



Minute of the Final Board Review Meeting for European Social Fund co-financed projects

Bucharest

19 March 2014, 11:00 – 13:00hrs

The development context within which the country programme operates has suffered important changes due to Romania's accession as an EU member state in 2007. This "new partnership model" between Romania and UNDP allowed Romania to transit from a recipient country towards a donor role in development cooperation.

UNDP was to support representatives of national central and local public authorities and civil society to formulate and implement projects with funding made available to Romania through EU funded operational programs mechanism such as the (ESF). This was aimed order to simultaneously provide technical substantive support toward the reduction of social disparities and to help speed up the implementation rate for such funds. This convening role became a useful tool aimed at reducing social exclusion while at the same time applying democratic and inclusive practices for protecting the rights of citizens' especially vulnerable groups highly exposed to long term poverty.

The current CPAP 2010 -2012 with the remaining projects is to be implemented until June 2015. On the programmatic side, UNDP is aiming for a meaningful impact at the national level, promotion of legislative changes with the added value being to provide a platform for participatory and democratic discussions.

Part of the evaluation plan included in the Country Programme Document, this meeting focused primarily on the main results, challenges and lessons learnt during the implementation of three ESF projects which ended their operational activities at 28th of February 2014. UNDP implemented also another ESF project which on promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility which ended in the spring of 2013. The projects produced

excellent sustainable results, fruitful and efficient public-private partnerships were developed and even though there were difficulties and delays concerning the reimbursement requests, the social impact of these projects has been meaningful at the policy level but also for the local communities.

In this final board review meeting participated the project teams, implementing partners, as well as representatives from the line ministries which contributed to the successful implementation of these projects: Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly; Ministry of European Funds and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With the ESF - Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013 programme (POSDRU) being taken over by the Ministry of European Funds (MFE) in March 2014, the ministry representatives assured all present that efforts are currently being made so that reimbursements will be processed and scrutinized faster, with simplified procedures and more efficient communication. The overall strategy is to launch new calls that will cover unfulfilled needs, such as the voucher system for the qualification of the vulnerable groups.

The MFE representatives stated that in March –April 2014 all reimbursement requests that have already been submitted will be solved and also expressed their openness to feedback and interest in collecting best practices that ultimately could be incorporated in the new guide for key areas of intervention, including 6.1 “Development of Social Inclusion” for ESF – POSDRU.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a significant role in coordinating the Ministry of European Funds and Ministry of Labor support for solving the difficulties and delays in the reimbursement requests projects and requested once more their cooperation and full support for finalizing smoothly the remaining reimbursement requests.

The projects results, lessons learnt and main challenges are shortly listed below.

I. ESF PROJECT: THE RETURN OF FORMER CONVICTS TO THE LABOUR MARKET AND THEIR INTEGRATION IN SOCIETY

Implementation period: 1st of March 2011 – 28 February 2014

Total budget: 14,005,228 RON (PNUD – 4,205,228 RON)

Partners: National Administration of Penitentiaries (ANP) - beneficiary
West University of Timisoara,

National School of Political and Administrative Sciences
Calarasi Regional Center for Adult Vocational Training

Website: www.suntemprodusulmediului.ro

Assets: It has been agreed that project assets will be transferred to the beneficiary (ANP);

Priority axis: Operational Programme Human Resources Development (POSDRU)
Priority Axis 6 'Promoting social inclusion'

Key Area of Intervention: DMI 6.2 'Improving access and participation of vulnerable groups in the labor market'

Main objective: Support the reintegration of former convicts into society and the labor market

Specific objectives:

- Conduct a study and recommendations to improve the legislative and administrative framework to facilitate the inclusion of prisoners and former prisoners;
- Developing a pilot instruction system of the inmates on trades and ecological occupations and of the correction staff on issues of communication and conflict management;
- Promoting social integration of former convicts and eliminating prejudices and stereotypes that hinder social inclusion;

Activities:

Results

1. Comparative analysis and development of an integrated inter-institutional mechanism to promote social inclusion.	8 European social inclusion models analyzed; 2 models of good practice; 2 visits to exchange experiences; 2 consultative workshops; final study recommendations – 3000 copies 300 copies of the financial impact analysis
2. Developing training centres	Modern training center available for prisoners and staff supervisor
3. Develop training packages for prisoners and supervisors and providing training for inmates	At least 80 inmates trained in animal husbandry, crop production worker and beekeeper; At least 28 inmates trained in weaving reed, Construction worker wood, adobe, stone; At least 200 inmates trained in "Education for reintegration into society" Developed 2 training modules for staff

	officers supervisor and trainers in communication and conflict management; Developed 1 training module for officers trained to improve teaching skills;
4. Providing training for trainers and supervisors of prison officers	At least 860 agents and supervisors trained in Communication Means of resolution of conflicts; 2 study visits abroad and 30 views in the country of 15 agents trained;
5. Promoting social integration of former inmates	8 regional seminars; Over 500 participants; 3 meetings with employers, employment agencies, representatives of labor and NGO; 1 national conference; Over 50 media items; Participation in 2 TV shows; 100 billboards; 2 TV spots and two radio spots; Two documentaries; 500 promotional material distributed during regional seminars; 500 copies of the textbook success stories;

Challenges and best practices

- Complexity of the project with 5 institutional partners, (ANP: beneficiary), (UNDP: Project management responsibility);
- Bureaucracy and permanently change of POSDRU implementing rules;
- Creating a solid inter-institutional partnership at the governmental level to promote a national strategy on reintegration of former prisoners;
- The experienced project team achieved the objectives undertaken and obtained results whose application will ensure sustainability of the project;
- The education courses for social integration had a major impact on inmates in most prisons in the country;
- Implementation of the first awareness campaign for reintegration of former convicts: TV spots and radio, TV and radio show dedicated outdoor, regional and local seminars, publications;

The training experts cooperated with all partners involved for the preparation of the training materials, including with the social workers in the penitentiaries.

II. ESF PROJECT: SOCIAL ECONOMY MODEL IN ROMANIA

Implementation period: 1 March 2011 – 28 February 2014

Budget: 10.297.124, 68 RON (PNUD - 5.878.754, 74 RON), spent over 70%

Partners: Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi - partner

Asociația Alternative Sociale - beneficiary

The Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest -partner

United Nations Development Programme Romania -partner

Website: www.profitpentruoameni.ro

Assets: It has been agreed that the assets will be taken under temporary custody by the social economy incubators which at a later stage will be transferred to the beneficiary.

Priority axis: Operational Programme Human Resources Development (POSDRU)

Priority Axis 6: "Promoting social inclusion"

Key Area of Intervention: DMI 6.1 "Development of social economy"

Main objective: Building strategic capacity of the social economy sector to support economic growth and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups

Target groups: - Disadvantaged groups (Roma people, people with disabilities, young people over 18 who are leaving the child protection system, the minimum income guaranteed beneficiaries)

- Specialists in social economy and social inclusion
- Journalists
- Decision makers
- General public

Romania has still a very low acceptance rate towards social economy and to tackle this Ministry of Education could provide support. The innovative feature of this project was the research component with two developed reports: one opening research with baseline data and a final research report with recommendations on social economy. One of the main results of the project was that it has contributed significantly to the clarification of the social economy concept, given that the module POSDRU (6.1 axe) was launched without a clear-cut description of the social economy and without a precise specification of the eligible entities as main beneficiaries. The definition of social economy launched within the opening research report was partially included in the last version of the draft of the law on social economy. Thus one of the project recommendations is that all social economy entities to be

included in the next strategies. The results of this project should be posted on a social economy portal, an undertaking which could be under the leadership of the European Commission's mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation the results of ESF co-financed projects.

There was a strong partnership with the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, who co-organized two important meetings on public debate of the draft law on social economy in December 2011 and November 2013. A main outcome of this project was the social economy bid which has passed the Government approval and the Competition Council and is now for approval in the Parliament. Another recommendation was that as an incentive, the social economy enterprises must be offered fiscal facilities as well as support from the legal, institutional and social perspectives.

The development of human resources has been an significant component in the project, during which over 500 people from civil society and local government have been trained in the social economy through seminars, exchanges, training of "training of trainers" summer school; Additionally two post-graduate courses in social economy at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza University" of Iasi and "Academy of Economic Studies" of Bucharest - 84 graduates;

The project has provided financial and procedural support to entrepreneurs available in a rich array of publications:

- Models of social enterprises for Roma
- Models of social enterprises for beneficiaries of minimum income guaranteed
- Models of social enterprises for people with disabilities
- Models of social enterprises for young people over 18 who leave the child protection system
- Guidelines for establishing social enterprises for Roma
- Guidelines for establishing social enterprises for beneficiaries of minimum income guaranteed
- Guidelines for establishing social enterprises for people with disabilities
- Guidelines for establishing social enterprises for young people over 18 who leave the child protection system

But also instruments for specialists in social economy: Journal of Social Economy, Guide on social economy best practices and the training materials available in the post-graduate course on social economy at the two above mentioned universities.

During the project several structures of social economy have been developed:

- The Resource Center on Social Economy (Iasi), which will continue its activity after the end of the project;
- Social Economy Incubator Centre Development Region, (Sfantu Gheorghe) with 2 newly established enterprises, 7 enterprises which benefited from technical assistance and 8 new work places established;
- Social Economy Incubator North-East Development Region (Bacau) with 1 newly established enterprise, 6 enterprises which benefited from technical assistance, and 5 new work places established;
- Social Economy Incubator South-West Development Region (Craiova) with 2 newly established enterprises, 5 enterprises which benefited from technical assistance, and 5 new work places established;

The project has brought together 16 UNDP experts and 8 experts in social economy, and has created the largest online library of social economy in Romania, available on www.profitpentruoameni.ro. As innovatory element, the recommendation research report listed all 107 Romanian volumes dedicated to social economy. But it has also promoted the development and implementation of social economy in Romania by creating a network of specialists in the social economy, social inclusion and people interested in these areas.

The media campaign was very rich with radio and outdoor broadcasts:

Radio - broadcast nationally on Pro FM (November 5th 2012-7 December 2012) and locally on Pro FM Craiova, Bacau and Pro FM Radio Brasov - coverage in Saint George (January 21, 2013 - 28th February 2013). According to figures from media agency, it is estimated that a total of approximately 3,700,000 people have heard the spot at least once.

Outdoor - In Bacau were placed 74 billboards, in Craiova 104 panels and Sfantu Gheorghe 23 panels.

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Project complexity, inflexibility and bureaucracy of POSDRU rules created difficulties in implementation, modification rules (i.e. Defining indicators and target groups to be achieved) generated during the implementation difficulties in achieving the indicators stipulated, however due to the efforts of the partnership, more than 90 % of indicators have been met , some have even been exceeded .
- UNDP's previous experience and partnerships in the development of business incubators have massively supported and allowed the creation of sustainable social economy structures in three development regions;

- UNDP office network has made possible the use and dissemination of international experience at the national level;
- Positive report of UNDP with the line ministries (i.e. Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, etc.) facilitated communication with them and for developing inter-institutional dialogue and advance the social economy bill;
- Participation of representatives of disadvantaged target groups, local and central government, social economy entities and the private sector has been an important pillar in validating and ensuring sustainability of project results;
- The involvement of qualified human resources has been transposed in quality tools developed.

III. ESF PROJECT: SOCIAL ECONOMY – A SOLUTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA

Implementation period: 1 March 2011 – 28 February 2014

Budget: 4, 079, 203. 94 RON

Partners: Foundation Center for Institutional Analysis and Development (CADI) – Beneficiary
 United Nations Development Programme
 Roma Civic Alliance of Romania
 Department of Interethnic Relations, Romanian Government

Assets: the project assets have been agreed to be transferred to the beneficiary (CADI).

Target group: Roma communities in Romania, non-governmental organizations and local authorities have a role in the development and implementation of projects / programs / policies that address the needs of Roma communities.

Priority axis: Operational Programme Human Resources Development (POS DRU)
 Priority Axis 6: “Promoting social inclusion”

Key Area of Intervention: DMI 6.1 “Development of social economy”

The project used an implementation strategy consisting of technical and financial assistance for the development of social economy initiatives, supporting institutional development and coordination among key actors in the social economy (NGOs, government, private sector).

Activities	Results
1. Analysis of the applicability of practices of social in the context of social inclusion strategies of Roma people in Romania	1 situation analysis report 1 guide to setting up social economy models for Roma communities in Romania.
2. Support the development of social economy initiatives	1 compendium of business ideas; Support to setting up 2 social enterprises in Roma communities.
3. promoting social economy in Roma communities	3 forums on social economy with over 350 participants representing local and central authorities, civil society, the business community; 6 regional seminars (Bacau, Cluj-Napoca, Calarasi, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Oradea, Targu Mures) with 164 experts in social inclusion certified ANC as social entrepreneurs; 4 specialized trainings with 82 Roma people certified ANC in sales; 1 final conference; 1 media campaign.

Socio-demographic context:

In 2011, 619 007 people have identified themselves as Roma (representing 3.25% of total population). The Roma population is young, about two thirds (66.8%) were under 30 years. Active population (15-64 years) is 60.3%. Distribution by gender: 50.7% - men, 49.3% - women.

Poverty is present at the individual, family and community. Half of the Roma population in Romania is in absolute poverty, 4 times more than the majority of the population.

Poor communities are considered not only those in which the population is chronically poor, and economic potential and infrastructure are lacking. The rate of employment in the group of 15-64 years is approx. 30%, with significant differences between men and women (19% of women and 42% of men are employed in jobs).

Challenges in developing models of social economy:

- Major deprivation affecting Roma communities which determine their preference towards short-term earnings;
- The isolated location of certain Roma communities;
- Limited access to a range of resources;
- Lack of qualified personnel with expertise in implementing projects for Roma;
- Low interest in formalizing income generating activities, especially because it would require a substantial increase of costs for maintaining a company;
- An unsuitable approach of Roma communities, without special regard to their specific socio-economic and cultural differences.

Opportunities in developing models of social economy:

- The existence of national rich experiences in implementing community development projects in Roma communities;
- The existence of public institutional structures that deal at county and local level with Roma issues;
- Existence of public assistance and community assistance services.

Conditions for development of the social economy:

- Proper development of the legislative framework;
- Access to funding;
- Ensuring product and service quality offered by the social enterprises;
- Improving the skills and employment;
- Develop technical capacity for implementing income generating activities;
- Development of cooperation and support networks

Challenges

- A limited understanding of what the social economy represent and the use of a complex set of concepts in defining the social economy. To reduce the variance due to these issues, the project team focused and used during the design concepts of social entrepreneurship and social business.

- Limited local initiatives regarding social inclusion and the different agendas of the institutions on Roma issues.
- Compliance extremely bureaucratic procedures HRD and interest while maintaining quality partners on getting results and making a positive impact on the target group (local authorities and Roma communities).

Lessons learnt

There are three main factors which limit the socio-economic development of Roma communities:

- 1) Residential segregation (in rural and urban communities)
- 2) The existence of limited economic opportunities,
- 3) Limited access to funding and financing.

To promote the social economy in Roma communities in Romania, it is relevant to consider:

- developing a supportive legal framework
- support community development
- creation of services / systems support for the social economy

Social economy can be promoted in an integrated manner, together with improvements in infrastructure and fiscal facilities.

Moreover it was specified that the professional schools may be linked to the idea of social economy.

Overall recommendations and lessons learnt

With over 150 years' experience in social economy, Romania has still a very low acceptance rate towards social economy and to tackle this it is recommended that the Ministry of Education would provide support. The most vulnerable groups do not benefit from fiscal facilities, lack opportunities to access information and to obtain financial support for the development of small entrepreneurial initiatives etc.

The three ESF projects brought several innovative features namely on the research components, partnership development and sustainability of the projects through the national ownership of the projects' results.

The projects on social economy contributed significantly to the clarification of the social economy definition with the clear recommendation that the future POSDRU programmes should address all social economy entities. The results of these projects should be posted on

a social economy portal, an undertaking which could be under the leadership of the European Commission's mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. The project on reintegration of former convicts into society and labor market has created a significant impact through the legislative recommendations and development of a pilot instruction system on trades and ecological occupations that would facilitate the inclusion of prisoners and former prisoners, as well as training of correction staff on communication and conflict management, sustainable results which will continue to be fructified by the implementing partner – The National Administration of Penitentiaries.

All projects have produced excellent outputs and UNDP office network has made possible the use and dissemination of international experience and best practices at national level. They have been built on previous success stories on promoting social inclusion which has helped achieve 100% of the proposed indicators for all projects and in some cases they have even been exceeded.

The UNDP procurement exercise has made it possible to recruit excellently qualified experts which played a major role in the development of quality tools and building success stories.

The projects actively engaged representatives of disadvantaged target groups, local and central government, social inclusion entities and the private sector which has been an important pillar in validating and ensuring sustainability of project results.

Excellent and efficient partnerships have been developed with the line Ministries (i.e. Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice, Agriculture, Development, etc) which played a significant role in fostering the development changes through adoption of legislative bids (i.e. Social economy) as well as adoption of national strategies developed in the project (i.e adoption of national strategy on reintegration of former convicts by the National Administration of Penitentiaries). The lessons learnt in these projects have been recorded in a wide array of publications which were distributed to the stakeholders and are available for the large public online and in print formats. Moreover they will play a significant role for the planning of next development interventions through valuable research, best practices and lessons learnt.

There were also significant challenges which were related to the bureaucracy, inflexibility, and constant and retrospective modifications of POSDRU procedures which have been quite strenuous on the project teams. The Ministry of European Funds has emphasized their commitment to simplify procedures, openness for feedback and efficient communication.

The added value brought by UNDP was the *focus on impact, coordination* with other partners that implement similar actions and *advocacy* to policy makers for an enabling environment for social economy. Through participative meetings with the social economy entities and decision makers, the aimed result is to foster significant improvements to the next programmatic interventions (2014 -2017) and ultimately the desired impact at a systemic level.

Final Board Review Meeting pentru proiectele ESF

Participants list, 19 Martie, 11:00 – 13:00

MINISTRIES

Name	Institution	Position	Signature
Dl. Bebe Ciobotaru	Ministerul Afacerilor Externe	DONUISF	
Dna. Olivia Rusandu	Ministerul Muncii	Manager Public	
Dna. Camelia Baiculescu	Ministerul Fondurilor Europene	Expert	
Dna. Mirela Cosovan	Ministerul Fondurilor Europene	Consilier	

ESF PROJECT: THE RETURN OF FORMER CONVICTS TO THE LABOUR MARKET AND THEIR INTEGRATION IN SOCIETY

Name	Institution	Position	Signature
Dl. Cristi Plesa	Administratia Nationala a Penitenciarelor		
Dl. Mihai Moia	PNUD	Coordonator de proiect	
Dl. Adrian Ciuraru	PNUD	Expert raportare	

ESF PROJECT: SOCIAL ECONOMY MODEL IN ROMANIA

Name	Institution	Position	Signature
Dna. Simona Stanescu	Institutul de Cercetare a Calității Vieții, Academia Română	Expert economie sociala	
Dl. Marius Neacsu	Academia de Studii Economice	Coordonator Activitati	
Dna. Alina Bocai	PNUD	Coordonator de proiect	
Dl. Dorian Ilie	PNUD	Asistent Comunicare si PR	

ESF PROJECT: SOCIAL ECONOMY – A SOLUTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA COMMUNITIES IN ROMANIA

Name	Institution	Position	Signature
Dna. Rodica Precupetu	Programe si Relatii cu societatea civila si institutiile internationale, DRI	Sef Serviciu	
Dna. Catalina Serban	PNUD	Coordonator de proiect	
Dna. Mihaela Ghinescu	PNUD	Coordonator Comunicare	

PNUD

Name

Dna. Monica
Moldovan
Dna. Nicoleta
Dumitru

Institution

PNUD

PNUD

Position

Director de programe

Asistent programe

Signature