At international level, the concerns for social economy are not new, this being a theme of interest during the 19th century in several European states, and also in the United States and Canada. In Romania, the interest for the social economy field has increased in the last years, mainly following the implementation of the projects co-financed by the Social European Fund. Both at European level and at national level, it is recognized that social economy had a significant contribution to employment, being regarded as a long-term solution for the employment integration problems of the vulnerable groups. In Romania, the activity of the social economy entities is regulated by specific legislation, a unitary framework regarding this area still being on the public agenda. These organizations comply with the features of the social enterprise defined by the EMES European Research Network, but are not joined together under this title that was just recently introduced at national level.

In this context, and in the conditions where the interest of the non-governmental organizations for the social enterprises has increased, it was published the work called *Guidelines for Good Practices on Setting-up Social Enterprises for Roma Communities*, within the project “Social economy – a solution for the development of Roma communities in Romania”, co-financed from the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013 “Invest in People!” Within the same project were published the

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report “Social Economy and Roma Communities. Challenges and Opportunities” (2012) and a “Compendium of business ideas and models of good practice” that presents social business models and best practices developed in Roma communities. Within the project “Prometeus – promoting social economy in Romania through research, education and training at European standards”, the Institute of Social Economy has published “Guidelines for social enterprise managers” (2012) that contains both theoretical aspects on social economy and information regarding the legal framework, strategic planning and cases studies. Within the project “Integrat – Resources for socially excluded Women and Roma groups” was published an intervention manual “From Idea to Profit: How to set up a social economy enterprise in Romania” (2012). But neither the manual nor the guide for managers presented above focus on Roma communities in Romania.

The Guidelines for Good Practices on Setting-up Social Enterprises for Roma Communities is structured in six chapters, each discussing an essential phase in the development process of a social enterprise.

The introduction intends to make the reader familiar with the objectives of the guide and with its structure. The second chapter (Social enterprise) makes some conceptual clarifications: it defines the notions of social economy, social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. The author emphasizes the defining characteristics of the social enterprise such as the differences between this form of organization and the other economical agents and describes the main types of social enterprises: the non-governmental organizations, the mutual societies, the co-operatives, the protected units and the other types of legal entities that abide the principle of social economy. The phases for setting up a social enterprise are the same regardless of the problems they address to, but the author of the guide focuses on the social enterprises for Roma communities, as a consequence of their increased vulnerability.

The social enterprises have a positive impact both on the communities, by stimulating local economic development, poverty reduction, increasing the inclusion of the vulnerable groups, developing social capital, and also on the initiators and developers, leading to an increased organizational capacity and to the improvement of the
organization’s image in the community, to fundraising opportunities and to the creation of social capital. The chapter ends by presenting the activity of a social enterprise developed in Bihor County and with a very useful section for those interested to develop a social enterprise, the frequently asked questions.

The third chapter reviews the phases of the development of a social enterprise and suggests a questionnaire that comes to support the reader in the attempt to determine the individual abilities, as well as the organizational capacities required in such a process. The phases that must be run through in the development process of a social enterprise are establishing the vision, the mission and the objectives, generating the ideas and identifying the opportunities, the pre-feasibility analysis, the feasibility study, the business plan, the preparation of the launching, the implementation, measuring the performances and the growth reinvestment, adapting and evolution. Three of these are detailed in the fourth chapter of the guide: identifying the business idea, its analysis and the feasibility study. The identification of the business idea is not the exclusive task of the person who desires to set up the social enterprise, but it is done “starting with the needs and possibilities of the community the social enterprise in question is to serve” (p. 39) and implies a consultation process with the interested stakeholders from the community. Once identified, the business idea must be analyzed from the point of view of the market potential, of the social impact and of the congruency with the organization’s mission, vision and the objectives, and the feasibility study must include an analysis of the market potential, of the competition and also a marketing study.

The fifth chapter (Preparation) discusses the main challenges for the social enterprises, caused mainly by the differences between these and the other economical agents, the basic rules for setting up a social enterprise and the analysis of the organizational capacity. There is an emphasis placed again on the importance of involving the interested actors in the development process of a social enterprise: investors, partners, community members and organizations from the community. Besides the analysis of the interested actors and the previously mentioned phases, it is vital to know the capacity of the organization to develop a social enterprise, and for this evaluation the author proposes
an analysis tool. Once this aspect is evaluated, the business plan must be conceived, and its phases are presented in detail within the sixth chapter of the guide *Planning the Social Enterprise*.

The last chapter presents the legislative elements specific for each type of the social economy entities – non-governmental organizations, mutual aid associations, co-operative societies, protected units, traditional forms of ownership in common (rom. “obști/composesorate”) and agricultural associations – and this gives the guide an increased level of usefulness. To complete these, the chapter includes also the opinion of the representatives of an experienced entity in the social economy field regarding the legislative barriers.

The *Guidelines for Good Practices on Setting-up Social Enterprises for Roma Communities* may be a starting point for the design and development of social enterprises, both in the Roma communities and outside them, responding to many of the questions of those interested in this process and presenting, together with the principles and the rules suggested, examples of good practices at national level.