

## **Economic and Social Potential of the Third Sector in Poland – A Case of Associations and Foundations\***

Sabina AUGUSTYN

Krakow University of Economics  
Cracow, Poland

Correspondence should be addressed to: Sabina AUGUSTYN; [sabina.augustyn@uek.krakow.pl](mailto:sabina.augustyn@uek.krakow.pl)

\* Presented at the 44th IBIMA International Conference, 27-28 November 2024 Granada, Spain

### **Abstract**

*Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)* are often called the *third sector* or *non-profit sector*. There are various definitions of these terms, but they all refer to institutions operating independently of governments, on a voluntary basis and for the community and its members. They are usually not-for-profit, primarily concerned with providing services, including the cooperation of community members, with their activities often focused on people who are socially or economically excluded. Their impact on societies is continuously growing, and their importance in national economies is also growing.

In this paper, an attempt was made to analyze the performance of the two most popular organizations of the third sector in Poland, i.e. associations and foundations. The analysis is based on the year 2022, but the changes in selected factors between 2010 and 2022 are also presented and discussed. The paper focuses mostly on the social and economic capital of the organizations studied.

As the research has shown, there are significant differences between foundations and associations, but at the same time great similarities can be observed. The activity of this sector has changed over time, being a reflection of the socio-economic changes taking place in Poland in the period under study. These organizations constitute a significant element in the socio-economic reality of Poland, meeting the specific needs of society and activating groups exposed to various types of social and economic exclusion.

**Keywords:** NGO, third sector, social economy, associations, foundations, Poland