

**Journal of Social  
Economy Law**

C O N F E R E N C E R E P O R T

**Self-Governance, Cooperatives,  
Entrepreneurship – the Art of Civic  
Self-Determination. Selected Legal,  
Economic, and Social Issues.  
Between Theory and Practice**

**6th Euroregional Scientific  
Conference, Rzeszów, April 3–4,  
2024**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The report presents the course of the 6th Euroregional Scientific Conference “Local Self-Government, Cooperatives, Entrepreneurship or the Art of Civic Self-Determination. Selected Legal, Economic and Social Issues: Between Theory and Practice”, held in Rzeszów on 3 and 4 April 2024 and co-organised by the Department of Civil and Commercial Law of the University of Rzeszów, the Podkarpackie Provincial Assembly, the Cooperative Research Institute in Sopot and further institutional partners. The proceedings opened with the traditional “Young Scholar” panel and continued in three thematic sessions devoted respectively to entrepreneurship, to cooperatives in theory and practice, and to local self-government as an element of civic self-determination. The*

*papers addressed the principle of democratic member control and cooperative autonomy, cooperative insolvency, the appealability of resolutions of the general meeting, energy cooperatives and citizen energy communities, social and housing cooperatives, supervision over cooperative savings and credit unions, and the protection of whistleblowers.*

## KEYWORDS

cooperative law; democratic member control; social cooperatives; housing cooperatives; energy cooperatives; cooperative savings and credit unions; local self-government; professional self-governance; entrepreneurship.

On April 3 and 4, 2024, the 6th Euroregional Scientific Conference, titled *“Local Self-Government, Cooperatives, Entrepreneurship or the Art of Civic Self-Determination. Selected Legal, Economic, and Social Issues: Between Theory and Practice.”* The event was co-organized by the Department of Civil and Commercial Law at the University of Rzeszów, the Podkarpackie Provincial Assembly, the Cooperative Research Institute in Sopot, the Industrial Development Agency Tarnobrzeg Branch, the Carpathian Euroregion Association, the Podkarpackie Provincial Institutions Complex in Rzeszów, ELSA Rzeszów, and the “Amicus Curiae” Academic Circle for Economic and Commercial Law.

The conference is part of two academic and research series previously organized by the Faculty of Law and Administration at the University of Rzeszów: a series of Euroregional events organized jointly with the Carpathian Euroregion Association and the *“Between Theory and Practice”* series.

This time, the discussion focused on an issue that had not previously been analyzed in great depth, either in theory or in practice. New phenomena, such as the energy transition, climate change, and shifts in society’s understanding of property rights, ownership, and consumer use of goods, require a new, interdisciplinary approach—not only from the social sciences. The existing institution of the cooperative is taking on new significance in legal and economic transactions. However, the legal and organizational structure of cooperatives raises numerous questions, including those regarding the legal nature (status) of their members, the legal consequences of cooperatives going bankrupt or undergoing “transformation,” and, finally, the understanding of the very idea of self-governance among cooperative members. This last element is also linked to a broader understanding of self-governance in the context of local or professional self-governance. All aspects of self-governance, however, will be connected to the need—or even the art—of understanding citizens’ self-determination, as well as the idea of the common good. After all, every cooperative, in the interest of its members, engages in joint economic, cultural, educational, and social activities. The assets belonging to the cooperative are the private property of its

members. Local government entities can also be members of cooperatives. Hence the final element: entrepreneurship.

On April 3, 2024, the traditional “Young Scholar” panel took place. During the event, undergraduate and graduate students had the opportunity to present their papers. The panel was moderated by Dr. Michał Chajda from the Department of Civil and Commercial Law. The first presentation was given by Katarzyna Bróż, M.A. (Department of Civil and Commercial Law, University of Rzeszów), who spoke on the topic “The Activities of Church Organizations in the Republic of Poland, with Particular Emphasis on Social Cooperatives”—highlighting in her presentation the process by which the charitable activities of church institutions have taken shape. The second speaker was Ms. Dominika Nowak, M.A. (Department of Administrative Sciences, University of Rzeszów), who addressed the topic “Autonomy of Higher Education Institutions in Light of Case Law—Selected Aspects.” The remarks presented were particularly valuable and innovative, as they compared the classic characteristics of autonomy with the new challenges and areas of research and organizational development that higher education institutions must face.

The third presentation was delivered by Ms. Marta Golowska, M.A. (Department of Historical and Theoretical Legal Sciences, University of Rzeszów), who, in collaboration with and under the guidance of Dr. hab. Artur Łuszczynski, Professor at the University of Rzeszów, prepared a presentation on “*Philosophical and Legal Dilemmas of Medical Autonomy and the Role of the Professional Self-Governance of Physicians*.” The presentation highlighted the need to understand self-governance also through the lens of the professional conditions faced by various professions, including those that command a high level of public trust, such as the medical profession.

Next, Mikołaj Kantorowski, M.A. (UR), presented on the topic “*Employment of Convicts by Social Cooperatives*,” providing a detailed analysis of this issue as it relates to both individuals who have completed their sentences and those currently incarcerated. In turn, Michał Skóra, M.A. (Department of Labor Law and Social Insurance, University of Rzeszów), highlighted another objective of social cooperatives, presenting on the topic “*The Role of Social Cooperatives in the Economic Integration of People with Disabilities*.”

The sixth presentation was given by Kacper Krauz, M.A., from the Marshal’s Office of the Rzeszów Province, who addressed the topic “*The Audit Committee as an Internal Control Body of the Provincial Executive Board*.” Significantly, self-governance itself is not an unlimited value and, for it to function properly, must be subject to appropriate corrective mechanisms.

The next lecture was devoted to “*Selected Aspects of Establishing Energy Cooperatives in Poland*.” During the presentation, the current regulatory and institutional requirements were outlined—those that entrepreneurs applying to register energy cooperatives must meet. I had the great pleasure of delivering this presentation.

The following presentations were given by: Nikola Bodzioch (UR) on the topic *"Integrity in Philanthropy: Financial Fraud in Charitable Organizations"*; Anna Balicka (UR) on *"Legal Aspects of Agricultural Production Cooperatives' Adaptation to Climate Change: Challenges, Regulations, and Support Opportunities"*; Artur Chmiel (UR) on *"The Role of Cooperatives in Social Adaptation to Climate Change"*; Daria Kowalska (UR) *"Social Responsibility of Cooperatives and Entrepreneurship: Fulfilling a Social Mission While Achieving Business Goals"*; Diana Kut (UR) *"Selected Issues Facing Housing Cooperatives"* and Katarzyna Żmuda *"Activities of Social Cooperatives Serving Individuals Released from Correctional Facilities."* All of the above presentations strongly emphasized the impact of cooperatives' social activities and their connection to the external environment, as well as their mutual interactions with it.

At the end of this part of the conference, Stanisław Ludwikowski, M.A., delivered a very timely presentation titled *"Cryptocurrencies—A Shield Against the State's Fiscal Sword,"* which highlighted trends in the cryptocurrency financial market and the phenomenon of speculation, which also affects cooperative financial institutions. A lively discussion ensued after this segment. Its conclusions addressed, among other things, the need for rational regulation of new phenomena and institutions to prevent harmful overregulation, which is a major problem in today's developed economies.

On April 4, 2024, the main part of the substantive deliberations took place in the auditorium of the Podkarpackie Provincial Assembly. However, before the proceedings began, an exhibition by artists from Rymanów—sculptor Krzysztof Śliwka, painter Jacek Śliwka, and painter and iconographer Julita Pelczar—accompanying the conference was officially opened.

The main conference panels were officially opened by: dr hab. Grzegorz Maroń, prof. UR Deputy Director of the Institute of Legal Sciences at the College of Social Sciences of the University of Rzeszów and Professor at the University of Rzeszów; dr hab. Roman Uliasz, prof. UR, Head of the Department of Civil and Commercial Law at the University of Rzeszów and Professor at the University of Rzeszów; and Jerzy Borcz, Chairman of the Podkarpackie Provincial Assembly. The Chairman of the Provincial Assembly also mentioned the upcoming 50th anniversary of the academic career of Prof. dr hab. Elżbieta Dyni, former Vice Rector of the University of Rzeszów, extending his heartfelt congratulations to her.

The moderator of the first session on Thursday was dr Piotr Pałka a professor at SANS representing the Cooperative Research Institute in Sopot.

The central theme of this session was entrepreneurship in the broadest sense. The substantive part of the proceedings was inaugurated by a presentation by dr hab. Dominik Bierecki, professor at the University of Słupsk (UP) from the Cooperative Research Institute in Sopot, titled *"Principles of Democratic Member Control and Cooperative Autonomy in Polish Law,"* which outlined the most fundamental principles underpinning and defining the scope of properly understood cooperativism.

The second presentation in this session was delivered by dr hab. Joanna Kruczalak-Jankowska, a professor at the University of Gdańsk, on *"Selected Issues of Cooperative Insolvency"* in which she addressed the most current issues related to practice, bankruptcy procedures, and case law.

The first panel also featured dr hab. Krystyna Leśniak-Moczuk a professor at the University of Rzeszów, who presented a paper titled *"The Expressive Women's Social Movement as an Example of Civic Engagement"* in which she outlined the methodology for sociological research on women's civic movements and, in this context, described the characteristics of the Krystyna Polskie movement. In addition, a recording by Dr Kamil Sulej, President of the Catholic Association *"Civitas Christiana"* was played, in which he briefly discussed the topic *"Ethics in Business and Catholic Social Teaching."*

In turn, dr hab. Roman Uliasz, a professor at the University of Rzeszów, addressed the issue of the appealability of resolutions passed by a cooperative's general meeting, comparing them, among other things, with model solutions applicable to limited liability companies, while placing a clear emphasis on highlighting the corporate and institutional differences. The first panel also featured a representative of the conference's content partner and moderator of the first session, dr Piotr Pałka, Prof. SANS from the Cooperative Research Institute in Sopot, who presented the topic *"Citizen Energy Community"* thereby outlining the latest changes to energy law and the Renewable Energy Sources Act concerning the institutionalization of associations of individuals and entities producing energy from renewable sources.

The next presentation was given by Tomasz Miśko, Director of the Tarnobrzeg Branch of the Industrial Development Agency (ARP), who spoke on the topic *"ARP's Support for Entrepreneurship in the Podkarpacie and Lublin Regions"* The final presentation in this session was given by Dr. Artur Lis of the Catholic University of Lublin and focused on *"Competency Based Management"*

The second Thursday panel, titled *"Cooperatives in Theory and Practice"* which began after the break, was moderated by ks. dr hab. Sławomir Fundowicz, professor at the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). The presentation session was opened by prof. dr hab. Jan Olszewski, a professor at the University of Rzeszów, with a presentation titled *"Selected Issues in Artificial Intelligence (AI) Law in Support of Economic Activity"* in which, in addition to the main topic of AI, other factors such as digital currency and FinTech and RegTech technologies which are transforming the contemporary legal and regulatory environment were also discussed. The second presentation was delivered by Julita Pelczar, the aforementioned artist and painter, who is also the chair of the board of the "Kogutek" Social Cooperative in Rymanów. Her presentation focused on *"The Activities of the 'Kogutek' Social Cooperative and Selected Legal Issues from a Practitioner's Perspective"* The presentation by dr Elżbieta Małecka from the Academy of Humanities and

Economics in Łódź was devoted to the topic of “KNF Supervision of Cooperative Savings and Credit Unions” and focused on the process of changes regarding the extension of supervision to cooperative credit unions.

From a practical standpoint, Edward Słupek, chairman of the board of the “Zodiak” Housing Cooperative in Rzeszów, also gave a very valuable presentation titled “*Housing Cooperatives and Selected Legal Issues from a Practitioner’s Perspective*”. Among other topics, the principles of cooperativism including the principle of collegiality were discussed in the context of how housing cooperatives operate. Returning to the topic of cooperative savings and credit unions, dr Michał Chajda from Department of Civil and Commercial Law at the University of Rzeszów, presented on “*Cooperative Savings and Credit Unions Selected Issues*”. During the lecture, previously discussed regulatory issues were also addressed, and current case law was presented.

The presentation, given by dr Krzysztof Buczek from the Public School Complex in Rymanów, was titled “*Franciszek Stefczyk (December 2, 1861 – June 30, 1924), teacher, historian, economist, social activist, and patriot: leader of the cooperative movement. Life and Work. Other Examples of Galician Cooperativism*” was primarily dedicated to presenting the traditions and history of cooperativism in the Podkarpacie region, as well as the very local Iwonicz-Rymanów tradition.

As part of the conference, the president and program director of the Prof. Krzysztof Żmijewski Association for Efficiency, Rafał Czaja and dr inż. Grzegorz Maśloch also gave presentation, titled “*The Role of Local Government in the Development of Energy Cooperatives*” from the perspective of projects carried out jointly with the National Center for Agricultural Support and the Podkarpackie Voivodeship Local Government, aimed at promoting and implementing initiatives in the areas of renewable energy and prosumerism.

As planned, the closing presentation of this part of the conference was delivered by dr Rajmund Stapiński, representing both the Marshal’s Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship and the Department of Economic Law at the Institute of Public Administration (INP) of the University of Rzeszów. The title of his presentation was: “*Urban business incubators as an example of supporting economic activity at the local level*”. It aligned in many respects with the perspective presented by ARP Director Tomasz Miśko. The presentation provided an overview not only of the institutional but also of the programmatic elements of the ongoing planning and development process in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the areas of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the acquisition of significant funds from foreign investors.

All of the presentations delivered during Session 2 were very well received by the audience. The discussions that followed highlighted the highly practical aspects of the individual presentations and explored the direction of future changes.

The third part of the conference, titled "*Local Self-Government as an Element of Civic Self-Determination*" was moderated by dr Rafał Polak, director of the Office of the Podkarpackie Provincial Assembly and assistant professor at the State Higher School of Applied Sciences (PANS) in Krosno.

The keynote presentation in this area was delivered by dr hab. Eugeniusz Moczuk, a professor at the Rzeszów University of Technology, and was titled "*Irving L. Janis's Theory of Bad Decision-Making in Local Government, Cooperatives, and Social Movements: A Sociological Perspective*" The speaker drew particular attention to the mechanisms involved in decision-making, as well as to issues related to their proper study and the applicable classification system.

Jerzy Borcz, Chairman of the Podkarpackie Provincial Assembly, in his speech titled "*Local Self-Government—The Foundation of Democracy*" emphasized the importance of cooperation as well as the connections between the state of democracy and local self-government. The speech also addressed the semantic boundaries of both concepts and the discrepancies in their meanings that arise in practice.

Meanwhile, Aleksander Cisek, a legal advisor representing the Regional Chamber of Legal Advisors in Rzeszów and, at that time, Vice Dean of the Chamber's Council, presented "*Professional Self-Governance of Legal Advisors*" with particular emphasis on the role of legal advisors in the process of protecting the law.

Dr Paweł Wais, Director of the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in Rzeszów, also spoke during this session, delivering a lecture on "*Self-Governance in the Strategic Documents of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship*" This extremely interesting presentation was rich in insights regarding the long-term development prospects of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, in which cooperatives, broadly understood, may also become an important element.

Andrzej Dziugan, a representative of the Podkarpackie Provincial Network of Educational Institutions and deputy director of PPNEI, also gave a substantive presentation in which he spoke about "*Student Self-Governance*" including from the perspective of a school principal.

The topic of dr Kamil Szpyt's presentation from the Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski University in Kraków, titled "*Student Self-Governance and Artificial Intelligence*" sparked lively discussions. A number of comments and questions focused on how the functioning of society and selfgovernance itself, will change in the context of the technological and social revolution brought about by AI.

The next speaker, dr Oskar Bróż from the Department of Economic Law at the University of Rzeszów, presented on "*The Role of Local Government in the Healthcare System Selected Legal Issues*". The main points of his presentation focused on the need to ensure appropriate and balanced regulation regarding the operation of publicly accessible pharmacies and access to medications and medical services.



The final presentation of the session and of the entire conference was delivered by Anna Kantor-Kilian, Ph.D., from the University of Warsaw, on the topic *"The Situation of Whistleblowers in Local Government Units Based on EU Directive 2019/1937"*. The discussion of this topic also drew considerable interest from both the students in the audience and local government officials. The failure to implement the discussed directives, along with successive generations of draft laws, is stirring up growing concern regarding the need to ensure a constitutionally guaranteed democratic state governed by the rule of law. A number of comments during this session also addressed issues related to the protection of personal data.

The conference concluded with a brief address by dr hab. Roman Uliasz, professor at the University of Rzeszów and head of the Department of Civil and Commercial Law at the University of Rzeszów, who raffled off a copy of *Cooperative Law: A Commentary* (Warsaw, 2024), sponsored by C.H. Beck Publishing House.

The organizers would like to extend their sincere thanks to all the speakers, panelists, moderators, participants, members of the Scientific Committee and the Organizing Committee, as well as the students and others who supported the organization of the conference.

#### S C I E N T I F I C C O M M I T T E E O F T H E C O N F E R E N C E

prof. dr hab. Elżbieta Dynia  
 prof. dr hab. Bernadetta Fuchs  
 prof. Mustafa Avci, Anadolu University, (Turcja)  
 dr hab. Dominik Bierecki, prof. UP w Słupsku  
 prof. Angelo Vigliani Ferraro dell'Università "Mediterranea" di Reggio Calabria (Włochy)  
 dr hab. Sławomir Fundowicz, prof. KUL  
 doc. JUDr. Regina Hučková, PhD., Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach (Słowacja)  
 dr hab. Joanna Krucalak-Jankowska, prof. UG  
 dr hab. Krystyna Leśniak-Moczuk, prof. UR  
 dr hab. Eugeniusz Moczuk, prof. PRz  
 dr hab. Tomasz Długosz, prof. UJ  
 dr hab. Jan Olszewski, prof. UR  
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 dr hab. Roman Uliasz, prof. UR  
 dr Piotr Pałka, prof. SANS w Sopocie  
 dr Krzysztof Buczek  
 dr Elżbieta Małecka  
 dr Rafał Polak  
 dr Kamil Szpyt  
 dr Paweł Wais

#### O R G A N I Z I N G C O M M I T T E E

dr Oskar Bróz  
 dr Michał Chajda  
 dr Izabela Fac



dr Arkadiusz Dorian Leśniak-Moczuk  
dr Jakub Michał Łukasiewicz  
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