DEVELOPMENT OF MUNICIPAL SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE BANSKÁ BYSTRICA SELF-GOVERNING REGION

ROZVOJ OBECNÉHO SOCIÁLNEHO PODNIKANIA V BANSKOBYSSTRICKOM SAMOSPRÁVNOM KRAJI

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I. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is still a relatively new form of entrepreneurship that was recently regulated in Slovakia through Act No. 112/2018 on the Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship is defined as a traditional business activity, as a systemic and continuous activity carried out by an entrepreneur independently, in his own name and at his own risk, but with the difference that the entrepreneur does not carry out this activity primarily for profit, but in order to achieve a certain positive social impact, such as providing services beneficial to society in general or to a particular group of persons, e.g. handicapped, long-term unemployed or other vulnerable natural persons^{(1), (2), (3)}. A social enterprise is thus an enterprise that carries out its activity, while its primary goal is not to achieve economic profit, but to provide a positive so-

cial service to society (so-called social profit)^{(4), (5)}.

On the other hand, towns and municipalities are eligible under Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment to establish their own enterprise through which they can provide certain services, as well as services falling within their competencies⁽⁶⁾. A municipal enterprise is thus defined as an enterprise established and owned by the relevant town or municipality carrying out a certain business activity to make a profit. However, municipal enterprises of a social nature are beginning to appear, the so-called municipal social enterprise that carries out its activities in order to achieve a positive social impact. The advantage is the knowledge of the territory and thus the object of such enterprises reflects the specific needs of the locality where they were established, i.e. specifically the

⁽¹⁾ Martin (2007).

⁽²⁾ Saifan (2012).

⁽³⁾ Act No. 112/2018 on the Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship.

⁽⁴⁾ Korimová (2007).

⁽⁵⁾ Pangriya (2019).

⁽⁶⁾ Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment.

Abstract (EN)

Social entrepreneurship is important tool in eliminating regional disparities, inclusion of socially excluded people into society, overall improvement of the quality of life and much more. This paper aims to analyse the development of municipal social entrepreneurship in the conditions of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, where some of the less developed districts are located. The main sources of research were questionnaire realized among local government representatives, plan of the economic and social development of the district and statistical data. In the article, there were many indicators examined, such as quantity of the municipal social enterprises, its activities, support or barriers of its development. The results points to fact that only 7% of the participants of research own municipal social enterprise. The most common barrier to establish and manage these enterprises is inadequate knowledge of the relevant legislation.

Keywords (EN)

social policy, social economy, social entrepreneurship, municipal entrepreneurship

Abstrakt (SK)

Sociálne podnikanie je významným nástrojom štátu na odstraňovanie regionálnych disparít, nakoľko prispieva k začleneniu vylúčených ľudí do spoločnosti tým, že zlepšuje kvalitu ich života a má mnoho ďalších pozitívnych účinkov na spoločnosť. Príspevok si kladie za cieľ analyzovať rozvoj obecného sociálneho podnikania v kraji, kde sa nachádza väčšie množstvo menej rozvinutých okresov Slovenska, konkrétne v Banskobystrickom. Hlavným zdrojom informácií boli dotazníkový prieskum realizovaný medzi predstaviteľmi samospráv v kraji, plán hospodárskeho a sociálneho rozvoja kraja či štatistické údaje o kraji. V príspevku boli skúmané ukazovatele ako množstvo obecných sociálnych podnikov v kraji a ich podnikateľská činnosť, podpora obecného podnikania v kraji či bariéry jeho rozvoja. Výsledky poukazujú na to, že len 7% zo samospráv zúčastnených vo výskume je majoritným alebo minoritným vlastníkom sociálneho podniku, pričom najčastejšou bariérou v riadení týchto podnikov je nedostatočná informovanosť o príslušnej legislatíve.

Kľúčové slová (SK)

sociálna politika, sociálna ekonomika, sociálne podnikanie, obecné podnikanie

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needs of the town or municipality⁽⁷⁾.

As far as situation in Slovakia is concerned, social enterprises as tools of the social economy arose as a result of persistent and increasing regional disparities in consequence of long-term unemployment or social exclusion of the population, especially in the lagging regions. For the first time, these enterprises appeared in Slovakia in the second half of the 19th century. They appeared in the form of self-help cooperatives and unions⁽⁸⁾.

Banská Bystrica self-governing region is also one of the lagging regions. It is situated in Central Slovakia. There are sufficient geographic and geomorphic conditions, especially for the development of tourism or agriculture. Moreover, it is the largest self-governing region by area in Slovakia, which consists of 13 districts, 24 towns and 516 municipalities⁽⁹⁾. The problem of its development partially lies in fragmented settlement structure with a predominance of small municipalities⁽¹⁰⁾, which represent 53% of the total number of municipalities in the region. This indicator shows that Banská Bystrica Region is predominantly a rural region. In terms of demographic indicators, the Banská Bystrica Region is the least densely populated territory in Slovakia (69 inhabitants per km²). There is a trend of declining population growth, aging and also the female predominance. As far as education is concerned, the majority of the population has obtained secondary vocational or elementary education. The qualification of the population is low, which is a sign of a low level of development in the region⁽¹¹⁾. The Banská Bystrica Region also has a problem with a high number of Roma people (they represent the second largest nationality in the region after Slovak with 12.8% of the total population)⁽¹²⁾. In 2019, there were 210 municipalities with Roma communities in the Banská Bystrica Region, mostly in the Rimavská Sobota, Lučenec and Krupina districts⁽¹³⁾. The lagging of the region is also confirmed by socio-economic indicators. In 2020, 51.2% of the population from this region were economically active people. 3.8% of job seekers were registered at the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family and the unemployment rate in the region was 6.67% (1.69% higher than the Slovak average). Regarding the comparison of these statistical data between individual districts, the most backward of them was Rimavská Sobota district with the highest number of job seekers or the highest unemployment rate, while the data for this district lagged significantly behind the average data of the region. Moreover, Rimavská Sobota district is the second district with the highest unemployment rate (14.96%) in Slovakia⁽¹⁴⁾.

Based on the facts mentioned above, it follows that the development of municipal social entrepreneurship in Banská

Bystrica self-governing region as a tool of social economy is appropriate for overall development of the territory. It is therefore necessary to study the municipal social entrepreneurship potential and the barriers of the development, both from the perspective of present or potential owners of social enterprises and from the regional government point of view, to come up with proposals to eliminate them and support the establishment and functioning of these enterprises.

II. Objective and methodology

This paper follows the research role of the Department of Regional Studies and Rural Development of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. It aims to analyze the current state of municipal social entrepreneurship in Banská Bystrica self-governing region and the possibilities of the development. Statistical data obtained from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic and the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic were used as secondary data sources to investigate the issue. Another important source of secondary data which was processed in the article through content analysis, citation or paraphrase is the plan of economic and social development of Banská Bystrica self-governing region. The primary source was a questionnaire survey realized in the municipalities of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, which was distributed at the end of 2019 and at the beginning of 2020 to employees of municipal authorities (called local government representatives) via an electronic form repeatedly in 3 phases. The total number of questions was 41 (11 open, 12 semi-open, 18 closed). As the research itself was part of a broader research task of the Department of Regional Studies and Rural Development, the questions in the survey were taken from questionnaire surveys conducting in parallel in other regions of Slovakia. The success rate of the survey was 57%. The total number of surveyed towns and municipalities in the region was 540 and 305 employees of the interviewed municipal authorities and offices participated. In accordance with the research goal, which is the analysis of municipal social entrepreneurship and the possibilities of its potential development in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, the survey examined indicators, such as the number of municipal social enterprises in the region and their business activities, employees, support for municipal entrepreneurship in the region or barriers to its development from the owners' point of view. These were evaluated through the Google Forms system, followed by tabular transformation and graphical processing. Another primary source of information in the field of the social entrepreneurship that provided the regional self-government perspective on this issue was an interview with Ing. Milan Vaňo, who is one of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region representatives. He is a specialist in the social economy, an employee of the Regional Development Agency Dobrý kraj and co-founder of several municipal social enterprises in the region. The main topics of conversation were the current state of the municipal social enterprise in the region, opportunities or barriers to its development and the position of the development agency.

⁽⁷⁾ Geller (2019).

⁽⁸⁾ Lubelcová (2012).

⁽⁹⁾ The Economic and Social Development Programme of Banská Bystrica self-governing region, 2015-2023.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Based on the classification of municipalities by Fáziková (2005), the population of small municipalities is less than 500 inhabitants.

⁽¹¹⁾ Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2011).

⁽¹²⁾ Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2020).

⁽¹³⁾ Atlas rómskych komunit/Atlas of Roma Communities (in the MVSŘ/Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, 2019).

⁽¹⁴⁾ ÚPSVR/Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (2020).

Table 1: Comparison of legislation regulating the concepts of social economy and social entrepreneurship in the European Union and Slovakia

European Union	Slovak republic
Europe's Charter of Principles of the Social Economy	Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on Non-profit Organizations Providing Generally Beneficial Services
Decision No. 1672/2006 of the European Parliament establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity	Act No. 34/2002 Coll. on Foundations
Regulation No. 346/2013 of the European Parliament on European Social Entrepreneurship Funds	Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services
Regulation No. 1296/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Social Inclusion	Act No. 448/2008 on Social Services
Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund	Act No. 112/2018 Coll. on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises

Source: own processing based on eur-lex and slov-lex, 2020

III. Social economy and entrepreneurship legislation

The concepts such as social economy and social entrepreneurship emerged in Europe in the 1990s as a response to arising and persistent social problems of certain population groups⁽¹⁵⁾. Despite the fact that the first specific forms of the social economy existed in Europe in the first half of the 19th century, it was difficult to define and implement in legislation the related concepts of social economy or entrepreneurship because this issue is still relatively new and constantly evolving. Due to the mentioned facts, the regulation of these sectors was, and still is, slightly chaotic and not specified. We processed its comparison related to the European Union and Slovakia in the table below.

As far as the social economy and social entrepreneurship are concerned within the European Union, there is no comprehensive regulation of these concepts. The most important document in this field is the European Charter of Principles of the Social Economy as a tool for its application. Furthermore, the legislation is represented only by decisions of the European Parliament or regulations of the European Parliament and the Council within the concepts such as social solidarity, promotion of employment, social inclusion or the European funds to support the social economy and social entrepreneurship.

Until recently, there was no comprehensive legislation regarding the regulation of the social economy and social entrepreneurship in Slovakia. These concepts have been partially regulated by law, such as Act No. 213/1997 Coll. on Non-profit Organizations Providing Generally Beneficial Services, Act No. 34/2002 on Foundations and on the Change of the Civil Code as amended, Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services, Act No. 448/2008 on Social Services, etc. However, the mentioned laws were dealing with these concepts only very marginally. There were many inconsistencies in the realization of social economy and social entrepreneurship. This incongruity deterred many subjects from creating the social enterprises. In 2018, Slovakia adopted Act No. 112 Coll. on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises and on amendment and sup-

plement of some acts. It defines the basic concepts of the social economy, social entrepreneurship or the forms and methods of its support. The aim of this act was to clarify the basic concepts of the issue, unify the rules and create favorable conditions for social entrepreneurship in Slovakia or remove its barriers⁽¹⁶⁾.

IV. Municipal social entrepreneurship in Banská Bystrica Region

305 representatives of the surveyed towns and municipalities participated in the research on the issues of municipal social entrepreneurship in the Banská Bystrica Region. Regarding the basic characteristics of the representatives 68% were men, while the predominant age of the respondents was 40–59 years (up to 72% of the respondents). 50% of local government representatives have been in the office for the third term.

The knowledge of the relevant concepts and the relevant legislation in this field are the main conditions for successful management of the municipal social enterprise, therefore in the questionnaire were also included the questions verifying the knowledge of local government officials in this area. In the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, 80% of local government representatives are familiar with the term social entrepreneurship, and 54% of representatives are familiar with the term social agriculture. 54% of local government representatives partially know the relevant Act No. 112/2018 on Social Economy and Social Enterprises, while the remaining 15% master this law and 31% do not know it at all. As far as the knowledge of running and managing a municipal social enterprise is concerned, 14% of respondents are absolutely sure about it, 49% of respondents stated that they have at least partial knowledge, but the remaining 37% of respondents do not have the knowledge at all. Based on these results, the first barrier to the development of social entrepreneurship in the region was formulated, and thus ignorance and insufficient awareness of the region representatives and municipal social enterprises operators in the relevant laws and terms.

The aim of the most important part of the survey was to find out the current state of municipal social entrepreneurship in

⁽¹⁵⁾ Borzaga (2012).

⁽¹⁶⁾ MPSVR/Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family (2018).

Figure 1: Sectors in which interviewed representants of self-government enterprises of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region operate, 2020

Source: own processing based on the results of survey, 2020.

the Banská Bystrica self-governing region. There were questions focused on finding out the number of social enterprises located in the region and their characteristics.

The results of the research showed that only 7% (21 respondents) are the owners of a municipal social enterprise.

The mayors as representatives of the local government-initiated establishment of 12 enterprises (57%). Furthermore, members of municipal councils (28%) or residents of towns and municipalities (5%) participated in the establishment of enterprises to the greatest extent. The most common motives that initiated the establishment of municipal social enterprises were, in particular, the effort to solve the long-term unemployment, to increase income or to improve services and the overall quality of life within the territory of the relevant self-government.

Research also shown that as far as the organizational structure of these companies is concerned, leading positions were held by men to a greater extent (67%), mostly with a university degree (67%). Municipal social enterprises in the Banská Bystrica Region employ 353 people, while 64% (225) are male and the remaining 36% (118 employees) are women. As far as employees are concerned, 7 out of 21 companies (33%) owned by towns and municipalities of the Banská Bystrica self-governing region employ disadvantaged applicants on the labor market. These are municipal enterprises that also have the character of a social enterprise.

The figure illustrates the business objectives of the companies.

The research showed that companies are involved in several sectors. They usually maintain the public spaces, provide various construction works or dispose of waste. As the figure does not contain the infrequent answers (in the number of 1 company), we have listed these outside the figure and they are: industrial production, education, health care, social assistance and social services, pasta production, cemetery management and also flower and vegetable production.

The aim of the research was to find out which respondents plan to establish such an enterprise, whether just a municipal enterprise or an enterprise performing social functions.

The results of the research pointed to the fact that only a minimum of interviewed local government representatives plan to establish a municipal (15% of respondents) or social enterprise (18% of respondents) in their town or municipality in the future. This led us to assume that local government

Figure 2: The share of BBSK (Banská Bystrica self-governing region) towns and municipalities that plan to establish a municipal enterprise, 2020

Source: own processing based on the results of survey, 2020.

Figure 3: The share of BBSK towns and municipalities that plan to establish a social enterprise, 2020

Source: own processing based on the results of survey, 2020.

representatives are not sufficiently motivated to pursue such forms of business. Insufficient motivation to set up municipal or social enterprises may also stem from insufficient support of such enterprises. The support can take various forms (financial, material, etc.) and can be directed from several levels (European, national or local)⁽¹⁷⁾.

Therefore, other questions in the survey dealt with the currently used forms of support by existing municipal social enterprises in the region and the desired forms of support for enterprises by respondents who do not own such enterprises but they would like to. The following tables summarize the answers.

Financial support to social enterprises in the Banská Bystrica Region derives mainly from European sources. The local level is the main source of the material, technical and other support (including consultancy). The social enterprises in the Region use the national level of support the least.

The results point out that the most local government representatives in the Banská Bystrica Region who own a social enterprise or plan to set up their own would accept help from the local community in the form of volunteering. Towns and municipalities want to draw the most financial and technical support for their companies from regional self-government and state administration (up to 100% of respondents) and as a form of support, they could also imagine the co-ownership of a social enterprise. Within all three possible levels of support, the respondents showed the least interest in consultancy

⁽¹⁷⁾ Lubelcová (2012).

Table 2: Forms of support used by social enterprises owned by BBSK towns / municipalities, 2020

Form of support	Level	Number of enterprises that use it
Financial support	European	4
	national	3
	local	2
Material support	local	6
	national	1
Technical support	local	7
	national	1
Other support	local	5
	national	1
	European	1

Source: own processing based on the results of survey, 2020.

in the field of establishment or management of a general social enterprise.

Regarding the current state of the social economy or social entrepreneurship, 34 social enterprises are currently legally registered in the Banská Bystrica Region. 11 of them are municipal enterprises⁽¹⁸⁾. There is also a large Roma community and relatively high unemployment rate. As a result, 5 districts from this region belong to the least developed in the Slovak Republic. Based on the answers of the respondents and information from Ing. Milan Vaňo, the greatest barrier for local governments to set up social enterprises is lack of courage as currently the business environment in Slovakia is not very favorable for small entrepreneurs. The other problems are fear of administrative complexity, maintenance of own resources and last but not least lack of qualified workforce or workforce in general, because many inhabitants leave the Banská Bystrica self-governing region for work, either to the West Slovakia or abroad. Another problem is insufficient awareness and knowledge of the representatives in the relevant concepts or legislation regulating social entrepreneurship and the reluctance to learn in this field.

Dobrá kraj Regional Development Agency is the only one in Slovakia that has specialized department for social economy. Based on information from Ing. Vaňo, thanks to this department, it mediates the assistance to local self-governments and their social enterprises in the form of:

- direct support: the agency itself is the founder of two social enterprises mediating employment for the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged jobseekers,
- indirect support: in the form of public procurement contracts (with Act No. 112/2018 on the Social Economy and Social Enterprises stipulating a 6% share of public procurement contracts to social enterprises), administrative support and consultancy.

V. Conclusion

The present state of quality of life indicators of population (such as the unemployment rate, the number of job seekers,

⁽¹⁸⁾ MPSVR/Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family (2020).

Table 3: Desired support of existing and potential social enterprises owned by BBSK towns / municipalities, 2020

Level of support	Form of support	Number of answers
From the local community	voluntary work	23
	financial support	6
	material support	2
	technical support	2
	advice	1
	willingness to start the employment	1
From regional self-government	financial support	22
	material support	7
	technical support	12
	advice	3
From state administration	co-ownership of the company	1
	financial support	27
	material support	13
	technical support	15
	consultancy/ legislation	2

Source: own processing based on the results of survey, 2020.

etc.) in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region is average or even below average in comparison with the whole of Slovakia. Among other things, it raises the need for effective social policy instruments, including social entrepreneurship.

The aim of this paper was therefore to analyze the current state of municipal social entrepreneurship in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region and the possibilities of its development. These facts were researched through the analysis of geographical, demographic and socio-economic indicators of the region based on available statistics, as well as through direct inquiries of local governments.

The results of the research pointed to the deteriorating economic situation in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region, especially in some districts. As far as municipal social entrepreneurship is concerned, the deteriorating economic situation is an opportunity to establish or develop municipal social entrepreneurship. Thanks to social enterprises, long-term disadvantaged jobseekers may have the opportunity to employ. This could help to reduce the unemployment rate or the number of registered jobseekers, recipients of social benefits, etc. At the same time, according to Ing. Vaňo, the municipal social enterprises are the most desirable forms of social entrepreneurship, because the result of their activities is not only a positive social profit, but they can adapt their business activities directly to the needs of the territory in which they are established, which leads to overall development of the area. Compared to social enterprises established by private owners, they usually bring social profit, while they don't consider the development and needs of the specific area. Therefore, it is more effective for problematic localities to focus on the development of municipal social entrepreneurship. A particular opportunity for the development of municipal social entrepreneurship is the

crisis caused by the coronavirus. The unemployment rate has increased rapidly, because many people lost their jobs due to measures to limit the spread of the disease. Social entrepreneurship is therefore an important tool for the overall regional development. It is also a tool to balance the deteriorating regional disparities.

Regarding the current state of municipal social enterprise in Banská Bystrica self-governing region, only 7% of towns and municipalities that participated in the questionnaire were the owners of municipal social enterprise, while most of the towns and municipalities do not plan to establish such enterprise in the future. According to the local governments, the most common barriers to the development of municipal social entrepreneurship are a lack of knowledge of the relevant legislation and the other concepts, insufficient awareness of social entrepreneurship and its opportunities, which is associated with the courage to establish such enterprises. Some towns and municipalities also confirmed that the persistent prejudices of the local community towards the target group that the social enterprise would employ are also a problem. According to collective consciousness, it is especially a large Roma community that is unable to work effectively. Another major problem is extremely fragmented settlement structure of the region, which is also associated with the issue of financing. Small municipalities have a more limited budget for financing the social enterprise, which could be beneficial for the municipality, but financially unsustainable.

Based on the research, the social entrepreneurship in Banská Bystrica Region could be a desirable social policy tool that contributes to higher employment, social inclusion of individuals, improves the quality of life of the population and partially a tool to balance the regional disparities.

In connection with the need for its development, we finally came up with several proposals to remove the social entrepreneurship barriers in Banská Bystrica self-governing region. Some of them have already been implemented by Dobrý kraj Regional Development Agency. First of all, it is necessary to organize regular trainings, workshops or seminars for local government representatives to study the legislation and other concepts in the field of social economy and business, to study the administrative or other types of activity, to go through the advantages and disadvantages associated with the establishment and management of social enterprises. Through this form of consultancy, the local governments would gain certain insight and their confidence in this area would increase, which could lead to greater courage in business and thus increase the total number of social enterprises in the region. The solution to improve the financial aspect and thus to contribute to promotion of social entrepreneurship and its development in the towns and villages of Banská Bystrica Region may lay in connecting or association of small town and municipalities, and thus their mutual partnership in founding and managing social enterprises, regarding its fragmented settlement structure. The recommendation is also to pay more attention to the creation of social enterprises with regard to the needs of the territory or region itself, which should result not only in the branch of the enterprise (e.g. agricultural social enterprise in the south of Banská Bystrica self-governing region), but also in the nature of the social enterprise (e.g. enterprise employing candidates

after serving a sentence in a territory with the high number of these people). At the same time, these measures must be applied to the greater extent, especially in the districts with the highest unemployment rate, poverty or total social exclusion, because these factors increase territorial disparities. Rimavská Sobota, Revúca and Lučenec belong to these districts.

As far as our proposals are concerned, the positive fact is that several of them have already been applied by Dobrý kraj Regional Development Agency, which plans to persist and to do it more intensively.

The deficiency in the field of research is represented by the insufficient participation of the respondents (57%), therefore it is not possible to determine municipal social entrepreneurship in the Banská Bystrica self-governing region and the condition of its development to be mapped enough. However, the results which were achieved may provide baseline data for wider and more comprehensive research in this area.

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