



# Social Activation - A Pilot Project of a Comprehensive Approach

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## Basic information and data

- ▶ Conceived immediately after the previous economic and financial crisis (that caused tectonic changes in the national economy, labour market and augmented the unemployment rates) and launched in 2017
- ▶ **Is a pilot project representing the national step from the classical welfare state practices towards more 'workfare' attitudes**
- ▶ **aims to turn from passive to active social policy** as the expected indirect effects are the reduction of expenditures of rights paid from public funds, reduction of long-term unemployment and strengthening of social and welfare program nets.
- ▶ The main **immediate goal** of the project – **creating the system and environment (institutional, IT, social, economic, et. al.) for the social activation (SA) approach to become functional/ operational**
- ▶ The main **intermediate goal** of the project – facilitation of the **empowerment, successful labour market entry and social integration** of the long term unemployed and long-term beneficiaries of financial social assistance (**i.e. most vulnerable social groups**)
- ▶ The main **long(er) term goal** of the project – by showing its effectiveness in gaining the intermediate goals, **integration of the SA as a new service into the system of public service (SWC)** at the end of the programming period 2014-2020

# Basic information and data

## THREE PILLARS OF THE PROJECT:

1. **Development of accessible and quality programs of social activation** for individuals most far-off from the labour market and not being capable to enroll to the active labour market policies programs due to their specific needs and deficits;
2. **Introduction and establishment of the network of coordinators for social activation on regional and local level** to work with socially excluded people and development and promotion of better (improved) collaboration between SWC and Labour offices;
3. **Development of IT system** to provide effective data & statistics support to the SA approach;

## FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT

- ▶ **Budget planned for the project conduction (September 2017 – October 2022):** approx. 30 million €
- ▶ Co-funded by the:
  - European Social Fund – 80%
  - National budget – 20%

# Basic information and data

## SOCIAL ACTIVATION PROGRAMS

- ▶ Five public tenders (from September 2017 to January 2020) filed for the co-financing of the diverse SA programs
- ▶ **Target groups (lowest common denominators):**
  - long-term unemployed (LTU) – adults without a job for more than one year (according to ILO definition)
  - long-term recipients of social benefits
- ▶ **Indicators of success:**
  - positive exits: entry into the register of unemployed people, (re)entry in training and education programs/ process, joining the programs delineated in the Active labour market policies, protected working environments in the context of public work or the employment in the regular labour market/ **target goal: 25% of the enrolled reach a positive exit**
  - the number of people enrolled in the programs / **target goal: 5.655 members of the target groups enrolled in programs**
- ▶ **Positive motivation for the enrolled:** reimbursement of transport costs and lunch costs, activation award: 0,80 EUR per hour); no conditionality

## Statistical data collected by the types of the program until 30.10.2020

30.10.2020	Long - term programs	Short - term programs	Hybrid programs	programs of 5th tender
N° of programs	46	29	26	78
N° of people invited to the presentation	4449	1914	1896	5495
N° of signed contracts	1032	450	439	1231
N° of people who left programs	337 (32,7%)	102 (22,7%)	94 (21,4%)	185 (15%)
The number of positive exits	277 (26,8%)	64 (14,2%)	208 (47,4%)	199 (16%)
Duartion of project	September 2017 - Oktober 2019	Oktober 2017 - December 2018	June 2018 - June 2019	September 2019 - Oktober 2022

## 5<sup>th</sup> public tender (programs) - the most elaborated and the most unique

- ▶ **Programs composed of 3 modules** (introductory module, implementation module, final - follow-up module)
- ▶ Additional **emphasis put on the individualized approach**
- ▶ More **precisely delineated fields of activities/ courses** that need to be provided to the enrolled participants
- ▶ **Devised additional special SA programs, focused on the chosen sub-groups of the target group** (i. e. women from foreign cultural background and Roma women)
- ▶ **Challenges of facing the lock-down** – conduction of the program activities has been put on hold

## Why enhancing the SA programs focus on women from different cultural backgrounds & Roma women?

- ▶ **Vulnerability:** originating from strongly patriarchal social and cultural environments makes them (together with children) the most vulnerable groups within the Roma and immigrant communities, strongly susceptible to challenges of socio-economic deprivation;
- ▶ **Social position within family:** staying at home, bound to the domestic chores, subordination to (her) man and the elders;
- ▶ **Social function:** the child up bringer - key medium of primary socialization processes (transition of cultural and social norms and values);

### WRAPPING IT UP IN AN EQUATION:

**Investing in the empowerment of women through SA = investing in children = investing in better future**

## Target group deficiencies and challenges addressed by/through 5th SA public tender programs

Target group 2: women from foreign cultural backgrounds

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Weak social network (usually restricted to family and kin);          | 1. Activities focused on developing the group dynamics, enhancing and expanding their social networks    |
| 2. Weak knowledge on norms and values of their new ,home‘ state;        | 2. Workshops on introduction to their new ,home‘ society (culture, norms and values)                     |
| 3. Lack of communication capabilities in the national official language | 3. Practical lessons in official language use  |
| 4. Limited insight in the functioning of the social services system     | 4. Demonstration of social services system (schooling, labour market, welfare et. al.)                   |
| 5. Inadequate functional competencies & work experiences                | 5. Providing the possibilities for acquirement of work experiences and functional competencies upgrading |



## Target group deficiencies and challenges addressed by/through 5th SA public tender programs

### Target group 3: local Roma women

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Weak social network (usually restricted to broader family/ kin);  | 1. Activities focused on enhancing and expanding their social networks   |
| 2. Group social/community norms largely conflicting with the social norms& values of majoritarian society; | 2. Workshops on explaining the benefits of employment and education for one's and her family advancement             |
| 3. Limited social competencies and knowledge of peaceful conflict solving                                  | 3. Workshops on assertiveness, conflict resolving and other social competencies necessary for successful integration |
| 4. Illiteracy and weak knowledge in national official language   | 4. Practical lessons in official language use  |
| 5. Inadequate functional competencies & work experiences   | 5. Providing the options for acquirement of work experiences and functional competencies upgrading                   |

# A new player in the game: Covid-19 epidemic

**Result: new challenges ahead for all the enrolled in the programs, for the SA programs providers and SA coordinators**

## **Challenges for the target groups members enrolled in the SA programs:**

- ▶ Halt of the social networking & cooperation processes/dynamics taking place within the groups of the participants
- ▶ Cessation of all the practical working experiences providing activities
- ▶ Requirement to participate and assist children in the online education processes
- ▶ Lack of understanding of the requirements for the participation in the online education processes
- ▶ Anticipated enhanced role of providing the emotional support to the family members suffering psycho-social distresses caused by the epidemic
- ▶ Misunderstanding of the epidemic spreading prevention measures
- ▶ Diminution of the possibilities to earn/ provide for the family
- ▶ Limitation of the freedom of movement (i.e. additional physical limitation of the social contacts)

**A new challenge ahead:** enhanced role of the SA program providers & SA coordinators in assisting the enrolled in dealing with Covid-19 caused psychologic and social challenges

**The new goal ahead: Minimizing the negative effects of Covid-19 epidemic on acquisition of SA programs goals as well as on determination and willingness of the enrolled to achieve self-empowerment, social integration and successful entering in labour market**

#### **LEVELS OF ACTIVITIES/ MEASURES TAKEN:**

- ▶ **Individual level** – SA coaches & SA coordinators conduct daily/weekly personal phone contacts with each and every person enrolled
- ▶ **Group level** – SA coaches & SA coordinators conduct and orchestrate the online activities designed to create the positively and proactively oriented virtual group environment
- ▶ **Functional specialists meetings** – SA coaches and coordinators convene (monthly) online meetings with functional specialists (ES and CSW et. al.) to assess the situation in group and determine the steps to be taken in the short/midterm period to come to assist the enrolled

**The new goal ahead:** Minimizing the negative effects of Covid-19 epidemic on acquisition of SA programs goals as well as on determination and willingness of the enrolled to achieve self-empowerment, social integration and successful entering in labour market

#### **ACTIVITIES TAKEN BY THE SA COACHES & SA COORDINATORS:**

- ▶ **Preservation of the emerging social networks** – educating the enrolled to utilize tools such as Zoom, Viber, FB MSG to retain the group dynamics and networking through virtual world groups
- ▶ **Sparking and preservation of the productive/creative energy (spirit) of the enrolled** – through the establishment of the 'formal' SA group where the coaches set down teaser daily/ weekly challenges to the enrolled
- ▶ **Preservation of working motivation** – providing the enrolled with practical tasks whose completion results in creation of a practical product (examples: a shopping bag, a face mask, etc.)
- ▶ **Online assistance to the enrolled in the online education processes** – interpretation and translation of the requirements and work to be done by children)
- ▶ Conduction of (and assistance with) the online language skills improvement assignments

**The new goal ahead:** Minimizing the negative effects of Covid-19 epidemic on acquisition of SA programs goals as well as on determination and willingness of the enrolled to achieve self-empowerment, social integration and successful entering in labour market

#### **ACTIVITIES TAKEN BY THE SA COACHES & SA COORDINATORS:**

- ▶ Translation of the epidemic spreading prevention measures into the Roma language
- ▶ Explaining the importance of the adherence to the epidemic spreading prevention measures
- ▶ **Preserving the spirit of community within the group by providing it with the common goal/cause, demanding the collective commitment (ex: sewing of blankets at home for the local hospital)**
- ▶ Helping in filling in the forms for various forms of social assistance
- ▶ Organizing the virtual simulations of job interviews
- ▶ **Through informal virtual group formulation – establishment of a leisure and chill-out virtual area, where the enrolled can reset their minds from the daily pressures and challenges**

## The lessons learned

- ▶ **Social activation is about the dedicated people helping the people in need of assistance on their path to empowerment and entrance into the labour market**
- ▶ **Social activation is a process that does not stop at the crisis situation/ challenges – it requires thinking ,out of the box‘**
- ▶ **Providing the ,learn & use‘ opportunities to the stakeholders adds to the value and the quality of the program conduction**
- ▶ **High value of the follow-up activities**
- ▶ **On the long term, social activation can be a successful social mechanism in helping the enrolled achieving their (career) goals, when capable of adapting to the new (social) circumstances.**

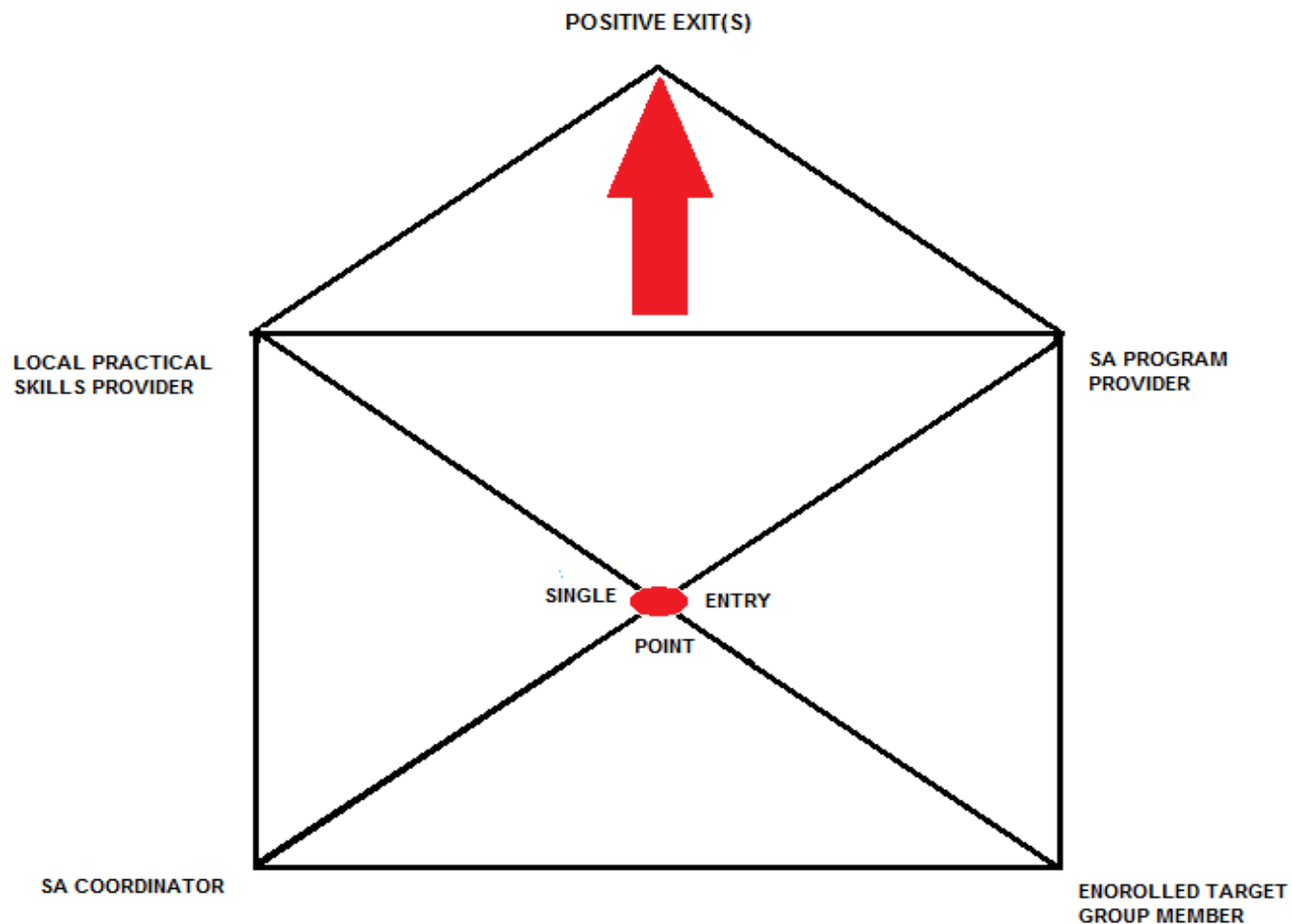
## The lessons to be learned

- ▶ **Acquisition of practical work experiences and skills during the lock-down ,seasons‘** - Where to look for the possibilities for the enrolled to achieve/gain the practical work experiences while the State/ society is in the lock-down
- ▶ **How much emphasis** ought to be put **on the improving of the IT skills** of the enrolled (while considering their deficits in the afore mentioned field)
- ▶ **How to interpret and explain the results**, achieved during the epidemic crisis in order to saturate the success indicators delineated before the outbreak of epidemic
- ▶ **Social activation promotion and marketing** – how to make SA programs and concepts more visible and understood by the general populace.
- ▶ **How to make the social activation programs more attractive** to the members of the target groups

## A Social Activation concept/ experiences Wrap-up

- ▶ **Based on three pillars:** (1) accessible and quality SA programs; (2) network of coordinators for SA on regional and local level; (3) development of IT system
- ▶ **Key generators of the social activation dynamics:** competent program providers (and SA coaches), social activation coordinator(s), and motivated enrolled members of the target groups.
- ▶ **A holistic approach (helping)** addressing challenges and deficiencies of adult individuals most far-off from the labour market (incapable of enrolling into the active labour market (policies programs) due to their specific needs and deficits)
- ▶ **Main goal:** drawing closer to – preferably enabling – the members of the target groups to successfully enter into the labour market
- ▶ **Amorphous concept – ever-evolving, developing and adapting to new social challenges** (via finding the most suitable ways to empower the enrolled in the program – while taking into consideration the local labour demand and characteristics – to successfully enter the labour market)
- ▶ **Individualized approach to work with the enrolled in the program by the SA coordinators and SA coaches:** formulation/revision of tailor-made personal plans of advancement to be followed throughout the course of program
- ▶ Success of programs, satisfaction of the enrolled, acquisition of public tender goals **depend decisively on dedication of the coordinators and SA program coaches to helping the enrolled and understanding the concepts and approach social activation**
- ▶ **Generates many highly valuable social effects/benefits, difficult to measure quantitatively** (however fundamental for one's empowerment and his/her better equipment for entering into labour market)





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**

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