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Mapping social  
entrepreneurship  
for Roma communities  
*National Report*

**Romania**

 **SERCo**

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## Table of contents

Project Description .....	4
Introduction.....	5
Aim of the report.....	6
Proposed methodology .....	6
Framework of social economy.....	6
Romania: National context and the Roma community inclusion .....	8
Public policies and political actions which directly impact to social economy .....	8
Main stakeholders that promote social economy .....	9
Opportunities and challenges in the development of Roma communities through Social Economy .....	10
Romania Problems and Solutions Regarding the Implementation of Social Economy Projects within Roma communities .....	10
Final considerations.....	13
Public policies impact on social economy .....	14
Successful best practices .....	14
Bibliography.....	15



## 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.

4

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](http://www.kep.unipi.gr) , Greece – SERCo Coordinator
- IDEA ROM ONLUS, [www.idearom.it](http://www.idearom.it) , Italy
- CESIE, [www.cesie.org](http://www.cesie.org), Italy
- The European Roma Information Office-ERIO , [www.erionet.eu](http://www.erionet.eu) , Belgium

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- Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “AMALIPE”, [www.amalipe.com](http://www.amalipe.com) , Bulgaria
- Fundacio Privada Pere Closa, [www.fundaciopereclosa.org](http://www.fundaciopereclosa.org) , Spain
- Tolerance and Mutual Aid Foundation (TMAF), Bulgaria
- Four Elements, [www.4-elements.org](http://www.4-elements.org) , Greece
- Association Promoting Social Inclusion PAKIV (ACPSI PAKIV), [www.pakiv.ro](http://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 OanaAilenei, 2005). Simply, the high rates of unemployment in the past decades and the loss of protection of the welfare system explains clearly the growing interest in the social economy and the importance to search solutions for the creation of new job positions, of setting up worker-owned co-operatives, and the furtherance of entrepreneur answers (Mellor et al. 1988).

Under this perspective, SERCo approach has the willingness to prove the importance to develop social economy initiatives to foster the economic promotion 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, usually entrepreneurship policies and social economy initiatives do not take into consideration targeting 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 activity. 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 be focused on those 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 Roma community inclusion is basically a strategy that ought to be certainly 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 social economy can offer to Roma society and, last but not least, a state of art of social entrepreneurship resources in each partner's country.

Basically, the main part of the report goes into the particular national situation. The idea is to map the public policies and public actions, which directly impact to 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 suppose to Roma communities.

## Proposed methodology

In order to achieve a completed report, not only do the consortium has decided to include data from other studies or institutions, but also it decided to include gathered opinions from policy makers, Roma leaders, Roma organizations and Social Economy actors at each national context. Consortium members actually did some interviews to analyse their content and to reflect on the potential impact of social economy within Roma communities.

Moreover, SERCo partners agreed to work on the same methodology to produce similar reports. To achieve such intention, consortium has developed a sort of questionnaires and interview guidelines to provide national reports with the same structure and shape. The process has been led by Amalipe (Bulgaria), Fundació Pere Closa (Spain) and TMAF (Bulgaria).

In general, the result has been 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 English and in its national language.

In furtherance on this, national reports appear as a first step to design a sort of guidelines for Roma social entrepreneurship in a second project stage. This guidelines will be transferred to Roma mediators with the idea to start different Roma-led start-ups with groups of 4/5 Roma people.

## 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".

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Basically, social Economy concept has had lots of meanings. For instance, the Euro-centered 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) specifies 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 forms 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 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.

Over and above, social economy is a good tool to promote the common good and principally the self-worth of people 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 times motivated by an attitude to promote more democratic societies by which women roles are basic for the social motor, and social equality and sustainable development are principle aims (Lévesque, 2001).

There are indeed lots of 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 in Roma communities may put the Roma inclusion on the desk by offering new labour market opportunities, developing new skills and training capacities to those who are more vulnerable, promoting community improvements in the fields of health, education, labour and housing, and last but not the least, promoting capacity building and engaged citizenry.

7

## Romania: National context and the Roma community inclusion

Records show that the social economy, centered values and social interactions can create opportunities development of Roma communities. In coordination with social policies and measures Specific education, health and employment, economy Social activities can offer viable alternatives which can increase economic inclusion Social Romanian citizens of Roma origin. Of Therefore, the social economy can only thrive from a global perspective, by making links between government, civil society, communities, financial institutions and the private sector. Outside the immediate need to increase investment in education and providing social services for Roma communities, Romania will have to implement structural reforms centered encountered poverty in Roma communities, including coherent strategy of increasing the unemployment and creative mechanisms to support social inclusion.

### Public policies and political actions which directly impact to social economy

Social inclusion is defined in EU documents as "process that gives persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in the economic, social and cultural life, to enjoy the standard of living and welfare considered normal in the society in which they live. Inclusion social ensure increased participation of these people in decisions that affect them life and access to fundamental rights.

The situation illiteracy also complains continuing efforts to increase educational inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority in the employment and labour market integration should be noted that the population made up of Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority is generally a level of school education lower compared to the majority population, which limits their access to the labour market while the demand for skilled labour is growing, it is important that the employment rate among young people belonging to the Roma minority is significantly higher than that among young non-Roma. It is a consequence of mutual compliance of the economic situation and the degree of educational integration – youth Roma enter the labour market earlier in the absence of economic support to enable them to continue their studies. Socio-economic conditions and low education associated with access barriers to health services, have direct consequences on the health of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority. Romanian Government aims to continue the measures taken for inclusion Roma social, including facilitating dialogue with the competent institutions in Romania European partners and civil society. The main policy paper on social inclusion of Roma in Romania was the Romanian Government Strategy for Improving the Roma the period 2001-2010, adopted by H. G. no. 430/2001, amended and supplemented later.

[The evaluation report from 2013](#) (Progress in the implementation of national strategies for Roma integration) was focused specifically on prior structural conditions required in each

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country. These annual reports (2020) uses the information provided by each country, NGOs, international organizations and the Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union (FRA), assess the progress made, in general, in all areas, focused on the structural conditions required for a proper implementation, identified some progress in aligning national strategies (revised) on Roma integration in EU financial instruments. At the same time, it noted that further efforts are needed to combat discrimination and hostile attitudes towards Gypsies and coordination structures in place have become effective cooperation mechanisms and inclusive, where it is involved civil society and national, regional and local emphasis on implementation at local level and monitoring the results.

During the dialogue on Europe 2020, the Commission stresses that further efforts must be made to achieve Roma inclusion. In fact, Commission took into consideration special effort to get social equality and an effective inclusion for different social communities. As an examples of this initiative we can point out the report [Overview of youth discrimination in the European Union](#), the report [Practical guide to launch and implement a Diversity Charter](#) and the report [List of actions by the Commission to advance LGBTI equality](#).

Moreover, there was also planned the [Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020](#) that succeeds the Regional Operational programme 2007-2013 and is one of the programmes that Romania will be able to access EU structural funds and investment from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

### 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 some programmes and priority axis that looks for achieving such goal.

The **National Agency for Roma**, within the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020, supports education, offering skills and encouraging Lifelong Learning.

The **FundatinPakiv** works to achieve the “European Social Fund- Priority Axis 6. Promoting social Inclusion”. It consists in the creation and operation support structures focused on employment (Centers for social inclusion for Roma). Project activities are intended to facilitate social inclusion and professional training programmes and access to specific support measures for 1200 Roma people.

The **Asociation Romano ButiQ** works also to achieve the “European Social Fund- Priority Axis 6. Promoting social Inclusion”. Its projects consist in the development of handicraft cooperatives "Workshop Brooms Clejani" cooking and specific support measures for 1200 Roma people.

Finally, the **AsociationPartidaRomilor Pro-Europa** and the **City Hall distric 2** work to encourage employment and labour mobility, especially among those young people who are not into the labour market. Likewise, the **Ministry of European Funds** and the **European**

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**Centre for Integration of Roma**, within the Human Capital Operational Programme (2014-2020), try to promote social inclusion and combating poverty.

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

In Romania, the Roma population is one of the groups most at risk of exclusion labour market, unemployment rates are significantly lower compared to the general population. This is mainly due to low level of education and lack of professional qualifications, but and discrimination play a vital role in social and economic exclusion of Roma. Recent practical experience of programs and projects implemented by NGOs regarding Roma communities in Romania highlights the need to develop integrated programs for lengthy clearly aimed at Romanian citizens of Roma Inclusion. these programs It must be adapted to the communities they work with and must address both individuals through projects focused on education, health, labor market inclusion and community and here we refer to infrastructure projects, to decent housing, anti-discrimination, etc.

The social economy is an effective tool inclusion of disadvantaged groups. It cansupport local development through increased participation. Vulnerable socio-economic labour market and adapting products and services provided to businesses Social to local market conditions by supporting debate on community needs and taking account the cultural, social, economic their central and local authorities have a role central in social dialogue on the social economy. In Romania, the Ministry of Labour, Family Protection Elderly Social and assumed the role of promoter of the social economy and proposed a draft law of social economy, which was adopted by the Government on 11 December 2013.

10

According to our experience, the main actors that may promote social economy within Roma communities are the European Social Fund, Roma NGO, the Ministry of European Funds; Local Public Authorities; throughout the community of Roma and non-Roma.

## Romania Problems and Solutions Regarding the Implementation of Social Economy Projects within Roma communities

In Romania, the Roma population is one of the groups most at risk of exclusion from the labor market, unemployment rates are significantly lower compared to the general population. This is mainly due to low level of education and lack of professional qualifications and discrimination play a vital role in social and economic exclusion of Roma. Evidences show that the social economy, centered on values and social interactions can create opportunities for the development of Roma communities. In coordination with social policies and measures specific to education, health and employment, the social economy can provide alternative viable economic activity may increase social inclusion of Romanian citizens of Roma origin. Therefore, the social economy can only thrive in a global perspective, by creating links between government, civil society, communities, financial institutions and the private sector. Outside the immediate need to increase investment in education and providing social services for the Roma, Romania will have to implement structural reforms centered on poverty found

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in Roma communities, including coherent strategy of increasing the unemployment and mechanisms creative support social inclusion. Development and inclusion - as well as social exclusion - it happens at the local level, a constant interaction of the local community. Local authorities should, therefore, be involved in a more visible especially in the implementation of government strategies which aim at raising the living standards of Roma communities and social inclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Direct experiences indicate a positive impact in places where there is a common local agenda and good coordination between the various government institutions; but these examples are unfortunately limited nationwide. It is therefore vital connections and create clear alignment between strategic objectives addressing Roma communities and resources, especially in the current economic crisis. The social economy is an effective inclusion of disadvantaged groups. It can support local development through increased participation of vulnerable groups in terms of socioeconomic labor market and adapting products and services provided to social enterprises to local market conditions. By supporting the debate on community needs and taking into account the cultural, social, economic them, central and local authorities have a central role in social dialogue on the social economy. In Romania, Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Protection has assumed the role of promoter of social economy and proposed a bill of social economy, which was adopted by the Government on 11 December 2013.

#### **The main provisions of the draft bill concern:**

- The definition of social economy as a whole representing independent activities organized by the public sector whose purpose is to serve the general interest, the interests of a corporate and / or personal non-property interests, by increasing employment of persons belonging to the vulnerable group;
- Establishing principles underlying the social economy;
- Definition of significant terms in the social economy;
- Establish mechanisms to support and encourage the development of social undertakings;
- Establishing national single record of the Register of social enterprises.

11

#### **Public authorities:**

- Recognition greater role of social economy entities in the process of social inclusion and poverty reduction
- Establishing a system to promote and support the sector
- Creating tax incentives both for social enterprises in order to lighten the burden of taxes, fees and contributions to the budget of state that- and for their clients in order to stimulate purchase (including the development of financial incentives for formalizing "business" those operating in the informal sector and supporting access to various support services during the transition from employment in the informal to the formal sector)

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- Creating social investment funds and shares a scholarship social (and environmental), boosting microcredit
- Stimulation and development of integrated projects, multi-sector (infrastructure, education, social services) anchored in local development plans and / or micro-regional
- Creation of business incubators in Roma communities to support business development.

#### **Local initiatives groups:**

- Reduce social exclusion
- Development of skills and qualifications in Roma communities
- Facilitate dialogue and build community networks and support dialogue
- Information and promotion of best practices
- Ensuring representation of Roma in decisions needs and interests of local, regional and national affecting Roma and encourage participation in the development of their communities.

#### **Business environment:**

- Companies operating in the banking field by facilitating access to credit for disadvantaged either directly by creating micro credit lines flexible and dedicated, either through cooperation and initiative groups or NGOs
- Facilitating access of social enterprises to markets by distribution companies and large retailers by offering access to distribution channels • supporting business incubators in Roma communities to support business development in disadvantaged communities Companies can include such activities corporate social responsibility programs.

12

#### **NGOs:**

- European funds earmarked for this sector
- Creating an impact not only on a small number of people, but on the whole communities
- Creating services that are missing from some communities that can help meet the needs of the community, on the whole
- Providing support and advice to social enterprises whose development it supports (including local action groups), for a period of time after they were established in order to create their chances to stay on the market

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- Stimulation and development of integrated projects, multi-sectoral, which takes into account the interconnectivity between sectors and which is anchored in local development plans and / or micro-regional
- Creation of business incubators in Roma communities to support business development
- The achievements of these recommendations are significant, considering the novelty of social economy in Romania and the scarcity of public information. Achievements include:
  - Familiarity with a wide range of business ideas (income generating activities) and best practices, as well as potential challenges and benefits thereof;
  - Advancing the development of a business model (income generating activities) in Roma communities who rely on close communication and community involvement in the planning stages and launch;
  - Raising awareness of the challenges and factors that may influence the smooth running of a business (income generating activities) in Roma communities. The development of income-generating activities can be a real help in structuring a framework for thinking to plan and implement a successful social economy initiative, a continuously adapting to market changes and expectations of the community. The model involves setting a clear mission and vision, determination realistic targets and result-oriented, all as part of a collective effort, collaboration "enterprise - community" forming the foundation of this model.

## Final considerations

Considering the multiple problems faced by Roma communities and many examples of social enterprises operating around the globe, this compendium supports the idea of applying the principles of social economy as a strategy for diversifying the means of making a living and promoting social inclusion in these communities.

The main purpose of the social economy, compared with the market economy order is not making profit, but improve living conditions and delivering new for disadvantaged or vulnerable part of.

To address successfully the complexity and interconnectivity problems in Roma communities, the approach and the development of social economy initiatives in these communities should be an integrated and long-term, taking into account the characteristics of this population, such as cultural diversity and specificity of traditional demography, the specific factors influencing poverty, education and skill level and employment.

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## Public policies impact on social economy

In Romania's development strategy documents, the concept of social economy appears for the first time in 2005, the National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion. In the medium to long term objectives, the social economy is mentioned as one of the tools aimed at building an inclusive society. The social economy is seen as a solution to boost labor market participation, especially of vulnerable groups. Also in the specific objective 'Promoting social inclusion' of the National Development Plan states that "the development and strengthening of social economy "is a way of increasing the employment of vulnerable groups and ensure equal opportunities for integration and maintain employment .

Since 2008, the social economy has been included as an area eligible for funding from the European Social Fund Operational Programme Human Resources Development. Priorities envisaged for vulnerable are contained mainly in Priority Axis 6 Promoting social inclusion, which has the overall objective to facilitate access to employment of vulnerable groups and promoting a cohesive and inclusive society to ensure the welfare of all citizens, major areas of intervention are:

- development of social economy;
- improve access to education and participation of vulnerable groups;
- promoting equal opportunities in the labor market;
- transnational initiatives on the global labor market.

The term has been widely promoted in Romania with the advent all in 2008, the National Strategic Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, which states that "the development of the social economy can be the first step for an efficient and dynamic to interact with an economy based on social justice. Building such a system is very important because it provides answers to the identified needs of Romanian society. " The social economy is seen as a solution to boost labor market participation and the development of entrepreneurship of all and especially for disadvantaged groups.

14

## Successful best practices

1. ROME-RE project aims at setting up a "five resource centers support structures social enterprises to promote Roma social entrepreneurship ". One of the prominent features of social enterprises is that they provide recycling paper therefore promotes sustainable development activities and, therefore, will not only benefit employed persons but the entire community. The resource centers are structures that are designed to ensure the establishment and conduct business all the preparatory work. They operate in 5 regions, with the center in Alba Iulia and branches in Bucharest, Craiova, Cluj Napoca and Piatra Neamt. Production and distribution activities will be enterprise-focused center, while other activities - the raw material collection, sorting, washing, pressing - will be provided by "branches". [www.roma-re.ro](http://www.roma-re.ro)

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2. Cher Romano - Casa Roma is a project of social economy project aims to integrate traditional artisan rum labor market and active life community. Amid the general decline in crafts, trades are all traditional Roma less visible and competitive labor market. Cher Romano - Casa Roma proposed recapitalization Roma traditional crafts and their adaptation to the current labor market. By the recapitalization of these crafts kept the identity and appearance, where some communities is very important. <http://kcmc.ro/proiecte/finalizate/romano-cher-casa-romilor/>
3. Gypsy is the first restaurant as a result of a project that promoted social Economy . The Gypsy is a restaurant with traditional gypsy unique in Europe. Located downtown, is one of the elite in Bucharest restaurants where you can enjoy the best dishes cooked with excellent Chef Niculescu.

Starting from authentic decor, great atmosphere, traditional dishes to performances or live music traditions and customs "The Gypsy" offers a special experience designed to surprise you. [www.latiganci.ro](http://www.latiganci.ro)

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[http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/economia\\_sociala\\_in\\_contextul\\_dezvoltarii\\_locale.](http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/economia_sociala_in_contextul_dezvoltarii_locale.)

15

