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# Centralny Punkt Integracji



A friendly day-activity centre as well as art therapy and body workshops for people experiencing homelessness



Centralny Punkt Integracji (CPI) is a new way to cooperate with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of it, developed by the Daj Herbatę Foundation. It involves **the creation of a physical space and organisation of an art therapy workshop for men** (related to art creation and perception) **and a body workshop for women**.

Thanks to this combination of space and workshops, individuals facing such challenges can find empowerment, get to know their emotions, shape pro-social attitudes, and spend time in a creative and safe way.

## Who is the innovation is targeted at?

- adult individuals experiencing homelessness (both women and men),
- adults at risk of homelessness, living in extreme poverty, including older and lonely individuals.

## Who can implement the innovation?

- social organisations and other institutions that support people experiencing homelessness, including facilities running consultation points and shelters,
- local activity centres,
- community centres,
- individuals running art therapy workshops or body workshops.

# What problems does the innovation address?

Centralny Punkt Integracji is an attempt to practically face the following problems and challenges:

- **No places in which people experiencing homelessness could spend a day in safe conditions**, talk to someone, have a cup of tea, learn something, take part in a workshop the topic and course of which they can have impact on.
- **People experiencing homelessness questioning their capabilities**, perceiving themselves as helpless and not having any resources.
- **Homeless people not having access to cultural life understood as perceiving and creating art**. The purchase of a museum or cinema ticket loses against the necessity to buy food.
- **No ability to decide about yourself**. People experiencing homelessness (commonly considered free) must subordinate to others. They usually do not have any impact on what and when they will eat (they eat what a socialkitchen offers at a given moment), or where they will sleep (beds at shelters are selected for them by the facility employees).

# How to implement the innovation at your end, step by step?

Centralny Punkt Integracji involves:

- art therapy workshops (for men) and body workshop (for women),
- participation in cultural events (film screenings, exhibitions),
- access to a laundrette and bathroom,
- access to a warm meal,

- discovering and nurturing participants' abilities and resources,
- access to social consultancy, psychological support and psychotherapeutic consultations.

Centralny Punkt Integracji, established by the Daj Herbatę Foundation, offers access to other services, such as ID photographs, support in writing a résumé or a legal document, legal support, warm beverage or meal preparation, access to clean clothes (e.g., for a job interview) access to information on available forms of support.

**BEFORE INITIATING CPI**, it is necessary to ensure the following:

- 1. Obtaining a venue.** The Daj Herbatę Foundation managed to lease a venue from the city on preferential terms available for NGOs. The ca. 100 square meter big site required a renovation but was suitable for running classes. Entities that are interested in implementing the innovation but do not have any venue at their disposal, can consider regular cooperation with community or social activity centres.
- 2. Recruitment of class facilitators.** These must be individuals competent in a given area but also prepared to work with people experiencing homelessness – sensitive to their needs and familiar with the specificity of their lives.
- 3. Initial familiarisation with potential users prior to launching a CPI.** People experiencing homelessness live day by day, being used to frequent change of location and rotation of their social environment, so it takes time to convince them to get affiliated to a CPI (and trust it).
- 4. Establishing cooperation with other institutions, such as community centres or museums.** The Daj Herbatę Foundation started collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw organising weekly screenings of films devoted to the art and life of famous artists even before the official CPI launch, and with the 'Świt'

community centre at which an exhibition crowning the art therapy workshop was organised.

## **5. Estimating fixed costs of implementing the innovation.**

**BOTH DURING THE LAUNCH STAGE**, and later when the **CPI IS RUN**, the following pattern seems worth following:

Identification of beneficiaries' needs → popularisation of the CPI idea → recruitment → workshops and counselling → popularisation of outcomes → designing future activities

### **1. Identification of beneficiaries' needs**

This is a stage at which we sound out the participants' needs. It seems advisable to ask them about the organisation of their day, areas of interests or ways in which they spend their free time – both now and before they became homeless.

The 'what if' questions seem particularly useful, e.g. 'What if a place at which... would you be interested in it?', 'What if we organised... would you like to take part?'

### **2. Popularisation of the CPI idea**

It is an important but also time-consuming stage at which we continue to familiarise potential beneficiaries with planned activities. We tell them about what is going to happen, we present possible benefits and estimate the launch date. At this stage, our addressees do not know the details yet, but we are gradually arousing their curiosity and desire to visit the CPI.

### **3. Recruitment**

Based on the previously aroused interest in the idea of the CPI, we move on to the recruitment stage, which we understand not only as the selection of participants but also as 'bringing' them to the venue.

At the Daj Herbatę Foundation, the recruitment involved the distribution of leaflets with information on CPI and individual talks to people experiencing homelessness.

Another incentive increasing interest in visiting CPI was a package of free services:

- washing and drying clothes during the workshop, no pre-registration required,
- access to a warm meal,
- access to a bathroom for the purposes of personal hygiene.

#### **4. Workshops and support**

We organised two cycles of CPI workshops:

- Body, relaxation, mindfulness, yoga and psychoeducation workshop for women, focusing on identifying participants' resources, helping them identify and control their emotions, reduce tension. Sinusoidal class organisation system was particularly crucial, namely, difficult topics were alternated with occasional meetings or artistic work. This made participants feel safe and reduced the experienced discomfort. The course of classes was planned with participants on an ongoing basis and was tailored to their needs.
- Workshops for men, including art therapy and artistic classes allowed not only for attending exhibitions but also for creating art on one's own. This gave participants an opportunity to decide about themselves, to discover their talents (even though it is not a prerequisite when enrolling in CPI), to develop and strengthen their soft skills (communication, assertiveness, teamwork).

At the same time, participants could also take advantage of psychological support, psychotherapeutic consultations, or social counselling. This proposal resulted from the risk related to taking part in the

workshop (e.g., activation of past memories) and the desire to change one's difficult life situation.

## 5. Popularisation of outcomes

Art therapy was crowned with an exhibition, and the body workshop with shooting a film. Beneficiaries were informed about it at the beginning of their participation in CPI.

All beneficiaries took part in the **exhibition** preparation, and their participation was not limited only to sharing their work created over the course of six months. Men had influence on the choice of the exhibition site, the way in which their works were displayed, on the choice of frames. They were engaged in drilling holes in walls, installing sculpture stands. Their opinion on the promotion of the event was also taken into account (at the Daj Herbatę Foundation it was a radio programme, a mention on a TV news programme, and Facebook posts) or the form of catering. This taught them agency, and stressed their right for self-determination, giving them an opportunity to demonstrate their resourcefulness.

The **film** was initially recorded by workshop facilitators, and then by two volunteers of the Daj Herbatę Foundation who were introduced to the process gradually. First, their participation was announced, and then one of them took part in classes and set up recording equipment in the distance. Finally, women were ready to give an interview in full light, with light reflectors, a microphone, and a camera right next to them. Some asked for questions they could answer, others were ready to make a spontaneous speech. Facilitators were present during the recording session and took part in it themselves.

## 6. Designing future activities

Officially, the CPI workshops run by the Daj Herbatę Foundation were planned for six months (for men) and three months (for women).

After the last session both groups asked if the project could be continued. And this is what happened at the Foundation, but it obviously required some consideration regarding further course of the project. It is a good idea to think about sources of financing for subsequent activities, goals that both groups are to achieve, frequency of meetings, or organisation of events accompanying the initiative.

## What is particularly noteworthy?

From the point of view of launching and successfully running CPI, it is particularly important to ensure:

- a stable **venue** for meetings (the same for at least a couple of months) and open during the day,
- regular **classes** run separately for women (art workshops) and for men (art therapy),
- psychological or psychotherapeutic **consultation** or social counselling,
- **principles** of trust, acceptance and support.

## Does it work? How does the innovation help its beneficiaries?

Centralny Punkt Integracji can be disappointing for those who expect fast and spectacular outcomes. CPI does not aim to ensure full social readaptation and coming out homelessness. Instead, it is an opportunity to start self-work and to rebuild or strengthen the resources of those who do not have a home.

The key observed changes among participants which they noticed themselves include:

- better organisation of the day – being punctual and systematic,



- increased openness to people, boosted self-confidence,
- increased desire to commune with art and to creating it,
- group integration – making appointments to get to classes together, etc.,
- more self-care, paying more attention to meals consumed, some also prolonged their period of abstinence from alcohol,
- more focus on your own needs and giving yourself the right to make your own decisions and choices, e.g., thanks to making decisions at CPI on what to eat or drink, what to do about your body (workshops for women) and what activities you want to engage in (workshops for men),
- higher confidence in your own potential – men started the workshop with the ‘I-cannot-draw-it-is-not-going-to-work’ attitude, but they completed it with the desire to continue the project and childlike curiosity about various art techniques, while women were initially uncertain about what was going to happen and were somewhat distrustful of other participants, but they started supporting one another in their choices over time.

## How much does it cost?

Launching and running CPI requires financial means on:

- maintaining and equipping a venue,
- materials for classes,
- refreshments for participants,
- public transport tickets, and optionally also museum or theatre tickets,
- remuneration for workshop facilitators.

At the Daj Herbatę Foundation, the monthly cost of running a CPI amounted to ca PLN 6,500.

## Who are the authors of the innovation?



The Daj Herbatę Foundation operates in Warsaw providing support to people experiencing homelessness, in the spirit of harm reduction, focusing on satisfying basic needs. It supports innovative solutions in various areas of social life, with particular focus on offering material and therapeutic help to people experiencing homelessness and socially excluded individuals. For 10 years it has been running the so-called 'pass' at the Central Railway Station in Warsaw, distributing meals and clothes among individuals experiencing homelessness.

More information: <https://dajherbate.pl>.

### Introducing authors of the innovation:



**Katarzyna Nicewicz** – socially active since she turned 15, for over 10 years she has been taking care of socially excluded individuals, including those experiencing homelessness. In 2012, she initiated the Daj Herbatę initiative that in 2015 turned into the Daj Herbatę Foundation. Now she is doing her MA course in artistic education, in the field of fine arts, specialising in art therapy, at a sculpture lab. Together with the Foundation beneficiaries and employees, she established the 'Domniemani' artistic group and developed body workshop for women experiencing homelessness or at the risk of it. In 2021, together with the Foundation team she opened Centralny Punkt Integracji in the Włochy district of Warsaw.



**Marta Mikołajczyk** has been affiliated with the Daj Herbatę Foundation since 2015, initially as a volunteer and since January 2021 as an employee. As a psychotherapist, she runs individual consultations for the Foundation beneficiaries and a psychoeducational group for women. Since 2005, she has also been lecturing at the Maria Grzegorzewska Special Pedagogy Academy. She holds a PhD in the humanities, in the field of pedagogy. She has conducted research projects on the homelessness crisis. She is an editor, co-author and author of scientific papers on the situation of people without a roof over their heads, social work and welfare. Privately she is a partner, mother, a caregiver to two cats. She practises yoga and swimming. She is an enthusiast of Italian cuisine.

## Contact details and more information

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For more information see the guide on the CPI implementation on:  
[https://inkubatorpomyslow.org.pl/pomysl\\_na\\_innowacje/centralny-punkt-integracji/](https://inkubatorpomyslow.org.pl/pomysl_na_innowacje/centralny-punkt-integracji/).



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# Uncommon solutions to common problems

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