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## Comparative Report

WS1 – O<sub>3</sub>

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## Executive Summary

This report is the 3<sup>rd</sup> output of WS1 – Mapping Social Entrepreneurship in Roma Communities. The aim of this report is to offer a comparative analysis about the similarities and differences, obstacles, different methodologies, public policy decisions, practical solutions, success stories, recommendations, different historical and cultural background, various government strategies, diversity of communities, needs, cluster analysis of different problems and approaches, the meaning of social economy phenomena, the benefits that it can offer to Roma in the six participating states, the 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 compares 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.

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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.

The project's core deliverables are the following:

- 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

The SERCO Consortium is consisted of the following 9 partners:

- 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
- 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

## 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 conducted some interviews to analyse the content of social entrepreneurship and reflect on the potential impact of social economy on Roma communities.

Moreover, SERCo partners agreed to work on the same methodology to produce reports in common format. 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

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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 neighborhoods. 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.

## Comparative Analysis of National Contexts and the Roma Community Inclusion in the Six Participating Member States

The National Reports are an evidence that, due to different historic and cultural background, there are various factors that shape the national context. After careful examination of the national reports, three groups were formed. The first consist of Italy, Spain, and Greece, the second of Bulgaria and Romania, and the third of Belgium. At the same time, there are a number of additional similarities between Greece, on one hand, and Italy-Spain, on the other, especially in the area of social grants and bank programs for social entrepreneurship to prevent poverty crisis, given the tough economic background in the three countries.

## The group of Italy, Spain, and Greece

**Italy's** economic structure relies mainly on the services sector which accounts for almost three quarters of total GDP and employs around 65% of the country's total employed people, and on manufacturing, which is the most important sub-sector within the industry sector. The country's manufacturing is specialized in high-quality goods and is mainly run by small- and medium-sized enterprises. Most of them are family-owned enterprises. Italy suffers from political instability, economic stagnation and lack of structural reforms. The country is divided into a highly-industrialized and developed northern part and a less-developed, more agriculture-dependent southern part. As a result, unemployment in the north is lower and per capita income is higher compared to the south. The Italian unemployment rate reached the 11.4% of the labour force in 2015. This rate is particularly important for the range 15-24 years reaching the 35.3% in 2015 and the unemployment is more a long-term unemployment. The female unemployment rate is also higher than men's for both EU and Italy.

Considering all these characteristics of the Italian economy, the social economy in this country has a relevant role to play. In Italy there is not an institutional recognition of this sector and its components, it's defined as the "third sector" (Terzo settore), employed 9.7% of the labour market force and represented 3.4% of the GDP in 2015. Its main actors are the cooperative movement whose social role is recognized in the Constitution, the associations and foundations or non-profit organizations in general. The different organizations are organized in national or local networks and federations to promote the social economy and the cooperative entrepreneurship. For example in Sicily the Forum of the third sector units around 40 representative organizations as such as cooperatives, associations and other NGOs working on the promotion of social inclusion, social cooperation allowing a local cooperation and the sharing of tools and good practices.

Similarly to Italy, **Spain** has suffered an important economic crisis since 2008. The situation has affected 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 (EPA). 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. Furthermore, 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.

Considering **Greece**, the situation shows that 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. 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, dominance of human against capital, 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 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: The creation of supportive mechanisms for KOIN.S.EP, such as counselling and incubators; 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; Access to funding mechanisms, such as bank grants, security deposit etc., for their reinforcement and extension.

### The group of Bulgaria and Romania

The group of **Bulgaria** and **Romania** is considered problematic. One of the major critics towards Roma integration processes in Bulgaria, points out that apart from the restructured and systematized recent policies, (mainly due to pressure from international organizations and the European Commission) the financing of these efforts comes mainly through the instruments of the European structural and investment funds (basically, the European Social Fund), the EEA and Norway grants. Scarce financing is provided by the state budget and in most of the cases it is a co-financing to major grants provided by the above mentioned financial mechanisms. This influences the measures supported in the policy actions. Due to the high priority given to employment, especially by the European Commission and the European Social Fund regulations, social entrepreneurship is one of the topics with priority in the field of employment, regrading marginalized and excluded groups (“Promoting social entrepreneurship and vocational integration in social enterprises and the social and solidarity economy in order to facilitate access to employment”). As a result this gets into the scope of Roma integration policies and has been promoted during recent years.

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 and social inclusion for Romanian citizens of Roma origin. 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.

### The group of Belgium

Regarding Belgium, it has a relatively low employment rate, of 62% (men 68.9%, women 55.3) compared to EU average of 66.0% (men 73.2%, women 58.8%). It has a long and well-established history of the social economy in the traditional sectors of agriculture, finance and sports and culture. From the beginning of the 1990s the social economy began to be gradually recognized as a third sector, made up of co-operatives, mutuals and associations and its development corresponds to the major changes in our economic systems. Compared to other countries, the social economy has a relatively high level of official recognition, especially in the region of Wallonia, accounting for 7% of employment (more than 362.000 jobs). It is proportionally the fifth largest social economy sector in Europe. Church-run hospitals and schools are considered borderline social economy bodies but are not included in the 7% figure.

## Public Policies and Political Actions with Impact to Social Economy

In **Italy**, **Spain**, and **Greece** we can point out several initiatives at European, national and local level which directly impact to social economy. In particular, at European level we can identify the programme Interreg IVC and the Social Business Initiative.

*INTERREG IVC programme* provides funding for interregional cooperation across Europe. It helps regions sharing solutions and supports sustainable regional development. Furthermore, the Social Business Initiative – Action plan supports the development of social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and social innovation in close partnership with

stakeholders in the sector. In fact it contains 11 priority measures, organized around three themes: making it easier for social enterprises to obtain funding, increasing the visibility of social entrepreneurship and making the legal environment friendlier for social enterprises. Moreover, at national level we can identify the Italy's National Strategy for Roma integration, which defines the roadmap for public policies in the area of the social inclusion of the Roma communities. The strategy recognizes the importance of developing local action plans reflecting the needs of individual communities. It relies on the co-operation of all stakeholders involved in the process of Roma inclusion.

Apart from it, we can also identify the *Promozione e sviluppo del terzo settore (Promotion and development of the third sector)*, which was initiated by the Ministry of labour and social policies. It plans an active and conscious participation of the third sector organizations, a transparency and simplification of procedures, an identification of good practices, the promotion and support of the capacity of the third sector to stimulate a greater involvement of the civil society.

At local level, **Italy** councils and local governments implement the *Piano di Azione per la Coesione (Action plan for Cohesion)* that refers to actions for the development of the social inclusion at local levels. It includes the promotion of the social enterprise, of the third sector and fight against poverty. Moreover, the *Jeremie Programme* which was funded by the Sicily Region, the ethical bank and the FEI, promote social inclusion and local development funding to small social enterprises and cooperative entrepreneurship at a local level. 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 in **Spain** supports and protects freelances with social economy purposes. Moreover, the law 14/2013 supports entrepreneurs and their internationalization. In addition, there is also the *Confederación Empresarial Española de Economía Social (CEPES) (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, has created 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 communities. Within its 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 a specific measure that aims at offering 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.

In **Greece**, there are some initiatives that directly impact to social economy at European, national and local level. At European level, the report of WS1, maps the 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), presents a number of priority axes to support the development of social enterprises, but only in the legal 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 of 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 and social economy within Roma community at national level.

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)*, with its primary objective 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.

In **Bulgaria** and **Romania**, following the implementation of Europe 2020 Strategy, each Member State is supposed to identify key fields for development for achieving the joint objectives of the Strategy. According to the *National Program for Reform Bulgaria 2020* (updated 2015) part of this is modernizing the labor market and introducing active employment measures for people belonging to vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, social economy seems to be left aside from the core focus of interest. The first official documents treating specifically social entrepreneurship in Bulgaria has been adopted in 2011: the National concept for social economy. Although it explicitly points this sector as a priority, neither the National concept, nor the Plan for its implementation has clear vision how it should be developed. In addition, within the legislation framework Bulgaria has not defined yet the term “social enterprise”.

Since 2012, the National Statistical Institute in Bulgaria has started collecting data about social enterprises. In 2013 criteria for self-identification as a social enterprise has been developed. According to data from the NSI for 2012, 4872 social enterprises had been defined as social. In 2013 the number of enterprises has been reduced to 3612. None of this mentions Roma as a target group while most of the efforts focus either on people with disabilities or NEETS. The major areas of support of the social enterprises in Bulgaria are: Providing jobs within the social enterprise or consulting for finding job for people from vulnerable groups (e.g. people with disabilities, women victims of violence, etc); Providing social services; Providing training and educational services.

Major national documents in the field are: Europe 2020: National Program for reform (updated 2015); National concept for social economy, 2011; Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for social economy 2014 – 2015 assigned to a working group in the Ministry of



labor and social policy; National strategy for reduction of poverty and fostering social inclusion; Human resources development Operational program 2014 – 2020. Regarding financing two operational programs envisage financial support for social entrepreneurship for the period 2014 – 2020: Human resources development Operational Program and Competitiveness Operational program. Up to September 2013 one hundred and sixty four social enterprises were either created or existing enterprises supported by the HRD OP during the first programming period providing new jobs for 3681 persons. However the big question mark is to what extent this financial support would shift from piloting and short term financial support to promoting sustainable results.

In terms of Roma integration social economy has not paid special attention to the issue so far. Increasing entrepreneurship culture among Roma has been mentioned in the Action plan for the implementation of the National Roma Integration strategy (NRIS) within the employment field and due to that scarce actions all over the country has been taken. Nevertheless, they are limited mainly to theory trainings provided by the local labor offices without a more strategic input. Therefore, the report for the implementation of the NRIS published by the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEI) about 2015, points out that during the period of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015) just 1565 persons have been motivated and included in trainings for starting and managing their own business. This is far behind the indicator planned (11 500 persons). Just 6 persons were included in such measures during 2015. The usual excuse in this situation is that “Not fulfilling of the activity is due to the lack of motivation and active attitude on behalf of the unemployed persons for including them in start-up trainings, lack of start-up financial resource, lack of skills for developing projects.” None of the reports finds any failure on behalf of the NCCEI or any other governmental structure.

To tackle the low levels of illiteracy in **Romania** continuing efforts are being made to increase educational inclusion of Romanian citizens, belonging to the Roma minority, in the employment and labour market integration. It should be noted that the population made up of Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority, is on average an educational level 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 at a similar level to that of young non-Roma and the employment rate among youth should be higher in total. It is a consequence of mutual compliance of the economic situation and the degree of educational integration, i.e. youth Roma enter the labour market earlier in the absence of economic support, so as to be able 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 social inclusion of Roma, 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* in 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 country. These annual reports (2020) use the information provided by each country, NGOs, international organizations and the Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union (FRA). It makes an assessment of the general progress made in all areas, is focused on the structural conditions required for a proper implementation and identifies some progress in aligning national strategies (revised) on Roma integration in EU financial instruments. At the same time, it is noted that further efforts are needed to combat discrimination and hostile attitudes towards Gypsies and coordination structures have become effective and inclusive cooperation mechanisms, 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, the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 was also planned, that follows 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).

In **Belgium**, there are several initiatives at European, national and local level which directly impact to social economy. At European level, there is the European Social Fund which is the main instrument for supporting jobs, helping people get better jobs and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens. It works by investing in Europe's human capital – its workers, its young people and all those seeking a job.

Moreover, there is the Small Business Act. It is an overarching framework for the EU policy on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It aims to improve the approach to entrepreneurship in Europe, simplify the regulatory and policy environment for SMEs, and remove the remaining barriers to their development. At national level, there is the National Roma Integration Strategy that promotes actions to improve the socio-economic integration of the Roma communities living on Belgian territory. At local level, there is the Flemish Action Plan on Central and Eastern European Roma. Under the terms of the Flemish Integration Act [Vlaamse integratiedecreet], the plan includes actions to facilitate the integration of the Roma, for example concerning the access to social housing, etc.



## 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 a number of public administrations, NGO's, and financial Institutions in Italy, Spain, and Greece.

In **Italy**, firstly, the Ministero del lavoro e delle Politiche sociali (Ministry of labour and social policies) is a public body which includes legislation, information diffusion and funds providing for the development of social economy projects. Moreover, the Consiglio<sup>1</sup> nazionale dell'economia e del lavoro (National council of the economy and labour) acts as an advisory institution of the Italian Government on economic and social legislation.

Secondly, in the field of NGO's, The Forum del Terzo Settore (Third sector Forum) is an institution that represents national and local organisations of the social economy and promotes social economy's activities. It has a political representation in the Government and in the public institutions, coordinates and supports national and local social economy networks. Moreover, another stakeholder is the Associazione generale cooperative italiane (Italian general association of the cooperatives). It tries to promote the promotion of the interests of the cooperative sector, work management and awareness on cooperation and economic alternatives at national context. In the group of the NGO's we can also identify Legacoop<sup>2</sup>. It is an organization that promotes projects development in social economy and cooperative entrepreneurship. Another organization is Confcooperative<sup>3</sup> which focuses its activity on the promotion of interests of the cooperative sector, work management and support. Last but not the least, Unicoop Sicilia is an association that Supports the development of strategies encouraging cooperation and promotion of laws and regulations of cooperative interests. It also provides professional support in the development of cooperative enterprises and support to local institutions and policy makers. Finally, the Popolare Banca Etica (Ethical Bank) provides social initiatives with ethical finance and microcredits and network for ethical banking.

Within the Public Bodies in **Spain**, we can point out: Barcelona Activa (active Barcelona), Servei d'Ocupació de Catalunya<sup>4</sup> (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

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cnel.it/home>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.legacoopsociali.it/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.confcooperative.it/>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.oficinadetreball.gencat.cat/socweb/opencms/socweb\\_ca/home.html](https://www.oficinadetreball.gencat.cat/socweb/opencms/socweb_ca/home.html)

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<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> 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.

In **Greece**, 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 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.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.upsocial.org/es>

<sup>6</sup> <http://spain.ashoka.org/ashoka-espana>

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. In Bulgaria and Romania, on behalf of governmental institutions the Ministry of labor and social policy is the major stakeholder responsible about promoting social economy, to a great extent due to the pressure from the European Union and with the instruments of the European social fund through Human Resources Development Operational Program. The National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues is the other major stakeholder responsible about Roma integration policies. Since it is obliged to promote social economy as one of the measures included in the Employment field in the National Roma Integration Strategy in Bulgaria this appeared also to be one of the aspects monitored in the Roma Integration policy. Nevertheless, as pointed above, the reports submitted by the regional councils on ethnic and integration issues, either inform about motivation training in the labor offices, or report the lack of such due to the lack of money.

The Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law (BCNL) was founded in July 2001. BCNL’s mission is to provide support for the drafting and implementation of legislation and policies aiming to advance civil society, civil participation and good governance in **Bulgaria**. Their main goals include: support for the development and establishment of a favorable legal and policy environment conducive to an independent civil society, including Bulgarian NGOs; facilitate an improved cooperation between the state and the NGOs and the actual and active civil the participation in decision making processes. For more than 10 years a focus in their work has been promoting social economy and especially legislation changes for fostering social entrepreneurship as a tool for alleviating the situation of vulnerable communities such as Roma.

One of the projects run by BCNL is "Strengthening of Social Enterprise in Bulgaria Forum" which is 10-month long project of Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation in partnership with Bulgarian Center for Not-for-Profit Law. The project aims to strengthen the recently established Social Enterprise Forum in order to become the voice of the sector and to influence the necessary policies and programs. The partners will attract for members of the Forum the most innovative and sustainable social enterprises, supporting organizations, companies and individuals. The most important results of the project are the opportunity to design the growth of the sector (Road map of the social enterprises) to measure the development (Index of social entrepreneurship) and to encourage coalitions for advocacy campaigns. Furthermore, BCNL has identified several types of stakeholders regarding social entrepreneurship, as well as several good practices. Association "New Road" Hajredin is a

Roma organization which develops social enterprise "Bee" within permissible by law additional economic activities. The mission of the company is to create opportunities and conditions for Roma, long-term unemployed and people with disabilities to acquire work habits and skills in beekeeping as thus helping them to realize their own way to integrate and socialization in the society. Revenues from the sale of honey and bee products are reinvested in social activities of the association. Within the activities they provide training in beekeeping for the target group and support them to start their own business after that. The National Agency for Roma, within the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020, supports education, offering skills and encouraging Lifelong Learning.

The Fundatin Pakiv of **Romania**, works to achieve the "European Social Fund- Priority Axis 6 - Promoting social Inclusion". It includes 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-Europaand 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 Centre for Integration of Roma, within the Human Capital Operational Programme (2014-2020), try to promote social inclusion and combating poverty.

In **Belgium**, as public bodies there are: the Federal State (Cellule économie sociale), which is a government policy for social economy; the Flemish Platform for Social Economy, which is the representative body for the social economy in the region of Flanders; the Social Economy Working Group (German-speaking Community (GSC)), which is the representative body for the social economy in the German-speaking community; The Social Economy Platform (Brussels Capital, which is the representative body for the social economy in the region of Walloina. Finally, there is the civil society Pour la Solidarité (PLS). It is a service provider for socio-economic and political stakeholders wishing to operate in a professional manner in the European solidarity sector.

## Social Economy Entities working to develop Social Entrepreneurship in Roma Communities

In Italy, Spain, and Greece, there are some social entities which offer support to create entrepreneurial initiatives within Roma communities.

For instance, in **Italy** the A.I.Z.O Rom e Sinti Onlus is an NGO that offers grants of financial support to provide professional training for Roma in order to enter the labour market or re-start school. Also the Credito Cooperative is an ethical finance institute that provides microcredits for the development of social entrepreneurship. Likewise, the Region of Sicilia through the programme “Microcredits for Sicilian families” offers support to local entrepreneurship. Moreover, the Unicredit Fondation<sup>7</sup> offers subsidies and financial support for the creation of social enterprises and cooperatives. It works with Roma mediators to develop entrepreneurship in Roma communities. Finally, the Cooperativa Zajedna<sup>8</sup> offers microcredits to supports Roma women entrepreneurship.

ACCEDER in **Spain** 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<sup>9</sup> and Fundación Esplai<sup>10</sup>. 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.

In **Greece**, 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

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unicreditfoundation.org/it.html>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.zajedno.it/?page\\_id=7](http://www.zajedno.it/?page_id=7)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.saoprat.net/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://fundacionesplai.org/>

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 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. 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.

In **Belgium**, The King Baudouin Foundation has supported seven pilot projects in Walloina and five in the Brussels Region regarding the authorisation and subsidisation of integration enterprises. The SOWECSOM provides credit, guarantees other loans and makes capital investments in integration enterprises in the region of Walloina the Crédal is a financial cooperative for alternative credit to small enterprises in social economy and management consulting services. Finally, the Cera is a cooperative group that supports the Centre for Social Economy through the financing of the Cera Chair for training in the management of social enterprises, research on social entrepreneurship and the management of social enterprises and actions that reinforce entrepreneurs' potential for social innovation.

## Opportunities and Challenges. Problems and Solutions Regarding the Implementation of Social Economy Projects within Roma Communities

Italy, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania

In 2015, the Council of Europe estimated at approximately 140,000 Roma living in Italy which represented 0.23% of the total population. According to the study of Strati F., seven out of the twenty Italian regions might account for 80% of the total Roma population (in the Centre (Lazio), in the North (Lombardia, Piemonte, Emilia Romagna and Veneto,) and in the South (Calabria and Campania)). The different groups of Roma have rich and old culture and story. Music and craft take an important place in their daily life. The culture is mostly unwritten, but it remained unified and inside the family.

Half of the Italian Roma population is mostly young and aged less than 16 and only 0.3% are over 60. The population of Roma living in camps live in overcrowded, poor conditions, without adequate access to water and electricity. They are also excluded from social housing, applicants having to prove that they had been lawfully evicted from private rented accommodation, an impossible task for Roma living in or forcibly evicted from camps. This also conducts to issues for Roma to attend an educational process in national institutions.

In Italy, the National Strategy for Roma Integration implemented by the public institutions in cooperation with all stakeholders involved in the process of Roma inclusion impacts on the four key areas of education, employment, healthcare and housing, as well as in the fight against discrimination and the use of funding. One of the top goals of Italy's National Strategy for the Roma is to ensure education for all Roma children, to promote non-discriminatory access to education and to tackle the problem of leaving school early. The MIUR expose that in 2011 some measures were planned to reduce early school leaving rate in Campania, Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily.

A National project launched in 2013 involving 13 large municipalities, aimed at increasing school attendance of Roma children in primary and secondary schools. The strategy also states its intention to eliminate the housing of Roma people in "camps" and The Italian government promotes vocational training and job orientation fighting undeclared work, promoting self-employment but also promoting access to services. In order to promote social economy, recycling is the economic activity the most widely practiced the by Roma metropolitan communities. Such activities which are generally carried out by the individual familial groups have, in some cases, structured itself in the form of social working cooperatives or associations that allow them to enter the labour market more easily. The



experience of the organizations of the social economy in social entrepreneurship and their proximity with the local population allow them to provide the adequate tools to foster social inclusion and encourage the entrepreneurship within Roma community. The Italian labour market is working on the small enterprises and the social economy can help the Roma communities to enter this market with small entities based on family models and using their cultural specificities (as hand craft or music) to offer new products and services. On the financial aspect, the banks which provide microcredits can be a solution to help the Roma communities to start a professional activity and enter the labour market. Moreover, being in contact with mediators who are actors of the social economy, can help Roma people to become pro-active in the society and develop their entrepreneurship working on social inclusion and civic participation. The mediators have also the role to inform the people about the national disposals available to help them on the housing or health care being a solution to many problems related to the isolation in the camps. The social economy offers support (through mediators and assistants), formal or non-formal tools complementary to the learning provided by the national educational institutions and different forms of trainings adapted to the local needs of the population and more particularly to people excluded from the labour market to enter it gaining new skills.

The organisations of the social economy provide social services and have a role in the accomplishment of certain social aims, potentially being useful instruments in combating social exclusion and encouraging local development especially in rural or disadvantaged areas and with disadvantaged people. They also play an important role towards the integration and the development of the women empowerment allowing them to follow trainings for example. The non-profit organisations and the cooperative sector lead programs in cooperation with the local administrations for example to fight against school drop-out, work on social inclusion, etc. The national networking and the local synergy between the different actors is one of the strength for the implementation of efficient projects and measures. This sector is really dynamic with a constant growth and contributes to build more sustainable enterprises and a socio-economic development model fluid and productive. The social economy offers support (through mediators and assistants), formal or non-formal tools complementary to the learning provided by the national educational institutions and different forms of trainings adapted to the local needs of the population and more particularly to people excluded from the labour market to enter it gaining new skills. The organisations of the social economy provide social services and have a role in the accomplishment of certain social aims, potentially being useful instruments in combating social exclusion and encouraging local development especially in rural or disadvantaged areas and with disadvantaged people. They also play an important role towards the integration and the development of the women empowerment allowing them to follow trainings for example. The non-profit organisations and the cooperative sector lead programs in cooperation with the local administrations for example to fight against school drop-out, work on social inclusion, etc. The national networking and the local synergy between the different actors is one of the strength for the





implementation of efficient projects and measures. This sector is really dynamic with a constant growth and contribute to build more sustainable enterprises and a socio-economic development model fluid and productive.

The main problems related to the implementation of social economy within Roma communities can be identified within 2 levels: External factors: General ratio of unemployment; Prejudice; weak connection between Italian society and Roma; Racism; Lack of official documents. Internal factors: Patriarchal family; Jealousy between the Roma families; Youngsters are fragmented between the Italian lifestyle and the Roma traditions. In Italy, recycling is the economic activity the most widely practiced the by Roma metropolitan communities. Such activities which are generally carried out by the individual familial groups have, in some cases, structured itself in the form of social working cooperatives or associations that allow them to enter the labour market more easily. The experience of the organisations of the social economy in social entrepreneurship and their proximity with the local population allow them to provide the adequate tools to foster social inclusion and encourage the entrepreneurship within Roma community.

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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 disproportionally 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.

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.

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. An estimated 80% of the Brussels Roma live in poverty and they tend to be concentrated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, living in low quality rental homes with few amenities. Moreover, the majority of them do not have a permanent residence and they tend to move frequently. The unlawful conduct of a minority of Roma has found its way into the media and influenced public opinion, which has reinforced certain stereotypes and prejudices.

According to the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Belgian federal government, in Belgium, only a very limited number of Roma are employed on the basis of a standard employment contract while such contract provided the basis for access to social benefits. The unemployment rate is high because of language barriers, low educational achievement, and high levels of illiteracy or lack of practical experience. Many Roma also live through unofficial work, including selling flowers or playing music often accompanied by their children. Belgium has developed a National Roma Integration Strategy, which consists of an integrated set of policy measures within Belgium's social inclusion policies focusing on the elimination of poverty and social exclusion among marginalised Roma communities, in particular in the areas of education, employment, health and housing. The activities that are organized include among others language courses, training, help with administrative procedures and job search, counselling and the use of Roma mediators to communicate better with the communities. More effective measures are necessary to ensure the integration of disadvantaged groups, including Roma, in the open labour market.

Social economy entities have commercial characteristics whilst also having social goals. Firstly, work inclusion initiatives combine training with work experience to combat social exclusion and integrate people furthest from the labour market. Proximity services, carried out by community organisations with non-profit, co-operative, and mutual characteristics help to address the needs of disadvantaged communities, complementing the work of state social services, and can also play an important role in bringing jobs out of the black economy. Associational activities act as an important complement to labour market integration namely by helping people gain a political voice, strengthening their sense of identity and providing

mutual support and self-help. Roma mediators could be appointed to inform the Roma community about the available social economy policies and programs to ensure that they will be accurately informed about their rights and about what these entities can offer to them in order to improve their social and economic status.

In Bulgaria, at present Roma are the most vulnerable group in the field of employment. This situation is additionally worsened by the crisis in mainstream economy. The aspects of Roma social exclusion are numerous and recognized: low level of education and qualification, extremely low employment rate, significantly disadvantaged health and social status, disastrous living conditions, wide-spread segregation and discrimination, strong anti-Roma stereotypes and hatred, etc. As pointed above all these phenomena form sustainable exclusion pattern that is difficult to be broken.

Two important factors stay behind and maintain the exclusion patterns in the rural areas: namely, the extreme poverty and the absence of democratic traditions. Both of them define and preserve the exclusion making the rural societies more exclusive compared to the urban ones. They relate to the rural population as a whole. Among the rural Roma communities these factors have additional strong negative impact that makes impossible to break the vicious circle or social exclusion since the poverty and lack of democratic traditions are completed with the absence of social structures within the local Roma communities. The mainstream social structures (such as cultural centers, pensioners clubs, etc.) usually do not include Roma. The community based services could be a way to support establishing community social structures but the mainstream services are significantly less developed and seldom in the rural areas, they rarely reach the Roma communities. That is why developing community based services for fostering the activation of Roma and establishing inner-community structures is a must; This already sets a safe ground for building social economy as a tool for developing Roma community. Social exclusion of rural Roma is linked not only with the high unemployment (widespread also among the majority of rural population in Eastern Europe) but also with the low level of education, vocational training and the quality / existence of services provided. It needs complex approach of intervention that focuces on all these areas.

Therefore, social entrepreneurship when designed to support the development of Roma community and alleviate the situation of Roma, in rural areas should be diverse and broader as perspective. The main actors and resources that may promote social economy within Roma communities are the European Social Fund and European Agricultural fund for Rural Development through the Human Resources Development Operational Program and the Rural Development Program, Roma and pro-Roma NGOs, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy; local municipalities and Local Action Groups, and so on.

In Romania, the Roma population is one of the groups most at risk of exclusion in labour market, although unemployment rates are significantly lower compared to the general population. This is mainly due to low level of education and lack of professional qualifications, while at the same time, discrimination plays 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 integrate programs clearly aiming at inclusion of Romanian citizens with Roma origins. These programs must be adapted to the communities they work with and also address both individuals, through projects focused on education, health, labor market inclusion, and community, with reference to infrastructure projects, decent housing, anti-discrimination, etc. The social economy is an effective tool for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. It can support 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 Social Protection and Elderly 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. According to experience gained, the main factors that may promote social economy within Roma communities are the European Social Fund, Roma NGOs, the Ministry of European Funds; Local Public Authorities; throughout the community of Roma and non-Roma. In Romania, the Roma population is one of the groups most at risk of exclusion from the labor market, and 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, which play a vital role in social and economic exclusion of Roma.

Evidences show that the social economy, focused 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 and 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 focused on poverty of the Roma communities, including coherent strategy of increasing unemployment and mechanisms of creative support for social inclusion. Development and inclusion - as well as social exclusion – is, at local level, a constant interaction of the local community. Local authorities should, therefore, be involved in more visible strategies, especially in the implementation of government, 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. However, these examples are unfortunately limited nationwide.

It is therefore vital to create connections and 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 on community needs and taking into account the cultural, social, economic, central and local authorities, they have a central role in social dialogue for 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, was 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; Establishing mechanisms to support and encourage the development of social undertakings; Establishing national single record of the Register of social enterprises.

Public authorities' role: Recognition of 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); 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' role: 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 role:** 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.

**NGOs role:** 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; 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 achievement 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

Italy, Spain, Greece, Belgium, Bulgaria, Romania



Summing up, developing social entrepreneurship in Roma communities of Italy, is a challenge not only to facilitate the inclusion of Roma in the Italian society, but also to promote their social inclusion and the development of a profitable enterprise, that would benefit the Italian community. Some of the main aspects that should be highlighted are the following:

- Creating bridges between the communities and the institutions.
- Addressing the basic needs to Roma communities by the Public Administration (water, garbage etc.)
- Facilitating the Roma' access to the job market
- Providing trainings, starting from the very basics.
- Developing the interventions, not at a level of operators, but mostly in forming teams of lawyers and other experts, who can attend and influence the Consulate in Rome etc.

The key internal issues towards social entrepreneurship are cultural, and related to gender and family hierarchy (such as the role of woman within the community). They are due to discrimination and prejudice, or because of lack of real interventions from institutions. Moreover, the competitiveness orientation of the labour market and the lack of documents, the prejudice against Roma and their inadequate educative level expose Roma to different levels of social and entrepreneurial exclusion.

Potential solutions that are assessed are to enable the cultures to work together for a common goal, to provide support from institutions and public administration, to put housing and job opportunities as priorities, to create interventions with experts ex. lawyers, who can attend and influence the councils in Rome.

Some best practices suggested are: training Roma in new technologies and computer skills, getting the associations working with Roma involved into the policy creation and manning house-building projects with Roma themselves.

Finally, 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.

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.

Additionally, 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.

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, which 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.

The overall lack of integration of Roma communities in the countries they reside in impedes their access to the labour market and thus to enter the formal economy. This lack of integration is both related to the discrimination and exclusion they face and, to some extent, to the way some communities are organized. Hence, the level of education and qualification being very low within the Roma, they are partly invisible to organizations promoting social economy. This situation precludes any effective collaboration between the social economy sector and the different Roma communities, and as a direct consequence many opportunities of leaving poverty and marginalization are wasted. Improving communication and cooperation between these two parties could be a first step in the fight against Roma exclusion and the multiple problems our interviewees mentioned before. Roma empowerment through social entrepreneurship and the access to a better living, both socially and economically, should be considered as a “win-win” situation in the sense that both Roma and non-Roma have many things to gain. For the societies where Roma reside, it could be a great way to energize and invigorate the local economy and to create economic activity even for the non-Roma, and for the Roma it could mean better access to public services and eventually gaining the confidence of institutions and corporations.

Improving collaboration, information, training and knowledge could be a prerequisite and an important first step. Knowledge about the Roma community from social economy organizations and knowledge of the benefits of social economy, from the Roma community.

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 to generate profit, but to improve living conditions and provide new opportunities for disadvantaged or vulnerable parts of the population.

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.



## Public Policies Impact on Social Economy

The Romanian 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 populations 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. The 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.

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The term has been widely promoted in Romania with the advent in 2008, in 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.

## 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)

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)

## Comparative analysis and final conclusions

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It is evident that the system for financial encouragement of social entrepreneurship and social economy for Roma is much more developed in Spain and Belgium. Italy also has a number of institutions that promote social entrepreneurship at sustainable level. Greece has developed a good tradition in social entrepreneurship programs, but mostly dependable on institutions and the establishment system.

In comparison, Bulgaria and Romania still are mostly dependable on EU funds. Both countries lack enough number of independent institutions promoting social economy efforts. Moreover, they both need a system for social grants that would provide for sustainability of NGO-implemented projects. In addition, the very existence of Roma NGOs in Bulgaria and Romania is sometimes endangered by lack of institutional strengthening grants and sustainable support.



Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece need to further develop the system of public-private partnership in the social entrepreneurship area; this is something for which Belgium and Spain could serve as a positive example. Italy has settled a number of on-spot programs which is related to the Italian practice of limiting the free movement of certain Roma communities. This is, on one hand, supportive effort to some Roma entrepreneurs but at the same time could limit their right to free development and trade.

Finally, the analysis of national reports classified three groups, arranged in order from best practices to problematic state of the issue: Belgium and Spain in the first group, Italy and Greece in the second, and Bulgaria and Romania in the third. This is judged by the criteria of developed system for social entrepreneurship.

By another criteria (that is, National context and the Roma community inclusion), the grouping was different and took the following formation: after careful examination of the national reports, three groups were formed. The first consisted of Italy, Spain, and Greece, the second of Bulgaria and Romania, and the third of Belgium. At the same time, there are a number of additional similarities between Greece, on one hand, and Italy-Spain, on the other, especially in the area of social grants and bank programs for social entrepreneurship to prevent poverty increase, given the financial crises and the tough economic background in the three countries.

We would like to draw special attention on the situation with social entrepreneurship among Roma in Bulgaria and Romania. It is evident that many factors – economic, traditional, political, etc. – make the process slow, ineffective and unsustainable. The respective governments of those two Member States should swiftly take the necessary decisions to foster independent financial tools to enable more programs in the field of social entrepreneurship. This is quite needed since Roma population in the two outlined Member States is in large number, proportionally, and the poverty situation among Roma has reached its critical state.

## Recommendations

After taking into consideration all the relevant factors, stakeholders, key players, national strategies, agencies, and competent bodies' status of operation, it is possible to elevate the issue of social entrepreneurship and social economy to the level of primary consideration as a national instrument, if at least 75% of the below outlined issues are paid special attention in terms of additional institutional support, organizational strengthening, and continuous sustainable effort in the direction of practical implementation and concrete, outcome-based strategy:

- ❖ Fostering grassroots organizations' development through proactive synergy between state and local-level authorities;
- ❖ Creating enough number of NGO networks that are capable to serve both as distributors (intermediate support organizations - ISOs) and direct beneficiaries of social grants;
- ❖ Providing for institutional development support to Roma NGOs that deal with the issue of social entrepreneurship;
- ❖ Implementing additional public policy decisions that would successfully achieve:
  - Roma communities social integration at local level;
  - Roma NGOs sustainable support;
  - Legislation initiatives to ease the status of Roma entrepreneurship at national level;
  - Involvement of major Roma organizations at the level of national strategy concerning social entrepreneurship;
  - Tools that would enable Roma communities to successfully network with partners throughout EU;
  - Providing free consultation work to Roma organizations, NGOs, communities, and leaders to outline practical steps, draft concrete projects in the areas of social entrepreneurship;
  - Finding the demarcation line and thus connecting concrete social entrepreneurship oriented projects with other programs and projects that would also foster Roma social and cultural integration (for example, in the areas of agriculture, cross-border cooperation, social care, cultural

preservation and multi-cultural partnership, education, women integration, youth initiatives, etc.);

- Finding the best way towards a critical mass of Roma NGOs that could have the capacity to influence the legislator both at local and national level;
- Encouraging of independent Roma advocacy campaigns and media coverage of success stories considering social entrepreneurship programs and concrete local achievements;
- Providing for constant Roma participation in international and EU-level consultative bodies that outline the relevant strategies in the social area;
- Assuring monitoring and good governance practices both for national authorities and Roma organizations that are directly involved with grant distribution, grant absorption, and grant management;
- Provide constant training to Roma NGOs at local and national level and help Roma communities participate in more international trainings and experience exchange programs.

In addition, it is vital to assure better and swift coordination between the national councils/bodies for cooperation on ethnic and integration issues and the respective Operational Programs Authorization Bodies in order to have at hand a flexible national instrument to further develop what has been achieved so far in the area of Roma integration and social entrepreneurship programs. Also, a keystone of such a process could be given additional special attention by the Governments, combined with supplementing measures and efforts to strengthen the function of the existing national councils/bodies dealing with ethnic and integration Issues; this would provide for tangible results when working with local or national Roma NGOs in practical implementation of social integration programs.

It is worth mentioning, that the number of national strategies and programs is a bit surpassing the number of practical actions in the area that is subject of the present report. This could possibly mean that there might be certain gaps in the organizational smoothness or, substantially, in the very process of decision making and management capacity concerning



the instruments and programs for social integration, Roma integration, and social entrepreneurship encouragement.

It should be outlined that the legislation and regulation framework is well laid, with concrete measures incorporated into the very body of the Operational Programs following the National Strategic Reference Frameworks of the relevant MS. There are a number of active institutions and NGOs that have a long story of success and projects implemented with good care and practical, measurable outcomes. What is needed for the future is a swifter and more flexible, eased institutional approach to encourage communities and NGOs to be more proactive in taking the responsibility to carry out social entrepreneurship programs and be hand-in-hand with their respective communities in order to enlarge their target groups.

As a whole, the process has been well arranged in terms of legislative and instrument measures. It is evident, though, that the practical implementation framework needs concrete development in the direction of more successful stories, local and national impact, and publicly recognized achievement at EU level.

## Comparative Table

| Country        | National Strategies  | EU Strategies   | Good Practices  |
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| <b>Belgium</b> | <p><b>National Roma Integration Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Flemish Action Plan on Central and Eastern European Roma.</b></p> | <p><b>European Social Fund</b></p> <p><b>Small Business Act</b></p> | <p>The <b>King Baudouin Foundation</b> has supported seven pilot projects in Walloina and five in the Brussels Region regarding the authorisation and subsidisation of integration enterprises.</p> |

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|                 |   |                             | <p>The <b>SOWECSOM</b> provides credit, guarantees other loans and makes capital investments in integration enterprises in the region of Walloina.</p> <p>The <b>Crédal</b> is a financial cooperative for alternative credit to small enterprises in social economy and management consulting services.</p> <p><b>Cera</b> is a cooperative group that supports the Centre for Social Economy through the financing of the Cera Chair for training in the management of social enterprises, research on social entrepreneurship and the management of social enterprises and actions that reinforce entrepreneurs' potential for social innovation.</p> |
| <b>Bulgaria</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National concept for social economy, 2011</li> <li>Action plan for implementation of the Strategy for social economy 2014 – 2015 assigned to a working group in the Ministry of labor and social policy</li> </ul> | <b>Europe 2020 Strategy</b> | <p><b>Association "New Road" Hajredin</b> is a Roma organization which develops social enterprise "Bee" within permissible by law additional economic activities. The mission of the company is to create opportunities and conditions for Roma, long-term unemployed and people with disabilities to acquire work habits and skills in beekeeping as thus helping them to realize their own way to integrate and socialization in the society. Revenues from the sale of honey and bee products are reinvested in social activities of the</p>  |

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|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National strategy for reduction of poverty and fostering social inclusion</li> <li>Human resources development Operational program 2014 – 2020</li> </ul>   |  | association. Within the activities they provide training in beekeeping for the target group and support them to start their own business after that.   |
| <b>Greece</b> | <p><b>Strategic Plan for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship (2013)</b></p> <p><b>Social economy Registry Dept. of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Welfare</b></p> <p><b>Operational Programme Competitive ness, Entrepreneurship &amp; Innovation – EPAnEK</b></p> <p><b>National Strategy for Roma</b></p> <p><b>New National Strategy for Roma (2014-2020)</b></p> | <p><i><b>A map of social enterprises and their eco-systems in Europe. Country Report: Greece</b></i></p> | <p><b>KOI.S.P.E. – Social partnership of limited liability</b> 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.</p> <p>In addition there is also the <b>Special Service for Social inclusion and Social Economy (EYKEKO)</b>. It is responsible for planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating all the necessary policies and actions aimed at developing and strengthening the social economy.</p> <p>Moreover, there is the <b>EKKE’s Social Economy Observatory</b>. It is a mechanism that aims to the constant observation of the Social Enterprises of the Limited Liability, by field research.</p> |

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|  |  |  | <p>Within the group of civil society organizations there are the <b>Panhellenic Federation of Social Cooperatives</b> and the <b>Institute of Social Economy</b>, which offers modern and flexible support and counselling, having starred in variety and innovative social entrepreneurship project services. Provides support, counselling, creative ideas and practical training to young entrepreneurs. Additionally there is the NGO <b>Ashoka-Greece</b> that represents a European network for the promotion of social enterprise, as a solution to the general social problems.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is the <b>“Bouki” Developmental Agency for the support of unemployed Roma of Thessaly Region</b>, 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.</p> <p><b>Prasini Politeia</b>, 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.</p> |
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|  |  | <p><b>KLIMAKA - human and social capital development vector for tackling social exclusion</b> 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.</p> <p>Additionally, <b>KOINSEP – Social Economy Institute</b> is an organization dealing with social entrepreneurship which offers subsidies. Likewise, the <b>Institute of Entrepreneurship Development</b> offers subsidies, pensions and grants to strengthen entrepreneurship and to develop researches in entrepreneurship.</p> <p>The <b>Institute of Development of Employment (ex Development Institute for Thessaly)</b> 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.</p> |
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|  |  |  | <p>The <b>Scientific Society for Social Cohesion and Development</b> 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.</p> <p>The <b>E.K.PO.S.P.O. NOSTOS - Company of Social and Cultural Support of Repatriated Greeks "Nostos"</b> 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.</p> <p>The <b>Project S.A</b> 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.</p> <p>The <b>Oikokoinonia-NGO</b> offers grants and implements actions to promote the</p> |
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|              |  |   | <p>employment of persons belonging to vulnerable social group of Roma. Similarly, the</p> <p><b>Industry Disruptors-Game Changers (ID-GC)</b> establishes effective partnerships for entrepreneurs and start-ups to fulfil their potential by bringing together talent, knowledge, mentoring, education, funding and networking.</p>  |
| <b>Italy</b> | <p>Italy's National Strategy for Roma integration</p> <p><i>Promozione e sviluppo del terzo settore</i> (Promotion and development of the third sector)</p> <p>Piano di Azione per la Coesione (Action plan for Cohesion)</p> <p>Jeremie Programme which was funded by the Sicily Region, the ethical bank and the FEI</p> | <p><b>Programme Interreg IVC</b></p> <p><b>The Social Business Initiative</b></p> | <p>Firstly, the <a href="#">Ministerio del lavoro e delle Politiche sociali</a> (Ministry of labour and social policies) is a public body which includes legislation, information diffusion and funds providing for the development of social economy projects. Moreover, the <a href="#">Consiglio nazionale dell'economia e del lavoro</a> (National council of the economy and labour) acts as an advisory institution of the Italian Government on economic and social legislation.</p> <p>Secondly, in the field of NGO's, The <a href="#">Forum del Terzo Settore</a> (Third sector Forum) is an institution that represents national and local organisations of the social economy and promotes social economy's activities. It has a political representation in the Government and in the public institutions, coordinates and</p> |



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|  |  | <p>supports national and local social economy networks.</p> <p>Moreover, another stakeholder is the <a href="#">Associazione generale cooperative italiane</a> (Italian general association of the cooperatives). It tries to promote the promotion of the interests of the cooperative sector, work management and awareness on cooperation and economic alternatives at national context.</p> <p>In the group of the NGO's we can also identify <a href="#">Legacoop</a>. It is an organization that promotes projects development in social economy and cooperative entrepreneurship. Another organization is <a href="#">Confcooperative</a> which focuses its activity on the promotion of interests of the cooperative sector, work management and support. Last but not the least, <a href="#">Unicoop Sicilia</a> is an association that Supports the development of strategies encouraging cooperation and promotion of laws and regulations of cooperative interests. It also provides professional support in the development of cooperative enterprises and support to local institutions and policy makers.</p> <p>Finally, the <a href="#">Popolare Banca Etica</a> (Ethical Bank) provides social initiatives with</p> |
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|  |  | <p>ethical finance and microcredits and network for ethical banking.</p> <p>Moreover, there are some social entities which offer support to create entrepreneurial initiatives within Roma communities.</p> <p>For instance, the <a href="#">A.I.Z.O Rom e Sinti Onlus</a> is an NGO that offers grants of financial support to provide professional training for Roma in order to enter the labour market or re-start school.</p> <p>Also the <a href="#">Credito Cooperative</a> is an ethical finance institute that provides microcredits for the development of social entrepreneurship. Likewise, the <a href="#">Region of Sicilia</a> through <a href="#">the programme</a> “Microcredits for Sicilian families” offers support to local entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Moreover, the <a href="#">Unicredit Foundation</a> offers subsidies and financial support for the creation of social enterprises and cooperatives. It works with Roma mediators to develop entrepreneurship in Roma communities.</p> <p>Finally, the <a href="#">Cooperativa Zajedna</a> offers microcredits to supports Roma women entrepreneurship</p> |
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| <b>Romania</b> | <p>Romanian Government Strategy for Improving the Roma</p> <p>the Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020</p> <p>Bill of social economy, 2013</p> <p>National Development Plan</p> <p>National Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Act</p> <p>Operational Programme Human Resources Development</p> <p>National Strategic Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion</p> | <p>The evaluation report from 2013 (Progress in the implementation of national strategies for Roma integration)</p> <p>Agency for Fundamental Rights of the European Union (FRA)</p> <p>the report <i>Overview of youth discrimination in the European Union</i>, the report <i>Practical guide to launch and implement a Diversity Charter</i> and the report <i>List of actions by the Commission to advance LGBTI equality</i>.</p> | <p>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". <a href="http://www.roma-re.ro">www.roma-re.ro</a></p> <p>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</p> |
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|              |   |            | <p>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.</p> <p><a href="http://kcmc.ro/proiecte/finalizate/ro-mano-cher-casa-romilor/">http://kcmc.ro/proiecte/finalizate/ro-mano-cher-casa-romilor/</a></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. <a href="http://www.latiganci.ro">www.latiganci.ro</a></p> |
| <b>Spain</b> | <p>the law 31/2015</p> <p>the law 14/2013</p> <p><i>Confederación Empresarial Española de Economía Social (CEPES)</i></p> | <b>ESF</b> | <p><b>ACCEDER in Spain</b> is a labour mediation programme which emerged with the objective of achieving the effective incorporation of the Roma population in</p>   |

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|  | <p>(Confederation of Spanish Entrepreneurs of Social Economy)</p> <p>programme<br/><i>@EmprenSocial</i></p> <p>The programme <i>Xarxa Empren</i>.</p> <p><i>Pla de xoc per fer créixer l'economia cooperativa, social i solidària a la ciutat</i> (Shock Plan to promote social economy in Barcelona)</p> <p>the National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020</p> <p>the <i>III Pla Integral del Poble Gitano de Catalunya</i> (Third Integral Plan of Roma Community)</p> <p>the <i>Estratègia Local amb el Poble Gitano de la ciutat de Barcelona</i> (Local Strategy for Roma Community in Barcelona)</p> <p>the <i>Consell Assessor del Poble Gitano a Catalunya</i> (Advisor</p> |  | <p>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 <i>Barcelona Activa</i> have specific grant programme for young people or people without enough economic resources. Moreover, they have specific support programmes for women and young people. <i>Obra Social la Caixa</i> (Caixa Bank foundation) has the <i>Incorpora</i> programme which offers microcredits to people without resources to start their social initiatives. Moreover, <i>Programes de Garantia Juvenil</i> (Youth Guarantee programmes), have provided Roma organizations with resources to start social economy initiatives with young Roma in neighbourhoods. Examples of these organizations are <i>GATS</i>, <a href="#">Saó Prat</a> and <a href="#">Fundación Esplai</a>. 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.</p> <p><a href="#">UpSocial</a> seeks to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of innovative proposals that significantly</p> |
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|  | <p>Council of Roma Community in Catalonia)</p> <p>the <i>Consejo Estatal del Pueblo Gitano</i> (National Council of Roma Community)</p> <p>Third Integral Plan of Roma Community in Catalunya</p> <p>Local Strategy for Roma community in Barcelona</p> | <p>improves the lives of people and that provides sufficient scope for the dimension of the problems. Furthermore, <i>UnLtd Spain</i> and <i>Ship2B</i> foundation are initiatives which offer trainings, information and financial support, to make real social initiatives. Additionally, <i>INNOVES</i> 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, <a href="#">Ashoka</a> is a non for profit organization that links multiple social economy actors and supports their initiatives. Similarly, the XES, <i>Xarxa d'Economia Solidaria</i> (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: <i>Gawa capital</i>, <i>Creas</i>, <i>Premios UEM</i>, <i>Vivergi Social Impact Fund</i>. In general, they are social enterprises that invest in social economy initiatives.</p> |
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|  |  |  | Moreover, we can highlight <i>COOP57</i> , which is an ethical bank that provide microcredits to start with social initiatives. |
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