SOCIAL ECONOMY A SOLUTION FOR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA COMMUNITIES
IN ROMANIA

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Abstract
The project „Social Economy a solution for the development of Roma Communities in Romania” contributes to the efforts of Romanian stakeholders to develop and implement of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma Citizens belonging to Roma Minority. Signed by the Management Authority in March 2011, the project provides support for the development of socio-economic interventions within Roma communities and promotes social economy as a social inclusion tool for a group as vulnerable to the insertion on the labor market as that of the Roma. The project helps advance key issues regarding social economy and Roma communities, inter-alia sustainability and how to 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.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP Romania) in collaboration with the Center for Institutional Analysis and Development (CADI Eleutheria), the Department for Interethnic Relations and the Roma Civic Alliance of Romania have launched the project „Social Economy as a solution for developing the Roma communities in Romania”. The project framework seeks to make a tangible difference to Roma communities from Romania by means of applying Social Economy practices as an innovative solution. Through the proposed activities, the

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Project contributes directly to achieving specific objectives under axis 6 in Sectoral Operational Programme - Human Resource Development (SOP HRD) 2007-2013 programme, by developing social economy structures, promotion of social economy and enhancing capacity of social economy operators and environment. The Project is also contributing to the development of human capital in Romania by implementing concrete measures for social inclusion on modern flexible labor market. The project is also in line with the European Union (EU) Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 that request EU Member States to address the situation of Roma in terms of employment, poverty and education.

The three year project has a total budget of 1 million EUR, and is financed from the European Social Fund (ESF), in line with UNDP’s Country Program for Romania for 2010-2012. UNDP will support national partners’ capacity to implement the project, by ensuring adequate management for results, best value for money, fairness, integrity, transparency and effective international cooperation. The project is based on the experience that social economy can create both private and social structures for communities that strengthen solidarity and sustainable development while offering labor market flexibility. The overall objective of the project is the empowerment of disadvantaged Roma communities by applying social economy practices and by promoting social economy as an instrument for integrated development. The project presents policy analysis of the social economy practices for the enhancement of Roma inclusion in line with Romania’s European and international commitments in this regard. The project will also provide direct assistance to the establishment of social enterprises and promote social economy practices among selected Roma communities and the Romanian public.

The Government of Romania – Department for Interethnic Relations, the Center for Institutional Analysis and Development (CADI Eleutheria) and Roma Civic Alliance for Romania with support from UNDP Romania
organized in Cluj-Napoca, on the 26/27 October 2011, at the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, the regional seminar on socio-economic policies addressing Roma communities. „Rethinking socio-economic policies addressing Roma communities in Romania“, organized within the framework of the project Social Economy a solution for the development of Roma communities in Romania, is the first in a series of six seminars dedicated to strengthening the role of local authorities and civil society in developing socio-economic models for Roma communities, noting their diversity in terms of culture, social empowerment, education and income generation.

Over 40 participants, including actors and promoters of social economy, civil society organizations, community leaders, researchers, donors and government officials attended the seminar. The discussions focused on social economy models for Roma communities in Romania, the success factors in developing social economy models and challenges encountered in the implementation of social initiatives. The long process for a well-developed legislative and administrative infrastructure to support sustainable socio-economic development was also discussed, and the need for a permanent dialogue between local and national authorities, private sector, civil society and affected communities, clearly emerged from the consultations.