



Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Report of the Demonstrative Actions

MedTOWN project

**Co-production of social policies with social &
solidarity economy actors to fight poverty,
inequality and social exclusion.**

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About the project

MedTOWN is a transnational initiative to support the role and the capacities of the Social Solidarity Economy actors in fighting poverty, inequality, social exclusion and environmental unsustainability in close cooperation with the local public authorities, the local communities and the local economic operators.

MedTOWN is a social innovation project based on the research and experimentation of a SSE based co-production model with the use of electronic public currencies for the provision of social services and financial aid to the most vulnerable groups in order to increase the socio-economic impacts and effectiveness of public policies and expenditures at local level. The overall aim is to promote a sustainable inclusive growth model that will transform public services from unilateral providers to facilitators of more democratic participatory communities.

MedTOWN is a project implemented by 9 partners from 6 EU and non-EU Mediterranean countries (Spain, Greece, Portugal, Palestine, Tunisia and Jordan) and 9 strategic associate partners. The project has a budget of 3.4 million euros, financed by the EU by 86,5% through the European Neighbourhood Instrument within the Cross Border Cooperation Programme "Mediterranean Basin" – ENI CBC MED 2014-2020 and by 13,5% by own contributions of the project partners.

The 2014-2020 ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The Programme objective is to foster fair, equitable and sustainable economic, social and territorial development, which may advance cross-border integration and valorise participating countries' territories and values. The following 13 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, and Tunisia. The Managing Authority (MA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French. For more information, please visit: www.enicbcmed.eu.

The European Union is made up of 27 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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ACRONYMS

ACPP - Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz

AECID – Spanish Cooperation for Development Agency

AFD – French Development Agency

AICS – Italian Cooperation for Development Agency

CEPES – Spanish Confederation of Social Economy

CIRIEC - International Centre of Research and Information on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy

CRESSes - Regional Chambers of SSE (from its original in French)

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

DA- Demonstrative Action

DAC - Development Assistance Committee

EMES - European Research Network on Social Enterprises

ENI-CBC Med - European Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation for Mediterranean Sea Basin

EQA - Environmental Quality Authority

ESMED -Euro Mediterranean Network of Social Economy

EU – European Union

GDA – Agricultural Development Groups (from its original French: Groupements de Développement Agricole)

GSEF - Global Social Economy Forum

lesMED - Innovation & Social Economy in Mediterranean

ILC – International Labour Conference

ILO – International Labour Organisation

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JFC - Junta de Freguesia de Campolide

JOHUD - The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development

MoSD – Ministry of Social Development

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PARC - Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee

PHG - Palestinian Hydrology Group

PWD – Palestinian Water Department

QR - Quick-response Code

REMESS o RMESS – Moroccan Network of SSE

REVES – Network of Regions, Provinces and Municipalities for the Social Economy

RIPES - Intercontinental network for the promotion of social solidarity economy

SE – Social Economy

SEAP – Social Economy Action Plan

SRDEII -Regional Economic Development, Innovation and Internationalisation Scheme (from its original in French)

SSE- Social and Solidarity Economy

SSEO - Social and Solidarity Economy Organisation

TCSE- Tunisian Center for Social Entrepreneurship

UFM-Union for the Mediterranean

UGTT - Tunisian General Labour Union

UN – United Nations

UNTFSSSE - United Nation Task Force for the SSE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The current evaluation aims to offer a regional perspective on the MedTOWN project, providing an overall assessment of its achievements, learnings, and findings. It synthesizes research and evaluation conducted by a team of local experts. The evaluation addresses both summative and formative aspects, examining whether the project achieved its goal of demonstrating the value of co-producing public policies with Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors. The assessment also aims to provide valuable insights for project actors and stakeholders, emphasizing the interconnected nature of summative and formative dimensions.

Project background

MedTOWN, funded by the European Union under the European Neighborhood Instrument, is a cooperation project focusing on co-producing social policies through collaboration among public, private, and social solidarity economy (SSE) entities. The project aims to enhance the role and capacities of SSE actors through a shared Community of Practice and improved regulatory frameworks. MedTOWN seeks to harness the collective potential of SSE agents, citizens, and local authorities to co-produce social policies addressing poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and environmental issues in Mediterranean riparian countries. The initiative provides tools and connections to build local resilience and promote the transition to fair, resilient, and sustainable societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Action Research is employed to support the design of effective public policies, implementing experimental co-production actions as both service delivery enhancements and test-monitoring for policy design. It was implemented in six countries in the Mediterranean: Jordan, Palestine Territories, Greece, Tunisia, Spain and Portugal.

Evaluation process and methodology

The methodology employed in the research involves triangulating various data sources, including primary data from country-level analyses and secondary data from regional and individual country sources. The approach also incorporates first and observations, interactions with national experts, and engagement with project stakeholders. A general evaluation framework was established in July 2022, focusing on criteria from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development

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Assistance Committee (DAC) and key components related to the objectives of the MedTOWN project. Evaluators were given the flexibility to adapt criteria but were required to explain choices. Country-level evaluation frameworks were to be submitted late, impacting the baseline report deadline of March-April 2023 and the final report deadline of August 15, 2023.

Key findings

Relevance

1. **The MedTOWN project has managed to design and implement a highly relevant set of Demonstrative Actions.** Besides this main finding, others are mentioned:
 - a. **All national reports analysed conclude that relevance is high** and that efforts to maintain or increase such relevance bore fruit, with continuous monitoring and/or meeting with different stakeholders.
 - b. **This high relevance has been accompanied at the regional level by a series of milestones signalling a growing interest by national, regional or international actors** in favour of the Social and Solidarity Economy and calling to increase efforts to collaborate on behalf of public actors.
 - c. **There is a difference in relation to the policy/legal relevance of the concept of co-production.** Co-production seems to have less presence as a concept in these territories despite growing references and policy practices.
 - d. **Despite the high relevance demonstrated by policy documents, meetings and statements, effectiveness has been compromised in a series of projects.** As we will see later, some projects that have maintained a strong relevance, failed to implement one component or the majority of it, while in others such relevance was not sufficient to achieve all operational objectives.
 - e. **There has been a sustained effort to maintain relevance and engage different stakeholders.** Both elements are intimately related but they are even more important in a project about co-production.
 - f. **The learning nature of these DAs has facilitated the relevance across the lifespan of the projects, even in those where important obstacles affected the effectiveness.** This learning nature is reflected in the accent on awareness raising, increasing explicit knowledge, producing sufficient reports, etc.
 - g. **Strong alignment with important national priorities may facilitate relevance but also sustainability, as in the case of Jordan.**

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Coherence

2. **The MedTOWN project has managed to reach a high level of coherence, both internal and external.** External coherence has been strengthened with the connections with other key regional actors and internal coherence has also been a challenge due to COVID and other elements. Besides this main finding, others are mentioned:
 - a. **External coherence was strengthened by the collaboration with key regional actors** including one of them as sub-contractor (DIESIS). Moreover, the participation of the Lead Partner also as leader of the MedRISSE project increased the external coherence of the project.
 - b. **Internal coherence has been a constant challenge.** Regarding the internal coherence of MedTOWN, there were serious problems, which resulted in sub-optimal implementation for some of them (mainly Greece but also Tunisia for some extent). In relation to the internal coherence of the DAs, those analysing it (Portugal and Jordan) assess a high level of it.
 - c. **Internal coherence at the project level has been challenged by unexpected difficulties in achieving compliance by the different teams of the DAs.** Deadlines have been constantly missed, guidelines have not been followed, templates have been misused, etc.

Effectiveness

3. **The general assessment of the effectiveness of the MedTOWN project is low.** However, if we only take into consideration general objectives the assessment can be higher due to the high demonstrative and learning potential of those DAs having problems with their operational objectives. Besides this main finding, others are mentioned:
 - a. **The absence of two reports (Greece and Tunisia) and the problems encountered in Spain show that the DAs have had many difficulties in achieving their stated operational objectives.** However, the demonstrative ethos of a project aiming at testing innovative approaches entails a certain level of risk. Such risks are an indicator of the truly innovative nature of the project as well as the level of the problems addressed.
 - b. **In spite of this, all the problems encountered contributed to providing high-quality lessons by identifying key obstacles.**
 - c. **It is worth noting as a discharge that the context has abruptly changed since the design and submission of MedTOWN and such changes have affected some DAs more than others.** In trying to find a common thread in the failures, the obvious element would be the balance

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between how much the context worsened compared with the sensitivity/ambition of the issue at stake.

- d. **Complex projects aiming at culture or organizational change require more time.** Despite the initial duration of the project of four years, COVID actually halved that lifespan. Thus, time can be identified as a key obstacle.

Factors supporting or hindering the achievement of results

- **Enhanced stakeholder engagement and collaboration is key.**
 - The most successful DAs point to a strong focus on stakeholders' engagement and collaboration at all stages (design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation).
- **Coordination Challenges:**
 - Coordination among stakeholders and within them (in the case of complex actors such as public administrations) is a challenge.
- **Systemic View and Project Orientation favour the achievement of results and their absence hinders them,**
- **The capacity to adapt both to innovative methodologies or technological Adaptation.**

Efficiency

4. **The MedTOWN project overcame many implementing hurdles to achieve a medium to medium-high level of efficiency.** It has reached a reasonable level of efficiency concerning the utilization of resources and the generation of desired outputs but is hindered by some obstacles concerning operational objectives. Besides this main finding, others are mentioned:
 - a. **Despite the problems with the implementation, the efficiency in the management of the resources is high.** However, there are key elements that have hindered the efficiency both at the level of the global project and at the DA level.
 - b. **Efficiency gains of the Social Innovations implemented have been demonstrated in many cases despite difficulties in assessing them.**
 - c. **DAs' assessments point to an important dimension in the area of added value for stakeholders.**
 - d. **However, there is room for improvement efficiency, especially for SSE.** Some DAs point out elements which could foster such efficiency gains as more awareness-raising actions to increase the engagement of citizens (Palestine) improving the capacity of SSE to engage in policy advocacy (Spain and Jordan).

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Impact

5. **The impact of the MedTOWN project is assessed as significant.** Although some DAs' assessments point to a medium or medium-low level of impact the global higher-level effects of the demonstrative dimension of the project could be considered to compensate a bit for the problems related to implementation and effectiveness of the operational objectives. Besides this main finding, others are mentioned:
 - a. **Attaining elevated higher-level effects in some DAs has been challenging; however, the compensatory factor lies in the demonstrative impact.** While Jordan and Portugal show high levels of impact, others such as Spain or Palestine show lower levels. However, despite setbacks in implementation, there have been other levels of impact (learning, digital literacy, awareness, etc.)
 - b. **A strong focus on citizen engagement seems to favour a higher level of impact.**
 - c. **There is also impact beyond the main issues of co-production and SSE.** The DAs were also sort of pilot projects and in that sense, they have tested several hypotheses beyond co-production and the role of SSE (the role of new technologies, the efficiency gains of circular economy, the feasibility of time banks, etc.).
 - d. **In some cases, the impact has been reinforced by the pilot projects accompanying the DAs.**
 - e. **Collaborative Initiatives can reinforce the impact.** Collaborative initiatives and guides for replicability have been positively assessed as a tool for impact.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the less positive assessment of all the criteria in the MedTOWN project but it varies ostensibly among DAs. Two of the Demonstrative Actions (DAs) register a sustainability assessment in the low or medium-low range, whereas Jordan's evaluation rates it as high. Portugal's report states that the continuation of the different stakeholders to be involved in the process beyond the end of the ENI-CBC Med funding varies according to category (citizens, politicians, civil servants and SSE organisations). As for the sustainability of the outputs and outcomes achieved at the regional project, the assessment is slightly positive because of the focus on producing explicit knowledge and other intangible assets, as well as the demonstrated willingness by some partners to use them to replicate or foster further learning.

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Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

Financial sustainability seems to be a key element in assessing the continuation of the effects of the new services being created. Many DAs point out that financial commitments on behalf of public authorities are not guaranteed.

The threats to sustainability posed by a lack of financial commitments need to be contextualised. Public spending varies significantly across the countries involved in the MedTOWN project, and this affects the perceived role of international funds that do not come directly from national budgets. The difference in public spending can also impact how certain aspects of new projects are seen as sustainable.

Views on sustainability may differ if the focus changes towards the demonstrative nature of the project. The main general objective of MedTOWN was not to implement new social services to be maintained through time. Innovations take time to be transferred to mainstream policies. Despite the success of a new service and the confirmation of its impact and benefits by stakeholders, sustainability remains susceptible to various threats.

Sustainability is favoured by increasing ecosystem capabilities. Such capabilities can be more tangible (such as a new budget line or programme on co-production or SSE, a building or a truck) or less tangible such as those enhancing the capacity of key actors both in terms of intangible assets (knowledge, liaisons, visibility, social capital, etc).

Summary of policy recommendations

Two types of recommendations are proposed: policy ones (with the specific aim of presenting them under an operationalised form) and other recommendations aimed at key actors in the context of co-production.

Policy recommendations

1. There is a general agreement among reports **to request an improvement of the legal frameworks.** Both pillars (Co-production and SSE) of the MedTOWN project have faced inadequacies or deficits in the analysis of national legal frameworks, which call for specific action.
 - a. **Regarding SSE and despite the last decade's improvements, there is a need to further develop the legal frameworks** either by drafting and approving SSE framework laws or laws addressing a specific component

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such as cooperatives, social enterprises or either exclusively social or solidarity economy.

- b. **There are other elements to be taken into consideration in policy development.** For example: the relationship to Secondary or Implementing Legislation, whether it is addressed within the law (like in the case of France's SSE law of 2014) or in decrees of application and/or development of the law (such as in Ecuador in 2011). Other aspects to consider are the legal forms, the inclusion/recognition of the SSE in the rest of public policies, etc.
 - c. **An improvement of the policy framework is also a recommendation which can either precede or follow the drafting of SSE framework laws.**
 - d. **To increase both: funds and time dedicated to this legal framework improvement.** More funds would help, however, from the analysis emerges that such an increase would benefit from a more strategic approach with programme-like initiatives, increased institutional recognition within the European Commission departments and bodies active in the area and an improved design using the clear-cut definitions included in the SEAP and the UN and ILO resolutions.
2. **Concerning co-production, there is also room to either develop non-existing laws on co-production or to improve the legal framework promoting civic engagement and public-private partnership with the SSE.**
 3. **Regarding finance, different lines of action must be developed:** on the one side, mobilization of resources tailored to different stages of both SSE enterprises and co-production initiatives; on the other improving the sustainability of specific policies, projects and programmes by including tailored guidelines to this sense.
 - a. **Further resources need to be dedicated to the different stages of development of SSE organisations:** pre-seed, start-up, growth (either in size or in scope, i.e., in the range of activities or target groups), etc. Also, it would be interesting to include specific funds for certain dimensions such as innovation or internationalisation.
 - b. **Specific funds should be allocated to sustain innovative actions in the field of co-production and concrete measures should be included in such innovative actions to ameliorate their sustainability.**
 4. **Initiatives in which the role of public actors does not involve budgetary commitments should be promoted.**
 5. **Policy aiming at building social capital through networks, platforms and partnerships should be promoted.**
 6. **A final and cross-cutting policy recommendation: to foster internationalisation policies aiming at both SSE and co-production.**



Recommendations transcending mere policy

The above-mentioned recommendations do have elements or lines of action that transcend policy. For example, innovative actions could and should be designed by SSE organisations. However, in the following set of recommendations, the idea is to transcend policy and highlight agency and the assumption of responsibilities. For this reason, a differentiation is established. But, as it will be noticed, all these recommendations require or would greatly benefit from specific policies.

7. **SSE should improve its capabilities in key areas to foster its role in co-production.** The main area should be its capacity to participate in all stages of policy. One specific strategy to address this recommendation could be to improve the embeddedness of SSE with the most relevant social movements such as feminism or those fighting against the environmental crisis.
8. **Public actors also need to improve their capabilities to foster their role in co-production.** However, in this case, the required set of assets can differ at certain points due to peculiarities such as how the positive development of creating specific departments (in charge of SSE or Innovation) can result in a diminished sense of ownership on these matters by the whole government.
9. **In the area of technology, further efforts should be made at the pre-design and design stage regarding the feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency of new technology in Social Innovation, co-production and SSE-related projects.**
10. **In the case of researchers, they need to improve their capability to evaluate and monitor regional projects.**



INTRODUCTION

The present report tries to provide a regional view of the MedTOWN project. The main objective is to offer a general assessment of the achievements but also of the main learnings and findings of this ambitious project. This a synthesis of the research and evaluation effort carried out by several teams at the local level in 6 Mediterranean countries which means that readers are strongly encouraged to also read the country-level report to grasp a more complete picture.

The assessment intends to address the double nature of this evaluation process: summative and formative ones. In the first case, the assessment needs to evaluate whether the objective of demonstrating the value of co-producing public policies with the support of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) actors has been achieved and if so, to what extent. In the second case, the evaluation should provide relevant learnings for the actors involved in the project and for the different stakeholders at large. Each dimension (summative and formative) is closely related to the other.

The report is structured in three parts: a concise review of the methodology, an analysis of the main findings and conclusions based upon the inputs from the different reports on the national Demonstrative Actions (DA) and other primary and secondary sources, and a chapter on lessons learned and policy recommendations.

Brief description of the MedTOWN Project

MedTOWN is a cooperation project financed by the European Union through the European Neighborhood Instrument of Cross-Border Cooperation within the framework of the Mediterranean Basin 2014-2020 Programme. The main objective of the project is to promote and demonstrate initiatives for the co-production of social policies through the cooperation of the public, private and social solidarity economy (SSE) sectors as well as to strengthen the role and the capacities of the SSE actors in the co-production model through a shared Community of Practice and a better-regulated framework.

MedTOWN is an initiative focused on the combined potential of agents of the social and solidarity economy (SSE), citizenship and local authorities to co-produce the social policies that can fight poverty, inequality, social exclusion and environmental unsustainability in the riparian countries of the Mediterranean basin, providing them with tools and connections to help them build local resilience and foster their transition towards becoming more fair, resilient and sustainable societies in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

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The initiative is based on Action Research to support the design of effective public policies on the provision of social services. To that effect, a series of experimental actions deploying a co-production model have been undertaken and have attempted to serve both as effective modalities to increase the effectiveness of social services delivery during the project and as test-monitoring of results for policy design.

Brief Description of the five different Demonstrative Actions

JORDAN

The Demonstrative Action "DA" in Jordan has demonstrated a public-private partnership that utilizes co-production and Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) approaches to create tailored social services for the most vulnerable groups. The primary goal is to empower these groups to become social entrepreneurs who can positively impact their communities.

The DA has two key objectives: empowering vulnerable groups to establish prosperous businesses and removing obstacles hindering access to fundamental services. This has been achieved through an innovative business incubator that offers training and resources, promoting self-reliance and addressing daily challenges.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, JOHUD is implementing the MedTOWN demonstrative action in Koura and Mazar districts in the northern Jordan region. The Social Business Incubator, hosted by MoSD and operated by JOHUD, focuses on training and supporting marginalized youth, particularly women, Syrian refugees, and individuals with disabilities.

The incubator acts as a bridge, connecting vulnerable groups with decision-makers and business leaders. It empowers participants to acquire entrepreneurial skills, establish sustainable businesses, and fosters a culture of entrepreneurship. By addressing socio-economic disparities, it offers equitable access to opportunities and encourages the establishment of new businesses, creating employment opportunities, as well as providing social services to vulnerable communities in the targeted areas.

The incubator serves as a collaborative platform, facilitating partnerships among various stakeholders and narrowing the gap between marginalized groups and decision-makers. Through successful social business ventures, it provides viable models for addressing local challenges.

The DA has promoted social justice, empowered marginalized individuals to engage in economic activities, and contributed to local economic growth by nurturing innovative

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entrepreneurs. It encourages innovative solutions and networks of support, ultimately creating a sustainable ecosystem for business development.

The incubator assesses its impact through monitoring and evaluation, tracking metrics like the number of established businesses, job creation, income generation, and overall socio-economic improvements in the target districts.

PALESTINE

Within this framework, MedTOWN piloted a demonstrative action (DA) in the village of Beitillu in Palestine in partnership with the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC), a Palestinian NGOs.

Beitillu –home to around 4500 residents- is located 19 Km north-west of Ramallah city, and closest neighbouring villages are Deir Ammar and the refugee camp to the south-west and Jammala, which is just 2 Km to the west. The three villages were merged in 2015 under a single municipality called “Al-Itihad”. However, in 2017, this municipal arrangement was dismantled, and the three villages reverted to their separate administrative entities.

Waste collection and transportation in Beitillu is organized and managed by the Village Council of Beitillu, which before the DA used to also manage solid waste collection and transport from the neighbouring villages of Jammala and Deir Ammar. At that time, primary collection (from houses to neighbourhood containers) was carried out using a 12m³ compactor truck on leased from the Joint Service Council for Solid Waste Management in the Governorate of Ramallah and Al Bireh (JSC). The collected waste was then transferred to a landfill in which disposal occurs (from containers to landfill – secondary collection). The landfill is located in the north area of Beitillu, and it covers an area of 35 dunums (3.5 hectares) and is one of 53 uncontrolled, non-sanitary dumpsites in Ramallah Governorate, where waste burning is the primary method for waste management.

The DA builds on support Beitillu village council received from the House of Water and Environment, a Palestinian NGO, to establish a compost production facility, centred on the collection of organic waste from the restaurants located in the nearby city of Ramallah, and facilitated through a partnership between the Municipality of Ramallah, the Beitillu Village Council, and the House of Water and Environment.

The DA is a pilot co-production model that relies on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) principles to test and promote a socially responsible and environmentally friendly public-private partnership to provide Beitillu Village residents with efficient solid waste collection and recycling service on the basis of a circular economy model. This was done

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through a new system of solid waste collection and management, leveraging best practices in this field, where the DA provided support to the Beitillu Village Council to procure a compactor truck as an incentive to promote solid waste separation at source and launch a waste recycling venture in partnership with the residents and community-based organisations in the village.

The new system is designed around a joint-venture model between the Beitillu Village Council and Beitillu and Deir Ammar Agricultural Cooperative Association, where both parties worked together to transform the solid waste collection service into an economically viable and environmentally friendly service through a system of incentives for separation of organic waste at source, initially targeting 100 of the 1300 households and businesses in the village, to enable recycling of organic waste into compost.

The DA involved the adaptation of a MedTOWN developed mobile application called (Clickoin) to enable the Beitillu Village Council to monitor, both, the process of the waste collection, and the quality separation process at the source (by households), while also enabling participating households to monitor –through their accounts on the application- the quantity and the quality (based on a 3-point system) of organic waste that has been collected from their bins in real-time. The premise of using this point system is that households can exchange their collected points for credit with the village council, which they can use to get exemptions from paying waste collection fees and/or to receive discounts on purchases of compost produced by the village council and cooperative association’s joint venture.

The DA was enhanced by the implementation of four pilot projects in collaboration with community-based organizations in Beitillu. These projects aimed to promote models of social solidarity economy within the village, focusing on activities such as recycling, income generation, environmental protection, waste management, addressing climate change in the context of social and solidarity economy (SSE), and engaging in lobbying and advocacy efforts. The implementation of these projects was carried out in partnership with the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) and the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC).

The decision to target Beitillu village was made after the initially selected village of Bani Zaid al-Gharbia declined participation in the DA.

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PORTUGAL

The Portuguese Demonstrative Action (DA), an innovative initiative unfolding in the "Bela Flor" neighborhood and the Parish of Campolide in Lisbon, Portugal, encapsulates a multifaceted approach to community development and sustainable living. This action, grounded in the principles of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), has been strategically developed around four key pillars: the Agroforest of Bela Flor, the Time Bank of Campolide, the Community Room, and the Community Group. Each pillar, while distinct in its function and objectives, interconnects with the others, creating a cohesive and integrated model for community empowerment and sustainable development.

Initially, the DA was conceptualized with two primary components. The first, the Agroforest of Bela Flor, focused on transforming a neglected public space into a vibrant, shared community area. This transformation was achieved through collaborative efforts between local residents, the parish government, and a mix of public and private institutions, including schools, NGOs, and senior universities. The primary aim was to cultivate a space for healthy and sustainable food production, fostering new communal knowledge and environmentally resilient practices. This endeavor not only revitalized the area but also established a community group, serving as an informal political platform to synergize local participation with institutional partnerships.

The second component, the Time Bank of Campolide, aimed to valorize local skills, talents, and knowledge by converting them into community assets. This innovative system used time as a unit of account and exchange, equalizing all forms of service and contribution. This initiative directly addressed local needs, particularly those unmet by the market, thereby combating poverty, social exclusion, and inequality. It also created a symbiotic relationship with the Agroforest, where time invested in agricultural activities could be exchanged for diverse services within the Time Bank.

As the project evolved, two additional pillars emerged. The Community Room, initially an adjunct to the Agroforest, developed into an autonomous entity driven by community demand. It became a hub for various activities, including study support, leisure activities for children, and a sewing workshop, addressing crucial needs in the neighborhood.

The final pillar, the Community Group, expanded beyond its initial scope within the Agroforest. It evolved into a central forum for identifying and addressing neighborhood issues, fostering debate, and co-creating community solutions. This group exemplified advanced public policy co-production, involving community members, local government representatives, and SSE organizations.

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SPAIN

The institutional proposal of a Local Public Currency linked to the improvement of the redistribution of the disposable income of people with minimum resources, began in 2016 with the tendering of a minor contract by the City Council of Seville, for a "Feasibility Study" for this concept. The chosen location was the Cerro-Amate neighbourhood, one of the lowest-income areas in Spain, where there was also a great demand for social aid in cash and in kind. This aid in the form of different types of benefits is provided by the Social Welfare Department of Seville City Council. This feasibility study was carried out by La Transicionera. This entity has been part of MedTOWN as a Local Trainer and at this moment as a Local Researcher, having information and knowledge of the whole process with the Seville City Council, as well as expertise on complementary, local and social currencies.

The mentioned study examined the administrative, legal, social, institutional, and technological feasibility of a particular proposal, drawing inspiration from ongoing projects elsewhere. Notably, it took cues from similar initiatives, especially the Ossetana currency in San Juan de Aznalfarache, a municipality near Seville. Implemented through the organization Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz (ACPP), this system facilitates the disbursement of social assistance to low-income individuals. The assistance is usable within a local trade network through the Ossetana local currency.

The progression of the feasibility report for a local currency pilot project by the Seville City Council explored various options, including public service contracting, lot tendering, and direct subsidy. However, none of these options materialized, primarily due to two reasons. Firstly, the challenging nature of modifying administrative processes and procedures within the Social Welfare Department proved a significant obstacle. Secondly, the proposal for aid and subsidy distribution through a relatively unknown tool faced resistance due to its novelty. At that time, the City Council had limited awareness of such initiatives, with only a few examples like Ossetana, REC in Barcelona, and La Grama in Santa Coloma de Gramenet available for reference.

In this context, the MedTOWN project, promoted by ACPP—the same organization that initiated the San Juan Ossetana currency—was considered a viable opportunity to launch a pilot project for the implementation of a local public currency. The City Council was envisioned as a participating entity, with the MedTOWN project providing financial, technical, and social support.

However, this proposal encountered unsurmountable obstacles and a commercial currency was proposed as an alternative. The commercial currency was designed as a euro-backed currency in which any natural or legal person can exchange euros for the currency

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itself, which could be used in the commercial establishments and professional services attached to the programme.

In the end, neither of the two complementary currency proposals, the local public one associated with social services, and the commercial one, could be implemented, although all the necessary legal, technological, administrative and economic elements have been developed. As a result, the DAs focused on developing further the demonstrative dimension by analysing key learning elements and paths for replication elsewhere.

TUNISIA

Through the demonstrative action in Tunisia, the Tunisian Center for Social Entrepreneurship (TCSE) is leading three main activities to advance women's economic conditions. Whether it is entrepreneurial support, putting together a female force studio or celebrating access to public spaces, TCSE is committed to creating social change.

As the Tunisian partner for the MedTOWN project, TCSE designed and implemented the demonstrative action with a focus on providing social services of interest to female entrepreneurs and workers to equip them with the tools and skills that can ensure their financial autonomy and their involvement in the public sphere, both on the individual and collective level. The Overall objective of the demonstrative action is to democratize women's access to economic knowledge and to ensure their economic emancipation.

To this end, TCSE has focused on enhancing the beneficiaries' entrepreneurial skills, enabling them to have better access to markets as well as public spaces and improving their digital skills.

Support services, empowering socially innovative female entrepreneurs and collectives

19 female entrepreneurs and beneficiaries from 3 cooperatives have been receiving entrepreneurial support since November of 2022. Based on a thorough needs assessment, the beneficiaries are receiving tailored opportunities through the project. From crafts to fashion to heritage, socially innovative female entrepreneurs are benefiting from coaching in business development, consultancies and visibility opportunities enabling them to achieve more and better for their businesses.

Socially driven cooperatives are being supported by TCSE to improve their inner workings as well as their impact. Idayet, a domestic workers' cooperative, Lella Kmar cooperative and GDA Kounouz Ben Arous, both food heritage-focused projects are being coached and assisted to add more value to Tunisian culinary heritage.

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The Female Force Studio, synergies among social and solidarity economy actors

In its initial design the demonstrative action in Tunisia set out to improve access to public spaces for female entrepreneurs and workers, mainly through a 'Female Force Studio' where women can learn new skills, work, market their products/services, inspire other women and advocate for better economic rights. In order to do so, TCSE has always sought to build a multi-stakeholder synergy to advance the Social and Solidarity Economy as well as female Entrepreneurship in Tunisia. A partnership process with the Municipality of Tunis was initiated and has resulted in the signing of an agreement of collaboration to improve a public space in the Medina of Tunis - Dar Ben Achour. The Tunisian political context presented challenges to the project, namely the dissolving municipal councils on the 8th of March 2023 which hindered the signature of the public space agreement, yet several efforts were taken to mitigate this risk by expanding the 'Female Force Studio' into a 'Female Force Cluster'. Through this cluster, impactful actors including Collectif Créatif and Mdinti, both culture-driven organizations located in the Medina will continue to support the female entrepreneurs and workers of the MedTOWN project.

Lingare festival, celebrating access to public places

On the 27th of May, TCSE organized The Lingare Festival which has welcomed over 450 visitors within the span of one day, featuring 17 social innovation initiatives, including 2 women-led cooperatives and 15 social entrepreneurs, with a majority of female entrepreneurs, which are. Participants took part in 17 workshops and SSE-themed guided tours, following 4 different stations: Co-creation & Inspiration, Gamification, Conscious consumption, and Co-Production; which were organized in a number of historical public spaces and other collaborative ones, led by local SSE-social and solidarity economy actors: Dar ben Achour, Dar el Collectif, La Rachidia, Dar el Sanaa and Dar el Harka. The event is covered in more detail in the following festival's digital booklet. The festival was also covered by one of the most prominent digital media in Tunisia, Faza, resulting in 6,300 views and 175 post engagements, on the event coverage.

Beneficiaries of the MedTOWN projects, at the front centre of the festival, were able to build partnerships and showcase their businesses through a hands-on approach in one station after the other.

GREECE

The Demonstrative Action in Paggaiio, Greece, represents a structured effort to address poverty, inequality, and social exclusion in the region. Initiated in late December 2021

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and transitioning into its execution phase by April 2022, this project focuses on refining job matching strategies through the localization and co-production with key local stakeholders, both public and private.

At its essence, the Demonstrative Action aims to revolutionize the traditional approach of the employment office by fostering closer collaboration with local authorities, social economy entities, and the community. This strategy is designed to ensure that job matching processes are more closely aligned with the specific socio-economic context of Paggaio and the needs of its residents.

A significant aspect of the project is its focus on integrating a diverse range of vulnerable groups into the labor market. This includes older individuals nearing retirement, people with disabilities, and those who have experienced long-term unemployment. The project leverages the expertise of the Community Centre of Paggaio and labor advisors from DYPA to provide personalized support to these individuals, thereby enhancing their employment opportunities and ensuring a better match between job seekers and available positions.

The utilization of funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, initiated in December 2022, has enabled the project to capitalize on new financial mechanisms, thereby bolstering its objectives. This strategic allocation of resources has been vital in creating job opportunities and enhancing the impact of the employment office's job matching strategies.

One of the project's notable achievements is the successful placement of 23 individuals in full-time employment, illustrating the practical effectiveness of the revamped job matching approach. This success not only meets the immediate goals of the Demonstrative Action but also contributes to the overarching aim of building a more inclusive society.

The project's future integration into the Municipal Operation Programme for 2024-2028 by the Municipality of Paggaio, along with its policy inclusion in the Community Centre's agenda for 2021-2027, demonstrates a commitment to the sustainable impact of these enhanced job matching strategies. These steps ensure the continued evolution and application of these methods to benefit the community.

Furthermore, the project's exploration of a Digital Social Wallet system as an alternative economic model represents its innovative and adaptive approach. The success of this pilot in forecasting economic and employment benefits highlights the potential for such models to be adapted and applied in different contexts.

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Objectives

Most DAs adhered to the overarching objectives of the project, concentrating on testing or promoting co-production practices within SSE while tackling one or two specific issues, such as waste management or the allocation of social benefits. Portuguese's DA provided an elaborated combo where the addressed problems were a long list of social illnesses: "respond to basic needs, to contribute to fight against poverty, social exclusion and inequalities and to develop a more sustainable and resilient community in several dimensions (environmental, economic, social, cultural, cognitive and political)" and "to foster a greater social and political awareness, as well as public investment, in the Social and Solidarity Economy (...) specifically in deprived urban areas".

Concerning operational objectives, the focus was on enhancing specific aspects of the service, ranging from establishing multi-stakeholder partnerships to address waste management and composting services to integrating elements of social and economic innovation through the use of e-currency technologies.

Assessment regarding objectives:

The vast majority of research teams had problems elucidating their general and operational objectives in line with the demonstrative aims of the MEDTOWN project. This points to a capacity deficit in relation to research.

Location of the initiatives

It is important to notice that the majority of DAs were addressing big cities or smaller sections of big cities (such as neighbourhoods or *freguesias*¹). But there were also two projects with a focus on smaller villages (Palestine) or rural areas (Jordan).

Targeted social service to be improved:

In the different DAs, a range of services is identified, often posing challenges in their precise delineation. This challenge emanates from the innovative nature of the project and the complex nature of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), allowing for the simultaneous pursuit of multiple objectives. Consequently, to address this issue, a

¹ *Freguesia* is the third-level administrative subdivision of Portugal



taxonomy outlined in the general framework for evaluation was proposed. This taxonomy is derived from a guide² tailored for mayors, city council members, and officials.

The guide identifies twelve different categories:

1. Support the creation of businesses, activities and jobs
2. Protecting the environment and enhancing the heritage
3. Support agriculture and encourage the organisation of short circuits
4. Promote responsible trade and tourism
5. Controlling energy and moving differently
6. Social and professional integration
7. Combating poverty
8. Promoting access to housing
9. Promoting the development of sports for all
10. Facilitate access to culture for all
11. Develop personal services: promote access to care and personalised support
12. Encourage citizen participation and community life.

Two main types of public services are targeted. In this case, two of the DAs have targeted the first one "Support the creation of businesses, activities and jobs", as in the case of Jordan and Tunisia, while at the same time also addressing other elements such as "Combating poverty" or "Social and professional integration" of women. Also, two of the DAs targeted one type of service: "Protecting the environment and enhancing the heritage", in this case, Palestine and Portugal. However, in the case of Portugal, it was also (and probably the main goal) "Encourage citizen participation and community life". Finally, only one (Spain) seems to target just one service: "Combating poverty". Thus, we have:

- Two DAs addressing "Support the creation of businesses, activities and jobs" as main targets.

² Guide de l'Economie Sociale et Solidaire A l'usage des maires, des élus locaux et de leurs services.
Available at : <http://www.recma.org/actualite/guide-de-less-lusage-des-elus-territoriaux-par-le-college-cooperatif-provence-alpes>



- Two DAs addressing “Protecting the environment and enhancing the heritage” but only one as the main target.
- Two DAs addressing “Combating poverty” but only one as the main target.
- One DA addressing mainly “Encourage citizen participation and community life”

Assessment regarding social services targeted:

The prominence of services linked to entrepreneurship is in line with a project whose one of its main pillars is SSE. Besides this it is also interesting to highlight how the prominence of environmental services is being targeted. Finally, most DAs also had a special focus on women, and two of them also on Youth (Jordan and Portugal).

Collaborative public authority:

Most DAs collaborated with a Municipal/Submunicipal type of public authority.

Only in the case of Jordan, the collaborative public authority was a Ministry).

Collaborative public authorities:

- Seville City Council. Department of Social Welfare and Employment, (Spain)
- Junta de Freguesia de Campolide (Parish government) Câmara Municipal de Lisboa (Lisbon City Council) (Portugal)
- Beitillu Village Council (Palestine)
- Municipality of Tunis (Tunisia)
- Municipality of Paggaios (Greece)
- Ministry of Social Development (Jordan)

Target groups:

The main target groups of the DAs were:

- Unemployed, low-income families, local businesses, commercial fabric (Spain).
- Long term unemployed people, older individuals nearing retirement, residents of social housing neighbourhoods, children and adolescents of the Bela Flor

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neighbourhood as the primary targets and the population of the Parish of Campolide (Portugal).

- Beitillu residents (Palestine).
- Vulnerable groups in Koura and Mazar Districts with limited socio-economic opportunities, mainly people with disabilities, women and Syrian refugees (Jordan).
- Groups of women (including cooperatives) and individual socially innovative female entrepreneurs (Tunisia).

Besides the two DAs that targeted the general population in the territory, the rest had a more specific vulnerable group within that population.

Assessment regarding target groups:

Maybe the nature of the main social service addressed (environmental services in Portugal and Palestine vs female/youth social entrepreneurs, for instance) drove the decision to target the whole population in those two territories.

Besides these target groups, as might have been expected in co-production projects, there were also secondary targets: either public actors and/or SSE organisations. Also, some DAs targeted other private actors such as Spain (Small businesses) or Jordan (Local and national private sector actors and chambers of industry and trade).

Finally, Jordan specifically mentions other types such as academia and research centres or Local and national media.

Direct beneficiaries/participants:

A significant number of beneficiaries has been reached. The number of direct beneficiaries/participants was affected by the difficulties in fully implementing the social currency in Spain but has reached more than 850 in the other four DAs (excluding Greece for which there is very limited data). The expected number of direct beneficiaries for Spain was 300 for the social e-currency and between 15.000 to 60.000 in the case of the commercial e-currency.

Indirect beneficiaries:

The number of indirect beneficiaries surpassed 6200 (again excluding Greece and Spain). The expected indirect beneficiaries for Spain were the social services and the commercial fabric in the targeted neighbourhoods (without a calculation of how many



individuals could have been benefitting indirectly from the two types of currencies proposed).

Assessment regarding beneficiaries

The differences in the number of beneficiaries among projects seem to come from the different types of services proposed. Thus, it is not the same to propose a targeted service for potential social entrepreneurs as trying to implement a new type of waste management for a whole village.

Relevant issues regarding implementation of the different Demonstrative Actions

This report is based on the analysis of four DAs' final reports. Greece and Tunisia's teams were not able to submit on time their reports. In the case of Tunisia, some information and intermediary reports were submitted on time. However, some findings, conclusions, lessons learned and policy recommendations do include input from those two countries arising from desk research, direct observations and exchanges with the local experts.



Evaluation process and methodology

The presented methodology is predicated upon the triangulation of diverse data sources. Initial insights are derived from primary data obtained through country-level analyses, supplemented by corroborative secondary data originating from both regional and individual country sources. Additionally, the methodology incorporates firsthand observations, interactions with national experts (national evaluation teams), and with other stakeholders from the various project partners (including the lead partner: ACPP). This multifaceted approach aims to enhance the comprehensiveness and robustness of the data foundation underpinning the research effort.

A general evaluation framework was created in July 2022 to improve the ability to compare data and analysis from different country-level evaluations. The evaluation teams were asked to propose their own country-level frameworks based on the main guidelines provided in the general framework. These guidelines were focused on two main pillars:

- a) evaluation criteria proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC);



- b) and key "components" related to the objectives of the MedTOWN project, including the actor (SSE), the issue (targeted social policy), and two "how-tos" (social innovation and co-production).

While evaluators were free to adapt or exclude any criteria (not the "components"), they were required to explain their choices. To ensure consistency in the evaluations, the general framework includes definitions supported by relevant literature, localized to some extent by the operational definition of Social Economy in the Social Economy Action Plan of the European Commission and different country-level legal frameworks.

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Evaluation teams were also asked to produce their country-level monitoring and evaluation frameworks by mid-August.

Unexpectedly, the different teams took several months to finish the different country-level evaluation frameworks. Some cases did not submit their final drafts while others did so well after the deadline for submission of the baseline report: March-April 2023 (a belated deadline due to the delay in the local frameworks). Baseline reports were submitted also very late, with the final versions of many of them arriving with scarcely a month before the deadline for the final report (end of July 2023).

A hard deadline was set for the final report on August 15th 2023. This hard deadline was communicated in May 2023. Only two teams submitted their version in time and two of them (Greece and Tunisia) did not submit it at all.

Finally, given the problems with previous deliverables, a detailed template with instructions was issued for the final report. Even in this case, none of the reports followed all the instructions, some of them also excluded some sections or changed the order/structure.

Assessment regarding compliance of researchers

There seems to be a problem in meeting deadlines or following guidelines by local researchers or by local teams (researchers plus public and private actors implementing the project). This may be linked to several issues (may be the most important ones derived from the difficulties experienced by the project in general as a result of the COVID crisis or related issues) or to the general difficulty of coordinating research teams. However, it is worth considering that there may be some other elements. One of them may be the contested nature of some concepts that exacerbates the confrontation when local experts or contexts have a background which may differ from more consensual approaches such as the proposed Social and Solidary Economy one. In some cases, this, combined with the combative nature of some actors or the hostile local context, may lead to an excessive reticence to accept suggestions or follow guidelines.

Another element may be linked to the ambition of the project, which delays or hinders the implementation. These, in turn, affect the work of the different experts causing further delays (and it may leave less room to analyse or assume the proposed general framework).

Also, the nature of the projects. MedTOWN is proposing to address what can be called "wicked issues", i.e., issues where some or all the stakeholders do not fully agree on the nature of the problem. This situation may be producing a situation at the local level that hinders the work with frameworks which necessary need to overcome local resistances and therefore these local partnerships require extra effort and time to accept and follow regional guidelines and timetables.



Finally, it could be related to the absence of sufficient regional interaction in the areas of co-production and SSE. Such absence may affect the construction of a regional level of collaboration between research and public/private actors resulting in less capacity by local teams to fully understand the needs and constraints of regional interventions.

In the following section, the different findings from the six OECD/DAC criteria for evaluation will be presented.

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FINDINGS

In this section, the finding from all DAs will be summarized and enriched with other data sources, as mentioned in the methodology. The idea is to try to provide regional findings. However, when relevant, findings referring only to a group of countries (or even to only one but with sufficient importance and with potential regional scope) may be presented.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This analysis is based on the examination of only four Demonstrative Action (DA) reports. It is noteworthy that the reports from Greece and Tunisia had not been submitted at the commencement of the drafting of this regional report.

RELEVANCE

In all the criteria, a numerical assessment has been added. Such assessment is subjected and corresponds to the pondering analysis of the four different assessments of the different DAs.

Overall assessment of the criteria

The MedTOWN project has managed to design and implement a highly relevant set of Demonstrative Actions. The duet made by Co-production and Social and Solidarity Economy responds to the needs and priorities of all territories and it is increasing its relevance at regional and international levels.

Such an increase seems to be also significant at the country level in the four DAs analysed.

Numerical assessment (0-4): 3,875-High.

Detailed analysis

All national reports analysed conclude that relevance is high and that efforts to maintain or increase such relevance bore fruit, with continuous monitoring and/or meeting with different stakeholders. The four national reports also highlight various documents, policy initiatives, projects, and other indicators that underscore the high relevance of co-production and/or SSE in their respective countries and municipalities.



This high relevance has been accompanied at the regional level by a series of milestones signalling a growing interest by national, regional or international actors in favour of the Social and Solidarity Economy and calling to increase efforts to collaborate on behalf of public actors. Concerning the national level, Spain approved a five-year strategy and prepared a draft law to advance the policy framework of the Social Economy (2023), a training joint centre on Social Economy was inaugurated in Guarda (Portugal) by the corresponding labour ministries of Spain and Portugal. However, it is worth noticing that despite initial progress made in countries such as Tunisia (with the Law on SSE approved in 2020) and Jordan (with a draft law prepared back in 2022 by the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Digital Economy), there seems to be a setback according to some sources. For example, the recent evaluation of two EU projects aimed at supporting Social Entrepreneurship in Jordan stated that “the topic of social entrepreneurship has lost its momentum as a policy priority in Jordan” and in the case of Tunisia, an EU project aimed at fostering knowledge exchange in SSE was abruptly cancelled in early 2023. On the positive side, though, it is worth noting that efforts to amend and improve cooperative legislation in Jordan have been accelerated with the support of the ILO country office in the framework of a big project addressing decent work (the Prospects project)³. Worsening conditions in the region also affect policy priorities and it seems that SSE struggles to maintain a prominent position among such priorities.

Regarding the regional and international level, it is worth noting the continuous advancement in the EU after the Social Economy Action Plan was presented in 2019. Also, the 110th Labour Conference approved a resolution to support and promote SSE by all its country members in 2022. In addition, the UN recently approved its resolution “Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development” (A/RES/77/281). It encourages its member states, entities as well as other international organisations to support the social and solidarity economy. However, the recently approved EU action in the Southern Neighbourhood that replaced a previous one targeting Social Entrepreneurship, is more focused on Impact investment than promoting SSE in the region.

Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

There is a difference in relation to the policy/legal relevance of the concept of co-production. Co-production seems to have less presence as a concept in these territories though there may be many references to this approach and it has increased its relevance in policy practices as well as in literature. However, there is still a long way ahead to grasp all nuances of this complex approach both in private and public actors. The DA analysis

³ https://www.ilo.org/beirut/media-centre/news/WCMS_866814/lang--en/index.htm



in Palestine makes several references in this direction also. For this and other reasons, it may require more time to achieve changes in legal frameworks.

Despite the high relevance demonstrated by policy documents, meetings and statements, effectiveness has been compromised in a series of projects. As we will see later, some projects that have maintained a strong relevance, failed to implement one component or the majority of it, while in others such relevance was not sufficient to achieve all operational objectives. Some elements regarding this, such as the wicked nature of the problems, the administrative hurdles, the tension within public organisations, and the advocacy or policy design capacities of the SSE or the construction will be analysed later. At this point, it can be noted that ambitious, innovative projects often find eco-systemic obstacles despite their relevance.

There has been a sustained effort to maintain relevance and engage different stakeholders. Both elements are intimately related but it is even more important in a project about co-production. We will later see how citizens and public officials/policymakers are key in other criteria such as sustainability, effectiveness or impact.

The learning nature of these DAs has facilitated the relevance across the lifespan of the projects, even in those where important obstacles affected the effectiveness. This learning nature is reflected in the accent on awareness raising, increasing explicit knowledge, producing sufficient reports, etc. This nature can also be observed in the importance given to specific issues such as feasibility studies about the implementation of social currencies. It has also had an impact in both highlighting key areas that need to be addressed (for example technological adaptation) and in increasing the capacity of SSE actors to bring about policy change elsewhere (such as the cases in Spain, with transfers to Catalunya and Cantabria of similar experiences). There is a common emphasis on knowledge transfer and awareness as key project outcomes. All of these elements are also the result of an eco-systemic approach to solving wicked problems.

Strong alignment with important national priorities may facilitate relevance but also sustainability. Finally, in the Jordan project, its alignment with important national priorities has facilitated the relevance of the project and it seems to have had an impact on its sustainability.

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COHERENCE

Overall assessment of the criteria

The MedTOWN project has managed to reach a high level of coherence, both internal and external. External coherence has been strengthened with the connections with other key regional actors and internal coherence has also been a challenge due to COVID and other elements.

Numerical assessment (0-4): 3,7-High.

Detailed analysis

External coherence was strengthened by the collaboration with key regional actors such as lesMED (Innovation & Social Economy in Mediterranean⁴), CEPES (Spanish umbrella organisation for SE)/ESMED network (Euro Mediterranean Network of Social Economy), GSEF (Global Social Economy Forum), RIPESS (Intercontinental network for the promotion of social solidarity economy), etc. Also, the inclusion of DIESIS Network as a subcontractor and its collaboration improved external coherence. Moreover, the participation of the Lead Partner also as leader of the MedRISSE project increased the external coherence of the project.

Besides this, all DA analysis signals a high degree of external coherence (except for one report, which refused to analyse this criterion). However, some of them signal some room for improvement (Jordan).

Internal coherence has been a constant challenge. Regarding the internal coherence of MedTOWN, there were serious problems, which resulted in sub-optimal implementation for some of them (mainly Greece but also Tunisia to some extent). Maybe the main cause was the extra difficulties derived from the COVID crisis and the project leader and the partners had to make an effort to navigate through them. On top of that, efforts have been also made to address the difficulty of fully understanding the ambitious nature of the project aiming at testing a complex and ambitious hypothesis: the benefits of co-production with SSE to tackle the many social problems of the region. This also means understanding that some DAs may fail in implementing the foreseen social innovation, but such "operational" failures should not entail a failure of the project. On the one side, successes demonstrate that it is possible and failures demonstrate that it is not easy. On the other side, failures do provide a vast amount of assets to continue

⁴ Now out of business.



the predicament of co-production and SSE. Knowledge is the most obvious, but also awareness raising, or also self-awareness of key actors, along with growing “organisational empathy” (Barco Serrano 2012)⁵.

In relation to specific DAs, those analysing internal coherence (Portugal and Jordan) assess a high level of it although they mention that co-production and partnership imply more complexity and difficulties in guaranteeing such coherence (Jordan).

Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

Internal coherence at the project level has been challenged by unexpected difficulties in achieving compliance by the different teams of the DAs. Deadlines have been constantly missed, guidelines have not been followed, templates have been misused, etc. This is the case in both research and management activities. Compliance is key to achieving internal coherence in a regional project with very different backgrounds despite all of them showing a high degree of relevance, i.e., the objectives of the project are aligned with local needs and strategies. Data may not be sufficient to fully understand the causes but the main hypothesis besides external shocks (COVID) and the ambition/complexity of the project, may lie in the lack of regional capabilities regarding these issues (co-production and SSE). There may also be a deficit of local expertise with the rapid development of projects dealing with SSE (or co-production) and such local expertise may be more interested in working directly with international or multilateral organisations providing better working conditions. Moreover, it is important to notice that there are significant initiatives at the national but multinational interventions are scarcer and they are missing a more homogeneous political/administrative framework such as the EU, for example.

Regional initiatives to foster international collaboration between EU partners and what is called the Southern Neighbourhood in EU jargon have not achieved the critical mass to facilitate a level of understanding by local teams of the specific needs of regional projects in terms of internal coherence. This understanding requires not only realizing that local peculiarities should qualify but not confront well-established international concepts (such as SSE) but also accepting that there is a third level of management which is absent in bilateral projects (regional coordination). Such a level is implemented by a partner and it seems that local partners do not react with the same level of speed and cooperation as they may do in the case of bilateral projects.

⁵ When actors develop a degree of understanding of the other actor's nature (impairments, perception failures, limitations, etc.) that is clearly conducive to dialogue.



Figure 1-Box 1-Some clarifications regarding capabilities

There may be a challenge in distinguishing between 'capabilities' and 'capacities,' particularly when addressing how to enhance organizations, sectors, or ecosystems.. Capacities often refer to physical resources, human skills, technological infrastructure, and other tangible or intangible assets. These facilitates strategies to increase them by acquiring such resources either directly or via partnership or alliances. On the other hand, capabilities refer to the potential to deploy such resources and skills effectively to achieve specific tasks or objectives. It involves the dynamic and coordinated use of capacities. Such potential can be affected by structural or contextual factors. However, such factors can be affected by human action. This term (capability) have been increasingly used to explain friendly SSE ecosystems building on the capability approach of Amartya Sen and Marta Nussbaum (Sen 1985) (Nussbaum 2011)

EFFECTIVENESS

Overall assessment of the criteria

The general assessment of the effectiveness of the MedTOWN project is low. However, if we only take into consideration general objectives the assessment can be higher due to the high demonstrative and learning potential of those DAs having problems with their operational objectives. Nevertheless, the problems with the two local projects not presenting their reports and the difficulties in achieving the operational objectives in Spain leave a more pessimistic assessment of this criterion.

Numerical assessment (0-4): 3,0-Medium-high (this numerical is higher than expected because of the positive assessment of the four submitted reports which also include the above-mentioned positive learning effects in the case of Spain).

Detailed analysis

The absence of two reports (Greece and Tunisia) and the problems encountered in Spain show that the DAs have had many difficulties in achieving their stated operational objectives. As mentioned before, the demonstrative ethos of a project aiming at testing innovative approaches entails a certain level of risk. Such risks are an indicator of the truly innovative nature of the project as well as the level of the problems addressed. However, it is true that despite the efforts to adapt and react to the changing conditions and the obstacles raised by them, Spain, Tunisia and Greece have presented



different levels of failure concerning the initial operational objectives. Also, Portugal has encountered problems with one of its components (the time bank).

In Seville, the local public authority was not able to abide by its initial commitment to implement a social currency and the mitigation measure of implementing a commercial currency was also dismissed for other reasons. Tunisia's public partner also rejected the initial idea of providing a publicly owned space in the Medina and the project SSE partners needed to react and adapt to a multifaceted approach, which required a weaker commitment on behalf of the public authority. In the case of Greece, there is an almost total absence of detailed and trustworthy information both on the execution level and on the evaluation of such execution level. Finally, in the case of Portugal, the Time Bank (one of the components of the project) only has the initial founders as members and it has not had any activity.

Initial assessments by the different reports, direct observations, interviews and exchanges with the different stakeholders point to the main factor being the level of ambition combined with the external shocks (COVID crisis, political turmoil, social unrest, economic difficulties, etc.) which hindered the necessary collaboration with all parties.

However, all these problems encountered contributed to providing high-quality lessons by identifying key obstacles such as the role of *interventores* in Spain (a body of public officials whose role is to attest documents, provide statutory legal advice, control and internal supervision of the economic, financial and budgetary management, accounting, cash flow and collection) or the need to carefully craft the technological tools to the context (Palestine and Spain).

It is worth noting as a discharge that the context has abruptly changed since the design and submission of MedTOWN and such changes have affected some DAs more than others. In trying to find a common thread in the failures, the obvious element would be the balance between how much the context worsened compared with the sensitivity/ambition of the issue at stake. Thus, growing political tensions in Spain combined with a project aiming to introduce a disruptive technology in a highly sensitive area such as economic transfers to vulnerable populations (social benefits) resulted in the incapacity of the local government to move forward. On the other side, entrepreneurship support to vulnerable populations in Jordan encountered fewer problems in a less complicated political context.

Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

Complex projects aiming at culture or organizational change require more time. Despite the initial duration of the project of three years, COVID actually halved that lifespan. A year and a half of total paralysis and then another year and a half slowed down by program regulations delaying modification procedures. Thus, time can be identified

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as a key obstacle. As signaled by some reports, many DAs are aiming at a broad cultural and/or administrative change. Also, the main concepts (co-production and Social and Solidarity Economy) require time to grasp all the nuances and even more if learning needs to produce explicit knowledge, i.e., going beyond certain individuals' learning.

Factors supporting or hindering the achievement of results

1. Enhanced stakeholder engagement and collaboration is key.

The most successful DAs point to a strong focus on stakeholders' engagement and collaboration at all stages (design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation).

Opportunities to exchange and for mutual learning to occur are assessed very positively in the case of Portugal, while the Jordan project highlights the efforts to build more permanent partnerships and their success in empowering vulnerable groups.

On the minus side, Palestine points to the insufficient level of citizen engagement as an obstacle to achieving the full potential of co-production.

Finally, despite multiple efforts and a high level of engagement from many stakeholders, the failure to engage some key actors of the municipal public officials was a key factor in the ineffectiveness of the operational objectives in Spain.

2. Coordination Challenges:

Coordination among stakeholders and within them (in the case of complex actors such as public administrations) is a challenge.

For example, the Spanish analysis mentions hindrances in coordination between all actors involved, also within the different departments in the city council, which tend to work in silos and with separated budgets.

Also, in the case of Palestine, there is an emphasis on the need for clear guidelines and definitions to ensure a shared understanding among stakeholders, indicating coordination challenges.

3. Systemic View and Project Orientation:

Spain's analysis has clearly identified the need for a more systemic view and project orientation within public administration to facilitate ambitious social innovations.

In the case of Palestine's DA, the evaluation calls for the development of an integrated policy framework aligning waste management, circular economy, and co-



production efforts with broader regional and national policies, suggesting a similar systemic perspective. This is also in line with success factors in Jordan (alignment with strong national strategies).

4. **The capacity to adapt both to innovative methodologies or technological Adaptation:**

Innovative approaches such as co-production often require new methodologies to be implemented. The participatory methodologies implemented at different levels in several projects are an obvious call and it was a key success factor in Portugal. Also, the effort to foster partnerships among SSE/CSOs in Jordan can be considered an innovative methodology. However, the failures in Spain or Palestine also call for an improvement in the capacity of both public actors and SSE to adapt. For example, towards "mission-oriented" methodologies [such as those promoted by (Mazzucato 2018)] to foster innovative policies. But also, the importance given to both Spain's and Palestine's analysis of technological adaptation, overcoming the digital divide or customization of platforms to suit local needs.

EFFICIENCY

Overall assessment of the criteria

The MedTOWN project overcame many implementing hurdles to achieve a medium to medium-high level of efficiency. It has reached a reasonable level of efficiency concerning the utilization of resources and the generation of desired outputs but is hindered by some obstacles concerning operational objectives. Nevertheless, such obstacles were addressed with adequate mitigation initiatives with efficient use of the resources and maintaining a focus on the general objectives of the project (in terms of their outputs and outcomes as *demonstrative* actions). The main problem comes from the Greek DA, which seems to have had problems to implement the action, the difficulties with one component in Portugal and the implementation in Spain.

Numerical assessment (0-4): 3,05-Medium-High.



Detailed analysis

Despite the problems with the implementation, the efficiency in the management of the resources is high. However, there are key elements that have hindered the efficiency both at the level of the global project and at the DA level. In the first case, as mentioned above, the ambition of the project combined with the factors hindering the internal coherence of the project (lack of regional capacity, the complexity of certain concepts, etc.) may have challenged also the efficient use of resources, with an extra effort by coordination to overcome these factors.

At the DA level, the main issues hindering efficiency have been the failures in a component (Time Bank in Portugal) and the problems with the implementation of either the social currency or the first mitigation measure (the commercial currency) in Spain. However, these two DAs achieved medium to medium-high levels of efficiency.

Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

Efficiency gains of the Social Innovations implemented have been demonstrated in many cases despite difficulties in assessing them. Efficiency is a challenge when implementing an ambitious Social Innovation project because it is difficult to find hard data to compare and see the gains. Some economic models were more solid, such as savings due to the creation of employment (Jordan) or improving waste management, efficiency has been easier to document and the assessments have been more positive (high or medium-high). However, even in the case of Jordan, where the cost per job created was identified (2000 EUR), efficiency gains were difficult to assess due to solid comparable initiatives. In the case of Portugal, gains have also come from the assessment in terms of increased sustainability of the ecosystem or from the assessment of added value in other dimensions such as the cultural or political ones.

DAs' assessments point to an important dimension in the area of added value for stakeholders. Thus, Public Authorities in Palestine are highly satisfied with the DA, not only because of the improved solid waste management practices it helped introduce, but also because it is helping advance circular economy models in the solid waste management sector and generating learning on how these models can work in Palestine. Also, in Jordan, the project's efficient engagement of CSOs and governmental organisations in policy advocacy demonstrates its ability to mobilize resources effectively while working towards long-term sustainability. Portugal also mentions efficiency gains from mutual learning between public officials and citizens. Finally, even in Spain, the documentation of the potential gains was not able to be tested in Seville, but it has led to improvement in other areas (the northern regions of Cantabria and Catalunya, the latter being part of the ENI-CBC med programme).

However, there is room for improvement, especially for SSE. Some DAs point out elements that could foster such efficiency gains as more awareness-raising actions or

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similar initiatives to increase the engagement of citizens (Palestine). Also, improving the capacity of SSE to engage in policy advocacy (Spain and Jordan) could be another viable option. .

IMPACT

Overall assessment of the criteria

The impact of the MedTOWN project is assessed as significant. Although some DAs' assessments point to a medium or medium-low level of impact the global higher-level effects of the demonstrative dimension of the project could be considered to compensate a bit for the problems related to implementation and effectiveness of the operational objectives.

Numerical assessment (0-4): 2,8-Medium to medium-high.

Detailed analysis

Attaining elevated higher-level effects in some DAs has been challenging; however, the compensatory factor lies in the demonstrative impact. While Jordan and Portugal show high levels of impact, others such as Spain or Palestine show lower levels. However, in the case of Spain, despite failures in implementation, there have been other levels of impact (learning, digital literacy, awareness, etc.), even if there is still room for improvement. The assessment also highlights that both the city council and the SSE counterparts are more aware of the main obstacles to co-production. Palestine's assessment indicates that there has been little progress in implementing holistic policy changes or improving environmental conditions. However, given the ambitious scope of the MedTOWN project, which addresses co-production and SSE issues with limited resources and time, it may be unrealistic to expect such a higher level of impact. For example, the Palestinian report also signals (elsewhere not in assessing impact) that the "DA, according to EQA, has contributed to identifying mechanisms and a language to make professionals more aware of these concepts and to help them understand how they can help overcome challenges in the delivery of public services".

In this sense, despite the difficulties in assessing the impact produced by new explicit knowledge, training, targeted awareness and mutual and international learning, a more positive evaluation can be derived regarding these elements from other references in the individual reports and data extracted from different sources such as direct observation, exchanges, etc.

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Another potential sign of its demonstrative impact is the fact that even for those projects with more problems in terms of achievement of their operational objectives (mainly Spain but also Palestine), there have been initial movements to replicate or extend these initiatives beyond the geographical scope of the DAs.

Finally, assessing impact from the point of view of the level of policy/behavioural change could be misleading considering the time frame needed for such changes even for less multifaceted “wicked problems” as those addressed by the DAs with less positive evaluations (such as Palestine or to a certain extent, Spain). However, finding the key obstacles (be they technical such as the adaptation of the *Clickoin* technology in Palestine or political/bureaucracy-related as in Spain) can be considered a highly relevant impact.

Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

A strong focus on citizen engagement seems to favour a higher level of impact.

This can be derived from the positive evaluation of Portugal and the assessment of Palestine, which points in this direction.

There is also impact beyond the main issues of co-production and SSE. The DAs were also sort of pilot projects and in that sense; they have tested several hypotheses beyond co-production and the role of SSE (the role of new technologies, the efficiency gains of circular economy, the feasibility of time banks, etc.). This requires a suitable evaluation approach that focuses on the impact of capacity/ies on the local ecosystems, which in some cases may have been missing. For example, realising the potential of *Clickoin* but the need to adapt it to local conditions such as the difficulty of using QR or keychains in the Palestine project, has an impact both in a local capacity and at the regional level.

In some cases, the impact has been reinforced by the pilot project accompanying the DAs. For example, in Spain, one of the pilot actions called “I can do it too” (“*Yo también puedo*” in Spanish) aimed at reducing the digital divide of the population eligible for social assistance. This digital divide was identified as one of the obstacles hindering the potential effectiveness and efficiency of a social currency targeted at this population.

Collaborative Initiatives can reinforce the impact. Collaborative initiatives and guides for replicability have been positively assessed as a tool for impact. For example, MEDRISSE and the different guides/knowledge transfer tools play a role in reinforcing the impact of the projects and contributing to knowledge sharing.

SUSTAINABILITY

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Overall assessment of the criteria

Sustainability is the less positive assessment of all the criteria in the MedTOWN project but it varies ostensibly among DAs. Two of the DAs register a sustainability assessment in the low or medium-low range, whereas Jordan's evaluation rates it as high. Portugal's report states that the continuation of the different stakeholders to be involved in the process beyond the end of the ENI-CBC Med funding varies according to category (citizens, politicians, civil servants and SSE organisations). As for the sustainability of the outputs and outcomes achieved at the regional project, the assessment is slightly positive because of the focus on producing explicit knowledge and other intangible assets, as well as the demonstrated willingness by some partners to use them to replicate or foster further learning.

Numerical assessment (0-4): 2.3-High.

Detailed analysis

Sustainability varies according to the level of success in achieving the expected operational goals of the different DAs. Thus, those DAs with a more positive evaluation of their effectiveness have also presented a better assessment of sustainability. However, despite a medium-high evaluation in the case of Palestine, the assessment is more negative concerning sustainability.

This may be related to the fact that bringing about policy change requires more time and funds but, also, because the level of engagement of citizens in this project about waste management (Palestine) has also been insufficient. This and other factors seem to hinder sustainability according to the analysis of most DAs.

Other findings or learnings from the analysis of the indicators

Financial sustainability seems to be a key element in assessing the continuation of the effects of the new services being created. Many DAs point out that financial commitments on behalf of public authorities are not guaranteed. This is more the case with the co-production approach, which requires a continuous effort to maintain the involvement of non-public actors (citizens, CSOs or SSE organisations). This relates to the fact that co-production is often the core of the service, for example in Palestine where the report emphasizes that the sustainability of the project's co-production elements, including separation at source, is unlikely without further investments in awareness raising and technical support. Also interestingly, different stakeholders show different

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views about the availability of funds in Portugal with the public authorities' technicians showing major doubts about such availability.

The threats to sustainability posed by a lack of financial commitments need to be contextualised. Public spending varies significantly across the countries involved in the MedTOWN project, and this affects the perceived role of international funds that do not come directly from national budgets. The difference in public spending can also impact how certain aspects of new projects are seen as sustainable. Public authorities may favour investments in hard assets over services based on intangible assets such as training or awareness raising. However, the positive view on sustainability in the case of Jordan may strengthen the focus on sustainability even when new services have a strong component of intangible assets, such as advocacy capability or increasing coordination among SSE actors.

Views on sustainability may differ if the focus changes towards the demonstrative nature of the project. The general objective of MedTOWN was not to implement new social services to be maintained through time. Despite the success of a new service and the confirmation of its impact and benefits by stakeholders, sustainability remains susceptible to various threats, as highlighted in Portugal's assessment. One notable challenge is the harmonization of rhythms and processes across different levels of public administration, including the EU, national, regional, and municipal levels. However, the focus on demonstrating the benefits of co-producing services with the SSE may change the assessment. Thus, the Spanish report has produced a better assessment than in the case of Palestine, maybe because the implementation of the specific services suffered important setbacks before the evaluation started and the mitigation activities had to focus more on these demonstrative effects. These setbacks may have facilitated a clearer view of these demonstrative effects vs the narrower views on the actual service being implemented.

Sustainability is favoured by increasing ecosystem capabilities. Such capabilities can be more tangible (such as a new budget line or programme on co-production or SSE, a building or a truck) or less tangible such as those enhancing the capacity of key actors both in terms of intangible assets such as knowledge, liaisons, visibility, social capital, etc. The latter can be achieved through specific actions such as training, learning, knowledge creation, awareness-raising campaigns or simply by facilitating encounters between key public actors and CSOs, SSE organisations or groups of citizens. In order to increase the sustainability of these encounters, the formalization of certain components of different projects may have demonstrated their impact such as the platform in Jordan, the creation of an online international community of practice on SSE and Coproduction or the meetings between civil servants and citizens in Portugal.



Figure 2-Box 2-Defining Ecosystems

The use of this metaphor (“ecosystem”), which is borrowed from ecological sciences, is not new and has been used for several decades by mainstream entrepreneurial research. In the more nascent SSE arena, it has been gaining traction in recent years, particularly by policymakers and practitioners due to the increased interdisciplinarity of research in this area beyond management sciences, for example from economic geography, economic sociology, urban economics or even behavioural economics. But the term has also gained salience in key policy documents regarding support for social enterprises and the social economy around the world, particularly in those countries that are leading the way when it comes to policy innovation in this area. More recently, there has been a series of research papers trying to offer a clearer and more precise view of what is a Social Economy Ecosystem. One of the most recent and interesting papers (de Bruin et al. 2022) defines it as “an evolving composite community of varied, yet interdependent, actors across multiple levels, which collectively generates positive externalities that contribute to sustainable solutions to social problems”. However, concerning its use in this report, it is important to notice that this metaphor serves to shed light on other contextual elements of this community that go beyond actors, tangible resources (financial resources, buildings, etc.) and policy/legal framework. It refers to “the multiplex of intertwined social, spatial, temporal, historical, cultural, and political influences” (de Bruin et al. 2022). It is worth noting that such influences can be referred to as intangible assets such as social capital, social cohesion, trust, etc.

Lessons learned

It is necessary to identify potential obstacles among and within stakeholders. The very delicate context in the majority of the countries involved and a regional level, the wicked nature of the problems addressed (where there is not even a common understanding of the problem), the risk aversion of most public administrations (as a whole, despite the existence of some innovative policy entrepreneurs), the road ahead to make SSE and co-production well established and understood concepts and the lack of capacity by SSE actors (mainly in policy advocacy but also in policy design, implementation and evaluation) are all major hurdles. For this reason, it is important to strengthen the analysis of potential obstacles within public actors such as *interventores* (civil servants acting as auditors or controllers) in Spain or the different views between politicians and civil servants regarding potential sustainability in Portugal. Concerning departments and individuals responsible for audit and control functions, these entities typically exhibit risk-averse tendencies and often possess conventional academic backgrounds. This inclination may impede their comprehension of proposals rooted in more heterodox theoretical frameworks, such as SSE or co-production. Also, in the

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absence of strong legal frameworks confirming the legitimacy of certain actors such as SSE or in contexts where awareness towards such actors or the proposed social/technological innovation is low, extra effort should be made to reach out to these departments/actors and/or to build "organisational empathy".

Extended project timelines are needed. In order to allow for meaningful impact and sustainable co-production, recognizing the importance of time in initiatives aiming at cultural or behavioural changes is fundamental. Any impact in policy requires time and there is a tendency in certain projects to misjudge the necessary resources to bring about such policy changes in the face of wicked problems such as those increasingly dealt with by local authorities and addressed by SSE. Time is even more necessary when practices and ecosystems have structural biases that play against the concepts of co-production or SSE. Their participatory values, their focus on the empowerment of citizens and vulnerable groups, their use of non-instrumental logics, etc., all require overcoming such biases, also in the communities where SSE is present. In addition, longer terms are needed for those changes to take place in much more rigid institutions such as public bodies and organisations.

As expected, there are several capacity deficits:

Regarding SSE there is a need to build their capacities in various areas:

- Increasing independence from public actors
- Facilitating collaboration with research and other types of business
- Facilitating their dialogue with key actors in public government (civil servants from different departments, not only those directly related to SSE, and also elected officials and policymakers).
- Fostering diversity in their leadership with special focus on women.
- Further building the local connections and roots of the SSE. This is so, because in certain territories SSE is epidemic and does not allow fostering their capacity in advocacy or policy design.

Regarding public actors the needs in capacity building could be summarized as follows:

- Promoting the engagement of both civil servants and policy makers in community initiatives.
- Improve their capacities to go beyond short-termism to overcome blockades and working in silos. This could include organisational learning in new methodologies such as mission-oriented innovation policies from (Mazzucato 2018).

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- Raise awareness and acquire conceptual clarity both at individual and organisational level on co-production and SSE.

Research also needs to increase its capacity to play an adequate role in support of transformative actors. In this sense, it is important to stress that researchers can be also activists. Still, the main agency in transformative actions lies in CSO, SSE (formal and informal groups) and public actors. Therefore, researchers should provide key intangible assets to other transformative actors. This is not to defend “pure” identities. In fact, as signalled by (Barco Serrano and Nogales Muriel 2020) “a contextual urgency places researchers in front of the mirror regarding their roles beyond producers of “research” and there is a necessity to go “beyond “clean-cut identities” (researcher, lobbyist, entrepreneur, policy maker) (so that) a whole community and its allies could enhance the role of research in social transformation”. However, this necessary “hybridization” of both organisations and individual research cannot be promoted at the cost of sufficient independence, objectivity and organisational empathy towards both SSE/CSOs and public governments.

Also, the significant struggle with compliance on behalf of all the researchers may refer to specific individual deficits and time constraints due to problems in implementation. However, from a regional perspective, it seems that the absence of sufficient regional interaction in co-production and SSE has resulted in less capacity by local teams to understand the needs and constraints of regional interventions fully.

Regarding institutional or other structural deficits, regional and country-level analyses present an embryonic phase in many areas. Maybe the most advanced one, but still clearly insufficient, is the presence of a growing body of laws and policy initiatives at the international and country levels. However, there is still room to improve acceptance of a common framework. There has been a power struggle to achieve the dominant position among paradigms/concepts defining the space between the public economy and the private for-profit economy. This is still affecting the regional and local acceptance of SSE as valid and non-conflictual with local realities (despite the need to localize the concept). However, as signalled by (Barco Serrano 2022) “most elements that defer the development of the social (and solidarity) economy as an uncontested concept in these countries are better explained by the power struggle of competing concepts”. The obstacle does not lie in its suitability at both national and regional levels. It has sufficient assets in the form of the encompassing nature of SSE and the support given by an extended body of literature and laws. However, many reports have somehow struggled to accept this dominance and the suitability of SSE to be better used in their analysis.

Other deficits lie in the absence of more permanent and capable forums in the area of SSE and co-production in the region. International networks such as EMES or CIRIEC are developing national-level initiatives and they are collaborating on a project basis with

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the region. But this regional dimension is too embryonic. Also regional platforms of SSE actors need further developments and this could also favour the above-mentioned hybridization (Barco Serrano and Nogales Muriel 2020). Despite the existence of SSE platforms such as EsMED, it has shown little capacity⁶.

⁶ Its website is hosted within the CEPES website and has little known activity:

<https://www.cepes.es/internacional/mediterraneo/red-esmed&lng=en>



CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. **Failures in effectiveness, sustainability and other minor issues related to relevance or impact underscore the considerable challenges that lie ahead for the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and co-construction in the Mediterranean.** Leaving aside the transformative impact of the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent disruptions at political, economic, and social levels that affected the MedTOWN project, it is imperative to recognize that co-production with SSE actors at the regional or municipal level still encounters numerous difficulties. The project has, to a certain extent, illuminated these obstacles while also emphasizing the pressing need to enhance the capabilities of the actors and the ecosystem as a whole.

The setback mentioned regarding the diminished relevance of SSE in national or regional policies is a critical factor that must be taken into consideration. This is especially noteworthy given that co-production holds a less central position in current trends in policy and legislation development.

2. **However, the attainment of a satisfactory level of success in some Demonstrative Actions (DAs) and a notably high level in others underscores the continued viability of advancing projects tailored to local contexts.** The consistently high relevance demonstrated across all DAs, coupled with an equivalent assessment of the significance of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) as a pivotal actor in addressing mounting and interconnected threats to our communities and the environment, along with co-production as a fair and efficient approach, should serve as ample justification for proposing new and innovative interventions.

Notwithstanding, positive outcomes in terms of achieving operational objectives in three DAs, and success in identifying obstacles for the ambitious DA in Seville (along with a positive assessment of the demonstrative dimension across all DAs), collectively contribute to an **overall positive evaluation.**

However, such **projects need to build upon the lessons learned and improve the examination of the local context** well beyond SWOT analysis and look for capability deficits both in actors and within other elements of the ecosystem, including political climate, the digital divide, etc.

3. **Finance plays a diverse role, encompassing various aspects.** Financial resources, along with other forms that they can take such as time, contribute in

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multifaceted ways. In addressing highly complex issues requiring cultural shifts or the overcoming of barriers—whether technological, administrative, or related to internal culture like working in silos or exhibiting strong supervision/risk aversion—the demand for financial resources and time exceeds what isolated individual projects like MedTOWN can provide. This gap is especially pronounced considering the geographical scope, diverse contexts, and the imperative to sustain a long-term perspective.

It is crucial, however, to broaden the understanding of resources beyond mere grants or budget allocations. The necessary resources also encompass time, a steadfast and sustained policy focus on co-production and Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), as well as investments in intangible assets such as trust and social capital. Initiatives like the platform in Jordan or the emphasis on community action in Portugal exemplify the importance of developing these intangible assets. **It is worth noting that SSE also need to develop a strategy to tap on to these resources and how allocate them effectively.**

Moreover, **financial considerations reveal a nuanced nature in various reports.** Not all budgetary items exhibit equal sensitivity, as demonstrated by the obstacles encountered in implementing technological innovation in the realm of social benefits in Spain. Financial instability in Palestine also impacted a DA striving for comprehensive change in waste management. Reports from Palestine and Jordan underscore the necessity to leverage diverse financial mechanisms to address different stages and components of such transformative changes. Additionally, expectations regarding sustainable fund availability beyond the project timeframe play a crucial role and can engender mutual suspicion among various stakeholders. Finally, and interestingly, financial incentives do not emerge as a primary motivator for engaging in co-production, as highlighted in Palestine’s report: “Therefore, we conclude that the question of whether financial incentives are an effective instrument to boost people’s willingness to coproduce is not a simple question, but a layered one, depending not only on the level of compensation, but on the socio-economic circumstances of these people and their intrinsic motivations” (Palestine’s report).

4. Research is key and can play a relevant role in different aspects:
 - a. **Continuously providing intangible assets to sustain the transformative momentum.** There are many gaps in those assets, for example, training and education adapted to the local context for both SSE and public officials, awareness-raising tools and methodologies that take into account also limited financial resources, monitoring frameworks that highlight non-monetary or instrumental motivations, tools to properly assess the added value of internationalisation for local actors, further research on key issues such the potential of non-monetary public interventions beyond legislation, etc.

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- b. **Address research gaps to assess efficiency (added value, comparable data, adaptation of orthodox economic analysis to heterodox proposals, etc.).** One of the most relevant research gaps in MedTOWN has been the difficulty in assessing efficiency for Social Innovation projects whose logic distances itself from mainstream economic analysis. The most obvious gap is producing data so future projects can use it to compare. However, other avenues of research are worth highlighting. For example, the meaning of efficiency adopts a new dimension when outputs and inputs could be relational goods such as trust or social cohesion. Also, in the face of insufficient comparable data due to the innovative nature of the project, it is necessary to make an effort between flexibility and standardisation of measurement instruments and methodologies. Such methodologies should not only focus on outcomes or impact but also on the process since values-driven proposals such as SSE demonstrate the validity of intrinsic/non-instrumental logics.
- c. **Foster regional ecosystem capabilities through formal networks (also hybrid ones supporting advocacy coalitions or umbrella organisations) at the regional or sub-regional level (Maghreb and Mashreq).** There is a need to improve regional-level analysis, which is more than the sum of different national ones. Adding a regional dimension also requires adapting the national approaches and methodologies. Also, the regional dimension offers new light and facilitates overcoming local barriers. One of the most obvious elements that would benefit from a regional approach is the continuous power struggle behind competing concepts and paradigms. SSE is a paradigm that is the result of an effort to include, synthesize and comprehend local realities and competing proposals, also from the point of view of policy. It has demonstrated its validity also during the legislative process. This validity has been reinforced when such processes have addressed the key elements of democratic governance and use of profits or asset lock. Other proposals such as the Solidarity Economy or Social Entrepreneurship are fully included within SSE unless they depart from the above-mentioned key elements. In such a case, both proposals severely diminish their transformative or even palliative potential, especially in the long run.
5. **The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) currently faces a notable deficiency in attaining comprehensive local capacities across all stages of policy development, spanning advocacy (agenda setting), design, implementation, and subsequent follow-up/evaluation.** This is not (only) an issue of external conditions such as friendlier legal frameworks or supportive local politicians. It is

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important to understand that SSE needs to assume its responsibilities in this area. Examples of areas of improvement are: building broader coalitions, improving their understanding of the political context (including increasing its “organisational empathy” towards policy actors), going beyond simple narratives such as insufficient political will, improving managing capabilities to implement complex projects, developing umbrella organisations while being aware of the power struggle intrinsic to this process, developing capillarity from supra-national (meaning the Mediterranean) till sub-municipal (meaning neighbourhoods) level, etc.

Even in countries better equipped with advocacy capabilities within SSE organizations, exemplified by Spain, the SSE capacities at the sub-national level have exhibited restricted effectiveness across various policy stages.

However, examining specific local contexts, such as that of the Portuguese DA, reveals that despite insufficient national-level capabilities in areas such as the improvement of the existing Social Economy framework, the Solidarity Economy has the potential to implement initiatives that transcend the confines of such frameworks.

Finally, achieving greater autonomy from public actors (Jordan), having the capacity to play a more central role in co-production (Palestine) or leaving behind silo approaches by fully embracing the possibilities of the more encompassing SSE paradigm (Tunisia) are other suggested paths for increasing capabilities.

However, **it is important to stress that the current path of building the capacity of genuine SSE actors locally is correct.**

Finally, another possible option could be engaging with local actors who may be more capable to adapt to international standards in project implementation or be closer to other less transformative proposal. However such option would affect local empowerment and will diminish the option to address local challenges.

6. **Citizens' engagement through co-production has several potential impacts.** As it would have been expected, many reports have signalled actual or potential gains in efficiency, reducing social conflicts, empowering specific groups such as women or people with disabilities, improving social cohesion and inclusion, etc. To a certain extent, some failures may point in the direction of insufficient engagement, such as the problem with the implementation in Spain not only in the case of the social currency but also for the commercial coin.
7. **It is also important to notice how many of the DAs are close to two of the most relevant social movements of recent years: environmentalism and feminism.** However, scarce mention has been included in reference to relevant organisations belonging to such movements (except to vague references to CSOs in the case of Jordan and maybe in Portugal), or any other major social partner (such as trade unions). Further analysis may be compelling, given that the various social movements of the last decade, such as the Arab Spring and the anti-



austerity movements in Portugal, Spain, and Greece, have evolved, giving way to what appears to be less organized forms of social unrest. This has not been analysed in any of the reports but it could be worth understanding the role of the SSE and the co-production approach in facilitating transformative empowerment of citizens.

8. **Public actors still are ill-prepared to implement social innovation projects, despite growing needs due to *polycrisis*** (Morin and Kern 1993). Interest in Social Innovation is still high and mainstream political discourse shows strong commitment to its role in addressing the interlinked crisis being faced by our communities. Leaving aside a critical view of the concept from the point of view of the “kind of social change that social innovation ought to bring about” (Teasdale et al. 2021), it is true that anchoring such process within the SSE framework should reinforce its capacity to face such *polycrisis*. Two of the most important dimensions of the SSE framework (its transformative and empowering *ethoses*) should reinforce the potential of Social Innovation. However, public actors have shown that they are ill equipped to engage in Social Innovation projects. Several factors can be extracted from the reports: problems with holistic approaches needed to address wicked problems, risk-aversion, inadequate legal frameworks, lack of space and models for innovation with economic, administrative and legal security, rigidity of processes, inadequacy to engage in co-production processes, inability to promote deeper citizens engagement in co-production or to grasp the nuanced nature of complex concepts. Another element worth mentioning is the isolation of policy entrepreneurs. Thus, certain policy entrepreneurs within public administration can face certain isolation that hinder the innovation initiatives. Achieving institutional recognition through the appointment of a specific department in charge of SSE and/or Social Innovation can come at expenses of hampering ownership by the whole government when it comes to complex initiatives.

9. **A more comprehensive analysis of the context is required.** Several reports point to weak elements in the analysis of the context. One element that stands out is the feasibility of the proposed technological tools, taking into account tangible challenges, such as the use of QR codes in Palestine, and intangible barriers, like the digital divide affecting the commercial currency in Seville. Also, the potential blockages within the public actor (including those due to a more polarised or confrontational political climate) seem to have been unnoticed, especially in the case of highly sensible services such as social benefit allocation. Another weak point could be the capability of SSE to advocate or implement several aspects of the co-production project. Finally, failures in sustainability may point to insufficient analysis of the local requirements.

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10. **There is room to improve the legal framework and build a friendlier regional ecosystem for policy change in support of SSE and co-construction.** Legal framework analysis points out areas of improvement regarding co-production, SSE or Social Innovation. It is worth noticing that laws can have different impacts such as providing legitimacy or institutional recognition to some actors (formal or informal in the case of Solidarity Economy), encouraging or empowering policy entrepreneurs inside or outside the public government, facilitating positive organisational behaviour such as cooperation across departments or involvement/empowerment of citizens, etc. All these elements have been signalled in one way or another in the reports. However, gaps in legislation should be properly assessed since they can also represent an opportunity for innovative/disruptive initiatives.

Moreover, it is important to understand the limits of laws. Legislators must properly define the object and scope of the law, the subject (persons, entities, etc., which should be concerned by the law) and other provisions that facilitate sanctions, enforcement, lines of action for concerned actors and evaluation. For instance, when advocating for laws to support SSE, legislators have shown the difficulties in including informal actors as objects or subjects of these laws. Similar difficulties arise when defining an actor whose primary focus is a particular social objective or impact, as opposed to distributing profits to shareholders.

Policy recommendations

In this section, a set of policy recommendations is presented. Usually, such recommendations are drafted as a list of mildly independent and general calls to action, like a “wish list”. However, the idea in this case is to try to upgrade them to form a more integrated set of proposals which could form an embryonic “Ecosystem building” program.

Moreover, and considering that the objective of this project is to foster co-production with SSE, some of these recommendations may not be policy ones since they will be aimed at private actors (researchers or SSE organisations). Nevertheless, viewed from the co-production perspective, it is important to signal them since the empowerment of the private actors participating in co-production cannot be exclusively granted by public ones. It needs to also be based on the assumption of responsibilities by both SSE and researchers.

For this reason, there are two types of recommendations: policy ones (with the specific aim of presenting them under an operationalised form) and other recommendations aimed at key actors in the context of co-production.

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Contextualisation of the recommendations

It is important to notice that geographical scope and time are relevant variables to be taken into consideration.

In the case of geographical scope, several levels can be defined for almost all the recommendations. The obvious first level is the regional one (meaning Mediterranean). Then, sub-regions (such as Maghreb and Mashreq) or even groups of countries, like Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon (considering that Egypt's size is bigger than these three combined) could also be envisaged. The remaining levels would be national, regional (meaning sub-national regions) and municipal ones.

With regards to time variables, it is important to bear in mind that highly complex issues require longer periods. These issues often involve cultural changes or overcoming various barriers—whether they be technological, administrative, or related to internal culture, such as working in silos or strong supervision/risk aversion. This entails the availability of more resources both in general terms and over a longer time frame.

However, resources should not be reduced to grants or budget headings. There are other assets such as policy focus on co-production and SSE and other intangible ones, such as trust or social capital, legitimacy, social awareness, institutional recognition, etc. The point regarding time in these cases is that the availability and allocation of such assets should be also framed in different time frames: short, medium and long terms.

Expanding on that, any action focused on ecosystem building needs to consider how to find, increase and maintain such assets across longer periods of time.

Policy recommendations

There is a general agreement among reports **to request an improvement of the legal frameworks**. Both pillars (Co-production and SSE) of the MedTOWN project have faced inadequacies or deficits in the analysis of national legal frameworks, which call for specific action.

1. **Regarding SSE and despite last decade's improvements, there is a need to further develop the legal frameworks.** Either by drafting and approving SSE framework laws or laws addressing a specific component such as cooperatives, social enterprises or either exclusively social or solidarity economy. Even in those countries where there exists a law, there is room for improvement, as recently demonstrated by the draft proposal of Social Economy Integral Law in Spain. Recent developments both at the international (EU, OECD, ILO and UN) and country levels (Tunisia's recent law from 2020 but also the above-mentioned proposal in Spain and Morocco's current draft) clarify and facilitate this. Regional and national

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policy entrepreneurs and advocacy coalitions will certainly benefit from the current work of ILO to produce a series of guidelines for legislation on the social and solidarity economy (SSE). Hopefully, this should diminish problems in legislative action related to the legal technique. All these developments and initiatives clarify the options regarding the nominal aspects of the laws: valid principles and features regarding the content and structure of the law (inclusion of families, scope, coordination within government, registration, promotion, statistics, etc.).

However, power struggles and the related path dependencies remain. Thus, tensions between what could be called "social entrepreneurship-related" and SSE-related approaches may still be part of the legislative process. This is particularly relevant in light of the recent emergence of the impact economy, which has already demonstrated its disruptive potential in certain countries⁷. Another component of the comprehensive SSE is the Solidarity Economy. There may be a gap in those countries where the predominant approach is Social Economy. However, from a legal perspective, it is worth noting that laws require a clear object with a defined scope. Therefore, the main deficit in those areas may lie in the principles and values, which are often articulated in the preamble and have lower normative power.

The analysis of existing Solidarity Economy legislation (basically at the sub-national level in Brazil) reveals a larger set of values and principles (as compared with the SSE) that reduces the object/scope of what can be considered Solidarity Economy. Therefore, the main impact of development in this sense will be a stronger institutional recognition for specific actors within the SSE and a stronger focus on key elements such as "the practice of fair prices, in accordance with the principles of Fair and Solidarity Trade" or "respect for differences and promotion of gender, generational, ethnic-racial and traditional community rights" (Law no. 8351/19, of 1st April, which establishes the State Solidarity Economy Policy within the scope of the State of Rio de Janeiro, and makes other provisions).

Problems can also arise as a result of inadequate use of existing literature. For example, the taxonomy put forward by (Hiez 2021) distinguishing between statutory and substantive approaches (*approches statutaires ou substantielles* in French) may lead certain legislators or facilitate to favour a legal framework in which cooperatives or associations must undergo double registration and supervision processes (first as cooperatives and then as SSE). If not addressed or compensated for, this can result in unfair conditions for certain types of SSE entities.

2. Besides the above-mentioned features, there are other elements to be taken into consideration in policy development. Therefore, **the improvement of the legal framework should go beyond the drafting and approval of framework SSE laws**. A non-exhaustive list of areas of improvement could include the relationship to Secondary or Implementing Legislation, whether it is addressed within the law (like in the case of France) or in decrees of application and/or

⁷ The recent tensions between "Mouvement Impact France" and "ESS France" are a sign of this.



development of the law (such as in Ecuador). Other aspects to consider are the legal forms, the inclusion/recognition of the SSE in the rest of public policies, etc. Concerning the latter, a series of elements has also been signalled by national analysis and they could include a series of support policies: fiscal policies, employment, local/territorial development, etc.). However, other elements should also be considered, such as relations with other powers and institutions (Central Bank, financial supervision, etc.).

3. In this sense, support policies are often the source of operational definition prior to the existence (or in the absence) of SSE framework laws. **Thus, an improvement of the policy framework is also a recommendation that can either precede or follow the drafting of SSE framework laws.** Regional initiatives such as the Social Economy Action Plan of the EU have already demonstrated certain deficits such as more vagueness in the initiatives to be implemented in this area, and with the existing ones dangerously diverting their focus to impact economy instead of social economy.
4. Several projects have aimed in one way or another at improving the legal and policy frameworks supported by the EU and other multilateral actors. However, despite having terms of around 4-5 years and significant budgets, these projects have not achieved the desired impact. The obvious conclusion would be **to increase both funds and time. However, from the analysis emerges that such an increase would benefit from a more strategic approach with programme-like initiatives. This approach should also include increased institutional recognition within the European Commission departments and bodies active in the area, as well as an improved design using the clear-cut definitions included in the SEAP and the UN and ILO resolutions.**

Potential path to operationalize these recommendations: (1) Engage other levels within international actors, such as the EU Parliament, EU Delegations, the UFM (Union for the Mediterranean), etc., as well as other instrument, for example the Monitoring Committee for the Luxembourg Declaration or other international institutions such as the UNTFSSSE (United Nation Task Force for the SSE). This will ensure that the work at project/programme level is also supported by high-political strategies and actions. Such engagement should benefit from and should build upon the recently approved Recommendation on developing framework conditions for the social economy nr 13287-2023 INIT⁸. (2) Further operationalise the SEAP and improve its follow-up mechanisms in relation to this goal (improving the legal framework). (3) Enhance the collaboration and coordination with those international actors with a higher level of commitment in the region such as ILO. (4) Identify and support local "champions", such as the UGTT in Tunisia or the REMESS in Morocco to foster advocacy capabilities. (5) Establish formal or informal collaboration between SSE actors and national cooperation actors such AFD, AICS or

⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/ALL/?uri=CONSIL:ST_13287_2023_INIT



AECID, to facilitate the emergence of specific initiatives in this area of legal framework development.

Finally, (6) ad-hoc projects should develop specific tools to increase advocacy capabilities with precise and achievable indicators.

5. **Concerning co-production, there is also room to either develop non-existing laws on co-production or improve the legal framework promoting civic engagement and public-private partnership with the SSE.** In this sense, it is important to signal that the friendlier frameworks are the French and the Italian ones with specific reference to SSE concerning co-production/partnership clauses. In the case of France, the SSE Law (n° 2014-856) of July 31, 2014, specifically includes co-construction in its article 8: "The public policies of local and regional authorities and their groupings in favour of the social and solidarity economy can be part of a process of co-construction with all the players concerned. The procedures for this co-construction are based in particular on the establishment of bodies involving the players concerned or approaches involving citizens in the public decision-making process". Moreover, even though they refer to the development of SSE policies, not to policies in general, the so-called NOTRÉ Law (n° 2015-991) of August 7, 2015) requires the elaboration of a regional strategy of economic development through a Regional Economic Development, Innovation and Internationalisation Scheme (SRDEII). This plan must follow a multi-partner approach and the CRESSes (regional Chambers of SSE) must be consulted (Bance and Chassy 2022). This shows a path that has not been followed. Besides this, it is important to enhance specific legislation concerning the actions of local governments, with particular attention to eliminating legal barriers to innovative co-construction initiatives.

Potential path to operationalize this recommendation: considering that the legal object of this law may not be as precise in scope as in the case of SSE, the suggested path should be to specifically introduce specific components in the above-mentioned operational recommendations. This approach should be adapted to local contexts, with a focus on promoting the development of regional level action within SSE legislation. It involves developing the decentralisation of policy design and (whenever possible) implementation with references to SSE in both economic development and social affairs policy areas. Additionally, it aims to enhance the capacity of regional/local SSE actors to participate in all stages of policy.

6. **Regarding finance, different lines of action must be developed: on the one side, the mobilization of resources tailored to different stages of both SSE enterprises and co-production initiatives; on the other improving the**



sustainability of specific policies, projects and programmes by including tailored guidelines to this sense.

- a. In the case of supporting SSE organizations, some analyses have pointed out to the **need to dedicate further resources to the different stages of development of SSE organisations**: pre-seed, start-up, growth (either in size or in scope, i.e., in the range of activities or target groups), etc. It would also be beneficial to include specific funds for certain dimensions such as innovation (both social and technological) and cooperation (S2B, S2S and S2P⁹). S2P funds should be especially relevant. These could facilitate preparatory actions (including actions focusing on understanding local needs or reaching out to non-associated SSEOs or CSOs), co-design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Public-SSE co-production initiatives. Finally, specific funds for internationalisation are needed given the current significant deficits in regional collaboration.
- b. Concerning the need to improve sustainability, some reports have signalled significant room for improvement. Thus, **specific funds should be allocated to sustain innovative actions in the field of co-production and concrete measures should be included in such innovative actions to ameliorate their sustainability**. However, such measures need not be of a primary financial nature, further funds to sustain the action beyond its lifespan. As mentioned by the report, sustainability is strengthened through improved citizen engagement or awareness raising.
- c. Finally, **initiatives in which the role of public actors does not involve budgetary commitments should be promoted**. Public actors have various forms of power beyond just allocating funds to a certain goal or imposing sanctions. Promoting collaboration among stakeholders or raising awareness about specific issues can provide other types of support. Moreover, public actors can bring in other assets, such as knowledge or legitimacy to initiatives funded by third-party actors (be they public or private).

Potential path to operationalize this recommendation: The majority of these recommendations are articulated in an operational manner. However, a series of specific features are further detailed below.

The stage of development of the national ecosystems is highly diverse. As in the previous case, being inside or outside the EU can be a differentiating factor, thanks to the impetus received by SEAP regarding intra-EU funds and programs. Nevertheless, increased focus from actors such as national or EU networks (e.g., CEPES, ESS-France, RMESS, Social Economy Europe) and international networks (e.g., RIPESS, GSEF, or DIESIS Network)

⁹ S2B: SSE to other Businesses. S2S: SSE to SSE. S2P: SSE to Public Actors.



should help develop advocacy coalitions to enhance and increase specific funds. Further collaboration among organizations working in the field of cooperation for development and the aforementioned networks is highly desirable.

Specific focus on the development of alternative sources of funds, distinct from grants, is crucial. This is especially true in light of the prevailing trend to prioritize senior debt through microcredit and the bias of impact investment toward actors with low or null democratic governance and no asset-lock, i.e., actors that do not fall within the realm of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE).

7. **Another policy to be fostered is the development of social capital through networks, platforms and partnerships.** Regional networks of SSEOs should be further developed. Also, the extension of already existing networks to areas where their presence is insufficient could be considered. However, the proliferation of networks could lead to greater competition over collaboration so (if necessary) special attention should be given to specialisation, either in terms of their roles (support, advocacy, etc.) or their geographical (regional or sub-regional) or sectoral (health, industry, agriculture, etc.) scopes. Moreover, research networks (such as CIRIEC or EMES) and forums should be also the focus of specific policy measures, as well as hybrid initiatives, i.e., initiatives involving transdisciplinary approaches. Such approaches not only relate to different scientific disciplines (economy, sociology, ecology, etc.) but are also built on the assumption that actors different from researchers are also knowledge producers. On the other hand, the involvement of researchers in SSE networks should be promoted.

Finally, special attention should be given to the networks and forums of both SSE and Public Actors. An excellent example of this could be the European Network of Cities, Provinces and Regions in support of the Social Economy (REVES¹⁰). Hybridity should also be promoted in this field.

Potential path to operationalize this recommendation: This recommendation is articulated in an operational manner. However, a series of specific operational features are further specified below. The concerted focus should be on expanding current capabilities within existing networks, utilizing available sources of funding (via calls for proposals and tenders), leveraging internal resources, and incorporating collaboration with public authorities. The latter could be achieved, for example, through the establishment of permanent and more structured sections at annual conferences. The specific initiative of creating a network akin to REVES could arise from expanding established networks (like REVES itself) or developing regional sections within those networks, such as GSEF.

¹⁰ <https://www.revesnetwork.eu/>



8-. A final and cross-cutting policy recommendation: to foster internationalisation policies aiming at both SSE and co-production.

Internationalisation should be understood differently (see Box 2 below), as it enhances the value and impact of local initiatives through the international flow of goods, services, funds, and (most interestingly) intangible assets. Such policies should go beyond funding specific projects such as MedTOWN and be part of mainstream internationalisation policies (including trade agreements). Furthermore, they should engage multiple stakeholders and establish precise, achievable goals, focusing on key features. These features may include enhancing organizational understanding and capabilities in areas such as co-construction and Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), as well as other crucial intangible assets sought after through internationalization, such as social capital, business models, software, and social innovation methodologies. Additionally, the development of indicators that demonstrate the enhancement of organizational understanding or specific organizational capabilities and the mentioned intangible assets is essential.

Potential path to operationalize this recommendation: This recommendation is articulated in an operational manner. However, a series of specific operational features are further specified below.

A key element in this recommendation is developing a deeper understanding of internationalisation beyond export/import activities and its potential to increase social impact even for small or isolated SSE organisations. Consequently, further dissemination activities should be promoted by SSE networks and other support organisations.

Figure 3-Box- 2 Internationalisation

Defining frequently used terms such as internationalisation can be challenging since literature has often described the process, strategies, and barriers without providing a precise definition. This absence of a clear definition has influenced how SSE perceives internationalisation since the conventional approach is based on the extractive logic of capitalism. By steering away from profit-focused strategies leveraging international advantages and broadening the scope of exchange in alignment with SSE principles, the benefits of endorsing and advancing internationalization become evident.

For these purposes, the definition included in a recently published paper by the OECD could be very useful: "Internationalisation can be defined as a set of processes involving multilateral flows of goods, services, financial resources and "intangible assets" (information, skills, business models, knowledge and more) within and between organisations and across countries. More importantly, this set of processes can be both outward-oriented (selling or investing abroad) or inward (such as acquiring know-how



or other intangible assets from international sources)". (Barco Serrano and Pastorelli 2022)

Some of the more interesting elements of this new definition are that it defines more precisely, what is internationalised and highlights that there are two directions (outward/inward). In both cases, SSE presents key differences that can help address global threats. Moreover, SSE produces and seeks (also) another type of intangible assets such as relational goods, and its inward/outward focus is (more often) qualitatively different. This can have a huge impact on how internationalisation policies or trade agreements are designed.

Recommendations transcending mere policy

The above-mentioned recommendations do have elements or lines of action that transcend policy. For example, innovative actions could and should be designed by SSE organisations. Also, networks of SSE or researchers are to be promoted and managed by those types of members, not by public actors. Autonomy from public actors is one of the principles of SSE that should be fostered, as signalled by the Jordan report. However, in the following set of recommendations, the idea is to highlight agency and the assumption of responsibilities. For this reason, a differentiation is established. Nevertheless, it is important to note that all these recommendations require specific policies or would greatly benefit from them.

1. **SSE should improve its capabilities in key areas to foster its role in co-production.** The main area should be its capacity to participate in all stages of policy: advocacy (including agenda setting), design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Such capabilities are enhanced not only by means of increasing its capacity (more resources or infrastructure) but also by means of improving other intangible assets: its broader competence as individual organizations, including its skills, knowledge, technology, and overall ability. This can be achieved through knowledge-related efforts like training in advocacy methodologies or policy design/monitoring, etc., but also by, increasing its social capital, centrality (i.e., responsiveness to messages and behaviour of the SSE organisation), legitimacy and other complex features. One example of this could be the mentioned "organisational empathy". Also, as referred to above when describing "ecosystems", such capabilities extend beyond individual assets (the skills are not just the skills of the members of the organisation). Thus, organisational understanding of "the multiplex of intertwined social, spatial, temporal, historical, cultural, and political influences" (de Bruin et al. 2022) of the context and the capacity to address or shape them is key in this capacity building.

One specific strategy to address this recommendation could be to improve the embeddedness of SSE with the most relevant social movements such as feminism or those fighting against the environmental crisis.

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2. **Public actors also need to improve their capabilities to foster their role in co-production.** However, in this case, the required set of assets can vary at certain points. Fostering dialogue with local communities and conducting awareness-raising activities around the concept of co-production could be an (obvious) initial step forward. Another crucial advancement is the institutional recognition of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). Nevertheless, in this scenario, the positive development of establishing specific departments (responsible for SSE or Innovation) may lead to a diminished sense of ownership on these matters by the entire government or by specific relevant departments or roles (such as the social benefits section when an initiative from the SSE department reaches them). Another capacity-building requirement specific to public administration is the elimination of barriers to social innovation, such as the rigidity of processes and the absence of adequate methodologies like mission-oriented policies.

4. **In the area of technology, further efforts should be made at the pre-design and design stage regarding the feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency of new technology in Social Innovation, co-production and SSE-related projects.** This could also benefit from specific policies to facilitate the efficient use of technology by both public actors and SSE. Additionally, public actors and SSE organisations should also develop their capabilities regarding the use of technology in their social innovation or co-production projects. In this sense, they would benefit from having their own digital strategies (either general or project-related ones). Such digital strategies should be tailored to the needs and context of SSE and vulnerable communities. They should not be top-down approaches or technologist-led interventions and they need to be transdisciplinary initiatives: "This refers not only to the transfer of research results or involvement of practitioners on research projects, but more institutional initiatives where the actors in the production of new knowledge are not exclusively full-time researchers, but also practitioners and activists" (Barco Serrano and Nogales Muriel 2020). The same recommendation regarding digital strategies applies to specific actions when designing projects.

5. **Researchers need to enhance their ability to evaluate and monitor regional projects.** According to the analysis, the primary aspects of this improvement are comprehending the requirements and limitations of regional projects, localizing key concepts such as co-construction, SSE, Social Enterprise, etc., avoiding blind spots that may arise due to their immersion in the local context, addressing research gaps such as mapping of local ecosystems, statistics, deeper financial analysis including quasi-equity

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products, acquiring a more extensive understanding of the legal framework beyond SSE, Solidarity Economy or Social Enterprise's Laws, adapting support tools to the local context, adapting technology to the local context, etc. In addition, they should develop their organizational empathy towards both public actors and SSE to ensure an unbiased analysis. They should foster transdisciplinary approaches and hybrid organizations, and acquire specific skills and training for monitoring and evaluation due to the apparent deficit in the pool of experts available. It is essential to note that monitoring and evaluation also require specific skills and training. As mentioned earlier, this is a joint effort that would benefit from specific policies (including isolated projects) at the regional level or national ones with an international focus.

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APPENDIX 1- MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK.

THE AGENT

Definition

The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is receiving growing attention due to its proven track-record in providing answers to key social issues faced by individuals and communities on all continents. These answers address both the most evident needs such as housing, employment, health, care, food, etc. but also neglected issues such as social connectedness, social isolation, resilience, and so on. In sum, social and solidarity economy organizations provide complex answers to complex challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened this record and it has raised its profile as a key tool to address a just and fairer recovery. However, there is not a widely accepted definition of this concept, as the recently published report for the International Labour Conference (ILC) held in June in Geneva points out: "A shared understanding of the SSE is emerging from the development of legislation and statistical frameworks on the SSE. While a consensus is emerging on the values and principles of the SSE, there is no universal agreement on the organizational forms that are subsumed under it".

The ILC's conclusions propose a definition:

"The SSE encompasses enterprises, organizations and other entities that are engaged in economic, social, and environmental activities to serve the collective and/or general interest, which are based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence, and the primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits as well as assets. SSE entities aspire to long-term viability and sustainability, and to the transition from the informal to the formal economy and operate in all sectors of the economy. They put into practice a set of values, which are intrinsic to their functioning and consistent with care for people and planet, equality and fairness, interdependence, self-governance, transparency and accountability, and the attainment of decent work and livelihoods. According to national circumstances, the SSE includes cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, self-help groups and other entities operating in accordance with the values and principles of the SSE"¹¹.

¹¹ILO, Proposed resolution and conclusions concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy.

Available at https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/110/reports/records/WCMS_848073/lang--en/index.htm



This is a very relevant step in the development of the SSE since this is a definition agreed by all constituencies of the International Labour Organization (ILO) which includes governments, workers and employers. The document is also available in various languages including Arabic and French.

Regarding the above-mentioned values, we can find a longer explanation in the report submitted to the assembly of the ILC. Thus, it is mentioned that these set of values distinguish “the SSE from other subsets of the economy, as reflected in national and subnational legislation” and fall into five different categories:

5. “Care for people and planet: integral human development, the satisfaction of community needs, cultural diversity, ecological culture and sustainability.
6. Egalitarianism: justice, social justice, equality, equity, fairness and non-discrimination.
7. Interdependence: solidarity, mutual aid, cooperation, social cohesion and social inclusion.
8. Integrity: transparency, honesty, trust, accountability and shared responsibility.
9. Self-governance: self-management, freedom, democracy, **participation and subsidiarity.**”

These values are subsequently operationalized through a set of SSE principles:

10. “Social or public purpose: SSE units aim to meet the needs of their members, or the community or society in which they work or live, rather than to maximize profits. The purpose may be social, cultural, economic or environmental, or a combination thereof. Promoting internal solidarity and solidarity with society, they seek to reconcile the interests of their members, users or beneficiaries and the general interest. Some national laws refer to this principle as the “primacy of people and social purpose over profit”.
11. Prohibition or limitation of profit distribution: SSE units that generate a positive result (profit or surplus) must use it in accordance with their purpose. 14 Those not prohibited from distributing profit have significant constraints on their ability to generate and distribute it. Those that distribute surplus do so based on member activity, such as work, service, usage or patronage, rather than on the basis of capital invested. In the event of their sale, transformation or dissolution, many are legally bound to transfer any residual earnings or assets to a similarly restricted unit. Some national laws refer to this principle as the “primacy of people and work over capital”.
12. Democratic and participatory governance: The rules applicable to SSE units provide for democratic, participatory and transparent governance, enabling member control through active participation in setting policies and making decisions and by holding elected representatives accountable. In primary SSE units, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote). Horizontal and vertical structures of the SSE are also organized democratically.

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13. Voluntary cooperation: Participation in SSE units is not forced or compulsory and must involve a significant element of choice. Members and users join and remain in SSE units voluntarily and freely, without penalty or the threat of a penalty for non-participation. SSE units may engage in voluntary cooperation and mutual support with other SSE units, creating vertical and horizontal structures.
14. Autonomy and independence: SSE units are self-governed. They must enjoy autonomy and independence from public authorities and other entities outside the SSE and must not be subject to undue interference or control. If they enter into agreements with other SSE units or public and private sector actors or raise capital from external sources, they must do so on terms consistent with the SSE values and principles.”

Another relevant element mentioned in the report is the institutional units included that subscribe to the set of SSE values and principles are cooperatives, mutual societies, associations, foundations, self-help groups and social enterprises¹². However, they also leave the door open to different types of such units.

They also provide a description of such units:

- “A cooperative is “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.”
- A mutual society is organized by individuals seeking to improve their economic situation through collective activity. It differs from a cooperative because it is a mechanism for sharing risk, either personal or property, through periodic contributions to a common fund.
- An association is a legal entity principally engaged in producing non-market services for households or the community at large whose primary resources are voluntary contributions. A community-based or grassroots association is member-based and offers services to or advocates for members of a particular neighbourhood, community or village.
- A foundation is an entity that has at its disposal assets or an endowment and, using the income generated by those assets, either makes grants to other organizations or carries out its own projects and programmes.
- A self-help group is similar to both a cooperative and a mutual society in that individuals join in accomplishing goals of mutual support, such as technical and financial support, that would be unattainable on an individual level. However, it differs from both in that it is not principally engaged in commercial activities. Moreover, many self-help groups are in the informal economy.

¹²The new reference in the conclusions to any “other entities operating in accordance with the values and principles of the SSE” it is also relevant



- A social enterprise is a unit that utilizes market means but primarily to serve social purposes, such as employing and training disadvantaged individuals (for example, persons with disabilities and the long-term unemployed), producing products of particular social value or serving disadvantaged persons in other ways”.

However, we can see how this taxonomy of units can present some problems. Maybe the two main ones could be the difficulty to include informal economy initiatives beyond self-help and the blurred lines between social enterprise and other units. Thus, if the distinctive feature of these units is utilizing market means, why can it be a cooperative, or a mutual, a social enterprise? This is the case because, despite a growing interest in the research agenda, there still exist “many definitional and terminological ambiguities” (Agrawal and Hockerts 2019). However, it is interesting to point out that one of the first appearances of this term in public is the Italian “Social Enterprise Review” (*Rivista Impresa Sociale*) back in 1990, and that the first law on Social Enterprises is also the Italian Law on Social Cooperatives from 1991.

Besides this, another relevant element highlighted by this report is that although “a particular SSE value or principle may apply outside the SSE, it is the set of SSE values and the set of principles that together give coherence to the SSE”.

Finally, we would also like to mention two relevant ones. The first one is that SSE is a vector of social transformation, i.e., its goals are not merely palliative but transformative ones. The second is that many of the above-mentioned institutional units (if not all) are able to mobilize both market (money, paid work and other assets) as well as non-market ones (donations, voluntary work, etc.), this is a clear advantage when involved in the different policy stages.

Situation in the participating countries

Despite growing awareness and the multiplication of initiatives using it, this term is far from being homogeneously used across the different regions of the world, it is also contested, as the different policy processes, and confronting advocacy agendas demonstrate in many countries and in other multinational actors such as the European Union or, more recently, the African Union.

Initially, the term Social Economy or Social and Solidarity Economy, in its modern meaning, was initially used in public policy-related forums in France during the 70’s. From there, we see how it started to be used in Spain and other EU countries during the 80’s and the 90’s. In this process, the EU Commission led by Jacques Delors was instrumental.

We can find policies and advocacy actors being develop during those decades in Spain, Portugal and, to a lesser extent, Greece. However, legal framework development needed waiting until last decade, when pioneering Spain approved its framework Law and then other countries followed (including France in 2014).

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However, this development did not reach southern Mediterranean countries until a later stage and so nowadays, we find that only Tunisia has a framework law (in the area).

Country	SEE law?	Date and link
Greece	Social Solidarity Economy and Development of its Agents (Entities) and other provisions -	31/10/2016 https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Anazitisi-Nomothetikou-Ergou?law_id=de53343e-dbb3-4c24-b7c9-a69700b7f2bb Other links: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=104614&p_count=109103&p_classification=01.09&p_classcount=66
Portugal	Ley núm. 30/2013 de Bases de la Economía Social.	08/05/2013 http://www.parlamento.pt/atividadeparlamentar/paginas/detalhediplomaaprovado.aspx?bid=17553 Other links: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=93073&p_count=109103&p_classification=01.09&p_classcount=66
Spain	Ley núm. 5/2011 de Economía Social.	29/03/2011 https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2011/BOE-A-2011-5708-consolidado.pdf Other links: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=86256&p_count=109103&p_classification=01.09&p_classcount=66
Jordan	Proposal of Entrepreneurship Law	Social The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Digital Economy prepared a draft general policy to support and develop social entrepreneurship, which is still under administrative, technical and legal procedures, and it is expected that these procedures will be completed by mid-July 2022.
Palestine	NO	N/A
Tunisia	Loi n° 2020-30 du 30 juin 2020, relative à l'économie sociale et solidaire.	30/06/2020 https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=112196&p_count=109103&p_classification=01.09&p_classcount=66



These differences in terms of legal framework development sometimes mirror differences in terms of weight of the social economy. Thus, despite some problems to provide official figures for SSE we see that among the three EU countries in MedTOWN project Spain presents the most significant figures, while Greece is the least developed:

Country	Figures
Spain	10% of GDP with over 43000 companies and almost 2.2 million jobs (2020) ¹³
Portugal	3% of Gross Value Added (4819 MEUR), 5.3% of total compensation of employees and employment (4321 MEUR) and 6.1% of employees of the economy (234886) ¹⁴ .
Greece	€2.5 billion in 2012 or 1.4 % of national GDP or even less (restricted to the set of conditions prescribed by national legislation): €6.9 million in 2016 or 0.01 % of GDP ¹⁵ .
Jordan	There are no reliable data about the whole Social Economy but According to figures provided by the Jordan Cooperative Corporation (JCC), there are 1,591 cooperatives registered with the agency, two-thirds of which are active, with the overall membership base comprising 142,000 citizens. The value of total assets is 430 MEUR, while the available cash at hand stands only at 55.2 MEUR
Palestine	According to data from 2017, there are 3748 activity units within Social Economy in Palestine. The value-added of Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households (NPSHs) amounted to 494 million US dollars in 2018, reaching 3.1% of Palestinian GDP.
Tunisia	There are almost 530 cooperatives under different legal forms (SMBSA, SMCSA, UCPA ¹⁶ and non-agricultural cooperatives). All of them are supposed to produce around 0.9% of GDP. 54 mutual associations and two insurance companies of a mutual nature (CTAMA and MAE) More than 3200 GDAP (Fisheries agricultural development groups) Around 180 active microfinance associations Finally, there are other associations, like groups for the management of the in industrial zones, but there is not enough information. There is also a number of 24 392 associations subject to Decree No. 88 of 2011, but there is no data on those who are still active and those with economic activities.

Insufficient data is expected in an area where only we have only recently seen the first initiatives in the legal framework (Tunisia). However, the potential in terms of economic

¹³<https://www.cepes.es/estadisticas-generales-economia-social/publicaciones-estadisticas>

¹⁴<https://www.cases.pt/contasatelitedaes/>

¹⁵https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/greece_social_and_solidarity_economy_report_english_british_council_0.pdf

¹⁶These stand for Société Mutuelle de Base de Services Agricoles (SMBSA), Societe Mutuelle Centrale de Services Agricoles (SMCSA) and Unité coopérative de production agricole (UCPA)



units and in the role of such economic units in addressing key social and environmental challenges is obvious.

Finally, in the recently released MedUP! regional report we can read that these legal definitions are aligned with the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP) definition of both Social Economy and Social Enterprises. The main divergences come in relation to some of the operational values mentioned-above and specific units. Thus, in some units (cooperative, associations and foundations) the problematic principle is autonomy due to inadequate policy frameworks, in others (social enterprises in some countries) the problematic principles are horizontal/democratic governance and limited profitability. However, in this latter case, the problems are at the level of self-definitions by some actors, the only approved legal framework (Tunisia) is line with the vast majority of legal/policy frameworks, which include them when defining Social Enterprises. These tensions may be related to the contested nature of the term and specifically the resulting power struggle between actors proposing a much more loosen definition of social enterprises to gain access to much needed tangible (funding) and non-tangible resources (such as agenda-setting capabilities, legitimacy or recognition).

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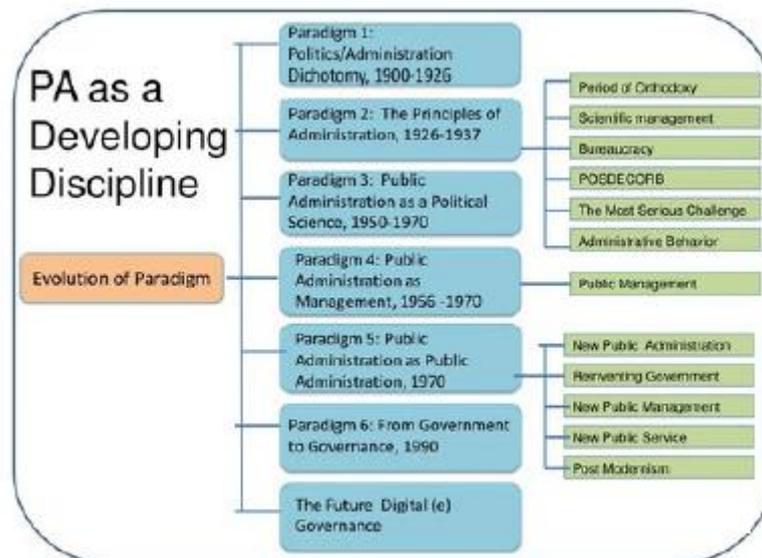
THE ISSUE (PUBLIC POLICY)

In the current chapter, we will also try to address another relevant concept in our project: what is policy? As it happens with many concepts, which are widely used beyond academia their definitions may, also present problems in terms of precision and this can lead to difficulties when developing an adequate evaluation framework.

In our case, we believe that this paragraph from (Howlett and Cashore 2014): “Probably the best-known, simple and short definition of public policy has been offered by Thomas Dye, ‘anything a government chooses to do or not to do’ (Dye, 1972: 2). While many organizations and actors create policies to which their members must adhere, we focus on ‘public’ policies made by governments that affect and influence every member of a nation-state or a subnational jurisdiction”.

However, in this case, the challenge is to also describe what is precisely this “anything” for different reasons. Firstly, because the capabilities of the public actors differ from one country to other and this is so for objective (material resources, different legal frameworks, etc.) but also for subjective reasons (what and how public administration should act varies across time and geography). Regarding the objective capabilities, we will not further analyze them since this presents less problems in terms of understanding. However, in the case of the subjective reasons we could simply have a look at how the Public Administration discipline has evolved in the last century:

Figure 1 Evolution of public policy discipline



Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/jobitonio/paradigms-or-models-of-public-administration-21939731>

In this case, we propose to focus on what happens between stage 3 and stage 4-5, and then from stage 5 and stage 6. In the former we see how the initial development of the discipline provided a view of PA as “scientific” actor which could assess and then propose solution to the problem faced by their communities of reference. In a way, the public



administration is seen as a “capable” actor which, through a scientific process and by the development of a strong bureaucratic administration, could do almost “anything” required to address the above-mentioned problems.

After the 70’, we witness how both due to the increase in complexity and the development of more and more wicked problems, but also due to the evolution of certain political proposals such as Neoliberalism (Harvey 2005), the “public actor” is requested to evolve and include private sector tools but also different theoretical approaches.

This has also questioned how public actors related to private actors (companies, citizens and civil society organizations or employers and social movements). For example, as Lévesque states (Fossati, Degavre, and Lévesque 2018) prior to the arrival of New Public Management (NPM), in some territories, the relation between public and private actors can be defined as “providential”: *“Le providentialisme, c’est un compromis où l’État offre l’accès universel et gratuit aux services, mais en échange s’abroge le droit de définir ce qui est bon pour les usagers, c’est à dire la nature des services ainsi que la façon dont ils vont être livrés”* (Providentialism is a compromise where the state provides universal and free access to services, but in exchange abrogates the right to define what is good for users, i.e. the nature of the services as well as the way they will be delivered).

However, with the arrival of NPM, such providentialism was called into question but a very different type of decentralization of the public policy: with a total trust on the market regulation. This has resulted in certain territories in a confrontation with what new social movement were seeking: a democratization of public services through their re-appropriation by users (Fossati, Degavre, and Lévesque 2018).

Nevertheless, these changes on how policy and the public actors were seen opened the window for an increased role of private actors in the different stages of policy: selection of issues to be addressed, design, implementation and evaluation of policies.

Taxonomies

Another relevant element in facilitating the creation and dissemination of knowledge from, as well as the evaluation of, our project is the taxonomy that will help us identify the public policy being targeted by the demonstrative actions.

In our case, we have decided to select two types of taxonomies, one in relation to the tool being used in such policies, the other in relation to the issue being addressed by them. In the first case we can use the adaptation of Chaves, 2018 division between “soft” and “hard” policies. Thus, the former “aim to create a favourable environment” and maybe divided into two groups, institutional policies and cognitive policies. Conversely, the first one can be divided into four types of impacts/interventions¹⁷:

¹⁷Although often the same policy includes several of these impacts or interventions.



1. Those granting legal recognition such as a framework law of social economy, on social/alternative currencies or on the common goods. This recognition presents implications for awareness and the reputation of the object of the policy.
2. Those removing any regulatory obstacles.
3. Policies recognising the co-protagonist capacity of the policy object/target groups (social economy, groups of citizens, etc.) in the public policy drafting and implementation processes. This may entail including representative organisations in the different participation bodies, institutionalised ones such as economic and social councils or noninstitutionalised such as the social dialogue roundtables.
4. The institutionalisation through the establishment of bodies at the heart of the public administration itself that are specialised in overseeing and promoting the policy object.

In the case of cognitive policies, they “aim to influence the cultural environment, ideas and awareness”. They try to improve the general visibility of the policy issue and on its receptiveness and social acceptance. Typical measures included in this type of policies may involve the dissemination of generic and specialised information to focus groups, training and specialised research, or the development of specific data in public statistical services.

Finally, hard policies aim to address the policy object such as the commons, social exclusion or the development of social economy with the provision of resources (grants, tax rebates, real estate assets, etc.). This can be done, by direct provision or by facilitating access public contracts/concessions or to international markets. The following figure shows this taxonomy applied to the social economy (policy object)

Table 1. Typology of social economy policies

Soft policies Policies aimed at creating a favourable ecosystem for enterprises	Institutional measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - measures aimed at the legal form of social economy entities, recognising them as private players - measures aimed at recognising the ability to operate social economy enterprises within the whole economic activity sector, removing any legal obstacles present - measures aimed at recognising social economy enterprises as policy makers, an interlocutor in the design/construction and implementation of public policies - public bodies promoting social economy enterprises
	Cognitive measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - measures to disseminate and increase awareness and knowledge of the social economy throughout the whole of society or/and by target groups - measures to promote training on the social economy - measures to promote research on/into the social economy
Hard policies Economic policies promoting enterprises	Supply measures, aimed at improving competitiveness among social economy enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - measures focused on businesses functions, such as financing, consultancy/advice, training, employment and human resources management, cooperation and networks, R &D and innovation, quality, new computing and communication technologies, physical space, etc. - these measures distinguished according to the life cycle of the enterprise (creation or stage of development of the business)
	Demand measures, aimed at the activity of social economy enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - measures aimed at easing access to public markets and foreign markets (such as social clauses and reserved public contracts)

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Source (*Chaves Ávila and Monzón Campos 2018*)

The second useful taxonomy we want to include in our baseline report refers to the issue being addressed by the policy. For this we have decided a typology extracted from a guide¹⁸ for mayors, city council members and officials.

They identify twelve different categories:

- Support the creation of businesses, activities and jobs
- Protecting the environment and enhancing the heritage
- Support agriculture and encourage the organisation of short circuits
- Promote responsible trade and tourism
- Controlling energy and moving differently
- Social and professional integration
- Combating poverty
- Promoting access to housing
- Promoting the development of sports for all
- Facilitate access to culture for all
- Develop personal services: promote access to care and personalised support
- Encourage citizen participation and community life.

THE HOW TO'S

In the following chapter, we intend to address the two main “methodological” elements of the MEDTOWN projects, i.e., social innovation and co-production of public policies. In the first case, it is related to the final quality of the process (a social innovation) but it also implies a certain way of how to achieve such innovation according to the most relevant part of research. In the second case, it is directly related to key elements of the process: actors, relations among such actors, procedures and policy frameworks, etc.

Social innovation

As stated by (Teasdale et al. 2021) “Contemporary research on social innovation has emerged from different theoretical perspectives and academic disciplines (...). What strikes us as interesting is that these different strands of literature on social innovation appear to have recently converged (...) within a ‘collaborative discourse’ (...). This presents social innovation as a collective process (...) aimed at achieving social change”.

The main contestation between the two opposing approaches comes when addressing the question of the subsequent social change between a “utilitarian, or outcome-oriented, perspective focuses narrowly on social change as marginal improvements to quality or quantity of life, while ignoring the processes that lead to such change”. Another school defends a more transformational perspective where social innovation (SI)

¹⁸Guide de l’Economie Sociale et Solidaire A l’usage des maires, des élus locaux et de leurs services



is seen as a “(democratic) process entailing the empowerment of disadvantaged groups and the restructuring of (societal) power relations”.

However, the above-mentioned collaborative discourse allows for “a multiplicity of perspectives to be employed (Ziegler 2017); a broad conceptualisation of social innovation allows people with different interests, backgrounds and ideological convictions to identify with the concept, both ideologically and affectively”. Nevertheless, on the minus side, it may hinder how to achieve such desirable futures, the so called ‘theory of transformation for realising those alternatives’ (Wright 2010).

In this context, intermediary organizations play a relevant role not only in agenda-setting and playing a central role in the allocation of both tangible and intangible resources, but also, as Teasdale and Roy (Teasdale et al. 2021) state, by “breaking down academic understandings and re-shaping them for their own purposes, they can set out processes of recognising, labelling and accrediting what counts as a ‘social innovation’, thus contributing to articulations of the boundaries and priorities of the field”.

Regarding the types of social innovation which has decided to use two different sets which place the social innovation in relation to the process or the existence of a strong regulation or not. In the first case we speak about radical vs incremental SI. In the former, we can use the example provided by Lévesque (Fossati, Degavre, and Lévesque 2018): the “insertion enterprises” (*entreprise d’insertion*) which break down silos between three different policy realms: social security, employment and training policies. This goes beyond what it was known before. Besides those, we find a series of small innovation which slowly and incrementally improve a specific issue or solve different element of a wicked problem. In this case, in order to achieve true transformation, they need to be numerous and its linkage to more radical innovations.

Regarding strong Social Innovation, we refer to SI, which show a certain degree of sustainability. Thus, following the Lévesque vision of these innovation the strong ones require a certain founding compromise a social compromise that guarantees its regulation, for example an institutional mechanism of arbitrage between the social mission and the economic constraints. Such institutional commitment guarantees that the achievement of the social innovation is not left to the “good will” of a few persons with decision power. Thus, by strong we are referring to a certain degree of permanence. According to Lévesque, setting up a formal network or the insertion within an ecosystem of actors and policies, provide also a certain degree of continuity of the commitment so this could also constitute a strong SI. However, weak innovation could also be interesting. For example, in long stable periods between crisis weak innovation could also have a relevant role in addressing specific problems, or, as in the case of incremental SI, a series of weak ones could lead to address wicked problems. However, in this case there should be also some structural or (eco)systemic elements taking into account power or the political dimension. During moment of crisis, however, strong, radical innovation can help address the necessary change of course with the support of a network of actors within a developed and equipped ecosystem with strong mechanism of regulation and arbitrage.

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In relation to SSE, and in certain context like Quebec, we witness the incremental use of this concept during the 90's. However, it must be noticed that an SSE organisation *per se* is not a Social Innovation, but, as Lévesque (*Fossati, Degavre, and Lévesque 2018*) also points out, is a social innovation matrix. This must be seen in relation to the above-mentioned feature of SSE as a social transformation-seeking actor, as also signalled by the United Nation's Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy's (UNTFSE) guidelines (forthcoming). In this sense, the definition provided by the Quebec's Network of Social Innovation (RISQ) declares that:

"A social innovation is a new idea, approach or intervention, a new service, a new product or a new law, a new type of organisation that responds more adequately and sustainably than existing solutions to a well-defined social need, a solution that has found acceptance within an institution, organisation or community and that produces a measurable benefit for the community and not just for some individuals. The scope of a social innovation is transformative and systemic. It constitutes, in its inherent creativity, a break with the existing"¹⁹.

This definition emerges after a long story that has witnessed different waves of social innovation, according to the leading Prof. Benoit Lévesque. They have always existed but it is during the 60's a series of factors facilitated their identification. This is partly due to the "contra-culture movement". Initially the SIs took place mostly in the field of work, due to the crisis of the *Fordist* model, while in the 90's it changes focus and addresses service of general interest and the role of users (in relation to the above-mentioned "providentialist" approach in policy delivery. Thus, this approach offers universal and free access to services but in exchange, it decides what is good for the users.

It is in connection with this crisis and in the context of Quebec where social innovation is already a known concept (the Center for the Research on Social Innovation or CRISES was founded there on 1986) where the connection with the Social Movements and the increasingly popular Social Economy concept, set the conditions for a series of strong and radical social innovations during this decades and the following ones: new services, new tools (especially in the area of social finance) and new actors (RISQ, *Chantier de l'Economie Sociale*, TIESS, etc.). Regarding the fields where these innovations developed, we can mention four main areas: personal services, employability and inclusion, local development and, later, fair trade and environment.

Social innovation and co-production

In this context we find social innovation proposing new social connections, social relationships, new ways of coordinating, working together, sharing power and sharing resources (*Fossati, Degavre, and Lévesque 2018*).

¹⁹Translated by the author. Available at RQIS: Quebec Network of Social Innovation:

<https://www.rqis.org/innovation-sociale/>

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In the current phase, there is also a new generation of Social Innovation, but in this case, they are not mostly aimed at re-configuring the State, but at addressing the necessary social and ecological transition.

Finally, in the current situation of environmental and social crisis the challenge for Social Innovation is simultaneously address both in a just transition approach, and, in doing so, SSE and research actors need to be able to foster transdisciplinarity approaches "stakeholders in the field with a view to the co-production of knowledge" (*Fossati, Degavre, and Lévesque 2018*). But as he also highlights we need to set up truly participatory processes with "moments, or even devices, that encourage deliberation (...) [so that] the quality of the argument and not just the disciplinary value (...). In this perspective, the co-production of knowledge thus established is itself a matrix of social innovation". However, we understand that in this re-alignment of roles, such stakeholders should not only be seen as provider of transdisciplinary knowledge but also other relevant tangible and intangible assets.

Co-production

From this perspective, we need to better understand what we mean by co-production of public policies. In this sense, we can highlight what stated by Bance et Alt. (Bance, Bouchard, and Greiling 2022): "a plethora of different definitions of co-production exists. Instead of co-production, co-creation is sometimes used as the umbrella term". In line with this, it is important to notice that French tradition, more specifically the highly relevant Quebec's case, prefers the use of co-construction to differentiate from a mere involvement of citizens/civil society in the implementation phase of the policy and/or the provision of data/input in the designing one. In our case we propose the use of co-production as the wider concept that includes Co-commissioning, co-designing, co-delivery and co-assessment (*Bovaird et al., 2019*) which further develops the definition proposed by (*Ostrom, 1996: 1073*): Co-production is "the process through which inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not in the same organisations. [...] Co-production implies that citizens can play an active role in producing public goods and services of consequences for them". However, the involvement of SSE organisations (be them formal or informal) could also be seen with a more complex optic that also include other dimensions of the policy process such as agenda-setting or the fostering of institutional recognition and/or legitimacy of actors.

In relation to the description of co-production practices, these are path dependent and its influencing factors could be (among others): the degree of autonomy of local governments and regions, welfare state traditions, the role of SSE actors in a state, country-specific answers on how to prioritize the market, the government and the community logic and the roles of citizens in decision processes"(Bance, Bouchard, and Greiling 2022).

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Finally, another interesting indicator as resulted from the analysis of some highly developed Social Economy ecosystems such as Spain are the level of organizational empathy found in key actors of the policy process (*Barco Serrano 2012*).

In the next chapter, we will provide some examples, which should help local research to develop and adequate proposal of indicators and a framework for the narrative description and evaluation of the Demonstrative Actions.



APPENDIX 2

DEFINITION OF THE SSE ACCORDING TO THE UN RESOLUTION

At its 66th plenary meeting on April 18, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution "Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development" (A/RES/77/281). This resolution provides a definition of the SSE in line with the one included in the ILC.110/Resolution II concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy of the ILO:

"the social and solidarity economy encompasses enterprises, organizations and other entities that are engaged in economic, social and environmental activities to serve the collective and/or general interest, which are based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence and the primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits, as well as assets, that social and solidarity economy entities aspire to long-term viability and sustainability and to the transition from the informal to the formal economy and operate in all sectors of the economy, that they put into practice a set of values which are intrinsic to their functioning and consistent with care for people and planet, equality and fairness, interdependence, self-governance, transparency and accountability and the attainment of decent work and livelihoods and that, according to national circumstances, the social and solidarity economy includes cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, self-help groups and other entities operating in accordance with the values and principles of the social and solidarity economy."

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