

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EU REGION

Iuliu IVĂNESCU,
Camelia M. GHEORGHE,
Gina Gilet SZTRUTEN

Abstract

Social entrepreneurship has recently received greater recognition from the public sector, as well as from scholars. Whereas a dozen years ago the concept of social enterprise was rarely discussed, it is now making amazing breakthroughs on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in EU countries and the United States. In order to promote a competitive social market economy, the Commission has placed the social economy and social innovation at the heart of its concerns. The EU's new social-entrepreneurship initiative will support the creation and development of social enterprises, including making it easier for them to obtain funding. This paper analyses the impact of social-entrepreneurship over the EU business environment and the Europe's 2020 Strategy.

Keywords: *Social entrepreneurship; entrepreneur; European Union*

Background and context

Social entrepreneurship has recently received greater recognition from the public sector, as well as from scholars. Whereas a dozen years ago the concept of social enterprise was rarely discussed, it is now making amazing breakthroughs on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in EU countries and the United States. It is also attracting increasing interest in other regions such as Eastern Asia (especially Japan and South Korea) and Latin America. But, studies reveal that, because of different conceptions of capitalism and of the government's role in different regions of the world, there seems to be a disparity between the American and the European conceptions and type of businesses of social entrepreneurship regarding the individual, the process, the organization and the environment¹.

Building on the social change perspective, institutional theory represents a theoretical lens to move the sustainability and social entrepreneurship research forward addressing societal level change². And, despite a widespread recognition in the mainstream entrepreneurship literature that many legitimate entrepreneurs do not pursue purely profit-driven commercial goals, the small but burgeoning literature on entrepreneurship in the

¹ S. Bacq and F. Janssen, The multiple faces of social entrepreneurship: A review of definitional issues based on geographical and thematic criteria, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* Vol. 23, Nos. 5–6, June 2011, 373–403

² Kenneth Wm. Kury, Sustainability Meets Social Entrepreneurship: A Path to Social Change through Institutional Entrepreneurship, *IJBIT/ Volume 4 / Sp Issue 3 / January 2012*

informal economy has assumed entrepreneurs operating wholly or partially on an off-the-books basis are commercial rather than social entrepreneurs³.

The different approaches to entrepreneurship were summarized in some studies into two main research perspectives: a “*small-business-and-firm-foundation*” perspective and an “*evolutionary-institutional*” perspective on entrepreneurship⁴. Other research findings suggest that *social entrepreneurship can be conceptualized as a multidimensional model involving three dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk management and, as a consequence, entrepreneurship can be identified as a behavioral manifestation*. Moreover, the same findings suggest that social entrepreneurial behavior is deeply influenced by the concurrent requirements of the environment, the need to build a sustainable organization and the need to achieve the social mission⁵. Other research outlined three major social entrepreneurial types: *Social Bricoleurs (they identify a local concern and bring innovative measures to bear on a recognizable social problem)*, *Social Constructionists (they have the desire to generate social wealth matched with a hope to bring new equilibrium to broad social systems where serious imbalances exist)* and *Social Engineers (they focuses on introducing revolutionary change and deliberately upsetting the equilibrium within their environment)*⁶.

Recent studies demonstrated that if social entrepreneurship is to be effective and impactful, business and management education can facilitate the development of young entrepreneurs: agreeableness positively influences all dimensions of social entrepreneurship, whereas openness exerts a positive influence on social vision, innovation and financial returns. Therefore, the element of appreciation of social responsibility, sustainability and character development needs to be integrated within the business education curriculum to support social entrepreneurs in realizing genuine value and impact to the causes and communities they serve. Future business leaders also need to be equipped with entrepreneurship skills, while exuding independent and reflective thinking in the pursuit life-long learning⁷.

Social entrepreneurship in EU region

Social entrepreneurship has not a long history of study⁸, but is developing rather quickly nowadays because technological and economic progress requires quick response to

³ Colin C. Williams, and Sara Nadin, Beyond The Commercial Versus Social Entrepreneurship Dichotomy: A Case Study Of Informal Entrepreneurs, Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2012) 1250018

⁴ Jacques Defourny & Marthe Nyssens, Social Enterprise In Europe: Introduction To An Update, EMES European Research Network Sart Tilman, B33, Box 4 – University of Liège 4000 Liège – Belgium

⁵ Jay Weerawardena & Gillian Sullivan Mort, Investigating Social Entrepreneurship: A Multidimensional Model, Journal of World Business 41 (2006) 21–35

⁶ Shaker A. Zahra, Eric Gedajlovic, Donald O. Neubaum, Joel M. Shulman, A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges, Journal of Business Venturing 24 (2009) 519–532

⁷ Joyce Koe Hwee Nga, Gomathi Shamuganathan, The Influence of Personality Traits and Demographic Factors on Social Entrepreneurship Start Up Intentions, Journal of Business Ethics (2010) 95:259–282 – Springer 2010 DOI 10.1007/s10551-009-0358-8

⁸ Lee A. Swanson & David D. Zhang, Complexity Theory And The Social Entrepreneurship Zone, E:CO Issue Vol. 13 No. 3 2011 pp. 39-56, Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan, CAN

new challenges. As competitiveness in the world rises, enterprises should try to adapt, react, and change their activity, processes. Pressure of society develops new features of entrepreneurship and traditional entrepreneurship is getting such new dimensions as social⁹. Social entrepreneurship, as a practice and a field for scholarly investigation, provides a unique opportunity to challenge, question, and rethink concepts and assumptions from different fields of management and business research. Social entrepreneurship is a process that catalyzes social change and addresses important social needs in a way that is not dominated by direct financial benefits for the entrepreneurs. Social enterprises offer the promise of financially sustainable organizations that can respond to the world's most pressing problems.

With its continued emergence in both academic and practitioner communities, the diversity of organizations categorized as social entrepreneurship continues to expand and researchers found out that variance in the geographic focus of different types of social entrepreneurship influences the types of social networks in which social entrepreneurship is embedded.

Yet for social enterprises to succeed their leaders must effectively manage conflicting demands that arise from dual commitments to improving social welfare and achieving commercial viability¹⁰. From a more specific point of view, social entrepreneurship, ventured with a self-sustaining business model and a social impact objective, is a trend gaining momentum and garnering attention for the citizen sector¹¹.

Because it contributes directly to internationally recognize sustainable development goals, social entrepreneurship may also encourage established corporations to take on greater social responsibility¹².

Some social enterprises can earn a profit that is sufficient to get the business funded by investors. But many, if not most, cannot fund themselves entirely through sales or investment. They are not profitable enough to access traditional financial markets, resulting in a financial-social return gap. Many of them survive only through the largesse of government subsidies, charitable foundations, and a handful of high-net-worth individuals who will make donations or accept lower financial returns on their investments in social projects. The lack of funding opportunities is one of the major disadvantages social enterprises face. But, in the same time, they potentially have a larger universe of investors than conventional firms do. If they can structure their funding to treat charitable donations as a form of capital that seeks social, not financial, returns, they can then tap all the conventional sources of capital: venture capital firms, banks, mutual funds, bond funds, and so on. And with access to these sources, all the financial-engineering tools for transferring risk and return become available, allowing social enterprises to free up capital and grow¹³.

⁹ Jolita Greblikaite, Development Of Social Entrepreneurship: Challenge For Lithuanian Researchers, ISSN 1822–8402 European Integration Studies. 2012. No 6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5755/j01.eis.0.6.1498>

¹⁰ Wendy K. Smith, Marya L. Besharov, Anke K. Wessels, Michael Chertok, A Paradoxical Leadership Model for Social Entrepreneurs: Challenges, Leadership Skills, and Pedagogical Tools for Managing Social and Commercial Demands, *Academy of Management learning & Education*, 2012, Vol. II, No. 3, 463–478

¹¹ Cheryl Clark, Linda Brennan, Measurement Entrepreneurship With Social Value: A Conceptual Model For Performance, *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, Volume 18, Number 2, 2012

¹² Christian Seelos, Johanna Mair, Social entrepreneurship: Creating new business models to serve the poor, *Business Horizons* (2005) 48, 241—246

¹³ Antony Bugg-Levine, Bruce Kogut, and Nalin Kulatilaka, A New Approach to Funding Social Enterprises, *Harvard Business Review* January–February 2012

Future realization of economic and competitiveness growth requires human capital investments. Europe's prosperity is based on the prosperity of European enterprises. European Union aims to create a proper environment for initiative, enterprise development, and industrial cooperation and improve the exploitation of the industrial potential of innovation policies, research and technological development.

The possibilities which social enterprises offers in responding to employment problems of EU citizens and social exclusion, by minimizing social disparities facing minorities, represent a huge opportunity that the EU responsible organizations have seized and exploited it. Therefore the attention is focused on strategic actions that are concentrating on the development of social entrepreneurship.

Europe's 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth sets a target of 75% of 20- 64 year olds in employment by 2020¹⁴. If the target is to be met, employment in the EU will have to increase by 17.6 million additional jobs from its current level. However, during the crisis, the employment rate has fallen to 68.9% (3Q2011)¹⁵, with EU unemployment remaining persistently above 9.5% since early 2010 and climbing to 10,2% mark in February 2012. The deceleration of growth since mid-2011, with a less favorable outlook for 2012¹⁶ and widening divergences between Member States and regions, have only increased the challenge in terms of employment, social inclusion and combating poverty.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion is a major element of the Europe 2020 strategy: The EU wants to strengthen growth, employment and competitiveness, while creating a more inclusive society.

Economic growth in general brings with it employment and revenues for the area where it occurs. All regions, whether already successful and therefore seeking to secure and expand on that success or those suffering from above average unemployment and low relative income per inhabitant, are naturally likely to want to attract businesses to them.¹⁷ At the beginning of the last economic crises Luxembourg, the wealthiest Member State in terms of per capita income, was seven times richer than the poorest one, Romania. At the regional level, the difference was even bigger: the richest region is Inner London with 290% of EU-27's average GDP per capita, while the poorest region is Nord-Est in Romania with 23% of the EU average (EC- 2008).

Analyses made in the last period¹⁸ shows that a total of fifteen Member States experienced an increase in the level of disparity in GDP per capita in the post crisis period. In four of these Member States (Ireland, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom and Slovakia), the regional dispersion in income per inhabitant widened by more than 2 percentage points. Post-crisis, Latvia has shown the most prominent convergence in regional GDP per capita with a narrowing of almost 6 percentage points.

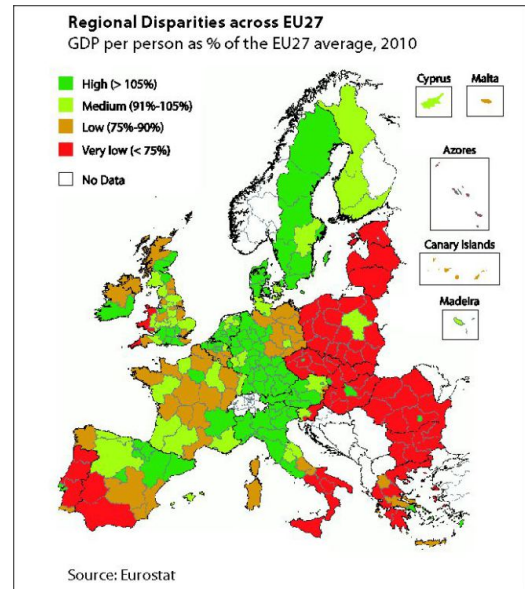
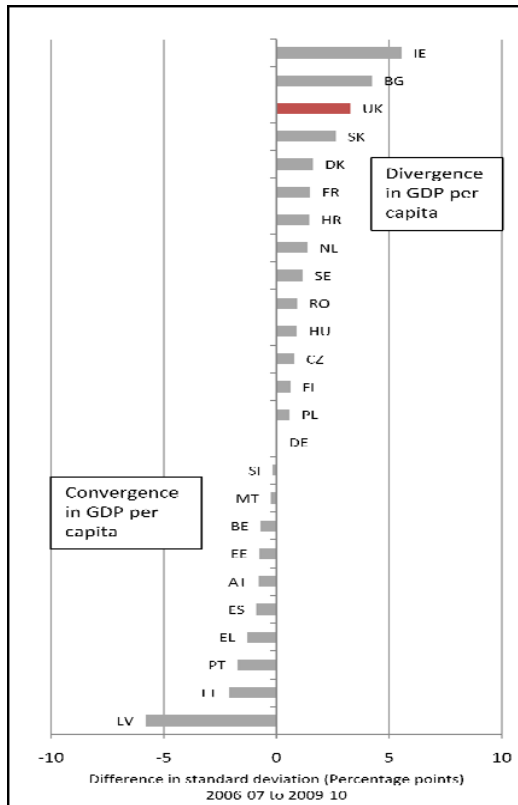
¹⁴ http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/europe2020/index_en.htm

¹⁵ Idem 14

¹⁶ Idem 14

¹⁷ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130501/LDM_BRI\(2013\)130501_REV1_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/bibliotheque/briefing/2013/130501/LDM_BRI(2013)130501_REV1_EN.pdf)

¹⁸ <http://www.londecon.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Regional-disparities-in-GDP-per-capita-in-the-EU-28-05-20131.pdf>



To overpass those challenges The European Union reshaped the budget structure and priorities (and in particular the European Social Fund) for the next years. The European Union worked to define new conditions for a more competitive economy with higher employment.

In order to promote a ‘highly competitive social market economy’, the Commission has placed the social economy and social innovation at the heart of its concerns, in terms of both territorial cohesion and the search for new solutions to societal problems, in particular the fight against poverty and exclusion, under the Europe 2020 strategy, the flagship initiative ‘The Innovation Union’, the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion³ and the ‘Single Market Act’ (SMA)¹⁹.

Nowadays the social economy employs over 11 million people in the EU, accounting for 6% of total employment. It covers bodies with a specific legal status (cooperatives, foundations, associations, mutual societies), many of which are also social enterprises in terms of the characteristics referred to above, as well as social enterprises in the form of an ordinary private or public limited company.

A 2009 study²⁰ assessed the share of the population involved in social entrepreneurship as 4.1% in Belgium, 7.5 % in Finland, 3.1 % in France, 3.3 % in Italy, 5.4 % in Slovenia and 5.7 % in the United Kingdom. Approximately one in four businesses

¹⁹ <http://socialbusinessearth.org/eu-social-entrepreneurship-conference-nov-18-2011/>

²⁰ <http://www.gemconsortium.org/docs/376/gem-report-on-social-entrepreneurship-executive-summary>

founded in Europe would therefore be a social enterprise. This figure rises to one in three in Belgium, Finland and France. These companies are often more productive and competitive than one might think. This is due to the very high level of personal commitment on the part of their employees and the better working conditions that they provide. In the EU-27, over 207,000 cooperatives were economically active in 2009. They are well established in every area of economic activity and are particularly prominent in agriculture, financial intermediation, retailing and housing and as workers' cooperatives in the industrial, building and service sectors. These cooperatives provide direct employment to 4.7 million people and have 108 million members.

Conclusion

According to some official reports, the social economy employs over 11 million people in the EU, accounting for 6% of total employment.²¹ It covers bodies with a specific legal status (cooperatives, foundations, associations, mutual societies), many of which are also social enterprises. The specific legal statuses of the social economy are particularly suited to social enterprises as their method of governance favors participation and openness.

The EU's new social-entrepreneurship initiative will support the creation and development of social enterprises, including making it easier for them to obtain funding. Developing a "highly competitive social market economy" is one of the EU's primary objectives. This requires new laws and new regulatory frameworks to help these enterprises – which are often very small and active only at local level – to realize their potential to generate growth, create jobs and reap the benefits of the EU's single market.

The social entrepreneurship initiative will offer a short-term action plan to promote the creation and development of social enterprises. *The first obstacle to be undertaken is how to make it easier for social enterprises to obtain funding. The second challenge is to increase the visibility of social entrepreneurship.*

²¹ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/10157/47822/Guide%20to%20Social%20Innovation.pdf>

Table 1 Paid employment in cooperatives, mutual societies and associations in the EU (2009-2010)²²

Country	Cooperatives	Mutual societies	Associations	TOTAL
Austria	61,999	1,416	170,113	233,528
Belgium	13,547	11,974	437,020	462,541
Denmark	70,757	4,072	120,657	195,486
Finland	94,100	8,500	84,600	187,200
France	320,822	128,710	1,869,012	2,318,544
Germany	830,258	86,497	1,541,829	2,458,584
Greece	14,983	1,140	101,000	117,123
Ireland	43,328	650	54,757	98,735
Italy	1,128,381	n.a.	1,099,629	2,228,010
Luxembourg	1,933	n.a.	14,181	16,114
Portugal	51,391	5,500	194,207	251,098
Netherlands	184,053	2,860	669,121	856,054
Spain	646,397	8,700	588,056	1,243,153
Sweden	176,816	15,825	314,568	507,209
United Kingdom	236,000	50,000	1,347,000	1,633,000
New Member States				
Bulgaria	41,300	n.a.	80,000	121,300
Cyprus	5,067	n.a.	n.a.	5,067
Czech Republic	58,178	5,679	96,229	160,086
Estonia	9,850	n.a.	28,000	37,850
Hungary	85,682	6,676	85,852	178,210
Latvia	440	n.a.	n.a.	440
Lithuania	8,971	n.a.	n.a.	8,971
Malta	250	n.a.	1,427	1,677
Poland	400,000	2,800	190,000	592,800
Romania	34,373	18,999	109,982	163,354
Slovakia	26,090	2,158	16,658	44,906
Slovenia	3,428	476	3,190	7,094
Acceding and Candidate Countries				
Croatia	3,565	1,569	3,950	9,084
Iceland	n.a.	221	n.a.	221
TOTAL EU-15	3,874,765	325,844	8,605,750	12,806,379
New Member States	673,629	36,788	611,338	1,321,755
TOTAL EU-27	4,548,394	362,632	9,217,088	14,128,134

²² <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/qe-31-12-784-en-c.pdf>

Table 2 Evolution of paid employment in the social economy in Europe²³

Country	Social Economy Employment		
	2002/2003	2009/2010	Δ%
Austria	260,145	233,528	-10.23%
Belgium	279,611	462,541	65.42%
Denmark	160,764	195,486	21.60%
Finland	175,397	187,200	6.73%
France	1,985,150	2,318,544	16.79%
Germany	2,031,837	2,458,584	21.00%
Greece	69,834	117,123	67.72%
Ireland	155,306	98,735	-36.43%
Italy	1,336,413	2,228,010	66.72%
Luxembourg	7,248	16,114	122.32%
Portugal	210,950	251,098	19.03%
Netherlands	772,110	856,054	10.87%
Spain	872,214	1,243,153	42.53%
Sweden	205,697	507,209	146.58%
United Kingdom	1,711,276	1,633,000	-4.57%
New Member States			
Bulgaria	n.a.	121,300	n.a.
Cyprus	4,491	5,067	12.83%
Czech Republic	165,221	160,086	-3.11%
Estonia	23,250	37,850	62.80%
Hungary	75,669	178,210	135.51%
Latvia	300	440	46.67%
Lithuania	7,700	8,971	16.51%
Malta	238	1,677	604.62%
Poland	529,179	592,800	12.02%
Romania	n.a.	163,354	n.a.
Slovakia	98,212	44,906	-54.28%
Slovenia	4,671	7,094	51.87%
Acceding And Candidate Countries			
Croatia	n.a.	9,084	n.a.
Iceland	n.a.	221	n.a.
TOTAL EU-15	10,233,952	12,806,379	25.14%
New Member States	908,931	1,321,755	45.42%
TOTAL EU-27	11,142,883	14,128,134	26.79%

²³ <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/qe-31-12-784-en-c.pdf>

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