

Social Innovation in Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonia

By Poraka Nova

When elaborating the concept of social innovation and social entrepreneurship, it is fundamental to give answer to the questions: What is social innovation? What is social enterprise? Who are social innovators and entrepreneurs? Social innovation is a topic, which can optimally adapt to our needs, because it is a combination of passion for a social mission with an image of business as discipline. So, analogous to this, social enterprises treat new models of working with social objectives. Social enterprises still aren't treated as special type in the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian economy, even though many economies, globally, give these business models special distinction.

Although the terms social innovation and social entrepreneurship are new, the phenomenon isn't. Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonia has always had social entrepreneurs, even though they didn't use the name. These social enterprises intensively attract the attention of government representatives because, through their work, they help to increase equality and social cohesion in Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian society. For the most part, social enterprises in Europe are SMEs, and we know that those are the driving force of economies in development, as it is in the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian economy.

The Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian Government identified the importance of creating this kind of enterprises to achieve reduction of unemployment and sustainable development of GDP. That's why, in August 2011, the Committee for entrepreneurship and innovations was established, whose priorities are the improvement of the competitiveness of the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian economy, as well as improvement of employment and economic activity through development of entrepreneurial spirit, especially by young people. Members of the Committee are the ministers for economy, health, informatics, public administration, education and science, attraction of foreign investors, agriculture and forestry, and also representatives from the business sector and the sciences.

They will work on opportunities for financial assistance and improvement of the Regulation Framework for the development of SMEs. They will also work for the improvement of entrepreneurial skills; for connecting social enterprises with universities and innovators; for implementation of projects for research and development; for support of the commercialization of innovations; for implementations of new technologies, and for other similar activities. In this way the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonia is creating a strategy for the development of innovations, which is in final phase of development.

The Committee created separate working teams which will work on creating measures and activities for improvement of the conditions in various areas which are evaluated by the Global Innovation Index, which are general improvement of the system for entrepreneurship and innovation in the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonia. In July, 2012, SEECCEL was invited to present in the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian parliament discussion on entrepreneurial learning. SEECCEL director presented the scope of SEECCEL's work to a range of Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonian stakeholders in the field of entrepreneurial learning and particularly focused on the active role and contribution that the Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonia has in SEECCEL.

The Former Yougoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Joint Research Centre by the EU, in September 2012, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in various scientific areas, with an aim to develop the institutional collaboration in the fields of energy and environment, climate change, health and protection of the consumers—also including the food safety, nanotechnology, biotechnology and natural disasters. The representative of the JRC highlighted the importance of investing in knowledge, innovations, creative potential and people curious for new challenges— not only investing in technology, but also in social

innovation. He said that investing in people and creativity is the best way of spending the money, where he presented the EU programmes for innovation, as Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, Erasmus, and others.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between the EU and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for participation of the country in the PROGRESS Programme. One of the general objectives of the programme is to promote employment and social inclusion by increasing the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises and by increasing access to finance for social enterprises.

There is an initiative of the European Commission, European Investment Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, for improvement and enlargement of the access to finances for innovative enterprises, presented in the project "Platform for development of enterprises and innovation". This is a joint project for the Western Balkan countries, and it is expected that the platform will begin to work in the first quarter of 2013.

Until now, CSOs are those who were mostly involved and created projects and solutions that could be defined as socially innovative.

Until very recently, in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia organizing efforts for developing and improving the capacities for social innovation and entrepreneurship were very limited. Compared to this, in the private sector the business entrepreneurship was and still is the biggest driving force for development.

For more information from the author of this summary please contact:

PORAKA NOVA

Address: Vlado Maleski bb, 6330 Struga, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Tel./fax: +389(0)46786045

e-mail: poraka.struga@gmail.com

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/socialinnovationeurope/directory/organisation/poraka-nova>

Contact person: Anita Gagovska, Project Manager

+389(0)78836124

For more information on social innovation in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, please follow the link to the country summary on social innovation in the western Balkans prepared by our international Country Partners at the Social Innovation Lab.