

# RAZLIČNI MODELI USTANAVLJANJA ZADRUG V SLOVENIJI

**Tadej Slapnik**

državni sekretar, Kabinet predsednika Vlade Republike Slovenije /  
Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia,  
[tadej.slapnik@gov.si](mailto:tadej.slapnik@gov.si)

**Povzetek:** Zadružno gibanje v Sloveniji danes pridobiva zagon v povezavi z evropskimi in globalnimi pobudami in združenji. Ključna naloga delavskih zadrug je ustvarjanje in ohranjanje trajnih delovnih mest, v perspektivi močnega lokalnega razvoja in ustvarjanja blaginje. Njihovi člani so zaposleni v podjetju, ki se tako skupaj odločijo o glavnih podjetniških odločitvah in ki volijo in imenujejo svoje vodje (uprave, direktorje ipd). Prav tako odločajo o tem, kako deliti dobiček z dvema ciljema: a) da se zagotovi pošteno plačilo, v obliki donosov na podlagi opravljenega dela (v resnici prilagoditev cene osebnih prejemkov), in b) za utrditev podjetja in njegovih delovnih mest na dolgi rok z izgradnjo rezerv. Nazadnje, v skladu z mednarodnimi zadružnimi standardi delavske zadruge spodbujajo obveščanje in usposabljanje zadružnikov, kar je predpogoj za razvoj avtonomije, motivacije, odgovornosti in odgovornosti, zahtevane v gospodarskem svetu, ki postaja vedno bolj negotov.

Študija Poslovna dinamika: Start-upi, poslovni transferji in stečaji, ki jo je Evropska komisija objavila leta 2011, ocenjuje, da se 450.000 podjetij, ki zagotavljajo 2 milijona delovnih mest, v EU vsako leto prenese. EU lahko izgubi približno 150.000 teh podjetij vsako leto, kar pomeni 600.000 delovnih mest, ker se njihovi lastniki upokojijo, ustanovijo novo podjetje ali iščejo druge možnosti, vendar ne morejo najti nikogar, ki bi prevzel njihove družbe. Če k temu dodamo še podatke o količini stečajev ali poslovnih neuspehov, v katerem je vsaj del dejavnosti dobičkonosen, in o potencialu podjetij v procesu privatizacije v Sloveniji, je potencial rešenih podjetij in delovnih mest še toliko bolj pomemben, še posebej v sedanjem gospodarskem in družbenem kontekstu. Različni modeli ustanavljanja zadrug, ki so danes že izvedljivi v Sloveniji, se bodo obravnavali tudi z vidika širjenja socialnega podjetništva in ekonomske demokracije.

**Ključne besede:** zadružno gibanje, delavske zadruge, Evropska unija, Slovenija, privatizacija

## VARIOUS MODELS OF ESTABLISHMENT OF COOPERATIVES IN SLOVENIA

**Abstract:** Cooperative movement in Slovenia is today gaining momentum in the connection with European and global initiatives and associations. Worker cooperatives' key mission is to create and maintain sustainable jobs, in a strong local development and wealth generation perspective. Their members are the employees of the enterprise, who hence jointly decide on the major entrepreneurial decisions and who elect and appoint their own leaders (boards of directors, managers, etc.). They also decide on how to share the profits with a twofold aim: a) to provide a fair remuneration, in the form of returns based on the work done (in fact an adjustment of the price of remuneration), and b) to consolidate the enterprise and its jobs over the long term by building reserves. Finally, in accordance with the international cooperative standards, worker cooperatives promote worker-members' information and training, a prerequisite to develop the autonomy, motivation, responsibility and accountability required in an economic world which has become increasingly insecure.

The study *Business Dynamics: Start-Ups, Business Transfers and Bankruptcy*, published by the European Commission in 2011, estimates that 450,000 enterprises, providing 2 million jobs, are being transferred in the EU every year. The EU may lose approximately 150,000 of these enterprises each year, providing 600,000 jobs, because their owners retire, set up a new business or seek other opportunities, but cannot find anybody to take over their firms. If we add to that data the amount of bankruptcies or business failures in which at least part of the activity is profitable and the potential of companies in the process of privatization in Slovenia the potential of saved enterprises and jobs is even more important, especially in the current economic and social context. Various models of establishment of cooperatives that are feasible in Slovenia today will also be considered from the perspective of the emergence of social entrepreneurship and economic democracy.

**Key words:** cooperative movement, worker cooperatives, European Union, Slovenia, privatization

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, cooperatives provide an important path to the future of the economy, as the world is increasingly in a need for a diverse global economy. The Global300 Report published in 2011 that collects information about the 300 largest co-operative organisations around the world states that the world's largest co-operative enterprises have collective revenues of USD 1.6 trillion, which are comparable to the GDP of the world's ninth largest economy - Spain. While co-operatives were not immune to financial hardship, their flexibility in responding to the shifting markets and the trust of their members enabled these businesses to survive and thrive. (ICA, 2011)

Co-operatives are businesses owned and run by and for their members who have voluntarily associated in order to meet their economic, social, cultural and other needs. Whether the members are the customers, employees or residents they have an equal say in what the business does and a share in the profits.

Cooperatives want to do business successfully because they are businesses, not charities. Members of cooperatives, for example, taxi drivers, farmers, independent creators, journalists and designers can do business more successfully if they operate in a cooperative. By sharing the profits made they ensure that their mutual cooperation is fair and is paying off. Instead of rewarding external investors cooperatives are sharing profits among their members.

As co-operatives are businesses driven by values not just profit, they share internationally agreed principles and act together to build a better world through co-operation. Co-operatives are based on the values of **self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity**. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Internationally agreed co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community

The Global 300 Report analyses co-operatives in seven distinct sectors - Agriculture/Forestry, Banking/Credit Unions, Consumer/Retail, Insurance, Workers/Industrial, Health, Utilities, and Other. Workers cooperatives will be dealt with in the continuation of the paper.

## 2. Worker cooperatives and their employment potential in Europe

According to Slapnik (2014), worker cooperatives' key mission is to create and maintain sustainable jobs, in a strong local development and wealth generation perspective. Their members are the employees of the enterprise,

who hence jointly decide on the major entrepreneurial decisions and who elect and appoint their own leaders (boards of directors, managers, etc.). They also decide on how to share the profits with a twofold aim:

a) To provide a fair remuneration, in the form of returns based on the work done (in fact an adjustment of the price of remuneration), and

b) To consolidate the enterprise and its jobs over the long term by building reserves.

Finally, in accordance with the international cooperative standards, worker cooperatives promote the worker-members' informing and training, a prerequisite to develop the autonomy, motivation, responsibility and accountability required in an economic world which has become increasingly insecure.

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### **3. Four scenarios to establish worker cooperatives**

Four scenarios of establishment of workers' cooperatives are already feasible according to the existing legislation in Slovenia (Slapnik, 2014):

- A) Employee buy-outs in distress or bankruptcy
- B) The privatization of state-owned enterprises
- C) Creating new jobs for redundant workers
- D) Retirement of company owners without successors to take over the family business (less likely at the moment due to relatively low average age of company owners; expected to grow in the future).

#### **A) Employee buy-outs in distress or bankruptcy:**

Companies with business problems are threatened to go out of business; so are businesses that are already in bankruptcy. Workers redeem companies in difficulty and turn them into worker cooperatives, or establish a worker cooperative and through it redeem healthy cores of the insolvent undertaking. Changes to bankruptcy law are needed to enact pre-emptive and pre-emptive right to workers' cooperatives in the bankruptcy proceedings. Potential resources for starting worker cooperatives are state subsidies for the creation of new jobs, capitalization of unemployment insurance, a loan with adequate financial guarantee mechanisms for these purposes.

#### **B) The privatization of state-owned enterprises - transfer of ownership to employees:**

The privatization of state-owned enterprises offers an opportunity that their employees become owners of these enterprises. Employees of the company may be the most responsible business owners, as they have a key motif in an enterprise to ensure decent and sustainable jobs. With workers' purchase of businesses, workers can prevent speculative buying, selling assets of the business and job losses.

- Options:

Workers may establish a worker cooperative, which buys state-owned company, and in the next stage they transform it into a worker cooperative.

- Direct transformation of state companies in the cooperative (on the basis of Article 48 of the Law on Cooperatives) followed by buying the share of the state by the employees of the cooperative.

Members of the cooperative, in addition to the state, may become employees, but also former employees, small shareholders, strategic suppliers and business partners of the company. State share of the company after its conversion into a cooperative may be bought by members of the cooperative hiring a long-term loan repayable from the profits of the company's operations and, if necessary, share of their earnings in the company.

#### **C) Creating new jobs for redundant workers:**

The proportion of employees in the sector of social entrepreneurship in Slovenia is only 0.7% of all employees. Average in 28 Member States of the European Union is 6.5%. There is great potential for the creation of new jobs in the sector of social entrepreneurship. When looking at possibilities for the creation of new workers' cooperatives, active role of works councils is very important.

New service or production programs in the field of social entrepreneurship can be a great opportunity for the creation of decent jobs for workers made redundant. Severance payments received by the dismissed workers, combined with financial incentives from the state and the EU to create new jobs can enable workers to

adequately capitalize workers' cooperative. In practice, this is the biggest problem in starting new social enterprises.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The project of promoting social entrepreneurship, cooperatives and economic democracy was already included by the ruling coalition in the coalition agreement and the government began realising it in January 2015. The project is aimed to receive 11.5 million euros from public funds, while 10 million euros should be acquired from EU funds. The Ministry of Economic Development and Technology also foresees about two million of private funding. One of the government's targets is to reach EU average of employment in the social economy sector.

A few years ago, the international cooperative movement launched the Cooperative Decade (Roelands, 2013). The Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade set the aim that, by 2020, the cooperative form of business should become "the fastest growing form of enterprise". However, as many comments from within the international cooperative movement have pointed out, the objective of Cooperative Decade requires that the terms "growing" and "growth" be properly defined. Intrinsically, cooperatives are triple bottom-line enterprises, namely enterprises combining economic, social and environmental concerns. Defining whether cooperatives will indeed become the "fastest growing" part of the economy at the end of the present decade can only be measured against their own stated mission and characteristics, a measurement that cannot be reduced to criteria related to only one single bottom-line (purely financial or economic, e.g. GDP).

As we have demonstrated, cooperative movement in Slovenia is today gaining momentum in the connection with European and global initiatives and associations. Viable options for its emergence that already exists could evolve into real "leap-frogging" through searching for synergies with other movements towards sustainable development goals.

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