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Ромски Ресурсен Центар
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ЗДРУЖЕНИЕ ИНИЦИАТИВА
ЗА ПРАВАТА НА ЖЕНИТЕ
ОД ШУТО ОРИЗАРИ



symplexis

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network

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP GUIDELINE **FOR ROMA WOMEN**

Project title:
“Young Roma Women Social Entrepreneurship”
ROMANSE

Implemented by:

NGO Roma Resource Center Skopje, North Macedonia

In partnership with:

NGO Initiative of women from Shuto Orizari, North Macedonia

Symplexis from Athens, Greece

DIESIS Network from Brussels, Belgium Resource Center

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WHY DO WE NEED A GUIDELINE

The guideline is developed within the framework of the project "Social Entrepreneurship for Young Roma Women" (ROMANSE), which aims to build the capacities of Roma, (pro)Roma and youth organizations to support the social entrepreneurship of young Roma women. The main goal of the project is to strengthen and integrate young Roma women into the labor market through social entrepreneurship model and trainings. The project is implemented by Roma Resource Center (RRC) as the leading organization and the partner organizations are the Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari, Simplexix (Greece) and Dieses Network (Greece). This guideline is intended for all Roma women potential social entrepreneurs who are interested in starting their own social business with the aim of employing Roma women and girls and other people from vulnerable categories. It is primarily intended for Roma women and girls interested in developing a social enterprise, but also for other women and men who are interested in getting involved in social entrepreneurship. The guideline is of an informative nature and in the guideline is provided information about the opportunities offered by social entrepreneurship, examples of already existing social enterprises, the importance of social enterprise for the employment of different categories of people and for the economic empowerment of Roma women and girls.

The guideline also provides an overview of the level of information and knowledge of Roma women about social entrepreneurship as well as the necessary skills and topics that are essential for Roma women and girls to engage in and develop social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. The guide will be distributed to women who will participate in the project activities, but also will be available and promoted to other young Roma women directly by local partners through events conducted within the project.



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of social entrepreneurship has become increasingly popular. Although at first glance it seems to be a new phenomenon, there have always been social entrepreneurs who have been most often associated with innovation, determination and the development of new models with a social mission. Many associate social entrepreneurship exclusively with non-profit organizations that start ventures or implement ideas from which they will make a profit, some use it to describe someone who starts a non-profit organization, and others use the concept for business owners who integrate social responsibility into their work. The guideline provides the definition of social entrepreneurship and social enterprises, the key aspects and principles of social entrepreneurship, as well as the forms of social enterprises. At the same time, the climate of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of North Macedonia is described, existing social enterprises and the opportunities the state and the government offer for the economic empowerment of vulnerable categories of citizens, primarily Roma women.

When it comes to the representation or participation of Roma women in the labor market in the Republic of North Macedonia, according to data from 2022 presented within the framework of the "North Macedonia Overview" (Employment and Social Affairs Platform 2, WB performance of economies in relation to the European Pillar of Social Rights), the employment rate of Roma is almost two times lower than the average employment rate, while the employment rate of Roma women was 8%. Women are less likely than men to start their own business, i.e. they decide on entrepreneurship less often, and when it comes to women from ethnic and minority communities, the rate is even lower. In North Macedonia in 2017, there were 2.5% more active men than women entrepreneurs. When it comes to the participation of Roma women in female entrepreneurship, official data is still lacking, and the little available data that is presented indicates that the activity of Roma women in entrepreneurial activities is very low. According to data from the Employment Agency and The National Strategy for Roma, between 2016 and 2020, only 23 Roma women received start-up grants, out of a total of 82 Roma people. Social entrepreneurship in North Macedonia is in its initial stages of development, and existing social enterprises show that there is potential for growth and development of this concept in the country. In order to encourage the development of the concept of enterprises, greater education and mentoring of all stakeholders in society is needed. Social entrepreneurs and social enterprises create new opportunities, new forms of work and action, and employ women from vulnerable categories. They have a mission to improve the economic and personal well-being of women from vulnerable categories.

Through a preliminary assessment made by conducting focus groups with Roma women and girls, the guide provides an overview of the level of knowledge and awareness of Roma women and girls about social entrepreneurship, as well as their needs for increasing knowledge. Based on the assessment, in the guideline are proposed topics for building the capacities of women and Roma girls in the area of social entrepreneurship and the development of social enterprises.



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1.WHAT IS SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Social entrepreneurship is a combination of innovation, resourcefulness, and opportunity to solve important social challenges and issues. Thus, social entrepreneurship has historically been associated with a strategic form of philanthropy. Social entrepreneurship combines entrepreneurial approaches with a focus on creating positive social or environmental change.

The etymology of the word "social" - comes from two Latin words - "socius", which means friend and "socialis" which means ally. On the other hand, the word entrepreneurship is a combination of two Latin words - "entre", which means to swim and "prendes", or to grasp, to understand. In essence, social entrepreneurship means "an ally who seizes the opportunity to solve a social problem."

The concept involves identifying and solving social problems, often through innovative business models, while simultaneously generating profit or achieving other forms of value. Key aspects of social entrepreneurship are:

1

Social impact - which includes positive social change and addressing problems such as poverty, educational and environmental challenges, etc.

2

Innovation, i.e. developing new and creative solutions to social problems

3

Reinvestment of profits (profit is not a key goal in social entrepreneurship)
Measuring success (combination of financial and social impact to measure success) The focus is on positive social changes through which the achieved success is measured.



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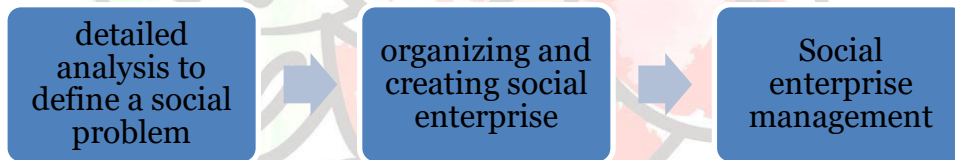


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Social entrepreneurship is basically a social mission through which people from different backgrounds try to develop, innovate and implement effective solutions in response to the challenges they face, whether the challenges are social, economic or environmental. Social entrepreneurship offers solutions in the form of products, services or interventions created by start-ups or existing profit and non-profit organizations. It means integrating an ethical perspective into business. In its essence social entrepreneurship has three dimensions: entrepreneurial, social and governance.

Social entrepreneurship consists of several stages:

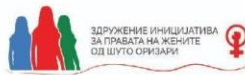


Essentially, it requires a detailed analysis of the social problem that the social enterprise will focus on or work. This should be followed by the organization and creation of a social enterprise with a detailed analysis of all elements in the creation, and as the final phase, management of the social enterprise.

- Today's social problems are very diverse and it is up to us whether we will see them as unsolvable social problems or as opportunities for social businesses.
- Some of the social problems in the community:
 - Unemployment and Poverty
 - Lack of drinking water, sanitation
 - Homelessness



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- Environmental pollution
- Aging and the needs of the elderly population
- Children with special needs and adults with special needs
- Sustainable energy, etc.

This does not mean that the social problem we are working on will be eliminated immediately, but it means a long-term effort and striving to gradually improve existing problems and circumstances. Therefore, social entrepreneurship focuses on new services, products and opportunities intended for marginalized groups and achieving

progress for the good of society, the local community and the local population. The profit is reinvested and used for further development.

1.1. Who is a social entrepreneur?

The development of social entrepreneurship requires people who will be innovative, not afraid of risk and will act courageously, people who will play the role of motivators and agents of change in the social sector, people who will recognize new opportunities for social values and who will be accountable to clients for the results obtained. Social entrepreneurs differ from commercial entrepreneurs because their most important mission is the **social mission**, not private and personal benefit. For them, the most important thing is to promote social well-being by meeting the needs of the most often marginalized category of citizens and citizens at social risk. Profit is actually achieved by meeting the needs of these categories of citizens and profit is seen as a tool for achieving a social goal - social welfare and well-being of citizens. A social entrepreneur is a pioneer in innovations that benefit society and humanity. Social entrepreneurs, together with institutions, networks and communities, create solutions that are efficient, sustainable, transparent and measurable.

Social entrepreneurs essentially focus on changing systems and practices that are the main causes of poverty, marginalization and deterioration of living conditions, accompanied by a loss of human dignity. In doing so, they can establish non-profit or for-profit organizations, but in any case, their primary goal is to create sustainable systemic change. Social entrepreneurship and social enterprises create sustainable and inclusive growth and foster social innovation because they focus on people, especially the marginalized, and promote the common good and foster social cohesion.



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Entrepreneur

[ˌæn-trə-p(r)əˈnær]

An individual who creates a new business, bearing most of the risks and enjoying most of the rewards.

Traits a person needs to have to be a social entrepreneur

TRAITS

Empathetic and Generous
Community Leader
Enthusiastic and Proactive
Open minded
Community Committed

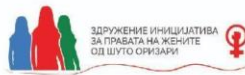
1.2. Known women social entrepreneurs

The most famous/known women social entrepreneurs throughout history are often cited as: Florence Nightingale from the United Kingdom, founder of modern nursing institutions, and Maria Montessori, the first female doctor in Italy, creator of the Montessori educational system for children.

Florence Nightingale, often called the founder of modern nursing, was not only a caregiver, but also an extraordinary social entrepreneur. Her endless dedication to improving health



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systems and her approach to solving social problems distinguish her as a pioneer in the field of social entrepreneurship. Why was she considered a social entrepreneur? Because of her transformative vision - a better world and active work towards a better world by providing care and nursing for the sick, through active work to train nurses, improve sanitation and reform healthcare at that time.

Through innovative solutions, she helped policymakers and health professionals understand the impact of sanitation and hygiene on patient outcomes.

Maria Montessori is considered a social entrepreneur because she identified a social problem—ineffective traditional methods of education—and developed an innovative solution—the Montessori Method. This method, which emphasizes child-centered learning, freedom, and respect for the child's natural development, as well as encouraging social interaction and learning with other students, has had a global impact that has benefited countless children. Her work has also created jobs through the establishment of Montessori schools and teacher training programs.

1.3. Benefits and opportunities from social entrepreneurship

The opportunities offered by social entrepreneurship are diverse; here are listed the following:

- The Covid 19 crisis has shown that people have begun to look for alternative ways of doing business as a way of livelihood
- Increasing the opportunities for active inclusion in the labor market of certain categories of citizens
- Increased awareness of consumers and users of services about the social and societal change through social entrepreneurship
- Opportunity for sustainability through reinvestment of profits
- A catalyst for significant change, primarily in the local community, as social entrepreneurs often create job opportunities in underserved areas that are detected during local needs assessments, which can further strengthen local economies and foster a sense of agency and inclusion among local residents.

There are many benefits of social entrepreneurship, including the following

1.4. Social Enterprises

Social enterprises are located in the middle between the business sector, the government sector and the social sector. The goal of social enterprises is to solve certain shortcomings



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in society through methods of making profits that will later be reinvested in the business and in implementing activities for social benefits of the categories of people who are under risks. The social component in social enterprises is emphasized through the employment of people who are long-term unemployed, people at social risk, and people from marginalized and vulnerable communities.

Employment of persons at social risk (some of the categories of persons at social risk):

- Women-victims of domestic and gender-based violence;
- Single mothers and single parents;
- Young persons at social risk;
- Members of different ethnic communities;
- Persons who are in any other way marginalized and/or excluded from social flows.

There is no single legal form for social enterprises. Many social enterprises operate in the form of social cooperatives, some are registered as private companies, and many are non-profit organizations such as citizens' associations, care societies, voluntary organizations, charities, or foundations.

Social enterprises mainly operate in the following four (4) areas:

Social Justice: Raising awareness of social problems and offering solutions to social problems

Community Empowerment: Empowering and encouraging individuals (people) and communities to participate in matters of public interest

Providing opportunities for economic advancement, skill development and self-sustainability of employees

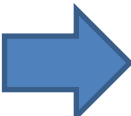
Creating a culture of social responsibility

Improving working conditions for marginalized groups and their active inclusion and contribution to the economic and sustainable development of society

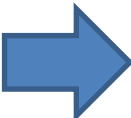
Social entrepreneurs inspire others to engage in social change by demonstrating the power of entrepreneurship to create positive impact



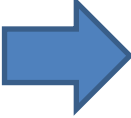
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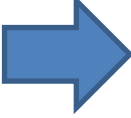
Integration into work/labor market-training and integration of people with disabilities and unemployed people



Personal social services-health, welfare and medical care and nursing, vocational training, education, health services, childcare services, services for the elderly or assistance to disadvantaged/people with special needs people.



Local development of disadvantaged areas-social enterprises in remote rural areas, development of neighborhoods in urban areas, development aid and development cooperation with third countries



Other types of services-include recycling, environmental protection, sports, arts, culture, research and innovation, consumer protection, etc.

➤ **CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**

- Using entrepreneurial principles, these enterprises serve the community, and are not focused on maximizing profits for the owners;
- The profit generated is mostly reinvested to achieve social goals, i.e. for specific social change;
- They offer innovative approaches for sustainable and equitable development;
- Most often, as mentioned, they operate in two directions: 1) provide goods and services to marginalized and underdeveloped communities and/or 2) employ people from vulnerable groups of citizens;
- They are market-oriented, i.e. they ensure financial sustainability through successful operation according to market mechanisms.

Social enterprises encourage a sense of social cohesion and promote togetherness. Social entrepreneurship encompasses cooperatives, non-profit organizations, and limited liability companies. These entities can be considered as social enterprises if they significantly benefit society, the environment, and local communities, and if their profits are reinvested in further development.

➤ **HOW TO START A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

- **Make the research of the potential local market**

- analyze what are local problems and challenges that further could be a potential opportunity for a social business
- what are the categories of citizens who face these challenges and problems, i.e. who are your potential target groups, what can you do for them, who could be a potential buyer of your products and/or services, are there other businesses or enterprises that deliver the same or similar services/products
- **Create a business plan**

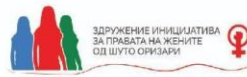
One of the most widely used business models is the Canvas business model

The Canvas plan consists of the following key elements:

- **Value**, i.e. the product or service that needs to be created and delivered to customers/users/clients;
- **Customer segments**, which customers/users the company serves (who are the most important customers, what is specific to them, who are the consumers of the services/product);
- **Channels**, how the value/product/service will be delivered to customers through communication, distribution and sales channels (this includes distribution channels, i.e. the way you will communicate with customers, which communication channels are the most effective, and which are the most economically viable);
- **Customer relations**, how will customer relations be established and maintained (relationships with customers and associates, relationship with consumers/clients);
- **Key resources**, i.e. what are the key resources with which value can be created and delivered (what resources do you need to produce the product or offer the service);
- **Key activities**, which are the activities that need to be implemented for the business model to function (definition of activities that include sales, production (if any), development and research);
- **Key partnerships**, which partners will be used for the normal functioning of the business model, i.e. who can help implement the business model (identification of key partners, key suppliers, key resources obtained from partners); In doing so, it is important to keep these resources in mind: information and knowledge, financial

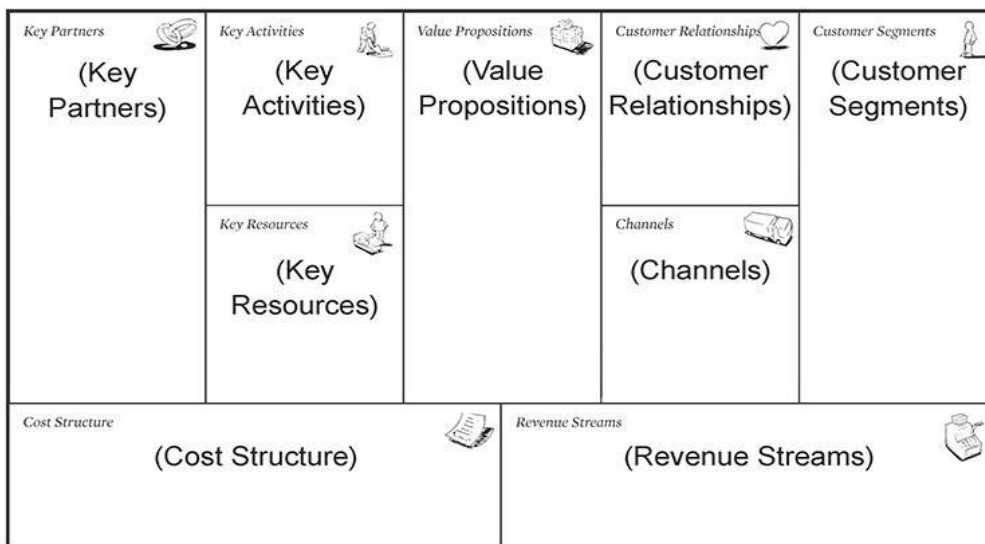


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resources, space and equipment for performing the core business, competent people, etc.

- **Cost structure**, i.e. what will be the main costs that the company will incur with this business model. You have to take into account the structure of costs and expenses. You can think about which payment option is most suitable, but you also need to have initial capital to acquire the necessary resources. For this, there are specialized funds that can help you.
- It is important to continuously **learn – learning by doing**;
- **Mentoring** can also be of great benefit. Think about sustainability, therefore it is advisable to upgrade the business model and include an analysis of positive and negative societal, social and environmental impacts.



www.businessmodelgeneration.com

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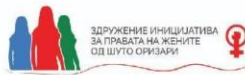
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The Canvas plan with 9 key elements

1.5. Social enterprises that brings positive practices



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SPAIN - CHOCOLATES ARTESANOS ISABEL

One example of social enterprise run by a woman is Chocolates Artesanos Isabel, a shop selling artisanal and ethical cacao. The owner is Isabel Félez who, after living and studying in France, Germany and the Nordic countries, decided to open a small store in 2013. Chocolates Artesanos Isabel wants to show that consuming more ethically is possible without sacrificing quality. She works with fair trade and ecological raw materials such as cocoa, sugar cane, and local products like extra virgin olive oil and Marcona almonds. She is committed to chocolate with more ethical criteria, taking into consideration people and the environment and having the guarantee that no children were working on plantations. The workers in the social enterprise are all women, and some work part-time to balance home and work life.

Fair Trade guarantees a decent wage and an improvement in working conditions for producers in impoverished areas of the countries of the South, which are also the areas where most of the cocoa, cane sugar and many other raw materials are. The FLO-Fairtrade Seal ensures that quality raw materials are obtained, guaranteeing that the rights of people and the environment have been respected. Chocolates Artesanos Isabel has signed a collaboration agreement with Asadicc and the INCORPORA program of Obra Social La Caixa. The goal is to promote in the company the social and labour integration of people at risk of social exclusion and with difficulties in accessing a job. Indeed, the enterprise gives opportunities to women, especially single parents to integrate into the labour market through a training course and work experience, offering free training for single-parent families. The Women's Institute has recognized the enterprise as a "Collaborating Company for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men".

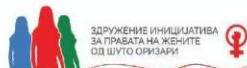
Chocolates Artesanos Isabel works to reduce the material of our packaging to a minimum, using recycled paper or paper from sustainable forests, with the minimum use of ink and minimizing disposable material. Most of their suppliers share our principles and use renewable energies and practices that are socially equitable and environmentally respectful. They work with small producers, ethical banking, ethical insurance and electricity from renewable energies as well as using lead-free and PTFE-free kitchenware and biodegradable and phosphate-free cleaning products. Chocolates Artesanos Isabel is within the Carbon Footprint Registry of the Ministry of Environment calculating, reducing, and offsetting our Carbon Footprint. The chocolates are certified by Fair Trade and by the Aragonese Committee for Organic Agriculture.

The enterprise offers a training course on sustainable production of chocolate. It contributes to rural development and its community in several ways: from people to planet with a focus on vulnerable women. The activity contributes to contrast with the depopulation of marginalised areas. Chocolates Artesanos Isabel wants to contribute to the socioeconomic development of rural areas and claim access to services and high-quality products so that people can choose to live in the villages and have the quality of life they deserve. How this Good Practice could be used/ transferred.

This good practice is interesting for many reasons: first of all because it shows that in rural areas you can have a diversified economy and not only agri-food sector, second that you



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can overcome the problem of small market thanks to digital solutions such as implementing an e-shop and third for the inclusion of women in entrepreneurship , which is a key contribution to the revitalization of rural areas and encourages the prevention of the growth of gender inequality

Website <http://www.chocolates.bio/>

SERBIA - RADANSKA RUZA

In the Serbian district of Jablanica, this social enterprise employs elderly and long-term unemployed women, single mothers and women with special needs from the rural parts of Lebane municipality. The green dimension of this social enterprise is reflected through organic production of raw - fruits and vegetables and production of final products in the traditional way - by humans, without machines. Radanska Ruza produces premium traditional Serbian food such as jams made from local fruits and vegetables.

The skills necessary to operate these activities are mainly related to the skills for organic agriculture such as: business planning/model and strategic management, including skills in mitigation and adaptation to climate change, water management, and soil nutrients; bioeconomy–technical skills including livestock efficiency, management and biosecurity.

Radanska ruza is a good example of gathering together and supporting women in small rural areas through economic activity and production of high-quality products from local fields in organic ways.

Website: <http://www.radanskaruza.rs/>

2. SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

2.1. NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

Social entrepreneurship is considered a relatively new phenomenon in the country, although the concept of social economy has a long history. The civil sector and non-profit organizations in the country are the main participants and promoters of the development of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of North Macedonia. In addition to civil society organizations that practice social entrepreneurship and have the motivation to use the opportunities it offers, other entities such as protective societies and cooperatives are also considered important actors in the development of the social economy and social entrepreneurship.



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The existing legal framework (the Law on Associations and Foundations, the Law on Employment of Disabled Persons, the Law on (Agricultural) Cooperatives, the Law on Trade Companies, the Law on Financial Support for Investments, etc.) provide for opportunities for the management of this type of entities within the existing forms of organizations. However, this framework did not represent and did not provide an appropriate favorable environment for the development of social enterprises and social entrepreneurship, and therefore policymakers and the civil society sector initiated more specific policies in this area.

Although a Law on Social Entrepreneurship was initially drafted in 2015, it has not yet been adopted and the idea of its adoption has been slowly abandoned. In contrast, the adoption of a Law on Social Enterprises as entities that will be able to employ persons at social risk and persons from various categories of marginalized citizens has been initiated.

- The Law on Social Enterprises is in the final stage of preparation and it envisages that social enterprises will have easier access to the market, be more visible, more accepted in the community and society and be self-sustainable.
- The draft Government Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society (2025-2028) envisages the adoption of a Law on Social Enterprises by 2026 as well as the inclusion of social enterprises with the legal form of an association or foundation in programs for supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Social enterprises are seen as potentially effective forms of action in order to address important social issues that would directly affect the improvement of the position of marginalized groups of citizens.

In the meantime, while waiting for the adoption of the Law on Social Enterprises, the National Strategy for Social Enterprises (2021-2027) accompanied by an Action Plan has been adopted. The main strategic priorities of the strategy are:

- Establishing a favorable legal framework – drafting and adopting a Law on Social Enterprises, creating a register of social enterprises and improving the tax treatment of social enterprises;
- Creating a culture of social entrepreneurship, integrating social enterprises into educational programs in formal (primary, secondary and higher education) and non-formal education;
- Assistance for mutual support, learning and capacity building for social enterprises and establishing resource centers for the development of social enterprises at national and local levels;
- Facilitating access to and development of markets for social enterprises as well as

increasing their visibility and recognition in the market;

- Facilitating access to external finance: piloting financial instruments for social enterprises, activating public funds for social financial instruments, encouraging companies to use corporate social responsibility and invest in social enterprises, etc.¹

A National Center for Social Enterprises has also been opened with contact persons and offices in 8 statistical regions in the country as part of the EU-funded IPA project "Support to Social Enterprises", which is a structure for support, development and capacity building of social enterprises. In 2019, a Social Enterprise Network was established, as a platform for communication and cooperation between different social enterprises.²

It should be noted that in 2019, the Strategy for Women's Entrepreneurship 2019-2023 was also adopted, but it is outdated and it is not clear whether a new strategy is currently being prepared. Also, the Strategy did not contain an intersectional approach and was not adapted to different target groups, primarily to different groups of women. The strategy envisaged a measure Transition from social assistance to self-employment, which is intended for social assistance beneficiaries and unemployed women, but it is too general and does not refer to different categories of women.³

The Agency for the Support of Entrepreneurship with the Program for Support of Entrepreneurship, Competitiveness and Innovation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in 2020 provided 11 measures and program activities, and with the program in 2022, provided 13 measures and program activities aimed at promoting and supporting entrepreneurship, self-employment of unemployed persons, mentoring of small and medium-sized enterprises, and generating new jobs. During 2022, within the framework of support for self-employment, out of the total number of developed business plans, 740 were for women within the framework of the voucher system. Also, out of the total number of vouchers issued, 54, within the framework of the voucher counseling system, 20 were for women. With the program for 2020, financial support was realized for the target groups - unemployed women and entrepreneurs in the amount of 1,970,000.00 denars through program activities: support for self-employment, (entrepreneurship). However, there is no available data by ethnicity.

The operational plans for active employment measures, for example for 2017, 2018 and 2019 and further up to and including 2024 and 2025, also include a measure that provides assistance and support to social enterprises, i.e. Support for self-employment

¹ National Strategy for Social Enterprises (2021-2027), available at: https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/trud/Strategija_socijalni_pretprijatija_2021_2027.pdf

² Support to Social Enterprises, available at: <https://centarsp.mk/>

³ Strategy for Development of Women's Entrepreneurship (2019-2023), available at: <https://shorturl.at/iUnCg>



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(entrepreneurship). The measure is intended to encourage the employment of unemployed persons in addition to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and social enterprises. For example, in 2017, 4 social enterprises, managed by non-governmental organizations, used the measure, with seven new jobs planned for vulnerable categories of citizens.⁴

The Operational Plan for 2025 provides for two types of support: Support for self-employment (entrepreneurship) for unemployed persons over 29 years of age, where unemployed Roma persons – men up to 60 years of age and women up to 58 years of age are also included as beneficiaries. The second type of support concerns self-employment (entrepreneurship) for unemployed young people up to 29 years of age. Also here, the beneficiaries are young Roma men and women up to 29 years of age with at least completed primary education.⁵

It is evident that there are employment opportunities through social enterprises as well as opportunities for subsidization provided for in the annual operational plans for active employment measures. Within the framework of this measure, as already mentioned, persons from the Roma ethnic community are also listed as beneficiaries, that is in line with the Strategy for Roma Inclusion (2022-2030) and an effort is made to increase the coverage of Roma in active employment measures and services by introducing a 5% quota for Roma coverage. The Strategy for Roma Inclusion also envisages the creation of an enabling environment for formalization and stimulation of entrepreneurship in order to support at least 1,000 people to open new businesses and formalize existing ones by 2030.

Entrepreneurship policies have a significant role in overall economic development, and social entrepreneurship can be an effective tool for social inclusion of Roma men and women.

2.2 KNOWN SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AND INCLUSION OF ROMA WOMEN

In Europe in 2014, 2 million social enterprises were recorded to exist and operate, representing 10 percent of all businesses in the EU. They employ more than 11 million workers, or about 6 percent of all employees in the EU. Hence, it is evident that the social economy and social enterprises have an important role and influence as employers in Europe, and overall influence the inclusive growth and development of the European economy.⁶

⁴ Ministry for Economy and Labor <https://www.economy.gov.mk/mk-MK/sektor-programi.nsp>

⁵ Operational Plan for active programs and measures for employment and services on the labor market for 2025, available at: <https://shorturl.at/GvgOg>

⁶ CEEDHUB, <https://ceedhub.mk/socijalni-petprijatija-info/>



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When it comes to Republic of North Macedonia, according to previously available data, 57 social enterprises have been identified. There is also a register of social enterprises on the Young Entrepreneurs website (<https://mladipretpriemaci.mk/>). Most of these social enterprises are located in Skopje and the Skopje Statistical Region, followed by the Pelagonia Region, then the Southeast Statistical Region. The smallest numbers of social enterprises are registered in the North-East (2%) and the South-West and Polog Regions (5% each).

These social enterprises offer different types of products and services such as: social services for vulnerable categories of citizens, waste management and recycling, inclusive and sustainable tourism, education for children and youth, production of organic products and organic food. According to the data from the Study, 43 enterprises, for example, employ 271 people (i.e. up to 5 or less than 5 people in an enterprise) of which 38.3% are young people from vulnerable categories, primarily young women, then young people from other marginalized groups and young Roma. It is important to note that some of the employees are employed with a regular employment contract (full-time), some are part-time employees and some seasonal employees.

Most of the social enterprises (59%) are registered as civil society organizations (civil associations, foundations) in accordance with the Law on Citizens' Associations and Foundations. Some are also registered as limited liability companies and single-member limited liability companies, in accordance with the Law on Trade Companies. There are also some that are registered as cooperatives in accordance with the Law on Agricultural Cooperatives.⁷

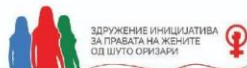
As positive examples of social enterprises are the enterprises listed below. Some of them include Roma women;

- "Face to Face" is a social enterprise dedicated to sustainable development, social justice, equality and humanity. It was formed in 2012 and is a pioneer in social entrepreneurship in the country. This social enterprise includes more than 150 street vendors who are selling the magazine Face to Face. These are people from marginalized groups thus the enterprise promotes their inclusion in economic processes and society in general.
- Social enterprise REDI recycling, whose goal is to organize and formalize individual collectors of secondary raw materials, by establishing a system for primary waste

⁷ Ickoski M., Rajcic O. Basic Study for social enterprises in Macedonia , National Youth Council, 2022 available at: https://arno.org.mk/mk/proekti/osnovna_studija/



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selection in residential buildings and companies. The vision of REDI Recycling is to create a social enterprise run by collectors of secondary raw materials and use a circular economy to recycle secondary raw materials. The goal is to improve the position of informal waste collectors, who are largely exposed to health risks, as well as to improve the environment and include Roma in the green economy.

- The social enterprise HumanaS is part of the social entrepreneurship that represents a service for care for the elderly in home conditions (palliative care). The social component is further emphasized by the fact that long-term unemployed people and people at social risk (women victims of domestic violence, single mothers/parents, young people, and members of different ethnic communities) are employed. It was formed in 2019 through a re-granting program and opens opportunities for economic empowerment of Roma women.
- The Center for Rehabilitation of Drug, Alcohol and Gambling Addicts - Pokrov Izbor is one of the first social enterprises in the country. This social enterprise works on the rehabilitation of addicts and their reintegration into society. Here, service users grow various fruit and vegetable crops and have a dryer for dehydrated products. They also operate a catering business, and some of their products are available in various chain stores such as Vero, Ramstore, etc.
- The humanitarian organization Milosrdie works with marginalized groups and aims to help those with health problems, and also builds the capacities of women in creating their own businesses. They work with women who, for certain reasons have not had the opportunity to acquire education or experience in the labor market, so here they gain skills to later open their own businesses. Those who are trained have an economic activity such as a hairdresser, makeup artist, sewing salon or preparing sweets, so in a way they themselves create a social enterprise. They work mostly with women from the settlements of Chair, Gazi Baba, Shutka, Topaana.
- Kopce (Button) is a social enterprise where anyone can donate clothes, but also buy a piece of second-hand clothing at favorable prices or receive it for free. "Kopce" was developed and operates within the framework of the Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia – Red Cross of the City of Skopje. "Kopce" provides a more efficient system of distributing clothes to people at risk, easy access to low-priced clothes for people with low incomes who do not seek help, employment of vulnerable target groups and contribution to preserving the environment.
- "Sewn Dream" is actually composed of two social enterprises one from Kičevo and the other one from Kočani. They have the same mission – equality and equal opportunities for Roma women from these two cities through inclusion in social entrepreneurship. Specifically, it is about sewing services and delivering products for



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the local market. These two social enterprises were united in the “ČkČk” platform and opened within the framework of a project funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and We Effect-Swedish Development Agency.

- The social enterprise CIP-CENTER FOR INTEGRATION AND SUPPORT (SIEC) includes young Roma women and works on the production of backpacks made from surplus material from the furniture factory “Birostil” from Skopje.
- Social sewing enterprise – RomArt which includes 15 Roma women and single mothers who first acquire sewing skills, and then have the opportunity for permanent employment in the enterprise. It is supported by NGOs HERA, as part of a project.
- Social enterprise Nega plus, in the past employed women from vulnerable categories of families, i.e. provided employment for women who are victims of domestic violence through assistance and home care for older adults. During 2017, 15 Roma women were involved in training and were employed in Nega plus. Unfortunately, this social enterprise is not functioning anymore.
- Social enterprise of the Roma Progress Association, aimed at employing Roma women as providers of care services for people with Alzheimer's and employed 10 Roma women. This contributed to the inclusion of Roma women in the labor market and social integration in the local community.

The exact number of Roma women employed in social enterprises, according to the findings from interviews with representatives of social enterprises and civil society organizations, as well as other available data, is not known.

It should be noted that a major problem is the sustainability of social enterprises. Some of the above-mentioned social enterprises were established by civil society organizations within the framework of a specific project. After the project was completed, sustainability for some of them was a challenge. So, some of the listed social enterprises are no longer sustainable, i.e. do not function.

3. ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF ROMA WOMEN

Regarding the knowledge and information about the concepts of social economy and social



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entrepreneurship, the findings from the focus groups conducted within the ROMANCE project indicate that there is not a sufficiently clear understanding and knowledge of what social entrepreneurship and social economy represent. Most Roma women, regardless of age (younger/older), associate the concept mainly with the term social/socially and identify it with some kind of assistance, most often financial assistance. Some of them associate the concept with the word economy, but again it is associated with financial means of living, employment or unemployment. They also associate it with providing some kind of help, support, funds, etc., while on the other hand, others see the second part of the term “economy” as the primary meaning of the concept and define the concept as economic sustainability, i.e. whether they have financial means to live, whether they are employed or not and whether they make an economic contribution.

It is clear that the concept is associated with a social mission, but from the aspect of receiving help and support from someone, and most often it is the state, the government, an NGO or a humanitarian organization in order to help people and women who are at risk. However, there is no clear understanding and comprehension of what exactly social entrepreneurship means. There is a lack of information about the concepts among almost all participants in the focus groups without exception.

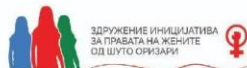
As already mentioned, some of the respondents associate social entrepreneurship only with the term entrepreneurship, i.e. a business for making a profit and associate it with profit, and this indicates that sometimes Roma women do not distinguish between traditional, i.e. business-oriented entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. When it comes to familiarity with social enterprises, Roma women could not give an example of a social enterprise, so it is obvious that they do not know about the concept and do not have information about the fact that social enterprises operate in the country and that some of them include Roma women. Due to the lack of knowledge of the concept, Roma women do not feel prepared to start some type of social enterprise because they need additional training, qualifications, but also initial capital. Almost all of them want to be part of a social enterprise that would be run by someone else, and the primary reason is for financial compensation, i.e. for subsistence, as well as inclusion in public life, i.e. contact and communication with other women and other people from their own and other communities.

Roma women are interested in engaging in social entrepreneurship, there is motivation for involvement, but according to the findings from the interviews with representatives of civil society organizations that have established social enterprises, the most difficult part is to stay in it for a long time, because they expect quick results. Sometimes a problem for retaining Roma women in social enterprises is discrimination on the terrain. They often face discrimination because there are cases where users of social services/products do not want to cooperate with Roma women, which further demotivate Roma women to stay in social entrepreneurship.

- **When it comes to the skills that Roma women have and that could potentially be used for social entrepreneurship, they are:**



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- Skills for maintaining hygiene in both residential and business premises;
- Care and nursing, assistance and support for sick, elderly and frail people (including shopping/buying and performing certain daily duties),
- Cooking skills
- Trade skills
- Sewing and tailoring

Some of them also have certain skills in:

- Hairdressing, makeup or cosmetics.

It should be noted that some Roma women already attend free courses for care assistance and support organized by an institution for elderly care.

3.1. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR STRENGTHENING THE KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITIES OF ROMA WOMEN FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

According to the findings from the focus groups with Roma women and interviews with representatives of organizations that have established social enterprises, the following were identified as needs or topics necessary for building the capacities of Roma women for social entrepreneurship:

- Improving technological and digital skills (management of digital tools and use of online platforms)
- Financial literacy (management of personal, family finances, financial planning)
- Generating financial resources and securing various sources of financing
- Getting to know existing available funds or information and accessing information on active employment measures and other available measures by institutions
- Leadership and management skills, managerial skills
- CV writing skills
- Social entrepreneurship, social economy and social enterprises, including registration of social enterprises, preparation of a business plan and similar concepts
- Communication skills, establishing and maintaining social contacts and networking and building partnerships with collaborators
- Marketing and promotion of products and services
- Time management
- Information about the opportunities offered by formal employment and the opportunity to be in the (state) system
- Work (business) ethics, elements of work ethics
- Trainings to familiarize with workplace rights, protection from discrimination in the workplace, reporting discrimination
- More specific courses related to some of the skills they already have such as: cooking, sewing and tailoring, foreign language



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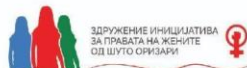
In addition to the above specific topics, it is also necessary to share success stories and practices from Roma women who are already part of a social enterprise and/or have established a social enterprise, which would be useful for attracting and motivating more Roma women and girls to get involved in social entrepreneurship. Also a positive practice is the potential establishment of a mentoring program at the entry-level and advanced levels.

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