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DYNAMIKA ROZVOJA SOCIÁLNEHO PODNIKANIA A SPOLOČENSKY ZODPOVEDNÉHO PODNIKANIA V POĽNOHOSPODÁRSKOM SEKTORE SLOVENSKA

DYNAMICS OF DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF SLOVAKIA

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the dynamics of the development of social entrepreneurship and socially responsible business in Slovakia. An analysis of the dynamics of the development of social entrepreneurship was carried out based on data from the catalogues of the creation of social enterprises in Slovakia in the period 2010-2021. The materials of the state statistics bodies of Slovakia on the functioning of socially oriented business in Slovakia were studied and systematized. Research and analysis of empirical data of the Centre for the Study of Public Opinion and the Centre for Research of Civil Society of Slovakia in the field of social entrepreneurship was conducted. Conclusions were made regarding promising forms of interaction between non-profit organizations, business, and the state for the activation of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia.

Key words: social entrepreneurship, socially responsible business, long-term unemployment rate, Slovakia, agricultural sector

Abstrakt

Článok sa zaoberá štúdiom dynamiky rozvoja sociálneho podnikania a spoločensky zodpovedného podnikania na Slovensku. Analýza dynamiky rozvoja sociálneho podnikania bola vykonaná na základe údajov o vzniku sociálnych podnikov na Slovensku v rokoch 2010-2021. Boli preštudované a systematizované materiály dostupné na Štatistickom úrade SR o fungovaní sociálne orientovaného podnikania na Slovensku. Uskutočnil sa výskum a analýza empirických údajov Centra pre výskum verejnej mienky a Centra pre výskum občianskej spoločnosti Slovenska v oblasti sociálneho podnikania. Boli urobené závery o perspektívnych formách interakcie medzi neziskovými organizáciami, podnikateľskou sférou a štátom pre aktiváciu sociálneho podnikania na Slovensku.

Kľúčové slová: sociálne podnikanie, spoločensky zodpovedné podnikanie, miera dlhodobej nezamestnanosti, Slovensko, sektor poľnohospodárstva

Introduction

The dynamism and vitality of entrepreneurship research is reflected in the flow of new ideas (Haugh 2005). Current economic globalization brings with it the need for social as well as environmental responsibility of countries and economic entities, especially businesses (Čierna, Sujová 2020). A phenomenon of social entrepreneurship has emerged in recent decades. This phenomenon is understood as the process by which so-called social entrepreneurs create social value through innovative use and resource combinations (Pache, Chowdhury 2012). Social economy emerged in early 20th century socio-economic thinking and approaches in Europe (Strečanský, Stoláriková 2012). The concept of social entrepreneurship has become well established in business (Peredo, McLean 2006). Social entrepreneurship has become a fashionable construct in recent years. Such companies are successful all over the world in various fields (healthcare, education, finance, culture, etc.) (Huybrechts, Nicholls 2012).

Theoretical background

Several authors, e.g., Schin, Cristache, Matis (2023) define social entrepreneurship as a key tool of economic as well as social policy, as it represents an opportunity to solve social problems (Haugh 2005) and at the same time the support for sustainable development. According to Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum & Shulman (2009), social entrepreneurship should include unexplored activities and processes, define and exploit opportunities to increase social wealth. National authorities and public administration bodies are tasked with establishing the legislative framework, setting processes, and assisting social entrepreneurs in their activities. Also provide financial support. Finally, to help cover the need for human capital. The success of social entrepreneurship is conditioned by environmental factors, such as access to financial resources for projects that address social needs, support from the public administration, and access to social capital (Schin, Cristache, Matis 2023) In general, the social enterprise is an independent organisation with social and economic objectives that aims to fulfil a social purpose as well as achieving financial sustainability through trading (Haugh 2005). Social entrepreneurship has also been helpful in creating new markets and new initiatives such as fair trade and microfinance (Huybrechts, Nicholls 2012).

In the search for the highest quality of products and services, companies must now also follow the principles of sustainable development. Because of growing demands on businesses sometimes make it a good idea to consider cooperation with other entities as well. In collaboration, organizations are motivated to improve social and environmental practices and collaborate with stakeholders (Ruževičius, Serafinas 2007). Public administration institutions can use their partner networks with social entrepreneurs to support the given region (Schin, Cristache, Matis 2023).

Socially oriented innovation enterprises are an important part of national innovation systems, and act as a contact point between science, production, and society (Ridley-Duff 2008). Social entrepreneurship has a role to play in creating value for society as it focuses on solving local environmental and social problems (Schin, Cristache, Matis 2023). The goal of social entrepreneurship is to solve social problems and issues of the regions. It is the ability to recognize opportunities, to create social value, revitalization of the neglected urban and rural areas through various innovative strategies (Pache, Chowdhury 2012).

In principle, there are different conceptions and interpretations the concept of social entrepreneur and business. Peredo and McLean (2006) claim that social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional construct formed by the intersection of several disciplines. People who run social enterprises are, according to Parkinson & Howorth (2008) referred to as social entrepreneurs because they are expected to combine entrepreneurial activity with a commitment to enriching the community. The defining characteristics of social entrepreneurs are thus that they recognize opportunities to generate social value (Martin, Osberg, 2007) by finding solutions to neglected social problems (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, Shulman 2009), they find innovative ways to mobilize the resources required to design these solutions, and they build the infrastructure (for example, an organization or a network) to sustain the creation of social value (Pache, Chowdhury 2012). Social entrepreneurs are driven by social goals. That is, the desire to benefit society in some way (Peredo, McLean 2006).

The typology allows us to identify similarities and differences among the broad range of individuals and organizations engaged in social entrepreneurship. As a result, we provide illustrative examples of these three types of social entrepreneurs:

- Social Bricoleurs,
- Social Constructionists,
- Social Engineers (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, Shulman 2009).

Social Bricoleurs perform important functions, especially in identifying social needs and solving them. Although the solutions they came up with are sometimes on a limited scale, they help in solving serious local social problems. Social constructionists because they build, launch, and operate ventures which tackle those social needs that are inadequately addressed by existing institutions, businesses, NGOs, and government agencies. The need for these organizations arises because for-profit businesses often do not have the incentive or the basis to address social problems. Social engineers often introduce dramatic changes in the social sphere. They act as prime movers of innovation and change, unleashing "surges of creative destruction" to destroy replace outdated systems, structures, and processes with newer and more suitable ones (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, Shulman 2009).

In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which were connected to centrally planned economies for many years, there was no room for a social economy. Shortly after 1989, post-communist countries – including Slovakia – saw a strong growth of the third sector, including foundations and self-help organizations, which represents a potentially significant source of the social economy (Strečanský, Stoláriková 2012).

The Slovak model of social entrepreneurship involves combining the functions of labour integration of persons who are in a disadvantageous situation and looking for work, together with the provision of assistance in their search on the open labour market with the function of the intermediate labour market by organizing temporary employment and increasing the potential of these persons, which is further extended to open labour market.

The creation of jobs in municipal social enterprises in agricultural sector was an important motive for the implementation of the model. In fact, the Slovak model is based on the specifics of understanding and studying the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia, which combines entrepreneurship in the social sphere, social business, and business with corporate social responsibility. Social agriculture represents an innovative approach. It represents both multifunctional agricultures, but also integrated employment at the local level, i.e., for small and medium-sized farmers. The task of social agriculture is therefore not only agricultural production, but also to offer and create services, new jobs, and educational activities and to carry out various types of therapies for a wide range of people with specific needs. This represents an additional source of income for farmers as well as building the capacity of the workforce from disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups.

The development and analysis of the implementation of individual models of social entrepreneurship are given in the scientific studios of Slovak researchers. Thus, Marková (2014) from the Faculty of Economics of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (UMB) investigates the problems of socially responsible business. UMB professor Korimová raises many issues of Slovak social entrepreneurship in his works; among them, the problems of regulatory and legal support, organizational issues, the role of social entrepreneurship in

solving employment problems in Slovakia, etc. (Korimová, Marková 2014), (Korimová, Hudecová 2016). Pčolinská (2014a) from the Faculty of Economics of Košice Technical University takes care of issues of corporate social responsibility, development of social economy under modern Slovak conditions, new social initiatives in Slovak business (Pčolinská 2014b). Lubelcová (2012) from the Department of Sociology of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Comenius University in Bratislava studies innovations in the Slovak social economy, opportunities for the development of social entrepreneurship in the spheres of public policy and public activity.

Svidroňová (2014) from the Faculty of Economics of the Matej Bel University (Banská Bystrica) investigates the impact of the third sector on the Slovak social economy. Analysis of the results of such scientific research makes it possible to characterize the models and forms of functioning of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia.

In Slovakia, an important motive for the introduction and legislative regulation of social entrepreneurship is the creation of jobs in rural areas in municipal social enterprises. This was reflected in the legalization of social entrepreneurship in the country. Its basis was provided by the Law of April 1, 2008, on Amendments to Law No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services, as well as to some other acts, in particular to Law No. 599/2003 Coll. about assistance in cases of material need; the amendments entered into force on September 1, 2008. Another amendment to Law No. 5/2004 Coll. entered into force on March 1, 2009, concerns the creation of social enterprises in the transition period and the provision of favourable legislative conditions for legal entities and individuals who wish to obtain the status of a social enterprise. From January 1, 2012, to May 1, 2013, there was support for the employment of a low-income applicant for a social enterprise according to § 50b. It was repealed by Law 96/2013 Coll. From December 15, 2015, § 50a "Subject of the social economy" appeared. It was introduced by Law 336/2015 Coll. It was repealed by Law 112/2018 Coll. from May 1, 2018.

A social enterprise is defined in the Law as an instrument of labour integration (determining the percentage of persons who are in a disadvantageous situation and looking for work, along with providing assistance in finding it on the open labour market) with the function of the intermediate labour market (temporary employment and increasing the potential of the specified persons are distributed to the open labour market) (Zákon č. 112/2018 Z.z.).

Methodology

The complexity of researching the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship is primarily due to the lack of a clear definition of it in the scientific community. The analysis of the formation of such a definition makes it possible to trace the existence of several important ideas: about commercial enterprises working to achieve social goals; about innovative activity aimed at achieving a significant social effect, a kind of "post-industrial philanthropy" based on the activity of people who find themselves in a difficult life situation; about a unique opportunity to accelerate the processes of social transformations with a view to solving certain social problems.

The following methods of scientific research were used to outline the tasks: dialectical cognition - for setting research problems, studying and detailing the research object; abstraction and morphological analysis - for clarification and ordering of the categorical-conceptual apparatus according to the chosen direction of research; abstract-logical approach - for theoretical generalization of research results and formation of intermediate and final conclusions based on them; economic and statistical method - to identify the main trends in the development of social entrepreneurship and socially responsible business in Slovakia; the method of scientific generalization and systematization - to determine promising forms of interaction between non-profit organizations, business and the state regarding the activation of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia; graphic-analytical method - to provide visibility of the material and schematic representation of research results.

Research is based on empirical data of the Centre for the Study of Public Opinion and the Centre for Research of Civil Society of Slovakia in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Results

Currently, a total of 530 social enterprises are registered in all regions of Slovakia according to the data of the register of social enterprises of Slovakia (Register sociálnych podnikov 2023). The first one received the status of a registered social enterprise on 17.09.2018, therefore, Statistics of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia has been conducted, in fact, since 2018. At the end of 2018, there were only 7 social enterprises in Slovakia. At the end of 2019 – 47, at the end of 2020 – 238. In fig. 1 shows the dynamics of the average number of social enterprises in individual regions and years.

From fig. 1 we can see that in 2020 the largest growth of social enterprises was in the Košice region, and in 2021 and 2022 - in Žilina. The number of social enterprises in the Trenčín region is actively growing. Out of the current total number registered social enterprises in Slovakia, 24 of them (4.5%) deal with activities from various branches of agriculture.

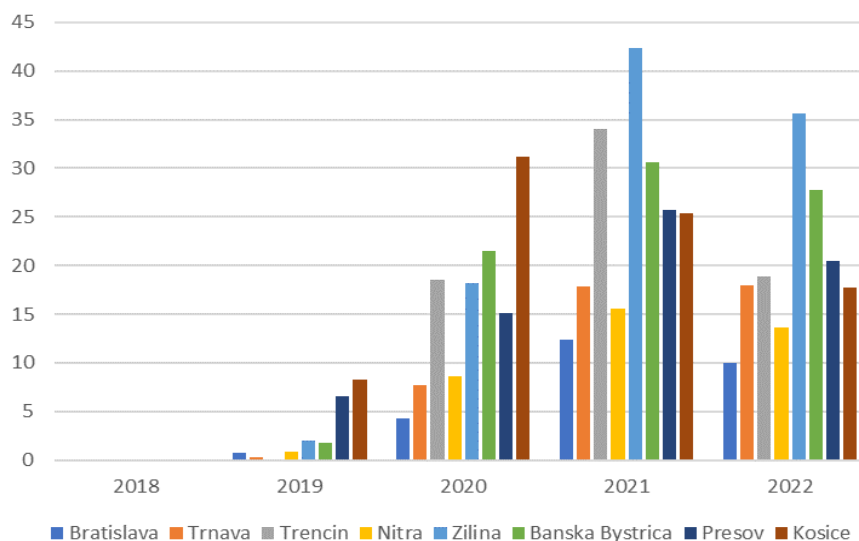


Figure 1 - Growth of registered social enterprises by year and region of Slovakia for the period 2018-2022

Source: own processing

About a quarter of social enterprises are located where they are most needed – in the least developed areas, where unemployment is significantly higher than the Slovak average. One aspect of regional differences is the influence of some areas, in our case the least developed areas, on the economy. Even though only 13% of Slovakia's population lives in the original twelve least developed areas (NRO12) as of the end of 2021, they have up to 25% of the unemployed, 40% of welfare recipients or 35% of the unemployed (Fig. 2)

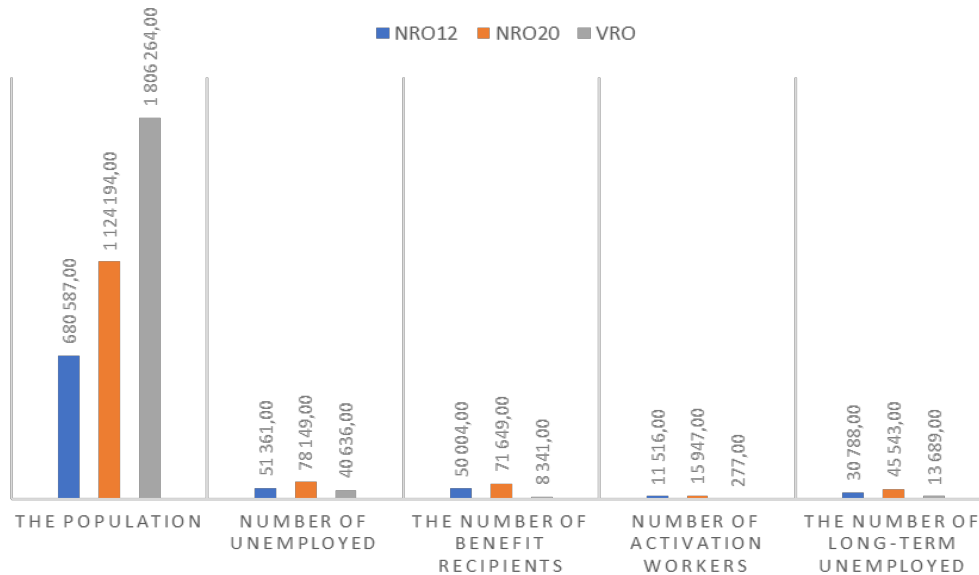


Figure 2 - The share of individual regions in Slovakia in 2021

Source: own processing

Notes:

NRO12: 12 original least developed districts (burgundy colour on the map at Figure 3)

NRO20: 20 least developed districts after replenishment in 2017 and 2018 (burgundy and dark grey on the map at Figure 3)

VRO: districts of western Slovakia and Považie (light grey on the map at Figure 3)

Create by authors based on (Najmenej rozvinuté okresy SR 2023)

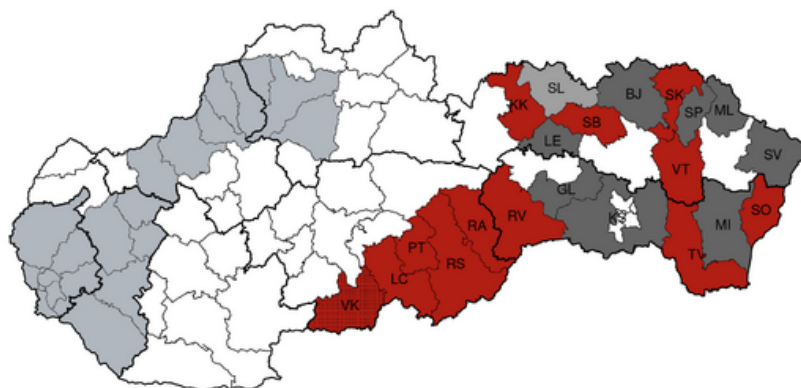


Figure 3 - A map of least developed districts

Source: <https://www.iz.sk/sk/projekty/inkluzivny-rast/najmenej-rozvinute-okresy>

Regarding the structure of socially oriented business in Slovakia, according to the data of the register, out of 530 social enterprises registered as of the end of 2022, 511 are integrative. According to the Law, an integration enterprise is a socially beneficial enterprise, the positive social impact of which is the promotion of employment through the employment of vulnerable or vulnerable persons.

In the east of Slovakia (Figure 3), there are many villages, whose inhabitants leave their homes in search of decently paid work. The use of the main Slovak employment model can help to ensure adequate employment in low-prospect mountain areas. The leading direction of adaptation should be the creation of new jobs and the involvement of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of the region's rural population in professional activities. The mechanism can be the establishment of enterprises providing services in the fields of tourism and recreation, production of souvenir products, products of mountain cattle breeding, etc. Social enterprises of this profile can play the role of an intermediate, temporary tool for providing work, but it both socially and economically stabilizes unpromising territories. In general, among the directions and ways of adapting the Slovak experience, the following directions should be highlighted: employment (due to the creation of new communal enterprises, worker cooperatives, in some of them it is advisable to provide easier working conditions), sustainable development of unpromising villages and territories (enterprises providing social services, agricultural and livestock cooperatives, environmental protection associations), integration of internal immigrants (youth clubs, cultural communities, enterprises providing social assistance), provision of personal social services, primarily to representatives of vulnerable segments of the population, ensuring social cohesion of local communities.

Discussion

Prospects for further research into the social entrepreneurship area of Slovakia are important for both Slovakia and Ukraine. In the conditions of a full-scale war on the territory of Ukraine, social entrepreneurship itself is an important factor in restoring the economic and social situation. To promote the development of social entrepreneurship and socially responsible business in Slovakia, the state is faced with the task of developing scientific concepts of sustainable development of regions, concepts of innovative breakthroughs in the development of socially oriented small and medium-sized businesses, new scientifically based investment methods and programs, in particular regional programs for investing in human capital, systems of preferences for socially responsible business, which would operate in the regions taking into account the regional socio-economic and demographic specifics. The need for state support of international initiatives, promotion of the introduction of international social standards, joining of Ukrainian business structures to international initiatives and national programs of social orientation is urgent.

The support of social entrepreneurship can involve a wide variety of preferences, and tax benefits occupy an important place in this context, but the lack of legal status of social enterprises stands as an obstacle to their establishment. Currently, we can state not only the practical absence of preferential taxation of social entrepreneurship, but also the impossibility of most social enterprises to take advantage of the social benefits provided for by the current

tax legislation. Therefore, it is necessary to provide legal support for the preferential taxation of social entrepreneurship, which may provide for special taxation regimes depending on the types of activities, partial exemption from paying tax on income received from the sale (supply) of goods and the performance of social works and services.

The main directions and forms of state and non-state support for social entrepreneurship are financial, informational, organizational, legal, and other support. The issue of successful combination of state (loans, subsidies, transfer of property) and non-state (grants, scholarships, sponsorship, donations, investments in authorized capital, loans from non-state organizations) forms of financial support by enterprises is important. State support involves the development of targeted complex programs, promotion of fund activities, stimulation of preferential lending by banks, implementation of social orders, etc. The state relies on expert, consulting, methodical support for social entrepreneurship. Today, forms of non-state support are more actively developing in Ukraine institutional support, various projects for the promotion of social entrepreneurship, and the activities of support centres in the regions. State and non-state support should be sufficient to ensure the necessary prerequisites for the sustainable development of the social entrepreneurship sector especially at agricultural sector.

The agricultural context of social agriculture is therefore typical not only by emphasizing production functions of agriculture, but also specific social relations and relations to the environment, which provides the potential to respond to the social needs of rural communities. Socially agriculture therefore represents a certain form of diversification of agricultural activities which offers the opportunity to define a new strategy for small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises, thereby may increase their chances of survival.

An important issue in the context of the prospective development of a social enterprise in Slovakia is the issue of long-term business sustainability of social enterprises, which is influenced by many factors. Entrepreneurial skills. Access to business and consulting support is especially important for businesses that aim to support disadvantaged populations. Here, it is important to develop forms of interaction between non-profit organizations, business, and the state regarding the activation of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia. In particular, the Slovak Business Agency (SBA) offers targeted programs within the framework of the national projects NPC Bratislava II and NPC in the regions. SBA offers several programs through the National Entrepreneurship Centres (NPC). This can be, for example, the use of the following services: professional group events, seminars, conferences, provision of short-term and long-term individual consultations, stay in a classic or virtual business incubator, participation in professional and internship events abroad, etc. (Sociálne podnikanie 2016). In this way, the level of survival and development and sustainability of social enterprises can be increased.

Conclusions

The functioning of social entrepreneurship in Slovakia is based on a general business model in which profit consists in increasing social good. Its main model is the employment model with the creation of jobs mainly in rural areas in agricultural sector due to the functioning of municipal social enterprises as a tool for labour integration with the function of an

intermediate labour market. Other models include models of providing auxiliary services in the labour market and social services. Typical institutional forms of social entrepreneurship are cooperatives, mutual societies, certain types of associations and foundations, workshops and enterprises providing small social services.

The positive consequences of the adaptation of Slovak models of the functioning of social entrepreneurship should be new opportunities for "embedding" the activities of social enterprises in the social needs of local communities, creating new incentives for the development of unpromising villages and territories, using effective Slovak forms of social economy and transforming them into promising means of labour participation in social unprotected segments of the population in new labour markets that will permanently develop, solving (with the assistance of international organizations) the problems of the shortage of social projects, increasing the corporate responsibility of business entities.

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