

The study about Social Economy and Social Enterprise in the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

The Social Economy is a topic, which has been newly established in the Czech Republic during last two or three years, though social enterprises have been active here for a long time. This study aims to define the Social Economy and makes some typology of Social Enterprises and their activities according to the Czech experience and with regard to the general perception. Some figures and case studies form the Czech Republic are given to underpin this study and to indicate the trends of the development in here. The development of the civil society has gone in coherence to the development of the social economy. The structure of social enterprises has its specific feature in the Czech Republic, because of many self-governments enterprises providing welfare on its level on one hand, and only a few (social) co-operatives or other self-help mutual symmetries on the other hand. Participation on social care is developing and social economy seems to improve within the last two years.

Key words: social economy, social enterprise, social cohesion, employment, co-operative, civil society, social care

1. Introduction

Social Economy¹ seems to be a very relevant topic in the European Union countries today because of the employment, social cohesion, and regional development requirement, after the Lisbon summit. It is the legitimate development component of the European economy and social policy.

The study presented below is based on the topic of *"The Civil society as a phenomenon of a social and regional development"* research being conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences - University in Ústí nad Labem (1999–2004). It answers some questions about social economy and social enterprise.

¹ Opinion of the European Regional Committee about *Partnership*. Brussels, March 26th 2002, CdR 384/2001fin N/o.

It was approached by the author in her doctorate "*The analyses of co-operatives position in the transitive economy*" (2003) and newly presented in the *Civil Society Dimension of Economy* (2004 - monographic).

2. Theoretic background of the social economy and social enterprise

The definition of the Social Economy has been formed for about the last fifteen years in Europe though this category has not been standardised till now. The European politicians might disagree about it, though they use the social economy obviously and widely in their policies.

We can try to define the social economy with some common characteristics, such as:

1. *The (civil) economy with social effects* – in a wide view; (the *participative economy* namely - Thomas Bata's phenomenon in 1920's in south Moravia - for example), or
2. *The private economy with some positive social externalities supporting employment, social cohesion and regional development* - understanding the EU politics of development; (the *democratic economy* – it means an employee ownership, mutual self-help symmetry or co-operation, and self-employment), or
3. *Formal private non-profit activities* – in its core; (notably foundations, associations and symmetries, which participate in social welfare and a provision of social services), or
4. *Economy provides welfare* - marginally and according to the view of a transitive economy; (social enterprises - governmental service agencies and enterprises included).

It means the *social economy* could be defined as the *economy with some social impact* - as an economy which supports employment, social cohesion and regional development. The core of the social economy lies in the private non-profit and formal sector, and it coincides with the functional *civil society* on one hand and a *partnership* of public and private sectors on the other hand. It is then a parameter of such an economy that arises from civil private activities.

They have its own welfare impacts, as the social economy is supported by governmental politics, legislation, and public finances (sometimes) in Europe, especially after the Lisbon summit. The governments appreciate this activity as an independent alternative that saves public finances, or as if it would enhance the effect of public politics.

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The term *social enterprise* stands for socio-economic entities that pursue social objectives by means of productive activities carried out in a stable and continuous way. Social enterprises rely on a broad range of resources (voluntary work, donors, public contributors" (by EMES research definition). We can understand it through citizens' initiatives, and governmental participation, producing and delivering welfare on the non-governmental level. The most significant role of a social enterprise is to prevent the poverty of people endangered by social exclusion, and force the social cohesion. It is the *authentic co-operative*² as a binary non-profit body and mutual self-help symmetry of interests, which is understood to be the basic model of a social enterprise. It is (a little) *business controlled according to democratic principles by co-operative members*, and its non-risk and variable *capital is employed by work*, and it naturally produces *socially positive externalities*. Such co-ops are the vehicle in a *civil direct democracy*.

The non-governmental non-profit bodies (formal *associations of interest* - as associations, foundations and symmetries) are usually perceived as a core of the *civil society*, as well as the core of the *social economy*. In principle, they are *autonomous* to the government and their existence and membership is *voluntary*, including some philanthropy and solidarity. It means the social enterprise is not the profit body. The purpose of its existence is some social benefit (as well as an economic and cultural one, sometimes), its *capital is employed and managed by work*, and the price of its activities is not given by the market.

According to that view we can perceive the civil economy as bound with its social impacts or private economic activities supporting social capital (being "economy for people", not "people for economy"), and being an association of interest as shown in Table 1.

The comparative advantage of the social economic bodies (social enterprise) is the above mentioned autonomy, voluntariness, solidarity, some philanthropy, and also a desire to generate some other benefits than the profit, citizens activities awakening, trust strengthening, and weakening of information asymmetries.

The authentic co-operative, being the binary subject³, is considered to be the very "social enterprise".

2 The authentic co-operative means the co-operative body being active within international co-operative standards of identity (The seven principles issued by International Co-operative Alliance – 1995). It means an *association* of members, which build democratically controlled *enterprise* by them because of the reach of their economic, social and cultural benefits. The profit of this enterprise is not delivered to capital owners but returns to the co-operative activity.

3 www.coop.org

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It could be very useful to see the position of social economy and social enterprise through the sectoral dimension of social-economy reality, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Table 1: Associations of the Interest (contrary to Associations of the Capital)

Type of body relationship	The Czech legal form	Type of
Association of members	"Association of Citizens" (1)	Association*
	"Association of Citizens" (2)	Mutual promoting symmetry
	"Association of Interest" - legal bodies	Mutual promoting symmetry
	"Professional Chambers"	Mutual promoting symmetry
Association of property	"Association of Common Benefits"	Association*
	"Foundation"	Foundation
	"Granting Foundation"	Foundation
	"Governmental Service Agency"***	Governmental social enterprise
Association of territory	Municipality and Region**	Mutual promoting symmetry
Association of members and property	"Association of Citizens" (3)	Mutual self-help symmetry
	"Association of Municipalities" (micro-region)	Mutual self-help symmetry
	"Co-operative"***	Mutual self-help symmetry

Notice: The symmetry means a mutual relationship (for reciprocal benefits) contrary to the asymmetry of the association "to public finance" and the foundation (for common benefits).

*) Body associated to public finance (Pestoff, 1995)⁴

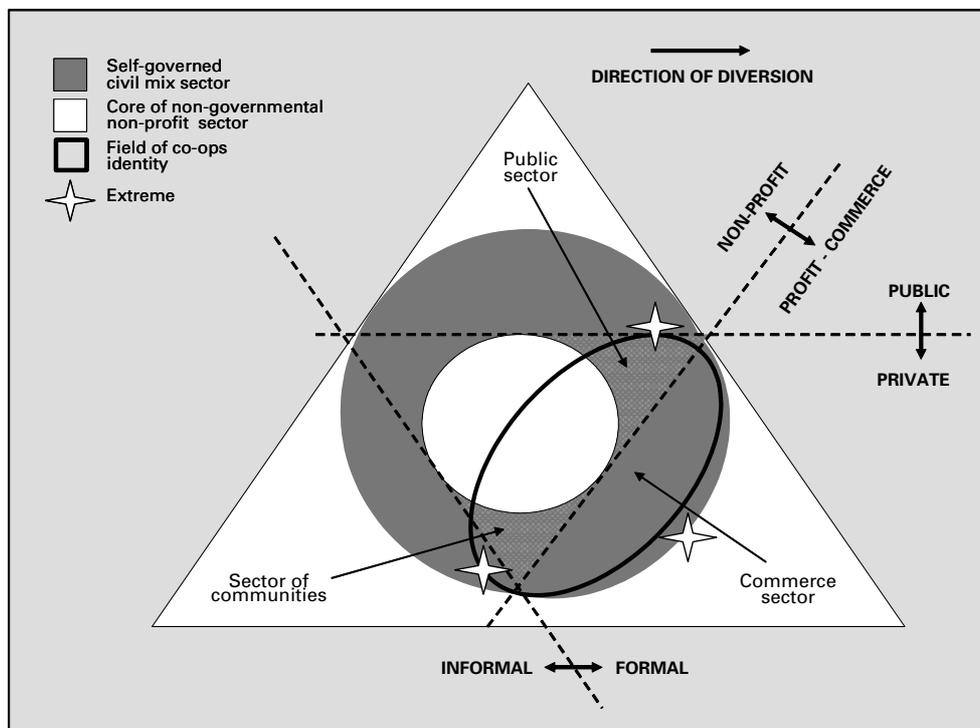
**) The public sector body

***) The Czech co-op is the commerce sector body within the Czech Commerce Code

Source: Hunčová, M.: *Analyses of co-operative position in transitive economy*, DDW - ESF MU Brno, 2003

⁴ Pestoff, V.A.: *Reforming social services in central and eastern Europe – an eleven nation overview*, Krakow Academy of Economics, Krakow, 1995

Figure 1: Field of co-ops identity within the civil mix-sector and the trend of its diversion



Source: Hunčová, M.: *Analyses of co-operative position in transitive economy*, DDW - ESF MU Brno, 2003 (to be created "Pestoff's Welfare Mix Triangle")

Notice:

There are three interfaces in this triangle. The first line divides: Non-profit/Commercial sector; the second: Public/Private one; and the third: Formal/Informal sector. There are three sectors in the corners: Commercial, Public and Community plus a Third (Non-governmental Non-profit) sector in the middle. The Third Sector of European provenience includes not only pure NGO's, but also many other bodies (associations and symmetries of interest) that are heterogeneous in their activities and relationship. Their common attribute is self-governance; they are not governed by a state directly. It is *Self-governed Civil Mix Sector*, depicted like a circle inside a welfare triangle (Laville, and Polany – Everts – Wintersberg – Halásek – Pestoff).

Within the "V.A.Pestoff welfare triangle", the authentic co-operatives are active along the board of non-profit/commercial sectors (because of its binary character). Co-operatives fluctuate into their operational field and tend overcome to the *extremes*:

1. When a co-operative body *diverts to commerce sector* too far, it tends to change its legal form to become a company and *lose its mutuality and self-help dimension*. Co-op members can lose their mutuality through co-op management where their position grows stronger, as a matter of fact. To safeguard the co-operative identity and social role of co-operatives, it is necessary to protect its mutuality and non-risk capital by law. Co-operatives could add the human dimension to the global market.
2. When a co-operative body *diverts into public sector* too far, it tends to lose its *autonomy and voluntary character*. When a co-operative is used as a tool by social and development policy, (ie., being fed by public finances), and their democracy is reduced, it is a peril because of *increasing corruption potential* in any welfare (social) or paternal state. Co-ops can lose their autonomy, their voluntary principles and their functions. It is why co-ops are allowed to be fed by public finances only for establishing them, or through the fiscal exemptions and law impediments.
3. When a co-operative body *diverts into community sector* too far, it meets there with a crisis of this sector. But a co-op is here within its authentic area (at home) because of co-operative mutuality and self-help *grass roots*. We might notice that the operational field of the *social co-op* overlaps to the sector of communities very naturally and within its identity.

It is useful to recognize the co-operative body in two forms:

- "Workers' co-operative" could be an authentic co-op with its capital managed by work. Members of this co-op are both, *employee and employer* (and sometimes consumers, too). These co-ops usually bring work to their members or produce some products or services to *ensure employment* for its members. The interest of the members is an economic, social or cultural assistance for themselves, their families and their communities, but *employment* is the primary interest and benefit of their mutuality. Consumption of any co-operative product or service by members and their families and communities is an additional and side-benefit in this case.
- "Customers' co-operative" could be an authentic co-op with its capital managed by work. Members of this type of co-operative could be both, *a customer and producer*. Members can simultaneously stay in employment positions. Interest and benefit of the members is usually some *economic, social or cultural assistance for themselves, their families and their communities*. The benefit could consist of a bargain on foodstuff and other daily

products (consumer co-op and producer co-op); bargain on service (service co-ops, *social co-ops*⁵) or interest reduction (credits unions and savings co-ops), competitive advantage (traders, stocks and sales co-ops) or quality and easy-to-get housing (housing co-ops), etc.

We can identify a social co-op as a customer's one, and the workers' co-operative and social co-operative as a social enterprise.

We can agree with V.A.Pestoff (1995) that: "The cultural appeal of co-operatives and mutual bodies to European researcher is found in the fact that they practice the direct grass-roots economic democracy". We can also agree with authors of the International Joint Project on Co-operative Democracy when they say: "If we aim at citizens seeking co-operation, however, we must recognise the limits to the role of the public sector and the private sector and explain the role of the social sector. ... It cannot be formed and function solely through representative democracy. ... The present can be seen as a period of transition ... to a different or new society... based on the initiative of individual citizens in their communities"⁶.

3. Social Economy and Social Enterprise in the Czech Republic

The Social Economy has recently taken its place also in the Czech theory, research and education. It is remarkable that the Czech economist Macek⁷ spoke about the Social Economy as early as 1947 meaning the co-operative movement and its role and functions in the society and economy.

The mutual self-help and mutual favour help co-operatives, active within the Co-operative Law of 1873, forced the economy, social status and cultural development mostly of not wealthy people and their communities. Until 1948 (1938 respectively), there were also some other "bodies in law" being active as some social enterprise. It was a foundation, which distributed social care through a profit of its commercial enterprises (Hlavka's foundation supported poor and talented university students, for example), and others. It is true; the old Czech tradition of rich flourishing social, democratic, and participative economy was interrupted only after 1938. Until 1990, most social function was provided by government and delivered through the state agencies and enterprises within the central planned

⁵ Social co-operative means supporting health services, daily assistance services, or services for excluded or handicapped members or their communities.

⁶ Making membership meaningful: Participatory Democracy in Co-operatives, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, University of Saskatchewan, 1995, p.8-15

⁷ MACEK, J.: Social economy (Lectures on political economy), UEC, Prague, 1947

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economy. The most of welfare has been de-etated to lower governmental level after 1990. We can see many social objectives, pursued by means of production activities, being delivered by public enterprises within the area of a soft infrastructure. These Czech governmental enterprise-agencies were partially supported by public financing. Some of the welfare functions have been privatised to the commercial sphere and we can see some commercial enterprises having also a social role. It primarily applies to the operating protected workshops or commercial enterprises having stake in communal economy⁸. The new NGO's and other private social enterprises have grown since 1990 in these quasi-market niches mostly.

On the other hand, the existence of co-operatives, with their self-help and mutuality, were depressed in the Middle and Eastern European countries after 1948 and again after 1990. Some other forms of NGO's are taking over the co-operative's social role at present and they play a serious role in the Czech social economy now. The result is that social care is mostly given to Czech citizens without their own activity and self-help, not counting the tax or direct money payment. It seems that there is only a narrow area of "work-fare"⁹ and mutual self-help in the Czech Republic. The Czech social enterprises are formalized less than it is usual in the European Fifteen, because of their own historical and political context. The next case studies can demonstrate some development.

Table 2: Some figures of the co-operatives in the Czech Republic (2003)¹⁰

	Housing co-operatives	Consumers' co-operatives	Producers' co-operatives	Agricultural co-operatives	Credit co-operatives
Number of co-operatives	1.854	62	314	686	42
Number of members	716 651	379 623	12 700 and 41 other body by law	*	11 174
Number of employees	4 397	16 777	25 700	44 000	*

Source: Briefing about Czech co-operative movement in 2003, CCA, Prague 2004.

⁸ Communal economy means the enterprise providing some communal services and held by governments directly or by the shares.

⁹ Social care through working activity

¹⁰ Briefing about Czech co-operative movement in 2003, The Czech Co-operative Association, Prague 2004

3.1 Case study 1: The protected workshop operated by legal bodies in Ústí nad Labem region

The social enterprises could be a partner of governments at regional and local level supporting public services and *social care*, and indeed they are. The main problem could be high dependence on public finances, though philanthropy, voluntariness and in addition, their economic activities bring a great financial reward (maybe about 50%). Law does not develop self-help and mutuality; they are not counted as a public interest in the Czech Republic at present.

The pro-employment policy is a matter of the Czech government - the Employment Bureau takes care of unemployed people, especially the handicapped. There are many programs to support employment, for example recondition lessons, public benefit works, protected workshops, etc., besides unemployment aid. Unemployment has grown since 1989 in the Czech Republic in a context of transition process and has reached about 20 % in some regions by now. People out of work started to receive benefits and social welfare, and they became dependent on a state care and lost their activity. The shadow market grows along with it.

The state government has approved some programs to enhance employment. The policy of "protected workshops" is a specific public policy inside other pro-employment policies. It is based on work integration in the way of supporting private subjects organizing and carrying out protected workshops for handicapped. Protected workshops could be recognized as "work-integrated social enterprises". Some production (industrial) co-operatives operate to establish protected workshops where handicapped can find their employment.

There were approximately 50 ongoing enterprises in the Ústí nad Labem region in January 2004 that employed handicapped people. The information about an opportunity to get employed as a handicapped is provided by the Work Bureau, some private recruitment offices and can be found on the Internet.

On this field, a students' research was conducted in the district of Ústí nad Labem and Litoměřice. It could be interesting; the protected workshops are mostly operated by business legal bodies in Ústí nad Labem (including co-operatives - a co-operative of blind members in the city of Ústí nad Labem named KARKO, and co-operative of handicapped members in the city of Litoměřice named INVA), contrary to mostly traders in Litoměřice, (and Diakonie of church).

Employment Bureau usually contacts private business bodies, which build up and operate the protected workshops and create new working positions within them. The *protected workshop* is a legal workshop, where the rate of handicapped employees is 60% at least.

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Employment Bureau supports such legal bodies in a certain amount per year by:

- Contribution of 100 000 Kč for setting up one working place for handicapped people;
- Subsidization of 40 000 Kč per 1 handicapped employee for maintenance of a workshop;
- 9 000 or 32 000 Kč (according to the handicap) deductions in taxation per person.

Every enterprise is allowed by law on handicap employment protection to employ handicapped people or buy products of their protected workshops.

Table 3: The structure of protected workshops in the Ústí nad Labem district (2001)

Form of bodies	Protected workshops	Employees with handicap	Private promoters in company with local government
Ltd.	6	183	2
Association	1	2	1
Co-operative	2	138	2

Source: Šimánová, V.: Unemployment of handicap persons and their position on Labour market in district Ústí nad Labem, FSE, UJEP Ústí nad Labem, 2002, p.45

As said above, some of Czech producing cooperatives are recognizable as quasi-social ones and social enterprises, as well. In the 1950s, cooperatives of handicapped workers were established and financed by the Czechoslovakian totalitarian state. Some of these cooperatives survived the cooperative transformation and still employ handicapped persons (members included). They operate in a difficult environment of market competition without, in principle, any support in the form of public funding, but only have the endowment of pro-employment policies as protected workshops.

3.2 Case study 2: Communitarian planning and granting in Ústí nad Labem territory (2004)

The de-etatisation of welfare is an ongoing process. New establishing of municipalities and regions, that is, independent self-governments in 2000 and regions in 2001, made the first step. Many social care services together with public enterprises that provide them were separated from the state administration and assigned to act on the local and regional level.

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Table 4: Some dates about social enterprises in Ústí nad Labem territory:

Care /Servant	ME	SE	AC	ACB	RI	Coop	Ltd	Trade
House for pensioners (accommodation and social care)	5							
Social care asylum for pensioners, handicapped or distressed mothers with children (accommodation and social or medical care)	2							
Social homecare for seniors and handicapped	1						1	2
Social counselling and stationary			2					
Stationary services for mentally handicapped	3		2					
Social care asylum for mentally handicapped (accommodation and social or medical care)	6		1					
Care for drug addicts (information, counselling, therapy, lodging, workshop, community, etc.)	1		7					
Care for handicapped (counselling, assistance, employment consulting, em- ployment, integration therapy, mobility)			1	4		1	1	
Children, young and mother care (nursery, leisure time activities, counselling, education)	5		4	1	2			
Children home and asylum (accommodation and education)	6	1			2			
Social care in crises and for non- adaptable, homeless and refugees (food, accommodation, wear, homecare, counselling, leisure time activities, employment consulting)			5					
Minority care (cultural and leisure time activities of Romany ethnic)			5					
Total	29	1	27	5	4	1	2	2

Source: The catalogue of social and health care providers in territory of the Ústí nad Labem, 2004

Notice: AC = Association of citizens; ACB = Association of common benefits; ME = municipal enterprise or institution; SE = state enterprise or institution; RI = religious institution; Coop = co-operative with self help and mutuality elements; Ltd., and Trade = business entities

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The self-governments have developed new political programs of related participation; ways and models of social care provision, distribution and financing. For example, the Ústí nad Labem municipality designed a three-year communitarian plan for the Ústí nad Labem territory¹¹ (2001 -2003) in co-operation with citizens initiative *Communitarian work centre*, and with citizens via questionnaire and mail discussions. This plan aims to create social services that react to clients taste better.

Politicians set the goals of a communitarian plan: *"Special social care and treatment shall be facilitated by citizens willing; a new field of social care would be created according to the citizens needs; every social care shall be provided in the best quality available; institutional social care shall be modified into communitarian one, if possible; providing an equal condition for any social care providers is to seek the best use of resource accessibility regardless the provider's donor"*¹².

Within the Second communitarian plan the municipality and private social care bodies have put together *territorial catalogue of social and health care providers* and organized the *"Market of territorial social and health care services"* in 2004. Many providers in it present their activities and objectives to give some information and find some donors. Providers vary in size, foundation, financial sources and orientation.

Municipal and state enterprises or institutions are traditional, large and give a high guarantee of expertise. It is expected; they would be economical, well organized and spend the public finances in a good manner. Their activities are usually financed by public finances, donations, and by some reciprocity cover. Voluntary work is here seldom.

Non-governmental non-profit organisation activities are covered by donations, public finances, some reciprocity, and by voluntary work in various forms. Their financing would be mostly unstable and their services could be malfunctioning, but the initiative and enthusiasm are usually high. They can suit the taste of clients much better, and could sometimes integrate the clients into their activities. Only a few NGO's work on mutual principle - the clients are only rarely their members or employees. An Association of common benefits stays in the middle between municipal enterprise and association of citizens because of its management quality and economic conditions. The religious institutions work with a large voluntary involvement, selflessness and donations, but the platform of their sympathizers is not large in the northern regions of Bohemia. The above-mentioned Ltd. and trade entities represent business, but not a profit, because of a public finance subsidy (accountable to the social care and employment services). It is a case of the Czech co-operatives, but they are also active within the Commerce Code now.

¹¹ It is the area of about 1 mil. people

4. Conclusion

In this view, the position of the Czech social economy today could be demonstrated by the position of the Czech co-operatives, which have lost a great deal of their mutuality, binary character, self-help, voluntariness and autonomy. They have become only an entity of production after 1948 (in the centrally planned economy and under the dictatorship of only one party), and again – they have become only "member-owned enterprises" (through their legal status) after 1991. No specific co-operative law exists now; in that way co-ops are not able to play their role in the field of *work and social integration* and *work and social capital* building. The Czech co-ops can neither build citizens' solidarity capital nor support their independency and responsibility.

Regardless, the Czech co-ops could be referred to as a social enterprise, ie, if the handicapped are members or employees. Czech economists have newly recognised *capital employed by work* and *non-risk capital*; unfortunately Czech lawyers have not recognised *association of work*. Politicians have not come to understand *mutuality*, *self-help* and *solidarity* in sharing ideas yet. It seems the area of citizen initiative remains rather narrow and the culture of dependence remains too high here.

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12 *The catalogue of social and health care providers in territory of the Ústí nad Labem, 2004*

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POVZETEK

Socialna ekonomika in neprofitne organizacije v Češki Republiki

Avtorica predstavlja v članku nekatere ugotovitve raziskave »Civilna družba kot fenomen družbenega in regionalnega razvoja«, ki so jo izvedli na Fakulteti za ekonomiko in družbene vede na Univerzi Ústí nad Labem v času 1999-2004, in ugotovitve iz svoje doktorske disertacije »Analiza položaja kooperativ v tranzicijskem gospodarstvu.«

Socialna ekonomika je aktualna tema v vseh državah Evropske unije, dogovorjena sestavina skupnega gospodarskega razvoja in socialne politike. Avtorica v članku teoretično opredeli socialno ekonomiko in neprofitne organizacije, jih razporedi po njihovih značilnostih povezovanja, uradni obliki in delovanju glede na Češke izkušnje in glede na nekatere splošne ugotovitve.

Podrobneje je predstavljeno delovanje socialnih podjetij v Češki Republiki. Čeprav so številne neprofitne organizacije obstajale že v devetnajstem stoletju, se je njihov položaj spreminjal in prilagajal glede družbeno dogajanje. V članku so predstavljene ugotovitve raziskave o poslovanju invalidskih podjetij v pokrajini Usti nad Labem in o planiranju socialnega skrbstva v tej pokrajini za razdobje 2001-2003.

Avtorica ugotavlja, da se na Češkem v zadnjih letih socialna skrb in socialna ekonomika razvijata in izboljšujeta.