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# Social Entrepreneurship in Roma communities *National Report*

## Spain

**Project information**

Project acronym: SERCo  
 Project title: Social Entrepreneurship in Roma Communities  
 Agreement number: JUST/2014/RDIS/AG/DISC/8096  
 Project website: www.serco-project.eu  
 Authoring partner: Fundació Pere Closa (FPC)  
 Report version: **1.0**  
 Date of preparation: 23/11/2016

Document history:

Date	Version	Author(s)	Description
23/11/2016	1.0	Fundació Pere Closa (FPC)	

## Abbreviations:

WORD	CONCEPT
IDESCAT	<b><i>"the Statistical Institute of Catalonia"</i></b>
OCDE/OECD	<b><i>"ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT"</i></b>
EPA	<b>"Active Population Survey"</b>
GATS	<b>"Partnership for Working Sociocultural Groups"</b>
CIS	<b>"Center for Sociological Research"</b>
FAGIC	<b>"Federation of Gypsy Associations of Catalonia"</b>
AET	<b>"Tax Agency"</b>



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## 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.

## Spain: National context and the Roma Community inclusion

Spain has suffered an important economic crisis since 2008. The situation have affected to country activity and occupation levels. In relation to occupation, the 21% of the Spanish population have been unemployed in the first term of 2016 (IDESCAT). Unfortunately such high unemployment rate has been the normality in Spain for the last 6 years. Furthermore, salaries were decreased 22.2% since the beginning of the crisis, contributing to increase around 12.9% the rhythm of impoverishment (OCDE). In fact, there were 719.100 homes without any income and 1.610.900 homes with all members unemployed the past year.



After the crisis, Spain has a poor distribution of wealth because economic inequalities have been increased. In fact, 13,4% of population are people with a risk of social exclusion, and the 1% of population own the total wealth of the 80% of the poorest people in the country. (OCDE)

This situation has been very aggressive to Spanish society and it has had important aftermaths to the past years. In fact, the cost of public debt is 100% in 2015 due to an increment of Public Administration costs and a low level of investments.

Although, the situation seems improving during the past year, the young entrepreneurs have decreased 30% from 2007 till 2012. For this reason the government decided to create some measures to promote the economy. For instance the law to support entrepreneurs (14/2013) states the importance to involve society in understanding the entrepreneurial activity through the investment in education. Moreover, it foresees the improvement of those supporting policies that allows entrepreneurs to be informed, coupled, and backed by institutions.

In this legal setting, entrepreneurship is one of the key actions that Catalan government wants to promote in order to improve social situation after the crisis. Moreover, the government is fairly supporting those initiatives by which social benefits are one of the main purposes. In fact, there are some specific resources and policies to promote social entrepreneurship but also, to enhance entrepreneurial attitudes in those who are in vulnerable situation.

## **Public policies and political actions which directly impact to Social Economy:**

In order to map public policies and political actions which directly impact to social economy we can refer to actions which foster social economy in general, and actions which foster social economy within Roma community.

At national level, the [law 31/2015](#) supports and protects freelances with social economy purposes. Moreover, the [law 14/2013](#) supports entrepreneurs and their internationalization.



In addition, there is also the Confederation of Spanish entrepreneurs of Social Economy is an entrepreneurial confederation which acts as a platform of institutional dialogue between social entrepreneurs and public authorities. It is composed by 28 organizations which represents the interests of Cooperatives, Labour societies, mutual companies, insertion companies, Special Employment Centres, fishermen's associations, disability care organizations, among others.

At regional level, the Catalan government in cooperation with the European Social Fund, have create the programme "[@EmprenSocial](#)" to foster social economy in the country. The main aims of this programme are to promote social entrepreneurship through fostering social entrepreneurs' network, increasing their visibility and normally, enhancing the presence of social entrepreneurship in Catalunya.

Moreover, the Catalan government offered support to entrepreneurs through the programme [Xarxa Empren](#). It is composed by more than 150 entities and 500 technical experts that offer support to public and private initiatives.

At local level, Barcelona city council has also launched the [Pla de xoc per fer créixer l'economia cooperativa, social i solidària a la ciutat](#) (Shock Plan to promote social economy in Barcelona). The aims are to foster and to enhance cooperativism, social economy and solidarity actions. The programme offers training and resources to cooperatives and organizations that are carried out by women.

In relation to those public policies and political actions which foster social economy within Roma community we can point out to the [National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#), the [III Pla Integral del Poble Gitano de Catalunya](#) (Third Integral Plan of Roma Community), the [Estratègia Local amb el Poble Gitano de la ciutat de Barcelona](#) (Local Strategy for Roma Community in Barcelona), the [Consell Assessor del Poble Gitano a Catalunya](#) (Advisor Council of Roma Community in Catalonia), and the [Consejo Estatal del Pueblo Gitano](#) (National Council of Roma Community).

All these programmes and political actions try to address Roma issues, promoting social inclusion and better life conditions. However, it is difficult to find some specific actions that are linked with Roma social entrepreneurship. For instance, the European



Commission stated through several reports the importance to improve labour Access for Roma community. Within recommendations, entrepreneurship is one of the goals that may help to decrease levels of discrimination.

Furthermore, the [Third Integral Plan of Roma Community in Catalunya](#), has an specific measure that try to offer microcredits from public funds to Roma entrepreneurs. Moreover, the [Local Strategy for Roma community in Barcelona](#) also states the importance to create actions and activities to encourage entrepreneurial attitudes within Roma community.

## Main Stakeholders that promote Social Economy

In relation to the main stakeholders that may provide social entrepreneurs with services to development social economy initiatives, we can identify several public administrations, NGO's and financial actors.

Within the Public Bodies, we can point out: [Barcelona Activa](#) (active Barcelona), [Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya](#) (Employment Services of Catalonia), [XALOC Network](#) (Network of the employment Services of local governments). Such public bodies not only do they offer support to look for job, but also they promote social economy and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, there are some programmes and organizations that promote social economy initiatives at national level. For instance: [Work for social](#) is an organization that helps social entrepreneurs by looking for funds and resources. Moreover, there is [UpSocial](#) which seeks to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of innovative proposals that significantly improves the lives of people and that provides sufficient scope for the dimension of the problems.

Furthermore, [UnLtd Spain](#) and [Ship2B foundation](#) are initiatives which offer trainings, information and financial support, to make real social initiatives.

Additionally, [INNOVES foundation](#) encourages innovation to create social value, promoting and managing innovative projects, cooperation and internationalization in Social Economy enterprises.



Apart from these programmes that promote social economy there are other organizations that try to create networks between actors that are working to develop social entrepreneurial initiatives. At national level, [Ashoka](#) is a non for profit organization that links multiple social economy actors and supports their initiatives. Similarly, the [XES, Xarxa d'Economia Solidaria](#) (Social Economy Network), works to improve social economy initiatives and to encourage new initiatives between social economy actors.

Last but not least there are some financial actors as: [Gawa capital](#), [Creas](#), [Premios UEM](#), [Vivergi Social Impact Fund](#). In general, they are social enterprises that invest in social economy initiatives. Moreover, we can highlight [COOP57](#) which is an ethical bank that provide microcredits to start with social initiatives.

## Social Economy Entities which are working to develop Social Entrepreneurship in Roma Communities:

Moreover, there are some social entities which offer support to create entrepreneurial initiatives within Roma communities.

In general, [ACCEDER](#) is a labour mediation programme which emerged with the objective of achieving the effective incorporation of the Roma population in employment. Although they are not focused on Social entrepreneurship they offer support to Roma people who want to look for a job or to start some economic initiative.

Moreover [Barcelona Activa](#) have specific grant programme for young people or people without enough economic resources. Moreover, they have specific support programmes for women and young people.

[Obra Social la Caixa](#) (Caixa Bank foundation) has [the Incorpora programme](#) which offers microcredits to people without resources to start their social initiatives. Moreover, [Programes de Garantia Juvenil](#) (Youth Guarantee programmes), have provided Roma organizations with resources to start social economy initiatives with young Roma in neighbourhoods. Examples of these organizations are [GATS](#), [Saó Prat](#) and [Fundación Esplai](#). All of them are carrying out projects to promote young Roma training and their



inclusion at labour market. Most of times, these actions are linked with the creation of new social enterprises with young Roma that want to improve neighbourhoods situation.

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

Roma in Spain have generally been self-employed in the past; they used to work in family businesses and their jobs were related to the agricultural sector, scrap and solid residues gathering and itinerant trading. Although the situation of the Roma in Spain has improved in the last four decades, as in many other countries they continue to experience high levels of poverty and social exclusion, poor educational results and suffer disproportionately from discrimination. In regards to employment, Roma face high unemployment rates, have low qualifications and are underrepresented in the labour market.

The SERCo initiative has been one of the responses of the Fundación Privada Pere Closa (FPC) to this situation. Based on the situation that Roma community faces in Spain, social economy might be a new strategy that should be put up for public debate. Moreover and according to CIS (Center of Sociological Research), the unemployment tax of Roma community in Spain is 36.4% whereas the 20,9% represents the overall society. Hence, the unemployment tax of Roma community is 15,5% higher than the unemployment tax of the rest of society. However, sometimes they are not in the formal market but they have some income working in the informal economy.

Traditionally, Roma community lived from craft but due to the new economic situation, they, themselves, have to adapt at other professions. Regarding with their economic activities, they use to have presence at agricultural sector and in the informal markets, selling clothes and shoes. However, there is increasing competition between families in the market, so that they have started to manage the commercialization of scrap metal.

Likewise, sometimes Roma people occupy low-wage employment because of their low level of education. Part time contracts, temporary and flexible place of work are the



main jobs Roma people have. Mostly, these poor working conditions usually affect women and in particular Roma women.

At this point, it is important to highlight the role of social entities that are working to promote Roma community inclusion. In fact, we should understand that Roma young people sometimes drop out before finishing high school because they start accessing at labour market or at other economic activities when they are teens. However, once they start to from a family they need to get better jobs but they do not have the proper training qualifications.

In the same way, social economy can be a way of changing some formal patterns of increasing the employment. As we defined at the beginning of this report, Social Economy gathers different perspectives and orientations that can help us in identifying initiatives and actions to promote communities situation. From our perspective the aim to impulse social economy initiatives should be offering professional skills to Roma communities that develop cooperative feelings between people, groups, entities and administrations.

Finally, it is basic to impulse social entrepreneurship of young Roma because they are the future of the community and they might be the leaders of this economic change.

## **Problems and solutions regarding the implementation of Social Economy projects within Roma Communities:**

In order to collect relevant material based on experiences implemented at a local level, interviews and a focus group have been conducted in order to collect contributions and recommendations from relevant members of the local network, working on social inclusion and intercultural dialogue.

The information included in this section derives from the 3 interviews and 1 focus group carried out in Spain between 09 May and 15 June 2016. The focus group included young Roma working in FAGIC with different post-compulsory studies: Jose Antonio Moreno, Noemi Muñoz and Susana Martínez together with a moderator coming from Fundació Privada Pere Closa (Miguel Ángel Franconetti). Moreover, interviewees



included, a think tank (Òscar Rando- GATS organization), a Roma representative (Ricard Valentí – Associació de Joves Gitanos de Gracia) and a policy maker (Nati Mora Codony- Social Worker at Social Services Citizenry Attention of Council Municipality El Prat de Llobregat). The interviews and the focus group have provided keys to identify the issues, potential solutions and good practices regarding the implementation of social economy projects within Roma communities in Spain.

### *Profiles of the Interviewees:*

**Ricard Valentí** is a Roma activist and president of the Gracia Young Roma Association at Barcelona. We chose to interview Ricard because he is a Roma who has been committed to Roma issues for a long time, he is also a school mediator and has an important role within the communities. He took also part of different projects connected with social economy and participation activities in Gracia Neighbourhood (Barcelona). Therefore, he can offer an outlook from the inside and is aware of many of the Roma's concerns, especially in Catalunya.

**Òscar Rando** and **Mireia Gonzalez** are Spanish social entrepreneurs and members of GATS- Organization of Social Transformation and AT2. In particular, we chose to interview Òscar because he is the founder and president of a non-profit organization working on social economy and supporting social entrepreneurship initiatives. The knowledge of both of them about economic issues concerning the social field was a good way for us to obtain information on concrete social economy projects and strategies in Spain.

**Nati Mora Codony** is the Coordinator of the Social Services of the Citizenry Attention at the Council Municipality of El Prat de Llobregat. She works as social worker to involve Roma community at different participatory and educative projects. She has a wide knowledge of Public administration processes and Roma community participation. Last but not least, Fundació Pere Closa (FPC) did a focus group with young Roma coming from Roma NGO's. **Jose Antonio Moreno** (Political Science), **Susana Martínez** (Economics) and **Noemi Muñoz** (Lawyer) reflected on the importance to promote social economy within Roma community and the challenges and opportunities that social economy can offer to Roma community. They are part of Federation of



Roma Catalan Organizations (FAGIC) staff and their knowledge on Roma community and Roma possible feats is relevant. They are also young Roma who can participate in the future in SERCo initiative.

### **Analysis of the Interviews:**

Interviewees pointed several problems by which social entrepreneurship isn't a common option within Roma communities.

Firstly, Òscar Rando (F.Esperanzah) and Mireia (GATS) clearly stated that “**there is a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding other sort of economies that are far away from capitalism. We are living in a consumer society. People usually want more and prices are more affordable.**” The Capitalism and the maximization of profit are the powerful views of economy. Sometimes it is difficult to understand that another economy is possible. Likewise, Susana Martínez (FAGIC) said “*I feel that there is not any interest in promoting social economy knowledge. In my case, working in a social organization was a coincidence. Despite the fact that I really like it now, I wanted to be a business women working in an enterprise when I was studying economics....but here I am, working for my culture and trying to help people*”.

Secondly, **social economy is not equally present in all society groups.** Òscar Rando (F.Esperanzah) and Mireia Gonzalez (GATS) argued that “*Public Administration doesn't use to disseminate social economy nor solidarity*”. Furthermore, Mireia Gonzalez (GATS) stated that “*poverty is usually reached by assistance measures while alternatives of social economy patterns are somehow reserved to other social groups*”.

Related to this, Jose Antonio Moreno (FAGIC) explained that social capital can be a key indicator to understand the uses of social institutions that people do. In general, “*Roma people participate a lot inside the community but don't participate at all outside the community. Due to this situation, sometimes the distance between general society and Roma community can be width, even if the levels of communication between them are low*”. **Roma community is excluded from socioeconomic policies because of a lack of communication with the administration.** In fact, it seems that institutions



do not reach Roma community to develop such new sustainable initiatives. However, Nati Mora Codony (Council Municipality of El Prat de Llobregat) argued that **Roma don't know those opportunities that public policies usually offer to foster social economy initiatives.**

Moreover, **“there is low awareness about solidarity, common good, cooperation and collectivism”** – said Mireia Gonzalez (GATS) and Òscar Rando (F.Esperanzah). Ricard Valentí (Associació de Joves de Gràcia) also pointed the importance of training and education to allow young Roma abroad their horizons and understand the importance to start personal projects that can contribute to improve their neighbourhood lives.

Some of the problems directly depend on internal factors or external factor. According to Ricard Valentí (Ass. Joves de Gràcia), **education and training are the first issue Roma community should improve to be involved in other society fields.** *“Sometimes, the Roma do not focus their efforts on their children education”* also said Mireia Gonzalez (GATS). Moreover, Susana Martinez (FAGIC) said *“sometimes when you are studying other Roma cannot identify with you”*. Unfortunately, **sometimes those Roma who finished their educational pathway are not promoted within the community as cultural referents.** Lots of Roma advocacy organizations are fighting against such internal prejudice by which having a degree is considered as something that assimilates oneself with the gadje society. Due to this situation, it is difficult to approach new knowledge regarding social economy and to get the enough capacity skills to be a social entrepreneur.

Furthermore, the idea of creating some entrepreneurial project creates some fears due to the hard administrative processes. As Jose Antonio (FAGIC) assumed:

*“There are some difficulties and a lot of bureaucracy to deal with if you want to be an entrepreneur.” For instance, there is actually a Roma woman who sews bride's dresses in La Mina Neighbourhood. She has an important business and she can be an entrepreneur. However, she doesn't know how to legalize her*



*business because the administration does not help you in the process. **There is an important barrier between Roma community and administration**".*

Therefore, there are some **external problems** that can be improved by Administration to spread out social economy within Roma community. For instance:

- the rigid processes that you may follow to create your start-up,
- the weak communication canal with Roma community,
- low intention of targeting Roma community within social entrepreneurship policies

Gathering all the information, the interviewees pointed out several measures that can try to deal with these problems. In general and according Jose Antonio (FAGIC) and Òscar Rando (F.Esperanzah) it is important to encourage Roma community to develop social economy initiatives. To achieve this goal, Public Administration needs to deal with Roma community, improving communication and perhaps, contacting with some Roma mediators or Roma leaders that can transfer the strategy to the community.

Moreover, it is important to promote education and training within Roma community. For this reason, enhancing Roma students as positive referents can involve community in changing mind and avoiding feelings of fear and exclusion.

Likewise, Roma inclusion plans and policies should include social entrepreneurship as an interesting option to foster Roma inclusion. The main goal is to improve the information canals between Administration and the community as well as creating a sort of meaning of entrepreneurship more linked with Roma culture than gadje society. Nati Mora Codony (Council Municipality of El Prat de Llobregat) understands the importance of creating campaigns to sensitize Roma community in cooperation and solidarity issues and to raise awareness that it can be a sector to promote Roma inclusion. This can be achieved if education policies and education agents creates some training to approach the topic to the community. Mireia Gonzalez stated that *"it is important to share social economy topics with Roma community and to support them that want to create something in particular"*.



Unfortunately, there are not so many examples of social economy experiences within Roma community in Catalonia/Spain. However, Òscar Rando (F.Esperanzah) and Mireia Gonzalez (GATS) explains de [Labesoc project](#). The project consists in creating a laboratory of ideas to promote new social economy enterprises within Roma youth.

## Final Considerations:

All in all, social economy and social entrepreneurship are key strategies to promote Roma social inclusion. In general it is important to improve the communication channels between Roma community and Public Administration to involve Roma in social economy initiatives.

Moreover, it would be interesting to offer some training to learn from other experiences the potential that social economy initiatives might have to community's live. In this sense, Roma community will be able to create Roma-led social enterprises that in the future can provide young people with jobs and can contribute to improve the economic situation of Roma families. Likewise, it would be an alternative of the labour market where sometimes Roma have difficult access because of discrimination.

Moreover, mapping the social economy resources, stakeholders and national legislation might help Roma mediators and social economy networks to understand the available supports and resources when some new initiative is created.

Finally, the alternative of social economy should be addressed by Roma policies as a key strategy to approach all sort of economies patterns to Roma community. This might be a success in terms of inclusion because Roma economy used to be clearly entrepreneurial during the whole history.



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