

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES AS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ROMA WOMEN

A NEW APPROACH TOWARDS
RESOLVING SOCIAL ISSUES

Research prepared on NGOs and small, medium and social enterprises on the territory of the City of Skopje

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Executive Summary

This publication reveals the findings from the analysis of 7 social enterprises (SE) which operate on the territory of the city of Skopje and the services which they offer through engaging persons from marginalised communities, with the emphasis placed on Roma women. It gives insight into the connection between social enterprises and employment of Roma women and in general people from vulnerable groups and communities as a possible measure for their integration in the society by involving them on the labour market. The analysis has provided findings about activities initiated by SEs for increasing employability of vulnerable or hardly employable citizens and their work integration. The analysis has focused on the process of involvement of Roma women from Skopje on the labour market and boosting their employability. The analysis further identifies findings regarding the challenges faced by social enterprises and hardly employable groups of citizens, with particular emphasis on women from the Roma population. Research also reveals how many of the surveyed social enterprises have used employment measures from the annual program of the ESA and MoLSP and provides input regarding the experience from the measures used.

The research does not encompass all NGOs, small, medium and social enterprises within the Skopje city limits nor does it involve all long-term unemployed Roma women from Skopje. Instead it focuses on those social businesses which are recognised in the community and are managed by various legal entities, registered under different legal forms, providing services which engage as workers people who are long-term unemployed. Involving other legal forms in this research would probably lead the results being underestimated.

This research is an attempt to present social entrepreneurship as a model for social inclusion of long-term unemployed Roma women and their involvement on the labour market. The purpose is to research the market for the existing social enterprises which employ persons from marginalised communities. The research shall help us identify challenges which SEs confront but also the obstacles faces by Roma women from Skopje during the process of labour integration.

1. Background

Social enterprises have gained substantial importance in view of the European and national policies in the recent years. There is increasing awareness that they create sustainable and inclusive growth and stimulate social innovations. By focusing on people as much as on the profits, social enterprises stimulate the feeling of social cohesion and promote the general good.

There are 2 million social enterprises working in the EU, and they account for 10 percent of all businesses in the EU. In fact, over 11 million people, (or 6% of all workers in the EU) are working in social enterprises and thus contribute to the development of the social economy. Social enterprises are perceived as potentially effective models for resolving important social issues which directly affect the marginalised groups. Hence, the social economy and social enterprises have a significant role and leverage as suppliers on every market.

In conditions of social changes and attempts to improve the economic status of citizens, civil society organisations and different other legal entities in North Macedonia began to reconsider how to strengthen the communities by modernising old concepts adjusted to the needs imposed by present times, that is, the establishing of social enterprises. Despite the lack of legislative framework for the creation of social enterprises, recently different legal entities have cropped up which boldly dared to embark into the waters of social businesses, embodying within themselves the social mission above all.

The HERA research demonstrated that social enterprises may evolve in various legal forms even within the existing legislative national framework: the Law on Associations and Foundations, the Law on Protective Organisations, the Law on Cooperatives, The Company Law, and as of recently even under the law on Financial Support to Investments.

NGOs are still debating at large on how to organise social entrepreneurship. Debates are also led within government institutions and local self-governments. Gradually a systematic approach is being developed, so that eventually we can answer the question: What to do with the social entrepreneurship?

What HERA has been advocating is setting of clear criteria on social enterprises, that is, defining which enterprise is social and why, as opposed to the traditional, business enterprises. The Strategy for the eco-system needed for development of social enterprises in the Republic of North Macedonia, the drafting of which is under way, is expected to provide the answers to these questions.

On the other hand, we perceive social enterprises as an opportunity for development of the female entrepreneurship, but also as groundwork which can help strengthen women from the marginalised communities, with special emphasis on long-term unemployed Roma women. By means of their education, requalification and most importantly, resocialisation in terms of their work ethics and development of soft skills, expectations are that Roma women from Skopje shall be economically empowered and shall equally participate on the labour market.

Ever since its establishment, HERA has recognised Roma women as a target group which needs to be addressed so as to contribute to the empowerment of these women and enabling them to exercise their basic human rights. Experience gained in the field and through direct interviews with beneficiaries identifies the economic independence as one of the main needs of this target group.

In light of this HERA started thinking about the new concept, i.e. the creation of social enterprises that will help engage professionally the long-term unemployed Roma women. In 2017 it established the social enterprise Nega Plus which is a service enterprise providing care and assistance to elderly and inform people in home conditions, where services are provided by certified Roma women as caregivers. Meanwhile several other social enterprises were established with the same mission – economic empowerment and independence of Roma women through their education/requalification, dignified employment and professional engagement.

The objective of this analysis is to identify social enterprises in Skopje that employ people from marginalized communities and Roma women, including their needs. The analysis shall identify the challenges posed before the surveyed social enterprises in terms of working with clients and managing human resources in the social enterprise itself. It will also provide information about the level of awareness and utilization of employment measures offered by the ESA on the part of the social enterprises and the extent to which the measures are applicable to them as new entities.

On the other hand, the survey will show how many of the Roma women surveyed did receive information from the municipalities and the ESA about the labour market inclusion measures and programs offered by the municipalities and the Employment Service Agency, or have, perhaps used them. We shall also present the process of work integration of Roma women engaged in social enterprises, the challenges and obstacles which Roma women face in terms of regular work engagement and the impact of the economic independence on their lives.

2. Methodology

For the needs of this research we have used a qualitative research approach and secondary data and we prepared an appropriate methodology in order to gather data from all stakeholders concerned. The research encompassed a desk study; interview with 7 social enterprises; two focus groups with 14 Roma women from Shuto Orizari and 2 case studies featuring 2 Roma women employed in social enterprises.

Research methods

Desk research

The desk research helped gather secondary data from statistical announcements, publications and analysis available at the State Statistical Office, the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, national strategies and action plans which incorporate Roma integration, as well as research conducted by UNDP, the World Bank and different NGOs.

The desk research helped provide an overview of the general conditions of Roma women from Skopje in terms of their employment and work, to-date practices and policies for their integration on the labour market, statistics and conditions of unemployed Roma women from Skopje, existing active measures and programs of MoLSP and ESA concerning employment, as well as of the conditions with social entrepreneurship in North Macedonia and perception of the eco-system for growth of social enterprises.

Focus groups

In order to survey the level of information of the target group concerning their rights and opportunities for employment offered by the Employment Service Agency of RNM and the municipalities planned in the local employment programs, the (un)employed status, the local employment measures and the role of municipalities, two focus groups were organised with 14 Roma women from Shuto Orizari participating. The focus group results shall be used in this research.

Semi-structured interview

The next phase of the research was conducting semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 7 social enterprises on the territory of the city of Skopje, 5 of which have been registered as NGOs and the remaining two registered as legal entities.

The typical duration of each interview was between 60 and 90 minutes. Records were kept of the interview as it was conducted.

Name of social enterprise	Legal entity of managed by
Nega Plus	Non-governmental organisation HERA
HumanaS	Non-governmental organisation Humanost (Humanity)
Kopche (Button)	Non-governmental organisation Red Cross of the City of Skopje
Nega Centar	Non-governmental organisation Red Cross of the City of Skopje
Handicrafts 4U	Non-governmental organisation SOLEM
Mama Organa	Craftsmen
Umbrella – Coffee Bar	Subsidiary of a company

The interviews were attended by the coordinators/managers of the social enterprises, and two of the respondent enterprises enabled the presence of their employees - Roma women from Skopje.

Case study

Lastly, in order to present what work integration of long-term unemployed Roma women into a social enterprise looks like, and more importantly, what the economic empowerment through work engagement means to a Roma woman, we decided to apply an empirical research and explore the phenomenon in context of real life.

During the research, specifically during the interviews with social enterprises, two Roma women employed in social enterprises were mapped. These Roma women were interviewed for about 60 minutes and they shared, in the course of the interview, their opinions of the process, motif and experiences gained through the process of work integration into social enterprises.

2.1 Research questions addressed at Roma women

In order to establish the condition Roma women are in and their level of information about the measures, employment and employability, the following questions were used during the surveys and focus groups:

- 1 First and last name of the respondent:
- 2 How old are you:
- 3 Are you employed?
- 4 Are you registered as unemployed person in the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia?
- 5 Were you offered any employment in the past 6 months by the ESA?
- 6 Are you available for work and are you actively seeking employment? (only for the unemployed)?
- 7 What are the ways in which you are seeking employment?
- 8 According to you, which is the main obstacle for finding employment?
- 9 Have you ever used any of the measures or employment services offered by the Government of RNM? If the answer is No, why not?
- 10 If the answer is Yes, which services have you used?
- 11 What is most important for you in terms of supporting you to find employment?

2.2 Research questions for the social enterprises

1. Which is the type of your organisation, and what does your social enterprise do?
2. Are you familiar with the employment measures offered by the ESA?
3. Are you using any of those measures? If Yes, which ones?
4. Are you satisfied with the measure?
5. Are you using this measure to employ any person from marginalised communities?
6. In case you are familiar with the measures, but are not using them, which are the reasons for this?
7. Has your organisation/company employed women from the Roma population?
8. Which are the challenges faced by your enterprise (external and internal)?

The interview reflected upon:

- Their regular, day-to-day activities including the provision of products or services which are charged for,
- Their core objective – business, social or environmental mission (compared to similar businesses-mainly profit driven);
- Organisation structure and staff (categories of citizens employed in the enterprises),
- Extent of knowledge about the employment measures and their absorption – experiences and

recommendations.

- Challenges encountered and experience in coping with them.
- Recommendations for improvement for purposes of employment and retention of employees with emphasis on Roma women.

2.3 Research sample

Within the desk research, firstly, data available from similar research studies were analysed, data available in reports, strategies and other documents drafted by relevant ministries and state agencies, reports by civil society organisations as well as research data and reports from international agencies such as UNDP, EU, World Bank, ILO etc. Moreover, different national and local policies and measures relevant to the needs of Roma and especially Roma women were used when conducting the analysis of social enterprises as a tool for employment of long-term unemployed Roma women and their inclusion in the labour market. The desk analysis also took into account the regional and local policies that address the issue of employment and social inclusion. The survey was conducted on a representative sample through a random selection of respondents as methodology and procedure of selection, following the demographic characteristics of the Skopje region.

In order to arrive at a clearer picture regarding the employment situation, employment and employability of Roma women, 2 focus groups were organised. The focus groups were conducted as a method to obtain subjective but in-depth knowledge of the employment situation of Roma women in Skopje. In order to obtain as relevant data as possible, the focus groups were comprised of 7 women (14 in total) from similar social milieu (long-term unemployed, wives, mothers) in order to gain broader representativity in the discussions and data. Focus group discussions provided information on specific experiences with labour market discrimination, opportunities and challenges for female entrepreneurship through ESA measures, as well as information on the attitudes and experiences related to their perception of the family and economic independence of Roma women.

The desk research has mapped around 15 social enterprises. According to the needs of the research, 7 social enterprises were selected which operate on the territory of the City of Skopje. Further on, 7 interviews were conducted with responsible persons from the enterprises. The objective of the discussion was to identify the challenges SE face in terms of the use of employment measures and the challenges of employing persons from marginalised communities.

Case studies have been devised in order to establish the personal experience of Roma women and to demonstrate the integration process of long-term unemployed Roma women and their economic strengthening.

The instrument used during the research was a questionnaire. Actually, two questionnaires were developed for the needs of the analysis – one for the focus groups, and latter questionnaire was developed in order to analyse the position of the social enterprises. The questionnaires were used as basis for the semi-structured interviews led with responsible persons at the SE and with Roma women from Skopje.

The findings of the analysis can be used to create new employment measures for Roma women but also to create measures specifically targeted at social enterprises employing people from marginalized communities. The findings can also help other social enterprises that face the same or similar challenges in addressing and overcoming the obstacles that arise during their operation.

2.4 The procedure

The research was conducted in the period April - July 2015. The desk analysis took place during the April - May 2019 period. It was conducted in order to establish the factual situation of the Roma on the labour market, to receive an overview of the employment measures and their absorption by SEs and Roma women as well as to map the SEs which are part of this analysis. The extensive analysis has contributed to filling the gaps which remained from the information obtained from the focus groups and the SE interviews.

The interviews with representatives of SE took place in May 2019. They were conducted also with managers of the social enterprises. Those were face-to-face interviews in form of conversation based by previously formulated questions, used as a benchmark in the interviews.

The focus-groups were held in the May-June 2019 period, in cooperation with the youth centre “Sakam da Znam (I Want to Know)” in Shuto Orizari and the “Roma Women initiative” from Shuto Orizari. The two focus groups were organised and conducted at the Youth Centre “Sakam da Znam (I Want to Know)” where the total of 14 women from Skopje participated.

The focus group participants were women from the same social strata and ethnicity. The limitation observed when using this method of research was the expansion of the discussion topics as the interview progressed. Especially when opening sensitive issues related to their lives, either due to the shorter time left for discussion but also because of the already established dynamics in the group, further exploitation and in-depth discussion on the topic was hard to achieve.

In the month of June, two Roma women from SEs were mapped and presented as case studies.

3. Situation of Roma women and men and the (un) employment

Employment of socially vulnerable and excluded citizens is still a serious challenge in the Republic of North Macedonia. The unemployment, but also difficulties in finding a job, is still a pressing problem, especially for the most vulnerable groups: young people, long-term unemployed, people on social welfare, people with lower degree of education, etc. The situation of the Roma community, especially Roma women, as long-term unemployed persons, remains to be one of the most worrisome factors which obstruct their full integration into the society.

The number of the Roma population in Macedonia is very difficult to establish. According to the 2002 Census in the Republic of Macedonia, the representation of Roma in the total population in the Republic of Macedonia amounted to approximately 2.7% (53,879), making the Roma the fourth largest ethnic community (by Macedonians, Albanians and Turks). On the other hand, according to estimates of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the 2006 Regional Roma Report (Ivanov et al. 2006) the actual size of the Roma community is somewhere between 220,000 and 260,000, which is over 10% of the population. Anyhow, just like in the other parts of the region, the poverty and unemployment rates are significantly higher among Roma compared to those in the majority community.

The state pays particular focus, when drafting programs and policies for socially excluded citizens, so as to continually develop and implement socio-economic, educational and employment policies. The main objective of these policies is to achieve a higher degree of social inclusion by employing vulnerable groups of the unemployed categories and empowering them economically.

The fact that youth and Roma are an important focus group in the policies that are implemented in continuity can be supported by the series of documents such as: "National Employment Strategy", "National Youth Employment Action Plan", "National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Exclusion in the Republic Macedonia", "Operational Plan for Active Labour Market Programs and Employment Services", as well as the legislative changes in the labour legislation. The "National Strategy for Roma 2014-2020" and the "National Action Plan for Roma Employment 2016-2020" have been developed and revised specifically for the Roma community.

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has, via the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy applied a system of planning and implementation of active labour market measures to address the different needs of vulnerable groups of unemployed people and employers, which include services for the unemployed, training programs, job creation programs, job clubs, internships, and others.

Further to the strategic documents and action plans at the local and national level for employing Roma men and women, the MoLSP, in cooperation with the ESA, is drafting annual plans and measures for employment, self-employment and entrepreneurship.

The Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures and Labour Market Services for 2019 sets out the programs, measures and services for employment that will provide new employments, support to job creation, and increasing employability of the unemployed, especially of the young people and beneficiaries of social welfare assistance (hereinafter: guaranteed minimum assistance). All the registered unemployed persons and employers have access to the employment programs and measures. The right to participate shall be determined on the basis of the conditions and criteria defined for each individual program or measure and employment service, and as a general rule shall seek to achieve equal representation of men and women under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, as well as participation of young people up to the age of 29, of at least 30%.

According to the data of the State Statistical Office, in 2018 the active population in the Republic of North Macedonia was 957,623 persons, of which 759,054 are employed and 198,569 persons are unemployed. The activity rate in this period is 56.9%, the employment rate is 45.1%, while the unemployment rate is 20.7%. By 30.04.2019 conclusively, the total number of unemployed on the territory of the city of Skopje was 18,347 of which 2,597 are of Roma nationality, and 1,301 of them are Roma women.

According to a Shadow Report regarding Chapter 23 for the June 2018 – March 2019 period prepared by the European Policy Institute from Skopje and the Helsinki human rights Committee: "...between 73 and 86% of young Roma aged 18 to 24 are not employed, lack the adequate training and are not getting educated. Only 22% of Roma women in the Republic of North Macedonia are employed. The number of Roma community members using the active employment measures is very low, accounting to only 1% in 2017 of the total number of beneficiaries of the measures consisting of self-employment support, training, support in job creation and work engagement. In terms of the employment of Roma in the public sector, in 2017 they accounted for only 1.3% of total employees, while in 2015 the number was 1.4%, indicating a decrease, instead of an increase in the number of public sector employees. If analysing the structure of employees by institutions, 750 Roma out of a total of 1,715 Roma are employed in public utility companies (43%). The number of Roma employed in higher ranking positions, i.e. in managerial positions in institutions remains insignificant."

According to the desk research, all the findings indicate that Roma people are disadvantaged on the labour market. The main reasons for this are the lower education levels, cross-sectoral discrimination from many entities and on many grounds, as well as the socio-cultural factors and limitations found among the Roma population. The focus groups with Roma women from Skopje only corroborated the findings of the desk research but also helps raise new areas for discussion and research.

3.1 Education

The lower level of education among the Roma population is one of the most important factors contributing to increased poverty. The reason for the low level of education is the poor economic and social situation of many Roma families, a high percentage of Roma children which were not enrolled in pre-school education, which is a significant prerequisite for socialization and inclusion in the education system, the insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language which leads to the inability to follow the education process with ease, the absence of adequate learning facilities at home due to the inadequate housing which is common for the majority of Roma population. Lack of awareness about the importance of education in Roma communities, especially of parents, is yet another reason for not enrolling, for the absenteeism and school dropouts after completing fourth or fifth grade. The patriarchal upbringing, on the other hand, does not motivate or encourage girls to join in the educational process. Thus, from the perspective of qualifications and education degree, one of the reasons for the relatively slim chances for employment of the Roma is their low education level.

The research showed that greater efforts are needed when it comes to the education and requalification of Roma women. Eleven of the Roma women surveyed have primary education and 3 have not completed their primary education. Roma women feel that they cannot get a job because they lack the appropriate education or, in case they do find a job or apply for training, they will not be able to keep that job or carry out the required tasks.

...“my boss is asking for primary-school diploma”..

...“I was afraid to apply for the training because I cannot read”... a Roma woman said, who is employed in one of the social enterprises encompassed by this research.

...“even if we were to find a good opening, with good conditions, how likely will that match your skills. And then we would have to learn something new. I want to be a hairdresser or beautician, but something like this was never offered by the employment centre. That is all I have had experience with, the only thing I have tried. And yes, I heard about the course in seamstresses, but I never knew how to work on a sewing machine”...

3.2 Inter-sectoral discrimination

3.2.1 Institutional discrimination and unequal treatment

The desk research helped identify that THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND MEASURES under Operational Employment Plan for 2019 does not recognise the Roma community as a separate target group that needs to be approached, but they are included as beneficiaries only, under the section of people under risk.

The only part where Roma people are recognised as a target group is under EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, item 5.

ACTIVATING UNEMPLOYED ROMA which states that “The service shall focus on all unemployed Roma people. The unemployed people shall have access to the team of mentors, who will be hired in the local communities. The mentors’ role will be to motivate and to regularly inform them about the opportunities for employment or improving professional capacities. Following an individual approach for identifying knowledge, skills and qualifications that the persons have, persons will be then referred to appropriate programs from the Operative Plan for active programs and measures for employment and labour market services.”

However, data on the number of unemployed Roma from the SEs is questionable given the fact that not all Roma regularly report to the Employment Service Agency. Many of the Roma women interviewed lack the knowledge and capacity to register themselves, which hampers them from becoming eligible to use activation services for unemployed Roma or to exercise the right to benefit from some of the employment measures.

During the focus groups, the women who stated they were registered with the ESA sad that although they were registered with the Agency, nobody had ever contacted them from ESA or the municipalities to offer them support in the registration process.

...“I do register with the Agency yes.

- Have they ever called you?

- No...

- How long have you been registered?

- ...well, for 7 or 8 years.

- And have they ever called you?

- No...”

... “Yes, I am registered since 2006...

- And nobody has ever offered you a job from there?...

- No, only my son found a job now, through the Employment Agency...”

“...No, no, no, nothing, not even once... ok, in the time of the former system they never called me, but back then people waited long years before finding a job, for instance if I had registered 5 years ago, and someone else only registered one year ago and we are of the same profession, I have the advantage, there were some criteria back then, but no, I was never contacted by them, not then and not even now. Regarding the availability of certain measures and activities, I don’t know, I have never benefitted from any trainings, education, courses, foreign language or computer courses, never...”

...“No, nobody has told me anything, nor called me... I go to the counter, I still remember, it is counter I0, I went there, I signed, they inserted a date in my card when to register again and that was it..

- And they never called you?

- No... you know I have been registered since I became an adult, ever since turned I9.

- And how old are you now?...

- 29...
- So nothing from them for 10 years?
- No, and that is why I am telling you, there is nothing... you wait forever for them to find you a job... so you are better-off finding that job on your own rather than waiting”...

According to findings regarding unregistered Roma women, the main obstacle is lack of information and familiarity with the registration procedure.

- ...“Why haven’t you registered so far?
- “I don’t know how those procedures go, so that is why”...

Some of the findings reveal the inconsistencies, that is the institutional barriers and mistrust in the institutions by Roma women.

...“No, I don’t want to register...

- Why is that?
- I don’t want to...
- Do you know what that means?
- For them to find me a job..
- And?...
- I don’t want to, like that... I have this friend, I wanted to bring her over as well, she was telling me that she was here once, you talked to her, she went to the Agency like you are saying, she left an application for employment, and no reply for a month, two, three, nothing, they didn’t help her”...

...“I am not registered because did not register on time, I missed the re-registration date by 2-3 days, and they blocked me from the computer, I was rejected... I was supposed to go and register every month and I forgot, I was late, and when I saw the date in the card when I need to re-register I went there and they told me I was already rejected from the computer”...

...“You know what is the thing, I was following them closely, a big mess was caused regarding manipulation and inappropriate access and information sharing by the civil servants from the Agency, when clients go there to register as active or passive job seekers, as you can hear it yourself from these people here, the clerks don’t care much, they don’t share any information with the people that they could benefit from certain measures and activities of the Agency, so they just tell people, well you don’t have to register as active seeker, why should you come every month, register as a passive seeker so that you could come once every 6 months”...

3.2.2 Discrimination by employers

Despite the positive climate, the enabling policies adopted, the strategies, operational and action plans for employment, what came to play is the disadvantage and discrimination of Roma women in the labour market both reflected in the quantity and quality of employment opportunities available to them. The disadvantaged position of Roma women is most visible in the quality of employment and violation of workers' rights.

Focus group data indicate that women are discriminated against on the basis of pay, there is misuse of workers' rights and exploitation of labour. Not only are the salaries of Roma women lower than those of non-Roma women, but the ethnic difference in wages in women is greater than that in men, and the degree of gender pay gap is higher among Roma than among the non-Roma population.

...“I used to be employed in a cleaning company. The clients were satisfied and always praised me in front of my boss. Gradually the number of hallways I had to clean started increasing. I started with 3, and ended up with 8-9 hallways. I asked for a raise or bonus, the boss told me no problem you will get it. I worked for three more months, I could not keep up with the work any longer, I didn't get any raise, the boss had lied to me, and I left”...

Moreover discrimination often crops up when it comes to certain occupations and forms of employment. The informal employment in the country is much more common when it comes to Roma than non-Roma workers. Compared to the non-Roma population, there is a much higher likelihood that Roma, especially Roma women, shall be involved in vulnerable and informal employment. Vulnerable employment is often characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity, and difficult working conditions that disregard even the basic workers' rights. Another typical thing for informal employment is that it also includes lower wages, and when there is no formal agreement there is no health and/or pension insurance either.

...“everyone knows where the Roma people work...where? ...as cleaners, outside, sweeping the streets, collecting the garbage, as you see them cleaning today for 5,000 then they will work a few more months and that will be it, they will be kicked out”...

...“there is one pool here, so they were looking for cleaners for the bathroom, to people to mop the floor in the café, the advertisement was on TV for a longer time that they are hiring. So we went there 2-3 friends together, and the man came out and we asked him can we apply. He said no applications of Roma are received. They don't let Roma people even for a swim in the pool”...

...“And have you ever worked before? ...Yes...What did you do? ...Before I worked in a private school...Ok,

and why did you stop? ...Well you know...they said we will employ you on a contract, but before the end of the school semester, they called me, asking me to sign something ...and what I signed was a notice of dismissal...and they said, that's it for now, when school starts again we will call you. And I no longer work..."

...“I had a friend who was cleaning houses, I don't know how to say this...she was not treated well...Did they hire her?.. Yes...And? ..She did not work for long. She didn't like it. She was ill-treated. They were vulgar to her. Ordered her about, telling her what to do, and she left. They were vulgar to her only because she was Roma. But we are too good, we let them play us”...

3.2.3 Discrimination of clients on grounds of ethnic background

Discrimination by clients is manifested as the desire of clients not to be served by a particular ethnic community. This happens when a particular group is pushed out of the labour market for certain occupations, such as service in restaurants, clubs, hotels, or in certain high-profile occupations that are in direct contact with clients. During interviews with heads of social enterprises which employ Roma women, several examples of discrimination against Roma women based on ethnicity and health status were indicated.

Examples from experience of managers when contacted by clients:

...“I have no problem with her being Roma, only don't you have someone who is whiter?”...

...“Roma people should not be in touch with food”...

...“Tell her not to come back to work until she recovers fully, I don't want to contract any of those germs”...

There were some instances where managers stated that Roma women have been accused of some petty thefts and only later did the clients realise that they were wrong, more specifically the missing items were usually found in the homes by the clients themselves or their family members

3.3 Socio-cultural factors and limitations

One of the more important findings is the impact of the socio-cultural factors and constraints which Roma women are facing, that is the role of Roma women in the family. The inevitable fact is that Roma women are subdued because of their position within the family. They are not expected to be party leaders or prominent public figures. Roma women, according to the traditional family upbringing are expected, at a certain age in life, to marry, and that marriage will bring upon them certain obligations, such as fully devoting to the needs of the family, the husband, being exemplary mothers at the home and outside in the community. The daily activities of Roma women in the society are only evidence of the deeply rooted perception of the role of women. There is very little

awareness that with her vote or participation she can change policies that are directly related to her needs and interests, such as: domestic violence; women's specific health needs; sexual harassment; sex-based discrimination in the workplace and many other issues. Due to their dual role (reproductive and professional), Roma women are compelled to choose only one role, most often the reproductive (private) one. These findings obtained through the desk research were confirmed also during the focus groups. The general conclusion was that the care for the house and the children is one of the main obstacles why these women cannot work.

...“Roma women must stay at home and watch over the house, the children and the elderly”...

...“What would be the biggest support for you in finding a job?... well I have nobody to leave my child with...

Among other things, these findings reveal also the institutional deficiencies of the system for care and education of pre-school children.

...“there is no one I can leave my children to. In Shutka there is no extra room in the kindergarten and they would not receive my child in any other kindergarten either”..

And do you work right now?.. No...And do you want to work...Yes of course but I have a small child and there is nobody to watch over it..So that is why you cannot work, that is stopping you from working?...Yes...So what would be of biggest assistance to you in finding a job?... (another women replies: for her child to be enrolled in a kindergarten)...yes,

The statements only corroborate the conclusions reached so far that Roma women are disadvantaged in the labour market. The desk analysis conducted helps show that these findings have been replicated in other research but also in government documents and papers for years back. It is worrying that the situation of Roma women remains unchanged (or has only slightly improved) despite all the efforts and resources invested in improving their position, both by the Government, the international community and from the non-governmental sector in North Macedonia.

This situation implies that we need a new, different approach for integration of Roma women on the labour market and their economic empowerment.

Identified challenges

- Low education level and limited employment opportunities,
- Intuitional deficiencies,
- Ethnic-based discrimination by clients and employers,
- Culturological challenges-traditional norms and values of the Roma community.

3.4 Specific recommendations for Roma women

1. To establish a new mechanism for informing Roma women about employment opportunities and their work integration.
2. Staff at the Employment Service Agency should be more sensitive to working and interacting with clients of the Roma community,
3. A special unit should be established within the ESA for incentivising the unemployed Roma men and women,
4. Special measure should be created for long-term unemployed women which will fully consider the characteristics of the Roma population as a category of beneficiaries,
5. To establish a strong inter-institutional cooperation between the ESA, MoLSP, ME and the local self-government in order to establish a mechanism for employment of Roma women at the local level,
6. To align and coordinate strategies, programs, and activities of the municipalities, the civil society and the business sector for a more efficient implementation of the employment measures.
7. To adopt and implement action plans for employment of Roma women in the municipalities where Roma population lives, and to target at least a certain quota of unemployed women.
8. To establish a monitoring system for municipalities which have already adopted Action Plans for employment of Roma people, in order to control its implementation.
9. To facilitate the access to requalification and professional training of Roma women.
10. To introduce free of charge adult education as a measure for work integration of Roma women.
11. To further motivate qualified Roma women to benefit from the self-employment measures and to incentivise entrepreneurship.
12. The institutions in charge of creating and implementing measures should develop a comprehensive evaluation of the programs and measures and should prepare a report about the effects thereof;
13. Adequate social support services should be made available for Roma women who wish to integrate into the workforce and are unable to due to the socio-cultural limitations (opening more kindergartens in municipalities where the percentage of Roma population is larger, setting quotas for enrolment of Roma children in non-Roma municipalities, establishing a unit within the ESA for psycho-social support to long-term unemployed Roma women for facilitating their work integration).

4. 3. Situation with social enterprises

The Social enterprises in the Republic of North Macedonia are receiving increased attention from civil society organizations and central government representatives. Recently there has been bigger focus and discussion about the eco-system in which these enterprises operate, but there is still a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the concept of “social enterprise”. Certain project initiatives by several NGOs, began to stimulate and influence the building of a social entrepreneurship structure in Macedonia. The process is on-going, and in the meantime new social enterprises are emerging which are more active in their social mission rather than the economic one.

By applying entrepreneurial principle, the social enterprises (SE) are serving their communities. The profit they generate is reinvested into the development of social changes. SE often use innovative approaches which contribute to a sustainable and equitable social and economic development. Most often, SEs are active in two missions: 1) providing goods and services for marginalised groups and underprivileged communities; 2) employment and work integration of vulnerable and marginalised citizen groups.

For the needs of this research 7 social enterprises were identified, more specifically those falling in the second group i.e. 2) for employment and work integration of vulnerable marginalised groups of citizens.

The general conclusion from the dialogue led so far among all stakeholders, but also the experiences from the countries in the region speak that clear criteria should be outlined that will differentiate between the social enterprises and the traditional ones. According to desk research, so far there is no relevant database on the number of social enterprises in Skopje and the Republic of North Macedonia, although there are different legal entities that deal in economic activities for social purposes. The legislative framework has still not been developed for this, for us still new, entity. Also, desk analysis has shown that for the time being, there is no system for measuring the results of social enterprises in terms of the impact/influence they deliver in the community, but also in terms of the impact they have on the target groups they employ.

Although there is neither a law on social enterprises nor a legal form which determines the status of the enterprise as social, the establishment of social enterprises is possible within the framework of other legislative acts such as, for example, the Law on Associations and Foundations (Official Gazette no. 52/10 и 135/11); Law on Employment

of People with Disabilities (Official Gazette no. 87/2005); Law on Cooperatives (Official Gazette no.51/02); Law on Agricultural Cooperatives (Official Gazette no. 23/2013); Law on Craftsmanship (Official Gazette no. 215/15); Law on Social Protection (Official Gazette no. 79/09) etc.

In terms of their legal form, according to the research, social enterprises can be formed and established as different entities such as civil society organizations and foundations, cooperatives, protective companies, trading companies, craftsmen's chambers, agricultural cooperatives etc.

Concerning the financial sustainability, social enterprises are facing a serious challenge. Enterprises operating within NGOs use the resources of the organization itself. Of the 7 interviewed social enterprises, 6 have stated that if they were to exit the roof of NGOs they would already have a problem covering the basic costs for their functioning (space, overhead costs, consumables, enterprise manager, etc.).

In addition to the aforementioned active employment measures, social enterprises have the opportunity to grow their businesses by providing donor funding such as from the European Commission. Also, in the last two years (2018 and 2019), the City of Skopje, through the Sector for International Cooperation and Support to Civil Society Organisations and Foundations, has been funding social entrepreneurship initiatives amounting to EUR 5,000, funds intended only for non-governmental organizations. In 2019, HERA, through a project funded by the European Commission, managed to support 2 existing social enterprises through re-granting, and to encourage the development of 4 new social enterprises managed by NGOs. The grants and funds available for creation of social enterprises vary depending on the donor and range from 3,000 to 15,000 EUR.

4.1 Institutional support to SE through the prism of Operative Plans for Active Employment Measures

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy together with the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia, when revising the operational plan for active employment measures for 2017, introduced a new measure for assistance and support to social enterprises. According to the Employment Agency report, only four social enterprises, led by NGOs, have benefitted from this measure, during which seven new employments were planned for vulnerable categories of citizens. Of these four enterprises, three were part of this analysis.

The operational plans for active employment measures for 2018 and 2019 already clearly identify social enterprises as eligible entities for applying for employment measures. Program 2 is for creating new jobs, measures 2.1. are for subsidising salaries and 2.2 are for employment and growth of legal entities, and all these include social enterprises as beneficiaries of the measures.

According to interview results, of the 7 surveyed social enterprises 5 have used Program 2 measures to employ persons from marginalized communities, in the period 2017 to 2019. The total number of employees from

marginalized communities through these enterprises is 51 out of which 35 are women and 9 are Roma women. Experience from the enterprises indicates that measures are inadequate, especially when it comes to smaller social enterprises which are facing financial sustainability issues. Experience gained so far says that measures have not been adapted to social enterprise needs, especially when it comes to the responsibilities and sanctions which the measure entails.

Asked about their level of satisfaction with the measure they use, all the SEs which are beneficiaries of measures are generally not satisfied.

“Consideration should be given to reducing the binding period for which the employer must keep the number of employees. Also the time period for filling a vacated job post with a new employee should perhaps be extended - it is not possible, in such a short time period, to find an appropriate person with a disability which is ready to work.”
 “In our case it happened that one person decided to leave upon his will. We were not able to meet the binding criteria for maintaining the number of employees imposed by the measure because we were not able to find a new person to replace him within the specified timeframe, and the Agency did not provide us with information about possible replacements with people from their database.”

“No, it has not been adapted enough for social enterprises which employ long-term unemployed persons. There aren't clear and precise enough criteria and guidelines for eligibility for these funds.”

-“we are beneficiaries of a measure for employing a person which works in an NGO and helps with the management and coordination of a SE and coordination of employed women, for not of the women hired as caregivers who are long-term unemployed Roma women. – And why not the Roma women? Because they are leaving, we cannot fulfil the criteria for retention of workers for at least one year nor can we find, in such a short time, a replacement female worker from the same category of vulnerability...”

Research has shown that staff at the employment centres and the ESA is not informed enough about the measures and manner of application.

“The administration workers did not know enough about the measures so they were not able to answer our questions” (it concerns the measures from the revised operative plan for employment measures for 2017)
 Interview findings indicate systemic weaknesses in terms of legislation and opportunities for funding by donors or the absorption of the measures offered by the by ESA and MLSP.

“We cannot use employment measures because I am registered as a craftsman and we cannot apply for grants either because we are not an NGO”.

Part of the social enterprises have as their social mission the inclusion of target groups on the labour market by strengthening their work ethnics and habits. Results have shown that the measures are targeted at employment but not at work integration.

“There isn’t a fitted measure that would be appropriate for the target groups we integrate onto the labour market. The purpose of our SE is to help people acquire skills and work habits with the goal of long-term employment in other larger firms and companies. The mission of our SE is work integration, more specifically reaching beyond the period of unemployment to a lasting employment, or more precisely helping the transition from unemployed to employed status. More specifically, strengthening their work ethic and improving employability. There is no such measure for SE nor is there a program for tailored for this target group.”

“The target group which the enterprise employs is facing special challenges which are consequence of the violence they have faced. Women victims of family violence quickly lose will to work, have low self-esteem, and those who are long-term unemployed have problem with the work ethnics.”

4.2 Most frequent challenges that social enterprises face during their operation

Besides the experiences and challenges related to the absorption of measures, social enterprises stated they were facing other challenges which are particularly important for their work. We have divided them into external and internal challenges in order to trace them better.

4.2.1. External challenges

- Institutional deficiencies: Legislation. Present legislation which regulates social enterprises is not developed enough for it to create sustainable social enterprises. Laws do not recognise social enterprises as separate entities, even though employment measures are available for them. There are no tax exemptions or subsidies for SE.
- there is no measure earmarked for social enterprises what would anticipate certain exemptions or will offer support to SEs with the challenges they are facing. The measures do recognise the social enterprises but they are subject to the same criteria and obligations as for the remaining traditional companies.
- there is no inter-institutional system of supporting the social enterprises.
- there is no cooperation between the already existing SEs which would assist the sustainability.
- the ethnic-based discrimination of the clients (described in the part regarding conditions for Roma women).
- unrealistic expectations from clients (larger expectations from the initial agreement leading to bigger exploitation of workers on the part of clients (upon request of the client women are asked to discharge tasks outside the domain of the originally agreed ones especially when it comes to domestic services like looking after care for the

elderly in domestic conditions).

- the general public does not understand the concept of the social enterprise so they often think the services are free of charge.

4.2.2. Internal challenges

- self-sustainability of the enterprises: if resources from NGOs are not used, the enterprises would not be sustainable.
- the code of conduct (business)/the lack of work habits and work ethics of the employees – all the social enterprises face challenges when it comes to the work ethics and habits of staff, that is, they are late for work, they fail to show up at work, go on sick leave without medical certificate, breach the code of conduct, disrespect the agreed obligations.
- motivation of the employed Roma women: the major challenge when it comes to employment of persons from marginalised communities, all the social enterprises complained of difficulties with retention of employees. After finding employment, persons are hard to be motivated to stay at work, so it happens that enterprises end up understaffed and cannot service clients any longer, or provide the offered services.
- poor financial literacy - employees have no money management experience. They do not understand the pathway of money; how the revenue is distributed in the enterprise, how to spend earnings responsibly, how to manage revenue; what is saving and what are the advantages of saving. If we want to meet the criteria of social enterprises, then employees themselves should be part of the management structure. Furthermore, the strengthening of financial literacy among Roma women is crucial for the development of social enterprises.
- lack of information about the meaning of registered work and no ambition for formal employment. Roma women do not fully understand the concept nor the benefits of formal employment. Roma women expect “cash on hand” which is expected, based on the to-date practices they have experienced. They have no confidence in employers that they will be paid at the end of the month. After receiving information from employers (social entrepreneurs) about the benefits they would have if they were formally employed, they perceive the incentive to get employed because of the paid maternity leave.

4.3. Specific recommendations for the social enterprises

1. To set clear criteria on social enterprises that will delineate them from the regular/traditional businesses.
2. To prepare a national strategy for social entrepreneurship that would regulate the pertaining criteria: which entities are social and which are traditional.
3. To define the facilitating legislative framework on social enterprises, without the obligation to create a law on social entrepreneurship.

4. If a law on social entrepreneurship is drafted, the law should be in the spirit of the national (local) context instead of copy/pasting the already existing laws from the neighbouring EU countries.
5. The law on social entrepreneurship should consider to-date practices and challenges that already established social enterprises are facing, and to seek ways how to facilitate their work from a legal point of work.
6. To establish a national fund for social enterprises in order to help their self-sustainability.
7. To include the local self-governments in supporting social enterprises, appropriate to the needs of the local population.
8. To re-examine the existing eligibility and selection criteria for awarding financial support through the measures and programs for self-employment and entrepreneurship.
9. To create a special measure in the operative plan for employment via the ESA for supporting specifically the social enterprises which employ people from marginalised communities,
10. To introduce a system for providing more detailed information at the ESA regarding employment measures and programs for purposes of effective referrals for interested, that is, potential users.
11. When selecting the legal entities which have applied for using the ESA measures, advantage should be given to those businesses which include at least 30% Roma women in their operation.
12. To create a separate unit within the ESA which will deal with labour integration of already employed Roma women and other persons from marginalised communities in the social enterprises, which will work on developing the work ethics, on soft skills, motivation, financial literacy and workplace retention.

5. Case Study

Case study 1

Anife M., aged 34, lives in Zlokukjani, Skopje. She has unfinished primary education, is unemployed, married with one child (aged 10, enrolled 4th grade primary school). She learned through a friend about the possibility of employment in an enterprise. After the phone conversation with Anife, the team from the enterprise visited her in her home to clarify the type of work to her. It consisted of four-months' training on caregiving, followed by a test. Anife attended the training for three months without absence, showed great interest and success, but due to difficulties in reading and writing she felt insecure and intimidated. Her fear from the test made Anife leave the training. Upon realizing that Anife is absent from the training, the team from the enterprise started intensive motivation activities, for Anife to finalise the professional training, consisting of psychological support, assistance with learning of the assigned materials by writing, reading and help with preparation of the final exam through interactive courses. After a successfully passed exam, she obtained the certificate for caregiver to elderly persons. This certificate helped her get employed in the social enterprise for caregiving for older people in their homes. During the first year she worked on service contracts, but later, as the enterprise grew, she was offered a formal open-ended employment contract. She is very happy for being formally employed now, with health and pension contributions paid and the ability to use paid vacation time. In the past she depended on her husband's income, who collected scrap metal, and on the remittances they would receive from relatives abroad. Now she has regular income and she manages the home budget. She feels more empowered and secure. She is very grateful that the family supported her in the employment process by helping with part of the responsibilities, especially around the child and the house, which her husband took over. Anife has been working for two years now, and she further motivates and recruits new Roma women to work in the social enterprise.

Case study 2

Jessica Sh. Is aged 30, living in Sh. Orizari, Skopje. She is married and has completed primary education, and is pregnant with her third child. She has never worked before, and was supported by her family (mother and father) and found out about this job through her cousin. At first she applied together with her mother (who is long-term unemployment) and after 4 months both women obtained the certificate for caregivers to the elderly and started working in the enterprise.

At her very first day she faced the risk which the profession itself brings, the is, the client (the old person) passed away. Scared by the nature of work and the stress suffered she started doubting whether to continue working at all. The social enterprise team invested effort to convince her to stay on the post by giving her psychological support to overcome the stress. Her family is supporting her, especially her father. She decides to continue on the job but has hard time observing the enterprise rules, that is, respecting the office hours and clients, timely updating about important developments, trusting the supervisor and cooperating with her colleagues. This was followed by a new process of motivation by the team, but this time it focused on improving work ethnics, building a sense of belonging and responsibility. She continued to work on service contract and later she was offered an open-ended contract, which she accepted. She feels more confident, she feels as an independent person who contributes equally to the family. One year later she got pregnant and started fearing for her post. The team explained to her that she will not lose her job, and will also be able to use her maternity leave. At first she did not understand what this means, but later she realized that she will get to be home with the baby and receive full salary for 9 months. She can also make a difference in the doctors' treatment at the time of her two pregnancies (when she had no health insurance) and the way doctors are treating her now, as a health insurance beneficiary. Unlike before, the doctors; treatment is more humane now.

Jessica has worked as a caregiver for two years, and is presently on maternity leave. She is keen on learning new skills that will help her improve her professional performances. The team of the SE still gives her support with the gathering, filling in and delivering the necessary documents to the health insurance fund, as well as with other administrative tasks.

6. General conclusions and recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

The conducted analysis so far only substantiate the perception that Roma Women are discriminated against on the labour market. The conclusions drawn from the focus groups with the Roma women is that they possess the basic motivation for employment, but what we could conclude from the interviews with managers of SEs is that the motivation weakens as early as in the first month of their work. Reasons for this are: the low degree of education due to which they do not feel ready to continue trainings which shall strengthen their position in the enterprise; their working habits and ethics are at a lower level, due to which they face all the issues which long-term unemployed persons face, the ethnically-based discrimination by clients and employers as well as the socio-cultural specificities of the community itself, described in Chapter 3 of this analysis.

What stands out in the analysis and pertains to the employment measures and programs is that the ESA maintains database of companies and persons who have applied and have benefitted from employment measures but the data are not stratified, so lacks information about gender or ethnicity.

There is no inter-sectoral cooperation, which is of vital importance. Staff is uninformed about changes in operative plans, lacks information about the overall application process, refrains from answering questions to which they have no answers and refer customers to other “more competent institutions”.

There isn't a single administrative worker or team of employees from the ESA which only deal with work integration of the Roma, which shall facilitate the registration of unemployed Roma women and support the process of application for some of the measures, or will help develop the work ethnics and motivation of already employed Roma women.

Concerning the operative plan for active employment programs and measures and related labour market services, despite being recognized as entities, there is no delineation between the social enterprises and the regular so-called traditional businesses which demotivates social enterprises to apply for them. Experience has shown that the measures are not suitable for SE employing persons from marginalized communities, especially those which include Roma women.

It is necessary to legally regulate SEs as separate legal entities which will enable bigger sustainability of enterprises. Regulating SEs from legal standpoint does not only mean drafting a law on social enterprises but also incorporating provisions on social enterprises in the already existing laws which regulate this activity.

Case studies demonstrate the difference between the traditional business sector and social enterprises especially in terms of motivation and retention of employees on the job. While the traditional business operate under the principle “everyone can be replaced”, the social enterprises work on developing the code on conduct with the objective of staff retention.

There are social enterprises that deal only with work integration of persons from marginalized communities in order to prepare them for permanent. Those social enterprises are especially important, both for the employers and the employees, but aren't, unfortunately recognized by the state, or aren't given much attention.

In their interviews, SE managers stated that unless some systemic changes are made enabling a different treatment of SEs as a separate entity, the likelihood of closing down these companies is great. In such a case Roma women will suffer the greatest damage, as well as the other people from marginalized communities, including here the community (clients) where SEs operate.

The public is not familiarized with the concept of social enterprises – their meaning and significance in the communities. If the broader public would be familiar with the SEs as a new business entity, there would be higher chances of people using more services from these enterprises, which would ensure sustainability of business and new employments.

One of the main findings which all managers underscored is the lack of networking or stakeholder cooperation. There is no cooperation between SEs but also no cooperation at the level of SEs with state institutions or local governments. The initial help which SEs are expecting should come from the state.

To sum up, in spite of the existing legislation which enables gender equality on the labour market, in reality there is a tremendous gender gap in the labour market activities, in the horizontal and vertical distribution of workplaces and in salaries. Data generated from the focus groups indicate that women are aware of the existing larger limitations they face when seeking employment compared to men, or the remaining non-Roma population. Additionally, conditions and opportunities in the society (lack of institutions and care for children, e.g. kindergartens in the region is a major problem) are inauspicious for women to be equally treated on the labour market and equally valued and treated. If one long-term unemployed Roma women and or any woman in general received an opportunity for employment, there would be no system for their labour integration. The national policies are still missing a gender-sensitive approach, clear criteria and practice that will reduce the gender gap in employment, nor is there a system or retaining marginalized people on their jobs. Female entrepreneurship is still in its fledgling phase.

6.2. General recommendations

Based on the analysis and conclusions from the situation of employment of Roma women in social enterprises and the use of measures and programs for employment and requalification we hereby share the following recommendations for the local self government units and NGOs as stakeholders which can further ameliorate conditions:

- Systematic involvement of local self-government units in national policies for poverty reduction and introducing own measures for reducing unemployment of Roma women and persons from marginalised communities result from the specificity of the target groups.
- Developing and introducing gender sensitive policies in the implementation of active employment measures, where criteria would guarantee equal access and absorption from Roma women, but in general also from the Roma and non-Roma population.
- Developing inclusive policies and planning measures that will help provide services (kindergartens, transportation etc.) in order to facilitate the positioning of the Roma women on the labour market.
- Developing special measures for social enterprises which employ Roma women and persons from marginalised communities.
- Adding specific criteria to the existing measures which target social enterprises alone.
- Giving priority to SEs which employ Roma women and persons from marginalised communities when selecting candidates for benefiting from the employment measures.
- Giving priority to traditional businesses which employ Roma women and persons from marginalised communities when selecting eligible candidates for using the employment measures.
- Providing financial and technical support (Resource Centre) to social enterprises, NGOs and small and medium sized enterprises which hire long-term unemployed Roma women and persons from marginalised communities.

Acronyms

MLSP – Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

ME – Ministry of Economy

ESA – Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia

SE – Social enterprise(s)

EU – European Union

UNDP – United Nations Development Program