



# Case Study Briefing

Assistance from “A” to “Z”:  
Professional activation of  
homeless people from Wroclaw  
Circle St. Brother Albert Aid  
Society



This project has received funding from the European Commission  
Horizon 2020 Programme Societal challenges: European societies  
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## 1. Overview

### **Social investment for the homeless, out of work and the risk of social exclusion**

The subject of the case study is the program Assistance from A to Z – Professional activation of homeless people from Wroclaw Circle St. Brother Albert Aid Society. The project was implemented in the period of time: 30.09.2012-30.10.2015 in Wroclaw by Wroclaw Circle St. Brother Albert Aid Society. The project concerns the socio-professional activation of people at risk of social exclusion, hence it is a part of social inclusion of people at risk of social exclusion policy. It applies to a specific group of people at risk of exclusion - the homeless – and is an investment for activation and empowerment the homeless. Assistance from A to Z project was implemented under the Operational Programme Human Capital and was financed by the European Social Fund. It received funding in the amount of PLN 3,230,097.45.

## 2. Key policy implications

**Effective social and vocational activation of homeless people is possible thanks to a multi-faceted impacts:**

- The homeless activation should be regarded as an investment that brings positive results in the future, and not as unproductive expenditure on social assistance;
- The homeless activation policy should take into account the multi-faceted impact (social, vocational, housing, psychological), adapted to the needs of the homeless;
- Innovative method of accompaniment brings very good results and should be implemented to practice of the homeless activation.

## 3. Context

The Assistance from A to Z project is social investment for the homeless, out of work and at risk of social exclusion. Thanks to the multi-faceted impacts of the project the homeless have found employment, became independent and started functioning in society without the need for support from aid institutions.

An important innovative element is the use of innovative method of accompaniment. This solution comes from France and it is an innovative component, developed under the projects implemented by the St. Brother Albert Aid Society. In Polish conditions, innovation is also the combined use of a wide range of social and professional support. Public institutions usually limit the support, which prevents the active inclusion of homeless people who require a comprehensive approach.

The Assistance from A to Z project involved the social and vocational integration of 105 homeless people, out of work, at risk of social exclusion, in three annual editions, 35 people in each cycle. In fact, the support was directed to 136 homeless people. 120 people accomplished the participation in the project.

The needs assessment emphasizes the co-existence of various problems of the homeless. It was pointed out that homelessness is most often the result of the many social problems coexistence, including addiction, unemployment, housing problems, family conflicts etc. Homelessness is also the cause of other problems, (psychological, with health etc.). It makes difficult to take up employment and causes exclusion from social life. Thus, the project emphasizes the multi-faceted activities, leading to solve the problems and meet the needs of homeless people.

Assistance from A to Z is a local project, it was realized in Wroclaw by the Wroclaw Circle St. Brother Albert Aid Society, however, it is related to the national and EU active inclusion policy. The project was implemented under the regional component, priority VII: Promotion of social integration, of The Operational Program Human Capital (which was financed at 85% by the EU funds: European Social Fund and at 15% by the national budget).

The main actor in the implementation of the Assistance from A to Z project is a non-governmental organization. We do not have, in this case, formal cooperation with the public sector. Although public institutions, such as the Municipal Social Assistance Centre in Wroclaw and District Labor Office in Wroclaw, perform tasks of social and professional activation of the homeless, including Wroclaw Circle St. Brother Albert Aid Society beneficiaries, they did not participate in this project, however these institutions supported its implementation unofficially. The project was financed with public funds under the Operational Program Human Capital.

The project on a small scale was supported by employers representing public and private sector, who offered directional advice and internships for beneficiaries. In the case of the project we have multi-sectoral solution, due to the involvement of the entity representing the non-profit sector and public financing, but the current multi-sectoral cooperation has not been developed here.

## 4. Sources of evidence

For the case study, the policy review was made. Policy analysis in the area of social inclusion and active inclusion, support people in difficult life situation, including homeless and unemployed was carried out. Also the legal framework in this area was analyzed. The evaluation team executed also literature review to identify approaches to the issue of social inclusion, active integration and method of accompaniment as the method used in the active integration in Poland.

The evaluation team in their work analyzed primarily project documentation, Wrocław Circle St. Brother Albert Aid Society documents, data from the monitoring system (application form, reports), data of Central Statistical Office, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, the Municipal Social Assistance Centre in Wrocław.

The evaluation team conducted also the interviews with project manager, project staff, accompanists in the project, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

## 5. Main findings

The project in fact involved the socio-professional activation of 136 homeless people, out of work, at risk of social exclusion, in three annual editions, 120 accomplished the participation, so 88% of the participants, which in the case of such a specific target category, is a great achievement.

The main objective of the project was acquired the skills and competencies of socio-professional by the homeless. The objectives included: reduction or limitation of the negative social impact of homelessness, acquisition of competences enabling navigate the labour market, acquisition or improvement of professional skills and acquisition of professional experience. Adopted goals resulted from the Operational Programme Human Capital's objective and Wroclaw Circle St. Brother Albert Aid Society was aware of the other needs of the homeless (eg. housing needs), which could not be implemented under the project.

Beneficiaries of the project benefited, among other, from classes forming social competencies and activation (e.g. sports, arts), IT trainings, work trainings, vocational trainings, meetings with entrepreneurs and vocational internships. The project provided psychological support, as well as, support in solving legal problems and accompanist support.

It should be noted that the project achieved its stated objectives. Forty people (33 per cent of those who participated in the project, have taken up employment. Twenty-one people (18 per cent) came out of homelessness (ie. left a shelter or night shelter for the homeless and are living in a dwelling). Project participants have increased their self-reliance, social competence, have created social bonds, have improved social functioning, have raised competencies related to looking for a job, have acquired new skills and professional qualifications and supplemented their professional experience. It should be recognized that the cause to achieve results at a level at which they are located, was the complexity of its step-by-step approach and duration, as well as the method used. At the same time the intervention was ineffective for those who do not have the willingness to change (especially for those who returned to addiction). The method of accompaniment – as a new, innovative way of implementing the social service offered to homeless people within the Assistance from A to Z project – was assessed as an effective tool.

The analysis showed that the outcomes achieved justify the investment of resources. Significant benefits for the homeless, but also a benefit for the public sector, indicates that the project brings social benefits and therefore responds to social needs. The achievement of such results would not be possible with lesser financial means, so expenditures were fully justified. Greater benefits would be possible to achieve the incorporation to the social-professional activation projects housing activation (availability of social/municipal housing, availability of protected/training housing), but the costs of such project would be incomparably higher.

## 6. Impact & Implications

Conducted analysis of the Assistance from A to Z project showed that the applied in the project forms of support brought satisfactory results in the field of social and professional activation of the homeless, and thus are worth the dissemination of practice.

The project results were in line with expectations, they indicate that social and vocational activation of homeless people is possible, and thus coming out of homelessness. The main success factors were: first, the usage of innovative method of accompaniment, secondly, the usage of various forms of impacts (a variety of classes and activities in the field of vocational and social activation, psychological support, support in solving legal problems) adapted to the needs of beneficiaries.

The experiences of the project show that it is necessary to conduct individualized impacts, adapted to the needs and capabilities of homeless people (including health, age, skills and needs of the homeless). It is very important to help in solving legal problems, as well as psychological support. Use of the method of accompaniment brought very good results, and the accompanist proved to be essential to supporting homeless people and their activation. The experiences from the project indicate that it is necessary to use flexible number of hours of accompanist support, because the demand for support is an individual matter of the homeless. However, it is important that the accompanist is always available and provide immediate help. It is also important to recruit suitable candidates for the accompanist position because a large extent of the project's success depends on their involvement. In the future, projects helping the homeless should enable the actions of housing support, because without such support it is difficult for the homeless to obtain their own homes and leave shelters or night shelters.


The project brings benefits to the homeless, but also to other stakeholders – for activities supporting the homeless should look for an investment that brings a return in the future, thanks to the activation and empowerment of the beneficiaries. Analyses indicate that such actions bring benefits exceeding expenditure for the project, which makes the activation of the homeless also economically viable. The project also indicates the methods of services for homeless people providing – the best results gives the multi-faceted impact, adapted to individual needs.

## 7. Further information

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For further information on InnoSI: Innovation in Social Investment: approaches to social investment from the scientific perspective, visit our website at <http://innosi.eu/>

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