

Demand and supply of social economy – two development regions of Romania, Simona Maria Stănescu, Sorin Cace, Filip Alexandrescu (editors), Vlad Achimescu, Ionuț Ardeleanu, Daniel Arpinte, Florin Botonogu, Cosmin Briciu, Gabriela Dima, Simona Ilie, Flavius Mihalache, Gabriela Neagu, Ramona Pavel, Ana Maria Preoteasa, Mihnea Preotesi, Iulian Stănescu, Gabriel Stănilă, Ștefan Corneliu Ștefănescu, Cristina Tomescu, Laura Tufă, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria, 2013, 398 pages

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Sursa: Revista Inovația Socială nr.1/2015 (ianuarie-iunie)

URL stabil: <http://www.inovatiасociala.ro/articol/141/>

Publicată de: Institutul de Cercetare a Calității Vieții

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Demand and supply of social economy – two development regions of Romania, Simona Maria Stănescu, Sorin Cace, Filip Alexandrescu (editors), Vlad Achimescu, Ionuț Ardeleanu, Daniel Arpinte, Florin Botonogu, Cosmin Briciu, Gabriela Dima, Simona Ilie, Flavius Mihalache, Gabriela Neagu, Ramona Pavel, Ana Maria Preoteasa, Mihnea Preotesi, Iulian Stănescu, Gabriel Stănilă, Ștefan Corneliu Ștefănescu, Cristina Tomescu, Laura Tufă, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria, 2013, 398 pages

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The book presents the results of a comprehensive research on Social Economy in Romania, which was conducted by Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy. The research was part of the “Integrat – Resources for the socially excluded women and Roma groups” project, which was co-financed by the European Social Fund (EFS) through the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resource Development 2007-2013. The main goal of the project was to stimulate social inclusion by the means of social economy, especially for women and Roma groups in the Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East development regions. The purpose of the research was to assess if and how the Social Economy sector is capable to contribute to the inclusion of vulnerable people on the labor market.

The book is structured in two parts: I – *Demand of social economy*, which contains eight chapters, and II – *Supply of social economy services in two development regions of Romania*, which contains nine chapters. The third part is dedicated to conclusions. The same as the book, the research was also split in two, the first part being a survey-based research, while the second part a quantitative and qualitative research.

We will now briefly present the chapters from the first part of the book, starting with the first chapter - *Social entrepreneurship and vulnerable groups* (Ramona Pavel), which begins by presenting the concept of social entrepreneurship, linking it with other concepts like corporate social responsibility and social enterprise, the chapter then proceeds to present some forms of exclusion from the labor market, after which it discusses the inclusion of vulnerable groups on the labor market, presenting both concepts and statistics on this subject, mainly comparing Romania with the other states in the European Union. The chapter concludes with presenting the role that social entrepreneurship could play in facilitating the integration of the vulnerable groups on the labor market.

Chapter two – *Labor market segmentation and the social economy* (Iulian Stănescu) begins by presenting a theoretical briefing on the functioning of the labor market, underlining the main lines of thought, and continues with pointing some of the concepts concerning employment. The author then presents a characterization of the labor market in Romania, employee profiles, with characterizations of the main employee profiles found in Romania. Another part of the chapter is allocated to the working poor, who are characterized, like the previews employee profiles, using national statistics and data collected from the two development regions the research was conducted in.

Chapter three – *Labor market integration of vulnerable groups* (Ana-Maria Preoteasa) presents the employment situation in the two development regions, compared to that of the whole country, then brings into discussion the active behaviors of those seeking jobs, either because they have none, or because they want better ones. The chapter also discusses on the subject of lifelong learning in the two development regions. The chapter ends with brief discussions on some vulnerable population categories.

The forth chapter – *The social economy – meeting social needs* (Simona Ilie), firstly presents the characteristics of the two development regions in terms of living standards, continuing with a general description of the social economy entities in Romania and the two regions the research focused on, mainly focusing on their offer firstly, then describing the demand for their services. The chapter then discusses on the support for social services, both in forms of money or other physical resources, and in forms of voluntary work.

Chapter five – *Involvement in social economy. Gender approaches and characteristics* (Simona Maria Stănescu, Vlad Achimescu, Sorin Căce) begins with presenting the progress that has been made in improving women's situation, both in terms of EU and national legislation and institutions created for this specific purpose. The second part of this chapter presents the general profile of women in relation to the social economy. The analyzed comes both from the research conducted in the two development regions, and from a national sample. In the next part, the authors discuss the profile of women actively involved in social economy activities, compared with men in the same situation.

The sixth chapter – *The Roma: Inclusion through social economy* (Cristina Tomescu, Florin Botonogu) discusses the Roma population in relation to social economy, the ways social economy could support the inclusion of Roma population and the challenges that have to be overcome in order to achieve Roma population inclusion. The chapter also discusses on the politics addressed to the social inclusion of Roma and a couple of social economy projects that succeeded to some extent to achieve a degree of Roma inclusion.

Chapter seven – *Social economy and disabled people in Romania* (Gabriela Dima) focuses on the demand of social economy for disabled persons. The first part of this chapter underlines the international progress that has been made towards achieving social inclusion for disabled persons, narrowing then the description to the Romanian context. Furthermore, the chapter presents the profile of the disabled person who's unemployed, profile drawn from the existing data provided by diverse organizations and institutions. The chapter concludes with describing how social economy could support the integration of disabled people, what are the needs of those seeking jobs and also what is the point of view of the employers, regarding this issue.

The last chapter of the first part of the book – *The socially deprived categories: needed support in the perception of the population* (Ștefan Corneliu Ștefănescu), analyzes the Romanian's population opinion on the necessity to supporting the vulnerable categories of population. The chapter begins with a methodological part, which describes the sample and the method used for data collection. In the main body of the chapter, the author presents the data analyzes he conducted and concludes that "the statistical analyzes revealed that the surveyed population doesn't have a discriminating attitude towards Roma ethnics; rather it has a perceptible level of "distrust" (p.209).

The second part of this book begins with a chapter on the *Regulations regarding the social economy entities in Romania* (Gabriel Stănilă), where the author discusses the laws specific to the different types of social economy entities.

Chapter two of the second part of this book – *Perception of the institutional and legislative framework by the representatives of the social economy entities* (Simona Maria Stănescu, Sorin Căce) is focused towards analyzing the opinions of those actively involved in social economy activities with regards to the institutional framework and how it supports the social economy in Romania. The authors analyzed the respondent's commentaries on the laws and regulations affecting social economy activities. Furthermore, the authors present some proposals for improving these laws and regulations. In the next part of the chapter, the authors discuss upon the collaboration with institutions and with other social economy entities.

The third chapter – *Profile of economic activities in non-governmental organizations* (Daniel Arpinte, Laura Tufă) discusses upon the data collected, on the aspect of the economic activities of the NGOs in the two development regions. The second part of the chapter focuses on analyzing the human resources in NGOs, means of evaluating, promoting and motivating employees and professional lifelong learning provided to employees by the NGOs. The fourth part of the chapter analyzes the financing sources of the NGOs in the two regions, while the last part of the chapter looks at the support that the public authorities are providing for the non-governmental sector.

Chapter four – *The mutual aid organizations of the employees: Between tradition and modernity, between crisis and prosperity* (Gabriela Neagu) analyzes the mutual aid organizations of the employees as social economy organizations, in the two development regions from their point of view, as well as from the population's point of view, and the relation between the mutual aid organizations and the vulnerable groups.

Chapter five – *The mutual aid organizations of the pensioners – traditional social economy entities in the Romanian society* (Ionuț Ardeleanu) analyzes the mutual aid organizations of the pensioners as social economy entities, in the two development regions, starting with a brief overview of the institutional framework regarding this subject, and presenting their evolution in the two regions.

The sixth chapter – *The social function of Romanian cooperatives in the development regions of Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East* (Filip Alexandrescu) discusses the Cooperatives (COOPs) as social economy organizations. The European legislation regarding social economy seems to come closer to the way COOPs are organized than any other form of organization. The chapter provides a short history of social economy

and the COOPs, going next to the social protection function of the studied COOPs in the two development regions.

Chapter seven – *Cooperatives in Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East development regions* (Flavius Mihalache) continues the previous chapter by presenting the profile of the cooperatives in the two development regions and the economic activities they are undertaking. The chapter also discusses about new ways of developing the COOPs sector in Romania and, in the same time, the social economy sector.

Chapter eight of the second part – *The social economy supply for disabled persons* (Gabriela Dima) does a short overview of the associations and foundations, as well as the authorized protected units, which are specifically intended for disabled persons, and presents shortly the legislation regarding the authorized protected units in Romania. The chapter evolves into discussing about the economic structure of these organizations, budget structures, then coming back to the vulnerable persons by discussing the services provided to them by the social economy entities.

The chapter nine of this book – *Typology of the entities supplying social economy services* (Cosmin Briciu, Mihnea Preotesei) begins by providing an overview upon the social economy, definitions, characteristics and functions, then analyzing the NGOs in the two studied regions by type and in relation to social economy.

The third part of the book is focus on conclusions and contains two chapters: *Towards and integrated strategy to promote employment through the social economy* (Sorin Cace, Simona Maria Stănescu), and *Towards and integrated strategy of supporting the social economy organizations* (Filip Alexandrescu, Sorin Cace, Simona Maria Stănescu),

Concluding this review, we can say that the book does a good job painting a complex picture of the social economy sector in the two regions studied and even in Romania. It nicely analyzes all types of NGOs, their roles and their opportunities in the social economy sector, also providing useful advice for all those interested in the matter.

Interview with Simona Maria Stănescu, PhD, co-editor of the book, senior researcher, Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy

What is the short story of this book?

This volume was written within the framework of research project Integrat – resources for the socially excluded women and Roma groups, co-financed from the European Social Fund in 2010-2013 through the Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013, priority axis 6 „Promotion of social inclusion”, major area of intervention 6.1 „Development of social economy”. The general objective of the project was the active promotion of social inclusion on the labour market by the activation of social economy, of women and Roma groups, by the development of partnerships and by stimulating the involvement in the community life of the socially excluded people from Bucharest-Ilfov development region and South-East development region.

The project was implemented by a consortium coordinated by the Association for Socio-economic Development and Promotion Catalactica, as main applicant, in collaboration with Research Institute for Quality of Life, Romanian Academy, and Bolt International Consulting L. Katsikaris & Co. Limited Partnership.

What research methodology have you used?

The general purpose of the research was to carry out an assessment of social economy sector in terms of its capacity to contribute to the inclusion of vulnerable individuals on the labour market.

Two distinct methodological approaches were used for the data collection. One was based on a survey designed to assess the demand for social economy's benefits among population. The second approach, focussed on the supply of social economy's services, included two elements: a quantitative (questionnaire-based) component and a qualitative (interview-based) component.

Which are the main conclusions of the study?

The first part of the book is focus on opportunities for employment in social economy entities, while the second discusses the supply of social economy services

Despite recent legislative modifications, tangible inequalities and actions of discrimination persist on the labour market from the two surveyed development regions. In terms of labour market discrimination, the Roma people are confronted with the highest difficulties, compared to women and disabled people.

Social economy is to be further stimulated and supported because its essential qualities are the social and economic investment in the well-being of communities and of vulnerable individuals. The fact that social economy activities bring economic and social benefits has been demonstrated in the past and at present, both within the Romanian context, and across Europe. Social economy has the possibility to provide real and sustainable opportunities for social development, particularly under conditions of economic instability.

What is the (novel) contribution of this book?

The research results presented in this book allow us to understand the specific context of two development regions of Romania: Bucharest-Ilfov and South-East, in terms of both demand for social economy benefits and supply of social economy services.

On a long term perspective, we consider that studies included in this book will support the development and adoption of specific local measures, with which to enhance employment in the two development regions, particularly in terms of social economy entities and of the professional insertion of the disadvantaged groups. Research outcomes can provide a basis for the development of action plans initiated by the social economy representatives, as well as by local, regional or national stakeholders to promote the social economy towards

Employment in social economy field as innovatory employment alternatives in the context of the current crisis will support Romania's answers to achieve national goals towards accomplishment of Europe 2020 Strategy, which Romania assumed as a member state of the European Union.

How will you continue the research?

Further secondary analysis with other sets of data collected for other development regions of Romania are envisaged.

Thank you for your collaboration!