



**ECOSYSTEM OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES
- A COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF THE PRACTICE OF
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

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Abstract: Due to the influence of numerous factors that make it difficult to find the innovative solutions to social and environmental problems that social enterprises deal with, there is a need for a joint action of social enterprises, both with each other and with other actors operating in their environment. In order to overcome the challenges more easily, which they face in their business, social enterprises and social entrepreneurs should take advantage of networking. Business networks can bring many benefits to their members, and networks in the social sector are of particular importance. Recently, networking has taken place within the broader framework of so-called ecosystems. With this in mind, the aim of this paper is to shed more light on the specifics of networking of social enterprises, i.e. their connection to ecosystems. The Social Entrepreneurship Network (SEN) has played a key role in the development of this sector in European countries. Also in the Republic of Serbia, networking of social enterprises with civil society organizations has significantly contributed to the creation of public policies and the promotion of social enterprises.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, social enterprise networks, social enterprise ecosystem

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1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurs operate in a specific segment among the state, the market, and the nonprofit sector (Austin et al., 2006; Dees & Anderson, 2003). In this specific environment, they create relationships with numerous actors (e.g. NGOs, local authorities, commercial enterprises). Establishing these interactions is of great importance because organizations are considered to be limited in their business by the ability to establish, maintain, and develop relationships (Lechner & Leironas, 2009, p. 658). This is especially true for social enterprises, which face numerous difficulties in their business (access to loans, donations, insufficient government support, etc.) (Bjärsholm, 2019).

One of the possibilities that can contribute to solving a number of problems of social enterprises is their networking (Austin et al., 2006; Sharir & Lerner, 2006; Spear, 2006; Weber & Kratzer, 2013; Yitshaki et al., 2008). A network is usually understood as a group of actors who have frequent and lasting interrelationships and where there is an exchange of information and trust (Hoang & Antonic, 2003). In modern business conditions, networking is seen as a prerequisite for the survival and success of the organization (Weber & Kratzer, 2013). Networks offer great potential for the development of social entrepreneurship, especially considering that the network can provide support in obtaining resources, facilitating the development of partnerships, identifying opportunities and gaining legitimacy (Granados & Rivera, 2018). However, social entrepreneurs have difficulties in identifying and developing relevant networks (Phillips et al., 2015), so the research of networks and networking must be approached from the point of view of business practice.

Therefore, the subject of this paper is the specifics and importance of networking of social enterprises with other actors in the environment, as well as the benefits and advantages of a developed ecosystem for social enterprises in all phases of their business. The aim of the paper is to compare the development path of the ecosystem of social enterprises in Europe and the Republic of Serbia. After considering the characteristics of social enterprises, the factors that form the basis of any social enterprise ecosystem will be analyzed. Then, the characteristics of the ecosystem of social enterprises in Europe and the Republic of Serbia will be presented, in order to identify opportunities for progress through their comparison and, finally, suggestions for their further development will be given.

2. Characteristics of social enterprises

Social enterprises aim to solve complex social problems such as poverty, limited employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, homelessness, and they also participate in solving environmental problems, contribute to the preservation of old crafts, contribute to the development of science and culture, etc. (Hjorth, 2013; Ivanović-Đukić et al., 2020). In conditions of numerous challenges, social

entrepreneurship appears as a significant driver of social innovation and encourages the recognition and solution of social problems in various fields (health, environment, education, social protection, etc.). In this way, social entrepreneurship recognizes and uses opportunities to improve the environment, design and diffuse new approaches and advanced sustainable solutions to create social values. At the same time, social entrepreneurship is a part of the broader context of the social economy (SE) (Velev et al., 2011). The social economy is a part of an economic reality in which the issues of social inclusion, well-being, social welfare and social capital are intertwined with an emphasis on the development perspective (Anheier, 2005; Defourny & Develtere, 1999; Nicholls, 2006).

Social enterprises operate with the goal of achieving a social mission using market strategies, so they are often characterized as “hybrid” organizations that combine elements of for-profit and non-profit organizations into a single business model (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Namely, the primary purpose of social enterprises is to achieve some social goals, so it could be said that they are non-profit organizations, but they are also expected to earn income from basic activities in order to be self-sustainable, which gives them a hybrid character. Also, many social enterprises are engaged in classic commercial activities and make a profit, so it could be said that they are profitable, but they reinvest that profit in solving some social problems, so they are hybrid on this basis (Stefanović & Ivanović-Đukić, 2018).

3. The importance of networking for social enterprises

Innovative policies, partnerships, appropriate legislation and various consultative bodies create the necessary environment for the development and operation of social enterprises. Social enterprises can achieve the greatest influence in such a created environment through various forms of association such as networks, coalitions, alliances, consortia, etc. Establishing formal relationships between different social enterprises and beyond, between the local community and relevant political actors and non-profit organizations, both locally and nationally, is of great importance for the development of this sector (Velev et al., 2011).

Networking activities can be defined as necessary processes and strategies for effectively connecting participants of one or more ecosystems, in order to enable efficient exchange of resources and competencies in accordance with common goals and visions and facilitate survival in a complex and insecure environment. Based on this, the social enterprise network can be defined as a community of stakeholders and agents operating in the social entrepreneurship sector, sharing a common vision, values, needs, goals and resources (Gabbi & Badeanschi, 2020).

The basis for networking of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs can be a geographical area (regional, national, international networks), a specific sector

(agriculture, tourism, food industry) or a joint social or environmental mission (employment, environment, etc.). (Inspiralba, 2021).

Of particular importance for the social entrepreneurship sector is the support of a wide community of professionals, public officials, researchers, consumers, volunteers and donors, who should be stimulated to join the sector and feel part of the community (through organizing various events, conferences, etc.). This gives members a platform to interact with like-minded people, ask questions, share ideas and experiences, and identify opportunities to work together (Gabbi & Badeanschi, 2020).

Because social enterprises represent a relatively new type of organization, they must convince many different actors in their legitimacy and reliability (Perrini et al., 2010; Shaw & Carter, 2007). This is especially pronounced in the early stages, when access to finance and other resources needs to be provided. Emerging social enterprises, which are in the early stages of development, face a lack of the necessary resources to develop the right conditions to achieve their goals (Teng, 2007). These resource gaps can be compensated for through partnerships or strategic alliances with organizations from the same sector or from different sectors (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Teng, 2007; Kanter, 1994). Partners can provide products or necessary material resources, manpower, financing assistance or technical assistance in the use of products or services (Maase & Doorst, 2007). In the early stages of the life cycle, the social enterprise can use its knowledge and information networks to identify opportunities for innovative solutions that meet certain social needs (Austin et al., 2006). In the later stages of existence, social enterprises continue to face challenges to legitimacy because of their hybridity. Social enterprises can also use their networks to test whether the opportunity they have identified will be attractive to donors, beneficiaries and other stakeholders (Lumpkin et al., 2013; Rao-Nicholson et al., 2017; Folmer et al., 2018). Social enterprise networks help their participants to have a collective voice, access to resources, advice and expertise, as well as contacts, because the resources, knowledge and resources of individuals or individual organizations are much more limited. In addition, networks are an important source for identifying potential partners with compatible goals for joint work and business cooperation. The benefits of networking are also significant in the field of marketing, and are realized through joint promotion, common internet platform for communication purposes, market presence and the like. Other advantages of networks include the possibility of mutual exchange, as well as the possibility of reaching a wider market (Inspiralba, 2021). Thus, networks can help develop social enterprise on a scale unattainable for any individual actor acting alone (Choi et al., 2018). For this reason, there is a continuing need to seek support from other actors and to associate with organizations that have a certain authority in business or do business in the same field (Montgomery et al., 2012; Stephan et al., 2016; Folmer et al., 2018).

Some of the main roles of the network are to improve the recognition of social enterprises and influence society's awareness of social enterprises, advocate policy-making, encourage mutual learning and exchange, and provide services to its members. Specific network organizations (consortia and so-called umbrella organizations) are increasingly providing business support services to social enterprises - supporting social enterprise activities and their launch, growth and development, in many cases through *ad hoc* capacity building and training programs for social enterprises (European Commission, 2020).

In order to complement existing, informal networks, gain the necessary experience and new knowledge in order to achieve innovative solutions to social and environmental problems and overcome these challenges, it is important to build formal, tailor-made support networks for social enterprises (Weber et al. 2013; Shah, 2009). Therefore, solutions based on community and ecosystems and a structured approach to networking are considered crucial for effective networking of social enterprises and offer benefits through: a) providing access to resources - networks can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience, as well as finding partners for projects, dialogue and cross-exchange of resources; b) lobbying - social enterprises can lobby effectively if they have common goals, can influence public policies, reach a larger number of consumers or communicate with larger companies in joint socially responsible business programs; c) cost efficiency: social enterprises can outsource services - fiscal, legal, financial, marketing, etc., and, thus, reduce costs (Gabbi & Badeanschi, 2020).

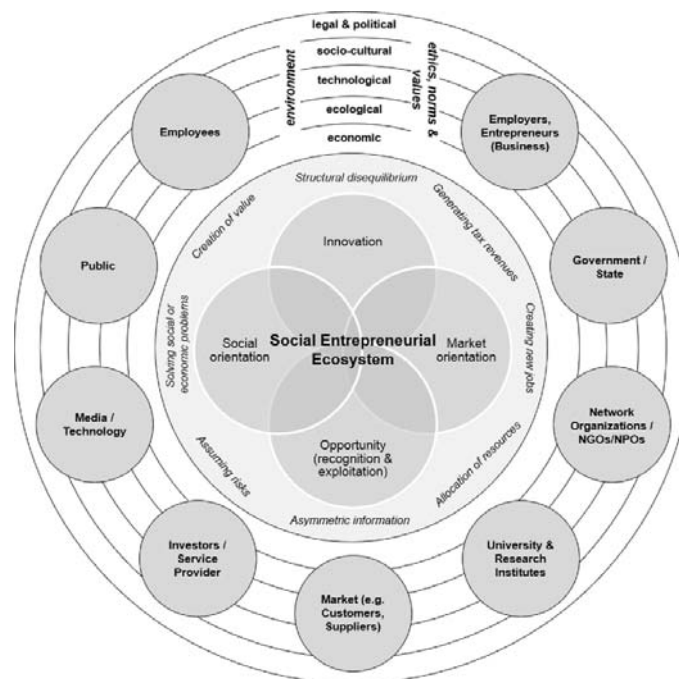
4. Social entrepreneurship ecosystem

The importance of social capital and specific networks for the formation and development of a commercial enterprise is indisputable. Entrepreneurs use networks to identify opportunities, to gain key resources, to gain legitimacy, and so on (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Brass et al., 2004). However, traditional mechanisms for gaining legitimacy and resources, which are characteristic of commercial enterprises, may have a limited use for social enterprises. In social enterprises, the creation of social value is equally important or more important than the creation of economic value, therefore, social enterprises try to include a wide range of stakeholders in their networks so that they can progress in achieving both social and economic goals (Folmer et al. 2018).

The inclusion of a wider range of stakeholders in the creation of economic and social value is taking place today within the so-called ecosystem of social enterprises. As in the case of a commercial enterprise, which interacts with a large number of actors in the form of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, the ecosystem of social entrepreneurship can also be observed. "The entrepreneurial ecosystem is a set of connected actors, organizations, institutions and entrepreneurial processes that formally and informally merge to connect, mediate and manage performance

in the local entrepreneurial environment” (Mason & Brown, 2014, p. 5). Analogously, one can observe the ecosystem of social entrepreneurship, which is specific due to the hybrid nature of social enterprises. The term "ecosystem" is used to describe the environment in which social enterprises operate and reflects the fact that social enterprises evolve and develop relationships with customers, suppliers, stakeholders, governments, and even competitors. The social entrepreneurship ecosystem is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Social entrepreneurship ecosystem



Source: Wirtz & Valkmann, 2015, p. 276

The actors of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem are primarily social enterprises and social entrepreneurs, but also civil society organizations, governments and state institutions, the corporate sector, financial institutions, etc. Of all the presented components of the ecosystem of social entrepreneurship, the influence of the government is particularly pronounced. The government can play a key role in creating a more advanced ecosystem for the development of social entrepreneurship in their country through undertaking or not undertaking various activities (Varga & Etchart, 2017, p. 12). The presence of support, understanding and assistance from national and local authorities can significantly contribute to the functioning of social enterprises. In addition, the institutional framework can have

a major impact on their business (Zahra et al., 2008). That is, it can act as an incentive (financial incentives, tax incentives, employment incentives for marginalized social groups) or, on the other hand, limit the development of social enterprises (unfavorable tax system, discriminatory legislation, complicated administrative procedures) (Corner & Ho, 2010; Van der Zwan et al., 2010; Ivanović-Đukić et al., 2020).

These factors largely overlap, influencing and correlating and often depending on each other. The degree of development of ecosystems largely depends on the degree of development of each element and on how different elements communicate with each other. The goal is to create conditions for the existence of a well-balanced ecosystem that can provide continuous assistance and support to its actors (European Commission, 2020).

5. Comparative analysis of the ecosystem of social enterprises in European countries and the Republic of Serbia

As a starting point for a comparative analysis of social enterprise ecosystem development practices in European countries and in the Republic of Serbia, the European Commission's comparative synthesis report *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe* (2020) was used, which compares and interprets key findings from 35 separate reports from both - the European Union countries and other European countries, and an individual report for Serbia (*Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Country fiche: Serbia*), which provides an overview of the state of development of social enterprises and their ecosystem in Serbia, based on available data (European Commission, 2018).

According to the above synthesis report of the European Commission, the ecosystem of social enterprises is based on four different pillars (European Commission, 2020):

1. Ability to self-organize (civic activism, networks and mechanisms of mutual support);
2. Visibility and recognition at different levels (political recognition, legal recognition, private recognition, self-recognition);
3. Access to resources (start-up and consolidation grants, resources from revenue-generating activities, renewable resources, tax incentives and fiscal benefits);
4. Research, education and skills development (research, education on social enterprises and social entrepreneurship, skills development).

The ecosystem is shaped by the interaction of all the factors that determine these four pillars. Individual reports show that the relative importance of the various components varies significantly from country to country as well as from the stage of development of social entrepreneurship.

The table below provides an overview of the characteristics of social enterprise ecosystems in European countries and Serbia, and after that, the specifics of each of these pillars of social enterprise ecosystems will be analyzed in more detail, in order to point out the existing development gap and identify the opportunities for progress.

Table 1. Comparative overview of the ecosystem of social enterprises in European countries and Serbia

Pillar of ecosystem	Europe	Serbia
Ability to self-organize	Developing/developed	Developing
Visibility and recognition	Significant	Inadequate
Access to resources	Limited	Limited
Research, education and skills development	Insufficient/raising	Insufficient

Source: Authors' work based on literature review

5.1. Social enterprises in European countries and their ecosystem

Social enterprises are an important segment of the modern world and European economy. There are approximately 2 million social enterprises in Europe, which means that almost every fourth enterprise is a social enterprise. In the European Union, social enterprises employ more than 11 million people, which represents about 6% of employees in the EU (ERDF, 2016).

Social enterprise networks have played a significant role in supporting the growth of social enterprises, gaining legitimacy, lobbying for policy introduction and drafting new laws in the EU countries, especially in the countries where such networks exist and where their impact is great (e.g. France, Italy and Spain). Likewise, the development of social enterprises in countries where networks are weak or almost non-existent has been much slower and more complex compared to the countries with strong networks. Significant differences between the countries are noticeable. For example, in Italy, Belgium and France there are many networks that help the functioning of social enterprises, in Poland intermediary structures and networks are less developed, while in Slovakia there are no dedicated networks at all (European Commission, 2016). In addition to formal ones, it is noticeable that informal networks have developed, both in countries with a higher level of institutionalization of social enterprises (e.g. the Danish Social Economy Committee) and in countries where social entrepreneurship has developed relatively recently (e.g. Croatian network of social enterprises) (European Commission, 2020).

However, social enterprise networks or some forms of networking and mutual support exist in almost all European countries. For example, in Italy there are consortia of social cooperatives that provide training and consulting support to

their members, then, in France business and employment cooperatives, which provide support to new entrepreneurs. Similarly, several umbrella organizations for social enterprises have been established in the UK. These organizations have significantly contributed to both sector development and policy development. The examples of Italy, France and the United Kingdom show that social enterprise networks can be a very important factor in the development of this sector (European Commission, 2016).

The role of social enterprise networks or umbrella organizations in terms of support for social enterprises is particularly emphasized in countries where there is no or limited state support initiative. Their role can be broad - as a support mechanism that offers guidance and advice, acts as an advocate for the sector, negotiates contracts, exchanges good practices and communicates with public bodies on building specific public programs. Such networks and umbrella organizations are emerging across Europe and exist at both national and regional levels (European Commission, 2016).

In most EU countries, there are elements that provide the basic infrastructure for the development of social entrepreneurship. This implies the existence of legislation in the field of social entrepreneurship, the presence of state bodies that use various measures to create a stimulating environment for the development of this form of entrepreneurship, provide easier access to funding, as well as various institutions to support social enterprises (Talić & Ivanović-Đukić, 2020). In certain EU member states, the adoption of adequate policies and the formation of a comprehensive ecosystem have yet to follow (European Commission, 2020).

Another pillar on which the social entrepreneurship ecosystem is based on is access to resources, especially financial ones. Financial resources play a significant role in all stages of the life of a social enterprise, but their availability is often limited. The reason for the complex access to financial resources for social enterprises is the nature of their business as well as the distribution of profits, if they make it at all, which makes them unattractive for investors or creditors. As a result, social enterprises often have limited access to bank loans. Insufficient knowledge of the nature of the business of social enterprises by the banking sector also contributes to all this. However, reports from European countries show that there is an improvement in the financial pillar of the ecosystem; primarily due to the growing phenomenon of social enterprises and a better understanding of the difficulties they face (European Commission, 2020).

One of the problems that social entrepreneurs face, which significantly affects the creation of a balanced ecosystem, is the lack of skills and knowledge to solve a particular problem. However, according to the joint report of European countries on the situation in social entrepreneurship (2020), it is noticeable that more and more attention is being paid and more funds are being invested in this segment. There are more and more programs for investing in various trainings, as well as in

research, the results of which significantly contribute to the institutionalization of social enterprises, especially in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (European Commission, 2020). However, there is room for further improvement. With greater coherence and joint action of actors, many actions could be implemented more efficiently (law-making, national education strategies or the introduction of a social entrepreneurship in formal education).

The development of ecosystems depends on the development of each of these pillars and the degree of their interconnectedness. Although the joint report shows a generally satisfactory state of social entrepreneurship in Europe, individual country reports point to significant differences between them. For example, while in developed countries there is such an ecosystem where there are many networks and in which each of these pillars is developed, the situation in Central and Eastern Europe and Southeast Europe is characterized by weak networks and underdeveloped social entrepreneurship ecosystem (European Commission, 2020).

5.2. Ecosystem of social enterprises in the Republic of Serbia

Unlike the countries of the European Union, the concept of social entrepreneurship in Serbia is relatively new. Due to a large number of economic and social problems, policy makers in the Republic of Serbia were forced to look for innovative solutions to solve them. The concept of social entrepreneurship has emerged as one of the solutions. However, the sector (e.g. Group 484, TRAG Foundation, Smart Collective) contributed the most to its development and promotion in Serbia.

Through mutual recognition and networking of social enterprises and civil society organizations, networks have been created aimed at mutual cooperation, exchange of knowledge, experiences and information, lobbying, which will contribute to the development of social entrepreneurship in Serbia. These are the reasons the Coalition for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship (KorSP), the Social Economy Network of Serbia (SENS), and the Forum of Social Entrepreneurs were formed. These networks of NGOs and social enterprises offer a platform for a joint approach to problems, for cooperation and for promoting the concept of social entrepreneurship in public (Aleksić-Mirić & Lebedinski, 2015).

The Social Economy Network of Serbia - SENS was founded in 2011, and its members are citizens' associations, companies for professional rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, limited liability companies and cooperatives. Through education, expert advice and promotion in all phases of starting and running a business, the goal of this network is to make social enterprises stronger, more visible and more influential. For social enterprises, business and development support provided by the network through the services of specialized advisors is of special importance, as well as assistance in providing new sources of financing (Smart Collective, 2014).

The mission of the Coalition for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship (KorSP) is for all actors to work together to create a stimulating environment for the development of social entrepreneurship, and raise awareness of key actors about the importance of this concept for the economic progress and sustainable development of society as a whole. This approach helps to establish appropriate legal frameworks and sustainable financing mechanisms for social enterprises. Through various educational and mentoring programs, this network works to strengthen the capacity of existing and build the capacity of new social enterprises. The coalition is actively involved in the discussion on public policies, and in cooperation with other stakeholders in 2019 a comprehensive proposal of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship was given (KorSP, 2021).

In addition to national networks, the development of networks at the regional level has begun. Following the Strasbourg Declaration, which defines the priorities and recommendations for the activities of European Union institutions in the development of social entrepreneurship, the Coalition for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship (KorSP) prepared a regional "Belgrade Declaration on the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in the Western Balkans and Turkey". The declaration gathered more than 450 organizations from the region, and as a result, the first regional network for the development of social entrepreneurship was formed - the Social Entrepreneurship Forum. The aim of this initiative is to propose measures to national, regional and European institutions and contributing to the region's involvement in European policies and initiatives in the field of social entrepreneurship (KorSP, 2021).

Social capital, as an important factor in the functioning of social enterprises, is not sufficiently developed due to the lack of solidarity and trust between different actors. In order to be included in this segment, it is necessary to have a greater involvement of social enterprises, as well as civil society organizations, businesses and the state. Although certain platforms aimed at contributing to networking and cooperation between social enterprises and other actors exist, it seems that they are not active enough and that there is room for improvement.

The state, government, and certain state institutions are increasingly showing a positive attitude towards social entrepreneurship. After many years of work on the preparation of the Draft Law on Social Entrepreneurship, it was finalized at the end of 2021, after which the Proposal of this law was adopted by Serbian government. In that way, the legal framework in the field of social entrepreneurship in Serbia is going to be established. Namely, the aim of this law is to create a favorable business environment for the development of social entrepreneurship, to develop awareness of the importance of the social economy and social entrepreneurship and to meet the identified social needs (Proposal of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship, Article 2). In addition, the law provides the establishment of the Council for Social Entrepreneurship, whose role will be to control the spending of

the financial resources of social enterprises, as well as to ensure the application of international standards regarding social entrepreneurship.

As already mentioned, civil society organizations (CSOs) have had a major role in promoting and supporting social entrepreneurship in Serbia. Civil society organizations are the source of numerous activities and initiatives with social goals and programs to support the development of social entrepreneurship. This support is mainly in the form of financial resources (through donations), assistance in founding social enterprises, mentoring and consulting services, training social enterprises, raising awareness of the importance of social entrepreneurship, encouraging public policy development, supporting social enterprise networks (Shrestha et al., 2019).

When it comes to access to resources, certain studies done in Serbia show that providing the necessary resources, primarily financial, is a very serious problem for social entrepreneurs (Cvejić et al., 2008; Vukmirović et al., 2014; Borzaga, 2020). Social enterprises in Serbia face this problem at all stages of business, but this problem is especially pronounced when funds need to be provided for the establishment of a social enterprise. This problem occurs due to the unattractiveness of this form of business for investors (Ivanović-Đukić et al., 2020).

Another pillar of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem is education and skills development. In Serbia, there is an obvious need to develop certain skills that would help social entrepreneurs in achieving their social mission (marketing, sales, financial management, etc.). The lack of necessary skills can be a source of many problems and make it difficult for social enterprises to function. Related to this is the problem of lack of financial resources, because social enterprises generally do not have the resources to hire experts in areas where they lack skills (Ivanović-Đukić & Seldenbach, 2018). Organizing more trainings and workshops for social entrepreneurs, as well as educational programs on social entrepreneurship, through formal and informal education systems, would significantly help solve the problem of lack of knowledge and skills (Ivanović-Đukić et al., 2020).

6. Conclusion

Social enterprises can act and develop in isolation, but the interaction of a large number of actors is already necessary. Social capital, mutual trust, networks of social enterprises, their connections with the government and other actors from the ecosystem etc., have a significant role in all stages of development of social enterprises. Social enterprises must have developed business relationships with other actors from their environment in order to maximize the effects of their operations. Also, the lack of social capital can be a serious limitation of social enterprise development. The insufficient use of their affects the social community. The lack of cooperation and networking between social enterprises with each other,

as well as between social enterprises and other actors from the ecosystem is an important obstacle to the development of social enterprises. This paper argues that social enterprise networks, formal and informal, are a resource of great importance for social enterprises and that special attention should be paid to the study of social entrepreneurship ecosystems, especially taking into account the many specifics that characterize this form of business.

In accordance with that, a comparative analysis of the development of the ecosystem of social enterprises in European countries and in the Republic of Serbia was done. The analysis showed that various factors influenced the development of the ecosystem of social enterprises, especially the emergence and development of networks. While in most European countries the role of the state in this process was pronounced, because the importance of social enterprises was already recognized, in Serbia the greatest contribution to the development of social enterprise networks was given by the non-governmental sector. Recently, the role of state is increasingly involved, which is confirmed by the adoption of a new proposal for the Law on Social Entrepreneurship, which regulates this area and provides conditions and incentives for the development of social entrepreneurship.

In most European countries, where there is an incentive infrastructure for the development of social entrepreneurship, and where the legislation in this area is deployed, this is largely due to the networks of social enterprises. On the other hand, the significantly slower development of social enterprises in the Republic of Serbia is noticeable, which was contributed to by the unfavorable institutional framework and delays in regulations in this area. However, their importance has been recognized by non-governmental organizations a good while ago, and some progress has been made through the networking of social enterprises and civil society organizations. Such networks have helped create better conditions that will stimulate the development of social entrepreneurship. The current situation leads to the conclusion that there is a need to make efforts, especially by the government and its bodies, to adopt and implement measures to create an environment for easier networking of social enterprises and creating partnerships with other actors (e.g. funding participation of social enterprises in fairs by local self-government, etc.).

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EKOSISTEM SOCIJALNIH PREDUZEĆA – KOMPARATIVNI PRIKAZ PRAKSE EVROPSKIH ZEMALJA I REPUBLIKE SRBIJE

Rezime: Usled uticaja brojnih faktora koji otežavaju pronalaženje inovativnih rešenja za društvene probleme i probleme životne sredine kojima se socijalna preduzeća bave, pojavila se potreba za zajedničkim delovanjem socijalnih preduzeća, kako međusobno, tako i sa ostalim akterima koji deluju u njihovom okruženju. Kako bi lakše prevazišli izazove sa kojima se susreću u svom poslovanju, socijalna preduzeća i socijalni preduzetnici bi trebalo da iskoriste prednosti umrežavanja. Poslovne mreže mogu doneti mnogobrojne koristi njihovim članicama, a poseban značaj imaju mreže u socijalnom sektoru. U poslednje vreme, umrežavanje se odvija u širim okvirima, takozvanih, ekosistema. Imajući rečeno u vidu, cilj ovog rada je da se detaljnije osvetle specifičnosti umrežavanja socijalnih preduzeća, odnosno njihovog povezivanja u ekosisteme. Mreže socijalnih preduzeća (Social Entrepreneurship Network - SEN) imale su ključnu ulogu u razvoju ovog sektora u evropskim zemljama. Takođe, u Republici Srbiji je umrežavanje socijalnih preduzeća sa nevladinim organizacijama značajno doprinelo kreiranju javnih politika i promociji socijalnih preduzeća.

Ključne reči: socijalno preduzetništvo, mreže socijalnih preduzeća, ekosistem socijalnog preduzeća

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