

Article

Drivers toward Social Entrepreneurs Engagement in Poland: An Institutional Approach

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to identify the factors that influence the involvement of individuals in social entrepreneurship in Poland from an institutional economics perspective. The research is based on exploratory data analysis using qualitative data covering 22 interviews with social entrepreneurs and 10 representatives of stakeholders from Poland as well as observations and secondary data. By employing an inductive approach and a case study methodology, it can be stated that involvement of social entrepreneurs is stimulated by a complex set of factors. Moreover, the results show the importance of the institutional environment for social enterprises in Poland, including the impact of formal and informal institutions on their development. The findings contribute to enhancing the knowledge on factors determining the establishment and development of social enterprises in Poland given the institutional economics perspective.

Keywords: social enterprise; social entrepreneurship; social entrepreneur; factors; institutional environment; Poland

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively young, knowledge-intensive area and a social practice of interest to researchers since the late 20th century (Brock and Kim 2011; Nicholls 2006; Short et al. 2009; Granados et al. 2011; Gras et al. 2014). It comprises a variety of activities and processes that lead to the creation and consolidation of social value by individuals, groups of citizens, and organisations. The entrepreneurial activities undertaken for social and/or public benefits, oriented towards change and/or innovation, apply market-based solutions, and remain under the influence of their external environment (Brouard and Larivet 2010). Researchers of social entrepreneurship are primarily interested in the following four topical areas (Ferri 2014; Urbano et al. 2017): (1) defining social entrepreneurship, (2) comparing social enterprises with other organisational forms (non-profit and commercial enterprises), (3) examining the entrepreneurial process in consideration of the emerging opportunities and social impact assessment, and (4) factors that determine the development of social enterprises.

The considerations presented in this article address the fourth research area and reflect the author's interest in the various factors that may have an impact on the emergence of social enterprises. The literature review reveals the multiple and complex conditions which influence the creation and growth of entities whose activities combine social and economic objectives. Thus, social enterprise results from the interaction between social entrepreneurs and the environment in which their activity is embedded (Mair and Martí 2006; Austin et al. 2006). This kind of interaction is one of the triggers as well as a factor which contributes to the development of social enterprises (Leadbeater 1997; Mair and Martí 2006; Perrini and Vurro 2006; Perrini et al. 2010; Urbano et al. 2010). Moreover, the importance of the context (environment) in which these activities are rooted should be emphasised (Mair and Martí 2006; Kerlin 2017). Despite certain advances, this area requires further research, especially in terms of the institutional models that affect the activities of social enterprises (Kerlin 2017).

Given the emergence of a number of models of social enterprises worldwide, the impact of the external environment on the decisions and behaviours of individuals is crucial. Research findings demonstrate that the configurations of institutional factors at meso and micro levels may reflect a decisive impact on particular domestic models of social enterprises (e.g., [Kerlin 2017](#); [Stephan et al. 2015](#)). On this basis, it can be stated that the knowledge of models shaping the development of social enterprises operating in Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland, remains limited ([Kerlin 2012, 2017](#)).

Poland may provide an interesting example for the analysis of the development of social enterprises. It has a rich experience in cooperative and reciprocal activities, as well as centuries-old traditions of charity work ([Pacut 2018a](#)). Poland's integration with the European Union significantly boosted the debate on social enterprises' relevance to solving social problems. It also made it possible to test social enterprise solutions owing to significant public funding allocated to this purpose and public policy. On the one hand, for more than 15 years, social economy development programmes have been created at national, regional, and local levels, and relevant legislation was adopted (e.g., the Social Cooperatives Act). These activities are accompanied by transfers of substantial public funds for the creation of new organisations which combine social with business objectives (e.g., social cooperatives, non-profit companies), support the process of economising activities by non-governmental organisations, and disseminate this form of activity among various target groups in Poland ([Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 2014](#)). On the other hand, potential aid recipients are neither particularly interested in setting up social enterprises nor aware of their performance. The literature lists numerous barriers and limitations to the development of social enterprises, such as the lack of more effective mechanisms for stimulating their creation and development, difficulties in accessing external sources of funding, the lack of appropriate legal forms, inadequate specialist business support, and poor understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship with a social objective ([European Commission 2015, 2016](#); [Stronkowski et al. 2013](#)). The factors and conditions of engagement in social enterprises are poorly recognised by both researchers and public decision-makers, especially in their institutional aspect.

The aim of the study is to identify and analyse factors influencing the involvement of individuals in social entrepreneurship in Poland from an institutional economics perspective. The empirical research was intended to answer the following questions: (1) What factors influence the involvement of individuals in social enterprises? and (2) How does the institutional environment affect the engagement in social entrepreneurship in Poland? The theoretical framework for the research and analysis of findings was provided by new institutional economics, which defines and explains the importance of the institutional environment for social phenomena ([North 1991, 2005, 2017](#); [Furubotn and Richter 2005](#)). The findings draw on a collective case study informed by a variety of data sources, including individual in-depth interviews conducted among 22 social entrepreneurs and 10 stakeholders, observations, and secondary data. Empirical research enabled the identification of reasons for the establishment of social enterprises. Moreover, the results show that involvement in this kind of activity results from multiple factors influenced by formal and informal institutions as well as the methods of their enforcement.

This article consists of five sections. Beside the Introduction, Section 2 contains an overview of the concept of social enterprises, discusses the factors that contribute to their development, and outlines the theoretical framework of the analysis. Section 3 presents the strategy of empirical research based on qualitative analysis. Section 4 focuses on the results and provides the discussion of the findings. Final considerations contained in Section 5 are devoted to a summary of the conclusions followed by the research limitations and further research directions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Entrepreneurship Field

Social entrepreneurship has been defined by researchers from diverse perspective. It is described as a multidimensional construct (Sullivan Mort et al. 2003), a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Mair and Martí 2004), as well as a multi-perspective phenomenon (Perrini 2006). The multidimensionality and complexity of social entrepreneurship are reflected in different approaches present in the literature. The literature distinguishes between objective, subjective, and processual approaches (Mair and Martí 2004; Brouard and Larivet 2010; Dacin et al. 2010; Bacq and Janssen 2011). The objective approach emphasises organisation, called a social entrepreneurship organisation or a social enterprise. It has a dual nature, which reflects both the implementation of social objectives and the market orientation. Social enterprises may take diverse legal forms. They combine managerial efficiency with addressing social needs and reinvesting profits for the benefit of the community (Haugh 2006). The subjective definition of social entrepreneurship focuses on the social entrepreneur perceived as a visionary individual who acts as a change agent in the social sector, seeking to effect systemic changes and sustainable improvements (Dees 2001). Finally, the processual approach includes the description of activities, stages, and processes undertaken in order to create and consolidate social value. In this case, the analyses involve, among others, the process leading to the identification of a specific social problem and its solution as well as to conducting of social impact assessment and the business model applied (Robinson 2006). From this perspective, social entrepreneurship is also analysed as a process of identifying, discovering, and taking advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities (Brooks 2009). This multidimensional term is also associated with a broader approach to innovation, where the emergence of new ideas is treated as a collective problem in the context of meeting social needs (Kopyciński 2018).

The literature also reflects both narrow and broad approach of social entrepreneurship (Perrini 2006). In the former case, the phenomenon is described as a way of aligning the activity of a non-profit organisations towards a more market-oriented, independent (from the public sector), customer-oriented, and self-sustaining model. The second approach recognises social entrepreneurship as a new and independent, extremely interdisciplinary field of research. In line with this, the organisational form (belonging in the for-profit, non-profit, or public sectors) is disregarded, with priority granted to innovative ideas and market-based activities.

The lack of agreement on the essence of social entrepreneurship creates extreme opinions about it. Some scholars argued the field to be in its pre-paradigmatic stage (Nicholls 2010). It is characterized by a debate on legitimate methods and research problems, the utility of this concept, and the quality of solutions relevant to the new field of knowledge. Due to the above, the analysis of social entrepreneurship is associated with various problems and inaccuracies of epistemological and methodical nature (Nicholls 2010). Other researchers demonstrate a progressive process of institutionalization of social entrepreneurship. This is reflected in the scientific journals and monographs on social entrepreneurship and in the establishment of centres, academic units, and scientific networks specializing in promoting practical knowledge about social enterprises (Sassmannshausen and Volkmann 2016). The latest results of bibliometric research conducted by Hota et al. (2019) show that the social entrepreneurship concept was developed by the inclusion of different organisational aspects (e.g., mission and vision, resources, legitimacy). The authors have identified nine thematic areas (clusters) in period from 1996 to 2017. In turn, Romani-Dias et al. (2018) described 'academic production on social enterprises studies' using the following six categories: (1) understanding social entrepreneurship; (2) governance and relationships with stakeholders; (3) attempts to increase practical references and samples within the field; (4) organizational learning, structure, and critical factors for success and failure of social entrepreneurship; (5) metrics, indicators, and social impact generated by social entrepreneurship; and (6) legislation of different countries and how it relates to social entrepreneurship.

Given the aim of this article, social entrepreneurship can be considered as an umbrella term for the functioning of individuals, organisations, or initiatives running a business for social purposes (Seelos and Mair 2004). Social enterprises are described as organisations that engage in business activities in order to achieve social objectives. They may take various legal forms, but what they have in common is the principle of using market solutions to achieve social objectives (Haugh 2005, 2006). Its organisational dimension comprises all types of enterprises which seek financial, social, and environmental outcomes (Germak and Robinson 2014). The social entrepreneur can be defined as “the individual that conceives of the initial idea, moves toward launching the venture, and works to sustain the venture” (Germak and Robinson 2014, p. 7).

2.2. Factors Influencing the Involvement in Social Enterprises

The growing global interest in social enterprises can be justified by the economic, social and political changes which have taken place in recent decades. In particular, increasing social inequality, accumulating environmental problems, decreasing availability of public funds, and concentration on market mechanisms in the distribution and redistribution of resources can be indicated here. Furthermore, the growing importance of corporate social responsibility and proactive reactions of representatives of the commercial sector to complex social problems is emphasised (Hoogendoorn et al. 2010). The origin and development of social enterprises is also analysed in terms of the role of demand factors (demand for social services produced by social enterprises), supply factors (activity of social entrepreneurs), and their contextual and institutional determinants (Chell et al. 2010).

Therefore, social enterprise as a process of creating social added value depends on several factors. For example, the literature emphasises the role of opportunity, human, and capital resources with regard to the environment (Austin et al. 2006). Lumpkin et al. (2013) explored such factors as motivation/mission, identification of opportunities, access to capital and diversity of stakeholders as unique characteristics of social enterprises. For Kickul and Lyons (2012), the creation of social enterprises results from individual motivations of social entrepreneurs, social needs to be addressed, and from the capacity of the community (and society at large) to meet these needs. It should be added that mission accomplishment tends to be associated with the pursuit of opportunities and appropriate deployment of human and other resources. The model proposed by Kickul and Lyons (2012) assumes that the above-mentioned factors relate to each other, while all the activities associated with this process occur in a specific context created by politics, culture, economy, social norms, geography, history, and the legal and money systems. This context penetrates and affects social enterprises initiatives. According to Sekliuckiene and Kisielius (2015), individual, organisational, and contextual factors (legal, environmental, etc.) constitute important variables which may support or impede such initiatives.

The researchers confirm the importance of the environment (context, eco-system) for social enterprises (Austin et al. 2006; Perrini and Vurro 2006; Hoogendoorn and Hartog 2011; Kickul and Lyons 2012; Sekliuckiene and Kisielius 2015). All activities in this area take place in a specific environment which affects the shaping of social enterprises—from the initial stages to the creating outcomes (Teo and Tan 2013; Lumpkin et al. 2013; Sekliuckiene and Kisielius 2015). On the one hand, social enterprise is stimulated by the needs of the environment, and on the other hand, it can be limited (Weerawardena and Mort 2006). The bibliometric analysis conducted by Hota et al. (2019) points to the study of the institutional environment as one of nine separate clusters of research on social entrepreneurship. This research described how the institutional context affect the conduct of social enterprises. It concerns two issues: the interaction between social entrepreneurship and its environment (environmental dynamics) and support structures (Hoogendoorn et al. 2010). For instance, Stephan et al. (2015) explained the importance of institutional support and institutional void for engagement in social entrepreneurship. The institutional factors demonstrated in this research model included values and norms (informal institutions) and government activism, treating the latter as an important formal institution shaping demand for social entrepreneurship. The results

of the research have shown that the national context “drives” individual engagement in the social economy through a mechanism based on resources and the influence of motivation, and less through demand-driven incentives. Urbano et al. (2010) analysed the impact of the following selected factors: social values, entrepreneurial and social attitudes, and social networks (informal institutions) and state financial support (formal institutions) on the emergence and implementation of social enterprises in Catalonia. Their research showed that informal institutions are more important in this respect. They influence not only the emergence but also the implementation of such activities in the country. Sahasranamam and Nandakumar (2020) investigated role of a country’s formal institutions (financial, educational, political) on the relationship between individual capital (financial, human, social capital) and social entrepreneurship entry. This study showed the nature of contingent effects of formal institutions on the relationship between individual capital and the emergence of social enterprises.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of social enterprise was provided by new institutional economics, which defines the institutional environment as an area governed by various rules regarding the behaviour of individuals and organisations in social interactions (Davis and North 1971; Furubotn and Richter 2005). That means that various social, cultural, and political norms (institutions) determine the way social actors act (North 2005, 2017).

According to the typology proposed by North, a prominent representative of new institutional economics, two kinds of institutions influence social enterprise, i.e., formal (rules, laws, constitutions) and informal institutions (norms of behaviour, conventions, self-imposed codes of conduct) (North 1994, p. 360). Formal institutions are established by law. Their observance is based on formal control, but also depends on informal institutions. Informal institutions can be defined as socially rules, usually unwritten, evolutionary, transmitted, and enforced outside (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). Referring to the North’s achievements, the importance of beliefs and mental models in shaping the actions and choices made by individuals can be emphasised. Mental models are “internal representations that individual cognitive systems create to interpret the environment,” whereas “the institutions are the external (to the mind) mechanisms individuals create to structure and order the environment” (North 1994, p. 4). By defining of institutions, North points to the methods of their implementation and enforcement. “Together they define the incentive structure of societies and specifically economies” (North 1994, p. 360).

The methodological postulate of the importance of institutions is common to different approaches occurring in institutional economics, both classical and new. Institutions, as rules of the game (North 2017), determine the decisions made by social actors. However, the question is not whether institutions matter, but what role they currently play (Aidis et al. 2007). In line with those considerations it can be stated that involvement of social entrepreneurs should be analysed in terms of the interactions between institutional environment consisting of formal and informal institutions and social enterprises (Figure 1).

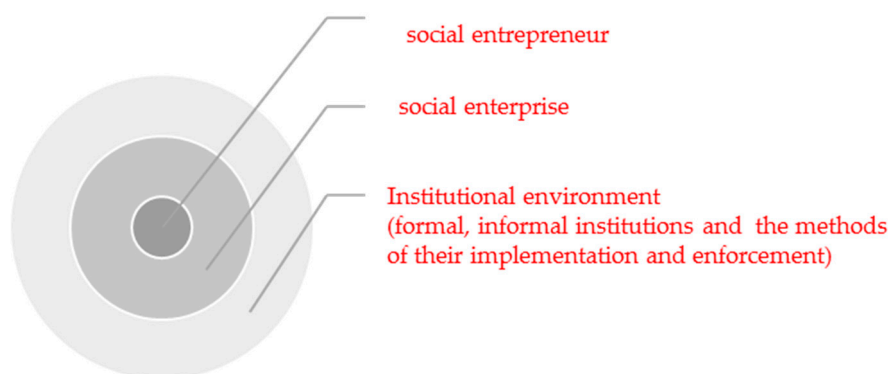


Figure 1. Institutional framework of social enterprise. Source: Own study.

Based on the theoretical background, this article attempts to explore the experience of Poland in implementing of social entrepreneurship. In line with this, the following two research questions were specified: (1) What factors influence the involvement of individuals in social enterprises? and (2) How does the institutional environment affect the engagement in social entrepreneurship in Poland?

3. Material and Methods

3.1. Research Methods and Techniques

The empirical study is based on qualitative methods. The choice of methodology is justified by the research objective and questions. Qualitative research relies on the description of the observed phenomena in their natural environment and an attempt to explain them applying the terms used by the studied individuals (Denzin and Lincoln 2009). Due to their advantages, such as flexibility of the research process, depth of communication, and the opportunity to take a holistic approach to the problem at hand, qualitative methods are appropriate for the study of the entrepreneurship phenomenon and are often used in research on social enterprises (Short et al. 2009). Quantitative research is not applied here because it is insufficient when the research aims to understand the nature of the phenomenon, its context, and interactions with other elements (Patton 2015). Qualitative methods allow for a thorough understanding of entrepreneurial activities and their context (cultural, social, etc.) as well as their relationships with the immediate environment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the potential benefits of using the qualitative methods outweigh their limitations, which include, among others the lack of intersubjective verifiability of the obtained data (a positivistic understanding of knowledge), differences in the structure and interpretation of the collected material by different researchers, difficulty in maintaining optimal openness, and objectivity toward the researched person (Dembirńska 2012).

For the research analysis, the collective case study (Stake 2009) was applied. The collective case study enables researchers to understand the phenomenon of interest not as a single case but the context of similar cases. As Stake (2009) emphasises, this is not a classical case study, but an instrumental case study extended over several cases, which involves studying a number of them in order to obtain an adequate insight into the general phenomenon. The cases were analysed in an objectified manner as a basis for making comparisons in order to identify the regularities governing the social phenomenon. The reason for choosing this method was not only the poor knowledge of the research problem in Poland, but also the multi-faceted nature of social enterprise, its dynamic development, and the need to explore the context and circumstances in which individuals engage in entrepreneurial activity (Yin 2009, 2015). The analysis based on the collective case study method served to create or complement the existing theories of social entrepreneurship. The theory-generating goal implies the possibility of developing a new theory or modifying, advancing, refining or identifying new elements of existing theories by analysing the phenomenon at hand (Yin 2009). Despite the existing knowledge on the determinants of establishment and development of social enterprises, the institutional impact on social enterprises remains modest. Case studies contribute to an in-depth examination of phenomena and processes in their actual context and thereby offer invaluable insights into the empirical reality (Patton 2015). Using a case study methodology and based on an inductive analysis of empirical data, the existing knowledge on the involvement motives of social entrepreneurs can be expanded.

In order to ensure the credibility of the findings, the data triangulation as well as researcher triangulation (in the final stage of the research, studied participants were enlisted to review and verify the conclusions) was applied (Denzin 1978). The following data collection techniques were used:

- Individual in-depth interviews conducted among 32 interviewees (including 22 social entrepreneurs (founding member) and 10 stakeholders—representatives of the immediate environment, i.e., public administration, social economy support centres, loan and guarantee organisations);
- On-site observations conducted in social enterprises;
- Analysis of documents and materials concerning the interviewed social enterprises.

The in-depth interviews were conducted in 2017–2018, each lasting on average about 1.5 hours. Interviews were recorded with the consent of respondents and then fully transcribed. The transcription results were anonymised, and most of them were published in the Harvard Dataverse database (Pacut 2018b).

3.2. Sample Selection

The selection of representatives of social enterprises to be interviewed as part of the collective case study was based on the principle of theoretical replication. The assumption was made that enterprises that obtain extreme results should be purposefully selected (Yin 2015). In other words, it was assumed that maximum-variation case sampling (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2008) enables an analysis of social enterprises operating in different contexts, which remain under the influence of different factors. The selection of extreme cases for analysis was primarily aimed at ensuring the heterogeneity of the research sample.

The research was conducted based on social enterprises in Poland. Owing to the lack of a legal definition of social enterprise in Poland and the lack of consensus among national researchers and decision-makers on the criteria for selecting this group of entities, EMES criteria (The Emergence of Social Enterprises in Europe) were used for empirical research. Accordingly, organisations which qualified as social enterprises were autonomous entities, continuously engaged in business activity, which employed regular staff and had a clearly stated objective of serving the community. In line with this, they were characterized by limits in the profits distribution, participatory nature (i.e., the involvement of people supported by the organization), and a democratic management style (Defourny 2001). These criteria were operationalized using the findings of Polish researchers (Herbst 2008; Małecka-Lyszczek 2017). These criteria were met by the following organisations operating in Poland: foundations and associations conducting economic activity, non-profit companies, social cooperatives, and labour cooperatives. This classification of social enterprises was also adopted at the central level in National Social Economy Development Program in Poland (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy 2014).

Social enterprises were selected on the basis of desk research from an independently compiled database, which comprised a list of over 100 organisations operating in Poland, from among the winners of national and regional competitions for the best social enterprises, certified social enterprises, as well as other good practices identified on the basis of a review of reports, studies, monographs, etc. In total, 13 entities were invited to participate in the research. Additionally, a group of 9 enterprises in liquidation, bankruptcy or those with serious problems, which hampered their further activity, was selected by stakeholders participating in the research and by snowball sampling method. Appendix A presents the profile of the selected 22 social enterprises.

Moreover, 10 different stakeholders were also selected for interviews. They represented organisations including, public administration, social economy support centres, and loan and guarantee organisations. These interviewees were directly involved in the cooperation with and support of social enterprises, performing executive, managerial, or line functions (e.g., head of the commune, head of social economy department in a municipal office). The stakeholder interviews covered the experiences of stakeholders in supporting social enterprises. Appendix B presents a detailed profile of 10 representatives of the immediate environment of social enterprises.

3.3. Data Analysis Methods

The data analysis involved selection and classification followed by a general review in order to capture the significance of the collected information. After that, the data were categorised using theory-based coding and supplemented by data-based coding (Creswell 2013). The procedure was carried out manually using Word, Excel. In the next step, the codes were specified and selected in order to reduce the data. This contributed to identify several categories of institutional factors affecting the process of social entrepreneurship, which were analysed on an individual basis by using the identified criteria (i.e., 'good practices' versus entities in the closing stages of their activity or those

facing problems). In order to aggregate the findings from a series of single studies, the cross-case synthesis, as one of the techniques applicable to case studies, for data analysis was used (Yin 2009). For the research objective, an empirical approach on conducting a collective case study in order to develop theoretical propositions was designed. The interviews were analysed using the content analysis technique. The results were illustrated by respondent's statements (anonymised, uncorrected for research purposes).

The validity and reliability of the findings were ensured by the following procedures of the research process: (1) Triangulation understood as the extraction of data from several independent sources (Yin 2009). Data for the analysis were collected by interviews (conducted in two groups of social entrepreneurs and stakeholders), observations made in social enterprises, the secondary materials and documents obtained; (2) Developing a research protocol, making it available to the respondents and taking into account the findings from further discussions; (3) Making public the qualitative data (interview transcripts) in the Harvard Dataverse database (Pacut 2018b). Table 1 summarises the research design for empirical research and the criteria to ensure the research quality.

Table 1. Research design of the empirical research.

Research Subject	Social Enterprise			
Research strategy	Case study			
Data collection methods	In-depth interviews		Observation	Secondary data
Data sources	Social entrepreneurs	Stakeholders	Social enterprises	Social enterprises
Quality assurance criteria	Triangulation Ethical Communicative Researcher's self-awareness and development Validation of findings			

Source: Own study.

The quality assurance applied in this research include the following criteria (Creswell 2013; Dembińska 2012; Flick 2011):

- The triangulation criterion: the use of more than one data source on a given topic.
- The ethical criterion: data protection and care for the well-being of respondents, respect for their views, sensitivity to their situation.
- The communicative criterion: the research process requires dialogue with the individuals, getting to know their lifestyles and behaviours.
- The researcher's self-awareness and development: ensuring a high level of one's own awareness and knowledge (keeping a research journal, consulting on current issues with experienced researchers specialising in qualitative research).
- Validation of findings.

The author is aware of certain weaknesses and disadvantages associated with the use of qualitative methods, including the limitations of the case study method; hence, the main attention was paid to the quality of research (Flick 2011).

4. Empirical Findings and Discussion

The results of empirical research are presented and discussed based on the main research questions: (1) What factors influence the involvement of individuals in social enterprises? and (2) How does the institutional environment affect the engagement in social entrepreneurship in Poland?

4.1. Factors Affecting the Involvement in Social Enterprises

Based on the interview data, observations, and secondary sources, the research analysis showed a variety of factors for individual decisions to involve in social enterprises. As a result of the cross-sectional analysis of the examined cases, seven main factors determining the decisions of individuals to involve in social enterprises were identified: social or personal advantages, public support, random events, norms and values, self-fulfilment, social and family models, and beliefs and ideas. Selected contributions from respondents indicating these factors, based on in-depth interviews, are presented in Table 2. The cited statements of individual respondents participating in the study were anonymised and translated literally. Each quote is followed by a code (e.g., Se1, S1), which indicates respondent type (Se—social enterprise, S—stakeholder representative), whereas the digits represent the ordinal number of the respondent (interviewee). The identified factors include a wide range of motives for involvement in social enterprises and can be specified as follows.

Table 2. Involvement in social enterprises in opinion of social entrepreneurs—selected respondent statement based in individual in-depth interviews.

Social and personal advantages
<p>“We would like to achieve a better, people-oriented tourism development of our region. [...] one that will take advantage of the local potential—people, landscape, history [...] This is our main goal: to develop a customer-friendly tourism in line with world trends, [...] without forcing the visitors to do strange things or lying to them”. (Se2)</p> <p>“I do it, I mean, I run a cooperative so that I don’t drink alcohol, because I’m terminally ill for the rest of my life. [...] I do it mainly for myself, not drinking, but also for others, to help them. It’s an element of my therapy and my life strategy”. (Se16)</p> <p>“We were just long-term unemployed with problems; we wanted to get ourselves a job. And it was a problem for a long time for various reasons—our dependence, lack of offer on the market. (...). We were then using social services in the city. Social Services sent us to a Social Integration Centre, where we trained up and six of us decided to open a social cooperative”. (Se13)</p>
Public support
<p>“I would like to emphasise the role of EU funds or public funds in general. For us, they were the stimulus that enabled us to take new action. Thanks to them, we established a non-profit company and later a social cooperative, which I think of as the development of our statutory activity. This allowed us to expand the scale of professional activation of people with disabilities and improve the quality of our market offer. It would have been difficult to achieve these goals without external funding”. (Se5)</p>
Norms and values
<p>“Our main goal is to raise the man who is most abandoned and somehow excluded; to raise him to a level where he becomes independent, useful, where he regains a sense of value and dignity. [...] We believe that in every human being, somewhere deep down, there is a potential that simply needs to be extracted. At the centre of our values has always been care for people, such solidarity values, responsibility for each other”. (Se11)</p> <p>“[...] What motivated us to create a social enterprise was, first of all, the readiness to help. [...], the need to do something together, [...] the sense that it is fun to do something together, [...] that we feel good about each other, that we like each other, that we like to be together, that we want to be together, that we not only want to work with each other, but that we want to spend time together. [...] And somewhere in us, in the group of people who started this activity a few years ago, there was such a strong belief in the value of common action”. (Se15)</p>
Self-fulfilment
<p>“I wanted to do something sensible in my life; it means something good to make it really beneficial for people other than me and my family. And if it is possible to combine it with earning money, let’s say it’s possible to live one way or another, although it’s not heaps of money, but it’s possible to function as if it’s enough [...] it’s hard for me to imagine myself, for example, in some company, where it’s just about making money”. (Se11)</p> <p>“We do not put pressure on ourselves or our employees or subcontractors here. We do not negotiate totally hard-core terms of cooperation and so on. [...] We are the decision-makers, we have influence, we are not employees, [...] and someone only manages us. We have a responsibility, we are responsible for everything”. (Se3)</p>

Table 2. Cont.

Random events
“The setting-up of the organisation coincided with my personal situation, my situation in life. I adopted a child and started to socialise in these circles. I got in touch with people who were dedicated to the mission of saving children. They have often experienced unemployment and they had to earn a living for these children by themselves, what the state provides for care is not enough, they have to work anyway, and on the other hand they were unemployed. [...] We have put all this together so that caring for children fits our needs, this region, where we lived in, and so we have formed our organisation”. (Se4)
Social and family models
“When my parents started the foundation, I was one and a half years old [...] now my parents are seventy. We have to continue their mission. I have been watching this activity since childhood, I have grown up in it, it is natural for me; it is something that gives meaning to my life, and above all, many people need this kind of activity”. (Se11)
Beliefs and ideas
“I have a mission from God to help these alcohol addicts, but it’s how I help myself and live my life”. (Se16) “[...] We have come up with the idea that running a business may be a form of generating income for the association for its statutory activity. That is, if the social business quote goes well unquote, if the income is good, then the social goal will be met, because the disabled will have jobs, and there will be additional funds for our various activities”. (Se5)

Source: Own study.

4.1.1. Social or Personal Advantages

The analysis results show that none of the social entrepreneurs considered market deficits as the basic reason for their involvement in social enterprise. Instead, their decisions were influenced by social or individual needs in order to address various social problems, such as unemployment, addiction, homelessness or meeting social needs. Social needs are understood as Bradshaw (1972). The author distinguished five types of social needs: normative, perceptible, expressed, comparative and technical (Bradshaw 1972). Reasons associated with personal or social advantages predominated among the social entrepreneurs. One of the stimuli for social entrepreneurs was the readiness to address individual or group needs resulted from various problems related to health, life, family, addictions, and others, getting a job and obtaining remuneration, and thus financial security. Involvement in social enterprise development was also associated with health issues and personal well-being. The aspect of health and social reintegration was emphasised particularly by representatives of organisations supporting people with various disabilities and addictions. Owing to this, not only a workplace tailored to their abilities and commitments was guaranteed, but also their needs associated with therapy, treatment, offered support in accessing specialist care services, socialisation, etc. were addressed. The engagement of respondents in social enterprise development also resulted from the need to take into account personal health problems or limitations which were not recognised by traditional employers. An important factor for social entrepreneurs was their commitment to solving various problems identified in the local community. For example, the engagement of one of the social entrepreneurs resulted from the local development needs, i.e., promotion of the region and tourism development, including the economic prosperity of the local community.

4.1.2. Public Support

Another stimulus to undertake social enterprise activities was the availability of public support provided within the framework of both EU-funded projects and domestic programmes. This included financial tools (available in the form of non-refundable grants business start-ups, or repayable funds for the development of existing organisations) and a variety of services (consultancy, training, information). Those activities were targeted both to natural persons and organisations. The public support was primarily intended to strengthen social integration, combat marginalisation and exclusion of various citizen groups from the labour market and society.

4.1.3. Norms and Values

These factors were also partly axiologically driven, and reflected the norms and values cherished by the social entrepreneurs. The respondents emphasised rules in society (e.g., solidarity, responsibility) and internal standards of conduct (e.g., cooperation).

4.1.4. Self-Fulfilment

The respondents emphasised also the importance of self-fulfilment, which was offered by a sense of working towards 'higher goals'. This was justified by satisfaction, professional fulfilment, facilitated gaining experience, development of new skills, or addressing new challenges. The respondents also highlighted that social enterprises offer an attractive space for professional development by creating jobs for themselves in accordance with their values. Moreover, the need for independence at work was emphasised by the representatives of social enterprises.

4.1.5. Random Events

Another reason for the engagement toward social activities was related to random events (contingencies). In the analysed cases, these included occupational problems, e.g., conflict with the previous employer, accident-related health problems, progressive illness, or personal decisions related to family life (e.g., child adoption). This required a change in lifestyle, place, or form of professional involvement, often associated with the emergence of new needs.

4.1.6. Social and Family Models

The driving factor behind the social activities also included community or family models, which influenced social involvement, choice of professional path or form of activity. For example, the representative of Se11, when he joined the organisation founded by his parents, he treated it as something natural, which constituted a value in itself.

4.1.7. Beliefs and Ideas

Finally, beliefs and ideas close the list of reasons indicated by social entrepreneurs as decisive to their involvement in social entrepreneurship. Two respondents are conscious and convinced of the mission as well as implementation of activities, i.e., the founder of a social cooperative in the construction industry, which concurrently supports the treatment of alcohol addiction of its members (Se16), and the founder of Se7, which operated in the marketing industry and employed young people with various health problems. The commitment to social entrepreneurship was also caused by ideas made by the interviewees. The analysis of the cases showed that the ideas and opinions of funders on the essence of social entrepreneurship, i.e., the combination of business principles with the passion for social impact can determine their strategic decisions and actions (Wolk 2008).

Moreover, the results of empirical research on the factors due to which the researched social entrepreneurs decided to become involved in social entrepreneurship were identified and summarized in Table 3. The analysis of the collected data indicates that the involvement in the social entrepreneurship was the result of a combination of personal factors and external, contextually embedded factors (Jilinskaya-Pandey and Wade 2019; Stephan and Drencheva 2017; Korunka et al. 2003). The reasons were quite individualised to each respondent. The factors determining the involvement of social entrepreneurs varied and could not be reduced to a single approach. The interviews also differed in terms of the weight they attached to particular factors. The obtained results refer to the findings of other researchers. Several studies suggest that incentive factors play a crucial role in emergence of social enterprises, e.g., (Yitshaki and Kropp 2015; Germak and Robinson 2014; Ruskin and Webster 2011; Miller et al. 2012; Perrini and Vurro 2006; Nga and Shamuganathan 2010; Lukes and Stephan 2012). They indicated the importance of various factors analysed according to different theoretical approaches and classified to diverse typologies, e.g., pull and push factors

(Yitshaki and Kropp 2015) or external and internal factors (Perrini and Vurro 2006). Polish researchers also pointed the importance of environmental factors influencing involvement in social entrepreneurship (Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. 2014; Florczak 2016; Kurleto 2016). The study of Bogacz-Wojtanowska et al. (2014) showed that the involvement and success of social enterprises depends on many internal factors (e.g., business activity, number of customers, product quality) as well as external, environmental factors (e.g., nature, scope and forms of public support). The authors draw attention to the need for better adjustment of financial support by public funds to the needs of social enterprises, in particular, by measuring the effectiveness of the public grants for activities that contribute to socio-economic development at the local level and foster the employment of disadvantaged people in the labour market. Ciepielewska-Kowalik et al. (2015) stressed institutional and historical context for the emergency and development of social enterprises, indicated legal aspects (legislation on the NGOs and cooperatives activities) and financial and public policies. In the research carried out by Wronka (2009) “motivation and involvement of people employed in the organization” was considered as the second most important of the 26 analysed success factors for social economy organizations. The key success factors identified by the author included leadership, strong leader, favourable legal solutions, attractiveness and innovativeness of the offer, management knowledge, personal characteristics of employees who have contact with the client, cooperation with public sector organisations, social capital, involvement of the local community, and maintaining and making available accurate financial records.

Table 3. Influencing factors of the involvement in social entrepreneurship.

Specifications	Influencing Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to solve problems identified in the local community socialization of groups excluded from the labor market and society gaining job, new skills support for therapy and access to specialist care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and personal advantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> financial tools (grants, loans) services (consultancy, training, information) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rules in society (e.g., solidarity, responsibility) internal standards of conduct (e.g., cooperation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norms and values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the need for independence satisfaction in work taking up new challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-fulfilment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accident deterioration of health adoption of a child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Random events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the social commitment of family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social and family models
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perception calling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beliefs and ideas

Source: Own study.

4.2. The Institutional Context of Engagement in Social Entrepreneurship

The following considerations address the second research question: how does the institutional environment affect the engagement in social entrepreneurship in Poland? The research analysis was based on the conceptual framework adopted from North (2005, 2017), presented in Figure 1. The factors behind decisions to engage in social enterprises, identified by empirical research, can be explained by institutional theory, particularly in reference to North’s findings. He stressed the critical function of institutions, which create, define and limit people’s behaviour. The scope of the study and significance of different factors enable an analysis from the institutional perspective.

In line with this, the identified factors of involvement in social entrepreneurship can be explained by formal and informal institutions as well as their characteristics, as illustrated in Table 4. Factors such as social and personal advantages, random events, norms and values, social and family models, self-fulfilment, beliefs, and ideas can be considered in the context of socially sanctioned norms of conduct or mental models characterizing a social entrepreneur. These factors refer to the unwritten social and cultural principles and can be analysed from the perspective of informal institutions. In turn, a factor related to the public support was a result of legal regulations, which indicates a formal institution. Additionally, attention should be paid to the ways in which the institutions are implemented and enforced. They differ depending on the type of institutions.

Table 4. Institutional factors on engagement in the social entrepreneurship.

Factors	Institutions	Enforcement of the Institutions
Social and personal advantages Random events Norms and values Social and family models Self-fulfilment Beliefs and ideas	Informal	Self-control of individuals, informal social control
Public support	Formal	Codified rules laid down in documents by public decision-makers

Source: Own study.

The results point out that the engagement of individuals in social entrepreneurship was determined by personal factors (e.g., norms, beliefs, patterns, needs) as well as formal, external factors (e.g., public support). The institutional approach allows a broader analysis of the activities of social entrepreneurs not only in the context of their needs and social problems, but also taking into account the situational context in which decisions to set up a social enterprise are taken. Several studies suggest that institutional factors play a crucial role in the involvement of social entrepreneurs (e.g., Urbano et al. 2010, 2017; Ferri 2014; Estrin et al. 2013). Therefore, the presented findings justify the following theoretical proposition.

(1) The decisions of individuals regarding the engagement in social entrepreneurship are determined by the combination of social and internal norms of conduct and legal regulations.

The involvement in social entrepreneurship can be influenced by a combination of different factors. From an institutional perspective, the attention was first drawn to informal institutions. Covering a wide range of activities, they affect the behaviour of individuals in a natural way, because they are more deeply embedded than formal institutions. Hence, North (2017) points to their pervasiveness in society.

In this case, the activity based on informal institutions constituted an extension, elaborations and modification of the existing formal rules (North 2017). The involvement of social entrepreneurs resulted from the need to intervene in problem areas, which receive little, insufficient or no support from the state or other organizations. Actions undertaken in social enterprises resulted from the objective needs and expectations which reflected economic difficulties associated with the labour market, changes involving the family life, civilisational changes resulting in an increase in the incidence of addictions, mental disorders, isolation, or random events (Leś 2013; Urbano et al. 2010).

At the same time, the activity of social entrepreneurs indicated the socially sanctioned norms of behaviour (North 2017) associated with e.g.,

- “taking responsibility for those who have it uphill all the way” (Se19);
- “concern for man in the name of solidarity values, responsibility for one another” (Se11).

Involvement of social entrepreneurs was also determined by internally enforced standard of conduct (North 2017), subjective factors, such as beliefs and ideas about work, life purposes, and the way of running a business, etc. Due to the opportunity for activities related to the own needs and

values, e.g., the work conditions, teamwork, career development, the concept of social enterprise was an attractive business model for the investigated respondents.

The study also showed the importance of formal institutions defined as public support for involvement in social entrepreneurship. Public support included access to financial and non-financial resources together with rules for their implementation, e.g., the specific legal arrangements at national level in order to make resources available for the creation and development of social enterprises. Thus, the study confirmed the importance of public mechanisms as a key factor in the development of social enterprises, which is characteristic for social entrepreneurship in the European context (Pestoff and Hulgård 2015; Defourny and Nyssens 2010).

The research analysis points to a difference in the factors of social entrepreneurs who represent social enterprises from the so-called 'good practices' group and those in bankruptcy or liquidation, respectively. The representatives of the former group (e.g., S5, Se11, Se15) strongly emphasised the importance of informal institutions. Standards and values (e.g., cooperation, responsibility), and seeking self-fulfilment were important for their decision to set up a social enterprise as well as further activities. Respondents from this research group were characterised by commitment and interest in the outcomes achieved, including sustainability and development of their enterprises. The achieved goals, "successes" and outcomes strengthened their commitment and inspired them to keep going. Public support was the main reason for engaging in social entrepreneurship among those social enterprises which went bankrupt, were in liquidation, or faced economic difficulties (e.g., Se8, Se18). The respondents emphasised the importance of factors related to the use of available financial resources, which offered an opportunity to improve their occupational situation and accomplish personal goals. This group of respondents was characterised by short-term thinking and a similar business approach with less interest in the outcomes.

On the one hand, research confirms that access to financial resources is one of the key factors for the creation and development of social enterprises (Smith and Darko 2014; Sharma 2015; Gandhi and Raina 2018). At the same time, the process of effective resource mobilization can be particularly critical for social enterprises (Desa and Basu 2013). The findings of the European Commission, which is reviewing social enterprise ecosystems in 28 EU Member States and Switzerland, indicated that high dependence on the public sector, difficulties in accessing external financing and the lack of specialised services and support for business development, the lack of a supportive policy are one of the main factors limiting the take-up and expansion of social enterprise activity in Europe (European Commission 2015). Enabling social enterprises to access adequate finance means in practice a smart combination of demand and supply side of finance (Varga and Hayday 2016).

On the other hand, the findings of the study stress the importance of 'soft rules' and standards of behaviour maintained by the individuals themselves (Wilkin 2016) for social enterprises. Their role is repeatedly highlighted in institutional literature (North 2017). The formal or informal institutions generate various incentives for social entrepreneurs. These institutions influence the type, direction and intensity of social and economic activity. The system of institutions should be treated not as a set of different rules, but as a complex system that generates stimulants or destimulants of actions of varying strength. The effect of some institutions may be strengthened or weakened by others (Gruszevska 2017). The results indicate that informal institutions (norms and values, social and family models, self-fulfilment, beliefs, and ideas) are important at the stage of creating social enterprises as well as at the stage of further activity. The factors influencing of the involvement in social entrepreneurship may also affect the obtained results.

The findings are in line with the conclusion of Urbano et al. (2010). They pointed to the role of informal institutions, which affect not only the emergence of social enterprises in Catalonia but also their implementation. Based on a study in 49 countries, Ferri (2014) demonstrated that informal institution (socio-cultural factors) are more important for social entrepreneurial process than formal ones (public spending and access to funding). In line with this, given the institutional economics perspective the following theoretical proposition can be formulated.

(2) The involvement in social entrepreneurship stimulated mainly by formal institutions in the form of public support is an insufficient factor for the creation of effective social enterprises.

Public programmes associated with the availability of the necessary financial and other resources made it possible to establish social enterprises. On the one hand, actions at the public decision-maker level were aimed at stimulating entrepreneurial activity with a social objective. On the other hand, it should be noted that the rules and conditions of access to support social enterprises motivated both those genuinely interested in such a form of activity, as well as those who exploited the available opportunities and resources in an instrumental manner. Public financial support made it possible to implement planned and well-thought-out activities. At the same time, the available support 'awakened' the entrepreneurship of people who had never intended to become entrepreneurs. Additionally, the respondents did not hesitate to admit that they used the available support by chance or in order to fund their private interests and needs.

Ultimately, their choice was largely determined by financial incentives available to social enterprises, despite the founders' insufficient knowledge of relevant legal regulations and principles of operation, and often the negative opinion about this form of activity. This approach can be illustrated by the statement made by the representative of Se4, who said,

"Because it was possible to obtain a grant to set up a business. If the same grant could be obtained with a different legal form, we would have no reason to set up this complex organisational structure. We have already had one organisation. Many social enterprises were established in this way because of the the available grants". (Se4)

A similar factor was indicated by social entrepreneurs as well as stakeholders who pointed out that some business plans were devised specifically in order to use the EU funds:

- "Grant considerations only determined the choice of this form of operation. [...] We knew what we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it, for us it was only a form of achieving our goals". (Se7)
- "Many of our beneficiaries had no intention to become social entrepreneurs. These business plans were specifically created in order to obtain EU funding". (S6)

From the point of view of the interviewed stakeholder, this led not only to the establishment of enterprises 'on a trial basis' but also indicated an insufficient commitment of their founders. As a result, a number of the social enterprises survived the minimum operating period required by the subsidy contract and then went bankrupt or continued the social business without any official or content-related action. Another interviewed stakeholders pointed out the insufficient planning and effectiveness of publicly funded activities and poor preparation of future social entrepreneurs for market activities:

"If the cooperative members [...] obtained a grant and know that all they have to do is not fail for a year and spend money on what they have planned, then, in fact, many of these cooperatives were set up according to the principle 'let's try and see if we succeed' [...]". (S3)

In conclusion, the 'rules of the game' for the development of social enterprises in Poland were defined by both, the codified rules specified in documents by public decision-makers and informal social control and self-control by social entrepreneurs. As already mentioned, the informal institutions refer to unwritten social and cultural principles while formal institutions are established by law. Their observation is based on formal control but also depends on internally enforced standards of conduct by individuals. The examined respondents complained about the low quality of regulations in the area of funding social enterprises and insufficient effectiveness of their implementing. At the same time, the lack of social control mechanisms of social enterprises (e.g., through measuring and communicating social impact by means of social reports) was indicated. The importance of the quality of regulations and mechanisms concerning the public support for the creation and operation of social enterprises in Poland was identified in different evaluation reports (Stronkowski et al. 2013) and other

national studies (Korycki 2015). The institutional framework for social cooperatives (as vital part of social entrepreneurship) in Poland was assessed by Starnawska (2014) as difficult and of low quality. The author distinguished three categories of social entrepreneurs' behaviours that relate to the complex institutional environment—networking, diversification, and the blurring of borders. Thus, the behavior of social entrepreneurs reflects their presence in the informal economy. Therefore, from the institutional point of view, the findings lead to the following theoretical proposition:

(3) The low quality of financial and nonfinancial support procedure on social activities may mitigate individual involvement of social entrepreneurs.

5. Conclusions

The growing importance of social entrepreneurship both in the world and in Poland is related to several factors. First, it offers solutions that contribute to the reduction or minimization of social problems, activate unused resources, and introduce various types of innovative and efficient solutions to accelerate social change. Thus, social entrepreneurship contributes to the improvement of the state and socio-economic development. Second, it is necessary to point out the problems and the modernization processes taking place in the public administration. Therefore, the role of social entrepreneurship as a potential provider of public services in the light of limitations and inefficiency of the public sector regarding financing and meeting social needs and changes in public services provision should be recognised. Thus, the emphasis from the government toward governance should be shifted, where the role of administration is less the provision of services and more often their delegation (Leś 2013; Hausner 2008; Sharir and Lerner 2006). Third, the intensification of social problems and the emergence of the new ones (precariat, aging of societies, ecological problems, etc.) cause an increase in demand for social services. This is a premise to seek new forms and methods of operation by social organizations, including entrepreneurial solutions that offer various forms of income generation and contribute to their sustainability. Due to the role of social enterprises in the economy, state, and society, there is a further need for research and analysis in this area.

The aim of the study was to identify and analyse factors influencing the involvement of individuals in social enterprises in Poland from an institutional economics perspective. Using of empirical data and a case study methodology, three theoretical propositions have been developed. The propositions can be considered as a significant contribution that expands the existing knowledge on influencing factors on involvement in social entrepreneurship.

The analysis demonstrated that the decision to engage in social enterprises was led by several combined reasons. In total, seven factors for involvement of individuals in social enterprises were identified: social and personal advantages, public support, random events, norms and values, self-fulfilment, social and family models, and beliefs and ideas. The institutional approach allows a broader analysis of social entrepreneur activities not only in the context of their needs and social problems, but also taking into account the situational context in which decisions to set up a social enterprise are taken. On the one hand, a context of social enterprises is created by informal institutions, i.e., social values, models of conduct and beliefs. On the other hand, formal rules also play a significant role in this phenomenon. The study confirmed the importance of combination of formal and informal institutional factors for the involvement of individuals in social enterprises (proposition 1). Next, the findings of the study emphasises indicated, that the involvement in social entrepreneurship, stimulated mainly by formal institutions, understood as public support in financial and non-financial form, can be seen as an insufficient factor for the creation of effective social enterprises (proposition 2). Moreover, the study showed the crucial importance of the ways of implementing and enforcing institutions, which is rarely analyzed in the literature. This demonstrates that the low quality of financial and nonfinancial support procedure on social activities may mitigate individual involvement of social entrepreneurs (proposition 3).

The research analysis leads to the observation that the institutional environment affects the involvement of individuals in social enterprise at the stage of creating an organisation (motivation

stage), as well as at the stage of conducted activities, and thus influences the results contributing to the development or limiting the conducted activities. The identified institutional factors included the system of positive and negative incentives (North 2017), stimulated and limited the opportunities for the development of social entrepreneurship in Poland.

The implications of the results are important both for theory and practice. First, the empirical analysis contributes to a better understanding of involvement in social entrepreneurship by exploring the factors influencing the activity of social entrepreneurs. It shows that the involvement of individuals in social entrepreneurship should be considered holistically, by showing various factors that affect the involvement of individuals. At the same time, the study broadens the definition of social entrepreneurs, understood as a person who creates enterprises to meet social objectives rather than generate personal financial profits (Shaw and Carter 2007) by showing the importance of other influencing factors, e.g., personal advantages, beliefs. Second, the findings of the research contribute to knowledge about the role of institutional factors in the creation of social enterprises. Given the institutional perspective, the analysis provides new insights into the factors for individual engagement in this area. As a result of the research, the importance of norms, values, patterns, i.e., informal institutions embedded in culture, which shape the choices made by individuals and determine the effects of social activities, has been pointed out. Analysing the importance of institutional factors provides new insights and knowledge about the studied phenomenon. It indicates the need to include in further research studies the institutional context.

Moreover, the study results are important for public decision-makers to design good quality solutions supporting the creation and development of social enterprises. High quality institutions are those that cause socially desirable behaviours of social and economic organizations (Rodrik 2011). Thus, it indicates that the essence of regulation is just as important as the way it is implemented. In this context, the process of monitoring and evaluation of solutions implemented by decision makers becomes more important, as well as the necessity to take into account the conclusions from this study.

Based on this research, different recommendations for further analyses with a view to gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon can be indicated. Further investigation in Poland and countries with similar backgrounds may focus on the performance of social enterprises (in terms of their stability, sustainability, and/or social impact) in the context of different types of factors that characterise social entrepreneurs. According to North (2005) and other institutional scholars (e.g., Helmke and Levitsky 2004), an important direction of research on social entrepreneurship development may include coherence between formal (legal regulations) and informal institutions (social norms and values, mental models). An analysis of the quality of institutions which provide the conditions for the development of social activities may also be of interest. In addition, further research may concern the examination of how the ethical nature of social entrepreneurs (the values they adhere to) differentiates the results obtained by social enterprises.

The conducted research has some limitations. First, the analysis results are not representative because of the qualitative approach. Hence, the findings cannot be generalised to the entire social entrepreneurship sector in Poland. Second, the study focuses only on the Polish experiences, which limits its international applicability. Third, the analysis concerned the institutions, which are difficult to measure in terms of their manifestations, quality and strength of impact.

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Appendix A. Social Enterprises Profiles and Sample Characteristics

Social Enterprise (Se)	Legal Form	Year of Foundation	Founder Type	Scope of Social Activity	Scope of Business Activity
Se1	Social cooperative	2005	Natural person	Professional and social activation of people with disabilities	Services: IT and training
Se2	Association	2009	Natural person	Local development, promotion of tourism, development of entrepreneurship among inhabitants	Promotion and sale of local products, tourist information
Se3	Social cooperative	2012	Natural person	Employment, community service activities	Services: advertising, printing, sewing, training
Se4	Social cooperative	2014	Legal person	Professional activation of women from rural areas, integration of parents adopting children, development of local community	Services: caring for children, old people
Se5	Non-profit company	2007	Legal person	Professional and social activation of people with disabilities	Services: catering and restaurant; rental of training rooms
Se6	Social cooperative	2014	Natural person	Professional and social activation of excluded groups	Services and facilities: catering and restaurant
Se7	Social cooperative	2011	Natural person	Professional and social activation of excluded groups	Services: advertising, online promotion, PR
Se8	Foundation	2017	Natural person	Professional activation of excluded persons	Restaurant services
Se9	Social cooperative	2007	Natural person	Professional activation of excluded persons	Services: café, cleaning services
Se10	Social cooperative	2011	Natural person, legal person	Professional and social activation of people with disabilities; promotion of the art of people with disabilities	Services: craftwork
Se11	Foundation	1989	Natural persons	Professional and social activation of excluded groups (homeless people, immigrants)	Agricultural holding
Se12	Social cooperative	2012	Natural person	Professional activation of the unemployed	Services: childcare (nursery, kindergarten)
Se13	social cooperative	2007	Natural person	Professional activation of excluded persons	Services: cleaning and maintenance of green areas
Se14	Social cooperative	2009	Community, NGO	Professional activation of excluded persons, development of local community	Services: food and beverage, training
Se15	Foundation	2007	Legal person, NGO	Activation of the unemployed and persons threatened by social exclusion through work and education	Services and facilities: carpentry, catering, laundry, training; Production: woodworking products
Se16	Social cooperative	2011	Legal person, NGO	Professional and social activation of excluded people (substance addicts)	Services: repair, cleaning, construction, care and support services
Se17	Social cooperative	2013	Natural person	Professional and social activation of people with disabilities	Services: maintenance of green areas

Social Enterprise (Se)	Legal Form	Year of Foundation	Founder Type	Scope of Social Activity	Scope of Business Activity
Se18	Social cooperative	2015	Natural person	Professional and social activation of the unemployed	Services: maintenance of green areas
Se19	Non-profit company	2013	Legal person, NGO	Promotion of culture, art, integration of the academic community	Food and beverage services
Se20	Foundation	1990	Natural person	Activation and reintegration of adults with disabilities	Services: organisation of cultural events
Se21	Foundation	2015	Legal person	Social and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities	Craftwork
Se22	Labour cooperatives	2014	Natural person	Promotion of social activity	Services: consulting and advisory services

Source: Own study.

Appendix B. Stakeholders' Profiles and Sample Characteristics

Stakeholder (S)	Represented Organisation/Sector	Scope of the Organisation's Activity	Interviewee Function in the Organisation
S1	Public administration, regional level/Public	Coordination of social economy policies in the region	CEO
S2	Public administration, regional level/Public	Research and analytical activities, including those related to SE, cooperation with social economy support centres	CEO
S3	Loan and guarantee organisation/Social	Financial services (advisory services, loans, guarantees) for the social and private sectors	CEO
S4	Social economy support centre/Social	Consultancy, training, information, incubation of ES entities	CEO
S5	Public administration, regional level/Public	Coordination of social economy policy in the region; running a social economy support centre (including counselling, grants for cooperatives)	Consultant, expert, researcher on SE
S6	Social economy support centre/Social	Supporting social enterprises and other social economy entities through consultancy, training workshops, information and incubation	Manager
S7	Municipal/Public Office	Supervision and coordination of the municipality's activities (including social issues)	CEO
S8	Union of labour cooperatives/Private	Support for individuals and organisations interested in creating and developing cooperative activities (consulting, financial support, ocean of cooperative activities)	CEO
S9	Financial sector/Private	Loans and guarantees to the social economy sector, commercial entities and individuals	CEO
S10	Municipal Labour Office/Public	Professional activation of the unemployed; non-refundable grants for the creation of social cooperatives	CEO

Source: Own study.

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