



‘LONE OR SELF-RELIANT PARENTS ON THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET’
Stakeholder Forum, RESTART, Academy of IT, Conference room,
Łódź, 12.05.2011, (11-13.00)

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

| Name. Surname | Organisations. Activity, |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Agnieszka Borowicz | <i>Psychologist, expert</i> in the current project SuperMom (www.supermom-kick-off.eu), which is realized in Academy of IT. Her specialization is psychotherapy for the elderly. She works with lone parents and parents who want to develop their parenting skills as well as with long-term unemployed and disabled people, with people 50+, youngsters and children. She offers group trainings on: self-motivation, personal development, stimulation and development of personal abilities |
| 3. Monika Kowalska | She works in private university in Lodz. <i>As a volunteer</i> Monika supports the activity of The Association for Musical and Theatrical Activation of Disabled People (organization of rehabilitation - sailor camps, supporting lone parents). In the social system project of Development Support Centre as a mentor she takes part in the process of disfavored youth becoming independent |
| 5. Mirosława Gruchala | <i>Lone mother</i> with disabled daughter; she is a member of The Polish Disabled Sailors’ Association and Łódź Association of Persons with Motor Disabilities |
| 6. Aleksandra Jurasz | <i>Lone mother</i> with disabled son (after car accident); she is a member of The Polish Disabled Sailors’ Association and Łódź Association of Persons with Motor Disabilities and also The Association for Musical and Theatrical Activation of Disabled People |
| 7. Krystyna Osmulska | <i>Economist; retired;</i> she works as a volunteer and supervises children activities in the community centre run by nuns.. |
| 8. Elżbieta Strzelecka | Expert in the RESTART project (Academy of IT). <i>Coachem ICC (life coaching, jobcoaching), trainer, academic teacher</i> Among others she runs trainings on motivation, entrepreneurship, interpersonal communication, personal development, stimulation and development of personal abilities. She has over 20-year experience in personal counseling and job intermediation. |
| 9. Małgorzata Wlazlak | Social educator and trainer. She works in The “Social Support” Association „I -YOU- WE” in Lodz . Her area of activity- social economy. Creator and co-ordinator of system project in Municipal Social Care Centre in Lodz (2008). She has realized social projects since 2007. As the regional expert and volunteer in The „Spring” Association’s Regional Academy of the Future (Kraków) she helps in work with children. |
| 10. Bogumiła Szukalska | Psychologist; she has experience in work with pathological families (including lone parents) |
| 11. Marek Trębala | Lawyer, he is a member of The Polish Disabled Sailors’ Association and Łódź Association of Persons with Motor Disabilities , he deals with the problems of disabled people |
| 12. Anna Ziemecka - Poteraj | Head International Projects Unit; WSINF-Wyższa Szkoła Informatyki (The Academy of IT) |

The participants of the Forum were informed about the aims of RESTART project in advance to be able to form their own opinions whether single mothers or fathers are rather ‘lone’ or ‘independent’ parents. *Can they influence their lives and the situation of their families?* The discussion helped to find answers to questions presented below.



Photo: E. Strzelecka

What is the experience of the project participants in the realization of projects aimed at lone parents or their children?

Agnieszka thinks that the family is very important, even the little one. It is vital to keep relations parents-children. In the case of projects aimed at children not only help for children but for their parents as well is important to enable them to help themselves. Her opinion is that what women need is individual approach.

Krystyna is sure that the process of helping lone parents should start with the activities aimed at helping their children.

Bogumiła has experience in work with pathological families. It's difficult to work with this group because of their demanding attitude so it's not easy to suggest any kind of cooperation. What really motivates them to take part in the project are free meals. What is essential in work with this group is learning about their social and cultural conditions and their needs. In projects aimed only at children, parents are not active at all.

Malgorzata, having experience from her work for Municipal Social Care Centre, pointed out that parents who permanently receive social help tend to become less independent. As some of them are addicts and they refuse to undergo therapy, the assistance is taken away from them.

Can lone parents feel excluded from local community? What are their needs?

The participants underline the fact that **lone parents very often don't have any access to information about EU projects** as they have no idea which websites to look for, some of them don't have computers or, if they have, skills to use them. Some institutions such as job centers refuse to put up informational notices from colleges, universities, training or counseling companies while lone parents very often come to this institutions and could easily learn about the projects there.

Marek, Aleksandra, Monika: Another form of specific exclusion is **difficult access to local transport** for parents with disabled children on wheelchairs as only few lines run buses with facilities for them. It limits to a great extent their possibilities to participate in many educational, cultural or social events. What's more sometimes bus drivers show no interest to help them get on the bus. These issues are often reported to local authorities by the disabled, but unfortunately they are not dealt with

in a satisfactory way. The authorities have no possibility to finance free transport for people on wheelchairs.

Architectural barriers /no special driveways to buildings, lack of lifts/ make it extremely difficult for people on wheelchairs and their parents to see the doctor / there are cases where there is just one health centre in the city with suitable facilities/, to attend schools, visit offices, vote during elections.

What projects supporting lone parents are realized in Łódź?

Malgorzata prepared for the participants a list of companies giving donations of up to 5000 euro on the base of 6.2 PO KL, including those for women 45+, 50+, women returning to work after childbirth and maternity leave, women entering labour market for the first time, long-term unemployed women (from 12 to 24 months), disabled women and those dismissed from work through no fault of their own within six months before entering the project. Some of the projects are aimed both at men and women. Here are some examples:

Enterprise is a woman ó HRP Czernecka, Jaszczy ski // ód /

Opportunity for business ó WSFiL (a private University in/ ód)

Your business your chance ó Local Democracy Development Foundation (/ ód)

Brilliant business – Foundation Incubator

Business for women ó enterprise and self-employment ó Commerce Chamber in/ ód

My own way ó Job Center in Piotrków Trybunalski

Malgorzata mentioned the project concerning setting up social cooperatives aimed at the unemployed, disabled and addicts. She told about establishing such cooperative by lone mothers.

Agnieszka presented SuperMom project, which is realized in the Academy of IT. The aim is to support the labour market integration of unemployed single parents. The project is funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Program da Vinci. She stressed the fact that single parents are an increasing family structure in the EU and they belong to the population group with the highest risk of poverty and hence they are strongly threatened by social exclusion. The project offers its beneficiaries free workshop including:

- Empowerment: competence analysis and confidence building in combination with vocational orientation, personal and social skills training
- Vocational training in media: theoretical and practical information about different film related professions in form of workshops, information about job opportunities and details about further education
- Practical implementation

What legal regulations should be introduced to create the same work and life conditions for lone parents as for full families?

Aleksandra is a mother of a grown-up, disabled and working son. She presented the problem of legal regulations connected with employing disabled people namely the loss of social pension when her son earns even a little more than it is allowed in case of a disabled person (less than average salary in the country). She wanted to know whether other countries participating in the project have similar regulations. The participants argue that because of this kind of regulations disabled people don't have comparable conditions.

What handicaps in educational system do lone parents come across? What are the possibilities of childcare (at school, after school)? What are the possibilities of creating support groups for parents?

Aleksandra told about a mother living in a very poor neighborhood. Her child very often doesn't go to school because she works at home and sometimes she simply has no time to take her child to school because of her work. She cannot count on her neighbours to help her.

Bogumila gave a positive example. Lone mothers created a kind of network ó they successively take care of their children and spend weekends with them.

Krystyna works as a volunteer in the community center run by nuns. The center was created for children from pathological families. Mostly children from grades 1-3 come to the centre but, when

the weather is bad, also older children come as well as those who don't want to spend time with their drunk parents. They are helped with their homework, take part in art activities, play with other children and are given a free meal which in many cases is for them the second and at the same time the last one in the day (at about 5.30 p.m.). The centre also organizes holidays for children.

Aleksandra stressed the fact that after her son had an accident she received help from school till he finished secondary school. A teacher used to come to her house but it was definitely not enough and Aleksandra had to teach her son as well. Unfortunately she couldn't get even this kind of help in further education of her son.

What is the situation of lone parents in Łódź?

The participants claim that most lone parents are rather independent. They have to be like that as a lot of institutions which should help them is not able to do it. They must literary fight for satisfying their needs.

What is the quality of life in Łódź? What are the living conditions of lone parents?

The participants assessed the quality of life in Łódź from the point of view of lone parents, including those with disabled children. They suggested point scale from 1 (minimum) to 6 (maximum). Below there are the results (arithmetic mean)

- Living conditions 4.1
- Public transport 2
- Education 4
- Job access 2.2
- Access to health service 2

At the end all participants received a list with useful contacts. The next meeting of the Forum was set on autumn.