

The Multi-regional Operational Programme to combat discrimination

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1. A brief background on social exclusion in Slovenia

In order to make a comparison of the OPCD carried out in Spain to possibilities of transferring it to the project relating social inclusion in Slovenia, we should first overview the situation in the field of social differences and possible discrimination threats in Slovenia.

In the last two decades, Slovenia has experienced not only fast economic development but also growing regional and human differences.

Regional differentiations have worked in favour of areas with good infrastructure conditions, educated labour force and well-developed service activities. Capital flows to such regions increased and, due to a growing demand for labour force, migration flows also occurred. Systematically, such regions usually undergo integrated development that enables their transformation into demographic and economic agglomerations and that was the case of central and western Slovenia. On the other hand, this type of development brings about the information of the so-called deprived regions, which shows very low values of socio-economic parameters (Eastern Slovenia). Functionally, less developed regions become dependant on more developed regions and state structures, which have to tackle the consequences of regional differences. Consequently, free market forces increased regional differences in all segment of the society. Differences in the income per capita, rates, high levels of unemployment, migrations, unfavourable age structure of the population, as well as environmental degradation and general development problems. On the basis of indicators related to the economic structure of the regions, settlement characteristics, demographic structure and social environment, we can describe the socio-economic profile of the population and determine a threat of social exclusion. There are four major most vulnerable groups we can stress out according to socio-economic threats:

- Unemployed (structural unemployment is especially problematic):
 - long-term unemployed;
 - under qualified unemployed;
 - young unemployed;
 - older unemployed;
 - unemployed women.
- Immigrants (mostly from other parts of former Yugoslav republic);
- National minorities (Roma);
- Disabled and handicapped.

Facing threats:

- Difficult access to the labour market;
- Difficult access to education and training, higher number of school dropout;
- Facing intolerance of the prevailing domestic population;
- Facing intolerance because of the handicap or other kind of differences.

1.1 National development strategy

Slovenian national development strategy is recognising and accepts the above-mentioned problems as a priority development actions in the second priority objective of EPD (National Programme Document), also to be achieved with four measures co-financed through ESF:

Table 1: National development strategies

| National development strategy objectives | Measures co-financed through ESF |
|--|---|
| Making better conditions for employment | Development and strengthening different employment policies |
| Reduce structural discrepancies | Encouraging and promoting social inclusion |
| Reduce regional differences | Life long education |
| Ensuring equal opportunities | Stimulate entrepreneurship and adjustability |

1.2 Transferability of the OPCD, similarities and differences

There are of course several strong similarities and parallels that can be drawn comparing the Fourth plan of Social Inclusion (2006 – 2008) and its five global objectives and objectives set in Slovenian development strategies: similar objectives, similar target groups, similar exclusion threats that are recognised in Slovenian society. With encouraging and promoting social inclusion, Slovenia has recognised the need to address the most vulnerable social groups through different actions in order to make them more competitive in entering labour market as well as to prevent discrimination. There are two major fields of implementation that could be the case of transfer and implementation in Slovenia. The first one is operational programme dealing with Roma population, mostly the way that the problem has been approached, organisational methodology of the programme and evaluation results. The second one is programme dealing with immigrants.

However, what is perhaps most important, is the organisational approach and structure of the programme implementation involving non-government organisation in the scale of managing the programme, not just in the matter of implementation of the programme but also financially.

Another important question that arises is the operational structure of the programme.

Since Slovenia has different geographical characteristics than Spain and there are obvious differences in development of urban and rural areas in Slovenia, it would be interesting to know, how the programme was planned and which were the mechanisms that enable the programme to be spatially efficient and to address different regions?

2. The role of third sector and non-government organisations in the ESF in Slovenia

At this point we can stress out the question of what should be the role that non-government organisation should have in implementing the programs in the social sphere. The case of Spain OPCD has set standards that could be the key model for recruiting civil society both as the initiators of the programs, managing authority and beneficiaries of ESF. What added value is there to this kind of implementation? The fact is that NGOs have more experience and special knowledge, are more flexible and adjustable, they can reach each individual and can provide empowerment. As the third sector they are closest to the civil society, therefore they can also recognise and detect problems much more profound. Can this model be transferred to the case of Slovenia? What kind of conditions should there exist for the NGOs to take part in managing their own financial programs?

Slovenia has a long and strong tradition of gathering people to different associations mostly connected with culture and church, later also political connotation and national importance emerged. In the year 2004 there were 20.000 non-profit associations registered. However more profound look in the situation reveals different understanding.

Table 2: NGOs and employees

| TYPE | NUMBER | N. EMPLOYEES |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Non – profit societies, associations of people | 20.000 registered (4.000 active) | 3.800 |
| Foundations, church and other humanitarian organisations | 250 | Not available data |
| Companies for disabled | 150 | 13.000 (6.000 disabled) |
| Co-operatives | 534 | 4.530 |
| Private non-profit institutes | 250 | 5300 |
| Temporary public works projects | 1200 | |

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With a high number of organisations registered we have to stress out that only around 4000 (25%) of them are active. Approximately half of them are active because of interest of their members and not exclusive for the public benefit. The potential of NGOs for the alternative production of common welfare and public good is therefore smaller in regard of the number of non-profit organisation registered in the country. The majority of organisations are active in the field of sport (arr. 28%), voluntary fireman associations (arr. 12%), culture (12%), environment and animal protection (arr. 6%), social welfare (3%). There is also big difference in regard of rural and urban areas. Rural areas are host of associations connected with process of connecting people, while in urban areas the type of classical NGOs is more present – dealing with human rights, environmental issues and culture. However, there is an estimation that the NGO sector in

Slovenia is not developed enough especially in the field of human rights and civil society, perhaps two of the most important sectors dealing with discrimination.

Estimations are that around 85% of non-profit organisations in Slovenia have non full time employed, only 4.9% have 1 full time employed, 3 % have full time employed and 6,8 % more than 2 employees. Compared to other countries where the percentage of employed in the non-government sector is arr. 3.4 %, we have only arr. 1 %. Non-governmental sector is therefore also a big "reservoir" for employment policies and creation of jobs. For qualitative work expected from the NGOs and in order to be an important and equal partner with government organisations in developing the third sector, the non-government organisations should fulfil several conditions the most important one being to assure the satisfactory human resources. The lack of professional human resources can slow down the development process and threaten the already existing programs.

There are not enough non-government initiatives to associate and provide strong (financially and with satisfactory human resources) associations in order to establish strong and independent bottom up approach to implement social inclusion programs. The estimation is that there are perhaps not more than three non-government associations at this moment and with this legislation background, capable to implement bigger project to assure objectives of the national strategies by their own financial investment in the project (as it was the case in OPCD Spain programme) – Red Cross, Caritas, confederations of different Unions, as there are foundations still in development process.

2.1 Legislation background and financing of NGOs

An overview of the legal framework related to the development of social enterprises (as well as of non profit organisations) and integration of weak groups in Slovenia shows that many Slovenian laws (such as acts on employment, rehabilitation and employment of disabled, business support environment, balanced regional development and even agriculture and rural development) at least indirectly tackle the field of social entrepreneurship and thus offer place to implement socially orientated initiatives. However, there is still not any explicit mentioning of active social integration of weak groups in any of the above-mentioned laws. There are three laws, which define the status scale (organisation scale and the principle of work) of citizen societies and associations, cooperatives, companies for the disabled, private funded non-profit institutes, foundations, mutual funds etc.: Society Act, Institute Act, Cooperatives Act.

Society Act and the Cooperative Act explicitly introduce the elements of social economy with the main purpose of maximising the common benefits. They explicitly introduce voluntary work and also provide the possibility that societies establish new forms of enterprises.

The Institute Act provides possibility to carry out economic activities on a non-profit basis and to develop activities, products and services meeting the needs of local communities.

Tax legislation also provides some benefits for societies, associations, and institutes. However there is constant effort of NGOs to achieve change of tax legislation as far as donations and sponsorship is concerned. There should be more stimulating environment in this direction for

NGOs to provide more permanent financial input and stability in order to participate financial share to the stronger and larger programmes.

With this kind of law and better tax legislations there could be better conditions provided for NGOs to become a relevant partner in social policy creation process by not only performing projects and being an eligible beneficiary of Structural Funds through the different governmental managed programmes, but also becoming a managing authority of funds. It is also important to reduce dependency on the mainstream policy by reducing financial dependency from the government financial sources and by doing that achieving more powerful and independent position in influencing the policy creation.

In the last few years, also with the implementation of the ESF in Slovenia, the new approach occurred in order to make the third sector more important as a social partner and in order to reorganise it and thus make it more flexible. It is the arising process of social economy and social entrepreneurship trying to combine socially orientated organisations and entrepreneurship.

2.2. Implementation of national development strategy and the position of NGO

In order to achieve and implement the objectives set in the strategy report Slovenia has undertaken several measures on national and local level regarding fulfilling the objectives of employment policy and equal opportunities. There is a national level programme of Active employment policy, managed by the Employment Agency, which provides counselling, training for the unemployed. There are several programmes of education, training, business counselling, running especially in rural areas, managed by Developing agencies (established by local communities), financed through different programmes at national or European level. All these activities can on one hand represent parallel activities to already existing activities carried out by the non-government organisations, and on the other hand, this parallel activity puts non-governmental organisation in a rather non-competitive position as they have to compete with governmental organisations for funds on calls. As the NGOs can not manage the programme financially they seek partnership with government institutions. The question here is weather by doing so, they loose the "sharpness" and reputation of critical stand against the mainstream policy and therefore address the right problems in the society.

2.3. Example of ESF project

Community Initiative Programme EQUAL, financed from the European Social Fund is a part of the EU strategy to establish more and better jobs and assure easier access to labour market. With partnership cooperation it encourages new ways of combating discrimination and inequality in labour market.

Taking into consideration the short programming period, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social affairs as a managing authority decided to limit the CIP Equal in Slovenia to four out of nine measures: Measure 1 (Employability), Measure 5 (Adaptability), Measure 8 (Equal Opportunities), Measure 9 (Supporting the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers).

2.3.1 Development partnership Roma Educational and Information Centre

Development partnership Roma Educational and Information Centre joins all the crucial actors from the area of the Roma policy of Slovenia, especially in the north-eastern regional of Slovenia. Mostly it includes public institutions, such as schools, municipalities and employment service. The main purpose of the partnership is inclusion of the Roma in educational system, especially kindergartens and schools.

The main goal of the partnership was based on the »Strategy of education and quality help for the Roma children in Slovenia«, which explicitly mentions the need for quality help to the Roma children in schools and kindergartens. Therefore the main goals of the DP was establishment of professional workers called Roma mentors, which will offer help in education, language and will represent a bridge between the parents and pedagogical staff.

The target group of the projects was the young Roma people, who have finished high school education and have the affinity to exercise pedagogical profession. Additionally the project focused also on the Roma children, their parents and pedagogical workers, who also gained certain knowledge regarding the Roma culture.

The project finishes on 28 October 2007 and has achieved to establish a national professional qualification for Roma coordinator and Roma assistant. These coordinators and assistants had professional training and education and are now helping in educating and employing the Roma people. A part from that the coordinators and assistants are also very active in schools, raising the awareness regarding to Roma culture and helping to Roma pupils and students. In this way the inclusion of the Roma children has increased and their success in school improved. Additionally also the communication between the parents of the Roma children and teachers improved.

2.3.2. K.U.P.O.L.A. development partnership

K.U.P.O.L.A. development partnership was established in 2004, it is supported by Ministry for Labour, Family and Social Affairs and Community Initiative Programme EQUAL within of the ESF. The partnership was initiated and organised by the Union for Unemployed Persons of Slovenia and ties together seven different non-government organisation. The structure of the partnership was created with the purpose of providing long term structures and mechanisms in order to help long term unemployed persons, elderly unemployed, young unemployed (first time job seekers), unemployed women (especially single mothers), handicapped people. The operative approach of the partnership was quite innovative as it didn't try to represent a classical employment agency but has created dynamic model which allowed unemployed persons to be an active member of it with a role of counsellor and informer (UP for UP – Unemployed Persons for Unemployed Persons). Additionally, a diagnostic model was created for the unemployed person to recognise and discover their needs and potentials and to be included in the programmes developed by organisations in the partnership.

The main goals of the K.U.P.O.L.A. DP model were to:

- create a network of informers recruit form the unemployed persons;
- prevent social exclusion on the personal level as there was potential of exclusion due to the loss of employment;
- design at least three new programmes for activate potentials of unemployed persons as to make them more competitive in the labour market, active and innovative – socially included;
- promote voluntary work as social inclusion factor and as a opportunity in employment process;
- create multidisciplinary diagnostic laboratory for unemployed persons;
- design new model for measuring and implementing social capital;
- create fundamentals for new professional standard;
- empowerment of the programme;
- make propositions for policy making.