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# On Relations between Government and Non-profits: The Case of Slovakia

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## Abstract

In this chapter, we look at non-profits and civil society as a transit zone for solidarity acts, social innovations and initiatives to influence social policy by means of co-creation and collaboration with government (public sector organisations). The aim is to present collaboration practices between public sector organisations, non-governmental organisation, social economy organisations and citizens, known as co-creation, with a focus on drivers and barriers of this collaboration in Slovakia. The chapter focuses on channelling solidarity produced by non-profits into social policy through co-creation. Introducing the solidarity economy approach allows us to evaluate the relationships between the government sector and non-profit organisations from a broader societal perspective including both economic and democratic dimensions.

**Keywords:** public sector, non-profits, NGOs, civil society, social economy, solidarity economy

## 1. Introduction

This chapter investigates how far the third sector and social economy act as a transit zone for solidarity acts, social innovations and initiatives to impact social policy. It focuses on forms of co-creation of welfare services, on gaining voice in public discourse to influence public policy practices and on the barriers and drivers for channelling grassroots initiatives and ideas into political practice.

This part of the chapter provides an overview of the key concepts and literature on the third sector, social innovation and co-creation, outlining the development of the research field by mirroring on the sphere of citizen action—social movements, civil society, third sector and social economy organisations—situated between the classical spheres of market and state.

Let us start with a question: Which came first, the social economy or the third sector? Proponents of the social economy argue that the terms ‘civil society’ and ‘third sector’ are just names for the social economy in the countries of Eastern Europe, where the civil society developed after the fall of communism. Proponents of the third sector argue the opposite that the social economy only appropriates what the third sector built a long time ago: active citizenship reflected into founding civic associations.

Cohen [1] stated that after the demise of state socialism in Eastern Europe, in which citizen movements played an important role, the concept of civil society became increasingly related to changes in institutional politics to address a perceived crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy and failing financial institutions. Apparently, neither the centralised state nor the magic of the marketplace can offer effective, liberal and democratic solutions to the problems of 'post-industrial' civil societies in the context of globalisation, introducing an economic dimension to civil society that finds expression in the emerging social economy.

Defourny [2] offers a distinction of three types of established social economy organisations: cooperative-style enterprises that go back to the mid-nineteenth century (working in agriculture, saving and credit, insurance and housing); mutual, based in the third sector or as part of the welfare state, working at community level; and advocacy associations offering services to members and society. While some of the old cooperatives, that is, in agriculture, have become more like conventional private businesses [3], the new social economy comprises 'new service cooperatives, voluntary organisations and social enterprises' [4], such as the British Community Interest Companies [5], social cooperatives in Italy [6], entrepreneurial spin-offs of traditional third sector organisations producing social services or concerned and responsible groups of citizens who want to make a difference [7].

The development of the social economy is unquestionably influenced by the development of the third sector that focuses on the provision of public services, including social services. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) earned their position in the economy of every developed country as social innovators and important actors in the social economy. Many social economy subjects take the legal form of civic associations or public benefit organisations. Third sector organisations can be seen in a certain light as social economy organisations, especially when taking into account, all the similarities between these two types of organisations summarised in **Table 1**.

To answer the question from the beginning, based on the above mentioned, we believe that third sector came first. The shift of third sector organisations towards the use of market resources, first observed in Europe during the 1990s as a means to respond to social deficits not addressed by social services and growing funding constraints, led to a re-orientation in third sector research towards notions of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship [7].

In sum, conceptualisations of the third sector vary across Europe and are connected to deeper cultural traditions. They focus on different features such as charitable purpose, non-profit distribution, expressions of social solidarity, or civic values such as public participation. Nevertheless, all of these potential manifestations of the third sector share certain common attributes: they are all institutionally separate from government, they share a high degree of self-governance, and they have a social mission that is pursued on a voluntary basis. Based on this common core, Salamon and Sokolowski [9] recently proposed a definition of the third sector that includes both non-profit institutions and some social economy organisations that: (i) pursue a legally binding social mission; (ii) operate under an 'asset lock'; (iii) are prohibited from distributing more than 50% of profits; and (iv) include at least 30% of individuals with specified special needs among its employees or beneficiaries. The last two requirements have been criticised as too high and difficult to achieve even for work integration social enterprises who employ people otherwise excluded from the labour market. Appreciating that the combined public purpose dimension and limited profit distribution constraint is a way to broaden a third sector conceptualisation strictly based on non-profit institutions, Defourny and Nyssens [10] argue that it still needs further research to better understand the great diversity within the cooperative and social enterprise.

Sector characteristic	Social economy/social enterprises (SEs)	Third sector/NGOs
Goal	Fulfilment of social mission—To serve a local community or specific groups of citizens	Fulfilment of organisation's mission—To provide social benefits
Institutions	A wide variety of organisational forms, including public benefit organisations, cooperative organisations, joint stock companies and limited liability companies	Formalised and institutionalised structures, legal form given by law, usually associations and public benefit organisations, but also foundations and non-profit funds
Autonomy	Social enterprises are usually created and managed by a group of people on the basis of an autonomous business plan	NGOs are not part of the public administration: they are institutionally separated from the state and have political independence
Non-distribution constraint	Limited distribution of profit to shareholders or employees and the obligation to reinvest the profit (or a substantial part of the profit) to the social objectives of the enterprise	NGOs are not founded to generate profit to be shared among the owners or managers, and any profits are fully returned to the organisation and used in accordance with its statutes
Voluntarism	A combination of volunteers and paid staff; a minimum level of paid work	Voluntary participation in activities of the NGOs; a high proportion of volunteering
Civic initiatives	Typically, the result of collective dynamics involving citizens or members of groups sharing a common goal or community need	Established by citizens for the purpose of achieving a mutual or generally useful purpose/benefit
Entrepreneurial/business activity	Business is a main activity; goods and services are produced, i.e. they enter the market and offer their production for sale	Funded under redistribution mechanisms; entrepreneurship is seen as a side activity
Funding	Financial sustainability depends on the performance of members and staff and their efforts to ensure adequate resources; activities are also funded through financial support mechanisms from public and private sources; multisource funding is used	Multisource funding is a principle; this may be a combination of public (government) sources, private and individual sources, grants, membership fees, income from self-financing and business activities
Management	Participatory governance, decision-making involves all stakeholders	Self-governance; they manage themselves through established organisational structures; the main body is usually a general assembly

*Source: Vaceková and Murray Svidroňová [8].*

**Table 1.**  
*Comparison of social economy and third sector characteristics.*

The third and social economy sectors are under stress. Scholars in the field argue, reflected in policy changes, that we have reached a juncture, where societies have to choose between a greater role for civil society, the third sector and the social economy

as providers of welfare, on the one hand, or unregulated privatisation, on the other [11]. In addition to that, Hulgård [12] detects a trend that steadily changed civil society from being a category related to political philosophy, the enhancement of citizenship and the possibility of democratic governance to a question of training business leaders to better identify and serve the markets at the bottom of the pyramid.

If political institutions are supportive of civil society, non-profit non-governmental organisations show the ability of a society to organise itself. Scholars agree that a lively non-profit non-governmental landscape contributes to institutional diversity and can have a positive impact on innovations in civil society [13]. Many European governments are seeking new ways to involve citizens and the third sector in the provision and governance of publicly financed welfare services [11].

Despite social enterprise and social entrepreneurship being a young field of academic research, which started in the 1990s with the observation of work integration enterprises, it has already produced a multitude of conceptual, analytical and comparative work [11, 14–16]. Scholars in economics and business studies have been very effective at explaining the economic rationale behind the emergence of social enterprises [17, 18] and the characteristics, dynamics and strategies deployed by these organisations in an uncertain and resource-limited environment [19, 20]. The 2008 financial and economic crisis and the turn towards austerity triggered a more financial approach, illustrated by the vast body of literature currently under development on ‘social’ and ‘impact investment’ [21].

## **2. Moving towards a solidarity economy**

Researchers on social and solidarity economy agree that the market-state dualism (state vs. market as expressed in liberalism vs. state socialism) inherited from the twentieth century is outdated [22]. Organisations in a solidarity economy are envisaged from the outset as voluntarily engaged in forms of public action for the common good. The participatory governance dimension takes centre stage in a conceptualisation of the social economy that highlights a more organic notion of solidarity rooted in pluralist civil society and social movements, coupling it with economic understandings of citizen initiatives and third sector.

The public space as a sphere of democracy expressed in citizen and civil society action is combined with a pluralist notion of economy: market economy, non-market economy and non-monetary economy, the latter two describing:

1. redistribution of produced goods and services by foundations or public institutions as part of the welfare state, providing citizens with individual rights, subject to democratic control;
2. redistribution of goods based on reciprocity, turning vulnerable people into co-producers and co-owners [22, 23].

Such a characterisation of solidarity economy is theoretically influenced by Karl Polanyi and his notion of reciprocity inherent to the market, and empirically inspired by the emancipatory movements in Latin America [24].

Polanyi [25] acknowledged the profit motive of capitalist economy but referred to a ‘fictitious commodification’ of labour, social and private spheres by drawing attention to economic practices, such as redistribution, reciprocity and household administration, safeguarded by a double movement of political elites and commercial interests on the one hand, and cross-class social movements leading to understand that it needs regulation in order to save society on the other. Thus, the



market becomes culturally and politically embedded, rather than autonomous and dominating political and private spheres, manifesting itself in the structure of government redistribution, but also in social rights and legislative and regulatory mechanisms, such as collective bargaining [26].

Nowadays, Fraser [27] argues that we must add a critique of domination to Polanyi's structural critique of fictitious commodification, and since today, it also affects the sphere of social reproduction, site of giving birth to and raising children, caring for family members and maintaining households, which is increasingly outsourced to low-paid help. She proposes to think instead of a triple movement that includes civil society, by bringing in the post-war emancipatory movements that rally around status such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or nationality that exposed the suppressive factors of national welfare and social protection and demand to find a new synthesis between social protection and marketisation. This infrastructure of a solidarity economy is aware that a wage could serve as a resource against domination premised on status ... they claimed the freedom of contract not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to emancipation, converting the social dimension into economic leverage or specific productive strength.

While Fraser [27] herself points out the possible detrimental effects of emancipation on the fabric of existing solidarities as it may open a path for marketisation that can erode the ethical basis of social protection, she also states that considering the scale at which crisis is experienced today, the welfare state alone cannot protect against the de-commodifying side-effects of competition, international markets and currencies without political and social integration. Hence, solidarity economy can be regarded as complementary of third sector and social economy, existing next to the for-profit market.

Empirical evidence from Latin America shows that apart from rare exceptions, solidarity enterprises do not replace existing forms of popular economy. Their main purpose is to reorganise the productive, material and human factors of the popular economy through progressive changes [24]. This requires certain structural conditions, namely the social and political recognition of the relevance of claims, a favourable regime and favourable legislation [11, 15]. Indeed, the concept has gained the attention of policy makers in a number of countries and at EU level, albeit still lacking supportive policies at national levels [28].

Solidarity economy identifies scope for the de-commodification of individuals due to its civil society base and focus on collective governance, self-organised production and democratic reciprocity that turns vulnerable people into co-producers and co-owners [23], rather than recipients of philanthropic expressions of solidarity that substitutes for the vocabulary of equality and rights that of public benevolence [24]. Solidarity in these ventures is evident in their members' involvement in day-to-day management and the adoption of equality principles, by placing new actors into work, recognition struggles or discourse of a meaningful life. Similar to the notion of associations as schools for democracy, solidarity encourages broader reciprocity practices, where practical experience in managing the common good lends new value to the notions of justice and public interest.

The notion of democratic solidarity dominant in solidarity economy could be considered an additional conceptual dimension in relation to 'successful acts of solidarity'. Defining solidarity as a morally motivated action arising from the feeling of an agent or a group recognising another individual or person's grief or discomfort, an actor is prone to be solidary with a certain group based on how 'deserving' the actor finds the other person or group in relation to 'control or responsibility, need, identity, attitude (e.g. gratefulness) and reciprocity' that is linked to notions of membership and inclusion that one can identify with [29]. It is generally of an altruistic or philanthropic nature. Laville [23] on the other hand criticises

philanthropic solidarity for bringing a mechanism of social hierarchy and support for the inequality that is built into the social fabric of the community.

The concept of democratic solidarity is built on redistribution to reinforce social cohesion and to redress inequality and an egalitarian understanding of reciprocity as a way to enhance voluntary social relations between free and equal citizens. This relation between redistribution and reciprocity is the foundation of democratic solidarity in which it is not a question of replacing the state with civil society but rather one of combining redistributive solidarity with a more reciprocal version of the latter in order to rebuild society's capacity for self-organisation [23]. Solidarity is produced in such a way that the recipient can become the giver, drawing on Mauss' theory of the gift [30] and focus on social expectations that appear when one person gives and another receives a gift, creating an expectation for the receiver to return a favour. Democratic solidarity aims to allow for the recipient to reciprocate, as to avoid the permanent position of inferiority [23].

Situated within third sector and social and solidarity economy research (but not exclusive to them) are the concepts of social innovation and co-creation of welfare services, moving to the core of our objective to understand the channelling of solidarity practice into social policy in the case of the Slovak Republic.

By co-creation we understand such provision of public services in which citizens are actively involved, the following three types of co-creation can be distinguished [31]: (1) in which citizens act as initiator (co-initiate); (2) in which citizens are invited to co-design (co-design); and (3) in which citizens are 'just' invited to implement public services (instead of public organisations) (co-implement).

Co-creation is a narrowly defined aspect of civil society and third sector activity. Hence, the trend of co-production of social services is less tainted by suspicions that ultimately more scope for citizen participation will effectively make way for a discourse of civic duties linked to being a community member that allows states to withdraw from public welfare, as is the criticism in social economy discourse [32]. Co-creation is more centred on empowerment through participation in a civil society tradition, located in a new public governance approach that is a response to New Public Management of the 1980s and 1990s, where public services were viewed as manufacturing rather than service provision, leading to privatisation, contracting out, systematic performance measurement and benchmarking, turning citizens into consumers rather than users of a service [33] failing to grasp the complexity of today's plural (multiple interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services) and pluralist states (multiple processes inform policy) [34].

### **3. Collaboration practices**

To map the relations between government and non-profits in Slovakia, we used a focus group. This method represents a homogeneous composed group of 6–12 participants discussing in a well-prepared way their ideas, motives and interests about a clearly defined issue chaired by a discussion leader. To guide the discussion, a list with topics was used and the discussion was recorded. Official invitations to participate in the focus group were addressed to 10 people. These included representatives of non-profits, public institutions and municipalities that are promoting solidarity actions, as well as academic experts on solidarity issues. Eight out of 10 people agreed to participate in the focus group (we respect those, who wished to be fully anonymous):

- A university employee—academic expert, female;
- Municipality of Banska Bystrica representative, female;

- NGO 1 from Banska Bystrica—director, female;
- NGO 2 from Banska Bystrica—leader, male (The Civic Association for the Amphitheater);
- NGO 3 from Bratislava—project manager, female;
- NGO 4 from Zvolen—project manager, female (EPIC n.o.);
- Public institution employee, male;
- Participant of community education programme, male.

The selection of case studies followed these criteria:

- there are cases with public organisations, NGOs and citizens involved;
- the selected cases represent four different policy areas (i.e. abandoned public properties, employment, health and education);
- at least, half of the case studies conducted are oriented to the fight against poverty and social exclusion;
- contain an element of third sector collaboration with public institutions, that is, a participant representing a social initiative producing a social service and their contact person at the municipality as the funding partner/co-creator.

The selection of cases was based on the focus group experts' judgment, which might be biased, however, the finding allows us to identify characteristics on government—non-profits relations in Slovakia. The analysed cases of collaboration practices are summarised in **Table 2**.

Since we were interested in collaboration between the non-profits or social economy organisations collaborating with public institutions (i.e. participants producing a social service possibly within the areas of education, health, abandoned properties, employment and their contact person at the municipality as the funding partner/co-producer), we asked about the nature of the collaboration and why this collaboration started to achieve what goal.

The collaboration includes specific short-term projects (education and employment), whereas in the field of health and abandoned properties, there is a long-term collaboration. The values sought from the public institutions' side were mostly about increasing efficiency, providing public services in a better way or using the option that the public service is provided by the NGO (using the activity and willingness of the NGO as an alternative public service provider).

From the NPOs' point of view, the key values guiding their choices for collaboration were: intersectoral cooperation and synergy, open communication and fulfilling the mission of the organisation.

### **3.1 Distribution of roles**

In this part, we asked questions such as: How would you describe the nature of your relationship and the distribution of roles (non-profit partner as initiator, co-designer, co-implementer)? Has there been a change in the nature of your relationship over time (i.e. from hierarchy to equality/reciprocity, or perhaps even the other way around)?



<b>Field</b>	<b>Programme and partners</b>	<b>Overview</b>
Employment	<p>Youth Guarantee on the local level</p> <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPIC, non-profit organisation</li> <li>• Municipality of Zvolen</li> <li>• Municipality of Turku</li> <li>• Network of local NGOs</li> <li>• Local secondary schools and university</li> <li>• Youth</li> </ul>	<p>The aim is to pilot test the good practice of Youth Guarantee (YG) approach from Finland in the environment of one Slovak municipality. The realisation of this objective shall be the starting point for the possible revision of the YG applications in Slovakia towards the local level. By creating a working group from one region, the EPIC organisation has empowered them to create a series of events for NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and several initiatives have started to help NEET at the local level.</p>
Education	<p>School of family finance programme</p> <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local NGOs</li> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Citizens from various communities</li> <li>• the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic</li> </ul>	<p>The School of Family Finance (SFF) is aimed at increasing financial literacy and thus improving the lives of the participants. After completion of the course, the participants are more aware of their personal responsibility for their financial behaviour. Socially disadvantaged citizens, senior citizens, children from orphanages, clients of crisis centres and other groups of citizens have the opportunity to realise how their decisions affect their financial situation. The topics of the seminars are chosen based on the needs and interests of the participants, including topics such as looking for a job, labour issues, taxes, personal and family budget, loans, insurance, consumer protection, basics of investment, etc.</p>
Health	<p>Non-governmental organisation helping people with autism – initiative in cooperation with the municipality of Banska Bystrica</p> <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local NGO</li> <li>• Municipality of Banska Bystrica</li> <li>• Disabled citizens and their families</li> </ul>	<p>The nature of cooperation is a partnership based on the principle of subsidiarity. A local NGO is one of the key actors in the Community Social Services Plan process in the town for the target group of a person with disabilities as well as for the target group of families with children with disabilities. One result is, for example, education for parents who are at home long-term caring for children. This enables parents to once again socialise during the education courses thereby helping to solve the problem of unproductive parents as well as autistic community problems.</p>
Abandoned properties	<p>The civic association for the amphitheatre</p> <p>Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local NGO</li> <li>• Municipality of Banska Bystrica</li> <li>• Citizens</li> <li>• Company</li> </ul>	<p>Public Amphitheatre was once a vibrant cultural place for outdoor cinema and special events. With the arrival of a multiscreen cinema in the local shopping mall, it was abandoned. After the municipality put it on the list of non-usable property, which was only a step away from being demolished, a group of young enthusiasts formed an NGO to save the Amphitheatre. They signed a co-operation memorandum with the municipality, and in cooperation with a private company, they revitalised the Amphitheatre. The main activity of the NGO remains the support of the Amphitheatre in the form of organising a summer movie theatre or other events with the aim of helping the Amphitheatre to become a vibrant cultural and social place, with an emphasis on sustainability, content diversity and preservation of its genius loci.</p>

*Source: own.*

**Table 2.**  
*List of collaboration practices.*

To this question, we obtained various answers. In three cases, the initiator is a non-profit partner (employment, abandoned properties and education), and once (health) the municipality feels the hierarchical relationship but the initiator is the NGO.

In the case of employment, the initiator is the NGO EPIC and the main partner is the municipality of Zvolen (approx. 43,000 inhabitants). Other institutions involved in the project are state/public educational institutions (schools), as well as entrepreneurs and companies—potential employers for young people, or other non-profit organisations dealing with youth work. An important partner in this project is the municipality of Turku in Finland which shares their know-how with Youth Guarantee programme and provides examples of best practices. The programme has managed to form a working group composed of a wide range of actors that are essential in elaborating on or influencing the employment of youth in the region. It aims to change the regional public policy of guarantees for youth. All partners are equal in this initiative.

In the area of education, the initiator is the Children of Slovakia Foundation, motivated by the low financial literacy of people in Slovakia caused by the changes of the financial markets after 1990, in the words of project manager: 'A new system of the functioning of the state came into being prior to which the people had enjoyed "the security" guaranteed by the state and limited financial products offered by one bank; the market changed and the people failed to respond to those market changes, the elderly were unable to adapt and teach the young ones; new banking products appeared along with non-banking sector companies and people were bewildered by the choices, were easily duped and fell prey to fraudsters'. The School of Family Finance is the first community project about financial literacy in Slovakia with accreditation from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Apart from the accreditation, it is hard to talk about any cooperation with the public sector. The project manager visited the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Ministry of Education and the Office for Minorities; however, no one expressed the desire to enter into cooperation, because they would not accept the methodology already developed by experts from the third sector. They displayed an unwillingness to cooperate on the product as they wanted to apply their own methodology. Yet another problem perceived by the project manager was the non-acceptance of the third sector by the government. Thus, the impact on changing public policies is difficult or even impossible at this moment.

In the case of health, the view from the municipality is that the accountability and responsibility are on the town, and therefore, they are at the top of the hierarchy: 'I would characterise the nature of our relationship as that of a common fulfilment of predetermined goals. It is difficult to talk about full equality in terms of the hierarchy of relations, because self-government has roles and competencies defined by law. So, there is a degree of commitment and responsibility towards citizens, to fulfil the roles and tasks. NPOs perform the tasks voluntarily and the degree of responsibility in relation to citizens is of a different nature. The NPOs may be at the top in terms of expertise, it is closer to the community, but in terms of accountability, the town plays a bigger role' (the municipality representative). Also, the NGO feels the responsibility for those public services for the disabled is on the town's shoulders, but they do everything in order to serve their target group: 'We are perceived as both initiator and co-implementer; we have initiated a number of discussions (e.g. education and inclusion of autistic children). The nature of relationships with the town is perceived as a division of tasks according to expertise—we actively seek pathologies in the community and try to work with them, the town creates a platform for solving these problems, that is., by providing grants and subsidies, supporting projects, community development via community

centres, etc. This all helps to integrate the target group into society'. In this case, the municipality is forming the local public policy in the field of social services together with the NGO.

The public spaces issue, specifically the abandoned public amphitheatre, which was on the list of non-usable properties, was also initiated by the NGO. It all started as an informal group of young people who organised the first screening in the amphitheatre in the summer of 2011, and the intention was to draw attention to a place that has its own value. The struggle for the preservation of the amphitheatre has gradually become a key activity for this informal group leading to a series of events: an open call for help, collecting signatures on a petition, art amphitheatre, concerts for the Amphitheatre and Week of Urbanism. This led to the founding of the NGO in 2013. At first, the municipality did not trust the young people, but they signed a co-operation memorandum with the NGO and asked for the concept of what the NGO would like to do with the amphitheatre, including the financial plan in the following three months. After the concept had been delivered, the city leadership changed their minds and began to trust the NGO. The main activity of Civic Association for the Amphitheatre remains the support of the amphitheatre, whether in the form of organising a summer movie theatre or other events. The initiative has no influence on public policy; however, it has inspired two other organisations to approach the municipality to start dealing with other abandoned properties (a former cinema turned into Urban Spot, old city bastion turned into a literary café). This initiative even has an indirect influence on politicians—the amphitheatre has become a symbol of the city, if any of the councillors wanted to 'do' something with the amphitheatre, it would affect the people in the city—the voters.

### **3.2 Drivers and barriers in the collaboration**

To answer the main research question 'What are the drivers and barriers of collaboration', we summarised the responses into **Table 3**.

Some of the drivers and barriers are explained in depth:

- Solutions that do not require a change in legislation or high financial investment, such as the establishment of a commission whose members would be from different sectors and would set the issue to be addressed within a set period - set priorities, plans and timetables for activities, allocate competencies and responsibilities between the individual organisations to avoid duplication, for example, the Youth Guarantee programme formed a working group of various experts from other NGOs, public sector organisations and companies.
- "Playing in your own sandpit"—individualism. If some areas/topics are dealt with by several institutions, they consider each other as competitors and do not want to cooperate for fear that their competitors will steal the know-how.
- Impact on various communities—there are significant changes in the participants' behaviour regarding financial situation, e.g. death of a family member, poor health, loss of employment, unexpected expenses, etc., and they can cope better with these issues.
- Interest and commitment of the civic association in the creation of policies in relation to the citizens they represent.

	Employment	Education	Health	Abandoned properties
Drivers	Connecting the sectors and better understanding between various institutions, companies and organisations	Impact on various communities in different life situations	Interest and commitment of the civic associations	Drive to revive the potential of the place
	Looking for solutions that do not require a change in legislation or high financial investment	Trends from abroad, e.g., European Money Quiz and Global Money Week	Constructive discussion and mutual respect	Self-realisation of several members of the NGO (artists interested in screenings)
	Common will to solve unemployment	Social need—public demand	Expertise	Lack of space for cultural activities—public demand
Barriers	Legislation	Unwillingness of Ministries for deeper cooperation	Limited competences of officials	Mistrust of the municipality in the beginning
	Finance—lack of resources	Finance—lack of resources	Finance—lack of resources	Finance—lack of resources
	Bureaucracy	The time factor (setting the learning cycles from a time perspective)	Hidden prejudices in society towards the disabled	A lease contract for 30 years which can be cancelled any time by the municipality
	Individualism		Lack of a qualified workforce	

Source: own.

**Table 3.**  
*Drivers and barriers identified by respondents.*

- Officials are willing and able to communicate only within the scope of their competence; however, within the scope of the laws that they use in their work, by which they are governed, they are unable to cooperate.
- Qualified workforce for children with autism (e.g., school assistants are lacking). Formally, criteria are met, e.g. by creating positions of assistants in schools, but to what quality are these services implemented? Legislation is set well, but is not enforceable due to a lack of resources.

## 4. Conclusion

The creation of municipal self-governments is an important issue also from the point of view of the existence of NPOs in Slovakia. Municipalities may take decisions independently and act in all matters pertinent to the administration of the municipality and its property, if a special law does not assign such acts to the State or to other legal bodies or individuals. Their decisions and ordinances may be superseded or invalidated only by Parliamentary Acts or, if illegal, by courts. Already in 1990, municipalities were allocated with many responsibilities



(including important tasks in investigated areas of education, employment, health and public spaces), and they have full freedom to decide to what extent to involve civil and non-profit sector into the delivery of the abovementioned services as the scope and method of discharging those responsibilities are independently decided by municipalities. It also helps the municipalities to ease the economic burden—the responsibilities were passed to the municipalities from the state, but the public budgets allocated from the state are not sufficient enough to fund all the responsibilities. Cooperation with NPOs helps municipalities, and mostly thanks to the amount of volunteer work from NPOs, the costs are reduced. Also, the services provided by NPOs are complementing the public services provided by the municipalities; in many cases, the NPOs replace the municipality completely.

Under these conditions and in order to discharge their responsibilities, from the beginning, municipalities started to co-operate with the non-profits in many different ways—from simple non-monetary co-operation, via the provision of financial grants, to the contracting and outsourcing of some services to NPOs. However, none of these forms of cooperation were undertaken in a fully systematic way and the concrete conditions differ between municipalities. Many municipalities invite non-profit organisations to participate in the local policy making processes, accepting their expertise and position of core local stakeholders. Such participatory processes deepen democracy and bring positive social impact. Non-profits can only fulfil their potential when embedded in supportive policy environment.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research was funded by the VEGA project ‘Abandoned Slovakia: Effective solutions to the creative reuse of used properties in non-urban areas, grant number V-18-101-07-101312’.

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