

# The Leftist Obsession: Social Economy and the Illusion of Corporatist Social Responsibility

George NEAMȚU, *Associated Professor Ph.D.*  
*Department of Human, Social and Political Sciences,*  
*“Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Romania*  
*georgelneamtu@yahoo.com*

## Abstract

*Though Social Economy exists for more than 100 years, there is little attention – so, there are hardly any authentic challenges – related to the theoretical or practical research of a notorious, valuable or conclusive kind in regard with this particular domain. S.E. has a diversity of forms, and a great visibility especially when it comes to its promotion in the economical structures of certain European Union member countries where it is believed that approximately 10 % of the active population to be involved in, while it is spoken about platforms, networks, and S.E.’ instruments. The present study points out Social Economy’s predominant role as placed in the building and maintenance of “social peace”. The supposition is that its philosophical / ideological grounds argued the thesis of the purposes convergence of all the organizations on a community level, no matter their public or private character*

**Keywords:** *Social security, Poverty and welfare, Social Economy (S.E.), Social exclusion, Social responsibility, Associative organizations, Public policies.*

Structures and instruments particular to social economy, under the present acceptations, have existed for at least one hundred years. In certain periods, these forms were quite visible, although their social impact was not – even then – of a great economical value or amplitude. In fact, except for some ideological projects, social economy was never in the centre of social attention, probably because of its effects, limited or irrelevant in social processes. From this point of view, the exacerbated visibility in theoretical and sometimes methodological concerns about this field in the last 2-3 years appears as surprising, at least in Romania. It is unlikely to be about a major subject “discovery”, with deep implications in social development. It is also unlikely that the social economy theme be used in a creative way in social research and planning, because this type of validation would have already taken place in its existence if this had been possible. A question

remains: to whom this revival of a field invalidated by its decades of existence is of any use? For it is not enough the argument according to which this presently tendency, this trend is due – according to some group representations (PNUD, 2012:31) – to a “form without substance” inserted and circulated in Romanian society by EU grants.

For the sake of a pertinent and truthfully scientific approach, ours and others, we shall correlate the social economy theme with another subject – or theme – from the social performance area, the one of social or human security – generally speaking. For the social security was, is and always be an issue – not in a sense of challenge – which asks for a big part, always growing, of social resources. And, it appears, until this moment, that it is impossible to find in the social control area – the quintessence of social security – a proper and efficient formula, to obtain desirable consequences using reasonable costs. From this point of view, the social economy lane can be considered a way – secondary, of course – in the complex map of the project regarding desiderated “social peace”.

### *Introduction*

The term “security” refers to an estate or a feeling of a person/ citizen who expresses the estate or feeling of security, trust, a wellbeing coming from the absence of some predictable danger. But, even though it is about a reality of individual, it is mention the social – or human – security, because the human is and manifest himself always inside a group, in a society, as person that acts and lives in a social economical environment. In addition, as every system, this environment has as a foremost purpose the construction and assurance of a certain level of comfort and security. This feature is build and manifest itself through and in two major components, from here the two parts of human security: on one hand, comfort and certainty (security) of economic type, which refers to specific elements to fulfil the needs and bare necessities of social individuals, according to Maslow pyramid. On the other hand, it is mentioned the sense of social certainty (security), determined by the quality of social interactions, the general level of functionality for groups seen as supportive instances for its members.

In other words, when the standard of living from the economic point of view (besides, defined by a single main indicator, the one of incomes) drops below a certain level and it comes up to estate of poverty or poorness, automatically / naturally those individuals experience also a feeling of insecurity, of uncertainty. Which means the insecurity is first generated by the unequal distribution of income and especially by the decreasing of the income of certain groups of

individuals, fact that will take to a psycho-behaviour decay / degradation. Correlated, when the estate of poverty is being installed or amplified, naturally and directly the insecurity level increases, for both the individual, and the group / community. We already know that the poverty estate is a social phenomenon, but it also affects different areas and segments of the population, therefore the insecurity is unequally dispensed in the society.

We reach the idea that the main problem of a society is represented by poverty, which means the unequal distribution of wellbeing. A widely accepted definition of poverty does not exist. In general, it is said that a group or a population (more often we talk about the standard unity of family) can be registered as being in the estate of poverty if its basic necessities or needs exceed the legal resorts of satisfying these ones.<sup>1</sup> However, from now on, we enter into details. Poverty can be estimated in an absolute or relative way. Absolute poverty represents the estate of an individual or group that obtains a minimal level of the income needed for living, taking into consideration only food needs at their lowest estimated costs. Relative poverty defines the estate of poverty of an individual or a group compared to another individual or group; turns out that someone can be characterized of being in an estate of poverty although he has incomes sufficiently enough to live, if those incomes are very low comparing to other members of society. Consequential, it means that poverty level or threshold is different from one country to another, from one community to another, a group to another. The more a society / country are richer and developed, the more the global poverty gap is bigger – because we are comparing the countries to each other. Otherwise, we would reach a paradox: in the developed countries, the poverty level is very high. In addition, same statements can be done about individual or social (in) security. But now we are interested about how is built exactly the poverty estate and how it is correlated to the insecurity estate – for later to have the knowledge and power to change them.

The factors most quoted to be decisive in social building of poverty – meaning inequality – are those which are analyzed if is needed to determine the inequality of incomes,<sup>2</sup> meaning: a) the differences of abilities and skills; b) education and training; c) discrimination; d) level of risk acceptance; e) the existence/ distribution of wealth; f) market structure; g) marginal productivity; h) the demand for work factor; i) fiscal system; j) luck, chance, relations. Defined in

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<sup>1</sup> C. McConnell and St. Brue, *Microeconomics, Principles, Problems and Policies* (Thirteenth Edition, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996), 407.

<sup>2</sup> McConnell and Brue, *Microeconomics*, 403.

the context of possibilities of a group to satisfy its basic economic needs, poverty is influenced also by other elements: the size of family, health condition, the age of family members, etc. which makes more of interest the medium incomes per group/ family member. More than that, the political factors are more interested by categories of population exposed at this phenomenon from the perspective of medium values, because in politics the “work” is done with statistical groups, meaning of large stature. In this way, the poverty phenomenon can be managed and adjusted – in one direction or another, based on political doctrine – through politics and proper social platforms.<sup>3</sup> More recently, in Romania these political platforms are named using the phrase “social inclusion politics”, which induces the idea of major concern to manage the problems of groups affected by poverty.<sup>4</sup> But what it must be pointed out is the fact that the poverty issue must be approached not in general, but it has to be isolated on certain groups and populations detected by certain variables: geographical areas, age categories, types of communities, residential environment, source environment, group membership, etc. From this social “sectorization” cannot miss a category of population defined by the variable “skills and abilities”, variable which deeply determines social performance and access to resources.

Thus, we distinguish the disparity of categories of population which are situated in the estate of poverty. They come from the rural, and also from the urban environment, are young, but also old, more or less educated. Of course, there are certain tendencies towards poverty, which in general are the same in all economies; we talk about a predilection towards poverty for people with no education, children coming from disorganized families, with divorced parents, etc. And, of course, the tendency, the inclination and the high risk of poverty for people that are part of the category defined by variable “limited skills and abilities for the labour market”. The same assumptions can be made about categories of population that are situated in wellbeing estate generated by the full part of income inequality.

Besides this essential delimitation of social security – the economic one –, in specialized field stands out a second major dimension, the social component of security: this is defined by the type and quality of social interactions, by the general level of functionality of groups as protection instances for their members,

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<sup>3</sup> M. Căprioară, “Introduction in social politics,” in *Social Work Treaty*, second edition, coord. G. Neamtu (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 263.

<sup>4</sup> S. Cojocaru, *The evaluation of social welfare programmes* (Iași: Polirom, 2010).

by types of social solidarity or rejection from communities.<sup>5</sup> Which means, the more the community membership has a larger number of aggressions, violence, events (created by natural or human causes) with a destructive character (e.g. instable natural environment: earthquakes, volcano, hurricanes, extreme temperatures), the more the social security feeling is lower. For sure, a part of those estates can be educated, controlled, directed, but this does not mean that the source of insecurity is gone. The generic term to describe social insecurity that manifests at group level and community level is one of social expulsion.<sup>6</sup>

The term of social economy, and its correlated instruments, has the merit of trying to reconcile and unite the two big components of social security: economic and social.

### *Social economy: assumptions*

CIRIEC<sup>7</sup> defines the specific instruments of ES as being private enterprises formally organized, with decisional autonomy and freedom of association, created to resolve the needs of its own members, using the market elements for goods production and service delivery. The decisional process, including the redistribution of profits and surpluses, it is not directly correlated with fund contribution or with fee and each member has only one vote.<sup>8</sup> Another clarification, which is similar with the previous, and which is not made to elaborate the mechanisms, we can find in *The Book of Social Economy* published in France and assumed in 1980 by the representatives of cooperative, mutual and associative districts.<sup>9</sup> According to this, the ES organizations function in a “democratic way, being constituted by solidary members, equal in rights and

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<sup>5</sup> G. Neamțu, “The genesis of welfare fields. Social exclusion,” in *Social Work Treaty*, first edition, coord. G. Neamțu (Iași: Polirom, 2003), 517-525.

<sup>6</sup> Neamțu, “The genesis of welfare fields. Social exclusion”. In specialized literature the term Exclusion and Expulsion is used as synonym. But this has a quite different meaning: according to the explanatory dictionary, EXCLUSION (noun) means *interdiction, forbidding, prohibition, proscription*. EXPULSION, *exclusions* (noun). The action of excluding and its result; getting out, abolishment, expulsion. So, the term Exclusion explains the result of a process of recurring rejection, so getting outside of a system (educational, economic, cultural, etc.). While the Exclusion refers to access interdiction, without specification of a cause, from which appears the interdiction.

<sup>7</sup> International Centre of Research and Information on the Collective Economy <http://www.ciriec.ulg.ac.be/en/pages>.

<sup>8</sup> CIRIEC (Centre International de Recherches et d'Information sur l'Economie Publique, Sociale et Coopérative), *L'économie sociale dans l'Union européenne*, Rapport par Rafael Chaves Ávila et José Luis Monzón Campos (2007): 5.

<sup>9</sup> MMFPS, 16. Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection (editor), Research report regarding social economy in Romania from the compared European perspective (Bucharest: Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection, 2010), [www.mmuncii.ro](http://www.mmuncii.ro) (2010:20).

obligations” and based on the following principles: “solidarity, responsibility, freedom, equal chances for all the members of the organization and mutual respect”. In this definition is more synthetically detected the specific content of social economy.

Summing up, the social economy defines the assembly of cooperatives, mutual companies, associations and foundations. These organizations have a number of traits, which make them apart of those of private enterprises, public enterprises and companies with private capital. These organizations have as their source individuals, of physical or legal nature, and are intended to answer the collective needs and expectations coming from these persons. They stand out from any other enterprise due to their collective character. Also, they distinguish from other companies because they succeed to gather up people / individuals before constituting a capital, but also because the economical profit or benefit in favour of its shareholders is a secondary objective. In addition, the ES types are different from public undertakings and organizations through their private nature. The General Assembly reunites all the members, is supreme and functions according to the principle “one person, one vote”. These members establish among them types of solidarity: mutual risk, sharing the products of their activity, creation of a mutual economy, mutual exchanges, etc. Groups containing individuals, social economy structures works on principles based on voluntary employment, equality of people, solidarity between members and economic independence.<sup>10</sup>

If these enterprises, as economical and judicial entities, are relatively easy to identify – starting from their judicial statute –, social economy as consolidated economical and social movement is still hard to sort and be visible, and sometimes it is misunderstood, possibly because the term had so many different meanings over time. To be reminded only that after a time of rising, the term was forgotten at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. After that, it will revert at its primary meaning around the 70’s, in France (where else), by the National Committee of Mutual Activities, Associations and Cooperatives. This significance will allow, on one hand, the possibility to non-exclusion of commercial dimension (especially present in cooperatives), and, on the other hand, underlines the element of individual participation in these associations as an element of democracy. In other words, the purpose of participation and representation prevails over the commercial-economic one. This democratic and humanist side, the one that

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<sup>10</sup> CIRIEC (Centre International de Recherches et d'Information sur l'Economie Publique, Sociale et Coopérative), *L'économie sociale dans l'Union européenne*, Rapport par Rafael Chaves Ávila et José Luis Monzón Campos, 2007.

contributes first at social peace, is confirmed and acknowledged in *Social Economy Book*, published in 1980. This change in the way of approaching the forms and instruments of social economy caused also a major modification in its instruments ideology and activity: the organizations of this sort assume major responsibilities in social intervention and optimization, responsibilities that are widely recognized.<sup>11</sup>

However, as an operational definition, today is accepted one that can be synthesized in few utterances. First, it is accepted that social economy is constituted from many types of private enterprises, juridically organized, which have decisional autonomy and freedom of association, created to satisfy some basic needs of its members, using economical devices of the market, by goods production and service delivery, insurances and financing. Social economy includes also private enterprises, formally organised, and endowed with decisional autonomy and freedom of association; without any redistribution devices of originated overflow (CESE, 1986).

### *Theoretical analyses*

However, it is more important that social economy's devices, as we indicated above, distinguish themselves from those of other types of organizations by the criteria we made operational when we clarified the concept of social security. Respectively, we can underlie social economy enterprises using four criteria of economical nature, related to the entrepreneurship activity of a social enterprise, and other five criteria of social nature, related to an activity with social finality of any social enterprise (according to [www.emes.net](http://www.emes.net)).<sup>12</sup>

a. *Economical criteria* can be thereby formulated:

- A social enterprise develops a continuing activity of goods and / or services production. In general, social enterprises do not develop advocacy or funds redistribution activities, as foundations do. On the contrary, one of their reason to be is to deploy a continuing production activity;

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<sup>11</sup> MMFPS, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> EMES is a research network consisting in well-known research university centres and in individual researches whose purpose is to build gradually a European *corpus* of theoretical and empirical knowledge, pluralistic in disciplines and methodology, around the issues of "The Third Sector". EMES exists since 1996, when an international group of researches created a research network, which was financed by European Union. Once it reached a high level of mutual understanding, mutual trust and perspective of collaboration, a group of researches left this work experience. Initially organized as a non-profit association (ASBL, according to Belgian law) in 2002 and named after the first research programme regarding "the emergence of social enterprises in Europe", EMES endorses without a doubt matters of general character, defining the "Third Sector" in a more extensive manner.

- A social enterprise has a high level of autonomy, meaning all the enterprises of such type are managed and controlled by the ones who founded them, independently from public power or other organizations which could finance them;

- A social enterprise assumes an inherent economical risk in its field of activity. The founders of such enterprises take over totally or partially this economic risk, making all the internally efforts to ensure the financial stability of the enterprise;

- A social enterprise must hire a minimal paid workers, and, same way as the social economy organizations in general, those can combine resources, monetary and non-monetary, volunteers or paid workers.

*b. The social criteria are:*

- A social enterprise has as explicit purpose of serving the community (for example, the professional insertion of people with disabilities), in the sense of social responsibility consolidation at the local level.

- A social enterprise is the result of an initiative lead by a group of people gathered around a collective project. The fundament of the association consists in the reunion of people “pooling knowledge and activities for a purpose other than the one of sharing profit”. Therefore, the overflows, which are generated by the economic activity of an enterprise, are not accumulated for other benefit except the one of the association; this capital cannot be, in a case of dissolution, invested in another association. Nevertheless, this rule of non-redistribution does not apply for other families in social economy. A mutual help association that signs a positive result can choose to increase its own funds, but, also, those funds could be re-distributed among its members as a deduction. In production cooperatives, the largest from the profitable ones – they rather refer at operating surpluses – is re-distributed as supplement remuneration (through work) or dividends through which are paid the members’ contributions. A cooperative is, in fact, owned by individuals, and not attached to an institution – as is the case of associations or mutual enterprises.

- The principle of decision inside a social enterprise is not based on the right of capital property, but on the principle “a single person, one vote” or the only way of ruling in which the power of decision is not underlain on the number of actions owned. This definition of democratic government needs some clarifications. On one hand, the equitable distribution of rights to vote in general assembly is not sufficient to ensure the democratic management of the enterprise; is demanded that the general assembly to be actually involved in strategic decisions and that the

representativeness of the members which are the company governing bodies be real. These two criteria are essential to ensure, above all principles, a real democratic government. On the other hand, the principle “a person, a vote” can be applied in various forms. Thus, especially in some cooperatives, can be different categories of members, with a specific distribution of rights to vote (the existence of certain colleagues with a present number of votes, for example). That does not mean that the democratic government principle is not fulfilled, as far as these specific rules, in general, were involved in management of parts taking up with business, thus ensuring a balance of powers.

- A social enterprise has a participatory character that means it must involve all the parts interested in activity, workers, clients, users, partners, etc. This practice enrolls in an approach intercession of local democracy.

- The social enterprise obeys the principle of profits limited to distribution. Therefore, its objective is not maximizing the profit that does not exclude increasing and redistributing the profit (for example, some cooperatives) to a certain degree.

These criteria allow us to have a general understanding of the principle on which is based the work in THE social enterprise, even though this does not exclude the possibility that ES have multiple forms and models of organizational functioning.

From here we draw an obvious conclusion: in social economy, the associative, non-commercial domain collaborates and leans upon the commercial domain, of private-profit type, in order to reach its purpose: the satisfaction of the needs and necessities of members / persons to the prejudice or ignoring the investors. At a first sight, it seems that the importance of ten factors that condition the inequality of incomes is diminished. At the same time, a question is raised: which is the interest – economic or not – of a private enterprise to support with resources a type of organization which does not have as priority the profit, but, in the end, the social peace and security?

The support and social solidarity initiatives of the private companies, no matter how paradoxical might seem have certain reasons and motivations quite well attended in specialized literature. There are arguments in favour of the social solidarity, stronger or more visible than the ones anti-responsibility, which explains the mechanisms of what we called Social Responsibility Solidarity.<sup>13</sup> We

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<sup>13</sup> The new collocation is taken over from G. Neamtu, “The Sources of Social Economy. The Reasons for the Social Responsibility of Solidarity,” *Annals of “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, Philosophy, Social and Human Disciplines*, volume II (Suceava: “Ștefan cel Mare” University Press, 2012). Social Responsibility Solidarity (RSS) refers to a form of solidarity as an

shall summarize a few types of social responsibility, the way they are approached in specialized literature, and which can be found in what is called using the expression “great social initiatives”. Social initiatives are major activities deployed at the level of the social institutions in order to sort social issues and for this appeal to the commitment – hypothetical – to the social responsibilities of small and large companies.<sup>14</sup>

In general, six major initiatives or actions stem are identified, which furthermore define similar types of social responsibility and could be detected at corporations’ level. First, one is the initiative of promotion type. In this case, it is manifested under the shape of some actions through which the social problems and the necessary resources to sort them are made familiar on a large scale. The organization of economic type either participates at this sort of actions as a partner, or as a singular actor or as a sponsor or a donor who does not get involved in the action itself. The second stem is the one from the marketing domain: a company gives (donates) a share from its sales or product sales to resolve a limited issue. Usually, this type of marketing is made public, is active for a limited period, for a certain purpose. It is partner with a non-profit / non-governmental organization and it is based on a mutual benefit relation: the company advertise and the social enterprise gains a certain financial support for a limited problem. The third stem is also from the applied marketing: the producing company / firm assumes the high costs determined by the development of a technology – not imposed by the law – which endorse human security: a safer environment, civic safety, more protected public health, community development, etc. Many times behavioural changes of social type are endorsed. The action of this type takes place usually in partnership with public institutions or non-governmental organizations.

Another type – the fourth – is the one of humanitarian type, when the companies come up with direct, public, transparent financial contributions. Probably this is the oldest form of support from Social Responsibility Solidarity area, although is criticisable and open to interpretations regarding its finality. Today there are still companies that use these types of support, especially in countries in which lobby activity is regulated by the special laws. Fifth type consists in *voluntary* actions. A company, a large one, of course, together with its

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extensive phenomenon, which transcends the motivation level that applies at private companies and firms.

<sup>14</sup> The Study Report “Cone Corporate Citizenship”, from 2004, presents the results of a telephone survey attained on a national sample of 1,033 adults, of which 519 men and 514 women, with ages over 18, living in private homes on Coast area of the Unites States. The study was conducted between 22nd and 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2004 and had a margin of error of approximately +/- 3%.

partners encourages and even stimulates various forms of volunteering to its employees or to other categories of citizens. Volunteering endorses concrete actions from local communities. It is valid when at this effort participate non-specific professionals, and in actions non-specific to their profession. Now it is of common use, especially after so many organizations attained real databases with volunteers and also with possible issues to support. To be seen the case of natural disasters (flooding, earthquakes, blizzards).

The sixth form, most recent, with long-term impact, refers to *convergent* strategies and business plans (of companies), that concur with major social issues of some communities. These types of action endorse practices meant to improve the general human environment and the human security indicators. Are more frequently because some forms of social normativity. For example, healthy food.

We did not propose to make the inventory of ES tools, neither to analyse their social-economic efficiency. As a simple enumeration, let's say that, starting with the Phalanstery from Scaeni in 1835 until the presently community foundations, the ES organization types are of a confusing diversity, associations, foundations, cooperatives, mutual aid funds, protected authorized units, micro-enterprises and social SMEs, non banking financial organizations/institutions. Inside the EU area, these organizations have similar names, if we should translate them: society for the benefit of the community; friendly society; mutual society; consumer retail society; co-operative workers; co-operative community; enterprise community; co-operative neighbourhood; business community; third sector enterprise; community trust; social business; community development trust; community development association; local development trust; community company; community development corporation; community benefit corporation; social enterprise; social firm; voluntary enterprise; credit union; community development finance initiative. (CESE, 1986)<sup>15</sup> All these organizational practices, enforced by the community Aquis having as corollary an unprecedented element, DO NOT impose professional abilities, but – and this is the ES novelty – they focus on using and eventually developing transversal abilities: the skill of working in a team, the efficient communication, time planning, own activities coordination, etc.<sup>16</sup> Which, in the end, contravenes all the rules of professional activities from any field, all the more in social services area.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Neamțu, “The Sources of Social Economy,” 2012.

<sup>16</sup> See RURES. “Course of social economy. Course support,” *RURES. Rural area and social economy in Romani* (2011). POSDRU 84 /6.1/S / 55122, www.rures.ro.

<sup>17</sup> St. Cojocaru *et. al.* “Analysis of professional competencies in social services supervision,” *Social Research Reports*, 17 (2010): 3-56. www.researchreports.ro.

More recently, inside the generous framework of social economy, a new type of initiatives, called Social Enterprises, gained ground, enterprises built on economical scope, but which state / affirm that are focused on social objectives. Social enterprises<sup>18</sup> fulfil activities particular to suppliers of specialized services, of a large diversity, situated in an area of trade activities (which produce benefit), although their main purpose consists not in generating profit, but in the inclusion of discriminated or disadvantaged people on the labour market. This last finality becomes prevailing and it is a form of social inclusion (meaning the diminishing of social expulsion) through temporary or permanent occupation of a population segment that is vulnerable and of a social risk. This category of population with disabilities (personal, cultural, professional, etc.) at some point, historically identifiable, was rejected and marginalised in certain stages of individual or group life because those people were not demonstrating the normal skills and abilities, they did not benefit from a mass professional training system, and, as a consequence, entered in the category of socially excluded.<sup>19</sup> The social enterprise, like other ES types, does not discard nor retrieves the actual handicap, be it individual, professional or cultural; it does not make the person become more competent and more skilled, but rebuilds the external environment – in this case, the organizational – so that the effect of rejection and marginalisation is no longer felt. In fact, this is a noble social purpose. The problem comes when we realize quantifiable evaluations of the added value regarding the frequency, weighting, importance, participation at GDP, etc.

Therefore, the area covered by the social economy structures is a marginal one. Even the objectives assumed by those enterprises refer to secondary activities, not only to economic ones: they assure limited local services with emergency character, they engage in activities left uncovered by the withdrawal of the real actors due to lack of profitability (meaning the inefficiency and the non-sustainability), acting to create jobs for people with poor skills or for people with disabilities, and to mobilize local resources for small, local projects. Let us admit that social economy structures are, in their way, some scenarios for successful

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<sup>18</sup> Romania did not regulate so far the status of social enterprise, even though some references are mentioned in laws already issued: GR 1.175/ 2005 regarding the approval of national Strategy for the protection, integration and social inclusion of people with disabilities 2006-2013 or the common Order of minister of labour, family and equal opportunities and the minister of economy and finance 254/1169/2008. In the field reality, the social enterprises are frequently found in Romania in the form of ltd in which the only shareholder is a NGO. Even though is not legally acknowledged, it is a practical form of unrolling wide-spreading economic activities, supporting in the same time the social projects of the NGO.

<sup>19</sup> Neamțu, "The genesis of welfare fields. Social exclusion," 529.

stories that would be possible to put into practice by the real social and economic actors. Besides, if we make an inventory of the possible financial resources that can be mobilized in this area we draw the same conclusion. For ES, the (direct and indirect) financial sources refer to state subventions, not to refundable grants, to the preferential participation to purchases, to the financial support through reimbursements, to financial benefits, to gratuitousness or facilities on rentals or partnerships, to the limited use of public property.

In Romania, a number of studies line up another fact. Underprivileged populations, the ones that are having difficulties in finding traditional jobs, also encounter difficulties in getting work in the ES sector: “Individuals belonging to vulnerable groups have a low absorption on the job market. The MMFPS study brings into the light a series of characteristics and difficulties of individuals belonging to vulnerable groups regarding their integration on job market and the access to ES offer. According to the study mentioned above, 76% of the gypsies never had a job. The same situation of being jobless was also shown in the case of 60% of the GMI beneficiaries, 56% of the people with disabilities, 55% of the mono-parental families and 54% of the youngsters. The reasons behind the non-integration on the labour market of these people are on one hand the difficulty in finding a job, while on the other hand are aspects which are related to the status of a person belonging to a vulnerable group (the membership to Roma ethnic group, a young person who left the system of child protection, the GMI beneficiary, a person with disabilities)”.<sup>20</sup> So that not even the role of getting into work of some wider categories of social actors is not fully demonstrated.

At last, the Social Economy structures can provide scenarios and successful practical simulations in the domain of social responsibility and social audit of enterprises, especially after the Maastricht Treaty introduced – bureaucratically? – as a democratic dimension its practice in working place for all the enterprises.

### *Conclusions*

Shortly, the social economy, through its forms from today’s European Union, is characterized by elements which defines at the same time the strategies and general politics of human security: it is based on the principles of solidarity and personal involvement in the process of active citizenship; it generates jobs, so it contributes at the imagine of a better life; it offers a setting which generates new types of work; it plays a part in local community and social solidarity

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<sup>20</sup> PNUD Romania. “Opening report within the project Social Economy Pattern in Romania,” (2012), 32, [www.economiesociala.net](http://www.economiesociala.net).

development; it promotes social responsibility and democratic behaviours; it forms new mentalities which correspond to priorities of global development.

In Romania, the structures of social economy are present and more and more active in limited sectors, of a *minor* significance in social services, which refer especially to categories of people found in addiction or vulnerability: older people, people with disabilities, drug addicts, individuals without any stable income, un-institutionalized youngsters, etc., categories that do not have much stateliness or are not very present in the social functionality. They are more visible in specialized services (for family, health services, cultural services and leisure activities, environment protection and rehabilitation), but their role is one of mobilization and social motivation. Their main purpose consists in activities of support, mediation and orientation in local communities.

Through their activity, the instruments of social economy have objectives, which endorse inclusive forms for the *underperforming* labour force, if we are to speak economically, socially disadvantaged. It is an activity that facilitates the search of innovating solutions based on knowing the society in local communities.

Ultimately, the structures of social economy can provide successful practical *stories* in the area of social responsibility and social audit of the companies, especially after the Maastricht Treaty introduced an exercise of applied democracy in the workplace for all enterprises.

Moreover, as we know, Europe has set its axes and the strategy to transform European Union until 2020 in the most dynamic and competitive economy, capable of lasting economic growth and to transform the Union into a world leader in educational and training systems domains. The social economy structures, even though are not the central part of this strategy, can contribute to component of security and social cohesion. For it is less credible that would have the capacity of entering in competition with the great multinational economic groups, replacing the present model of market economy with a European cooperative society.

And who would really want something like that for the western democratically model?

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