



National Report ROMANIA

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PART 1: COOPERATIVES ECOSYSTEM

1.1 General statistics

Social Economy in Romania 2012					
	Active organizations	Fixed assets	Revenues	Members	Employees
Associations and foundations	33.670	7.198.847	7.742.043	-	76.902
Cooperatives, from which:	2.228	1.122.805	1.764.363	-	31.428
Craftsmans' Coops	846	599.352	719.036	-	22.082
Consumers' Coops	940	265.295	571.711	-	7.050
Credit Cooperatives	86	86.371	156.339	-	2.049
Agricultural Coops	356	171.787	317.277	-	247
CAR, out of which	2.767	3.624.190	589.143	3.028	5.403
CAR for retirees	198	768.865	159.879	1.811	2.240
CAR for employees	2.569	2.855.325	429.264	1.217	3.163
Companies owned by social economy organizations	682	1.971.666	2.202.562	-	17.394
TOTAL	39.347	13.917.508	12.298.111	-	131.127

Source: Atlasul Economiei Sociale¹, INS

1.2 Historical background and recent evolutions

Romania has a long tradition in social economy, unfortunately interrupted by the communist period, which affected the essence of volunteering and cooperative

¹ "Atlasul Economiei Sociale 2014."

movement². The earliest formal associations started in 1835, when one of the first forms of social economy started, more precisely the agronomic and manufacturing society (The Phalanstery from Scaieni). Later on, from 1845 more forms of social economy have been developed: in 1851 the first popular bank is established in Transylvania, and Bistrita, almost simultaneously with the credit coops in Germany Schul Delish and Raiffaieisen models, first credit savings and mutual loan associations (a precursor of today's credit unions) were established, and also first rural popular bank „Frăția” is established in Domnești - Muscel and first rural consumer coop „Economatul” in Retevoiești.

From 1903 to 1935 the sector developed at an accelerated pace. During this period, 700 popular banks were already in existence, which provided work places for 150.000 workers. In 1929 the “Law for organization of cooperatives” was enacted, and subsequently amended to allow for various forms of cooperatives: credit cooperatives and popular banks, agricultural land purchase or lease, agricultural cooperatives, worker coops, agricultural machinery coops, marketing coops, housing coops, forestry and fishing coops.

After the Second World War, and the start of the communist regime, the social cooperative sector has been influenced by the massive changes taking place in all societal domains. In 1947-1948 the civil society and associative structures susceptible of conflict with communist interests were dissolved (1000 local and national organizations). At the economic level, *“forced industrialization was one of the main changes and scopes of the communist party, and it was mainly carried out by means of nationalization and prioritization of certain industries (automotive, steel, chemical industries) as well as by the massive forced collectivization of agriculture and the rural populations”*³. As a result, the main business actors became state-owned, and both enterprises and cooperatives could be categorized as follows: worker, consumer, credit cooperatives, and agricultural cooperatives⁴. While still being part of the centralized economy, cooperatives were considered private businesses, although being accountable to the communist party and not to its members, which had no rights or any type of autonomy regarding their assets. One of the main consequences of state intervention *“through mandatory programs, forced nationalization of co-op production and cultural facilities or their fixed funds”*⁵, in the activity of cooperatives was that they *“developed in terms of volume and types of economic activities, assets, members, and employees”*⁶.

In the early 1990s, cooperative organizations were treated almost as nonexistent during the initial phases of economic transition towards a market economy. To a certain extent, cooperative organizations in general and worker cooperatives in particular, became invisible to decision makers and the general public.⁷ After 1989, Romania had a declining cooperative

² Vamesu and Barna, “Romania Country Report.”

³ Lambru and Petrescu, “Surviving the Crisis,” 734.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

sector (number of members of cooperatives going down from over 1 million to below 30.000), a stagnating credit union sector and a thriving non-profit sector which grew exponentially getting in 2010 to over 20.000 active organizations and almost 100.000 employees with distinct identities enjoying limited to no visibility.

History of social economy in Romania	
1835	The agronomic and manufacturing society (The Phalanstery from Scaieni) – one of the first forms of SE in Romania
Since 1845	1851 – First popular bank is established in Transylvania in Bistrita almost simultaneously with the credit coops in Germany Schul Delish and Raiffaieisen models.
	1855 – In Brăila, the first credit, savings and mutual loan associations being established, a precursor of today's credit unions.
	1860 - Ion Ionescu de la Brad, a famous agriculture professor and rural development promoter establishes the first popular bank in a village Brad, Roman.
	1873 – first consumer cooperative.
	In 1886 - first rural popular bank „Frăția” is established in Domnești - Muscel and first rural consumer coop „Economatul” in Retevoiești
1903-1935	First Cooperative Law – already 700 popular banks in existence at the time – in 1903. The Law on popular rural banks and their Central Caisse, which through later modifications will regulate all other types of cooperatives.
	1929 - "Law for organization of cooperatives", which is revised several times. In 1935 the Law is revised to allow for various forms of cooperatives: credit cooperatives and popular banks, agricultural land purchase or lease, agricultural cooperatives, worker coops, agricultural machinery coops, marketing coops, housing coops, forestry and fishing coops
	In 1938 worker cooperatives were providing work places for 1 150 000 workers.
1921	The first Romanian regulation on associations and foundations
1947 - 1948	The civil society and associative structures susceptible of conflict with communist interests were dissolved (1000 local and national organizations)
1948	Disabled workers' cooperatives were set up
1948- 1989	Despite democratic appearances, the remaining organizations were an ideological tool.

	Forced membership; forced volunteering.
After 1989	<p>Before 2005</p> <p>The sector of social economy, the part of the economy grouping cooperatives, mutual and non-profit sector had no common identity as social economy in Romania prior to 2005. In the period 1989 – 2005 in Romania we had a declining cooperative sector (number of members of cooperatives going down from over 1 million to below 30.000), a stagnating credit union sector and a thriving non-profit sector which grew exponentially getting in 2010 to over 20.000 active organizations and almost 100.000 employees with distinct identities enjoying limited to no visibility. The legal framework for associations has a number of ambiguities related to the possibility of non-profit entities to conduct economic activities and, and the legislation for cooperatives has been reformed in 2005 turning cooperatives closer to commercial companies while the sector itself is quite far from the internationally recognized traditional principles of cooperatives</p>
After 2005	<p>Social economy, an emerging concept in a European financed program - Preparation and launch of the European Social Fund financed grant-schemes for social economy period 2006- to date. The social economy concept has been launched in the public arena in Romania by the European Social Fund Operational Program for Human Resource Development OPHRD Romania and by the NGO Sector representatives involved in the programming debates in the period 2005-2006. Previously there were initiatives of “enterprising non-profits” (around 10-15% out of total non-profits had reported income generating-economic activities during 2000-2009) and income generating projects in poor rural and some Roma communities and a number of protected workshops that could fall under the broad definition of social enterprise. As a consequence of these debates the OPHRD has designed a Major Area of Intervention Development of Social Economy allocating 600 mil Euro for grants of significant size for two types of projects – strategic maximum 5 mil Euros, and small up to 500.000 Euros. Around 60 projects have been financed and are at various stages of implementation. Therefore numerous initiatives with a variety of approaches are currently under way providing information/awareness raising, training, start-up advice, creating local/regional resource centers and, in rather few cases, direct financial support for enterprise start-ups. More specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -University studies – at least three projects had a component of University studies involving main Universities in Romania, including one Master’s degree.

	<p>-Research activities – numerous research activities – on the overall social economy sector in several regions, on the role these organizations may have for disadvantaged groups, specific research on potential role for Roma and disabled, policy research – at least two policy reports, one for the Ministry of Labour and one on role of social economy in work integration of the disabled</p> <p>-Support for start-ups and incubators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – training and advise, some start-up funding, local and regional resource centres for social economy entities <p>-Fairs – Ministry of Labour, CSDF, Protected Workshops.</p> <p>These initiatives gave a lot of visibility to the social economy concept and generated debates around the various concepts such as social economy and social entrepreneurship as we will see below⁸.</p>
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1.3 Legal context

The first attempt to create a unique legislative framework on the social economy sector started in 2010, when a first draft on the Law of Social Entrepreneurship has been elaborated. According to a 2012 Country Report on the state of the social economy, this first draft “*had numerous flaws confusing social enterprises and enterprises established by traditional companies with a social aim – poorly defined, mainly work creation, confusing it with corporate social responsibility and providing fiscal breaks for social investments by companies – among which multinationals where explicitly listed. This draft has shown the lack of clarity surrounding the concepts of social entrepreneurship and social economy to a large extent new to the Romanian society*”⁹

Instead, “the second draft law - **Law on Social Economy** was initiated by the Ministry of Labor and was generated in consultation with representatives of all three sector concerned: the NGOs sector, the credit unions federations and cooperatives during 2010-2011. Much of the discussions were around the concepts, definitions and principles. This was the period when new identities of both the “*traditional, old economy*” sector and of the new sector of mainly work integration social enterprises emerged. This draft was launched by the Ministry in the public debate in December 2011. A working group established by CSDF with NGOs and credit unions have proposed numerous amendments to this text. Given the current political situation in Romania (resigning government, elections in November) it is not clear what legislative steps could be taken.”¹⁰

The main input from the civil society went through *The Coalition for social economy*, which represents and association of various NGOs, foundations, mutual help homes for pensioners

⁸ Vamesu and Barna, “Romania Country Report.”

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

and employees through their unions and federations, agricultural cooperatives and social economy associations that took form in 2011 with the aim to support the social economy sector in Romania.¹¹ The *Coalition* has been actively involved in the process of public consultation initiated by the Ministry of Labor once the draft legislative proposal for the Social Economy law has been launched on 4th of December 2011. Through the advocacy campaign initiated by the *Coalition*, it has proposed an exhaustive set of amendments assuming to: clarify the limits of the three domains covered by the law (social economy, social enterprises and social insertion enterprises), clarify the organizational criteria for social enterprises, defining a minimum set of fiscal deduction and enabling adequate social dialogue mechanism within the sector. Subsequently, starting December 2013, the Coalition has been actively trying to influence the debate within the Romanian Parliament, debate that lead to the adoption in June 2015 of the Law for Social Economy (Law 219/2015) with unanimity.¹²

According to Article 4 from law 219/2015, social economy is based on a series of core principles: the priority is given to individuals and social goals, instead of increasing profit; collective solidarity and responsibility; aiming for a convergence of the members of social economy units and the goals of the collectivity; a democratic control by the members of the unit; allocating the profit for achieving general interest goals. All social economy enterprises have to allocate at least 90% of their profit for their designated social aims or creating reserves (article 8, alin b). Chapter two, describes a special type of social economy units – social insertion enterprises. These enterprises should have at least 30% of their employees belonging to vulnerable groups, and are designed to fight against social exclusion, discrimination and unemployment (article 10).

The Agricultural cooperatives are regulated by the Law on Cooperative societies (1/2005) and the law on Agricultural cooperatives (566/2004).¹³ A cooperative society is defined as "cooperative society is an autonomous association of natural/legal persons, with the aim of promoting economic, social and cultural interests of its members, and being democratically governed by its members (Law 1/2005, art. 7(1)).... The *agricultural cooperative societies* are defined as the association of natural persons for the aim of exploiting in common the agricultural area of shareholders, to improve together the common land, to together the equipment and value the agricultural products (Law 1/2005, art. 4(d))."¹⁴ Because the two laws have slightly different and incomplete definitions, Antonovici et al argue that we need to use both definition in order to have a clear description of what an agricultural cooperative is.

1.4 Public policy

¹¹ "Coalitia Pentru Economie Sociala."

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Antonovici, Savulescu, and Sandu, "The Agricultural Cooperatives in Romania: From Conceptual Framework to Profitable Local Production," 2016, 9.

¹⁴ Ibid.

According to Article 7 from law 219/2015, the local and central state authorities should support the social economy by: recognizing the role of social economy enterprises, recognizing the role played by social economy enterprises in the process of social insertion, developing mechanisms for supporting social enterprises focused on social insertion, actively participating in social economy activities by collaborating with social economy enterprises, creating counseling and information centers aimed at promoting social economy.

Beyond these general provisions, that are not technically operationalized through concrete goals and aims, section 3 of the law contains some clear provisions regarding the mechanism through which social insertion enterprises could be financed and supported. These enterprises can receive direct financial support from national or international bodies, benefit from certain exemptions of paying taxes and can receive concrete benefits like receiving buildings, lands or tax exemptions (art 19). Also, those social insertion enterprises that employ young persons can benefit from some exemptions in paying various employment related taxes (art. 20), or even direct financial help (art 21). Furthermore, Law 219/2015 stipulates in Chapter IV the creation of specific compartments aimed to promote social economy, like the Nation Commission for Social Economy (art 26) and the nation Unique registry of social enterprises (art 27).

According to a recent report on the need for financial investment of the social sector, *“The key is that that mode networks Business specific are insufficient known and understood. Complete non-recognition of the particularities of these models (such as Limited distribution or profit distribution, user / consumer focus, or On needs, a process Participatory decision-making, democratic governance or ownership Common) makes access difficult to traditional funding and to the instruments it uses supports SMEs.”*¹⁵ Although at the level of the EU, supporting the social economy sectors is a priority, in Romania, according to the evaluation by the European Social and Economic Council, the situation of social sectors’ access to financing is very difficult. The report evaluates the situation in Romania on 5 dimensions

According to the Social Economy Atlas,¹⁶ in 2012 social economy enterprises had an average revenue of 532.000 RON, the craft cooperatives around 850.000 RON, craft cooperatives 608.000 RON and agricultural cooperatives 891.000 RON. The research shows that “according to the Social Economy Atlas Romania 2014, based on the statistical data provided by INS for 2012, and secondary data processed by IES-FDSC processing, the following social economy organizations were active in Romania:

Type of organization	Nr. Of active organizations	% of total social economy organization
Associations and Foundations with	4058	56.63%

¹⁵ Doiciu et al., “Necesarul de Finanțare Și Acces La Servicii Financiare Și Acces La Asistență Tehnică Al Întreprinderilor Sociale Din România,” 2.

¹⁶ “Atlasul Economiei Sociale 2014.”

Registered Economic Activity		
Cooperatives, of which	2,228	31,09%
Agricultural cooperatives	356	4.97%
CAR retired	198	2.76%
Commercial companies owned by social economy organizations	682	9.52%
Total	7.166	

The 2016 research attained the following distribution of organizations that answered the questions

“56% of IS participating in the study are located in urban areas and 44% in rural areas with 34 IS located in all 8 development regions of Romania, with the largest percentage of them, 21% (7 IS) being located in the North - East, Center and South-West.”¹⁷ Thus, because the geographical distribution of IS respondents closely matches the statistical one, the authors of the report argue that “The respondents’ IS localization to this survey reproduces to a close extent the regional distribution of social economy organizations as presented at the 2012 level in the Atlas of Social Economy (ed. 2014).”¹⁸

An important finding regarding the average operating period of social economy enterprises is that, *“38% (13) of the IS participating in the study were set up in 2014 and have less than one year of effective work. For this, it was not possible to collect the financial performance data for 2014, as the financial statements of the Ministry of Finance are completed with the financial results of 2015 only in the second half of 2016.”¹⁹ Furthermore, “91% of the IS have between 1 and 60 full-time employees, with an average of 9 employees... . At the level of 2012, according to the Atlas of Social Economy (ed. 2014), the average number of employees was 7, while in the case of the craft cooperatives the average number of employees was 26. The consumer cooperatives had an average of 8 employees, the cooperatives 1 employee employed, and the companies owned by social economy organizations had an average of 26 employees. In a comparative perspective, the IS responding to the survey presented are among the newly established but sustained enterprises. Their average number of employees exceeds in some cases the average number of employees calculated in 2012, concluding that these enterprises can be categorized as large enterprises.”²⁰*

¹⁷ Doiciu et al., “Necesarul de Finanțare Și Acces La Servicii Financiare Și Acces La Asistență Tehnică Al Întreprinderilor Sociale Din România,” 12.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

1.5 Mechanisms

The methodological norm for the Law on social economy appeared just in August 2016, so the amount of time they had to generate their effect is relatively limited. In the second Chapter, the conditions under which an enterprise can obtain the Social economic actor status is described into detailed. Subsequently, the obligations of social economy enterprises are described into detail.²¹ At article 20, the norms describe the obligation of the county level Council to propose a County level plan for social insertion in accordance with the National Strategy for Employment for 2015-2020 period.²² Overall, the methodological norms do not go into details with any norms aimed to favor social enterprises' entrepreneurial approach.

The research also questioned the social enterprises regarding their financial situation. Except for those that were set up in 2014, and thus did not had their first annual financial reports, the rest had an average of 415.000 Euro revenues.²³ The 2014 Atlas of Social Economy assessed that the average income for social economy associations was 532.000 RON. Instead, "the IS participating in the study recorded expenditures in 2014, the average value of the expenditures registered reached, the equivalent of 426.000 euro. There are very large differences between the amount of expenditures declared by IS, the highest value being 22 million lei, and the lowest value of 3300 lei."²⁴

Instead, the main sources of funding are the following:

Type of financial source ²⁵	% of social enterprises that used this source
Targeting 2% of income tax on individuals; Sponsorship from commercial companies; Members' contributions	21%
Funding through start-up / development projects Social enterprises (International / national donors),	21%
Funding through start-up / development projects Social Enterprises (Structural Funds)	33%
Investment bank credit	2%
Short-term bank credit for circulating capital: raw materials-materials, wages, utilities, credit line, Co-financing / implementation of projects	8%

²¹ Guvernul Romaniei, "HOTĂRÂRE Nr. 585/2016 Din 10 August 2016 Pentru Aprobarea Normelor Metodologice de Aplicare a Prevederilor Legii Nr. 219/2015 Privind Economia Socială."

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Ibid., 14

²⁴ Ibid., 16

²⁵ Ibid.

Microcredits from non-banking financial institutions (IFN)	2%
Subsidies / grants from the state / local budget	4%
Other sources of funding: Income / Own sources, inheritance	10%
No answer	
Total	

65% of the social enterprises indicated that they would need a supplementary source of investments for development, and 56% stated that they intend to contract a short term credit for their daily activities.²⁶ Nevertheless, 50% mentioned that they do not have enough guarantees to access such a credit. Furthermore, 59% of the social enterprises mentioned that they would need some form of consultancy to access a credit.²⁷

Following the analysis of the research results, the two entities implied in this project have elaborated a set of conclusions and recommendations aimed at improving the current situation. Among the most important, we mention:

1. Social enterprises in Romania currently have very limited access to funding. The only sources of funding available in recent years have been European funds, which are occasional / unpredictable.

The difficulties encountered by the IS in the last period (2014-2015) in the implementation of structural funds programs for the social economy and / or international donors are due to the lack of financial resources for co-financing and the cash flow cover during the implementation period Of the projects.

The lack of financial resources has affected the IS's ability to complete projects over time, have led to the failure of performance and sustainability indicators and have led 10% of the IS to access loans for both the addition of funds for fixed assets and short- Or credit lines to finance the need for working capital.

2. It is necessary to develop and diversify the sources of finance available to social enterprises both in the start-up phase and in the development phase. For this, the following measures are needed:

A. Creating an appropriate allocation of funds for the grant program for social economy enterprises under the Government's Annual Financing Program for SMEs and compliance with the annual implementation schedule according to the law. After the adoption of the Norms to the Social Economy Law, all conditions will be met for its preparation and launch.

B. Support the development of financial instruments necessary for the development of social enterprises (already available to other SMEs), namely: credits (including cooperative bonds), guarantees and financial investment instruments.

²⁶ Ibid., 16

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

C. Allocation of financial instruments for this sector from the Human Capital Operational Program (POCU) - a specific objective 4.1, strategically following the experience of other countries in the development of financial instruments and institutions dedicated to the sector and not just temporary credit / guarantee schemes.

D. Supporting Romanian financial institutions in accessing the funds available through the European Commission's EaSI program for the development and / or co-financing of these schemes."²⁸

Beyond improving the technical organizations, and using the opportunities of EU funds, the development of the sector would need an improvement of the lending mechanism. The authors recommend the development of "financial instruments that would include a guarantee of up to 80% of the amount of credit are expected to be accessed by more than 50% of the IS that declare that they intend to contract but do not have sufficient guarantees. It is also expected that ISs that declare that they have collateral to opt for this financial product and request higher credits, so it is possible that the average amount of credit required by the IS associated with the collateral made by financial instruments may rise above the average of 315 Thousand lei for the investment loan and 150 thousand lei for the credit of circulating funds, currently estimated by the IS participating in the study.

6. Conditions for financial intermediaries managing financial instruments for IS

Given the need for technical assistance to enterprises in conducting external financing operations, the following is recommended:

- Intermediaries who will administer the financial instruments to have the expertise needed to finance such organizations - preferably institutions that hold loans to social economy enterprises - cooperatives, associations and foundations - and a medium and long-term commitment in Supporting the sector, especially financiers from the social economy sector itself - cooperative banks.

Due to the at least partially non-profit character of social enterprises, the ability to pay for financing costs, mainly interest, is reduced. Hence the need to ensure interest and costs of small guarantees and keep operating costs low, which can lead to a market failure - a limited interest of traditional financiers in this market. It is therefore necessary to consider primarily financial institutions that can qualify themselves as social enterprises (by their legal form and / or statutory terms - they comply with the criteria of limited profitability distribution and IS - research report on the need for financial resources and technical assistance (p.22)

Heritage assets in the event of liquidation) and / or have a mission with an important social component in order to ensure the respect of the social character of the granted funding.

- Financial intermediaries managing financial instruments for IS to provide the necessary advice for accessing credits / guarantees by IS.

- The IS's creditworthiness analysis should take into account the specificity of the social economy sector that does not primarily seek to obtain financial profit / surplus, but especially the social impact of its activities. Analysis of the viability of the investment / IS development project, IS sustainability in a competitive market and social impact indicators will need to be part of the analysis of the grant application.

²⁸ Ibid., 12.

- The costs of the financial instruments were not the subject of the study, the lack of feasibility analyzes of the IS development projects in terms of reimbursement of financial resources and of the cost of credit is one of the reasons why questions on this issue were not included in the questionnaire.
- In designing financial instruments for the social economy sector, financial institutions should take into account the fact that the launch of financial products at commercial or commercial cost close to them, the analysis of credit applications without an economic and social impact analysis, failure to meet the requirements for Credit period, grace, credit, etc. Will not have the estimated impact, IS preferring to defer or even cancel investment projects rather than jeopardize the financial stability of the organization.
- The promotion of financial instruments must follow specific information channels and / or existing social business networks so as to ensure that businesses, including those in rural areas, have access to this information.”²⁹

1.6 Public awareness

When it comes to cooperatives, most people think about rural cooperatives or credit cooperatives because these were active during the communist regime. One of the main issues regarding cooperatives is that they have great credibility problems because *“they are associated with the communist ideology”*, and are perceived as a communist form of organization, regardless of their nature (consumer, worker, agricultural or credit)³⁰. Due to the analogy with previous agricultural cooperatives, worker coops have *“preferred to maintain a ‘low profile’ within Romanian society and economy”*³¹

Nowadays, there have been certain cases that have been brought up by media in the public eye. For example, one of the most known agricultural cooperatives is “Legume Vidra”³² because it is one the main suppliers of vegetables for a large supermarket chain in Bucharest.

1.7 Public knowledge

Regarding the public knowledge of major coop specificities, there are certain stereotypes regarding cooperatives that had an impact on their development. First of all, stereotypes have had a *„long-term negative effect which translates into decision makers’ lack of interest in cooperative needs and concerns as well as into the exclusion of these entities from various grant programs”*. Another consequence of these stereotypes is that the *„curriculum of higher education institutions that teach economics no longer features courses on the cooperative system. This has greatly limited the understanding of this type of economic organization.”*. In other words, the general understanding of cooperatives resumes itself to the idea that they are a relic of the communist regime, belonging to an obsolete system. Because of this, coops

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

³⁰ Lambru and Petrescu, “Surviving the Crisis,” 741.

³¹ Ibid.

³² http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/newcrops_ro_case_study_5_vidra_cooperative.pdf

need to find a new identity and meet market economy demands, otherwise they are (in the best case scenario) lumped together with SMEs or, most often ignored.

1.8 Media

In Romania, the activity of coops is not very visible in media. With some exceptions, most cooperatives enjoy very little publicity. Although, there have been instances where this subject has reached the attention of the media, with positive reviews and attitudes from the latter ³³. The general attitude of the media is a positive one, highlighting the benefits of such organizations in the context of local economy *“Cooperatives can give farmers the opportunity to develop their economic revenues and income, and to use the collective power to increase prosperity among members, their families and their communities.”*³⁴

1.9 Role models

Name: Lunca Somesului Mic Agricultural Cooperative³⁵

Established: 2013

Scope: Agricultural production

This start-up was facilitated by a team of consultants from Civitas Foundation, which assisted the farmers into developing a business strategy and an efficient leadership. The cooperative is an intermediary between the farmers and some hypermarket chains, In their 3 years of activity the sales doubled and the production increased by 30%. Their goal for 2015 is to attract new members, to develop their management and distribution practices and to gain new clients.

	2013	2014	2015
Sales (Euro)	52.000	110.000	117.000
Sales (Tones)	350	640	420

Name: Util Deco sheltered workshop³⁶

Established: 2008

Scope: Social Service

Util Deco was established by a social services providing foundation (“Alaturi de Voi”) in Iasi. It started as a sheltered workshop for the disabled, but it currently includes other types of disadvantaged workers. Their main goals include:

- To create and maintain workplaces for people with disabilities;

³³ <http://www.arc2020.eu/cooperatives-do-they-still-exist-in-romania/>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/new_crops_ro_case_study_1_lunca_somesului_mic_coop.pdf

³⁶ http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/new_crops_ro_case_study_2_utildeco.pdf

- To provide continuous professional training;
 - To give support and guidance at the workplace;
 - Making handmade unique products (paintings, clothes and decorative candles);
 - Providing services in the field of manual book-binding, printing, storing archives and organizing events;
 - Retail of office supplies, cleaning products, protection equipment, etc.
- 100% of their profit is reinvested into social protection programs developed by ADV Foundation.

Name: Village Life³⁷

Established: 2011

Scope: Tourism

Village Life provides an example of a social enterprise start-up in the area of sustainable tourism in rural areas in Romania. The pilot project started in 2011 and it serves an increasing number of families living in the rural area, which now have an additional source of income from this form of tourism. The enterprise is funded mainly from donor sponsorship with increasing revenues from sales of services that it brokers between tourists and hosts. Village Life is a good example of a social enterprise run with minimum staff, which helps an increasing number of families and individuals as well as communities.

Name: "Vegetables of Vidra" Agricultural Cooperative³⁸

Established: 2013

Scope: Agricultural production

The "Vegetables of Vidra" Agricultural Cooperative was established in January 2013, benefitting from the support of two Foundations in Romania: the Romanian American Foundation -that offered funding - and the Civil Society Development Foundation - that offered consultancy and support. In the 3 years of existence, the cooperative experienced constant growth, both in regard to the number of members registered (from 11 to 21 members) and the sales and incomes obtained (100% raise, from 2014 to 2015). This case study serves as a good example of a start-up supported with external funding and know-how. From convincing the farmers about the benefits of association, to developing a self-sustainable cooperative on a growing performance path, the external funding helped to start and develop this cooperative.

Name: *Bio Hrana Prietenia*³⁹

Established: 2011

Scope: Agricultural production - Social enterprise

³⁷ http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/new_cropsro_case_study_4_village_life.pdf

³⁸ http://www.ies.org.ro/library/files/newcrops_ro_case_study_5_vidra_cooperative.pdf

³⁹ Antonovici, Savulescu, and Sandu, "The Agricultural Cooperatives in Romania: From Conceptual Framework to Profitable Local Production," 2016.

Bio Hrana Prietenia is an autonomous association of individuals, with the aim of promoting the social interests (social integration and therapy) of mentally and physically disabled people, by integrating them into the work field. It was established as a limited liability company, but it works within the framework of an agricultural cooperative.

Name: *Vlasca 2008* ⁴⁰

Established: 2008

Scope: Agricultural production

Vlasca 2008 is an autonomous association individuals created in order to aid the cooperative's members' economic interests, by the use of the agricultural area. Through their work, they provide vegetables to local markets.

1.10 National publications

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PART 2: COOPERATIVE/ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Part 2.1: Cooperative Education

Name	Assistance for the development of “Legume de Vidra” Cooperative
Providers	Romanian American Foundation (RAF)
Target	Farmers in Ilfov County
Content	Aid in developing a business plan and overcoming difficulties regarding business management and sales.
Learning practices	Courses on business management, and marketing.
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting entrepreneurship	Yes. One of the main components of the program consists in developing a sustainable business strategy.
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	No

Name	“Social economy is my chance!” ”Economia socială este șansa mea!”. http://www.economiasocialasansamea.ro/despre-proiect
Providers	Fundația pentru Tineri și Femei din Iași, împreună cu Asociația pentru Soluționarea Alternativă a Disputelor din Suceava și ADO SAH ROM
Target	Individuals belonging to vulnerable social groups
Content	Strategic planning and business management courses
Learning practices	Workshops on social economy entrepreneurship and social inclusion. Activities meant to develop the local social economy
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting entrepreneurship	Yes. Workshops focus on providing social entrepreneurial education.
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	No

Name	PROMETEUS (1)
Providers	Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Societatii Civile (FDSC), AMPSODRU
Target	All
Content	Studies regarding the state of the social economy in Romania, the visibility of cooperatives, courses on social enterprise
Learning practices	Workshops and seminars on social economy, outdoor activities where members of social enterprises are invited
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting entrepreneurship	Yes. Some workshops are intended to train managers for social enterprises.
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	No

Name	"START Social Entrepreneurship for Women!"
Providers	ACE-Economie Socială
Target	Women
Content	Courses meant to increase awareness about social Entrepreneurship as a tool of economic empowerment and to support educated young women with a precarious status on market labour to become financially independent
Learning practices	Vocational counseling regarding entrepreneurial skills, social business consultancy and applied workshops for social business skills
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting entrepreneurship	Yes. The program provides courses meant to aid the development of entrepreneurial skills.
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	No

2.1.2 Needs of cooperative actors to develop entrepreneurship

- A comprehensive national strategy regarding the rule aimed for various types of social enterprise, and the operationalization of an integrated set of measures aimed to foster social economy enterprises
- Strengthening the Compartment for social economy (Compartimentul pentru economie socială) and its role in steering the cooperative actors into developing entrepreneurial education programs

2.1.3 Needs of cooperative actors to reach young people

- Introducing basic educational elements on the cooperative sector into the mainstream educational system
- Integration of cooperative ethics and knowledge into the basic educational system
- A pilot program that would help student creating STUDENTS' COOPS during their university level education
- Developing proactive facilities for cooperative experimentation and start ups in a generalized and representative manner in all geographical areas, with an special attention given to the most deprived rural areas.

Part 2.2 : Entrepreneurship Education

Name	Dream Big http://aser.ro/dream-big/
Providers	Asociatia Studentilor Economisti din Romania (ASER)
Target	Students
Content	Business skills, networking and knowledge
Learning practices	Participatory Workshops on personal branding, leadership public speaking and time management.
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting cooperatives	No
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	Yes. The projects target groups are manly students.

Name	Compania JUNIOR and It's my business!
Providers	JA Romania
Target	Primary and High school students
Content	Trainings and workshops meant to develop basic entrepreneurial skills in young students

Learning practices	Workshops, courses and webinars on basic entrepreneurial knowledge. Writing projects of business start-ups. Interaction with the local business community.
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting cooperatives	No
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	Yes. The target group is mostly composed of young people.

Name	1stEP
Providers	Business Organization for Students
Target	Students
Content	Business skills, networking and knowledge
Learning practices	Panel discussions with local entrepreneurs, workshops regarding business administrations and personal branding.
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting cooperatives	No
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	Yes. The projects address the concerns of young individuals and recent graduates.

Name	IDEAL Project
Providers	CISA (Center for support in business start-up) and CEED România
Target	All
Content	Business skills and planning, project management, and business marketing
Learning practices	The project offers counseling to those who intent to start-up their own business, and also provides a set of business skills
Indicate if those programs include specific action	No

supporting cooperatives	
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	Yes. The projects' target group must include over 51% people age 18 – 25.

Name	Akademiks
Providers	Asociatia Studentilor Economisti din Romania (ASER)
Target	Students
Content	Personal development, networking with local businesses, marketing, human resources, sales and finance courses
Learning practices	Workshops on topics such as marketing, human resources or sales, counseling sessions
Indicate if those programs include specific action supporting cooperatives	No
Indicate if those programs include specific action towards young people	Yes. The projects target mainly students and young individuals.

2.2.2 Needs of entrepreneurship educative actors to cover cooperative entrepreneurship

Romanian entrepreneurship actors are rather absent, except international organizations, which provide entrepreneurial education. On the other hand, the entrepreneurial education at the pre-university level has made sensible progress in Romania in the last decade. Probably, the next most important step would be to generalize such curricular opportunities at the university level, and the development of easily accessible programs for young persons that are not enrolled in undergraduate studies.

2.2.3 Needs of entrepreneurship educative actors to reach young people

According to the 2012 Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe. National Strategies, Curricula and Learning Outcomes Report ⁴¹ the “ **Approaches to entrepreneurship education in primary education (ISCED 1), according to central steering documents, 2011/12 were not** explicitly mentioned in steering documents “, but appears as cross-

⁴¹ Bourgeois and European Commission, *Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe*, 14.

curricular and partially compulsory in the lower general secondary education. The 2012 Entrepreneurship Education at School in Europe. National Strategies, Curricula and Learning Outcomes Report summarize some of the most important advances in Romania " The Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Businesses has launched the '**Government Strategy for the Development of the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) Sector by 2013**' developed within a project co-funded by the European Social Fund. At present, there is a **draft Government Decision on the approval** of this strategy. The general objective of the strategy is the economic revival and the support for the development of SMEs over 2010-2013.

The measures and actions proposed within Priority 'Promoting an entrepreneurship culture and making entrepreneurship education efficient' refer to: Continuous development of the education system in order to efficiently support the promotion of an entrepreneurship culture, with the following actions: e.g. Developing specific modules within the school curriculum, which provide students with the opportunity to learn concrete things and the option of extending their entrepreneurship knowledge; Appropriate teacher training; Supporting the partnership between businesses and the education system with a view to promote entrepreneurship by developing curricula, in cooperation with local businesses, which provide students with the opportunity of hands-on experience through activities in a company.

<http://www.fonduri-structurale.ro/detaliu.aspx?t=Stiri&eID=8780> (only RO)

The Law of National Education 1/2011 stipulates in Article 343 the establishment of **Community Lifelong Learning Centers** by local public administrations in partnership with education and training providers. The role of the centers is to implement policies and strategies in the area of lifelong learning at community level. According to article 344, paragraph 1, point c, among the responsibilities of these centers, there are 'the provision of educational services for children, youth

and adults through: (...) (iv) **programmes for entrepreneurship education**'.

<http://www.edu.ro/index.php/base/frontpage> (only RO)

The concept of training firm was introduced in the Romanian technical and vocational education and training through a project initiated within the Stability Pact and carried out in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry of Education and Culture – the ECO NET project, since 2001.

<http://www.tvet.ro/index.php/ro/component/content/article/18-cap4/147-firma-de-exerciuiu-intreprinderea-simulata.html> (only RO)

<http://www.roct.ro/> (only RO)

In the framework of the strategic project 'Training Teachers' in technical and vocational education and training – the SERVICES profile in order to expand the use of the modern training firm method, implemented by the CNDIPT in 2010-2013, teacher training for the implementation of the training firm concept is taking place. The Ministry of Education organizes dissemination actions as a follow-up.

<http://firmaexercitiu.tvet.ro/>

The **Business Plan Competition**, addressed to all registered training firms, was introduced in the school year **2008/09** as a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and

Sports, the National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education, Kultur Kontakt Austria and other social partners.”⁴²

PART 3: OPPORTUNITIES

3.1. Youth

In Romania there are strong differences between the youth living in the urban region and the ones living in rural regions. One of the main differences is related to the level of school dropout. Most Romanian young people with a low level of education are to be found in a rural environment, because formal schooling is hardly seen as being necessary, and also because in the rural area schools are fairly scarce. As a result, dropping out of school is seen as a better alternative because “*school is good for nothing*” or because “*there are no jobs*”⁴³. One of the main causes for school dropout is related to the economic problems in rural regions. Almost three-quarters of the youth aged 14 to 29 and 50% of the youth over 18 years of age live with their parents (76% of young people live with their family of origin) and this is primarily due to the absence of economic or social opportunities for them. This is because the labor of children is useful to the household, considering that the economic level of the household is sufficiently low that the effort of all is needed. This means that 44% of the young population (aged 15 to 29) live in rural areas and almost half (47%) of rural working young people are unpaid workers in the family household. Moreover, six out of ten working young people from rural environments are employed in agriculture. On the other hand, young individuals in the urban environment tend to have lower rates of unemployment because they have more opportunities to get employed: 44% are active in the labor market as compared to 37% in the rural regions.

Lastly, another phenomenon which affects youth in Romania (especially ones living in the urban regions) is emigration. Whether we are talking about emigration as brain-drain process or a chance to find better living conditions than the ones present in Romania, emigration is a common topic among young individuals. As a result, emigration is the usual response of highly educated young people faced with the lack of opportunities to realize their professional aspirations in Romania⁴⁴, or an opportunity to find better living conditions.

3.2. Youth unemployment

Youth unemployment rate has been increasing since 2007, when this rate was at 19.3, afterwards increasing rapidly to a 24 rate, and slowly decreasing in 2015 (21.7) and 2016 (20.6)⁴⁵.

3.3. Youth **intentions** towards entrepreneurship

⁴² Ibid., 67.

⁴³ DuBois-Reymond and Europarat, *Youth Policy in Romania*.

⁴⁴ DuBois-Reymond and Europarat, *Youth Policy in Romania*, 30.

⁴⁵ [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Youth_unemployment_figures_2007-2016_\(%25\)_T1.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Youth_unemployment_figures_2007-2016_(%25)_T1.png)

According to a 2015 article, in Romania, you people come in contact with elements of entrepreneurial education in their 5th, 9th and 10th year.⁴⁶ The authors describe the ECO NET and the Junior Achievement Program. Junior Achievement Program was created in 1993 by the Ministry of Education and JAR Romania (Junior Achievement Romania), part of the JA Worldwide with the aim to train professors in the areas of entrepreneurial and financial education for pupils. Furthermore, HAI Romania has developed a series of other programs designed for entrepreneurship education in Romania.⁴⁷ The ECO NET Program has been financed by the OECD and the Austrian Ministry of Education. The aim of the program is to support the developing of entrepreneurship among students, by involving them in creating business strategies and developing their management skills⁴⁸

A recent evaluation of the situation of entrepreneurial education for youth in Romania concludes that *“Economic and entrepreneurial education in Romania represents both an absolute necessity at individual level, and an opportunity which requires to be followed in the present European context of an increasingly important role attributed to entrepreneurship. Economic education, if started at young ages, could contribute to better preparing the individual for an autonomous life, by endowing him or her with knowledge and abilities related to personal budget administration, better understanding of financial mechanisms, role and opportunity of credit and lending, efficiency of personal expenditure etc. Meanwhile, it is an opportunity in the present conditions, when a strong discussion of new curricular architecture has emerged.”*⁴⁹ Nevertheless, their empirical analysis showed that *“Romania is among the few countries in Europe where entrepreneurship education is regarded as an activity in phase of initiative, while in some countries entrepreneurship is part of an educational strategy much larger, and it is even part of the general education.”*⁵⁰

Using data from the *Flash Eurobarometer 354, Entrepreneurship in the EU and beyond* databases from 2012, Boldureanu shows that only 23% of respondents “have attended courses or other educational or entrepreneurship activities, whether they have put their ideas into practice and whether they have developed their own projects.”⁵¹ Among the 15-24 age cohort this percentage increases to 45,1% and decreases to 19,6% for 25-39 cohort. Thus *“The individuals who have completed their studies after the age 20 (29.2%) as well as those who are still studying (46.0%) are more interested in participating in entrepreneurship courses than those who have completed their studies at the age 15 (11.4 %) or at the age 16-19 years (1.4 %). The same trend applies to the European Union.”*⁵² Furthermore, *“72.5 % agree that the school education helped them acquire/develop an entrepreneurial attitude (with a percentage of 49.7*

⁴⁶ Pipirigeanu and Stancu, “Entrepreneurial Education in Romanian Educationl System.”

⁴⁷ https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/downloads/entrepreneurship/Romania_151022.pdf

⁴⁸ Pipirigeanu and Stancu, “Entrepreneurial Education in Romanian Educationl System,” 101.

⁴⁹ Csaba, Badulescu, and Cadar, “Economic and Entrepreneurial Education in Romania in the European Context,” 239.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 243.

⁵¹ Boldureanu, “ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN ROMANIA IN COMPARISON TO THE EUROPEAN UNION,” 178.

⁵² Ibid., 179.

% totally agree and 22.88 % agree on the matter)..... 35.6 % who totally agree and 23.4 % who agree, the Romanian responders agree with the statement that the school education has sparked their interest to become entrepreneurs. ”⁵³

3.4. **Uncovered social needs**

Romania faces the most inequality in terms of regional development when compared with other EU countries. Combined with the emigration of more than 3 million people, representing more than 15% of the population, and more than 25% of the active population, addressing the regional disparity is the most important social need that needs to be addressed in Romania.

3.5. Youth **sensibility** to uncovered social needs

Youth in the poor regions are the most affected by the lack of opportunities, and thus many times take to move in other regions or to emigrate. Increasing their prospects for a better life could change their choices.

3.6. Industries or social needs with high potential for cooperative entrepreneurship

- The agricultural and agricultural services sector
- Tourism sector
- Community, social service
- Sustainable energy development sector
- ICT

3.7. Do you think those are suitable for youth entrepreneurship?

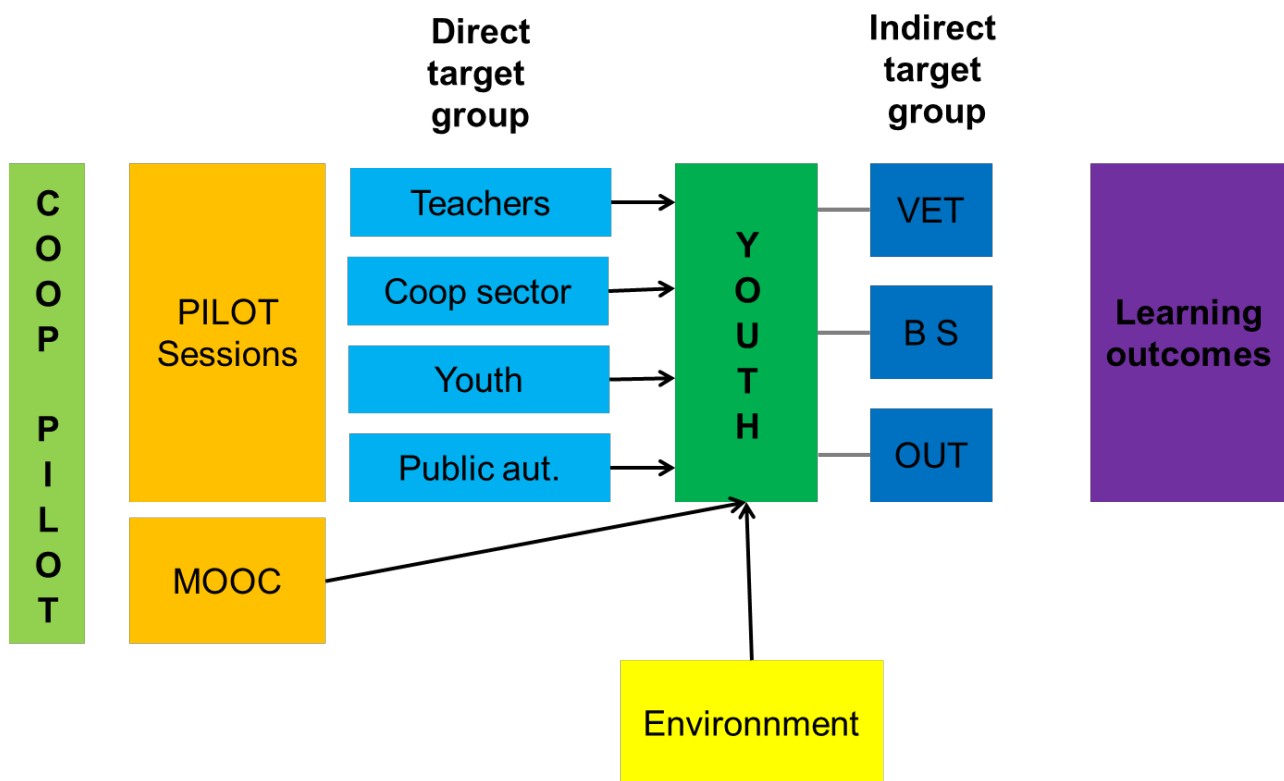
Yes, but provided that major efforts in the area of youth education would take place.

3.8. Industries or social needs with high potential for youth entrepreneurship

- ICT
- The agricultural and agricultural services sector
- Tourism sector
- Community, social service

⁵³ Ibid.

PART 4: NEEDS



4. Expected learning outcomes

4.1.2 VET students

Learning outcomes	Entrepreneurship	Cooperative
ATTITUDE Examples: self-confidence, sense of initiative, problem solving mind, cooperation ability, listening capacity, empathy...	4	6
SKILLS Examples: creativity, planning, financial literacy, managing resources, managing uncertainty, and risk, teamwork, co-construction, communication, decision making...	4	6
KNOWLEDGE Examples: assessment of opportunities, role of entrepreneurs in society,	2	5

entrepreneurial career options, legal framework of coop, coop ecosystem, funding sources for coop...		
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4.1.2 Universities scholars and business management students

Learning outcomes	Entrepreneurship	Cooperative
ATTITUDE Self-confidence, sense of initiative, problem solving mind, cooperation ability, listening capacity, empathy...	5	6
SKILLS Creativity, planning, financial literacy, managing resources, managing uncertainty, and risk, teamwork, co- construction, communication, decision making...	3	6
KNOWLEDGE Assessment of opportunities, role of entrepreneurs in society, entrepreneurial career options, legal framework of coop, coop ecosystem, funding sources for coop...	4	6

4.1.3 Young people out of education

Learning outcomes	Entrepreneurship	Cooperative
ATTITUDE Examples: self-confidence, sense of initiative, problem solving mind, cooperation ability, listening capacity, empathy...	6	6
SKILLS Examples: creativity, planning, financial literacy, managing resources, managing uncertainty, and risk, teamwork, co- construction, communication, decision	6	6

making...		
KNOWLEDGE Examples: assessment of opportunities, role of entrepreneurs in society, entrepreneurial career options, legal framework of coop, coop ecosystem, funding sources for coop...	6	6

4.2 Target audience that will attend the pilot session

- Teachers: 20%
- Coop sector: 10%
- Youth: 60%
- Public authorities: 10%

4.3 Expected learning outcomes that need to be supported by the pilot session

	VET student	Universities scholars and business management students	Young people out of education
Entrepreneurship ATTITUDES	4	4	6
Entrepreneurship SKILLS	4	4	6
Entrepreneurship KNOWLEDGE	4	3	6
Cooperative ATTITUDES	6	5	6
Cooperative SKILLS	6	5	6
Cooperative KNOWLEDGE	5	4	6



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National school of political studies and public administration - Romania (<http://www.snspe.ro>)

Federazione trentina della cooperazione - Italy (<http://www.cooperazionetrentina.it>)

Fundacion Escuela Andaluza de Economia Social - Spain (<http://escueladeeconomiasocial.es>)

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Social Economy Institute - Greece (<http://www.social-economy.com>)

Scuola Nazionale Servizi Foundation - Italy (<http://www.scuolanazionale.servizi.it>)

Association des agences de la démocratie locale, ALDA - France (<http://www.ald-europe.eu>)

Chamber of commerce and industry Vratsa sdruzhenie - Bulgaria (<http://www.cci-vratsa.org>)

Authority for Cooperative Societies - Cyprus (<http://www.cssda.gov.cy>)

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