



Social shops open to everyone

Introduction

As the Food Bank in Tri-City, we are a non-governmental organization, but for years we have been trying to work closely with social welfare centers. We believe that combining the potential of systemic support with the energy of the third sector results in synergy and enables people in need to benefit from high-level support. Also, the statutory definition of social assistance assumes that it is a process in which the main importance is attached to making the person in need feel their causative role.

For us, the answer to this approach to social assistance is the creation of social shops, in which the basic principle is the empowerment of customers by enabling them to choose the necessary food products in a non-stigmatizing, comfortable atmosphere.

The first social shop in Poland was established in 2017 in cooperation between the Food Bank in Tri-City and the Municipal Help Center in Gdynia. From the beginning, we knew that our facilities would be more than just food aid spots. Initiating the project "Social shops open to everyone"

On my first time there was this gentleman in the social shop, I remember getting so much food, I was so happy. The service is very kind, sensible above all.

A client of the social shop in Gdańsk

allowed us to check whether this assumption is in fact in line with reality. Thanks to many meetings and conversations with social shops' stakeholders – customers, neighbors, social workers, volunteers, activists, and representatives of local authorities – we were able to look at our activities from very different, sometimes surprising perspectives.

This publication is a summary of not only over 5 years of functioning of social stores, but also a year and a half of project work. For us, however, it is mainly a story of a journey we set out on, and finally reaching a completely different place than we initially assumed. In the end, the most crucial thing is who joins us on the way.

Social shops

Idea and formulas

Social shops, in some countries also called social supermarkets, are a modern formula for providing food aid. Instead of standardized food parcels, people in need can independently choose the products they need – just like during ordinary shopping. However, social stores differ from conventional grocery stores in that the range of available products consists mainly of goods with short expiry dates, that have been saved from waste and obtained from supermarket chains.

The combination of a dignified and inclusive formula of functioning with

care for sustainable food management means that social shops have been recognized by the European Commission as a particularly beneficial form of support. They help reduce food waste, treat people at risk of social exclusion as subjects, and have great potential for development towards local integration centers – spots where people in need can get not only specific support, but also assistance in taking further steps to get out of a difficult situations. Social shops are also places where people who have problems with entering or re-entering the labor market, includ-



ing people with special needs, can find employment.

Social shops as a form of assistance are present in many European countries, i.e. Austria, France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Romania, the Czech Republic, and Poland, as well as in non-European countries – New Zealand, Australia, USA. In most cases, the formula of operation of stores allows for making "ordinary" purchases, but at much lower prices, sometimes reduced by as much as 90%. A special card or ID issued by a social welfare center or municipal authorities entitles clients to make purchases.

When designing the Polish model of social stores, we started with three main assumptions that distinguish our facilities:

- only food is distributed in the social shop;
- food will be distributed to clients completely free of charge;
- the range of products available in social shops will be based mostly on food with short expiry dates, saved from waste from local retail chains and producers.

First social shops

The first social shop in Poland operating according to the model we developed was opened in 2017 in

Gdynia, in cooperation with the Municipal Social Welfare Centre. In principle, it was to help mainly migrants, as they are the social group usually experiencing a harsh start, and at the same time they are deprived of institutional support. The pilot stage of the store brought very satisfactory results, which is why in 2019 we launched another store in Gdynia and the first facility of this type in Gdańsk - all in cooperation with local municipal social welfare centers. Over time, social workers from other towns in Pomerania became interested in the formula of social shops.

At the time we started the implementation of "Social shops open to everyone" project, we were running a total of 3 stores in Gdynia and Gdańsk. Currently, when we sum up the project a year and a half later, there are already 8 social shops run by the Food Bank in Tri-City in our voivodship. Outside Pomerania, social shops were also launched by Food Banks in Kraków and Ciechanów.

The Tri-City social shops perform a very similar basic function, but they differ slightly in terms of operating principles:

Gdynia	Gdańsk
<p>Every person living in Gdynia can use the help in the social shop up to 3 times in a calendar year. The condition for further use of the shop is a verification of the financial situation of the client by an employee of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre. Based on the interview and visit to the client's place of residence, the social worker decides whether the priority rule will be applied to the person (i.e. the person may receive food first). There is a limit of 2.5 kg of food per person in the family, including a limit of meat products up to 0.5 kg. The date of the next visit and the order of entering the store are determined by registration.</p>	<p>The help in the social shop is mainly used by people referred by the Municipal Family Support Centre. Products in the shop are scored and, depending on the selected products and their weight, the number of points is deducted accordingly. Social workers assign a monthly limit of points on the referral (e.g. 200 or a multiplication of this number, with 200 points enabling the collection of 2.5 kg of food at a single visit). The referral lists two days of the week on which you can use the store. It is also possible to use the store without a referral up to 3 times in a calendar year, after prior verification by an employee of the Food Bank. In this case, there is a limit of 2.5 kg per individual and 5 kg per family.</p>

Social shops open to everyone

After 5 years since the launch of the first social store, we wanted to check how these outlets affect the social reality around them. For several years, in conversations with clients, we have noticed the possibility of using social shops as centers for integration of local communities and incubation points for social change. Many people from the vicinity of the shops – both their customers and volunteers or neighbors – showed great leadership potential and great sensitivity to other people's problems.

When planning the "Social shops open to everyone" project, we wan-

ted to channel this energy in several ways:

1. By promoting self-advocacy activities and giving leaders specific tools for further activity
2. By promoting an active attitude of social shop customers
3. Increasing the self-help potential of social shops as places gathering local activists
4. Counteracting the exclusion of people in need
5. By promoting intra-sectoral (between social organizations) and cross-sectoral (between NGOs and public institutions) cooperation to en-

courage self-reliance and self-advocacy

The intention of the first stage of the project was to examine what social changes have been achieved through the current operation of social shops, as well as what are the needs of shops' stakeholders (especially their clients). In the second stage, we wanted to select and engage leaders and create consultation groups that would help propose changes and development directions for our facili-

ties in a participatory formula. We wanted the participants of the project to become, in a way, spokespeople for their communities – they were to be supported in this by training in civic activity and self-advocacy. The final stage of this part of the project was to be joint testing and implementation of the proposed changes.



The shops and their clients

In order to better place ourselves at the starting point and get to know the perspective of people who use social shops on a daily basis, we conducted evaluation activities. Clients could complete anonymous surveys and take part in interviews. The respondents were mainly people who had at least several months of contact with social shops, thanks to which they had a broader perspective on how these institutions respond to their needs.

What is important, obtaining fully reliable results of surveys and interviews was hindered by the fact that during the research period there was an outbreak of war in Ukraine and the related refugee crisis. Uncertainty related to the exceptional situation certainly influenced the answers given.

In both surveys and interviews, we asked about the impressions and feelings of using the shops (including the memory of the first visit), opinions on the assortment, service and general atmosphere in social shops. We also encouraged the respondents to share their expectations and ideas

on what other needs could be met by the facilities.

In the surveys and interviews conducted in social shops in Gdynia, the most frequent reflection was that the shops were a significant help in the first months after arriving in a new country, and after stabilizing the life situation, they provide additional support and help to improve the household budget (most of the participants of the study were people with migration experience). It also turned out to be symptomatic that the respondents perceive shops as low-formalized places where one can choose food and talk, and not as an element of a wider social welfare system. The responses often pointed to the need to enable more frequent use of stores, as well as the fact that their spaces need refreshing and minor repairs.

A slightly different picture was drawn by the results of surveys and interviews conducted with customers of a social shop in Gdańsk. In this case, the respondents definitely more often pointed out that the food they choose in the facility is the basis of their nutrition and has a significant

impact on their daily life. Clients indicated the need to increase the number of available referrals (the limit set by the municipal social welfare institution is three referrals per year). They pointed out that they perceived the shop as part of the social welfare system, although at the same time it was a less formalized face of institutional support.

There were also many similarities and common threads in the responses of customers from all three shops. They include the need to express gratitude for the help received in the social shops. Most of the respondents also emphasized the role of shops' animators as first contact persons and guardians of the "good spirit" of these places. Also, the range of products was considered by the majority of customers to be sufficient

and suitable for their nutritional needs.

What seems quite significant, few people expressed the expectation that social shops would additionally fulfill other functions, e.g. educational or integration. Comments on the fact that in the shops you can gain new knowledge (e.g. on diet or available social benefits) or exchange information appeared rather in the context of conversations with animators, volunteers or other customers. This highlighted the need to focus on offering face-to-face contact and individual support rather than group-oriented activities (e.g. workshops, training, etc.).

Based on surveys and interviews, we created personas of people using social shops in Gdynia and Gdańsk.



Model personas of social shops' clients



GDAŃSK

Woman, 55 years old. She is from Gdańsk. She lives alone. She has health problems that limit her ability to work - she is currently on a disability pension. Her situation is difficult and it is difficult to hope for improvement in the near future.

She found out about the shop from a social worker. In addition to using support in the store, she also receives various social benefits.

She expects the social shop to be a friendly place, where she can get the food she needs most.

GDYNIA

Woman, 35 years old. She is a migrant and has been living in Poland for 2 years. She works below her qualifications, part-time due to the need to look after her children. She lives with her husband and children in a rented apartment in a peripheral district of Gdynia.

She learned about the shop from a friend, also a migrant. Apart from the social shop, she does not use any other support and has not looked for help elsewhere.

She expects social shops to help relieve the household budget and be a place where she can get the most necessary information.



The war

The outbreak of a full-blown war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 forced us to focus on providing humanitarian aid to thousands of refugees who found shelter in Pomerania in the first weeks of March and April. Social shops naturally became points of first contact for people fleeing war. The centers in Gdynia were especially crowded. Already the majority of their clients were migrants from Ukraine. Since the end of February they were joined by family members, friends and acquaintances fleeing Ukraine.

We wanted the stores to help refugees, but also to maintain support for existing customers. Adapting to the new conditions required extending the operating hours of social shops and working on Saturdays. At the same time, the animators and volunteers in the stores not only had to deal with a large number of new customers, but also take care of the traumas brought by the refugees.

As a result, from March to December 2022, about 6,000 refugees used social shops in Gdynia and Gdańsk, receiving almost 70 tons of products. Our shops quite naturally also be-

We listen and try to tune in. To whom "pazhalsta" and "spasiba", to whom "bud'laska" and "dyakuyu". We know these words, because for a long time foreigners have been using the help of social shops at the beginning of their new, immigrant reality. It was before the war.

Our new words are "stamp", "certificate", "border guard", "diapers", "hotline" and "information point". We often have volunteers from Ukraine with us. Belarussian women, who themselves fled to Poland not so long ago, also offer help. I am taking their phone numbers because it is specialist psychological help. Such contacts are now worth its weight in gold, platinum and diamonds.

Małgorzata Bierejszyk, animator
in social shops in Gdynia

came places where, apart from food, one could receive necessary information – not only from humanitarian organizations or local authorities, but also from volunteers and even customers themselves, who, thanks to their greater "seniority", shared their experience with newly arrived and took the role of guides through the new reality.

The need to support a large number of people in need meant that other facilities operating along the model of social shops we developed be-

gan to be established also at community spots or in shopping malls. However, mainly non-food products were available there (e.g. household chemicals, sanitary articles, clothes, basic appliances). What is important about such facilities, from the very beginning, the assumption was that their operation was limited in time, and access to support was limited by means of various tools (e.g. databases, the specially issued "Gdańsk helps Ukraine" card, etc.)

We knew that the huge challenge posed by the war in Ukraine required a flexible approach to the "Social shops open to everyone" project. For a long time we have been debating about including refugees in planned participatory processes. Ultimately, however, we decided to give ourselves time until the situation nor-

The image that will remain in me is a Soviet ID card. It was the only document an old lady who came from Ukraine with her family had. She brought it with her to Poland. Apparently, she didn't think she'd ever need another document.

Małgorzata Bierejszyk, animator
in social shops in Gdynia

malizes a bit and return to work with a group of previous clients. This also turned out to be difficult, because the economic crisis caused by the effects of the war resulted in anxiety and fear. Deterioration of the financial situation - especially in the case of people who have been at risk of social exclusion and poverty for many years - is not conducive to taking additional actions. The natural reaction is therefore to focus on meeting basic needs.



Meetings and consultations

Launching the project we planned for each shop to have its own consulting group and be subject to a separate process. However, during conversations with clients from Gdynia, it turned out that they treat the two local outlets interchangeably. That is why we invited our Gdynia stakeholders to join forces and think about the local stores as a whole.

During the first few months of the project, the atmosphere around the social shops, as well as the situation of customers, underwent rapid changes. Organizing regular consultation meetings with people involved in the project turned out to be very difficult. What occurred to be particularly important, customers of social shops

I have three children and this help is very noticeable. We no longer have to buy something much needed in the store. Even if there's only vegetables here and no meat, at least we don't have to buy them.

A client of a social shop in Gdynia

were afraid of meeting representatives of social welfare centers, which they considered a stressful confrontation. Therefore, we decided to replace the “official” meetings with a looser form of short conversations in subgroups or talks with individual active stakeholders. The information obtained in this way allowed us to plan the next stages of action.



My first visit? It was nice, but also a bit strange because I never got anything from anyone for free in my home country. And when I got something in a foreign country, just like that, for free, it was a strange new feeling.

A client of a social shop in Gdynia

In March 2023, we organized meetings summarizing our activities so far. We invited various groups of stakeholders to the conversation: social shop animators, volunteers, representatives of the local community (i.e. people living in the neighborhood of social shops), as well as social workers and, perhaps most importantly, the shops' clients.

Participants of the meetings clearly defined their needs regarding the role of social shops. Both in Gdynia and Gdańsk, all stakeholders unanimously emphasized that for them the main role of the social shop is food aid. At the same time, they mentioned that naturally, a social shop becomes a place of integration, exchange of information and undertaking various types of activities. In addition to receiving food, the customers of the social shops expected that in the social shop they would also be able to receive advice and suggestions on further steps in solving their problems.

Social workers and shop animators pointed out that the demographic cross-section of customers of social shops is changing. In Gdynia, where shops initially provided mainly support for migrants, Polish citizens appear more and more often, and they are not only seniors, but also young families with children. In turn, in the Gdańsk shop, which was mainly intended for people with referrals from the Municipal Family Support Centre, an influx of refugees has been noticeable.

An important conclusion was also that the current channels of communication about social shops, their role and everyday help were insufficient – they did not take into account digitally excluded people, especially seniors. Information about social shops was largely spread based on direct contacts between interested people. This way of exchanging information about shops raises two problems: firstly, it excludes people in whose environment there is no one who has used or heard about a social shop; secondly, it leads to frequent misconceptions about how the shops operate and how to receive help. This is not conducive to building relationships and openness, because social shops, contrary to the idea that guides them, can then be treated as facilities reserved for insiders.

Self-advocacy and activism

Preliminary research and the first consultation meetings revealed the need to diversify the training levels and the topics addressed. In Gdańsk, people participating in the workshops were well acquainted with the city and needed specific, often expert advice. In Gdynia, it turned out to be necessary to start with mapping the space, as among the participants there were several people with migration experience.

It was also important that the workshops were held in public places where social activities are carried out on a daily basis. Therefore, in Gdańsk, the training took place in the

Active Resident Club, just a 5-minute walk from the social shop. In Gdynia, the workshop space was lent to us by Przystań Chyłońska and Urban Lab. Thanks to this, some of the participants could see examples of the facilities for social activities that their cities have at their disposal.

During the workshops in Gdańsk, people from different worlds met in one room – from this year's high school graduate to a senior, from activists with many years of experience to people just starting their adventure with activism. The trainers Ewa Patyk and Przemysław Kluz, who conducted the training, made sure that



all participants, regardless of their experience, could plan their own activities, find supporters and properly publicize their needs.

The Gdynia trainings conducted by Sylwia Bruna gathered people equally diverse in terms of age and experience. During the first day of the workshop, we talked about what motivates and what discourages people from taking social action. Participants shared information about their experiences in the field of active citizenship. The issue of activist burnout and taking care of one's emotions also turned out to be important. The effect of two workshop sessions were not only very specific ideas for activi-

ties, but also a map of Gdynia created by the participants. It includes places that are conducive to activity in the city and can be a starting point for undertaking new initiatives. Among such points, of course, there were social shops!



How to start your activity?

It's a question worth asking when we feel the need to change our immediate surroundings, when we feel anger or disagreement with the rules or have a sense of injustice. We can participate in manifestations, protests, vote in elections, create non-governmental organizations, become a volunteer. These are activities in which not everyone will feel equally comfortable, and yet civic activity is necessary to create a good place to live.

Civic activity means participation in cultural events, participation in the social, economic and political life of the state and the local community, being an active part of the entire community. It is nothing more than conscious, voluntary action in all these areas of everyday life.

The construction of accessible toilets on the playground, activities enabling neighbors to get to know each other and spend time together, or the construction of a sports complex – those were some of the ideas that emerged during our two-day workshops. We worked in a very diverse group – social activists, seniors, employees of public institutions, volunteers. Meeting together allowed us to broaden our own perspectives. We

talked and talked about civic activity, motivation to act and taking initiatives in which we are self-advocates – how our own experiences can have an impact on real changes. The ideas were created in response to the deficiencies that we see in our neighborhood – in the stairwell, yard, district. These are actions that make us feel that we are part of a larger community, actions that can bring true social change.

Change often starts with one person, with a single voice, with us. What are we waiting for?

Sylwia Bruna

Workshop trainer, cultural anthropologist, urban researcher, social and cultural animator. She is the co-founder of the anthropological association Pracownia Inicjatyw Społecznych DYM. The areas of her exploration and inspiration are public space (including the non-physical one), everyday practices and locality in the city.



YLWA

Pomoz
i kup pro

- czy
- za

„system

- /brak sp
- /ngoro
- /praca w
- „miękkich

Activities and initiatives

The focus on the human side of social stores led us to notice how many initiatives were taken by stakeholders during the project. Social

shops have become the axis, but also the subjects of such activities. Here are a few of them.

From a client to a volunteer

Although there already had been a few cases of people who used the support of social shops returned as volunteers after regaining stability in life, during the implementation of the project we observed a new, specific process. People who were just starting to use the shops began to play a supporting role on their own initiative. This was especially the case with refugees from Ukraine. One of the clients, after choosing the products she needed, simply stayed until the end of the day, acting as a trans-

lator. During subsequent workdays, she simply came earlier and supported the animator in current duties. She was very happy when we asked her to sign a volunteer agreement - for her it was both a signal of appreciation and the first "independent work" she undertook in a new country. The experience gained in helping in the social shop later enabled her to find a stable source of income.

What is the conclusion?

1. For migrants and refugees, the social shop plays an anchoring role and supports the process of settling in a new place.
2. Strengthening individual initiatives (from small acts of help to regular volunteering) allows to restore self-confidence and increases independence of people at risk of social exclusion.
3. Helping in the social shop is a good way of regaining a sense of agency and expressing gratitude for the received support.

Unofficial givebox

Almost from the beginning of the social shops, the customers and neighbors have been asking about the possibility of bringing unnecessary clothes, toys or household appliances to stores - with the intention of handing them over to other people in need. For a long time, we did not allow such activities, e.g. due to sanitary regulations and fear of mess. However, during the implementation of the "Social shops for everyone" project, we saw the value in such a bottom-up initiative and decided to make room for it.

In each of the three stores, volunteers took care of accepting, sorting and handing over the brought non-food gifts. We tried to ensure that the

giveboxes functioning as part of social stores correspond to the current demand. If any of the customers reported that they needed i.e. clothes for a newborn or kitchen appliances, the volunteers, on the occasion of conversations with people visiting the store, informed that we were looking for such articles. On the other hand, if someone donated products to the shop, people interested in accepting them were searched for on an ongoing basis. Thanks to this, it was possible to avoid clutter and meet specific, individual needs.

What is the conclusion?

1. The needs of customers were heard, which also gave the stakeholders a sense of influence on the space of social shops.
2. Acceptance of the exchange of items allowed for the restoration of the sense of agency and "taking care of gratitude".
3. Strengthening the sense of agency and building a social climate for sharing stimulates building relationships and promotes the mission of food banks.

Local signature collection point

The Nowy Port district of Gdańsk, where a social shop has been operating since 2019, has been the subject of revitalization for years. Right next to the residential part, there are port areas where transshipments of coal and fuel substances are made. At the end of 2022, unsecured heaps of coal and fine dust caused dusting - pollutants settle in the district and affect the health and quality of life of residents. One of the volunteers of the social shop in Nowy Port (and at the same time a resident of the district) took part in a training on self-

advocacy and social activity. She joined an initiative group demanding a solution to the problem and intervention of the city authorities. For this purpose, together, with the help of lawyers, they wrote a petition to the authorities. Signatures for the document were collected, among others, in the social shop. People living in the district had the opportunity to express their support for the protest, and after submitting a petition to the city council, they regularly visited the shop to find out about the progress of the case.

What is the conclusion?

1. The shop was recognized as an important meeting place on the map of the district.
2. The shop presents itself as a place where one can take various initiatives and activities for the common good.
3. Neighbors visit the shop not only for help, but to ask about developments in their common cause. Thanks to this, a community is built around the institution, based not on the exchange of goods, but on common goals and needs.

Taking care of the common space

Inna works in the construction industry on a daily basis, and for several years she has been a volunteer in a social shop in Gdynia. She noticed that in the spring and summer of 2022, when we were intensively handing out food to refugees, one of the walls of the store became very dirty. Inna came up with the idea of a ma-

keover and renovating the wall - she organized the necessary tools and materials, and additionally decorated the space with special patterns from stencils. On a day when the shop was open in the afternoon, she came in the morning and painted everything herself. A changed, aesthetic space was waiting for customers that day.

What is the conclusion?

1. The shop is a common place that should be taken care of. Taking care of its space together strengthens the sense of co-responsibility for it.
2. A problem has been addressed that is not a priority (unattractive space does not affect the efficiency of assistance), but nonetheless significantly improves the quality of functioning in the store and the atmosphere between stakeholders.
3. Taking care of the space allows you to better accept a difficult situation, which for many people can be stigmatizing and embarrassing.



RATUSZ

Marzec 2023 Kwiecień 2023

P	W	Ś	C	P	S	N	P	W	Ś	C	P	S	N
27	28	1	2	3	4	5	27	28	29	30	31	1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31	1	2	24	25	26	27	28	29	30



Local newsboard

Opening the shops to contact with neighbors and residents of their districts naturally resulted in new functionality of the outlets. People who do not need help have noticed that the shop window can function as a newsboard. Information from local NGOs and initiative groups began to appear on it spontaneously. Curren-

tly, the information primarily concern various types of assistance services and support offers, including "A Heart For A Heart" - an action by one of the residents of Nowy Port, who, on her own initiative, from time to time cooks dinners for those in need and hands them out in the center of the district.

What is the conclusion?

1. The space of the social shop - both internal and external - belongs to the local community and should serve it.
2. Inviting the inhabitants of the district to use the space of the store allows to broaden its image of a place intended only for serving food.
3. Sharing information encourages establishing and maintaining relationships between people - asking for details, sharing impressions and opinions.

Conclusions

After almost 6 years since establishing the first social shop, the outlets initiated by us became co-owned by their clients. It is primarily them who determine the role that the shops should play. The possibility of meeting, close contact with stakeholders and looking at our activities from a different perspective turned out to be of great value. Without devoting time to conversations and observation, we would probably start creating multi-functional spaces in the shops with a workshop offer - after all, this is what initiating civic activity looks like... Reality verified our initial assumptions. It turned out that in surveys and interviews our interlocutors often say what they think we would like to he-

ar. Only long-term contact and joint work bring the truth about expectations and needs.

For social shops to truly become social, there is no need for top-down animation, but giving way to the initiative of customers, neighbors and other stakeholders is essential. The natural "life cycle" of these facilities means that after the initial mistrust and the stage of "sniffing out" the new place, a network of contacts is spontaneously created around the social shops. What is crucial is openness to other people's ideas, while respecting the original role of the shops, which is to provide food aid. In the course of the project, we saw that shops are places where one can col-



lect signatures for a petition, exchange important information, run a give-box, and finally just talk, receive advice, confide their secrets. The role of the food bank, animators and volunteers is not to be leaders, but to facilitate activities - to simply give space for things to happen.

Self-advocacy and civic activity in social shops are born gradually. The implementation of the project "Social shops open to everyone" was an important stimulus that helped us to see the stages of this process. The key condition here is building appropriate relationships. Animators running social shops must inspire trust, understand customer problems, and at the same time have authority, thanks to which they will be able to maintain order and organize a visit to the store properly. Volunteers also play a significant role - ideally if they come from the local store environment or from the group to which the shops are addressed (e.g. as in the case of facilities in Gdynia, visited mainly by migrants). A trigger in the form of an active volunteer is enough to turn a social shop into a contact and information point for local activity. The role of the food bank as the shops' operator is at most to enable the further development of volunteers so that they can fulfill their role as

catalysts of good relations even better.

An unnoticed need of shops' clients was to express gratitude for the support they received. The possibility of giving back turned out to be a very important factor building a sense of dignity and agency of people using food aid. An example of the need to express gratitude was when one of the clients would bring a jar of homemade soup for the animator with every visit. Another person appeared from time to time with a box of chocolates. Such activities normalize relations between people using help and people who provide it. At the same time, gratitude is a very good starting point to encourage shops' stakeholders to cooperate. For the food bank, it is also necessary to find appropriate forms of expressing gratitude that can be offered to clients, such as volunteering, donating 1.5% of tax, sharing knowledge or encouraging others to seek support in a social shop.

The publication was created as part of the project "Social Shops Open To Everyone", financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway from the EEA Funds under the Active Citizens—Regional Fund Programme.

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