

# SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE VISEGRAD GROUP COUNTRIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Ondrej Krocil<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the research interest of scientific articles authors in the concept of social entrepreneurship in the Visegrad Group countries. To explore it, the methodological approach of a systematic literature review is used. In total, 44 scientific articles from Web of Science and Scopus database were analyzed. The research shows most of the analyzed articles deal with social entrepreneurship in the Czech and Polish context. The articles are placed in journals published by institutions based in the V4 countries as well as by institutions located outside these countries. Four key research topics that are addressed in the articles were identified. These topics are social entrepreneurship from the perspective of rural development, social entrepreneurship from the perspective of its conceptualization, social entrepreneurship from the perspective of its performance and social entrepreneurship from the perspective of personality traits of social entrepreneurs and managers.

## Keywords

Social Entrepreneurship, Visegrad Group Countries, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary

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## I. Introduction

According to the social entrepreneurship concept, social enterprises are entities that develop economic activity, they are economically self-sufficient and have a positive social impact. In the case of for-profit social enterprises, following a socially beneficial goal is as important as pursuing a profit. In the European Union countries, the so-called work integration social enterprises prevail. These enterprises orient their positive social impact into the area of employing disadvantaged groups of people in the labor market. At the same time, however, there are differences in the conceptualization of social entrepreneurship in the EU countries. These differences relate mainly to the regulation of social entrepreneurship. Some countries have already included acts regulating social entrepreneurship and its support in their legislation, some have not yet. It is not different in the V4 countries. Although the V4 countries share a common history, they cooperate in a number of areas, the conceptualization and support of social entrepreneurship differ in these states.

In the Czech Republic, social entrepreneurship has not yet been regulated. Currently, the act on social entrepreneurship is being drafted in the Czech Republic. According to this draft, two types of social enterprises should work in the Czech Republic. These two types are represented by „general social enterprise“ (social purpose of this enterprise will not be specified in the act) and „work integration social enterprise“ (this enterprise must employ at least 30% of disadvantaged people out of the total number of its employees). Although it is not possible to determine how many social enterprises currently exist in the Czech Republic, the database of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic provides at least limited information. In this database, currently 267 social enterprises are listed. The TESSEA (Thematic Network for Social Economy) definition in the Czech Republic serves to orientatively determine whether an enterprise could be labeled as social or not.

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<sup>1</sup> Palacky University, Krizkovskeho 12, 77180 Olomouc, the Czech Republic. E-mail: [ondrej.krocil@upol.cz](mailto:ondrej.krocil@upol.cz).

Slovakia is the only V4 country that has already implemented the act on social entrepreneurship into its legislation. Act 112/2018 Coll. on social economy and social enterprises distinguishes three types of social enterprises: work integration social enterprise, social enterprise providing social housing and general social enterprise. The act also defines the types of support that registered social enterprises can receive. In July 2020, 163 social enterprises were registered in Slovakia. In Poland and Hungary, social entrepreneurship is not regulated by law. However, activities that are being developed in Poland could lead to the creation of a valid law. These activities are represented by these documents: the National Programme for Social Economy Development and the draft of the Legal Act on Social Enterprise.

In the development of social entrepreneurship in the V4 countries, academia can play an important role. It is essential to precisely define the concept of social entrepreneurship, to identify its key stakeholders and to determine the impact of social entrepreneurship on society. In these areas, academia could be helpful.

The aim of this paper is to explore the research interest of scientific articles authors in the concept of social entrepreneurship in the Visegrad Group countries. I will focus on how many scientific articles on social entrepreneurship topic in the Czech, Slovak, Polish and Hungarian context have been published in recent years, in which journals the articles appeared most frequently, in what languages are these articles written and what methodological approach is used in the articles. Moreover, I will try to reveal what are the key research topics presented in these articles and, on contrary, I will discuss what possible areas are not covered.

The article is structured as follows. After the introduction, methodology and research questions are introduced. In the third chapter, the results of a systematic review are presented. In the discussion, other topics that articles could address are briefly mentioned.

## **II. Methodology and Research Questions**

As mentioned above, the paper deals with the research interest of scientific articles authors in social entrepreneurship in the Czech, Slovak, Polish and Hungarian context. To explore it, I use the methodological approach of systematic literature review. Snyder (2019) defines a systematic literature review as an approach that's main purpose is to synthesize and compare evidence using specific research questions and systematic search strategy. In case of this article, the research questions are as follows:

- RQ1: How many scientific articles on the topic of social entrepreneurship in the context of individual Visegrad Group countries have been published in the last 10 years?
- RQ2: In which journals the articles appeared most frequently and in what language are these articles written?
- RQ3: What are the key research topics introduced in the articles?
- RQ4: What methodological approaches are used in the articles?

My approach is inspired by Bansal, Garg and Sharma (2019), Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués (2016) and Short, Moss and Lumpkin (2009). These authors used the method of a systematic literature review to research the interest of scientific literature in social entrepreneurship context. Bansal, Garg and Sharma (2019) analyzed and reviewed 173 scientific papers from Web of Science database from the perspective of publication year, coverage (developed countries, developing countries), dimensions (economy-related, environment-related, social issues-related), methodology, themes and contribution.

Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués (2016) used Web of Science database to determine the research areas with the greatest research output, the countries and languages responsible for most social entrepreneurship research, the year in which research on social

entrepreneurship began, the journals that publish most research, and the most relevant authors with publications on social entrepreneurship.

For the systematic literature review, I chose BOOLEAN operators as the method for selection of appropriate scientific articles. These articles were searched not only in the Web of Science database, but also in Scopus. Conference papers and book chapters are not included in the review. BOOLEAN operators define logical relationships between terms in a search and they are used in systematic literature reviews (e. g. Henry, Foss & Ahl, 2015, Casimir & Tobi, 2011, Bansal, Garg & Sharma). The systematic search was conducted from May to June 2020 and it included articles that have been published in last 10 years, i.e. from 2010 to 2020.

The following keywords and the following BOOLEAN operators were used to select scientific documents for systematic literature review:

- ("social entrepreneurship" or "social enterprise" or "social enterprises" or "social entrepreneur" or "social entrepreneurs" or "social business") and "czech"*
- ("social entrepreneurship" or "social enterprise" or "social enterprises" or "social entrepreneur" or "social entrepreneurs" or "social business") and "slovak\*"*
- ("social entrepreneurship" or "social enterprise" or "social enterprises" or "social entrepreneur" or "social entrepreneurs" or "social business") and ("poland" or "polish")*
- ("social entrepreneurship" or "social enterprise" or "social enterprises" or "social entrepreneur" or "social entrepreneurs" or "social business") and ("hungary" or "hungarian")*

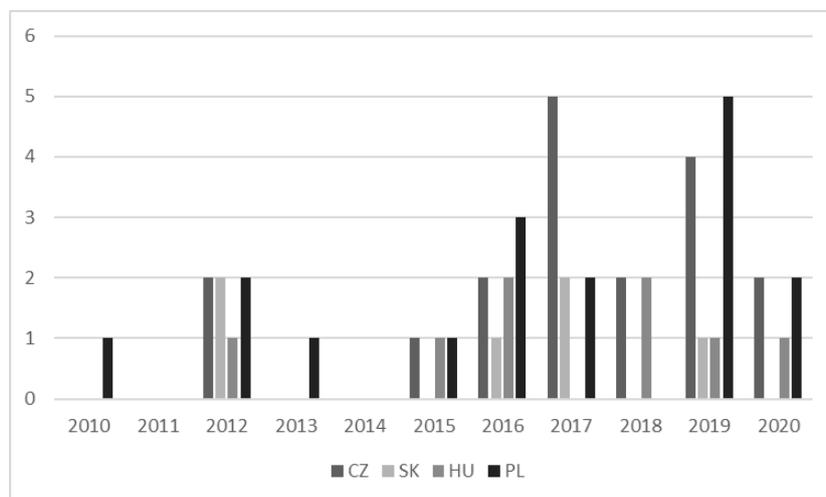
One might argue that the BOOLEAN does not contain the phrase "social economy". In this case, however, I focus exclusively on social enterprises, which I perceive as one of the actors within the social economy. In this way and after the exclusion of articles where social entrepreneurship is only marginal topic, I have identified a total number of 44 scientific articles. These articles were further analyzed.

### III. Results

#### Articles Publication Frequency

In the period from 2010 to June 2020, 44 scientific articles on the topic of social entrepreneurship in the Czech, Slovak, Polish and Hungarian context have been published and included in WoS and Scopus database. Some of these articles covered more than one Visegrad Group country. Figure 1 shows the articles publication frequency in recent 10 years.

**Figure 1 Articles publication frequency in recent 10 years (2010 – June 2020)**



Source: own processing

Only in Slovakia, social entrepreneurship has a legislative background. Surprisingly, only 6 articles on the topic of social entrepreneurship in Slovak context have been published. On the contrary, most articles focused on social entrepreneurship in Czech (18 articles) and Polish (17 articles) context. The first article concerning social entrepreneurship in one of the V4 countries was published in 2010. However, in general, the articles have been published more regularly since 2015. It should be added that the graph takes into account only the first half of 2020 and it can be expected that more articles will be published in this year.

### Journals and Language of Publication

In the next step, I found out the analyzed articles were published in 34 different journals. Table 1 contains the journals in which most articles dealing with social entrepreneurship in V4 countries were issued.

**Table 1 Journal titles with the highest number of articles**

Journal title	Publisher's country	Number of articles
Civil Szemle	Hungary	5
Administrative Sciences	Switzerland	2
Comparative Economic Research	Poland	2
European Countryside	the Czech Republic	2
Journal of Social Entrepreneurship	UK	2
Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice	the Czech Republic	2
Sociologia	Slovakia	2
Voluntas	USA	2

*Source: own processing*

Most articles on the topic of social entrepreneurship in the context of V4 countries were published in Civil Szemle journal. The journal has been published in Hungary since 2004 and it focuses on nonprofit sector and civil society which creates space for social entrepreneurship research. In the table, Journal of Social Entrepreneurship is the only platform specializing exclusively in social entrepreneurship. Two articles dealing with social entrepreneurship in Czech context were issued in this journal. These articles focus on performance of Czech social enterprises (Asmalovskij, Sadílek, Hinčica, Mizerová, 2018) and the identification of barriers to social entrepreneurship development in the Czech Republic (Pelucha, Kourilova, Kveton, 2017). The same number of articles were published in Voluntas journal. In general, Voluntas is mentioned by Short, Moss and Lumpkin (2009) as domain journal publishing social entrepreneurship research.

With six exceptions, the articles were published in English. This fact confirms the findings of Rey-Martí, Ribeiro-Soriano and Palacios-Marqués (2016) who identified English as the dominant language of social entrepreneurship publications. The rest of articles are written in Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Slovak and Croatian languages.

### Key Research Topics

Within the systematic literature review, 4 key research topics that are addressed in connection with social entrepreneurship in the V4 countries were found. In case of this review, each key topic should be addressed in at least 4 articles. Representatives of articles covering these key topics are listed below.

### **Social Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of Rural Development**

Social entrepreneurship from the perspective of rural development is one of the key research topics included in social entrepreneurship research in V4 countries context. This finding is in line with Bansal, Garg and Sharma (2019) who presented this topic within their systematic literature review focusing on social entrepreneurship as a tool to attain sustainable development.

Hudcova, Chovanec and Moudry (2018) compared social farming and social entrepreneurship streams in their article. They found out that these streams have a lot of common features, but, according to the approach to social entrepreneurship that prevails in the Czech Republic, it is not easy to determine which social farms can be considered as social enterprises in the sense of TESSEA definition (the definition was introduced at the beginning of the article). According to the authors, social farms represent a specific, unique, and multifunctional setting that supports alternative kinds of social integration in the countryside and participate in the sustainability of the site and the maintenance of traditional farming systems. The importance of social entrepreneurship and social farming as social inclusion tools in the context of rural development in the Czech Republic is highlighted also by Kucerova (2018). Rural social enterprises as solution to Roma people exclusion in Hungary were introduced by Mihaly (2019).

Chrenekova (2019) aimed to express the extent of social economy in terms of rurality of regions of the Slovak Republic. She found out the average number of social economy entities in rural districts of Slovakia is 12.71 per 10,000 inhabitants, 10.08 entities in intermediate districts and only 6.72 in urban districts. These conclusions point to a link between social enterprises and rural areas. According to Richter (2017), for rural regions, social enterprises prove to be important change makers, because they develop new solutions to social challenges and mobilise resources and support in networks and institutions that were rarely accessible for rural communities before their appearance. Dealing with the process of social innovations in rural regions and presenting four case studies of social innovations in Hungary, Kovacs, Varga and Nemes (2016) conclude that social enterprises could be the best way of social innovations' institutionalisation.

### **Social Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of its Conceptualization**

In the European Union countries, approaches to social entrepreneurship differ. This creates space for publishing articles focusing on social entrepreneurship conceptualization.

Asmalovskij and Sadilek (2017) analyzed social enterprises in the Czech Republic and Slovakia based on their legal forms and activities. The authors conclude that the perception of social entrepreneurship in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is often narrowed down to the issue of employing disabled or otherwise disadvantaged people. The most common legal form of social enterprises in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are limited liability companies, but forms of non-profit organizations are also widely used. The economic activity of social enterprises is emphasized in the Czech and Slovak concept.

According to Praszquier, Petrushak, Kacprzyk-Murawska and Zabłocka (2017), Polish mission-oriented social enterprises from the early 90s are today joined by new social enterprises that follow their approach and in many cases incorporate economic sustainability as part of their social mission. This feature is typical for the Czech Republic and Slovakia, too. Also in Hungary, social enterprises not only come from the NGO-sector, but also from traditional cooperatives with some social functions, social cooperatives, and private companies with social aims (Szalai and Svensson, 2018). This statement is supported by Buchko (2018) who claims most social enterprises in Hungary are non-profit and state-owned ones. The non-profit sector includes foundations and associations, other non-profits, while the for-profit sector mostly consists of social cooperatives. According to the author, social entrepreneurship in

Hungary is designed to solve the most pressing social issues of society, mainly related to the low level of employment.

### **Social Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of its Performance**

Asmalovskij, Sadilek, Hincica and Mizerova (2018) focused on identification of basic economic performance of Czech social enterprises. The authors worked with two dependent (profitability and productivity) and three independent variables (size, age and debt ration). Based on their statistical analyses, they revealed that high variance is present between the given social enterprises in productivity and debt-to-equity ratio. This could be explained by socially oriented and not for-profit nature of social enterprises. Further, the authors found out most Czech social enterprises are not profitable, nearly 40% of enterprises suffer financial losses. Significant positive correlation exists between profitability and productivity, as well as between size and age of social enterprises.

Prochazkova and Noskova (2020) aimed to investigate the issue of performance measurement of social enterprises with main particular focus on economic performance approach reflecting local aspect, which is important for social entrepreneurship concept. To achieve the goal, the authors used the methods of local multiplier 3 and Input-Output analysis. They revealed that the impact of social enterprises on the Czech economy is not negligible, but it differs in individual sectors and regions.

Olinski and Burchart (2013) tried to assess the effectiveness of financial aid, received by social cooperatives in Poland. The authors argue that the funds used in supporting social enterprises should not only bring profits to the social entrepreneurs but also it should be efficient from the public point of view. Based on a sample of 20 Polish social cooperatives they revealed the effectiveness of the financial activities of all surveyed cooperatives is 54%. However, at the same time, the authors point out that also non-financial performance, which refers to social objectives should be taken into account. For example, Krocil, Dopita and Pospisil (2019) focused on Czech social enterprises' performance from the point of view of employment policy.

### **Social Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of Personality Traits of a Social Entrepreneur and Managers**

Pacut (2020) identified the factors that influence the involvement of individuals in social entrepreneurship in Poland. She defined several reasons that lead to social entrepreneurship engagement. According to her findings, social entrepreneurs are affected by the following factors: social and personal advantages, public support, random events, norms and values, selffulfilment, social and family models, beliefs and ideas. Wronka-Pospiech (2016) explored the key competencies and optimal features of a manager running a social enterprise. The research was based on the sample of 100 Polish social enterprises. The author identified 10 critical competencies that are necessary for social enterprise managers. These competencies are: creative use of minimal resources, ability to create business plans and evaluate their feasibility, conflict resolution skills, ability to communicate with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders, identification with the idea, actors and activities of the social economy, confidence to succeed at challenging task, ability to manage administrative work, optimism, ability to identify social problems and ability to lead and develop others. This research can be linked to the study of Greblikaite, Sroka and Gerulaitiene (2016) who aimed to reveal how Polish university students perceive the development of skills and abilities gained during their university studies that are important for social entrepreneurship. According to Oancea, Pospisil and Drăgoescu (2017), in the new era of the knowledge society, education in general and particularly higher education is one of the most important determinants of the economic growth. It could be important also from the perspective of social entrepreneurship development.

Balgiashvili (2017) focused on comparison of entrepreneurial passion of social and commercial entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic. The author chose the questionnaire survey approach and obtained 119 responses from social entrepreneurs and 87 responses from commercial entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial passion consisted of three domains: passion for innovating, passion for foundation and passion for development. The study didn't prove statistically significant difference between these two groups of entrepreneurs in relation to entrepreneurial passion.

### Other Topics

Literary review also revealed a number of topics, which were dealt with in only 1-2 articles. These topics are not key in the context of social entrepreneurship in the V4 countries, so only some of them are mentioned in this subsection.

Pelucha, Kourilova and Kveton (2017) and Wildmannova (2017) researched barriers of social entrepreneurship development in the Czech Republic. In other V4 countries, this topic is not addressed. Mikolajczak (2020) examined the successful coexistence of the market logic and the social-welfare logic in Polish NGOs acting as social enterprises. Kubickova and Hodzic (2019) analysed the role of project management in Czech social enterprises. Bilan, Mishchuk and Pylypchuk (2017) searched for factors that influence the increase of number of social enterprises in the European countries including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland.

### Methodological Approaches

In a detailed analysis of scientific articles, I identified three main methodological approaches. The authors use the methods of qualitative research, quantitative research or the documents have the character of conceptual articles. Structure of scientific articles according to methodological approaches used by their authors is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 Scientific articles structured by methodological approaches used by their authors**



*Source: own processing*

Most of the analyzed documents have the character of conceptual articles. This is not surprising, as the boundaries of social entrepreneurship are still not clear and social entrepreneurship is still being developed in the V4 countries. This fact creates an opportunity for the publication of conceptual articles. Many of them fall into the second key topic – Social Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of its Conceptualization. These are, for example, the research of Hyanek (2012)

who described developments in Czech social economy in the institutional context of Czech national economy, or Praszkie, Petrushak, Kacprzyk-Murawska and Zabłocka (2017) who reviewed the development of the welfare system and social entrepreneurship in Poland, including the historical perspective. The conceptual article was written also by Szalai and Swensson (2018) who provided a thick analysis of how the long-term development of civil society in Hungary impacts the scope for the creation of a social economy.

The use of qualitative research appears especially in the first key research topic - Social Entrepreneurship from the Perspective of Rural Development. For example, Hudcova, Chovanec and Moudry (2018) conducted 15 in-depth interviews with stakeholders from Czech social farms. Kucerova (2018) applied content analysis to investigate how social inclusion was conceptualized in the main Czech rural development policy documents related to the EU. Richter (2019) implemented two case studies of Austrian and Polish social enterprises.

Quantitative research is typical for the third and fourth key research topics. Asmalovskij, Sadilek, Hincica and Mizerova (2018) collected financial data on 112 Czech social enterprises and applied multiple regression analysis to reveal how and what variables affect performance of Czech social enterprises. Olinski and Burchart (2013) calculated financial efficiency of social cooperatives in Poland. Wronka-Pospiech (2016) conducted a questionnaire survey of 100 Polish social cooperatives to indicate key competencies and optimal features of a manager running a social enterprise.

#### **IV. Discussion**

In the last chapter, the key research topics addressed in the scientific articles on social entrepreneurship in the V4 countries were introduced. However, there are several other topics that should be developed.

Although social entrepreneurship from the perspective of its performance was identified as the key research topic, no research concerning the Slovak context was found. Because Slovakia is the only V4 country that has introduced systematic support for social enterprises, it could be beneficial to measure whether this support is effective or not. Based on the research of this kind, other countries can be inspired by the Slovak example in terms of social entrepreneurship support adjustment.

Another research opportunity is offered by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Undoubtedly, crisis management of social enterprises differs from that used by conventional enterprises. According to experts from TESSEA, only a minimum of Czech social enterprises work systematically with crisis management. A similar situation could be in other V4 countries. The academia could help to create procedures on the basis of which social enterprises would implement their own crisis management systems. To create them, qualitative and quantitative research focused on the perception of risks by social entrepreneurs must be carried out.

Other topics related to social entrepreneurship, but not identified in this literature review, are offered by Bansal, Garg and Sharma (2019). These topics are: environmental and ecological considerations in social enterprises and financing and crowdfunding of social enterprises. The environmental perspective should be an integral part of social enterprises. How social enterprises in V4 countries take this perspective into account could be examined. The topic of social entrepreneurship financing could also offer a lot of research opportunities, as for example in the Czech Republic and Slovakia social enterprises exist in various forms (for-profit or non-profit organizations) which financing is different.

## V. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the research interest of scientific articles authors in the concept of social entrepreneurship in the Visegrad Group countries. The systematic literature review revealed that most of the analyzed articles deal with social entrepreneurship in the Czech and Polish context. Social entrepreneurship in Slovakia and Hungary is less often represented in the articles. The articles are placed in journals published by institutions based in the V4 countries as well as by institutions located outside these countries. Thus, most of articles were published by Hungarian journal *Civil Szemle*, but journals from Switzerland, UK and USA are also interested in articles dealing with social entrepreneurship in the V4 countries. Based on systematic review, I identified four key research topics that are addressed in the articles. These topics are social entrepreneurship from the perspective of rural development, social entrepreneurship from the perspective of its conceptualization, social entrepreneurship from the perspective of its performance and social entrepreneurship from the perspective of personality traits of social entrepreneurs and managers. These topics are associated with typical methodological approaches used by the authors of the articles. Conceptual articles are the most common approach.

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