' projects were co-financed under the program of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation 'Transformations in the Region' - RITA, implemented by the Education for Democracy Foundation. The Gotdap Community Foundation, the IEDERA Association and the authorities of the Dubasarii Vechi commune have ideas for further 'soft' and investment projects aimed at socio-economic development. May they be able to obtain new subsidies.

**Zbigniew Mieruński** - a socio-cultural animator, a visual artist, a local development trainer and advisor; he resides in Gotdap, serving as the president of the Gotdap Local Fund Association since 2002



From the left: Zbigniew Mieruński, mayor Dubasarii Vechi, Wioletta Anuszkiewicz i ambassador RP. In the background an old oak. Photo: GLF archive.



# LAMKOWO OPEN TO ABROAD

Łukasz Czarnecki-Pacyński

## A non-commercial and non-public school in Lamkowo near Barczewo pays a lot of attention to developing foreign contacts of its pupils

The Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Edukacji Dzieci i Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich WROTA [the association for the education of children and rural development] was established in 2007 to save the Lamkowo village school from liquidation. The school had been serving its local Polish community since the 19th century. In those difficult times, Franciszek Szczepański - the patron of this institution and a distinguished organizer of rural libraries in southern Warmia - worked here. However, the need to preserve this institution resulted not only from historical resentments. - A countryside school is also a kind of a 'cultural keystone', providing local community with a sense of local identity. And that is why we fought so hard to keep it alive - explains Małgorzata Bałusz, previously a long-time headmistress of the school in Lamkowo, now the president of WROTA, i.e. the association which runs the school. United Europe focuses on the integration of its citizens residing in different countries on the continent. Therefore, Lamkowo students, who improve their knowledge of the German language, go to German-speaking countries. Until the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Lamkowo facility also conducted an educational youth exchange with a German school in Osnabrück - Children from Lamkowo went to Osnabrück twice to study together with German friends, and twice their German peers visited Lamkowo - recalls Agnieszka Pacyńska-



Photo: Association archive

Czarnecka, the vice-president of the WROTA association, also acting as a school pedagogue. Another foreign partner of Lamkowo dwellers was the Polish school in Leuven, Belgium, the capital of the Flemish Brabant province. There, having classes once a week, the children of Polish-Belgian mixed marriages as well as the children of Polish families living abroad study, learn about Polish culture and improve their knowledge of the Polish language. - We were at their place, they were at ours, and the friendship contacts made by children are maintained nowadays, in the time of the pandemic, thanks to social media - says the vice president of the WROTA association. They hope they will have completed the pandemic-delayed Old And New Europe project by the end of 2022. Here, as part of the Erasmus+ program, young people from three European schools, i.e. Polish, Portuguese and Italian ones, have been building European understanding between nations, getting to know one another's cultures and working together during various workshops. Unfortunately, in the time of the pandemic, some of these activities have ultimately had to be held only by means of distance communication.



Photo: Association archive

**Łukasz Czarnecki-Pacyński,**  
a journalist and a school pedagogue.



# WE HAVE TO ACT TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz

**The environment, innovative local government or youth projects are just a few of the many activities of the Euroregion Baltic Association of Communes of the Republic of Poland. The association's partners include Baltic countries, but today it is also Spain, Austria and Croatia.**

- The most important goal of our activity is to activate not only local governments, but also all local beneficiaries of the Baltic Sea area and Europe, within and beyond its borders. We can learn from each other regardless of distance and location. Showing that borders in international cooperation do not divide, but can, above all, connect, is our main goal - explains Marcin Żuchowski, director of the Secretariat of the Euroregion Baltic Association of Polish Communes.

He also adds:

- Everyone thinks that their problem is individual. Meanwhile, the world has faced challenges in which multi-sector and multi-dimensional cooperation is important today. We therefore focus in our project work on solving common challenges and problems that do not distinguish between borders and distances, affect all environments, from local government to scientific to business to third sector organizations. Everyone must be involved in counteracting negative trends. If we want to consider comprehensive and long-term solutions, only by working with partners will we be able to develop sustainable solutions based on experience and practice.

The projects aim at strengthening direct contacts between citizens and authorities from many countries, exchange of good practices or a consultation process in order to enhance the sense of belonging and awareness of the European family. These are also projects that are supposed to make us aware of the importance of actions that create climate-neutral societies.

- On the one hand, this is our main area of activity; however, our goal is also sustainable deve-

lopment. We want the effects of our projects to be long-term. We must unite in the joint creation of a better Europe, friendly to the environment and people. Without limiting European Union's scope - Marcin Żuchowski emphasizes.

Baltic Euroregion currently cooperates not only with the Baltic countries.

- The Association's profile has changed over the last few years - Marcin Żuchowski assesses - Years ago, it was mainly cooperation with the Baltic region, within the framework of the Baltic Euroregion network, that is with Russia, Denmark, Sweden and Lithuania. Presently, our scope of international cooperation has expanded and today it also includes countries outside this region, such as Spain, Romania, Italy, Greece and Germany. Together, we are currently implementing important and interesting project initiatives that benefit local organizations and institutions. Of course, this does not change the fact that Scandinavian countries are still at the forefront of the countries we cooperate with. Oftentimes, based on our contacts, we constitute a kind of platform and bridge for the development of broader contacts between all the parties concerned.

The Baltic Euroregion has gathered a database of experts with whom it has been cooperating for years.

- Over the last six years, we have implemented exactly twenty projects, if we count in the seven currently in progress, and two that will start in 2023. Thus, we can already talk about dozens of organizations and hundreds of experts operating in various sectors. We have partners in almost every field, from environmental protection to blue and green growth to medicine and healthcare to civic participation. These are not

only non-governmental organizations, but also universities, technology parks or private organizations, adolescents and youth centres, cultural centres. The majority of beneficiaries are still related to local government work, i.e. communes and entities related to local governments in various countries.

Local governments can see today that there is strength in numbers and it is necessary to focus on cooperation.

– This is very important as today local governments have a lot of expenses, they have to reduce funds significantly and they are looking for additional opportunities to finance activities and initiatives that are socially important - our interlocutor adds. - The European Union programs, such as Interreg South Baltic and Interreg Baltic Sea, have become such a solution. After all, these are Erasmus projects which contribute to the implementation of bilateral cooperation programs between specific entities. This trend is noticeable. More and more local governments are looking for foreign partners; they have specific ideas, often initiated at the grass roots, by the residents themselves. Our task is to help them match initiatives to spe-

cific sources of funding.

The association itself is a pioneer of innovation in the market of associations that deal with international cooperation. These are many projects that change the approach and thinking about projects on a global scale, which create a new quality in many countries. 'Think globally, act locally' is one of them - a pilot project connecting cities and municipalities from five European Union countries - Italy, Romania, Greece, Spain and Poland. Its aim is to strengthen citizens' involvement in the life of their communities, create a balanced cooperation strategy, exchange good practices and supervise the consultation process which strengthens the sense of belonging and awareness of the European family.

It is in Elbląg that one of the most important events of the 'Sztum Circular Economy' project will take place, i.e. the establishment of a task force for mitigating negative effects of climate change and for the development of green and blue initiatives in northern Poland, the so-called 'Circular Economy Task Force.' Today, the Association is the creator of the blue and green changes in the regions and, most importantly, the regions can count on the support of our



Photo: Association archive



foreign partners in this area.

- We would like to be an open platform for the development of new initiatives and the exchange of good practices, as a response to contemporary climate challenges - Marcin Żuchowski emphasizes. - Many a time, interesting projects lacked money and rendered their implementation impossible. So we started to create new opportunities by engaging our partners, and in result the projects that were involved in preventing the effects of climate change had a chance to be implemented. The Sztum Circular Economy project is one of the undertakings that is interdisciplinary in nature and it is intended to contribute to a comprehensive approach aimed at solving common challenges. The aim is to gather experts and specialists, to create an interdisciplinary group that is to initiate new activities in the field of combating climate change. It is also a series of investment, educational and information activities that are to prepare societies for the challenges of the coming years.

Norway is, not without reason, among the foreign partners of Sztum Circular Economy; it is at the forefront of countries initiating ecological solutions that have a global dimension. In result of good practices learnt in Norway, local governments in Poland will be able to see how to create a project that combines bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Thanks to the Norwegian partners, the others will learn how to set up social cooperatives that will be centres for the reuse of building materials or recycling used equipment. There are many similar places in

Norway where these materials are reused. One can even say that this is a Scandinavian specialty.

- Our other project, Green Up, is designed to educate young people and contribute to the development of a long-term ecological strategy or pro-ecological activity of the young generation, Marcin Żuchowski informs. - It is about the inclusion of a local community in environmental education and environmental activities. Three local governments, as well as the Euroregion Bałtyk Association of Polish Communes, the WAMA-COOP Olsztyn association and FONIX A.S., our Norwegian partner, are involved in the activities.

**The Euroregion Bałtyk Association of Polish Communes is active on the international arena. It creates local initiatives that connect many countries. It closely cooperates with Scandinavia, which, as the director of the secretariat of the Euroregion Bałtyk Association of Polish Communes emphasizes, is also an opportunity for many of our start-ups, so much appreciated by entrepreneurs from these countries.**

- To us, the most important thing is to activate local governments and all entities that want to act and transform ideas into real projects - Marcin Żuchowski concludes.

**Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz**, a journalist. In the FOSa Federation supports groups in developing cultural and social competences.



# BRIDGES ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS

Joanna Szymańska

**Polish-German projects are a natural extension of the history of the Warmia and Mazury region. At the same time they constitute an implementation element of the European regional policy.**

The last 30 years have been a time of intense changes in Europe and in the world, which even such science-fiction masters as Stanisław Lem could not have foreseen. Digitization, intra-European mobility, intensification of women's emancipation, global warming - these are the processes that accompany us on a daily basis. In the face of these changes, good neighbourly practices, both joint and community ones, should be intensified. A wide spectrum of grant programs and underlying international agreements, supporting both grassroots

and institutional initiatives, make it all come true.<sup>1</sup> Building bridges and, in this context, the obvious Polish-German reconciliation play an important role in the field of international cooperation. Polish-German rapprochement and reconciliation take place on a daily basis, both grassroots and institutionally. Moreover, it is the Polish-German rapprochement that is the common denominator of the integration processes in Central and Eastern Europe. These bridges are worth building on a solid foundation.



## HOSPITALITY

The Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation has been building bridges between the civil societies of Poland, Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries for years. In the face of the war in Ukraine, this role gains particular importance and the intensity of the Foundation's activities increases. As a gesture of solidarity with a common neighbour in need, the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation has announced a grant competition entitled 'Bridges of the future. Poland and Germany for Ukraine' (More on the grant program: <https://fwpn.org.pl>).

The STN:ORT festival supported by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, which has been taking place since 2016 in Sztynort (near Węgorzewo), is a great example of a project that builds such bridges. The FOSa Federation will be involved as a regional partner in the STN:ORT project in 2023. This year's motto of the festival was:

- Hospitality - these days we need people who will welcome and accept us, whoever we are - without judging. We need places that will feed us and bring us closer together - with our hopes, fears, and vulnerabilities. We need places that will be our safe haven, filled with goodness, respect and love. We as people need to create such places and share hospitality in them. (More at <https://2022.stnort.org>).

## EDUCATION

In the face of the above-mentioned changes, it is important to care for the development and stimulation of educational competences of various age groups. Social asymmetries and the influx of immigrants force us to reorganize our everyday practices and open up, let it be interculturally. Participation and integration of adults and the elderly as well as people with a migrant background is not an obvious matter. Moreover, when both factors - migration history and age - coincide, it often becomes even more difficult. As a rule, unfavourable social conditions do not level out with age. On the contrary, the existing unfavourable conditions deepen with age. What's more, an individual attempt to change

the initial situation, without support from the immediate environment, including politics and public administration, does not bode well for success.

Projects based on European funds, such as the Erasmus+ program, support cooperation in the field of education and improving competences. The goals of the projects include supporting civic participation and exchange of experiences. An example of such activities is the 'Key skills - new opportunities for adults' project implemented with the funds of the Erasmus+ program. The project gathered organizations and institutions from five European countries, including Poland (the FOSA Federation) and Germany (Info-Forum-Polregio), in order to develop new solutions and exchange experiences in adult education. The experience gained from the implementation of the project is extremely valuable, particularly in view of the social dynamics of recent months. Implementation of new social solutions requires time and civil courage, and civil society certainly has plenty of that.

<sup>1</sup> *Part of article prepared for Radio WDR Cosmo in Polish of the anniversary 30th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty between Poland and Germany of good neighborliness and friendly cooperation. June 17, 1991, by Dr. Kamila Schöll-Mazurek and Joanna Szymanska.*

**Joanna Szymanska** is the scientific director of the Info-Forum-Polregio project in North Rhine-Westphalia. She implements programs to improve the integration and civic participation of immigrants from the European Union in North Rhine-Westphalia. Between September 2020-2021, she acted as a councillor for integration of the city of Aachen. She cooperates with the non-governmental sector of the Warmian-Masurian province.



## AID WHICH CROSSES BORDERS

Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz conversation with Mariola Jagiełło

**The cooperation of the Łańcuch Wzajemności [chain of mutuality] association with Lithuania and Germany has been carried out for many years. It brings benefits to local communities as well as organizations in other regions.**

- We have been working closely with two countries, Germany and Lithuania, for years. At the beginning there were also the Netherlands and Greece, but we only met on the occasion of one project. As far as Lithuania and Germany are concerned, this exchange of experiences is still ongoing, says Mariola Jagiełło from the Łańcuch Wzajemności Association.

- Our Lithuanian partner is Asociacija Vilties Tiltas (with its two branches), and the German one - Frauen Helfen Frauen. The German association is literally translated as Women help women, and the Lithuanian one - Bridge of Hope.

In case of our neighbours from across the eastern border, the meetings in Lithuania were initially focused on teaching the Polish language to children of members of a local association. They were also an opportunity to honour people from Lithuania with honorary membership of the 'Łańcuch Wzajemności' Association, especially those who contributed to the development of the Kiwity Commune and the Association. They included Fr. Bishop Algirdas Jurevičius, Ordinary of the Diocese of Telsze in Lithuania, the Virginija and Ažuolas Sutkai and Tatjana Prakapiene.

- Our Lithuanian organization gathers only women who help other women in their area - adds Mariola Jagiełło.

- Our cooperation with Lithuania has continued uninterrupted since 2005.

The 'Łańcuch Wzajemności' Association implemented for example a project called Common history - common future. Once again, the activities undertaken by the association focused on bringing neighbours closer together and educating inhabitants about how this friendly neighbourhood is important for future generations. The Polish participants of the study visits to Lithuania took part in the activities and meetings with local leaders and local community. During one of the study visits, the so-called Polish Day celebrations took place. They promoted the Kiwity commune abroad, referring to the content and national symbols, Polish dishes and products, Polish culture and traditions, the way of life and mutual cooperation of the community for the common good.

In the case of the German partner, the idea that initiated the cooperation stemmed from a wish to write a cookbook. In this way, the 'Łańcuch Wzajemności' association established contact with the 'Frauen helfen Frauen' organization, which provides free equipment to people in need as part of its activities for the benefit of the disabled, including wheelchairs, walkers for the elderly and elbow crutches.

- In turn, in 2006, 'Frauen helfen Frauen' invited us and an organization from Lithuania to a joint project. Our cooperation is based on mutual understanding. We have many common spaces for conversation, so our cooperation continues to this day - adds Mariola Jagiełło

Our project work during joint visits also drew on encouraging partners to visit Poland, show the region and the organizations operating in it, and encourage them to initiate cooperation.

- International cooperation brings many benefits - concludes Mariola Jagiełło. - We gain experience, share good practices. We can also use the knowledge of foreign organizations which have gone through many years of joint activities and initiatives for the integration of local communities. Our cooperation turned into a companionship, which today results in further activities.



Photo: Association archive

# HE THAT TRAVELS FAR KNOWS MUCH, I.E. INTERNATIONAL INSPIRATIONS IN EDUCATION

Marek Zbytniewski, Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz

**We will certainly remember this year as the year of international cooperation. After a long period of restrictions resulting from the epidemiological threat of Covid-19, we were finally able to pack our bags and set off on a trip outside Poland.**

We have visited for example Portugal, Romania, as well as the Latvian commune of Gulbene, with which we have been cooperating and implementing projects for many years. Twice, in April and September, we had the pleasure of welcoming delegations of our foreign partners to the FOSa Federation.

## TO FIND NEW IDEAS

International cooperation involves, of course, not only travelling (although the tourist element is a very pleasant part of it and gives a break from everyday routine in the office or in the training room). It is primarily a search for inspiration - innovative and effective educational methods or good practices and effective ways of dealing with social problems. Observation of how people and organizations from different cultural circles work gives us the opportunity to look at different matters from a completely different perspective. After all, we have similar problems everywhere - unemployment, poverty, disability, old age - these are topics for which there are no limits. We deal with them everywhere, regardless of our location on the map. But the ways of dealing with these issues are already very diverse. In Portugal, the elderly integrate over wine by playing board games. In Romania, we got to know an extraordinary educational program for young people who take part in two-week camps simulating the operation of a real country - with their own authorities, services and regulations. In order to survive, everyone has to work, and the fictitious money earned can be spent in the most real local shops, on the most real sweets.

And the work is diverse - from management, through cleaning work, to e.g. handicrafts in a workshop, where kids learn to produce everyday objects from plastic waste, thus gaining environmental awareness.

We bring some extraordinary knowledge from each such visit, and we implement some of these inspirations in our daily work. Silver Sharing (a method of activating the elderly through tourist activity) or Comp-pass (a tool for creating paths of employment) are the effects of international exchange of experiences and cooperation.

## IN LATVIA

We visited Latvia in August. Today, the country is a space for active implementation of innovative and creative methods of adult education, in which local communities are willing to engage. There are a lot of institutions in the Gulbene district that use inspiring and innovative educational methods. Garden therapy is promoted in the 'Siltais' Social Welfare Center. There are huge vegetable gardens right next to the building. They are tended by the residents who have volunteered to take care of this space. Artists and craftsmen reside in the 'Dzerves' center, and music therapy is used while working with adults. The use of various instruments, inclusive of historical ones, brings extraordinary therapeutic effects. Libraries play an important social role here. The local library in Ranka acts as a kind of support center for adults. Here, they come to take part in classes to increase their digital competences, but also to work on relationship in general. The Gulbene library, in turn, is known for its effective adult education methods.



- We try to inspire people to open up and use modern technologies - assures Ruta Bokta from the Regional Educational Center at the Gulbene Library. Then, the area of the Lejasciems commune is a place of numerous initiatives connecting generations. The school and the Youth Center are very active here. The inhabitants can participate in floristic workshops. Any effort in which nature plays an important role is an excellent method of working with adults.

- The technique of the workshops is prepared in such a way as to unleash creativity and stimulate fantasy - says Inga Nagle, the leader of the florist workshop. - The effects of the workshops are always fabulous. Creative expression, work in a natural setting, with natural materials, allows for everyone to focus on the here and now, to stop and notice the diversity and colours of the world around us. Moreover, during the classes, a lot of positive energy is released, and this work is fun.

At the end, the project representatives took part in a workshop in an unusual place, i.e. Rubeni.

Here, under the watchful eye of Alise Rubene -Dune, they could make bars of natural soap. It is a space where, among others, personal development workshops for women are held.

### A STUDY VISIT TO POLAND

We also have a lot to be proud of - after all, we are experts in creating and implementing social innovations. During the April study visit to Poland we introduced JOB Firma [Job company](a training program for the unemployed, simulating work in a real enterprise, in which participants learn to function in the workplace, gain professional skills and learn, e.g. to plan) to our guests from Portugal, Romania, Germany and Latvia. In addition, they could play our board game 'Effective Resource Management'. On the same day, they also met the authors of Radio SOVO, many of whom are participants of Third Age Universities.

As a province organization, we could not fail to take our guests on a tour of our befriended organizations. We visited e.g. Daily Senior Home+,



Fot: Archiwum Federacji FOŚa

which functions within the structures of the Municipal Social Welfare Center in Olsztynek. Its task is to take actions, among others, to keep its charges in their natural environment and to counteract institutionalization and marginalization. In Kętrzyn, several teachers presented us with an innovative educational solution that they use in working with children. Krokiet and Lama Academy is a great combination of exercise, fun and learning. These forms include motion videos, thematic worksheets and ready-made scenarios of classes, the purpose of which is to prevent addictions and undesirable behaviour. The city of Kętrzyn was the first in the province and the second in Poland to join this program.

### IT'S TIME TO REVIEW

Each of the expeditions and study visits results in a product. Together with our partners, we learn from one another and create new, even more effective methods of solving social problems from the elements of various forms of work which we get to know. It is a bit like putting together a puzzle, where, with seemingly completely incompatible pieces, we build a coherent picture. At the moment, we are summarizing our two-year project 'Key Skills - New Opportunities for Adults', and in December we are going to publish a guide book to the

most interesting educational methods we learned during our trips abroad. You will be able to learn more about their format, but also get tips and practical advice on their use and possible implementation. It will certainly be an interesting source of inspiration and a springboard from the tools we use every day.

Creativity and constant following and adapting to changes are very important in our work. Their presence is actually the only constant element of our reality. Searching for interesting solutions in other countries gives us the opportunity to adopt a different point of view - to look at things known to us through the prism of a different culture and resulting differences. And this, in turn, provides space for learning, experimenting, connecting and modifying which contribute to the emergence of innovations that meet the needs of the kaleidoscopic world.

### SO, DOES TRAVEL ACTUALLY BROADEN THE MIND?

#### OF COURSE, THEY DO!

**Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz**, a journalist.

**Marek Zbytniewski**, international cooperation manager.

*The activities described hereinabove were carried out under the 'Key Skills - New Opportunities for Adults' project. Its main goal is to improve the competences of staff related to adult education and the exchange of good practices in the field of models of educational support for adults with low key skills used in partner organizations. The partnership, led by the FOSa Federation, involves organizations from Portugal - University of Seniors in Evora (Universidade Sénior de Évora), Latvia - Gulbenes Municipality (Gulbenes novada pasvaldība), Germany - Polregio e.V. and Romania - the Seligstadt Youth Center Association (Asociația Jugendzentrum Seligstadt).*

*The project 'Key Skills - New Opportunities for Adults' received funding under the Adult Education Sector of the Erasmus+ Program, Action 2 Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education - Cooperation for Innovation and Good Practice*



# EDUCATION IN GULBENE

Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz

**We are talking to representatives of the Gulbene district in Latvia about non-formal education of youth, adults and the elderly.**

## **RUTA BOKTA, REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL CENTER AT THE GULBENE LIBRARY**

### **- What innovative solutions do you use in your work with adults?**

- We attempt to work individually with adults because this form is easier for our recipients. It is also one that works better in smaller towns. We try to inspire people to open up and use modern technologies, although it is not easy. Some people feel unsure about using them and need support in doing so.

### **- What are the most popular and effective methods today?**

- Individual work. This is a comfortable situation for both adults and lecturers. It gives more space to ask questions, everyone can work at their own pace and fully focus on the topic.

### **- How does this educational program enhance digital competences?**

- Participants of the classes have the opportunity to work at the computer at various levels of competence. These can be some first steps, e.g. using the mouse, turning on the computer, etc. If they have basic digital competences, they acquire new skills. They gain knowledge about Internet safety, about various e-services and databases available. Today, digital competences are not only computer skills. Digital skills are useful everywhere - on a mobile phone, TV, in a shop, in a car, at a railway station or at an airport.

### **- What form of classes for the elderly have you arranged?**

- These are methods of non-formal education - working in pairs, discussions, brainstorming, creative workshops, information retrieval, etc.

## **IEVA MILNE, THE 'PULSS' YOUTH CENTER (LEJASCIEMS, THE GULBENE DISTRICT)**

### **- The activities in your center are mainly addressed to young people, but recently there are also events for adults.**

- We work chiefly with children and adolescents,

but we also try to involve adults in our activities. We organize educational games and knowledge contests in which adults participate, too. We had organized a knowledge competition for school children and youth every year, however, this spring, for the first time, we addressed this event to everyone in our commune. This project turned out to be a success and we want the knowledge competition to become our tradition. We organize a knowledge competition in cooperation with a library that helps us prepare the questions. They concern various fields, including our commune or Latvia in general.

### **- You mentioned an interesting initiative during our meeting, the so-called 'wandering cafes' which integrate the community.**

- We are implementing this idea together with other institutions in the Gulbene district. Last summer, we travelled to every municipality in Gulbene and organized a so-called 'Pop-up cafe'. There was a snack table in each place, and people could choose what they wanted to try from the menu. When choosing dishes and desserts, they had to answer various questions related to the environment and knowledge about the region.

### **- What are your plans for involving your local community in your activities?**

- We have plenty of plans. For instance, there are workshops that we want to organize in the autumn. We are going to invite adults who work with wood on a daily basis to show children what such work is like. Later, they will work together to create something that will serve the community. These are the immediate plans. We always think about involving adults as well when organizing activities for children and teenagers. That is why we often organize workshops on Saturdays, when most people are free and can join us.

The commune of Gulbene is a permanent and proven partner of the FOSa Federation in projects devoted to the development of non-formal education of various age groups, implemented under the Erasmus+ program.

# IN SEARCH OF NEW METHODS OF WORK

Agnieszka Sójka

The ESWIP association has been supporting civic activity and social economy in its region for over 25 years. These activities are one of our main program areas. We believe that social economy is an effective tool for preventing unemployment and social marginalization.



Photo: Association archive

We have been running the Social Economy Initiatives Support Centre in Elbląg since 2009. According to the national standards of such entities, their role is, inter alia, to conduct social and professional reintegration. We also carry out this activity in the Elbląg Center for Social Integration [hereinafter CSI] which we run. CSI participants receive the support of specialists such as career counselors, job trainers and psychologists. They take part in vocational courses and training. They also complete apprenticeships in local companies and in CSI workshops, e.g. office, upholstery and tailoring, carpentry or economics.

Looking for new ideas to improve our beneficiaries' life situation, we came across the Le Mat social franchise concept and established cooperation with our partner in Sweden. As a result of the cooperation with Le Mat Jonsered, we have developed the 'Social hostel model' in our Dom pod Cisem enterprise, which can also be used by all entities implementing activities in the field of social and professional activation. The solution may act as a tool to be used by other Social Integration Centers (the hostel as a training workshop), but also an idea for paid or economic activity in social enterprises.

The model of a social hostel was developed as part of the 'Hostel at Dom pod Cisem as a model of social and professional activation' project, co-financed by the Knowledge Education Development Operational Program. The project was implemented between July 2020 and September 2021. Our partner in the project was the Le Mat Jonsered social enterprise from Sweden, which successfully implements measures activating groups at risk of social exclusion and poverty in its Social Hostel (Le Mat social franchise) in the Commune of Partille near Gothenburg.

You can read about the effects of our cooperation and the details of the Model at:

<https://www.eswip.pl/publikacje/96,pozarza-dowiec-wydanie-nr-4-wrzesien-2021>.

I invite you to read and encourage you to use the developed tools.



Photo: Association archive

**Agnieszka Sójka.**

A transnational cooperation specialist in the ESWIP Association



# THE ATAK INTEGRATION SPORTS CLUB

Katarzyna Janków-Mazurkiewicz interview with Tomasz Woźny, president of ATAK Sports Club

Photo: Tomasz Woźny,  
president of ATAK



The ATAK Integration Sports Club in Elbląg is the largest sports club in Warmia and Mazury. Its ranks are joined not only by athletes from all over Poland, but also from abroad. Tomasz Woźny, its president who has suffered in an accident, put everything on one card: sport. And around this idea he began gathering like-minded people. He has been very successful in this field, and his involvement in the work of a social activist has been appreciated many a time. In October, he was awarded the Golden Cross of Merit for outstanding contributions to the development and promotion of sport for the disabled.

- You do not do it for prizes, although it is certainly nice when you are appreciated - says Tomasz Woźny, president of ATAK. - I have been working in the club with my wife Aneta for 25 years, and before that, I was also active in sports as an athlete. I am still inside this environment. We have managed to do a lot. We have had organizational successes in international events in Paralympic sport, and among us there are world and Polish champions in many disciplines. The club hires 6 full-time employees and a dozen or so coaches.

The club has been well-known for many years for the integration of fully fit and disabled people. The first sport to be played in the association was sitting volleyball. Before long, it was possible to create amateur volleyball teams of women and men. Then there were regular amateur volleyball tournaments and the Elbląg Cup. In 2001, a standing volleyball team for people with disabilities was created in the club, and then other disciplines sprang up: athletics, shooting, swimming, wheelchair rugby, weightlifting, and hockey. Today, players with intellectual disabilities train, for example, boccia, table tennis, speed skating - short track, and they are very successful. The group includes nowadays, among others, a world champion. It is difficult to count all the successes, but recently the ATAK judo team returned from Madeira with the title of World Judo Champions for People with

Down's Syndrome. Thanks to the commitment of the entire team, they can boast Paralympic medalists, world and European champions, World Cup winners, multiple Polish champions and winners of the Polish Cup. They are also successful in organizing sports events for athletes with disabilities - 2 European Cups, 2 European Championships, and World Championships.

- Our club's standing beach volleyball team has won every tournament in the world for 14 years. We have won the Polish sitting volleyball championship 14 times. As for hockey, the greatest success was the silver medal of the World Cup. There were and are plenty of such successes, and apart from that, we also run volleyball classes for non-disabled children - Tomasz Woźny lists. We have built beach volleyball and para hockey teams in Poland from scratch.

- For years now, we have also run social projects - employment support programs, in which excluded people such as the physically and intellectually disabled take part. We are also proud of our training flats - premises in which they can stay and learn self-reliance - Tomasz Woźny adds. - We try to do a lot, but I think we have no choice, because there are a lot of people who need such support. So we want to provide them with activity that will support them and act for their benefit.

The centre in Piastów, acting as the host of many an event within the previous six years, including sports camps, was established by the club almost entirely from its own resources. It is the largest facility of this type in this part of the country. It includes for example the playing fields of beach volleyball, beach handball and beach soccer, with full equipment, recreational facilities and year-round houses. Among the partners of ATAK are clubs, teams and organizations from all over the world.

- Our athletes travel all over the world. They take part in championships in Europe and Asia, and some of the competitors have taken part in international competitions in Africa or North America. It can therefore be said that ATAK has travelled half of the world - emphasizes the president of ATAK. - Recent years have not been the easiest in terms of raising funds, but we are constantly working, organizing classes, taking part in national and international competitions. Contestants from all over the world come to the championships we organize.



# THE POLISH ELDERLY COMMUNITY IN EUROPE

Paweł Bielinowicz

## Fifteen European integration conventions of Polish Universities of the Third Age.

### ORIGINS

The idea and the need to organize integration meetings were born in 2006, during a trip several members of the Third Age Academy's Borderlands Enthusiasts Club made to Lviv. The excursion was organized by Czesław Wojniusz, the then president of its board. It was then that we met our compatriots from the Polish Lviv U3A. The participants came up with an idea to organize a meeting in which several delegations of all Polish U3As from across the eastern border of the country would participate.

And so, a year later, the first meeting was attended by delegations of five Polish U3As from across the eastern border.

### DEVELOPMENT

Soon enough, we went beyond the number of the participants and national borders. Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Czech Republic, Austria, Great Britain, Russia, Moldova, Kazakhstan. We are becoming a European Integration Convention of Polish U3As, with over 100 participants from Europe and Poland. New U3As are being created, whilst the existent ones are enriched with branches, e.g. a little unit in Kiejdany, Zmudz, is opening a branch in a much larger town of Poniewież.

We are working on a permanent model of meetings:

1. An opening ceremony with the national anthem sung by all participants;
2. The Holy Mass for Poles scattered all over the world, celebrated by Fr. Mirosław Hulecki, the priest of the parish in Kortowo, also serving as our chaplain;
3. An academic lecture referring to the motto of each subsequent meeting;
4. A discussion panel 'Good practices and solving problems of Polish U3As';
5. Evening talks of fellow countrymen at a bonfire on the banks of Kortowskie lake;
6. A trip around historical and nature corners of Warmia and Mazury, depending on the amount of obtained subsidies;

7. A sightseeing tour of Olsztyn, in small groups led by guides, Olsztyn shopping malls included;

8. Each meeting culminates in a gala evening and an exchange of gifts.

### COOPERATION

For years now, we have been taking advantage of subsidies available from the Chancellery of the Prime Minister or the Senate of the Republic of Poland and the Marshal of our province. Logistic and scientific support is ensured under constant cooperation with the University of Warmia and Mazury, formerly a Construction Technical School. The participation of over twenty volunteers from the Third Age Academy is indispensable - they work all year round on the preparation, implementation and settlement of subsequent meetings. We also avail ourselves of the assistance of young volunteers, including Ms. Marcelina Zaniewska - doctor of social sciences and a project organization specialist at the Wojciech Kętrzyński Northern Institute in Olsztyn.

### PANDEMIC

It is October 2020 - we did not succumb to the plague. We organized the 1st Internet European Integration Convention of Polish Universities of the Third Age in Olsztyn. The keynote, which referred to the 100th anniversary of the birth of John Paul II, was the papal teaching about the role of a family. As always, one could hear the national anthem, and in its background there were photos of the Polish Pope sent by Poles from all over Europe. We were united by common values. The footage is available at:

<http://www.atwolsztyn.pl/2020/09/i-internetowe-europejskie-spotkanie.html>.

### XV EUROPEAN INTEGRATION CONVENTIONS OF POLISH U3AS

We went through good practice in solving problems connected with the organization of a meeting after a two-year break. For the first time, the convention was held not in June, but in September. Hence the

entire summer holidays had stood for a time of hard work under the constant threat of the pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Despite the problems and our modest budget, we were glad to welcome 70 participants from Great Britain, Lithuania, Belarus and the much-awaited Ukraine. U3A delegations from Poland came as well. Our province was being proudly represented by the U3A from Braniewo.

We were supported by the Federation of Universities of the Third Age of Warmia and Mazury in setting up the reimbursement of travel costs for participants from Ukraine.

Two important vectors of the elderly's activities, directed towards the past and the future, could be seen at the discussion on good practices and problems of Polish U3As. First example: the colleagues from Lviv remembered when, as teenagers in the 1960s, before All Saints' Day, they had secretly tidied up the Łyczakowski cemetery, cutting out tall grass to light thousands of makeshift candles – oil lamps. They were taught to do so by their professors and teachers, and today they, inscribed in the chain of generations, pass it on to their chil-

dren and grandchildren.

The second example is the Polish Sunday School in Nowe Świąciany in the north-eastern part of Lithuania. It is run by retired Polish teachers from Polish U3As. Last year, thanks to ATW, the Society of Friends of Vilnius and the Vilnius Region, High School no. 5 and 'Polish Community', its students spent a short vacation in Olsztyn.

## XVI EUROPEAN INTEGRATION CONVENTIONS PUTW

We are on the brink of organizing next year's meetings, and thus we would like to invite you to cooperate in the implementation of the conclusions that were developed within good practices during this year's convention.

Polish cemeteries and Polish children – the history and the future. We can do it, because each year we become a community of the Polish elderly in Europe.

**Paweł Bielinowicz.** Member of the Management Board of the Third Age Academy, a project coordinator,



Photo: Marian Baranowski



# THE POWER OF MEETINGS

Piotr Pniewski

**The people at the Borussia Foundation strongly believe that each meeting changes the way one sees the world. That it is a real way to fight prejudices and stereotypes. Because people, by doing something together with a common goal, learn from one another and overcome the fear of others by experiencing different perspectives.**

## STUDY TOURS TO POLAND

Study Tours to Poland (STP) is a program of the Polish-American Freedom Foundation implemented by the Borussia Foundation in cooperation with the Leaders of Change Foundation. As part of the Program, study visits to Poland are organized for students and professionals from Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. The purpose of these visits is to share Polish experience, introduce the realities of Poland and the European Union, and to develop and strengthen contacts between leaders from Eastern Europe and Polish people and institutions.

- The program had come into existence yet before Poland joined the European Union - recalls Ewa Romanowska, the program director from the Borussia Foundation. - Together with the organizations working with the countries of the former Soviet Union, we came to the conclusion that contemporary Poland is unknown on the eastern side of the border from the perspective of the political transformation and those changes that took place very intensively in the second half of the nineties and in the early 2000s. The idea of the project was to reach young people, students and professionals and tell them what contemporary Poland looks like. Non-governmental organizations, which received groups of young people and professionals from across the eastern border, have been acting as the program operators since its very beginning.

- We told them about Poland as for the most impor-

tant areas: self-government and autonomy, the state management system, the values underlying the political system, and the EU values and the obligations and institutions associated with accession to the Union - Ewa Romanowska says. - We showed them the free media, the judiciary, or how Poland had managed to win against corruption. The general idea of this program is to convey the experience of the systemic transformation, things that turned out successful and those that failed, since Borussia programs are not intended to show the glazed image of Poland, but the real picture, teaching critical thinking about one's country. We try to promote small homelands, that is, thinking about the world that was not typical, for example, in Ukraine 15 years ago. We show that you can live in regions such as Warmia and Mazury or Silesia, and that a successful life does not only mean living in the capital, Kiev, Minsk or Moscow, but also in Olsztyn, Gliwice or Szczecin.

Professionals, mainly local government officials, pay thematic visits devoted to specific aspects of commune management, e.g. municipal waste management, housing community management systems or budget planning.

Several hundred people have already visited our region as a result of the program. They come as a result of projects run by an NGO and go to places they would never end up in.

This is how the recognition of Olsztyn and the region grows, and the promotion of our way of thinking - about identity, about the region, about multiculturalism - thrives.



- Due to the fact that we show our commitment and a great sense of regional identity, these people also come to like Olsztyn, they often return here - Ewa Romanowska says. - There were people who came back to us to act as our volunteers as part of the European Solidarity Corps. Some of them are

### EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Volunteering has been accompanying Borussia since the very beginning, since the 1990s, just like the Polish-German dialogue. The first foreign volunteers were young people from Germany who came to do military service here. They were mostly boys, but also people who, instead of serving in the army, could choose to work for an NGO, e.g. in Poland.

- We have received very different people; they were also the first employees of the Borussia office - Ewa Romanowska recalls. - So far, we have been in touch with them, we continue to maintain contact through various activities available. Last week we met a volunteer who had visited

us 25 years before and who is now the right-hand man of one of an EU commissioners.

Borussia prefers long-term, by choice 12-month, volunteering. At the moment, volunteers from Belarus and Ukraine Kiev are visiting Borussia. Through the foundation, a young boy from France supports the Polish-French Centre in Olsztyn with his voluntary involvement.

- We support other organizations and local government and public institutions in inviting volunteers, we are an intermediary organization - says Ewa Romanowska. - We also send young people to volunteer abroad. Borussia is supported by the Polish-German Youth Exchange (Jugendwerk) in the development of international volunteering. It is a government organization founded by Helmut Kohl and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. It acts as a mediator in Polish-German -school and out-of-school exchange, although at the moment people from so-called third countries can be invited, too. Jugendwerk also prepares youth exchange staff.

- We work with them and organize summer youth



Photo: Borussia Foundation archive

meetings every year. We create a space where young people from two or more countries can meet and do something together - Ewa Romanowska says.

- Conservation projects in cemeteries have been one of our classic projects since the early nineties. These are mainly Evangelical cemeteries, symbols in the landscape of communities and people whose descendants had to leave their land. They are much neglected nowadays. They are sometimes situated in an area that is no longer inhabited, on roadside hills, somewhere near villages. Young people, e.g. from Poland, Germany or Ukraine, work in these cemeteries, clear the area, inventory the tombstones, and in the afternoon they travel and learn more about our region. Through active participation and work somewhere in Warmia or Masuria, they learn more about our region than they would learn from a purely tourist perspective. To us, the cultural landscape, including cemeteries, is a symbol of the past, but also a pretext to learn about history and build attitudes of openness and identity, which are important in the context of development and thinking about what will come.

Apart from places such as the Borussia office or the Polish-French Centre, volunteers regularly appear in public kindergartens, where the presence of a young person from another country broadens the educational awareness of children and brings in an intercultural aspect.

- We have several partner kindergartens where our volunteers, more often female volunteers, work,
- Ewa Romanowska says. - They conduct anima-

tion and educational activities there. For example, when Christmas is approaching, they show how a Christmas tree is decorated in Germany, what toys are hung on it, they teach songs, poems and games. The volunteers also conduct their own activities - workshops, show around the Mendelson House, act as tour guides in Olsztyn. They learn about the region themselves, but they are also people who show our region to others.

## GENERATION EUROPE

The idea was born in the German organization Internationales Bildungswerk, with which Borussia cooperated in the nineties. IB deals with civic and environmental education. The program consists in establishing trinational partnerships, always with the participation of some German organization. Various European countries take part in it. There are fifteen participants just now. At the moment there are fifteen such partnerships in which forty-five organizations cooperate.

- The project is addressed to young people aged 15 to under 30, very often to those with fewer opportunities - says Kornelia Kurowska, president of Borussia. - Each partnership fills the project with its own content, but the essence of the project is civic education, learning the mechanisms which govern the functioning of democracy, looking for solutions and defining the problems of young generation. Young people have been taking part in the project for three years - not only by attending international meetings, as every year we meet for two weeks of workshops to get to know ne another and develop the next stages of this cooperation. Additionally, we take part in local activities. Borussia co-creates a partnership with an organization from Barcelona and the Munich City Hall. As you can see, partnerships are not only transnational, but also cross-sectoral. Similarly to partnerships, the groups of participants are also diverse.

- As far as our partners are concerned, the participants are not only German and Spanish youth. I could list the whole list of countries they come



Photo: Borussia Foundation archive

from - Kornelia Kurowska says. - This is natural in contemporary Europe, but it is unknown to a great number of our Polish participants. It was a bit shocking for young people from Mrągowo and the surrounding area to go to Spain and see that the streets of Barcelona are filled with people of different skin colours. In our group, the participants are also very culturally and ethnically diverse. Therefore, a natural topic does not include issues related to the condition of young people solely, but also ethnic and cultural diversity, stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, racism and nationalism.

Each group in Generation Europe defines its position in the large field of citizenship education with an emphasis on the views of the young generation of Europe and the problems they can see locally. During the workshops, young people learn the basic elements of democracy and their functioning as young citizens in a democracy. They are just about to become the citizens, but they quickly realize that they can have a big impact on what is happening in their environment - at school and in a local community.

- In the second year of the project, our group actually took over the school self-government, because they saw that depending on how they articulate their needs and problems, they are treated differently. They quickly realized what opportunities the school government gave them - Kornelia Kurowska recalls. The participants also had a meeting with a mayor. They asked him specific questions, and they did prepare very well for the meeting, i.e.: how does the city plan its development, does it support single mothers, is there any policy towards people from other cultures, minorities, how does the city support the development of housing utilities, etc. Just after twenty minutes, even though the meeting was scheduled for an hour, the mayor said he was extremely busy and left the meeting.

Generation Europe is the first experience of cooperation for many young people. Here, in teams, they talk about topics that are important

to them, such as sustainable development or climate protection, psychological problems, but also national or racial persecution. They pluck up the courage to formulate their own opinions, views and conscious thinking. They know that the more informed they are, the more they can achieve. For young people, it is also a motivation to learn a language other than their own, overcome their limitations and develop the ability to create relationships, one of the key competences of the future. Those who start their adventure in the project are supported by their predecessors. - We invited the participants of the first edition to act as assistants in the second edition of the project. We called them ambassadors - Kornelia Kurowska says. - They also undergo various meetings and trainings in this international group. Recently, the girls, because they are all girls, have been to a five-day ambassador conference. Earlier, in the spring, they attended a training course during which they learned how to work more consciously with participants.

## MEETINGS

According to Ewa Romanowska, such direct meetings make our guests happy to meet open-minded people who have a critical attitude to what is happening in Poland and who regard democratic values highly. This is important in the context of the current narrative about Poland in Western Europe. Borussia's guests are often people of great influence and contacts in their countries: scientists, journalists or artists, and it is them who can convey our positive image.

**Piotr Pniewski**, the director of the FOSa Federation, a journalist, an animator, a trainer, of Non-Governmental Organizations, an author of about 400 implemented projects, including those co-financed from EU funds, an advisor on cooperation between public administration and non-governmental organizations, an expert in social policy.



# THE EMPATHETIC IN EMSLAND

Jolanta Adamczyk, Władysław Strutyński

As part of the 'The empathetic us after the pandemic' project implemented by the Federation of Universities of the Third Age of Warmia and Mazury, representatives of the province's U3As took an educational trip to the Emsland district in Germany. Below, we present the memories of two of them.

## JOLANTA ADAMCZYK

I went to Emsland once again, this time with the leaders of the Universities of the Third Age of Warmia and Mazury as part of the Erasmus+ program. I was full of memories of meetings with the authorities of the towns of Wertle, Meppen and the Collective Commune of Lathen, at the invitation of which the 'Perta Warmii' Folk Dance Group from Lidzbark Warmiński gave concerts, their openness, cordiality and hospitality, and I hoped that it would be the same this time. I was not disappointed.

There would be no such impressions if it were not for Zbigniew Leszczyński, a representative of the starost of Meppen, who coordinated our stay in the entire Emsland region. He was also a translator and he planned for us to visit historical cities and places, including those related to Polish history. The Museum in Haren (former Maczków) is a very personal story for seniors from Warmia and Mazury. Each of us remembers it from the stories of parents and grandparents. All these stories bear the stigma of war, loss of loved ones and similar sad experiences. Our sight-

seeing program also included a palace complex in Schloss Clemenswert. It is a hunting complex built by Clemens August from Bavaria. It is very beautiful, interestingly designed and built in a 42-hectare park. Our program also included a trip to Fort Bourtange in the Netherlands.

One could tell much more about the stay in Germany, because meetings, visits and assertiveness workshops conducted by Prof Agnieszka Górka and Katarzyna Grabia, both psychologists, in line with the program, were more than enough. Getting to know oneself and the participants of the project made it possible to experience this mobility in an interesting way and with conclusions for the future.



## WŁADYSŁAW STRUTYŃSKI- TROCHĘ HISTORII.

People in Emsland know Lidzbark Warmiński, Orneta, Kiwity and Lubomino. They are particularly familiar with Jolanta Adamczyk - the president of the Lidzbark U3A, who has already visited the Pearl of Warmia there. Moreover, Halina Koziatek, Barbara Michalak and the undersigned hereinbelow participated in the project. The Orneta U3A was represented by Stanisław Czyż and Krystyna Wocial.

The authorities of the town of Haren, which we visited, decided to establish and build a museum and a documentation centre to disseminate little-known history. The centre is already open, although the official opening with the participation of the Polish authorities is scheduled for April next year. After the liberation of the Emsland district in 1945 by the Allied forces, which included the Polish 1st Armoured Division under the command of General Stanisław Maczek, about 40,000 people dwelt in these areas. They were foreigners, referred to as Displaced Persons (DPs). Most of them were Polish citizens - liberated prisoners of concentration and POW camps, as well as forced labourers. In mid-May 1945, the Allied authorities entrusted the Polish soldiers of the 1st Panzer Division and the 1st Independent Parachute Brigade with occupying the districts of Aschendorf, Meppen and Lingen and in the counties of Bentheim, Bensbrück and Cloppenburg as well as taking care of foreigners in this areas. At the behest of the British occupation authorities, the previous inhabitants of Haren left the city, and its name was changed to Maczków. Then, Polish citizens - recent victims of Nazism - settled there. Polish troops stayed in Emsland

until October 1947. In Maczków, which became the centre of the Polish enclave, Polish administration and education were organized. Social, cultural and religious life flourished. Records of the time indicate 289 weddings held, the birth of 497 children, and 101 funerals at the local cemetery. Thousands of Poles passed through the city awaiting transport to Poland or emigration to other countries. On September 6, 1947, the city was returned to its former inhabitants. The last Polish family left Maczków in August 1948. The graves of the inhabitants of Maczków were moved to the cemetery in GroßFullen from the cemetery in Haren in July 1958. More information about Poles in Haren is provided by the Documentation Centre Haren / Maczków [www.Inselmüshle.haren.de](http://www.Inselmüshle.haren.de).





# SENIOR POLICY IN EMSLAND DISTRICT

Jolanta Adamczyk

**Senior policy in Germany began with a change in the elderly's housing standard and care provided to them by volunteers. The trip to Emsland enriched me with knowledge about the support of local government authorities in Germany in response to the needs of various groups, especially seniors. I would like such a model to function also in our region.**



Photo: Author's archive

Emsland district's senior policy is based on two pillars. The first one is to provide seniors with homes in housing estates built especially for this group of local community. The model of three-generation families has ceased to function nowadays; more and more seniors live alone and cannot count on daily family support. There was a need for local governments to deal with this topic - so they began to build housing estates with apartments adapted to the specific needs of seniors. These estates are created in the centre of a given town (if possible), thus within seniors' easy reach of a doctor, a bus stop or a railway station. In each such housing estate there is a pharmacy, a shop and a type of clinic with a general practitioner on duty. If a senior needs help from third parties (assistance at shopping, medical aid, etc.), volunteers from Caritas or another voluntary organization take care of it. According to the information provided to us by the Meppen authorities, a single person is entitled to an apartment area of 54 m<sup>2</sup> and a married couple - 72 m<sup>2</sup>. The rent per square meter of the apartment amounts to about 4 euros. Owing to this fact, an elderly person can live in their own apartment as long as they manage their own household. Classic nursing homes are simply too expensive and many seniors cannot afford to stay there. In addition to a health insurance contribution, people in Germany pay a contribution to the so-called care in

the event of disability fund for many years. If an elderly person on a pension or retirement needs such support, it is from these contributions that the help is paid, often supported by senior volunteering performed by active seniors who realize that by helping others, they also help themselves. Someday they may be the ones who will need help.

The second pillar of the senior policy of the Emsland region is the support of non-governmental organizations and volunteers working for seniors. This is done by appointing specific persons responsible for coordinating the local authorities office's cooperation with non-governmental organizations and volunteer groups. These people are often former mayors or starostes who, having knowledge and experience, support non-governmental organizations financially and substantively. It is about creating a so-called win-win situation. It is a strategy that takes into account the interests of all parties involved in specific relationships and finds a solution in which everyone benefits. Thanks to such thinking, even potential competitors can become partners.

In the Emsland region, seniors have become an important age group that is worth taking care of, not only because this is the task of the state or local government, but because if properly cared for and fit, they themselves help others (in schools, kindergartens, e.g. by reading books to children, by cleaning squares, sidewalks, repairing benches, they take care of local culture - e.g. the famous Heimatvereins, they take care of other seniors who need it). Most importantly, they help themselves by helping others.

**Jolanta Adamczyk**, the chairwoman of the Seniors' Council in Lidzbark Warmiński, a representative of the Lidzbark district in the Social Council of Seniors of the Warmian-Masurian province, the president of the Association of Friends of the Lidzbark Land.

# INFINITE AID, OR FIREFIGHTERS FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Tomasz Czarniewski

**The District Branch of the Association of Volunteer Fire Brigades of the Republic of Poland (hereinafter DB AVFB RP) in Olsztyn cooperates with several international organizations. They are units from Germany and Ukraine.**



Conclusion of the cooperation agreement – November 2019

The cooperation has been going on for several years. However, it has recently gained a new dimension. Young people from Ukraine willingly participate in trainings and trips, whereby they can benefit from the experience of Polish friends and learn about good practices. There are no Youth Fire Brigades (YFB) in Ukraine.

– At present, the cells of the Volunteer Fire Brigades, which we are so familiar with in Poland, are not common in Ukraine. Similarly, there are no Youth Fire Brigades there - Tomasz Czarniewski, the treasurer of the District Branch of the Polish Volunteer Fire Brigades Association in Olsztyn explains. – Although there are no such structures, a lot of people show their interest and desire to create similar ones in Ukraine, and transfer our experience to their local areas.

In 2019, DB AVFB RP in Olsztyn entered into official cooperation with the Office of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine in the Chernivtsi Oblast. Even before signing the agreement, young people from Poland, Ukraine and Romania participated in the SAFE LIFE International Camp for Children dedicated to Safety Regulations, which took place in August in the Chernivtsi District. The outing initiated cooperation between the Office of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine and DB AVFB RP in Olsztyn. However, their formal cooperation was suspended due to restrictions related to covid-19 during the pandemic. The imple-

mentation of the projects was difficult, but the partners did not fail to maintain contact. In February 2022, the outbreak of war meant that the cooperation had to take a different form to implement the concluded agreement. Thus, in July 2022, Germany hosted a meeting of partners from Poland and Ukraine. Representatives from Poland, Germany, France and Ukraine (for the first time) participated in an International Camp of Firefighting Brigades.

This exchange could not have taken place without the decades-long partnership between firefighters from the Olsztyn district and the Land of Osnabrück – one which consists of annual youth exchange taking place alternately in Poland and Germany.

The purpose of these exchanges is to present mutual interests of young people, introduce the idea of volunteer firefighting and related active civic attitudes in individual countries. The camp participants made themselves acquainted with the issue of volunteering in the operation of a fire brigade, learned about YFBs functioning and rules of first aid. They could also get to know the active forms of civic engagement of young people in Poland, Germany and Ukraine. The camp included kayaking, study visits, educational games and activities, quests, shows and seminars. The issues that underlie this educational exchange include tolerance, volunteering, cooperation, as well as forms and possibilities of pursuing activity available to young people in Poland, Germany and Ukraine.

Such a youth exchange camp will take place in Poland in 2023 – and it will be of a similar or perhaps extended international composition.

**Tomasz Czarniewski**, a volunteer firefighter at the District Branch of AVFB RP in Olsztyn.

