



Permanent Mission of Albania to
the United Nations



PERMANENT MISSION
OF GREECE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



*Permanent Mission of Italy
to the United Nations*



CONCEPT NOTE

REGIONAL SIDE EVENT IN CSW63

Advancing Social Entrepreneurship as a Women Economic Empowerment Enabler

(11 March 2019)

- **Background:**

In order to accelerate the achievement of the SDG-s in all the countries, UN is coordinating efforts with state institutions to fulfil obligations deriving from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are crucial to the success of the 2030 Agenda. The empowerment of women and girls is critical driver for accelerating progress on sustainable development and gender equality, with no one left behind.

SMEs are across all regions the highest full-time permanent employer for women. As social enterprises they contribute to helping keep people at risk of social exclusion involved to the labor market. Moreover, the share of women's employment, particularly in SMEs is strongly connected with the per capita income of a country. SMEs in Albania play an important role in terms of employment, turnover, and added value. Trade still dominates and drives the SME's sector, but other sectors have the potential to grow such as agriculture, tourism, hydro-power generation, and ICT sectors. Greater number of women's in social enterprises may therefore have a positive impact on the economic growth and employment and serve as an entry point into the labour market for women.

Italy and Greece are two of the largest investors in Albania not only in terms of FDIs but also in terms of foreign owned enterprises. Italian and Greek owned enterprises employ around 120,000 Albanian workers, or 13% of total employment in the country, making them a relevant source of job creation and innovation. It is essential for the hosting country and the investors to ensure a healthy and functional business environment through effective regulation. Among the most important ones are: labor's rights; encouraging social dialogue; work integration activities; promoting sector level agreements. Effective regulation in the field of SMEs should help the establishment of higher standards on wages, benefits, skills and training, including for the deployment of new technologies.

In all three countries, Albania, Greece and Italy, social entrepreneurship has been developed as a result of the market's increasing need for addressing new social challenges through simple and effective solutions. Most importantly, social enterprises create new opportunities for involvement into active schemes of

social protection and employment. In all three countries this is of particular benefit to the empowerment of women and girls.

The progress achieved so far In Greece and Italy and the efforts made in Albania in finding innovative solutions to social issues through social enterprises have been proven to be a very successful in this regard. The progress achieved needs to be promoted and consolidated. Good political will, policies, affirmative actions and concrete financial commitment are key for ensuring sustainability and building good models which will enable social enterprises to support social and circular initiatives in a more transparent and participative way.

Moreover, the EU has promoted experimentation in the social economy field, exchange and collaboration across European countries, identification and spreading of good practices, in terms of legislation and organizational forms, as well as training of new social economy professionals. In the framework of EU Integration process, Albania has been working closely with social entrepreneurs' representative from Greece and Italy, as two successful European examples in the promotion of social entrepreneurship through SMEs.

- **Objectives:**

Raise awareness and promote exchange best practice models and knowledge from Albania, Greece and Italy on application of social entrepreneurship to enable women economic empowerment.

Addressing governments' leadership and encouraging their level of commitment from the perspective of the empowerment of women and girls.

Enhancing partners' collaboration.

Main issue that will be discussed are:

- *Innovation in the Social and Circular Economy*
- *SMEs as means of promoting the social and eco-innovation*
- *EU funding for Social and Circular Economy*

Best Practices of Social Entrepreneurship with case studies of successful solutions to pressing social and environmental challenges - presentation of gender-related European best practices from Greece and Italy but also Albania