

D4SEcosystem

Best Practice Catalogue

Interreg
Danube Region



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Danube4SEcosystem



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Introduction

As part of the Danube4SEcosystem project, an online catalogue of best practice examples has been created, showcasing successful models of cooperation between local government units and social enterprises in the Danube region. This catalogue is the result of joint efforts by 10 project partners from 9 countries involved in the Danube4SEcosystem project. From local solutions to state-level initiatives, each example showcases different ways to achieve cooperation between social enterprises and local self-government units.

The aim of this catalogue is to present the best examples of cooperation in the region, featuring at least three successful models of collaboration between local government units and social enterprises, with potential for application in other countries of the Danube basin. Through this online catalog of examples of best practices, we invite you to explore inspiring approaches and ideas that can be applied in your community with the aim of developing social entrepreneurship in the Danube region.

The Danube4SEcosystem project – Enhancing the development of Social Economy by engaging Local Public Authorities in the Social Enterprises supporting Ecosystem for a more inclusive Labor Market in the Danube Region is funded under the First Call of the Danube Region Programme 2021-2027.

The main goal of the project is to develop inspirational policies for social enterprises through the inclusion of local levels of government in the support ecosystem for social enterprises, aiming to enhance inclusive employment in the Danube region and support the sustainable operation of social enterprises. Specific objectives include the development of public policies at the local level, fostering resilience and managing innovative knowledge and skills, as well as enhancing transnational cooperation and coordination of the social economy within the ecosystem.

The project started on January 1, 2024, and will last until June 30, 2026.

We thank all project partners for their contributions and cooperation: the South Muntenia Regional Development Agency from Romania, the Central Danube Development Agency Nonprofit Ltd. from Hungary, the Slovak Business Agency, the Public Institution for the Development of the Međimurje County REDEA from Croatia, the Regional Development Agency of South Bohemia from the Czech Republic, the Centre for Social Innovation from Austria, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, Advanced Technology Systems from Romania, and the University of Maribor from Slovenia.

The catalogue was prepared by the Development Agency of the Republic of Srpska from the Republic of Srpska/Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Chances for new destinies

Region/Country: Romania
Local Community: Bucharest
Population: 217.367
Number of Social Enterprise: 14



Social Enterprise: SC Nazarcea Grup SRL
Year of Establishment: 2011
Activities: Car wash, bakery, textile laundry, tailoring, ceramics, printing

An example of good practice in this field is Nazarcea Grup. Nazarcea Grup was developed by the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection Sector 1, Bucharest, in 2011, through several projects with non-refundable funding, aimed at increasing the socio-professional inclusion of people with disabilities seeking employment. It is the largest authorized protected unit in the country, featuring 6 fields of activity organized in workshops where people with disabilities can work: car wash, bakery, textile laundry, tailoring, ceramics, and printing. The organization's mission is to develop and promote alternative services in the socio-professional insertion and work inclusion of people with disabilities. The strategy supports the principle that employing disabled individuals represents an added value for society and the community to which they belong. Since its opening, Nazarcea Grup has employed a total of 151 people with physical/psychic/mental/sensory/somatic disabilities.

Currently, Nazarcea Grup employs 58 people with disabilities, classified as follows: Serious - 3 people; Accented - 49 people; Average - 6 people. The activity is fully supported by public funds from the local budget of Sector 1, and the results of the work of people with disabilities are partially utilized in the social sector and partially in the free market. Nazarcea Grup can cover more than half of its operational costs. Through the social-professional integration of adults with special needs, the aim is to ensure a dignified existence, diverse relationships within social groups in the community, equal rights, respect for personal self-determination, and maximizing all available resources by following the evolution and the degree of adaptation-integration of people with special needs into society.

Resources Needed:

- Funding: Non-refundable funding and local public funds.
- Facilities: Equipment for workshops.
- Human Resources: Management, support staff and specialists.
- Support Programs: Social integration and community engagement initiatives.
- Compliance: Legal and operational resources.

Transfer Potential:

- To transfer this best practice of Nazarcea Grup to other countries, several factors and potential adaptations need to be considered. Here's a breakdown of aspects that could be transferred:
- Funding: Can be replicated with local adaptations.
- Operational model: Multi-field workshops adaptable to local needs.
- Human resources & social programs: Transferable with appropriate training and community engagement.
- Implementation: Requires research, partnerships, pilot programs, and capacity building.

www.nazarceagrup.ro



The social business that turns disability into ability

Region/Country: Romania
Local Community: Comuna Miroslava, Iași
Population: 28.534
Number of Social Enterprise: 3



Social Enterprise: UtilDeco
Year of Establishment: 2008
Activities: Physical and electronic archiving and document storage, textile work equipment tailoring and customization, typography, bookbinding and interior decoration, occupational safety and health services, specialty coffee roasting and packaging

Operating under the one-stop-shop principle, a disadvantaged person or those from the placement center can access a service pack for a bunch of issues: services social, psychological, educational, professional orientation, qualification, employment and workplace assistance. A comprehensive, transformative intervention model turns disability into ability. In the UtilDeco workshops, approximately 60% of employees are disabled and from other disadvantaged categories. As of 2020, UtilDeco employed 29 people, 18 of whom were from vulnerable groups. UtilDeco has proven that the insertion of social enterprises can create solutions in difficult times. Since its appearance in 2008, amid the economic crisis, it has created more than 150 jobs, more than half of which were for people with disabilities and other vulnerable categories and qualified hundreds of young people in protected workshops in big cities such as Iași, Constanța and Tg. Mures.

In 2020, 3 young people with disabilities received counselling and professional guidance services, testing vocational training, mediation and placement on the labour market, employment on the labour market (2 persons) and within your own company social insertion (one person), job coaching services between 3 and 6 months. Insurance of job coaching services for 17 people with disabilities and 5 from vulnerable groups, employed within their own social enterprise insert UtilDeco. The great work made by UtilDeco was possible due to a good collaboration with local public authorities:

County Employment Agency and The Direction of Social Assistance and Child Protection offered support in all actions taken by the social enterprise.

UtilDeco is a social insertion enterprise established by the Foundation “Alături de Voi” Romania (ADV) in 2008, as an employment solution for young people with disabilities, those from the child protection system from families with problems. In 2016, UtilDeco received the EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year award and was recognized by the European Commission as a good practice model. In 2020, it was featured in the best practice models catalogue by the European Network of Social Insertion Enterprises.

Resources Needed:

Financial: Initial capital for setup, ongoing budget for operations, and additional funding from grants and donations.

Human Resources: Skilled personnel in social services, vocational training, management team, and volunteers.

Potential for Transfer:

Implementation: Establish similar comprehensive service centres in other countries, adapting the model to local needs.

Benefits: Streamlines access to support services and promotes employment for disadvantaged groups.

Local Partnerships: Foster collaborations with local authorities and social service organizations to enhance support and sustainability.

www.utildeco.ro



Human dignity must never be compromised

Region/Country: Romania
Local Community: Bucharest
Population: 217.367
Number of Social Enterprise: 14



Social Enterprise: Humanitarian Organization CONCORDIA
Year of Establishment: 2010
Activities: Bakery Production

The CONCORDIA Humanitarian Organization is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization active at the international level. Its mission is to support families in difficulty and the social (re)integration (family, school, professional) of children, young people, and adults, towards an autonomous and responsible life. Initially, the organization offered services in placement and shelter centers for street children; later, it developed life projects for self-employment, vocational education, and professional advice, culminating in the establishment of social enterprises intended to directly support the integration into the labor market of the organization's young beneficiaries.

The CONCORDIA bakery started in a small workshop in the village of Ariceștii Rahtivani, Prahova county, where Andreas Resch, an Austrian volunteer, organized a baking workshop for children of all ages at the residential centre. The target group was represented by children from the Directorate for Child Protection. The CONCORDIA bakery, in collaboration with the General Directorate for Child Protection, aims to support the socio-professional integration of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Young baker graduates who fail to integrate into the labour market thus have the opportunity to work in a competitive bakery where they can gain experience and be a springboard to the free market. Training young people in the manufacturing steps – from shaping dough to baking bread – demonstrated that there was an inherent need for a place where they had the chance to prepare for the work they wanted to do, discover their potential and develop - self professionally and socially. The CONCORDIA bakery was born at the crossroads between the realization of an idea and the satisfaction of a growing need.

Until 2021, the Bakery has employed over 40 of the graduates of the baker's course organized within the CONCORDIA Vocational School. The bakery does not hire young people from outside CONCORDIA. This project brings together, for the first time, in a common structure, public and private social service providers in a joint effort to increase capacity and rapidly develop social services of the type day care centres in Romania, to grow the impact on eradicating poverty among children. The CONCORDIA Bakery model demonstrates a successful integration of vocational training and social enterprise to support disadvantaged youth. By providing hands-on baking training and employment opportunities, the bakery helps young people from vulnerable backgrounds gain experience and improve their employability. This model effectively combines vocational education with real-world application, creating a pathway for socio-professional integration.

The CONCORDIA Bakery represents one of the recognized models of social business success in Romania, and this is reflected by the awards obtained: ERSTE Foundation Award for Social Integration in 2011, Nest România – Competition of Social Enterprises in 2013.

Resources Needed:

Bakery equipment: Essential tools and machinery (ovens, mixers, dough shapers).

Workshop space: Location for baking operations in Ariceștii Rahtivani.

Human resources: Baking trainers - skilled professionals; graduates: young people trained at the CONCORDIA Vocational School; social service providers: public and private sector professionals.

Financial resources: Funding for operations, financial or resource-based support from awards, cooperation between social service providers and network resources supporting the bakery.

Training and development resources: Vocational training programs: courses and workshops for bakers, community and social impact resources.

Community and social impact resources: Support for disadvantaged youth: integration resources for young people.

Day care centers and social services: Structures for child protection and poverty eradication.

Potential for Transfer:

Local partnerships: Engage local social services and educational institutions for training and support.

Practical training: Develop sector-specific hands-on training programs.

Supportive work environment: Establish employment opportunities within social enterprises for valuable work experience and career growth.

<https://www.brutariaconcordia.ro/>



Ateliere Fara Frontiere – For people, education and environment!

Region/Country: Romania
Local Community: Bucharest
Population: 217.367
Number of Social Enterprise: 14



Social Enterprise: Ateliere Fara Frontiere Association (AFF)
Year of Establishment: 2008
Activities: Social, professional and civic integration of vulnerable people into the labour market

AFF has established strong partnerships with local, regional, and national communities, including the National Administration of Penitentiaries, several General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC) departments, the General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Municipality of Bucharest (DGASMB) and educational institutions. Since 2008, the association has actively collaborated to support vulnerable groups in overcoming social challenges and accessing services like housing, social assistance, legal aid, education, and health).

To fulfil its mission, AFF created four circular economy workshops: **educlick**, **remesh**, **logiEtic**, and **bio&co farm**. These workshops provide personalized socio-professional support, psychotherapy, and skills training for individuals facing significant employment barrier.

A good practice model of the AFF is the **“Let’s click for Romania”** program from the **educlick** workshop, which addressed educational gap by equipping rural and urban areas with digital infrastructure: Kindergartens, schools, NGOs, and public institutions received refurbished computers collected in line with environmental regulations and ISO 14 001 Certification. The materials are prepared for re-use within the **educlick** socio-professional insertion workshop, established by AFF for vulnerable people who can work, but who need a transition period to integrate in the labour market. While professionally they work in waste management activities and refurbishment of used IT equipment, the association helps individuals to achieve social stabilization, to gain work skills and training. The processes in the workshop are carried out under the careful supervision of the team leaders, so that the refurbished computers comply with the requirements and have a long service life. The workshop activity is based on a social model and an economic model.

The social model - The workshop implements a social model of socio-professional achievements based on three steps: Recruitment - Entry - Exit

- Activities from which the people working in the workshop can acquire skills and competencies useful on the labour market; these include: recycling and reconditioning of Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE); computer equipment maintenance; logistics and order preparation; transport
- Individualized socio-professional support: on average, in the educlick workshop, an employee works for 1 year and benefits from individualized support for solving their problems, for learning or re-adapting professional skills and defining a professional project, building a life project, participating in professional training programs and finding a job on the labour market.

The economic model:

- Free collection of used IT&C equipment from various organizations
- Testing of collected materials
- WEEE recycling according to national and European regulations
- Refurbishment and reuse of IT equipment – those that meet the quality criteria enter a global revalorization process.

In 2023, the **educlick** workshop collected 274 tons of WEEE, reusing 78 tons and recycling 154 tons. Approximately 4000 computers were refurbished through the **“Let’s click for Romania”** program, benefiting 340 public educational, social and cultural institutions, associations and foundations from all across Romania.

The **“Let’s click for Romania”** program is a good practice model that targets two of the objectives of sustainable development - quality education and responsible production and consumption, and which offers opportunities for digital education to rural schools.

Resources Needed:

Initial funding: Capital to set up the social enterprise and cover start-up costs, including equipment of the workshop spaces, initial salaries and operational expenses.

Current funding for workshop activities: Non-reimbursable financing (obtained from ongoing projects), funds from sponsorships, economic activities and public projects and subsidies.

Workshops and facilities: educlick is the workshop that collects, dismantles, and prepares waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) for recycling, while also refurbishing computers for donation to disadvantaged schools, especially in rural areas of Romania. Since 2008, Ateliere Fara Frontiere has supported 1,800 people in difficulty through socio-professional reintegration programs, providing employment contracts, rights, and skill development. From 2008 until now, 240 people have been employed in the workshops and more than 50% have successfully transitioned to stable jobs after completing the program.

Human resources:

- Administrative and managerial support; qualified staff for counselling and mediation on the labour market, including for people with disabilities; specialists or trainers for the development of skills in various fields; project specialists
- Specialists in social integration programs: reintegration into the labour market, socio-professional accompaniment, post-program monitoring up to 6 months of individual counselling for the employee and his new employer, support for employers by facilitating the integration of new employees through advice, training and mentoring for technical and HR staff.
- Specialists in employment services (information, counselling and mediation on the labour market in Romania), accredited by the Bucharest Municipal Employment Agency aimed at initial and periodic assessment of professional and transversal skills, psychological assessment (certified testing), testing professional aspirations, career counselling and jobs in the Association’s workshops.

Community involvement: Initiatives to promote the integration of vulnerable people into the labour market and to improve relations with the community and raise awareness about the benefits of employing people with disabilities, initiatives to promote the principles of sustainable development, social equity, equal opportunities, fairer distribution of resources, collective and individual responsibility, social and circular economy, initiatives to support refugees and volunteering.

Potential for Transfer:

The model proposed by AFF can also be implemented in other countries by applying the strategies below:

Funding: The concept of using grants, public funds and sponsorships can be replicated.

Market research: Conducting research to understand the need for the establishment of service centres/workshops that offer a wide range of social, psychological, educational, vocational guidance, etc and which can support social services, circular, solidary and sustainable economy.

Establishing an operational model:

- **Defining a social model of socio-professional accompaniment with clear flows of human, material and financial capital, which includes:**
 - Recruitment activities: orientation towards partner institutions or associations; own initiative.
 - Input activities: problem identification; assessment of needs, knowledge and skills; defining a professional project and learning objectives; selection of beneficiaries by partners.
 - Output activities: well-defined professional project; employment contract or professional training, accompaniment 3-6 months after the end of the course of insertion in the workshop.
 - Auxiliary activities: participation in international solidarity construction sites as a volunteer.
- **Defining an economic model with clear workflows regarding the activity carried out in the workshop.**

Considerations: The needs and demand of the workshop’s target market must be assessed to determine which areas of activity are most relevant. In addition, the availability of equipment and materials may vary from country to country.

Establishing partnerships and pilot programs:

The model can be adapted to meet local/regional/national identification needs and to integrate existing services by establishing collaborative relationships with local/regional/national actors: the local/regional/national community, public institutions, local/regional public authorities/ national, partnerships with organizations from other countries, joining networks that promote social interests and practices.

Promotion and training of local/regional/national communities:

Implementation of programs and public actions to inform and raise awareness of communities.

<https://atelierefarafrontiere.ro>
<https://www.facebook.com/atelierefarafrontiere>
<https://www.instagram.com/atelierefarafrontiere>
<https://www.educlick.ro>
<https://remesh.ro>
<https://bio-co.ro>
<https://atelierefarafrontiere.ro/logietic>



Source of attached pictures: <https://atelierefarafrontiere.ro/>

Ability Hub – The place where skills and professional performance meet and collaborate without barriers

Region/Country: Romania
Local Community: Bucharest
Population: 217.367
Number of Social Enterprise: 14



Social Enterprise: Ability Hub Association
Year of Establishment: 2013
Activities: Ability Hub Association develops a system to identify, evaluate, counsel, and integrate people with disabilities to enhance their access to employment

The Ability Hub Association is a group of entities that brings together Protected Units, companies, associations, and other organizations operating in the Social Economy sector in Romania. The association is the only organization authorized to mediate the services and products of all Protected Units in Romania, becoming an honorary member and coordinator of the non-governmental segment of PASRO (Business Association for Social Entrepreneurship in Romania) since 2021. Founded in 2013, its primary goal is to support the professional integration of people with disabilities, thereby contributing to the reduction of their discrimination in the labor market. Since its establishment, the group has grown and developed into a key partner in promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Romanian labor market through various initiatives and collaborations. Ability Hub aims to become a national leader in evaluating, training, and guiding disadvantaged individuals in the labor market. It collaborates with various partners to achieve its goals of social and professional inclusion for people with disabilities, including organizations within the Social Economy sector and companies that support the employment of disadvantaged groups. One of its most notable partners is RoboHub, a Center of Excellence recognized for promoting new technologies. Together, they have launched innovative training programs in artificial intelligence (AI) for people with disabilities. This partnership aims to transform how this community interacts with new technologies and increase their chances of labor market integration in the context of accelerated AI development, by preparing the target group to become trainers in this field, thus opening “doors” to high-skilled opportunities in this emerging sector.

RoboHub and Ability Hub will offer courses with a curriculum tailored to the specific needs of the participants, covering a wide range of topics from the fundamentals of AI to the practical application of emerging technologies. These courses are designed to be accessible and engaging for individuals with various types of disabilities, providing new professional perspectives and contributing to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8, which promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. These partnerships are essential for the development and implementation of labor market integration initiatives for people with disabilities.

Resources Needed:

Initial funding: Capital for establishing the social enterprise and covering startup costs, including facility setup, initial salaries and operational expenses.

Current funding: Non-repayable funding (already obtained from various projects), funds from sponsorships, economic activities and public projects, grants.

Human resources: Administrative and managerial support for daily operations within the association, qualified personnel for counseling and mediation in the labor market, specialists or trainers for skills development in various fields and project specialists.

Social integration programs: Re-entry into the labor market, socio-professional accompaniment, post-program monitoring with up to 6 months of individual counseling for the employee and their new employer, support for employers by facilitating the integration of new employees through counseling, training, and mentoring for technical and HR staff, employment services (information, counseling, and mediation in the Romanian labor market), accredited by the Bucharest Municipal Employment Agency, including Initial and periodic assessment of professional and transversal skills, psychological assessment (certified testing), testing of professional aspirations and career guidance counseling.

Community involvement: Initiatives to promote the integration of vulnerable individuals into the labour market, improve community relations, and raise awareness about the benefits of employing people with disabilities; Initiatives to promote principles of sustainable development, social equity, equal opportunities, fairer resource distribution, collective and individual responsibility, social and circular economy; Initiatives to support vulnerable individuals; Volunteering.

Potential for Transfer:

To replicate this model in other Danube region countries, the first step is to adapt it to local legislation and policies regarding the rights of people with disabilities, based on a thorough understanding of laws. The second step involves creating a network of partnerships with local entities focused on integrating vulnerable individuals, such as protected units, companies, associations, and organizations in the Social Economy sector. The third step is to develop tailored training programs and curricula that address local market needs and are accessible to individuals with various disabilities.

Additionally, implementing an evaluation and support system is crucial for identifying, assessing, counseling, and integrating people with disabilities, providing long-term support for their labour market readiness. Finally, promoting equal opportunities and combating discrimination should remain central to this model, supported by awareness campaigns and policies that encourage social inclusion.

<https://abilityhub.ro>
<https://www.facebook.com/abilityhub.ro/>
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/abilityhub-romania/?originalSubdomain=ro>



Source of attached pictures: <https://abilityhub.ro>

Atelierul de Panza - A social enterprise for people and the environment

Region/Country: Romania
Local Community: Bucharest
Population: 217.367
Number of Social Enterprise: 14



Social Enterprise: Atelierul de Panza
Year of Establishment: 2009
Activities: Production of cotton bags and other products from reusable textile materials and recycling

Atelierul de Panza is one of the social economy initiatives of the Viitor Plus association. This enterprise was born from the desire to contribute to finding nature-friendly solutions to replace the classic single-use plastic bag, a major polluting agent, and has 2 missions. Their environmental mission is to reduce plastic consumption, and in order to fulfil it, Atelierul de Panza offers consumers an eco-alternative to plastic bags - the canvas bag, moreover, the company aims to become a promoter of circular economy, recycling textile scraps from larger businesses and recycled cardboard, using them as raw material in the production process. The social business encourages the local economy, purchasing only from local suppliers and producing sustainably (without generating waste), while offering jobs to disadvantaged people, especially people with disabilities.

Atelierul de Panza also has a social mission to employ people with disabilities, who face a 90% unemployment rate. The company provides a safe workplace that boosts their confidence and self-esteem while supporting their reintegration into the workforce after accidents or serious health issues. As a protected unit, over 50% of its employees are people with disabilities, allowing companies to purchase its products using half of the disability tax fund.

The flexibility and adaptability of the models offered, the short execution times, the excellent communication with customers and the high-quality standards work together to have helped Atelierul de Panza to establish profitable partnerships, to reduce, even if minimally, the pollution impact of plastic bags and create new jobs for people with disabilities or other social problems.

An important partnership that should be mentioned is the one with the IKEA store chain, in which the sewing services at two of its locations in Bucharest are provided by Atelierul de Panza.

Another service offered by Atelierul de Panza that is important to mention is the painting workshop on cotton bags where, in addition to the guidance in the painting, all the necessary supplies are made available to the participants: consumables, water-based paints or markers for colouring textiles, so that the bags you will paint will become your permanent accessory. This service helps Atelierul de Panza to enter into partnerships with various companies that want to offer their employees recreational or teambuilding activities, and even educational institutions to give children a "different" kind of afternoon.

Resources Needed:

Initial funding: Capital for establishing the social enterprise and covering startup costs.

Current funding: Non-repayable funding (already obtained from various projects), funds from sponsorships, economic activities and public projects and grants.

Human resources: Administrative and managerial support, specialists or trainers, project specialists, marketing, digital marketing, green marketing and sales specialists, IT specialists.

Social integration programs: Re-entry into the labour market, socio-professional accompaniment, support for employers by facilitating the integration of new employees through counselling, training, and mentoring for technical and HR staff, employment services, psychological assessment, testing of professional aspirations and career guidance counselling.

Community involvement: Initiatives to promote the integration of vulnerable individuals into the labour market, improve community relations, and raise awareness about the benefits of employing people with disabilities and other social problems; Initiatives to promote the principles of sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, environmental education, environmental infrastructure, social equity, equal opportunities, fairer distribution of resources, collective and individual responsibility, social and circular economy; Initiatives to support vulnerable individuals; Volunteering.

Potential for Transfer:

In order to replicate this model in other countries in the Danube region, first of all the needs and opportunities in the local market for sustainable products and reusable textiles must be identified, then a market assessment must be carried out to understand the existing supply and to identify the points through which the products can differentiate themselves from those of the competitors (competitor assessment). A second step should be to identify and collaborate with non-profit organizations that support people from vulnerable categories, including people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups, and recruit and train staff from vulnerable groups through specific training programs to provide them with the necessary skills for textiles production. The third step should be to identify suppliers of sustainable (eco-friendly) materials, such as organic cotton or other ecological textiles, and even suppliers of scrap textiles and recycled cardboard for reuse. Obtaining funding through grants, donations or partnerships with national and even international organizations that support social entrepreneurship is also an important step in replicating this best practice model in other countries. Implementing a business model that prioritizes social impact and sustainability, not just profit, is also essential, and social goals must be clearly integrated into the business strategy. Establishing competitive prices that cover costs and are attractive to consumers is also an important step in this regard.

Local branding and awareness campaigns should be undertaken to promote the social and environmental benefits of the products to attract sustainability-minded consumers and to adapt the brand to resonate with local culture and values, while maintaining consistency with the global values of Atelierul de Panza. Creation of guides and manuals documenting the production, training and management process, facilitating the replication of the model in other locations and the development of international partnerships to facilitate the exchange of best practices and the expansion of the model. Implementing an evaluation system to monitor and report on the impact of the business on local communities and the environment is just as important as collecting feedback from employees, customers and partners to support continuous improvement. Ensuring compliance with labour regulations, environmental protection laws, adapting to the local cultural norms are also important in order to successfully replicate such a model.

<https://atelieruldepanza.ro/ateliere-de-pictura-pe-sacose>

<https://www.facebook.com/atelieruldepanza>

https://www.instagram.com/atelierul_de_panza

Value with perception

Region/Country: Hungary
Local Community: Komárom, Komárom-Esztergom County
Population: 20.000



Social Enterprise: Kemence Traditional Gastro-Cultural and Community Development Association
Year of Establishment: 2016
Activities: Agricultural activity, social farming

The association is based in Szőny, a (formerly independent) part of Komárom, so its impact is primarily felt in the local community.

The operation of the Kemence integrated day-care and supported housing facility for people with disabilities, with associated service package, sheltered employment and public employment status.

Kemence Traditional Gastro-Cultural and Community Development Association was founded in 2016. Since its establishment, the Association has reached a wider and wider section of society, from preschoolers to the elderly. The Association currently offers gastronomic, cultural and community-building gatherings, as well as art therapy and sustainable farming activities, while focusing on creating opportunities for all.

The social farm run by the Association functions as a “complementary” segment of the national economy, focusing on social inclusion, equal opportunities and environmental sustainability. These social economic activities require long-term cooperation between actors based on common interests and create employment and income opportunities for “non-competitive” groups. Kemence presents a good practice which on one hand helps the integration of specific target group members (people with disabilities, homeless individuals, addicts, etc.) into the labour market. On the other hand, it cooperates continuously as a social enterprise with local governments, large companies, informal communities and so on. Within the agricultural activities in production and processing, the organization employs disadvantaged groups, people with reduced working capacity, people in the child protection system, correctional-educational institutions’ pupils, convicted persons and refugees. Therefore, Kemence is an integrated day institution and housing for disadvantaged groups with its associated service package. In addition to the above, the association has launched a social (subsidised) housing programme to alleviate the housing challenges of disadvantaged people working in the organisation. In the course of its social activities, Kemence Association is also actively involved in a number of statutory core tasks of the municipality, which are partly or fully financed by the municipality. Such tasks include, for example: a model public employment programme, food rescue, sustainable operation of the association, individual support for the rehabilitation employment of workers with reduced working capacity, etc. The NGO actively participates (through the provision of its own awareness-raising and cultural programmes) in municipal and county events, as a key partner of the municipality.

Resources Needed:

Funding:

- tenders, grants, donations
- partnership agreements
- adult learning (mainly soft skill training)
- social responsibility advice
- organisational mentoring
- advising on sustainability
- accreditation certification other services offered to companies, organizations, institutions and individuals

Human resources:

- 2 main leaders (President and Chief Financial Officer)
- at least 4 administrative and proposal/project management staff
- 20 to 25 staff from disadvantaged backgrounds (varying job titles, staffing levels and assignments, depending on skills)
- unlimited number of volunteers
- corporate, governmental and civil partners

Potential for Transfer:

The good practice is particularly easy to adapt to other countries and regions, provided that the following criteria are met:

- the long-established NGO is well-established in the local community and, as a social enterprise, works closely with local government and businesses;
- continuously monitors local needs and opportunities for local and national aid policy instruments;
- employs professionals who can organise the basic agricultural work effectively, given the human resource skills available;
- the organisation undertakes to provide other services (development, supported housing, etc.) to disadvantaged target group members and external partners (adult education, counselling, mentoring, etc.) in addition to the operation of the social farm;
- gain the trust of the local community thanks to its transparent and credible operation;
- measures and communicates its social and environmental (positive) impact;
- participates in knowledge-sharing networks and communities.

www.kemence-egyesulet.hu

www.szocialisfarm.hu, relevant as the president of the association is also the vice-president of the Hungarian Social Farm Association.



Outsourced social service delivery

Region/Country:	Hungary
Local Community:	Kiskőrös, Bács-Kiskun county
Population:	14.000
Social Enterprise:	Filadelfia Integrated Social Institution
Year of Establishment:	2009
Activities:	Outsourced municipal social tasks



Hungarian Baptist Church Filadelfia Integrated Social Institution

The Filadelfia Integrated Social Institution has developed a highly effective partnership with the local municipality by fully taking over one of its legally defined statutory tasks. Through this collaboration, the institution now manages and continuously fulfils essential social services that the municipality has outsourced. This unique model not only enhances the quality and consistency of care but also provides the municipality with a reliable, professional partner for addressing the community's social needs.

Key services provided by the institution include daycare for the disabled, support services, home help, daycare for the elderly, social catering, and homestead stewardship services. These services ensure that vulnerable populations, including the elderly and disabled, receive personalized and ongoing support that meets their specific needs.

In addition to these essential services, the Filadelfia Integrated Social Institution offers residential care for the elderly and provides a range of supplementary social services. These include the Seniors Club, which offers social engagement and activities for older adults; home help services, ensuring that those with limited mobility or support networks can continue living independently; and the Day Care Institute for the Disabled, which provides care and activities for disabled individuals in a safe, nurturing environment. The institution also runs a social catering and support service to ensure that those in need receive comprehensive care tailored to their living situation.

This innovative partnership between the institution and the municipality is a best-practice example of how social services can be outsourced effectively to specialized organizations. It not only improves the efficiency of service delivery but also strengthens the overall social support framework within the community.

Resources Needed:

The operation of the centre is supported by the Baptist Church. The municipal tasks are fully financed by the transfer of some budget lines for the operation of the municipality to the social enterprise. No additional funding is provided by the municipality for the operation of the centre.

The human resources required depend on the number of users of the service, which is a variable indicator. The minimum resources required to provide institutional care (laid down by law) can be provided by the centre on an ongoing basis, with the involvement of local partners and professionals

Potential for Transfer:

The Filadelfia Integrated Social Institution model can be successfully applied in other Danube region countries due to its adaptable structure and focus on public-private collaboration. Many municipalities in the region face similar social challenges, including the need for elderly care, disability services, and home assistance, which could benefit from outsourcing to specialized organizations.

This model allows for more efficient use of resources and ensures consistent, high-quality service delivery. The model's flexibility allows for adaptation to different legal frameworks and local needs, offering a cost-effective and scalable solution for improving social service delivery across the region.

www.filadelfia.baptist.hu



Békési Social Cooperative

Region/Country: Hungary
Local Community: Békés, Békés County
Population: 18.000



Social Enterprise: Békés Economic and Service Start Social Cooperative
Year of Establishment: 2014
Activities: Creating new jobs in the settlement by processing vegetables produced in public employment

The Békés Economic and Service Start Social Cooperative was founded in 2014 by the Municipality of the City of Békés and 16 natural persons with the aim of creating new jobs in the settlement by processing vegetables produced in public employment.

In 2016, the cooperative started its activity of manufacturing sports equipment, in the framework of which nets for sports equipment (soccer goals) and different protective nets are made, mostly by manual labour. Despite the increase in the price of raw materials, the activity is on the rise and currently provides full-time employment for 8 people.

The economic challenges of recent years have not only made the cooperative's production conditions more difficult but also significantly increased their expenses in terms of raw material procurement and transportation costs. The management introduced energy efficiency measures and successfully applied for the Complex Energy Program. With the planned investment, they intend to reduce the site's heating costs by 50% and plan further technological development in production. Of the 12 employees, 10 are cooperative members, so employment is the primary goal of the cooperative.

Bekesi Social Cooperative is a social cooperative created on the basis of a public employment program. The main purpose of these social cooperatives is to help the products produced within the local public employment program reach the market and to enable the people participating in public employment programs to enter the job market or to provide them with additional income in a sui generis legal status.

The activity of the social cooperative, which has been operating for 10 years, is an excellent example of the cooperation between the municipality and the social enterprise, which provides jobs, strengthens and nourishes the local community with its healthy products, and also brings the settlement's reputation to prestigious sports events with its products "made by busy hands".

The processing plant primarily deals with pickling and the preparation of potatoes and onions for cooking (cleaning, chopping). There are 4 permanent employees who have obtained the appropriate OKJ qualification in recent years. Annually, 80-100 tons of raw materials are processed in the plant, which is entirely delivered to the city's public catering and to the larger public kitchens of the surrounding settlements. Fruits from the lands and gardens of the municipality are also processed here in a natural way, using a preservative-free process. The drinking juices and jams produced in this way are sold partly in public catering, partly on their premises, and on the local market. The cooperative also undertakes contract work in the processing plant, producing drinking juices from its own fruit and beetroots supplied by the local population.

Resources Needed:

National complex policy intervention that combines public employment programs and social enterprise development (Focus program) in order to tackle unemployment and local economic development at the same time.

- Socially committed manager: wants to hire disadvantaged people and solve local problems.
- Motivated and dedicated team able to focus on both the business and social elements of the social cooperative.
- The manager or team must have business acumen and a network that is used for the development of the enterprise,
- Committed local municipality and a mayor who understands that a social cooperative with its social and business focus is able to provide public services for the local communities and find revenue-generating business activities at the same time.

Potential for Transfer:

Good cooperation between the local government and the social enterprise. The municipality should not only be a nominal member of the cooperative but an active partner who is able to capitalize on the synergies between the social cooperative and the local municipality activities. For example, products provided by public employment could be sold by the cooperative (purchased below the market price, but above the cost price).



Municipality social enterprise as an instrument

Region/Country: Banska Bystrica region, Slovakia
Local Community: The district of Žarnovica, village Horne Hámre
Population: Horne Hámre – 610; Žarnovica – 24,668
Number of Social Enterprise: Horne Hámre -1; Žarnovica - 6



Social Enterprise: Sociálny podnik, s.r.o. (Social Enterprise, Ltd)
Year of Establishment: 2022
Activities: Maintenance of the municipality properties and the provision of municipal activities providing comprehensive services including road maintenance, construction works, public spaces maintenance, waste collection, cleaning works and support services for local residents, particularly the elderly

The Socialny podnik, s.r.o. is a so-called municipal social enterprise, which means that the social enterprise is established and controlled by the municipality. The ownership share of the municipality in this case is 100%. This type of municipal social enterprise is quite common in Slovakia. Through social enterprise, local municipalities ensure the performance of some of their tasks (e.g. summer and winter maintenance of local roads). The added value of the municipal social enterprise is its orientation towards employing people from the municipality, thus, in addition to the performance of specific services, the municipality also supports the employment of locals, especially those who are far from the labour market. The municipality of Horné Hámre is no exception. The motivation of the municipality was to increase the employment of local people and to provide some of the activities of the municipality. However, in the case of small municipalities, such as the municipality of Horné Hámre, the municipality is not able to fill the capacity of the municipal enterprise, as the range of contracts that such a municipality can provide is not sufficient. It is also a common practice that neighbouring municipalities are starting social enterprises with identical or similar business plans, as a result of which neither of these social enterprises is able to secure a sufficient number of contracts and all collapse. An example of good practice offered by the Socialny podnik, s.r.o. is that the municipality of Horné Hámre has established cooperation with neighbouring municipalities, namely the municipalities of Župkov (population 851), Hrabíčov (population 553) and Klák (population 170). These have transferred all the non-administrative tasks of the local municipality to the social enterprise; the municipal enterprise is thus responsible for the management of sewage treatment plants, road maintenance, cleaning of ditches, maintenance of local greenery, etc. The social enterprise also provides preparation and support for cultural events in the municipalities (e.g. setting up stalls, cleaning public spaces after events, etc.). Recently, the social enterprise has also started to manage local cemeteries and offers services such as digging graves etc. to citizens. As of 31.12.2023, the social enterprise employed 10 employees, all of whom are disadvantaged due to health disability.

In 2023 the social enterprise received payments for its services in the amount of EUR 103 500. The total revenue of the company in 2023 amounted to EUR 198 880.

Resources Needed:

It is a work integration social enterprise type (so-called WISE). The key condition for the functioning of this type of social enterprise is access to job subsidies for disadvantaged employees. In the case of the Socialny podnik, s.r.o. the wage subsidy in 2023 accounted for up to 58% of all wage costs. Without this subsidy, the performance of the social enterprise would not have been possible.

Technical equipment and administrative and coordination facilities are also important for the performance of the social enterprise's activities. However, this is essential for any type of enterprise.

The technical equipment (in terms of access to machinery and equipment) determines the range of activities carried out; the more technical the equipment, the more services the social enterprise can carry out. However, many of the activities on offer can only be carried out with simple and cheap tools such as shovels, etc.

The activities of the Socialny podnik, s.r.o. are coordinated by one person.

Potential for Transfer:

The main added value of the Socialny podnik, s.r.o. is its focus on inter-municipal cooperation, which is not common in Slovakia. The involvement of several municipalities ensures the long-term sustainability of the social enterprise; the municipalities involved are able, thanks to the social enterprise, to provide services that they would otherwise be able to provide only with great difficulty, if at all. The social enterprise also employs people from all the municipalities involved.

The model of "municipal social enterprise" can be an inspiration for other countries in the Danube region. It is also defined in Slovakia in the Act on Social Economy and Social Enterprises and offers a model for the provision of services that small municipalities, in particular, would otherwise struggle to provide.

A unique characteristic of the Socialny podnik, s.r.o. is its orientation towards the provision of services in the micro-region and the strengthening of inter-municipal cooperation, which is specifically important mainly for small municipalities.

www.hornehamre.sk



Applying the social dimension



Region/Country: Prešov region, Slovakia

The Prešov Self-Governing Region is one of the eight self-governing regions in Slovakia. It consists of 13 districts, 9 of which are classified as least developed districts (there are 19 such districts in Slovakia). Compared to the rest of Slovakia, the Prešov region is characterised, among other things, by a high unemployment rate, a high risk of poverty and poor transport infrastructure. A characteristic feature of the region is the high number of municipalities with up to 500 inhabitants (these are municipalities that often fail to fulfil even their basic competencies). There is also a high concentration of marginalised Roma communities in the region, where people live in highly substandard conditions and face extreme levels of intergenerational poverty.

Regional self-governments are responsible for a wide range of competencies, which are also fulfilled through major infrastructure investments. The regional government therefore often acts as an investor and selects suppliers of services, goods or works, which it does in accordance with the rules of the Public Procurement Act.

European legislation on public procurement specifies particular instruments for the wider application of social and environmental criteria in the selection of contractors. Although these articles have been transposed into national legislation, the lowest price is still perceived as the only and most frequently applied criterion for supplier selection.

Public procurement in Slovakia is perceived as a very complex and risky topic, subject to close scrutiny and even small errors are subject to heavy financial penalties. Procurers therefore try to keep the selection criteria as simple and easy to evaluate as possible, and the potential added value in the social or environmental field is ignored.

Office of the Prešov Self-Governing Region has been trying to change this practice since around 2022 and, in view of the difficult social situation in the region, is also starting to take into account the social aspects of the purchases it makes.

Recently it has repeatedly carried out public procurement procedures in which social aspects were applied among the selection criteria. These included, in particular, the compulsory employment of people distanced from the labour market.

In practice, this means that only contractors who undertake to employ an X number of people disadvantaged in the labour market to a predetermined extent when securing the contract can bid for the contract.

That is why the Office of the Prešov Self-Governing Region, specifically the Department of Regional Development, has established informal cooperation with a number of social enterprises that are dedicated in various ways to promoting the employment of disadvantaged groups.

The main task of the Office of the Prešov Self-Governing Region is to link potential contractors (commercial companies bidding for the contract) and social enterprises. If a commercial company wins a contract from the Prešov Region, it starts cooperation with the social enterprise and the social enterprise provides the necessary number of disadvantaged employees.

In some cases, commercial companies pay for the services of the social enterprise, in others social enterprises provide this service free of charge. Due to the shortage of available workforce in the Slovak labour market, in 2023 there were reported cases where commercial companies approached social enterprises with a request to provide workers outside of contracts performed for the municipality. However, the linking of social enterprises with commercial companies was only possible thanks to the initiative of the Prešov Region.

One of the social enterprises involved - the non-profit organisation Človek v ohrození (which does not have the status of a registered social enterprise and promotes employment through the provision of employment services) in 2023, thanks to the described initiative, placed 13 people on the labour market, most of whom were from marginalised Roma communities with no, or very limited, previous work experience.

Contractors are not a priori opposed to employing these people, but point out that they cannot find them and that they are often unprepared to perform the expected activities.

Resources Needed:

No additional financial resources are required to implement this initiative. The main condition for the implementation of this initiative is the willingness and courage of the people working in public administration to go beyond established practices and apply innovative practices in at least some of the public procurement carried out (the social aspect is not applied to all public procurement). It is also a prerequisite that at least some of the staff are open, willing and able to link potential contractors to social enterprises and to do so in a transparent manner. The presence of social enterprises in the region that are able to provide training and support for disadvantaged employees is also a prerequisite. The initiative can be implemented by any contracting authority, but in the case of contracting authorities that carry out a larger number of procurements and have sufficient internal capacities, it is easier.

Potential for Transfer:

The implementation of the initiative is based on the content of European legislation on social procurement, which promotes the application of social aspects in public procurement. A similar initiative can therefore be implemented in any EU Member State, but inspiration can come from the environment in which the initiative is implemented. This is a country and region where the application of social aspects is not common and has to face many misinterpretations about the illegality of such practices.

What is particularly inspiring is the fact that similar initiatives can be successfully realized also in environments where this is not common; the only condition is an individual commitment.



Buying food from local social enterprises of micro-regional cooperation

Region/Country: Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Slovakia



The Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region is one of the eight self-governing regions in Slovakia. It consists of 13 districts, 4 of which are classified as least developed districts (there are 19 such districts in Slovakia). Compared to the rest of Slovakia, the Banská Bystrica region is characterised, among other things, by significant socio-economic disparities among specific districts, the fastest ageing population, a large brain drain and poor transport infrastructure, specifically in the southern districts of the region, which have long been among the poorest in Slovakia. However, these districts, absurdly, were among the richest in the past and were known for their high agricultural production.

Development Agency of the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region named "Dobrý kraj" ("Good Region"), Banská Bystrica, established in 2018.

List of 15 social enterprises from the Banská Bystrica region active in the food production sector.

School canteens and social service facilities established by self-governing regions are important food buyers. This is no different in the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region. It is the founder of a total of 48 catering establishments (school canteens and social service establishments), which together purchase more than 4 440 tonnes of food each year. Their purchase is subject to public procurement, which most often respects a single criterion, namely the lowest price.

In the absence of other selection criteria, the kitchens often receive inferior quality food or food produced abroad, the purchase of which represents an unnecessary increase in the carbon footprint and does not bring any economic benefit to the region.

The Banská Bystrica Self-governing Region, through its development agency, the Good Region, has created a model through which it strengthens the purchase of local food, which undoubtedly has a positive impact on supporting the local economy.

The model uses the possibilities of Act 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement for the purchase of goods and services by registered social enterprises, for which the law offers the implementation of so-called reserved contracts. In practice, this option means that only suppliers who have the status of a registered social enterprise or a sheltered workshop, i.e. suppliers whose activities and emphasis on employing people far from the labour market also bring a positive social impact for society, can submit a bid.

However, farming and food production are not yet a widespread business activity among registered social enterprises in Slovakia. The Banská Bystrica region, through its development agency, has implemented activities aimed at encouraging existing registered social enterprises in the region to expand their business scope to include agricultural or food production. The development agency staff also sought out agricultural and food enterprises that fulfilled the principles and ethos of social entrepreneurship and sought to inspire them to apply for registered social enterprise status with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

The energy was also needed to raise awareness of the schools and social service establishments that purchase food, specifically 47 organisations, which are potential buyers.

Currently, there are some 15 suppliers (registered social enterprises of work integration type) involved, the suppliers offer a spectrum of basic food categories and their products are purchased through a dynamic purchasing system. Fruits and vegetables (not exotic), potatoes, beef, pork, milk and dairy products and eggs are all available for purchase locally by the canteens under the responsibility of the BBSK founder.

A positive externality of the whole initiative is the creation of 19 new local jobs that have been created as a result of the initiative.

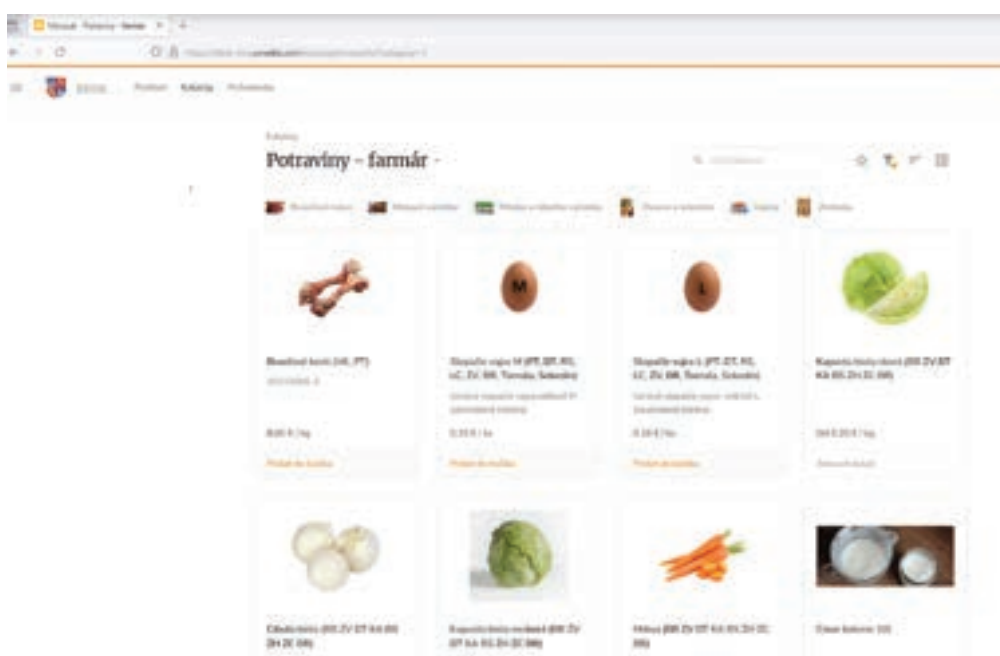
Resources Needed:

The initiative would not have been possible without the human capacities that were invested in a) an information campaign addressed to the canteens that buy the food, b) supporting local food producers who have transformed themselves into a social enterprise, c) networking between food producers and potential buyers. Maintaining a functioning model requires at least one full-time expert.

Potential for Transfer:

The initiative offers a functional model, implemented at the regional level, which offers support for local food production and the stabilization of social enterprises from the region that are engaged in agriculture and employ people disadvantaged in the labour market.

<https://www.uvo.gov.sk/vestnik-a-registre/vestnik/oznamenie/detail/519846>



Pioneering social change: Humana Nova's collaborative efforts with local public authorities

Region/Country: Međimurje County, Croatia
Local Community: Čakovec
Population: 27.266
Number of Social Enterprise: 10



Social Enterprise: Social cooperative Humana Nova
Year of Establishment: 2011

Humana Nova is a leading Croatian example of a social enterprise for work integration. It employs people with disabilities and other socially excluded individuals (of the 55 total employees, 33 are people with disabilities, and 20 come from marginalized groups). They produce new, high-quality, and innovative products from discarded textiles, as well as sustainable products made from new materials. Humana Nova engages in various activities, including textile collection, selling wearable collected clothing in their own second-hand store, producing rags for the industrial sector, packaging felt, and sewing products from recycled or new materials (either locally sourced or environmentally certified from other countries, always respecting fair trade principles). They also organize textile waste collection campaigns and conduct Creative Workshops on textile recycling.

Humana Nova has established a business collaboration with the City of Zagreb (the capital of the Republic of Croatia, a unit of local administration, and at the same time, of regional administration at the county level). The City of Zagreb conducted an open public procurement process for the production of nearly 30,000 flags, with the goal of entering into a framework agreement with three economic entities for a period of four years. Two economic entities participated in the tender: Humana Nova and an institution for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities from Zagreb. A framework agreement was signed with both for a period of four years. Following this, they engaged in mutual competition. In this case, the contracts were reserved contracts, meaning they were based on a public procurement process where the right to participate is reserved for bidders or offerors according to a protected employment program or only for bidders or offerors that employ more than 50% of persons with disabilities relative to the total number of employees. The economic price is not the main criterion.

The key factors that Humana Nova considers most important for the successful development of their business are perseverance, especially during difficult and unpromising business times, as well as support from some business partners in the form of loans, advance payments, and similar assistance in challenging situations. Furthermore, Humana Nova invests heavily in the development and quality of their products and services, consistently delivering products of exceptional quality made from the best materials, sustainable and long-lasting.

In Croatia, including the county, there are no developed strategies to support social enterprises.

Humana Nova also collaborates with local public authorities on other business matters. For example, they cooperate with Međimurje County not only on various projects but also through business cooperation agreements. In Croatia, it is legally regulated that if an employer does not employ the prescribed number of people with disabilities, they can fulfil the obligation of quota employment through a substitute quota by, for instance, entering into a business cooperation agreement. This quota can be met through the procurement of goods and services from protective and integrative workshops, companies, cooperatives, and associations where more than half of the workers are people with disabilities, as well as from self-employed people with disabilities.

Additionally, there is currently a strong possibility of future cooperation in supplying Međimurje County with products for sustainable tourism, specifically for tourism facilities within the county.

Resources Needed:

Establishing and operating a Humana Nova practice requires substantial financial and human resources. Initial costs include rent, facility adaptation, procurement of equipment and machinery, as well as securing initial inventory and materials. Ongoing operating expenses encompass salaries, facility maintenance, raw materials, marketing, transportation and logistics, and investment in technology and software. The estimated total financial requirement is around €900,000 annually, covering both rent and operational costs. In terms of human resources, a diverse team is essential, comprising management, skilled labour, social support, and operational staff.

Potential for Transfer:

The Humana Nova model of social entrepreneurship, which focuses on work integration and the reuse of textiles, offers significant potential for transfer to other countries in the Danube region. Many countries in the Danube region face similar social challenges, including high unemployment rates, especially among people with disabilities and marginalized communities. The Humana Nova model can address these challenges by creating employment opportunities for these groups. The Danube region faces environmental issues related to waste management. Humana Nova's focus on textile recycling and reuse directly addresses these concerns, aligning with EU directives on waste reduction and circular economy principles. While the core of the Humana Nova model can be replicated, it must be adapted to the local context. This includes understanding the specific needs of the marginalized communities in each country, as well as the local market demand for recycled and upcycled products. Humana Nova is now recognized as a desirable employer, known for providing an exceptionally supportive work environment. Adopting this model could be highly beneficial for other countries in the Danube region. Also, creating a network of similar social enterprises across the Danube region could enhance the model's impact. This network could facilitate the exchange of best practices, joint marketing efforts, and even collaborative funding applications.

www.humananova.org



Cooperation between City of Križevci and Hedona Llc. chocolateria, social enterprise and integrative workshop

Region/Country: Koprivnica-Križevci County, Croatia
Local Community: Križevci
Population: 18.949



Social Enterprise: Hedona Llc. chocolateria, social enterprise and integrative workshop
Year of Establishment: 2013
Activities: Chocolate production, sewing, packaging and printing services

Hedona Llc was founded as part of the project “Chocolateria Chris” – Križevci chocolateria, by the Association of Persons with Disabilities Križevci. In December 2018, the Ministry of Labor and Pension System issued a decision establishing the Hedona integrative workshop, the only one in which a person with a disability participates in the complete production. Hedona started their story in 60 square meters and with 6 employees, 4 of whom were employees with disabilities. Today they are situated in 200 square meters with 47 employees (23 of whom are people with disabilities). This SE emphasizes the development potentials of their employees by reinvesting the profit through employees’ education, development and growth. Hedona has had support from local and regional authorities from the very beginning. The mayor of the city helped them start realizing their idea, and since then, the City of Križevci has supported them. The premises in which they operate are owned by the city and are used under a preferential lease arrangement. The city purchases promotional gifts throughout the year for their partners, thereby promoting Hedona and expanding its market based on reputation. Additionally, the city uses Hedona’s printing, sewing and packaging services for its needs. Hedona also has good cooperation with large companies across Croatia, and the collaboration with public institutions and authorities is facilitated mostly through the substitute quota model. Quota employers are obliged to employ persons with disabilities in an appropriate job and appropriate working conditions, in the amount of 3% of the total number of employees. If an organization does not employ persons with disabilities, one of the solutions is to conclude one or more agreements on business cooperation with an organization where more than half of the workers are persons with disabilities.

Hedona Llc is constantly engaged in a creative and innovative process. By leveraging its abundant human resources, the company continuously develops new and innovative products, closely monitoring the current and potential market. In this way, they have expanded their business from chocolate production to include printing, sewing and packaging services as well.

Resources Needed:

Costs include rent premises, industrial facility and its maintenance, utilities, logistics, employee training, salaries, raw materials, marketing activities etc. Given the constant growth in production and the contracting of new business, the need for expansion has become evident. Therefore, long-term plans include increasing the workspace by constructing their own facility and hiring an even larger number of persons with disabilities.

Potential for Transfer:

Hedona, as a social enterprise and integrative workshop, serves as a good example of the potential for transfer to other countries in the Danube region. With a focus on providing good opportunities for vulnerable groups, particularly persons with disabilities, it offers insight into a successful model of inclusion and business operations. Hedona is guided by the main principles of a responsible social entrepreneurship impact on society and the environment: attitude towards employees, customers and suppliers; relationship with the competition; relationship to the environment; and relationship with the local community.

www.hedona.hr



Source of attached pictures: www.hedona.hr

Center for Home Assistance in Međimurje County and their Collaborative Efforts with Local Public Authorities

Region/Country: Međimurje County, Croatia
Local Community: Čakovec
Population: 27.266
Number of Social Enterprise: 10



Social Enterprise: Center for Home Assistance in Međimurje County
Year of Establishment: 2013
Activities: Meal organization, household chores, personal hygiene maintenance, and fulfilling other daily needs of the elderly and people with disabilities

The Center was established as a result of a project that was submitted multiple times and received a positive evaluation under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) in 2012. At that time, Međimurje was the only region in Croatia without developed non-institutional services for the elderly. Through the project, three vehicles were acquired to provide services, an institution was established, and three clubs for the elderly were founded (in Prelog, Mursko Središće, and Nedelišće). During the first three years of operation, ACT Group was the primary driving force, particularly in terms of financing, visiting institutions, and securing funding. Since 2016, the Međimurje County has become involved, a partnership that continues to this day.

The Center has established a collaborative partnership with Međimurje County, one of its founding members. A formal agreement has been signed between the Center and MŽ to jointly finance the Center's initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of life for the elderly and disabled population. In recent years, MŽ has generously contributed a total of €258,366 to support the Center's endeavours.

Međimurje County consistently encourages its cities and municipalities to actively engage with the Center, identifying individuals in need within their communities and offering appropriate support.

Since its inception, the Center has fulfilled a dual mission: to educate and employ geronto-housekeepers, thereby contributing to the reduction of unemployment and promoting the social inclusion of long-term unemployed women. These geronto-housekeepers subsequently provide home care services to interested individuals, addressing the needs of the elderly and infirm within the local community. The Center's range of services has steadily expanded to include meal preparation, housekeeping, personal hygiene assistance, and other essential daily tasks.

The Center's growth and development have been facilitated by significant employee engagement and a comprehensive outreach program. Direct visits to social institutions and municipalities have been instrumental in disseminating information about the Center's services.

Over time, the Center has formed partnerships with five municipalities within Međimurje (Šenkovec, Mala Subotica, Pribislavec, Belica, and Donja Dubrava). These municipalities collaborate with the Center to provide home care and hot meals to individuals who, according to financial assessments, are unable to afford these services but remain in need. In recent years, the Center has experienced a surge in the number of users, all of whom have received necessary care. Despite this increase, new requests for services continue to arise, underscoring the growing demand for the Center's offerings. Currently, the need for home care services exceeds the Center's capacity.

Resources Needed:

Establishing and operating the Center practice requires significant financial and human resources. Initial costs include the purchase of vehicles, rent, payroll costs, and other equipment necessary for daily operations. The prices of services are determined by the competent Ministry.

It is estimated that the total annual financial requirement will be around €100,000, covering rent and operational costs. In terms of human resources, a diverse team is needed, consisting of management, skilled labour, social support, and operational staff.

Potential for Transfer:

The Center Model, as a model of social entrepreneurship, focuses on integrating vulnerable groups into the workforce and providing home care services. It offers significant potential for transfer to other countries in the Danube region. Many countries in the Danube region face similar social challenges, including a large number of elderly people, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.

This model can address these challenges by creating employment opportunities for vulnerable groups and providing home care services. The Danube region faces the problem of a large number of elderly people who are unable to care for themselves or who do not have family members to care for them.

While the core of the Center Model can be replicated, it needs to be adapted to the local context. This includes understanding the specific needs of marginalized communities in each country, as well as local demand. The Center has not yet been recognized as a desirable employer, as it employs certain groups of people who come with certain challenges.

Adopting this model could be very beneficial for other countries in the Danube region. Additionally, creating a network of similar social enterprises across the Danube region could enhance the model's impact. This network could facilitate the exchange of best practices, joint marketing efforts, and even collaborative funding applications.

www.cpukmz.hr



Refurbishment of houses as a first step towards social inclusion

Region/Country: South Bohemian Region, Czech Republic
Local Community: Ceske Budejovice
Population: 94.000
Number of Social Enterprise: 3 directly in the town and 2 more in agglomeration



Social Enterprise: KABINET CB, Ceske Budejovice
Year of Establishment: 2020
Activities: Re-use centre focusing on collecting and restoring furniture and small household equipment

The town of Ceske Budejovice implemented a project aimed at ending homelessness, insecure and inadequate housing through the Housing First concept. This concept was created for people who need intensive social support to be able to leave their unsatisfactory situation. Among the target groups, the project helps homeless people with serious mental illness, and alcohol or drug addiction. Housing First has also proven to be effective for people who experience long-term or repeated homelessness and who lack social support, i.e. help from friends or family and are not part of any community.

The town of Ceske Budejovice, as the project implementer, used the opportunity to purchase furniture and other equipment for these apartments from the local social enterprise & re-use centres.

KABINET CB received a contract to repair, repaint and refurbish apartments, usually owned by the municipality. The refurbishment focused on the entire apartment with not only large furniture but also accessories, bed linen, and if necessary, toys. KABINET CB collaborated with the Food Bank on the provision of food for the first week.

The contact was realized outside the public procurement regime (so-called ethical shopping), when the supplier was chosen within one department of the municipality office, specifically by the Department of Social Affairs. The selection was based on criteria such as price, speed of delivery, comprehensiveness of services and social impact.

A very specific aspect was that people who went through the settlement process could get a part-time job and work habits at the CB CABINET.

Resources Needed:

The project was financed under the ERDF's Operational Programme Employment; thus, the contractor did not have any further expenses associated with the contract. The total costs were 808.000 CZK. In total, 27 apartments were furnished and inhabited, the average costs were approx. 25.000 CZK per apartment.

This cooperation took place thanks to the activity of the NGO coordinator at the Department of Social Affairs within the town of Ceske Budejovice and her knowledge of social entrepreneurship.

Potential for Transfer:

The Housing First concept is well-replicable and can be used to address homelessness and insecure housing everywhere. In 2016, the European Housing first network was established, a platform that supports the implementation of this concept in the EU/Europe.

At the same time, the RREUSE network operates in the EU and represents social enterprises that do business in areas such as reuse, repair shops and/or redesign.



Harvesting of timber and cultivation works in municipal forests

Region/Country: Vysočina Region, Czech Republic
Local Community: Havlickuv Brod
Population: 24.000
Number of Social Enterprise: 3



Social Enterprise: FOVY, Havlickuv Brod
Year of Establishment: 2013
Activities: Social enterprise is involved in multiple fields: forestry activities, laundry, gastronomy, transportation and ceramic workshop

The public procurement for harvesting timber and forest cultivation was contracted by Technical Services of Havlickuv Brod, a public company of the Town of Havlickuv Brod. By dividing the procurement into 5 parts, the contractor made the smaller contracts available also for SMEs, including social enterprises. This practice is not very common yet in the Czech Republic. Division of the public procurement into smaller contracts is permissible by the law, if it is categorized as a whole in terms of the size of the procurement. Even though this step creates more work for the contractor, it allows to better focus on the quality of the procurement.

Social enterprise FOVY, which adheres to the principles of social entrepreneurship in their founding documents, signed up for one part of the contract, which involved works in the field of forest restoration, cleaning up the forest, building fences, planting trees and smaller harvesting and cultivation activities. If the original idea for public procurement had not been divided into smaller contracts, the social enterprise would not have been able to apply due to its capacities and limited references. The contract was successfully implemented also thanks to FOKUS Vysocina, a parental company supporting the social enterprise with social workers when hiring new workers with mental illness.

This public procurement granted the social enterprise stable work for 3 years for two shifts of their disabled workers. Two groups of 4 people each worked on the procurement so that individual employees did not have monotonous and physically demanding work every day. For the needs of the contract, the qualification of workers was increased by working with a chainsaw.

Resources Needed:

The total value of the contract before division was 9.555.000 CZK. The social enterprise FAVY received a contract for 3 years in the amount of approx. 2.800.000 CZK. Thanks to the division of the contract into parts (an invention of technical services employees), a social enterprise could enter the procurement..

Potential for Transfer:

Works related to the maintenance of forests or other green areas under the management or ownership of towns and municipalities always include tasks that fit employees with social or health disadvantages, this is transferable anywhere.

The rules for public procurements in the EU are governed by Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and the Council. The division of public procurements into parts, if expedient, is therefore possible in all EU countries. This will increase the opportunities for social enterprises to participate partly in larger contracts, for which they would not have the capacity or experience if procured as a whole.



Maintenance of green areas of Prague 12 as a job opportunity for people with mental illness

Region/Country: Prague/Czech Republic
Local Community: District Prague 12
Population: 54.000
Number of Social Enterprise: 3



Social Enterprise: Fokus, Praha
Year of Establishment: 2021 (before the protective workshop operating from 2006 until 2021)

Activities: Gardening services, laundry

Public procurement for the maintenance of green areas and cleaning of public spaces in two locations of Prague 12 district. The contract was executed from 2013 to 2017. The estimated value was 25.000.000 CZK.

Even though the main evaluation criterion was the price (60%), other aspects such as quality of execution (20%) and implementation by persons with disabilities (20%) were included. 11 bidders competed for the contract, but during the evaluation, several of them were eliminated for various reasons. The joint bid by private company TSB and social enterprise Fokus was selected as the winning bidder for both locations.

The joint bid by a social enterprise and a commercial entity significantly increased the chances of obtaining a public contract for the SE, since they didn't have enough experience in competing in public contracts separately. The SE received administrative support from an experienced partner.

Resources Needed:

The total value of the public procurement was 25.000.000 CZK.

Potential for Transfer:

Two examples of good practice can be seen in this case. First, the criteria to employ people disadvantaged in the labour market and second the example of joint efforts of social enterprise and traditional private business in order to compete in the public procurement. This connection will enable the social enterprise to apply for a public contract that it would not have been able to achieve without a commercial partner.



Verified Social Enterprise Label

Region/Country:

Austria-wide



Social Enterprises can apply for the “Verified Social Enterprise” label from Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH (aws). After a positive review by an independent Impact Board, the “Verified Social Enterprise” (VSE) label is awarded by the Federal Ministry of Labor and Economic Affairs (BMAW). It can be used in the company name and for public communication. The label is intended to contribute to greater visibility and easier identification of social enterprises. It also increases the company’s credibility with customers, partner organizers and investors. All certified VSEs appear in the USP company service portal and in the A-Z company register of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) and can be found there specifically as such. The VSE label is awarded by the BMAW and processed by the aws in close cooperation with the Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria (SENA) and the WKO.

Resources Needed:

Dedicated working hours on a weekly or monthly basis by involved LPAs.

Potential for Transfer:

If there is no official recognition label yet in the country, the establishment of such in cooperation with the chamber of commerce can help social enterprises gain credibility.

<https://www.bmaw.gv.at/Themen/Wirtschaftsstandort-Oesterreich/Social-Entrepreneurship/Label-Verified-Social-Enterprise.html>

<https://www.aws.at/verified-social-enterprise-label/>

Social Business Hub Styria (SBHS)

Region/Country: Austria
Local Community: Styria and Carinthia
Population: Styria 1,2 million; Carinthia 568 984
Number of Social Enterprise: 258



Social Enterprise: Social Business Hub Styria (SBHS)
Year of Establishment: 2013
Activities: Support services and networking opportunities for social enterprises, including start-up and upscaling training

SBHS services social entrepreneurs in the Austrian provinces of Styria and Carinthia. The hub cooperates with the Department of Economy of the City of Graz, which is Styria's capital. It further collaborates with the Department of Economics and Tourism and the Department of Water Management, Resources and Sustainability of the province of Styria.

Resources Needed:

The establishment of such a hub is connected to significant investment. Currently, the hub has 5 staff members and an advisory board, which includes nine different stakeholders, including representatives of the local business service.

Potential for Transfer:

The potential for transfer is very high, provided that the necessary funding can be achieved. Local hubs are able to effectively respond to the needs to the local social economy. Therefore, they have the potential to be very impactful. The need for funding and space also provides a strong case for collaboration with LPAs, as a hub could potentially be housed by an LPA.

<https://socialbusinesshub.at/en/>

https://socialbusinesshub.at/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/04/Social-Business-Report-EN_v1w.pdf

Quality Label for Social Enterprises

Region/Country:

Austria



Social Enterprise:

Arbeit plus – Soziale Unternehmen Österreich

Year of Establishment:

2016

Activities:

Advise, supervise and employ people with difficulties to access the labour market

As of August 2024, 32 social economy organisations support the integration of long-term unemployed people into the labour market. The organisations were located in 8 out of 9 Austrian federal states that held the Gütesiegel. Any organisation with the primary mission of supporting the labour market integration of the long-term unemployed can apply.

The organization was founded in 1985 as “bdv austria” and became “arbeit plus – Social Integration Enterprises Austria” in 2016. Arbeit plus operates a network consisting of approximately 200 non-profit social enterprise member organisations. Member organisations receive public funding to “advise, supervise and employ people with difficulties access the labour market.”

Mutual partnerships between Austrian’s job market service (AMS) and intermediary companies that work with work integrative social enterprises (WISEs). Companies undergo an external assessment by experts from Quality Austria and “arbeit plus - Soziale Unternehmen Österreich”. They analyse the companies with regard to defined quality standards. At the same time, they look at the company’s strengths and development opportunities. Arbeit plus has awarded the Gütesiegel to social enterprises since 2010. Companies receive the award for three years. After that, they need to be re-certified. Through the process, the organization receives thorough feedback on its operations from a variety of stakeholders. This process ensures that the organisation operates in a way that enables it to achieve its objectives and secures its position in the market.

Resources Needed:

The application process includes 5 different stages, which can be time and resource-intensive for an organization to complete. Organisations must be willing to prepare and share documentation with the external assessment and facilitate a visit from the assessment team. Organisations must also be committed to active gender mainstreaming and diversity management.

Potential for Transfer:

The idea of a Gütesiegel, which would form the foundation for a Quality Management System for social enterprises, originated in Brussels in 2002. The Austrian Gütesiegel was partly inspired by existing examples in Spain and France and further contributed to the evolvement of quality standards set by the European Network for Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE). Accordingly, other countries in the Danube region will be able to build a similar certification system based on existing examples.

This quality label is sponsored by the AMS (national jobmarket service): <https://arbeitplus.at/guetesiegel/>



Source of attached pictures: <https://graz.welocally.at/geidorf/treffen/q-a-session-zur-einreichung-fur-das-social-green-business-grundungsprogramm-online>

Caritas Šabac - Avlija of sustainable development

Region/Country: Šabac, Serbia
Local Community: Municipality of Šabac
Population: 105.432
Number of Social Enterprise: 1



Social Enterprise: Avlija održivog razvoja / Avlija of sustainable development
Year of Establishment: 2015
Activities: Health and social protection, Other unmentioned social protection without accommodation

“Avlija održivog razvoja (Avlija of Sustainable Development)” Bogatić was founded by the Caritas Šabac Association, which has been engaged in humanitarian work for over 20 years, acting in emergency situations and providing social protection services. Caritas Šabac - Avlija of sustainable development (Avlija) is a social enterprise company that provides work inclusion of people from vulnerable categories of society, among them people with disabilities, especially people with mental disorders and intellectual disabilities. They put together social protection, agriculture, healthy and affordable food production, event management, ethno- tourism and work inclusions, which fully align with their concept of sustainable social business impact. Avlija provides the following products and services:

1. Assisted daily home care service - providing personal care, work integration, cooking meals;
2. Residents in the daily care centre and supported living shared community with other residents, who come together to socialize, air grievances, plan activities and share their knowledge and work therapy;
3. Skilled nursing care - providing a more closely supervised and assisted medical lifestyle on the same property;
4. High-quality health and affordable food - distribution to private individuals and business consumers. Daily meals for their workers with the highest quality ingredients, cooked by persons with disabilities. We offer a variety of cuisine for breakfast, lunches, dinners and appetizers;
5. Event service for wedding, business launches, family entertainment, corporate training rental space for half-day of full-day timespans, family and individual weekend specials, audio-visual rentals and support, event and training equipment, space rental with a head full-service catering fee, parties and banquets of key events in life (weddings, birthdays, engagements, bridal and baby showers, retirement parties or for business (holiday or end of year parties, honouree galas, retirements, corporate meetings, product launch, presentation, lectures);
6. Brandy distillery and winter stores production- high quality and wide range of products under the affordable price of an average of 3 euros, ideally produced for individual consumers and corporate presents.

LPA Šabac and Avlija are helping each other in writing, applying, and conducting EU projects. Besides that, cooperation with LPA Šabac is helping Avlija survive the challenges it may face in the market. LPA Šabac covers 50% of Avlija's cost of production and service delivery. In addition, LPA Šabac donated the land on which Avlija built a day-care facility for people with special needs. To improve care for people with special needs, LPA Šabac assigned a house to Avlija for a period of 5 years, to be used as a day-care centre for people with special needs.

Resources Needed:

The city of Šabac is one of the rare places in Serbia with a greater offer of various social protection services. All these services are foreseen in the strategic document “Development Plan of LPA Šabac”. To engage organizations that deal with providing support to people from vulnerable groups of the population, LPA Šabac announced a public call within the priority objective defined in the strategic document “Development Plan of the City of Šabac” - Social Development. Avlija met the criteria defined in the tender and thereby acquired the condition to use LPA funds within the budget line - Family and home accommodation, shelters, and other types of accommodation, as well as LPA funds within the budget line - Support for persons with disabilities. Based on that, LPA Šabac covers 50% of the production and service costs of Avlija. Avlija employs about 50 people to establish and run this practice. This practice of cooperation between SEs and LPAs is repeated successfully from year to year. This practice is a good example of social public procurement too.

Potential for Transfer:

This example of best practice can be applied in other Danube region countries easily. It is recommended that LPAs develop a Strategy for the employment of people with disabilities, a Strategy for social care, and/or other strategies that regulate social entrepreneurship and social assistance and care services. Also, the will of the LPAs is needed to support SE and to provide funds in its budget for the development of social entrepreneurship and social assistance and care services. To replicate this model in other countries in the Danube region, also, one of the steps should be adapting it to comply and align with the local legislation and policies regarding the rights of people with disabilities. Avlija was established as a company for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities based on the Serbian Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

www.caritas-sabac.com



Frigo Iris, Novi Pazar

Region/Country: Novi Pazar, Serbia
Local Community: Municipality of Novi Pazar
Population: 106.720
Number of Social Enterprise: 1



Social Enterprise: Frigo Iris
Year of Establishment: 2021
Activities: Manufacturing industry, Other processing and canning of fruits and vegetables

FRIGO IRIS has a cold store in Novi Pazar, which has a tunnel for freezing raspberries (and other fruits and vegetables) with a capacity of 8 tons of fresh goods in 24 hours, as well as a chamber for storing frozen goods with a capacity of 150 tons. Within the building where the cold store is located, there is also a space for processing goods, as well as a large commercial space of 100m², intended for offices, that is, as space for a centre for rural development. FRIGO IRIS also has certain equipment for processing fruits and vegetables into final products (duplicators, choppers, presses, fillers). In addition, FRIGO IRIS has signed cooperation agreements with about 50 agricultural farms, related to support in the primary agricultural production of raspberries and the purchase of the final product, which provides a raw material base of about 50 tons of fresh raspberries. FRIGO IRIS DOO has also signed an agreement on strategic cooperation with the company FRIGO DAVOD Lucani, in the part related to the placement of frozen raspberries, which ensures a safe market for the placement of frozen raspberries, and a certain stability in business. They also have active cooperation with FIRO MINERAL doo, through which they provide professional support to subcontractors in primary production, as well as the necessary chemicals and fertilizers necessary for the primary production process. By providing storage capacity for the social enterprise FRIGO IRIS doo, an economically profitable solution is provided from the point of view of the producer, as well as from the point of view of the social enterprise. The provision of storage and processing capacities is one of the key parameters for the further development of the raspberry production sector, which has great potential for growth in Novi Pazar and contributes to poverty reduction on a local level.

As we mentioned above, the development of raspberry production is an excellent opportunity to reduce poverty in rural areas of Novi Pazar, bearing in mind the structure of agricultural farms, i.e. relatively small land holdings for agricultural households and the need to provide a high-intensity culture that generates more income on small agricultural plots. In addition to ensuring the sustainability of the operation of FRIGO IRIS and the projected profits, the goal is to redirect part of the profit (besides the price of fresh raspberries) that is generated to primary producers as investment funds for development and growth, which would have a reciprocal effect on the growth of FRIGO IRIS itself. This is the social philosophy of FRIGO IRIS.

This best practice is financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with the funds of the Austrian Development Cooperation, and it is implemented by ASB Austria in partnership with the Initiative for Development and Cooperation, IDC, City of Novi Pazar (LPA Novi Pazar), and the Regional Development Agency "SEDA".

Resources Needed:

Within the project "Social Entrepreneurship as a Model for Reducing Poverty in Agriculture", implemented in partnership with the City of Novi Pazar, the Austrian Development Agency (ADC), the Regional Development Agency of Sandžak "Seda", the Agricultural Advisory Service and "Merhamet" Sandžak, a social company Frigo IRIS was established. LPA Novi Pazar provided financial support (30% of the full amount) to Frigo IRIS in buying needed equipment for freezing raspberries.

Now, after three years of successfully doing business operations, Frigo IRIS has become self-sustainable. The help that they need from LPA as well as other stakeholders is in promoting their business operations and finding buyers for frozen raspberries. This will help them to make more profit which will be refinanced in a diversification of the production process. It is possible to buy, freeze and sell other fruits and vegetables besides raspberries, also forest fruits and wild plants (for which there is great potential in the vicinity of Novi Pazar), which, depending on the season of arrival of raw materials, could diversify income. In addition, higher degrees of fruit and vegetable processing have great potential, because, in addition to the raw material base, there are processing capacities as well as a large market potential of the local market.

Potential for Transfer:

This innovative approach of doing business as a model for poverty reduction could be applied in other Danube region countries. It helps small agricultural farms to sell their fruits and vegetables and ensure the economic development of rural areas.

First, it is important that LPAs recognize the importance of SEs and their impact on developing rural areas and reducing the number of unemployed people from rural areas. Second, it is important that LPAs dedicate funds in their budgets to establishing SEs as well as developing them. Third, a stakeholder important for the success of this business model is also the final buyer of the frozen fruits and vegetables.



Radanska Ruža, Lebane

Region/Country: Lebane, Serbia
Local Community: Municipality of Šabac
Population: 18.119
Number of Social Enterprise: 1



Social Enterprise: Radanska RUŽA
Year of Establishment: 2015
Activities: Manufacturing industry, Other processing and canning of fruits and vegetables

Social enterprise Radanska Ruža was founded as a Civil Public Partnership between the Women's Association RUŽA and the Municipality of Lebane.

Radanska RUŽA primarily employs women from vulnerable groups (women with disabilities, single mothers, women younger than 30 and older than 50...), who process fruits and vegetables in a traditional way, according to the old national recipes and principles of good housewives. What housewives produced decades ago in their kitchens in the south of Serbia has been now made in the company's production facility, that is, a large communal kitchen. Pickled winter food is made without preservatives and other additives, and it is pasteurized by heat treatment and packed in glass packaging. It has started its production by employing 5 women, with 20 products and looking for a market they didn't have. In 2020, the enterprise had a twentyfold higher production and over 30 women employed in production. In 2018, it started its primary organic farming, and in 2019, the production of finished organic products. The entire organic products are currently exported to EU markets. In the 2020/21 season, the total export of organic products was over 120,000 jars. The goal of the social enterprise Radanska RUŽA doo Lebane is to further promote social enterprises and increase the number of employed women. The company reinvests 50% of the profit in the development of the company and invests 50% in social protection services.

Since the SE Radanska Ruža was established by LPA Lebane they got premises for the offices as well as promotion of their products through LPA Lebane networks. This cooperation helped them to become self-sustainable in the market. Nowadays, this cooperation could be less formal, which will help Radanska Ruža to use public support programmes, which was not possible earlier.

The main goal of this practice was to employ women from marginalized groups. The second goal was to offer the market healthy products that were prepared according to a traditional recipe. In the next 10 years, their goal is to employ 50 more women belonging to marginalized groups in the social enterprise. Also, what they want to achieve is gender equality, a world without poverty, and dignified work in LPA Lebane.

Resources Needed:

With the aim to raise the employment of women from rural areas, LPA Novi Pazar in cooperation with the Women's Association Ruža established the social enterprise Radanska Ruža 9 years ago. LPA's support is reflected in the provision of office space and the promotion of Radanska Ruža products. Further support that could be helpful for Radanska Ruža is a less formal partnership with LPA and instead of formal cooperation, the willingness of LPA to create a support program (grants, subsidies, reduced taxes, etc.) for SEs on the local level.

Potential for Transfer:

This example of practice showed that cooperation with SEs and LPAs is very important, especially in the starting phase when SEs need all the help that LPA can provide. This practice could easily be applied in other Danube region countries. The problem could be only if there is a Law that forbids that LPA could establish a social enterprise. Otherwise, good will, the capacity of the LPA, and dedicated funds in the LPA budget could be enough for this kind of cooperation.

www.radanskaruza.rs



Cooperation between the municipality of Bratunac and the general agricultural cooperative “Žena” Kravica, Bratunac

Region/Country: Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Local Community: Municipality of Bratunac
Population: 20.340
Number of Social Enterprise: 1



Social Enterprise: General Agricultural Cooperative “ŽENA” Kravica, Bratunac
Year of Establishment: 2013
Activities: Purchase of berries, catering services, equipment rental

The General Agricultural Cooperative “ŽENA”, founded in 2013, became a social enterprise in 2022 after the Republic of Srpska’s Social Entrepreneurship Law was enacted. The cooperation between the Municipality of Bratunac and the cooperative is successful and continuous. The Municipality of Bratunac has consistently supported the cooperative, recognizing its role in economically empowering marginalized women who earn income through cooperative relationships or various contracts and daily wages.

The Municipality co-financed the cooperative’s registration as it was the first women’s cooperative in the Republic of Srpska.

The municipality also co-finances the cooperative’s projects/business plans, particularly the “Organization of Agricultural Production” program, which is implemented through the IFAD program by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska, specifically the Agricultural Project Coordination Unit. Through this program, the municipality co-finances food and protection packages for raspberries and blackberries for the cooperative’s members, covering 10% of the costs. The program is highly significant for the cooperative members, as they receive complete food and protection at the beginning of the year, ensuring better yields from their plots, and they return 50% of the package value to the cooperative through their raspberry and blackberry harvests.

The cooperative also provides catering services for municipal events, furthering women’s economic empowerment. It should be noted that the General Agricultural Cooperative “ŽENA” mainly cooperates with rural women, victims of violence, and war victims, as well as women who have persons with disabilities in their families.

Resources Needed:

The scope of co-financing this positive practice by the Municipality of Bratunac varies, and on average, it amounts to 1,500 euros annually.

The value of catering services used by the Municipality is about 1,500 euros annually.

Although these are not significant financial resources, it is important to highlight the importance of support through promotion, improvement of the strategic framework for the development of social enterprises, etc.

Potential for Transfer:

The cooperation between the Municipality of Bratunac and the General Agricultural Cooperative “ŽENA” is continuous and successful and can serve as an example of good practice for other local governments throughout the Danube region.

www.facebook.com/opzzena?mibextid=ZbWKwL



“Kreativna vizija” Rudo - Empowering women in rural communities

Region/Country: Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Local Community: Municipality of Rudo
Population: 8.000
Number of Social Enterprise: 1



Social Enterprise: General Agricultural Women’s Cooperative „Kreativna vizija” Štrpci, Rudo
Year of Establishment: 2020
Activities: Production of juices, spreads and sour winter program

With the aim of economically empowering unemployed women in rural communities, the Center for Responsible Democracy “Luna” from Rudo founded in 2020 the General Agricultural Women’s Cooperative “Kreativna vizija.” The cooperative produces homemade juices, jams, and marmalades made from apples, aronia, raspberries, rosehips, and strawberries. Their products are packaged in containers of 0.2l, 0.75l, and 210g. All products are prepared using traditional recipes without additives and preservatives, with a modern component added through product pasteurization, which enables their standardization.

To establish plantations, the General Agricultural Women’s Cooperative “Kreativna vizija” leased a 5-hectare plot from the municipality of Rudo and planted rosehip seedlings on 1 hectare. After the lease was canceled in the conditional facilities of the Agricultural Cooperative Uvac-Rudo, this social enterprise leased the old Uvac railway station from the municipality of Rudo.

Every purchase of this social enterprise’s products directly helps women from rural areas, as confirmed by their slogan, “Every purchase helps the valuable work of women from rural areas, gathered in the general women’s cooperative „Kreativna vizija”.

The General Agricultural Women’s Cooperative “Creative Vision” has provided an opportunity for hardworking women from rural areas, who face difficult economic conditions, to work and live from their labor. The establishment of the cooperative has not only economic but also social significance, as the cooperative membership consists of women aiming to strengthen female entrepreneurship.

Resources Needed:

To initiate production at a sustainable capacity for juices, jams, and spreads, the General Agricultural Women’s Cooperative “Creative Vision” requires funds for the purchase of packaging, raw materials, the construction of a wastewater drain, space adaptation, the water supply for the rosehip plantation, the purchase of organic fertilizer, the engagement of an agronomist, and the engagement of a technologist. In the first phase, 30,000 BAM would be sufficient to allow the cooperative to continue its work efficiently.

Potential for Transfer:

The joint cooperation of rural women, NGOs, the social enterprise, and the local community in the development process of social entrepreneurship in the Republic of Srpska can serve as a good practice example for other countries in the Danube region.



Cooperation between the City Administration of the City of Bijeljina and the social enterprise “Patriot”

Region/Country: Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Local Community: Bijeljina
Population: 103.874
Number of Social Enterprise: 3



Social Enterprise: Limited liability company for the employment of the disabled “Patriot” Bijeljina
Year of Establishment: 2021
Activities: 52.21 Service activities incidental to land transportation

The limited liability company for the employment of disabled individuals “Patriot” from Bijeljina carries out its tasks and achieves its goals with the understanding of the local community and at mutual satisfaction. The local community, specifically the City of Bijeljina, allocates part of the tenders it issues for social enterprises, namely enterprises that employ a certain percentage of disabled individuals in accordance with the Law on Public Procurement of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina, numbers 39/14 and 59/22). The machines and tools that “Patriot” possesses are intended for maintaining green spaces, and the workforce is trained for the same or similar jobs.

Through parking control in the City of Bijeljina and the maintenance of green spaces, this social enterprise significantly contributes to the local community and the environment in which it operates. Through the valuable work of all its members, it enhances the City’s rating and creates a more beautiful and organized living environment.

The “Patriot” enterprise is socially responsible as 99% of its employees have a certain percentage of disability. In order to facilitate the work process, all profits are reinvested in machines and tools.

Resources Needed:

With limited human and financial resources, “Patriot” achieves significant results. With a budget of around 500,000 BAM and about 30 employees, it successfully manages parking in a city with approximately 100,000 residents, maintains the city park along with three smaller parks, and cleans and mows the Dašnica canal.

Potential for Transfer:

The operations of the “Patriot” enterprise, which has limited financial resources and employs individuals with limited work capacity, along with the understanding of the local community, represent an example of good practice that can be successfully applied in other countries of the Danube region.

www.facebook.com/groups/612933745432660



Cooperative for developing sustainable food supply, primarily supplying public catering establishments and clients in the wider region

Region/Country: Podravje, Slovenia
Local Community: Sveti Jurij, Slovenske gorice
Population: 2113



Social Enterprise: Cooperative Dobrina, cooperative for developing sustainable local supply z.o.o., so.p.
Year of Establishment: 2011
Activities: Sale of food and beverages products

The fundamental purpose of the Dobrina cooperative is not to make a profit but to develop small farms, create a fair food trade, and ensure the possibility of fair payment to growers and producers. In Slovenia, small farmers are increasingly abandoning cultivation, so the cooperative, with its market model, encourages them to restart the cultivation and sale of vegetables, fruit, and home-made delicacies, primarily to catering establishments and final consumers in the broader region of Podravje.

The purpose of the cooperative is also to connect the countryside with the urban centre, the promotion and development of organic farming, the principles of sustainable local food supply and social-entrepreneurial activities in the field of food production and processing, and the preservation of cultural, technical, and natural heritage in the field of agriculture.

The cooperative connects more than 130 regional small farms, offering residents fresh, seasonal, local, and healthy products in an urban environment (store in Maribor). The cooperative has an organized logistics system that brings fresh food from the farmer to the consumer in less than 24 hours. The quality of the products is guaranteed by organic or integrated production by farmers working within the cooperative.

Today, the cooperative supplies local food to more than 70 catering establishments (within legislative restrictions). All residents of Maribor and surrounding municipalities are offered delivery of various sizes of containers with seasonal food in the physical store in Maribor and via the online store. At events, the cooperative offers "farm catering with local delicacies".

Key to the success of the mentioned practice is, on the one hand, the internal organization of the company, where stakeholders themselves determine the terms of cooperation and the prices of the products, and on the other hand, the support of local communities, which recognize the cooperative as a partner and provider of services for their events and European projects. This way of connecting represents an innovative approach to raising awareness of sustainable food supply through a sustainable business model.

An example of good practice is solving a social or regional problem that aligns with local and national strategies for developing the social economy and its entities.

Resources Needed:

The total investment cost amounts to 56,500 EUR, covering items such as equipment, a car, an online platform and store, and necessary materials. The monthly operating costs are 11,500 EUR, which include marketing, rent, materials and five employees.

Potential for Transfer:

The general assessment is that in each of the Danube countries, there is potential for starting a similar (social) entrepreneurial venture, which would have similar positive effects as in Slovenia. A regional organization, such as a local action group, an association of municipalities, an agricultural institute, or an initiative of united local food producers, could implement good practice.

Presentation video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP_LjNBB4t0&t=68s

Webpage:

www.zadruga-dobrina.si



Social service for training and employment of disabled people

Region/Country: Podravje, Slovenia
Local Community: Šentilj
Population: 8.362
Number of Social Enterprise: 1



Social Enterprise: ZMOREMO, Institute for Training and Employment of the Disabled
Year of Establishment: 2016
Activities: Other unclassified education and training

The purpose of “Zmoremo institute” is to cover the needs of people in need of help (mainly the elderly and disabled), who maintain their independence in their living environment due to their satisfactory mental and physical well-being, but at the same time, due to their age, need a certain form of social and health care and help with various tasks. When the institute carries out its activities, it includes vulnerable and neglected groups (e.g. disabled people, more difficult-to-employ profiles, and those with shorter working hours) into the working environment.

In the municipality of Šentilj, where the company is headquartered, the Zmoremo Institute is a partner of the municipality in the delivery of hot meals for senior citizens and the disabled, and the local community partially covers the costs of transportation to the doctor, delivery of medicines and delivery of baskets of daily necessities.

Zmoremo Institute employs disabled people and those who are more difficult to employ and who can perform simple and undemanding jobs. For this purpose, the institute is a contractor in the local communities of Šentilj, Duplek, and Gornja Radgona for the services of landscaping and maintaining green areas, occasional cleaning of public and private areas, winter snow removal, and as a caretaker of some facilities (e.g., managing schedules and locking of the gym).

The local communities have thus gained a reliable partner and provider of social services, with whom they jointly tackle the problem of elderly and disabled people in a wider area. At the same time, they include vulnerable groups of people in the working environment who once again feel useful to society.

The Institute operates as a joint service that provides several social services for various local communities to people who need help, including people who are difficult to employ. In addition to the innovative business model, there is a great emphasis on integrating neglected persons who remain in their home environment and are surrounded by local people.

The Institute operates as a joint service that provides several social This example of good practice solves a social or regional problem and aligns with local and national strategies. Municipalities use the institution as an external contractor for certain services and co-finance the mentioned social services. Key success factors of this example are the ageing population and increased number of people that need services, the increasing number of people that are difficult to employ, and the support of municipalities.

Resources Needed:

The total investment (one-time expenditure) costs 49,000 EUR, covering items such as equipment, a car, an online platform, and supplies. The monthly operating costs are 14,000 EUR, which include consumables, rent, and five employees.

Salary costs do not include financial support and co-financing of the employment of disabled people by the state, as provided by law. There is a minimum wage for workers, and the costs of the director's work include many travel expenses (supervision, meetings at local communities).

The staff costs include two groups (2-3 people) for two work locations simultaneously.

Potential for Transfer:

The described model presents one of the possible solutions to the general social problem of an ageing population and the fast-growing number of socially excluded persons. Challenges may arise in geographically dispersed regions or settlements, where access is difficult, or distances are very long, so when implementing this model, it is necessary to optimize the logistics network.

The prerequisite for implementing such a model is the interest of the municipality or interest group (e.g., senior citizens or their relatives). However, it is also necessary to ensure the financially sustainable operation of such a company,



Establishing a model of marketing “local tourist offers” with the support of local communities

Region/Country: Podravje, Slovenia
Local Community: Lenart
Population: 8.583
Number of Social Enterprise: 263



Social Enterprise: Tourist agency Sončni vzhod, tourism and travel organization, trade, and hospitality, d.o.o.
Year of Establishment: 2023
Activities: Activity of tour operators

From the general economic and tourist development perspective, the Podravje region falls below the Slovenian average, especially outside the municipality of Maribor and in rural areas. This area is home to many natural, cultural, and other attractions, which, together with the local/tourist attractions, represent the wide tourist potential of the area. Tourism stakeholders and local communities have repeatedly expressed their desire for effective development and marketing of these potentials, but until now, no regional organization has been dealing with marketing.

Through communication, the idea and proposal to unite 6 local action groups to establish an effective model of marketing local offers for the entire region as an agency that would market integral tourist products and experiences. The practice established the market model with the support of 35 local communities and more than 100 other tourism stakeholders. In sum, key success factors, in this case, were a lot of untapped potential in tourism in the Podravje region, as mentioned above, such as enthusiasm and support of tourist offer providers, the interest of local interest groups, and support of local communities. As part of the project, marketing was initially focused on the geographical areas covered by the 6 involved local action groups, but now the agency operates more widely.

The agency's purpose is to raise the tourism visibility of the region and the marketing of the tourist offer, where the emphasis is on smaller, boutique providers who do not know how or do not have the capacities and capabilities to market themselves. This brings added value both for local communities and for other tourism stakeholders. Tourist packages have been designed for different target groups and include many tourist experiences, including different providers.

Some local communities financially support the agency's activities up to the level of losses in the initial period of operations. Due to procedural restrictions, the agency did not initially register as a social enterprise. Still, in practice, it operates according to the principles of social entrepreneurship (e.g., joint decision-making by partners, reinvesting money back into the company, inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g., the guide is a person with a disability), and enabling inclusion in the provision of tourism to those with fewer opportunities (e.g., tourist providers in remote areas, lack of competences for own marketing).

This example of good practice solves a wide regional problem, recognized by municipalities, tourist stakeholders, and other regional organizations. It aligns with local and national strategies to boost the social economy and local tourism offer.

Resources Needed:

The total investment cost is 22,000 EUR, covering items such as designing tourist packages, office equipment, and an online platform. The monthly operating costs are 19,000 EUR, which include marketing, rent, and one permanent employee. There is also the option of online sales without a physical office.

Potential for Transfer:

Such a model of marketing the local offer is suitable for regions where (local) tourism is underdeveloped, interest in designing and commercializing tourist offers exists, and profit is not the first priority. Instead, increasing the recognition of the destination is the first priority. First, it is necessary to analyze the terrain and tourist potential, connect serious potential providers in a joint offer, and agree on mutual relations and goals. The most difficult part is the terrain analysis because it is time-consuming and expensive.

Good practices can be implemented in rural areas without a dominant tourist entry point, and people do not want mass tourism. As a rule, smaller providers with a unique story are included in the model, so tourist packages are also designed in a condensed area named after local communities. The concept envisages added value for various stakeholders in a given local community as some visitors explore the places themselves.

Based on the use of the model that good practice foresees, the visibility of the region and those local communities that invest in tourism and development also increases indirectly.



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