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Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU Social Economy

Improving the socio-economic knowledge of the proximity and social economy ecosystem

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Corporate authors:
EURICSE, CIRIEC, Spatial Foresight

Authors:
Chiara Carini, Giulia Galera, Giulia Tallarini – EURICSE
Rafael Chaves Avila – University of Valencia and CIRIEC España
Barbara Sak, Jérôme Schoenmaeckers – CIRIEC

Project managers:
Barbara Franchini - EURICSE
Silke Haarich – Spatial Foresight

Language editor:
Tim Wills

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E-mail: EISMEA-SMP-COSME-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu

European Commission
B-1049 Brussels

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Text
CCI	Cultural and Creative Industries
CEC	Citizen Energy Communities
CIRIEC	International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy
CLG	Companies Limited by Guarantee
CLS	Company Limited by Shares
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	European Commission
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EMES	Emergence of Social Enterprises in Europe (International Network)
EQLS	European Quality of Life Survey
ESA	European System of Accounts
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EURICSE	European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprise
EVS	European Values Survey
FTE	Full-time equivalents
GVA	Gross Added Value
ICA	International Cooperative Alliance
ICMIF	International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation
ICNPO	International Classification of Non-Profit Organisations
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estatistica (Portugal)
INSEE	National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (France)
LC	Limited Companies

Abbreviation	Text
LLC	Limited Liability Companies
MS	Member State
NACE	Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NR	National Researcher
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLC	Private limited companies
REC	Renewable Energy Communities
SBI	Social Business Initiative
SCIC	Collective Interest Cooperatives
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAP	Social Economy Action Plan
SESA	Social Economy Satellite Account
SILC	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
SME	Small- And Medium-Sized Enterprise
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
TSEP	Third System and Employment Programme
UN	United Nations
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNTFSSE	Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy
WISE	Work Integration Social Enterprises
WP	Work Package

Abstract

This report summarises the findings of the project 'Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU social economy'. Across the 27 Member States, the social economy includes more than 4.3 million entities[1]. Social economy entities are mainly cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations. Within these figures, there are more than 246 000 social enterprises, of which almost 43 000 are ex lege and over 203 000 are de facto social enterprises[2].

At least 11.5 million people[3] – 6.3% of the employed population in the EU – are occupied in the social economy. More than 6.2 million people (54%) are employed in associations and 3.3 million (29%) in cooperatives. Social enterprises employ at least 3.9 million people. At least 3.3 million people are employed in the health and social care sector, a further 702 000 in education and 622 000 in arts, culture and entertainment. Even if data on female employment is not always available, the share of female employment can be expected to be rather high. In Belgium and Portugal, women account for more than 70% of employment in the social economy, while in France, Poland and Italy the shares are 66%, 60% and 46%, respectively.

The revenues generated by the social economy accounted at least for a turnover of EUR 912 billion in 2021. France, Italy, Spain and Finland account for the largest cooperative sectors in terms of turnover, predominantly driven by agricultural, consumer and worker cooperatives. France and Germany register the highest turnover for associations, foundations and mutuals.

The social economy plays an important role in other industrial ecosystems. Its contribution to the health ecosystem is significant. It is also well positioned in the agri-food, retail and energy-renewables ecosystems, while it is emerging in the cultural and creative industries and in the tourism ecosystem. The capacity of the social economy to influence policies is very diverse, ranging from almost insignificant in some ecosystems (e.g. tourism) to extremely relevant (e.g. health, energy-renewables).

[1] All data presented in this abstract are sourced from Chapter 4 of the report 'Benchmarking the Socio-Economic Performance of the EU Social Economy' and are the result of calculations made by the authors at the European level by aggregating data available from individual Member States. For more information on data coverage at national level, refer to the tables in chapter 4. Moreover, for detailed sources and reference years for each country, refer to the Appendix 3 of the report.

[2] Refer to Appendix 3 of the report for more information on the data sources and methodology adopted to estimate the number of social enterprises.

[3] Employment data was collected for 25 Member States as data was not available for Malta and the Netherlands.

Executive summary

This report summarises findings of the project 'Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU social economy', (Call for tenders EISMEA/2022/OP/00159 - Lot 1). This study assesses the socioeconomic weight of the 'Proximity and Social Economy' ecosystem and its contribution to a sustainable, innovative and resilient economy and society. The European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises - EURICSE (consortium leader), CIRIEC International and Spatial Foresight have pursued two interconnected aims: to represent the social economy of today based on current data as well as to identify methodological and operational tools to improve this representation.

For this project, the social economy is defined by the **2021 European Commission Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP)**[4]. The plan covers four types of entities, or 'families', including entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial initiatives as well as organisations promoting the interests of their members and organisations pursuing objectives of general interest, namely: **cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), foundations**, plus **social enterprises**, as a recent, crosscutting dynamic within the social economy.

There are social economy organisations in all European (EU) countries, though some operate outside the radar. What changes across EU Member States is how much such entities are acknowledged by policymakers, the general public and grassroots organisations - and recognise themselves - as part of the social economy. Factors explaining the limited visibility of the social economy and underestimates of its contribution include a poor understanding of the diverse roles played by the organisations and the lack of high quality, comparable data and statistical analyses. Currently, only a few Member States have national statistics specifically measuring the social economy, including different types of social economy organisations, employment, the number of volunteers and the value added.

Research methodology

To ensure consistency across countries, the qualitative and quantitative analysis is based on an operational definition of the social economy and social enterprise. The qualitative analysis included desk research and interviews. These shed light on the tradition, institutional framework, roots, trends and level of recognition of the social economy in each Member State. Special attention was paid to assessing the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and recovery by focusing on sectors most affected by the social economy and analysing the weight of the social economy in the agri-food, cultural and creative industries, energy-renewables, health, retail and tourism ecosystems. The quantitative analysis assessed the size of the social economy in the 27 Member States based on available data[5]. Statistical units were identified in each country that are consistent with the operational definitions of the social economy and social enterprise. National researchers engaged for the purpose of the study, aggregated social economy statistics in their countries for the number of entities, employment, turnover and value added, number of members and volunteers and, if available, the hours of volunteering. Specifically for social enterprises, national researchers were asked to consider both ex lege and de facto social enterprises. Building on findings at national level, the core research team conducted the comparative analysis at EU level.

[4] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy (SEAP)". https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en

[5] Reference year 2021. When not available, data refers - in order of priority - to 2019, 2018 or 2020.

Social economy tradition in the European Union – Historic roots

The social economy is both a socio-economic field shaped by the capacity of civil society to self-organise in response to unmet needs and a theoretical concept. As a socio-economic field, it has its historical roots in 19th century workers' self-help associations, cooperatives and mutual benefit societies. As a concept, the social economy was originally shaped to bring together organisations traditionally representing local communities, namely associations and cooperatives. Foundations, typically representing philanthropy, were added later while social enterprises have been acknowledged only recently. The challenge of operationalising the social economy in Member States is two-fold. Firstly, it implies self-recognition by the organisations as well as acknowledgement by public authorities and the general public of them as full-fledged components of a unitary field. Secondly, there are different trajectories in different countries. In some Member States, institutionalisation of the social economy was strongly supported by a common sense of identity. In other countries, this conceptual crystallisation has not yet taken place.

The EU and the social economy

At EU level, the attitude of European institutions towards the social economy has varied. In the decade 1990-2000, attention was mainly paid to the capacity of the ‘third system’ to create employment and the ability of civil society organisations to strengthen democracy. There was a significant change in 2009 when the European Parliament adopted a report recognising the social economy as a social partner to help achieve Lisbon Strategy objectives. Then in **2011 the Social Business Initiative**[6] was launched to increase the visibility and recognition of social enterprises. Ten years later, the European Commission launched the SEAP, which makes a significant step towards conceptual convergence. The same year, a new ecosystem identified as the ‘Proximity and Social Economy’ was introduced in the EU Industrial Strategy. These steps were complemented by the **Council's first recommendation on the social economy**[7] (adopted in November 2023), that Member States to take measures to acknowledge and support the social economy in the social fabric of EU countries.

Components of the social economy

Given its strong local anchorage and proximity dimension, the social economy tends to be extremely context-specific and dynamic. It is creatively shaped in sometimes unique ways by the organisational and legal forms of grassroots organisations, in line with characteristics and traditions of their local legal systems. Country variations in size and diffusion, along with recognition of the diverse components of the social economy, are due to interrelated political, social, economic and cultural factors.

The four ‘families’ of the social economy have been named before: **cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), foundations**. Associations are evenly spread across all Member States and together with foundations are regarded as the vital expression of a vibrant civil society that can contribute to democracy in a practical way. However, the role and potential of traditional cooperatives is recognised to differing degrees across Member States. The same is true for mutual benefit societies, or ‘mutuals’, which nowadays play a key role only in a few countries where they are highly integrated into the public health system. **Social enterprises** deserve separate consideration since they do not

[6] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Social Business Initiative (SBI) Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation”. https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2011)682&lang=en

[7] Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H01344

refer to a specific legal entity. They are transversal, cutting across diverse legal forms of the social economy and – under specific conditions – even beyond.

Applying the social economy definition in Member States

To include the diverse types of organisations under the four social economy families has not been straightforward for three reasons. There is a predominance in some countries of concepts which only partially overlap with the social economy, such as ‘third sector’ and ‘non-profit sector’. There can also be a narrow understanding of the social economy and either a too-broad or too-narrow understanding of the social enterprise concept. Operationalising the social economy needed in depth analysis of extremely diverse country contexts while sticking rigorously to a shared research framework. The core research team continuously worked together with national researchers to scrutinise the complexity of the social economy on the ground.

National recognition

How the social economy is understood as a concept varies dramatically across Member States due to diverse traditions and historical roots. The concept is relevant in countries with a tradition of fruitful interaction between its components, such as France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain. It is not commonly used as a concept in countries with a strong division between cooperatives (as organisations solely promoting the interests of their members) and associations (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy). The social economy is gaining relevance in countries where specific policy actions have been recently adopted (Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia).

The poor recognition of the social economy in central and eastern European countries is partially due to a negative perception of cooperatives versus significant recognition of traditional non-profit organisations. Finally, in countries like Cyprus, Estonia, the Netherlands and Sweden the social economy is struggling to find its way due to a predominance of other concepts and approaches including social innovation, social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.

Due to the interplay of diverse historical, political and social factors, the social economy and the social enterprise do not enjoy the same recognition. The social enterprise enjoys strong legal, policy and self-recognition in Ireland and Italy. Its recognition is challenged in Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Luxemburg by the strong and widespread acknowledgement of the social economy. The social enterprise has gained relevance in Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia and Slovenia thanks to new legislation. Conversely, it tends to be conflated with work integration in Croatia, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Finally, the social enterprise concept is not commonly used in Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands or Sweden due to the predominance of traditional welfare institutions.

The EU social economy in numbers

Across the 27 Member States, the **social economy includes more than 4.3 million entities**[8]. Social economy entities are mainly cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations. In addition, other legal forms are recognised as part of the social economy by national/regional legislation or meet this study’s operational definition of the social economy. Finally, data takes into account also limited liability companies (LLC)

[8] All data presented in this summary are sourced from Chapter 4 of the report ‘Benchmarking the Socio-Economic Performance of the EU Social Economy’ and are the result of calculations made by the authors at the European level by aggregating data available from individual Member States. For more information on data coverage at national level, refer to the tables in Chapter 4. Moreover, for detailed sources and reference years for each country, refer to the Appendix 3 of the report.

that can be considered as social enterprises which represent only a very low percentage of the total number of entities counted.

Indeed, this study estimates there are **more than 246 000 social enterprises**, of which almost 43 000 are ex lege and over 203 000 are de facto social enterprises. Most social enterprises continue to use legal forms that have not been designed specifically for them also in countries where social enterprises have been legally recognised. There are various reasons explaining this situation, including shortcomings in legislation like the lack of proper fiscal incentives which fail to acknowledge the social responsibility taken on by social enterprises. An additional barrier is the poor self-recognition of a significant share of eligible organisations in the social enterprise. Interestingly, some 89.1% of the social enterprises belong to one of the four families traditionally constituting the social economy.

People employed, members and volunteers

At least **11.5 million people – 6.3% of the employed population**[9] **– are occupied in the social economy**[10]. More than 6.2 million people (54%) are employed in associations and 3.3 million (29%) in cooperatives. Social enterprises employ at least 3.9 million people[11]. A lack of data in some Member States hinders analysis of **female employment**[12]. In Belgium and Portugal, women account for more than 70% of employment in the social economy, while in France, Poland and Italy the figures are 66%, 60% and 46%, respectively. It is clear that women are strongly represented in associations and foundations, while in cooperatives the figure varies by country and by sector.

Data on membership refers only to 16 Member States where information covers only part of the social economy. From this limited information, there are **over 95 million membership of cooperatives and 135 million memberships of associations**, though this includes multiple affiliations. National data on volunteers are only available in 15 Member States but show more than 53 million active volunteers. Data does not consider the somewhat occasional dimension of voluntary work or the possibility of individuals volunteering with more than one organisation.

The economic size and characteristics of the social economy

Two methods can be used to calculate the economic size of the social economy. Turnover reflects the revenue generated by an enterprise or sector, and value added measures the contribution of that enterprise or sector to GDP excluding intermediate costs of production. For turnover, data totalled **EUR 912.9 billion in 2021**. It could be obtained for only 19 Member States[13]. France, Italy, Spain and Finland account for the largest cooperative sectors in terms of turnover, predominantly driven by agricultural, consumer and worker cooperatives. France and Germany registered the highest turnover for associations, foundations and mutuals. Data on value added is only available for eleven Member States and in half of these it is incomplete.

Reconstructing **sectoral diversity** based on existing classifications faces several limitations. Not all countries have up-to-date statistics on activities carried out by social economy organisations and where data is available, it is often not comparable due to

[9] This does not include Malta and the Netherlands, where data on employment in the social economy are not available. Data on total employment refer to 2021 and have been extracted from the Eurostat database.

[10] Employment data was collected for 25 Member States as data was not available for Malta and the Netherlands.

[11] This figure underestimates the number of people employed in social enterprises as data are not available for Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Ireland and the Netherlands. Even where data are available, it may not cover certain types of social enterprises.

[12] Data on female employment is available for nine Member States, i.e. Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

[13] Turnover information was obtained for cooperatives from 19 countries, for associations and foundations from 16 countries, and for mutual benefit societies and other legal forms from even fewer countries.

different national classifications. Nevertheless, despite the limitations, it is interesting to note that **at least 3.3 million people are employed in the health and social care sector, a further 702 000 in education and 622 000 in arts, culture and entertainment**[14].

The European business fabric contains many small- and medium-sized enterprises. According to the Structural Business Statistics published by Eurostat[15], the large majority (99.8%) of enterprises active in the EU non-financial business economy in 2021 were micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In this respect, the social economy data is unsurprising, as it shows the vast majority of enterprises in the social economy are SMEs, with **micro enterprises accounting for more than 93%.**

Social economy and the Covid-19 crisis

Based on information provided by the national researchers and interviews with key players, the analysis highlights how much the social economy was impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. Social economy entities played a special role in welfare and this report presents interesting practices and initiatives, often in collaboration with public authorities, to mitigate the health crisis. Few reports studied the impact of Covid-19 on the social economy at European level and these are mostly either national or regional. They often only mention some interactions, reactions, or resilience and adaptive strategies of social economy organisations/ enterprises. Otherwise, reports covering the crisis may have a section dedicated to social economy entities or are limited to one type of entity such as an umbrella federation or activist network and often only on behalf of its members. These studies do not give a comprehensive picture of social economy organisation reactions to the crisis, or its impact on the social economy ecosystem. They do not compare the social economy to the rest of the economy. Nevertheless, thanks to the expertise of national researchers, this report features interesting illustrative cases. A specific bibliography provides references to national studies (with diverse examples from different sectors).

It is very difficult to measure or evaluate the effects of just the pandemic on the social economy. Most of the time the health crisis boosted development within an organisation or enterprise, based on initiatives and projects already in the design phase and along existing strategic lines. Institutional settings adapted because of the pandemic, at policy or national/regional level, with collateral effects on the social economy as on many other areas, notably teleworking.

Covid-19 disproportionately affected the poorest segments in Europe. This has been confirmed during the interviews made with European networks, such as the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES), Social Economy Europe (SEE), and Social Services Europe (SSE). These organisations also published papers and reports on this issue[16].

Two key features were pointed out by national researchers and in interviews with national and European stakeholders: digitalisation, as well as initiatives and developments in health and care services.

Covid-19 exacerbated existing inequalities. It revealed the digital gap not only in equipment, digital literacy and internet service subscription, but also in housing conditions (overcrowded

[14] Data by NACE codes are available for Austria (only for cooperatives and mutual benefit societies), Belgium, Croatia, Czechia (partial data for cooperatives), Estonia, Finland (excluding mutual benefit societies), France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain (only for cooperatives, mutual benefit societies and, partially, for “other legal forms”). However, due to confidentiality, some data may not be published for all sectors in these countries. For Germany and Sweden, partial data were obtained for education, health and social work and housing by searching for matches in the available classifications.

[15] See : https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Structural_business_statistics_ overview#Size_class_analysis

[16] See Chapter 5 in the report.

with confinement and unfit for families to learn and work from home, with no or only one computer). However, across Europe the increased use of digital tools and communication with organisation members are positive outcomes of the crisis, but this is nuanced. Online meetings allow more participants though this does not mean more participation in the democratic governance advocated by social economy entities. Furthermore, there is a downside to accelerated digitalisation, an increased digital divide. Post Covid-19, many services remain accessible only online.

A lesson from the crisis is that public health measures and prevention such as communication and convincing people to wear masks, supported by local social economy organisations, are less costly for society as a whole than infected patients. Another positive aspect is that new delivery modes for 'health' services have proved feasible via 'tele-consultation/help/support'. However, many social economy entities underestimated mental health issues and excess burdens on staff as a consequence of Covid-19, because serving people and beneficiaries was the goal even at the expense of an individual's own health.

The social economy includes many small entities acting locally next to very large structures, especially insurance or financial sector mutual benefit societies or large cooperatives. Those mostly engaged directly with people during the crisis were front-line workers from small entities.

An important contribution from the social economy is to complement the provision of public services through partnerships with public authorities, increasing capacity. Social economy entities and organisations do not have the means – nor is it their role – to take responsibility for state functions. However, they do help organise and deliver welfare and can complement social and socio-economic functions with important benefits for society (e.g. social inclusion, sustainable development, territorial cohesion, social resilience, population well-being, etc.), on a national, regional, local and autonomous basis. Social economy enterprises and organisations, thanks notably to their local anchorage and their volunteers, also advance the green and digital transitions with a real impact on preventing and mitigating negative effects of the climate crisis and the digital divide.

Social economy entities also need to learn lessons from the Covid-19 experience to better use and adapt their operations to the digital era, while upskilling their staff. Nevertheless, management of a similar crisis would benefit greatly from collaboration or ad hoc partnerships with public authorities. This could include sharing facilities, devices and platforms as well as operational costs. The social economy could provide workers and volunteers to co-organise and deliver services, benefiting from each other's experience, including through joint training. This would also foster mutual knowledge between social and public sector partners. Social economy entities also need to self-critique and apply social economy principles and values to themselves and their internal governance to be more convincing about this way of doing business. Nonetheless, building socio-economic resilience based on collective and structural partnerships between the social economy and the public sector is a long-term endeavour, which needs adaptation and goodwill from the participants.

Social economy vis-à-vis other industrial ecosystems

The research shed light on the relevance of the social economy during multiple on-going crises, especially the environmental, food and energy crises, and as a result of ageing, the transformation of work, the dramatic increase in inequality and the recent pandemic. At the same time, it highlighted the poor visibility of the social economy, especially in the health, energy-renewables and agri-food ecosystems as well as a lack of awareness of the general public that some key services are being delivered by the social economy. Several interviewees highlighted the need to broaden the assessment of the social economy's contribution beyond narrow quantitative parameters.

Agri-food: Social economy organisations in the agri-food ecosystem are very diverse. Well-established traditional agricultural cooperatives in some countries have evolved into very large enterprises that control the food system. Alongside these is a parallel system of local organisations including smaller cooperatives and networks of small producers who support the development of Local Food Systems. They are also particularly inclined to foster a reversion to more sustainable production. Compared to other ecosystems, the social economy - especially agricultural cooperatives - has a much greater influence in agri-food. The role of agricultural cooperatives is particularly relevant in the Netherlands, Finland and Italy. Unlike older Member States, agricultural cooperatives are less developed in central-eastern Member States. Agricultural cooperatives have historically improved members' economic sustainability and working conditions. They have enhanced the competitiveness and sustainability of agri-food in rural areas, induced a positive effect, contributed to innovation and acted as supply chain coordinators. New social economy initiatives facilitate communication between farmers and consumers, triggering a new attitude towards sustainability in the whole production-consumption system. They also increase agri-food diversity, ensure access to fresh and healthy food as well as support the shift towards sustainable farming.

Cultural and Creative Industries: Non-profit cultural organisations have a long tradition in most Member States. The social economy contributes to valorising and improving access to cultural heritage and art, enhancing social capital in local communities, supporting sustainable development especially in sparsely and underpopulated areas, promoting inclusive and integrated territorial development as well as promoting and preserving decent working conditions in an ecosystem with poor protection for labour and social rights. From an EU comparative perspective, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Spain and Portugal account for the most creative, arts and antertainment enterprises.

Energy-renewables: From a historical perspective, citizen-led initiatives have existed for almost a century next to big corporations and highly centralised energy infrastructure in Germany, Austria and Italy. Community energy projects have flourished in other Member States in recent decades. These are extremely diverse in terms of size, legal form, organisational capacity, technology, people involved, diffusion and as energy producers or providers. The social economy has been particularly impactful in the energy-renewables ecosystem. It has played a crucial role in transforming this ecosystem by stimulating policy design. The main contributions have been better retail prices than conventional enterprises, tackling energy poverty, educating the public about renewable energy and fostering public acceptance of renewable energy technology, fostering energy independence for communities, as well as creating new employment and enhancing social cohesion by cultivating a positive vision of the future.

Health: The health ecosystem includes diverse social economy organisations, including worker, production, user and new multi-stakeholder cooperatives, associations, mutual benefit societies and foundations. The role of the social economy has dramatically increased over the past 20-30 years. It currently plays a key role especially in Spain, Belgium, France, Germany and Portugal. There has been a two-fold shift of setting up multi-stakeholder organisations involving workers, volunteers, recipients and donors alongside the pursuit of explicit social aims by member-oriented organisations. In addition to treatment, cure, preventative, palliative and rehabilitation services, social economy organisations manage hospitals, clinics and other health facilities in some countries. They provide health insurance for services that may not be covered by the health system. They also provide pharmaceutical services, care for vulnerable people and promote, inform and educate on health. Social economy development is likely to increase in importance in the near future, especially filling severe gaps in healthcare provision. The contribution of the social economy will be key especially in providing soft health services such as long-term care, prevention services and fast diagnostic treatment. Its added value is mainly connected to its capacity to engage different stakeholders, build support networks around the patient and the family, design new services and push other healthcare providers to improve their quality standards while keeping reasonable prices.

Tourism: Tourism is a relatively new ecosystem for the social economy and its potential is far from being fully exploited. It includes areas not normally regarded as attractive by conventional enterprises such as accessible tourism for people with disabilities, authentic cultural practices, innovative tourism services in remote and sparsely populated areas and innovative work integration pathways. In addition to a multitude of small, locally-based initiatives that are sometimes difficult to detect since they often operate in multiple fields, noteworthy are online platforms structured and managed according to social economy principles. Work integration social enterprises employing disadvantaged people operating touristic activities have emerged in almost all Member States, whereas social economy initiatives facilitating the connection between tourism facilities and small agricultural producers are present in France, Ireland, Italy and Romania. The social economy has the power – still to be fully harnessed – to transform the tourism ecosystem from below. It contributes innovative services that foster economic vitality in areas traditionally overlooked by for-profit enterprises, improves the quality of work, valorises and preserves local cultural and landscape heritage and wisdom, fosters community empowerment and the involvement of disadvantaged groups and persons at risk of exclusion and also redistributes income from tourism to enhance inclusive and integrated territorial development combining social, economic and environmental aspects.

Retail: In the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria consumer cooperative trade disappeared more or less completely due to its inability to handle competition from large-scale and highly competitive firms, while in Finland, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway cooperative developments were much more positive. The landscape of the social economy in the retail ecosystem is however extremely diversified. A wide range of actors often have divergent interests. At one extreme is cooperative large-scale distribution, with consumer and producer cooperatives which have often become very powerful in some countries. At the other extreme is a multitude of small local cooperative retail shops. Not surprisingly, these highly diverse social economy entities do not feel they belong to the same retail ‘world’. Particularly noteworthy are small cooperatives and work integration social enterprises innovating the retail ecosystem. Both contribute to close links with local communities by enhancing territorial cohesion, stable and high-standard jobs with equitable conditions for each partner in the supply chain, fostering sustainable development, empowering consumers, prioritising high-quality products and contributing to the circular economy.

New indicators and approaches to assess the social economy

The role of the social economy in generating both social and economic value is increasingly recognised by scholars and international bodies such as the European Parliament, the OECD, and the United Nations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO). However, assessing its macro level impact remains a challenge. Key questions concern its added value compared to the public and private sectors, including who should identify this and how it can be effectively measured.

Addressing these questions requires a nuanced understanding of the macro functions of the social economy since its greatest added value is through social cohesion and inclusion, territorial cohesion, sustainable environmental development, civic and political engagement and participation. Current economic indicators such as GDP and employment fail to fully capture this contribution. Proposals for new indicators face obstacles related to data (un)availability, high computational complexity as well as time and human resources. Moreover, the social value of activities such as volunteering and membership transcends economic and quantitative evaluations, necessitating innovative and more comprehensive approaches. Efforts to move beyond GDP have gained traction internationally.

However, two main challenges in the design of new indicators persist. Firstly, prior efforts to measure social progress have neglected the social economy role. Secondly, there is a need to encompass the multifaceted contributions of the social economy and highlight its distinctiveness from for-profit enterprises and the public sector.

Recommendations

This study has enabled to design a set of recommendations to improve the representation of the social economy. Recommendations are addressed to different key actors: the European Commission (including Eurostat); the research community; national/local governments and/or national statistical offices; and social economy umbrella organisations.

The first set concerns the urgent need to promote a better understanding of the social economy. The second set relates to the visibility of the social economy, particularly the need to improve its recognition at different levels. Both sets of recommendations are regarded as a prerequisite for improving statistics and designing policies that take stock of the contribution of diverse social economy entities to welfare improvement, employment growth, social inclusion, sustainable development and enhanced social cohesion. The recommendations then address methodological issues that need to be resolved to improve the production of comparable statistics.

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the project 'Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU social economy' (Call for tenders EISMEA/2022/OP/00159 - Lot 1), assessing the socio-economic weight of the 'Proximity and Social Economy' industrial ecosystem and its contribution to a sustainable, innovative and resilient economy and society.

This project implements an action line of the European Commission Action Plan for the Social Economy (SEAP), to increase the visibility and recognition of the social economy by 'launching a new survey to collect quantitative and qualitative information on the social economy' (European Commission, 2021c). It was carried out by a Consortium of three organisations: the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (EURICSE[17]) as consortium leader, CIRIEC International[18] and Spatial Foresight[19].

Context

The project is carried out in the wake of the momentum gained by the launch of the SEAP in December 2021 and the inclusion of a new ecosystem called the 'Proximity and Social Economy' in the European Union (EU) Industrial Strategy in May 2021. These decisions have been complemented by the Council's first-ever recommendation on the social economy (adopted in November 2023). This recommends Member States take measures to acknowledge and support the social economy. In addition to giving the social economy a boost, these EU policy initiatives recognise the social economy as an autonomous and distinct pillar along with State actors and for-profit entities. Its presence as well as actual and potential relevance is now recognised in all economic sectors, beyond niche domains, and its contribution is widely acknowledged.

Background

This project reviews the social economy as defined by the SEAP. 'Traditionally, the term social economy refers to four main types of entities providing goods and services to their members or society at large: cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), and foundations. They are private entities, independent of public authorities and with specific legal forms. Social enterprises are now generally understood as part of the social economy. Social enterprises operate by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and often innovative fashion, having social and/or environmental objectives as the reason for their commercial activity. Profits are mainly reinvested with a view to achieving their societal objective. Their method of organisation and ownership also follow democratic or participatory principles or focus on social progress. Social enterprises adopt a variety of legal forms depending on the national context' (SEAP, p. 5).

The project reflects the progressive conceptual shift prompted by the European Commission (EC) from the 2011 Social Business Initiative (SBI) concept of the social enterprise as a new type of enterprise distinguished by particular features, to the social economy sector, which covers a broader and more comprehensive spectrum of organisations, including the social enterprise as a specific dynamic within the social economy.

The starting assumption of this project is that organisations belonging to the social economy exist in all Member States, even though they sometimes operate outside the radar and are hence difficult to detect. Regardless of the evolutionary patterns of the diverse

[17] https://euricse.eu/en/

[18] https://www.ciriec.uliege.be/en/

[19] https://www.spatialforesight.eu

organisational types, what varies dramatically across countries is how much such entities are acknowledged – and recognise themselves – as part of the social economy. In addition, the extent that some of these entities are seen as a specific dynamic (i.e. social enterprises) within the social economy diverges between policymakers, the general public and the organisations. In several countries, the two concepts of the social economy and the social enterprise are only employed in academic circles. In other countries only one concept has gained visibility, whereas the other is still struggling to emerge. Both concepts enjoy broad recognition in very few countries, which is reflected in their widespread use by different stakeholders (policymakers, academics and such organisations). Nevertheless, the social economy has been recently acknowledged through several policy initiatives and laws in an increasing number of Member States. In spite of the growing awareness of policymakers of the capacity of the social economy to tackle multiple crises and trigger beneficial transformations in industrial ecosystems, its potential is still far from being fully harnessed. Among the factors explaining underestimates of its contribution are a poor understanding of the diverse roles played by the organisations and a lack of high quality, comparable data and analyses. Only a few Member States are currently equipped with national statistics devoted to the social economy, including the number of social economy organisations, the employment share, the number of volunteers engaged and the value added. Supporting a proper understanding of the social economy as well as better data collection and access would promote recognition of the social economy by the general public and fuel the debate on public policies for its further development.

Objective

The project pursued three objectives:

- collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data to promote evidence-based policy on the social economy ecosystem in the context of EU industrial strategy;
- contribute to EU and national policy making for the social economy by providing information on the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis;
- assist statistical offices at Member State and EU levels to produce quality data and develop indicators to measure impacts of the social economy.

Structure

Chapter 2 summaries the research methodology. Chapter 3 provides a definition of the social economy based on the SEAP and sheds light on the difficulties of applying this concept in the different European countries. Chapter 4 illustrates key data on the social economy in the 27 Member States. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the importance of the social economy during and after the Covid-19 crisis as well as its contribution to other related industrial ecosystems. Chapter 7 provides reflections on methods and challenges regarding data gathering and measuring the impact of the social economy. Finally, Chapter 8 outlines recommendations addressed to key stakeholders. The bibliography can be found in Chapter 9.

The research is based on a methodology and a common understanding of key concepts which are detailed in the appendices 1 (Extended methodology) and 2 (Glossary). Other relevant information can be found in appendices 3 (Country factsheets), 4 (Specific literature ‘Covid-19 and the social economy’, and 5 (Summary of the workshops).

2. Research methodology

This chapter summarises the methodology used for this study. The methodology is detailed in Appendix 1. The project was articulated in three work packages. The first featured data gathering and analysis for the research. In the second package, three EU-wide online workshops were organised with regional, national and international experts as well as social economy stakeholders. Finally, project management and quality control supported effective organisation of the tasks.

Research

Work Package 1 was organised by the consortium core research team, supported by 27 national researchers who conducted desk research and collected data in the 27 Member States. This was structured in four steps: 1) Design a common research methodology; 2) Qualitative analysis at Member State level; 3) Quantitative analysis at Member State level; and 4) Comparative analysis at EU level. To facilitate a consistent methodological approach, an operational definition of social economy and social enterprise was agreed within the consortium (see table 1).

Table 1 – Social economy and social enterprise features[20]

Features	Social economy	Social enterprise
Objectives	Carry out activities in the interest of members/users or society at large	Carry out activities to meet the needs of vulnerable groups or society at large
Distribution of profits	Primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits as well as assets, including reinvesting most of the profits	Reinvestment of all/most of the profits and compliance with an asset lock
Governance	Democratic and/or participatory governance	Democratic and/or participatory governance
Resources	Resource mix depending on whether an organisation is a commercial entity (cooperative, mutual benefit society) or not (e.g. a charity)	In addition to non-commercial resources (unpaid work, donations, etc.), social enterprises use production factors typical of the monetary economy
Type of producer	Market and non-market producer	Market producer
Legal forms	Cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), foundations and social enterprises	Cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, and conventional companies pursuing explicit social aims; associations and foundations that conduct economic activities

[20] This table illustrates the main features of the social economy and social enterprise in a simplified manner. Differences across legal forms, consistently with their national legislatures and organisational ownership, are not taken into consideration. It should be considered that in some countries distribution of profits is to a certain extent allowed within some cooperatives and that the governance, especially in some traditional charities, is not as democratic and participatory as in cooperatives.

After setting up common guidelines with the national researchers, there were several rounds of data gathering as well as quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The **quantitative analysis** assessed the size of the social economy in the 27 Member States based on available data[21]. To this end, statistical units consistent with the operational definition of the social economy and social enterprise were identified in most countries with some exceptions due to the impossibility of identifying specific entities[22].

For each country the national researchers:

- identified official statistics on the social economy as a whole from national statistical offices (NSOs), including the type of data source (e.g., satellite account, census, survey, statistical register), data relevance and coverage (in terms of institutional entities and variables of interest) and coherence with the definitions of social economy and social enterprise;
- identified data sources for one or more of the social economy families (cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, and foundations) when official statistics were not available, partially available, out of date or (partially) inconsistent with the operational definitions, e.g. excluding some types of cooperatives;
- assessed the quality of available data sources.

Data from existing statistics was then aggregated to measure the social economy in countries with reference to the number of entities, employment, turnover, value added, number of members and volunteers and, if available, hours of volunteering.

Both ex lege and de facto social enterprises were considered. Particular attention was paid to the risk of double counting from potential overlaps between institutional forms that are traditionally recognised as being part of the social economy and entities conceived as social enterprises, as well as between ex lege and de facto social enterprises.

The **comparative analysis** was carried out on data collected by national researchers and on second-level data sources identified by the core research team to fill in missing data in the sources identified by the national researchers. As a result, there are some differences in the data regarding the different methods used to collect the data, the units in which the data are expressed (in particular for employment data) and the reference period of the data. Therefore, to carry out the comparative analysis, we adopted several criteria. First, the core research team and the national researchers carried out a joint assessment to determine whether certain organisational forms were within or outside the scope of the social economy or whether they were social enterprises ex lege or de facto. Second, 2021 was the reference year and, if data were not available for that year, the nearest year was used. Third, the number of active entities (if available) has been taken as a reference rather than the number of registered institutions. Finally, as regards employment data, priority was given to data expressed as headcount at the end of the year; if these data were not available, annual average headcount were used; and only if the first two data were not available, data expressed as full-time equivalents were used.

The **qualitative analysis** enabled the research team to analyse the tradition, institutional framework, roots, trends and level of recognition of the social economy in each Member State. This also enabled identification of new organisational forms and businesses which have emerged in recent decades to tackle unmet challenges and address new social needs. Special attention was paid to assessing the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and recovery by focusing on sectors of the social economy affected the most, and to analysing the weight of the social economy in agri-food, cultural and creative industries, energy-renewables, health,

[21] Reference year 2021. If data for 2021 was not available, the reference year was changed to either 2019, 2018 or 2020, according to availability of data.

[22] In Sweden it was, for instance, not possible to distinguish foundations from other types of funds. As a consequence, data provided for Sweden overestimate the overall number of foundations.

retail, and tourism. Against this background, national researchers and the core research team carried out a preliminary literature review at both national and EU level based on secondary data sources. In addition, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including national experts and EU umbrella organisations.

Workshops

The online workshops were integral to the methodology. They supported all the research steps. The workshops addressed three aspects within the overall challenge of availability and comparability of data on social economy, including social enterprises:

- Workshop 1 on ‘Current state of art of statistics on the social economy in the 27 Member States’;
- Workshop 2 on ‘Gaps, barriers, and obstacles in producing statistics and possible solutions to overcome them’;
- Workshop 3 on ‘New indicators and approaches for assessing the role of the social economy’.

A specific workshop concept was designed at the beginning of the project. The online workshops followed a digital interactive approach supported by tools and techniques to facilitate small group work (breakout rooms), co-creation on shared whiteboards and group plenaries.

On average, some 30 participants (excluding the project team members) attended each workshop. Participants included experts from Eurostat, national statistical offices, public agencies and national or sub-national governments, researchers from research institutes dealing with data collection/statistics, representatives of social economy networks, umbrella organisations, and international organisations.

The workshops helped to:

- deepen the understanding of how social economy statistics are presented in different parts of the EU;
- examine the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches to generate statistics and provide suggestions as to how social economy statistics may be better presented;
- reflect on how contemporary socioeconomic factors and mega trends can impact the design of appropriate tools and indicators to adequately represent the role of the social economy and its new forms of organisations and businesses.

The outcomes of the online workshops were fed into this report. A summary of the workshop outcomes and conclusions can be found in Appendix 5.

3. Social economy tradition in the European Union

3.1. Historic roots of the social economy in Europe

The social economy is a socio-economic field shaped by civil society self-organising to respond to unmet needs arising in society and a theoretical concept.

As a **socio-economic field**, the social economy has its historical roots in 19th century workers' self-help associations, cooperatives and mutual benefit societies (CIRIEC - Monzón and Chaves Avila, 2012). When they first emerged, these entities were spontaneous defensive reactions to harsh conditions engendered by the industrial revolution and rural poverty. Over the centuries, new organisational forms, rooted in the values of self-help and solidarity, have addressed new social needs.

As a **concept**, the social economy gained momentum in France in the 1970s, when cooperatives, mutual benefit societies and associations joined to create the National Liaison Committee for Mutual, Cooperative and Associative Activities (CNLAMCA). From then on, the concept started to be used in different national and international contexts, but only gained significant visibility in the last 20 years, as awareness of the limitations of the state-market duopoly grew (Demoustier et al., 2006; CIRIEC – Chaves Avila and Demoustier, 2013).

From a research perspective, the social economy concept was analysed first by researchers under the CIRIEC (International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy) network. This has been researching and informing on the public, social and cooperative economy for over 55 years and is covered by the magazine Revue des Etudes Coopératives, Mutualistes et Associatives (RECMA). It originally brought together organisations representing the grassroot engagement of local communities, namely associations and cooperatives. Foundations – typically representing philanthropy – were later added, while social enterprises have only recently been acknowledged as a dynamic within the social economy.

To operationalise the social economy in Member States, including countries lacking a social economy tradition, the great challenge lies in identifying its components. The social economy includes a wide and diverse range of organisations including entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial initiatives as well as organisations promoting the interests of their members and organisations pursuing objectives of general interest. The challenge is two-fold: firstly, self-recognition by the concerned organisations and acknowledgement of their specificity by public authorities and the general public as full-fledged components of a unitary field that shares specific principles and values, including the pre-eminence of people over capital in their missions, as well as voluntary and open membership, autonomous democratic governance, solidarity, and autonomy and independence from public authorities. Secondly, several countries use approaches other than the social economy to conceptualise the diverse actors between the public sector and for-profit enterprises. This results in an identity challenge, which is seen in the plurality of denominations and concepts in Member States (Teasdale, 2012; Chaves Avila and Monzón, 2018; Galera and Chiomento, 2022).

Different trajectories have been followed by different countries. In some countries, there is self-recognition strongly supported by a common sense of identity. In other countries, this has not taken place. In some countries, cooperatives have chosen to remain on the fringes of this process, not identifying themselves as part of a broader group. In other countries, the associative and foundational sector is reluctant to feel part of the social economy.

3.2. The EU and the social economy

Since the early 1980s, the social economy has been recognised by the European Parliament[23] and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). However, it was not until 1989 that it formally entered European institutions with the creation of a Social Economy Administrative Unit (DG XXIII) in the European Commission. In 1990, the Intergroup on the social economy was set up within the European Parliament.

Figure 1 – Social economy recognition by EU institutions (1989-2024)

Between 1989 and 2021, the year the SEAP[24] was launched, the attitude of European Institutions towards the social economy wavered.

Reconstructing if, how and to what extent the European Institutions supported the social economy in different phases can contribute to better explaining the rationale behind national policy schemes and legal acts that have failed to take proper stock of the potential of the diverse social economy legal entities that compose the social economy.

[23] European Parliament (1983). Resolution on cooperatives in the European Community, based on Working Documents, 1982-1983, document 1-849/82. Report drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs on the cooperative movement in the European Community, Rapporteur: Mr K.-H. MIHR, 15 November 1982 (http://aei.pitt.edu/62706/1/B2371.pdf). It presents explicitly the concept of social economy definition and components and claims for a report on cooperatives, mutuals and associations as part of the social economy. This report was produced in 1986 by the Research Division of the General Secretariat of the Economic and Social Committee (The cooperative, mutual and nonprofit sector and its organizations in the European Community: http://aei.pitt.edu/41813/1/A5956.pdf).

[24] European Commission (2021c). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy (SEAP)”. https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en

1990-2000

Over the decade 1990-2000, attention was mainly paid to the capacity of the so-called 'third system' (under the Third System and Employment Programme - TSEP) to create employment and to the ability of civil society organisations to strengthen democracy. The major report on this, with the first figures on the social economy in Europe, was elaborated for the European Commission by CIRIEC in 2000 (CIRIEC, 2000)[25]. That happened while starting the EU integration process when particular attention was paid to the transition of former socialist countries to a market economy and democracy. Against this background, developing a vibrant organised civil society was seen as a way to encourage more effective EU integration. Nevertheless, attention was almost exclusively paid to associations and foundations, whereas the potential of cooperatives was mostly overlooked.

From a research perspective, at the end of the 1990s, an emerging group of researchers from different Member States started to focus on an innovative dynamic within the social economy, which was conceptualised as the social enterprise. Analysis of its emergence and development in an EU research project (The Emergence of Social Enterprises in Europe-EMES) resulted in two major publications (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001; Spear et al., 2001) and a new network: the EMES International Research Network.

2000-2006

The turn of the century was marked by the launch of the EQUAL Community Initiative financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and co-funded by Member States within the 2000-2006 programming period. This initiative focused on supporting innovative, transnational projects tackling discrimination and disadvantages in the labour market and prioritised the development of social economy initiatives supporting the integration of vulnerable persons. While a lot of attention was paid to work integration social enterprises (WISEs), this phase was characterised by EU institutions progressive recognition of the key role played by cooperatives as testified by the Communication on the promotion of co-operative societies in Europe[26] and the Council Regulation on the Statute for a European Cooperative Society (SCE)[27].

2009

There was a significant change in direction in 2009 when the European Parliament adopted a report recognising the social economy as a social partner to achieve the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy (the Toia Report - European Parliament, 2009)[28]. Meanwhile, the social economy was endorsed by the EESC as a key element of the European social model. The EESC has played in particular a key role in increasing the visibility of the social economy with its thematic reports drawn up by the International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy (CIRIEC)[29].

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[25] See: https://www.ciriec.uliege.be/en/publications/etudesrapports/les-entreprises-et-organisations-du-troisieme-systeme-un-enjeu-strategique-pour-lemploi-2000/

[26] European Commission (2003). Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European parliament on the promotion of co-operative societies in Europe: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0018:FIN:EN:PDF

[27] Council of the European Union (2004). Council Regulation (EC) No 1435/2003 of 22 July 2003 on the Statute for a European Cooperative Society (SCE). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32003R1435

[28] European Parliament (2009). The European Parliament resolution of 19 February 2009 on Social Economy (2008/2250(INI)). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-6-2009-0062_EN.html

[29] See European Economic and Social Committee (2017).

2011-2020

In 2011, the Communication on the SBI was launched to increase the visibility and recognition of social enterprises (European Commission, 2011)[30]. It introduced a concept of social enterprise, which draws on three dimensions. Based on this approach, social enterprises run commercial activities (entrepreneurial/economic dimension) to achieve a social or societal common good (social dimension) with an organisation or ownership system that reflects their mission (inclusive governance-ownership dimension). In essence, social enterprises provide goods and services in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and use their profits primarily to achieve social objectives. They are managed in an open and responsible manner and, in particular, involve employees, consumers and stakeholders affected by their commercial activities (European Commission, 2020c).

Thanks to the SBI there has been a stronger conceptual coherence which has stimulated the legal recognition of social enterprises in several Member States. More attention has been moreover paid by the research community and policy makers to social enterprises, as testified by the mapping and SBI impact studies (European Commission, 2020b and 2020c). However, despite rising interest of national policies in social enterprises, conceptual confusion has continued to be an issue. The narrow focus of the SBI pushed some Member States (e.g. Latvia) to recognise only conventional enterprises complying with given criteria as ex lege social enterprises, at the expense of social enterprises using the typical legal forms of the social economy like for instance cooperatives. Noteworthy is moreover the 2016 European Commission's Start-up and Scale-up Initiative, which targets also social enterprises[31].

2021-2024

In 2021, the European Commission launched the SEAP (European Commission, 2021c) which sees the social economy as contributing to the relaunch of the social dimension of the EU process implied in the European Pillar of Social Rights. Unlike previous policy documents that overlook organisational diversity and its operative implications, the SEAP has a large spectrum of actions and provides for a multifaceted recognition of the differences between the social economy and mainstream enterprises.

The same year a new ecosystem identified as the 'Proximity and Social Economy' was introduced in the EU Industrial Strategy highlighting the role of its actors in economic and industrial development. Its presence as well as real and potential relevance is recognised in all economic sectors. Both decisions are the result of a progressive clarification to find strategies to address the deep wounds inflicted by the economic crisis and the Covid-19 crisis on the social and economic fabric.

These decisions have been complemented by the Council's first-ever recommendation on the social economy (Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions adopted on 27 November 2023)[32], which asks Member States to to set out a framework supporting the design and implementation of social economy strategies at national level. This is in line with the recent International Labour Organisation (ILO) resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy

[30] European Commission (2021c). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Social Business Initiative - Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation': https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0682

[31] European Commission (20216). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Europe's next leaders: the Start-up and Scale-up Initiative': https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2016%3A733%3AFIN

[32] European Commission (2023d). Proposal for a Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2023:316:FIN

(ILC.110/Resolution II adopted on 10 June 2022)[33] as well as the resolution of the United Nations' General Assembly on the social and solidarity economy and sustainable development goals (A/RES/77/281 adopted on 18 April 2023)[34], both signed by most Member States. Noteworthy is former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta's recent report 'Much More Than a Market' which calls for a new and comprehensive Single Market Strategy acknowledging the key role of the social economy (2024)[35].

3.3. The different components of the social economy

The upsurge and consolidation of the social economy reflects the ability of civil society to self-organise and respond to constantly evolving needs in society due to social and demographic changes, as well as economic transformations and multiple challenges that vary substantially across regions and time. Unsurprisingly, innovative forms of civic engagement evolve thanks to the bottom-up mobilisation of civil society. Accordingly, while there is a decline in some forms of associational activity, there is a growth of others.

Given its strong local anchorage and proximity, the social economy tends to be an extremely context-specific and dynamic phenomenon that is often creatively shaped in unique ways by the organisational and legal forms assumed by grassroot organisations, consistent with the legal systems where they operate[36].

The diffusion of its main components, namely associations, cooperatives, mutual benefit societies and foundations, varies significantly across countries. Interestingly, in most Member States social economy organisations pre-existed modern welfare states where key welfare institutions were developed by mutual benefit and cooperative societies. In a significant number of cases, these were subsequently incorporated by national governments as part of the modern welfare states. In other (less common) instances, they have survived and managed to safeguard their autonomy. At the same time, social economy organisations that had decreased in relevance, have reappeared in most countries, albeit refashioned by new dynamics driven by the need to address new challenges.

Country variations in terms of size and diffusion as well as recognition of the diverse components of the social economy are due to the interplay between political, social, economic and cultural factors.

Associations and foundations

Associations are evenly present in all Member States. As typical membership organisations, associations are the most widespread family of the social economy. In some countries, associations are considered jointly with foundations, making it difficult to distinguish between them. This is especially so in central eastern European countries where the re-emergence of organised citizen activity outside the state and the market gained momentum after the collapse of socialist regimes.

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[33] ILO (2022). Resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy (ILC.110/Resolution II adopted on 10 June 2022. https://www.ilo.org/resource/ilc/110/resolution-concerning-decent-work-and-social-and-solidarity-economy

[34] United Nations General Assembly (2023). Resolution 'Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development', A/RES/77281, adopted on 18 April 2023: https://unsse.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/A_RES_77_281-EN.pdf

[35] 'Much More than a Market - Speed, security, solidarity. Empowering the Single Market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU Citizens' : https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf

[36] For a more detailed explanation of the proximity dimension, please look at: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/proximity-economy_en

It is common ground that associations and – to a less, but still significant extent – foundations are regarded as the vital expression of a vibrant civil society that can contribute to fostering democracy in a practical way. However, the same cannot be said – at least not in all the countries studied – for other social economy organisations.

Cooperatives

The role and potential of traditional cooperatives – e.g. consumer, credit, agricultural, worker cooperatives – is well recognised in most western Member States (particularly in some regions) including Austria, Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Denmark and Sweden. Here they are seen as organisations typically involving the right of individuals to collectively pursue and defend common interests. This is not the case in most central eastern European countries, where cooperatives have a controversial reputation. They are normally either regarded as relicts of the socialist regime or as part of the traditional private sector, without being recognised in light of their collective and democratic ownership. This is the case in Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania where cooperatives are not conceived as part of the social economy even though they pursue the interests of owners other than investors, including consumers, farmers and workers.

This is due to the ambiguous role played by cooperatives during the socialist regime and in the first transition (Münkner, 1998) which prevents them from fully exploiting their potential even today, despite their revitalisation where they managed to affirm their capacity to represent the interests of weak stakeholders, such as persons at risk of labour market exclusion.

The negative attitude towards cooperatives is widespread also in countries where national legislature allows for cooperative demutualisation. Examples include where mutual aid societies and cooperatives can be legally transformed into conventional for-profit enterprises, with the risk that the transformation is induced by opportunistic members or managers who are primarily interested in seizing control of the assets that cooperatives have accumulated (Borzaga and Galera, 2012).

The controversial evolution of cooperatives in some Member States explains the reluctance of some national researchers and policy makers to consider them as a key component of the social economy. Furthermore, particularly in the agricultural sector and in the food industry, some cooperatives may have become so dominant within their fields that they may well serve their members (owners), but at the same time be a hindrance to efficient climate change mitigation as well as the necessary combat of the loss of biodiversity.

Country variations also apply to new types of cooperatives (social and community cooperatives), which have recently emerged to support the insufficient provision of services including social, educational, and work integration services to local communities and disadvantaged people. It is no coincidence that this evolution of the cooperative form towards stronger social commitment, which testifies its capacity to adjust to changing social and economic conditions, has caught on especially in countries where cooperatives play a key role in local communities, including Italy, France, Portugal, Spain and Belgium.

New cooperatives – such as community energy cooperatives, platform cooperatives, housing cooperatives and new retail cooperatives – have emerged to help communities exploit local resources and face new societal challenges. This trend cuts across countries and leads to reflections on the potential of this organisational form which continues to be underestimated in some Member States.

Mutual benefit societies

Country variations are especially significant when it comes to mutual benefit societies, which nowadays play a key role only in very few countries, including Belgium, France and Germany where they are highly integrated into the public health system. In these three countries they have survived unlike most EU countries, where mutual benefit societies were downsized by publicly funded universal healthcare systems established in the 20th century.

'Other' social economy entities

In some Member States, in addition to the four main families of the social economy, there are a few 'other' country-specific legal forms which rightly fall within the scope of the social economy. These non-standard entities sometimes have a longstanding history and tradition, such as agrarian commons in Austria; *sociedades laborales*, fishermen's guilds and agrarian societies of transformation and singular entities in Spain; religious entities in Czechia; holy houses of mercy in Portugal and *chitalista* in Bulgaria. In other cases they reflect specific social, political and economic conditions, such as *zavodi* in Slovenia.

Social enterprises

Social enterprises deserve separate consideration since they do not refer to a specific legal entity as they are transversal, cutting across the diverse legal forms of the social economy and sometimes even beyond.

The great majority of social enterprises continue to emerge using typical social economy organisational forms not specifically designed for them, notably the associative, cooperative and foundational models, which are by far the most widespread forms at EU level.

The emergence of social enterprises has been triggered by the need to encounter new challenges and concerns of society at large or of vulnerable groups specifically. They are the result of a collective dynamic and mainly stem from organisational values and models with strong roots in European societies, such as solidarity, self-help and participation (European Commission, 2020c). In a few cases, social enterprises have evolved from conventional enterprises, following the enhancement of their social commitment. The predominance of either trend typically depends on historical and cultural factors, reflecting the profound differences across countries.

Social enterprises operate as associations and/or foundations in countries permitting a significant degree of freedom for entrepreneurial activities by non-profit organisations (e.g. France). This has coincided with a progressive shift of associations towards a stronger entrepreneurial stance given their delivery of welfare services.

Interestingly, in several central and eastern European countries, social enterprises often use legal forms that were introduced before the concept of social enterprise started to be used for managing diverse activities with a social focus (included 'other social economy entities'). This is the case in Slovakia, Czechia and Slovenia. During the research for this study, in such cases, some national researchers were reluctant to trace these entities back to the social enterprise concept.

In countries where cooperatives have never weakened or managed to refashion their 'concern for the community', the cooperative form has proved to be an effective way to start social enterprise activities. In some countries, cooperatives have strengthened their social commitment to pursue interests of the broader community, overcoming their member and single stakeholder orientation. It is no coincidence that social enterprises tend to be set up as conventional companies where cooperatives have a negative reputation (e.g. central eastern European countries) and/or in countries like Ireland where charities are allowed to operate through a traditional company legal form.

A third pattern concerns setting up social enterprises via conventional companies by existing social economy entities, which maintain control and ownership. This is typical in countries where the social economy is more consolidated, creating second level/umbrella organisations willing to invest in capital-intensive domains (e.g. health).

However, in all such cases, to be regarded as social enterprises conventional companies must adjust their modus operandi – by law or voluntarily by their founders – and pursue explicit social aims and commit to the general interest over time with specific devices such as the asset lock and a profit distribution constraint.

The evolution towards the social enterprise has been followed in some coutries by ad hoc legislation that recognises new cooperative forms whose aims, features and fields of activity are defined by law (e.g. Italy, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Hungary and France) to benefit non-members and involve more than one category of stakeholder. Italy was a pioneer (social cooperatives) followed by Portugal (social and solidarity cooperatives), France (societé cooperative d'interest collective - SCIC), Poland, Hungary and Czechia. Even though these new cooperative forms are fully aligned with the social enterprise definition as they institutionalise the pursuit of explicit social aims and the establishment of multistakeholder organisations, they tend not to be considered as ex lege social enterprises in some countries (e.g. SCIC in France). For the purpose of this study, new cooperative forms legally introduced to strengthen their social commitment and allow for the engagement of the concerned stakeholders in their governing bodies are regarded as ex lege social enterprises. The same is true for specific legal forms existing in given countries – e.g. *zavodi* in Slovenia – that are considered by this study as ex lege social enterprises because they fully comply with the operational definition implemented.

Latvia has followed a different path with regulations for conventional companies, which are the only legal form entitled to gain the status of social enterprises in this country (regarded as ex lege social enterprises).

The second trend towards legal recognition of social enterprises refers to legal statuses/ qualifications/accreditation schemes that can be adopted by certain legal entities – including conventional companies – if they comply with specific criteria. Depending on the country, social enterprise qualifications are in principle obtainable by organisations operating in fields of general interest or by organisations facilitating work integration (work integration social enterprises). Organisations acquiring ad hoc social enterprise status/qualifications/accreditation are likewise regarded as ex lege social enterprises.

A more recent trend concerns the introduction of a legal status qualifying social enterprises within a broader recognition of the social economy, social and solidarity economy or third sector. This step has strengthened the connection of social enterprises, particularly those set up as traditional companies, with the social economy and its embedded values (European Commission, 2020c). Also in these cases, the new qualifications have allowed for the legal recognition of ex lege social enterprises.

To conclude, the identification of social enterprises is especially challenging where social enterprises have not been legally recognised and operate solely as de facto social enterprises. These use traditional social economy organisations that have been refashioned by an innovative dynamic and/or traditional companies which comply with the social enterprise definition.

Identifying social enterprises is likewise complicated in countries where the new legal forms and qualifications for social enterprises have not met with great success. This means that many eligible organisations decide not to seize this opportunity. Cases in point are provided by Italy and Slovenia where a significant number of eligible organisations prefer not to apply for the social enterprise qualification, preferring to stick with the status quo.

Identifying the whole universe of social enterprises is then challenging, because national researchers tend to ignore de facto social enterprises that are inevitably overshadowed by ex lege ones.

3.4. Defining and understanding the social economy

The diverse types of organisations representing the four main social economy families are easily identifiable in all Member States. However, their inclusion in the social economy universe has not been always straightforward. Indeed, the social economy is widely recognised by researchers, policymakers and the same umbrella and grassroot organisations in only a few countries.

Operationalising the social economy has proved to be challenging for three main reasons. First, the predominance of concepts that only partially overlap with the social economy in some countries, such as the third and non-profit sectors. Second, a narrow understanding of the social economy. This tends to predominate in countries where the definition of the social economy in laws and/or accounting systems is not aligned with the SEAP definition. The third challenge concerns the social enterprise and is connected to a broader or narrower understanding of this concept compared to the operational definition used here.

3.4.1. Social economy vis-à-vis other concepts

Over the past two decades, there has been an extraordinary increase in interest in the diverse set of actors located between the public and business sectors, typically for-profit enterprises. The way of conceptualising such actors differs greatly depending on the perspective and the cultural traditions in the different countries. Indeed, the reference changes if one wants to highlight just organisations with general interest purposes, those structured as enterprises, or those with both economic and political functions.

In some countries operationalising the social economy and social enterprise has proved to be very ambitious if not impossible, because of the predominance of other concepts/ approaches in the policy discourse. The following sheds light on concepts with particular attention on challenges.

Solidarity economy

As a concept, the solidarity economy encompasses both formal and informal solidarity initiatives. The solidarity economy arose in Latin America as a counterpoint to modern forms of solidarity-based philanthropy (Yunus, 2007; Laville et al., 2015) and as an alternative to the institutionalised approach of the social economy (Laville et al., 2017). It includes all militant initiatives anchored to the territory, which have a strong political dimension and transformative power, including informal entities. It excludes large cooperative groups that have either lost contact with their membership or have adopted models and management tools typical of conventional businesses. This concept is used also by some social movements in Member States, particularly France and Spain.

Social and solidarity economy

The concept of the social and solidarity economy was not originally academic but was an attempt to integrate social economy practices with those of the solidarity economy and with social enterprise initiatives. This approach has been adopted by many international governmental and non-governmental organisations including the UNTFSSE (Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the Global Social Economy Forum, the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy and more recently the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). As regards its constitutive characteristics, the concept of the social and solidarity economy essentially overlaps with the social economy.

Third sector

As a concept, the third sector originates in Anglo-Saxon countries. Although, at the very beginning, its focus was on non-entrepreneurial entities such as associations, voluntary associations and foundations, the concept has over the years included civil society in all its forms. This includes cooperatives, community organisations, self-help and mutual support organisations, as well as other manifestations of civil society.

Non-profit sector

The non-profit sector traces its roots to the United States, originating from philanthropic and charitable ideologies deeply embedded in 19th-century Britain and the nations it influenced. The contemporary understanding of the non-profit sector was precisely defined and globally disseminated through an international research initiative in the early 1990s led by the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in the USA (Enjolras et al., 2018). This quantified non-profit organisations under five criteria. Non-profit organisations must have an institutional structure and presence, be private, self-governing, non-profit distributing and rely on voluntary participation. The key feature is non-profit distribution, so such organisations can generate profits, but these must be reinvested into the organisation's primary mission and cannot be distributed to owners, founders, or governing bodies. This study stimulated the inclusion of a handbook focused on non-profit institutions in the United Nations Handbook of national accounts data. This has strongly influenced statistical data collection in an increasing number of EU national statistical offices. The borders set by the non-profit approach have, however, been unable to capture the EU reality, which mainly includes cooperatives, associations and mutual benefit societies rather than foundations (the most widespread legal form in the USA).

Table 2 – Concepts used in selected countries/regions

Concepts	Countries where the concept is broadly used	Primacy of general interest aim	Non-profit distribution constraint (a) (b) and Asset lock (b)	Stakeholder involvement (b) and Democratic governance (b)
Social economy	Portugal, Spain	No	Yes	Yes
Solidarity economy	Latin America and partially France and Spain	No	Yes	Yes
Social and solidarity economy	France and Canada (Quebec)	No	Yes	Yes
Third sector	Italy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Non-profit sector	Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary	No	Yes	No

(a) Total or partial.
(b) Inclusive governance.

3.4.2. Narrow understanding of the social economy

There is a double tension in the conceptualisation of organisations that are neither public, nor for-profit. In addition to the different theoretical concepts developed by social scientists, there is a tension between theoretical concepts and their translation into concrete national policy initiatives and legislation.

Typical examples are provided by Poland and Luxembourg.

In Poland, the satellite account for the social economy does not cover all the legal entities typically seen as components of the social economy. Housing cooperatives, cooperative banks, and cooperative funds of saving and credit (SKOK) are indeed excluded from the satellite account. This is the same for Luxembourg, where financial cooperative banks consistent with a strict application of the UN Handbook are excluded from its satellite account.

The same is true in Italy, where the third sector was legally recognised in 2016 by Law 106/2016. The Italian legislator aggregated and regulated organisations which ‘pursue the general interest’, thus excluding cooperatives and mutual aid societies, unless they acquire the status of social enterprise (see Legislative Decree 117/2017 – Third Sector Code, and Legislative Decree 112/2017 on social enterprise).

In Spain, the third sector is also used in political discourses and is legally recognised by a national law (2015) and several regional laws. It integrates mainly associations, foundations and big entities such as Caritas, Red Cross and ONCE (the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind).

3.4.3. Broad versus narrow understanding of the social enterprise

The prevalence of broader versus narrower approaches is strongly influenced by the policy discourse that predominates in a particular country and/or in a historical phase.

Examples are countries where the social economy is poorly diffused as a concept and the prevalence is to regard all conventional enterprises that generate a beneficial impact as social enterprises. In such cases, it is inevitable that national researchers may lean towards a broad definition of social enterprises. This happens in Estonia, the Netherlands and Sweden where neither policy initiatives, nor specific legal frameworks have been adopted to recognise the social economy or the social enterprise. However, it is common also in countries where researchers adopt a more flexible approach to social enterprises. In such cases, a widespread pattern is to include multiple innovative enterprises with a primary objective of profit in addition to one or more objectives of general interest under the definition of social enterprise. This includes mission-driven enterprises, B Corps[37], benefit corporations and enterprises with a social vocation which have not institutionalised the pursuit of explicit social aims and do not adopt inclusive governance models, being free to distribute their profits to their investors[38].

In countries where emphasis has long been on tackling exclusion from the labour market, the trend is to conflate social enterprises with work integration. This has until recently been common in several central eastern European countries (e.g. Poland, Romania and Czechia).

[37] For-profit corporations certified for their social impact by the private network B Lab.

[38] It should be noted that B Corps, benefit corporations, and mission-driven enterprises are placed outside the scope of the social economy, as defined by the SEAP.

3.5. Recognition of the social economy at national level

How the social economy is understood as a concept varies dramatically across Member States.

The concept has gained relevance in countries where the social economy has a tradition of fruitful interaction between its components (associations, cooperatives and mutuals), such as in France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain (European Commission, 2020c). Conversely, it is not commonly used as a concept in countries with a greater division between the various types of such organisations (e.g. cooperatives and associations), as in Italy and Germany.

At national level, the social economy has increased visibility primarily through laws of 'symbolic' recognition: in 2011 in Spain, and 2013 in Portugal. However, both laws defer to other specialised legislation regulating the organisational characteristics of such entities, including tax treatment.

Romania (2015) and Slovakia (2018) have more recent laws on the social economy that also regulate the functioning of social enterprises.

What varies dramatically across countries is how much such entities are acknowledged and recognise themselves as part of the social economy and to what extent these entities are seen as a social enterprise within the social economy by policymakers, the general public and the grassroots organisations. In several countries, the concepts of the social economy and the social enterprise are only employed in academic circles; in other countries one concept has gained visibility, whereas the other is still struggling to emerge. In very few countries do both concepts enjoy broad recognition, which is reflected in their widespread use by different stakeholders (policymakers, academics and such organisations).

Table 3 – Degrees of recognition of the social economy in Member States[39]

Degree of recognition	Countries
Longstanding recognition (including self-recognition)	Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain
Increasing recognition thanks to specific policy actions by policymakers	Bulgaria, Greece, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
Moderate recognition	Ireland
Poor recognition partially due to the negative perception of cooperatives versus significant recognition of traditional non-profit organisations	Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia
Social economy not commonly used as a concept: strong division between cooperatives (often seen as organisations promoting solely the economic interests of their members) and associations	Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy
Predominance of other concepts/approaches in the policy discourse, including social innovation, social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, democratic enterprises	Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Malta, Netherlands, Sweden

[39] This table draws on a combination of sources: desk research conducted for this study, information gained from national researchers, previous studies conducted by the core research team and comparative considerations. Please note that the classification proposed may not reflect the opinion of individual researchers.

Different factors contribute to explaining country variations, including the diverse traditions and historical roots of the social economy which emerged to bring together associations, cooperatives, mutual aid societies, and foundations. In countries where the social economy is broadly used as a concept – such as Belgium, France, Portugal, and Spain – the social enterprise often struggles to find its own way as a specific concept. Another factor is the negative perception of cooperatives inherited from socialist/communist regimes, which still has a role in explaining poor recognition of the social economy in Member States such as Croatia, Latvia and Slovenia. Also, the strong relevance of traditional private welfare organisations in countries like Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden contributes to explaining the strong division between cooperatives and associations, which are rarely seen as components of the same group.

Noteworthy is furthermore that public policies designed to support social enterprises in some countries (e.g. central and southeastern Member States) have triggered the use of the term social enterprise, albeit in some instances with a narrow meaning, for example, conflating it with work integration.

Table 4 – Degrees of recognition of the social enterprise in Member States[40]

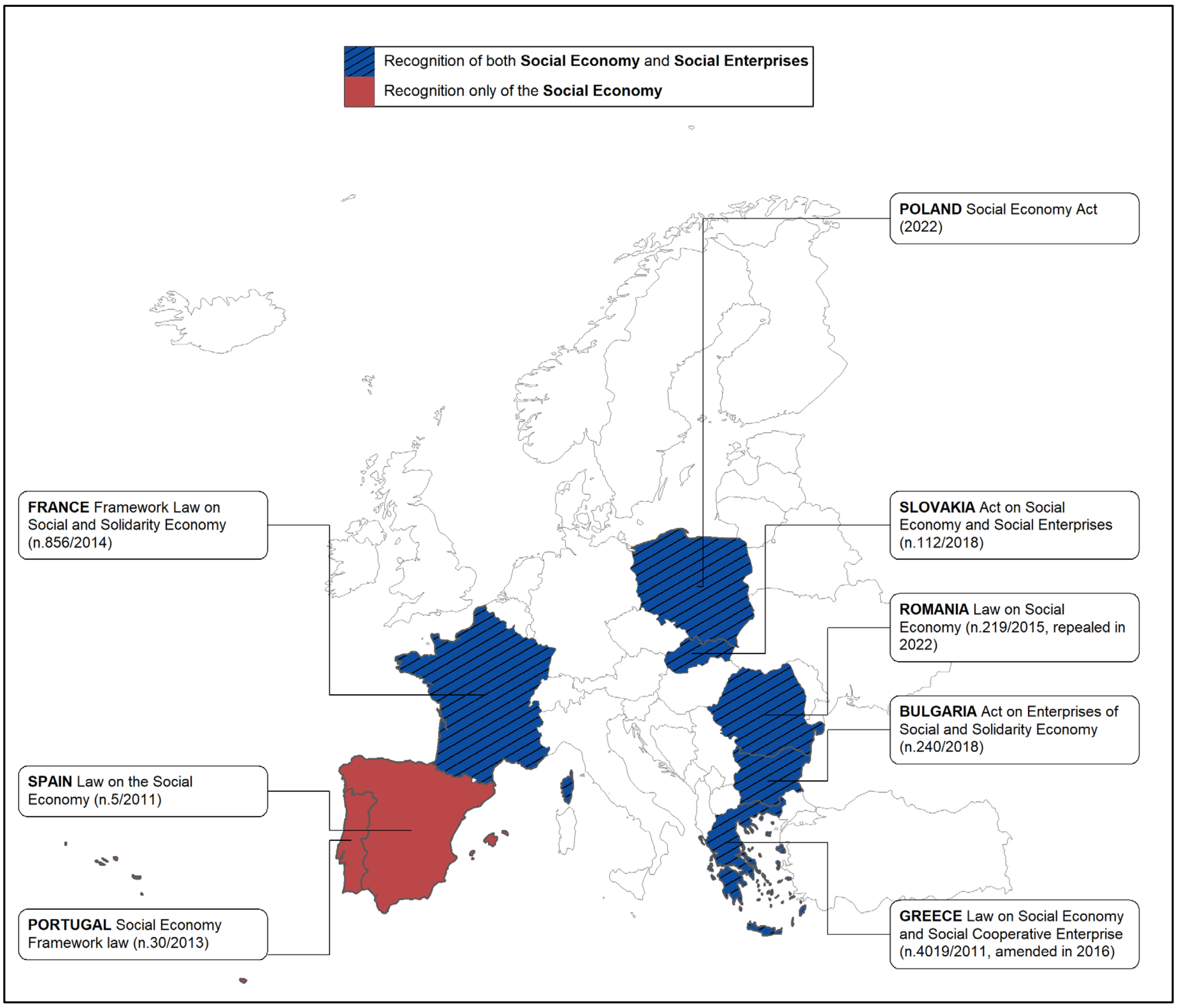
Degree of recognition	Countries
Strong legal and/or policy recognition and large self-recognition	Ireland, Italy
Recognition of specific social enterprise types challenged by the social economy and/or social and solidarity economy concepts - which enjoy broad recognition	Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain
Recognition of specific social enterprise types by law but moderate self-recognition of the organisations on the ground	Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Slovenia
Policy support to develop social enterprises, but in principle narrow understanding (work integration); variable self-recognition	Croatia, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
Social enterprise concept not commonly used - limited space due to traditional welfare institutions	Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden
Emerging acceptance	Estonia, Malta

There are moreover more than a few countries where the social enterprise concept is not commonly used and has a limited space of development due to the relevance of traditional welfare institutions. It would be too detailed to go into all country variations here. One example is Denmark where 'social enterprise' is not commonly used in public policy discourse and the field is more a battle ground between such concepts as 'democratic enterprise', 'social entrepreneurship' and 'citizen driven enterprises'. Other examples are Sweden and Estonia where social innovation is widely used as a concept.

The following Figure 2 represents the situation of recognition in the different Member States. The boxes below show examples of the recognition of the social economy in national statistical systems.

[40] This table draws on a combination of sources: desk research conducted for this study, information gained from national researchers, previous studies conducted by the core research team and comparative considerations. Please note that the classification proposed may not reflect the opinion of individual researchers.

Figure 2 – Laws on the social economy in the Member States



PORTUGAL – Satellite accounts of the social economy required by the law on the social economy

The regular production of statistics on the social economy was institutionalised in Portugal when the Social Economy Framework Act (Act 30/2013) was approved.

The entity responsible for producing these statistics is CASES (António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy - www.cases.pt), a public interest cooperative created in 2009 by the Portuguese Government's Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. CASES was created as a hybrid entity that involves the state and entities representing the cooperative and social economy sector to promote the social economy. It must also ensure the creation and maintenance of a satellite account of the social economy, developed within the national statistical system. In order to build the Portuguese Social Economy Satellite Account (SESA), CASES started to collaborate closely with Statistics Portugal (INE - www.ine.pt) and with international experts such as CIRIEC researchers. This institutional governance of the production of statistics ensures the availability of statistical experts, in Statistics Portugal and CASES as well as academic experts, and stable funding from public resources. SESA covers entities considered by the Social Economy Framework Law (Law 30/2013). This was defined jointly by Portuguese social economy entities, the government and experts in the framework of CASES. The work involves case-by-case analysis to avoid oddities and will be developed to include new emerging realities. To compile the SESA, Statistics Portugal used its internal sources (such as the General Register of Statistical Units and several of its own surveys) and other public and social economy bodies with which it has agreements. All the Portuguese satellite accounts firstly refer to the concepts and methods of the National Accounts, as defined in the European System of National and Regional Accounts. They also use international manuals for the compilation of statistics and satellite accounts of the social economy and its families.

The international manuals include the ‘Manual for drawing up satellite accounts of social economy enterprises: cooperatives and mutual societies’ from CIRIEC, the first ‘Manual on non-profit institutions’ of the United Nations, and the new United Nations Manual (2018) ‘Satellite account on non-profit and related institutions and voluntary work’. The ILO’s Guidelines concerning Statistics of Cooperatives and the Volunteer work measurement guide have also been used.

With more than a decade of experience in compiling social economy statistics, four SESAs were published in 2013, 2016, 2019 and 2023, and a survey of the social economy sector was carried out in 2018. This survey was carried out because of need to go beyond the SESA statistics, seeking information on the internal composition of the social economy, its activities, the relationship between the public sector and the social economy sector, the involvement of volunteering and the characteristics of the workforce mobilised. Additionally, statistical innovations have included a modular approach to aggregate the entities that make up the social economy. Also ad hoc surveys focus on different fields of attention. Those responsible for this European statistical advance recognise that the main benefits of reliable statistics on the social economy are that they have increased the visibility of this socio-economic field, strengthened its identity and the unity of the sector, and provided useful information to guide the policies of both governments and entities representing the social economy.

Reference:

- https://cases.pt/estatisticas-da-economia-social/

POLAND – Exploiting European opportunities to develop the first edition of the satellite account of the social economy

In 2021, the Polish Statistical Office (Statistics Poland) published the first edition of the country's social economy satellite account. The aim was to determine the size and economic contribution of the sector to the Polish economy in 2018 by combining information from the National Statistical Office into a single calculation with tables consistent with the System of National Accounts (Statistics Poland, 2021). The satellite account was released under the Eurostat grant ‘Satellite accounts of the social economy’ which provided Statistics Poland with the assistance of Eurostat experts and the opportunity to share information with other Member States’ statistics offices. Statistics Poland's work on non-profit institutions over the last 15 years formed the basis for this satellite account. Since 2008, Statistics Poland has systematically conducted surveys on non-profit organisations. In addition, in 2016 Statistics Poland organised an international seminar ‘Increasing relevance and development of statistical surveys of the third sector/social economy - Past achievements and new tools for comparative statistical research in Europe’ as part of the project ‘Integrated Monitoring System for the Social Economy Sector’ of the Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development. This was co-funded by the EU and implemented jointly with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy. The seminar was an opportunity to exchange experience with representatives of 14 EU national statistical offices.

The 2021 social economy satellite account follows the methodology in the handbook ‘Satellite Account on Non-profit and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work’ (United Nations, 2018) and the European System of Accounts (ESA 2010 - European

Commission, 2013b). The definition of the social economy and the types of entities included in it complies with the methodology of the handbook and with guidelines of the government programme ‘Krajowy Program Rozwoju Ekonomii Społecznej do 2023 roku. Ekonomia Solidarności Społecznej’ (National Programme for the Development of the Social Economy until 2023. Social Solidarity Economy). So far, the one published in 2021 has been the only edition. Nevertheless, the NSO's work on non-profit institutions and cooperatives has continued. In January 2023, the Polish NSO published preliminary data for 2021 on the number of social economy units, their employment and economic size (Statistics Poland, 2023). This time the units surveyed were also identified taking into account the definition of social economy entities introduced by the Act on Social economy, which entered into force on 5 August 2022.

Reference:

- https://stat.gov.pl/en/experimental-statistics/social-economy/social-economy-satellite-account-for-poland-2018,5,1.html

3.6. Mutual learning

The aim of this study was to identify the methodological and operational tools that are needed to make the representation of the social economy more complete, accurate, homogenous and reliable, at the national and aggregate EU levels in the near future.

Against this backdrop, the social economy first needed to be further operationalised and defined. This implied considering the extremely diverse country contexts in Europe while sticking rigorously to a shared research framework. To this end, we have worked closely with national researchers to scrutinise the complex sphere of reference of the social economy together.

Thanks to multiple bilateral meetings, the research team managed to apply the social economy definition to countries that do not commonly rely on this approach. We are however well aware that our approach, which is fully in line with SEAP, may not be appreciated by all national stakeholders.

During the fieldwork some entities required specific assessments by national researchers and the core research team. The issue was to place them within or outside the scope of the social economy. Among the most significant cases are:

- special-purpose church facilities in Slovakia, which were finally included since the national legislator specifically recognised them as an agent of the social economy in the Act 112/2018 on Social Economy and Social Enterprises;
- ‘Democratic enterprises’ in Denmark, which were finally excluded because they do not fit all the criteria; and
- Lithuanian ‘public enterprises’, despite their misleading name these are created by private individuals and meet the criteria for being considered as social enterprises.

Meanwhile, the in-depth analysis of individual country contexts revealed grey areas in several countries, namely organisations that are difficult to classify based on their ownership and governance structures.

Examples are organisations that were originally collective and private but have since been made public, however they continue to employ cooperative decision-making processes.

For social enterprises, the main challenge was to exclude ‘intrusive’ entities such as conventional companies engaged in ‘social washing’ as social or impact enterprises, as well as companies ‘disguised’ as social enterprises.

4. The EU social economy in numbers

4.1. Data on the EU social economy

This chapter highlights the social economy in the 27 Member States[41] by providing: (i) the number of existing social economy entities, (ii) the volume of people mobilised – including the number of people employed, volunteers and members – and (iii) key economic data – including turnover and value added.

These quantitative data have been cross-referenced by the legal form, economic sector and entity size. Analysis shows that in the European Union there are:

- More than 4.3 million social economy entities;
- employing more than 11.5 million people;
- with turnover of more than EUR 912 billion.

Social economy entities are mainly cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations (4 231 055 entities; see Table 6). In addition, other legal forms are recognised as part of the social economy by national/regional legislation or, according to national researchers and the core research team, meet the operational definition of the social economy adopted in this study. These include labour societies, fishermen's guilds, agricultural transformation societies, singular entities, agricultural common goods, holy houses of mercy and legal entities constituted by the churches, among others. However, these other legal forms are limited in terms of size, employment and economic value. Finally, as we will see in the next section, there are limited liability companies (LLC) which can be considered as social enterprises.

Table 5 – The social economy in Member States[42]

Country	Entities	People employed	Turnover (Mio. EUR)
Austria	136 936	86 827	13 825.3
Belgium	17 396	592 279	n/a
Bulgaria	8 609	33 812	n/a
Croatia	26 972	22 946	1 426.5
Cyprus	1 526	4 044	182.8
Czechia	113 737	112 369	3 138.9

[41] To carry out this overview, we adopted several criteria (see the methodological chapter and Appendix 1). Firstly, 2021 was the reference and, if data were not available for that year, the nearest year was used. The country factsheets in Appendix 3 report detailed information on the reference year for each Member State. Secondly, the number of active entities (if available) has been taken as a reference rather than the number of registered institutions. Thirdly, to specify the field of observation, the national researchers and the core research team carried out a joint assessment to determine whether or not certain forms of entities fell within the scope of the social economy or whether they were social enterprises ex lege or de facto.

[42] For some Member States, the figures shown in the table may be partial due to a lack of data sources. Please refer to the notes to Table 6 for the number of enterprises, Table 8 for employment and Table 12 for turnover for details of the coverage of data by legal form. Note in particular that information on employment was collected for 25 Member States. Morever, information on turnover was obtained for cooperatives from 19 countries; for associations and foundations from 16 countries; and for mutual benefit societies and other legal forms from even fewer countries.

Country	Entities	People employed	Turnover (Mio. EUR)
Denmark	132 078	179 598	n/a
Estonia	44 552	65 721	280.7
Finland	21 492	174 262	44 079.5
France	1 530 540	2 590 960	487 700
Germany	650 057	3 426 585	77 040.8
Greece	27 762	96 500	3 539.7
Hungary	60 644	163 727	9 097.1
Ireland	13 038	43 520	8 773.9
Italy	406 709	1 534 828	128 931.1
Latvia	26 270	29 619	11.8
Lithuania	7 474	68 573	1 051.6
Luxembourg	2 179	21 221	1 899.9
Malta	2 859	n/a	125.2
Netherlands	45 010	n/a	n/a
Poland	97 468	250 400	8 736.1
Portugal	73 574	240 382	10 103.3
Romania	128 176	101 951	1 244.7
Slovakia	57 012	69 700	2 703
Slovenia	26 978	14 686	1 732.3
Spain	406 821	1 389 937	107 245.5
Sweden	264 457	196 836	n/a
EU-27[43]	**4 330 326**	**11 511 283**	**912 869.7**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each country.

[43] The total for the EU aggregate is obtained by summing the values from individual Member States. If data is missing for any country, it will also be missing from the EU total. If data is partial for any country, this partial information is reflected in the EU aggregate. It is recommended to refer to the data from individual countries for information on missing or partial data.

Table 6 – Number of social economy entities in EU-27 by legal form

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other	'Other' includes:
Austria	1 655	128 414	3 143	24	3 700	Agrarian commons (3,046); LLC with/without public benefit status (Gemeinnützigkeit) (654)
Belgium	641	16 301	231	87	136	PLC with a social enterprise recognition
Bulgaria	2 000	5 769[a]	839	0	1	LLC and partnerships
Croatia	742	25 941	207	0	82	LLC founded by associations, pursuing general interest; other companies pursuing explicit social aims and operating as non-profits; sheltered workshops[b]
Cyprus	75	331	190	830	100	LLC
Czechia	12 915	97 574	2 909	0	339	Legal persons established by churches (251); LLC (88)
Denmark	2 067	122 331	7 533	n/a[c]	147	LLC; PLC; public LC; entrepreneurship and partnership companies
Estonia	6 045	37 953	398	0	156	LLC
Finland	3 500	16 386	1 432	37	137	LLC
France	22 600	1 500 000	5 320	620	2 000	Social and solidarity economy commercial companies

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other	'Other' includes:
Germany	6 966	615 759	24 650	n/a	2 682	LLC with public benefit status (Gemeinnützigkeit)
Greece	6 925	20 203	532	6	96	LLC; civil companies; consortia
Hungary	3 455	34 811	18 728	49	3 601	Non-profit companies
Ireland	1 172	1 277	395	46	10 148	CLG (9 819); CLS/Unincorporated and other entities (329)
Italy	55 237	311 423	8 319	n/a[d]	31 730	Other non-profit institutions (30 634); LLC and partnerships (1 096)
Latvia	1 674	22 863	1 540	0	193	LLC
Lithuania	343	1 951	213	0	4 967	Public enterprises (4 845); WISEs[e] (122)
Luxembourg	7[f]	2 097	36	9	30	Societal impact companies
Malta	73	2 781	n/a[g]	0[h]	5	LLC
Netherlands	3 285	41 725	n/a[g]	n/a[c]	n/a	
Poland	1 300[f]	79 300	16 800	11	57	Non-profit companies
Portugal	2 174	70 315	618	91	376	Holy Houses of Mercy
Romania	2 043	100 775	17 811	5 216	2 331	LLC

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other	'Other' includes:
Slovakia	1 444	48 206	477	0	6 885	NGOs providing general-purpose services; non-investment fund; purpose-built facilities; LLC; other (477)
Slovenia	407	22 745	264	1	3 561	Private institutes (Zavodi) (3 528); LLC (33)
Spain	23 675	350 089	9 218	226	23 613	Labour societies; fishermen Guilds; agrarian transformation societies; other special/singular entities (CR, GSO, Caritas); labour insertion companies (5); special disabilities employment centres[(e)]
Sweden	78 103	163 364	20 783[(i)]	9	2 198	Registered religious communities
EU-27	**240 523**	**3 840 684**	**142 586**	**7 262**	**99 271**	

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each country.
(a) Data on associations refers to 'non-profit entities for public benefit'.
(b) Sheltered workshops with legal forms different from cooperatives, associations, foundations and mutual benefit societies.
(c) Data on mutual benefit societies included under cooperatives.
(d) Data on mutual benefit societies included under 'other legal forms' except for mutual insurance societies which are included under cooperatives.
(e) For WISEs and Special Disabilities Employment Centres it is not possible to verify the legal form, but previous research suggests that the vast majority are limited companies.
(f) Partial data on cooperatives as the Luxembourg and Polish Satellite Accounts partially cover the cooperative sector.
(g) Data on foundations is included under associations.
(h) This figure does not include two mutuals in Malta that are subsidiaries of a Spanish mutual insurance company.
(i) Both foundations and other funds are included in this figure.

4.2. Social enterprise as an innovative dynamic within the social economy

The data in the previous section does not indicate the number of existing social enterprises. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the social enterprise is a relatively recent phenomenon that cuts across various legal forms, depending on legal traditions and culture in each country. This paragraph therefore provides data on ex lege enterprises and estimates for de facto enterprises. Counting only ex lege social enterprises would give only a partial picture. First, ex lege social enterprises do not exist in all Member States. Second, even where they exist, the number of officially registered social enterprises may not cover the full social enterprise phenomenon, as not all entitled entities decide to qualify as a social enterprise. The same is true if we consider specific legal forms, given the possibility of diverse legal options to set up a social enterprise. In this regard, the quantification of ex lege social enterprises poses fewer challenges, as it is possible to rely on data in administrative registers and refer to specific legal forms or legal statuses. Conversely, the estimation of de facto social enterprises poses greater challenges mainly related to the difficulties of operationalising the social enterprise definition on the basis of data in each Member State[44].

This study estimates there are more 246 000 social enterprises in Member States, of which less than 43 000 are ex lege social enterprises and over 203 000 are de facto social enterprises. The estimates range from a few social enterprises in Malta, Latvia and Estonia up to tens of thousands in Italy, France and Poland (Table 7).

Data by legal form confirm that 89.1% of the social enterprises belong to one of the four types traditionally constituting the social economy.

[44] The methodology for the estimates in this chapter produced the greatest homogeneity among data sources. However, there could be country variations in specific calculations for the number of social enterprises, mainly due to data (un)availability.

Table 7 – Estimated number of social enterprises in EU-27 by legal form

Country	Total	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other	'Other' includes:
Austria	3 107	96	2 151	206	0	654	LLC with/without public benefit status (Gemeinnützigkeit)
Belgium	1 006	463	407	0	0	136	PLC with a social enterprise recognition
Bulgaria	7	0	3	3	0	1	LLC and partnerships
Croatia	526	93	346	5	0	82	LLC founded by associations pursuing general interest; LLC pursuing explicit social aims and operating as non-profits; sheltered workshops[(a)]
Cyprus	190	20	50	20	0	100	LLC
Czechia	198	51	56	0	0	91	Registered religious legal entities (3); LLC (88)
Denmark	951	5	734	65	0	147	LLC; PLC; public LC; entrepreneurship and partnership company
Estonia	381	5	203	17	0	156	LLC
Finland	2 488	295	1 741	315	0	137	LLC
France	79 544	1 931	74 427	566	620	2 000	Social and solidarity economy commercial companies
Germany	50 162	1 939	44 681	860	0	2 682	LLC with public benefit status (Gemeinnützigkeit)

Country	Total	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other	'Other' includes:
Greece	3 390	3 261	27	0	6	96	LLC; civil companies; consortia
Hungary	16 412	1 027	9 381	3 770	0	2 234	Non-profit companies
Ireland	4 335	173	0	0	0	4 162	CLG; CLS; unincorporated and other entities
Italy	25 868	15 016	3 665	1 420	0	5 767	Other non-profit institutions (4 671); LLC and partnerships (1 096)
Latvia	241	0	48	0	0	193	LLC
Lithuania	1 734	0	449	49	0	1 236	Public enterprises (1 114); WISEs[b] (122)
Luxembourg	865	0	835	0	0	30	Societal impact companies
Malta	9	4	0	0	0	5	LLC
Netherlands[c]	1 185	250	935	0	0	n/a	
Poland	21 106	1 300	19 749	0	0	57	Non-profit companies; LLC
Portugal	8 350	435	7 117	331	91	376	Holy Houses of Mercy
Romania	9 090	9	1 435	93	5 222	2 331	LLC
Slovakia	1 297	7	124	1	0	1 165	NGOs providing general-purpose services (569); purpose-built church facility (119); LLC (477)

Country	Total	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other	'Other' includes:
Slovenia	6 211	59	5 583	20	0	549	NGOs operating in public interest; private institutes; LLC (33)
Spain	3 064	617	0	0	0	2 447	Labour insertion companies(b); special disabilities employment centres(b)
Sweden	5 061	1 172	3 889	0	0	n/a	
EU-27	**246 778**	**28 228**	**178 036**	**7 741**	**5 939**	**26 834**	

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each country.
(a) Sheltered workshops with legal forms other than cooperatives, associations, foundations and mutual benefit societies.
(b) For WISEs and Special Disabilities Employment Centres it is not possible to verify the legal form, but previous research suggests that the vast majority are limited companies.
(c) The figure for the Netherlands does not include social enterprises with legal forms other than cooperatives, associations, mutual societies and foundations as the data sources do not enable an estimate.

4.3. People involved

4.3.1. People employed

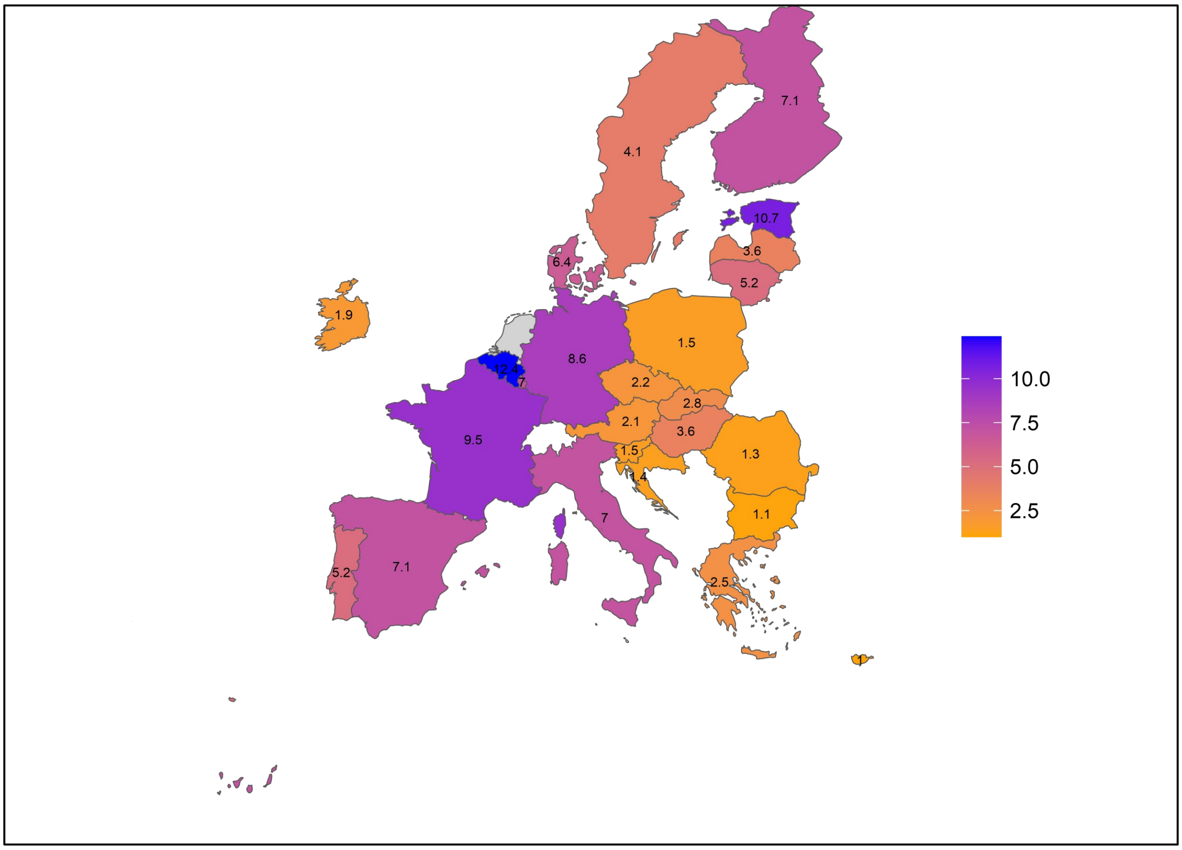
Quantifying the number of employed persons in social economy organisations is a challenge due to the availability of employment data in individual countries, as well as the different methodologies for data collection and the measurement unit at the national level[45].

Analysis of the data shows that at least 11.5 million people, some 6.3% of the employed population[46], are occupied in the social economy.

Germany (3.4 million), France (almost 2.6 million), Italy (over 1.5 million) and Spain (almost 1.4 million) are the Member States with the most. These are followed by Belgium (more than 592 000), Poland (around 250 000) and Portugal (almost 245 000).

If employment in the social economy is related to the data of the population employed, the weight of the social economy is also evident in other Member States, as highlighted in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Persons employed in social economy organisations as a share of the employed population



[45] The figure is headcount at the end of the year or an annual average, depending on the country. For Finland and Lithuania, the figure is only available as full-time equivalents. For Sweden, the figure covers full-time equivalents for mutual insurance enterprises and headcount at the end of the year for all other legal forms. For Poland, headcounts are not available for associations and foundations and therefore data are in full-time equivalents. No data are available for Malta and the Netherlands.

[46] This does not include Malta and the Netherlands, where data on employment in the social economy are not available. Data on total employment refer to 2021 and has been extracted from the Eurostat database (Total employment (resident concept - LFS) - 15 to 64 years).

Table 8 – Number of people employed in the social economy by legal form

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other legal forms
Austria	45 988	23 570[(a)]	6 562[(a)]	3 040	7 667
Belgium	8 935	555 438	7 663	18 187	2 056
Bulgaria	21 095	10 258	2 459	0	n/a
Croatia	2 285	20 381	280	0	n/a
Cyprus	400	1 799	1 820	25	n/a
Czechia	46 894	51 861	925	0	12 689
Denmark	33 602	112 059	32 445	n/a[(b)]	1 492
Estonia	8 589	54 480	1 492	0	1 160
Finland	92 000	37 721	24 479	6 594	13 468
France	320 313	2 024 845	108 345	137 457	n/a
Germany	1 000 276	2 020 579	247 583	n/a	158 147
Greece	33 548	49 833	12 095	n/a	1 024
Hungary	11 414	37 434	19 871	n/a	95 008
Ireland	43 520	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	1 130 741	167 931	104 863	n/a[(c)]	131 293
Latvia	4 215	24 324	n/a[(d)]	0	1 080
Lithuania	4 588	7 337	851	0	55 797
Luxembourg	925[(e)]	19 076	645	n/a[(f)]	575
Malta[(g)]	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
Netherlands[(g)]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland	33 500[(e)]	160 800	56 100	n/a	n/a
Portugal	24 309	156 034	14 764	4 906	40 369

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other legal forms
Romania	15 326	64 243	10 791	5 912	5 679
Slovakia	23 800	22 417	406	0	23 077
Slovenia	2 694	4 619	115	356	6 902
Spain	378 849	522 380	267 005	1 626	220 077
Sweden	51 991	75 157	25 041	14 984	29 663
EU-27[(h)]	**3 339 797**	**6 224 576**	**946 600**	**193 087**	**807 223**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.
(a) Data refer only to associations and foundations classified as 'economically active' by Austria Statistik.
(b) Data on mutual societies included in the cooperative data.
(c) Data on mutual insurance companies included in the cooperative data. Data on other mutual benefit societies included under 'other'.
(d) Data on foundations included in the dataon associations.
(e) Partial data on cooperatives as the Luxembourg and Polish Satellite Accounts partially cover the cooperative sector.
(f) Data is not published for confidentiality reasons.
(g) Data on employment not available for all legal forms under analysis.
(h) The EU-27 figures do not include Malta and the Netherlands, as employment data for these countries is not available.

Table 8 shows that more than 6.2 million people (54.1%) are employed in associations and 3.3 million (29%) in cooperatives. Prominent among associations are the 2 million people employed in French and German associations, more than 555 000 in Belgian associations and 522 000 in Spanish associations. Among those employed in cooperatives, noteworthy are those in Italian cooperatives (more than 1.1 million), one million in Germany, almost 379 000 in Spanish cooperatives and 320 000 in French ones.

Social enterprises employ at least 3.9 million people (33.7% of those employed in social economy organisations)[47].

A lack of data in some Member States does not enable us to fully analyse female employment. In spite of this, we can make some observations based on the data for some countries[48].

The social economy is a reservoir of female employment, as a large proportion of social economy organisations are in the health and social care sectors, which generally have a high presence of women.

Data from Member States with information on women in social economy organisations confirm this. In Belgium and Portugal, women account for more than 70% of employment in the social economy, while in France, Poland and Italy the figures are 66%, 60% and 46%, respectively. It is clear that associations and foundations have a strong presence of women. In cooperatives the figure varies from country to country and in relation to sectoral

[47] This figure may underestimate the number of people employed in social enterprises as data is not available for Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Ireland and the Netherlands. Even where data is available, it may not cover certain types of social enterprises.

[48] Data on female employment is available for 9 Member States; i.e. Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

specialisation, as an example, in Portugal, 54% of cooperative workers are women, whereas the proportion for associations is 70%.

As far as part-time work is concerned, the data are limited to a few countries and to certain types of organisations[49]. This makes it impossible to draw general conclusions for part-time work in social economy organisations at the European level. Nevertheless, in all ten countries for which data is available, the part-time share of total employment has remained higher than the general figure. Deriving conclusive insights for legal frameworks is also unfeasible. Notably, in the two countries with data on part-time work, namely France and Italy, there is a substantial variation in the proportion of part-time relative to total employment. Specifically, for associations, the percentages are 37% and 45%, while for cooperatives, the corresponding figures are 12% and 49%.

4.3.2. Members

Members are a key element of the social economy as they concern the genuine organisational and entrepreneurial model, the 'member-based organisation'. Members are people who own the organisation, take part in its decision-making under a participatory and democratic process, define the objectives of these organisations, participate in activities and receive profits and surpluses based on the people, activity and work carried out.

Members are important, firstly because they reveal the size and sociography of the population involved in the organisation. Secondly, they show the value of social interaction and citizen bonding and thirdly they reveal the degree of citizen participation and exercise of democracy in decision-making processes.

The social economy includes member-based organisations, such as cooperatives and associations, as well as mutual benefit societies, and non-member-based organisations, such as foundations and institutes. Members can be individuals or entities. In cooperatives, members carry out a cooperative activity linked to the objective of the entity and the criteria for the distribution of surpluses. For example, in a worker cooperative, the cooperative activity is the work of its members (workers). In a consumer cooperative, the activity is determined by the joint use/sale of goods and services provided to members (users), etc.

Despite the great interest in the contribution of the social economy, quantification of membership in social economy organisations currently faces serious gaps and challenges. This study confirms severe problems of data availability, a wide disparity of data between countries, a lack of international surveys monitoring the phenomenon and diverse measurement methods.

The main problem in measuring the number of members in the social economy also lies in the multi-affiliation of members. This can occur between sub-families of institutional forms of social economy entities, such as a farmer who is a member of two agricultural cooperatives, a credit cooperative and also another consumer cooperative, and between institutional forms (a member of a consumer cooperative can also be a member of a sport association).

Databases of administrative registers, entities and platforms – although they provide interesting information such as membership per entity – are not adequate tools to build aggregates. Given multi-affiliation, this method incurs the problem of double counting, which inevitably leads to overestimating the phenomenon.

Methods based on population surveys are more relevant as they avoid double counting and better capture membership and the degree of multi-membership. These methods make it possible to know, firstly, the membership rate of a country, i.e. the percentage of people over 16 years of age who are members of social economy organisations and based on this,

[49] Data on part-time employment is available for ten Member States; namely Austria, Belgium, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland and Spain.

the number of members of at least one entity. Secondly, the degree of multi-affiliation (whether a person is affiliated to one, two or more organisations). Thirdly, the type of organisations according to the sector of activity and whether they are employers or not, as well as other socio-economic variables. Variables include the number of members of at least one social economy entity in the country, the membership rate (as a share of the population), the membership per entity; the multi-membership rate (of a single entity, two entities and three or more entities, and the type of these entities), the membership by type of entity family and finally the member's level of involvement in the entity.

In this study, only 18 Member States provided information on the number of membership of social economy entities and this information covers only part of the social economy. Most of the countries that provided information covered only one or two institutional forms, mainly cooperatives by failing to identify multiple affiliations. Only Portugal, which in 2018 conducted a survey on the social economy, including the membership variable (INE Portugal, 2020), provided complete information on the number of membership for each institutional form. We have then supplemented, where possible, this overview with data from previous reports (Cooperatives Europe, 2016; European Economic and Social Committee, 2017). The results appear in Table 9.

Table 9 – Number of members in the social economy by legal form[50]

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Mutual benefit societies
Austria	2 595 536	n/a	1 108 397
Belgium	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bulgaria	n/a	950 000	n/a
Croatia	21 462[(a)]	n/a	n/a
Cyprus	509 388[(a)]	n/a	n/a
Czechia	828 234	6 566 740	n/a
Denmark	31 571[(a)]	n/a	n/a
Estonia	70 559	1 481 844	n/a
Finland	7 600 000	n/a	5 500 000
France	30 000 000	21 500 000	55 000 000
Germany	23 000 000	83 833 124	n/a
Greece	264 229	146	n/a
Hungary	547 000[(a)]	2 486 532	n/a

[50] Attention here is paid only to member-based organisations. Please note that data may include multiple affiliations.

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Mutual benefit societies
Ireland	3 596 068	n/a	n/a
Italy	11 451 028	n/a	n/a
Latvia	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lithuania	160 000[a]	n/a	n/a
Luxembourg	n/a	n/a	n/a
Malta	3 943	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland	26 200	6 900	n/a
Portugal	828 454	18 335 430	1 084 363
Romania	674 500	n/a	2 286 849
Slovakia	433 300	144 618	n/a
Slovenia	n/a	n/a	818 067
Spain	8 028 998[a]	n/a	n/a
Sweden	5 000 000	n/a	n/a
EU-27[b]	**95 670 470**	**135 305 334**	**65 797 676**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in the Appendix 3 for the list of sources and reference year for each Member State.
[a] Source: European Economic and Social Committee (2017).

(b) The EU-27 figures are derived from aggregating data from individual Member States. However, due to missing or partial data from several countries, these figures do not accurately represent the total number of memberships in the European social economy. Instead, they should be considered as a conservative estimate or lower threshold of the actual numbers.

Other information has been collected from international surveys, namely, 1) the European Values Survey of the EVS Foundation[51], 2) the European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS-2016) of Eurofound[52] and 3) the Eurobarometer (2020)[53]. However, these surveys have some shortcomings. While surveys are carried out at regular intervals in some countries, in others they do not cover the entire social economy. In some cases, they only consider associative entities, organised civil society or similar, excluding cooperatives and mutual

[51] https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/

[52] https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/surveys/european-quality-life-surveys-eqls

[53] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/it/be-heard/eurobarometer/civic-engagement

societies. Secondly, the concept of member does not fit well with analysis in these surveys. Some use 'engaged in an organisation', which does not make it clear whether it is a volunteer or a producer/consumer of the goods and services produced by the organisation.

Eurostat does not include membership in its annual survey on income and living conditions (EU-SILC 2015). For the first time in 2015 it included a module on 'social and cultural participation', which is not exactly membership. The European Values Survey gives membership data, but the entities do not fit the social economy categories. It asks: ‘For each of the following voluntary organisations, please indicate which, if any, do you belong to. Please indicate whether you belong to: Religious or church organisations; Education, arts, music or cultural activities; Trade unions; Political parties or groups; Conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights; Professional associations; Sports or recreation; Humanitarian or charitable organisation; Consumer organisation; Self-help group, mutual aid group; Other group; None’.

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS-2016) provides information with a question on ‘Participating in social activities of a club, society or association at least once a week’. Finally, the Eurobarometer (2020) contains ‘Q6. Are you engaged with civil society organisations (CSO[54]) in your country in one of more of these ways? (You have taken part in demonstrations or similar activities organised by a CSO, volunteering, social networks, donate money, encourage other to involve in CSO)’.

Table 10 – Membership and participation in the social economy, as a share of the population

Country	EVS*	EQLS**	Eurobarometer***
Austria	50.7	28.0	51
Belgium	0.0	22.0	49
Bulgaria	23.9	4.0	27
Croatia	50.9	n/a	34
Cyprus	54.2	10.0	45
Czechia	41.8	8.0	50
Denmark	84.0	n/a	68
Estonia	21.4	12.0	32
Finland	72.6	29.0	40
France	41.0	17.0	50

[54] CSO are defined as “organised groups operating in areas of shared interests, values and purposes in a way that is distinct from both government and business actors. CSOs can be active in many fields, such as democracy, human rights, the fight against intolerance and exclusion, development aid, or relations between citizens and the state. CSOs include organisations representing social and economic players, non-governmental organisations and religious communities”. (Eurobarometer, 2020; p. 4). Although this definition is not completely in line with the definition of the social economy, data from this study may provide insights into the membership of social economy organisations.

Country	EVS*	EQLS**	Eurobarometer***
Germany	66.9	27.0	52
Greece	25.9	6.0	41
Hungary	28.1	5.0	21
Ireland	0.0	35.0	48
Italy	24.9	n/a	35
Latvia	26.2	12.0	38
Lithuania	24.2	11.0	35
Luxembourg	0.0	19.0	52
Malta	0.0	12.0	17
Netherlands	69.0	36.0	64
Poland	22.0	9.0	44
Portugal	8.2	16.0	44
Romania	24.5	n/a	16
Slovakia	26.9	8.0	30
Slovenia	63.8	21.0	53
Spain	27.5	13.0	57
Sweden	82.8	36.0	64

Source:
* EVS European Values Study 2017: Member of any kind of entity (includes 11 types of entities)
** EQLS Eurofound - European Quality of Life Survey 2016: 'Participating in social activities of a club, society or association, at least once a week'.
*** Eurobarometer 2020: 'Are you engaged with civil society organisations (CSO) in your country in one of more of these ways: have you taken part in demonstrations or similar activities organised by a CSO, volunteering, social networks, donate money, encourage other to involve in CSO?'.

4.3.3. Volunteering

Among the people who bring social economic activities to life, volunteers who actively contribute to creating economic and social value are essential.

However, measuring the dimension of voluntary work[55] in the social economy is challenging. The disparity of national data, in terms of both surveys and measurement methods, makes it difficult to quantify the number of volunteers activated in social economy organisations.

Specific data, which are only available in 15 Member States, show more than 53 million active volunteers. This does partially enable indications on the dimensions of volunteering, as it does not consider the occasional dimension of voluntary work and the possibility of an individual volunteering with more than one organisation.

In 2015, the Eurostat annual survey on income and living conditions (EU-SILC) added an ad hoc module on social/cultural participation and material deprivation. This collected data on the percentage of people aged 16+ involved in formal[56] and/or informal voluntary activities in the previous 12 months. New data have been also released for 2022 covering the percentage of people involved in formal and informal voluntary activities over the total population[57].

The survey estimates that in 2022 around 12.3% of EU citizens volunteered formally in organisations. Among EU Member States, Netherlands has the highest proportion of adults participating in formal voluntary activities (36%), while in Denmark, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, Slovenia and Ireland more than 20% of the adult population participated. In thirteen countries, mainly in eastern and southern and Eastern Europe, less than 10% participated in formal volunteering.

Table 11 – Volunteering in the social economy

Country	Volunteers*	EU-SILC 2022 (in %)**	EU-SILC 2015 (in %)***
Austria	1 950 000[(a)]	19.7	28.3
Belgium	621 700[(a)]	15.9	20.4
Bulgaria	42 777	3	5.2
Croatia	45 362[(b)]	8.8	9.7
Cyprus	n/a	11.7	7.2
Czechia	1 306 896[(c)]	10.2	12.2
Denmark	n/a	26	38.7
Estonia	8 614[(d)]	10.4	16.4
Finland	n/a	23.9	34.1

[55] According to the ILO (2013) voluntary work is ‘non-compulsory work performed for others without pay’. Therefore ‘persons in volunteer work are defined as those of working age who, during a short reference period, performed any unpaid, non-compulsory activity to produce goods or provide services for others’.

[56] Formal voluntary activity is defined in the survey guidelines as ‘any unpaid and non-compulsory work for or through an organisation, formal group or club. It also includes unpaid work for charitable or religious organisations’ (Eurostat, 2016). Therefore, this data can be considered an approximation of volunteering in social economy organisations.

[57] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_scp19__custom_10808390/default/map?lang=en

Country	Volunteers*	EU-SILC 2022 (in %)**	EU-SILC 2015 (in %)***
France	Approx. 22 000 000	15.6	23
Germany	12 761 683(b)	n/a	28.6
Greece	n/a	7.4	11.7
Hungary	371 534(c)	5.7	6.9
Ireland	3 000(e)	20.5	29
Italy	4 661 269	5.3	12
Latvia	n/a	6.2	7.3
Lithuania	n/a	7.5	16.3
Luxembourg	n/a	25.1	36.7
Malta	n/a	8.9	8.8
Netherlands	n/a	36	40.3
Poland	2 500 000(b)	7.4	13.8
Portugal	516 187(a)	7.3	9
Romania	n/a	3.9	3.2
Slovakia	165 442(c)	7.5	8.3
Slovenia	173 184(c)	20.7	30.4
Spain	2 260 329(b)	8.9	10.7
Sweden	Approx. 4 000 000	22.1	35.5
EU-27	**--**	**12.3**	**18.9**

Source:
* Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.
** Eurostat - EU-SILC 2022. Participation in voluntary activities (formal and informal), 2015 (% on total population).
*** Eurostat - EU-SILC 2015. Participation in voluntary activities (formal and informal), 2015 (% people aged 16+).

(a) Data refers to associations.
(b) Data refers to associations and foundations.
(c) Data refers to associations, foundations and “other legal forms”.
(d) Data refers to cooperatives and associations.
(e) Data refers only to cooperatives.

4.4. The economic size of the EU social economy

Knowing the economic weight of the social economy and comparing it with other economic sectors helps understand the contribution of this sector. Two methods can be used to calculate the economic size of the social economy: turnover and added value. It is important to note that only the latter should be used for a sector's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The main difference between the two methods lies in how they are calculated and what they represent. Turnover reflects the revenue generated by an enterprise/sector, whereas value added measures the actual contribution of that enterprise/sector to GDP, excluding intermediate costs of production, thus avoiding double counting of business transactions. The sum of all value added in a country equals GDP. In this context, a consumer cooperative, for example, has a much higher turnover compared to its value added, as it markets products whose value added has already been incorporated by other enterprises, unlike an agricultural production cooperative, whose turnover is very close to its value added.

It was possible to collect data on turnover and value added for this study. However, the information is incomplete.

Turnover

By legal form, information on turnover was obtained for cooperatives from 19 Member States; for associations and foundations from 16 countries and for mutual benefit societies and other legal forms from even fewer. The main sources of data were national statistical offices and the reference date, for most of the Member States, was 2021 (see Table 12). For several countries and for associations and foundations, instead of turnover, data on revenues was used.

The EU social economy had a turnover of over EUR 912.9 billion. France, Italy, Spain and Finland have the largest cooperative sectors in terms of turnover, predominantly driven by agricultural, consumer and worker cooperatives. France and Germany have the highest turnover for associations, foundations and mutuals.

Table 12 – Social economy turnover by legal form (EUR million)

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other legal forms
Austria	13 288.1	n/a	n/a	413.7	123.5
Belgium	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bulgaria	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
Croatia	232.6	1 132.9	61	0	n/a
Cyprus	182.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Czechia	464.4[(a)]	2 262.6	80	0	331.8
Denmark	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other legal forms
Estonia	36.9	174.9	20.8	0	48.1
Finland	38 000	3 227.7	35	n/a	2 816.8
France	329 300	123 700	16 100	18 600	n/a
Germany	1 452	58 721.7	16 867.1	n/a	n/a
Greece(b)	3 119.2	383	37.5	n/a	n/a
Hungary	1 564.4	1 741.7	1 229.5	n/a	4 561.6
Ireland	689.1	983.2	290.3	8.8	6 802.6
Italy	128 931.1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Latvia	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	11.8
Lithuania	702.9	115.6	12.7	0	220.4
Luxembourg	42.6(c)	1 763.4	66	n/a	27.8
Malta	107.8(b)	17.4	n/a	0	n/a
Netherlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland	878	5 048.5	2 809.6	n/a	n/a
Portugal	1 867.1	5 824	865.8	491.1	1 055.3
Romania	772.6	320.8	45.5	0.7	105.1
Slovakia	2 507	n/a	n/a	0	196
Slovenia	734.3	553.6	23.7	8.9	411.9
Spain	66 509.6	15 188.7	7 754	2 251.9	15 541.4
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
EU-27	**591 382.5**	**221 159.7**	**46 298.5**	**21 775**	**32 254.0**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.

(a) Data refers to housing cooperatives only.
(b) Partial data.
(c) Partial data, as the satellite account partially covers the cooperative sector.
(d) The EU-27 figures are derived from aggregating data from individual Member States. However, due to missing or partial data from several countries, these figures do not accurately represent the total

turnover of the social economy at the EU level. Instead, they should be considered as a conservative estimate or lower threshold of the actual numbers.

Value added

For the value added generated by social economy organisations, data are only available for eleven Member States, and is incomplete for several reasons in many of these. In spite of this, the data enable some conclusions. For eight countries (Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia) information on the added value of the different legal forms is available.

Table 13 – Value added of the EU social economy by legal form (EUR million)

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other legal forms
Austria	4 555.9	n/a	n/a	342.5	n/a
Belgium	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bulgaria	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Croatia[(a)]	20.9	0	n/a	0	n/a
Cyprus	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Czechia	295.1[(b)]	961.6	25	0	253.5
Denmark	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Estonia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Finland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
France	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Greece[(c)]	240.9	29.3	1.3	n/a	n/a
Hungary	398.3	289.1	512.2	n/a	604.5
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	40 409.2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Latvia	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
Lithuania	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a

Country	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies	Other legal forms
Luxembourg	34.3(d)	1 207.2	49.3	n/a	21.9
Malta	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
Netherlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland	0.5	4 233	0	n/a	n/a
Portugal	715.7	3 534.5	379	319	627
Romania	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Slovakia	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
Slovenia	14.4	174	4.2	n/a	223
Spain	10 566.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	2 115.2
Sweden	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
EU-27(e)	**57 251.5**	**10 428.7**	**971.1**	**661.5**	**3 845**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.

(a) Data refers to market-oriented entities only.
(b) Data refers to housing cooperatives only.
(c) Partial data.
(d) Partial data, as the satellite account partially covers the cooperative sector.
(e) The EU-27 figures are derived from aggregating data from individual Member States. However, due to missing or partial data from several countries, these figures do not accurately represent the value added of the social economy at the EU level. Instead, they should be considered as a conservative estimate or lower threshold of the actual numbers.

4.5. Sectoral distribution of the EU social economy

As highlighted in the previous sections, the social economy encompasses a wide variety of organisational forms. These are found in almost all sectors in line with with national developments and traditions.

Reconstructing this sectoral diversity based on existing classifications faces several limitations. Firstly, not all countries have up-to-date statistics (or do not publish data for reasons of confidentiality) on the type of activities carried out by social economy organisations. Where data is available, it is not always possible to compare and aggregate it at the EU level. This is mainly due to the different national classifications and to the different statistics on the legal forms that make up the social economy.

Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the specialisation of the four main families of the social economy based on the analysis of countries for which data is available using the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE Rev.2)[58] (see Table 14).

Table 14 – Number of social economy entities by legal form and sector[(a)]

Sector	Cooperatives	Associations	Foundations	Mutual benefit societies
Agri-food	17 502	12 040	67	1
Industry	3 865	424	16	0
Energy and utilities	3 997	168	6	0
Construction and real estate	93 220	37 595	2 754	4
Transport	6 340	438	9	0
Retail	10 043	1 338	38	1
Food and Accommodation	3 411	3 147	66	1
Financial and insurance services	3 415	1 993	215	5 844
Cleaning and landscape activities	4 873	324	9	0
Education	4 611	58 175	11 287	4
Human health and social care	10 175	169 115	13 569	162
Creative, arts and entertainment activities	3 646	585 647	9 844	3
Other sectors	23 638	593 714	39 862	317
Total	**188 736**	**1 464 118**	**77 742**	**6 337**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.
[(a)] Data categorized by NACE codes are available for Austria (solely for cooperatives and mutual benefit societies), Belgium, Croatia, Czechia (with partial data for cooperatives), Estonia, Finland (excluding mutual benefit societies), France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia (only for cooperatives), Slovenia, and Spain (limited to cooperatives and mutual benefit societies, and partially, other legal forms). However, due to confidentiality concerns, some data may not be published for all sectors in these countries. Data based on the NACE classification are not available for Germany, Ireland, Malta, Poland, and Sweden. Partial data were obtained for education, health and social work, and housing by searching for matches in the available classifications adopted at the national level. Given these limitations, these figures should be regarded as a conservative estimate or a lower threshold of the actual numbers.

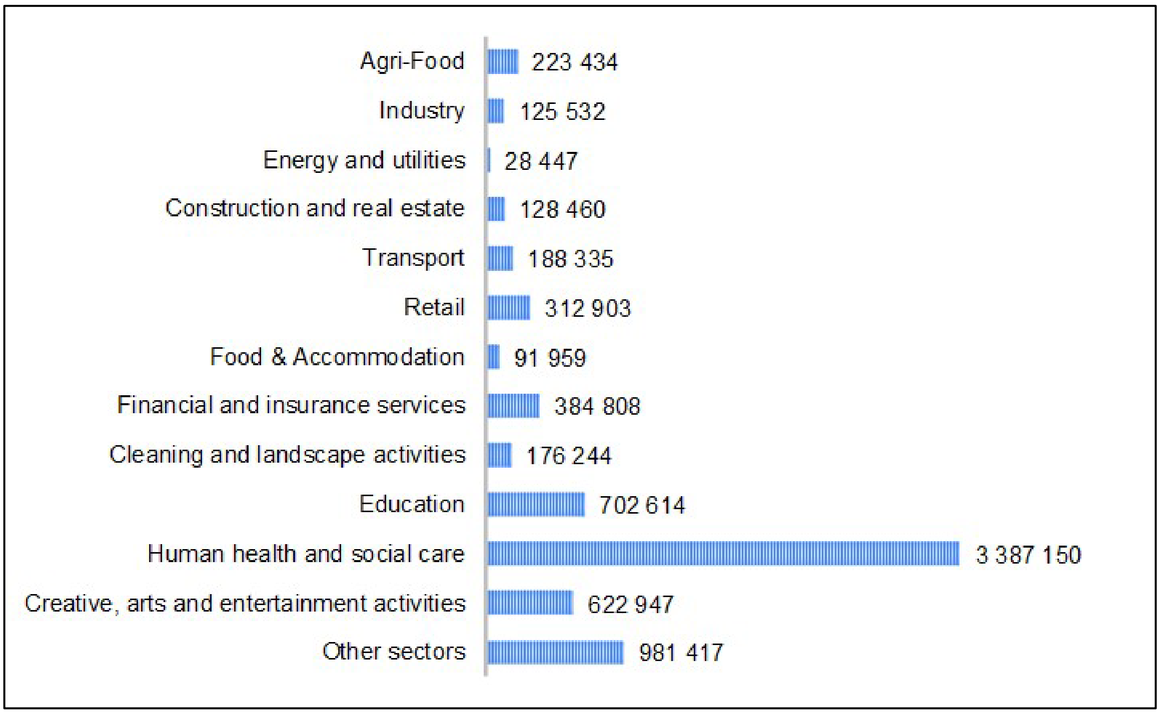
[58] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Statistical_classification_of_economic_activities_in_the_European_Community_(NACE)

Based on Member States with available data (Table 14), cooperatives have a multi-sectoral character, with agriculture and food, housing, retail trade and health and social services being the most important sectors. Mutual benefit societies are concentrated in the insurance industry, with some entities registered in other industries, probably in relation to the type of users (as in agri-food) or the type of services (as in the case of social and health services).

For associations and foundations, the analysis of the sector of activity is conditioned by the NACE classification of the generic category ‘Activities of membership organisations’ (included in the ‘other sectors’ category in Table 14), which includes most of these organisations. Outside this category, many organisations operate in the social domain, particularly in the housing sector, in education, but above all in social and health services as well as artistic and creative activities.

Finally, despite data unavailability in some Member States, it is interesting to note that – as shown in Figure 4 – at least 3.3 million people are employed in the health and social care sector, a further 702 000 in education and 622 000 in the arts, culture and entertainment.

Figure 4 – Number of persons employed in the EU social economy by sector[(a)]



Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.

(a) Data by NACE codes are available for Austria (only for cooperatives and mutual benefit societies), Belgium, Croatia, Czechia (partial data for cooperatives), Estonia, Finland (excluding mutual benefit societies), France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain (only for cooperatives, mutual benefit societies and, partially, for “other legal forms”). However, due to confidentiality, some data may not be published for all sectors in these countries. For Germany and Sweden, partial data were obtained for education, health and social work and housing by searching for matches in the available classifications. Given these limitations, these figures should be regarded as a conservative estimate or a lower threshold of the actual numbers.

4.6. The size of EU social economy entities

The European business fabric contains many small- and medium-sized enterprises. According to the Structural Business Statistics published by Eurostat, the large majority (99.8%[59]) of enterprises active in the EU non-financial business economy in 2021 were micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)[60].

In this respect, the data in Table 15 is not surprising, as it shows the vast majority of enterprises in the social economy are SMEs, with micro enterprises accounting for more than 93%.

Table 15 – Share of EU social economy entities by size

Country	Micro	Small	Medium	Large
Austria[(a)]	78.7	12.9	6.9	1.5
Belgium	67.2	23.5	6.7	2.6
Bulgaria[(b)]	88.6	11.4	0.0	0.0
Croatia[(a)]	98.0	1.9	0.2	0.0
Cyprus	94.3	4.5	1.2	0.0
Czechia	98.4	1.3	0.3	0.0
Denmark	89.8	1.2	8.9	0.0
Estonia[(a)]	99.1	0.8	0.1	0.0
Finland[(a)]	93.7	3.3	1.3	1.6
France[(a)]	80.0	16.1	3.7	0.3
Germany	94.0	4.3	1.3	0.4
Greece[(a)(c)]	90.0	8.5	1.3	0.1
Hungary	96.1	3.1	0.7	0.1
Ireland	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Italy	94.8	4.0	1.1	0.2
Latvia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

[59] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Structural_business_statistics_overview#Size_class_analysis

[60] Micro enterprises have less than 10 workers, small enterprises less than 50 and medium-sized enterprises less than 250. For a more detailed definition of SMEs, see: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en

Country	Micro	Small	Medium	Large
Lithuania	85.7	10.3	4.0	0.0
Luxembourg	86.8	9.7	2.7	0.8
Malta	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland(d)	58.3	33.3	8.3	0.0
Portugal(e)	87.4	10.0	2.6	n/a
Romania	98.3	1.5	0.2	0.0
Slovakia(d)	47.3	40.7	9.7	2.4
Slovenia(f)	96.0	3.2	0.8	0.1
Spain(g)	85.7	11.8	2.1	0.5
Sweden	98.8	1.0	0.2	0.0
EU-27(h)	**93.5**	**4.6**	**1.7**	**0.2**

Source: Various data sources. Please refer to the country factsheets in Appendix 3 for the sources and reference year for each Member State.

(a) There is no data available for the category 'other legal forms'.
(b) Medium enterprises counted as small due to confidentiality issues.
(c) Data on mutual benefit societies not available.
(d) Data available only for cooperatives.
(e) Large enterprises counted as medium due to confidentiality issues.
(f) Data on associations not available.
(g) Data on associations, foundations and mutual benefit societies not available.
(h) Based on available data.

FRANCE – Observatoire National de l'ESS – National Observatory[61]

The National Observatory of the Social and Solidarity Economy is promoted by the French social economy. In the 1960s the cooperative, mutual and associative movements organised themselves at regional and then national level and needed a statistical information system to promote their activities and guide their development as a sector. In the 1980s, they created a network of social and solidarity economy (SSE) observatories on the regional basis of the CRESS (Regional Chamber for the Social and Solidarity Economy). This network was articulated in the National Observatory of the Social and Solidarity Economy in 2008, led by SSE France, the representative platform of the French social economy.

With the adoption of the French law on the SSE in 2014, the production of statistics on the social economy became a public mandate. Indeed, this law institutionalises the production of statistics and confers a dual role on the regional centres of the CRESS and the representative body SSE France. They produce studies and statistics while also maintaining, updating and publishing the list of SSE enterprises. The production of statistics by the SSE observatories is a genuine partnership between the observatories and other producers of statistics. It is carried out in collaboration with the regional sections of the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE). It is also a collaboration with scientific and academic experts, in particular with researchers and statisticians specialised in the social economy integrated in ADDES, an association created in the 1980s to promote research on the SSE and produce a satellite account of the SSE in the national accounts. Data also comes from public and private bodies and entities, such as ministries, the Union de recouvrement des cotisations de Sécurité sociale et d'allocations familiales, the Mutualité sociale agricole and Banque de France. The statistical perimeter of the SSE was defined in 2008, when the National Observatory of the SSE was created by the national representatives of the SSE, the State and INSEE. This perimeter was not modified by the 2014 national SSE law, though the methodology to produce SSE data (sources, nomenclatures, fields, etc.) was articulated that year.

The National Observatory and its regional network have stable funding and expert staff. The funding comes from three sources: State funds, SSE members as well as contracts and projects. It has 17 observatories in the CRESS with a further 20 experts. The main works include: (a) L'Atlas national de l'ESS (ESS France), (b) National and regional overviews and connection notes, (c) Territorial diagnoses and overviews to support local authority SSE policies, (d) Thematic studies on working conditions, gender equality, youth and SSE, retirement pensions, economic models, sectors and affiliates, etc. (e) Territorial studies: SSE and rurality, SSE and political districts of the city, etc. (f) Studies by statutory form: overview of cooperatives, employment in foundations, associative commitment.

Reference:

- https://www.ess-france.org/observatoire-national-de-l-ess-0

[61] Thanks to information provided by Benjamin Roger, Responsable for the Observatoire national de l'ESS - ESS France.

5. Social economy and the Covid-19 crisis

5.1. Introduction

Just a few months following the emergence of this health crisis, the impacts of the Covid-19 were already profoundly devastating. As reported by the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, by mid-January 2021 the global Coronavirus pandemic had infected over 333 million individuals and claimed the lives of 5.6 million people. This was reminiscent of the Spanish flu outbreak at the onset of the 20th century. In the economic realm, the declines in GDP and widespread job losses in the initial months of the pandemic find parallels in the 1930s. How has the social economy navigated these turbulent times?

According to Walker et al. (2004), Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013), and Manca et al. (2017), resilience denotes a society's capacity to adapt to shocks while also leveraging them as opportunities for economic and social advancement. These studies outline three dimensions of social resilience in an ecosystem. Absorption capacity is the ability to confront and respond to shocks or structural changes, withstand their impact. Adaptation capacity, involves the flexibility to make incremental adjustments in the system. Transformation capacity, or transformability, comes into play when shocks become unmanageable, necessitating significant changes, including structural transformations, to sustain the existing system. This transformation capacity also introduces systemic learning, or the ability to use shocks as openings for social and economic progress. In addition to these three capacities, resilience encompasses the ability to maintain social well-being and continue sustainable human development. Ultimately, social resilience is intricately linked to the social and economic structure.

Numerous reports studied the impact of Covid on the economy as a whole[62] or from a territorial or policy point of view[63]. They sometimes mention the interactions, reactions, resilience and adaptive strategies of various types of social economy organisations/ enterprises in this crisis. However, most of these studies are either national or regional[64], since the answers depended on the institutional context, or on public policies (OECD, 2020). Otherwise, reports covering the Covid-19 crisis may have one chapter dedicated to social economy entities, and recent ones about the social economy may have one sub-section dedicated to Covid. These studies are limited to one type of social economy entity[65], since they were mostly conducted by an umbrella federation or activist network, and often only about their members. They do not give a general comprehensive picture and do not compare the social economy to the rest of the economy.

There are few studies related to the reaction of social economy organisations to the Covid-19 crisis, and in turn to Covid's impact on the social economy ecosystem, especially from a more analytical and comprehensive perspective and at European level. These studies often were commissioned/supported by European institutions or stem from the OECD (see Appendix 4). In general, they look at the topic from a more general macro-economic perspective (Filippi et al., 2023) or study the recent evolution of the social economy in general. Nevertheless, thanks to the expertise of national researchers, this study offers many references to national studies (with very varied examples/illustrations) in Appendix 4.

[62] For instance, a study for the European Parliament (Smit et al., 2023) acknowledges that very little data is available on the social economy, and briefly refers to digital cooperative platforms (https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2022/platform-cooperatives-ensure-caring-sharing-economy) in a section about new working practices.

[63] See e.g.: TERRCOV-ESPON (2022); Böhme and Besana (2020).

[64] For example, for Italy: Maino (2022); Tortia and Troisi (2021); Borzaga and Tallarini (2021a; 2021b).

[65] For example, covering France: Bidet (2020); Archambault (2020).

The social economy sector's resilience to Covid is notably depicted in an OECD Policy Paper (OECD, 2020) stating that 'The social economy is mitigating impacts of Covid-19 crisis and complementing government responses. […] The social economy reacted quickly to address the urgent social needs arising from the Covid-19 crisis, helping mitigate crisis effects. […] The Covid-19 crisis has allowed the social economy to demonstrate its true capacity and assets in addressing market and state failures'.

This section presents the analysis of the impact the pandemic had on the social economy, which played a special role in the fields of welfare. It presents good practices and initiatives from the social economy, often in collaboration with public authorities, to counterbalance or mitigate the effects of the health crisis. The analysis is predominantly based on primary research such as interviews with European and national stakeholders.

5.2. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the social economy

From the literature review, several studies highlight particular features of social economy enterprises that deployed their full potential to face uncertainties and crises such as Covid. For instance, mutual benefit societies, especially in the health sector, acted promptly vis-à-vis their members and showed their ability to renew themselves and their services. Fully in line with their values, they very often associated with municipalities and other civil society stakeholders to rapidly offer – free of charge (with the help of foundations and public funds, but through their own workforce) – protection devices and advice to the most vulnerable (Maino, 2022).

Cooperatives being member- and user-centric, focus on their values and principles (such as democratic participation) and pay attention to their local area, adapting to the emerging needs of their members (ICA-EURICSE, 2021). They also rapidly reorganise their activity and business plan to keep their workers and avoid (partial or temporary) layoffs, but also provide new services and goods (ICA-EURICSE, 2020). Furthermore, cooperatives are embedded in a movement, which makes it easier to share good practices and enhances, through the sense of 'community', the development of local and even international partnerships and solidarity initiatives (Billiet et al., 2021).

It is necessary to recognise that it is very difficult to measure or evaluate the effects of just the Covid pandemic on the social economy. Most of the time the health crisis accelerated, accentuated or boosted development within an organisation or enterprise, based on initiatives and projects already in the design phase and along pre-existing strategic lines. Institutional settings adapted because of the Covid pandemic, at policy or national/regional level, and had collateral effects on the social economy, as they did on any other sector (e.g. teleworking). Social cooperatives (especially in Italy, where the Covid-pandemic started in the EU) played a pioneering role in testing technological devices and services to support citizens and families. They were quicker to react than local public authorities, thanks to their operational flexibility, and they created new ad hoc informational and support networks (Bernardoni et al., 2022).

Basing on the interviews carried out for this study, Covid-19 has had a major impact on all the countries considered even if the effects vary in magnitude (for example, according to a survey of ENSIE, revenues for work integration social enterprises (WISEs) decreased by 80% in France and Slovakia, but 'only' 29% in Ireland and 15% in the Netherlands, when 45% of companies had to close temporarily, or partially in Belgium. This resulted in more than just a drop in revenue and partial or total closure (ENSIE, 2020).

Four examples refer to Portugal, Germany, Sweden and Latvia.

In Portugal, thanks to data from the satellite accounts (INE Portugal, 2023), quantitative impact was measured as follows. In 2020, contrary to the national economy, that registered a decrease of 5.8% in Gross Added Value (GVA) and 2.2% in employment compared to

2019, the Social economy GVA and employment increased slightly (by 0.4% and 0.3% respectively). Associations with altruistic goals together with the community and self-management subsectors created more than 60% of the social economy GVA. Health and social services provided the most GVA and employment. Four elements emerged from surveys of civil society organisations and public entities: financial impact with increased expenditure, difficulty in sustaining the social response (fewer users), need to adapt the organisation to new routines (teleworking, cleaning and disinfection of spaces, etc.), and dealing with professional burnout which had wide-ranging and significant impact on human resources, especially in care and welfare services.

In Berlin, linked to the work of the Paritätischer Wohlfahrts-Verband Berlin (Parity Welfare Association), welfare organisations faced less funding but at the same time more people isolated from social services. They had to innovate and the importance of volunteers was highlighted, as they passed food in through windows. Digital tools were invaluable, but training had to be provided urgently and in compliance with health regulations, as skills were virtually non-existent, confirming recent studies (Chaves Avila and Soler, 2023).

In Sweden, many WISEs had substantial turnover from selling services to the public sector with a focus on helping unemployed people move closer to paid employment. Several of these enterprises went bankrupt. Associations also encountered enormous difficulties because they were not allowed to carry out their regular activities. This is shown by a large survey (relating to 2020 and 2021[66]), conducted by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society. Around 80% of the associations saw a large negative impact on their possibility to provide activities to members (and others). Around 40% saw notably fewer members and around 50% faced a significant negative impact on their financial situation. On the other hand, much of the social economy was not affected negatively by the pandemic (including renewable energy organisations), and for some the pandemic had a large positive impact. One example is a large cooperative grocery store chain that performed very well during the pandemic.

According to the survey on social enterprises in Latvia (Safege Baltija, 2020), most were extremely, very or somewhat worried about the impact of the Covid-pandemic on their social enterprises. 46% worked in limited mode during the crisis (mid-March to late May 2020) while 28% closed in that period and 20% could work normally. Some respondents noted that the crisis hit them severely since their activities depended on buyers and the number of orders practically zeroed. Even when the quarantine was lifted, it was not possible to return to the initial figures. 70 % of social enterprises reported their revenues declined during the crisis (e.g. from mid-March to late May 2020) compared to the previous period – for 43%, sales decreased by more than 50%; for 26%, by more than 75%. The same issues appeared for the country's associations. As they did not have any financial reserves to cover increased costs, many organisations claim their working conditions deteriorated because of a higher workload, in addition to the stress of the health situation.

Two key features were pointed out by national researchers during the interviews with national and European stakeholders: digitalisation as well as health and care services.

Digitalisation

Covid exacerbated existing inequalities. It revealed the digital gap not only in equipment, digital literacy and internet service subscription, but also in housing conditions (over-crowded with confinement and unfit for families to learn and work from home, with no or only one computer). However and everywhere in Europe, increased use of digital tools and communication with organisations' members are positive outcomes of the Covid-crisis, but this is nuanced. If online meetings allow more participants, this does not mean more participation by all in the democratic governance advocated by social economy entities. This

[66] https://www.mucf.se/publikationer/ett-ar-med-nya-utmaningar

is especially so for sensitive and difficult issues. Some participants may be reluctant to take the floor and engage with others online, whereas they may have done so more easily during a break in a physical meeting. However, such behavioural dynamics are not social economy specific.

The research team did not find data or studies analysing varied or different effects due to the pandemic in the speed or level of digitalisation adaptation, nor in the types of digital tools and services offered, between the social economy and the rest of the economy[67]. Varied effects are noticeable depending on the size of entities and existing digitalisation, but these are not traceable to the social economy sector as such. However, many local and sectoral examples show better integration of digital communication within social economy enterprises and organisations, and the accelerated use of digital solutions[68]. Nonetheless, according to the survey led by Social Economy Europe (SEE, 2020), most social economy organisations recognised the need for digital retraining and up-skilling employees, which takes time. Adaptation to the lockdowns necessitated quick reactions and resilience, which was seen in the most agile enterprises. However, social economy organisations and enterprises needed to find voluntary skilled support in an emergency. This very much depended on the connections and networks of the management and boards of those entities.

Furthermore, there is a downside to accelerated digitalisation, worsening the digital divide: post-Covid, many services remain accessible only online. Even for digital literates, it is difficult to reach essential services (including education, social protection, healthcare – including mental care) and public administration. Thus, poor and less skilled persons simply abandon their rights[69].

Health and care provision

A lesson from the crisis is that public health measures and prevention (e.g. communication and convincing people to wear masks) supported by local social economy organisations, are less costly for society as a whole than Covid-infected patients. In Germany, for example, social economy welfare associations (including the Red Cross), worked closely with the public social security welfare system and provided almost all local services linked to Covid measures/vaccines, etc. Another positive aspect is that new delivery modes of 'health' services have proved doable/feasible via 'tele-consultation/support'.

However, mental-health issues and over-burdened staff as a consequence of Covid was underestimated in many social economy entities, because serving people and beneficiaries was the goal even at the expense of one's own health. Even today, several entities (including public agencies) face a shortage of personnel, especially in the social care sector.

The next two sections showcase what can be learnt and highlighted for the social economy. Illustrative cases in boxes (also with a view to further dissemination) present findings from the data collection or the interviews.

[67] In the retail sector, temperature controls at the entrance of stores, installing people counting technologies to control access to outlets, were for instance implemented in cooperative retail stores; but also in mainstream businesses. Online food-shopping with pick-up or delivery systems to minimize customer contact, while supporting smaller rural stores, enabled these to provide a much larger range of products distributed from warehouses (e.g. the Czech E-COOP project). See: https://www.eurocoop.coop/news/325-One-Year-into-the-Pandemic-Consumer-Co-operatives-Stocktaking.html

[68] See, for instance, the report by EASPD 'Going online' (2021).

[69] For example, in Belgium 300 000 persons do not access their social security rights; this is 12% of those entitled to full benefits (which then, through a special BIM ('Bénéficiaire de l'intervention majorée', i.e. subject to additional benefits), automatically gives them access to free additional healthcare support). This unduly increases poverty.

5.3. Reactivity of the social economy ecosystem to the Covid-crisis

The responsiveness of social economy entities is certainly the most important element, as highlighted in ad hoc studies and during the interviews. Whatever the country, the reactivity of social economy entities (perhaps due to their smaller size and/or the staff commitment) contrasts the cumbersomeness of government services.

Below are four illustrations from different sectors, featuring the necessity to partner with local stakeholders in a holistic approach to the issue. However, the research is not sufficient to confirm that the social economy can contribute in the long term to a fundamental change in providing health and social services, or in short circuit food distribution channels. The social economy is a complementary provider. For instance, unless historically fully embedded in public health systems and co-financed by social security, social economy organisations/enterprises and health mutuals serve their members and their target audience but are not dedicated to replacing public health systems. Nonetheless, on a local basis, notably via local producer cooperatives or through the accredited 'maisons médicales' in French-speaking Belgium[70] or third sector proximity health facilities in Italy (Galera, 2020), holistic services can be provided by the social economy for the local community.

In Romania, there was a need for computers for disadvantaged children (250 000 without access to computers and internet for online schooling). A social economy entity (Ateliere Fără Frontiere) continues to collect and recycle IT equipment for these children after Covid.

ROMANIA – Enabling access to digital education to reintegrate socially and economically excluded communities

Ateliere Fără Frontiere (AFF) is a non-profit organisation, established in 2008, which integrates people from vulnerable backgrounds into the labour market in Romania, in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way. Dăm Click pe România is a programme of the Ateliere Fără Frontiere association that aims to digitise education in Romania and reduce the educational gap by equipping educational organisations operating in marginalised rural or urban areas with digital infrastructure. These include kindergartens, schools, high schools, NGOs and public institutions with a social character. During the Covid crisis, a greater effort to collect and recycle IT equipment was made to enable remote schooling for as many children as possible. Indeed schools were closed and it was estimated that 250 000 children in Romania did not have access to computers and internet for remote schooling. Since 2008, Ateliere Fără Frontiere has donated over 27 000 refurbished computers. In total, 3 163 educational organisations have benefited from equipment in the last 15 years, the equivalent of more than 10% of all schools in Romania. Help was also provided to install the material and give minimum training, especially to children whose parents were not able to do so.

References:

- https://www.educlick.ro/ and Laboratorul de Solidaritate.

In Latvia, as in numerous other countries, social economy enterprises and organisations have seen their workload increasing significantly since the Covid-crisis. Many organisations claim their working conditions have deteriorated. This refers to increased working hours, workload, less salary, social guarantees, higher taxes, working environment (due to remote

[70] https://www.maisonmedicale.org/maison-medicale

work), etc. In general, conditions for associations and foundations have deteriorated in Latvia and representatives of the organisations are often overloaded, increasing the risk for burnout. Certain organisations have indicated that some of their participants have given up working in the social economy. This is where volunteers come into play more and more.

LATVIA – The importance of social enterprises and volunteers in caring for the most disadvantaged people

The volunteer movement ‘Paliec-majas.lv’ (Stay-at-home.lv) was created by two social enterprises – Sonido and Visas iespējas. It tackled challenges caused by Covid-19. Volunteers organised community support networks, ensuring that vulnerable people such as the elderly, people with disabilities and people in financial difficulties received the services they needed (from delivering food and medicine to running errands and providing emotional support). Volunteers worked with medical professionals, hospitals and health care facilities, offering their support in various areas. They also worked with government agencies, non-profit organisations, businesses and local communities to ensure a unified response to the crisis. Sonido created a telephone support line ‘Uzklausīsim!’ (‘Let's listen!’) so anyone who felt angry, disappointed, etc. during the pandemic, could call and express their negative feelings. People could choose the form of emotional release – swearing or complaining. This was important because during the pandemic emotional tension increased significantly and people vented their anger in internet comments and on their colleagues, family members and random passers-by. Building on the positive experience with the conversation line for lonely people ‘Parunāsim?’ (‘Let's talk?’), Sonido offered a solution – to call and unload accumulated emotions in a safe way. A call cost 60 cents per minute. People could communicate in Russian or Latvian and curse or complain. The operator could engage and answer. The Sonido team was psychologically prepared and trained to perform such work because Sonido is a social work integration enterprise that provides call center services employing people with disabilities.

References:

- https://paliec-majas.lv/ka-latvijas-brivpratigo-kustiba-apvienojas-pret-covid-19/

Foundations have a ‘quiet’ and long-term supporting role, complementing the financial resources of social economy enterprises and organisations providing services at local/ regional level. In Italy, where the Covid-crisis started and entailed a very heavy and dramatic death toll, foundations supported the health sector where they could.

ITALY – The importance of foundations in the complementary financing of healthcare in times of crisis

The Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo took immediate action to tackle social, educational and health emergencies triggered by the pandemic. Emergency health measures in the Turin region were immediately implemented with EUR 5 million to help Piedmont regional council provide additional intensive care and high-dependency care beds; EUR 3 million for a temporary healthcare area (under a multi-year agreement with Piedmont regional council), including EUR 1.1 million to set up a Covid hospital within the C. Sperino Ophthalmic Hospital complex in Turin; EUR 300 000 for ‘Medicina a Misura di Donna’, a non-profit foundation, to purchase masks and other personal protective equipment for Sant’Anna hospital in Turin; up to EUR 880 000 to purchase personal protective equipment and adapt Regina Margherita paediatric oncology outpatient units. Other foundations, such the ‘Fondazione della Comunità Bresciana’, launched fundraising campaigns for the local healthcare system in other regions of Italy (see ‘resilience story #

40' in Borzaga and Musella, 2020) to increase the number of intensive care beds in hospitals and cover the costs of transport organisations for increased services (such as disinfecting vehicles as well as protecting employees and volunteers).

References:

- https://www.compagniadisanpaolo.it/en/what-we-do/covid-19-emergency/

In Spain, as in many other places, culture was way to mitigate Covid-consequences. Here also, social economy workers deployed their action capacities, the closest possible to the population, especially in rural and less-populated areas, where lockdown measures forced many social economy initiatives and facilities to close. Ceasing subsidies to social economy projects and entities, while subsidised activities were no longer performed, also left cultural sector workers jobless; these then re-invented their actions.

SPAIN – Social economy initiatives in the cultural sector to face the lock-down or numerous facilities closing

The umbrella organisation CEPES[71], the country-wide Spanish business organisation representing the social economy, collected practices set up by their members and showcased the action of over 400 enterprises/organisations to help and support citizens during Covid, through multiple solidarity initiatives made possible by the action, engagement and volunteering of their members and workers. In the cultural sector, especially in rural and less-populated areas, social economy initiatives proved valuable, so people 'confined at home' did not feel completely abandoned. Usual activities and action modes were digitalised and provided activities at unusual business hours, also to 'emotionally' support children and elderly persons without 'normal' societal relationships anymore. Examples of actions and initiatives are: collective video-watching followed by interactive debates to explain the situation and how to 'get over it'; 'dystopian reading to illuminate the days of confinement'; online games to provide an alternative vision of society; creative online video animation and workshops for children (notably with disabilities); performing (theatre/music) together online; cooperative workshops for a sustainable society; online support calls to prevent 'uneven quarantines' in favour of Moroccan strawberry pickers without water in their migrant camps; culturally documenting and featuring inequalities in quarantine; showcasing and collectively sharing Covid-daily life through art, films and theatre plays; daily 'group-notebooks', collective writing and shared sequel novels.

References:

- CIRIEC-España
- Confederación Empresarial Española de Economía Social (CEPES) and Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, Gobierno de España (2021).

[71] The CEPES network groups some 30 confederations and specific business groups, representing cooperatives, labour societies, mutual societies, insertion companies, special employment centres, fishermen guilds and associations of the disability sector, with more than 200 support structures at regional level.

5.4. Social economy contributions in times of crises

This section highlights lessons that can be learnt from social economy contributions in times of crises. An important contribution is complementing the provision of public services through partnerships with public authorities, to have greater capacity, as well as for the social economy sector to be able to rely on existing infrastructure to deploy activities and services. Such partnerships often rely on interpersonal relations and long-forged cooperation at local/regional level between social economy entities and public authorities, but also between the social economy and the mainstream private sector (bringing technical, scaling[72] or funding capacities). Those partnerships are constitutive elements of the 'collective social economy ecosystem' that is enhanced in case of a supportive institutional framework. Public authorities, sometimes due to budgetary constraints or inability to correctly serve the specific needs to be addressed – whether for reasons of individual/geographical/sectoral particularities –, have given way to increased supply of services by social economy organisations. The latter, basing on their intrinsic characteristics, but also on autonomous action modes, have entered into play where they thought they could have a useful role and impactful action to serve some particular population segments. Often, this service provision starts with pilot projects/endeavours/initiatives that are experimented at small scale, before being enlarged or replicated in another sector or location. Due to legislative and institutional contexts, it proves sometimes less costly to provide services via the social economy sector than via civil servants (see e.g. the situation with the Belgian health mutuals acting as an auxiliary arm of the State). Nonetheless, the ad hoc needed funding arrangements of this dispersed service provision by the social economy sector, especially at local level, are not always easy to implement or to guarantee in the long run (notably due to legislation constraints), especially when the size of the population to serve increases, or when the project expands.

The social economy lives and functions through people and communities acting together in a collective way, thanks to many volunteers. Social economy organisations do not have the means and capacity – nor is it their role – to take responsibility of State functions. However, they do partner in the in the organisation and delivery of welfare and can complement social and socio-economic functions and generate important benefits for society (e.g. social inclusion, sustainable development, territorial cohesion, social resilience, population well-being), on a national, regional, local and autonomous basis.

In a few countries/regions, such as Lithuania, Malta, Spain, and Wallonia for instance, national/regional recovery or sectoral policy plans did formerly associate and/or enhance social economy entities in the management of Covid-crisis or the post-Covid recovery.

Below are some illustrations of this co-creation and activity.

In Ireland, the social enterprise FoodCloud went straight into distributing surplus food to the underprivileged during the pandemic. While surplus food distribution is not a long-term solution to food poverty, isolation or social exclusion, it can help resilience within communities in times of economic and social shocks. The current cost of living crisis makes this as important as ever.

[72] E.g. in the retail sector: Auchan, a French hypermarket (owned to 15% by its salaried workers) partners with ANDES, a French network of social solidarity grocery shops, to provide precarious and vulnerable students, having lost their student jobs because of the pandemic, with daily meal solidarity vouchers. See: https://andes-france.com/epiceries-solidaires-precarite-etudiante/

IRELAND – Improving Surplus Food Distribution (SFD) in Ireland: the case of FoodCloud

The agri-food system needs to develop more initiatives to tackle food waste (European Commission, 2023c). Ireland's composting and anaerobic digestion per head has increased moderately since 2016 but remained below the EU-27 average in 2020 at 70 kg per head vs 97 kg. During the pandemic, many households saw their resources dwindle and access to food become more complicated. There was already a social enterprise that worked to tackle the twin issues of food waste and food security: FoodCloud. It did this by distributing surpluses from the food industry to a network of community and voluntary organisations (CVOs). The pandemic led to an acute rise in the demand for food from FoodCloud. The impact of the pandemic restrictions revealed many issues related to food security, but also created new challenges for individuals and groups. In response CVOs organised new food distribution programmes and adapted their existing food services to help build and maintain community resilience. During the peak of the pandemic in April and May 2020, FoodCloud more than doubled the amount of food distributed to over 60 tonnes per week. By the end of the year, it had distributed 77% more food than in 2019 to over 650 charities and community groups across Ireland (FoodCloud, 2021).

The challenges were enormous because they 'could not close' during the pandemic. In a survey, Share et al. (2022) point to the various challenges faced by CVOs and their community members when running an SFD project or receiving food support. These include financial and resource costs of managing volunteers, food safety, transport/fuel, and donations of unsuitable foods. By 'opening the box' of what happens to surplus food once it enters the 'second food chain', Share et al. (2022) show 'that the work of SFD often involves much more than the receipt and distribution of food, that successful SFD is ultimately about relationships, connection and community. It also shows that while we know that local SFD food projects will not 'fix' a broken global food system or solve food poverty, they do provide examples of responsive, community-led and sustainable innovations which can become the basis for grass-roots action in times of crisis and beyond.' Given the accelerated climate and food security crises, FoodCloud has continued and even extended its projects (in England, Czechia and Slovakia), redistributing larger quantities of food year after year.

References: Interviews.

In Belgium, exceptional mobilisation of mutual insurance companies enabled continuous home care (nurses, family helpers and professional caregivers) despite the risks involved. Mutuals also took the full reimbursement of mental care and psychological assistance on their own budget. This continues today and still covers from the first euro spent. As another illustration, trade union associations (with workers usually helping and managing unemployment allowance schemes) assisted the state and national public administrations to enrol hundreds of thousands of workers entitled to Covid allowances, and ensure they were paid rapidly.

BELGIUM – The role of health mutuals: Solidaris

In managing the health crisis, the health mutual Solidaris has been on all fronts. It has been a social and political actor in the media, adapted its products and developed new services to respond to the social and economic consequences of the crisis. Solidaris managed to avoid being shut down, working with its network of associations and frontline workers to maintain access to quality care, and with trade unions to value the work of all care providers during the crisis. Four axes have been identified in the Solidaris response to the crisis: the inter-mutual response to tracing, reinforcing the presence of the mutual insurance company with its affiliates, providing responses to psychological emergencies and the deterioration of mental health, and finally assuring price/fare security. Only the first axis is briefly explained here but other axes are detailed in Sak and Schoenmaeckers (2022). This includes psychological consultations extended to the entire population and the number of annual services increased from 8 to 12 as well as other measures to facilitate reimbursement pre- and post-hospitalisation.

For the tracing aspect, information about index patients (Covid-19+) arrived electronically on a platform. Call centre agents used scripts to ask questions and compile a list of their contacts. These contacts were then called to communicate instructions and, if necessary, a code to carry out a PCR test. A certificate of quarantine (official document) was sent to them. 'Communities' such as nursing homes, schools, occupational medicine companies were also contacted if necessary so they could take measures at their level. If the call centre was unable to reach a person within 48 hours or if the person refused to cooperate, a mutualist agent was sent to their home. This personal and physical contact was extremely important to explain and convince. As a proximity actor, mutuals have been particularly committed to providing field agents. The arrangements were flexible and evolved according to the epidemic. The system started with 400 agents in call centres and 150 agents for field visits. This increased in July 2020 by 90 FTE 'call centre agents' and 8 FTE 'field agents'.

References: Interviews.

In France, there were many Tiers Lieux (third places), especially in rural and less populated areas, which developed rapidly, as soon as confinement measures started to be lifted. These offered local spaces/places for people to meet again and organise local production, exchanges and service. This was connected to Fab Labs, where masks were produced early in the pandemic. The Tiers Lieux also favoured the development of 'commons' and digital services to people in need, e.g. older adults (without digital skills) or persons without digital access. The Tiers Lieux continued after the end of Covid measures thanks to volunteers and the goodwill of municipalities.

FRANCE – Third places as a local response to shortages

A 'Third Place' is a physical or virtual space where people with a variety of skills and abilities can come together, even if they are not necessarily destined to do so. At first glance, it is an umbrella term for coworking spaces, Fab Labs, Repair Cafés, shared gardens and other shared habitats or open businesses. They have developed in this era of digitalisation and are designed to encourage exchanges and meetings, to create value (economic, social, educational, etc.). Third places help to combat the digital divide and contribute to social and professional integration. Almost 40% of them are cooperatives or associations. In the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region (south-west of France) in particular, an open community of producers, tinkerers and seamstresses has set to work in a decentralised way to design free and open-source solutions to meet local needs. This was achieved in an emergency reaction to the Covid surge with the health and protection measures as well as daily issues to face, and in a form of citizen generosity. Two examples[73], one in healthcare and the other in food supplies, are illustrative. L'Établi, in the municipality of Soustons (Landes), provided protective visors for healthcare workers and those in contact with the public, both by producing visors, working with other Fab Labs in a network and joining in the national drive spearheaded by the France Tiers Lieux association. The two production processes (laser cutting visor and 3D printing) could

[73] https://coop.tierslieux.net/les-tiers-lieux-se-mobilisent-face-au-coronavirus/

result in almost 200 visors a day. Alongside this initiative, others in different fields have proliferated. The volunteer members of the Graine de Coop Third Place have also been working hard to link producers and consumers by setting up ‘producer to plate’ distribution for local residents in the Gironde countryside. Using an online form, residents can order products from a range offered by local producers. They can put together their ‘shopping basket’ over four days, after which Graine de Coop places orders with the producers. Deliveries were made every Thursday to the Third Place car park (to comply with health regulations). The volunteer team also collected payment from local residents and paid the producers.

References: Interviews.

In Germany, the public welfare system embedded in local delivery with the Freie Wohlfahrtspflege that are organisations delivering non-statutory welfare directly linked and following up on the social security and public health system. Large umbrella federations and multiple organisations with their own autonomous structures, workers and volunteers deliver services and initiatives to the benefit of citizens.

GERMANY – Missing infrastructure: What needs to be learnt from the Covid crisis

‘In addition to the great achievements in the Corona crisis, it also became clear that most non-governmental welfare providers do not have solid disaster-proof infrastructure’. An interesting analysis in Germany, based on a survey, recognises the insufficient equipment and lack of preparation not only of the German government, but also of large non-statutory welfare federations and associations. These parts of the social economy sector, such as the German Red Cross, are key to the German welfare system. But being able to serve the entire population with public welfare and services of general interest is not the role nor the main feature of the social economy. The social economy is and should remain autonomous in its action and operation scale. Ideally, public welfare organisations should partner with the public authorities, putting together competences and societal engagement as well as collective ‘co-action’ to make the most of existing capital and infrastructure, bringing a broad cross-sector outcome. To cope with emergency measures such as distributing masks, testing and vaccination facilities, social workers, medical staff and Red Cross volunteers co-decided measures and rescue packages, and partnered with local administrations, cities, social economy organisations and enterprises. Together, they set up tents and emergency medical facilities to be as close as possible to the citizens, so circulation was as geographically limited as possible. Thanks to the local action of social economy entities and many volunteers, communication and contact setting were efficient to contact everyone and ensure that instructions were scrupulously enacted and respected by all. Alone, however, social economy entities could not deploy their full potential. It turned out in Germany that mainly women ‘went back home’ to take care of children and the elderly and volunteered. This was correlated to the drop in female employment during lock-downs, which negatively impacted social service provision. Finally, digitalisation as a tool needs to be further developed in social economy organisations, who must also train their users/beneficiaries to make better use of it, to better service their target groups. Entities that were already equipped fared much better than those having to set up remote work. Much more long-term investment in digital equipment, devices and training is needed.

References: Interviews; Steinke (2020); Kreidenweis and Wolff (2022)

In the Netherlands, Publieke Werken is an initiative by creative entrepreneurs to provide an alternative, outdoor exhibition to compensate for the lockdown and closure of cultural amenities. This initiative was supported by a municipal crisis service desk and charitable funds. The initiative met great enthusiasm among artists in the city, as well as among inhabitants and the local authorities. New rounds were organised during new lockdowns, and a discussion started on replacing commercial advertisements with artistic content on a more structural and lasting basis.

THE NETHERLANDS – Publieke Werken, how a citizens' initiative kept culture alive during and after the health crisis

Publieke Werken was initiated by innovative entrepreneurs with experience of community and solidarity projects in Rotterdam. Originating as a city-wide exhibition during the summer of 2020, it capitalised on the abundance of empty billboards resulting from the closure of cultural venues and the absence of advertisements for events, concerts and performances. Inviting many artists based in Rotterdam to showcase their work on these billboards, Publieke Werken aimed to fill the void left by shuttered galleries. Initially conceived as a temporary response to the Covid-19 crisis, the initiative garnered such fervent support from artists, residents, funding bodies and local authorities that plans were quickly laid for its continuation. Indeed, when the second lockdown hit in the winter and early spring of 2021, Publieke Werken once again adorned the city's billboards with creative displays. The individuals driving Publieke Werken were well-connected within Rotterdam's cultural sphere, adept at fostering collaboration with public authorities as well as securing financial backing and locations throughout the city. With an established organisation and a clear vision of cultivating a city that prioritised cultural vibrancy over commercial advertising, they exemplified the fusion of social capital, transformational leadership, and organisational resources.

References: Boonstra and Rommens (2023)

Another noteworthy example can be found in Italy (Bologna). A partnership between the city council, SMEs, a foundation, public libraries, a bikers' union and riders emerged during the Covid period to deliver products from small shops. Workers in the cooperative are the riders delivering items and books to places/small shops close to where the customers live. The riders/workers are actively involved in governance of the cooperative and in partnership with the city for territorial coverage. Covid was a booster for this project which was already in development. It remains active today (Consegne etiche).

Also in the retail sector, some illustrations prove the adaptability and agility of social economy entreprises, in particular cooperatives:

- In Bulgaria, the nation-wide online platform Coop Care centralised updated information regarding the Covid-19 and facilitated the delivery of basic goods through cooperatives, notably via vehicles serving as mobile retail units in areas where there are no permanently operating stores (Eurocoop, 2021).
- During the crisis, some retail cooperatives' behavior illustrates increasing solidarity patterns emerging from belonging to a (global) movement. For example, Italian retail cooperatives, having experienced increased revenues during the pandemic, decided to donate their surplus to support local community cooperatives, which did not have any income due to the lockdown, as well as to public hospitals. This support was crucial to maintain a net of local (social) cooperatives. Solidarity also took place at the international level. When Bulgarian retail cooperatives faced a national shortage of cleaning detergents and disinfectants during the pandemic's first wave,

Coop Italy responded to their call by delivering promptly, despite their stock being critically challenged (Bacq and Lumpkin, 2021).

- Cooperation among cooperatives resulted in entrepreneurial initiatives, such as Pwiic, a platform cooperative, partnering with Multipharma, a cooperative pharmacy in Belgium, to set up an online community that brings together supply and demand for assistance and mutual services at the local level by and for citizens (Billiet et al., 2021).
- Other partnering initiatives stem from smaller cooperatives such as bio-producers or local breweries, sharing e-commerce platforms or delivery modes (e.g. via bicycle couriers cooperatives for deliveries[74]), in order to share and reduce costs.

5.5. Conclusions

Covid-19 disproportionately affected the poorest segments in Europe. This has been confirmed during the interviews with representatives of European networks and umbrella organisations such as the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES), Social Economy Europe (SEE), and Social Services Europe (SSE). These organisations also published papers and reports on this issue[75].

At the EU level, several analyses and publications highlight that the pandemic negatively affected service provision to persons in need, but showed the innovation potential of digitalisation in the sector. This includes online learning/training for workers and service target groups. However, now the Covid crisis is over, budgetary constraints mean there is uncertainty about the future development of social and care services, as well as other initiatives and activities fostering inclusion, wellbeing and community solidarity. Moreover, the overarching policy interest and investment in the green and digital transition do not necessarily focus on the people most in need and/or adequately tailor policies and action to prevent rising inequalities. Green and digital transitions need information, awareness raising, accessibility tools, capabilities, in order to effectively reach those most deprived and vulnerable, but also those located in rural and less-populated areas. Social economy enterprises and organisations, thanks notably to their local anchorage and their dedication to sustainability, do act in this sense and can have a real impact to prevent, where possible, and mitigate negative effects of the climate crisis and of the digital divide.

There is also the perception of increased vulnerabilities for citizens who might need better access to social and support services, especially in times of a sanitary crisis. The social economy sector provides a holistic understanding and approach, helping to access multiple services/rights and accompanying those unable to get access to services and rights they are entitled to. In several countries, public administrations also strive to simplify procedures and make rights more automatically accessible to persons in need (notably by asking less administrative proof of entitlement). This results in increased performance for public authorities, their agencies/administrations and frontline workers. The increased efficiency enables social economy entities to concentrate more on their core projects.

However, the picture varies across countries. In terms of partnerships with public services/ governments, some social economy entities (as in Berlin) seem to have increased financial

[74] See: https://cafebabel.com/fr/article/vivre-avec-le-virus-grace-a-la-biere-et-au-velo-5ed6ce5af723b313619e35e1/

[75] See EAPN (2020; 2023); ENSIE (2020; 2021); SEE (2020). See also: the joint position paper 'COVID-19 and Social Services: what role for the EU?' (https://easpd.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/joint_position_paper.pdf); the SEE open letter (https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/2020/04/08/social-economy-europe-open-letter-overcoming-covid-19-time-for-solidarity/); REVES in 2020 (https://www.revesnetwork.eu/covid-19-cities-regions-social-economy-enterprises-take-action/) and the EASPD reports on the pandemic effects on service provision for persons with disabilities (EASPD 2020a; 2020b; 2020c).

resources post-crisis, as the public authorities have realised the importance of social and care-related activities for citizens. There is also an acceleration and mainstreaming of public/social economy partnerships in a number of Italian cities. Elsewhere, as in Finland, no particular partnerships with the social economy sector were maintained after the Covidcrisis. In other countries/regions, social economy entities ask not just to finance ad hoc actions during a crisis, but to ensure that the action, in response to recognised needs, consolidates and operates over the long term; this is the essence of an ethical partnership process. In times of crisis, social economy entities have sometimes responded more quickly, despite the economic and financial risks and the extra workload. It is important to note that the social economy sector has many small entities acting locally, next to very large structures (e.g. mutuals or large cooperatives especially in the insurance/financial sector). The front-line workers of small entities were those ones mostly engaged with the population during Covid. Any SME with little capacity, including a lack of personnel and financial resources, finds it difficult to provide products and services to many people or a widespread clientele. This said, the social economy has never had the goal to replace the public sector having the role of guaranteeing the provision and delivering of public and general interest services to all citizens and enterprises. Social economy entities supplement and complement the public sector or public administration where they can. Indeed, the social economy is autonomous and relies also on resources from volunteers and on reciprocity. It is not a universal service provider for (social) services of general interest. The social economy can help, but it should not become an additional layer adding a burden or replace public services that should remain accessible to all. Social economy entities, unlike public services and authorities, do not have the same accountability.

Social economy entities also need to learn lessons from the Covid experience and better use and adapt their operations to the digital era, while, at the same time, training and upskilling their staff. Nevertheless, the management of another similar crisis would benefit greatly from collaboration or ad hoc partnerships with public authorities. This could be sharing facilities/devices/platforms possibly using existing infrastructure and taking advantage of running/operational costs provided by the public sector. The social economy could provide workers and volunteers to co-organise and deliver the services. Benefiting from each other’s experience, including through joint training, this would also foster mutual knowledge between partners from the social and public sectors.

On another note, the ‘charitable’ social economy is sometimes, in some countries, seen as an additional factor of stigmatisation: ‘the social economy is for the poor’. This prevents some people in need of support from asking for help or going to social economy entities. The social economy sector is not ‘the’ answer and has not the capacity to assume, alone, the responsibility to fight poverty nor the Covid crisis impact, as other mainstream policies should tackle such issues. ‘Charitable’ social economy entities are sometimes insufficiently governed bottom-up, which results in solutions for beneficiaries not aligned with their needs.

Social economy entities also need to self-critique and apply social economy principles and values to themselves and their internal governance to be more convincing about this alternative way of doing business.

Nonetheless, building socio-economic resilience, based on such collective and structural partnerships between the social economy and the public sectors, is a long-term endeavour, which needs adaptation and goodwill from and among the partners concerned. It would benefit the management of a future sanitary crisis.

6. Social economy vis-à-vis other industrial ecosystems

6.1. Introduction

Research shows that early social economy initiatives – consumer cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives, mutual benefit societies and associations – were strongly rooted in a 'collective awareness' that sought to improve the well-being of communities (Defourny and Nyssens, 2012).

Over the years, social economy organisations have become extremely diversified depending on their location and field of operation. In countries where markets are more developed, cooperatives have weakened their social commitment. In some cases, they have evolved into entrepreneurial forms that differ from investor-owned enterprises, only due to their ownership rather than their capacity to actively engage stakeholders (Borzaga and Galera, 2015). Meanwhile, new types of cooperatives with declared social goals have emerged in recent decades in a growing number of Member States. Many operate in new fields of activity, or in more than one field and engage different stakeholders (and are therefore regarded as social enterprises). Depending on the legal framework – as new or traditional cooperatives, associations and sometimes limited liability companies – social economy entities are mostly rooted in new forms of collective awareness. This includes promoting social justice, protecting the environment, and supporting the social and professional integration of disadvantaged individuals (Defourny and Nyssens, 2012).

All interviews conducted for the purpose of this study highlighted the relevance of the social economy in the wake of the multiple and permanent crises affecting all industrial ecosystems, namely the environmental, food and energy crises, ageing, work transformation, a dramatic increase in inequality, the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. At the same time, some interviews highlighted the poor visibility of the social economy (especially in the health, energy-renewables and agri-food ecosystems) and the lack of awareness of the general public that some key services are being delivered by the social economy.

Several interviewees highlighted the need to broaden the assessment of the economic contribution of the social economy beyond narrowly quantitative parameters. This section will focus on the contribution that diverse social economy organisations have historically provided and continue to provide to six industrial ecosystems, namely (i) Agri-food; (ii) Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs); (iii) Energy-renewables; (iv) Health; (v) Tourism; and (vi) Retail (European Commission, 2020a).

The following sections will provide a snapshot of the role, trends and challenges of the social economy in these ecosystems. However, the purpose of these sections is not to examine the net impact of the social economy on the other ecosystems; the aim is to shed light on the overall beneficial contribution of the social economy.

6.2. Agri-food

The agri-food ecosystem encompasses an interconnected network of entities in the food supply chain, including farmers, retail and wholesale outlets as well as food service providers, along with their input and service suppliers. This ecosystem employs a substantial workforce (16.3 million people), contributing significantly to the EU economy by providing some 5% of its total value added (EUR 585 billion). It involves almost 600 000 firms, almost all of them (99.4%) being SMEs (European Commission, 2021a).

The agri-food ecosystem faces three enduring challenges. First, poor employment conditions of its workforce, who are often employed part-time, self-employed, or engaged in temporary and precarious employment (European Commission, 2021a). Second, the agri-food ecosystem grapples with the degradation of natural capital (European Commission, 2021a) and contributes extensively to climate change (Poore and Nemecek, 2018; Fomina et al., 2022). Third is the producer-consumer disconnection. The global food chain expands and extends across international boundaries, often distancing the final consumer from its producers. This means consumers ignore where their food comes from, and large agri-business, processors, retailers and other intermediaries capture the added value from food produced by small-scale farmers (European Commission, 2013a).

Social economy organisations in the ecosystem

Social economy organisations engaged in the agri-food ecosystem are very diverse. They include traditional large agriculture, forestry and fishing cooperatives, small community-based cooperatives and networks of small producers, and sometimes consumers, who support the development of local food systems.

The roots of agricultural cooperatives can be traced back to the 19th century. They emerged as a response to challenges faced by farmers such as market volatility, low bargaining power and economic instability. As independent SMEs, farmers use thus cooperatives for purchasing inputs and selling products. By pooling resources, small-scale producers can in this way respond to the market power of big retailers and processors to maintain their role as producers and protectors of local economies.

Compared to other ecosystems, the social economy – and especially agricultural cooperatives – has a much greater influence on the agri-food ecosystem. The role of agricultural cooperatives is particularly relevant in some Member States. In the Netherlands, cooperatives hold an 83% market share of the sector, in Finland 79%, in Italy 55% and in France 50%[76]. In Italy, in 2021 there were 5 459 agricultural cooperatives, generating an average turnover of EUR 7.26 million and employing more than 160 000 workers (EURICSE, 2023).

In France, nearly nine out of ten farmers belong to a cooperative. In the agricultural, forestry and fishing sectors, the social economy accounts for 4.3% of employment; in food industries, it also accounts for 4.3% (Observatoire national de l'ESS, 2023). Moreover, in several Member States, cooperatives contribute to managing forests (e.g. in Finland, Sweden and Lithuania). In Finland, one of three forest industry companies is cooperatively owned and has 103 000 owner-members[77].

Unlike older EU Member States, agricultural cooperatives are less developed in central-eastern European Member States. One factor is the mistaken concept of cooperatives during the transition from socialist to free market economy. Many governments looked at the cooperatives as being closely linked to the socialist regime and forced them to share out the land among their members (Bartus, 1998 – as cited in Igual et al., 2008).

Alongside well-established traditional agricultural cooperatives, which have evolved into very large enterprises that control the food system in some countries, there is a parallel system of locally based organisations. These include smaller cooperatives and networks of small producers who support the development of local food systems and are particularly inclined to foster more sustainable production modalities (Fonte and Cucco, 2017).

[76] European Commission website: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/social-economy-eu/cooperatives_en

[77] Data from Pellervo website: https://pellervo.fi/en/

There has been a surge of local food systems and short food supply chains[78] with diverse approaches, such as farmer markets and shops as well as partnerships between producers and consumers in many Member States (European Commission, 2013a). New short food supply chains are 'local food movements' involving producers, consumers and institutions which seek to sustain 'traditional' farming practices through new models and social innovation.

There are other interesting examples in Portugal and France. In Portugal, the social economy has been a pioneer in shaping and expanding a circular economy by providing goods and services that challenge current consumption patterns and build more sustainable societies. This has been particularly impactful in agri-food systems, where the social economy has actively shortened agricultural supply chains by relocating food production – often organic-farming – closer to consumers (Ferreira, 2021). In France, collective interest cooperatives (Société Coopérative d'Intérêt Collectif, SCIC) have emerged as locally based cooperatives often involving farmers, consumers, volunteers and local governments fostering very innovative local initiatives.

Along the same lines in Romania, many sustainable food initiatives have been developed by the social economy in the last ten years to introduce a new approach by supporting small farming through the active involvement of consumers.

CRIES

The Resource Centre for Ethical and Solidarity-based Initiatives (CRIES) was established in 2009 through a participatory community process. It is a Romanian association that aims at promoting sustainable and community development. CRIES focuses on enhancing the social and economic well-being of communities by developing social and solidarity economy initiatives, including ethical consumption and solidarity-based practices in the agri-food ecosystem. CRIES is nonetheless a certified work integration social enterprise (WISE) which facilitates the social and professional integration of people with support needs.

The organization supports the development of local food systems that prioritize sustainability and social justice and supports local farmers and producers by providing training and resources to help them adopt sustainable agricultural practices. CRIES also facilitates the establishment of Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, which connect consumers directly with local producers, ensuring fair prices and fresh, healthy food for the community. CRIES conducts also educational campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of ethical consumption and sustainable food systems. These campaigns aim to inform consumers about the importance of choosing locally-produced, organic, and fair-trade products, thereby driving demand for sustainable food options and supporting local economies. Lastly, CRIES plays a critical role in policy advocacy, as it engages with policymakers to promote regulations and policies that support sustainable agriculture and fair trade.

Contribution of the social economy to the ecosystem

In the agri-food ecosystem, the social economy has a beneficial impact at different levels as documented in several studies.

[78] The food supply chain includes 'all those activities that lie between on-farm production and the point of consumption' (Pretty et al., 2010, p. 231). Since the last half of the 20th century, food supply chains have undergone significant transformation, evolving into a more globally expansive system characterised by rising scales of production, increased variety of manufactured product lines, and elevated economic levels across different sectors (Pretty et al., 2010).

- Agricultural cooperatives have:
  - historically improved members' economic sustainability and working conditions (Grashuis and Ye, 2019; Candemir et al., 2021);
  - enhanced the competitiveness and sustainability of the agri-food system in rural areas, stimulating new enterprises and strengthening agri-food complementary sectors (Igual et al., 2008; Tarangioli and Varia, 2010);
  - induced a positive effect: the higher prices paid to farmers by cooperatives have induced other firms to raise the prices of farmers' products (Hanisch et al., 2013; Jardine et al., 2014; Candemir et al., 2021);
  - acted as knowledge developers and disseminators for their members, contributing to innovating the ecosystem and enhancing cooperative competitiveness (Fontanari and Sacchetti, 2019);
  - acted as supply chain coordinator by implementing production protocols, quality control and certification systems for the benefit of the entire supply chain and consumers.
- New social economy initiatives, including multi-stakeholder cooperatives and new networks:
  - facilitate communication between farmers and consumers, triggering a new attitude towards sustainable consumption of the whole production-consumption system (FAAN, 2010; European Commission, 2013a; Vasquez et al., 2017);
  - contribute to increasing agri-food diversity, including the preservation of cultural heritage and fostering community engagement (FAAN, 2010);
  - ensure access to fresh and healthy food (FAAN, 2010);
  - reduce emissions by employing sustainable farming systems, low-input farming practices and resource-conserving techniques (Bougherara et al., 2009; FAAN, 2010; Balázs et al., 2016; Vasquez et al., 2017).

6.3. Cultural and Creative industries (CCI)

In Europe, the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) are extremely diverse and dynamic (European Commission, 2021a). They encompass a range of sectors, including audio-visual, music, books and press publishing, advertising, cultural heritage (museums, historical sites), performance (theatre, dance), visual arts and cultural education.

Since they are endowed with merit, culture and creativity are eligible for public support, whose role is especially important in the audio-visual industry and the heritage sector (European Commission, 2021a).

Based on recent data, CCIs employ some 8 million people and contribute 4% to EU value added, about EUR 477 billion. The sector is composed of 1.2 million firms, of which almost all (99.9%) are SMEs (European Commission, 2021a). A closer look at the ecosystem reveals great variations across Member States, with the Netherlands accounting for the most creative, arts and entertainment enterprises (95 902), followed by France, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal. On the contrary, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Malta report much lower numbers (Eurostat, 2023a – based on data from 2021).

Despite these impressive figures, CCIs face many challenges, including the increase in insecure forms of work. This implies low certainty over job continuity and little protection, lack of legal protection for intellectual property and uncertainty facing artificial intelligence (Diesis, 2018; European Commission, 2023b; Nogales Muriel, 2023).

The quality of jobs in this area has been heavily impacted by significant public budget cuts and reduced financing for cultural initiatives (Nogales Muriel, 2023), which have worsened since the pandemic.

Social economy organisations in the ecosystem

Non-profit cultural organisations have long been involved in different segments of cultural activity in most Member States, from the most erudite to the most popular – with associations being by far the oldest and most widespread organisational form (Ferreira et al., 2022).

Culture and the arts are a key driving force for social innovation and a way for social economy organisations to listen to the needs of citizens and devise solutions using a cooperative approach that can enhance social cohesion (Diesis, 2018).

At the same time, arts and culture cooperatives improve pay and job conditions for artists, while enabling creative industry workers to share resources and infrastructure. These include cooperatives of dancers, musicians and actors, handcrafts and artisans (jewellery, ceramics, sewing) as well as ‘entrepreneurial impulse cooperatives’ offering an umbrella against precarity and intermittency to cultural workers (Nogales Muriel, 2023).

In France, the social economy represents 78% of enterprises and 46% of jobs in the cultural and creative sector, concentrated in a myriad of small associations and a few cooperatives (mostly Société coopérative et participative - SCOP, SCIC and to a lesser extent Coopérative d’activité et d’emploi - CAE) and foundations supporting and organising cultural events. The sector also includes many associations and foundations that manage museums, historic sites and nature reserves, and contribute to the preservation and enhancement of France's important cultural and natural heritage (Defalvard, 2019; Opale, 2020; Observatoire national de l’ESS, 2023). In Spain there are around 300 cooperatives involved in cultural and creative activities (as of September 2017), which employ more than 3 000 worker-members, while in Italy (as of 2018) there are more than 1 900 cooperatives in this field with approximately 31 500 employees and a production value of EUR 810 million (Diesis, 2018).

AMAT

Accademia, Musica, Arte e Teatro (Academy, Music, Art and Theater - AMAT) is an Italian social enterprise operating in the CCI ecosystem. Previously an association and then a limited company with social enterprise status in 2021 it is a pioneering social enterprise in the cultural field in Italy. AMAT disseminates musical heritage through an innovative approach focused on interactions, new technologies and people engagement. Projects include symphony concerts, operas and musical theatre performances. Additionally, they organise educational programs, seminars, competitions and other cultural events, both live and digital. Key values shaping AMAT endeavours include a strong emphasis on innovation, a commitment to maintaining high quality and professionalism, ensuring accessibility, fostering collaboration and inclusion, and a dedication to sustainability. Special attention is paid to young people – as AMAT gathers their opinions and perspectives to shape cultural content that appeals to them – and to women. There is a dedicated festival to valorise women in the cultural field and in the labour market. Currently, AMAT is undertaking a ground-breaking technological project to enhance music accessibility for deaf people through the use of vibrations. AMAT is also recognised as a charity in the United States. It receives support from various contributors, including two US patrons, the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Monte dei Paschi di Siena Foundation, and the Tuscany Region. Collaborating with various institutional and entrepreneurial entities, this social enterprise continues to stand at the forefront of cultural innovation, bridging tradition with cutting-edge approaches in the world of culture.

Contribution of the social economy to the ecosystem

The beneficial impact of the social economy in the CCI can be seen from different perspectives. The social economy contributes to:

- valorising and improving access to cultural heritage and art for as many people as possible (Ferreira, 2021);
- public-private partnerships that include social economy community-based initiatives through experiences and community culture practice based on co-production and co-management of cultural resources to enhance the wellbeing and sustainability of territories and communities (Nogales Muriel, 2023; 2024);
- enhancing social capital in urban and rural local communities by boosting community engagement in civic life and making communities more vibrant (Mcquilten and White, 2015; Diesis, 2018; Caruana and Nogales, 2019);
- supporting sustainable development especially in sparsely and underpopulated areas, where social economy organisations create job opportunities for vulnerable groups, have a role in rendering remote areas more attractive places to live and contribute to the diversification of local economies, with spillover effects on other industries (Diesis, 2018);
- enhancing an inclusive and integrated territorial development combining social, economic and environmental aspects (Diesis, 2018; Ferreira, 2021);
- promoting and preserving decent working conditions in an ecosystem with poor protection of labour and social rights, precarious contractual ties and deficiencies in access to social protection, and strongly impacted by Covid-19 (Caruana and Nogales, 2019).

6.4. Energy-Renewables

The energy-renewables ecosystem encompasses a wide set of energy sources, including wind energy, solar energy, hydropower, bioenergy, geothermal energy, ocean energy, and heat pumps. It is a dynamic sector which accounts for 1.2 million employees, contributing to 1% of EU added value, equivalent to EUR 122 billion. With a total of 111 000 firms, of which 99.4% are SMEs, the energy-renewables ecosystem has high growth potential and is expected to generate substantial employment opportunities in the near future (European Commission, 2021a).

This ecosystem has attracted the interest of both EU and national policymakers in recent years. In addition to the environmental crisis, economic and social concerns about fossil fuels, including energy dependency, price instability, and energy poverty, have prompted governments to take action.

Also thanks to their increased economic competitiveness, the use of renewable energy sources in the EU has doubled in recent years, rising from about 10% in 2005 to 22% in 2022 (European Environment Agency, 2022). Many of the above-mentioned challenges remain unresolved and have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In particular, there has been an increase in ‘energy poverty’ and a decrease in the imperative to diminish energy dependence and address price volatility.

Social economy organisations in the ecosystem

Faced with the liberalisation of the energy market and the marginalisation of public authorities in the production, distribution and supply of energy, spaces for development have opened up for the social economy thanks to its capacity to contribute to more resilient and equitable energy systems.

In a few Member States citizen-led initiatives have existed for almost a century next to big corporations and highly centralised energy infrastructure (Schreuer and Weismeier-Sammer, 2010; Huybrechts and Mertens, 2014; Bauwens et al., 2016) that dominate the energy sector in all Member States. In Germany and Italy (South Tyrol and Trentino), historical hydroelectric cooperatives have existed since the first half of the 20th century (Magnani and Osti, 2016).

Denmark has had a strong windmill tradition since the 1970s (Danielsen, 1995; Olesen et al., 2004). Cooperatives, where individual citizens co-finance wind turbines and sell the electricity generated, have become the most popular form of ownership since the 1990s (Bauwens et al., 2016). The success of the cooperative model in Denmark is mainly due to a strong anti-nuclear/alternative-energy movement that has raised awareness on the relevance of renewable energy alongside highly-supportive policies (Jørgensen and Karnøe, 1995 - as cited in Schreuer and Weismeier-Sammer, 2010; Kemp et al., 2001). In Austria, the development of citizen power plants started in the second half of the 1990s. During this period, approximately 80% of the country's wind power capacity was owned by local citizens and cooperatives, which have been important in scaling up hydropower plants (Wierling et al., 2018).

From an EU perspective, community energy projects differ greatly in terms of size, legal forms, organisational capacity, technologies (Bauwens et al., 2016), stakeholders (Walker, 2008; Arnould and Quiroz, 2022) that can operate as energy producers or providers (Magnani and Osti, 2016) and diffusion.

Renewable energy cooperatives are the oldest, most widespread and most promising model (Magnani and Osti, 2016) enabling citizens to collectively own and manage the organisation (Bauwens et al., 2016). Based on existing data, there were around 4 000 renewable-energy cooperatives in the EU in 2014. However, in line with EU law, energy communities can take any legal form[79].

Greece introduced legislation on energy communities in 2018 with Law 4513/2018 that allowed the establishment of ‘energy communities’, a new type of cooperative[80]. In 2023, this law was not fully compliant with EU provisions, so it was abolished and replaced by Law 5037/2023. The new law forbade the establishment of energy communities and introduced the definitions of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) and Citizen Energy Communities (CECs). Nonetheless, the legal entity to be chosen by these initiatives has remained unchanged: RECs and CECs can only be established as cooperatives and therefore fully fit within the scope of the social economy.

RESCOOP.EU

REScoop.eu was established in 2013 as a not-for-profit association. It is the European federation of citizen energy cooperatives. The federation aligns its efforts with four overarching aims. These are to represent citizens and energy cooperatives at the EU level, support the establishment of new energy cooperatives, foster cooperation among energy cooperatives including through thematic working groups and to promote the use

[79] Source: https://rural-energy-community-hub.ec.europa.eu/energy-communities/organisational-form-and-legal-structure_en

[80] In Greece, cooperatives are regulated by Law 1667/1986.

of renewable energy through the cooperative model. Although not all REScoop.eu members are formally organised as cooperatives, adherence to international cooperative (ICA) principles qualifies them for inclusion in the federation. To date, REScoop.eu boasts a total of 105 members, including 17 national or regional federations representing their own 2 175 members, from Czechia, Ireland, Spain, the UK, Belgium, Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. There are also 88 individual members from all over Europe. In total, the association represents more than 2 200 local initiatives. REScoop.eu provides a range of services to its members, including representation at the EU level and in energy transition debates, continuous updates on political developments, advocacy actions, monitoring EU projects, and facilitating networking opportunities for members to engage with other cooperatives and stay informed on initiatives in the field.

Contribution of the social economy to the ecosystem

The social economy has been particularly impactful in the energy-renewables ecosystem. It has played a crucial role in transforming this ecosystem by:

- enabling better retail prices than conventional enterprises and tackling energy poverty (Kunde and Beker, 2014; European Commission, 2023a);
- educating the public about renewable energy and fostering public acceptance of renewable energy technology (Olesen et al., 2004; Schreuer and Weismeier-Sammer, 2010; Warren and McFadyen, 2010; Huybrechts and Mertens, 2014);
- fostering energy independence for communities, mobilising local capital and keeping profits within the local community (Heinrich Böll Foundation Greece and ELECTRA Energy cooperative, 2023);
- creating new employment (European Commission, 2022);
- enhancing social cohesion by cultivating a positive vision for the future (Heinrich Böll Foundation Greece and ELECTRA Energy cooperative, 2023).

6.5. Health

The health ecosystem covers very diverse subsectors including pharmaceuticals and other medical products, personal protective equipment, medical services, hospitals, nursing homes and residential care (European Commission, 2021a). With 24.8 million employees, 493 000 firms, and contributing to 9.5% of EU value added, the health ecosystem has a significant societal and economic value.

Challenges are diverse and include the decline in health goods production in the EU, public buyers awarding contracts to the lowest price bidder, skill shortages, unattractive pay and working conditions, digitalisation and technological advances as well as demographic changes which put public expenditure under dramatic pressure (European Parliament, 2011a). This is mainly ascribed to a rising demand for long-term care services due to longer life expectancy, the difficulties of most health systems to organise preventive care, long wait times and the difficulty of containing rising health costs (IHCO and EURICSE, 2018).

These difficulties have a number of implications, including a reduction in healthcare coverage and increasing inequality among individuals and between urban and rural areas, more pressure on healthcare workers to increase their productivity and a growing gap between the demand for personalised services and standard healthcare. These challenges have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis which shed new light on the need to rethink the organisation of the health system. The Covid-19 emergency confirmed the urgency of building a proximity healthcare system and replacing the traditional separation of care pathways with a network based on concrete interdisciplinary, inter-professional and inter-sectoral collaboration (Campaign 'Primary Health Care: Now or Never', 2020)[81].

Social economy organisations in the ecosystem

The health ecosystem has diverse social economy organisations including: cooperatives (i.e. worker, production, user and new multi-stakeholder cooperatives), associations, mutual benefit societies and foundations.

The role of the social economy has dramatically increased in relevance over the past 20-30 years (IHCO and EURICSE, 2018). There has also been a two-fold shift towards new multi-stakeholder organisations involving workers, volunteers, recipients, donors, etc. and the pursuit of explicit social aims by traditional member-oriented organisations. The increase in social enterprises has been dramatic, especially in countries where there were previously limited or no social economy organisations. Their growth has been a clear reaction to increased demand for health services and the rising difficulties for public authorities to support healthcare expenditure (Anderson, 2023). Especially since the Covid-19 crisis, there has been upward pressure on health spending in almost all Member States.

In addition to treatment, cure, preventative, palliative and rehabilitation services, social economy organisations manage hospitals, clinics and other health facilities in some countries (Spain, Belgium and Portugal). They also provide health insurance to cover the costs of services that may not be covered by the health system, provide care to vulnerable people (Italy), promote, inform and educate and provide pharmaceutical services (pharmacist or user cooperatives in Greece and social farmacies of mutuals and mercy houses in Portugal). In essence, the social economy is a key pillar of the health system in most Member States.

Mutual benefit societies deserve a specific explanation. They can be seen as predecessors of the modern welfare state (European Commission, 2012), dating back to the Middle Ages. The current role of mutual benefit societies in health insurance and in providing health services varies significantly across Member States. While they play a key role in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany, especially in central eastern Europe they have disappeared or play a very marginal role. An interesting exception is Romania where the role of mutual benefit societies has been revitalised (Lambru and Petrescu, 2016). In countries such as Italy and Portugal, the role of mutuals declined after the creation of the national health system in the 1970s (European Parliament, 2011a), but is now timidly regaining relevance.

The Covid-19 pandemic has corroborated the significant potential of the social economy to innovate health service delivery. However, its role in this domain is dramatically ignored in most Member States for several reasons. First, the tendency to not differentiate between for-profit or not-for-profit private providers. Secondly, the assumption that for-profit actors are more efficient and thus perform better than both public providers and the social economy. Third, the social economy supply of health care is complex, particularly its different forms, activities, sizes, contributions and features. A number of social economy organisations in the health ecosystem have a very negative reputation which has affected the whole social economy. This is mainly connected to competitive contractual arrangements based on the lowest price that has favoured the biggest and least innovative organisations. At the same time, the great majority of social economy organisations continue to design extremely innovative services, improving the function of the health system as a whole. These range from health promotion activities, such as health education, information and training to promote disease prevention, advocacy activities to demand greater accountability, self-help activities for fragile groups, as well as co-production and

[81] For more information, see: https://www.saluteinternazionale.info/tag/campagna-primary-health-care-now-or-never/

co-management of local health services. These organisations confirm the creative potential especially seen in times of need through the ability to cooperate. Moreover, it is mainly thanks to community ties, reciprocity and the values of solidarity rooted in the social economy that the system has not broken down in many Member States during the recent health crisis.

Fédération nationale de la Mutualité Française

Established in 1902, the Fédération nationale de la Mutualité Française (National Federation of French Mutual societies - FNMF) is the professional union of French mutual benefit societies. Acting as a representative of 456 national, regional and local mutual benefit societies, FNMF is a key player advocating for the well-being and interests of its members while fostering a sense of community among them. Members of the Federation provide personal insurance (supplemental health and provident insurance) and prevent and promote health (e.g. through mental health, parental care and dental care services). FNMF actively contributes to the national debate by organising open discussions, publishing studies and engaging stakeholders in the health domain. The federation's approach extends to publishing reports providing valuable insights into the state of healthcare and mutuals in France. FNMF commitment is evident in its annual events, which keep the debate alive on health and social protection issues. These events engage mutuals and other key players in the sector and contribute to a broader dialogue with French citizens. Additionally, the federation initiated a three-part communication campaign in 2018 around the concept of ‘real mutual,’ emphasising the key role of mutual benefit societies in promoting solidarity and mutual aid. Lastly, the Federation recognises the importance of addressing disputes that may arise between mutual and their members and provides a mediator responsible for handling such conflicts.

Contribution of the social economy to the ecosystem

Social economy development spaces are likely to increase in importance in the near future especially to fill severe gaps in healthcare provision. The contribution of the social economy will be key to providing services such as long-term care, prevention and fast diagnostic treatments. Its added value is mainly connected to its capacity to:

- engage different stakeholders, bring together professions and build alliances at territorial level to strengthen proximity healthcare (Galera, 2020);
- build support networks around the patient and the family (Borzaga and Fazzi, 2014);
- design new services such as palliative care, which was until recently neglected;
- push other healthcare providers to improve their quality standards and prices.

6.6. Tourism

The tourism ecosystem is highly heterogeneous and complex (European Commission, 2021a). It encompasses multiple subsectors, in particular, accommodation and food services, creative arts, transportation and business support. With 20.3 million employees, 3.2 million firms and contributing to 7% of EU value added, the tourism ecosystem has played a pivotal role in generating wealth across European countries. Notably, 99.8% of the firms are micro or SMEs, contributing some 64% of the ecosystem value added and employing about 83% of its workforce (European Commission, 2021a). Infrastructure created for tourism purposes contributes to local development and jobs created or maintained can help counteract industrial or rural decline (Eurostat, 2023b).

A decline in EU tourism’s global market share was exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis and jeopardised around 11 million jobs (European Commission, 2021a). There are several other challenges ahead for the tourism sector related to how this ecosystem has grown and developed. Tourism has developed top-down, in response to external demand created to a lesser extent autonomously and to a large extent under large tour operators. Most of the choices in this domain are outside the control of the destinations themselves and do not necessarily coincide with the interests of the host area (Miedes-Ugarte et al., 2020). This often results in significant burdens on local economies, including price escalation affecting not only real estate but also essential goods like food (Goeldner and Ritchies, 2012; UNTFSSE, 2023) and rent (Deery et al., 2012; Biagi et al., 2016; Mikulić et al., 2021; UNTFSSE, 2023) leading to housing affordability challenges for local residents. Moreover, public budgets allocated to infrastructure for tourism development (e.g. roads) can reduce public investments in health and education (Frent, 2016).

Recent research underlines the unequal distribution of tourism revenues among local stakeholders (UNTFSSE, 2023) as well as precarious working conditions and poor quality jobs in this field, which put into question the impact of tourism-driven economic growth. Additional controversial consequences include overcrowded public spaces, higher demand for public services (Deery et al., 2012) displaced locals (Frent, 2016) and the risk of standardisation and commodification to meet tourist demands. From an environmental perspective, valuable sites have been degraded to be more attractive to mass tourism. Recent surveys and reports reveal that 82% of EU citizens are prepared to modify their behaviour in favour of sustainable tourism (European Commission, 2021b). This means that especially since the pandemic there is an unmet demand for a different tourism offer.

Social economy organisations in the ecosystem

Tourism is a relatively new ecosystem for the social economy, whose potential is far from being exploited. Social enterprises are highly relevant in the tourism domain. They often engage in fields that are not attractive for conventional enterprises, including accessible tourism for people with disabilities to defend the right to travel for all, authentic cultural practices, innovative tourism services in remote and sparsely populated areas and innovative work integration pathways. Data on the size and economic impact of these initiatives are not currently available. Based on the interviews conducted for the purpose of this study, the social economy is marginal compared to mass tourism. The multitude of small local social economy initiatives are sometimes difficult to detect because they often operate in multiple fields. However, there are online platforms that are structured and managed according to social economy principles. Compared to mainstream platforms, which develop tourist destinations in response to purely economic interests, cooperative platforms are driven from within tourist locations and respond to stakeholders in those destinations.

Fairbnb

Fairbnb is a cooperative booking platform that stands at the forefront of responsible and sustainable tourism. Its name combines the words ‘fair’ and ‘bed & breakfast’ (B&B), reflecting the cooperative's mission to offer ethical travel experiences. Indeed, Fairbnb distinguishes itself from traditional booking platforms as it prioritises sustainability and well-being for communities living in tourism areas. At the same time, it offers visitors authentic local experiences, fostering positive relationships between travellers and host communities. Rooted in activism, Fairbnb.coop was born in 2014 in Venice (Italy) to face emerging challenges in the tourism sector, especially with short-term rentals. Two years later, Fairbnb.coop officially emerged, rapidly expanding its influence across Europe. The platform provides diverse accommodation, from homes and apartments to B&B, all held to ethical and sustainable standards and committed to minimising the ecological footprint of travelling. Moreover, the platform redirects 50% of net commissions to community projects, creating tangible opportunities for local inhabitants, which are actively involved in decision-making in the cooperative.

Examples of social economy initiatives in the tourism and hospitality industries are WISEs that employ disadvantaged people operating restaurants, guesthouses, B&Bs, camp sites and resorts. They are present or emerging in almost all Member States (Galera et al., 2022). In Romania, Italy, France and Ireland social tourism has been further developed by social economy initiatives facilitating the connection between tourism facilities and small agricultural producers.

Contribution of the social economy to the ecosystem

Desk research and interviews suggest that the social economy could transform the tourism ecosystem from below by rendering key decision-making more inclusive, democratic and inclined to enhance mutual cultural understanding (UNTFSSE, 2023).

In particular, the social economy contributes to:

- designing innovative tourism services that foster economic vitality in areas traditionally overlooked by for-profit enterprises and a sense of shared responsibility in travellers, businesses, the workforce and communities to preserve local assets (Diesis, 2023);
- improving the quality of work in the tourism domain, which is notably at risk of being precarious;
- valorising and preserving local cultural, heritage and wisdom (UNTFSSE, 2023);
- fostering community empowerment and the involvement of disadvantaged groups and persons at risk of exclusion (Aktürk and Demir, 2021; EYSET, 2023; Olmedo et al., 2023);
- redistributing incomes generated by the tourism industry to enhance inclusive and integrated territorial development combining social, economic and environmental aspects (Perales, 2002).

6.7. Retail

The retail ecosystem involves approximately 5.5 million firms which engage in diverse domains, including wholesale and retail trade, but also postal and courier activities. Compared to other ecosystems, retail employs more people, 29.8 million and contributes substantially to the EU economy by providing 11.5% of its total added value. Of the top 250 retail companies globally, 88 are based in Europe. The retail sector has seen a significant transformation in the last ten years, mainly prompted by widespread growth in new technologies, with e-commerce representing 10-15% of total retail sales (European Commission, 2021a).

An increasingly informed consumer market has also contributed to the profound reshaping of this ecosystem. Consumers' shopping expectations, preferences and behaviours have evolved in part due to the internet and new mobile technologies, which have made price and product information more accessible. In addition, there has been a surge in ethical consumption. The increase in digitalisation and evolving consumer needs present both challenges and opportunities for all enterprises. During the Covid-19 crisis, shops faced closures and stringent precautions, leading to increased turnover in grocery retail but also escalating operational costs due to safety measures. Non-grocery retailers experienced significant sales declines, with online sales varying across categories. There is a growing consumer awareness of such challenges which has led to a shift in consumer behaviour. Surveys indicate heightened consumer interest in local foods, with Eurobarometer (2011) reporting overwhelming agreement that the EU should support local markets. A majority of respondents (54%) strongly believe in the benefits of buying products from local farms. EU customers increasingly associate local products with higher quality, healthier eating, environmentally friendly production and a lower carbon footprint. They value direct contact with producers, knowing the origin of their food, supporting local agriculture and ncreasingly choosinge to buy products from local markets (Bougherara et al., 2009; European Commission, 2016).

Social economy organisations in the ecosystem

The landscape of the social economy engaged in the retail ecosystem is extremely diversified. It has a wide range of actors with divergent interests.

At one extreme is cooperative large-scale distribution, with consumer and producer cooperatives which can have a history going back to the 19th century. By minimising intermediation costs and retail prices, consumer cooperatives have emerged almost everywhere in Europe to protect consumers from excessive prices by investor-owned monopolists (Hansmann, 2000; Mikami, 2003; Rey and Tirole, 2007). In countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria, consumer cooperative trade disappeared more or less completely due to its inability to handle competition from large-scale and highly competitive firms (Brazda and Schediwy, 2001; Battilani, 2005 – as cited in Ekber, 2008) coupled with adverse policies and legal restraints. In Finland, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway cooperative developments in the post-war period were much more positive (Ekberg, 2008). In addition to consumer cooperatives, noteworthy are producer cooperatives that have established retail arms. By working together, producer cooperatives have allowed members to pool their outputs and achieve a greater volume, which has enabled them to reach larger and/or more distant buyers than would be possible for members acting alone. Many consumer and producer cooperative groups in the retail ecosystem have become very powerful in countries where they managed to survive, up to the point that they now sometimes differ from investor-owned enterprises solely due to their ownership rights.

At the opposite extreme, there is a multitude of small cooperative retail shops that have maintained their proximity dimension. These include traditional cooperatives and bio proximity shops collectively owned by diverse stakeholders including consumers, workers and volunteers. Noteworthy are also trade and local markets, local currencies and fair trade initiatives which mostly fall within the solidarity economy. Not surprisingly, these extremely diverse social economy entities in the retail sector do not feel they belong to the same 'world'.

The interviews shed light also on the increasing, though still marginal, role of WISEs in the sale of second-hand products. In Austria, WISEs have been selling their products and services in stores since the mid-1980s. They sell environmentally sustainable products and recycle old products or expired food in their stores, including social markets and re-use stores. In Slovenia, companies for people with disabilities and employment centres play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and enhancing the contribution of the retail sector. Employment centres dedicated to people with disabilities function as intermediaries, connecting qualified individuals to suitable job opportunities in the retail sector.

KRINGWINKEL

Kringwinkel was established in 2011 as a network of second-hand shops (*Kringloopwinkels*). It operates in the Flanders (Belgium) through a partnership of various companies. Thanks to its 21 recycling centres and 132 shops, Kringwinkel sells a wide range of items, including vintage goods, books, music, toys, clothes, furniture, household supplies, and electrical equipment, thus providing an eco-friendly alternative to traditional retail solutions. The environmental impact of Kringwinkel is significant: each year, its recycling centres collect 84 000 tons of goods, with about half being repurposed and sold through Kringloopwinkels, resulting in 5.8 kg of reuse per inhabitant. This effort not only reduces waste, but also provides employment opportunities for over 4 800 individuals, 85% being disadvantaged workers in the labour market. They register, sort, check, repair the items collected and sell them in stores. By giving items a second life and selling them at affordable prices, Kringwinkel promotes sustainable consumption patterns, supports community well-being and enhances social cohesion. Its mission extends beyond retail and work integration, actively engaging local communities in educational campaigns to raise awareness about the environmental and social benefits of second-hand shopping, and advocating for policies that enhance circular economy, sustainability and social inclusion.

Contribution of the social economy to the ecosystem

The diversification of the social economy landscape in the retail ecosystem poses different challenges for the diverse actors. In countries where traditional large-scale cooperative distribution is relevant, its contribution is not regarded as particularly innovative by most interviewees. Conversely, based on the literature and interviews, small cooperatives and WISEs are seen as very innovative. Both contribute to:

- developing a close link with local communities by enhancing territorial cohesion;
- providing stable and high-standard jobs and equitable conditions for each partner in the supply chain;
- fostering sustainable development;
- empowering consumers;
- prioritising local, sustainable and/or high-quality products (e.g. Km0 food, bio);
- contributing to the circular economy.

6.8. Trends and challenges

Research has shed light on various roles and potential for the social economy across ecosystems; some ecosystems are more dynamic (e.g. health), some are emerging (e.g. CCIs and tourism), in some others there are diverse and sometimes opposed dynamics of development, reflecting diverse interests (e.g. agri-food, retail and health). The capacity of the social economy to influence policies at national and EU level is very diverse, ranging from almost insignificant in some ecosystems (e.g. CCIs) to extremely relevant (e.g. energy-renewables).

What changes dramatically across ecosystems is the role played by the diverse social economy families. Such variations depend to a significant extent on the legal regulations in Member States. Based on the interviews, the social economy contribution to employment creation, job quality, welfare and enhanced social cohesion varies significantly across the six ecosystems.

Comparative reflections are biased by a lack of comprehensive studies. Not all ecosystems have been researched in-depth. There are several older studies on the role of the social economy in the retail and agri-food ecosystems, though research in relatively new ecosystems for the social economy (e.g. CCIs and tourism) is lacking altogether.

Interestingly, there is a growing share of the social economy crossing multiple ecosystems, especially CCIs and tourism, tourism and agri-food, as well as agri-food and retail. The rationale is the engagement of multiple stakeholders, who often represent different parts of society and have a strong local anchorage which induces them to prioritise deeper rather than broader strategies (European Commission and OECD, 2016).

The biggest challenge remains the poor self-recognition in the social economy of some of its key components, particularly cooperatives. This is especially evident in the agri-food and retail ecosystems.

The added value of the social economy

The research corroborates that social economy organisations are best placed to transform the ecosystem they operate in by rendering it more inclusive, accessible and sustainable.

The reason is that social economy organisations are not motivated to maximise profit for investors, but rather to address the needs of communities (Borzaga and Galera, 2012) and citizens. As such, they are particularly inclined to foster community empowerment as well as local production and management of key activities and common goods. Throughout history, social economy organisations have adapted to changing conditions. They have modified their governance and business models, with innovative forms of organisations emerging to address new economic and social concerns (i.e. social enterprises), reflecting profound social and societal changes.

Diverse stakeholders with different types of governing bodies have enabled innovation in production and consumption including partnerships between farmers and consumers/ members as well as multi-stakeholder cooperatives in a growing number of Member States. In France, many farmers’ markets are run by collective interest cooperatives (SCICs). The short distribution chains of some social economy enterprises bring additional opportunities to farmers to market their products locally.

Apart from the specific roles played by the diverse social economy types in the six ecosystems, some key contributions connect the different types of social economy organisations:

- **Detecting unmet needs** and enabling access to often innovative services that would not be otherwise accessible, or provided at an accessible price such as health, energy, artistic and cultural services.
- **Reconciling conflicting challenges**. Through innovative participatory modus operandi, social economy organisations contribute to reconciling opposing interests: in the tourism ecosystem, the needs of local inhabitants and those of tourists; for agri-food and retail, the interest of producers and consumers; for renewable-energy, the interest of local communities who can benefit from local management and citizens from an SDG perspective; for CCI, fostering social and economic cohesion, while supporting local economic development in a smart and inclusive way.
- **Spillover effects**. In the health ecosystem, the social economy pushes other healthcare providers to improve their quality and prices. The same is true for the agri-food ecosystem, where agricultural cooperatives offer higher prices to farmers with a positive effect for farmers who are not cooperative members (Hanisch et al., 2013). In the retail ecosystem, social economy organisations often champion ethical and fair-trade practices that can influence consumer behaviour, leading to a broader market shift towards ecologically sustainable and socially responsible products.
- **Improving the quality of jobs and creating new employment opportunities**. Social economy organisations prioritise fair wages, reasonable working hours, work-life balance, a supportive work environment and financial security for their members, especially in the agri-food, tourism and CCI ecosystems. They often democratically involve employees (e.g. in worker cooperatives), who thus have a direct say in decision-making concerning the organisation and its strategic development. Furthermore, they foster inclusive employment, as some social economy organisations are set up to create jobs for disadvantaged people.
- **Resilience**. Social economy organisations have greater longevity than for-profit firms, survive crises better than other types of enterprises and more successfully address the effects of crises (Birchall and Hammond Ketilson, 2009). This has proved to be especially relevant in the wake of the global financial crisis, the more recent energy crisis which exposed consumers to global price fluctuations and the health crisis. As confirmed by research, in most countries, cooperatives responded more effectively to the global financial crisis than investor-owned firms (Borzaga and Galera, 2012) and have saved jobs (Birchall and Hammond Ketilson, 2009; ILO, 2017; Borzaga et al., 2021) in their ecosystems.
- **Enhancing social cohesion and social capital**. Social economy organisations play a pivotal role in enhancing social cohesion as they build bridges between stakeholders with divergent interests. A key driving force is their services, which often incorporate social added values such as cultural events and festivals, health services, energy services. In addition, the inclusive dimension of the social economy stimulates the participation of different stakeholders. Especially relevant is the educational role of the social economy in all six ecosystems, accompanying local communities to make more sustainable decisions from a social and environmental perspective.

In turn, enhanced social cohesion extends beyond social economy organisations to benefit the entire ecosystem, creating a more inclusive, resilient and socially cohesive society.

- **Improving the attractiveness of remote areas**. Social economy organisations have proved to be especially prone to revitalising deprived, sparsely populated and remote areas (e.g. in Italy, Portugal, and Spain) thanks to their capacity to diversify local economies and design innovative services such as cultural tourism and roots tourism (Diesis, 2018).

7. New indicators and approaches to assess the role of the social economy

7.1. Introduction

Many scholars agree that the social economy generates a social and economic contribution, at all levels (Borzaga and Tortia, 2006; Bouchard, 2010; CIRIEC - Monzón and Chaves Avila, 2012; CIRIEC - Chaves Avila and Demoustier, 2013; Borzaga and Galera, 2016; Itçaina and Richez-Battesti, 2018; Novković, 2021). This contribution is particularly noticeable in areas such as job creation, public welfare, citizen empowerment, local development, promotion of social values, resilience, social capital enhancement, and improved social service delivery. Several theories have highlighted the competitive advantage of the social economy vis-à-vis other actors, and agree on its positive contribution (Hansmann and Weisbrod, 1975; Hansmann, 1981; Weitzman, 1984; Kruse, 1994; Demoustier, 1999).

The macro functions of the social economy are also recognised in official international declarations. These include the Resolution of the European Parliament (Toia Report) in 2009 and more recently, after many others at European level, the ILO Resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy (2022), the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Social and Solidarity Economy for sustainable development (2023), and the the OECD Recommendation on the Social and Solidarity Economy and Social Innovation (2024).

Three questions are crucial to assess the role of the social economy at the macro level. The first is what marks its added value compared to the public and private sectors and what would society miss if the social economy did not exist. In other words: What difference does the social economy make? The second question is who should identify and specify these 'added value' roles played by the social economy. Should this be social economy participants, policy makers, the scientific world, other people interested in the social economy, or should it be done jointly? The third issue concerns the methods and indicators to assess the contribution of the social economy.

7.2. The macro functions of the social economy

During the development of this project, international experts, representatives of social economy umbrella organisations as well as national and international governmental bodies participated in three expert workshops[82]. One focused on new indicators and approaches to evaluate the social economy. As a result of these exchanges and other meetings of the core research team, it is clear that the social economy brings its greatest added value to the economy and to society in certain fields. These include the production of intangible public and relational goods that are difficult to measure with current mainstream indicators and metrics. These macro functions of the social economy are summarised in Table 16.

[82] The workshops were organised as part of the contract with EISMEA. They took place online in October and November 2023 and February 2024. A stakeholder meeting to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations took place in March 2024. For more information, please see Appendix 5.

Table 16 – Social economy contributions

Dimensions
Livelihoods, wealth, social equity and competitiveness[a]
Social innovation and change democratising the economy and counterbalancing corporations
Well-being[b]
Social cohesion and inclusion
Territorial cohesion
Sustainable environmental development
Civil and political engagement and participation

[a] Providing livelihoods for people (jobs, labour inclusion and entrepreneurship).
[b] Well-being meaning quality of life, satisfaction, happiness, health, culture and education.

These functions of the social economy are in line with recent work such as the OECD's (2021), Bouchard (2010), Salathé-Beaulieu et al. (2019) linked to the SDGs, on the economy of the common good (www.ecogood.org) and the Doughnut Economics of Kate Raworth (2017), and finally, the works on families of the social economy, as contributions of cooperatives by Novković and Šimleša (2023) and the third sector by Enjolras and Sivesind (2018).

7.3. The need to develop new indicators and methods

The capacity of economic indicators such as GDP, turnover and employment to capture performance and social welfare is limited. New indicators and metrics are needed.

Value added is widely considered an inadequate indicator for capturing the social economy economic contribution. A number of indicators have been proposed, but their use at the macro level is hampered by difficulties related to (un)available data or complex computation. Additional difficulties include the time and human resources needed to apply these data (ILO, 2017b). In this regard, guidelines about statistics on cooperatives issued by the ILO note that 'to assess the economic contribution of cooperatives it is important to take the characteristics of different types of cooperatives into account. Different measures of this contribution may be needed depending on the type of cooperative (and thus the interest of the members). For this purpose, information should be collected on employment, revenue, value added, assets, liabilities, the use of profits or surpluses, investment and the earnings of workers within the scope of statistics on cooperatives. Information should also be collected on the (share of) transactions with members and non-members.' (ILO, 2018, p. 6). Moreover, the authors of the report identify the issue of measuring economic contribution as one of the points on which future work is needed, emphasising that 'the ILO, in collaboration with interested parties, should work on the development of measures to assess the economic contribution of cooperatives.' (ILO, 2018, p. 7).

Moreover, the limitations of a purely economic approach to highlight the benefits of the social economy becomes clear when analysing two fundamental components: volunteering and membership. From an economic point of view, volunteering is measured (ILO, 2008) by the number of hours volunteered which are then assigned an economic value in the form of salary. This monetises the social value, but the full value of volunteering goes beyond this economic dimension. It also includes a qualitative dimension of active participation and well-being for volunteers, beneficiaries and the community/society. This dimension is considered in the OECD Better Life Index[83]. The same is true for membership in organisations. From an economic perspective, these people are counted among the other human resources of these organisations. However, their social value goes beyond that. For example, it includes an extra dimension of social participation, civic engagement and community/societal involvement to contribute to social life and change. The main challenge lies in identifying indicators and methods capable of measuring these contributions to the socio-economic system.

The issue of moving beyond GDP has been on the international agendas of policy makers and the scientific world for the last 15 years.

Several EU institutions and bodies such as the European Commission, Eurostat, the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee have paid attention to this issue, recognising its complexity and importance. A high-level expert commission (the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress - the 'Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi' Commission) has made interesting progress (European Commission, 2009; Eurostat, 2010; European Parliament, 2011b; Stiglitz et al., 2018; European Commission, 2021d; European Economic and Social Committee, 2021; Terzi, 2021), but more effort needs to be invested in this endeavour.

At global level, since the introduction of the 2030 Agenda, there has been extensive literature on indicators to measure sustainable development, mainly aimed at measuring the progress of individual countries towards the Sustainable Developmeng Goals (SDGs). There have also been attempts to develop indicators to measure the contribution of enterprises to well-being and sustainable development (UNCTAD, 2019; United Nations Statistics Division, 2021).

The UNRISD Sustainable Development Performance Indicators Project

The UNRISD Sustainable Development Performance Indicators Project (SDPI) aims to measure and assess the sustainability of conventional businesses and social economy organisations (Ilcheong Yi et al., 2022). The project proposes 61 indicators to measure and assess sustainability based on the recognition that conventional approaches do not adequately measure meaningful progress towards sustainable development. It seeks to overcome the limitations of the traditional approach, which fails to take account of the social economy as an agent for sustainable development and at the same time preserves the social economy ability to function as an economic player. The SPDI project has identified 12 areas in which the social economy makes a strong contribution and has included six indicators that are specific to the social economy in the final set of indicators. These are: training vulnerable groups, work integration, attendance at annual general meetings, democratic elections, legitimising management and stakeholder participation. The SDPI online platform is an easy-to-use tool to assess an organisation's impact or performance against sustainability standards and benchmarks. Although these indicators assess sustainability performance and progress at the organisational level, they can be a starting point for a macro level analysis of the social economy contribution.

Reference:

- https://sdpi.unrisd.org/

[83] OECD Better Life Index https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/, see also OECD, Measuring Well-being and Progress: Well-being Research, https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm

For the new indicators, there are two main challenges.

Firstly, previous developments in measuring social progress have overlooked the role of the social economy and its entities, contributing to their invisibility and making it difficult for the social economy to take advantage of these developments.

Secondly, there is a need to i) cover the multidimensional contribution of the social economy; and ii) highlight the 'social economy difference' from conventional for-profit enterprises and the government sector, since the social economy does business in another manner, according to specific principles and values that themselves create positive externalities.

Assessing the impact of social economy values and principles in Spain

The 2023 study 'Analysis of the Socio-Economic Impact of the Values and Principles of the Social Economy in Spain' (CEPES, 2023) is the third in a series promoted by the Spanish social economy platform CEPES which aims to assess the contribution of the social economy to society as a whole. It also looks into different qualitative benefits of the social economy to society and development in the country. It analyses the 'social economy difference', i.e. how social economy entities behave and act differently from traditional for-profit businesses. The study is based on a counterfactual evaluation method and is sourced from the Continuous Sample of Working Lives of the Social Security.

The study evaluates the role of the social economy in:

i) territorial cohesion, analysing the presence of these entities in municipalities with less than 40 000 inhabitants and in rural areas; and

ii) inclusive growth and reduced inequalities, studying employment for groups with difficulties in accessing employment, job stability, equal opportunities between men and women, and the provision of care, education and water management services.

Among the findings it has shown, for example, that the social economy is highly present in rural areas and medium-sized cities in Spain. The social economy also has the greatest resilience to job destruction. The study includes an evaluation in monetary terms of the social impact of the social economy. It quantifies the impact of the social economy difference, its principles and values. It is based on a real scenario and an alternative one in which social economy entities lose their principles and start to behave like conventional for-profit companies. One result is that if the social economy were to behave like a market economy in its recruitment policy, 181 000 jobs currently filled by groups with employability difficulties would be lost.

But there are more and more solutions and new methodologies to overcome these obstacles.

Contributions at the micro level are well known, as several methodologies have been widely adopted by individual social economy entities to demonstrate the value generated by specific initiatives, projects or, more generally, by the action of the enterprise (Salathé-Beaulieu at al., 2019). Recent developments at the meso and macro levels can be found in the literature (Bouchard, 2010; GECES, 2014; Saïd et al., 2015; Enjolras and Sivesind, 2018; OECD, 2021; Duguid and Rixon, 2023; and Novković and Šimleša, 2023) as well as in projects promoted by regional and national umbrella federations.

The studies highlighted in the boxes above serve as an example of a metric that responds to the objectives described in this chapter.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Thanks to recent statements and recommendations at the global and EU levels, the social economy benefits from a positive momentum. At the national level, the legacy of the past continues, however, to influence the development of the social economy in individual Member States. The country-specific and fast-changing nature of the social economy calls hence for tailor-made recommendations that consider contextual factors and policy changes at country/regional level as well as the diverse features and goals of the different social economy entities.

While the design of targeted recommendations addressed to national policy makers is out of the scope of this study, the study is well placed to reflect on conclusions and recommendations to improve the statistical representation of the social economy, given the aim of making it more complete, accurate, homogenous and reliable.

As shown in previous chapters, based on social economy statistics, the 27 Member States can be categorised into two groups. The first group includes Belgium (especially Wallonia), France, Portugal and Spain, which are distinguished by a longstanding recognition of the social economy. Luxembourg and Poland are also placed in this group, as key policy initiatives have recently contributed to recognising the social economy in both countries. In France, Portugal, Poland and Spain statistics of specified social economy organisations are mandatory: they are either required by a Social Economy Law or by a Social Economy Development Plan. In all these countries, permanent observatories on the social economy (Wallonia, France and Spain) or NSO publications (France, Luxembourg, Poland, and Portugal) periodically update statistics on the social economy. For the remaining 21 Member States, there is no unified statistical picture of the social economy. However, in all countries studied it is possible – with varying degrees of difficulty and approximation – to collect data from several data sources covering the different institutional types belonging to the social economy.

Based on the results of this project, including workshops and interviews with key informants, we can identify several obstacles that hinder the availability and quality of statistics in individual Member States. Data collection for this project has highlighted significant variations at the country level, which are influenced by the different degrees of recognition of the concepts of the social economy and social enterprise. Additionally, many workshop participants emphasised that, even when there is a clear demand for statistics on the social economy, financial constraints often impede the initiation of the statistical process (see Appendix 5 for a summary on the workshop outcomes and conclusions). Against this background, key areas for improvement include the following:

1. improving the understanding of the social economy;
2. increasing the visibility of the social economy and fostering a common vision;
3. supporting the production and dissemination of statistics.

In addition to these limitations, this study shows that further methodological issues must be addressed to compute comparable statistics at the national level while ensuring consistency at the EU level. These include:

4. adopting a shared statistical definition of the social economy;
5. setting common indicators and combination of data collection methods;
6. adopting common classifications;
7. engaging different stakeholders in the statistical process.

The following paragraphs propose a set of recommendations in response to these points, specifically directed towards:

- the European Commission and Eurostat;
- national/regional governments;
- national statistical offices (NSOs);
- social economy umbrella organisations;
- the research community.

8.1. Improve the understanding of the social economy

Based on the SEAP, the social economy comprehends four main legal forms: cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations, which constitute more than 95% of the European social economy entities, so that the remaining legal forms, reflecting national specificities, are a small minority. In spite of its contribution to supporting socio-economic development and a more balanced redistribution of wealth, the social economy still struggles to receive the attention it deserves as a research field, policy domain, and voice in promoting the European social and economic model and democracy.

Its potential continues to be underestimated especially in countries where it is not properly acknowledged and in sectors where the social economy has recently become increasingly relevant. These include health, tourism and renewable energy. The same is true for traditional sectors such as agri-food and retail, where new entities have taken shape to address new challenges while social economy organisations with a longstanding history tend to operate next to the new entities. In the agri-food and retail ecosystems locally-based new generation cooperatives and associations, actively involving both consumers and producers in their governing bodies, feel indeed quite distant from large consumer and agricultural cooperatives. The strong differentiation and division among the different components of the social economy hamper internal social cohesion and the development of a common identity in some Member States.

On top of this, failure to fully understand the social economy, including its way of doing business and differences within its components, has resulted in inconsistent policies, as well as inadequate management tools and models. These alter the management of social economy organisations to become more like conventional enterprises, including the use of indicators that fail to capture their contribution.

There are wide differences in the way the social economy is understood by different actors in different Member States. Particularly in countries where the social economy has recently entered policy discussions and where it is rarely used as a concept by researchers, understanding continues to be rather poor. When asked to apply the SEAP definition, in countries where the social economy lacks a long standing recognition, national researchers are, for instance, inclined to exclude cooperatives (especially larger ones, or those operating in the financial and insurance sectors) from the social economy.

This suggests that ad hoc actions addressed to key actors are needed to promote a better understanding of the social economy, both as a concept and as a policy domain. Differences across its components should be identified particularly when it comes to designing support policies.

At EU level, the authors of this study recommend the European Commission should:

- fund in-depth analyses of the social economy to map its components and evolution, as in the 2017-2019 mapping study of the social enterprise and its ecosystems. While there is a need to understand how to regulate different components of the social economy according to their special nature, regulations ought to be designed consistently with the culture, history and tradition of each country. This would avoid legal transplants and the artificial replication of policy frameworks based on a perceived efficacy of systems in other countries (OECD, 2023).

National governments

In Member States with a poor recognition of the social economy, where it is not commonly used as a concept in media and research, and where other concepts/approaches predominate in the policy discourse, national governments should support setting up:

- national specialised transdisciplinary teams of experts, composed of government representatives, researchers and social economy umbrella organisations, to identify entities that are inside and outside the scope of the social economy, based on the SEAP definition. This could be spurred via 'peer-learning partnerships'-programmes to raise awareness. The perimeter of the social economy traced by national specialised transdisciplinary teams should be then operationalised in statistical terms (see point 4 above).

Research community

Our recommendation is that research be directed to:

- in-depth analysis of the founding characteristics and differences among diverse types of social economy organisations, including social enterprises and especially the difference between social economy entities and purpose-driven enterprises which pursue some social goals, without neither prioritising them nor changing their ownership structure. This implies focusing on (statutory) governance aspects and particularly on devices implemented by social economy organisations to safeguard their way of doing business. This includes limiting profit distribution, reinvesting profit into the entity mission, locking assets, inclusivity empowering workers, beneficiaries and all stakeholders, including the most vulnerable.
- go beyond quantitative assessment, better capture and assess the transformative role social economy has in relation to the necessary transitions towards sustainability, not forgetting the social dimension.

Social economy umbrella organisations

Social economy organisations, especially second-level and umbrella organisations as well as European and national federations should:

- promote a stronger awareness by members about intrinsic principles and values shared by social economy organisations;
- favour different entities of the social economy operating together as a system with its own identity;
- build bridges with the research community also by participating in research, including being more actively involved in defining research objectives and actions;
- create stronger connections with the research community to reinforce research-based decision-making.

8.2. Increase the visibility of the social economy and foster a common vision

Over the past two decades, there has been an extraordinary increase in interest in the diverse actors located between the public and the conventional business sectors, typically represented by for-profit enterprises. However, the social economy is widely recognised by researchers, policy makers and by the same umbrella and grassroots organisations only in a few Member States. Its visibility is jeopardised in many countries by the predominance of concepts which only partially overlap with the social economy such as the third sector, non-profit sector, the solidarity economy, as well as social innovation, social impact business and mission-driven companies. Also, in countries where the social economy enjoys stronger recognition, it is sometimes-narrowly understood and not aligned with the SEAP definition, as it is the case for Luxembourg and Poland.

The social economy potential is underestimated due to historical and cultural factors, leading to the lack of a unitary vision and strong division among the different types as well as between new and old organisations. Typical patterns include the distance between cooperatives and non-profit organisations in some countries (e.g. Italy and Germany) and the confusion of social enterprises with conventional entrepreneurial practices in other countries (e.g. Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden).

When it comes to social enterprises, what varies dramatically across countries is how much social enterprises are acknowledged and self-recognised as part of the social economy and to how much they are seen as a specific dynamic within the social economy by policymakers, the general public and grassroots organisations. In terms of visibility, in many countries, the two concepts – social economy and social enterprise – are only employed in academic circles. In other countries only one concept has gained visibility, whereas the other is still struggling to emerge. In very few countries do both concepts enjoy broad recognition, though this is reflected in their widespread use by different categories of stakeholders (policymakers, academics and grassroot organisations). Different factors contribute to explaining country variations including the diverse traditions and historical roots of the social economy. Promotional activities ought to properly advance the social economy as a conceptual framework and socio-economic field. At the same time, it is extremely important that all key actors agree on the boundaries of the social economy, which need to be determined at regional/national levels (also in relation to legislation and institutional settings) and exclude organisations that do not adhere to its principles and values.

National/regional governments

National governments should:

- fund ad-hoc actions (e.g. conferences, workshops, campaigns) to promote the visibility of the social economy and a stronger unitary vision by its components;
- promote recognition of the social economy through tailored policy actions (e.g. national action plans and national strategies, support schemes) and by recognising the social economy in existing policy schemes and measures related to other policy domains (e.g. laboour policies; health policies; circular economy);
- ensure the specificity of the social economy is adequately recognised in all policy domains through the setting up of a Task Force at ministerial level or a High Commissioner responsible for the social economy;

- establish the institution of a social economy envoy, with a similar role and function as the national SME envoy[84].

Umbrella social economy organisations at national/regional level

Umbrella organisations should:

- raise awareness through targeted initiatives (e.g. seminars, ad hoc campaigns, training activities) in public administrations, policymakers, political parties and communities about the contribution of the social economy to local economies, welfare improvement, employment growth, social inclusion, sustainable development and enhanced social cohesion;
- cross-fertilize each other to develop self-regulatory regional and/or federal mechanisms and bodies representing the interests of the social economy and taking measures to ensure that its values and principles are fully observed by its components;
- promote cooperative specificity and recognise cooperatives and mutual-benefit societies belonging to the social economy.

8.3. Support the production and dissemination of statistics on the social economy

Workshop participants shed light on financial barriers preventing the production and dissemination of statistics.

On this regard, the European Commission and Eurostat could:

- create within Eurostat a specific section or unit to statistically study the social economy dedicated to coordinating efforts on the topic at the European level;
- support financially (e.g. grants) new pilot projects to create satellite accounts or observatories in Member States.

National and regional governments should against this backdrop:

- allocate funding and human resources to NSOs, other dedicated public statistical agencies, or public research centres to support the production of statistics.

NSOs should:

- facilitate free access to microdata, at least for research purposes;
- develop pilot projects on social economy statistics in countries with no experience in this matter;
- include the production of statistics on the social economy or its main legal forms (cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, and foundations) in the statistical plans of national or regional statistical institutes as well as other public bodies producing statistics.

[84] The network of SME envoys was set up in 2011 as part of the review of the Small Business Act. Each EU Member State has nominated a national SME envoy to complement the role of the EU SME envoy who chairs the network. The group of SME envoys makes up an SME policy advisory group that promotes SME friendly regulation and policymaking in all EU countries. For more information, see: https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-strategy-and-sme-friendly-business-conditions/sme-envoys-network_en

8.4. Adopt a shared statistical definition of social economy

The data collected across the 27 Member States indicated that even in the six countries where statistics on the social economy are available, the population covered by these statistics does not always perfectly match the SEAP definition. The analysis of the social economy satellite account from Poland and Luxembourg has shown that the current UN Handbook for the satellite account on non-profit and related institutions and voluntary work does not adequately capture the complexity of the European social economy as it excludes part of the cooperative sector. In addition, the UN manual does not align with the diverse social economy landscapes beyond Europe, as indicated by recent ILO and UN resolutions. In the other Member States, the research team had to evaluate each country individually to determine which forms to include within the scope of the study. This raised issues regarding the comparability of data between countries and the need of a more formalised process to define the operational criteria for including and excluding units.

On this regards, the European Commission and Eurostat could:

- formulate guidelines with standard criteria for identifying statistical units that fall within or outside the scope of the social economy, adopting a modular approach that considers the different statistical units;
- encourage the publication of manuals or guidelines – also in collaboration with other working groups, such as those affiliated with the UN (ILO and UNTFSSE) – adopting an operational definition of the social economy in line with the SEAP.

NSOs should:

- In Member States where official data on the social economy as a whole is already available, ensure that the study population aligns with the SEAP definition. If not, encourage a revision of the adopted definition;
- In countries lacking comprehensive statistics on the social economy, promote pilot projects in coordination with Eurostat to operationalize the SEAP definition within the national statistical framework.

The Research community should:

Our recommendation is that research be directed to:

- support Eurostat and NSOs in identifying operational criteria to determine in-scope and out-of-scope units.

8.5. Set common indicators and combination of data collection methods

Statistics in this report are based on data from different sources (both statistical and administrative) provided by several organisations (NSOs, ministries and other public bodies, research institutes and umbrella organisations). That said, the type of sources available (and the content of these sources) vary from country to country, depending on various factors including the diverse traditions, roots and relevance of each social economy family in each country. These differences have an impact on the type of data available and give rise to comparability and reliability issues.

Data collection in the 27 Member States shows that it is generally possible to obtain statistics on the number of social economy enterprises and their employees. More challenging is the collection of data on economic variables (especially value added), volunteers and members. In particular, collecting data on members and volunteers showed the greatest difficulties due to the lack of data in many Member States. Additionally, where data is available, it is often collected from the enterprise side, leading to an overestimation of the actual number of members and volunteers, as individuals can be members or volunteers in more than one entity.

Finally, interacting with stakeholders in the project workshops has emphasised the need to extend beyond typical statistical indicators for measuring enterprises. It is essential to identify appropriate indicators reflecting the social economy contribution beyond purely economic or occupational aspects.

On this regards, the European Commission and Eurostat could:

- provide guidelines on indicators to be measured and methodologies to be used to collect data by listing the pros and cons of each methodology regarding the variables to be measured;
- checking for difficulties in some Member States and suggesting good practices to transpose;
- reflect on the current European system of national and regional accounts (ESA 2010) that lacks provisions for adequately integrating the social economy as a distinct sector. While the ESA (2010) incorporates ‘Non-profit institutions serving households’ (S.15), this fails to encompass the entirety of the social economy, mirroring limitations in the UN Handbook (2018). A revision of ESA should incorporate all entities of the social economy, following the SEAP;
- explore the possibility of conducting a special Eurobarometer on the social economy to gather information on how EU citizens are involved (by differentiating between membership and volunteering), what they know about the social economy and how they perceive the social economy contribution to society;
- explore the possibility of including social economy variables in existing periodic surveys (i.e. the EU statistics on income and living conditions - EU-SILC survey) to obtain data generally not available at Member State level, such as members or volunteers of social economy organisations. The six-year module for quality of life in the EU-SILC survey already requires collecting data on participation in formal voluntary activities distinguishing (in the 2022 edition) by charitable, cultural, sport, religious and other organisations. Thus, data is already available on the population that performs voluntary activities in social economy entities. If anything, it would be a matter of reasoning whether and how to reshape the response options to better delineate the type of activities and represent individual components of the social economy. At present, the survey does not include questions on the size of membership. Therefore, one could open a discussion on the introduction of a specific question on membership in cooperatives, associations or other social economy entities;
- promote and support the reflection on and testing of new indicators that go beyond the traditional GDP metrics, incorporating indicators directly related to the social economy. These new indicators will better assess welfare and transitions, especially the digital and green transitions. Examples of progress in this direction include estimates of the economic value of volunteers or the evaluation of the contribution of associations to social cohesion and well-being as indicators of a better life. In recent years, Eurostat has made progress in advancing welfare indicators beyond GDP, but these advancements have not considered the social economy.

NSOs should:

- adopt a modular approach that leverages existing statistical processes to produce official statistics (this may imply the adoption of satellite accounts) on the social economy as a whole;

- explore the potential use of data already collected for other purposes (i.e. data of the European Business Statistics (EBS)[85], data from the National Accounting[86]).

The research community should:

- conduct further research to develop consistent socio-economic indicators. These should include the quality of jobs (worker satisfaction, training, types of working contracts), the contribution to territorial cohesion and challenges, the proportion of underrepresented groups (e.g. women, youth) in managing positions, the longevity of the enterprise, the social economy share of key sectors (linked to current societal needs) and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) performance indicators. This would offer a better grasp of the social economy contribution to addressing social and societal challenges compared to traditional indicators currently used at international level.

8.6. Adopt common classifications

Difficulties emerged also in aggregating data by sector as Member States apply different classifications.

In most cases, the difficulty arises because cooperatives and mutual benefit societies are traditionally classified under the Statistical classification of economic activities in the European Community (NACE), while associations, foundations, and other non-profit institutions are generally classified under the International Classification of Non-profit Organizations (ICNPO). This study has made it clear that both NACE classification and ICNPO have both advantages and disadvantages for statistics on the social economy. The NACE classification allows for comparability with other business statistics and enables linking the social economy with other ecosystems, such as agri-food, retail, energy-renewables, health, tourism and cultural and creative industries. It allows for the classification of cooperatives and mutual societies without particular problems, but does not fully represent the activity of associations. In contrast, the ICNPO classification is better suited to classifying associations and foundations, but it does not have useful categories for classifying many activities of cooperatives and mutuals.

In this regard, Eurostat should:

- reflect on how to best represent the sectoral distribution of the social economy, especially in light of the new NACE Rev. 2.1 classification coming into effect on January 1, 2025.

The NSOs should:

- evaluate the release of a correspondence table between the national classification (including ICNPO) and the NACE classification.

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[85] Cooperatives, as enterprises, fall within the population gathered in the European Business Statistics (EBS), especially in the statistical business registers. These registers serve as the primary source of information for statistical analysis of the business population and its demographics. Even though cooperatives are generally included in these registers, some Member States do not publish data by legal form, sometimes subsuming cooperatives under 'other legal forms'. Therefore, it would be sufficient to provide for the publication of statistics by type of enterprise by creating a category dedicated to cooperatives (where there are no limitations on the number of statistical units and, thus, problems with data confidentiality).

[86] National accounting systems do not develop a complete accounting picture of non-profit institutions (including associations and foundations); rather, they focus on allocating these to different institutional sectors according to their economic behaviour and what they share with other units in these sectors. This means that NSOs estimate the contribution of non-profit institutions to national value added and operating surpluses, but they compile and disseminate a complete system of accounts only for non-profit institutions whose activity is directed towards the production of services for households free of charge or for a reasonable fee. In countries where data on associations and foundations are currently unavailable or with only statistics on the number of entities, data on non-profit institutions collected for national accounts could be used to provide or complete the statistical picture on associations and foundations.

8.7. Engaging different stakeholders in the statistical process

The project highlighted that producing statistics can benefit from various stakeholders' input. While Eurostat and statistical offices play a primary role in producing statistics on the social economy, NSOs often lack the expertise and data sources to quantify the social economy size and contribution. Therefore, fostering dialogue and collaboration between Eurostat, NSOs, government agencies and departments, academia, and umbrella organisations might be crucial. This inclusive approach will enhance the methodology for social economy statistics, ensuring comprehensive and accurate data while addressing the issues discussed in the previous paragraphs.

In this regards, the European Commission should:

- establish a European Working Group on social economy statistics in the GECES, in analogy to what the ILO is doing, bringing together Eurostat researchers and experts from NSOs and other relevant stakeholders;
- promote seminars and workshops for NSOs on the topic of statistics facilitating mutual learning and the exchange of best practices in social economy statistics;
- support calls for projects or joint research projects at EU level: between Eurostat, NSOs, social economy umbrella organisations and federations, and experts/researchers;
- support for several Members States, sharing practices and peer-learning between NSOs, social economy umbrella organisations and federations, as well as researchers;
- foster its participation in working groups that, at the international level, are engaged in defining new methodologies for the statistical study of the social economy.

National/regional governments should:

- establish social statistical observatories to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of existing statistics and improve statistics for the future;
- promote, facilitate and support collection and production of social economy statistics. This may include establishing agreements between NSOs, government agencies and other stakeholders.

Umbrella social economy organisations at national/regional level should

- support and encourage all the above, by actively communicating their activities, advocating at the territorial level, and making their voice better heard.

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10. Appendix 1: Detailed research methodology

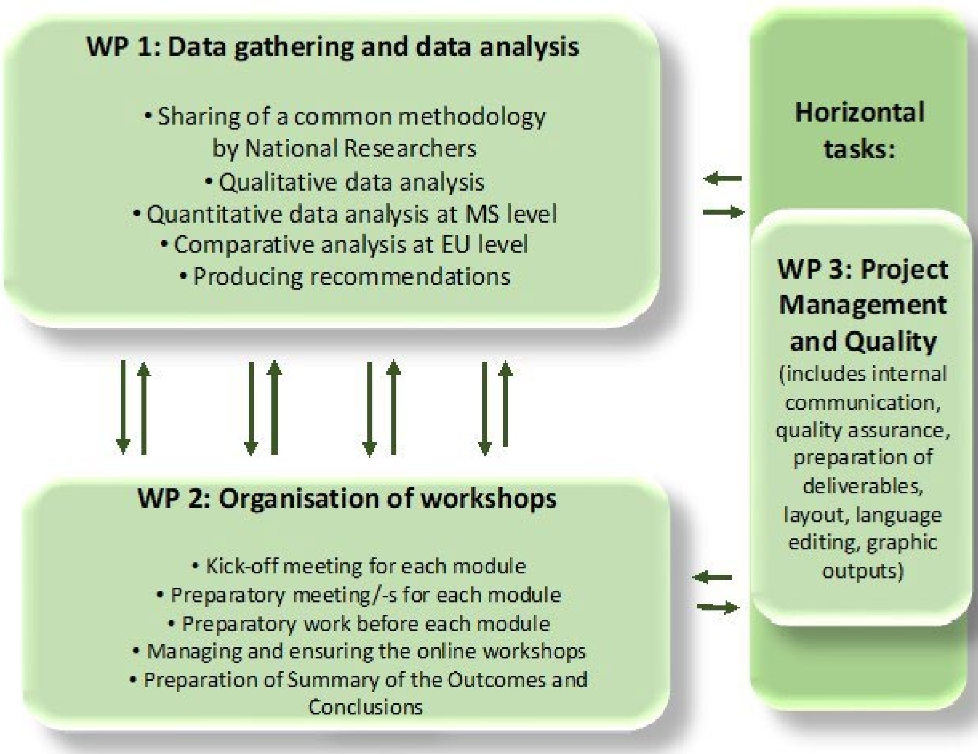
The project pursued three objectives:

- collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data to promote evidence-based policy on the social economy ecosystem in the context of EU industrial strategy;
- contribute to EU and national policy making for the social economy by providing information on the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis;
- assist statistical offices at Member State and EU levels to produce quality data and develop indicators to measure impacts of the social economy.

The project was structured in three Work Packages (WP):

- Data gathering and data analysis (WP1);
- Organisation of workshops (WP2);
- Project Management and Quality (WP3).

Figure 5 – Methodology of the study



WP1 was structured in four research phases: 1) Design of a common research methodology; 2) Qualitative analysis at Member State level; 3) Quantitative analysis at Member State level; and 4) Comparative analysis at EU level, which jointly aim at providing EU-wide, updated and in-depth information and data on the social economy.

The work regarding data gathering and analysis was led by the core research team of the consortium, supported by a network of 27 national researchers (NRs) who were responsible for conducting desk research and collecting data at country level.

The online workshops (WP2) have been an integral part of the overall methodology; they supported the implementation of all research steps. Similarly, the project management and quality control system (WP3) supported the research and ensured the achievement of the overall project objectives.

Design of a common research methodology

To facilitate the sharing of a consistent methodological approach, the core research team developed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodological tools to support national researchers in applying the shared definitions of both the social economy and social enterprise to national contexts and in supporting them in carrying out the qualitative and quantitative analysis at Member State level.

As for the definition of social economy, the starting point of this study is the definition of the social economy as provided in the SEAP: '*Traditionally, the term social economy refers to four main types of entities providing goods and services to their members or society at large: cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), and foundations. They are private entities, independent of public authorities and with specific legal forms. Social enterprises are now generally understood as part of the social economy. Social enterprises operate by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and often innovative fashion, having social and/or environmental objectives as the reason for their commercial activity. Profits are mainly reinvested with a view to achieving their societal objective. Their method of organisation and ownership also follow democratic or participatory principles or focus on social progress. Social enterprises adopt a variety of legal forms depending on the national context*' (SEAP, p.5).

As the social economy is a highly country-specific and fast-changing phenomenon, strongly influenced by the interplay of social and economic contextual factors and policy change, the core research team provided a set of general conceptual guidelines to delineate the boundaries of the social economy and social enterprise in each national context.

Table 17 – Social economy and social enterprise features[87]

Features	Social economy	Social enterprise
Objectives	Carry out activities in the interest of members/users or society at large	Carry out activities to meet the needs of vulnerable groups or society at large
Distribution of profits	Primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits as well as assets, including reinvesting most of the profits	Reinvestment of all/most of the profits and compliance with an asset lock
Governance	Democratic and/or participatory governance	Democratic and/or participatory governance
Resources	Resource mix depending on whether an organisation is a commercial entity (cooperative, mutual benefit society) or not (e.g. a charity)	In addition to non-commercial resources, social enterprises use production factors typical of the monetary economy

[87] This table illustrates the main features of the social economy and social enterprise in a simplified manner. Differences across legal forms, consistently with their national legislatures and organisational ownership, are not taken into consideration. It should indeed be considered that in some countries distribution of profits is to a certain extent allowed within some cooperatives and that the governance, especially in some traditional charities, is not as democratic and participatory as in cooperatives.

Features	Social economy	Social enterprise
Type of producer	Market and non-market producer	Market producer
Legal forms	Cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), foundations and social enterprises	Cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, and conventional companies pursuing explicit social aims; associations and foundations that conduct economic activities

The conceptual guidelines have been complemented by guidelines for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, including information on how to identify statistical units, existing official statistics and data sources on the social economy and social enterprise, and how to analyse and aggregate data at national level, as well as information on how to examine several aspects (e.g. tradition, recognition, evolution of the social economy, sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and how they have recovered from its effects, contribution of the social economy in selected industrial ecosystems). Finally, a glossary was defined to explain key terms used in the Study (see Appendix 2).

Qualitative data analysis at Member State level

The qualitative analysis enabled to investigate the tradition, institutional framework, roots and trends, as well as the level of recognition of the social economy in each Member State, including new forms of organisations and businesses operating outside the radar which have emerged over the past decades to tackle unmet challenges and address new needs arising in society.

Moreover, special attention was paid to both assessing the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and recovery by focusing on the sectors of engagement of the social economy that have been affected the most and analysing the contribution of the social economy in selected industrial ecosystems, namely: agri-food, cultural and creative industries, energy-renewables, health, tourism and retail.

To collect information, a preliminary literature review was conducted at the national and EU level and information was collected through a template designed by the core research team and addressed to NRs. In addition, a series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with key informants.

For the **analysis of the impact of Covid-19 and recovery**, CIRIEC team members (including a documentarist-librarian specialised in public, cooperative and social economy), carried out desk research and the national researchers were asked to complete the information and suggest literature references within a specific template provided by the core research team with reference to:

- Impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the social economy and the whole economy:
    - an overview of the economic and social impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the national economy (e.g., on employment, GDP, sectors, volunteers, etc.);
    - an overview of the economic and social impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the social economy as a whole and on the specific institutional families of the social economy;
    - key activity sectors most impacted by Covid-19, both in the social economy and in the whole national economy, with particular reference to the following

sectors: home care services, social support, agri-food delivery and zero-kilometre products, proximity healthcare, virtual educational services, retail;
  - key social economy sectors (operators, economic activities) acting against the Covid-19 crisis;
  - main differences in the impact of Covid-19 (also in relative weight between the social economy and the whole of the economy), and main reasons explaining it.
- Adaptation to the Covid crisis by the social economy:
  - reactive strategies and ways in which the social economy (and its institutional families) tackled the crisis;
  - innovative actions and strategies developed by the social economy in some economic sectors to face Covid-19;
  - most resilient activity sectors/operators of the social economy;
  - effects of the crisis on the social economy recognition.
- The social economy in the recovery context from the Covid crisis:
  - recovery of the social economy activities/operators after the crisis;
  - involvement of the social economy in the main recovery public policies;
  - introduction of new public strategies and/or plans focused on the social economy;
  - main trends/developments of the social economy after the crisis.

In addition, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants (Table 18) to collect examples/illustrations along the following questions:

- What impact did Covid have on the social economy?
- Depict the reactivity of the social economy ecosystem to Covid, and/or operational actions deployed.
- Did specific innovations/actions/tools/partnerships, etc. “survive” and become permanent after the Covid period?
- Did public authorities associate or partner with social economy entities or federations, to deploy post-Covid public policies? If yes, how?

Table 18 – List of interviewed organisations (Covid-19)

Organisation	Geographical coverage	Interview Date
Solidaris (mutual health organisation)	Belgium	07/11/2023
European Network of Cities and Regions for the social economy (REVES)	EU	10/11/2023
Department of Rural and Community Development	Ireland	13/11/2023
Romanian Network of Social Integration Enterprises (RISE)	Romania	16/11/2023

Organisation	Geographical coverage	Interview Date
Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Joint social welfare association)	Germany	16/11/2023
Social Services Europe (SSE) (not-for-profit social and health care organisations)	EU	17/11/2023
Social Economy Europe (SEE)	EU	21/11/2023
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Portugal	Portugal	21/11/2023
Pellervo Coop Center (also deals with mutuals)	Finland	23/11/2023
European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE)	EU	23/11/2023
Center for Social and Economic Research (CASE) and Institute of Labour and Social Affairs	Poland	24/11/2023
European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN)	EU	30/11/2023
ZMAG and Good economy cooperative	Croatia	20/12/2023
Labour Market Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare	Latvia	10/01/2024
Université Aix-Marseille et LEST – CNRS France	France	30/01/2024

As for the **contribution of the social economy to the other industrial ecosystems**, members of the EURICSE team carried out a desk research at the international and national level targeting: i) the contribution of the different types of social economy organisations on welfare, employment, and growth; ii) recent transformation/evolutionary patterns of social economy organisations to face new challenges; iii) specific contribution of the social economy to the selected industrial ecosystems and iv) main challenges of the social economy when engaging these ecosystems.

The desk research was complemented with the analysis of the information provided by national researchers. In particular, researchers were asked to critically describe the contribution of the social economy to at least three out of the six selected industrial ecosystems. A set of guiding questions was developed by the EURICSE research team:

- To what extent does the social economy contribute to filling gaps in basic service/goods delivery in the above-mentioned ecosystems?
- To what extent does the social economy contribute to ensuring the survival of small/family enterprises by combining the advantages of the small size and the capacity to generate economies of scale?
- In which industrial ecosystems and among what target groups is the social economy creating new employment and/or enabling to safeguard employment?
- To what extent does the social economy play a role in ensuring access to a variety of undersupplied services in remote and sparsely populated areas?

- Which industrial ecosystems where the social economy is playing a role are being affected by the digital transition?
- To what extent does the social economy play a leading role in the ecological transition the industrial ecosystems are facing? To what extent can the social economy speed up the adoption of a more circular approach that has a role in reducing environmental impacts by changing mainstream production and consumption models?
- To what extent does the social economy contribute to democratising the economy by both engaging the concerned stakeholders in the management of key goods/activities and favouring new forms of partnerships between public and private sectors?

In addition, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants (Table 19) on the following issues:

- Contribution of the social economy to the selected industrial ecosystems;
- Main challenges faced, unexploited potential and recent trends of the social economy;
- Main institutional types of the social economy that are expected to play a more significant role over the next future;
- Role of the social economy in shaping policies for the ecosystem;
- Policies needed to harness the contribution of the social economy.

Table 19 – List of interviewed organisations (Ecosystems)

Organisation	Ecosystem coverage	Interview Date
REScoop	Energy-renewable	25/09/2023
RREUSE	All	27/09/2023
ENSIE	All	26/09/2023
Social Economy Europe (SEE)	All/CCI	19/10/2023
Diesis & ISTO	All/Tourism	27/09/2023
CECOP	All	21/09/2023
Urgenci international network & RIPESS Intercontinental	All	25/09/2023
International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM)	Health and Welfare	28/09/2023
International Health Cooperative Organisation (IHCO)	Health	25/09/2023
REVES	All	21/09/2023
International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)	All	28/09/2023

Organisation	Ecosystem coverage	Interview Date
Social Services Europe (SSE)	Welfare	28/09/2023
VoluntEurope	Welfare	28/09/2023
EC - DG GROW	CCI	21/11/2023
EC - DG GROW	Tourism	27/11/2023

Quantitative data analysis at Member State level

The quantitative analysis was aimed at assessing the size of the social economy in the Member States based on available data (reference year 2021). If data for 2021 was not available, researchers referred, in order of priority, to 2019, 2018 or 2020. National researchers identified, analysed and aggregated existing statistics to measure the social economy in their countries with reference to the following:

- number of entities (statistical units were identified in each country consistently with the shared operational definition of the social economy and social enterprise);
- employment (broken down by institutional type, size, and sectoral representation);
- economic size in terms of turnover and value added (broken down by institutional type, and sectoral representation);
- number of volunteers (and, if available, hours of volunteering);
- number of members.

National researchers identified and evaluated existing statistics on the social economy as a whole covering the variables of interest and following the common guidelines. Moreover, they identified data sources for one or more of the four main social economy families (cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations), social enterprises (both ex-lege and de facto) and other institutional types in the national context that fulfil the operational definitions, in case statistics on the social economy as a whole were not available, partially available, out of date or partially inconsistent with the operational definitions adopted in this study.

The assessment covered, first of all, official statistics (including satellite accounts, statistical registers, censuses, surveys, etc.) released by the national statistical offices, other statistical data derived from surveys and databases carried out by other subjects at national or international levels (governmental agencies, umbrella organisations such as e.g., second- and third-level organisations) and administrative registers and other administrative sources managed by governmental agencies or umbrella organisations. For each source identified, national researchers assessed the quality of the data in terms of relevance and coverage, coherence, accessibility and clarity, timeliness and quality improvement over time. Based on the results of these preliminary steps, the national researchers aggregated existing statistics to measure the social economy in their countries with reference to the variables of interest mentioned above. Specifically for social enterprises, they were asked to consider both ex lege and de facto social enterprises. Particular attention was paid to the risk of double counting deriving from the potential overlaps between institutional forms that are traditionally recognised as being part of the social economy and institutional forms conceived as social enterprises, and between ex lege and de facto social enterprises.

Aggregation of data by size, the size categorization refers to the EU classification for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)[88]. As far as sectoral representation is concerned, sector categorisation refers to the economic sectors listed in Table 20 that proposes a correspondence between economic sectors and NACE Rev. 2 codes[89].

Table 20 – Economic sectors and NACE codes

Economic sector	NACE codes
Agri-food	A1 – Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities A2 – Forestry and logging A3 – Fishing and aquaculture C10 – Manufacture of food products C11 – Manufacture of beverages C12 – Manufacture of tobacco products
Industry/Manufacturing	C – Manufacturing (excluding C10, C11, C12)
Energy and utilities	D – Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply E – Water supply; sewerage; waste management and remediation activities
Construction and real estate	F – Construction L68 – Real estate activities
Transport	H – Transporting and storage
Retail	G – Wholesale and retail trade
Accommodation and food services	I – Accommodation and food service activities
Financial and insurance services	K – Financial and insurance activities
Cleaning and landscape activities	N81 – Services to buildings and landscape activities
Education	Q85 – Education
Human health activities	Q86 – Human health activities
Residential care activities	Q87 – Residential care activities
Social work activities without accommodation	Q88 – Social work activities without accommodation
Creative, arts and entertainment activities	R90 – Creative, arts and entertainment activities
Other sectors	Sectors not included in the previous categories

Comparative analysis at EU level

[88] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/smes/sme-definition_en

[89] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/ks-ra-07-015

Building upon the findings achieved in the first research phases, the core research team conducted comparative analyses to:

- Compare the diverse traditions of the social economy, development patterns, level of recognition by society, policymakers and academia;
- Review the measurement techniques in use at the international level for assessing the socio-economic impact of the social economy;
- Compare data on the sizes of the diverse entities that compose the social economy at the EU level;
- Compare data on the contribution of the social economy to the selected industrial ecosystems at the EU level, as well as data on the social economy and the Covid-19 pandemic.

WP2: Workshops

The online workshops supported the research and the identification of new methods and indicators. The workshops address three aspects within the overall challenge of data availability and comparability of data on social economy, including social enterprises:

- Workshop 1 on the 'Current state of art of statistics on the social economy in the 27 Member States'
- Workshop 2 on 'Gaps, barriers, and obstacles in producing statistics and possible solutions to overcome them'
- Workshop 3 on 'New indicators and approaches for assessing the role of the social economy'.

A specific workshop concept was designed at the beginning of the project. The online workshops followed a digital interactive approach supported by tools and techniques to facilitate small group work (breakout rooms), co-creation on shared whiteboards and group plenaries.

On average, some 30 participants (excluding the project team members) attended each workshop. Participants included experts from Eurostat, national statistical offices, public agencies and national or sub-national governments, researchers from research institutes dealing with data collection/statistics, representatives of social economy networks, umbrella organisations, and international organisations.

The workshops helped to:

- deepen the understanding of how social economy statistics are presented in different parts of the EU,
- examine the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches to generate statistics and provide suggestions as to how social economy statistics may be better presented,
- reflect on how contemporary socio-economic factors and mega trends can impact the design of appropriate tools and indicators to adequately represent the role of the social economy and its new forms of organisations and businesses.

The outcomes of the online workshops were fed into this report, especially in Chapters 7 and 8.

Several conclusions and recommendations could be identified. National laws and a tradition on social economy at regional or national level were identified as main drivers for good data availability on the social economy. The diversity of data sources and the need to connect them and find agreements on relevant information collection for the social economy monitoring was seen as one of the challenges to comparable statistics in the EU Member States.

Overall, the discussions concentrated on the multiple complexities and obstacles to produce comparable statistics. It became clear that many different steps and agreements are needed to produce comparable statistics. The following aspects could be gathered as challenges in producing social economy statistics:

- Social economy statistics from an international and comparative perspective: Use of international guidelines, comparability and Interoperability between national approaches and national data, differences between countries, generating and managing knowledge at EU level.
- Statistics and data at national level: benefits of social economy data and statistics, political frameworks and national priorities, process and first steps to build social economy statistics, governance of social economy statistics, quality, continuity and sustainability.
- General methodological considerations: definition, building the Universe, reflecting specific social and societal benefits of the social economy.
- Technical aspects: data collection, calculation, methods.

A summary of the workshop findings and conclusions is included as Appendix 5.

11. Appendix 2: Glossary

Table 21 – Glossary

Term	Explanation
Asset lock	An asset lock is a mandatory and irreversible legal or constitutional mechanism, which ensures that surplus income, capital, profits or other property is not distributed to any organisation's members, shareholders or persons. It prevents the assets of an organisation from being used for private gain rather than for the social mission of the organisation, both during the life of the organisation and in case of its dissolution or sale.
Association	A legal form that is broadly characterised by the following features: a group of individuals/organisations organised on the basis of a written agreement to further a shared purpose; it can be established to further a range of social purposes; profits are used for purposes stated in governing document and are not distributed. The possibility that associations carry out entrepreneurial activities is not acknowledged in all countries.
B Corp	A private international certification that can be obtained by any private enterprise. It designates that a business is meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials. B Corps are not part of the social economy.
Benefit corporation	A legal form recognised in the USA and Italy since 2016 with the denomination of benefit corporation. The economic activity is not instrumental to the pursuit of explicit social aims as benefit corporations are not structured to carry out mainly general interest activity. Benefit corporations are not considered as part of the social economy and cannot qualify as social enterprise according to the Italian law on social enterprise.
Contract	An agreement to deliver a specific quantity and quality of products or services as specified by the buyer, often based on a competitive tendering process.
Conventional enterprise	Any entity that strives for profit, although not being necessarily aimed at maximizing it. It can be engaged in any economic activity and may be structured in different ways as per corporate law: sole proprietorship, partnership, and corporation. Liability in some types of conventional enterprises (the smaller ones) is assumed by the owners; it can either be limited or unlimited depending on the type. In advanced economies, the specific rules regulating conventional enterprises are rather similar and vary only to a limited extent. Also referred to as "mainstream enterprise" or "traditional enterprise".
Cooperative	According to the definition of the International Co-operative Alliance of 1995, the term "cooperative" means an "autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise". According to the ILO Recommendation 193 of 2002, a cooperative is a legal form that is broadly characterised by the following features: - jointly owned and democratically controlled by the people who work in it, trade through it or use its products or services ("members"); - can pursue almost any purpose, traditionally subject to the requirement that there should be a common economic, social or cultural need or interest shared by members of the cooperative; - can in principle distribute profits to members. However, there can be limitations to the distribution of profits, i.e., notably in those legal systems that have strengthened cooperatives' social function.
Foundation	A philanthropic organisation organised and operated primarily as a permanent collection of endowed funds, the earning of which are used for the benefit of a

Term	Explanation
	specific group of people or of the community at large. The main classification is between grant-making foundations and operating foundations. The latter provide social, health, and educational services. A foundation is broadly characterised by the following features: established by one or more “founders”; allocating assets to further a social purpose; it can be established to further a range of social purposes (e.g., philanthropic, artistic, cultural and religious purposes); assets and surpluses can only be used for social purposes stated in the governing document and are not distributed; it is not democratically governed; it is managed by trustees appointed by the founder or by the board.
General interest services	The term refers to the benefit of the public in general or of an unspecified group of beneficiaries. Counterpart is self-interest. General-interest services cover a wide range of activities that have a strong impact on the well-being and quality of life of a society at large. They range from basic infrastructure (e.g., energy and water supply, transportation, postal services, waste management) to key sectors such as health, education and social services.
Grant	A sum of money awarded una tantum that is provided for free by a governmental agency or private organisation. Most grants are provided with a view to funding a specific project and require some level of compliance and reporting (for a comparison between the terms “grant” and “subsidy”, see footnote).
Impact enterprise	A constructed concept that seeks to put an umbrella over the multitude of organisations that use business for the purpose of creating positive societal impact. Entreprise à mission is a French legal framework - introduced by the Loi Pacte of 2019 - in which businesses pursue a set social and environmental purposes. The French enterprise à mission is not conceived as part of the social economy according to the 2014 French Law on the Social and Solidarity Economy.
Legal form	The form under which an organisation is incorporated. The legal form determines how aspects like property rights, liability, governance and control, reporting, profit distribution and funding will affect the organisation.
Legal framework	It refers to the complex set of rules established by one or more legislations that are applicable to a certain legal entity.
Legal status	Qualification provided by law to certain entities meeting given requirements. A legal status is regulated by a national or regional legislation or by a public policy strategy.
Market	The term refers to any exchange that results from a contractual agreement. A market is created whenever potential sellers of goods and services enter into contact with potential buyers and there is a possibility of exchange through a contractual agreement.
Member	The social economy includes both membership organisations that typically gather people together around a particular activity, location, interest, or profession and non-membership organisations, which in-volve fewer individuals. Cooperative, associations, and mutual aid societies are typical membership organisations. Foundations and institutes are cases in point of non-membership organisations. Cooperatives: a member of a co-operative is a person who, having acquired a capital share, benefits from all the benefits and services which, without any profit motive, he or she receives from the co-operative. For example, in a worker cooperative, the cooperative activity is constituted by the work of its members (workers); in an agricultural marketing cooperative, the cooperative activity is constituted by the collective marketing on the market of the products provided by its members (producers); in a consumer cooperative, the cooperative activity is determined by the joint use/sale of goods and services that are provided to members (users), including education, energy, housing, consumer goods, etc..

Term	Explanation
	Over the past decades, in several countries a share of cooperatives has evolved from a single stakeholder towards a multistakeholder membership gathering different categories of members having different relations with the cooperative (users, workers, volunteers and in some cases also local authorities). This is the case of cooperatives pursuing explicit social aims such as for instance social cooperatives in Italy, social solidarity cooperatives in Portugal and societies of collective interest in France (which can all be regarded as social enterprises). Mutuals and mutual societies: in mutuals and mutual societies, the members are the mutual members or insured persons. In these entities, members do not acquire capital shares, but pay a contribution. Associations: associations can be of general interest or of mutual or particular interest. In both cases, associations do not have capital shares: they rely on a mix of incomes, including membership fees, contributions, other contributions donations, etc. Foundations: Foundations do not have members. The governing body of the foundation is called the Board of Trustees. Its functioning is regulated by the foundation's statutes.
Mutual benefit society	"A mutual society is an autonomous association of persons (legal entities or natural persons), united voluntarily for the primary purpose of satisfying their common needs in the insurance (life and non-life), providence, health and banking sectors, which conducts activities that are subject to competition. It is managed according to the principle of solidarity between the members, who participate in the governance of the business, and adheres to the following principles: - Absence of shares Mutual society funds do not consist of shares which would produce (even low) returns for the shareholders. Mutual societies operate on the basis of an initial capital - or own funds - financed by the members or by borrowing. These funds are the collective, indivisible property of the mutual society. - Freedom of membership: Mutuals are open to anyone who fulfils any conditions that may be laid down in the articles of association and abides by mutualist principles. - Lack of pure profit-making objectives: The main objective of mutual societies is not to make a profit but to serve the members' interests. The lack of a pure profit motive does not mean that mutuals are not economically active or that they do not endeavour to be economically viable or even to produce a surplus. To be viable and to ensure their continuity, mutuals must be competitive and must balance their accounts. Surpluses are not used to pay a return on capital. They are reinvested in order to improve the services offered to members, finance the development of the business or increase the own funds or, subject to certain limits, are distributed among members. - Solidarity: The members of a mutual society aim to meet individual requirements through collective action, pooling resources and/or activities to meet everyone's needs. - Democracy: Mutual societies are run democratically, with members actively participating in the governance of the business in accordance with representation systems that vary from country to country. Through the principle of 'one person one vote', each member has equal power in the decision-making bodies. Although in practice this principle is often adapted to allow a certain amount of weighted voting, the democratic principle is generally preserved by limits in the articles of association on the number of votes that any member may hold. - Independence: Mutual societies are independent businesses which do not depend on state subsidies to subsist."
Non-profit and Not-for-profit	The most well-known definition is provided by Johns Hopkins University. According to this definition, the sector includes organisations that are: voluntary; formal; private; self-governing; and do not distribute profits. The term "non-profit" refers to organisations that have to comply with a non-distribution constraint. The term "not-for-profit" is more general and refers to the goal pursued (which is other than profit).

Term	Explanation
	Non-profit organisation: an organisation that has a legal form which does not permit the distribution of profit and which is able to trade freely in furtherance of a social purpose. Examples include most foundations, associations and non-profit companies.
Private mark	It is a symbol attached to certain organisations or products for giving information about the values, features and/or code of governance shared. Private marks are regulated by private entities normally for self-identification purposes with a view to presenting clear signals to stakeholders. The use of private marks is normally authorized after a more or less in-depth screening and is subject to periodic checks.
Profit	The residual return to the entrepreneur, i.e., the difference between total sales revenue and total costs incurred by the enterprise.
Public procurement	The process of purchasing supplies and services by public authorities, typically via tendering or auctioning. Public procurement is a key element, which has and will most probably stimulate the growth in number and size of social enterprises. The EU public procurement rules (2014/24/EU) which came into force in 2014 are in this respect of paramount importance. Indeed, they encourage the evaluation of bids, in particular those concerning social and health services, on the basis of the best price-quality ratio, which can create new opportunities to social enterprises. Additional opportunities offered by the EU directive include the following: reserved tenders for economic operators that work for the social and professional integration of persons with disabilities and disadvantaged people, special regime for social, health and cultural services, more attention to quality in public procurement procedures, and reserved contracts for social and health services. The EU Directive 24/2014 also introduces a number of modalities whereby public administrations can develop a more strategic approach and enter into dialogue and cooperation with potential service-providers, including social enterprises. These include competitive procedures with negotiation, competitive dialogues, innovation partnerships, and informal bidding (article 31, EU Directive 24/2014).
Shareholder	A person or a company who owns shares in a company and therefore receives part of the company's profits and has the right to vote on how the company is managed.
Stakeholder	This term was introduced by Edward Freeman in the 1960s. According to its original meaning, "stakeholders" refers to "those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist". Recently, the significance of stakeholders has become wider and more commonly used to mean a person or an organisation who is somehow involved in the company's business and has an interest in its success (e.g., employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, local communities, etc.). The term "multi-stakeholder" refers to the involvement of different stakeholders, representing different interests. A "multi-stakeholder social enterprise" refers to a social enterprise that engages different stakeholders in its governing bodies, i.e., workers, users, volunteers, donors, representatives of the local community, etc.
Subsidy	A sum of money granted by the state or a public body to help an industry or business keep the price of a commodity or service low (for a comparison between the terms "grant" and "subsidy", see footnote 1).
Surplus	Synonym of profit (i.e., the difference between total sales revenue and total costs incurred by the enterprise) but more commonly used by non-profit organisations uncomfortable using language related to the commercial sector.
Third Sector	This term is mainly used in the scientific literature to overcome the differences between the many national models. It refers to organisations other than the public owned (the "State") and the private for-profit ones (the "market"). This term emphasises the intermediary nature of the belonging organisations and

Term	Explanation
	includes exclusively non-profit organisations. This means that cooperatives are in most countries not included in the Third Sector.
Work Integration Social Enterprise (WISE)	WISEs are a special type of social enterprise that display the following minimum characteristics: - private and autonomous enterprises operating on the market; - which comply with a minimum threshold of disadvantaged workers over total workforce whose core mission is the integration through work of disadvantaged people; - where the disadvantaged workers have employee rights under national labour law.
STATISTICAL DEFINITIONS	
Employed person	Employees + Self-employed persons For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Persons_employed_-_SBS
Employee	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Employee_-_SBS
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Full-time_equivalent_(FTE)
Hours volunteered	The total number of hours of volunteer activity performed during the reference period. For more information, see: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_167639/lang--en/index.htm
Industrial ecosystem	Please refer to the European industrial strategy: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en
Part-time employee	An employee “whose normal hours of work, calculated on a weekly basis or on average over a period of employment of up to one year, are less than the normal hours of work of a comparable full-time worker” (Clause 3 of the Framework Agreement on part-time work, as implemented by Council Directive 97/81/EC of 15 December 1997).
Size (enterprise)	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Enterprise_size
Statistical unit	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Statistical_unit
Self-employed person	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Self-employed
Turnover	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Turnover_STS
Value added	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Gross_value_added
Volunteer	According to the ILO definition, persons in volunteer work are defined as all those of working age who, during a short reference period, performed any unpaid, non-compulsory activity to produce goods or provide services for others, where:

Term	Explanation
	(a) “any activity” refers to work for at least one hour; (b) “unpaid” is interpreted as the absence of remuneration in cash or in kind for work done or hours worked; nevertheless, volunteer workers may receive some small form of support or stipend in cash, when below one third of local market wages (e.g., for out-of-pocket expenses or to cover living expenses incurred for the activity), or in kind (e.g., meals, transportation, symbolic gifts); (c) “non-compulsory” is interpreted as work carried out without civil, legal or administrative requirement, that are different from the fulfilment of social responsibilities of a communal, cultural or religious nature; (d) production “for others” refers to work performed: (i) through, or for organisations comprising market and non-market units (i.e., organisation-based volunteering) including through or for self-help, mutual aid or community-based groups of which the volunteer is a member); (ii) for households other than the household of the volunteer worker or of related family members (i.e., direct volunteering). For more information, see: https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/volunteer-work/

12. Appendix 3: Country factsheets

Austria

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises(1)	People employed (headcount - annual average)	Part-time employees (headcount - annual average)	Female employees (headcount - annual average)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers (million)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	1 655	96	45 988	17 911	20 511	13 288.10	-	2 595 536
Mutual benefit societies	24	0	3 040	867	1 565	413.73	-	n/a
Associations	128 414	2 151	23 570(2)	16 166(2)	15 727(2)	n/a	1.95	n/a
Foundations	3 143	206	6 562(2)	2 757(2)	4 509(2)	n/a	-	-
Other legal forms	3 700	654	7 667	7 347	729	123.47	-	-
Total	**136 936**	**3 107**	**86 827**	**45 048**	**43 041**	**13 825.30**	**1.95**	**3 703 933**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	166	0	n/a	n/a	3 046(2)
Industry	10	0	n/a	n/a	0
Energy and utilities	607	0	n/a	n/a	0
Construction and real estate	175	0	n/a	n/a	0
Transport	12	0	n/a	n/a	0
Retail	181	0	n/a	n/a	0
Food and accommodation	13	0	n/a	n/a	0
Financial and insurance services	368	24	n/a	n/a	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	8	0	n/a	n/a	0
Education	4	0	n/a	n/a	0
Human health activities	2	0	n/a	n/a	0
Residential care and social work activities	0	0	n/a	n/a	0
Creative, arts and entertainment	2	0	n/a	n/a	0
Other sectors	107	0	n/a	n/a	0
Total	**1 655**	**24**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**3 046**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms(3)
Agri-food	3 435	0	n/a	n/a	7 667
Industry	233	0	n/a	n/a	0
Energy and utilities	675	0	n/a	n/a	0
Construction and real estate	4 441	0	n/a	n/a	0
Transport	84	0	n/a	n/a	0
Retail	11 766	0	n/a	n/a	0
Food and accommodation	106	0	n/a	n/a	0
Financial and insurance services	19 163	3 040	n/a	n/a	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	2 548	0	n/a	n/a	0
Education	4	0	n/a	n/a	0
Human health activities	C	0	n/a	n/a	0
Residential care and social work activities	0	0	n/a	n/a	0
Creative, arts and entertainment	C	0	n/a	n/a	0
Other sectors	3 387	0	n/a	n/a	0
Total	**45 842**	**3 040**	**0**	**0**	**7 667**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives[4]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations [2][4]	Foundations [2][4]	Other legal forms
Micro	1 053	4	1 766	21	n/a
Small	304	5	153	4	n/a
Medium	180	13	48	7	n/a
Large	34	2	16	2	n/a
Total	**1 571**	**24**	**1 983**	**34**	**n/a**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives [4]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[2][4]	Foundations [2][4]	Other legal forms
Micro	1 545	7	2 294	19	n/a
Small	7 563	C	3 158	C	n/a
Medium	18 126	1 981	5 183	710	n/a
Large	18 364	C	12 430	C	n/a
Total	**45 598**	-	**23 065**	-	**n/a**

Data sources

Data collected by Maria Anastasiadis, Andreas Exner and Dirk Raith.
For entities in the agriculture sectors (NACE codes 01, 02, 03): Austria Statistik - Farm Structure Survey. Year 2020.
For entities in other sectors (NACE codes different from 01, 02, 03): Austria Statistik - Structural Busines Survey (SBS). Year 2021.
For the total number of associations: Ministry of Interior Affairs - Associations Register. Year 2022.
For the total number of foundations: Williams, R., & Millner, R. (2023). Stiftungsreport 2023. Gemeinnützige Stiftungen in und für Österreich. Verband für gemeinnütziges Stiften & Kompetenzzentrum für Nonprofit Organisationen und Social Entrepreneurship. Data for year 2020.
Membership data for cooperatives: Raiffeisen, ÖGV, GBV. Year 2021.
Data on volunteers: Statistics Austria - Survey on Volunteer Work. Year 2022 (Freiwilliges Engagement in Österreich).

(1) Data on "ex lege" social enterprises were collected from the Commercial Register (https://firmenbuch.at) on the basis of "public benefit" status under tax law, using the following search terms ""gemeinnützig"", "gGmbH", "gemGmbH", "gem. GmbH", "mildtätig".
"The number of "de facto" social enterprises was estimated on the basis of data from (1) the commercial register (see above) based on the search term "sozial", followed by a check of individual cases for actual social orientation, (2) the Structural Business Statistics and the Farm Structure Survey of Statistics Austria, which contain data on economically active associations and foundations, and (3) the database of enterprises with a valid Social Balance Sheet with an above-average score (benchmark was 400 out of 1000 points).
(2) Data refer to associations and foundations classified as "economically active" (with at least 1 employee) by Austria Statistik.
(3) Data refers only to agriarian commons.
(4) No employment size classes are available for entities in the agriculture sectors from the Farm Structure Survey.

Belgium

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount - annual average)	Part-time employees (headcount - last quarter)	Female employees (headcount - annual average)	Number of Volunteers
Cooperatives	641	463	8 935	3 101	5 060	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	87	0	18 187	5 901	13 056	n/a
Associations	16 301	407	555 438	311 055	408 804	621 700
Foundations	231	0	7 663	2 507	4 571	n/a
Other legal forms	136	136	2 056	1 462	1 724	n/a
Total	**17 396**	**1 006**	**592 279**	**324 026**	**433 215**	**621 700**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[2]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	128	0	51	0	n/a
Industry	30	0	15	1	n/a
Energy and utilities	26	0	11	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	31	0	7	0	n/a
Transport	8	0	28	1	n/a
Retail	139	0	70	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	21	0	204	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	29	24	15	1	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	7	0	229	0	n/a
Education	6	0	2 468	15	n/a
Human health activities	8	0	4 462	36	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	97	0	4 935	110	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	6	0	2 601	43	n/a
Other sectors	73	63	935	24	n/a
Total	**641**	**87**	**16 031**	**231**	**136**

Employment by sectors of economic activity[3]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	225	0	476	0	n/a
Industry	1 040	0	85	220	n/a
Energy and utilities	120	0	103	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	57	0	49	0	n/a
Transport	32	0	233	3	n/a
Retail	5 492	0	1 000	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	91	0	2 613	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	439	850	219	1	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	499	0	17 221	0	n/a
Education	26	0	36 661	428	n/a
Human health activities	49	0	389 033	2 366	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	362	0	54 631	835	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	17	0	21 236	734	n/a
Other sectors	461	17 337	31 875	3 075	n/a
Total	**8 395**	**18 187**	**555 438**	**7 663**	**2 056**

Entities by size(3)

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	265	15	10 942	166	n/a
Small	47	16	3 891	36	n/a
Medium	19	23	1 077	22	n/a
Large	9	33	391	7	n/a
Total	**641**	**87**	**16 301**	**231**	**136**

Employment by size(3)

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	932	67	44 863	491	n/a
Small	1 123	407	90 407	841	n/a
Medium	1 540	2 863	105 868	2 044	n/a
Large	5 340	14 850	314 299	4 287	n/a
Total	**8 935**	**18 187**	**555 438**	**7 663**	**2 056**

Data sources

Data collected by Jérôme Schoenmaecker with the support of Augustin Morel.

Concert'ES (2021), except for data on volunteers: Hustinx, L. & Dudal, P. (2020). *Le volontariat en Belgique. Chiffres-clés 2019*. Département de Sociologie, Université de Gand. https://media.kbs-frb.be/fr/media/7736/Le%20volontariat%20en%20Belgique.pdf%20for%20volunteers

Note that the Flemish government has a much narrower understanding of the social economy (only for persons in need). It thereby does not recognise the statistical work of either ConcertES or its Observatory, that nevertheless collects statistics for Belgium in its entirety.

(1) Estimates provided by the National Expert taking into account the following legal forms/statuses: Cooperative societies with a social enterprise recognition ("sociétés coopératives agréées comme entreprises sociales" or "coöperatieve vennootschappen erkend als sociale ondernemingen"); Entities recognised as "companies with a social purpose" ("sociétés à finalité sociale" or "vennootschappen met sociaal oogmerk"); SAACE (structures d'accompagnement à l'autocréation d'emploi); Maatwerkbedrijf; IES (Initiative d'économie sociale); IDESS (Initiatives de développement de l'emploi dans le secteur des services de proximité à finalité sociale); ESD: social and democratic enterprise; EI: entreprise d'insertion.

(2) Only partial data are considered, namely those cooperatives having requested and obtained the national approval agreement (see: https://economie.fgov.be/en/themes/enterprises/starting-business/steps-starting-business/forms-companies/cooperative-societies/approval-cooperative-societies).

(3) Only partial data are available.

Bulgaria

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	2 000	0	21 095	n/a	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	n/a	n/a
Associations[2]	5 769	3	10 258	n/a	950 210
Foundations	839	3	2 459	n/a	n/a
Other legal forms	1	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**8 609**	**7**	**33 812**	**42 777**	**955 946**

Employment by sectors of economic activity[3]

	Total
Agri-food	11 275
Industry	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a
Construction and real estate	n/a
Transport	n/a
Retail	4 774
Food and accommodation	n/a
Financial and insurance services	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a
Education	n/a
Human health activities	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	3 284
Other sectors	n/a
Total	**33 812**

Entities by size[3]

	Total
Micro	7 627
Small	982[4]
Medium	n/a
Large	0
Total	**7 627**

Data sources

Data collected by EURICSE.

Data based on OECD fact sheet prepared in the framework of the OECD Global Action "Promoting Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems", funded by the European Union. Year: 2018, except for volunteers: 2019.

(1) Estimation based on the number of ex lege social enterprises listed in the OECD fact sheet.
(2) Data on associations refer to "non profit entities for public benefit".
(3) Data by legal form not available.
(4) Data also include medium entities.

Croatia

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Revenue (EUR million)[2]	Number of Volunteers
Cooperatives	742	93	2 285	233	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	0	n/a
Associations	25 941	346	20 381	1 133	45 201
Foundations	207	5	280	61	161
Other legal forms	82	82	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**26 972**	**586**	**22 946**	**1 426**	**45 362**

Entities by sectors of economic activity[3]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food[4]	299	0	0	0	n/a
Industry[5]	133	0	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	2	0	0	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	74	0	0	0	n/a
Transport	9	0	0	0	n/a
Retail	77	0	0	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	42	0	0	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	6	0	0	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0	0	0	n/a
Education	19	0	19	0	n/a
Human health activities[6]	15	0	1 233	1	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	10	0	8 542	0	n/a
Other sectors	56	0	16 147	206	n/a
Total	**742**	**0**	**25 941**	**207**	**82**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food[4]	857	0	0	0	n/a
Industry[5]	426	0	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	3	0	0	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	111	0	0	0	n/a
Transport	64	0	0	0	n/a
Retail	407	0	0	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	143	0	0	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	13	0	0	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0	0	0	n/a
Education	81	0	34	0	n/a
Human health activities[6]	5	0	6 877	0	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	17	0	4 227	0	n/a
Other sectors	158	0	9 243	280	n/a
Total	**2 285**	**0**	**20 381**	**280**	**n/a**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	691	0	25 449	203	n/a
Small	47	0	452	3	n/a
Medium	4	0	40	1	n/a
Large	0	0	0	0	n/a
Total	**742**	**0**	**25 941**	**207**	**82**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	1 129	0	8 665	113	n/a
Small	839	0	8 791	70	n/a
Medium	317	0	2 925	97	n/a
Large	0	0	0	0	n/a
Total	**2 285**	**0**	**20 381**	**280**	**n/a**

Data sources

Data collected by Danijel Baturina.

Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2021), except for data on volunteers: Registry of nonprofits organizations by the Ministry of finance (2021).

(1) Estimations made by the National Expert based on European Commission (2019). Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Updated country report: Croatia. Author: Davorka Vidovic. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?advSearchKey=socentercountryreports&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=1307&doc_submit=&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

(2) Data on turnover is not available. Instead, revenue is considered.

(3) Partial data.

(4) Data on agri-food only includes NACE sector A.

(5) Data on industry also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.

(6) Data refers to the whole NACE sector Q.

Cyprus

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Turnover (EUR million)
Cooperatives	75	20	400	182.82
Mutual benefit societies	830	0	25	n/a
Associations	331	50	1 799	n/a
Foundations	190	20	1 820	n/a
Other legal forms	100	100	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 526**	**190**	**4 044**	**182.82**

Entities and Employment by sectors of economic activity[2]

	Number of Entities	People employed
Agri-food	n/a	n/a
Industry[3]	19	259
Energy and utilities	0	0
Construction and real estate	6	2
Transport	3	19
Retail	39	113
Food and accommodation	0	0
Financial and insurance services	833	29
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0
Education	0	0
Human health activities[4]	148	1 381
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	0	0
Other sectors	378	2 239
Total	**1 526**	**4 044**

Entities and Employment by size[2]

	Number of Entities	People employed
Micro	1 345	1 156
Small	64	1 334
Medium	17	1 554
Large	0	0
n/a	100	0
Total	**1 526**	**4 044**

Data sources

Data collected by EURICSE.

Statistical Service of Cyprus (2021), except for data on turnover of cooperatives: Authority for Cooperative Societies and Social Enterprises. Year 2021.

(1) Estimates based on: European Commission (2019). Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Updated country report: Cyprus. Author: George Isaias. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
(2) Data by legal form not available.
(3) Data on industry also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.
(4) Data on human health activities also includes "Residential care and social work activities".

Czechia

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2]	Part-time employees (headcount - annual average)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	12 915	51	46.894[3]	n/a	464.45[4]	n/a	828 234
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associations	97 574	56	51 861	18 033	2 262.60	1 218 968	6 566 740
Foundations	2 909	0	925	332	80.03	5 119	n/a
Other legal forms	339	91	12 689	3 703	331.81	82 809	n/a
Total	**113 737**	**198**	**112 369**	**22 068**	**3 138.89**	**1 306 896**	**7 394 974**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms[5]
Agri-food	n/a	0	5 622	0	0
Industry	n/a	0	0	0	0
Energy and utilities	n/a	0	0	0	0
Construction and real estate	7 950	0	1 351	0	0
Transport	n/a	0	0	0	0
Retail	n/a	0	12	0	0
Food and accommodation	n/a	0	20	0	0
Financial and insurance services	n/a	0	0	8	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	0	0	0	0
Education	n/a	0	2 040	76	7
Human health activities	n/a	0	376	72	3
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	0	1 129	233	241
Creative, arts and entertainment	n/a	0	31 103	186	0
Other sectors	n/a	0	55 921	2 334	0
Total	**12 915**	**0**	**97 574**	**2 909**	**251**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[6]	Foundations[6]	Other legal forms[5]
Agri-food	n/a	0	113	0	0
Industry	n/a	0	0	0	0
Energy and utilities	n/a	0	0	0	0
Construction and real estate	3 803	0	43	0	0
Transport	n/a	0	0	0	0
Retail	n/a	0	16	0	0
Food and accommodation	n/a	0	47	0	0
Financial and insurance services	n/a	0	0	7	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	0	0	0	0
Education	n/a	0	4 536	32	11
Human health activities	n/a	0	846	6	364
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	0	20 700	55	10 867
Creative, arts and entertainment	n/a	0	4 747	59	0
Other sectors	n/a	0	12 432	631	0
Total	**46 894**	**0**	**43 480**	**790**	**11 242**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives(7)	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms(5)
Micro	7 800	0	96 198	2 878	93
Small	126	0	1 142	28	80
Medium	22	0	224	3	67
Large	2	0	10	0	11
Total	**7 950**	**0**	**97 574**	**2 909**	**251**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives(4)	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms(5)(6)
Micro	1 876	0	10 914	418	101
Small	1 025	0	18 780	304	1 529
Medium	611	0	17 094	203	5 407
Large	509	0	5 073	0	4 205
Total	**4 021**	**0**	**51 861**	**925**	**11 242**

Data sources

Data collected by Marek Hojsík and Marie Dohnalová.

For data on cooperatives: Register of Economic Entities (2021), except for the number of employees and members: annual report "Czech co-operative movement and selected statistical data in 2021" published by the umbrella Cooperative Association (2021).
For data on associations, foundations and other legal forms: Czech Statistical Office (National account statistics). Year 2021.

(1) Estimates include social cooperatives and registered social enterprises according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs - Directory of Registered Social Enterprises.
(2) For cooperatives: headcount at the end of the year; For associations, foundations and other legal forms: headcount - annual average.
(3) Partial data as they only refer to members of the Czech umbrella Cooperative Association.
(4) Data refer only to housing cooperatives (7 950 entities).
(5) Data refer only to legal persons established by churches.
(6) Data are in Full-Time Equivalents (FTE).
(7) Data refer only to housing cooperatives and 2 301 other cooperatives.

Denmark

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)
Cooperatives	2 067	5	33 602.00
Mutual benefit societies[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a
Associations	122 331	734	112 059.00
Foundations	7 533	65	32 445.00
Other legal forms	147	147	1 492.00
Total	**132 078**	**951**	**179 598**

Data sources

Data collected by Gurli Jakobsen and Thomas Poulsen.
DBA: Danish Business Authority. Year 2021.

(1) Number of social enterprises estimated based on the Social Enterprise Registration.
(2) Data of mutual benefit societies included in the data about cooperatives.

Estonia

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount - annual average)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers (FTEs)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	6 045	5	8 589	36.86	241	70 559
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	0	0	n/a
Associations	37 953	203	54 480	174.90	8 373[2]	1 481 844
Foundations	398	17	1 492	20.84	n/a	2 012
Other legal forms	156	156	1 160	48.08	n/a	n/a
Total	**44 552**	**381**	**65 721**	**280.68**	**8 614**	**1 554 415**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	54	0	94	0	n/a
Industry	0	0	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	22	0	37	1	n/a
Construction and real estate	1 684	0	24 461	11	n/a
Transport	2	0	3	0	n/a
Retail	11	0	17	1	n/a
Food and accommodation	3	0	16	1	n/a
Financial and insurance services	0	0	0	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	16	0	26	1	n/a
Education	318	0	941	37	n/a
Human health activities	34	0	43	0	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	154	0	415	29	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	316	0	1 010	40	n/a
Other sectors	3 431	0	10 890	277	n/a
Total	**6 045**	**0**	**37 953**	**398**	**156**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	54	0	99	0	n/a
Industry	0	0	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	23	0	40	1	n/a
Construction and real estate	1 926	0	29 914	19	n/a
Transport	2	0	3	0	n/a
Retail	13	0	134	1	n/a
Food and accommodation	3	0	39	1	n/a
Financial and insurance services	0	0	0	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	16	0	26	1	n/a
Education	1 067	0	3 235	291	n/a
Human health activities	825	0	63	0	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	309	0	1 946	268	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	323	0	1 261	202	n/a
Other sectors	4 028	0	17 720	708	n/a
Total	**8 589**	**0**	**54 480**	**1 492**	**1 160**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	5 990	0	37 639	388	n/a
Small	42	0	294	10	n/a
Medium(3)	13	0	20	0	n/a
Large	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**6 045**	**0**	**37 953**	**398**	**156**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	6 518	0	47 181	1 375	n/a
Small	769	0	5 663	117	n/a
Medium(3)	1 302	0	1 636	0	n/a
Large	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**8 589**	**0**	**54 480**	**1 492**	**1 160**

Data sources

Data collected by Katri-Liis Lepik.

Statistics Estonia (2021), except for the number of volunteers of cooperatives and non-profit associations: Enjolras, B., Salamon, L. M., Sivesind, K. H., & Zimmer, A. (2018). The third sector as a renewable resource for Europe: Concepts, impacts, challenges and opportunities. Springer Nature. Year 2018.

(1) Estimations made by the National Expert based on Social Enterprise Network (2022) and Statistics Estonia (2022).

(2) Data only refer to non-profit associations.

(3) Data also refer to large entities.

Finland

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	Employees (FTEs)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	3 500	295	92 000	38 000.00	7 600 000
Mutual benefit societies	37	0	6 594	n/a	5 500 000
Associations	16 386	1741	37 721	3 227.73	n/a
Foundations	1 432	315	24 479	34.99	n/a
Other legal forms	137	137	13 468	2 816.76	n/a
Total	**21 492**	**2 488**	**174 262**	**44 079.48**	**13 100 000**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[2]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[2]	Foundations[2]	Other legal forms
Agri-food	105	n/a	58	0	n/a
Industry	66	n/a	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	56	n/a	0	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	217	n/a	135	70	n/a
Transport	28	n/a	0	0	n/a
Retail	178	n/a	0	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	43	n/a	1	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	19	n/a	44	176	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	1 191	n/a	4	0	n/a
Education	73	n/a	1	0	n/a
Human health activities	86	n/a	3	0	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	213	n/a	11	1	n/a
Other sectors	798	n/a	1 171	1	n/a
Total	**3 073**	**37**	**1 428**	**248**	**137**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[2]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[2]	Foundations[2]	Other legal forms
Agri-food	337	n/a	1 144	0	n/a
Industry	2 591	n/a	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	156	n/a	0	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	253	n/a	108	419	n/a
Transport	89	n/a	0	0	n/a
Retail	20 859	n/a	0	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	120	n/a	103	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	2 112	n/a	4 044	19	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	135	n/a	0	0	n/a
Education	52	n/a	0	0	n/a
Human health activities	202	n/a	117	0	n/a
Residential care activities and Social work activities	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	122	n/a	366	226	n/a
Other sectors	2 566	n/a	2 925	1	n/a
Total	**29 594**	**6594**	**8 807**	**665**	**13 468**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives(2)	Mutual benefit societies	Associations(2)	Foundations(2)	Other legal forms
Micro	2 962	n/a	1 053	207	n/a
Small	50	n/a	90	10	n/a
Medium	27	n/a	28	4	n/a
Large	34	n/a	26	13	n/a
n/a	0	0	231	14	0
Total	**3 073**	**0**	**1 428**	**248**	**137**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives(2)	Mutual benefit societies	Associations(2)	Foundations(2)	Other legal forms
Micro	1 289	n/a	1 157	45	n/a
Small	828	n/a	1 937	170	n/a
Medium	1 446	n/a	2 032	315	n/a
Large	26 029	n/a	3 681	135	n/a
Total	**29 592**	**6 594**	**8 807**	**665**	**13 468**

Data sources

Data collected by Harri Kostilaninen.

For cooperatives: Pellervo Coop Centre, Co-operative yearbook 2023. Year 2022.

For associations: Statistics Finland - Structural business and financial statement statistics (2021), except for the number of associations: Trade register. Year 2021.

For mutual benefit societies: European Economic and Social Committee (2017). Recent Evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union. https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/qe-04-17-875-en-n.pdf. Year 2015.

For foundations: Statistics Finland - Structural business and financial statement statistics (2021), except for the number of foundations: OECD fact sheet prepared in the framework of the OECD Global Action "Promoting Social and Solidarity Economy Ecosystems", funded by the European Union. Year: 2021.

For other legal forms: Social entrepreneurship in Finland (Yhteiskunnallinen yrittäjyys Suomessa) https://yyo.fi/tietopankki/data/. Year 2020.

For data disaggregated by sectors and size: Statistics Finland - Structural business and financial statement statistics. Year 2021.

(1) Estimates made by the National Expert based on Social entrepreneurship in Finland (see Data sources).

(2) Data refer only to entities covered by the Structural business and financial statement statistics of Statistics Finland.

France

Social economy data overview

	Total number of Entities	Number of employing entities [1]	of which social enterprises[2]	People employed (headcount at the end of the year)	Part-time employees (headcount at the end of the year)	Female employees (headcount at the end of the year)	Turnover (EUR billion)	Number of Volunteers (million)	Number of Memberships (million)
Cooperatives	22 600	8 138	1 931	320 313	38 438	153 750	329.30	n/a	30.0
Mutual benefit societies	620	620	620	137 457	28 866	100 344	18.60	n/a	55.0
Associations	1 500 000	140 428	74 427	2 024 845	749 193	1 397 143	123.70	Approx. 22	21.5
Foundations	5 320	566	566	108 345	23 836	79 092	16.10	n/a	n/a
Other legal forms	2 000	2 000	2 000	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 530 540**	**151 752**	**79 544**	**2 590 960**	**840 332**	**1 730 329**	**487.70**	**Approx. 22**	**106.5**

Entities by sectors of economic activity[3]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	1 677	0	638	3	n/a
Industry	372	0	157	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	645	0	40	0	n/a
Transport	0	0	0	0	n/a
Retail	1 090	0	254	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	120	1	1 880	25	n/a
Financial and insurance services	1 664	489	67	4	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Education	136	0	15 727	32	n/a
Human health activities	36	38	1 944	33	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	96	48	15 700	128	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	88	0	52 517	57	n/a
Other sectors	2 214	44	51 504	284	n/a
Total	**8 138**	**620**	**140 428**	**566**	**2 000**

Employment by sectors of economic activity[3]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry	11 676	0	4 795	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	12 018	0	721	0	n/a
Transport	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Retail	50 389	0	n/a	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	940	0	24 531	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	172 310	84 504	8 989	18	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	n/a
Education	2 914	47	351 493	8 627	n/a
Human health activities	485	22 860	135 256	35 142	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	3 122	22 864	943 939	51 858	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	1 203	0	166 550	917	n/a
Other sectors	65 256	7 182	388 571	11 783	n/a
Total	**320 313**	**137 457**	**2 024 845**	**108 345**	**n/a**

Entities by size(3)

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	4 991	328	114 106	332	n/a
Small	2 735	184	21 099	115	n/a
Medium	333	83	4 960	95	n/a
Large	79	25	263	24	n/a
Total	**8 138**	**620**	**140 428**	**566**	**2 000**

Employment by size(3)

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	67 896	20 118	288 346	2 884	n/a
Small	101 761	30 937	737 598	18 999	n/a
Medium	67 206	52 328	817 588	51 098	n/a
Large	83 450	34 074	181 313	35 364	n/a
Total	**320 313**	**137 457**	**2 024 845**	**108 345**	**n/a**

Data sources

Data collected by Nadine Richez-Battesti, Eric Bidet and Benjamin Roger.

For the total number of entities: Enquête CES - Centre de recherche sur les associations; Panorama des coopératives Coop Fr.; Observatoire de la philanthropie - Fondation de France.

For the number of employing entities, people employed, part-time employees, female employees, female employees: Insee Flores et BTS.

For turnover: Enquête CES - Centre de recherche sur les associations; Panorama des coopératives Coop Fr.; Observatoire de la philanthropie - Fondation de France.; ACPR-Banque de France.

For the total number of volunteers: Enquête CES - Centre de recherche sur les associations; Enquête CRA/CSA sur le bénévolat.

For the total number of members: Enquête CES - Centre de recherche sur les associations; Enquête CRA/CSA sur le bénévolat; Panorama des coopératives Coop Fr.; Observatoire de la philanthropie - Fondation de France.

For data on sectors and size: Insee Flores et BTS.

All data is referred to 2019, except turnover for cooperatives (2020); associations, mutual benefit societies and foundations (2021).

(1) Entities with at least one person employed.

(2) The estimates include all legal forms that have been legally acknowledged in France to enable the pursuit of explicit general interest goals and the engagement of a plurality of stakeholders (SCIC and CAE, Sociétés commerciales de l'ESS).

For the purposes of this study, the core research team (Euricse-Ciriec) has chosen to consider them as ex lege social enterprises, since they meet all the key criteria of the operational definition of social enterprises adopted in this study. This decision reflects the need to ensure comparability and consistency across all EU Member States that have undergone similar legal developments.

Moreover, the figures presented in the table include an estimate of de facto social enterprises, i.e. the estimated number of enterprises covering other legal forms (HLM coopératives, SCOP and other cooperative societies of persons, mutual societies, associations and foundations) that meet the three criteria of the operational definition adopted on the basis of the available data.

(3) Data only refers to entities with at least one person employed.

Germany

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	6 966	1 939	1 000 276	1 452.00	n/a	23 000 000
Mutual benefit societies	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Associations	615 759	44 681	2 020 579	58 721.74	12 452 080	83 833 124
Foundations	24 650	860	247 583	16 867.07	309 603	n/a
Other legal forms	2 682	2 682	158 147	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**650 057**	**50 162**	**3 426 585**	**77 040.81**	**12 761 683**	**106 833 124**

Entities by sectors of economic activity[2]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transport	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	56	n/a	n/a	5 548	n/a
Human health activities	37	n/a	16 078	1 597	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	83	n/a	33 331	4 245	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	130	n/a	315 044	5 632	n/a
Other sectors	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**6 966**	**n/a**	**615 759**	**24 650**	**2 682**

Employment by sectors of economic activity[2]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transport	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	649	n/a	n/a	30 499	n/a
Human health activities	148	n/a	129 553	43 749	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	1 965	n/a	690 730	122 548	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	566	n/a	317 951	17 419	n/a
Other sectors	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 000 276**	**n/a**	**2 020 579**	**214 215**	**158 147**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives[3]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	1 792	n/a	579 747	22 261	n/a
Small	138	n/a	25 966	1 350	n/a
Medium	5	n/a	7 705	665	n/a
Large	5	n/a	2 341	374	n/a
Total	**6 966**	**n/a**	**615 759**	**24 650**	**2 682**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives[3]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	2 597	n/a	285 654	15 291	n/a
Small	5 278	n/a	450 076	25 930	n/a
Medium	1 668	n/a	710 723	71 575	n/a
Large	1 668	n/a	574 126	134 787	n/a
Total	**1 000 276**	**n/a**	**2 020 579**	**247 583**	**158 147**

Data sources

Data collected by Jennifer Eschweiler.
For cooperatives:ZiviZ-Survey 2023 (year of reference 2022), except for number of entities (DGRV - reference year 2023).
For associations: ZiviZ-Survey 2023 (reference year 2022), except for nuber of entities (Association register - reference year 2022).
For foundations: ZiviZ-Survey 2023 (2022), except for Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen (refence year 2022).
For other: ZiviZ-Survey 2023 (refence year 2022) and Estimation by IAB-Betriebspanel based on Corporation register (year 2022).

(1) Estimates based on Ziviz data following the methodology adopted in European Commission (2018). Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Updated country report: Germany. Authors: Nicole Göler von Ravensburg, Gorgi Krlev, Georg Mildenberger. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Appendix n.2.
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?advSearchKey=socentercountryreports&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=1307&doc_submit=&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

(2) Partial data, as for some types of cooperatives, associations and foudations only ICNPO data are available.

(3) Data refers only to social cooperatives.

Greece

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2]	Part-time employees (headcount)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	6 925	3 261	33 548	964	3119.18	264 229
Mutual benefit societies	6	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	481 400
Associations	20 203	27	49 833	32	383.02	146
Foundations	532	0	12 095	n/a	37.53	n/a
Other legal forms	96	96	1 024	121	n/a	0
Total	**27 762**	**3 390**	**96 500**	**996**	**3 539.72**	**745 775**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[3]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[3]	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	1 470	0	29	3	n/a
Industry	0	0	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	2 012	0	14	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	84	0	8	7	n/a
Transport	35	0	25	0	n/a
Retail	836	0	16	4	n/a
Food and accommodation	99	0	2	1	n/a
Financial and insurance services	122	6	11	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	27	0	0	0	n/a
Education	112	0	523	20	n/a
Human health activities	52	0	87	7	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	49	0	392	195	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	67	0	10 784	47	n/a
Other sectors	1 057	0	8 340	248	n/a
Total	**6 022**	**6**	**20 231**	**532**	**96**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[3]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[3]	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	21 245	0	91	45	n/a
Industry	0	0	0	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	218	0	19	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	127	0	148	15	n/a
Transport	117	0	136	0	n/a
Retail	6 751	0	54	11	n/a
Food and accommodation	586	0	8	2	n/a
Financial and insurance services	715	n/a	60	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	365	0	0	0	n/a
Education	536	0	8 950	394	n/a
Human health activities	176	0	368	1 230	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	502	0	8 720	4 418	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	133	0	2 713	804	n/a
Other sectors	2 673	0	28 703	5 176	n/a
Total	**34 144**	**n/a**	**49 970**	**12 095**	**1 024**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives(3)	Mutual benefit societies	Associations(3)	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	4 226	n/a	9 429	367	n/a
Small	541	n/a	657	131	n/a
Medium	67	n/a	111	29	n/a
Large	5	n/a	8	5	n/a
Total	**4 839**	**6**	**10 205**	**532**	**96**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives(3)	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	6 811	n/a	17 482	989	n/a
Small	10 957	n/a	12 517	2 742	n/a
Medium	6 113	n/a	9 822	2 391	n/a
Large	4 294	n/a	10 012	5 973	n/a
Total	**28 175**	**n/a**	**49 833**	**12 095**	**1 024**

Data sources

Data collected by Stratos Nalmpantis.

For cooperatives: Greek Statistic Office (ELSTAT), which data consists of two sources: Registry of Enterprises and Structural Business Survey (SBS). Year 2020.
1) Data on the number of entities include: a) data from the National Register of the Social and Solidarity Economy (NRSSE, 2022) for KOINSEP, agricultural cooperatives,workers cooperatives & energy communities; b) data from ELSTAT (2020), excluding data from NRSSE about agricultural cooperatives; c) data from general commercial registry (GEMI, 2023), excluding data from NRSSE about energy communities; 4) data from the forest registry (MIDASO, 2023).
2) Data on the number of persons employed include: a) data from NRSSE (2022) about KOINSEP, agricultural cooperatives, workers cooperatives & energy communities; b) data from ELSTAT (2020), excluding data from NRSSE about agricultural cooperatives; c) Data from the forest registry (MIDASO, 2023).
3) Data on the number of part-time employees: NRSSE (2022).
4) Data on turnover: ELSTAT (2020).
5) Data on members include: a) data from NRSSE (2022) about KOINSEP, agricultural cooperatives, workers cooperatives & any other legal forms related to cooperatives; b) data from the Agricultural registry (excluding data from NRSSE about agricultural cooperatives); c) data from the union of cooperative banks; d) data from the forest registry (MIDASO,2023).
For associations: Greek Statistic Office (ELSTAT), which data consists of two sources: Registry of Enterprises; Structural Business Survey (SBS). Year 2020.
1) Data on the number of entities include: a) data from NRSSE (2022) about Somateia (unions) & AMKE; b) data from ELSTAT (2020) about associations, unions and non for profit civil company (excluding data from NRSSE); c) data from the Registry for cultural associations (2023) by the Ministry of Culture; 4) data from the Registry of Sport Associations (2023) by the Ministry of Sports about sport clubs.
2) Data on the number of persons employed include: a) data from NRSSE (2022) about AMKE & Somateia; b) data from ELSTAT (2020), excluding data from NRSSE.
3) Data on the number of part-time employees: NRSSE (2022) about AMKE & Somateia.
4) Data on turnover: ELSTAT (2020).
5) Data on the number of members: NRSSE (2022) about AMKE & Somateia.
For mutual benefit societies: Bank of Greece (2023).
For foundations: Greek Statistic Office (ELSTAT), which data consists of two sources: Registry of Enterprises; Structural Business Survey (SBS). Year 2020.
For other legal forms: National Register of the Social and Solidarity Economy (NRSSE, 2022).
For data on sectors and size: Greek Statistic Office (ELSTAT), which data consists of two sources: Registry of Enterprises; Structural Business Survey (SBS). Year 2020.

(1) Estimations made by the National Expert based on all the entities listed in the National Register of the Social and Solidarity Economy (NRSSE), as well as women's agricultural cooperatives and mutual benefit societies.

(2) Headcount. For Other legal forms: number of employees.

(3) In the case of cooperatives and associations, the sum of the data by activity and by size does not add up to the total shown in Table 1. This is because the data sources for these tables are not the same as those used to compile the data in Table 1, nor is the reference year the same. There can be no reconciliation between the data presented in Table 1 and those presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Hungary

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount at the end of the year)[2]	Part-time employees (headcount at the end of the year)[2]	Female employees	Turnover (EUR million)[3]	Number of Volunteers (headcount at the end of the year)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	3 455	1 027	11 414	n/a	n/a	1 564.36	n/a	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	49	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Associations	34 811	9 381	37 434	15 214	n/a	1 741.67	266 233	2 486 532
Foundations	18 728	3 770	19 871	8 238	n/a	1 229.53	100 028	0
Other legal forms	3 601	2 234	95 008	30 114	n/a	4 561.55	5 273	0
Total	**60 644**	**16 412**	**163 727**	**53 566**	**n/a**	**9 097.11**	**371 534**	**2 486 532**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	597	0	923	12	77
Industry	164	0	12	4	61
Energy and utilities	15	0	6	4	163
Construction and real estate	1 341	0	34	24	186
Transport	32	0	7	4	19
Retail	489	0	14	6	59
Food and accommodation	103	0	25	14	101
Financial and insurance services	10	49	11	16	14
Cleaning and landscape activities	78	0	11	6	120
Education	31	0	1 036	1 355	394
Human health activities	8	0	135	379	127
Residential care and social work activities	17	0	278	688	421
Creative, arts and entertainment	11	0	823	361	389
Other sectors	559	0	31 496	15 855	1 470
Total	**3 455**	**49**	**34 811**	**18 728**	**3 601**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	3 415	n/a	1 305	5	854
Industry	1 087	n/a	0	0	16 105
Energy and utilities	63	n/a	1	0	11 893
Construction and real estate	1 983	n/a	71	10	3 592
Transport	124	n/a	1	0	6 767
Retail	2 064	n/a	10	2	503
Food and accommodation	565	n/a	6	7	1 185
Financial and insurance services	19	n/a	140	26	333
Cleaning and landscape activities	185	n/a	1	1	4 204
Education	101	n/a	777	1 583	1 646
Human health activities	11	n/a	241	547	5 950
Residential care and social work activities	19	n/a	1 178	4 004	9 515
Creative, arts and entertainment	6	n/a	335	330	9 234
Other sectors	1 772	n/a	33 368	13 356	23 227
Total	**11 414**	**n/a**	**37 434**	**19 871**	**95 008**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	3 164	34	34 185	18 331	2 556
Small	266	11	543	349	701
Medium	25	4	74	44	287
Large	0	0	9	4	57
Total	**3 455**	**49**	**34 811**	**18 728**	**3 601**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	3 665	n/a	13 661	5 882	5 385
Small	5 471	n/a	10 593	7 131	15 827
Medium	2 278	n/a	6 433	4 085	29 877
Large	0	n/a	6 747	2 773	43 919
Total	**11 414**	**n/a**	**37 434**	**19 871**	**95 008**

Data sources

Data collected by Julianna Kiss.
Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Year 2021.
For cooperatives: OPTEN Ltd. Year 2021.

(1) Figures on social enterprises include social co-operatives (data source OPTEN Ltd.) and an estimate of the number of market-oriented associations,
(2) Only people employed through an employment contract. Self-employed people are excluded.
(3) For associations: total annual income.
(4) Data from EESC (2017).

Ireland

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives[2]	1 172	173	43 520	689	3 000	3 596 068
Mutual benefit societies	46	0	n/a	9[3]	n/a	n/a
Associations	1 277	0	n/a	983[4]	n/a	n/a
Foundations	395	0	n/a	290[5]	n/a	n/a
Other legal forms	10 148	4 162	n/a	6 803[6]	n/a	n/a
Total	**13 038**	**4 335**	**43 520**	**8 774**	**3 000**	**3 616 068**

Entities by sectors of economic activity[7]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transport	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	n/a	n/a	60	46	612
Human health activities	n/a	n/a	88	45	558
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	213	32	1 617
Creative, arts and entertainment	n/a	n/a	102	28	806
Other sectors	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 172**	**46**	**1 277**	**395**	**10 148**

Data sources

Data collected by Lucas Olmedo.

For cooperatives (not including credit unions): Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies (2021), except for employment, turnover, volunteers and members: ICOS report 2020 (2019) and Irish Nonprofit Directory crossed with the Charities Register 2023 (2021).

For cooperatives (credit unions): Financial Conditions of Credit Unions, Central Bank of Ireland (2022), except for employment: Irish League of Credit Unions (2023); volunteers and members: Credit Unions and the Irish Economy - official government press release (2021).

For mutual benefit societies: Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies (2021), except for turnover: Irish Nonprofit Director 2023 (2022) crossed with the Charities Register 2023 (2021).

For associations: Irish Nonprofit Directory 2023 (2022), except for turnover: Irish Nonprofit Directory 2023 (2022) crossed with the Charities Register 2023 (2021).

For foundations and other legal forms: Irish Nonprofit Directory 2023 (2022), except for turnover: Irish Nonprofit Directory crossed with the Charities Register 2023 (2021).

For social enterprises: Author's estimation (see note n.1).

(1) Estimations based on Department of Rural and Community Development (2023). Social Enterprises in Ireland: A Baseline Data Collection Exercise. Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b30e5-social-enterprises-in-ireland-a-baseline-data-collection-exercise/

(2) For cooperatives (not including credit unions): data on employment, volunteers and members are only from 43 cooperatives (mostly agri-food cooperatives); data on turnover from only 43 cooperatives (mostly agri-food cooperatives) and 19 cooperatives registered as charities. Figures

(3) Data from 38 mutual benefit societies registered as charities. Figures underrepresent the sector.

(4) Data from 1109 associations registered in the Charities Register 2023. Figures underrepresent the sector.

(5) Data from 126 foundations included in the Charities Register 2023. Figures underrepresent the sector.

(6) Data from 3265 companies limited by guarantee included in the Charities Register 2023. This data also referres to some semi-state agencies and hospitals.

(7) Partial data, as for some types of cooperatives, associations and foudations only ICNPO data are available.

Italy

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount - annual average)	Part-time employees (headcount - annual average)	Female employees (headcount - annual average)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships [4]
Cooperatives	55 237	15 016	1 130 741	550 384[3]	590 825[3]	128 931.07	44 260	11 451 028
Mutual benefit societies[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Associations	311 423	3 665	167 931	74 922	108 507	n/a	4 155 390	n/a
Foundations	8 319	1 420	104 863	30 361	79 085	n/a	71 361	-
Other legal forms	31 730	5 767	131 293	52 028	97 268	n/a	390 258	-
Total	**406 709**	**25 868**	**1 534 828**	**707 695**	**875 685**	**128 931.07**	**4 661 269**	**11 451 028**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies[2]	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	7 074	n/a	200	32	65
Industry	2 154	n/a	0	0	0
Energy and utilities	530	n/a	6	0	0
Construction and real estate	7 755	n/a	0	0	0
Transport	5 437	n/a	0	0	0
Retail	4 562	n/a	32	0	12
Food and accommodation	2 495	n/a	108	17	110
Financial and insurance services	600	n/a	181	1	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	3 402	n/a	0	0	15
Education	2 067	n/a	10 975	1 560	4 164
Human health activities	751	n/a	11 320	330	344
Residential care and social work activities	7 777	n/a	24 125	2 172	1 089
Creative, arts and entertainment	742	n/a	32 290	1 268	8 439
Other sectors	9 891	n/a	232 186	2 939	16 396
Total	**55 237**	**n/a**	**311 423**	**8 319**	**30 634**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies[2]	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	86 089	n/a	423	0	82
Industry	24 764	n/a	0	0	0
Energy and utilities	13 701	n/a	2	0	0
Construction and real estate	31 496	n/a	0	0	0
Transport	160 488	n/a	0	0	0
Retail	90 648	n/a	7	0	130
Food and accommodation	44 363	n/a	270	107	538
Financial and insurance services	45 067	n/a	426	0	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	143 761	n/a	0	0	193
Education	24 693	n/a	26 361	15 776	59 953
Human health activities	15 721	n/a	31 741	36 736	23 874
Residential care and social work activities	327 910	n/a	26 271	40 147	21 457
Creative, arts and entertainment	9 732	n/a	6 855	4 560	10 825
Other sectors	112 301	n/a	75 575	7 512	14 240
Total	**1 130 734**	**n/a**	**167 931**	**104 838**	**131 292**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives (3)	Mutual benefit societies(2)	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	36 025	n/a	307 941	6 909	28 508
Small	10 334	n/a	3 144	978	1 709
Medium	3 034	n/a	338	432	417
Large	604	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**49 997**	**n/a**	**311 423**	**8 319**	**30 634**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives (3)	Mutual benefit societies(2)	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	99 879	n/a	61 506	7 803	23 396
Small	216 734	n/a	57 712	21 117	32 609
Medium	313 725	n/a	48 712	75 943	75 288
Large	460 582	n/a	n/a(4)	n/a(4)	n/a(4)
Total	**1 090 920**	**n/a**	**167 930**	**104 863**	**131 293**

Data sources

Data collected by Chiara Carini.

For cooperatives:

Istat - ASIA enterprises (for data excluding NACE codes 01, 02 and 03) and ASIA Agriculture (for data relating to NACE codes 01, 02 and 03). Year 2021.

Aida - Bureau Van Dijk (for economic data). Year 2021.

Legacoop, Confcooperative, AGCI (for data on membership). Year 2021.

Istat - Permanent census of non profit institutions (as for data on volunteers). Year 2021.

For associations, foundations and other non profit institutions:

Istat – Nonprofit register. Year 2020.

Istat - Permanent census of non profit institutions (as for data on volunteers). Year 2021.

Estimations of the number of social enterprises based on:

Istat - ASIA enterprises. Year 2021.

Unioncamere based on data from Infocamere - Register of Companies, special section on social enterprises. Year 2022.

Irisnetwork (2021) L'impresa sociale in Italia. Identità, ruoli e resilienza, IV Rapporto sull'Impresa sociale published by Iris Network (Data reported in this study refers to 2018).

(1) This estimate takes into account i) the total number of enterprises legally recognised as social enterprises (this includes all social cooperatives plus other enterprises registered in a special section for social enterprises in the business register); ii) an estimate of the number of cooperatives, associations, foundations and other non-profit institutions that had at least one employee and that can be considered as market-oriented due to the nature of their income.

(2) Data of mutual benefit societies included in the "other legal forms" except for mutual insurance societies which are included in the data about cooperatives.

(3) Data does not cover the NACE sectors 01, 02 and 03.

(4) Membership figures refer to cooperatives affiliated to the 3 main national federations. The figure overestimates the actual number of memberships. This figure is the sum of the memberships of the 3 individual federations. Some cooperatives (impossible to identify) belong to more than one federation, so their members are doublecounted in the figure.

(5) Due to confidentiality issues related to the limited number of enterprises classified as large, data on large enterprises are included in the medium category.

Latvia

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises(1)	People employed (headcount)	Part-time employees (headcount - monthly average)	Turnover (EUR million)
Cooperatives	1 674	0	4 215	2 875	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	0	0
Associations	22 863	48	24 324	n/a	n/a
Foundations	1 540	0	n/a(2)	n/a	n/a
Other legal forms	193	193	1 080	n/a	11.80
Total	**26 270**	**241**	**29 619**	**2 875**	**n/a**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food(3)	248	0	837	4	n/a
Industry(4)	44	0	43	4	n/a
Energy and utilities	7	0	15	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	689	0	2 670	10	n/a
Transport	175	0	50	3	n/a
Retail	90	0	36	4	n/a
Food and accommodation	1	0	33	1	n/a
Financial and insurance services	42	0	9	4	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	0	0	1 356	139	n/a
Human health activities(5)	1	0	488	135	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	7	0	4 710	176	n/a
Other sectors	370	0	12 616	1 060	n/a
Total	**1 674**	**0**	**22 863**	**1 540**	**193**

Data sources

Data collected by Lāsma Līcīte Kurbe.

State Revenue Service (2021), except for data on employment of associations and foundations: NGO sector monitoring (2023, data for 2021).

For social enterprises: Ministry of Welfare. Year 2021; Ministry of Welfare, Oxford Research Baltics. Year 2021 (see note n.1).

(1) Ex lege social enterprises: data from the Ministry of Welfare. Year 2021;
De facto social enterprises: estimation based on Ministry of Welfare, Oxford Research Baltics (2021). Pasākuma "Atbalsts sociālajai uzņēmējdarbībai" starprezultātu novērtēšana un priekšlikumu izstrāde tiesiskā ietvara un atbalsta pilnveidošanai (in Latvian). Available at: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/media/14466/download
(2) Data on foundations included in the data about associations.
(3) Data on agri-food only includes NACE sector A.
(4) Data on industries also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.
(5) Data on human health activities also includes "Residential care and social work activities".

Lithuania

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2]	Turnover (EUR million)
Cooperatives	343	0	4 588	702.92
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	0
Associations	1 951	449	7 337	115.57
Foundations	213	49	851	12.66
Other legal forms[3]	4 967	1 236	55 797	220.47[4]
Total	**7 474**	**1 734**	**68 573**	**1 051.58**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food[5]	137	0		0	n/a
Industry[6]	14	0	1	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	0	0	0	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	12	0	1	0	n/a
Transport	9	0	2	0	n/a
Retail	88	0	2	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	2	0	1	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	67	0	0	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	2	0	9	0	n/a
Education	0	0	76	2	n/a
Human health activities	0	0	75	199	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	0	0	334	3	n/a
Other sectors	12	0	1 442	9	n/a
Total	**343**	**0**	**1 951**	**213**	**4 967**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food[5]	1 056	0	17	0	n/a
Industry[6]	378	0	3	0	n/a
Energy and utilities	0	0	0	0	n/a
Construction and real estate	38	0	2	0	n/a
Transport	184	0	11	0	n/a
Retail	2 108	0	11	0	n/a
Food and accommodation	18	0	2	0	n/a
Financial and insurance services	748	0	0	0	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	17	0	20	0	n/a
Education	0	0	229	4	n/a
Human health activities	0	0	742	789	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	0	0	803	7	n/a
Other sectors	41	0	5 497	51	n/a
Total	**4 588**	**0**	**7 337**	**851**	**55 797**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	226	0	1 847	193	4 032
Small	96	0	99	19	543
Medium	21	0	4	1	270
Large	0	0	1	0	n/a
Total	**343**	**0**	**1 951**	**213**	**4 967**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	801	0	4 852	435	9 419
Small	1 935	0	1 757	361	11 162
Medium	1 852	0	462	55	30 459
Large	0	0	266	0	n/a
Total	**4 588**	**0**	**7 337**	**851**	**55 797**

Data sources

Data collected by Irena Blaževičė.

For cooperatives and other legal forms: Official statistics portal (2021), except for data on employment: public data of insurers. Year 2021.

For associations and foundations: Register of legal entities (2021), except for data on employment: public data of insurers. Year 2021.

(1) The estimates made by the National Expert include all entities included in the list of social enterprises at the Lithuanian Labour Exchange under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. In addition, the National Expert estimated the number of associations, public enterprises, foundations and cooperatives that meet the operational definition of a social enterprise based on the results obtained for the Mapping study: European Commission (2018). Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Updated country report: Lithuania. Authors: Irena Pranskeviciute and Laima Okuneviciute Neverauskiene. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pager.offset=15&advSearchKey=socentercountryreports&mode=advancedSubmit&catId=1307&doc_submit=&policyArea=0&policyAreaSub=0&country=0&year=0

(2) Data refers to the number of employees (FTEs).

(3) This category includes Public enterprises and Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs). For Public enterprises, the figure in the table is an estimate by the National Expert and does not take into account publicly controlled enterprises. For WISEs, it is not possible to verify the legal form, but previous research suggests that the vast majority are limited companies.

(4) Data on turnover for WISEs: not available.

(5) Data on agri-food only includes NACE sector A.

(6) Data on industries also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.

Luxembourg

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Turnover (EUR million)
Cooperatives [2]	7	0	925	42.59
Mutual benefit societies	9	0	C	C
Associations	2 097	835	19 076	1 763,41 [3]
Foundations	36	0	645	66.03
Other legal forms	30	30	575	27.83
Total	**2 179**	**865**	**21 221**	**1 899.86**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	0	1	51	3	0
Industry	0	0	0	0	0
Energy and utilities	0	0	0	0	0
Construction and real estate	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Retail	0	0	0	0	0
Food and accommodation	0	0	0	0	0
Financial and insurance services	0	0	0	0	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0	0	0	0
Education	0	0	71	7	0
Human health activities	0	0	68	2	0
Residential care and social work activities	5	4	710	9	4
Creative, arts and entertainment	0	0	311	2	0
Other sectors	2	4	886	13	26
Total	**7**	**9**	**2 097**	**36**	**30**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	0	C	493	C	0
Industry	0	0	0	0	0
Energy and utilities	0	0	0	0	0
Construction and real estate	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Retail	0	0	0	0	0
Food and accommodation	0	0	0	0	0
Financial and insurance services	0	0	0	0	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0	0	0	0
Education	0	0	1 595 [4]	C	0
Human health activities	0	0	4 273	C	0
Residential care and social work activities	C	C	9 330	51	393
Creative, arts and entertainment	0	0	529 [4]	C	0
Other sectors	C	C	2 827	179	182
Total	**925**	**C**	**19 076**	**645**	**575**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	3	8	1 836	21	23
Small	1	0	196	12	3
Medium	1	1	49	3	4
Large	2	0	16	0	0
Total	**7**	**9**	**2 097**	**36**	**30**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	C	14	2 710	C	21
Small	C	0	4 575	200	C
Medium	C	C	4 627	C	C
Large	C	0	7 164	0	0
Total	**925**	**C**	**19 076**	**645**	**575**

Data sources

Data collected by Sandra Spule.

Luxembourg institute of statistics (STATEC) and its Social and solidarity satellite account. Year 2021.

(1) Estimates by the National Expert are based on total number of societal companies and associations active in the Health and Social work sectors.
(2) Satellite account does not cover all cooperatives and therefore the figures reported here underestimate their overall size.
(3) For non-market associations, as no data on turnover is avaiable, production is considered.
(4) Data on non-market associations: C.

Malta

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	73	4	107.84	3 943
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0.00	0
Associations	2 781	0	17.40	n/a
Foundations[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other legal forms	5	5	n/a	n/a
Total	**2 859**	**9**	**125.24**	**3 943**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations[2]	Other legal forms
Agri-food	21	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry	3	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transport	16	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	3	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	5	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Human health activities	5	0	812	n/a	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	5	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	3	0	528	n/a	n/a
Other sectors	6	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**73**	**0**	**2 781**	**n/a**	**5**

Data sources

Data collected by Vincent Caruana.

For cooperatives: data on the number of entities, turnover and memership data: Board of cooperatives website. Year 2021 (turnover) and 2023; for data on sectors: Classification by author based on MCF and Koperattiv Malta, as well as Author's own interpretation. Year 2023.
For associations: OCVO annual report. Year 2021.
For social enterprises: Author's estimation (see note n.1).

(1) De facto social enterprises: author's selection of social cooperatives on the MCF website; for social enterprises adopting other legal forms: author's estimation based on an interview with Social Enterprise Association.

(2) Data on foundations included in the data of associations.

Netherlands

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	3 285	250	n/a
Mutual benefit societies[2]	n/a	0	n/a
Associations	41 725	935	n/a
Foundations[3]	n/a	0	n/a
Other legal forms	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**45 010**	**1 185**	**16 700 000**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies[2]	Associations	Foundations[3]	Other legal forms
Agri-food	125	n/a	160	n/a	n/a
Industry	30	n/a	90	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	325	n/a	55	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	200	n/a	1 245	n/a	n/a
Transport	65	n/a	290	n/a	n/a
Retail	225	n/a	730	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	40	n/a	725	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	290	n/a	1 500	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	25	n/a	45	n/a	n/a
Education	80	n/a	2 495	n/a	n/a
Human health activities	165	n/a	935	n/a	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	85	n/a	5 045	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	45	n/a	4 825	n/a	n/a
Other sectors	1 585	n/a	23 585	n/a	n/a
Total	**3 285**	**n/a**	**41 725**	**n/a**	**n/a**

Data sources

Data collected by Philip Marcel Karré.
Statistics NL. Year 2021 (Quarter 4).
For social enterprises: core research team estimations (see note n.1)

(1) Estimates by the core research team based on data from cooperatives, associations and foundations operating in the health and social care sector. Lack of data prevents updating the estimates presented in the report 'European Commission (2019) Social enterprises and their ecosystem in Europe'. Updated country report: The Netherlands. Author: Niels Bosma. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
(2) Data on mutual benefit societies included in the data of cooperatives.
(3) Data on foundations included in the data of associations.

Poland

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2]	Female employees (headcount at the end of the year)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	1 300[3]	1 300	33 500	15 300	878.00	n/a	26 200
Mutual benefit societies	11	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Associations	79 300	19 749	160 800	102 804	5 048.50	2 200 000	6 500 000
Foundations	16 800	0	56 100	29 850	2 809.60	300 000	-
Other legal forms	57	57	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
Total	**97 468**	**21 106**	**250 400**	**n/a**	**8 736.10**	**2 500 000**	**6 526 200**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[4][5]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[6]	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	14	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Industry	285	n/a	n/a	n/a	15
Energy and utilities	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Construction and real estate	124	n/a	n/a	n/a	7
Transport	18	n/a	n/a	n/a	3
Retail	96	n/a	n/a	n/a	3
Food and accommodation	163	n/a	n/a	n/a	2
Financial and insurance services	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Education	55	n/a	9 000	n/a	4
Human health activities[7]	145	n/a	3 600	n/a	2
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	22 000[8]	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	29	n/a	36 200	n/a	1
Other sectors	365	n/a	n/a	n/a	20
Total	**1 300**	**n/a**	**70 800**	**n/a**	**57**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	700	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Small	400	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Medium	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Large	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
n/a	100	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 300**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**

Data sources

Data collected by Anna Ciepielewska-Kowalik.

For cooperatives:

CSO (2021) Spółdzielnie jako podmioty ekonomii społecznej w 2019 r. Warszawa: GUS. (as for number of persons employed, female employees, members, number of entities by sector. Reference year 2019).

CSO (2023) Podmioty gospodarki społecznej w 2021 r. Informacja sygnalna. Warszawa: GUS. (as for number of entities and turnover. Reference year 2021).

CSO - data provided for the NR upon payment. Submitted 13.10.2023 (as for number of entities by size. Reference year 2021).

For associations and foundations:

CSO (2022) Sektor non-profit w 2020 roku. Warszawa: GUS. Number of persons employed (2020). (As for number of part-time and female employees, members, volunteers (Reference year 2020).

CSO (2023) Podmioty gospodarki społecznej w 2021 r. Informacja sygnalna. Warszawa: GUS (As for number of entities, number of persons employed and turnover. Reference year 2021).

CSO (2023a) Kondycja podmiotów ekonomii społecznej w latach 2017-2021. (As for turnover. Reference year, 2021).

CSO - data provided for the NR upon payment. Submitted 13.10.2023. (As for number of entities by size. Reference year 2021).

CSO (2021) Social Economy Satellite Account for Poland 2018. Warszawa: GUS. (As for number of entities by sector. Reference year 2018).

Mutual benefit societies:

CSO (2021) Social Economy Satellite Account for Poland 2018. Warszawa: GUS. (As for number of entities by sector. Reference year 2018).

Non profit companies:

Own calculation based on the register of social enterprises provided by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy (as of 09 July, 2023).

Social enterprises:

NPOs: Ministry of family and social policy. Year 2023.

Cooperatives: CSO - data provided for the NR upon payment (submitted 13.10.2023). Year 2021.

(1) The estimated number of social enterprises includes the social cooperatives, work cooperatives, the disabled and the blind cooperatives, and non profit companies.

(2) For cooperatives data are expressed in headcount at the end of the year. For associations, foundations data are in full-time equivalents.

(3)The CSO data covers social, work, disabled and the blind cooperatives. Therefore, housing cooperatives, cooperative banks, SKOKs, and other cooperatives are not counted in these figures.

(4) Data on agri-food only includes NACE sector A.

(5) Data on industry also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.

(6) Data also includes foundations. Partial data as only ICNPO data are available.

(7) Data on human health activities also includes "Residential care and social work activities".

(8) Data aggregated as: Social work activities, rescue services, employment assistance.

Portugal

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount)	Female employees (headcount)[2]	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers (annual average)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	2 174	435	24 309	13 200	1 867.10	n/a	828 454
Mutual benefit societies	91	91	4 906	2 993	491.10	n/a	1 084 363
Associations[3]	70 315	7 117	156 034	111 211	5 824.00	502 098	18 335 430
Foundations	618	331	14 764	11 334	865.80	n/a	121 327
Other legal forms	376	376	40 369	34 260	1 055.30	n/a	116 434
Total	**73 574**	**8 350**	**240 382**	**172 997**	**10 103.30**	**516 187**	**20 486 008**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	557	0	1 010	2	0
Industry	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	18	0	10	0	0
Transport	80	0	21	0	0
Retail	291	0	10	1	0
Food and accommodation	17	0	88	1	0
Financial and insurance services	88	16	6	0	1
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	154	0	4 619	62	2
Human health activities; Residential care and social work activities	213	67	8 105	271	370
Creative, arts and entertainment	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other sectors	756	8	56 446	281	3
Total	**2 174**	**91**	**70 315**	**618**	**376**

Entities by size[4]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[3]	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	1 189	24	54 500	292	20
Small	654	47	5 460	179	71
Medium[5]	169	20	1 120	103	286
Large	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**2 012**	**91**	**61 080**	**574**	**377**

Employment by size[4]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[3]	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	1 074	22	20 257	231	0
Small	7 614	390	47 022	2 228	1 239
Medium[5]	16 398	4 815	112 639	12 831	41 279
Large	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**25 086**	**5 227**	**179 918**	**15 290**	**42 518**

Data sources

Data collected by Eduardo Pedroso.

Social Economy Satellite Account (SESA) 2019/2020 (2019), except for the number of female employees, number of members and data by size: Social Economy Sector Survey (2018); number of volunteers: Survey on Volunteer Work (2018).

(1) The core research team considered all cooperatives of social solidarity, private institutions of social solidarity (IPSS) and cooperatives with a public interest status other than IPSS as ex lege social enterprises.
Among the de facto social enterprises, the National Expert included:
- Cooperatives and associations engaged in community and economic development, housing and environmental protection activities without IPSS status;
- Associations with public interest status other than IPSS;
- Foundations with public utility status and NGOs with development cooperation, both without IPSS status

(2) SESA does not count the number of female employees. However, in 2018 these figures were obtained through the SESS 2018. The estimate for 2019 has been calculated assuming the same percentages as in 2018.
(3) Associations include Community and self managamente subsectors, except for data on volunteers and members.
(4) Total figures by size differ from Tab. 1 because data by size refer to 2018 and Tab. 1 to 2019.
(5) Data also refer to large entities.

Romania

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2]	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	2 043	9	15 326	772.60	674 500
Mutual benefit societies	5 216	5 222	5 912	0.70	2 286 849
Associations	100 775	1 435	64 243	320.85	n/a
Foundations	17 811	93	10 791	45.46	n/a
Other legal forms	2 331	2 331	5 679	105.07	n/a
Total	**128 176**	**9 090**	**101 951**	**1 244.68**	**2 961 349**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	269	0	1 846	8	n/a
Industry	294	0	106	7	n/a
Energy and utilities	2	0	24	1	n/a
Construction and real estate	319	4	168	38	n/a
Transport	2	0	12	1	n/a
Retail	971	1	144	22	n/a
Food and accommodation	26	0	40	6	n/a
Financial and insurance services	0	5 001	149	5	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0	0	0	n/a
Education	0	4	3 770	442	n/a
Human health activities	0	5	n/a	0	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	0	0	5 410[3]	737[3]	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	1	3	20 084	412	n/a
Other sectors	159	198	69 022	16 132	n/a
Total	**2 043**	**5 216**	**100 775**	**17 811**	**2 331**

Employment by sectors of economic activity[2]

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	673	0	3 983	29	n/a
Industry	5 000	0	222	99	n/a
Energy and utilities	2	0	86	6	n/a
Construction and real estate	982	47	490	88	n/a
Transport	3	0	41	2	n/a
Retail	4 426	43	532	168	n/a
Food and accommodation	275	0	149	50	n/a
Financial and insurance services	0	4 522	270	8	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	0	0	0	0	n/a
Education	0	4	17 313	1 916	n/a
Human health activities[3]	0	3	10 420	4 968	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	0	12	5 368	423	n/a
Other sectors	3 965	1 281	25 369	3 034	n/a
Total	**15 326**	**5 912**	**64 243**	**10 791**	**5 679**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms[4]
Micro	1 676	5 078	99 387	17 540	1 226
Small	317	132	1 246	240	17
Medium	49	6	137	31	0
Large	1	0	5	0	0
Total	**2 043**	**5 216**	**100 775**	**17 811**	**2 331**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms[4]
Micro	3 710	3 016	24 995	3 310	5 452
Small	6 414	2 431	24 290	4 624	227
Medium	4 566	465	12 885	2 857	0
Large	636	0	2 073	0	0
Total	**15 326**	**5 912**	**64 243**	**10 791**	**5 679**

Data sources

Data collected by Claudia Petrescu and Mihaela Lambru.

National Institute of Statistics (2021), except for data on ex lege social enterprise: National Registry of Social Enterprises (2021); data on members of cooperatives: Cooperatives Europe (2015). The power of cooperation - Cooperatives Europe key figures 2015; data on members of mutual benefit societies: Civil Society Development Foundation (2015).

(1) The estimates made by the National Expert include all entities registered in the National Register of Social Enterprises, all mutual societies and the estimated number (based on National Institute of Statistics data) of NGOs that declared income from economic activities.

(2) Data refers to the number of employees (headcount at the end of the year).

(3) For associations and foundations: the National Institute of Statitistics has "Health and Social work" as a category, with no distinction between residential care and social work without accommodation. According to the National Expert, most associations and foundations are active in the social work sector.

(4) Partial data.

Slovakia

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount - annual average)	Part-time employees	Female employees (headcount - annual average)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	1 444	7	23 800	n/a	n/a	2 507	n/a	433 300
Mutual benefit societies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associations	48 206	124	22 417	n/a	9 220	n/a	142 372	144 618
Foundations	477	1	406	n/a	294	n/a	3 283	n/a
Other legal forms	6 885	1 165	23 077	n/a	9 251	196	19 787	n/a
Total	**57 012**	**1 297**	**69 700**	**n/a**	**18 765**	**2 703**	**165 442**	**577 918**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food[2]	644	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry[3]	101	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	304	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transport	13	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	139	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	7	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	7	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities[4]	110	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	4	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Human health activities[5]	1	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	3	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other sectors	109	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 444**	**0**	**48 206**	**477**	**6 885**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	439	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Small	378	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Medium	90	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Large	22	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**1 444**	**0**	**48 206**	**477**	**6 885**

Data sources

Data collected by Zuzana Polačková.
Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2019), except for turnover: Finstat (2019); employment and members: Report "The power of cooperation. Cooperatives Europe key figures 2015" (Coopseurope, 2015), available here: https://coopseurope.coop/wp-content/uploads/files/The%20power%20of%20Cooperation%20-%20Cooperatives%20Europe%20key%20statistics%202015.pdf.
Data on size: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2021).
For social enterprises: Author's estimation (see note n.1)

(1) Estimation based on data from the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and Register of Social Enterprises. (Reference year 2021).
(2) Data on agri-food only includes NACE sector A.
(3) Data on industries also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.
(4) Data refers to the whole NACE sector N.
(5) Data on human health activities also includes "Residential care and social work activities".

Slovenia

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2]	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers	Number of Memberships
Cooperatives	407	59	2 694	734	n/a	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	1	0	356	9	n/a	818 067
Associations	22 745	5 583	4 619	554	137 381[3]	n/a
Foundations	264	20	115	24	4 256[4]	n/a
Other legal forms	3 561	549	6 902	412	31 547[5]	n/a
Total	**26 978**	**6 211**	**14 686**	**1 732**	**173 184**	**818 067**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	78	n/a	513	0	28
Industry	14	n/a	0	0	35
Energy and utilities	27	n/a	0	0	6
Construction and real estate	35	n/a	0	0	9
Transport	4	n/a	0	0	3
Retail	101	n/a	1	0	38
Food and accommodation	14	n/a	4	0	32
Financial and insurance services	3	n/a	0	0	3
Cleaning and landscape activities	4	n/a	0	2	10
Education	16	n/a	198	12	1 037
Human health activities	3	n/a	1	0	292
Residential care and social work activities	7	n/a	397	46	283
Creative, arts and entertainment	7	n/a	504	5	356
Other sectors	94	n/a	21 127	199	1 396
n/a	0	0	0	0	33
Total	**407**	**1**	**22 745**	**264**	**3 561**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	431	n/a	15	0	44
Industry	0	n/a	0	0	53
Energy and utilities	1	n/a	0	0	10
Construction and real estate	29	n/a	0	0	4
Transport	7	n/a	0	0	6
Retail	2 101	n/a	n/a	0	48
Food and accommodation	19	n/a	0	0	47
Financial and insurance services	0	n/a	0	0	0
Cleaning and landscape activities	1	n/a	0	1	80
Education	6	n/a	39	0	2 498
Human health activities	0	n/a	n/a	0	412
Residential care and social work activities	33	n/a	974	19	1 971
Creative, arts and entertainment	3	n/a	27	2	114
Other sectors	63	n/a	3 562	93	1 489
n/a	0	0	0	0	126
Total	**2 694**	**356**	**4 619**	**115**	**6 902**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	338	0	n/a	261	3 431
Small	43	0	n/a	3	89
Medium	24	0	n/a	0	8
Large	2	1	n/a	0	0
n/a	0	0	0	0	33
Total	**407**	**1**	**22 745**	**264**	**3 561**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	176	0	n/a	75	3 004
Small	474	0	n/a	40	2 944
Medium	1 540	0	n/a	0	843
Large	377	356	n/a	0	0
n/a	127	0	0	0	111
Total	**2 694**	**356**	**4 619**	**115**	**6 902**

Data sources

Data collected by Anja Uršič.

AJPES (2021), except for data on volunteers: Ministry for public Administration (2021); data on mutuals: AJPES (2021) and JOLP (2021).

For social enterprises: Author's estimation (see note n.1)

(1) Author's estimation based on AJPES data. Year 2021.

(2) The average number of employees is calculated according to working hours in the accounting period, and is computed by dividing the number of working hours in the accounting year for which employees received wages and salary compensation by the number of potential working hours for the selected accounting year. Except for mutuals: headcount at the end of the year.

(3) Data based on associations registered in the Register for Voluntary Organizations. In 2021, there were registered 1.505 associations but not every association provided this data.

(4) Data based on foundations registered in the Register for Voluntary Organizations. In 2021, there were registered 27 foundations and all of them provided this data.

(5) Data based on private institutes registered in the Register for Voluntary Organizations. In 2021, there were registered 440 private institutes but not every private institute provided this data.

Spain

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed (headcount at the end of the year)	Part-time employees (headcount at the end of the year)	Female employees (headcount at the end of the year)	Turnover (EUR million)	Number of Volunteers
Cooperatives	23 675	617	378 849	62 097	121 750	66 509.62	n/a
Mutual benefit societies	226	0	1 626	n/a	n/a	2 251.86	n/a
Associations	350 089	0	522 380	n/a	n/a	15 188.70	2 049 964
Foundations	9 218	0	267 005	n/a	n/a	7 754.00	210 365
Other legal forms[4]	23 613	2 447	220 077	79 010	65 948	15 541.36	n/a
Total	**406 821**	**3 064**	**1 389 937**	**141 107**	**187 698**	**107 245.55**	**2 260 329**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Agri-food	3 669	0	n/a	n/a	12 358
Industry	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	1 029	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Transport	262	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	61	226	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	303	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Human health activities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	3
Creative, arts and entertainment	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Other sectors	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**23 675**	**226**	**350 089**	**9 218**	**23 613**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms[2]
Agri-food	72 043	n/a	n/a	n/a	3 676
Industry	38 703	n/a	n/a	n/a	12 813
Energy and utilities	764	n/a	n/a	n/a	106
Construction and real estate	12 560	n/a	n/a	n/a	7 375
Transport	16 649	n/a	n/a	n/a	2 760
Retail	90 527	n/a	n/a	n/a	9 873
Food and accommodation	10 715	n/a	n/a	n/a	3 791
Financial and insurance services	21 513	n/a	n/a	n/a	169
Cleaning and landscape activities	5 040	n/a	n/a	n/a	1 929
Education	53 091	n/a	n/a	n/a	5 614
Human health activities	5 099	n/a	n/a	n/a	558
Residential care and social work activities	7 337	n/a	n/a	n/a	40 464
Creative, arts and entertainment	2 146	n/a	n/a	n/a	189
Other sectors	23 159	n/a	n/a	n/a	8 718
Total	**378 849**	**1 626**	**523 280**	**267 005**	**220 077**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms[2]
Micro	20 239	n/a	n/a	n/a	7 594
Small	2 721	n/a	n/a	n/a	1 109
Medium	584	n/a	n/a	n/a	87
Large	131	n/a	n/a	n/a	18
Total	**23 675**	**226**	**350 089**	**9 218**	**23 613**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms[2]
Micro	159 829	n/a	n/a	n/a	25 501
Small	54 083	n/a	n/a	n/a	19 772
Medium	57 192	n/a	n/a	n/a	6 974
Large	107 745	n/a	n/a	n/a	45 788
Total	**378 849**	**1626**	**523 280**	**267 005**	**220 077**

Data sources

Data collected by Ángel Soler Guillén with the support of Eva Benages Candau and Antonio González-Rojas.
For cooperatives: Ministry of Labour and Social Economy (MITES, 2019) (data on employment); Monzón, J.L., Galán, J. y González-Rojas, A. (2023). Las cuentas satélite de las cooperativas y las sociedades laborales en España, año 2019. CIRIEC-España (turnover). Year 2019.
For mutual benefit societies: CIRIECStat (2019), except for data on employment: Spanish Federation of Mutual Societies (2019).
For associations: CIRIECStat. Year 2019.
For foundations: Spanish Association of Foundations (AEF). Year 2019.
For other legal forms:
- Labour societies: Ministry of Labour and Social Economy (data on employment); CIRIECStat (turnover). Year 2019.
- Labour insertion companies: CIRIECStat/FAEDEI (data on employment). Year 2019.
- Special disabilities employment centres: CIRIECStat (turnover) and SEPE (data on employment). Year 2021.
- Fishermen guilds: National Federation of Fishermen's Guilds (FNCP). Year 2019.
- Agrarian transformation societies: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA). Year 2019.
- Other special/singular entities: CIRIECStat. Year 2019.

(1) Estimations based on the number of: Labor insertion companies; Special disabilities employment centres; Social initiative cooperatives.
(2) Data are referred only to Labour societies and Special/singular entities.

Sweden

Social economy data overview

	Number of Entities	of which social enterprises[1]	People employed[2] (headcount at the end of the year)	Female employees (headcount at the end of the year)	Number of Volunteers (million)	Number of Memberships (million)
Cooperatives	78 103	1 172	51 991	2 836[3]	n/a	Approx. 5
Mutual benefit societies	9	0	14 984	n/a	n/a	n/a
Associations	163 364	3 889	75 157	44 495	n/a	n/a
Foundations	20 783	0	25 041	19 496	n/a	n/a
Other legal forms	2 198	0	29 663	17 977	n/a	n/a
Total	**264 457**	**5 061**	**196 836**	**84 804**	**Approx. 4**	**n/a**

Entities by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[6]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[6]	Foundations[6]	Other legal forms
Agri-food[4]	170	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry[5]	151	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	361	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	70 532	n/a	7 465	2 594	n/a
Transport	133	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	479	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	202	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	32	9	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	1 172	n/a	2 800	1 934	n/a
Human health activities	238	n/a	5 182	1 838	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	1 966	n/a	63 324	1 583	n/a
Other sectors	1 994	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**77 430**	**9**	**78 771**	**7 949**	**0**

Employment by sectors of economic activity

	Cooperatives[6]	Mutual benefit societies	Associations[6]	Foundations[6]	Other legal forms
Agri-food[4]	1 738	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industry[5]	4 980	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Energy and utilities	454	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Construction and real estate	13 366	n/a	1 093	1 060	n/a
Transport	510	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Retail	7 922	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Food and accommodation	518	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Financial and insurance services	51	14 984	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cleaning and landscape activities	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	12 691	n/a	15 095	11 062	n/a
Human health activities	5 444	n/a	978	2 186	n/a
Residential care and social work activities	n/a	n/a	9 772	4 393	n/a
Creative, arts and entertainment	2 265	n/a	22 348	1 756	n/a
Other sectors	1 905	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	**51 844**	**14 984**	**49 286**	**20 457**	**n/a**

Entities by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	77 337	0	161 873	20 411	1 582
Small	665	0	1 267	250	447
Medium	82	4	207	109	160
Large	19	5	17	13	9
Total	**78 103**	**9**	**163 364**	**20 783**	**2 198**

Employment by size

	Cooperatives	Mutual benefit societies	Associations	Foundations	Other legal forms
Micro	14 565	0	22 764	2 154	293
Small	12 142	0	25 059	5 798	11 307
Medium	8 338	487	18 182	10 218	14 189
Large	16 946	14 497	9 152	6 871	3 874
Total	**51 991**	**14 984**	**75 157**	**25 041**	**29 663**

Data sources

Data collected by Gordon Hahn and Erik Jannesson.

Statistics Sweden. Year 2021.

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(1) Due to the lack of data, estimates were made based on (i) the number of civil society organisations that have a governance dimension, are active in the health (welfare) and social security sectors and are economically active (3889 units) and (ii) childcare co-operatives (1172 units).

(2) For the mutual benefit societies data are in full time equivalents.

(3) Partial data. Data refer only to housing cooperatives, housing renting cooperatives and communities. Data not available for economic societies.

(4) Data on agri-food only includes NACE sector A.

(5) Data on industries also includes NACE C10, C11, C12.

(6) Partial data, as for some types of cooperatives, associations and foudations only ICNPO data are available.

13. Appendix 4: Covid-19 specific literature

A. European or international studies

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14. Appendix 5: Summary of the outcomes and conclusions from the workshops

14.1. Introduction

Within the EU-funded research project "Improving the socio-economic knowledge of the proximity and social economy ecosystem (EISMEA/2022/OP/0015) – Lot 1: Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU social economy", the organisation of workshops on social economy data and statistics in the EU Member States was planned.

The events were envisaged to (1) deepen the understanding of how statistics on social economy are presented in different parts of EU, with a focus on the methodologies and available data sets, (2) examine the strengths and weaknesses of the diverse approaches to regularly generate statistics and provide suggestions as to how statistics on social economy may be better collected/presented and (3) reflect how contemporary socio-economic factors and mega trends can impact the design of appropriate tools and indicators to adequately represent the role of the social economy and its new forms of organisations and businesses.

Three workshops have been organised to allow for productive discussion and feedback on the following themes:

- 'Current state of art of statistics on the social economy in the 27 Member States;
- 'Gaps, barriers, and obstacles in producing statistics and possible solutions to overcome them';
- 'New indicators and approaches for assessing the role of the social economy.

- **Workshop 1: 'Current state of art of statistics on the Social Economy in the 27 EU MS' (8 hours)**	
Date	• 10th and 11th October 2023 (2 half-days - mornings)
Focus:	• Overview of the methods and tools currently in use for compiling statistics in EU MS with a focus on their strengths and weaknesses. • Learning about the variety of bodies collecting relevant data/statistics. • Identification of key dimensions to be measured and indicators to be used for measuring the impact and performance of the Social Economy. • Focus on individual country experiences from (a) countries with quasi no data available; (b) countries with statistics available: definition and application of advanced indicators.
Objectives:	• Discuss key technical and statistical issues/challenges related to the Social Economy with a view to identify solutions to fill gaps in data. • Learn from success stories and develop recommendations on how to replicate successful methodologies for assessing the size of the Social Economy at national level.
Methodology:	• Presentation of national studies/experiences/surveys and open discussion. • Invited speakers will report on satellite accounts, statistical registers and research surveys conducted; they will showcase achievements from regional and national observatories. Participants will exchange views on issues related to: data gathering; the setting up of administrative registers and observatories and the adoption of statistical measurement methodologies.

- Workshop 2: 'Gaps, barriers, and obstacles in producing statistics and possible solutions to overcome them' (4 hours)	
Date	• 8th November 2023 (morning)
Focus:	• How can we improve statistics? • What are the obstacles faced by National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and public/administrative bodies/agencies (also at regional level) in producing Social Economy statistics? • How can we encourage NSOs to work (or work more intensively) on the Social Economy theme? • How can Eurostat support the work of NSOs? • Reflection on the satellite accounts and other possible methodologies based on the experiences analysed in the 1st workshop.
Objective:	• Discuss and define strategies with key stakeholders for advancing statistics on the Social Economy at European level.
Methodology:	• Facilitate an open discussion between the workshop participants. The discussion will start from the critical analysis of the good practices presented in the 1st workshop and it will be specifically aimed at ensuring a more effective coordination between the different levels of data producers.

- Workshop 3: 'New indicators and approaches for assessing the role of the Social Economy' (4 hours)	
Date:	• Foreseen for the 7th February 2024 (morning)
Focus:	• What dimensions, besides economic and employment dimensions, need to be considered to represent the real contribution of the Social Economy? • How can contemporary socio-economic factors and mega trends can impact the design of tools and indicators to represent the role of the Social Economy in society and economy? • What indicators can contribute to capturing these dimensions?
Objective:	• Support the replication of public policy and support measures aiming to develop regular collection and production of statistics, as well as ad hoc measurement tools
Methodology:	• Presentation of international and national studies/experiences/surveys and open discussion

14.2. Background

Although the concept of social economy is not legally codified as such, the EU Commission's Action Plan[90] outlines a perimeter within which specific legal and organisational forms are included: cooperatives, mutual societies, associations (including charities), foundations and social enterprises. However, the declination of these forms varies significantly across EU-27. And this diversity poses a major challenge when it comes to defining the size and characteristics of the social economy and the social enterprises on a European scale. The SBI study confirmed that "there is a clear need for more and updated information on the development of social enterprises and their ecosystems in most countries". The lack of statistics at national and European level even limits the recognition of the social economy in Europe and, as a result, the design of proper support actions.

"The SBI supported a dedicated OECD-EU cooperation on generating and disseminating information on social enterprises, social and inclusive entrepreneurship. In the field of statistical data, the European Commission promoted the initiative "Manual for Drawing Up the Satellite Accounts of Companies in the social economy: Co-Operatives, Mutual Societies and Social Enterprises", already in 2007. After that, Eurostat was involved in the development and revision of the United Nations Handbook on Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts as a member of the Technical Experts Group. Since 2020,

[90] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=10117&furtherNews=yes#navItem-1

Eurostat is working with some Member States (France, Poland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain) to develop satellite accounts in their statistical systems. In addition, several pilot projects of the European Parliament, activities within GECES and cooperation with OECD and Member States tackled this topic."[91]

Despite the efforts and progress made by national statistical agencies, dedicated observatories, and researchers (academic and institutional) to develop methodologies and gather data on the social economy at the regional, national and international levels[92], for the time being only few Member States are properly equipped with national statistics specifically devoted to measuring the size of the social economy (including its employment share, number of volunteers engaged, and value added).

Countries where significant progress has been made in terms of statistics on the social economy include France, Italy, Portugal[93] and Spain[94]; these are not surprisingly the countries where the social economy has either a longstanding tradition (France, Portugal, Spain) and/or has been (entirely or for some of its components) acknowledged by dedicated framework laws (more precisely, in France the Social and Solidarity economy; in Italy the Code of the Third Sector) that have enhanced its visibility. Units covered by statistics in countries with a high quality of data are normally based on legal definitions. In federal states, social economy may be the competence of regions, and can thus be defined at sub-national level with specific regional laws able to boost production of statistics (e.g. in the Walloon Region (Belgium) since 2008).

The comparative analysis of relevant legislations at EU level show that the milder the legislation, the more likely it is that statistics include self-seeking enterprises that may contradict the basic principles of the social economy.

Most countries are however not only ill-equipped to screen social economy organizations, but they are also lacking relevant official statistical data. Such a situation may be due to different factors[95], including:

- low attention paid by the NSOs to the social economy, both in their statistical plans and in their experimental statistical activities, resulting in limited official data or data that are not regularly updated;
- adherence to different theoretical concepts that result in not entirely comparable data;

[91] Haarich, S., Holstein, F., Spule, S., Galera, G., Franchini, B., Borzaga, C., Chiomento, S., Spiess-Knafl, W., Scheck, B., Salvatori, G. (2020). Impact of the European Commission's Social Business Initiative (SBI) and its Follow-up Actions. Study for DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission. Pages 24-25.

[92] Carini, C., El-Youssef, H. & Sparreboom, T. (2015). The Importance of Statistics on Co-operatives: Why and How Should We Collect Data? In Brown, L., Carini, C., Gordon-Nembhard, J., Hammond Ketilson, L., Hicks, E., McNamara, J., Novkovic, S., Rixon, D. & Simmons, R. (Eds.) Co-operatives for Sustainable Communities Tools to Measure Co-operative Impact and Performance. Saskatchewan, Canada: Co-operatives and Mutual Canada & Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, pp. 18-35. And

Compère, C., Sak, B. & Schoenmaeckers, J. (2021). Mapping of SSE Mappings. UNTFSSE Knowledge Hub Draft Paper Series. Genève. UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE). https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/fr/knowledge-hub/mapping-international-sse-mapping-exercises-2/

[93] Ramos C. (2019). Social Economy Satellite Account (CSES): How to build a Satellite Account, Unit of Statistics Portugal's Satellite Accounts and National Accounts Quality Assessment Unit. https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Ramos_2019_Social-Economy-Satellite-Account-in-Portugal.pdf. Original article: http://www.revista-es.info/ramos_6.html

[94] Monzón, J. L. and Chaves-Ávila, R. (2019). Medición y estadísticas de la economía social: avance y retos. Mediterráneo Económico, 2019, vol. 32, p. 35-52.

[95] Chaves-Avila, R. (2021). Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy Policy Recommendations and Directions for Future Research. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WP-2021-SSE-Stats-Chaves-Avila.pdf

- existence of disparate data (collected by different administrations/bodies and organisations) on the diverse entities and aspects of the social economy in the same country, making it difficult to assess the size of the social economy as a whole;
- lack of systematic computerised processes of periodic data collection and processing within public bodies, especially concerning data on employment and contribution to GDP;
- non-mandatory statistical/accounting reporting for small entities (less than 10-20 employees or with limited turnover or balance sheet) representing many social economy entities in several countries;
- lack of funds and experts specialised in the production of statistics on the social economy, both for the social economy as a whole and for its sub-families.

Previous work on generating and analysing social economy statistics and data has shown the complexity of finding a common agreement on what and how to measure the social economy.

There is an ample diversity in data and knowledge about the social economy that complicates the overall comparability of information across borders. This partially roots in the diverse landscape of national traditions and understanding of different social economy organisations in the diverse European countries and the differences in national legal initiatives to formalise the self-organised civil society as such. But it also links to the complexity of the sector when it is to be described with data and statistics. Overall, when it comes to the quality of available data and statistics on the social economy, countries can be divided into different groups according to whether statistics are produced for the social economy as a whole; whether they are available on a regular basis and whether they come from organisations with experience in producing statistics.

The diversity of approaches makes comparison and aggregation of social economy statistics and data in the EU almost impossible. The workshops tried to embrace the diversity and the challenges offering a common platform for different stakeholders to exchange ideas and experiences on how to continue to work on the generation and analysis of social economy data and statistics.

14.3. Workshop 1

On 10 and 11 of October 2023 the first workshop was conducted. This section summarises the discussions and presentations held in this workshop.

The focus of the first workshop was the following:

- Overview of the methods and tools currently in use for compiling statistics in EU Member States with a focus on their strengths and weaknesses;
- Learning about the variety of bodies collecting relevant data/statistics;
- Identification of key dimensions to be measured and indicators to be used for measuring the impact and performance of the social economy;
- Focus on individual country clusters: (i) countries with quasi no data available; (ii) countries with statistics available: definition and application of advanced indicators.

Agenda

Time	Day 1 – Activity
09:30	Start, Welcome, Context of the Project, Presentation of the agenda and the working mode; Introduction of the team and participants
09:45	Welcome by the European Commission (Patrick Klein, DG GROW)
10:00	Introduction: Social Economy statistics in Europe (EURICSE)
10:15	Overview on experiences across Europe: Inputs by the participants on data and statistics on the Social Economy or parts of it which are available in their country or at international level (Belgium, Portugal, The Netherlands, Finland, Slovenia, Spain)
11:00	***Short break, going into Breakout sessions***
11:15	Introduction to breakout session Breakout session 1: Data & statistics on Social Economy Small group discussions
12:15	Presentation of the group discussion findings by designated rapporteurs & discussion in plenary
13:15	Summary and preparation for tomorrow
13:30	End of day 1
Time	**Day 2 – Activity**
09:30	Welcome, Context of the Project Presentation of the agenda and the working mode Introduction of the team and participants Recap of yesterday
09:40	Presentation: Methods and tools for data collection and generating data on Social Economy in Europe – Good Practice from Portugal and Poland
10:00	Input by the participants on their methods for collecting/ generating data (Estonia, Luxembourg, Romania)
10:45	***Short Break, Going into Breakout sessions***
11:00	Introduction to the breakout session Breakout Session 2: Methods for data collection and generating data
12:00	Presentation of the group discussion findings by designated rapporteurs & discussion in plenary
13:00	Presentation of the homework and Workshop 2, Concluding remarks
13.30	End of day 2

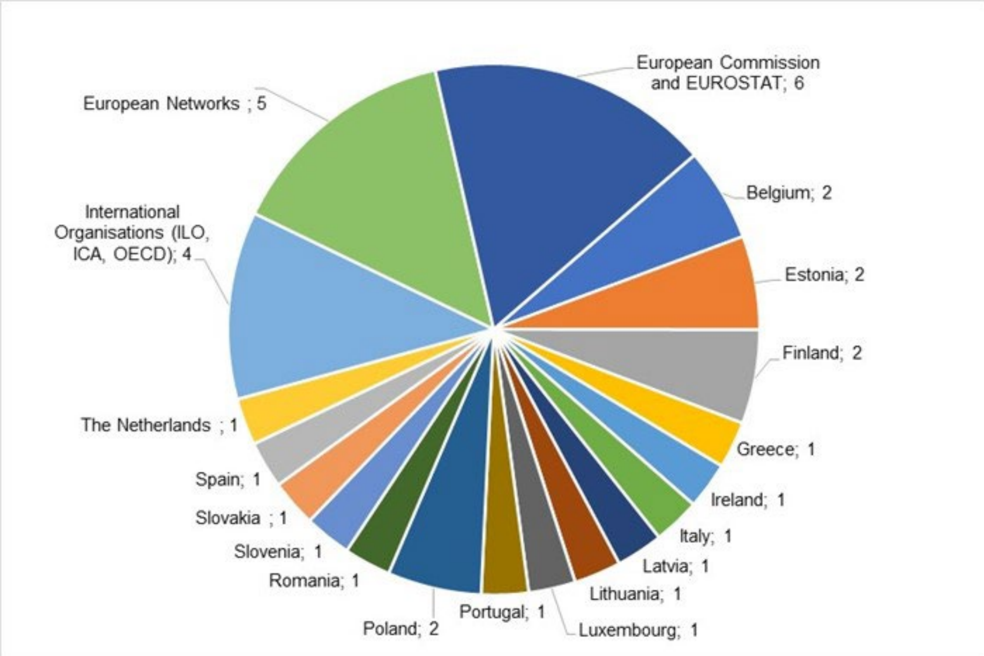
Participants

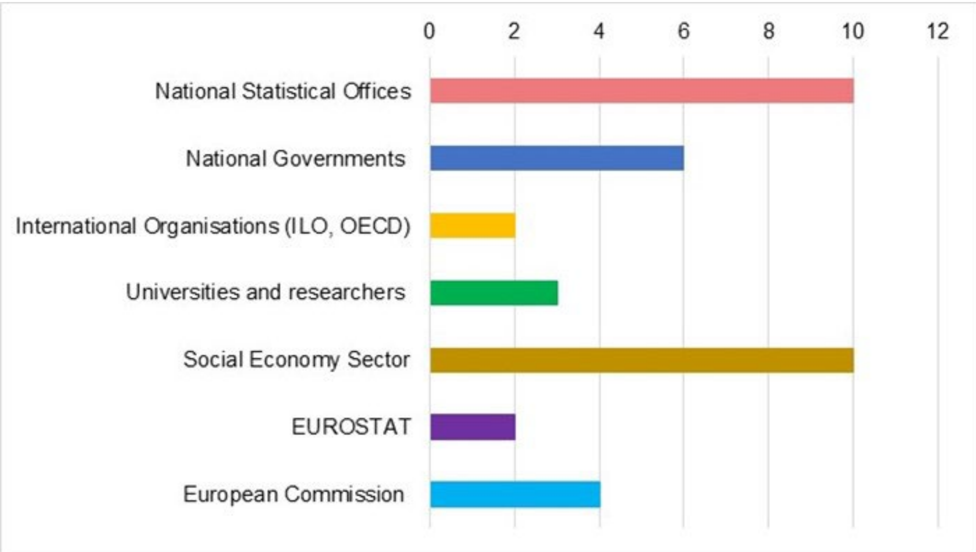
In line with the Terms of References, approximately 30 participants (excluding the project team members) were anticipated to attend each workshop. The target groups of the workshop were: researchers, experts from Eurostat and national statistical offices (NSOs), experts from public agencies and research institutes dealing with data collection/statistics; representatives of social economy networks and umbrella organizations, as well as International Organisations dealing with social economy data and statistics.

35 experts and representatives of national and international organisations registered for the workshop, in addition to six European Commission officers (EISMEA, DG GROW, DG EMPL) and 12 members of the contracted consortium.

The representatives from the national statistical offices from Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia were attending the workshop.

Overall, the participation had the following characteristics (excluding 12 participants from the organising team):





Outcomes

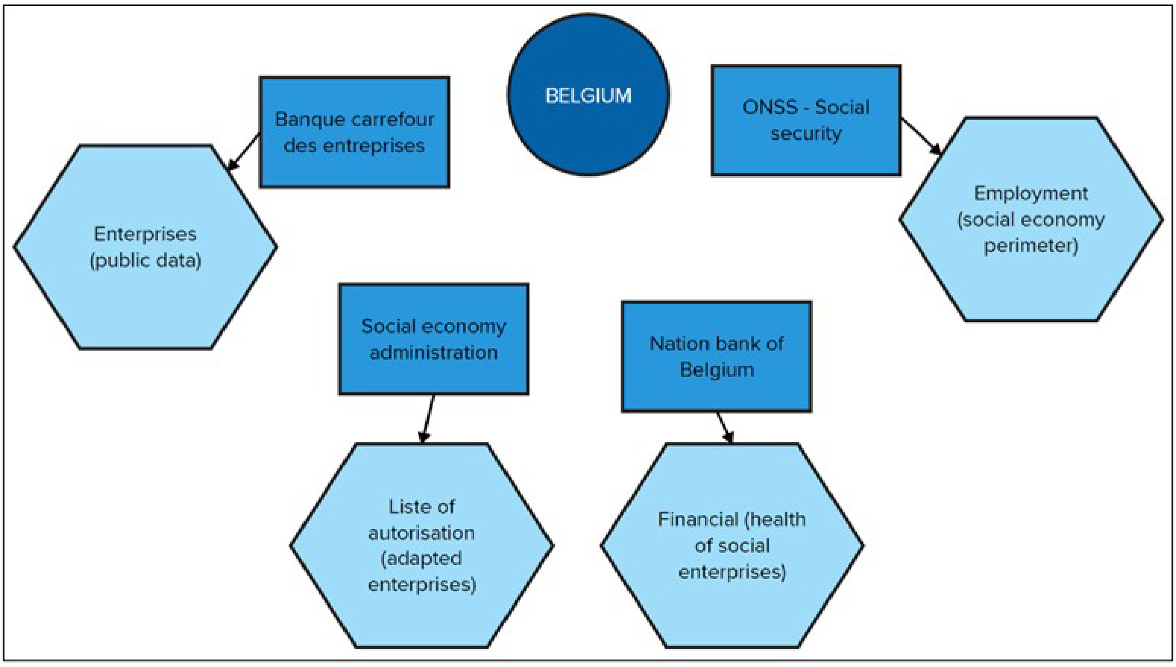
Day 1 started with a presentation by the Chiara Carini (EURICSE) on the state of art of social economy statistics and data in the Member States. It was highlighted that relevant data can be found in statistical or administrative data sources which means there are different providers of data and difference in the consistency and quality of data. In general, there is no unique approach or agreement across Member States of which data is covered or which methodologies are used for data generation. Therefore, the situation of social economy data across Europe is characterised by:

- Lack of data;
- Wide range of different organisations and types of organisations involved in data collection and generation;
- Different definitions and limitations of the universe applied for a) the social economy as a whole, b) for different subgroups;
- Problem of timeliness;
- Differences in data quality;

- Difficulties for comparability and consistency due to different sources, definitions, methodologies;
- Lack of agreements and indicators on how to measure and observe the specificities of the social economy beyond the usual socio-economic data.

Then different countries presented the situation of social economy data availability and quality in their country, namely Belgium, Portugal, The Netherlands, Finland, Slovenia, and Spain. Different approaches to collect and analyse data were identified[96].

The Belgium example was presented by a representative of Concertes as a case, where a sub-national bottom-up approach, rooted in an Interreg project was used to create a regional Observatory on the social economy in Wallonia (https://concertes.be/)[98].



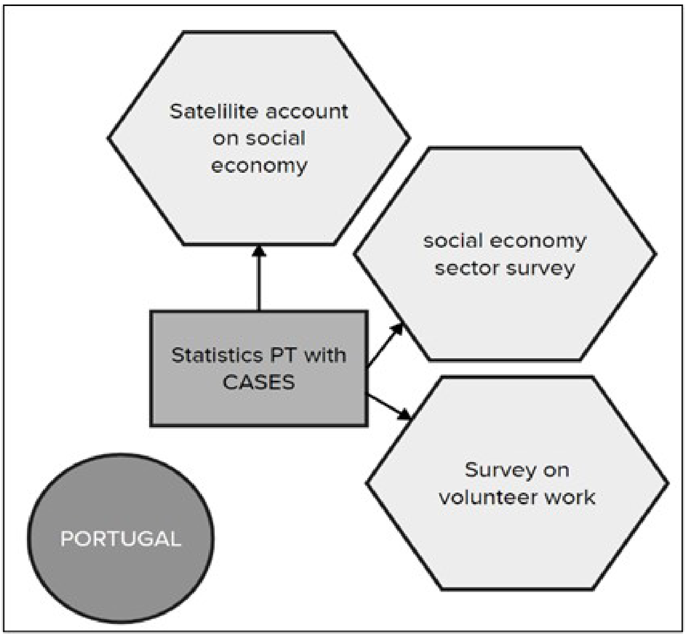
After that the approach of Portugal was presented by a representative of CASES. The Statistical Office of Portugal (www.ine.pt) created a Satellite Account on the social economy (https://www.cases.pt/contasatelitedaes/), which is constantly updated and improved together with the cooperative CASES (www.cases.pt). Based on an effective partnership between the State and six entities representing the social economy sector and taking the legal form of a "public interest cooperative", CASES aims to promote the strengthening of

[96] It has to be noted that the information presented below is based on summaries of individual contributions by the participants of the workshop. The presented examples do not necessarily reflect the complete picture of Social Economy data available in one country, but sometimes only selected examples of data sources or statistics. The figures have been drawn by the Workshop Organisation team based on information submitted by the participants to increase the comparability of approaches.

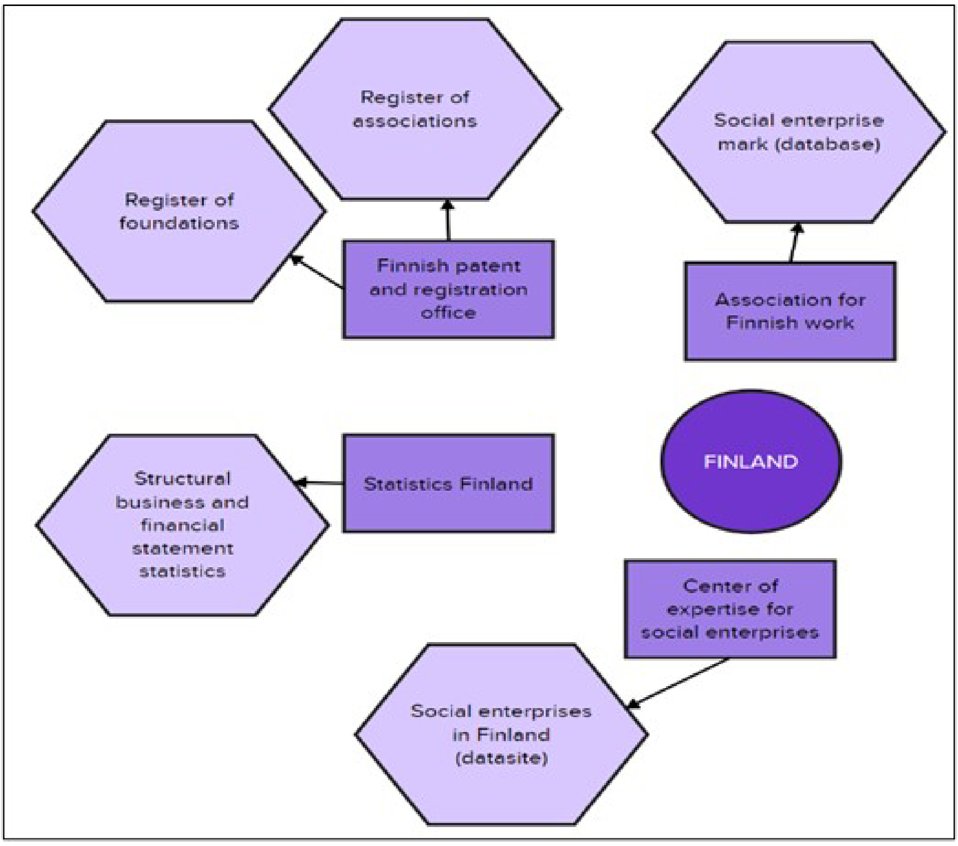
[97] See: Bouchard, M.J. & Salathé-Beaulieu, G. (August 2021), Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy: The State of the Art, UNTFSSE Knowledge Hub Draft Paper Series. Genève. UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE), p. 40, for a description of this Observatory in Box 5: the case of Belgium. https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/knowledge-hub/producing-statistics-on-social-and-solidarity-economy/

[98] See: Bouchard, M.J. & Salathé-Beaulieu, G. (August 2021), Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy: The State of the Art, UNTFSSE Knowledge Hub Draft Paper Series. Genève. UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSE), p. 40, for a description of this Observatory in Box 5: the case of Belgium. https://knowledgehub.unsse.org/knowledge-hub/producing-statistics-on-social-and-solidarity-economy/

the social economy sector, deepening cooperation between the State and the organizations that integrate it, as well as the pursuit of policies on volunteering.

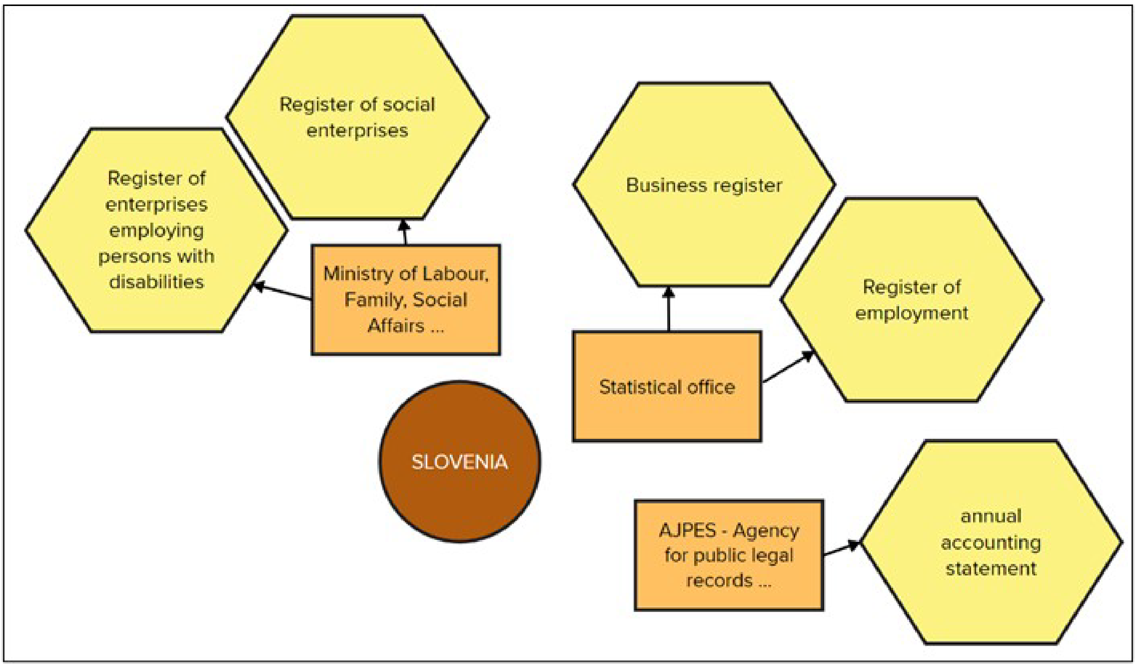


A representative of the social economy sector presented for Finland relevant social economy data sources and statistics available in the country. This reflects a mosaic of data sources, statistics and registers but without one single, consistent approach.



Spain was represented by the Sub-directorate General for Self-Employment, social economy and Corporate Social Responsibility at the Ministry of Labour and social economy. The registers for cooperatives and self-employed workers and their companies at this Ministry and some Autonomous Communities as well as the social security data on these groups were presented as what the country collects on the social economy (no picture available).

Slovenia (the National Statistical office) presented its approach to collect data on the social economy from different sources.



The Netherlands, represented by a researcher from a University, presented the differentiated understanding of social economy in the country, which is not understood (and therefore not observed or measured) as one economic sector, but as a horizontal characteristic of existing subsectors, such as the non-profit sector, the welfare organisations, charities, associations, and social enterprises. This hampers comparability with other countries. It was mentioned that other countries such as Germany and Austria have a similar understanding of the social economy. Another obstacle is that definitions used by EU and in other European countries are far too broad to be useful in the Netherlands, for example on social enterprises.

In the following break-out rooms, smaller group discussions were held on the following topics:

- Gaps and challenges for social economy statistics and data in the different countries;
- Purpose, costs and benefits of Satellite accounts and social economy data;
- Differences in classifications and delimitations of the social economy sector;
- Benefits of making it mandatory for EU Member States to produce certain statistics (at national level by law or from the European level);
- Need for qualitative data to show the impact of the social economy, need for comparable qualitative dimensions and indicators.

The discussions allowed identifying drivers and obstacles for the development of social economy data and statistics were identified:

Drivers:

- National or regional laws and legal frameworks on the social economy;
- Partnerships between NSO and umbrella organisations from the social economy to help the NSO in identifying specific characteristics and new trends in the social economy;
- Participation in EU pilot projects helped to develop specific statistics, but follow-up support is needed.

Obstacles:

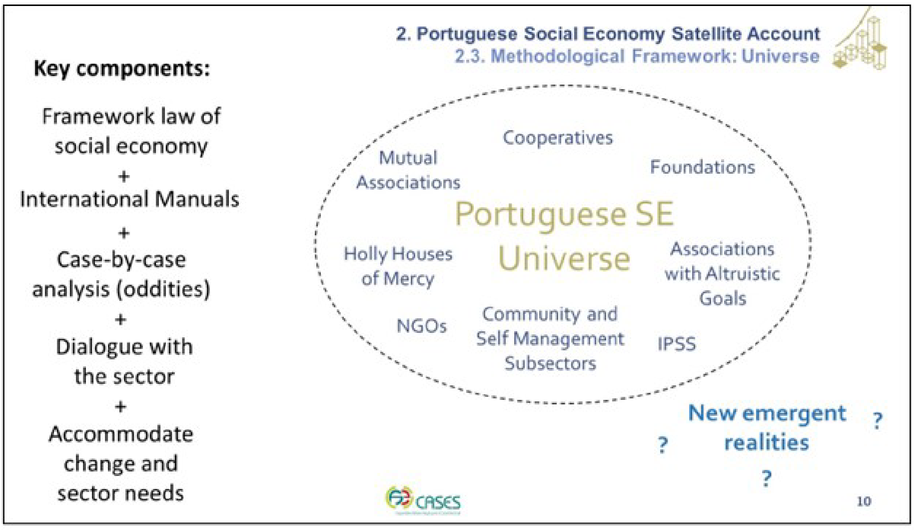
- It was noted that “information on the social economy is out there" in general statistical and administrative databases, but often NSOs are not filtering or analysing it specifically because they have no mandate to do so.
- A major challenge is that definitions of the social economy and different subgroups are not harmonised in the EU. This makes it difficult to operationalise criteria/parameters to identify the universe of social economy in a country.
- There is a lack of information on some types of organisations in almost all countries. Excluding certain types of organisations can be a possible solution to start collecting data but might have a big impact on reliability and accuracy of the data.
- It was noted that the collection, filtering and analysis of SE data has a high cost at the beginning, even when costs are reduced over time.
- Some country representatives noted that it is not clear which purpose should the data have. If there is no political interest and public policies to support the social economy, then also the demand for specific data is low.

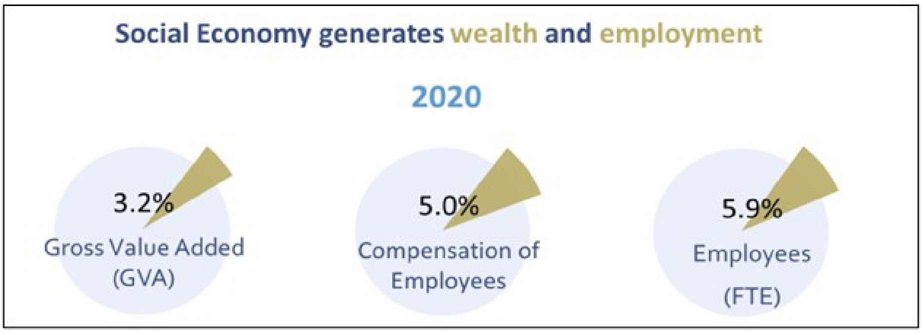
During the discussions, the representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) mentioned relevant reports that will be published soon or have already been published.

- OECD presented its newly elaborated Country Factsheets on the social economy. Different Factsheets were already available at the time of the Workshop, such as the example on France;
- ILO referred to a relevant report on guidelines for measuring the social and solidarity economy and an international overview on the state of art of social economy statistics: Measuring the social and solidarity economy (SSE): A roadmap towards Guidelines concerning statistics of the SSE;
- ILO together with ICA referred to a document reflecting the situation of statistics on cooperatives: Measuring cooperatives: A progress update on the ILO Pilot study on the applicability and implementation of the Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives in five countries.

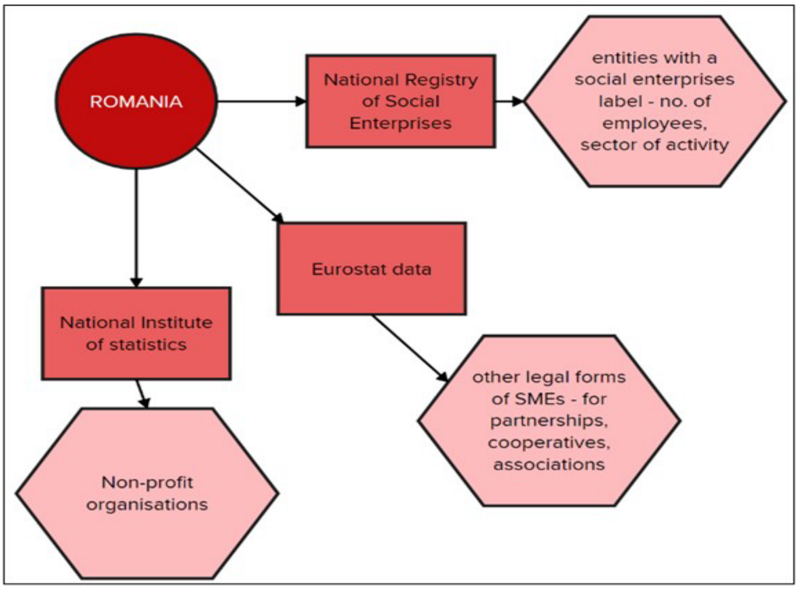
On Day 2, the discussion about the state of art in different European countries and specific challenges and obstacles for consistent data was deepened. First, Portugal and Poland presented their approaches more in-depth. After that, Romania, Estonia and Luxembourg presented the situation in their countries.

In the first presentation, the case of Portugal's Satellite Account, its methodology and the results of the most recent study were presented with more detail.



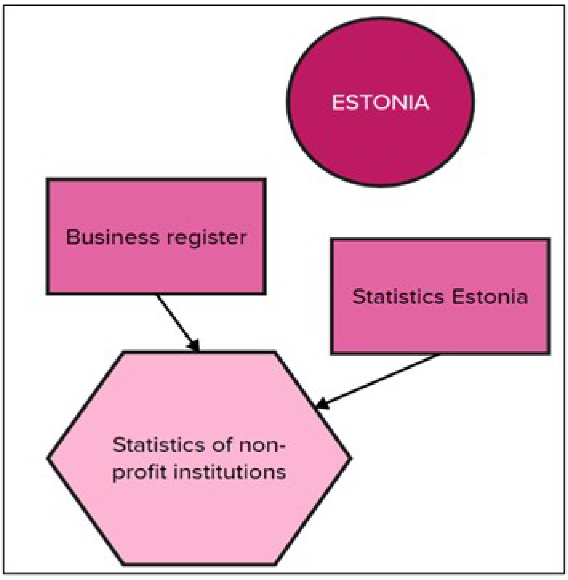


Poland (represented by the statistical Office of Poland together with a researcher) presented its Satellite Account approach. The social economy Satellite Account allows to determine the size and the actual monetary value that social economy activities achieve. As a tool for monitoring the social economy sector, it enables to assess the need for sectoral empowerment in the process of stable and sustainable economic growth. It is a tool to expand the data published in the national accounts, while maintaining the integrity of the whole. It allows consideration of non-monetary aspects, including volunteering.

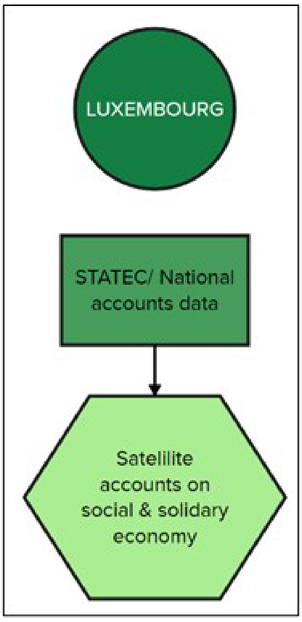


Romania (represented by a researcher) presented the situation in the country regarding social economy data, being able to observe only some specific sub-groups such as social enterprises and non-profit organisations.

After that, Estonia (represented by the National Statistical Office and a representative of the social economy Sector) presented its available statistics on the social economy which covers only non-profit institutions and leaves out many other subgroups of the social economy.



Finally, Luxembourg (represented by a representative of the National Statistical Office) introduced its Satellite accounts on the social economy.



After that, a lively discussion was held on the different approaches and the differences in covering different subgroups of the social economy, e.g. cooperatives. The definition of the universe was named as one of the key challenges to provide comparable statistics. It was asked for some mandatory definitions, for example on cooperatives, and the support of Eurostat in using them across EU-27.

Another issue was the question if and to what extent associations with or without economic activity or economic dimension should be included into the data and statistics of the social economy.

It was highlighted that there will be always some grey areas, 'outliers' or 'false' social economy organisations who do not fulfil the guiding principles and values of the social economy but rather want to receive the benefits of certain legal forms. On the one hand, this will always reduce the interoperability of statistics and its accuracy. On the other hand, this requires also smaller methodologies such as 'case-by-case' analysis and flexible rules in addition to the general statistical guidelines.

For future studies and activities it was suggested by a participant to break down complexity of the topic by creating country clusters with similar social economy traditions or availability of statistics, or by concentrating on certain subgroups of the social economy.

In the break-out rooms, smaller group discussions focused on the following topics:

- Drivers and success factors of social economy statistics;
- Diversity of bodies and players that are or could be involved in the collection and generation of data on the social economy.

National laws and a tradition on social economy at regional or national level were identified as main drivers for good data availability on the social economy. The diversity of data sources and the need to connect them and find agreements on relevant information collection for the social economy monitoring was seen as one of the challenges to comparable statistics in the EU Member States.

Overall, the discussions concentrated on the multiple complexities and obstacles to produce comparable statistics for the social economy. It became clear that many different steps and agreements are needed to produce comparable statistics. Flaws do not only refer to methodological aspects or technical questions, but also to the governance of social economy statistics.

The following aspects could be gathered as an input for the second Workshop, focusing on the challenges in producing social economy statistics:

- Social economy statistics from an international and comparative perspective: Use of international guidelines, comparability and Interoperability between national approaches and national data, differences between countries, generating and managing knowledge at EU level;
- Statistics and data at national level: benefits of social economy data and statistics, political frameworks and national priorities, process and first steps to build statistics, governance of social economy statistics, quality, continuity and sustainability;
- General methodological considerations: definition, building the Universe, reflecting specific social and societal benefits of the social economy;
- Technical aspects: data collection, calculation, methods.

A final round of impressions and feedback confirmed the positive response from the participants on the discussions in the workshop. Especially the presentations on the more advanced countries in collecting and analysing social economy statistics, such as Belgium and Portugal were highlighted as valuable information. In general, the exchange of examples and the discussions about concrete methodological details were appreciated by the participants.

Conclusions

To conclude, some participants indicated some concrete suggestions to continue the work on social economy statistics and data in Europe:

- Eurostat could coordinate the work in the European Union, publish data or surveys on the social economy, highlight differences between countries, lack of information and help in defining (in line with International Guidelines) the social economy or certain sub-groups;
- A Eurobarometer about the social economy in Europe could help raising awareness on the topic and on understanding differences between countries;
- The 'governance of statistics' needs to be understood, for example, via "peer-learning partnerships"-programmes to raise awareness or national/EU specialised transdisciplinary team;
- The purposes and benefits of having updated data and statistics on the social economy need to be clearly identified and communicated;
- Rules for defining the social economy and its subgroups should be simple, and efforts should be made to collect at least basic information;
- The diversity of social economy traditions and approaches in Europe needs to be seen as an asset.

14.4. Workshop 2

On 8 November 2023 the second online Workshop took place. This section summarises the discussions and presentations held in the second Workshop of the project.

The focus was:

- How can we improve statistics?
- What are the obstacles faced by national statistical offices (NSOs) and public/administrative bodies/agencies (also at regional level) in producing social economy statistics?
- How can we encourage NSOs to work (or work more intensively) on the social economy theme?
- How can Eurostat support the work of NSOs?
- Reflection on the satellite accounts and other methodologies based on the experiences analysed in the first workshop.

Agenda

Time	Activity
09:00	Registration, technical fine-tuning
09:10	Welcome and presentation of agenda
09:30	Presentation: Obstacles and barriers to generate and analyse SE data in the EU27, Rafael Chaves Avila
09:45	Presentation: The challenge to produce comparable analysis across different countries, David Hunter
10:10	Input from participants on the 'Governance' of Social Economy data and statistics – the diversity of players to collect, provide and analyse data
10:30	Discussion
10:55	**Break, Going into Breakout sessions**

[illegible]	Break, Going into Breakout sessions
11:15	Introduction to the breakout session Breakout Session Small groups to discuss obstacles, gaps and barriers and steps in improving data and statistics on Social Economy and Social Enterprises • International perspective: comparability of data, comparative analysis • National level: Benefits of data on Social Economy, first steps in setting up data systems, diversity of actors, roles and functions of different bodies, quality of data systems • Methodological and technical aspects: Definitions, what belongs to the Social Economy, methods, outliers
12:30	Presentation of the group discussion findings by designated rapporteurs & discussion in plenary
13:30	Preparation of joint conclusions and proposals – definitions of recommendations
13:45	Concluding remarks by the team
14:00	End of the workshop

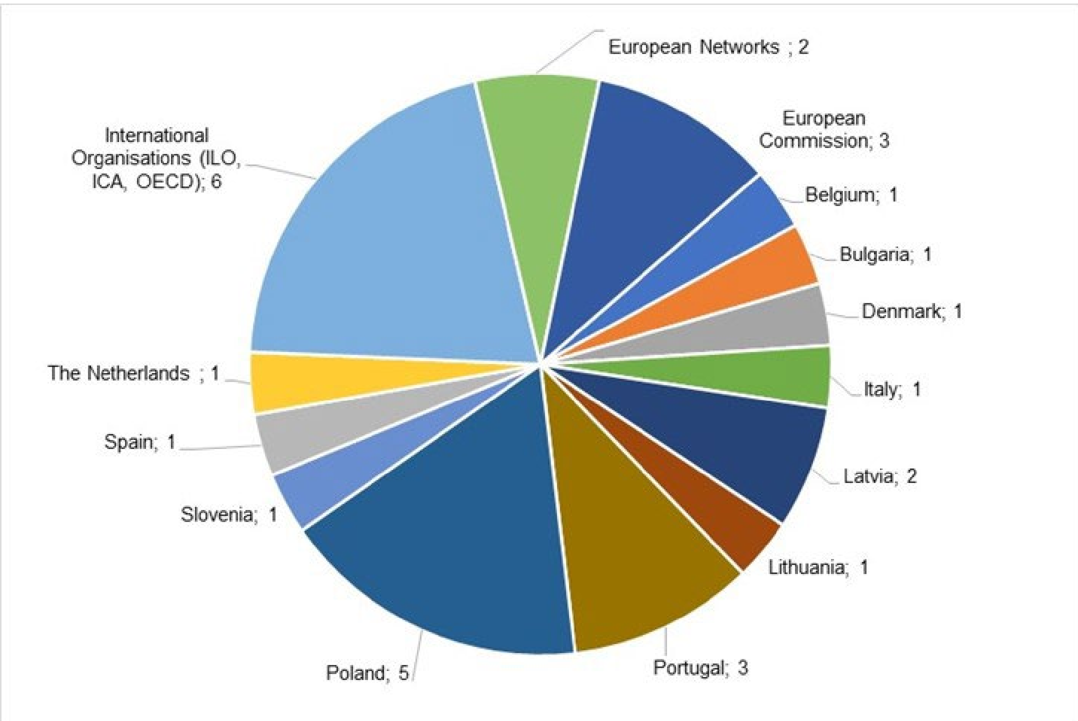
Participants

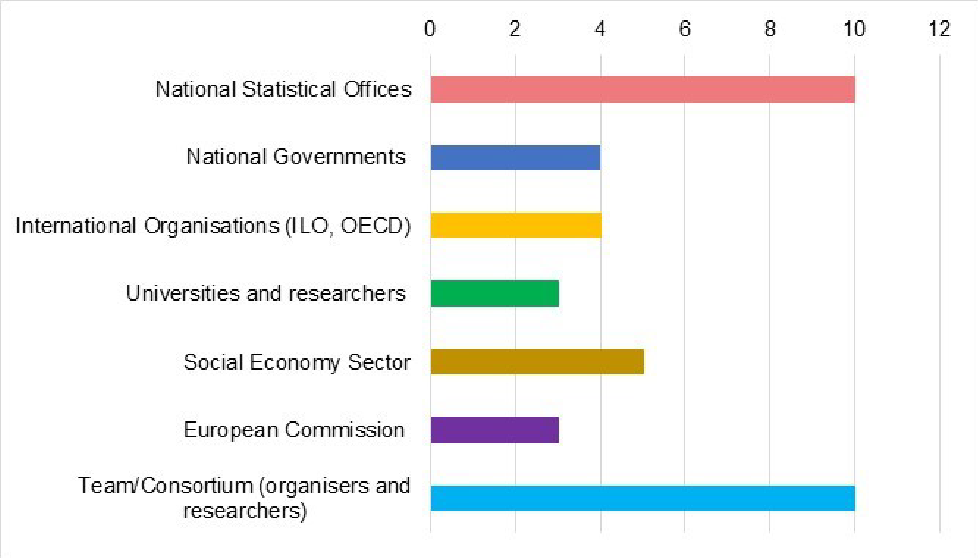
Approximately 30 participants (excluding the project team members) were anticipated to attend the Workshop. The target groups were researchers, experts from Eurostat and national statistical offices (NSOs), experts from public agencies and research institutes dealing with data collection/statistics; representatives of social economy networks and umbrella organizations, as well as International Organisations dealing with social economy data and statistics.

26 experts and representatives of national and international organisations registered for the second Workshop, in addition to 3 European Commission officers (EISMEA, DG GROW, DG EMPL) and 10 members of the contracted consortium.

The representatives from the national statistical offices from Latvia, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Slovakia were attending the workshops.

Overall, the participation characteristics were as follows (excluding 10 participants from the organising team):





Outcomes

The workshop started with a general welcome and presentation of the overall EU-funded research project. A brief summary of the outcomes of workshop 1 served as introduction to the general context of this second workshop. The first plenary session included two expert presentations from international experts on social economy Statistics.

First, Rafael Chaves Avila (CIRIEC and University of Valencia in Spain) presented 'Obstacles and barriers to generate and analyse SE data in EU27'. In his presentation he referred especially to his recent working paper for the UN Knowledge Hub on the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE)[99]. Rafael introduced a classification of the main general barriers in the production of SSE statistics. He mentioned the following five categories of obstacles.

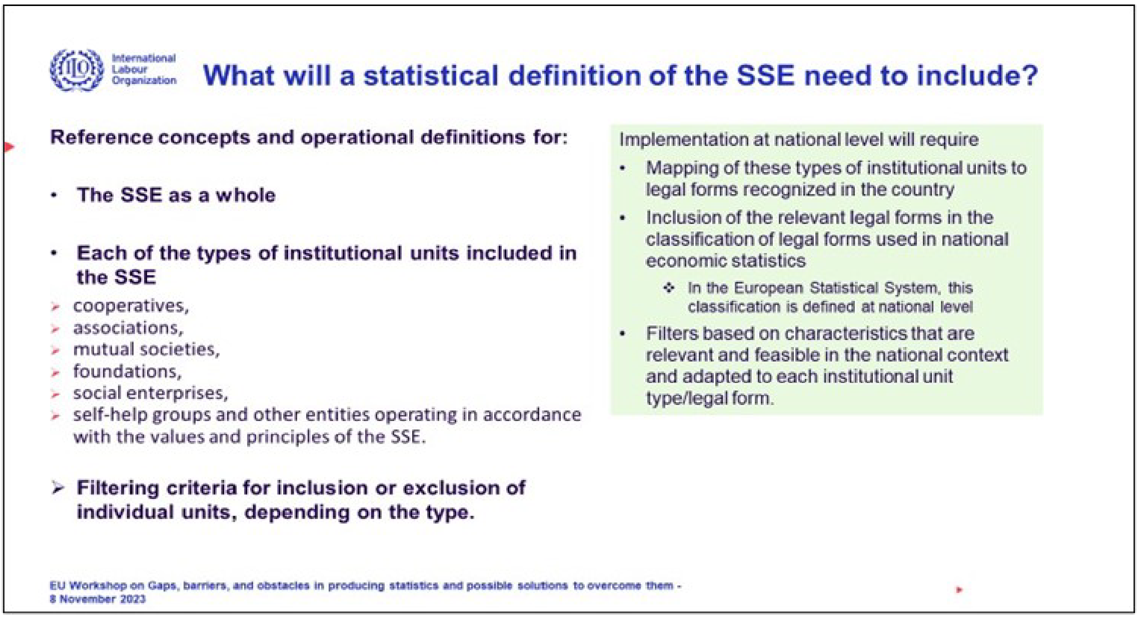
- Technical barriers at different stages, e.g. in the definition and delimitation of the scope of statistical analysis, in the building of a system of SSE raw data sources, in the stage of data processing and the methodology used to generate SSE statistics or in the publication and dissemination of statistics;
- Training barriers. Lack of technical skills;
- Institutional barriers. Lack of standards defining the statistical scope; lack of a normative mandate to push governments and statistical institutes to undertake the statistical endeavour,
- Financial barriers. Lack of funding to develop or continue specific SSE statistics;
- Lack of policy support from the SSE sector.

After that, David Hunter, who was already an active participant in Workshop 1, kindly agreed on presenting 'The challenges to produce comparable analysis across different countries', prepared together with the international expert Prof. Marie Bouchard. David Hunter is an independent expert based in Switzerland and working, among others, for the International Labour Organisation (ILO). He presented an important working document on the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) held in October 2023 on 'Measuring

[99] Rafael Chaves-Avila (2021): Producing Statistics on Social and Solidarity Economy. Policy Recommendations and Directions for Future Research. KNOWLEDGE HUB WORKING PAPER. To be found at: https://cdn.unrisd.org/assets/library/papers/pdf-files/wp-2021-sse-stats-chaves-avila.pdf

cooperatives: A progress update on the ILO Pilot study on the applicability and implementation of the Guidelines concerning statistics of cooperatives in five countries'[100].

The presentation showed an overview of the challenges in producing comparable statistics on the SSE in different countries.



He highlighted that, as a first step, it is necessary to achieve global recognition of the need for statistics on the SSE. This recognition has been realized with the ILO 2022 report on 'Decent work and the social and solidarity economy' that recognizes that the SSE is an important pathway to decent work, sustainable economic development and employment opportunities. Furthermore, the UN resolution on promoting the SSE for sustainable development (April 2023) recognizes that cooperatives and social enterprises, can help alleviate poverty and catalyse social transformation by strengthening the productive capacities of those in vulnerable situations and by producing goods and services accessible to them.

The need for coherence with existing international statistical frameworks

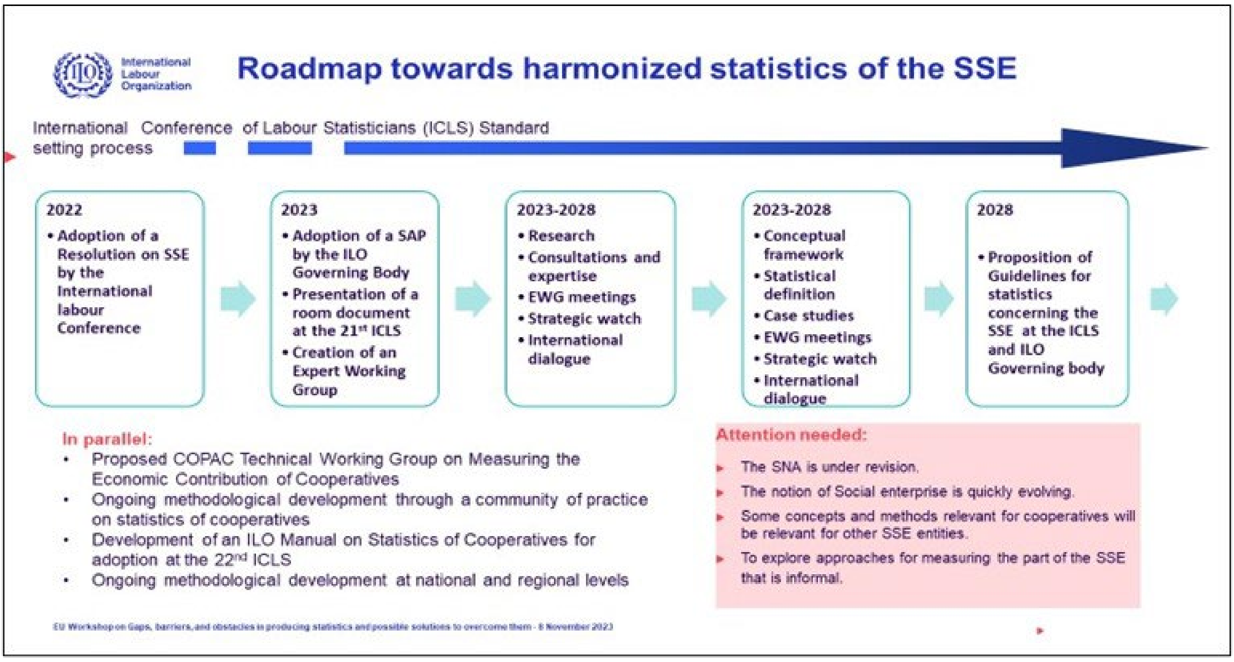
Author, date	Conceptual frameworks for SSE statistics	Entities
UNSD, 2003	Handbook of Non-profit Institutions in the System of National Accounts	NPI + organized volunteer work
CIRIEC, 2006	Manual for Satellite Accounts of Companies in the Social Economy	Cooperatives and mutual societies
UNSD, 2018 (replaces UNSD, 2003)	Handbook for Satellite accounts on Non-profit Institutions and Related Institutions and Volunteer Work (Third Sector or Social Economy = TSE)	NPI + some social enterprises, cooperatives and mutual societies + non-organized volunteer work
ILO, 2018	Guidelines concerning the statistics of cooperatives	Cooperatives
	Other international standards related to SSE	**Entities**
2008, SNA	System of National Accounts	All
ILO, 2011	Manual on the measurement of volunteer Work	Volunteer work
ILO, 2021	Volunteer work measurement guide	Volunteer work

[100] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_894546.pdf

The UN Resolution acknowledges the potential of the SSE to contribute to the achievement and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and encourages Member States to make visible, when feasible, the contribution of the SSE in the compilation of national statistics. He presented the need to better understand and agree on a common definition of the SSE, especially on evolving from a political to a statistical definition of the SSE, and within this to develop not only a conceptual definition and general references but also operational definitions.

The presentation insisted on the challenge of identifying relevant institutional units in statistical data sources and defining adequate filtering of existing statistical and administrative data sources. “Filtering will be needed for institutional types for which the legal statute does not clearly enforce SSE values and principles into structural-operational features or constraints (e.g. democratic control, limited surplus distribution).” The expert asked for coherence with existing international statistical frameworks.

Finally, a roadmap towards harmonized statistics of the SSE was presented.



In the following round of Q&A, the presentation was deemed as highly relevant to understand the international context of social economy Statistics and the current situation at global scale.

After this first block, input from participants on the ‘governance’ of social economy data and statistics was discussed. This input was based on the requested ‘homework’ after Workshop 1. Two country representatives filled in the online tool with answers about the following questions:

- What other data, sources, stakeholders apart from you(rs), do exist in your country? Which connections do exist between the different sources and stakeholders? How do they exchange and cooperate? Which connections would be eligible/ desirable?

A representative of CASES Portugal answered these questions from his perspective about Portugal, while a researcher reflected about the situation in The Netherlands. It was interesting to see the important differences between the perception and the availability of data on the social economy sector in these two countries.

Situation in Portugal: “*The main and only source of data for social economy, as a sector, is provided by official statistics, either the satellite accounts, or other statistics produced by the National Statistics Institute. Then there are some administrative sources for different* *groups, for example, for cooperatives, foundations and for entities with special statutes. Then it is possible to access information via umbrella organizations and through some studies/projects done by universities or research centers. However, outside official statistics, information tends to be very limited (e.g., only lists of organizations). In Portugal, since a "social economy Sector" is already established and recognized, both legally and operationally, it would be very advantageous to have a more unified and agile voice. This would help give to different organizational forms more strength in protecting common interests and strategies for development which, I believe, would also include working on having more information available concerning the sector, and the different families that make it up. There are already organizations that represent the social economy sector, but they need further development and a different dynamism, at least in terms of furthering statistics on the sector. Also, it would be desirable that the information channels between the NSO and other public organizations that have some power of registry or that collect administrative data on social economy, could be further developed. Namely, some information is still not easily accessed or made available which is further hindered by the fact that there is no substantial flag that helps identify which organizations are part of social economy*."

Situation in The Netherlands: "*In the Netherlands, no data is available on the social economy as such, as it does not exist as a statistical/administrative category. There is some limited data on organizational forms that could be said to be part of the social economy (associations, foundations, cooperatives, social enterprises) but that data is limited also (I can tell you about the number of associations for example, but not much more). There is no additional data available: I've spent many hours searching fruitlessly and have also been in contact with other national experts and stakeholders. It seems that, the more the social economy is part of the economy / public service ecosystem as a whole and hence, the more it is not a special sector that can be set apart from 'the rest', the less data is available. Public service provision and value creation in the Netherlands are inherently hybrid (Karré, 2011). From the cradle to the grave, the Dutch encounter hybrid third sector organizations: associations, foundations, and cooperatives. Every organizational form has its own advocates (there is a council for cooperatives for example and an organization lobbying for social enterprises), but those operate more individually than as a sector, in my opinion*."

In the discussion it was mentioned that different drivers and facilitators are needed to promote social economy data. These drivers can be top-down, such as a national/regional law on social economy data, or they can be rooted in the sector itself, requesting more recognition and awareness and developing bottom-up solutions for more information about the sector. In the end, a connection of top-down and bottom-up movements is necessary. An important role is played by national umbrella organisations ("apex organisations").

The following breakout sessions were dedicated to small group discussions on more specific obstacles and potential solutions. The group discussions had the aim to engage all participants into the debates. The participants of the workshop were able to choose their preferred topic. Three small groups were created.

One group discussed the challenges and obstacles related to 'Building statistics and data at national level'. The participants highlighted that the sector needs to prove its benefit to Society. However, basic statistics are very different from impact assessment. Statistics should only be a means to support a bigger picture.

In this group several participants presented obstacles and gaps they observed in their countries, but also solutions and needs to improve the situation of social economy data.

The following table summarises some of the presented aspects:

Obstacles/Gaps	Solutions	Needs
• Fragmented perception and approaches to classify different forms of organisations • Diversity of players required for data collection • Sector organisations might be interwoven with the state • Lack of funds to carry out a satellite account • Differences between regulations and methodologies between EU and national level • Clear national definition of SE is missing. • Lack of political willingness	• Showcase the impact of the Social Economy • Learn from other EU Member States and adapt to national context • See statistics as a means for discussion not as a goal in itself • The sector itself can start gathering information (or commission a study) to gain visibility and recognition • Influence from EUROSTAT: guidelines, compulsory definitions, standards. • Statistics need to be put into context. • Work with umbrella organisations for the Social Economy or parts of it	• Need to standardise national approaches • Justification of why Social Economy is important • Broader dialogue with various stakeholders of the sector • Funding is vital to start working with SE statistics • Create a governance for Social Economy statistics, the NSO cannot do additional analysis alone, and working on dialogue and promotion of the data.

Two groups talked about 'methodological challenges such as technical/statistical definition of the population, technical aspects on data collection, calculation, methods'. The first group defined statistics on the social economy as necessary input to define policy support. So, if the sector wants to be supported, it has to show its value and benefit to the economy and to employment. Important gaps refer to lack of skills and lack of experiences in national statistical offices. The EU Council Recommendations show that there is a political will. The second group highlighted the need to show the benefits and contribution to the society of the social economy sector, as a specific contribution of this sector compared to other economic sectors. However, it was reminded that it is important not to mix up social impact assessment with the economic and employment contribution as reflected in statistics and administrative data.

Obstacles/Gaps	Solutions	Needs
• Lack of political will • Underfunding of National Statistical Offices • Lack of human resources and skills (especially in smaller countries) • Countries are different as well as national context. Challenge for standardising. • National/regional laws and definitions make it difficult to create harmonised data. • Difficult access to existing data (high costs) • Also other economic sectors want to show their social impact. • How to take on board all relevant SE entities. • Understanding the different methods to measure the Social Economy, there is not only the Satellite Account but can be also Census or Surveys. • Attribution gap of social impact	• Programme started/coordinated by EUROSTAT can convince/persuade EU MS to collect data on Social Economy. • Dedicated funding programme to support capacity building on Social Economy accounts. • Working Group between EU MS to exchange approaches and good practices. • Identify what (provisional) statistics can be produced quickly (e.g. partial SE, only cooperatives) • Start with definitions of what counts as Social Economy in a given country and what not. • Define the difference between social enterprises and other Social Economy entities. • Define a national strategy for Social Economy sector analysis. • Approximate estimates of Social Economy in case calculations are complicated. • Find solutions for new challenges after the first steps (e.g. how to measure the informal sector). • Adoption of laws helps a lot to make statistical approaches last (better than pilot projects).	• Need for a common reference between the countries. • Need to work on a common reference for impact assessment • How can existing data systems and satellite accounts be expended beyond basic data? • Keep statistics updated and able to reflect new trends within the Social Economy. • Identify what figures would be collected and why (for which objectives). • National Social Economy organisations should lobby in a coordinated way to convince their national governments to produce more knowledge on the Social Economy.

After the breakout sessions, the small group discussions were briefly presented in the plenary. A short discussion took place about the different proposals for solutions and the identified needs for action.

Conclusions

Towards the end of the workshop a final reflection round about possible next steps was held. Participants indicated questions to continue the work on social economy statistics and data in Europe:

- How far can the EC/Eurostat prepare the ground for further national work on social economy statistics?
- What do the national statistical offices need to continue working on social economy statistics and data? (e.g. funding programmes, pilot projects, capacity building, exchange on good practices?)
- How to deal with existing conceptual differences between traditions and countries?
- How to define a set of minimum requirements for comparable data and a set of maximum requirements for detailed data?
- How to stimulate discussions between experts/researchers and statisticians?
- How to operationalise the conceptual definitions of the social economy?
- How to continue learning about the specificities on the ground in the different EU Member States?

A final feedback round confirmed the value of the workshop for most of the participants and the interest to continue exchanging experiences and views on learning on how to build and analyse social economy data.

14.5. Workshop 3

On 7 February 2024 the third and final workshop planned within the project took place. This time the focus was on:

- What dimensions, besides economic and employment dimensions, need to be considered to represent the real contribution of the social economy?
- What indicators can contribute to capturing these dimensions?

Agenda

Time	Activity
09:00	Registration, technical fine-tuning
09:10	Welcome and presentation of agenda
09:20	Keynote Presentation: Approaches and indicators to describe the benefits of the Social Economy, Prof. Dr Barbara Scheck, Munich Business School
09:50	Presentations: 1) international perspective from OECD 2) perspective of the sector (Social Economy Europe) 3) research perspective and contribution from a specific country (Belgium): Researcher from the University of Louvain on Social impact assessment in the social economy, supported by ConcertES, the Social Economy Observatory of Wallonie in Belgium
10:20	Discussion
11:00	**Coffee Break**
11:15	Introduction to the breakout session Three Breakout Groups
12:00	Presentation of the group discussion findings by designated rapporteurs & discussion in plenary
12:45	Closing remarks by the team
13:00	End of the workshop

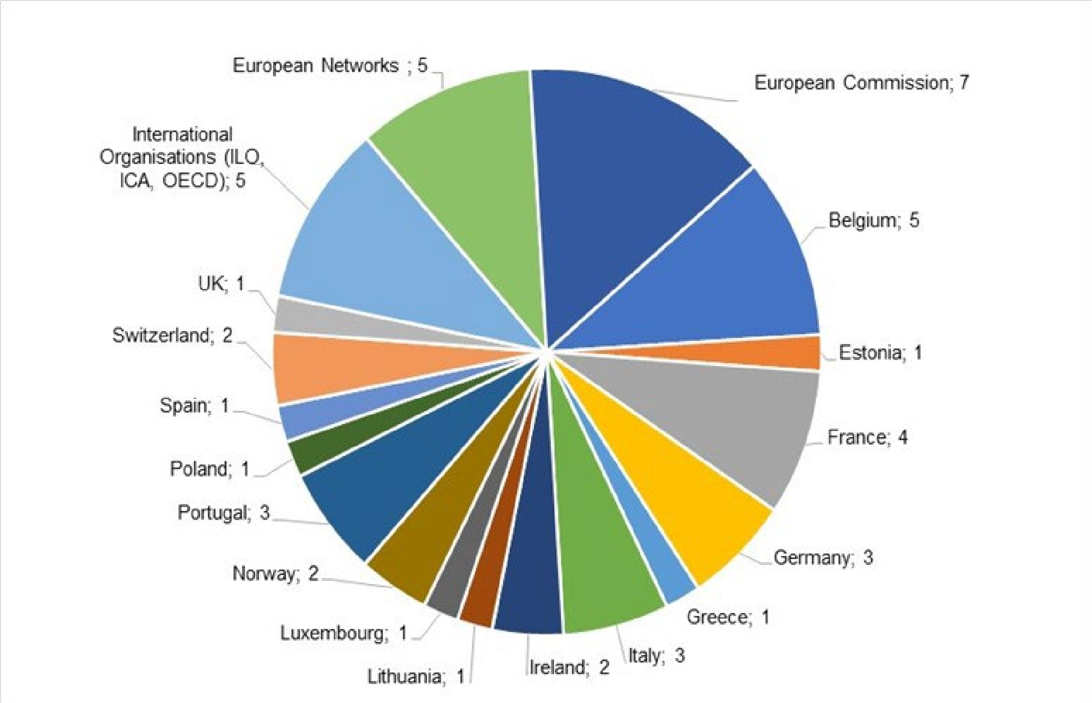
Participants

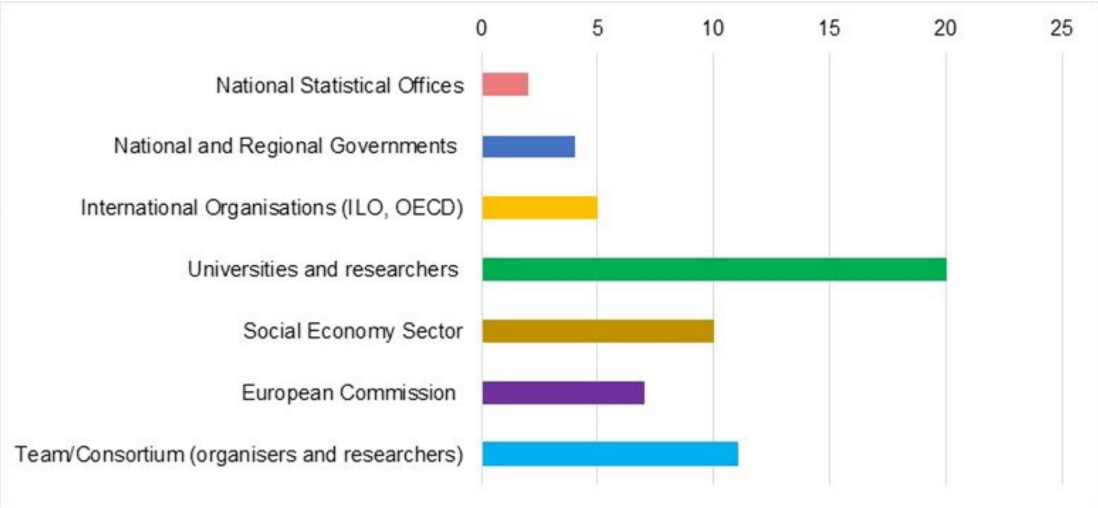
41 experts and representatives of national and international organisations registered for the workshop, in addition to 7 European Commission (EISMEA, DG GROW, DG EMPL) and Eurostat officers, and 11 members of the contracted consortium.

In total, 15 countries were represented, of them 12 EU Member States. It was positively noted, that in comparison to the previous workshops, countries such as Germany, France, Ireland and UK were present at the workshop. Representatives from the national statistical offices from Portugal were attending the workshop.

Regarding stakeholder groups, researchers and academics were the most prominent group of participants. The representation of International Organisations and of European Networks was higher than in the previous workshops. As expected, the participation of national statistical offices and national governments was lower than in the previous workshops. They had also not been specifically targeted for this workshop where the topic is much more linked to research and the experience from the social economy sector.

The characteristics of participation were as follows:





Outcomes

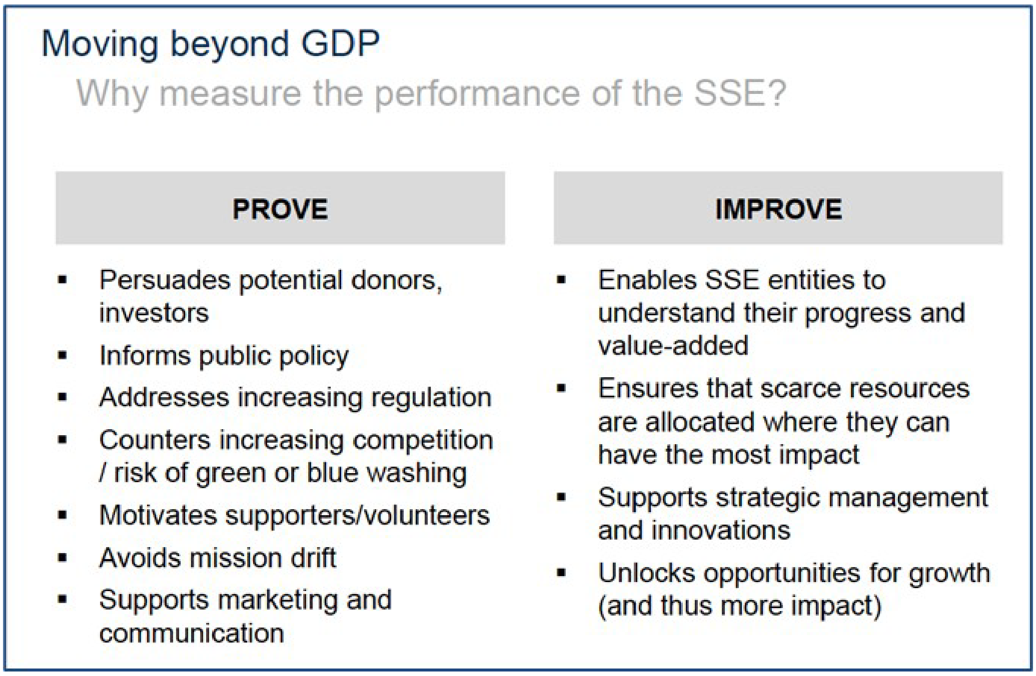
The workshop started with a general welcome and a brief introduction into the overall EU-funded research project. It presented the project and its outcomes to the present day and outlined the complexity of measuring the benefits and impact of the social economy.

The Keynote Presentation “New indicators and approaches for assessing the role of the social economy” was given by Prof Dr Barbara Scheck from the Munich Business School. Barbara Scheck is Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Munich Business School since June 2016. She is also Head of the MBA General Management programme and Co-Founder and Chief Learning Officer of Volunteer Vision, a social business for digital corporate volunteering. Her research focuses on the financing of social enterprises, impact and mission-related investing and impact assessment.

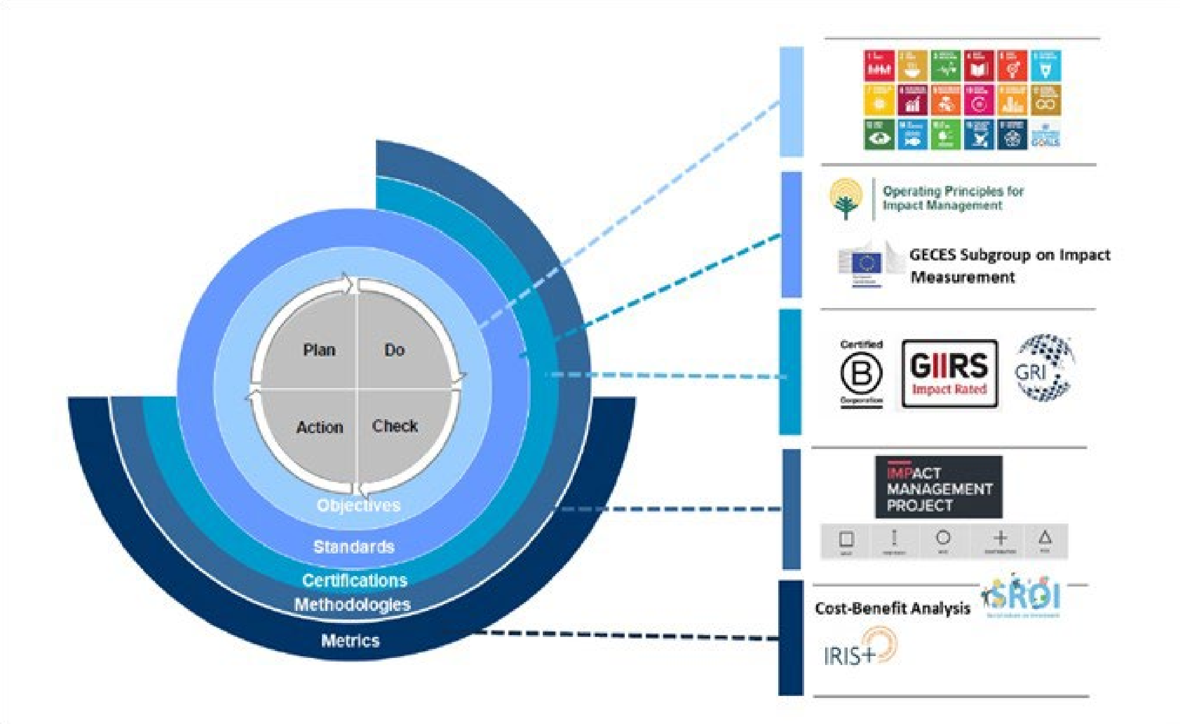
In her presentation Barbara Scheck talked about:

- Moving beyond GDP: Why should you measure the performance of the SSE?
- Lost in options or the art of choice: How could you assess it (current approaches)?
- The puzzle pieces missing: What are the challenges?
- Mission accomplished? Outlook

Barbara Scheck reflected on why measuring performance of social economy entities should move beyond economic and employment related indicators, identifying the need to provide evidence and the wish to improve as main drivers.



She introduced different existing approaches to impact measurement and assessment of individual organizations or at the level of sectors or countries. Approaches might include general objectives for impact, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, or standards, certifications, or metrics.



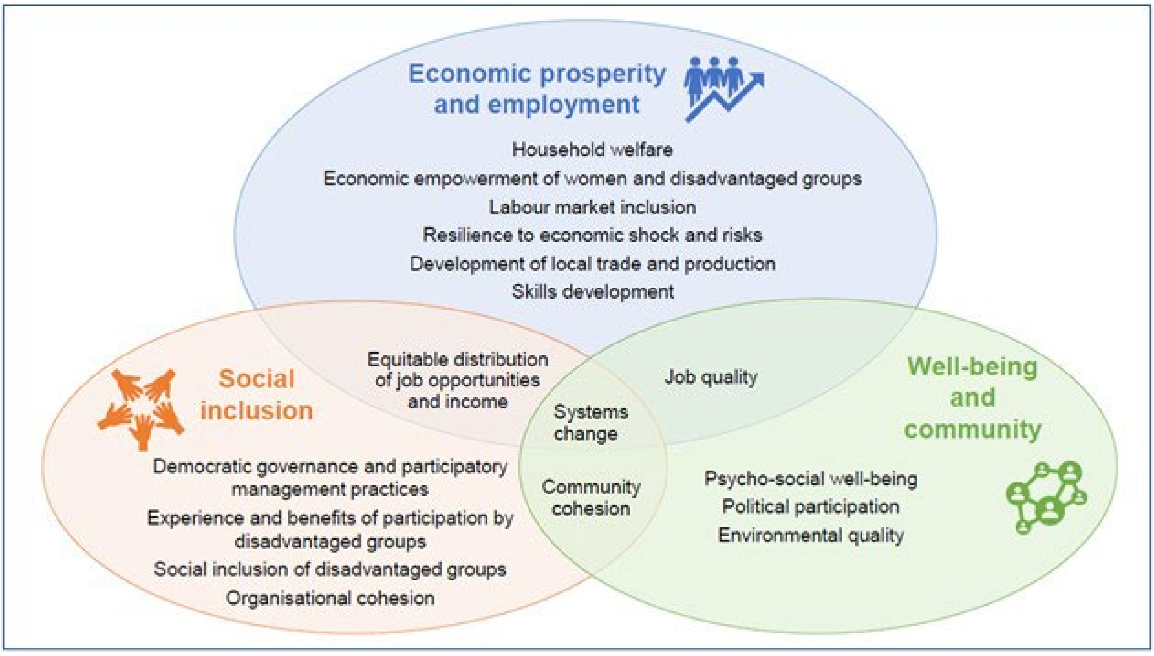
Dr Scheck underlined the relevance of different conceptual, methodological and operational hurdles. As challenges for the future, she highlighted especially the following topics:

- Capacity building and internal learning needs;
- Pressure to standardize/harmonize vs. over-simplification;
- Moving from a siloed, technical exercise to a comprehensive, iterative, organization-wide process;
- Innovations in data collection (e.g. lean data, leveraging ICT).

The following discussion questioned the need of limiting the various options of what can be measured to certain set of indicators as well as micro level indicators versus macro indicators that could describe the whole sector/-s at a level of a region or country. It was recognized that often the problem rises with highly qualitative indicators, those referring to intangible values: how to include them into an aggregated entry considering the importance they have for SE and for public policies as well.

The international perspective was presented then in a second contribution from Irene Basile and Melis Aslan from OECD. In their presentation they acknowledged the importance of measuring social impact. The presented the areas where social impact can be expected in the fields of economic value creation and employment, with regard to social inclusion and in the area of well-being and community. They highlighted that the areas with the highest added value from the social economy refer to intangible public goods and are the hardest to measure with current indicator systems and metrics.

When developing a measurement system often there is a high external pressure for standardisation and methodologic hurdles when defining suitable quantitative indicators. The presentation ended with the presentation of draft principles for social impact measurement, management, and maximisation. Advice to policymakers was formulated with regard to improving the policy framework, provide support capacity to the sector and to experts through networks and resources, providing guidance and building evidence. They referred to a recent OECD publication[101] about the topic: “Policy Guide on Social Impact Measurement for the Social and Solidarity Economy” and announced a new publication.



The next presentation reflected the view from the social economy sector itself. Carlos Lozano (social economy Europe) in this presentation provided an example of the analysis of the benefits of the social economy beyond the usual GDP and employment indicators. Along a study on the socio-economic impact of social economy values and principles in Spain, published in 2023[102], he presented the methodology and the results of the assessment.

As one concrete method he presented how a database that collects administrative anonymized data on working lives of around one million people taken from Spanish Social Security records was used for the analysis. An official statistical source: Continuous Sample of Working Lives (CSWL) is being used. Researchers can analyse behaviour of control groups and retrieve and compare data about social economy enterprises and their workers.

He presented the findings of the study, in particular how the social economy contributes to inclusive growth and reduces inequalities:

He highlighted the spatial benefits of the social economy for rural and sparsely populated areas in Spain, which suffer from many disadvantages compared to urban and densely populated areas:

- The social economy is by and large located in towns with a population under 40,000;
- The social economy has a greater concentration of “younger enterprises” in medium-sized cities and rural areas compared to larger cities; the opposite is true for commercial companies;
- social economy enterprises show greater sectoral diversity in rural areas. This improves competitiveness of these areas by developing endogenous social and economic resources and by supplying social services (care and educational) that stop population loss;

[101] https://www.oecd.org/publications/policy-guide-on-social-impact-measurement-for-the-social-and-solidarity-economy-270c7194-en.htm

[102] https://www.cepes.es/files/publicaciones/143.pdf

- Compared to an alternative setting where decisions would be made like “commercial companies”, social economy contributes to keep 74,000 jobs in rural areas and 192,000 people are stopped from relocating to urban areas.

Social Economy contributes to inclusive growth and reduces inequalities

1. **Greater levels of quality jobs.** The comparative analysis of professional careers clearly points towards job stability for waged workers being higher in the Social Economy than in commercial companies.

2. **Greater levels of equality in enterprise.** Wage levels are much more equal; there are narrower gender wage gaps; greater diversity in top management, with a greater incorporation of women and disabled people;.

3. **To a much greater extent than commercial companies, the Social Economy incorporates groups of workers that have specific difficulties to access the labour market**, such as women aged over 45, persons aged over 55, disabled people, persons at risk or in a state of social exclusion and low-skilled workers.

4. **The productive specialisation of the Social Economy in services that improve people’s quality of life** (care services and education services, and a commitment to environmental sustainability, such as water management).

The discussion after the presentation emphasised the need to bring in territorial dimension into this social impact measurement recognizing that there are objective differences of impact between players in urban or in rural/sparsely populated areas, for example with regard to providing social services or creating employment. The question was raised how to weigh the impact in different territorial settings. One participant mentioned: “One job created in a depopulated rural area should not weigh the same as one job created in a large city”.

The next presentation added the research perspective. Coralie Helleputte, a postdoctoral researcher of one of the four Belgian Universities dedicated to research on social economy (UCLouvain, UMONS, ULB, ULiège) involved in several European/ Belgian research-action projects on social impact assessment (SIA). Coralie regularly collaborates with the Wallon Observatory on the social economy ConcertEs. She mentioned how different research projects, some of them from a territorial cooperation perspective within the INTERREG programme, analysed the assessment of social impact of social economy entities and sectors.

One aspect Coralie mentioned was the importance to have a clear understanding of the terminology and to know that some terms are not neutral to some players, e.g. social performance, or are used more in one country than in others, e.g. social utility used mostly in France. She highlighted that social economy entities already have a positive impact through their “DNA”, that means the principles that guide most social economy organisations, e.g. social purpose, democratic management, non-capitalistic allocation of surplus.

Coralie brought into the discussion experiences and challenges related to bringing assessments from the micro level to the macro country level. She identified several methodological and political issues. She stressed that it is almost impossible to provide figures on impact (or output) indicators for the whole SE sector, but that this can be overcome by different practices and diverse metrics to reflect different dimensions of impact.

However, impact can be shown systematically for a region, country or sector by shading light onto specific benefits, such as stakeholders' involvement and participation, territoriality, job quality, environmental dimensions, diversity and anti-discrimination.

Her three key messages were:

- The choice of word matters;
- Assessing social impact is not neutral;
- Making the impact of the whole SE sector visible is a challenge.

During the discussion after the presentation once again the value of Satellite Accounts on the social economy for offering county-wide information also on qualitative aspects of the social economy was mentioned. It was stressed that this was already presented in the previous two workshops. As a good example of Portugal Satellite Account[103] was mentioned. A representative from the Statistics Office was again present at the workshop and mentioned that they continuously try to find information also on other types of social benefits of the social economy, not linked to economic added value or employment. He highlighted that in Portugal the National Statistical Office works in close cooperation with the social economy sector to find out relevant information about the real contribution of the sector.

Overall, the need for bringing data from the micro to the macro level was highlighted by some participants. This can be done by analysing macro data from a specific point of view (e.g., social cohesion, community, inclusion, territorial dimension), by applying a system's view and analysing the role of social economy as an element and driver of social change or by aggregating data reported by individual entities or sector organisations, e.g. from surveys, membership analysis etc.

A key point is the connection of the social economy to its local area, to the community and to the territory, which is usually linked to several social or environmental benefits.

It was concluded that a clear definition of the social economy and of the benefits to be analysed and measured are key to perform further impact measurements and assessments.

During the session, some of the participants mentioned in the chat or in brief interventions additional studies, reports or websites that might be interesting for the audience.

These were:

- The Sustainable Development Performance Indicators (SDPI) produced by UNRISD. They measure the sustainability performance of economic entities, including both for-profit enterprises and social and solidarity economy organizations;
- ILO (2023): Measuring the social and solidarity economy (SSE): A roadmap towards Guidelines concerning statistics of the SSE;
- The 2023 Atlas of the Social and Solidarity Economy in France with relevant information about impacts and benefits;
- The Australian SEEDKIT tool to measure social impact;
- A Call for Papers on the topic "Challenges and limitations of social impact measurement in social and solidarity economy".

103 https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=620418151&DESTAQUESmodo=2&xlang=en

After a short break, the workshop participants were distributed into three smaller groups to enable discussions and more active participation for all participants.

The breakout sessions were dedicated to group discussions on the specific benefits of the social economy. The discussion was meant to conclude with solutions for existing challenges. Notes of the group discussions were collected on the online Mural board. The outcomes of each of the breakout rooms were afterwards presented in the plenary session. Below is a summary of the reflections that were gathered and discussed in the three breakout rooms.

Question	Reflections
What are the specific social and societal impacts/benefits of the social economy?	Contribution to cohesion within EU and outside at different scales through inclusion of stakeholders, contribution to inclusive growth and reducing inequalities Soft transformation values: Social inclusion, equity, community and well-being, job quality, systems change, community cohesion Four dimensions: social justice, economic democracy, community empowerment and the creation of social capital Also, well-being especially at work, so shall ties and inclusion, recognition and self-esteem, benefits for health, involvement and citizenship and access to fundamental rights Transforming of society, strengthening democracy, breaking relationship between capital and power Efficient allocation of resources though in some cases questionable Looking at some more evident aspects and neglecting others, there is a risk to limit the potential of social economy
Are there differences between types of social economy organisations?	Social economy can take various forms according to the recent UN definition There are differences depending on national legislation. These differences might entail necessity or production of the data. There are voluntary driven organizations, “professional” / paid social organizations and cooperative organizations There are differences between organizations that are located in rural and urban regions. Also differences as to the scale and activity sector. They are united by a collective interest.
How can these social and societal benefits become visible?	First it needs to be defined to whom we want them to be visible: to the general public as well as decision makers, media, exhibitions / festivals Efforts to showcase SE contribution should be done through qualitative tools such as illustrations, testimonials, case studies and storytelling, also share values, living experiences, results, advantages Besides statistics also this seminar dictation and communication strategies addressed to the general public are essential. Use of social media Different level of statistics (elements that are usually not statistics) Measure the added value through comparison with a counterfactual: COVID pandemic was a laboratory to show the effects of NOT having social services / social economy
How can these social and societal benefits be measured?	There are at least two different approaches: (i) on micro level: entities can measure themselves and (ii) on more macro level, e.g., national statistics offices can follow Different SE entities may need different methodologies Apply different approaches in data collection, e.g., collective impact: coordinated action, data aggregation from different initiatives Drawing on psychological research on well-being and community cohesion Mapping to whom social economy organizations are accountable Cost of producing the services, prices are asked by for-profit organizations’ willingness to pay

How can they be communicated to policymakers?	It is important to respond to decision makers expectations and create a shared narrative that can be also understood by them It depends if policymakers want to make reactive policies or be transformative, forward-looking. Has to be communicated in line with political objectives of SE organizations Through official statistics and studies and reports based on them Meetings with all stakeholders including umbrella organizations, social economy actors Social enterprise monitors, e.g., ESEM

Conclusions

In the final plenary some hints to possible solutions to existing challenges could be identified:

- Develop a common recognized statistical definition (using the UN definition) that can be adapted to national contexts, discuss and propose a clear definition of a national social economy;
- Establish a European Working Group on social economy statistics, bringing together researchers and experts from NSOs and other relevant stakeholders;
- Eurostat should provide guidelines on indicators to be measured and methodologies to be used to collect data by listing the pros and cons of each methodology regarding the variables to be measured;
- Improve availability of indicators in national statistics by improving the data sources;
- Include social economy variables in existing periodic surveys (i.e. EU-SILC survey) to obtain more data;
- Carry out specific studies on intangible public goods going beyond quantitative assessment. This could refer, for example, to the quality of jobs, community value added, the contribution to territorial cohesion and challenges, the proportion of underrepresented groups (women, youth, etc) in managing positions, the longevity of the enterprise, the social economy role in emerging sectors and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) performance indicators;
- Identify social or inclusive equivalents to GDP, e.g. a well-being index, and testing of new indicators that go beyond the traditional GDP metrics, incorporating indicators directly related to the social economy;
- Carry out practical tests in EU local areas and bring the results together in a European web portal;
- Explore the use of artificial intelligence to learn more about the impact of the social economy;
- Capacity building via seminars and workshops for NSOs on the topic of statistics facilitating mutual learning and the exchange of best practices.

14.6. Registered participants by country and organisation

List of registered participants for Workshop 1:

#	Country	Affiliation/ Organisation	Area
1	Portugal	former INE Portugal, now CASES Portugal	Statistical Office
2	Poland	STATISTICS POLAND (GUS)	Statistical Office
3	Poland	STATISTICS POLAND (GUS)	Statistical Office
4	Poland	STATISTICS POLAND (GUS)	Statistical Office
5	Slovenia	SURS Slovenia	Statistical Office
6	Luxembourg	STATEC - Luxembourg	Statistical Office
7	The Netherlands	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Researcher
8	Finland	Labour Market Counsellor (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)	National Government
9	Finland	"Centre of expertise for Social enterprises"	Social Economy Sector
10	Croatia	Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb	Researcher
11	Slovakia	Ministry of the Interior	National Government
12	Spain	Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Economy	National Government
13	Ireland	Department of Rural and Community Development	National Government
14	Latvia	Ministry of Welfare, Department of Labour Market Policy	National Government
15	Greece	Head of Department of the Register of Social and Solidarity Economy Institutions	National Government
16	Romania	RISE Romania	Social Economy Sector
17	Belgium	Social Economy Observatory / Concert'ES	Social Economy Sector
18	Europe	Social Economy Europe	Social Economy Sector
19	INT	International Cooperative Alliance	Social Economy Sector
20	Europe	Social Impact Alliance for Central & Eastern Europe (CEE) CEE Impact Foundation	Social Economy Sector
21	INT	ILO	International Organization
22	INT	ILO	International Organization
23	INT	StatClass	Researcher
24	Italy	ISTAT Italy	Statistical Office
25	Estonia	Estonian Social Enterprise Network	Social Economy Sector
26	Estonia	Estonian Statistics	Statistical Office
27	Spain	Comisionado Especial de Economía Social, Gobierno de España	National Government
28	Lithuania	State Data Agency	Statistical Office
29	Europe	EASPD	Social Economy Sector
30	Europe	REVES	Social Economy Sector
31	INT	OECD	International Organization
32	Europe	ENSIE	Social Economy Sector
33	Belgium	Ecorys Brussels	Researcher
34	INT	OECD	International Organization
35	Poland	GUS Poland	Statistical Office

List of registered participants for Workshop 2:

#	Country	Affiliation/ Organisation	Area
1	INT	ILO	International Organisation
2	Europe	EASPD	Social Economy Sector
3	INT	StatClass Consulting Services	Researcher/Expert
4	INT	OECD	International Organisation
5	INT	Université du Québec à Montréal	Researcher/Expert
6	Poland	Statistical Office in Cracow	Statistical Office
7	Portugal	CASES - Cooperative António Sérgio for Social Economy	Statistical Office
8	INT	OECD	International Organisation
9	Poland	Statistics Poland	Statistical Office
10	Netherlands	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Researcher/Expert
11	Portugal	CASES - Cooperative António Sérgio for the Social Economy	Statistical Office
12	Bulgaria	Ministry of labour and social policy	National Government
13	Spain	Ministry of Labour and Social Economy	National Government
14	Portugal	CASES - Cooperative António Sérgio for Social Economy	Statistical Office
15	Latvia	Ministry of Welfare, Latvia	National Government
16	Latvia	Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia	Statistical Office
17	Italy	Istat	Statistical Office
18	Poland	Statistics Poland	Statistical Office
19	Slovenia	Stattistical office of the Republic of Slovenia	Statistical Office
20	Denmark	Sociale Entreprenører i Danmark - Social Entrepreneurs in Denmark	Social Economy Sector
21	Belgium	ConcertES	Social Economy Sector
22	Europe	Social Economy Europe	Social Economy Sector
23	INT	International Cooperative Alliance	International Organisation
24	Poland	Social Impact Alliance for Central & Eastern Europe / CEE Impact Foundation	Social Economy Sector
25	Lithuania	Ministry of social security and labour	National Government
26	Poland	Statistics Poland	Statistical Office

List of registered participants for Workshop 3:

#	Country	Affiliation/ Organisation	Area
1	Italy	University of Bologna	Researcher
2	Europe	Social Impact Alliance for Central & Eastern Europe (CEE)	Social Economy Sector
3	France	ESS France	Social Economy Sector
4	Estonia	Tallin University	Researcher
5	Belgium	Social Economy Observatory / Concert'ES	Social Economy Sector
6	Norway	ISF - Institute for Social Research	Researcher
7	Europe	Social Economy Europe	Social Economy Sector
8	Spain	Zaragoza University	Researcher
9	Belgium	University of Louvain	Researcher
10	Lithuania	Vilnius University	Researcher
11	INT	ILO	International Organization
12	Belgium	Government of Flanders, Department of Work and Social Economy	National Government
13	Portugal	CASES - Cooperativa António Sérgio para a Economia Social	Statistical Office
14	Portugal	CASES Portugal	Statistical Office
15	France	Le Mans University	Researcher
16	Italy	Free University of Bolzano-Bozen Italy	Researcher
17	Italy	Ashoka	Social Economy Sector
18	UK	UCC	Researcher
19	Europe	CECOP-CICOPA	Social Economy Sector
20	INT	International Cooperative Alliance	International Organization
21	INT	UNRISD &UNTFSSE	International Organization
22	Germany	PHINEO	Researcher
23	Norway	Institute for Social Research, Norway	Researcher
24	Ireland	University College Cork	Researcher
25	Europe	REVES	Social Economy Sector
26	Poland	Krakow University of Economics, Poland	Researcher
27	Ireland	Cork University Business School	Researcher
28	INT	OECD	International Organization
29	France	Rennes School of Business	Researcher
30	France	Aix-Marseille Université	Researcher
31	Switzerland	CDE, University of Bern	Researcher
32	Germany	Social Impact gGmbH	Social Economy Sector
33	Belgium	ConcertES	Social Economy Sector
34	Switzerland	University of Bern	Researcher
35	Europe	EMES Network	Social Economy Sector
36	Greece	KMOP - Social Action & Innovation Center	Researcher
37	Germany	PHINEO	Researcher
38	Luxembourg	Ministry of Labour, Employment and the Social and Solidarity Economy	National Government
39	Belgium	Departement Werk en Sociale Economie	National Government
40	Portugal	Social Innovation	National Government
41	INT	OECD	International Organization

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