DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF SOCIAL ECONOMY –
TWO DEVELOPMENT REGIONS OF ROMANIA
BUCHAREST-ILFOV AND SOUTH - EAST

Simona Maria Stănescu, Sorin Cace and Filip Alexandrescu (coord.)
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The book, developed through a European-funded project "Integrat - resources for women and socially excluded Roma groups", co-financed from the European Social Fund in 2010-2013, throw Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, Priority 6. "Promoting social inclusion", KAI 6.1. "Developing social economy" was coordinated by Simona Maria Stănescu, Sorin Cace and Filip Alexandrescu.

The volume consists of four sections: 1. Methodological framework; 2. The demand of the social economy (8 chapters); 3. Offer of social economy services in two development regions of Romania (9 chapters) and 4. Conclusions.

The exchange of domestic experiences and the collaboration along participants to the project’s consortium can be appreciated in a positive way. Reputed researchers and partners from Romania and Greece participating having vast knowledge in the area of social economy. The main applicant is CATALACTICA Association for the Promotion and Economic and Social Development together with the Research Institute for Quality of Life (ICCV) of the Romanian Academy with the international partner Bolt International Consulting L. Katsikaris & Co. Limited.

The work aimed at analyzing the social economy in the development regions Bucharest and South-East including the counties:

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Buzău, Brăila, Galați, Ilfov, Tulcea, Vrancea and the potential of these areas, in terms of further development of organizations with economic activity oriented towards vulnerable population groups and their reintegration into the labour market.

A substantial number of socio-economic entities and NGOs (229), 235 Cooperative and 228 mutual organizations of employees and pensioners were included in the survey in the development regions Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East.

The information gathered through the questionnaire were addressed, on the one hand, to persons belonging to vulnerable groups - in terms of income and quality of personal and family life - namely the Roma population, to people with disabilities, persons receiving minimum income, persons who have been detained, etc. and on the other hand, the questionnaire included sections for the managers of the above mentioned entities of social economy.

In fact, this vulnerable population is subject of extensive analysis in the chapters dedicated to each of them and opportunities for integration into the labour market; following training courses and training these people on the real demands of the labour market. For more details please see the role of social entrepreneurship in facilitating the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labor market (Social entrepreneurship and vulnerable groups by Ramona Paul); poor employees (Labour market segmentation and the social economy by Iulian Stanescu); categories vulnerable population (Labour market integration of vulnerable groups by Ana-Maria Preoteasa); regional characteristics and life (The social economy – meeting social needs by Simona Ilie); profile of women in social economy entities (Involvement in social economy. Gender approaches and characteristics by Simona Maria Stanescu, Vlad Achimescu and Sorin Cace); Social policies aimed at the Roma population (The Roma: inclusion through social economy by Tomescu Cristina and Florin Botonogu); Social Economy and the opportunity to integrate people with disabilities (Social economy and disabled people in Romania by Gabriela Dima).

The offer of social economy services is covered subject of the third part of the book. The action of collecting data on the social economy offer included a large number of socio-economic entities. The book provides information regarding the legal framework (Regulations
regarding the social economy entities in Romania by Gabriel Stănilă); and its perception among workers from the social economy area (Perception of the institutional and legislative frameworks by the representative of the social economy entities by Simona Maria Stănescu and Sorin Cace).

Each type of social economy entity is approached: NGOs (Profile of economic activities in non-governmental organizations by Daniel Arpinte and Laura Tufă); mutual organizations for employees (The mutual aid organizations of the employees: between tradition and modernity, between crisis and prosperity by Gabriela Neagu); mutual organizations for pensioners (Mutual organizations of the pensioners – traditional social economy entities in the Romanian society by Ionuţ Ardeleanu). Two chapters approached the cooperatives: The social function of Romanian cooperatives in the development regions of Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East by Filip Alexandrescu and Cooperatives in Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East development regions by Flavius Mihalache.

We can realize the scale of the studied field, the impressive number of people, as well as the social economy organizations interviewed, the dispersion of research in the field, and the poverty size within studied development regions. The book offers valuable information on vulnerable people from the income and quality of life point of views. The vulnerable groups studied face a higher risk of falling into poverty and social exclusion and includes: the young, the women, the Roma people, the disabled people, the elderly and the people living in rural areas.

The economic crisis in recent years nationally and internationally triggered unpleasant situations with consequences within the labour market while weakening social protection. Social economy activities are needed and beneficial because they work hard to create jobs especially for people who are low-skilled or disabled. These organizations use locally available human resources to develop local projects to provide community services and business that satisfy the most important and urgent local needs.

The behaviours identified at vulnerable groups regarding reintegration on the labour market are different. There are unemployed people saying they have not sought work because of personal problems that do not allow them to work (family responsibilities, health), while other persons deemed insufficient own skills and characteristics. About
the same reasons, especially those related to health, are given by the disabled people who have leaved the labour market for a long period. The situation of Roma in the labour market remains problematic despite the active measures undertaken. Part of the Roma obtained a qualification at work and benefited from work experience, but the question of their market reintegration remains open. Most of them, with a low educational capital of retraining, cannot turn to other economic sectors, or if they do so, their absorption is reduced. The population in question, following the loss of jobs turned to subsistence agriculture, exposing themselves to extreme poverty.

That is why social economy organizations are beneficial to vulnerable populations in search of a job and not only for them. Although cooperative organizations or mutual organizations have a long tradition in our country, foundations and associations have seen a dramatic increase in numbers after the 1989 revolution. In the concluding chapter, the book gives us hope that in the long run these studies may help law enforcement agencies to develop and adopt specific local measures which to focus on increasing employment within the two analysed development regions, especially in terms of supporting social economy organizations and labour market reintegration of the vulnerable groups.

References


3. Stănescu, S. M., Cace, S., Alexandrescu, F. (coord.); 2013, Demand and supply of social economy – Two development regions of Romania, Prouniversitaria, București.