



Erasmus+

ANALYSIS OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

from selected Central European countries in the process
of creating, implementing and supporting social innovation



Research report forming part of the
**"BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION"**
(Erasmus Plus) project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION – the context, scope and general concept of the study.....	4
2. METHODOLOGY.....	4
2.1 The search for „social innovation” – definition and examples.....	4
2.2 Explanation of other important concepts used in the report.....	5
2.3 Research goals and intents; research, data gathering and analysis methods.....	5
3. THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATING SOCIAL INNOVATIONS.....	7
3.1. Conclusions pertaining to building networks and infrastructure of collaboration in the area of social innovations.....	7
3.2. Conclusions pertaining to inter-sector collaboration.....	8
3.3. Recommendations.....	10
4. RESEARCH RESULTS.....	11
4.1. Desk research analysis.....	11
4.1.1. Forms of university involvement in the issue of social innovation.....	13
4.1.2. Creation, implementation and support of social innovations within the higher education institutions included in the study.....	16
4.1.3. Project execution.....	17
4.1.4. Types of „networking” – constant inter-institutional and inter-sector collaborations with the aim of supporting social innovations.....	18
4.1.5. Network-based innovation activities carried out within established European network.....	20
4.1.6. Network-based innovation activities carried out within other types of permanent partnerships and communities.....	21
4.1.7 Social innovation incubation.....	23
4.2. Qualitative analysis	25
4.2.1. Social innovation at Polish universities.....	25
4.2.1.1 Definition of Social Innovation.....	25
4.2.1.2. Creating and implementing innovations at universities.....	26
4.2.1.3. The conditions of creating social innovations by the universities and at the universities.....	28
4.2.1.4. The conditions of creating social innovations by the universities and at the universities.....	31
4.2.2 Social innovation at foreign universities.....	35
4.2.2.1 Definition of social innovation.....	35
4.2.2 Implementating and developing social innovations at universities.....	36
4.2.3 Factors that contribute to the successful implementation of social innovations at universities.....	37
4.2.2.4. Collaboration between various sectors in creating social innovations (devising an inter-sector collaboration model).....	38

1. Introduction

– the context, scope and general concept of the study

This report forms a part of a broader research project entitled "BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION" carried out by Collegium Civitas based on a contract with the Foundation of Educational Development dated 12.10.2015 no. 2015-1-PL01-KA203-016828).

The idea for the research has grown out of the need for general, albeit wide, information concerning the engagement of Central European universities in matters of social innovation. No such database was available at the commencement of this study. The study has an exploratory character and the research framework was been determined by: adopting a definition of social innovation that will be presented in this report, and the three main goals of the project corresponding to the three problem areas to be analyzed as part of the study.

2. Methodology

2.1 The search for „social innovation” – definition and examples

„Social innovations are elements of social change, which contribute to social changes. They are most often perceived as processes of change, the creation, implementation and spread of which involve various social and professional groups and even large parts of society. Social innovation seldom includes one-time changes. The participation of society (social groups) may be of a professional nature if the process is led by specialists, such as: scientists, researchers, engineers, etc., or quasi-professional if the process of social innovation is carried out by social activists, who create change and spread its outcomes” (Olejniczuk-Merta 2013: s. 27). Another definition, which takes into account the various aspects of social innovations, can be found in the „Guide to Social Innovation” published by the Directorate-General of REGIO and EMPL: social innovation can be defined as the development and implementation of new ideas (products, services and models) to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. It represents new responses to pressing social demands, which affect the process of social interactions. It is aimed at improving human well-being. Social innovations are innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance the individuals’ capacity to act. They rely on the inventiveness of citizens, civil society organisations, local communities, businesses and public servants and services. They are an opportunity both for the public sector and for the markets, so that the products and services better satisfy individual but also collective aspirations” (Guide to Social Innovation 2013: s. 6).

The following general definition of social innovation was adopted for the needs of this study: „breaking out of preconceived notions and patterns of activity” relating to social life, the manners in which it can be affected, as well as proposing and implementing specific solutions.

2.2 Explanation of other important concepts used in the report

The most important concepts used throughout the report are defined below to make the analysis clearer to the reader:

- **collaborative networks** meant to further social innovations - a developed, arranged and structured network of links and connections between various entities from different sectors created with the aim of providing ongoing collaborative support for social innovations. Collaborative networks thus defined are an ideal type, which in this analysis will be used to seek phenomena that fit the definition or, if no structure of connections that would at least partially fit the definition is found, only fit it to a certain extent through certain symptoms of broader collaboration between organizations and sectors.
- **social innovation** support infrastructure, which in this report is broadly defined and goes beyond material resources (funds, buildings, etc). The term includes all material and immaterial resources, all available measures, networks, different kinds of capital (social, cultural, economic, symbolic, etc.), which are used to create, implement and support social innovations in the Central European countries included in the study by building a real „system of power“ aiming to develop social innovations.

2.3 Research goals and intents; research, data gathering and analysis methods

The main goal of the study is to create a multi-faceted image of the activity of higher education institutions in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Lithuania in the area of social innovation, and the phenomena and processes associated with creating, implementing and supporting social innovations. The analysis covered the educational, academic, research and collaborative capabilities of Central European universities.

The three detailed goals presented below were devised to assist in reaching the main goal:

- I. Identifying the manners in which higher education institutions become engaged in creating social innovations (including identifying and classifying social innovation in the operations of higher education institutions, analyzing the conditions of creating social innovations within them; analyzing the available incubators, mentors, networks, etc.).
- II. Examining the relations between higher education institutions and non-profit sector entities, and identifying the best practices in the forms and outcomes of such collaborations.
- III. Creating a typology of inter-sector collaboration between higher education institutions and entities from other sectors (NGOs, businesses, public administration including local authorities).

The following research questions were formed to assist in fulfilling the detailed research goals and, consequently, the main goal of the study:

1. In what manner do the higher education institutions included in the study become engaged in creating/implementing/supporting social innovation?
2. Do the higher education institutions that took part in the study have within their structure or collaborate with cells/organizational units/organizations that are directly or indirectly responsible for social innovation activities?
3. Do the higher education institutions included in the study collaborate with non-profit entities to create/implement/support social innovations? In what manner? What are the objectives and outcomes of these collaborations?
4. Do the higher education institutions included in the study collaborate with businesses or public administration bodies to create/implement/support social innovations? In what manner?
5. What types/models of collaboration between higher education institutions and representatives of other sectors can be identified?

The main method used to reach the above goals was desk research, a non-reactive method consisting of analyzing available secondary sources, such as articles, reports, websites, etc. Due to the lack of constraints on the areas of research and the need to obtain as much data as possible in an area that has not been widely covered thus far, it was decided to gather data using a number of parallel strategic paths (alternately):

1. Google searches to obtain information about each of the higher education institutions relating to the 3 goals of desk research using the native languages of each university as well as English. Example of a search algorithm: name of the institution + concepts relating to the three research goals (including: social innovation; CSR; social value; innovation; incubator; incubation; organization; projects; networks),
2. A strategy that focuses on following promising leads – finding an interesting initiative, for example, has often led to discovering various structures just by following hyperlinks on websites,
3. Reading and analyzing sources that were already known to the authors, recommended to them or found on the Internet, such as pdf books, pdf articles, articles in other formats, study reports, project documentation, results of project competitions, websites of various organizations, institutions, undertakings, etc.

A qualitative study, including 13 higher education institutions from Poland 7 from abroad (Czech Republic, Hungary and Lithuania), was also carried out.

The respondents were selected based on the results of the desk research, which allowed the authors to determine which organizational units of the higher education institutions were engaged in social innovation, for example by carrying out projects in this area. The qualitative study consisted of individual in-depth interviews conducted with: university experts specializing in social innovations; heads of departments, innovation centres, incubators; individuals responsible for activities relating to social innovation (such as conferences, studies, projects, etc.).

The IDI script, prepared by the research team, was divided into the following thematic blocks:

1. Definition of social innovation.
2. Definition of social innovation.
3. Implementation of social innovations in the university.
4. Factors that contribute to the successful implementation of social innovations in the university.
5. Collaboration between various sectors in creating social innovations (devising an inter sector collaboration model).

3. The most important conclusions and recommendations for creating social innovations

3.1 Conclusions pertaining to building networks and infrastructure of collaboration in the area of social innovations

The most significant conclusions drawn from the study relating to the process of building networks of support for social innovations apply to the potential, which should be taken advantage of, and areas in need of further inquiry.

Both of these issues have a common set of elements reflecting the network-based and constant collaboration between universities and a variety of other institutions:

1. The network of business incubators operating at higher education institutions – a potential network of social innovation, which however does not emphasize this area of its activity,
2. Organizations specializing in innovations, technology transfers, CSR, quality, etc. operating at higher education institutions have a high potential for building collaborative networks of higher education institutions. These organizations are, by definition, tasked with establishing cooperation with other education institutions and representatives of other sectors,
3. Taking advantage of widespread collaboration on projects – striving to replace temporary work on social innovations with a permanent collaboration meant to create, incubate and test social innovations.
4. The following are examples of well-implemented projects resulting in social innovations: Educational intervention Bliżej [Closer] (University of Social Sciences and Humanities); the cybercrime threat (Janusz Korczak Pedagogical University in Warsaw); strategy of sports development in Mrągowo (University of Warsaw); Accessibility standards for the city of Gdynia (Gdańsk University of Technology),
5. Wider usage of Living Labs (Social Innovation Labs), which are currently underused in the region, and social innovation incubators,
6. The following are examples of well-functioning network-based collaborations: Open Middleware 2.0 Community, Centrum Winnet at the University of Szczecin, Centre for Social Innovation partnerships (ZSI), the Śląsk „Universities” Group, etc.

3.2 Conclusions pertaining to inter-sector collaboration

1. The analysis of the gathered data demonstrates that, at the moment of the study, the biggest potential for integrating communities and creating complex support infrastructure for social innovations was observed among non-profit organizations and businesses, both of which often enter into such partnerships – this is attested to by numerous examples of organizations from these two sectors being identified. Local authorities seem to be the least engaged in such matters.
2. The widespread project-based inter-sector collaboration model is potentially feasible for both researchers and universities committed to social innovations. The researchers will most likely find it worthwhile to determine the actual scale and ‘depth’ of the collaboration – e.g. if such partnerships actually come to an end once the projects are completed. University administrators responsible for social innovation may see projects as an opportunity for establishing contacts and developing wider capabilities for cooperation, which in practice may even necessitate taking risks and adopting new approaches to actively searching for new/further avenues of developing a given initiative.
3. One of the main goals of this research project was creating a typology of inter-sector collaboration between higher education institutions and bodies from other sectors. Due to the database obtained through the study being heterogeneous, dispersed and lacking in developed structure, direction or even trends in the activities being taken, it is difficult to create any kind of model or typology of collaboration of universities and other organizations in the area of social innovation. The most important differentiating factor allowing to determine any types of collaboration seems to be the level of development of social innovation support employed by each of the higher education institutions included in the study. Northampton University may serve as an example of an institution with a highly-developed system of social innovation by being oriented towards furthering social change, collaborating with local businesses and industries, implementing a coherent system of educating social innovators, cooperating with the local community with a variety of tailor-made programmes on offer, engaging in the life of the local community and implementing the solutions in its immediate neighbourhood. Among the various types of activities undertaken by all of the universities included in the study we do find examples of such engagement, but they are usually dispersed – it seems that no unit is tasked solely with supporting social innovation, both in theory and practice, by consistently implementing a detailed social innovation plan. The following levels of commitment to creating, implementing and supporting social innovation were identified during the study:
 - I. **universities that are visibly, albeit sporadically, involved in the development of social innovations** – less than 5 examples of such involvement were found,
 - II. **universities that are involved in the development of social innovations on a substantial level** – at least 5 but less than 10 examples of such involvement were found, including initiatives varying in character and reach, among which were project partnerships and other initiatives requiring advanced social innovation support.
 - III. **universities that are involved in the development of social innovations on an advanced level (their activity in this area is developed)** – more than 10 examples of such involvement were found, including various types of activities such as project

partnerships, permanent partnerships with other bodies, etc., i.e. various forms of initiatives requiring advanced social innovation support),

- IV. **universities resembling the Northampton model** – stand out among other universities due to their commitment to supporting social innovations; not necessarily caused by the highest number of search engine hits, as some examples were singled out thanks to expert knowledge or specific initiatives proving the institution's high engagement in social innovations.

The last two categories are the most interesting when considering setting up the networks and infrastructure to support creating, implementing and supporting social innovations. The following universities had the highest level of social innovation activity:

1. Mykolas Romeris University (LT),
2. Budapest University of Technology and Economics (HU),
3. Janusz Korczak Pedagogical University in Warsaw (PL),
4. Kozminski University (PL),
5. University of Warsaw (PL),
6. Jagiellonian University (PL),
7. School of Form in Poznań (PL).

Universities that are highly involved in social innovations are also worth mentioning and include:

1. Universities in Wrocław (PL),
2. Charles University (CZ),
3. Masaryk University (CZ),
4. University of Gdańsk (PL),
5. Gdańsk Institute of Technology (PL),
6. Warsaw University of Technology (PL),
7. University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw (PL),
8. AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków (PL),
9. Kraków University of Economics/Matopolska School of Public Administration in Kraków (PL),
10. Corvinus University (HU),
11. Slovak University of Technology (SK),
12. Technical University of Kosice (SK),
13. University of Economics and Management in Prague (CZ),
14. Kaunas University of Technology (LT).

It seems that the two above lists of universities present the potential „strongholds” of building an effective and developed infrastructure of providing support to social innovations in Central Europe.

3.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on two stages of research that were carried out:

1. As attested to by the sources of information that were explored, the concepts of social innovations and social entrepreneurship are fairly new to countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia, and, moreover, they have been largely ignored by their education systems. The available literature on businesses, entrepreneurship and social innovations in Poland provides evidence that the ideas of cooperation and entrepreneurship are being actively discouraged in schools, for example by replacing student-operated school shops with ones operated by outside companies (cf. Social Enterprise, Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship in Poland: A National Report, available at: <http://www.fp7-efeseiis.eu/national-report-poland/>). Reports from the Czech Republic mention that the understanding of social innovations in the country is mainly associated with the technological aspect of the term, and the innovations themselves are initiated and financed chiefly by the European Union (cf. Report on the European Social Innovation Policy Framework in Light of Third Sector & Civil Society Actors, available at: http://itssoin.eu/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ITSSOIN_D1_2_Policy-frameworks-third-sector.pdf).
2. The analysis allows us to conclude that the sphere of social innovation is unstable, with plenty of initiatives that, unfortunately, are narrow in scope and reach, not communicated enough, but mostly independent. For them to improve and grow a network of institutions and support should be set up, which would take constant efforts aimed at building an inter-sector ecosystem of supporting social innovations, in which higher education institutions would play a major part.
3. We may see that it is mostly universities that specialize in technology, economics and management, as well as „general” universities and universities of various profiles, e.g. economics, natural sciences, medicine, agriculture, that undertake the most initiatives meant to support social innovations. This is most likely due to the fact that these universities are working on new technologies to improve various aspects of society on the one hand, and often take up issues of social economics and social entrepreneurship, or have special units in their structure meant to address these problems, on the other. Other universities that are involved in social innovations to various degrees include academies and all kinds of private education institutions (including those with profiles focusing on economics, management, finances, entrepreneurship, business, law and administration).
4. The above situation also leads to the possible risk of blurring and imprecisely defining the concept of social innovation, low recognisability of solutions attributed to the concept, and, in effect, a lack of understanding of the concept of social innovation even in communities that use very specialized languages, but have no intersubjective knowledge that would allow them to identify and categorize social solutions meant to bring about long-term outcomes. This reveals one of the important tasks that universities in the region may take upon themselves, namely the task of popularizing the social innovation discourse, creating a widely available and accessible system of concepts and categories, which would allow representatives of various practical

fields to find ready-made solutions and test them, but also co-create „recipes“ for successful solutions with the aim of fostering social development. The development and popularization of the discourse should focus mainly on effective education and establishing a system of providing support to educational processes in accordance with academic standards. Popularizing the discourse may lead to a long-term outcome of creating a new social way of thinking about social innovations as a category that is indeed needed and useful, and not only a „EU term“ that needs to be included to receive EU project funds.

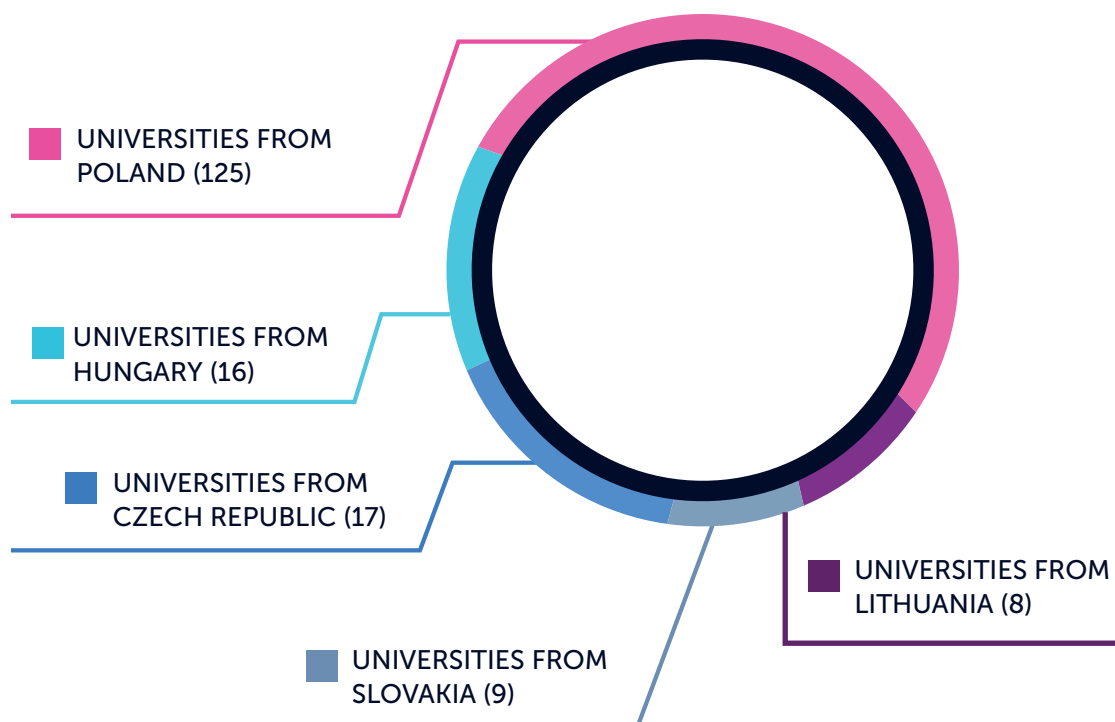
5. When analyzing the issue of social innovations one must keep in mind that Central Europe is a developing region with a socialist past. The concept of „social innovations“ should have a local and contextual nature – it is often the case that what may be considered an innovation in poor and marginalized areas in the region, and sometimes in urban areas as well, had been implemented in the West decades ago.

4. Research results

4.1 Desk research analysis

During the research it became apparent that in the Central European countries included in the research there are, in fact, no developed inter-institutional and inter-sector networks devoted to social innovations. The research methods used allowed us to gather hundreds of examples of various types of university involvement in activities related to social innovation, but these activities are often disjointed, small initiatives undertaken by single entities or minor consortiums. The gathered data includes many ideas on how to combine and use that potential.

There are also many good examples of collaboration and attempts of „networking“, which will be described in detail in another section of the report. The second main issue is the identified lack of a rooted culture of using terms relating strictly to social innovations and, therefore, the term innovation itself. We may conclude that if the concept of innovation were popularized in Central Europe, then it could become a useful „bridge“ of communication between scientific and specialist communities of diverse specializations, but also individuals who have practical experience in the area or representatives of other groups, in search of well-prepared and proven solutions to social issues. The results of the research prove that there is a certain intersubjectivity of meanings of social innovation. Basing a well-developed, ordered and freely available database of terms and knowledge on them would definitely increase the effectiveness of many initiatives.



The research delivered data concerning 125 universities from Poland, the majority of which are operated by the state, 16 from Hungary, 9 from Slovakia, 17 from the Czech Republic and 8 from Lithuania. The number of public and private higher education institutions in Poland is about 350, whereas the number in all other countries combined is only about 250.

However, in most cases it is the European Union that creates opportunities for social innovation, both through direct initiatives on an international level, for example through the European Commission, and through funding national initiatives with EU funds. We found it interesting that the research uncovered differences between Poland and the remaining countries, as well as between all of the countries, in the very general characteristics of social innovation activity – there are some activities and institutions that are present in Poland while being absent in the other countries and vice versa. As concerns the differences between the individual countries, they are manifested at the level of activity – the research proves that the lowest number of initiatives happen in Slovakia, more take place in Lithuania (but some of them stand out among all the others), the Czech and Hungarian activity levels are similar, but aimed at slightly different issues (the Czechs focus more on the technological and business aspect of social innovation, whereas the Hungarians are very interested in resolving social problems and developing social entrepreneurship).

The overall image of the activity of universities in the area of social innovation in Central Europe is made up of single undertakings of higher education institutions – activities and solutions that are carried out without outside assistance or in collaboration or partnership with external institutions and organizations. These activities are most often projects usually carried out as part of EU programmes and competitions organized by state institutions. Upon closer scrutiny we saw a curious pattern – despite the initiatives being „European” at the outset, they are often developed to fit the „local” conditions and „fit” the local social and cultural environment. Unfortunately, due to them being projects, they are often temporary, which is not without consequence for the social initiative support systems, an issue that will be discussed in another section of the report.

4.1.1. Forms of university involvement in the issue of social innovation

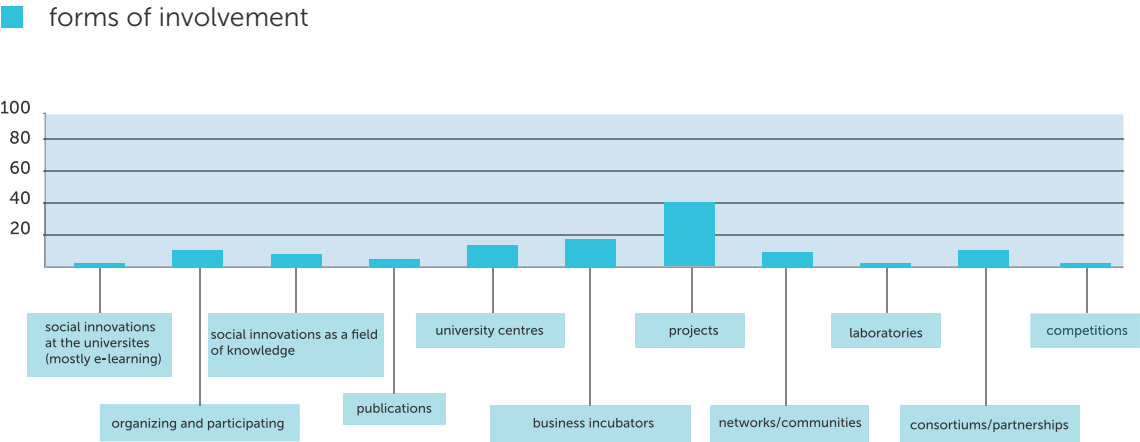
Below is the complete list of forms of university involvement in activities associated with social innovations, as well as their creation, implementation and support, that also provides the number of cases of each (number of identified types of activity in a given area):

1. social innovations in the organizational structure of the university (mostly e-learning) [11],
2. conferences and workshops (organizing and participating) [39],
3. social innovations as a field of knowledge included in the curriculum (post-graduate studies and sporadically: courses; specializations; semester courses; doctoral studies) [28],
4. publications (books, articles, research reports) [22],
5. university centres of: technology transfer; entrepreneurship; research; knowledge;
6. evaluation; innovation; social innovation [54],
7. business incubators (operating at the universities) [71],
8. projects: national; international; independent; inter-sector; governmental/European; in partnership with the non-profit sector or businesses [235],
9. networks/communities (collaboration with universities) [45],
10. laboratories (based at the universities or collaborating with the universities) [12], consortiums/partnerships with entities from other sectors [46],
11. competitions for the best social innovations (co-organizing and/or participating) [4].

The list includes all cases of universities from Central Europe becoming involved in initiatives directly related to social innovations or ones that most probably will have a certain impact on social innovation due to their nature.

Chart 1. The share of individual activities in the total number of social innovations identified in selected Central European countries (PL, CZ, HU, SK and LT)

TYPES OF ACTIVITY - SOCIAL INNOVATION (%)



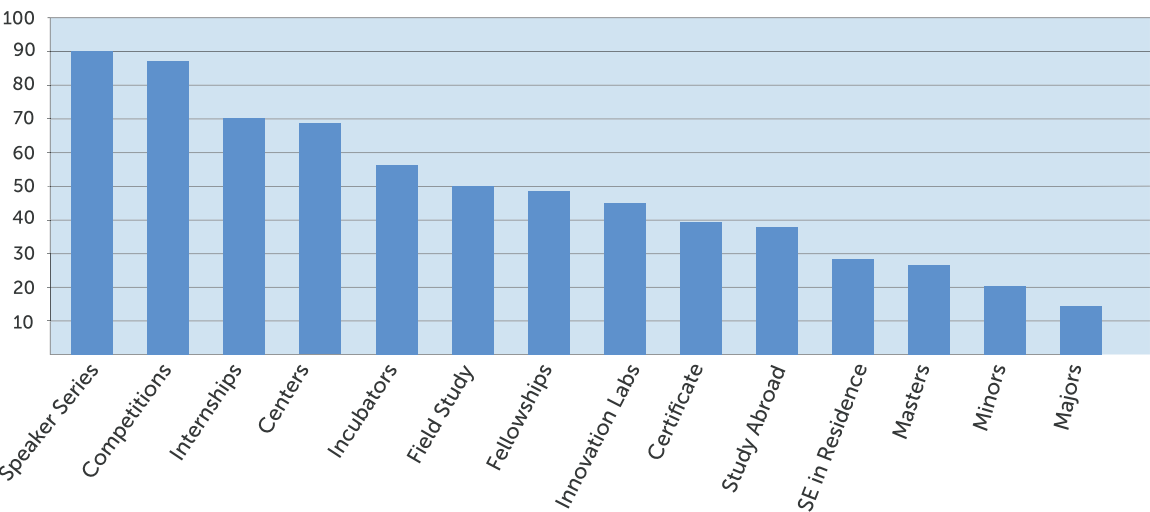
Source: the authors' own research

The Central European list lacks the categories of: internships and training programmes, scholarships, certificates, foreign exchange programmes, master's studies and fields of study, which were included in the Ashoka U list.

The Central European list lacks the categories of: internships and training programmes, scholarships, certificates, foreign exchange programmes, master's studies and fields of study, which were included in the Ashoka U list.

Chart 2. The share of individual activities in the total number of social innovations identified in the USA and other selected countries (based on the methodology used by Ashoka U Census)

CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF SOCIAL INNOVATION OFFERINGS



Source: Ashoka U Census, available at: <http://ashokau.org/trends/trend-calls/curricular-teaching/curricular-teaching-findings/>

We can see that the types of involvement are mostly similar with a few notable exceptions. The Ashoka U list does not include social innovations that the universities implement within their organizational structures, nor does it have separate categories of projects, partnerships and publications – this may be caused by the differences in social innovation activities in other countries where the above activities are considered „less important” or fit into different categories.

The Central European list lacks the categories of: internships and training programmes, scholarships, certificates, foreign exchange programmes, master’s studies and fields of study, which were included in the Ashoka U list.

4.1.2 Creation, implementation and support of social innovations within the higher education institutions included in the study

The only identified cases of social innovations introduced into the organizational structure of the universities concern the manners and forms of organizing the educational process itself and the popularization of knowledge by making it easier to access. The desk research has uncovered rare instances in which universities operate open educational resources such as: „open university”, „children’s university”, non-public elementary school, accessibility for disabled persons and „intensive PhD courses.” The most popular form of this initiative (and the only one that is widespread) is e-learning, which is a social innovation in itself, but may also contribute to creating new solutions in response to changing needs while taking advantage of the newest technology. Some universities based in Poland and other Central European countries offer this type of education, while others operate special units devoted to e-learning, form partnerships with other organizations (including those from other sectors) and participate in networks.

Central European universities are becoming involved in the process by offering study programmes, courses, and modules covering the issue of social innovation. The following examples of university involvement in supporting social innovations by offering study programmes were found, of which most are rare occurrences:

1. courses included in study programs: „Module introduction: Social innovations” – Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań,
2. „Social innovations and interventions” – a specialization of the supplementary MA studies in sociology at AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków,
3. „Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy” course – a one-semester social entrepreneur course in which social enterprises are also involved. Students have the opportunity to do a traineeship in social enterprises – Corvinus University in Budapest (HU),
4. Social Innovations Doctoral School – a special doctoral program at Mykolas Romeris University (LT); for more information visit: <https://www.mruni.eu/en/research/doktorantura/>

The research revealed that a wide selection of courses concerning social innovation or similar concepts, such as human and social capital, CSR, innovation management, social economics, was offered only as part of postgraduate studies. All of them are offered by Polish universities. During the desk research dozens of organizations and organizational units of universities were identified that may serve as potential centres of thought and work on social innovations, and probably may also deliver the most knowledge on the subject. The organizations and organizational units are listed in Appendix 1.

There is a large group of organizations in Central Europe that may potentially create, implement, and support social innovations, but not many of them are named in a way that would imply their dedication to social innovation. The abovementioned organizations are mainly focused on the commercialization of knowledge by connecting the world of science with the business, modern industry and new technology sectors. The organizations usually carry out research and development activities with the aim of disseminating and implementing scientific achievements, educating (including training) and organizing seminars, conferences and meetings. Some of them claim to be interested in the social aspects of life and communicating with society. A number of them operate business incubators.

4.1.3. Project execution

Another type of organizations that operate out of universities in Central Europe are business incubators.

Poland has a network of 50 Academic Business Incubators in 24 cities operated by the AIP Foundation (a complete list of all AIP incubators is available at:

<https://inkubatory.pl/mapa-inkubatorow/>).

There are other incubators based at universities that do not belong to the AIP network, such as the DAIP (Lower Silesia Business Incubator which includes an innovation incubator) collective, which includes Wrocław's universities: Wrocław University of Technology, University of Wrocław, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, as well as individual units forming part of the following universities: Kraków University of Technology, West Pomeranian University of Technology Szczecin, University of Opole, Marie Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, University of Economics and Innovation in Lublin, Lublin University of Technology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.

A number of business incubators are also active in the remaining countries: InovaJet – business incubator, an important part of Inovacentrum (Czech Technical University in Prague) (CZ); University Business Incubator (Corvinus University and Eötvös Loránd University) (HU); University Business Incubator (Széchenyi István University) (HU); University Business Incubator (University of Szeged) (HU); Business Incubator of KTU Regional Science Park (Kaunas University of Technology) (LT). The chief characteristic of business incubators is their focus on the business aspect of their activity. However, when we take into account their prevalence and several years of experience in supporting business, including HR and CSR activities, it seems that they should be further investigated at a further stage of the study due to their potential involvement in social innovation, as well as being an example of a functioning network, which may prove useful when researching the subject of social innovation in more depth in the future.

Publications prepared by universities may be considered an „internal” type of involvement in creating innovation. The desk research has found about 20 examples of such publications, mainly articles (with a few books and research reports), of which approximately 15 were published by Polish universities. It is worth noting, that they often cover basic topics, e.g. describe the nature of social innovation in a given country or on an international level, or describe certain aspects of the social innovation development environment in a given country or community. They are often based on foreign initiatives and publications and, therefore, popularize the social innovation discourse and spread the good practices that have been developed elsewhere.

Central European universities become involved in the organization of conferences and workshops devoted to social innovations and participate in them. During the desk research we found several examples of such involvement, varying in type and scope, covering diverse issues: new technologies, social economics, local and regional development, best practices in social innovations selected in contests or as a result of the activity of international organizations. Workshops are an interesting way of universities becoming involved in supporting social innovations, as their interactive character creates opportunities to create and consult ideas, confront views, brainstorm, etc. The desk research has revealed that almost no organizations or universities become involved in social innovation workshops. Examples of initiatives that were found: „24 h Między Budynkami” [24 Hours Among Buildings], which focused on urban planning and featured a consultant from the Gdańsk University of Technology, and student workshops covering research methods meant to support social innovation held at the School of Form in Poznań.

4.1.3. Types of „networking” – constant inter-institutional and intersector collaborations with the aim of supporting social innovations

The most popular manner in which universities become involved in social innovations is by working on projects.

Social innovation projects are executed by higher education institutions independently or collectively, usually as part of inter-sector collaborations, however not many of them have a constant, long-term nature (as is the case with partnerships between institutions), which would allow them to oversee the process of creating, implementing and supporting the innovations for as long as possible.

It is possible, however, that other factors come into play here, such as the capabilities and resources making such long-term collaborations possible, the manners in which funds are allocated, etc. Examples found during the desk research are mainly projects funded by the EU as part of competitions announced and supervised by national or European institutions. Some of them are aimed directly at fostering social innovation, while the descriptions of others contain information about activities and products that may be considered social innovations or be associated with them. Some of the competitions are not aimed directly at social innovators, but were nevertheless included on our list as a potential opportunity for creating initiatives associated with social innovations. A list of all identified projects may be found in Appendix 2.

When summarizing the analysis of the research results concerning projects as a way of universities from Central Europe becoming involved in creating, implementing and supporting social innovations it is worth noting that the most popular manner of executing social innovation projects were international and inter-sector partnerships.

The issues addressed by these undertakings are, as mentioned earlier, diverse and include: supporting local development, educational initiatives, work-life balance, CSR, health, social innovations in the technological sphere, supporting the non-profit sector, supporting individuals suffering from social exclusion and/or due to social problems, social economics, social innovation at universities and popularizing their achievements outside of the academia. The above activities are often part of broader European initiatives, which are financed or co-financed by the EU. A small number of them are independent or supported by national and international organizations or by the universities themselves.

Another important question concerning the inter-sector collaboration of Central European universities is what entities become involved in such initiatives. Based on the gathered data we may conclude with certainty that most of them are non-profit organizations, including foundations and associations, but also entities with the following words in their names: forum, union, federation. Businesses, mainly from the services and technology sectors, form a large part of the collaborators as well. Scientific centres, institutes and other state-operated science facilities are also fairly numerous among the collaborators. The analysis of the gathered data proves that universities seldom cooperate with local government bodies on matters relating to social innovation.

4.1.4. Types of „networking“ – constant inter-institutional and inter-sector collaborations with the aim of supporting social innovations

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, we were unable to identify a well-developed, inter-institutional infrastructure meant to support social innovations in the sources concerning Central Europe. We have been able, however, to identify certain cases of long-term collaborations, some of them even transformed into networks, that may be used for further inquiry.

Apart from the partnerships formed during projects, which are limited in time and usually concentrate on a narrow range of issues, universities from Central Europe also undertake permanent collaborations with a variety of organizations and institutions from diverse sectors, thus forming inter-sector networks of contacts. Some of these partnerships focus directly on social innovations, while others concern phenomena that may be considered social innovations or areas in which social innovations may arise.

4.1.5. Network-based innovation activities carried out within established European networks

The involvement of Central European universities in notable European social innovation networks, such as Ashoka, Social Innovation Europe or Social Innovation Exchange Europe, seems very low:

ASHOKA – the identified types of collaboration are sporadic and diverse:

1. Ashoka Fellow „on board” universities:
PL: University of Wrocław, University of Gdańsk, University of Szczecin, Catholic University of Lublin,
2. partnership in the Ashoka BIHAPI contest, whose aim is to create innovative applications for citizens of Intelligent Cities. It may result in creating applications that raise safety and accessibility levels, make it easier to take advantage of the city's recreation facilities, or inform about cultural events:
PL: Jagiellonian University, Gdańsk University of Technology, Poznań University of Economics, Warsaw University of Technology,
3. Collaboration in the „Szkoly z mocą” [Changemaker Schools] programme (participation in a panel tasked with selecting schools that have the power to change the world):
PL: Collegium DaVinci, University of Gdańsk,
4. Ashoka Conference 2016 Exchange:
PL: University of Warsaw,
5. Ashoka Social Nobel Prize Winners:
PL: University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw,
6. The growing collaboration between Ashoka and Masaryk University Brno (CZ) focused on research of the scope of social innovation impact,
7. CERGE institute, Charles University in Prague, is starting a new initiative inspired by Ashoka: „a post-doc fellowship for ‚data-driven changemakers’ in applied economics.”

Social Innovation Europe (SIE) – is the biggest active community in Europe devoted to social innovations. The website of the network states that: „SIE shows who is doing what, how and why across Europe”, and: „SIE platform has become a community of over 3000 people across Europe, a go to place to understand the context of social innovation in different countries, and a database of organisations and events across Europe.” Three Central European universities are among its members:

- Charles University Prague (CZ)
- College of Nyíregyháza (HU)
- Mykolas Romeris University (LT).

4.1.6. Network-based innovation activities carried out within other types of permanent partnerships and communities

A number of „alternative” forms of network-based collaborations on social innovations have been observed among Central European universities, but they are not well-developed. The desk research has revealed several examples of communities whose activity may be interesting and worth further inquiry at further stages of the study:

Open Middleware 2.0 Community – a community created by companies, scientific institutions and other entities. The initiative’s website states that it enables „young programmers, using the Orange telecommunications network, to create their own innovative telecommunications and IT applications. During the three years of the community’s operations, several dozen innovative solutions have been developed, including an application for individuals in need of care, a social urban game, a service for public transit passengers, a parking system and a system for managing public events. Numerous engineering and master’s theses as well as several dozen articles were created in cooperation with universities.

Open Middleware 2.0 Community is a place where business, academia, students, medium and big companies meet. These meetings include workshops and certifications of university students, give birth to ideas and prototypes of new applications and services.” The community’s partner universities include: Warsaw University of Technology, Łódź University of Technology, Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poznań University of Economics, Gdańsk University of Technology, Kraków University of Technology, Silesian University of Technology, AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków.

The project’s website <http://www.openmiddleware.pl/>

Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) – a scientific institute based in Austria founded in 1988 as an association, which collaborates with various institutions from around the world regarding them as „cooperation partners.”

ZSI's university partners in Central Europe include:

1. AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków (including a collaboration on ZSI PEER - a digital „peer learning” project for adults aged 50+)
2. Budapest University of Technology and Economics (HU) (including a collaboration on the REVIVE - Reviewing and Reviving Existing VET Curriculum project)
3. Széchenyi István University (HU) (including a collaboration on the Danube Macroregion: Capacity Building and Excellence in River Systems project)
4. Slovak University of Technology (SK) (including a collaboration on the REVIVE - Reviewing and Reviving Existing VET Curriculum project)
5. Tomas Bata University in Zlín (CZ)
6. Kazimieras Simonavičius University (LT) (including a collaboration on the SI-DRIVE project)
7. Kaunas University of Technology (LT)

Further information about the institution's activities are available at: <https://www.zsi.at>

The „Universities” Group – an interesting initiative in the Silesia region resembling an experimental network of social innovators from various sectors, who are active in different areas of social innovation. They had carried out diverse socially responsible projects in the Silesia Voivodship, the concepts and outcomes of which were presented during the „Responsible Silesia” CSR Conference. Information concerning the group was obtained from one brief source which, apart from the above information, lists all of the tools that the university sector uses and may influence the development of the inter-sector cooperation, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the university sector in carrying out inter-sector assignments. The University of Silesia and Katowice University of Economics are involved in the initiative.

Further information about the institution's activities are available at:

<http://www.kopex.com.pl/upload/user/odpowiedzialnosc/Odpowiedzialny%20%C5%9A%C4%85sk%20-%20podsumowanie%20sektor%20Uczelnie%20Anna%20Losa%20Jonczyk.pdf>

The last initiative aspires to adopt an approach that would provide us with a greater understanding of the issue of social innovation through conversations and interviews with representatives of universities and organizations. Perhaps similar attempts at creating networks, which include universities, of providing support to social innovations, albeit smaller in scope, are currently active or planned for the future in Central European countries, but no information about them is available to the public.

4.1.7. Social innovation incubation

Incubation, i.e. supporting and monitoring emerging social innovation initiatives by selected entities, is one of the most interesting forms of supporting social innovation. We have not been able to identify any objects referred to as „social innovation incubators” in the gathered data, however, as was mentioned earlier, various types of organizations are currently involved, or may be potentially involved in the future, in such activities (business incubators and others). We have established that incubation of social innovation in Central Europe may take place in „social innovation laboratories”. Such initiatives are known as Social Innovation Labs and, during the desk research, we have found several examples of universities becoming engaged in this type of activity:

Social Innovations Laboratory Network MRU LAB – a well-developed internal initiative of Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius (LT). It may serve as an example to other universities of how a space for developing social innovations should be arranged. MRU LAB is a network of 19 social innovation laboratories devoted to diverse areas of social life, such as business, technology, gender, quality of life, etc. A high awareness of the impact of social innovation is evident in this initiative and at the university as a whole. The website states: „Social Innovation research areas and programs at the University are developed by interdisciplinary groups of scientists, researchers and students (...) Laboratory networking concentrates on consolidating the usage of the scientific production and collaborating with experienced group of researchers. The main purpose is to prepare and implement international projects and contract research for public and business sectors under the new funding schemes. It is also very important to develop competitive, high knowledge, innovation based study-business partnership and ecosystem management”. The MRU LAB website invites other institutions and organizations from various sectors to collaborate.

Further information about the institution’s activities are available at:

<https://www.mruni.eu/en/research/laboratories/>

Social Innovation Lab (Zagreb, Croatia) – the initiative’s website states: “social innovation has improved the quality of citizens’ daily life in the Western Balkans. Inclusive and innovative society that uses far-reaching and realistic policy alternatives and practical solutions for solving local and regional socio-economic challenges in the Western Balkans. (...) Our mission is to provide platform for social innovations where knowledge, ideas and practices meet to find solutions for development challenges in the regional socio-economic context.” Kazimieras Simonavičius University (LT) is a partner of this undertaking.

Further information about the institution’s activities are available at:

<http://socinnovationlab.org/>

Living Labs are another type of initiative created with the purpose of introducing various kinds of social innovation. They are environments in which creators and users of innovations may come together to experiment on and test them in „real life.” The website of CentraLab states that: „A Living Lab is an ecosystem for experimentation and co-creation with real users in real life environments, where the end users together with researchers, firms and public institutions jointly explore, design and validate new and innovative products, services, solutions and business models” (cf. <http://centralivinglab.eu/index.php/en/about>). Living Labs operate as inter-sector consortiums consisting of research and development centres and institutes,

universities, non-profit organizations, companies, networks and organizations associated with the development of technology and modern infrastructure among others. Some Living Labs collaborate with Central European universities:

European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) is an international federation of living labs from Europe and the rest of the world. The network is represented by ENoLL, an international association based in Brussels.

1. International Centre for Decision Sciences and Forecasting, Living Lab Fundacji Progress and Business in Kraków – its partners include: AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków, Jagiellonian University in Kraków.
2. Kielce Technology Park Living Lab – its partners include: Kielce University of Technology, Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce,
3. Homokháti Rural Living Laboratory – founded by University of Szeged
4. Well-being Living Lab Nagykovacsi - Eötvös Loránd University uses the innovations developed there

Further information about the institution's activities are available at:

http://staging03.dough.be/enoll_new/aboutus

CentraLab – its leading partner is E-zavod, a Slovenian institute that supports sustainable growth based on implementations in the R&D sector and innovative projects, including those financed with European funds, in the areas of ecology, energy, economics and e-business. CentraLab unites 10 partners from 8 EU countries and the activities of the network focus on 10 international pilot projects.

Among the participating Central European universities are:

1. Corvinno Technology Transfer Center, Corvinus University Budapest (HU)
2. Technical University of Kosice (SK).

PPNT Social Innovation Laboratory – forms part of the Pomeranian Science and Technology Park in Gdynia. As stated on the institution's website „Pomeranian Science and Technology Park in Gdynia is a space for all innovators who create cutting-edge products, services and initiatives.” The data that we managed to gather suggests that PPNT is a perfect space for collaboration on social innovation between universities. Further information about the institution's activities are available at: www.ppnt.pl

Unit for Social Innovation and Research „Shipyard” – the website of the Shipyard states that it „was created with the aim of providing a critical and reliable description of challenges to social life in Poland and to search for and promote effective, innovative methods of reacting to them, based on the principles of civic participation.. The Shipyard attaches particular importance to growing the collaboration between the following communities: researchers-academics and social activists, including those active in non-profit organizations. The current activities of the Shipyard concentrate in four main areas: research and evaluation, social innovation, civic participation and bringing knowledge closer to practice.

- partner in the eCoSolving project, which resulted in the creation of the pracademia portal (University of Warsaw)

- member of a consortium tasked with completing the MEMo project (the Shipyard is the leader) <http://stocznia.org.pl/projekty/memo/> (University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw)

Further information about the institution's activities are available at:
<http://stocznia.org.pl/o-stoczni/>

4.2. Qualitative analysis

4.2.1. Social innovation at Polish universities

4.2.1.1. Definition of Social Innovation

At the beginning of the study, the respondents were asked to give their definition of social innovation. The question was meant to introduce the respondents to the main theme of the conversation. It also served a diagnostic purpose – the answers provided the researchers with information on the extent to which the concept of social innovation is present in each of the universities included in the studies. The representatives of the universities gave diverse definitions of social innovations, although partial similarities are evident.

The most prevalent definition of social innovation at universities included innovative solutions of social problems, which are tasked to serve the society as a whole or certain specific smaller social groups (e.g. members of organizations, residents of small rural communities, etc.).

The aforementioned innovativeness (i.e. doing something in a manner that has not been tried before) often relates to solving a specific social problem, usually in the sphere of social policy, for example the issue of social exclusion. The above definition was confirmed by the respondents giving examples of social innovation that included lifestyle changes, which would make people eat healthier food; modifying traffic systems to reduce traffic jams; or innovative education methods used to teach Polish literature at schools.

Only a few of the respondents associate social innovation with the issue of costs. Social innovations not only provide solutions to certain social problems, but they are also inexpensive or cost nothing at all to implement. Not all respondents approved of this definition often pointing to the fact that numerous social innovations are carried out as part of projects financed with public funds, and their duration and long-term outcomes depend on securing further funds once the project runs its course.

The analysis of the definition of social innovation also included asking the respondents if the definition is contained within the official strategic documents, e.g. Development Strategy, of their universities. Unfortunately, this was not the case at any of the universities.

Selected quotes concerning the definitions of social innovation.

I think that social innovation includes every change, every service that adds new value. (...) All in all, everything that brings new value may be considered an innovation. Social innovation should meet two conditions at once: the way in which it is implemented works, and a change in the social fabric is made, which should be positive. (1)

The Stanford definition is often mentioned, which emphasizes finding new solutions to certain social problems that are more effective than the ones used thus far and are not concerned with the bottom line, but rather on easing the hardships that certain groups suffer as a result of certain problems. An important aspect, which is often emphasized, is for the innovations to be inexpensive and I consider this to be a key aspect. (2)

It is an innovative manner of seeking solutions to certain social problems, tackling a certain social challenge in a way that allows for more effective allocation of existing resources and interpersonal relationships. Social innovations solve problems effectively and permanently. Innovations are not inventions, but rather discovering ways of bypassing certain obstacles.(13)

I consider it a change resulting in better satisfying some social needs or solving some social problem using a sort of a business model. It is not only the idea that counts, but also the way in which it is implemented as to replace the former, ineffective way of doing things. I consider social innovation to have two types of value. A certain collective, social and financial good. So the benefits are twofold: social and financial.(10)

Generally speaking, it is a social change, and to put it more detail, it can be a new way of resolving social problems, a new organizational solution in social matters, for instance. (...) Unfortunately, the term is understood in Poland as imitating or borrowing certain solutions that have been successfully used elsewhere and making them a part of social policy practice. (...) The correct meaning, as I see it, it is a new development, a change that is social in nature, a new way of dealing with the challenges of modernity, implementing new instruments and solutions, mainly services, in the sphere of social policy.(11)

4.2.1.2. Creating and implementing innovations at universities

The second thematic area analyzed as part of the study was the issue of creating and implementing innovations at universities, the organizational solutions accompanying the process and examples of successfully implemented social innovations.

When examining the manners of organizing social innovation within university structures, we may identify two types of innovation management structures, i.e. decentralized and centralized management. The latter requires a thoroughly grounded organizational unit tasked with coordinating social innovation projects and obtaining financial grants to fund them. The unit acts independently, but cooperates with the university, communicates with other units, reacts to their needs and, depending on the requirements, engages the university's resources (human and financial) in its activities. Innovative projects may be executed outside of the central unit, but it nevertheless remains the only largely independent unit. On the other hand, decentralized management allows for many independent units to operate alongside each other, which may carry out social innovation projects as part of their basic functions and tasks. For example, the

university may have faculties and student organizations that create their own innovations, but specialized technology transfer centres, such as incubators tasked with introducing innovations (including social innovations), are also founded. The two above management models are naturally dependent on the size of the organization and its legal status. Big public universities prefer decentralized management with independent units. Small, mostly private universities prefer centralized management with a single independent management unit, but there are notable exceptions to this rule.

The most prevalent definition of social innovation at universities included innovative solutions of social problems, which are tasked to serve the society as a whole or certain specific smaller social groups (e.g. members of organizations, residents of small rural communities, etc.).

The number of innovative projects executed by Polish universities paints a rather unfavourable picture of Polish universities as innovation centres. There are, however, vast differences between private (even very renowned ones) and public universities. Representatives of private universities presented more examples of various activities that fit the definition of social innovation. On the other hand, representatives of public universities often admitted that no innovative projects are being worked on or talked about projects that are hardly innovative at all. The respondents listed social innovations of three kinds: those associated with research, teaching and organization of the university. We find it interesting that the respondents recalled less examples of social innovations resulting from research than those concerning teaching or growth of the university. The research carried out by academics, especially those specializing in technology, are considered to be innovations only by the respondents themselves because they are aimed at businesses and fall into the activities of the technology transfer centres based at universities. Examples of social innovations given by the respondents include:

1. E-learning methods used in teaching students and course attendees;
2. Professional development of university staff and students through tutoring, mentoring and coaching projects;
3. Innovative projects in the area of providing aid to individuals affected by social exclusion or in danger of being excluded, e.g. assisting individuals aged 50 and over in finding jobs, assisting disabled students through organizing and conducting online courses, rehabilitating inmates by allowing them to work at supermarkets, creating modern aid programs aimed at welfare recipients;
4. Creating Children's Universities, Universities of the Third Age and Open Universities;
5. Providing innovative course programs, such as Social Rehabilitation, Socially Responsible Business, Innovator Training, designed in collaboration with representatives of business and other sectors;
6. Innovative projects concerning racial discrimination, such as projects tasked with fighting prejudice towards refugees through interactive theatre performances;
7. Projects tasked with providing support to business owners, including a project aimed at popularizing beekeeping among small businesses, a project in which students helped local business owners make their establishments look more modern using interior design techniques;

8. Creating business incubators, i.e. spaces allowing students to flesh out their business ideas.

The above list presents only selected categories of innovative projects that are often executed at Polish universities. Please note, however, that numerous examples of innovative projects given by the respondents are in fact not innovative at all. For example, some respondents considered conferences on the subject of innovations to be innovative. One can argue that they may indeed contribute to innovation, however they cannot be considered an innovation in and of themselves.

4.2.1.3. The conditions of creating social innovations by the universities and at the universities

One of the most important issues that the study had to address was determining what factors support social innovations at universities and what factors hamper them in the opinion of the respondents. The analysis of the respondents' statements has led us to two conclusions: First, the respondents pointed out many more obstacles hampering the creation and implementation of social innovation projects at universities than they did favourable factors. Second, more obstacles are present at public universities than at private ones.

Among the few favourable factors listed by the respondents were:

1. A culture that facilitates creating and implementing innovative projects by academics, administrative workers and students – it was very often emphasized that freedom from regulations makes it easier to create social innovations, which result from grassroots initiatives and not tasks forced on the university by the administration;
2. Internal market demand for innovative solutions;
3. Employing leaders and knowledge brokers who motivate academics and university employees to become engaged in executing innovative projects, and who are also able to seek out customers for the innovations.

The obstacles to incubating and implementing social innovations should be divided into two categories:

- *systematic obstacles encountered by universities and public administration bodies (one of the customers of social innovations),*
- *mental and social obstacles.*

Below are the obstacles of both categories listed by the respondents:

1. Systematic barriers:

- a. A scattered, highly hierarchical and conservative university management structure (especially true for public universities), which translates into slow and ineffective decision-making processes which, in turn, influence the chances of innovative undertakings being approved;
- b. Promoting a standard range of activities (especially true for public universities) and not straying from established patterns of activity;
- c. Elaborate public administration bureaucracy that chooses to promote only low-risk projects as part of innovative programs, which translates into a disapproval of innovative projects;
- d. The New Public Management model is another factor that hampers innovations, as it requires that the effectiveness of innovative projects be measurable. The respondents were of the opinion that the effectiveness of innovative projects is difficult to measure due to them consisting not only of final outcomes, but also the process that leads to achieving them;
- e. Technological innovations developed by technology and economics universities are promoted and supported by the public administration – the importance of social sciences and humanities is not recognized.
- f. No permanent collaboration between scientific institutions, universities and public administration bodies.
- g. Not including social innovation in official university development strategies (especially true for public universities). Universities focus on preserving the status quo and making it through today's difficult times with less and less students enrolling each year.

2. Mental and social obstacles:

- a. Lack of determination and knowledge among university employees (mostly academics) that research work may result in developing social innovation projects;
- b. Low level of trust and social capital among university employees (especially true for public universities);
- c. Low social and cultural capital (education) of the society, which is not ready to accept social innovations;
- d. University employees are unwilling to take the risks associated with creating social innovations;
- e. Academics are unwilling to go beyond their sphere of expertise, which translates into the low probability of forming interdisciplinary teams that could develop social innovations;
- f. The public administration officials responsible for creating financial grant plans for innovative projects are unaware of how universities operate and which social innovations are in demand.

Selected quotes concerning the obstacles to and favourable conditions for creating social innovations:

If there is any place with suitable conditions, it must be the university, because working conditions at universities are flexible and academics have lots of freedom. They are free to choose what they want to do. Nobody is able to tell them to do something else, thus it is a perfect place to work on social innovation. (...) It is a question of motivating academics to start working on such things. (8)¹

There is a lack of conviction among academics specializing in the humanities and social sciences that their research may indeed have a practical use. So we brokers will sit down with them and say 'listen, but of course it does, you just have to do this and that' – opportunities open up momentarily and if you provide some examples, you can convince them that the research does make sense and can make changes happen. (6)

We stumble upon another problem here resulting from the fact that social sciences – which I represent – are worse off than more marketable areas of science. Even in the case of social innovations, which should be associated with social sciences, the understanding of the concept is wide, technological. This causes some initiatives to be overlooked because, right or wrong, concerns arise whether the faculty will be given preference. This applies both to research projects and teaching projects, teaching innovations, etc. I have to admit that, even though I am in an unusual place with one foot in a non-profit organization and the other in a university, people tend to abandon the university route, as it is long and full of obstacles resulting from disputes on who will get the funds, because the competition is fierce at such a large university, so I choose the non-profit route and thus the idea is developed in partnership by the non-profit and the university. (5)

I see objective barriers. For example contests with many technical conditions. You have to have a number of achievements to your name to take part in National Science Centre contests. To be awarded a grant, you have to have a certain number of them – this is not how you create innovation because you need young blood to make innovations happen. Right now you complete 125 projects in some area so you get a grant to complete another one because you are experienced and distinguished. Public funds are spent on dependable things. It is a sort of dependability policy: it is better to spend money on people who will not waste it. They will do a good job, but you cannot call it innovation. (1)

I attended a couple of conferences on social innovations and I was surprised that innovation is often an empty catchword. I think that, unfortunately, most innovative projects are developed outside of universities. I even think that universities hamper innovation rather than being an incubator, as they are ruled by academics, by certain powers, who are unable to look at things in a different way. (2)

4.2.1.4. Collaboration between various sectors in creating social innovations

The last issue that was explored as part of the study concerned the collaboration between various sectors in creating social innovations. Three types of entities were included in the research:

1. Non-profit organizations;
2. Businesses;
3. Public entities

The collaboration between public and private universities was also examined. Most of the university representatives stated that they cooperate with each of the three types of entities, however there are some differences as to how this cooperation works.

According to the majority of the respondents, cooperation with non-profit organizations proves to be the most effective, which results from three factors.

First, non-profit organizations are dedicated to achieving strictly social goals, serving the society as a whole or specific segments of it, which also constitutes a natural part of social innovation.

Second, non-profit organizations manage projects in the most effective possible manner, therefore they are often tasked with coordinating joint efforts, whereas universities are responsible for providing knowledge.

Third, many academics are also social activists working for non-profit organizations and, therefore, become a natural and informal bridge between the university and the non-governmental organizations when developing social innovations projects. Due to the social nature of non-profit organizations, the majority of projects developed by them in cooperation with universities focus on helping individuals who are in danger of social exclusion, such as the unemployed, elderly and disabled.

Many universities collaborate with businesses, however there are certain limitations that they encounter.

First, collaborating with businesses is, in most cases, limited to creating innovative study programs aiming to reconcile the courses and knowledge transferred to the students with the actual needs of the labour market.

The second most prevalent sphere of collaboration stems out from businesses commissioning universities to develop certain solutions, however this applies mainly to technology. Two kinds of problems arise from this type of collaboration: the difference between the logic of business and the logic of universities as well as the technologies being more market-oriented rather than socially-oriented. The aforementioned differences in logic are evident in the highly bureaucratic operations of universities, with an inefficient decision-making process, while businesses expect the solutions to not only be inexpensive, but also quick to develop and implement. The respondents support the claim that universities, mostly public ones, are ineffectively managed and before a collaboration with a business (or other external entities) is established a number of approvals and decisions must be issued by the university administrators. Whereas the problem of market-driven scientific developments being introduced results from most technology transfers having nothing to do with social innovation, as their purpose is to serve businesses and not society.

As regards the relationships between universities and the public sector, the majority of cases involved collaboration on various tiers of the public administration ladder, ranging from central to local government.

The respondents have not identified any notable problems resulting from this type of collaboration. However, as is the case with other innovative projects, one may question, and rightly so, whether the collaboration with the public sector leads to true innovation. The respondents often stated that universities are mostly tasked with carrying out research and preparing analyses for the public sector. It should be mentioned that collaboration between universities and local government bodies is different because of the proximity of both entities. Universities often execute innovative projects for the local government, which answer the needs of the residents and solve specific social problems, such as homelessness or the current immigration and assimilation issue. Opinions on this type of collaboration vary. Some local governments are open to universities putting forward suggestions of social innovation projects, but sometimes it is the local governments request universities to prepare them. On the other hand, some local governments are closed and try to execute innovative projects without outside assistance – they are still learning how to use the resources available to the universities to their own benefit.

Although universities collaborate with the public sector, non-governmental institutions and businesses, they seldom cooperate with other Polish universities.

This is probably caused by a number of factors.

First, the competition among universities, especially private ones, is fierce. Attendance numbers are dropping each year and, therefore, universities have to compete to attract prospective students and, thus, generate revenue.

Second, Polish universities are highly independent by nature. They are independent not only from the public administration, which oversees the universities in Poland, but also from the environment, including other Polish universities. All attempts at collaboration require universities to give up some of their independence on account of establishing a relationship with another higher education institution.

Third, Polish universities do not have an interdisciplinary culture – they would rather isolate themselves from the outside world, are reluctant to pool resources, do not make attempts at collaborating with outside entities especially on scientific projects and study programs. All of the abovementioned factors lead to the lack of collaboration on social innovation projects.

To conclude this section we would like to mention the lack of a stable network of relationships between universities and external partners. This problem was often mentioned by some respondents. Strong partnership networks support social innovations, allow forming collaborations in a quick and easy manner and make possible the exchange of resources. According to the respondents, such strong networks are absent in Poland and, what is more, networks of any type are approached with mistrust by the public administration during social innovation contests. The problem results from the requirement that, in many projects, partners be selected through a contest or a market analysis. This approach is misguided, as the most effective networks are formed as a result of long-term relationship building based on mutual trust. Incidental partnerships are never permanent and cannot serve as a base for developing effective collaboration.

Selected quotes concerning the collaboration between various entities:

Collaboration between various partners does bring results. We have a number of important agreements in place with diverse partners and each of them covers something. As regards the most intense collaboration, I would say it takes place in postgraduate studies – conducting postgraduate programs with outside partners. There are also other projects in which I took part. It sometimes happens, because you know, there are some requirements which say that a given company or institution, which has an interesting project idea, is almost required to enter into a partnership with a university. They of course come to us and say 'we want you'. This may not be the best model, but the involvement of the university is somewhat of an afterthought. I think that the model should be developed along with the university from the very start. This illustrates the way in which universities are often treated, because their input is not really wanted, they just have to be included in the grant application. (2)

All of the units included in this point do indeed take part. When it comes to academics and innovations stemming out of social sciences and the humanities, because they deliver the broadest range of innovations; technological innovations are implemented almost solely by businesses. However, projects developed by social sciences and the humanities involve collaboration with businesses, non-profit organizations and the public sector. This is especially evident in the case of research projects commissioned by specific entities. This is an advantage that social innovations have, as they can reach a broader range of customers than technological innovations. (6)

A common problem (in cooperating with businesses) arises out of the differences between the science and business worlds. They have different paces of work. Academics focus on various activities, including teaching students. Businessmen do not have this obligation, plus they wish to do everything on the cheap. (...) Many difficulties are also encountered when working on grants together. It involves dealing with miles of red tape. (8)

The principles of cooperation with the third sector should change – it is not formalized in any way. In some rare cases it is, but that is only due to the efforts of select individuals. Universities do not see the third sector as a worthy partner. There is no common ground required for cooperation to develop. (...) Ongoing cooperation does take place, but I would not consider it to be social innovations, because it involves single projects, such as studies, conferences, lectures, etc. There perhaps may be awareness of the need to cooperate, but it does not translate into a formal framework of cooperation.(11)

Collaborating with businesses is hard because they would like the university to do everything for free, pro publico bono, so they are unaware that the projects need to be paid for. I had difficulties getting a company to pay disabled people for acting as consultants. No one seems to see the need to pay for the work required to implement social innovations. (7)

4.2.2. Social innovation at foreign universities

4.2.2.1. Definition of social innovation

At the beginning of the study, the respondents were asked to give their definition of social innovation. The question was meant to introduce the respondents to the main theme of the conversation. It also served a diagnostic purpose – the answers provided the researchers with information on the extent to which the concept of social innovation is present in each of the universities included in the studies. The representatives of the universities gave diverse definitions of social innovations, although partial similarities are evident.

The vast majority of the respondents struggled when asked to provide a definition of social innovation.

Even at the respondent screening stage some of the candidates stated to be unable to take part in the study because they did not know what exactly constitutes social innovation. Even the individuals who agreed to take part had difficulties defining the concept and goals of social innovation and listing examples. Respondents often asked the interviewers to explain what innovations are, as to ensure that they had a correct understanding of the term. Some respondents admitted to have looked up the official definitions of social innovation before the interview, as they could not come up with their own definition. Those respondents who tried to explain their concept of social innovations often associated them with a kind of social change resulting from introducing an innovative idea. That definition is very imprecise and broad. It serves as proof that some of the respondent did not fully understand the concept. Their lack of understanding stems from the fact that the respondents seldom have the opportunities to observe or introduce social innovation at their universities.

The understanding of social innovation depends largely on the faculty or the university profile of a given respondent.

Respondents from technology universities had much more trouble explaining social innovations than academics from other universities. Most of them admitted to not knowing what social innovations are at the beginning of the interview. They saw innovations as results of the inventions created by their faculties. On the other hand, academics from faculties specializing in the social sciences were willing to consider a wide array of activities, especially those carried out by their faculty, as social innovations. They provided examples of studies, papers or even single events organized by the faculty as social innovations.

Selected quotes concerning the definitions of social innovation.

I understand the concept as using knowledge, new products, activities or services. All that which improves social relations, the functioning of institutions or social life. We are open to broadening this definition. (13)

These are new ideas meant to address the needs of society. Therefore, they arise out of a certain need. They can be achieved through different kinds of processes. The main objective of each innovation is to fill a certain gap, for example unemployment. (14)

Social innovation means using the available resources in the most effective manner. It also involves seeking new goals that may lead to social change. (15)

It makes possible solving social problems in a new way, with new tools that have not been used before. (19)

4.2.2.2. Implementating and developing social innovations at universities

The interviews confirmed the findings of the desk research. The term of social innovation is rarely used at the universities included in the study. The respondents admitted that the idea of innovation is only starting to gain a foothold in their work environment. We are at the beginning of the move towards innovative thinking. It is evident, however, that these ideas are starting to crop up and, thanks to the engagement of individual universities, are spreading. The examples of social innovation given by the respondents fit the actual definition of social innovation in very rare instances. The majority of respondents were unable to even define social innovation. They could, however, outline the research carried out by their peers and the technologies developed at their universities.

The universities included in the study are not yet determined to create social innovation. However, their activities are definitely inspired by social innovation and will most likely evolve in the future.

The majority of the universities operate centres or institutes that include innovative activities in their mission statements. Their staff was also unable to provide examples of social innovation. However, they were aware of their lack of knowledge. They explained that such activities are new to their universities and even new to their countries. Universities do not have official strategies that would motivate academics to develop social innovations. The official documents do not even contain the term of social innovation. The respondents were asked to list the units of their universities that contribute the most to social innovation. They did not find the question easy. They often listen social sciences faculties.

Selected quotes concerning the implementation and development of social innovation:

Almost nobody in the Czech Republic understands the concept of social innovation. They are simply not being developed here yet. We prefer to stick with traditional solutions rather than trying innovative ones. (19)

The purpose of universities is not to create social innovations. Universities should pass on knowledge and educate. By doing this they contribute to the development of social innovation. We do not create social change, however, we do not help disadvantaged groups. That is what non-profit organizations are for. (16)

4.2.2.3. Factors that contribute to the successful implementation of social innovations at universities

Most of the respondents stated that their universities have a favourable approach to social innovation. Universities are considered innovation-friendly mainly due to the favourable environment and infrastructure. However, when asked about specific innovations and the factors that encourage academics to create them or make the process easier, the respondents focused on listing the obstacles to social innovation. They emphasized that their universities have the potential for developing social innovation, but it is not fully utilized yet.

The main obstacle to introducing social innovation is the conservative way of thinking about the university by its staff.

According to the answers given by the respondents, the majority of university staff are not determined to create social innovations. They lack motivation or are simply not interested. The universities themselves were stated to be very conservative. Even though many of them agreed to create new structures meant to change the approach to creating social innovations, few academics actually take advantage of the new possibilities.. Other obstacles listed by the respondents include: red tape, lack of creative thinking and time. Foreign respondents rarely included the lack of funds among the obstacles, which was listed often by Polish respondents.

Selected quotes concerning the obstacles to and favourable conditions for creating social innovations:

I think that our university is improving in this regard. Creating social innovations here is still challenging, but easier than it used to be. This marks the beginning of change. We are slowly trying to introduce practices that are already widespread abroad. We are becoming more open and try to cooperate with others. (19)

I think that our university has recently become a fairly good place to work on social innovation. Mainly because we took the effort to reorganize its structures and introduced cooperation between faculties. We have a new space for cooperation. A new building was erected in which representatives of various fields meet. (13)

The main factor that supports social innovation is the demand for it, and the solutions are expected to be created mostly by representatives of the social sciences. Working on social innovations is made more difficult by the attitude of academics, who see no purpose in activities of this kind and do not wish to change their working habits. The long implementation process of social innovation also turns many people off. (14)

4.2.2.4. Collaboration between various sectors in creating social innovations (devising an inter-sector collaboration model)

Universities lack a structured network of relationships with external partners.

The respondents did describe individual examples of cooperation with non-profit organizations, businesses and public institutions. However, *the examples were isolated and the cooperation did not focus on creating social innovation*. If innovation does results from such cooperation, it is a coincidence and an added value to working together.

Collaborating with businesses takes place at each university and is deemed to be the most satisfying and beneficial for both sides. It includes, for example, activities aimed at providing job opportunities for students and graduates. However, collaborations with business are desired mainly for the direct financial gains that they provide universities with. Universities cooperate with big corporations, banks and insurance companies. Those sectors were listed the most often by the respondents.

Collaborating with non-profit organizations usually involves carrying out research or applying for a financial grant together. In Lithuania and Hungary this type of cooperation does not take place very often, as the non-profit sector is described as undeveloped, underfunded or even corrupt. Therefore, universities do not perceive non-profit organizations as worthy partners. They have a much better opinion of businesses and the public sector. Those types of cooperation make it easier to apply for financial grants, increase their prestige and ensure that projects receive bigger funding.

Universities actively collaborate with public entities. This mostly involves academics acting as experts in developing strategies for public institutions or government programs.

All of the abovementioned types of collaboration rarely focus on creating social innovation. They are rather a result of maximising organizational and financial gains through cooperation. Their objective is not to bring about social innovation.

Selected quotes concerning the collaboration between various entities:

The universities in our country are unwilling to collaborate with non-profit organizations. They are underfinanced and underdeveloped. We have very few large non-profits. We are infinitely more willing to collaborate with public entities. We are used to working with them. (13)

Cooperating with business is more popular than working with non-profit organizations. There is a lot of competition for collaboration on projects in both cases, but my co-workers are more inclined to work with private companies as they increase our financial gains. Companies want universities to develop specific solutions and are ready to pay for it. (19)

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