



PR1 Inspirational package

University of Primorska

Rural Women's Empowerment
through Green Social
Entrepreneurship in SLOVENIA



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PR1 –
WEGREEN Inspirational package

**Rural Women's Empowerment through Green Social
Entrepreneurship in SLOVENIA**

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National context

This report presents national context of rural women's empowerments through green social entrepreneurship in Slovenia. It is based on the information obtained from desk review, collected secondary data, conducted five interviews and collected information from focus group. In-depth interviews with educators are based on the pre-prepared semi-structured questionnaire (Petrescu, 2022), while an in-depth review of policies regarding promotion of social entrepreneurship and the development of social enterprises in Slovenia can be find in OECD (2022).

More than a half of the Slovenian families are classified as non-urban confirming the importance of rural areas for living space of the population. As can be seen from Table 1, urban families are a slightly more important for families with no children and families with one child. The absolute and relative importance of urban families substantially declines and at the same time substantially increase for non-urban families with the two and particularly with more children.

Table 1. Families by urban vs. non-urban areas with number of children, 2011

	Families - Total	No children	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children	5 children	6+ children
Total	567347	137674	233084	159555	30633	4863	1091	447
Urban areas	278353	69574	120384	74542	11762	1619	351	121
Non-urban areas	288994	68100	112700	85013	18871	3244	740	326
Share of urban (%)	49.1	50.5	51.6	46.7	38.4	33.3	32.2	27.1
Share of non-urban (%)	50.9	49.5	48.4	53.3	61.6	66.7	67.8	72.9

Source: SORS (2022b).

Among total population aged 15 or more years, there is almost equal percentage of men and women (Table 2). In 2021, more than 56% of them are active, but considerably different according to the gender with a higher participation of men than women. This gender imbalance is coming from higher employed part for men and higher inactive part for women among active population, while there is almost no gender difference for unemployed. Among inactive, participation of pension recipients is considerably higher for women than men, but also higher participation of women than men is among pupils and students, and others.

Table 2. Population aged 15 or more by gender, degree of urbanisation and activity status, 2021

	Population aged 15+ years – Total	Active - Total	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive - Total	Pupils and students	Pension recipients	Others
Total	1791246	1009892	917009	92883	781354	149704	525013	106637
Cities (densely populated areas)	351987	193095	171447	21648	158892	41419	95894	21579
Towns and suburbs (intermediate density areas)	642115	363028	330077	32951	279087	50781	191768	36538
Rural areas (thinly populated areas)	797144	453769	415485	38284	343375	57504	237351	48520
Men	896268	551098	504961	46137	345170	70784	227228	47158
Cities (densely populated areas)	171753	104442	93089	11353	67311	18773	38602	9936
Towns and suburbs (intermediate density areas)	320777	197658	181253	16405	123119	24395	82560	16164
Rural areas (thinly populated areas)	403738	248998	230619	18379	154740	27616	106066	21058
Women	894978	458794	412048	46746	436184	78920	297785	59479
Cities (densely populated areas)	180234	88653	78358	10295	91581	22646	57292	11643
Towns and suburbs (intermediate density areas)	321338	165370	148824	16546	155968	26386	109208	20374
Rural areas (thinly populated areas)	393406	204771	184866	19905	188635	29888	131285	27462
Total (in %)	100.0	56.4	51.2	5.2	43.6	8.4	29.3	6.0
Cities (densely populated areas)	19.7	10.8	9.6	1.2	8.9	2.3	5.4	1.2
Towns and suburbs (intermediate density areas)	35.8	20.3	18.4	1.8	15.6	2.8	10.7	2.0
Rural areas (thinly populated areas)	44.5	25.3	23.2	2.1	19.2	3.2	13.3	2.7

Men (in %)	50.0	30.8	28.2	2.6	19.3	4.0	12.7	2.6
Cities (densely populated areas)	9.6	5.8	5.2	0.6	3.8	1.0	2.2	0.6
Towns and suburbs (intermediate density areas)	17.9	11.0	10.1	0.9	6.9	1.4	4.6	0.9
Rural areas (thinly populated areas)	22.5	13.9	12.9	1.0	8.6	1.5	5.9	1.2
Women (in %)	50.0	25.6	23.0	2.6	24.4	4.4	16.6	3.3
Cities (densely populated areas)	10.1	4.9	4.4	0.6	5.1	1.3	3.2	0.6
Towns and suburbs (intermediate density areas)	17.9	9.2	8.3	0.9	8.7	1.5	6.1	1.1
Rural areas (thinly populated areas)	22.0	11.4	10.3	1.1	10.5	1.7	7.3	1.5

Source: SORS (2022b).

Between the agricultural censuses in 2000, 2010 and 2020, there is the decline in the number of farms and the average farm size has increased (SORS, 2022a). According to the first provisional data from the Census of Agriculture 2020, in Slovenia were 67,927 agricultural holdings, or 9% less than in 2010 (74,646) or 21% less than in 2000 (86,467).

As can be seen from Table 3, among agricultural holdings in Slovenia there is a small number of agricultural enterprises, but are mostly family farms. While agricultural enterprises represent up to 0.3% of the number of agricultural holdings, their importance is greater when considering the cultivation of the utilised agricultural area with their share between 5.2% and 6.1% in the period 2000-2016. The great majority is cultivated by family farms.

Table 3. Agricultural holdings and utilized agricultural area in Slovenia

	Number of agricultural holdings							Utilised agricultural area [ha]						
	2000	2003	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016	2000	2003	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016
Agricultural holdings	86467	77149	77175	75340	74646	72377	69902	485879	486473	485432	488774	474432	477023	479589
Agricultural enterprises	131	112	133	131	221	201	231	29664	26895	25447	25593	26581	26077	25528
Family farms	86336	77037	77042	75209	74425	72176	69671	456215	459578	459986	463182	447851	450946	454060
Agricultural holdings (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agricultural enterprises (%)	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	6.1	5.5	5.2	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.3
Family farms (%)	99.8	99.9	99.8	99.8	99.7	99.7	99.7	93.9	94.5	94.8	94.8	94.4	94.5	94.7

SORS (2022).

In 2020, the average agricultural holding in Slovenia cultivated 7.0 hectares (ha) of agricultural land (common pastures are not included). In the same year, the average area of agricultural land in use was 0.6 ha larger than in 2010 and 1.4 ha larger than in 2000 (Kranjc and Šuštar, 2021).

Table 4 clearly confirms the increased in the average size of agricultural holdings in terms of utilised agricultural area in ha per holding. The average farm size growth was driven by family farms which on average are smaller than agricultural enterprises. With the increase in the number of agricultural enterprises, their average size in terms of utilised agricultural areas has declined. It seems that some agricultural enterprises have been split into smaller units.

Table 4. Average size of agricultural holdings (utilized agricultural area in ha per holding)

	2000	2003	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016
Agricultural holdings (ha per holding)	5.6	6.3	6.3	6.5	6.4	6.6	6.9
Agricultural enterprises (ha per enterprise)	226.4	240.1	191.3	195.4	120.3	129.7	110.5
Family farms (ha per farm)	5.3	6.0	6.0	6.2	6.0	6.2	6.5

Source: SORS (2022b).

While for more than two-thirds of family farms the main destination of their agricultural production traditionally in the past was for own consumption, this has changed after the entry of Slovenia in the European Union (EU) in 2004. The number of family farms has declined and the survived family farms largely specialized in agricultural production for sales as their main destination. In 2016, sales represented the main market outlet destination of agricultural production for 74.5% of family farms (Table 5).

Table 5. Main destination of agricultural production on family farms (in %)

	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016
for own consumption	68.5	60.6	59.7	59.5	57.6	45.0	34.2	28.5	28.3	25.5
for sale	31.5	39.4	40.3	40.5	42.4	55.0	65.8	71.5	71.7	74.5

Source: SORS (2022b).

Most agricultural holdings in Slovenia are situated in less-favoured mountain area and in other less-favoured area (Table 6). In addition, around a quarter of agricultural holdings is situated in areas with environmental restrictions. Only around one-fifth of agricultural holdings and around a quarter of utilised agricultural area are not situated in less favoured area. The role of organic farming has increased with a potential for further development, but it far less important than conventional farming.

Table 6. Some characteristics of agricultural holdings in Slovenia

	Number of agricultural holdings					Utilised agricultural area [ha]				
	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016	2005	2007	2010	2013	2016
with organic farming	1224	1546	1867	2643	3009	16948	24567	27405	39503	47989
in conversion to organic farming	433	332	313	936	586	8227	4248	4349	11422	9840
in less-favoured area, mountain area	42762	42138	43371	42854	40787	259335	258786	252750	251048	252348
in other less-favoured area	15237	15991	15378	14901	14276	90945	97632	91120	94810	93948
not in less-favoured area	19175	17211	15897	14623	14840	135151	132356	130563	131164	133292
in areas with environmental restrictions	28941	23952	...	...	...	195149	168334	...	...	...
Total	107772	101170	76826	75957	73498	705755	685923	506187	527947	537417
with organic farming (%)	1.1	1.5	2.4	3.5	4.1	2.4	3.6	5.4	7.5	8.9
in conversion to organic farming (%)	0.4	0.3	0.4	1.2	0.8	1.2	0.6	0.9	2.2	1.8
in less-favoured area, mountain area (%)	39.7	41.7	56.5	56.4	55.5	36.7	37.7	49.9	47.6	47.0
in other less-favoured area (%)	14.1	15.8	20.0	19.6	19.4	12.9	14.2	18.0	18.0	17.5
not in less-favoured area (%)	17.8	17.0	20.7	19.3	20.2	19.1	19.3	25.8	24.8	24.8
in areas with environmental restrictions (%)	26.9	23.7	...	...	...	27.7	24.5	...	...	...
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: SORS (2022b).

The previous research for Slovenia has confirmed that farms with greater engagement and the role of young woman farmers in farm management are more agri-environmentally concerned. They are more likely to adapt and participate in voluntary agri-environmental measures (Unay-Gailhard and Bojnec, 2021).

Like in some other EU countries, the challenge in rural areas can be also gender balance on farms and in rural areas with greater integration and role of rural women in farm management and rural development (Černič Istenič, 2015).

In addition to the secondary data and incorporation of the previous research (ASES, 2021; Bojnec, 2021; OECD, 2022), this study is based on the conducted five interviews with educators of rural women. It aims to identify specific needs of rural women for their integration into the labour market and foster green social entrepreneurship for women in rural areas.

We have conducted five interviews with educators from academia (employed at the university), combined part-time employment at academia (at the university) and at social enterprise, regional development agency and its education centre, secondary and higher education institution, and potential user/customer

of such education or potential educator in rural areas. According to gender: two are men and three are women.

The first interview was conducted with the respondent from academia (university) as a partner organization, senior professional, fully employed by the public university in area of marketing and vice-dean of faculty for quality assurance. He is also engaged in international project as an educator supporting rural women.

The second interview was conducted with a respondent with a combined employment in academia (university)-social enterprise, senior professional, combination of public university-social enterprise employed in area of business and social entrepreneurship, director and founder of social enterprise as non-governmental organization, educator.

The third interview was conducted with the regional development agency and its regional education centre. They organize education for adult and their education programmes include women. However, their main activities are related to the acceleration of the development of the region's municipalities, especially in the fields of tourism, small business, personnel and infrastructure in the countryside and in small urban centres of the area. The contents of its operations have been adapted to the actual needs of the area, with the regional development agency specializing in particular in contents supported by European Community funds and in projects that are in the common public interest of the area of several municipalities.

The potential of rural areas to improve the situation of rural women is better than it used to be, but it is still a considerable challenge for women to start their own businesses and become an entrepreneur. Women use more opportunities for education and training than men and are very socially involved. To a large extent, they are developing a business related to the sale of home-made products, home-grown vegetables and fruits, jams, juices, and home-made pastries. Recently, women have also been choosing a business that they are interested in and that they can master, and which is not related to agriculture. More education in the field of entrepreneurship such as how to prepare business plan and start-up a business should be introduced so that women know what awaits them on their business journey and are better prepared.

The fourth interview was conducted with a master student in economics from rural areas as potential user or customer on one hand, but also potential educator in rural areas. Her part-time working experiences are in trade and tourism as well as in administrative work in accountancy services.

The fifth interview was conducted with a middle-age women as an assistant in the project office of the secondary and higher education institution. It is an educational establishment consisting of a secondary school, an adult education, an inter-enterprise centre and a higher education institution.

While agriculture has remained important in rural areas, there is an increasing importance of non-agricultural activities with higher added value activities. This requires and demands different knowledge and skills that are not anymore linked only to a traditional way of life in rural areas. This is an opportunity and challenge particularly for young and for a new role of rural women in their integration into the labour market and local employment development.

In the interviews was raised a problem of sustainability of social enterprises and needs for general and specific business knowledge and skills for training of rural woman. In Slovenia, rural women are less likely to differ importantly from other female students. There might be some issues connected with the distance that has to be travelled to the school or maybe periods when there is a more intensive job to be done on the fields in agriculture and they might have more troubles to fulfil their duties in the school. For those rural women that were involved in research projects, it could be said that they took their part very seriously, maybe some time limitations regarding their involvement had to be taken into account because of previously mentioned problems.

It has been suggested specific community-based strategies of business and social entrepreneurship in rural areas. In some rural areas has been developed a good information and communication infrastructure with a high-speed broadband network, the potential and opportunities for green jobs are much greater. Lab centres of high-tech skills, distance education, services of public institutions, and similar can be developed to improve attractiveness of rural areas. The most important thing is to create conditions, suitable infrastructure for the development of new green jobs for all rural stakeholders. The greatest potentials include organic production and processing, organic farms, tourism, shops with local and organic food, social and family care. Nature conservation, environmental management and protection, and animal protection are also among the most potentially interesting.

As important from the women empowerment and rural entrepreneurship, it was highlighted the need for entrepreneurship education and training as a way for woman business start-up in rural areas. As an educator supporting rural women noticed that rural women have started to become more economically independent and that they are no longer placed in the family only to raise children, work in the house and work on the farm. When compared to men, women are still in a somewhat subordinate position in terms of inclusion in economic and political processes. Many of them are still dependent on their husbands because they have no income of their own.

As an important constraints and limitation for rural areas, it was stressed a problem of less developed public transportation as a disadvantage of rural areas. Since rural areas can be away from the city/town, many times a person is also required to have a car and driving licence. Employers are not impressed if a person lives far away from the workplace, because they have to pay for travel expenses.

From the women educator perspective, it was also argued that the main challenges for an educator supporting rural women are that women are not confident enough. They have too much work at home

and do not come to trainings, they do not feel empowered enough to participate in discussions. The potential for development in rural areas is seen in different forms of tourism, small private boutique farms with specific products and a common brand. More emphasis and support from policy, funding and training would be needed.

To sum up the main findings from the desk research, collected secondary data, five interviews and the discussion with the focus group, the report contributes some recommendations for activities targeting the empowerment of skills and knowledge of rural women to improve their economic and social integration contributing both to possible closing gaps in rural labour market mismatches and possible gender unbalances in different economic activities in rural areas. The synthesized confirmation and the focus group discussion confirmed that rural women's empowerment through green social entrepreneurship in Slovenia is a relatively new challenging issue. So far it has not been addressed in education curriculum and there are needs to develop these subjects in education and training programmes. Finally, the interviews and the consultations with the focus group contributed alternatives to selection of case studies of the best practices.

Rural entrepreneurship

Most of the Slovenian territory is considered as a rural with relatively small regional towns in rural areas. This polycentric economic development has mitigated decline of rural population. In Slovenia around 50% of the population lives in rural areas compared to the European average of 35%. The comprehensive inclusion of women and equal opportunities at all levels of decision-making and investing in their education, health and well-being have been important objectives. This strengthens the entire community and rural society, and it is also important for achieving the goals of sustainable development and ensuring human rights for all people. Poverty, exposure and vulnerable groups in rural areas as broader objectives have been addressed with the help of regional, agricultural, social, infrastructure, health, cultural and other policies.

Rural entrepreneurship in Slovenia has long tradition. Unlike in some other Central and Eastern European countries, family farms were not collectivized. They were operating within the set maximum of agricultural and forestry land. While family farms were limited in their size and operation, since mid-1960 and particularly since the 1990s the size and operation limitations have been largely abolished. In addition to agricultural and farm entrepreneurship, also family craft and micro business and entrepreneurial activities were allowed. This has contributed to development of rural entrepreneurial activities particularly in activities such as hospitality and tourism, wood and small furniture activities, construction and housing activities. Since the 1990s, rural entrepreneurship can be in different economic activities.

However, rural areas have some limitations, as usually, and the farms in Slovenia are of relatively smaller land size. This can be one of the reasons that rural population try to have a regular job and do the work on the farm additionally to their main source of income. At the Slovenian coastal area, those that took the

challenge and want to live from farming, try to differentiate their products and services, offering tourist accommodations, farming experience, producing products for final consumers (yoghurt for schools and other short food supply chains), connecting tourism providers in joint projects (Istrian breakfast and other similar events), organizing school visits, guided tours of the fish and shellfish farm (Fonda fish farm), branding their products (Piran sea bass Fonda) and others.

The entrepreneurship in rural areas and new trends in rural communities are diverse, and a one-size-fits-all approach to rural entrepreneurship will not work. Each community has to develop its own specific strategies. Trend is e-commerce to conduct business and provide services, because people in rural areas are becoming more tech-savvy, they are increasing rural commercialization growth. This could be attributed to the availability of smartphones and cheap high-speed internet connectivity all over the rural areas. There are successful women entrepreneurs in rural areas. In general, they are extremely active in the non-governmental sector in rural areas as generators of community development.

From the gender-based perspective, it is important to strengthen rural women entrepreneurship. Regarding the entrepreneurship in rural areas and the new trends in rural entrepreneurship, women are important in rural development as they make up about half of the rural population. For this reason, women should be encouraged in their independence and employment. A trend in the countryside is family farms, where members of the family are employed. The question that arises is if all family members or all women are also officially employed and if they are socially protected or if they are entitled to sick pay and maternity leave.

Social entrepreneurship in rural areas is still in its infancy. For example, the Sociolab (2022) project was aimed at establishing a comprehensive ecosystem for strengthening the potential of individuals, initiatives and communities with the aim of expanding the social economy (social enterprises and cooperatives) and the associated creation and preservation of quality and permanent jobs in the social sector of economy and the expansion of the offer of accessible (socially) innovative products (services and products), which will ensure greater social inclusion of vulnerable groups, contribute to reducing poverty and increasing the quality of life and economic and social development in the Podravska region. The ecosystem was brought closer to every user via info points. However, the vast majority of people did not see the major advantages of establishing a social enterprise.

The potential of rural areas is seen in agriculture and manufacturing as well as in service activities. However, public transport should be organized in rural areas, because bus lines are rare. The entrepreneurship in rural areas is less developed. Usually there are some small family businesses, car mechanics and crafts, where they do small jobs in the remote rural areas.

Rural entrepreneurship is considered as quite easy to run as it is a small business/farm which can be run by family members, provided of course that the business/farm has enough potential to develop.

In bottom-up approach in local development can be important Local Action Groups (LAGs) and LEADER (the French acronym for "Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale") as links between the rural economy and development actions (Volk and Bojnec, 2014; European Commission, 2022).

Legal framework

Traditional policies dedicated to rural women empowerment were focusing on their knowledge and skills in households' activities such as education and trainings in cooking and sewing in the winter months. While these activities are still important, there are new challenges and needs for rural women empowerments, which are related to more advanced and contemporary knowledge in information and communication technologies, business and management of farms and rural businesses.

A social enterprise is a form of entrepreneurial activity. The possibility of its establishment came into the Slovenian legal order with the adoption of the Social Entrepreneurship Act (ZSocP, 2011) in March 2011. Its effective date was 2nd April 2011 and 1st January 2012 as the date of commencement of its use. Later, it has been amended twice: in 2014 (ZDU-1I, 2014) and in 2018 (ZSocP-A, 2018).

The goals of social entrepreneurship are to strengthen social solidarity and cohesion, to encourage people's cooperation and voluntary work, to strengthen society's innovative ability to solve social, economic, environmental and other problems, to provide an additional range of products and services that are in the public interest, develop new employment opportunities, provide additional jobs and social integration and professional reintegration of the most vulnerable groups of people on the labour market. The main purpose of social entrepreneurship is to employ long-term unemployed persons and to engage them in such a way that they independently generate income and provide for their own survival within the framework of social entrepreneurship.

A non-profit legal entity can operate as a social enterprise if it obtains such a status. It must be established for the permanent performance of social entrepreneurship activities in such a way that it permanently employs at least one worker in the first year and at least two workers in subsequent years of operation (social enterprise type A) or is established for the employment of a certain type of person (from the sixth article of the ZSocP, 2011, 2018) in such a way that it will perform a certain activity by permanently employing at least one third of all employed workers (social enterprise type B). A profit-oriented company can establish a social enterprise only for the purpose of providing new jobs for its redundant workers.

The law is designed in such a way that it enables an open model of social entrepreneurship, which means that the establishment of a social enterprise is not limited to the classic status form of the holder, but the holder can also be an association or institute. In a similar way is determined responsibility for the obligations of a social enterprise, since the law governing the concrete legal organization of each type of legal entity is used to determine it.

The law defines the activities that a social enterprise can perform, which must be socially beneficial or must be aimed at employing the most vulnerable groups of people on the labour market. Social entrepreneurship activities can be carried out in the field of:

- social care, family care, care for the disabled,
- science, research, education, upbringing and provision and organization of youth work,
- health protection and promotion,

- ensuring social inclusion, promoting employment and vocational training of persons who are unemployed or at risk of unemployment,
- organic food production, nature conservation, regulation and protection of the environment and animal protection,
- promoting the use of renewable energy sources and the development of the green economy,
- tourism for people whose living conditions prevent or hinder access to tourist services, in a way that respects the values of sustainability, accessibility and solidarity (social tourism),
- stores for socially vulnerable people (social store) and stores that ensure the sale of products from smaller producers from the most economically underdeveloped environments on the basis of ethical, transparent and equal business relations between producers and traders, aimed primarily at ensuring the possibility of fair payment for producers and thus their livelihoods (fair trade) and trade in services and products from social entrepreneurship activities,
- culture, technical culture and preservation of cultural, technical and natural heritage,
- amateur sports and physical culture, the purpose of which is recreation and socialization,
- promoting the development of local communities,
- support services for social enterprises.

Act on the foundation of a social enterprise, in addition to the content specified in the Act on the Legal Organization of a Single Type of Legal Entity (e.g., the Companies Act, the Societies Act, the Institutes Act), the Act on the establishment of a social enterprise must also define the non-profit purpose of the establishment of the legal entity and justify its public benefit and social character. As an activity or the tasks of a social enterprise must define the performance of social entrepreneurship or other activities, demarcate them from other activities or tasks, and define the method of disposing of assets and spending profits or surplus income.

The founding act must thus:

- define the method of managing a social enterprise according to the principle of equality,
- determine the persons responsible for management in the implementation of social entrepreneurship activities and the conditions for their appointment or election and responsibilities,
- determine the supervisory body and the method of electing or appointing the members of the supervisory body, the term of office and their powers, authorities and responsibilities,
- determine the type of social enterprise (type A or type B),
- determine whether the social enterprise also includes volunteers in its work,
- determine the method of participation of stakeholders (i.e., employees, volunteers) in management (consultation, mandatory opinion, etc.),

- determine the rules for keeping business books and preparing financial statements of a social enterprise or determine the rules in a special act and
- determine the conditions for the status transformation of a social enterprise and the disposal of the social enterprise's assets in the event of termination.

A social enterprise can share part of the profit or excess revenue to members, management and employees only if this share does not exceed 20% of all generated profit or excess revenue in a given year and only if the excess revenue does not represent unspent public funds and has defined in the act of incorporation. If the management of a social enterprise decides to share part of the profit or surplus income, it must not exclude workers.

Different policies and programmes are dedicated to social and green entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is a form of entrepreneurship that operates on non-profit principles that profit invests back in own activity. It is supported by policies, but government supports are not permanent subsidy supports. Therefore, entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and tools are needed to operate and to deal with relevant social problems using business model contributing to sustainable development.

A generational renewal is important for agriculture and rural economy. Young farmers and women on farms are important for sustainability and resilience of farm households with on-farm and off-farming activities and incomes. Business and social entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in farming and non-farming activities can be important for competitiveness and survival of rural economy. There is a special support for setting-up of farms by young farmers and succession of existing farms from older to young farmers within the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU. There are also some other EU initiatives and financial supports for young farmers and residents in rural areas. One of them is a tool for promoting joint local development (LEADER) approach based on the "bottom-up" principle.

In rural women's empowerment and in transition from education to employment are engaged different local players and stakeholders from education institution, local offices for employment, enterprises and different other organizations. In this transition process is also important transfer of knowledge and skills to rural women. A generational renewal brings not only younger-vis-vis older generation, but there is also potential of improvements and catch-up in knowledge and innovation due to more educated and more likely more flexible youth-vis-vis older population that can possess skills and experiences to be combined in this process.

Among other organizations can be important social enterprises and social entrepreneurship for women, vulnerable and socially excluded groups in their integration into labour market, social integration and local development. Exchange of ideas and networking between education institutions, public and private sector organizations and civil societies can be important in mitigating possible gaps in different interests contributing to social cohesion and wellbeing among women and different structures of rural population particularly in integration of women and youth in employment. In addition to public support, it is important to encourage women and young entrepreneurs to become engines of innovation, job creation and income generation in local development of rural areas.

Green social entrepreneurship (eco-social entrepreneurship)

While local competitive advantages mainly related with the labour market and the economic activities are important, social entrepreneurs more often deal with areas that are less attractive for classical business entrepreneurs due to lower profit. It can be also areas where the state has been less successful in resolving them. These areas are like waste management, unemployment, education of vulnerable groups, healthy way of life, local food production and food security, tourist and craft products. They are building social capital, providing help and resolving problems in local community of their operation. The bottom-up approach and possible close link with consumers can contribute to resolving specific problems in local community.

Social enterprises offer a business model that takes into account financial, social, cultural and environmental needs and resources for the development of activities that contribute to sustainable development with their products and services. In this sense, the social entrepreneurship sector can be promising in terms of the creation of new jobs such as for vulnerable population groups. Therefore, actors of social entrepreneurship can be particularly active in the areas of social and work integration of vulnerable population groups, social services, healthcare, ethical banking, insurance, supplies, manufacturing activities and agriculture, services in the local environment, education and training, in the areas of culture, sports and activities for free time.

Challenges in fostering green or social green entrepreneurship in rural areas are linked to obstacles and constraints as well as their opportunities.

The first challenge is defined as usual female obstacles that are in trade-off in decision between raising a family and career, if a farm is bigger man goes often after a stable income in some kind of industry and rural women remain at the farm. It is less likely that the gender issue with some kind of discrimination makes a great impact in Slovenia, or that there are some stereotypes about rural women. They are equal to men, women are driving tractors and other machineries, making deals with customers deciding about the crop and other businesses on farms.

As social enterprises are concerned, there have been some attempts to start agricultural or other types of cooperatives as social enterprises, involving some deprived or underprivileged groups. Some of them survived and some of them exited. Some enterprises even though they operated according to social principles did not want to register as social because this more or less only brought them additional bureaucracy. This can be also seen from national data on the development in the number of registered social enterprises (Table 7). They have increasingly increased from year-to-year between 2012 and 2016, followed by an additional increased in their number between 2016 and 2020, but their decline in 2021.

Table 7. Number of registered social enterprises in Slovenia

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total	7	21	59	113	243	262	263	268	272	269
New registrations	7	14	38	55	131	27	18	16	17	16

Source: OECD (2022, p. 34).

On December 19, 2022, in Slovenia were 261 social enterprises in the register. On the other hand, 84 were deleted from the register of social enterprises, among other things, due to bankruptcy or liquidation (MEDT, 2022a).

According to legal-organizational form, institutes are the most important single form of social enterprises in Slovenia both for the number of registered social enterprises and for the number of employees, followed by cooperatives for their number, societies for both the number and the number of employees, limited liability company for the number of employees, while institution is the least important (Table 8). According to legal status, most of registered social enterprises are with the status of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the public interest.

Table 8. Legal and organizational forms and statuses of social enterprises in Slovenia, 31 December 2020

	Number of registered social enterprises	Number of employees in registered social enterprises
Legal-organizational form		
Society	68	406
Cooperative	70	65
Institution	1	3
Limited liability company	33	122
Institute	100	676
Legal status		
Disabled company status	0	0
Employment center status	4	46
The status of an NGO in the public interest	19	549

Source: OECD (2022, p. 31).

Social entrepreneurship has a relatively bad reputation in Slovenia. While in EU countries, the average number of employees working in social enterprise is between 7-8%, in Slovenia it is 3%. The reason for that might be the fact, that many social enterprises stop operating, as soon as the project funding ends. There is no systematic and continuous infrastructure that could help sustainability for those interested to keep the business running.

Rural women are interested in green social entrepreneurship to learn about new business possibilities, but when they start asking about financing and experiences from previous projects, they usually decide on standard entrepreneurship forms. Whether rural women are encouraged to become entrepreneurs, it is a personal trait matter, some people have the desire, courage, and skills to become entrepreneurs, and some do not. The same goes for rural women.

Some opportunities in development of social entrepreneurship in rural areas can be described as one of the solutions to reduce poverty, migration, depopulation and retention of the working population in rural areas. These opportunities are seen in developing and implementing projects and businesses with economic, environmental and social goals targeted mainly at agricultural holdings and small and medium-sized enterprises and various services in connection with tourism and agriculture all over rural areas in Slovenia.

There are several challenges in fostering green social entrepreneurship in rural areas. The concept of social entrepreneurship is still quite unknown and unclear, for example in Podravska NUTS-3 region, so first of all it is necessary to explain to people what social entrepreneurship is, what are the advantages and conditions of establishment, and to emphasize that this promotes positive social changes.

The main challenges for women preventing their integration in the labour market are how to start an independent entrepreneurial journey, since most of them have a lot of knowledge from their activity, but no entrepreneurial knowledge. If they gather enough courage and start a company, they may encounter problems that they did not expect or they did not know them. There are challenges for rural women in developing a business in rural areas as there is still a stereotype that a woman raises children, takes care of the family's food and does housework and helps with work on the farm. The problem is that all the work that is taken for granted makes it harder to become financially independent. Entrepreneurship is still considered to be more suitable for men.

Rural women are interested in green social entrepreneurship. They grew up in the countryside, are very attached to green meadows, cultivated fields and vineyards, and are proud of their home-grown vegetables and fruits and livestock raised with home-grown food. Women are quickly able to recognize and identify social problems in the area, but they are most afraid of acting as entrepreneurs because they do not know what awaits them. Among others, the risks of failure and uncertainty about business survival are among challenges a rural women face in developing a green social entrepreneurship. Rural women are not encouraged enough to become entrepreneurs. Question is at what extent they are encouraged by the Labour Office.

It is more difficult for rural women to start a business that they can do from home. Women who live in the city have an advantage because they are closer to everyday tasks. In rural areas there are stereotypes, not only gender stereotypes, because all people know each other.

Social entrepreneurship in rural areas in Slovenia is not as developed as it can be to create rural jobs. Social enterprises could focus more on rural areas. People living in the rural areas appreciate the advantages that live in the nature in the countryside. Green social entrepreneurship would not face many challenges as it is not difficult to convince people to take care of what they love. The problem would be

that in some rural areas there are not many inhabitants and most of them do not want to be engaged in things that do not bring them profit.

One of the main challenges rural women are facing preventing their integration in the labour market are linked to a lack of women self-confidence. The solutions are to gain more self-confidence, to be more determined, and to gain experience through training to empower their knowledge and skills.

To sum up, there are difficulties in understanding and implementation of the concept of social entrepreneurship in rural. Therefore, it should be more promoted advantages and best practices in green social entrepreneurship (eco-social entrepreneurship) at home and abroad.

Specific needs of rural women and challenges they face

In March 2019, the Council for Rural Women (MAFF, 2022) was established in Slovenia. The Council for Rural Women is a consultative body of the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. The council formulates opinions on important decisions in the field of ensuring women's rights in rural areas as a neglected topic. The council monitors the situation of women in rural areas and makes proposals for improving their situation, gives expert opinions on agricultural and other policy measures that affect the situation of women in rural areas, contributes to raising awareness of the special situation of women in rural areas and informing the general public about this issue, promotes and encourages organized action and intergenerational cooperation of women in rural areas, and in social security system and supports (assistance in cases such as illness, accidents, maternity leave, recovery, education, participation in community activities, recreation and leisure). The aim of the social-labour supports and services of social welfare among agricultural population is to ensure equality of working conditions between farmers and other categories of employees. The establishment the council is considered as an important step towards the recognition of the position of women in all areas of agriculture of exceptional importance in ensuring the rights of women in rural areas. Among the first activities and tasks were the review of the legislation governing social rights and the preparation of proposals for possible changes, informing women about rights in the work and social spheres. The council works closely with the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food, and Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Other organizations include the Farmers' Union of Slovenia, the Association of Slovenian Rural Youth, the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia and the Association of Farmers' Women of Slovenia (Zveza kmetic Slovenije) (ZKS. 2022). The latter was founded in 1995 as a voluntary, non-governmental organization that works in the public interest with more than 6,500 women members, who work in associations in the territory of Slovenia. The association aims to raise awareness among women and concern the aging of the population to take care of the next generations of women.

Rural women needs' in developing social green businesses as well as the skills rural women need to develop for a business or a green social business is a complex question. The missing gaps include common entrepreneurial knowledge, ways how to do research about the market, assess the potential, and competition and develop an offer that would differentiate from others. Find a source of financing for the idea, to receive financial support and start-up business. Green social business development is dependent also on the difference between the declarative will of buyers to buy (more expensive) green products or services and the actual transformation of this will to action. Therefore, among skills rural women need to develop a business or for a green social business, these are knowledge of using computer tools, the Internet, organizational support and having a good idea to implement in business. They need also knowledge from their field of activity, basic entrepreneurial skills, they must have certain knowledge about legal bases and master the basics of accounting. The basis for a green social enterprise is the establishment of a green workplace that contributes to the protection of the environment, such as organic agriculture, efficient use of natural resources, sustainable tourism and crafts by encouraging the

employment of vulnerable groups. While rural women are interested in green social entrepreneurship, they lack appropriate information, knowledge and skills. Among stereotypes that women are not good enough to run a business and that a woman is there for cooking at home and looking after the family.

To sum up, specific needs of rural women for their integration into the labour market and fostering green social entrepreneurship for women in rural areas can be divided according to sector of economic activities, geographical location, and level of economic development and wellbeing in a certain NUTS-3 region.

The sector of economic activity is important because it can require specific knowledge, skills, and experiences to perform in a such specific activity. In addition, it can require also specific assets that can be linked with risks and possible higher sunk costs of a failed investment. This can be one reason why rural women are afraid to undertake and start-up business entrepreneurship as well as social entrepreneurship. The latter is also still less clearly understood in rural areas.

The geographic location can be important due to possible higher transportation costs and gravity to towns/markets with their products/services. While distances in relatively smaller countries like Slovenia are smaller, the less developed local infrastructure can present limitations for the attractiveness of certain rural areas for start-up and the development of businesses.

The level of economic development and well-being in a certain region is a pull factor that attracts people to stay or to move in a such rural area. However, this can be often associated with the location of such a developed region where a crucial role can play a regional town or a specific economic activity such as tourism, which provides both attractiveness of locations to leave and to develop economic and social activities. Unlike such advantageous areas, there are more remote rural areas which experience more disadvantages and difficulties in their development as an issue for further investigation.

Regarding rural women social and green skills, there are different training programmes dedicated to rural women's empowerment for business development, covering diverse needs. However, the participants had to do the several-month practice and they did not get any compensation for their engagement. The skills and competencies targeted by the training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment are focused on developing the business model, researching the market potential, searching and receiving financial support, connecting, preparing the offer (marketing mix) and similar how to start-up business. Among the topics of the training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment are also courses and programmes offering social entrepreneurship topics. Many programmes, but with less financial support, have difficulties that would continue through time.

While the present training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment may provide enough opportunities for them to respond to their needs for business development because there are certain programmes offered by the supportive environment for entrepreneurship in some regions. The biggest problem then is to find investors or business angels for their business ideas. Otherwise, there are no specialized programmes just dedicated to rural women empowerment, but for entrepreneurs in general. However, there are initiatives that also deal with female entrepreneurship. The trainings in the region are mainly dedicated to strengthening the following competencies: business modelling, marketing, and incubation in the start-up phase. One of the programmes offered by the supportive environment for

entrepreneurship in the western Slovenia NUTS-2 cohesion region is the Poni (Entrepreneurship over challenges) programme, which is not only intended for women, but for everyone, and also has content related to social entrepreneurship.

More training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment respond to their needs for business development would be needed. The skills and competences targeted by the training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment are often in one of the following areas: familiarization with the concept of social entrepreneurship, advantages and obligations, support in the establishment, development and growth of a social enterprise, strengthening of their support environment, assistance in obtaining non-refundable and returnable funds. However, there are different experiences between the NUTS-3 regions in Slovenia.

It might be also that women living in rural areas do not have enough incentive to become entrepreneurs. One reason is a lack of financial support to start their entrepreneurial journey, already because of transportation to the place of work or to the place where she will practice her profession, she will need a driving licence, a car, rent for a business place, and similar. In the countryside and in rural areas, there is a problem with public transport, or the bus line, which ran only a couple of times a day to that village. Every day it is necessary to wait for several hours at the bus station. Meanwhile, women who live in cities do not have to worry about this cost. The reasons for the smaller incentives are in fact that people prefer to do their work in cities where they are closer to their everyday tasks. In some rural areas, there is still a backward thinking that women can take care of the family, so they do not get enough support.

However, the social entrepreneurship in rural areas can offer a number of advantages and positive features, especially in terms of added value and promoting the inclusion of problematic groups/invalids, but has not yet developed for example in Gorenjska NUTS-3 region. However, social farms have mainly developed. Some time ago the Employment Service had a programme to involve and educate women in entrepreneurship, but not specifically for rural women.

To sum up identified some challenges in fostering green or social green entrepreneurship in rural areas, trainings that include green skills topics are diverse in terms of different types of green skills that are addressed. The diversity in consideration of green skills is also recommended to be included in future education and training of rural woman empowerment. However, there is less information or less awareness of entrepreneurial trainings in some regions such as in the Obalno-Kraška NUTS-3 region addressing the topic of "green" skills. The challenges in fostering green social entrepreneurship in rural areas are about services, quality of life, creative economy and tourism. Among the main challenges rural women face preventing their integration into the labour market are also the availability of high-speed internet, and gender equality in the labour market and employment.

The topics of the training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment include green skills, learning about green jobs and their purpose, environmental protection, and sustainable development. Trainings in some regions include green skills topics. For example, the Green Slovenske Gorice (RASG, 2022) project covers vulnerable target groups and all generations. They are conducting workshops that deal with topics related to improving the state of the environment. They present sustainable neighbourhoods, talk about how to handle food sparingly (do not throw it away), shop wisely, propose

zero waste in tourism, sustainable decisions in life, and similar. In the last triad of primary school, they run an entrepreneurial circle, where children make a mini business plan for designated green workplace. They will also include activities that will contribute to the reduction of poverty and a better quality of life.

Therefore, women living in rural areas are interested in green social entrepreneurship. Traditionally, women are planting a garden and preparing vegetables for their own consumption.

The missing skills rural women need to develop a business and for a green social business are in idea or business plan development, marketing, networking, and self-confidence workshops. It would be also important to act sustainably, ecologically, and to be aware of the importance of protecting the environment, and to develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

The training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment respond to their needs for business development are either not available or are generally not known. Green skills or social entrepreneurship are new topics that need to be developed.

To sum up with the findings, business and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills can be among recommendations for activities targeting the empowerment of skills and knowledge of rural women to improve their economic and social integration contributing both to possible closing gaps in rural labour market mismatches and possible gender unbalances in different economic activities in rural areas. These can include certain practical knowledge and experiences on how to implement a certain business idea in terms of business and green social entrepreneurship. A competitive business plan can then be supported in green social business development via financial support for the women start-up business.

Educators' skills and competencies for green transition

Skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators

The Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (MEDT, 2022b) provides mentoring education of a social enterprise (ZMP, 2022). The activities are co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the EU from the European Regional Development Fund within the framework of the Operational Program for the implementation of the European Cohesion Policy in the period 2014-2020, priority axis: 3 Dynamic and competitive entrepreneurship for green economic growth.

Specific skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators working with women in the rural area that need to be enhanced and fostered are practical (hands-on) experience. It should especially be encouraged related to the promotion of the ability to analyse, connect and foresee the resolution of matters, autonomy in professional action and decision-making and managing matters, the ability to apply knowledge in practice, the development of techniques and procedures for project management as a way to achieve the organization's goals, cooperation and teamwork.

The main challenges as an educator supporting rural woman were mainly related to a great desire to acquire new knowledge and look for educational opportunities in the local community. It should also have certain practical experience or at least know how to connect theory with practice or help with advice on how to implement a certain business idea in terms of green social entrepreneurship, to be very encouraging and empathetic, able to motivate, enhance and strengthen self-confidence, determination, basic entrepreneurship, basic management, working with clients, developing ideas, and financing. Therefore, it was confirmed the importance of multidisciplinary skills and competences of formal and non-formal educators.

Training programmes curricula to foster social green entrepreneurship in rural areas

Training programmes curricula to foster social green entrepreneurship in rural areas is an open question. There are general training social entrepreneurship programs, but less specific "green" training programmes for rural woman empowerment, except in some regions, where was possible to identify the training programmes dedicated to rural women empowerment that include green skills and social green entrepreneurship in rural areas. While rural women might have the necessary skills to have their own entrepreneurial journey, they just need support in a green social business via financial support for women start-up business. Training programmes dedicated to rural woman empowerment are not well-promoted in Slovenia, so they are not well known.

Best practices related with green social entrepreneurship for women in rural areas

The young part of the population can be a crucial driver for rural development. Therefore, it is important that human and other resources are used in sustainable rural development. In such sustainable development are important economic, social, and environmental potentials in rural areas. Among the three aspects of sustainable development, social aspects are particularly considered in this report. In social aspects of rural development important role can play social enterprises as a challenge in development. They can be constrained by less developed infrastructure and digital connectivity, less favourable access to services and less attractive employment opportunities in rural areas as well as by institutional constraints related to state governance and its complicated bureaucratic procedures.

Resilience, sustainability and competitiveness of rural areas will depend on the quality of human capital, particularly young. There are CAP supports for young farmers and thus generational renewal on farms. CAP measures can play an important role in the creation of green jobs in rural areas (Unay-Gailhard and Bojnec, 2019) and in farm employment (Bojnec and Fertő, 2022).

Rural areas can also use financial support from social, cohesion, and regional EU funds. However, they often require local human resource capacity and resources for co-financing. In addition, each investment requires an acceptable business proposal. Knowledge and skills can be obtained or updated with life-long learning which requires access to education and training institutions.

One potential human resource in rural areas are rural women and rural development programmes that promote gender equality on farms and in rural areas (Černič Istenič, 2015; Unay-Gailhard and Bojnec, 2021). Our conducted interviews with educators and discussion with focus group confirmed the need for rural woman empowerment, particularly in areas of business entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, knowledge and skills of green rural development, and dealing and mitigating with uncertainty and risk in rural business development.

Among more successful case studies, two practices that follow this path in green jobs and good practices in social entrepreneurship development are proposed Cooperative Dobrina and Centers for Reuse (Domajnko and Bojnec, 2022; Bojnec, 2022). It can be also included the social enterprise Brinjevka (2022), which is run by a woman (women). It is an organic farm, registered as a social enterprise, and vulnerable groups, including women, are involved in the work. The extension of this company is the employment centre Bodika, which owns a store where they sell what the farm produces and a bar at the Sežana Administrative Unit, where women from vulnerable groups are employed.

In the field of education and training, it can be included Biotechnical Centre Naklo (2022) as one of secondary and higher education institution in the field of agriculture and rural development. In its mission among them are provisions of education and training of students and adult learners for the biotechnological sector. It develops training programs in the fields of formal and non-formal education. Cooperation with universities and business sector, cooperation in national and international EU projects with other educational institutions, vocational education and training providers, industry entrepreneurs,

representative of public bodies on European, national and local level, development agencies, associations, local action groups. The Centre facilities can be used for the purpose of real learning situations. Accomplishing sustainability and responsibility for the nature and contribution to the rural development to prevent migration of population from rural areas.

Finally, among the best practice at national Slovenian level is suggested bottom-up approach as every Local Action Group (LAG) has as members an association where women are in the majority (e.g., Association of Farmers' Women, Association of Rural Youth). Women in rural areas are very active in various associations for the development of the region, the village, where the goal is usually economic growth, prosperity, preservation of the environment and cultural heritage and where rural women are encouraged to become entrepreneurs.

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