

Stefanescu F., Holovcsuk (Miculaiciuc) A.

ORTHODOX CHURCH – A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR. THE CASE OF ROMANIA AND UKRAINE

The paper analyzes the compatibility between the principles and aims of the social economy, on the one hand, and the ideology of the orthodox church, on the other, the research, carried out in Romania and Ukraine, highlights the fact that social entrepreneurship is a new kind of economic activity combining a social mission, economic efficiency and innovation, and is frequently manifested just as a response from the entrepreneurs to the urgent needs that appeared at a certain moment in society. The conclusion is that the involvement of the Orthodox church in both countries in the economy is very modest, in the circumstances in which it is the majority church, in fact preotent to those who actually get involved in these matters, motivated by their own personality and intellectual formation, by the humanist ideals born out of the desire to help, give effective support to the needy people. Even so, activities such as: integration into the work of low-skilled aperiens and personal training services, care, services for the elderly, assistance for certain categories of disadvantaged persons (abused children, refugees, immigrants, etc.) are in the attention of the two orthodox churches.

Key words: social economy, orthodox church, entrepreneurship, Romania, Ukraine

Introduction. The social economy is not an isolated reality, as it is sometimes approached, but is part of a complex social system, in turn determined by a multitude of factors. The term seems to have first been used by the French economist Charles Dunoier in 1830 in his Treatise on the Social Economy in which the author approaches the economic activity from a moral perspective. (apud CIRIEC, 2007, p.14)

The social economy has emerged and manifested itself differently in diverse national or regional contexts, but starting mainly from the needs of social assistance that the state could not fully covered (Budd 2003; Paton 2003) and from the emphasis on the individual and collectivity. It is claimed itself by the charitable organizations that have been operating since the 18th-19th centuries, who aimed to support people affected by poverty, illness or other shortcomings; and it was structured around the value of social solidarity.

From this perspective, the involvement of the church generally, including the Orthodox Church – as a supporter of Christian morality and who's concern was the well-being of the people in need, with in the social economy activities, seems not only be beneficial, but also necessary. An additional argument is that the large number of Orthodox believers (from Romania and Ukraine, in this case) together with the persuasion power of the church in relation to these, favor the initiation and development of these type of activities.

If this implication of the church is not visible

enough (as it is showed by statistics), it is, on the one hand, due to the fact that the Orthodox Church is perceived to be concerned almost exclusively with the spiritual and religious matters, and on the other hand, due to the fact that just a few researchers deemed to study this kind of reality. In addition, at least at the level of the two states subject to this research, there are no systematic concerns for the inventory of social economy activities carried out under the auspices of the church, statistical institutes providing those interested with a very small number of data, not representative of this phenomenon.

In reality, both the ideology and the Orthodox Church practices not only allow, but also encourage these activities, and the initiatives, even unsystematic, are numerous and effective: from nursing homes, children's homes, social canteens, medical units, educational institutions and furthermore, even counseling services, even mediation for insertion into the labor market or vocational training.

Regarding the Orthodoxy, there are some interpretations that associate this with a contemplative-mystical attitude according to which work should only provide for the bare necessities for survival; otherwise, it commits a deepening of religiosity. But the authentic Orthodox believer becomes a "doer by deed." "The true inner life is conceived and sustained by deed," "faith without deeds is like the flower without its fruit: it is shown in a fleeting beauty," said Ernest Bernea (1995, p. 65), the facts having both a material meaning, but also a spiritual one; they can only acquire a real meaning only insofar as they aim at both the material and the spiritual well-being.

Literature review. The social economy claims itself, we could say, in terms of its promoted values

©Stefanescu F., Professor habil.PhD supervisor, University of Oradea, Romania

Holovcsuk (Miculaiciuc) A., Doctoral student, University of Oradea, Romania

aroused from Christianity. We consider the idea of human dignity, derived from the equality of all people before God, ideas materialized in the social economy through the human right to work, implicitly, through the effect of its exercise, respectively the feeling of utility. The state has the responsibility of the institutions of a social security system not only by ensuring a functional system of social assistance, but also by creating the daily needs framework for people, even if only partially able to work, to live independently and have a dignified life.

At the same time, it is valued by the social economy, the Christian idea of respect for others, given the diversity, the plurality of the world that must be found not only politically, but also economically, culturally or socially. This diversity must be guaranteed by state, considered Aristotle, John Locke or Immanuel Kant (Eisel, 2012).

Finally, recognition and respect for human imperfection, lead, in the social economy, to the promotion of some forms of economic organization adapted and accessible to the disadvantaged ones.

All these values substantiate the ethical principles of the social economy: ensuring consumer goods and services towards population, the proper working quality conditions, social solidarity and ecological compatibility.

The philosophy of the social economy is that every person has not only the right, but also the duty, to carry out an activity within the limits of his or her possibilities, respectively to be educated in order to acquire knowledge, skills and competences which to use them at work place, to accumulate assets and make financial arrangements for retirement or other more difficult arising times in life. In this perspective, personal initiative is valued, social assistance being minimized without excluding state action when individual initiative is too weak to succeed. In fact, one of the EU 2020 flagship initiatives is the "European Platform against Poverty" aimed at ensuring "social and territorial cohesion, so that the benefits of growth and jobs are distributed equitably, and people facing poverty and exclusion to be given the opportunity to have a dignified life and to play an active role in society." (EU, 2020, p.6).

In an attempt to "economically decrypt dogmas", Paul Fudulu (2010) makes a ranking of the world's major religions according to their compatibility with their economic performance (in descending order of consistency): Judaism, Protestantism (Calvinism, Lutheranism), Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam (Sunnis, Shi'a), Confucianism and Buddhism. Whether or not we accept the arguments brought in support of this ranking, the economic reality, based on comparative studies, confirms it. Therefore, Orthodoxy is somewhat, from this point of view, on

the border between the two worlds, Christian and non-Christian: the least compatible with economic performance in the Christian world, but more compatible than any of the non-Christian religions.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the evolution of the non-profit sector is slightly different from that of Western Europe in the sense that the highest employment in this sector is in the fields of culture and recreation, followed by business and professional associations. This is seen by Salamon et al. (1999) as an extension of some concerns of the communist state for these heavily subsidized areas, which, following the abolition of the communist regime, created a competitive advantage in the market of non-profit activities. At the same time, Non Profit Organizations that have been working in the fields of environment and advocacy have emerged from the need to respond to the challenges facing the new regime established after 1989 and which had received major support from abroad. Social assistance services, on the other hand, remained mainly into the responsibility of the state that organizes, coordinates and finances them, this fact is counterbalanced by the presence of a considerable number of volunteers to support them. (pp.7-8).

Although the post-communist period meant to be a resurgence of the civil society, including a stable and sustainable non-profit sector, the ambiguity is what it characterizes Eastern European society, which is still marked by the communist countries, especially in regards with the expectations of the population in relation to the state that is considered mainly responsible with the guarantee and quality of social services, education and also health services.

The history of the predominantly Orthodox countries of South-Eastern Europe highlights the presence in the church's preoccupations of the elements of social economy. There is, in other words, a tradition of this church to get involved in charitable activities, but also to support vulnerable people, not only spiritually, but also materially.

However, Stelian Gomboş stated that "the disintegration of the Eastern political systems, as well as the radical economic transformations put Orthodoxy in front of some situations that have not been experienced so far. New elements appear, to which the Orthodox Church, without a precedent, must respond to it quickly... Analyzing the Eastern geopolitical reality, we can conclude, probably without making too many mistakes, that the Orthodox states in the former communist camp have not yet managed to specify clearly a coherent political strategy, which should engage their peoples towards clear objectives, the achievement of which should be pursued with perseverance" (Gomboş, 2009).

In both Romania and Ukraine, the social entrepreneurship is a new kind of economic activity that combines a social mission with the economic efficiency and innovation, characteristic of social enterprises. Social entrepreneurship is a concept that essentially changes the main objective and mission of business activities, in which all profits from business activities are directed towards solving social problems.

The idea of social economy is relatively new in Ukraine, while in Romania, especially after EU integration and benefiting from the possibility of attracting European funds for the development of this sector, the social economy is conceptualized and theorized in a series of studies, at the same time with the development of social enterprises.

Ukrainian legislation does not yet have a definition of social enterprise and does not create the environment in which all the advantages of this phenomenon could be used advantageously (...), while in Romania there is a law of social economy which, on the one hand clarifies, and from a legal point of view, the term, and on the other hand, regulates the framework for its organization and functioning (Law 219/2015)

Methodology of the research. Starting from the statement that “in general, international comparisons are difficult from a methodological point of view, based on the heterogeneity of data (Lallement et Spurk, 2003) especially in the field of social economy, it was a real challenge to choose the most suitable method for the present research work.

The two approaches of the research for this work, in this field, the one based on satellite accounts and the other one based on the social observer, have both advantages and disadvantages that are difficult to overcome. The satellite accounts method, using standard indicators, has the advantage of data homogeneity, comparability and continuity over time, but also the disadvantage of global approach to results, focus on main activity and large units, harming small units and related activities, which distort the final results. The social observatory, on the other hand, using specific indicators, is more suitable for diverse and heterogeneous activities, has the advantage of nuanced data on particular local activities or units, but does not allow comparisons or the establishment of long series of data. A combination of the two approaches has been tried (eg Mertens et Marée, 2012 proposes the indicator “expanded production” covering all results, as well as direct or indirect impact), but a clearer conceptualization and use of the activities to be measured is needed.

In these conditions, the methodology of this research is a more complex one in order to

compensate for the missing of the necessary data, the different way of highlighting some indicators, the lack of updating of some data.

Starting from the idea that “the more indicators reflect the diversity of the social economy, the less comparable they are” and that “solving this tension requires a new and innovative methodological solution” (Saïd, Ladd, and Yi 2018), we opted for a new methodological solution that should be based upon a good knowledge of the functioning of the social economy, to take into account the great diversity of social economy entities, but also the danger of confusion between them and companies seeking profit and use relevant tools to this field.

But these tools or indicators, in order to be comparable must be first standardized, or the social economy lends itself more to flexibility. There are even authorized voices of some researchers in this field who wonder if “existing impact indicators assess the transformative capacity of enterprises and organizations. Are they adequate? Are they able to measure “genuine change”? (Reisman and all, 2015, 8). Undoubtedly, the skepticism expressed through these questions is legitimate. After all, the impact of social economy activities must not be a pressure upon them, especially if we take into account their specificity and, in particular, the workforce involved in these activities. Also, the fact that this impact cannot always be expressed in value units does not mean that it should not be investigated and, if measurement is not possible, it can be described with almost the same success. There are real chances that the analysis of several aspects of the social economy and the corroboration of the results will then allow the capture and evaluation of the socio-economic impact of this field, as well as the formulation of public policy proposals to support and promote the development of these activities.

Article purpose. There are social economy researchers who find the impasse in the evaluation of social innovation and they argue that there are alternatives, a “pluralism of evaluation methods” including placing social aspirations at the center of the evaluation process (Besançon, Chochoy, 2019), and Emerson believes that: “Maybe we should keep quiet and listen to the world, the different human and non-human communities and the history of the experience. Maybe we need to create more space to hear from those we try to influence their lives? ” (Emerson 2018, 4).

It is also the reason why we conceived the research of the involvement of the Orthodox Church in Romania and Ukraine as a study through which we followed and presented how the Orthodox Church in the two countries relates to the social economy, how these activities operate under the auspices of the

church. they are reflected in the profile magazines and how they are perceived by the people who manage or monitor these activities. The study is a comparative one carried out in four stages:

a) Analysis of the organization of Orthodox churches from of the two countries from the perspective of managing socio-economic issues, including social economy activities

b) Analysis of the profile magazines from the two countries, from the thematic aspect, of the way of approaching the church's involvement in the social economy

c) Analysis of statistical data on the involvement of the two Orthodox churches in the social economy

d) A survey based on a self-administered interview among BOR prelates and managers of social economy units with a religious profile

The aim of the research: analysis of the involvement of the Orthodox churches in Romania and Ukraine in the social economy of the two countries.

Objectives:

1. Capturing the characteristics of the involvement of the Orthodox Church in the social economy in different conditions, spaces and approaches

2. Understanding the relationship between belonging / non-belonging to the European Union and the involvement of religious organizations in the social economy

3. Highlighting the Orthodox socio-economic doctrine and its impact on the economy and society.

Presentation of the main research data.

Research methods: documents analysis, statistical analysis, content analysis, interview survey

The research is an exploratory one considered by Saunders and Lewis (2012), as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself and that can say a lot about the world around, and was done in 4 complementary stages that allow forming an image of overall involvement of the Orthodox Church in the two countries in social economy activities.

Data analysis

A first conclusion is that in both countries the theoretical aspects related to the social economy are less known by the initiators of social economy activities or by their coordinators, a much more important aspect being considered to be "facts" as they are captured in the Orthodox doctrine. In this context, it can be seen that many activities are repetitive; they do not include elements of innovation, that it is a main characteristic of a social entrepreneurship.

Even when there are innovative initiatives, they are most often a result of a response from entrepreneurs to the urgent pressing needs, at some point. Also, we do not meet the idea of sustainability

in the case of all projects carried out, the new social situations and their gravity being, rather, those that catalyze the approach of entrepreneurs. The most important aspect considered by the initiators of such activities is the improvement of the situation (material, social, educational, health, environmental, etc.) to those to whom it is addressed, by capitalizing on the resources at their disposal, at a given time.

For these reasons, we can appreciate that the social economy managed by the Orthodox Church partially balks the "canons" of the definitions and characteristics of the social economy, having its directional specificity of religious dogmas.

In case of the studied area, it turns out that the concerns of the Orthodox Church are being influenced by the political-organizational aspects, in the case of Ukraine or by socio-economic aspects, in the case of Romania.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, currently facing less problems of restoring credibility, regaining its identity, is expanding its activity in the economic field, becoming an actor in the market economy. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, on the other hand, crushed by internal problems, is concerned mainly with the organizational problems that will give it unity within the borders of the Ukrainian state, which also means the struggle for gaining power, influence, for stability. Only after it becomes a settled community the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will be able to turn its attention to a greater extent, to the faithful and their needs, including those economic ones.

Romania's integration into the European Union has had a major impact on the involvement of religious organizations in the social economy in two ways:

- The circulation of information, of people, of non-experience in the European space, which determined a change in attitude of religious organizations in the sense of complementing spiritual activities with practical activities, including social economy, following the model of churches in Western countries.

- Possibility of access to European funds by religious organizations through the European Social Fund, for social projects, including social economy.

However, the involvement of the Orthodox Church in both countries is very modest, even if it is still the main church, with a consistent participation of the believers into the religious practices. It says that the main reason for this modest involvement is the belief of the servants of this church that their role, and implication of the church, is based on the spiritual one and less than an economic role. Even if the social doctrine of Orthodoxy supports the church's involvement in the material and social problems of

the parishioners, even if at the patriarchal level there are specialized departments on social issues, priests who are effectively involved in these aspects are motivated by their own personality and intellectual foundation, by humanistic ideals born with the desire to help others, to effectively support people in need and less by clear directions of action to be preached by religious ideology. On the other hand, priests often present a lack of skills needed for social entrepreneurship or access to projects in the social field. In fact, studying the curriculum of the higher education in Theology, we can observe the absence of disciplines that prepare future priests for the economic and social activities.

Conclusion and prospects. This research highlights that, even in the case of the social economy managed by the Orthodox Church, the favorite activities are, as European researchers pointed out: the integration of low-skilled seekers (Nyssens, 2006) and personal services (Borzaga and Defourny 2001): vocational training, childcare, services for the elderly or help for certain categories of disadvantaged people (abused children, refugees, subsidies, etc.), activities better adapted to the needs and meant to increase the satisfaction of people in need.

The social entrepreneurship managed by the Orthodox Church, despite the “lack of resources, entrepreneurial skills, wide and strong networks”

(Williams et al, 2003, p.156), is innovative both in terms of work, organization, production methods and management, as well as the much-needed flexibility in adapting to the changing needs of the society, an eloquent example of this, being the approach to demand for services by involving both social service providers and beneficiaries in social projects.

A truly revolutionary element in the social economy, as it results from this work, is that, no matter what kind of vulnerabilities we are discussing about in the groups involved in social economy activities, it is implemented the principle that every person has not only the rights but also obligations, including those of working, of course, according to the possibilities of each one. I would also add that throughout working, these vulnerable groups acquire the dignity of being involved, not just being a passive beneficiary.

Finally, this research suggests that, in terms of the objectives and content of social economy activities, it is best suited to the context of sustainable development pursuing economic growth associated with social welfare and preserving the environment to achieve harmony among these three areas (“economic, social and sometimes ecological”, Boschee, McClurg 2003), often mutually considered as being hostile to the economy profit .

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Отримано 14.03.2021