

Reinforcing social and solidarity economy for the unemployed, uneducated and refugees

MoreThanAJob Consortium

This policy brief is developed as part of the MoreThanAJob project funded by the EU under the ENI CBC MED programme. The Policy Brief provides insights about the implications of “MoreThanAJob” Project outputs in partner countries through implementing the developed framework efficiently and effectively. Aimed at supporting the development and growth of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), this Brief proposes ways in which SSE should be reformed and improved from different aspects. This will directly maximize impact for the target groups.

Key message and recommendations

Problem: There is need for supporting the SSE actors through

- ✓ Recommendation 1: Provision of training programmes for skills development
- ✓ Recommendation 2: Creation of a networking mechanism/platform
- ✓ Recommendation 3: Financial support through micro-loans and small grants
- ✓ Recommendation 4: Need for an enabling policy framework

Introduction

Due to the instability and complexity of economy in different countries, especially in Mediterranean countries, and in response to the increasing unemployment rates, Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) policies in these countries should be assessed, revised and developed, shared among main actors and stakeholders, approved from the policy makers, adapted and systematically implemented.

Based on the analysis of international and local best practices in services for the promotion of social and employment inclusion of vulnerable people, the MoreThanAJob framework identifies **three main priorities** that will support the development of welfare services:

1. Social service delivery is increasingly responsive, and generates greater social stability and livelihood outcomes, based on the needs of host, refugee and immigrants' populations.

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2. Social and Solidarity Economy is progressively growing and provides greater local economic development opportunities for the most vulnerable community members.
3. Education System is dynamically adaptive to market needs and allows greater access to innovative and agile technical education and vocational training programmes targeting different levels of education including un-educated population.

This policy brief aims at providing an overview of the current context in partner countries on the implementation and ongoing discussion on policy areas identified under each priority within the MoreThanAJob framework. Based on the current context, we have identified some policy recommendations that could support the actors involved, namely the PA and the SSE actors, in the development of policies and action plans aligned with the indications provided in the MoreThanAJob framework.

About the project

MoreThanAJob will deliver and demonstrate a framework of best practices, previously identified and studied for the inclusion of the unemployed (including refugees and uneducated) in the work and education system. The framework that is created focuses on the collaboration of SSE actors and public authorities (PA) for delivering in a more effective way their services. This will be made possibly with through pilot sub-projects aiming to ensure a long-term impact and the creation of jobs.

MoreThanAJob will bring a change in the way SSE actors and public institutions work together for services provision to unemployed people, focusing on vulnerable groups (uneducated and newly arrived migrants/refugees). Through the development of a framework of new social pilot schemes, as well as peer to peer learning, exchange of best practices and training seminars that will focus on SSE and PA representatives, the interaction of the stakeholders involved will be improved and strengthened. Finally, the MoreThanAJob project will contribute in the planning and delivery of more grounded interventions and policy initiatives.

Study results, conclusions and recommendations

The evidence that is available for the recent research made in relation to the current situation and trends of the SSE in different partner countries (Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Greece, and Italy) makes apparent that there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed, in order to strengthen the SSE actors. More specifically, there is need to support the human, social and financial capital. Therefore, the following four (4) recommendations are suggested below:

Recommendation 1: Provision of training programmes for skills development

The SSE stakeholders mention that there is need for further training in relation to the development of their organization. Despite their high level of education, most of the members in SSE initiatives point out that they lack essential skill for their organization's further development. Also, Public institutions training and involvement is a requirement for the change, which includes training programs targeting public institutions on the developed MoreThanAJob framework. This will help these institutions planning, implementing and coordinating the social service delivery with the other stakeholders.

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Recommendation 2: Creation of a networking mechanism/platform

According to the input available from different SSE sectors in different countries it seems that there is moderate connectivity among the stakeholders and the networking activity is not widespread. More specifically, only some of the total SSE actors examined has responded that their organization/initiative was engaged in some sort of networking action. Involving volunteering and no profit organizations in the planning of social policies in their area of competence and developing clearer guidelines and approaches on third sector organizations in the delivery of social services.

Recommendation 3: Financial support through micro-loans and small grants

Consequently, access to finance emerges as one of the key points for an SSE organizations development sustainability and growth in different countries. The brief policies from different countries show that, the top three barriers for organizations all relate to financial issues. More specifically obtaining finance is an important factor, cash flow and liquidity also important factor and finally obtaining grants.

Recommendation 4: Need for an enabling policy framework

MoreThanAJob case clearly makes evident that there is need for an enabling and inclusive policy framework for the SSE initiatives, in order to support and strengthen their activities. The SSE organizations vary in terms of their legal form and status. More specifically, only some of the organizations mapped have had a legal status and were registered in the Social Public Authorities PAs. On the other hand, the majority was either not registered in the PAs despite having a legal form or they did not even have a legal status or they were categorized as an informal entity. Therefore, there is need to adapt the policy framework and make it more enable and inclusive in order to strengthen the SSE eco-system.

Limitations

The above recommendations made, which are also related to the development and the application of the MoreThanAJob project, would possibly face a number of limitations related to their successful application. More specifically the obstacles that would arise could be related to the following:

- ✓ The scattered but rigid legislative framework
- ✓ The different legal forms among the SSE initiatives and organizations
- ✓ The exhausting bureaucratic processes within the Public Administration
- ✓ The absence of networking activities related to the absence of a shared platform
- ✓ The lack of a coordination mechanism for the implementation of policy initiatives

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