

CEV AUTUMN VOLUNTEERING CONGRESS 2022

3 -4 OCTOBER 2022, GDANSK (PL)



EVCCC STUDY VISIT IN GDANSK

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The municipality representatives from the **European Volunteering Capital Candidates Community (EVCCC)**, **CEV members**, **other organisations and individuals had the opportunity to take part in the study visit**; Organisations and initiatives that were visited included: The Orunia Community House, and the Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and at Immigrant Support Centre. **The study visit involved over 100 participants** and was aimed at introducing participants to gain a deeper understanding of how volunteering and solidarity is encouraged and supported in Gdansk through a strong cross sectoral partnership and embedded in EU values.

The **Orunia Community House** runs a network of social organisations: Gdansk Innovation Foundation, Orunia Partnership, Gdansk Cultural Archipelago, Gdansk Equal Rights Council.

The participants were welcomed by Szymon Knitter, working for the Regional Volunteering Centre of Gdansk, Piotr Wroblewski, Children's Homes Director, Ewa Patyk, Manager of Gdańsk Foundation for Social Innovation, and Przemysław Kluz, Neighbourhood House's Manager.

The Community House has its headquarters in the Gdansk district of Orunia which in the past has been a degraded and poor outskirts area. The aim of the Community is to bring back life to the district through cultural and sport activities, to create safe spaces of dialogue among the community and incentivise solidarity in cases of emergency (such as domestic violence, poverty, depression, etc.). Moreover, the Community House believes in the importance of creating a circular ecosystem that gives the possibility to some beneficiaries of NGOs or Community Houses to be trained and to find their first job. As such the Orunia Community House has implemented a model that was applied to three social companies (Kuznia Cafe, Wozownia Coffee Shop and So Stay Hotel) in which part of the staff come from vulnerable groups trying to introduce them to the labour market.

Piotr Wroblewski took the floor to present to the participants what the Gdansk Innovation Foundation is and is working on. The Foundation was established in 2007 to help children, adolescents and families in socio-economic needs and to support local communities' development. The Foundation stressed the modernization of orphanages in the whole region of the Polish Pomerania and today, it runs 6 Houses for Children with 84 children and adolescents aged 10 up to 25 supervised by mentors and educators, and tutored by volunteers.

A short break followed the presentation and gave the possibility to CEV members and other organisations' representatives to network and exchange ideas on what was presented.



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Then, the study visit continued introducing the participants to the other projects and activities the Orunia Community House is currently running. Among these, the Neighbourhood House "Gościenna Przystań". Created in 2010, it represents an important centre for the local community to take part in activities in the Orunia district but also to influence its future development. Moreover, the Neighbourhood House is home to a kindergarten, common rooms, seniors' and youth clubs. Afterwards, Piotr Wroblewski presented the three social companies managed by the Orunia Community House: Kuznia Cafe, Wozownia Coffee Shop and So Stay Hotel. As anticipated in the introduction, these companies were founded to allow youngsters of the district to have a first income, to develop professional skills (such as as waiter, receptionist, chef, etc.), to have direct contact with customers and to work in a team. The first social company that was launched was Kuznia Cafe in 2012; then, So Stay Hotel, a three-star hotel, opened in 2015 that offers 17 rooms, a training room and catering services. Finally, Wozownia Coffee Shop started its activity in 2019.

Since the war in Ukraine, the Innovation Foundation Initiative created the Refugee Support Point which is helping Ukrainian migrants to get information regarding support for refugees in Gdansk and about their rights, and to get to know the activities for children and adolescents the Foundation is actively carrying out.

Then, the organisers took the participants from the Orunia Community House to visit one of the Children's Houses and Kuznia Cafe which is run by volunteers. The participants didn't have the opportunity to enter the Children's House for privacy reasons but had the chance to see the building from the outside and visit the garden with a children's playground.



Children's house and playground

The study visit visiting Kuznia Cafe, which is located in a cosy little house of the XIX century.



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The [Polish Association for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities \(PSONI\)](#) is a national organisation that consists of 11 thousand members having more than 120 local branches. PSONI works to provide children with intellectual disabilities the possibility to enable them to develop physically, cognitively and socially, so as to allow them to have an active, autonomous and normal life within the society. Their main areas of expertise are: youth education and rehabilitation, occupational therapy, supported employment, supported living, ICT applied in education and therapy. In collaboration with its partners, PSONI prepared a digital interactive film method being used in education and therapy of youth and adults with intellectual disability. Moreover, PSONI runs an internet radio Radio SoVo which was created by people with intellectual disabilities for people with intellectual disabilities. They keep organising live and recorded broadcasts. The mission of the Association is to ensure the dignity, happiness and quality of life of persons with intellectual disabilities, their equal place in the family and in society, supporting families of people with intellectual disabilities in all areas of life and situations, and in particular their readiness to help others.

During the visit, participants had the chance to get to know the organisation by entering the main building where the activities take place, getting involved in the environment and the tools for accessibility that the organisation was able to provide in order to create favourable inclusion conditions for all.

The presentation showcased not only the several activities implemented by PSONI, such as the [Orchestra "Vita Activa" \(Active life\)](#), but also their engagement with the European Union dimension by hosting European Solidarity Corps volunteers.



The visit to PSONI was followed by the visit to the [Alexandry FOSA Social backrest Foundation, or FOSA Foundation](#), a non-governmental organisation that provides support in the area of mental health in the broad sense. The focus of the FOSA Foundation is the Municipality of Gdańsk and the Pomeranian Voivodeship. The Foundation participates in the tasks of the Gdansk NGO Council, the activities of the Pomeranian Coalition for mental Health.

It is a member of more than five partnerships, namely the Gdansk Centre for equal treatment, urban regeneration programs, the groups of the socio-occupational activation system in Gdansk and co-implements an innovative program of self-reliance on people excluded as part of the site.

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It is currently carrying out projects and tasks:

- for children and young people with mental illness and disorders. They are referred to as the "Youth Szopen" Environmental Self-Help House, the "Young FOSA" Youth Hall for children and young people.
- support for families includes, such as the Environmental Support Point, the Family Support and Treatment Centre.
- on the scope of accessibility to information, support and equal treatment, including the Gdansk Centre for equal Treatment, Information and consultation Point.
- And involved socially and professionally active people excluded by the project's socio-occupational activation system in Gdańsk through the Klub Social Integration.

Participants to the study visit had the possibility to visit the building and the many rooms where all these activities take place. A lot was exchanged by the participants with the representatives of the organisation since for many municipal environments mental health awareness is becoming a relevant matter to address and to find responses to.



The study visit continued on the second day at **Sitowie Garden and Twoja Rola Foundation** in Gdansk.

The project **"Osiedle Sitowie"** is a platform for comprehensive support in gaining independence as well as social and professional activation of socially excluded people. The project was created in cooperation with the Municipal Family Assistance Center in Gdańsk with non-governmental organisations. The main goal of the project is social and professional activation as well as providing hostel accommodation for temporary stay for project participants. The estate was built in 2011 in seven buildings from the housing stock of the City of Gdańsk, (six of which were transferred to non-governmental organizations) located at ul. Sitowie in the Gdańsk district of Rudniki. People staying there have the opportunity to work and earn money in the adjacent garden, which is part of the estate.

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Traditional farmers still operate within the borders of Gdańsk. Although it is a smaller and smaller group. There is also a form of farming called urban farming. An example is the Twój Rola Foundation, which cultivates the land for vegetables in a fairly small area in order to sell them and economize operations.

Their crops are often called market gardening, i.e. everything close to each other, in small intervals. So as to make the best use of the space for cultivation. They differ from the recently popular community gardens, where neighbors, somewhere near the apartment block, start to grow vegetables and herbs, thus organizing the space in the immediate vicinity.

The Foundation has created a line of products called "Siejemy Ferment". It is a Gdańsk product with a short supply chain, with a low carbon footprint, but also has a social aspect, because it is produced by the beneficiaries of our foundation and the "Osiedle Sitowie" project, activating people who need support in becoming independent in their private, social and professional life.

During the visit, the participants had the opportunity to talk to the project beneficiaries and the inhabitants of Sitowie, as well as representatives of organisations located there: Prometheus, MONAR. The whole thing ended in the garden of the Your Role Foundation, where you could see the products produced there.

To conclude the study visit there was a wrap up / debrief session at the European Solidarity Centre facilitated by experts from the Gdansk Volunteer Centre and Gdansk City Council.

