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FOSTERING GREEN OR SOCIAL GREEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: INSIGHTS FROM SERBIA

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GREEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (ECO-SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP)

Adoption of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship in Serbia introduces the term environmental protection through the principle of sustainable growth and development under Article 3 which implies that social entrepreneurship and incentives for social entrepreneurship shall be planned and implemented while considering:

- requirements about environmental protection;
- climate change fight;
- mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to climate change;
- preventing the overuse of natural resources;
- increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The effects thereof on society, especially on local communities, their development and specificities, vulnerable categories of the population, gender equality, as well as regarding the requirements of the fight against poverty.

Without a registry is challenging to define the existing number of social enterprises with ecological dimensions but different programs such as Green Ideas of Trag Foundation organized with the aims to instigate united citizens to use and develop innovative entrepreneurial ideas, operate with business sector technologies and knowledge when resolving social problems within local communities while preserving natural resources and the environment in the function of the principles of sustainable development and interest of different entities - teams, associations, companies to participate in the program shows that in Serbia exist a group of people and business which take care about the environment

The ecological dimension in social enterprises in Serbia is mainly based on using sustainable raw materials in production (recycling and reusing) and reducing the impact on the environment through business activities (e.g., sustainable ways of transportation, biodegradable packaging, digitised administration...). Also, digital trends in the business sector provided new opportunities. Today on the market exist many digital products with social missions related to environmental issues (e.g., City & Me: digital platform with Android and iOS applications which encourages activism and action of users in the field of recycling and cycling... through rewards for achieving proposed green goals - if users ride a bike for 50 km in the city areas, they will receive 1 CM token that can be exchanged for two tickets public theatre).

Challenges in fostering green or social green entrepreneurship

As a part of the explanation for the adoption of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship sent to National Assembly, key challenges for the development of the social economy sector in Serbia identified through public discussions with relevant stakeholders are:

- inadequate legal form;
- insufficient investment in human capital;
- difficult access to funding sources;
- tax treatment;
- lack of statistical monitoring.

The concept of social entrepreneurship in Serbia is politically and legally accepted. Besides adopting Law on Social Entrepreneurship, the Serbian government formed Council for social entrepreneurship. It started with preparing a Program for social entrepreneurship to support the formation of new social enterprises. Also, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce (PKS) formed the Social Entrepreneurship Section to work on social enterprises' sustainability, innovation and market orientation. On this level, understanding and integrating the adopted legal framework of social entrepreneurship in the regional and local policy documents, action plans, and budgets will be a big challenge for many authorities. It can be observed as an obstacle to developing eco-social companies in real conditions. On the level of society, a fundamental weakness for developing and supporting social enterprises and entrepreneurs, as well as eco-social projects and activities, is a low level of understanding of "social" in the concept of business among general populations caused by low visibility of eco-social enterprises and its stories, recognition and understanding of the social mission in activities. Also, this is mainly influenced by awareness of the concept and importance of social entrepreneurship and society's environmental awareness level.

Besides visibility and recognition, social enterprises need additional support through access to resources, education and skills development, mentoring and consultancy, as well as market support measures which will together support social enterprises to be sustainable, profitable and competitive in the market in real business conditions.

