



SLOVENIAN TRENDS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social Innovation in Slovenia is in its early stages and remains largely underdeveloped without a supportive environment for social innovators. Several social innovation projects in Slovenia have been launched in the last decade. The majority of them have come as a result of individual entrepreneurial initiatives within more innovative organizations.

The issues addressed by social innovation in Slovenia include long-term and youth unemployment, the inclusion of marginalized groups, the development of sustainable impact tourism and technological social innovation (e.g. apps for disabled people, such as a mobile app for people with visual impairments), education and social finances. Social enterprises in Slovenia usually employ subsidized workers (i.e. WISEs) to help disadvantaged workers enter the labor market including people with disabilities, long term unemployed, young unemployed, homeless, drug addicts, elderly and other vulnerable groups. However, the use of paid workers also extends beyond WISEs.

Organizations still rely considerably on voluntary work, especially the management of the enterprises. Beyond work integration programs, registered social enterprises also operate in the environmental area, education, agriculture, retail, catering, and health. Institutions work in a range of different fields of activities ranging from family care to culture and arts. They are also very active in the field of social protection (https://zavod14.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Social-Entrepreneurship_Case-of-Slovenia.pdf).



Challenges for Social Entrepreneurship in Slovenia

One of the greatest obstacles in the development of social innovation and social entrepreneurship in Slovenia is the fact, that the concept of social economy and social innovation is still very new and is just starting to establish themselves as generally recognized.

The next problem Slovenia has been facing (similar to other transitional countries) is confusion in values and attitudes and the use of terms related to the social economy. At the political level, the social economy is not well understood, and in particular, the specific form of social enterprises, as a new tool for social cohesion.

This poor understanding is no doubt the result of years of top-down socio-economic development strategy and the confusion regarding the meaning of 'social ownership' which was always associated with state ownership and is markedly different from what democratic countries understand as a 'social ownership initiative'. There are many concerns regarding the situation in the field of social entrepreneurship in Slovenia. Top-down program-driven strategy is driving the adoption of strategies for the social economy is true in all countries, but even more so in the transition economies.

In Slovenia, there is the necessity for a process approach to new policy initiatives that take into consideration the need to transcend historically rooted perceptions. Even vocabulary cannot be universally applied; the metaphors are not the same. A more extensive public dialogue and popular education about the social economy and social enterprises is necessary. This is as true within government as it is for society at large. Path dependency is not a barrier to change but it will shape how change is implemented. The fact is also that there is a lack of any competent study on social innovation in Slovenia. There are no accepted standards, nor criteria regarding what constitutes social innovation. Therefore, it is hard to source and include all relevant stakeholders (https://zavod14.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Social-Entrepreneurship_Case-of-Slovenia.pdf).