

ACTION PLAN GEMER

Social Entrepreneurship in Sparsely Populated Areas

**Social Entrepreneurship in sparsely
populated areas (SOCENT SPAs)**



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Action Plan for Gemer

Project: Social Entrepreneurship in Sparsely Populated Areas

Project Partners: Non-for-Profit Organisation EPIC, Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Affairs of the Slovak Republic

ABSTRACT - ACTION PLAN FOR GEMER

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Reference to Policy Instrument

OP Human Resources 2014-2020

Specific objective 6.2.1 Increase the employment of people from marginalized Roma communities through their involvement in the subjects of the social economy

Specific objective 3.1.1. Increase of employment, employability and decrease the unemployment with the special focus on the long-term unemployed, low qualified and people with disability

Context

Gemer region is located in the south-eastern part of Slovakia and with an average 53 inhabitants per km² is considered a sparsely populated area (compared to 110 inhabitants per sq km country average). Administratively the region of Gemer consists of 3 districts, Rimavska Sobota, Revúca and Rožňava, comprises about 200 municipalities and is divided between 2 units of local government: Self-governing region of Banska Bystrica and Self-governing region of Košice.

The region of Gemer suffers from economic underdevelopment, which has been worsened by the out-migration of the young educated people from the region. Due to the persistent high level of long-term unemployment, the 3 districts of Gemer qualify as least developed regions within a government development strategy. Long-term unemployment is seen as the utmost social challenge for the region; this factor also deepens the social and economic marginalisation of Roma communities and other disadvantaged groups in the region.

The development of social enterprises in Gemer, as part of an emerging sector of national economy, will facilitate the increase of employment and increase of employability of the target groups. The Gemer region also suffered from closing down of several key industries in the past. Now it relies on its natural resources, which remain to a large degree untapped. Social entrepreneurship is seen as the developing platform to address these issues and unlock the potential of the region.

In light of interregional learning within the SOCENT SPAs project, the following actions for social entrepreneurship are proposed

Action 1

Background: Interregional learnings and examples of good practices of social enterprises operating in the area of agriculture combining work integration of disadvantaged groups are seen as successful and viable models for development of new social enterprises for Gemer.

Action to set a common agenda in social entrepreneurship at the level of central and regional administration involved in the region of Gemer. The aim of the action is to create a common guidelines and strategies at the level of state administration to allow for a broader application of social entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector, and related areas.

Subaction: Negotiation between the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Agriculture

Subaction: Coordination of agenda between Self-governing Region of Kosice and Banska Bystrica in the area of SE and agriculture

Action 2

Background: Baseline studies and partner workshop identified the need build networks and improve infra- structures in relation to awareness raising, education, and access to supporting services for social enter- prises.

Action: Elaboration and realisation of information campaign about social entrepreneurship, with focus on social agriculture, in Gemer

Subaction: Preparation of information package on Social Entrepreneurship

Subaction: Realisation of information sessions in Gemer

Subaction: Establishing a curated expert database for social enterprises

Subaction: Coordination and networking

PART I: General information

Project: Social Entrepreneurship in Sparsely Populated Areas, SOCENT SPAs PGI02359
Country: Slovakia NUTS2 region: Central Slovakia, Eastern Slovakia, NUTS3 region:
Banskobystrický kraj, Košický kraj

Project partners:

- Dirección General de Economía Social y Autónomos Calle Jacinto Benavente – Regional government Castilla e Leon (Spain)
- Social Impact (Germany) § NGOD Cives Mundi (Spain)
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Action 1

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Sub-action: Coordination of agenda between Self-governing Region of Kosice and Banska Bystrica in the area of SE and agriculture

Action 2

Background: Baseline studies and partner workshop identified the need build networks and improve infrastructures in relation to awareness raising, education, and access to supporting services for social enterprises.

Action: Elaboration and realisation of information campaign about social entrepreneurship, with focus on social agriculture, in Gemer

Sub-action: Preparation of information package on Social Entrepreneurship

Sub-action: Realisation of information sessions in Gemer

Sub-action: Establishing a curated expert database for social enterprises

Sub-action: Coordination and networking

PART II – Context

The Action plan aim is: The investment into the programs of the employment growth development.

Reference to Policy Instrument:

OP Human Resources 2014-2020

Specific objective 6.2.1 Increase the employment of people from marginalized Roma communities through their involvement in the subjects of the social economy

Specific objective 3.1.1. Increase of employment, employability and decrease the unemployment with the special focus on the long-term unemployed, low qualified and people with disability.

Gemer region is in the south-eastern part of Slovakia and with an average of 53 inhabitants per km² is considered a sparsely populated area (compared to 110 inhabitants per sq km country average). Administratively the region of Gemer consists of 3 districts, Rimavská Sobota, Revúca and Rožňava, comprises from about 200 municipalities and is divided between 2 units of local government: Self-governing region of Banská Bystrica and Self-governing region of Košice.

The region of Gemer suffers from economic underdevelopment, which has been worsened by the out-migration of the young educated people from the region. Due to the persistent high level of long-term unemployment, 3 districts of Gemer qualify as the least developed regions within a government development strategy. Long-term unemployment is seen as the utmost social challenge for the region; this factor also deepens the social and economic marginalisation of Roma communities and other disadvantaged groups in the region.

The development of social enterprises in Gemer, as part of an emerging sector of national economy, will facilitate the increase of employment and increase of employability of the target groups. The Gemer region also suffered from closing down of several key industries in the past. Now it relies on its natural resources, which remain to a large degree untapped. Social entrepreneurship is seen as the developing platform to address these issues and unlock the potential of the region.

Information on the context and the methods of the Action plan implemented will contribute to the regional development:

Gemer region consists of 3 neighbouring central Slovakia districts _ district Rimavská Sobota, Revúca a Rožňava, which were included in 2015 among the least developed regions in Slovakia. The least developed districts (NRO) are - according to the legislation¹ - regarded the districts in which during the calendar quarters during previous twelve following calendar quarters the unemployment was higher than 1,5-multiple of the average level of registered unemployment in SR and reached at least 8 %.

Rožňava district belongs to the Kosice municipality with its size 1 173,34 km² ranks as the 7th place in the republic. It has 62 286 inhabitants and the average population density is 53 inhabitants per km². The administrative seat of the district is the town Rožňava. In Rožňava

district there are two towns Rožňava and Dobšiná and 60 villages. High unemployment of the Roma minority belongs to the key problems which the district faces and has to solve. On the other side in Rožňava district, as well as in the other NRO, there exist the higher demand on the labour market of employers for the professions compared to the offer from the side of the potential employers. It concerns mainly the following professions: machinery – toolmaker, welding operator, machinist, CNC operator, locksmith, health service – doctor, services – tailor. The reason is that the secondary schools try to react slowly to the labour market needs and insufficient district “attractiveness” to attract more labour force from the other districts.

Rimavská Sobota district is situated in Banská Bystrica region, it was established in 1996 and covers the area of 1 471 km². It has the second biggest share of the communities and the local municipalities in Slovakia. In 2018 84 270 inhabitants in total were registered in this district, the average population density is 57 inhabitants per km². The main characteristics of the district are the mixed nationality inhabitants structure, mainly the Slovak and Hungarian nationalities.

The remarkable migration loss, mainly in young inhabitants with education category, contributes mainly to the increase of the inhabitants share with the low education level, which have difficulties to find opportunities on the labour market. Rimavská Sobota district is the district with the highest level of unemployment, around 16%. The remarkable sign of the unemployment in Rimavská Sobota region is the high share of the long-term unemployed: up to 71 % of job applicants are not working for more than 1 year and up 44 % longer than four years. It is much more than the average in Slovakia and much more than Banská Bystrica region average.

Gemer region is characterised by the long-term high level of registered unemployment, whose reasons is necessary to search for in unbalanced economy development, in decay of the key subjects of the regional economy, in the process of badly implemented privatisation and restructuring of the economy. Other reasons are connected with the termination of the steel industry and mining industry and during the last years also declination of the agricultural industry and food industry. High long-term unemployment can be also connected with the insufficient work habits, bad working discipline, intergenerational poverty and social exclusion. These are the indicators of the necessity of the complex approach and of introducing the special measures in the area of the active policy at the labour market. The basic suppositions for district development are job creation reflecting the specific features of the work force and adaptation of the structure and qualifications of the job applicants to the labour market needs.

Revúca district is situated on the south-east of Banská Bystrica region. On the north it borders Brezno district, on the west Rimavská Sobota district, on the east Rožňava district and on the south-east Hungary. Revúca district covers 730 km², number of inhabitants is 39 736. The population density is 54 inhabitants per 1 km². During last years the decrease of the number of inhabitants continues and recently it reaches approximately 200 000 people. The aging in the district also continues, which will get worse in the near future because of departure of the strong population years into retirement.

The complicated situation lies also in the lack of the capital resources, not suitable demographic structure, low qualification level of inhabitants and departure of the qualified force away from the region. Recently Gemer region reaches very low level of education and lower level of economic development compared to the other regions in Slovakia. Not only the natural

potential is not used sufficiently, but the region also lacks technical infrastructure. Concerning the technical and transport infrastructure its mainly presented in Lucenec, Southern Slovakia region. The distant parts of Gemer region are far from the economy centres, it means the service provision is more difficult. Quite often only few inhabitants live in certain parts of the region and that's why there is a low demand for services or products, which results in the loss of the interest of investors.

On the other side the public administration is not able to provide all services and satisfy all needs/requirements. The needs of these small communities are many times mutual.

Even though the high level of unemployment has been reduced after the crises in 2008 almost to half, Slovakia still reaches high values of 18% unemployment, 13% of registered unemployment, out of which 7,8% is long-term unemployment. Similarly, the number of subsidiaries receivers has been decreased to half, but part of these achievements is due to changes in legislation and methodology.

From long-term view Revuca district belongs to the districts with the highest level of unemployment, recently at the 3rd place in ranking with the highest level of the registered unemployment in the Slovak republic⁵.

Social exclusion threat and dependence on social benefits contribute to the loss of working habits during the long-term unemployment as well as the low education level of long-term unemployed (UoZ). The share of UoZ with low education is a continual proportion to the length of unemployment. The social economy can be a proper tool and platform for the communities and another potential stakeholders interested in SE, which is able to understand better and represent the needs of Gemer region locals, secure effective answers for the local problems of the high unemployment also in the marginalised Roma communities as well as to apply new models of labour integration into the practice.

The Action plan aims to increase the links and coordination of state and public administration subjects and also the other initiatives dealing with the development and application of SE aspects in SR and to increase professional capacities of the players, who are active in pursuing the development of E in Gemer region. It also aims to increase connection between the subjects dealing with SE development focusing at bigger harmonisation in improving coordination and needs reflection in given region and to increase the advocacy ability to communicate and address the regional development needs aimed at social agriculture.

Realisation of the Action plan particular steps can help to wider application of social economy concept into practice, the creation of new enterprise and to increase employability of region residents, including disabled or marginalised Roma communities.

The preparation of the Action plan for Gemer:

The preparation of the Action plan Gemer has been realised in frame of the project Social Entrepreneurship in Sparsely Populated Areas in the program Interreg Europe.

The following activities supported the preparation of the Action plan:

- Baseline study on Gemer region and another partner regions: Brandenburg, Lapland, Castilla e León
- Interregional cooperation and experience exchange among the project partners realised in Spain, Finland, Germany and Slovakia (2017–2019)
- Regional meetings of project partners and another stakeholders during round tables and business breakfast discussions in Gemer (2017–2019)
- Collection of good practice examples from Gemer region and other partner regions, dissemination activities.

On the basis of the interregional experience exchange meetings with the project partner regions there were identified 3 areas of social economy support in SPAs, whose development reflects the local needs and priorities as follows:

1. Creation of the common agenda for the social enterprise with interference on the social enterprise in the agriculture sector in Gemer region at state and public administration level.
2. Elaboration and realisation of the information campaign on social economy in Gemer.

Part III - Action 1

Creation of the common agenda for the social enterprise with interference on the social enterprise in the agriculture sector in Gemer at state and public administration level

Background: Interregional learnings and examples of good practices of social enterprises operating in the area of agriculture combining work integration of disadvantaged groups are seen as successful and viable models for development of new social enterprises for Gemer.

The baseline of this action was formulated during the regional meeting in Rovaniemi (October 2018) and bilateral visit Laponland (May 2019) based on the success of particular Finnish social enterprise, e.g. social enterprise in Laponland village or Cooperative Uurto, in Kemijärvi. The study visits to these social enterprises showed the approach to the enterprise, which foundations lies in the use of natural resources in given region, focused at making it more attractive and improving the inhabitant's life quality via creating the work opportunities.

The example of Cooperative Uurto also shows innovative approach to creating work opportunities for disabled people, which includes not only the flexible forms of employments but also the training opportunities for employers. The target group are long-term unemployed people in Kemijärvi, where economically important enterprises were founded. The economic activity of Cooperative Uurto includes the wider spectre of the activities, including providing the nutrition services, cleaning, building maintenance or forestry. These examples connect the services focused at community-oriented development, the enterprises work under the auspices of the municipalities. Functioning of Cooperative is the inspiration also in regard of activity diversity which it covers, which shows the universality of the social enterprise.

The other inspiration for this action is also the social enterprise in Spain, which we visited during the interregional workshop in Rovaniemi (October 2018) - Apadrina un olivo in the region of Oliete, which is aimed in its economic activities at the agricultural development and natural resources regeneration. The enterprise employs disabled people. In the context of the natural conditions Gemer and its climatic conditions is highly suitable for the enterprises in agriculture. These examples and lessons learnt during the visits, which are mainly focused at the use of the regional natural resources and innovative ways of employing disabled people and the key role of the municipalities in the social enterprise can be used in the Gemer region.

The concept of social agriculture, which is new in Slovakia, is very optimal for sparsely populated areas. Region Gemer has the ambition to become the pilot region where the systematic development of social agriculture concept would be launched. Agricultural sector is a suitable area of economic activity of new social enterprises considering the optimal conditions for multiplication of the verified examples, with regard to the low technological requirements and necessary qualification of employers in social agriculture.

In order to improve development of social entrepreneurship and social agriculture in Gemer region, the Action plan intends to create informal working groups under the regional municipality offices, which will widen the space for discussion and create conditions to map the social economy area and identify new entrepreneurship opportunities in Gemer region.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and family of SR is the member of the working group for social enterprise in Slovakia, whose initiator are the representatives from Gemer region.

This working group deals with the topics like starting of social agricultural development in Slovakia, searching for solutions for the lack of seasonal workers in agriculture via applying the social agriculture concept, etc. This working group showed also at the potential of the social enterprise in Gemer.

Characteristics of the priority

The action focuses at the creation of the common agenda for SE in Gemer region at the level of the state and public administration bodies. The Action strengthens cooperation of the social economy area at municipality level of Gemer region. In order to improve the development of the social enterprise and social agriculture the Action plans to create non-formal regional working group under the auspices of the municipalities, which provides the space for mapping of the social economy area and to identify new business opportunities in Gemer region.

This priority has the ambition to strengthen and create the optimal environment for social economy development at the central level in frame of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs activities, so to reflect the concept of the social economy in the process of preparation of activities conditions in their resorts and with special regard to the particular position of agricultural sector and the limits accompanying the implementation of these activities.

Considering interregional learning within the SOCENT SPAs project, the following actions for social entrepreneurship are proposed:

Sub-action 1a

Negotiation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of SR in order to create the optimal environment for social economy development and social enterprise in agricultural sector.

Timeline – Sub-action 1

Start of the activities: **11/2019**

Description of the tasks

1. initiation of the first meeting
 - a. mapping of conjunction status quo of SE and agricultural sector – existing opportunities and compatibility of frameworks with financial tool, e.g. use of the financial tools for integration SE with its activities in agricultural sector
 - b. identification of the recent barriers from SE in agricultural sector and the proposals for removing of these barriers
2. 2nd meeting (2/2020)
3. Consultations with **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with Labour Office** around de minimis in the area of social agriculture (do 12/2019)
 - a. processing of the conclusions in regulation
4. creation of regulation on the use of the tools in the area of SE/ agricultural (7/2020)
5. conclusions communication to **municipalities, Implementation agency, Labour Office of Social affairs and Family in the region** (from 8/2020).

Outputs: regulations referring to the opportunities and obstacles of integration enterprise

KPI: creation of the work places, inclusion of disadvantaged persons, access to financing and spending in the area of agricultural sector

Risks: lack of cooperation, lack of political will, external: parliamentary elections March2020.

Sub-action 1b

Municipalities Košický region + Banská Bystrica region - Strengthening of coordination in the area of SE at the levels of Kosice and Banská Bystrica municipalities

Timeline Subaction 1b

Description/timeline of the tasks:

1. Approaching **KE and BB municipalities** in order to start networking and coordination of cooperation in SE area. (10/2019)
2. Setting up the agenda in SE with focus at Gemer region (do 1/2020)
3. Meeting of KE and BB municipalities, (possibly with **Presov municipality**, in frame of the platform SK – 3 (the least developed regions in SK) (02/2020)
 - a. Preparing information on social agriculture (12/2019)
4. Mapping of SE in line with the communities and identification of the possible new entrepreneurial opportunities in Gemer region (from 12/2019)
5. Networking of the communities via non-formal group/network “Information and network in Gemer” (in cooperation of the Association of towns and villages, supporting agencies in region and another local stakeholder (from 11/2019)
6. Communication of the conclusions of the negotiation of the Ministries (subaction1) towards the villages, regional supporting agencies, regional stakeholders)
7. Work in terrain: continuation of support provision for villages with up to 1000 inhabitants in the area of project preparation in BB region

Outputs: complete strategy for SE development in Gemer region verified in practice

Reference to the policy instrument:

The Action 1 proposes to set up the coordinated procedure of the institutions at 2 levels of the state administration - central state administration and public administration (municipalities) focused at establishing the environment for creation of new opportunities for social enterprise resulting in the increase of employment in the social economy through the enforcement of the innovative approaches of labour integration in social enterprise. The Action 1 contributes to the increase in employment and employability of disadvantaged groups in line with the specific aims defined in OP Human resources.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Family implements the national project „Support of the integration enterprises “. Integration enterprises are provided with compensation contributions according to the Act on Employment Services. These contributions are eligible as wages for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, additional costs related to employing the persons who are handicapped. This national project is realised via OP Human resources 2014-2020, specific objective 3.1.1.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Family recently elaborated also the material “Amendment to OP HR” for 2014-2020 program period, reacting to the new circumstances

resulting from program implementation and aims to adopt the programme document to the recent needs; e.g. for social economy and mainly measures on long-term unemployed and requalification is allocated 114 500 000 EUR for less developed regions and to support adaptability to changing labour market for mainly employed people is allocated 51 589 737 EUR for less developed regions (Gemer included).

Creation of the common agenda for social enterprises and development can have the direct impact on both initiatives, which the Ministry has launched, since the information on the whole picture of the existing social enterprises is still missing and this could assist also the Regional information centres on social enterprise to provide the information to all stakeholders and this way to provide better support also in providing the compensations/contributions for vulnerable groups on one side and to create functional network of the involved stakeholders on the other side.

Also the “*Amendment to OP HR*” for 2014-2020 program period is the result of the existing situation in less developed regions, where Gemer region also belongs and via supporting requalification of the unemployed and motivating the existing social enterprises to employ them, creation of the functioning network will make all the process more effective. Especially in agricultural economy, which is still new in Slovakia.

The Strategic plan of the Operational Programme Human resources for the period 2018 – 2020 identified as a challenge - for the second implementation period - series of measures for long - term unemployed, members of marginalised groups, young people, pupils/students and pedagogical/professional staff as well as the measures focused at balancing regional differences, mainly through the social economy support. The social challenges in the second period of programme implementation require to use fully the social innovations potential, which opens the space for the social economy, which can be implemented also through agricultural sector as planned within the Action plan.

The subjects of the social economy are not part of either the public nor private sector. The development of the social economy has a potential of great importance from the point of view of employment support – it belongs to the sectors with the biggest potential for regional and local development, since via its subjects it creates the work opportunities for disadvantaged groups and strengthen social and economic cohesion, creates the social capital, supports the active citizenship, solidarity and economy with democratic values.

Costs:

The proposed tasks and activities have mostly organisational and coordination character that is why they do not require distinctive financial resources. The planned activities can be realised in frame of the existing (personal) capacities of the participating parties

For the realisation of the Action 1 is not necessary to allocate significant amount of the financial resources since the involved stakeholders can cover the expenses from their budgets.

Stakeholders/responsibilities:

1. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR is coordinator and administrator of the Action on the social economy and social enterprise.

The Ministry will be responsible for

- overall coordination of the activities defined in the Action plan,
- setting up the meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture of SR to map and identify recent situation and intersections in the area of agriculture and social economy
- communication to other involved stakeholders

The Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is partially implementor of the support of the social economy in frame of the national projects

- in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour creation of the regulation on using the tools in the area of social economy and agricultural sector.

Centre of Labour,

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of SR

- can help in Action activities from their subsidy schemes as well as the controlling body the Programme of the regional development 2014-2020.

Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is also the implementor of the social economy support through the national projects.

2. Municipalities – Košice region, Banska Bytrica region and Prešov region

- Developing and strengthening of coordination in the area of SE at the levels of Kosice and Banska Bystrica municipalities
- Mapping of SE in line with the communities and identification of the possible new entrepreneurial opportunities in Gemer region
- Networking of the communities via non-formal group/network “Information and network in Gemer” (in cooperation of the **Association of towns and villages, supporting agencies in region and another local stakeholders**).

Action 2

Elaboration and realisation of information campaign about social entrepreneurship, with focus on social agriculture, in Gemer

Background: Baseline studies and partner workshop identified the need build networks and improve infrastructures in relation to awareness raising, education, and access to supporting services for social enterprises.

Relation to the project:

Prevailing low awareness and information on social economy principles was as the common challenge for social economy development identified with particular partner regions in the baseline study. On the basis of these studies the partnerships pre-defined 4 main strategic areas for social economy development in SPAs, which were consequently elaborated during interregional workshop in Soria (April, 2018). These areas are: 1) Legislation frame, 2) Financial and fiscal support 3) Improvement of the infrastructure 4) Social innovations, networks and cooperation.

One of the basic priorities, which were defined in frame of the collaborative process during the above-mentioned workshop is spreading awareness on good practice examples in frame of Innovation and networking. Secondly the priority related to the existing low awareness on social economy in social enterprise sustainability, whereby social enterprise in SPAs face the specific challenges like depopulation and the lack of the qualified human resources. The

answer proposed by the partners and stakeholders was provision of the consultancies in entrepreneurship (areas of financial support).

The conclusions from the interregional training activities were discussed during regional meeting with stakeholders. While the challenges connected with the awareness and sustainability of social enterprise are mutual to a certain extent in all regions, in case of Slovakia and Gemer region the low information level is concretely related to the existing Law and social economy and social enterprise. Increasing the information and building the awareness is necessary condition for starting the process of establishing social enterprise in the whole spectre of the opportunities stipulated in the legislation. The need to increase the awareness, promotion and counselling for social enterprise or for stakeholders was confirmed during the regional stakeholders meeting from Gemer in Rimavska Sobota (December 2018).

Characteristics of the Action 2

In frame of this Action the information campaign on SE will be realised, focused at agricultural sector in Gemer region. The aim of the Action is to increase awareness on SE, via coordinated approach to provide the information on SE to potential subjects/stakeholders. This should be reached through reinforcing of networking of SE regional centres with the National business centre in the area of enterprise.

The main tools for the increase of awareness and reinforcing the capacities of SE will be used information packages and information meetings in Gemer. The individual counselling for SE via direct consultations with the experts will be provided with the help of the expert database for SE. The database will have the supporting function/role to information on SE provided through the regional centres of SE and to information materials and resources available in SE area will be provided in cooperation with the National business centre together with the municipalities in KE and BB

The regional support centres will play an active role in the information campaign and will cooperate with the regional development support centres.

Coherence with the policy tool:

Law awareness on the principles and tools of the social enterprise stays as one of the main obstacles of its broader application in practice. Understanding of the principles of the social economy of potential interest groups on one side (see the list of stakeholders) is one of the main suppositions to start creation of SE, which will lead to the increase of the employment of disabled groups and their employability in line with the specific policy tools OP Human resources.

The social enterprises in sparsely populated areas face the specific challenges which are depopulation, the lack of the qualified work force, the problems of marginalised groups. Coordinated process of raising awareness on SE in line with reinforcing of the opportunities of consultations with the experts from different sectors/areas has the potential to help/assist social enterprises to face these challenges, make integration of disabled groups more effective and contribute to achieving the positive social impact in region.

Sub-action 2a

Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and family, Implementation Agency – preparation of the information package on social enterprise in agricultural sector

Start: **10/2019**

Description of the tasks:

1. Defining of the package thematic areas (general and specialised for agricultural sector) (12/2019)
2. Coordination of the contributors/authors of the thematic areas (12/2019)
3. Package editing, publication (03/2020)
4. Dissemination of the information package through regional supporting agencies, regional stakeholders via SE networks (06/2020)
5. Review process (10 – 12/2020)
6. Continuation of the dissemination of the information package after revision 12/2020

Outputs: online version of the information package, print version, leaflet

KPI: number of the package users

The end: 12/2020

Sub-action 2b

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Implementation Agency - realisation of information meeting

Start: **6/ 2020**

Description of the tasks

1. identification of the audience and stakeholders (January 2020)
2. introducing SE package in agricultural area (March 2020)
3. realisation of the information meeting in Gemer (06/2020)
 - a. meetings will be realised in local towns (Rimavská Sobota, Revúca, Rožňava (06 -12/2020)
 - b. media involvement

Outputs: 3 realised meetings in region, number of participants, - 25 per meeting till 12/2020.

Stakeholders: farmers, municipalities, non-governmental organisations, individual applicants, business subjects

Sub-action 2c

Implementation Agency, regional development support agencies + creation and updating the closed database of consultants in social economy.

Start: **10/2019**

Description of the tasks

The aim of this action is to create the concept and process of operationalisation of the approach to the external expert database for SE. The database will have supplementary function on SE provision through the regional centres (info materials and available resource in SE area).

The stakeholders will receive the access based on regional centres or regional supporting agencies approval. In case when the practical problem of the applicant will not be possible to answer from the accessible information resources of RC.

1. baseline study: mapping of the existing competencies and tasks in information provision necessary for SE
2. realisation of the introductory event + presentation of the baseline study
3. experts' involvement (consultants/ pro bono)
4. creation of the process to involve the experts (open call, application, selection process) and selection criteria
5. creation of the closed database
6. operationalisation and processing of database 12/2020
7. promotion of the database in SPAs till 2021
8. media involvement

Outputs: the increase of awareness on SE, improvement of the access to the information and services,

KPI: number of provided hours, number of contacts, media outputs

Cost: through the applicants' fee, pro bono, in fame of the existing tasks of regional support centres.

Stakeholders: MPSVaR, Regional centres on social economy, Slovak Business Agency, regional support centres.

Sub-action 2d

Reinforcing the cooperation, creating the links and raising awareness on SE and its use in business practice in Gemer region.

Start: 10/2019

Description of the tasks

1. Reinforce the networking capacities of the regional centres on SE with the National business centre in the area of SE
2. Increase of awareness on SE via municipalities tools and networking of regional centres of SE capacities Green Foundation in order to provide the support of the non-profit initiatives in Gemer.
3. Support and the direct counselling with the use of the capacity of the national business centre and the Slovak Business Agency aimed at the increase of the competencies v pre-phase of start-up and in the area of middle management competencies in business plans creation. Green Foundation has this capacity in cooperation with "Slovenska sporiteľňa" (commercial bank).

4. The cooperation with the regional development regional agencies and the support centres of regional development aimed at the increase of competencies and awareness, concrete assistance in business plans creation.

Outputs: improvement of SE awareness, improvement of the access to information and services,

Impact: number of provided lessons, number of contacts with SE subjects.

Stakeholders: MPSVaR, RC SE, Slovak Business Agency, regional support agencies, non-profit organisations, municipalities, Social innovators and the business sector.

Stakeholders/responsibilities:

Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and family, Implementation Agency

- preparation of the information package on social enterprise in agricultural sector

Implementation Agency, regional development support agencies

- creation and updating the closed database of consultants in social economy

Local action groups:

Community centres in Gemer region

Support centres for regional development:

Coordination centre for Roznava development, n.o

Centre for support of regional development, n.o

Regional development agencies

Agency for Gemer development

Regional development Agency, Association for Gemer development

Regional social economy centre

Development Agency BBSK

Regional tourist Agency

Main responsibilities:

- Assistance in creation of information package on social enterprise in agricultural sectors
- Providing the pool of experts in given area
- Dissemination of the information package
- Support of the cooperation among the subjects of market and social economy, which create the job opportunities for socially disadvantaged groups.

Green Foundation/Academy of social entrepreneurship, Slovak Business Agency

- 2 important organisations working in the area of social enterprise, providing also online support in social innovations will be important stakeholders to assist in advising on experts in SE, as well as in creating the database of experts and also in the process of information campaign through their channels.

Reference to the policy instrument:

The low awareness on social enterprise tools and principles is being the main obstacle in pursuing of its broader implementation in practice. The social economy principles understanding of the potential target group on one side (see the list of stakeholders) is the basic supposition for starting creation of the social enterprise, which will lead to the increase in employment of the disadvantaged groups. In line with the specific aims of OP Human resources.

The social enterprise in sparsely populated areas faces the specific challenges which are – depopulation, lack of the qualified labour force, problems with the marginalised communities. The coordinated communication and building up the awareness on social enterprise, in line with the opportunity to consult it with the experts from the different sectors has a potential to assist social enterprise to react to the existing challenged, strengthen their sustainability, creation and increase in number or employers in social enterprise, to make more effective the integration of the disadvantaged groups and to contribute to accomplishing positive social impact in the region.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR published a Call in frame of OP Human resources 2014-2020, the concrete priority 3.1.1., for submission of the applications for non-refundable financial resources under the title: “Support of regional and local employability development via social economy subjects”, where eligible regions for this Call is also the less developed region Gemer.

Indicative amount of the financial resources for the Call is 30 000 000 EUR.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR is also currently working on the preparation of the national project “*Investment assistance for social enterprise – un-refundable component*”, which will be realise in frame of OP HR. The aim of the project is to create and launch the financial system of investment support of social enterprise and contribute to improving to the employability of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. National project will create the conditions on providing non-refundable component. The concept of the project activities will be support of social economy subjects focused at strengthening stable employability via support of enterprise in line with labour market needs and in less developed regions.

The allocation for this call is 44 175 690 EUR.

The national project *Institute of the social economy* realised in OP HR in 2014 -2020 fulfils the task of communicating and providing the information to potential stakeholders in social economy and creates the necessary synergy for focus at Gemer region. It is the pilot whose aim is to create a verify functionality of the system of support of social economy development in SR, Law No. 112/2018 of Vol. on social economy and social enterprise. In line with the project SOCENT SPAs and the Action plan for Gemer the experts on agriculture will be involved via this project.

The launch of the information campaign plays a key role on impacting call and initiatives of the Ministry in rising the number of projects and mainly registration of the social enterprise under the new legislation on social economy, which put into effect last year. Even recently the Ministry registered higher number of social enterprise in Gemer municipalities – 47 registered social enterprise out of which 5 in Gemer region. After information campaign we expect the higher number.

Implementation of the measures like e.g. *The Institute of the social economy*, which activities are interlinked with Action plan for Gemer results in creating social enterprise in given region. One of the main tasks of the social enterprise in this region is to provide the employment opportunities also for vulnerable groups in the region to prevent from region depopulation.

The learnings from SOCENT SPAs will be used in the new but also existing projects of the Ministry, since it will - provide the database of the existing social enterprise in given region; database of the experts in SE and their different initiatives in this area; the negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture followed by creating new measures concerning the social economy in agriculture will support the development of this area in social economy (new in Slovakia); effective information campaign will help in networking of stakeholders in SE, as well as in providing the information on the new developments not only in social economy as such, but also in social economy in agriculture area and lastly the Action plan activities will interlink activities of numerous institutions/stakeholders/municipalities, which is an important baseline in the effective support and realisation of SE in Slovakia.

Costs: The proposed activities have mainly coordination and organisation character and they do not require remarkable amount of financing. Coordination and networking will be realised in frame of the existing capacity of the state and public bodies.

The costs for the information materials – in frame of the existing capacity + contracting external experts/vendors.

Costs related to the information meetings realisation.

The resources of the financing: through the applicants' fees, pro bono, in the frame of the existing regional development support agencies.

The list of stakeholders:

Applicants	State administration	Public administration	Supporting entities
Farmers	<p>The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of SR is coordinator and administrator of the Action on the social economy and social enterprise.</p> <p>The Office of Labour, social affairs and Family is partially implementor of the support of the social economy in frame of the national projects</p>	Municipalities	Local action groups
Municipalities		Towns and villages/communities	Support centres for regional development:
Non-governmental organisations		Association of towns and communities in SR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEROGEMA, n.o • Coordination centre for Roznava development, n.o
Individual applicants		Via these institutions the support of the cooperation among market and social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for support of regional development, n.o

<p>Business subjects</p>	<p>Centre of Labour, The Ministry of agriculture and rural development of SR can help from their subsidy schemes as well as the controlling body of the Programme of the regional development 2014-2020 the social agriculture as one of the social economy tools.</p> <p>Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is also the implementor of the social economy support through the national projects.</p>	<p>economy will be implemented at the local level. They also have the competency to allocated the financial resources at regional/local level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional development agencies • Agency for Gerner development • Regional development Agency, Association for Gerner development • Regional social economy centre • Development Agency BBSK • Regional tourist Agency <p>Support of the cooperation among the subjects of market and social economy, which create the job opportunities for socially disadvantaged groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centres • Green Foundation/Academy of social entrepreneurship • Slovak Business Agency
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LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak republic, involved in the project: Social Entrepreneurship in Sparsely Populated Areas, **SOCENT SPAs – PG102359** approved under the program of cooperation with **Interreg Europe** in period of **01/07/2017 – 30/06/2021**. The Ministry has undertaken to implement the project activities and expressed support for the fulfillment of project objectives.

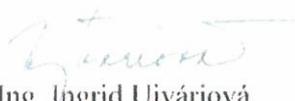
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak republic in cooperation with **EPIC Slovakia**, actively supports the project activities, participates in bilateral project meetings, workshops and expert groups.

This cooperation, together with the group of experts, resulted in the common development of an Action plan for the sparsely populated area of Gemer in order to promote social entrepreneurship in agricultural sector, which is a new initiative in Slovakia.

Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak republic and **EPIC Slovakia**, agree and declare their commitment to carry out the actions contained in the project Action plan in the context of the Interreg Europe project **SOCENT SPAs**.


Eva Havelková
director

Central European Coordinator
of EPIC Slovakia


Ing. Ingrid Ujváriová
director

Social economy department
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs
and Family of the Slovak republic