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Book Review

**Another Type of Occupation: The Need of
Social Economy in the Bucharest – Ilfov and
South East Development Regions**

Simona Maria STĂNESCU & Sorin CACE (coordinators)

Reviewed by: Corina CACE¹, Victor NICOLĂESCU²

In the context of the current economic crisis the consequences reflecting themselves at the level of vulnerable groups overlap: social tensions generated by the increase in people's poverty, in the fear of losing one's job, in growing number of families with severe financial problems, in the restrictions to finance consumer credits and in the effects caused by the mobility of the work force (Bostan & Grosu, 2010: 20). Once the current economic crisis has continued and gone deeper, as well as the more and more visible failure of the applied measures, social economy stands for a lifesaver. Therefore, the social economy offers solutions so as to reduce social exclusion by means of increasing the occupational rate of vulnerable persons and of creating the mechanisms to help these people (Arpinte, Cace & Cojocaru, 2010: 66). Another important aspect regards highlighting the proactive ways to incorporate the experiences which prove that social economy may actually contribute to achieving social cohesion and that it may be one the major players fighting social exclusion (Cace, Nicolăescu & Scoican, 2010: 192-193). The pro-social economy discourse has been so much present for the last three years in Romania due to the implementation of projects specific to the European Social Fund, that it engaged itself in the situation of having a consolidated offer delineated from the part of social economy structures. The paper herein makes another type of analysis from the perspective of those who apply for the participation in this form of social economy, especially the persons who belong to vulnerable groups.

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The volume “Another type of occupation: the Need of Social Economy in the Development Areas Bucharest – Ilfov and South - East Development Regions” (Expert Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011), coordinated by Simona Maria Stanescu and Sorin Cace, integrates an sequential analysis regarding the development stage of Social Economy in the Bucharest – Ilfov and South – East Development Regions. The paper has been drafted within the Project *INTEGRAT – Resources for Socially Excluded Women and Roma Groups*, co-financed from the European Social Fund (ESF) through the Sectorial Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, Priority Axis 6 “Promoting Social Inclusion”, Intervention Area 6.1 „Developing Social Economy”. The Project has been implemented by a consortium coordinated by the Association for Social – Economic Development and Promotion Catalactica in its position as main applicant, in collaboration with the national partner the Research Institute for Quality of Life (the ICCV) within the Romanian Academy of Sciences and the international partner Bolt International Consulting L. Katsikaris & Co. Limited Partnership. The volume, coordinated by the two researchers from the Research Institute for Quality of Life contributes to the active promotion of social inclusion on the labour market by means of activation of Social Economy (SE) of the women and Roma groups, offering substantiated arguments for the development of partnerships and as well as by means of stimulating the involvement in the community life of the socially excluded persons from Bucharest – Ilfov and South-East Development Regions (DR).

The approach singularizes and strands out at the level of the latest publicist issues by the fact that this form of social economy is treated from the supply and demand perspective. Therefore, as the supply offer is approached in a distinct volume („Between Opportunities and Risks: the Social Economy Offer in the Bucharest – Ilfov and South-East Development Regions”, coordinators: Simona STĂNESCU, Sorin CACE, Filip ALEXANDRESCU), the demand registered at the level of the sector is described herein in a structured, progressive and extremely clear way. Within this context, the paper hereof focuses on „*the analysis of social economy demand from the perspective of the population, with special emphasis on a part of the vulnerable groups: the women, the Roma population as well as other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities*” (Stanescu & Cace, 2011: 23). The research in the field was performed in the period of August 2010 – May 2011 by the ICCV, the Romanian Academy, by means of doing field research so as to collect data structured on two components: qualitative and quantitative. Therefore, the data collection regarding the SE was made under the form of a questionnaire survey; it took place in the period of January – February 2011 in the Bucharest – Ilfov and South-East Development Regions on two samples representative for the adult populations from the two regions. Moreover, so as to have a comparative approach of the obtained results, a third survey was

planned and performed which was representative for the adult population from Romania.

In compliance with the syllabus of the research methodology, the questions included in the questionnaire were structured in the following sections: the current occupational statute of the respondents; the sector of social economy; resources; social – demographic data; a section for the operator. In order to tone the collected information, different sections were developed for the persons who do not have a job or who are unemployed (the section for the reintegration on the labour market) and for the persons who are employed (the section for the participation on the labour market). A thoroughly qualitative approach of the persons belonging to the vulnerable groups is made within the book, both from the perspective of their exclusion from the labour market (the registered and non-registered unemployed people) as well as of the beneficiaries from social security services. Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews clinched through individual forms have approached the social – financial situation from the perspective of the support received from the state, thus being able to register the opinions related to the prioritization to support the needy and the responsibility towards the latter. The multitude of data registered within the field research materialized in the drafting of the work herein but it also offers the possibility “*to continue other studies in a comparative way, so as for the obtained results to support thoroughness of the level of knowledge gained in the field*” (Stanescu & Cace, 2011: 31).

In interrelation with the data and conclusions registered within the field research, the paper has been structured on four sections: the first section generally approaches the problem of employment; the second one presents in detail the characteristics of the labour market in the Bucharest – Ilfov and South-East Development Regions; the third section is dedicated to the detailed analysis of the vulnerable groups from the SE perspective; the last section makes a summary of the conclusions and recommendations related to the development stage of social economy in the two development regions which have been the object of the study, as well as to the trends registered at the level of the country for this form of economy. The first section of the volume starts with the framing of the SE issues in the general context of employment by means of describing the European policies and their involvement in national context. Therefore, the reader is given an incursion from the historic and economic perspective into the analysis of the unique market within the EU space, of the social policies and of the European social model with applicability within the Romanian context. Furthermore, the policies fighting poverty and those to prevent social exclusion in Romania are contoured by presenting the main regulations from the pre-adherence period of our country to the European Union (EU) with special emphasis on the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, as well as by searching for solutions at European and national level to continue the progress recorded by the Lisbon Strategy when implementing the Europa 2020 Strategy. This section is completed by a brief

conceptual approach of employment, of the workforce market, of the inclusion of vulnerable groups on the labour market and of the social entrepreneurship. Therefore, the potential of the social entrepreneurship valorizes when facilitating the integration of the vulnerable groups on the labour market: „*Social entrepreneurship may stand for a lever in supporting economic growth and it will surely represent a major source of creating social values by means of the social inclusion of the vulnerable groups, the development of the social capital in communities and by regulating and identifying the entrepreneurial activities as a distinct field, recognized and improved both by the free market and through the social policies*” (Stanescu & Cace, 2011: 97).

The analysis of the labour market's profit in the two development regions under assessment starts in the second section by means of segmenting the labour market in relation to the SE. On these lines, the presentation of the general characteristics of the labour market from Romania is followed by detailed analyses of the segmentation of the labour market and of the employees' profiles, the poverty among those who work and the SE services accessed by the employees. In order to complete this structured picture, the following section presents the reintegration behaviors on the labour market of the different categories of vulnerable population under various coordinates (occupation, non-occupation, inactivity and vulnerability, aspects specific to the continuous learning process. Seen from the perspective of the social need, the regional characteristics, the living standard, the situation regarding the offer and notoriety of the SE entities, the request for SE services and the support of the population for social actions. The third section of the book is dedicated to the analysis of the potential of the women's involvement in specific SE activities, it relieves the social integration opportunity of the Roma population by accreditation of the social valences of SE and it presents the difficulties which the disabled may face with in their integration process on the labour market. In this context, the chapter prospects for the potential which the social economy may bring to the improvement of the situation of the latter. This section includes to its end a statistic study on the population's perception regarding the under-privileged social categories that should be supported. The final section dedicated to conclusions and recommendations comes with an overview of the main results obtained from the perspective of the contribution which these may bring to the elaboration of an integrated strategy of promotion of employment through social economy, especially but not exclusively of the vulnerable groups (Cace et al, 2012: 53-54). The coordinators of the paper indicate the fact that “on a long-term basis, the studies comprised in the book shall support the elaboration and adoption of some local specific measures which aim at increasing employment in the two DR, especially from the point of view of the SE entities and of the professional insertion of the under-privileged groups” (Stanescu & Cace, 2011: 273).

The book, due to its additional approaches based on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, proves its applied value by means of the fact that it offers a comprehensive, reasoned and justified format of initiation and development of social economy cores triggered at those persons who are in a situation of social exclusion. Moreover, within a context where the a paramount emphasis is placed on the putting into practice the EU 2010 Strategy, which is associated with defining social economy as a serious partner of the civil society and of the State (Zamfir & Fitzek, 2010: 8), the need to supervise and evaluate the initiatives taken in this sector as well as to present the mechanisms through which a healthy and vibrant ecosystem by means of this form of economy supporting the innovative social entrepreneurs becomes exquisite (Cace S., Arpinte D., Cace C. & Cojocaru S., 2011: 65).

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