
Bars not Barriers

Unemployment and Gender Issues under Hybrid Welfare Regime in Central and Eastern Europe

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1 | OVERVIEW

City, Country	Požega, Croatia
Main actors	RODA (NGO)
Partners	Požega Penitentiary (state), A partner from private sector (businesses)
Theme addressed	Employment, Gender issues
Target Group	Women prisoners and their children
Development Stage	Ideation
Place/ geographic scope	National
Time	2014
Type of Organisation	NGO
Size of Organisation	Micro (<10)

1.1 Social Innovation

RODA (roditelji u akciji, Parents in Action) is a Croatian civil society organisation, founded in 2001 by a group of parents as a direct answer to the reductions of maternity leave benefits. Now it is active as a group of concerned citizens interested in promoting and protecting rights to a dignified pregnancy, parenthood and childhood in Croatia. One of the risk groups targeted by RODA are prisoners and their children. Within the only existing women's prison in Croatia, there is a sewing workshop, which is used by the inmates. The idea of the project is to have a fund, in which the profit from work done within the workshop by the inmates will be put, and can consequently be used to finance the traveling costs of the imprisoned women's children to the prison. This will in fact increase the frequency of the children's visit to their mothers, and hence maintain and improve their family ties.

1.2 Context & Framework Conditions



In Croatia there is only one penitentiary for women with longer-than-6-month sentences, and that is located in a remote area of the country, which is difficult to reach from the most other parts of the country. This prison is located in the Valley of Požega, or Požega basin, in eastern Croatia. This makes it difficult and also expensive for the children of the women in the prison to travel to the prison and visit their mothers.

Figure 1-1. Location of Požega valley in Croatia

As of 2013, more than 5% of prisoners in Croatia were women (Croatian Ministry of Justice, 2014) amounting to 791 individuals with different legal status, from which 105 were imprisoned in the Požega Penitentiary. At that year, according to RODA's executive manager Ivana Zanze, 39 female prisoners had 134 underage children.

On the legislative side, the Ombudsman's Office for Children in Croatia has been working to improve the situation of children of imprisoned parents since 2006, and has issued over 20 recommendations and proposals to the executive authorities of the Republic of Croatia, most of which have been accepted and realized so far. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of comprehensive policy and investment from public sector regarding this specific target group. According to RODA, when the inmates leave the penitentiary, they usually re-enter poverty and / or criminal cycles, and there is a lack of attention in order to prevent this cycle to take shape. Hence, RODA's idea is targeting a real shortcoming in the actual welfare system. Baturina *et al.* (2013) characterize Croatian welfare state as a *hybrid* one, having its roots in Bismarckian social insurance, but mixed with paternalistic state from communist period and liberal reforms made under the pressure of the World Bank.

According to the law on the execution of prison sentence in Croatia, inmates have rights for work. According to Croatian Constitution, there is no forced labour, so prisoners decide whether they want to work during serving prison sentence (Kovčo Vukadin *et al.*, 2010).

During the year 2011-2012, the Prison System Directorate of Croatian Ministry of Justice had administered *Responsible Parenthood* initiative in several prisons and penitentiaries in cooperation Family Centers (Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity / Ministry of Social Policy and Youth). The project had aimed at enhancement of parental skills and competencies, and was terminated for organizational reasons. However, there has been a very positive feedback and interest to continue with such a program. Hence, in the year 2013, a pilot program entitled *Prisoner as a Parent* was developed by the Head Office of the Prison Administration, and consisted of 14 workshops. This program was piloted in one penitentiary. Consequently, in the year 2014 staff in 12 prisons and penitentiaries were educated for implementation of the program. Invited by the Prison System Directorate of the Croatian Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman's Office for Children made also a plenary presentation at the beginning of the second part of the this education program, which was a three-day educative program for staff conducted in 12 prisons. Within the Penitentiary in Požega, 19 women prisoners have been included in program until now (during 2014).

2 | DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Idea & Problem Addressed

In Croatia there are six state prisons for those who serve sentences of more than six months, but only one of them is for females facing such sentences, and that is located in a remote area of the country, which is difficult to reach from the most other parts of the country. For instance, according to the RODA Association, in 2014 over 50% of children whose mothers were serving a sentence at the Požega prison were living over 200 kilometres away from the prison. This makes it difficult and also expensive for the children of the women in the prison to travel to the prison and visit their mothers. This problem affects the parental ties between the prisoners and their families (specifically their children), which can have negative consequences for their post-prison life term too.

The Croatian law stipulates that prisoners have to make a wage if they choose to work in the prison, and the earned money is held in a trust until they are released from the prison. In accordance with this, within the women penitentiary in Požega there exists a sewing workshop. The idea of the social innovation project is to establish a “fund”, in which the *profit* from the work done within the workshop will be saved, and can consequently be used to finance the traveling costs of the imprisoned women’s children to the prison to visit their mothers. This will in fact increase the frequency of the children’s visit to their mothers, and hence maintain and improve their family ties.

Since February 2014, NGO RODA (Roditelji u akciji, Parents in Action) has been already conducting another project within the prison system in Croatia, and that project is funded by European Union (instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance; Support programs of NGOs in the field of advocacy and motivation for socially excluded groups.). Activities in that project are divided into two phases: in the first part an analysis of public policies and practices will be made and recommendations will be formulated that can contribute to social inclusion and increasing the quality of life of female prisoners and their children and families. In the second part of the project, together with partner and associate organizations, a system of support for

prisoners and their families will be developed, which later will be applicable in other prisons and penitentiaries in Croatia.

In its researches in the above-mentioned project RODA has found that after serving their prison sentences, the state of the ex-prisoners who are mothers and their employability has a great effect on the family life (e.g. whether the family will stay together, whether the children would be placed in foster care, whether the mother will commit another crime and end up again in the prison, ...). Hence, RODA has concluded that investing in these group of mothers and their parenting competencies, and their relationships with their children, has many-fold returns. Based on this, RODA decided to find a way to improve the employability of this target group. Therefore RODA has already been engaged in activities concentrating on this aspect of inmates' lives. For instance some expertise is provided with regard to writing CV and improving interview skills. Another part of this attempt is helping the women prisoners to maintain and improve their relationship with their children. One of the most important aspects in this regard is to help children to visit their mothers more frequently. Taking into account the fact that most of the women prisoners come from socially excluded or marginalized groups, and a lot of their children are living in foster care, there is usually lack of financial means to arrange the visits of the children with their mothers.

In September 2014, the executive director of RODA, Ivana Zanze, came up with the idea to establish a social enterprise in the prison to secure financial resources from its profits for the purpose of funding the visits of the prisoners' children to the prison. According to RODA, the idea was inspired also by a similar example in Milan (Italy), where the prisoners sew and produce collars for high-end fashion products. After the idea emerged, RODA applied for the award for Social Innovation of the Year in Croatia, which it won in December 2014. The terms of the award states that RODA needs to work on the realization of the idea.

2.2 Motivation & Core Solution

Executive director of NGO RODA has initiated this social innovation with her idea about a solution to improve the welfare of female prisoners. The idea is in line with the mission that NGO RODA pursues to fulfil in the society. RODA has defined its mission as followings:

“to change society into a society that acts responsibly towards children, parents, future parents and families – through information, education, active lobbying and inclusion in the processes of change, as well as encouraging parents and other societal groups to question the status quo and be part of change.”

In line with this, the envisaged project helps women prisoners to have more incentive to earn a wage, to improve their employability, but also to improve their parental ties and skills. For the purpose of the project, the sewing workshop existing in the prison will be used, in which (parts of) clothing products will be produced. Hence, the type of this social innovation will be new products which can bring new competences as well for the SI users.



Figure 2-1. Sewing workshop within the Požega Penitentiary's Department for Women Prisoners

The project is bound to the specific group of female prisoners who are mothers. However, according to RODA, the other female prisoners (who are not mothers) have also shown interest on the project, as they would like to help their fellows who are mothers in their cause. The inmates will be paid (to the trust) from the work they do in the workshop, and the profit from the workshop's activities will be put into a fund, from which the costs of the travels of the mother prisoners' children to the prison (presumably more than the current situation, which is 2 or 3 times per year) to meet their mothers will be covered. This would be an important improvement compared to the past, when the children could meet their parents usually just 2-3 times per year. It is aimed to realize the project (at least partly) by the end of 2015.

The geographical delimitation of this project is the whole country of Croatia, as it deals with the only existing women's prison in the country. This implies that, all female prisoners in the country that are – or will be – sentenced for more than 6 months in custody and are mothers, will benefit from this social innovation.

Institutional setting in which the project is to get realized has not so far demonstrated any conflict with this SI. However, issues like governance of the enterprise with regard to cost accounting (which will affect the profit calculation), and taxation regime implemented by the state remains to be observed during the next stages of the project.

3 | IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Resources & Business Strategy

RODA is a Croatian NGO founded in 2001 by a group of parents as a direct answer to the reductions of maternity leave benefits, and is active through a developed network of projects and activities in the country. Its activities are carried out by more than 250 volunteer members of the organisation, which are located throughout Croatia and abroad.

RODA received an award in December 2014, for the best social innovation in Croatia. Hence the idea of the SI project has got recognition at national level. The award is sourced from an EU grants and is given to RODA to work on the realization of the idea. It was given by The National Foundation for Civil Society Development (launched in 2004), and worth 30,000 HRK (about 4000 Euros). As mentioned, RODA shall use the award to try to realize the idea.

The sewing workshop within the Požega prison is already in place and equipped, and according to RODA, this would be the most expensive part of resources needed for the project. Training of some of the prisoners to be able to work within the workshop is an aspect which would need some additional effort. But overall, the most important challenge is to find a suitable product which is simple enough to be sewn within this prison's workshop. Moreover, finding a market for the products, or finding a client who would like to outsource part of its production activity to the Požega prison's sewing workshop, is an important issue to be solved, and RODA is dealing with this issue now. In addition, the public opinion about purchasing products made in the prison is deemed as a critical criteria for the success of the project.

The extent of required financial resources will depend on how fast RODA will succeed in finding a partner in the private sector who is willing to purchase the products from the prison's sewing workshop. Furthermore, the way the raw material for the production will be secured, will also affect the costs incurred.

3.2 The Network – Governance, Support & Obstacles

The two main actors in the project will be Požega female prison and RODA (see Appendix 1). Požega is a state prison, and RODA is an NGO. The shared objective of them is to improve the welfare of the inmates and their children by providing them with employment possibility during the inmates' sentence term.

Since February 2014 RODA has been conducting a two-year project named as *ma # me*, whose slogan is *empowering inmates for parental role and involvement in the labour market*. The overall objective of this project has been defined as the followings:

- increasing employability, social inclusion and quality of life of prisoners and their families, especially their children
- improving partnership in advocating and implementing programs aimed at prisoners, especially their children

Although at this idea stage RODA does not have any partner in the project, but it envisages that there would be need for a) a business partner who will use or sell the products produced in the prison, b) business associations to support the project, c) support from prisons authority in ministry of justice.

However, the public institutions has already shown their interest in the project, and it is expected to have their involvement easily.

According to RODA, even those female prisoners who are not mothers, are interested in participating in the envisaged innovative program, because they have empathy for their fellow inmates who are mothers.

In cooperation with a polling company, RODA is conducting a poll on public opinion regarding purchasing products which are produced by the prisoners. This is expected to indicate the present level of social acceptance regarding the activity envisaged for the social enterprise.

Another project which RODA has conducted in the prison was renovation of the library in the prison, because it was realized that the existing books in the library were very old. Hence, RODA conducted a public appeal to people to send interesting books voluntarily to this prison. The response from the people was very good and

RODA sent two pallets of books (which were collected in the RODA office in Zagreb) to the prison library. Afterwards, RODA has received letters from the prisoners appreciating the initiative.

4 | SOCIAL INNOVATION EFFECTS

4.1 Outcomes & Impact

Since the project is currently at the idea stage, no outputs can be analysed readily. However, the expected outcomes of the project are both economic and social. The envisaged social enterprise within the Požega prison will enable the female prisoners to have income while they spend their sentence time, but also will help them to strengthen their family (and social) ties. Another main beneficiary of the project would be the children of female prisoners, who will be able to visit their mothers more frequently, and this can benefit both the mother and the child, and the family ties survival during and after the prison sentence. This in turn can decrease the probability of re-offence, family disintegration and similar problems in post-sentence time.

In order for the project to become successful, there is a need for collaboration from the private sector. This needs to be in the form of business collaboration, enabling the social enterprise to sell its products to its potential customers. More specifically, a partner from textile, clothing and fashion wear sector is sought, to sell the Požega prison workshop products to it. In addition, the supply of required raw material for the workshop is considered another area, which a collaborator from the private sector can have an important role, because it will affect the operational costs of the social enterprise.

As RODA is already conducting another project with close objectives in the Croatian prison system, the institutional context has been already prepared for incorporation of the idea. Furthermore, the award for the best social innovation in Croatia which was received from the National Foundation for Advancement of Civil Society Development, has had important role in dissemination of the idea.

4.2 Measurement

So far, the sole contribution to the project has come from the National Foundation for Civil Society Development, which has awarded equivalent to € 4000 to RODA in order to realize the project idea. The most capital intensive item in the project is the sewing machines and the workshop, which are already available, and hence do not need new investment. Training of those inmates who need to be trained to be able to use the equipment within the workshop, is an item which might need additional investment.

In 2014 over 50% of children whose mothers were serving a sentence at the Požega prison were living over 200 kilometres away from the prison. The average budget per beneficiary will be equal to their children's traveling costs to the prison to visit their relatives. During the year 2015, the RODA Association will co-finance the travels costs in the amount of € 15 to € 125. It must be noted that this will be spent from the envisaged "profit" made by the social enterprise. Hence, the wages and the operational costs of the social enterprise will be covered by its revenue as well.

Although currently nothing can be measured as the outcome of this social innovation, the potential outcomes but would be easily measurable. Following indicators are some of the measurable outcomes:

- by the end of 2015, it would be possible to observe if the sewing workshop already has customer(s) who is willing to buy the produced material from the workshop, and potentially the income which would be generated from that.
- the profit from the sales which will be saved in the designated fund.
- The number of children who have used the fund to finance the traveling costs.

The long-term value created for the broader society is related to avoidance of social and economic damages which would occur in case of absence of the proposed measures. As mentioned, one of the key purposes of this SI is to decrease the probability of re-offences and also to improve the relational capital for the target group and their children. This is expected to benefit the society and the beneficiaries through reducing the social costs and contributing to their future prospects.

5 | CONCLUSION

The presented social innovation from Croatia intends to provide a possibility for female prisoners who are sentenced to longer than 6 months of imprisonment, and are mothers of under-aged children, to be visited by their children more frequently than before. This social innovation is at the ideation stage, and comprises of **components** from third sector and public sector **actors**. NGO RODA is a third sector entity with activities concentrated around improving the parental and children rights in Croatia, and Požega penitentiary is a state prison. For the realization of the project idea, there is need for partnership from private sector (businesses) in order to sell the products produced in the social enterprise located in the prison. While the Požega prison will provide access to the needed economic **resources** such as land and capital, the inmates of the prison will constitute the labour resources, and RODA (NGO) will have the main role in providing the social resources (social capital and leadership). Nevertheless, realization of the SI is bound to access to economic resources for the operationalization phase, which in turn will be tied with the quality of bridging social capital and relational capital between private sector and the actors from previously mentioned sectors.

The objective of the initiator of this SI is a social **objective**, namely empowerment of the targeted social risk group in order to improve their welfare both during and after their sentence terms. As to the political objective of welfare maximisation, however, it remains to see if at the time of operationalization of the idea, the government will support the social enterprise concerning exemption from taxation and other costs. The economic objective of profit maximisation is expected to be pursued by – and will be dependent on - the users of the SI themselves, as it will serve their purposes directly, and no other actors’.

According to RODA, other inmates who do not have children have also shown interest in participating in the social enterprise activities, as they know the value of its outcome for their fellows who are mothers. Hence, the role of solidarity and social cohesion among the inmates is a specific factor contributing to the economic (and consequently, social) objectives of the social enterprise. In fact, *bonding social capital* appears in this SI as a resource contributing to the **principles** of SI, through

facilitating cooperation of beneficiaries in a Pareto optimum condition within the social enterprise.

Not only the capital needed for the activities of the SI is owned by the state, but the wages that inmates can make by working within the prison's sewing workshop will be governed by the prison. Hence, RODA's idea of creating a fund to use the profits from the workshop for the traveling costs of the children, is a **co-regulation governance mode**, as this needs to be confirmed by the governing system (prison managers) as well (and is expected now to be confirmed). This combination in the governance mode is in line with the characteristics of hybrid welfare regime typology, in which components from liberal and state-influenced regimes are included.

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Appendix I: Mapping the Egocentric Actor Network

The following table is utilised to study actors' relations in the innovation process.

ID	Name	Type of Actor	Location			Role	Involvement		Intensity
			Country	Region	City		Date	Duration	
1	RODA	3	HR	HR041	Zagreb	1,2	09/2014	8	3
2	Požega Womens' prison	1	HR	HR049	Požega	3,4	0/2015	-	5
3	Požega women prisoners	5	HR	HR049	Požega	3	0/2015	-	5

Remarks

- (1) *Type of Actor*: 1 = Public, 2 = Private, 3 = Third Sector, 4 = Civil Society, 5 = Individual, 6 = Non-profit
- (2) *Location*: Country (NUTS code), region (NUTS code), city (name in English)
- (3) *Role*: 1 = Initiator, 2 = Idea provider, 3 = User, 4 = Investor, 5 = Promotor, 6 = Design, 7 = Production, 8 = Marketing, 9 = Contractual issues, 10 = Reseller
- (4) *Date of Involvement*: Month/Year (MM/YYYY)
- (5) *Duration of Involvement*: month
- (6) *Intensity*: 1 = one occasion, 2 = less than monthly, 3 = monthly, 4 = weekly, 5 = daily