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the European Union. The contents of

Mapping social
entrepreneurship
for Roma communities
National Report

Greece

Project information

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|----------------------|--|
| Project acronym: | SERCo |
| Project title: | Social Entrepreneurship for Roma Communities |
| Agreement number: | JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8096 |
| Project website: | www.serco-project.eu |
| Authoring partner: | Greece |
| Report version: | Final |
| Date of preparation: | 14/12/2016 |

Document history:

| Date | Version | Author(s) | Description |
|------------|---------|-----------|-------------|
| 24/03/2016 | 1.0 | Greece | |
| 14/12/2016 | Final | Greece | |
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Project Description

The project promotes social economy as an effective instrument for integrated development of the Roma communities by:

- 1) analyzing the potential of applying social economy practices within Roma communities, from a social, economic and institutional point of view;
- 2) engaging policy-makers and civil servants and training Roma mediators for developing social enterprises; and
- 3) assisting Roma social business initiatives and promoting social economy within Roma communities and to the general public.

The SERCo partners recognize that social entrepreneurship can be a solution to the issues of Roma people, since it:

- helps resolving some of the existing needs of the community;
- facilitates the qualification on the job;
- uses local resources and allows the development of more entrepreneurs;
- supports traditional crafts;
- increases the qualification and education level;
- stimulates solidarity and lead to the improvement of the relationships between the members of the community;
- represents a self-help method;
- allows hiring people in vulnerable situations.

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The project's core deliverables are:

- guidelines for Roma social entrepreneurship
- Mediators' training programme
- One-to-one mentoring for social enterprise development
- SERCO VLE for mutual learning
- Public roundtables & info days
- Network for Roma Social Economy

SERCO Consortium:

- University of Piraeus Research Center, / www.kep.unipi.gr , Greece – SERCo Coordinator
- IDEA ROM ONLUS, www.idearom.it , Italy
- CESIE, www.cesie.org, Italy
- The European Roma Information Office-ERIO , www.erionet.eu , Belgium

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- Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “AMALIPE”, www.amalipe.com , Bulgaria
- Fundacio Privada Pere Closa, www.fundaciopereclosa.org , Spain
- Tolerance and Mutual Aid Foundation (TMAF), Bulgaria
- Four Elements, www.4-elements.org , Greece
- Association Promoting Social Inclusion PAKIV (ACPSI PAKIV), www.pakiv.ro, Romania

Introduction

Social economy is a way of challenging societies. In general, it is an answer to the alienation and non-satisfaction of needs by the traditional private sector or the public sector in times of socioeconomic crisis (Frank Moulaert and Oana Ailenei, 2005). The high rates of unemployment in the past decades and the loss of protection of the welfare system clearly explain the growing interest in social economy and the importance to look for solutions to create new job opportunities, of setting up worker-owned co-operatives, and the furtherance of entrepreneur answers (Mellor et al. 1988).

Under this perspective, SERCo approach intends to show the importance of developing social economy initiatives to improve the economic situation of Roma communities. In fact, Roma’s history has been featured by an adaptation to different countries and a survival attitude in different societies. For this reason, entrepreneurship seems a common behaviour of Roma culture.

However, entrepreneurship policies and social economy initiatives usually do not target Roma communities in particular. Low-income classes usually face difficulties when creating new entrepreneurial initiatives and, unfortunately, entrepreneurial projects easily born in high-income classes or wealthy environments (Kantis, 2008). According to the Report on Social Entrepreneurship (GEM, 2011), most of those who start social entrepreneurship ventures have post-compulsory education or are graduates, so individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to engage in social entrepreneurial activities. At this point and having in consideration that people aged 25-34 and 34-44 have highest propensity of being involved in social entrepreneurship activities (GEM, 2011), entrepreneurship policies and political encouragement of social economy should focus on young people with less social opportunities and, even more, on those who traditionally have their economy based on self-employment initiatives. Therefore, exploring how entrepreneurship and social economy can promote the inclusion of Roma communities is a strategy that ought to be considered.

Aim of the report

The aim of this report is to offer a first glance about the meaning of social economy phenomena, some benefits that it can offer to Roma and, last but not least, a state of art of social entrepreneurship resources in each partner's country: Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Romania and Spain.

The main part of the report covers the particular national situations. The idea is to map the public policies and actions, which directly impact on social economy in each country; the relevant stakeholders within the social economy sector; which may help partners to realize about the strategies and the allies of entrepreneurial processes; the social entities that are working to foster Roma-led entrepreneurial initiatives; and the stakeholders' perception about the impact that social economy might have on Roma communities.

Proposed methodology

In order to achieve a completed report, the consortium has decided to include data from other studies or institutions, and the opinions from policy makers, Roma leaders, Roma organizations and social economy actors at each national context. Consortium members did some interviews to analyse their content and to reflect on the potential impact of social economy on Roma communities.

Moreover, SERCo partners agreed to work on the same methodology to produce similar reports. To achieve this, partners developed a questionnaire and interview guidelines to ensure national reports followed the same structure and shape. The process has been led by Amalipe (Bulgaria), Fundació Pere Closa (Spain) and TMAF (Bulgaria).

This has resulted in six national reports (Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, Belgium, Italy and Romania) which have the same common part but differ in the national section. Each report is available in 7 languages: English, Greek, Bulgarian, Spanish, French, Italian and Romanian.

These national reports will help designing guidelines for Roma social entrepreneurship later in the project. The guidelines will be transferred to Roma mediators with the idea to start different Roma-led start-ups with groups of 4 to 5 Roma.

Framework of social economy

According to the report *Social Economy and Roma communities, challenges and opportunities* co-financed by European Social Fund (2012), “at European level there are no consensus over a definition of social economy”.

There are different definitions of social economy. For instance, the Euro-centred perspective, which is based on the Francophone approach (XIX century), generally understands social economy as “*the study of all efforts made to improve the condition of the people*” (Gide at Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005: 2040).

As Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) specify in their article “Social Economy, Third Sector and Solidarity Relations: A Conceptual Synthesis from history to Present”, social economy represents an Hybrid Typology that refers to a wide form of initiatives and organization which shows that the economy is not limited to the market but includes principles of redistribution and reciprocity.

Moreover, social economy can be divided by the third sector, which refers to a sector distinct from the private sector and the state; the solidarity economy, which refers to voluntary and reciprocity basis that promotes cooperative initiatives; and finally, the social economy not as a whole but more restricted into the economy of co-operatives.

Moreover, social economy is a good tool to promote the common good and mostly people’s self-worth who are involved in such initiatives. Broadly speaking, the social economy idiosyncrasy is far away from materialism but close to cooperation and solidarity positions. In fact, experience has shown that the intention of social entrepreneurs is, most of the times, motivated by an intent to promote more democratic societies in which women’s roles are considered to be the social motor, and social equality and sustainable development are principle aims (Lévesque, 2001).

There are indeed many social initiatives about production, commercialization, consumption and financing which income is re-invested in the community through a democratic logic as the promotion of equality and the human respect. Likewise, work co-operatives and collective services are based on new organizational forms that are focused on principles of redistribution and reciprocity to establish a collective well-being and recreate social bonds between the people within their communities (Lipietz, 2003).

For this reason, it is important to consider social economy and social entrepreneurship as a way of young Roma motivation that can contribute to contemplate new economically benefits for their communities and neighbourhoods. All in all, the impulse of social economy may offer new labour market opportunities to Roma community, developing new skills and training capacities to those who are more vulnerable, promoting community improvements in the fields of health, education, employment and housing, and promoting capacity building and engaged citizenry.

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Greece: National context and the Roma community inclusion

Although the economy of Greece had improved in recent decades due to the industrial development and tourism, presently the country faces a severe debt crisis and has many challenges to face, such as the low rate of development and the large unemployment. Greek economy is mainly based on service sector (85%) and industry (12%), while the agricultural sector consists only 3% of the national economic output. The most important economic industries in Greece are tourism and merchant shipping. In fact, about 15 million international tourists visit Greece every year, which makes it the 7th most visited country in the EU and the 16th in the world. Regarding the merchant shipping, Greece has the largest merchant marine in the world as it covers 16% of the world's total capacity.

In 2010, the country received a large loan from the World Monetary Fund and the European Union. In exchange for this large bailout, the government announced combined spending cuts and tax increases on top of the tough austerity measures already taken. The financial assistance by the EU and the IMF has no impressive results so far and the austerity packages have not helped much. Despite the many austerity measures, the government deficit does not reduce accordingly, leading to largest recession.

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An overall view of social economy in Greece

In order to deal with the large unemployment, the social entrepreneurship is a pillar for occupation and entrepreneurship, as well as the solution in social exclusion. The cooperative field in Greece is located in 1914 with law 602/1914 that was the first to officially introduce the cooperative concept and entity. However, the social economy and in particular the social entrepreneurship were institutionally recognized in 2011 under the law 4019/2011, that is based on the European experience and the successful examples of the Social Cooperatives of Limited Responsibility, which are the first officially recognized forms of social enterprise in Greece. According to this law (No 4019/2011), the social economy is defined as all economic, business, productive and social activities which are undertaken by legal entities or associations, whose statutory purpose is the pursuit of collective benefit and the purpose of general social interest.

The organizations of social economy are inspired by basic principles, such as solidarity, social cohesion, and dominance of human against capital and social responsibility and democratic decision-making. In between the organizations of social economy, social enterprises are the ones that are implemented, aiming to give solution in many social problems and to improve future prospects of people, as well as local communities. The creation of social enterprises is related to specific needs that have not been satisfied and their basic objective is to promote

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social innovation by adopting long-term solutions. Main characteristic is the their circular operation, in a way that all the income that comes from the selling goods and services, is invested again in the enterprise aiming in the support of the of their social purpose and not in the increase of the income for their members. This option of the entrepreneurship focuses on people and the social cohesion, which means that when the social enterprise blossoms, society blossoms as well.

In Greece, according to the law No 4019/2011 about the social economy and the social entrepreneurship, a new form of enterprise has been absorbed, the **Social Cooperative Enterprise (KOIN.S.EP)**, aiming to unite human force, create jobs and support the local community by the democratically participation of their members and the transparency of its cooperation. The Ministry of Labour, Social security and Welfare, has established a National strategy for the creation of a favorable environment for the development of KOIN.S.EP.

This national strategy consist of three action pillars:

- a) The creation of supportive mechanisms for KOIN.S.EP, such as counselling and incubators.
- b) Funding for the start of the activity, with selection criteria the quality of the entrepreneurship idea and the number of jobs that will be created.
- c) Access to funding mechanisms, such as bank grants, security deposit etc., for their reinforcement and extension.

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The KOIN.S.EP. is divided in three categories according to its specific objectives:

KOIN.S.EP. of integration, aiming in the economic and social inclusion of the disadvantaged group of Greece, such as people with special needs, addicted or recovered from addiction, seropositive, imprisoned and released from prison. In this category at least 40% of the employees should belong in the disadvantaged population.

KOIN.S.EP. of social welfare, aiming in the production and provision of goods and services of social and welfare character that are addressed in population such as elderly people, children, people with special needs and chronic diseases.

KOIN.S.EP. of collective and productive purposes, aiming in the promotion of the local and collective needs, in employment, empowerment of the social cohesion and the local or regional development. It is related in the production of goods and provision of services in sectors such as: culture, environment, ecology, education, provision of common benefit, development of local products and sustenance of traditional activities and professions.

The main characteristics of a KOIN.S.EP. is that their members have no participation in the profits, except if they are working in it. The profits are available in percentage, annually, as follows:

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- 5% for the reserves
- Up to 35% is distributed in the employers as a motive for productivity
- 60% of the profit is distributed in activities of the enterprise and the creation of new jobs.

The motives for the development of a KOIN.S.EP. are:

- Employees in the KOIN.S.EP. receive a welfare allowance together with their salary.
- KOIN.S.EP. have access in specialized funding programs.
- KOIN.S.EP. are integrated in support programs for entrepreneurship and in programs of OEAD (Manpower Employment Organization in Greece).
- KOIN.S.EP. can join contracts with the public sector.

The process for creating a KOIN.S.EP. demands the design of activities, as well as some formal procedures of establishment. First of all, the entry in the general social economy register, is obligatory. The design of activities, includes the preproduction of various entrepreneurship tools, such as the market research and the entrepreneurship plan. It is also necessary to inform and motivate possible partners in order to create an initial core of the enterprise and also attract other stakeholders.

In Greece there are two basic information departments of the Ministry of labor, social security and welfare; the special service for social inclusion and social economy¹ and the general register of the social welfare-department of social protection².

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Public policies and political actions which directly impact to social economy

There are some initiatives that directly impact to social economy at European, national and local level in Greece.

At European level, the report ***A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe. Country Report: Greece***, provides a non-exhaustive overview of the social enterprise landscape in Greece based on available information as of August 2014.

Besides this report, at national level there are the **Strategic Plan for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship** (2013) and the **Social economy Registry Dept. of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Welfare**.

The **Strategic Plan for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship** (2013), it presents a number of priority axes to support the development of social enterprises, but only in the legal

¹<http://www.keko.gr/en/Pages/Default.aspx>

² <http://www.ypakp.gr/>

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form of a Koin.S.Ep. In relation to the **Social economy Registry Dept. of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Welfare**, it is a public book held in electronic form accessible to everybody. The entities registered in this book, have access to the financing tools mentioned in the article 9 of Law 4019/2011.

Moreover, there is the **new Operational Programme Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship & Innovation – EPAnEK** at national level. It is one of the five sectoral operational programmes of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (the new NSRF) for the period 2014 - 2020. The central development objective of the OPCE II is to improve the competitiveness and extroversion of enterprises and industry, with an emphasis on innovation.

Beyond all these programmes and strategies, it is important to point out those Roma strategies that try to promote Roma inclusion at national level. They will also be important to promote social economy within Roma community.

In this sense, there is the **National Strategy for Roma** launched the past December 2011. The report presents all the actions and priorities of the Greek government to promote the inclusion of Roma people.

Furthermore there is the **New National Strategy for Roma (2014-2020)**. Its primary objective is to eliminate social exclusion of Roma and create the conditions for the social integration of Roma. The Action Plan is based on the principles of social business planning sector (sectoral operational plans) at a regional level (top-down process) with integrated interventions that will be implemented in the municipalities and country settlements, as well as territorial interventions.

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Main stakeholders that promote social economy

In relation to the main stakeholders that may provide social entrepreneurs with services to development social economy initiatives, it is possible to identify several public bodies, civil society organizations, a NGO, a development agency and a project.

Within the group of public bodies, **KOI.S.P.E. – Social partnership of limited liability** has the purpose to develop business in the direction of the social economy, with a view to upgrading the quality of life and socio-economic rehabilitation of persons with mental health problems, among others, experiencing work exclusion.

In addition there is also the **Special Service for Social inclusion and Social Economy (EYKEKO)**. It is responsible for planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating all the necessary policies and actions aimed at developing and strengthening the social economy.

Moreover, there is the **EKKE's Social Economy Observatory**. It is a mechanism that aims to the constant observation of the Social Enterprises of the Limited Liability, by field research.

Within the group of civil society organizations there are the **Panhellenic Federation of Social Cooperatives** and the **Institute of Social Economy**, which offers modern and flexible support and counselling, having starred in variety and innovative social entrepreneurship project

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services. Provides support, counselling, creative ideas and practical training to young entrepreneurs. Additionally there is the NGO **Ashoka-Greece** that represents a European network for the promotion of social enterprise, as a solution to the general social problems.

Furthermore, there is the **“Bouki” Developmental Agency for the support of unemployed Roma of Thessaly Region**, a development agency that focuses on the support and counselling of unemployed Roma in the sector of recycling, by helping them to develop a social enterprise.

Finally, there is the **Prasini Politeia**, a project of the Panhellenic Association of Roma that aims to promote social entrepreneurship in west region of Attica, especially in the branch of “green professions” in the secondary sector, which is one of the most dynamic sectors of the area.

Social economy entities which are working to develop Social entrepreneurship especially in Roma communities

Moreover, there are some social entities which offer some supports to create entrepreneurial initiatives especially within Roma communities. These supports are subsidies, grants, pensions, among others.

KLIMAKA - human and social capital development vector for tackling social exclusion develops multifaceted action to combat the generic causes and effects of social exclusion. It also designs and implements sustainable projects in the health, welfare, employment and economic growth in which the excluded populations participate actively and not only as recipients of the services offered.

Additionally, **KOINSEP – Social Economy Institute** is an organization dealing with social entrepreneurship which offers subsidies. Likewise, the **Institute of Entrepreneurship Development** offers subsidies, pensions and grants to strengthen entrepreneurship and to develop researches in entrepreneurship.

The **Institute of Development of Employment (ex Development Institute for Thessaly)** has intervention in the labor and social integration of vulnerable groups to help them back into employment and entrepreneurship. Specifically, actions designed to promote the employment of vulnerable social groups by placing them in jobs and Establishing New Enterprises and Social Business.

The **Scientific Society for Social Cohesion and Development** actively supports the promotion of the social economy and social entrepreneurship and strengthen local social development as a privileged field for the integration and activation of vulnerable groups in social and economic development and to combat social exclusion.

The **E.K.PO.S.P.O. NOSTOS - Company of Social and Cultural Support of Repatriated Greeks “Nostos”** is an active organization in supporting social and employment inclusion of those persons experiencing difficulties in their efforts to incorporate the social structure and enter the labor market. To this end it provides services and carries out activities of social and educational character.

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The **Project S.A** focuses on the study and implementation of supportive measures counselling, training and technical support of unemployed Roma residing in any of the Thessaly region in order to develop professional activity the field of recycling by creating social enterprises.

The **Oikokoinonia-NGO** offers grants and implements actions to promote the employment of persons belonging to vulnerable social group of Roma. Similarly, the **Industry Disruptors-Game Changers (ID-GC)** establishes effective partnerships for entrepreneurs and start-ups to fulfil their potential by bringing together talent, knowledge, mentoring, education, funding and networking.

Opportunities and challenges in the development of Roma communities through Social Economy

The Roma in Greece live scattered on the whole territory of the country, mainly in the suburbs. Notable centres of Romani life in Greece are Agia Varvara which has a very successful Romani community and Ano Liosia where conditions are less well. Roma largely maintain their own customs and traditions. Although a large number of Roma has adopted a sedentary and urban way of living, there are still settlements in some areas. The nomads at the settlements often differentiate themselves from the rest of the population. They number 200,000 according to the Greek government. As a result of neglect by the state, among other factors, the Romani communities in Greece face several problems including high instances of child labour and abuse, low school attendance, police discrimination and drug trafficking.

The main problem of Roma is the integration and their inclusion in a socio / economic reality constantly evolving at a rapid growth and as a result to a large extent is unknown to them. They face a lot of difficulties not only in finding work, but also in their social life, which contributes to the economic, social and cultural isolation. Most of them are illiterate or with little knowledge of Greek writing and reading and they have ignorance on the various government services, due to the lack of sufficient information and lack of confidence. Another fact is the non-acceptance of the Greek society and the local population. Their settlement in disadvantaged areas with few or no benefits (light, water, telephone) enhances the tendency for their isolation from social life and the marginalization mechanisms.

Regarding employment, few of them work, mainly seasonal or as street vendors. However, they would like more permanent and stable employment, but not as business owners or shareholders, but as workers. This demonstrates the insecurity and perhaps the lack of administration or skills that would make them able to undertake business activities. The main areas of interest for employment are the rural jobs, tourism and recycling waste.

As a result the main areas that Roma community faces a lot of problems are housing, employment, health and education. The Greek government has developed a national framework dealing with the problems of Roma community, which presents all the actions and priorities that need to be done in order to promote the inclusion of Roma people. The actions supported by the national framework aim in the following: to ensure proper housing, to

develop a grid of social intervention in education, employment and health and to develop social dialogue and awareness via the inclusion of Roma and their social liberation.

Social economy can be recognized as a social inclusion tool for a group, as vulnerable to the insertion on the labor market as that of the Roma. The development of social enterprises could create a network of professionals that will further develop the concept among Roma groups, social inclusion and equal opportunities as relates especially to Roma women, but also to Roma young people, local and national ownership.

Social enterprise can be a solution to the issues of Roma people, for many reasons. First of all, it allows hiring of people in risk situations and as a result resolves some of the existing needs of the community. Moreover, it facilitates the qualification on the job, thus increasing the qualification and education level, while at the same time can bring back traditional crafts. Finally, it stimulates solidarity and leads to the improvement of the relationships between the members of the community. Social Economy could be represented as a self-help method, for disadvantaged populations, and even more for Roma community.

The main factor that could contribute to the promotion of the social economy in Roma communities is the need for social change, for inclusion and acceptance of their culture. Most of the problems Roma are facing, can find solution in the implementation of innovative approaches that can take the form of a social enterprise.

The development of social entrepreneur in Roma community will provide opportunities for obtaining skills and qualifications that will promote their integration in the Greek society. It will be a motive to enter education and vocation training, and as a result they will have the opportunity to prove that they can do much better than the quality of their life reveals and gain the respect of the other social classes.

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[Problems and solutions regarding the implementation of social economy projects within Roma communities](#)

Objectives of the interviews

The purpose of this chapter is to present the challenges and the solutions in the sector of the social entrepreneurship of Roma communities. In particular, the main issues that will be identified are:

- the most important problems in the sector of social economy in regards with the Roma communities,
- the reasons that prohibit the development of the social economy within Roma communities,
- the internal and external factors of the Roma communities that affect the development of social entrepreneurship,

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- possible solutions that will promote social economy within the Roma communities.

A series of interviews were conducted with a broad range of stakeholder groups, in order to widely explore the above issues and elicit recommendations and good practices for the promotion of Roma social entrepreneurship. All the stakeholders that were interviewed offered insights and expressed a variety of opinions about how they perceive social economy and the potential for promoting in the Roma communities.

The profile of the interviewees

The interviews were conducted individually and in groups. In particular, there were 2 individual and 2 group interviews.

Two stakeholders from the public administration were interviewed individually in 19/5/2016 and 27/5/2016; Mrs. Christina Chalilopoulou is working at the Ministry of Interior and Administrative Reconstruction and is actively dealing with the social policy planning. Having Roma origin, the social cohesion is a priority for her, and for this reason, she welcomed the SERCo project as a challenge. Mrs. Eleni Kontonasiou is working in the Ministry of Labor, social security and social welfare. She is Head of the department of Coordination, Monitoring and policy evaluation for social economy and she is participating in actions and national services related to the social protection of disadvantaged populations, including Roma.

In addition to the above, an interview was also carried out with Mrs. Vassiliki Tsekoura, the educational director of KEK DAFNI. KEK DAFNI coordinated a large scale project for the Romani people of the West Achaia region of Peloponnese, with the support of other relevant services of the Municipality of Patras. This project aimed at training the local Roma community in social entrepreneurship and recycling in order to set up and operate a social enterprise in recycling. KEK DAFNI has relevant experience from other national and European projects targeting the inclusion of socially vulnerable groups including Roma.

The 1st group interview was conducted on 7/6/2016 with the participation of two stakeholders groups, the Roma leaders and associations focused on the Roma inclusion. The four interviewees are all members of the European Organization of Solidarity for Roma – EOSR (Roma NGO) an international, non-governmental, development organization which aims a world Roma without poverty and injustice, thus promoting social, economic and cultural development of the Roma. Mr. Demetrios Liakopoulos is the president of EOSR and an advocate of Roma rights. Present were also other members of EOSR: Mr. Eleftherios Tsitsikos, Mr. Evangelos Sainis and Mr. Nikolaos Stratogiannis. Each of the three members have set up their own unofficial organizations for the furthering of Roma rights. In addition they all have Roma origins with the exception of Mr. Stratogiannis and are acquainted with the problems and worries of Romani people, especially when related to their inclusion in Greek society.

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The 2nd group interview was conducted on 14/6/2016 with the participation of Mr. Pantzos Vasileios, President and Bajalis Antonios, press officer of the Panhellenic Federation of Greek Rom Groups (PANOSER). PANOSER aims to bring closer the different Roma groupings all over Greece, set up scientific committees for investigating and providing solutions to the problems of the Roma community as well as promoting their rights and grievances to the Greek state. Present in the 2nd meeting was also Mr. Athanasopoulos Apostolos an experienced state certified social mediator of Roma background.

All the interviews followed the same structure, however, each answer has been addressed from a different perspective, depending on the experience and position of speaker.

Challenges and solutions

A) Public Administration

A great challenge for the development of social economy within Greek Roma communities is the adoption of a particular policy line that would benefit Roma communities and the social groups. The model of social economy is not very popular in Greek region and the Roma communities, and this is due to the fact that it involves a great number of procedures and the administrative steps that are required for the establishment of a social enterprise. Such a bureaucracy could actually create many difficulties to people who have tried to establish a social enterprise.

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Some of the main issues, is how to get organized (vote, keep the minutes, etc.) and in general how to operate within an institutional framework, which is difficult for the Roma, because of their specific cultural feature which cannot permits them to respond in tight frames set by the public administration. The challenge in this point is to utilize the characteristic of collaboration and solidarity they have as a population.

The transaction difficulties with the administration is also a great challenge for the establishment of a social enterprise. The administration staff is adverse to understand and fully comprehend Romani people, as it is not appropriately trained to approach such groups with special characteristics and fully understand their demands. Similarly, Roma do not have the experience to complete a transaction in the typical way that administration requires. The high rates of illiteracy within Roma, is definitely affecting negatively the development of a social enterprise. Training both stakeholders would be a viable solution, because on the one hand, it will raise awareness on the administration staff and on the other hand Roma people will learn how to make a transaction in public sector.

Another challenge is the development of a clear and sustainable business plan. Just waiting to receive the appropriate fund, is not enough, when there is not a clear plan of action. The fact that Romani people are more familiar with some professions equivalent to the nature of social economy, such as traditional crafts, recycling, horses shoeing, is considered an asset for the establishment of a social enterprise. Mrs. Kontanasiou suggested that *“if Roma people are*

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Agreement Number: JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8096

familiar about the benefits of the social enterprise they establish and its contribution to the community, they will be engaged more actively to make it successful". As a result it is very important that Roma people are trained on the profound meaning of the social enterprise and the social economy, so that they get engaged more actively.

Moreover, Mrs. Chalilopoulou, referred to the Roma age group that would benefit more by establishing a social enterprise. *"18-35, is the best age for Roma people to claim for their social inclusion and ensure for a stable working environment"*.

Some of the viable solutions proposed by the public administratives are summarized in the following:

- To develop a mechanism in level state, able to support this format of social entrepreneurship,
- To collaborate with the local government in the development of a monitoring mechanism. The contribution of the local government is essential, in order to identify the people that would be able to participate directly in a programme of social economy,
- Education of both stakeholders - Roma and administratives - in regards with the transaction in public service,
- Awareness activities about the social entrepreneurship in Roma communities. Mrs. Kontonasiou proposed the introduction of a special course in the National School of Public Government and Administration about approaching disadvantage groups of population.
- Development of a manual, a handy guide for government people and Roma, to facilitate the transaction and on both sides.

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Finally, the interviewees made reference to Social Cooperative Enterprises as good practices of social entrepreneurship. Some of these enterprises involve cleaning and relocation services, seating manufacture, traditional Greek products, etc.

B) Roma leaders and NGOs related to Roma social inclusion

1st Group interview 7/6/2016:

One of the main challenges in acclimatizing the Roma community into social entrepreneurship is that they have barely heard of the concept and what it entails. We briefly explained to them and described the various types of social enterprises (SE) that can be created in Greece. EOSR members found that it had several advantages compared to other types of enterprises

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especially given their social character. Mr. Liakopoulos added that they would be open to the possibility of setting up one in recycling. One of the main challenges in doing that was that they would need an initial capital to start operations and there aren't many sources for that.

Moreover, communicating with the state and local authorities for day to day issues is a continuous challenge for the Roma community. It would be the same for setting-up a SE as they expected to face many obstacles in doing so. SERCo proposes mediation as a solution to the specific challenge. EOSR members' experience with mediators is mixed. They can be useful in helping them communicate better and solve issues with the state and local authorities. However, sometimes they do not understand their culture and ways, and as a result they often don't have their best interests in their mind. *After suggesting training mediators with a Roma background in SERCo:* All members of EOSR agreed that it is a very good idea and could make mediation more effective for setting up a SE as well as communicating with the state services in general.

Members of EOSR strongly believe that the Romani's people inability to exit the vicious circle of social exclusion and financial downturn is mainly a result of external problems that in turn affects their long-term ability to develop social economy within their community:

- The inability of the state to implement effective measures for the inclusion of Roma
- Racism, discrimination and prejudice against Roma that is pervasive at all levels of the state, including health and education as well as in the Greek society as a whole.
e.g. - Roma are systematically denied service or receive it with great delay by public authorities
- Roma children are very often segregated in schools

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All in all it was concluded that social economy could function in the Roma community under the right conditions and if it was coupled together with professions where the majority of Romani people already possess a high degree of proficiency. They suggested recycling, traditional crafts, green grocers and clothes retailers as four professional areas with a lot of potential for setting up a SE in the Roma community.

2nd Group interview 14/6/2016:

Mr. Pantzos: The implementation of the relevant European legal framework and institutions in Greece covering Roma rights as well as funding for their social and financial inclusion lags behind. Greece has to do a lot to be on the same level with the rest of Europe in this aspect and this affects the development of social economy in the Roma community as well. Decisions are made for Roma people without the actual representation of Romani people.

Mr. Athanassopoulos: Information and dissemination about social economy does not reach the Romani people. Funding for relevant projects targeting the Roma community and other

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vulnerable groups does not actually reach it and have an impact on it. The state and local authorities very often used such funds to address their own needs and not those of the community.

Mr. Athanassopoulos: PANOSER as a federation, believe in mediation as a route to helping bring the Romani people out of social and financial exclusion. By extent mediation is a useful tool to develop social economy within the Roma community. However, mediators should not exhaust their responsibilities by serving the needs of specific Roma camps but they should strive to pass their knowledge and expertise to the wider Roma communities.

One way to spread the principles and basic tenets of mediation in the Roma community more effectively is through Roma associations and other bigger groupings like PANOSER for example that is a federation that aims to include all the available Roma groupings in Greece. In this way it will act as a channel for training Roma in mediation. In this sense SERCo can complement and support this movement in the specific context of social economy. Mediators should have a Roma background so that they can understand and correspond better to the needs of the Roma Community.

Bigger Roma associations and federations such as PANOSER can take action at a Panhellenic scale and support Romani people in large numbers. An example could be that PANOSER could gather a large number of street sellers and assist them in issuing permissions to perform their trade legally and without interference by the police. This could be done by going directly to central or regional authorities and represent larger groupings of applicants. Social enterprises can be set up to help Romani people perform their trades in a more efficiently and in a more organized and transparent way.

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Try to connect social economy with their interests:

- Weekly and/or weekend bazars
- Music and composing (the percentage of early school leaving of Roma children from “Music” schools is close to zero compared to conventional schools

Individual interview with Educational Director of KEK DAFNI 28/6/2016:

Mrs Tsekoura argued that social economy presupposes:

- Culture of cooperation: BUT Roma communities are strictly patriarchal in their leadership and administrative status, based on orally transferred rules and ethical values
- Organisational models based on transparency, equality and democratic decision patterns rather than strict hierarchies: BUT Roma people are very often in conflicts which are produced by deficits in mutual trust, struggle for power and leadership
- Funding from donors or other sources under preparation and sufficient plan of actions to be provided: BUT Roma people are by a large majority of the population, illiterate,

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although competent in speaking, communicating or acting as mediators. Due to literacy deficits it is not possible to develop proposals for funding or justify in written form a well cohesive plan - the support of external experts is necessary but there is distrust.

- Employment for Romani people means a monthly income: they need a job which can secure a monthly salary more than being in the open market trying to operate a SE.

There are other internal and external challenges that preclude the Roma community from prospering and advancing in general including the development of the social economy:

- The time of austerity is generally difficult to find or secure a job.
- The structure of the current job market that provides deficits.
- The stereotypes against Roma people
- Their culture does not include LEARNING as VALUE
- Romani people often remain stuck in traditional crafts and other very specific professions

The state should foster more opportunities for both sides to communicate often, sincerely and in transparency. The people who are in charge to support them via services like mediators must be trustful, so that a mutual respect can be established with the respective results. In terms of a SE, recycling is an area with some potential within the Roma community. It could be in a well-structured, related industry environment and with main presupposition the necessary infrastructure - machinery and all related step up to the final processing of the recyclable material - not only collection as many Roma people think.

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Final considerations

Summing up, developing social entrepreneurship in Roma communities of Greece, is a great challenge not only to facilitate the smooth inclusion of Roma in the Greek society, but also to promote their creative spirit and transform it into a profitable enterprise, that would benefit the Greek community.

Some of the main aspects that should be highlighted are the following:

- Inform the Roma community about the characteristics of social economy and what constitutes a social enterprise.

- In order for social economy to thrive in the Roma community it has to address their needs and find ways to connect it with existing Roma professions, trades and customs like:
 - Recycling
 - Street sellers
 - Weekly and weekend bazars
 - Traditional crafts
 - Music, instruments and composing
 - Green grocers
- Mediation can be an appropriate vehicle for developing social economy and acting as a bridge of communication between Roma and the state, regional and local authorities. Existing mediators should share their knowledge and experience with the communities they serve. More mediators can be trained by using large Roma federations and associations as channels. Mediators should originate from within the Roma community so that they can have a better understanding of their needs, culture and ways and be trusted more easily by their community.
- The state, regional and local authorities should disseminate government and European funding ear-marked for Romani related projects more effectively in order to address their needs.
- Possible internal challenges to developing social economy in the Roma context is that learning is a not a fundamental element of Roma culture.
- The fact that Romani people seem to be active in very specific areas of profession like the ones above, could be an obstacle to the development of a comprehensive and flexible social economy.
- Setting-up and operating a social enterprise requires a specific set of organizational, communication, cooperation and management skills that are very often not

developed in the Roma community or even worse can be contradictory to their culture and attitudes.

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