



SEEDING - Grant agreement no. VS/2019/0073.
This project has received financial support from
the European Union.



SEEDING

Social Economy Enterprises addressing Digitalisation,
Industrial relations and the European Pillar of Social Rights



CASE STUDY SLOVENIA

Hiša!



“This document reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.”





NAME OF THE PRACTICE	HIŠA! DRUŠTVO ZA LJUDI IN PROSTORE, SO.P.
Responsible actor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management unilaterally
Type of practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • company internal regulation
Challenges addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • automation of work
Employment impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction of dismissals • job retention • skills and training • working time • work organisation and work-life balance • employee monitoring • health and safety at work
Geographical coverage	Mostly Podravje region of Slovenia, focusing on Maribor municipality.

Sectoral coverage	The company's sectoral coverage is quite broad, covering artistic creation, tourism, creative tourism, education, and organising various workshops, creativity laboratories, festival and cultural events. It is financed through grants, public calls, membership fees and the open market (creative tourism and tourism).
Company coverage	<p>The company turns over €189,745 a year, with €27,668 coming from sales and €162,077 from state grants. Operating profit in 2018 was €15,314.</p> <p>It is a creative cultural producer so we can say that it is the first link in the supply chain of the production of new cultural goods.</p> <p>The organisation was established in 1996. It employs two managers, tasked with financial management and taking decisions that need a quick reaction. However as far as vision, long-term management, employment and other relevant issues are concerned, the company is co-managed by all the employees.</p> <p>Workers are not unionised.</p>
Occupational coverage	<p>Hiša! employed 3.74 persons in 2017 and 3.77 in 2018, while today it employs 3 people full-time. So the trend is stable, even though cultural and creative professions in Slovenia are not experiencing the same trends. A lot of workers in the sector are obliged to be self-employed or adopt the status of cultural worker. This means they are self-employed, but enjoy some rights compared to the 'standard' self-employment status. Moreover, the Podravje region is statistically a deprived region so the growth in the employment capabilities of Hiša is welcome.</p> <p>Because workers co-manage almost every aspect of the business, they must all have the same skills and competences, with the exception of financial and leadership skills, which are required in the two managers (although other employees also possess some knowledge in this field). Additionally, all the employees, including management, possess skills and competences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisation • administration • creativity • communication • value-based approach • knowledge-seeking attitude • open-mindedness <p>Working space consists of one open-plan office, which also functions as a shop where Hiša! sells its products and is the starting point of its thematic walks. The staff all have their own table, chair and computer, but also work flexibly, for instance by redesigning or moving furniture, exchanging places, or rotating the sales job.</p>

	Employment conditions are quite flexible, as workers can work from home and do not have a traditional 9-5/40-hour working week. They stick to fixed hours when selling in the shop and working on accounting, while working time can differ when it comes to cultural events and thematic walks. Other activities (administrative, organizational etc.) can be carried out from home or from a cafe across the street.
Workforce addressed	<p>In 2018 statistically there were 3.77 persons employed, meaning that the fourth person was not employed full-time. In 2020 the company has 3 employees, 2 women and 1 man. Their ages range from 30 to 51 years old and they mostly hold bachelor's or master's degree. All the workers are Slovenian.</p> <p>The company also has a lot of volunteers, mostly middle-aged unemployed people, as well as a small amount of students and young workers. Many of these are taking part in student exchange programmes that bring them to live, work and study in Maribor.</p>
ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE ACTION	
Company management	Yes
Worker members of the cooperative at large	No
Works councils	No
Trade unions	No
Employers' organisations	No
NGO	No
Public authority	No
DESCRIPTION	
Rationale for the adoption of the practice	Digitalisation was considered as the answer to the needs both of the market and of the company's target groups. Other non-governmental organisations, companies and public bodies were not involved, but provided good practice examples for the adoption of digital tools.
Process of the adoption of the practice	<p>The company adopted the concept of an online store with social media marketing. However it retained its physical shop, as well as advertising through leaflets, banners etc. It used free software such as Google Drive, Google Sheets and Skype to improve both work in office and remote working.</p> <p>It also became more environmentally friendly, which is one of its missions, by using paper and plastic as little as possible.</p>
Description of the practice	Six years ago, Hiša! started to move its operations from paper to computer, using Google Drive, Google Sheets, Skype and other modern office tools. It established an online store and slowly translated its marketing model into social media targeted marketing. More recently it also moved its photos and videos into the cloud.

	<p>It became aware that in the future much information and education will be almost exclusively available online, so it is beginning to prepare videos of creative and educational workshops, tourist walks, cultural talks etc. The company is involved in projects in the online education of cultural workers and is starting to prepare for the digitalisation of cultural heritage in Maribor city and Podravje region.</p> <p>It has the tools (mobile phones and cameras) to produce videos of the innovative tourist walks that it offers, but is still very cautious in this area, because it is still sceptical about the proper monetisation of the service and whether it serves the mission of trying to establish genuine human relations with tourists.</p> <p>All the software used is free, except for bulk storage on Google Drive which costs €2 per month. Other investments were in work computers and mobile phones.</p>
Dismissed alternatives	<p>Augmented reality was something that came to mind when the team was brainstorming about the direction of the company in terms of digitalisation. However they quickly dismissed the idea, because they realised that their thematic and creative walks, once translated into augmented reality, would be too expensive for the organisation and would also threaten the jobs of some employees and volunteers, because they would no longer be needed as guides.</p> <p>They could still be employed part-time, because their speciality is innovative walks in the sense of creating new ideas for tourist walks, but the skillset they currently possess would not be needed, and they would be replaced by computer engineers.</p>
ASSESSMENT	
IMPACT OF THE PRACTICE ON:	
Job stability and secure employment	<p>Hiša! believes that offering remote working and working primarily on the computer (grant applications, administration etc.) enables it to better track its own work and the work of its co-workers. It is easier to determine who is responsible for what and how 'hard' they are working, given that some people were working a lot of overtime without realising it. In this sense tracking improves conditions for employees, because they know how much work they have done per day, week and month.</p> <p>This has improved job stability and work organisation. This 'tracking' concerns only work done on online documents, making it easier to see what has been done and how to proceed. In no way does the company track activities on computers, meaning how long they are turned on or what workers do on computers. Hiša! also reduced some costs for physical space and offices, enabling it to spend more on offering more stable employment conditions.</p>
Skills needs and training	<p>All the employees have gained new skills, primarily in computer hardware and software, video production, recording, social media marketing, online meeting platforms etc. The staff value those skills and training because they believe that this skillset is steadily becoming part of everyday life.</p> <p>Because their values and missions include being open-minded and knowledge-seeking, they have embraced new skills and training and are eager to press forward with the digitalisation of their organisation, but only if they believe it will benefit them, not just because of the digital era we live in.</p>

Working conditions	<p>The staff believe that remote working is good for them and brings flexible working hours for all employees. However on the other hand they also see it as a threat to work-life balance, because sometimes it is hard to unplug from company chats or brainstorming sessions that take place late at night.</p> <p>Working from home also interferes with the group dynamics and the relations within it as employees stop being used to each other's presence.</p> <p>Later working hours are acceptable to employees when it comes to the innovative walks or some classes that they attend or organise, but they wanted to cancel the employee group chats that took place after 18.00, so that they could socialise with their friends and family and not just with co-workers, even though they are all friends at the workplace. The company adopted new rules and dealt with the work-life balance issue very quickly. Employees believe that employee monitoring has improved, which is good for the company and for the workers, as the workload can be distributed more equally, and everyone is working for the good of the company and not slacking.</p> <p>They believe that remote working enables them to live healthier lives (breakfast at home with their family for example). They also think that the fact that communication is no longer carried out solely in person is a good opportunity to hear the voice of people who are naturally shy and would not speak up about certain issues face to face.</p>
Company performance	<p>The online shop and social media marketing (mostly through the company's very popular Instagram profile) contributed to an increase in sales from €15,636 in 2017 to €27,668 in 2018. The staff believe that the digital tools described above make them more productive and more responsible to each other and to the company.</p>
Overall strengths and weaknesses	<p>The strengths are seen in a sales spike, better organisation, the possibility of remote working, the gaining of new skills and competences and work flexibility. Hiša! is also better connected with similar organisations in Slovenia and the EU. There is one big weakness, which is that many of their products could be translated into augmented reality. This would mean that once a video is produced, they, as creative, cultural and tourist workers, would no longer be needed, and would have to be replaced with computer engineers, programmers and people with skillsets that they do not possess.</p>
Overall opportunities and threats	<p>Opportunities are in augmented reality, but the threat to the stability of the company's current work is a lot bigger than the opportunity that it presents. Another opportunity is the digitalisation of cultural heritage in Maribor city and working together with the municipality to present and establish it, using Slovenian or EU funds, but the threat here is the same: it endangers their field of expertise for the future.</p>
Potential for social partners and collective bargaining to upscale/transfer the practice	<p>The potential is in EU grants to implement projects in the company's fields of expertise. Hiša! can collaborate on joint applications with other actors. It is very active in advocacy and collaborates a lot with the NGO network CNVOS. The network provides various services to NGOs, including training, information and advice which helps them to grow, a support service which is much needed by small companies.</p>

Potential for public authorities to support upscaling/ transferring the practice	<p>Public authorities can learn a great deal about what it means to be (socially) innovative and also acknowledge that this is not just a trend around the world, but that social innovation is the building block of the future.</p> <p>They can also learn that old school tourism, without any environmental, societal, social or other vocation or impact, is a thing of the past. Because public authorities still face regulatory restrictions, the best way to support such practices could be through public procurement, in the sense that they could award additional points or impose more flexible rules for companies and initiatives that are innovative.</p> <p>This would enable smaller companies to compete with larger companies and win public contracts. The same can be done with 'green' public procurement.</p>
List of annexes, sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interview with manager
Company website	https://www.rajzefiber.si/

The case study was prepared by: Association Social Economy Slovenia/ PRIZMA Foundation for Improvement of Employment Possibilities (Slovenia)