



BREED

Building community Resilience
and sustainable Development
through social economy



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Deliverable

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List of abbreviations:

BREED: Building community RESilience and sustainable Development through social economy

D2.1 Deliverable 2.1 “Data collection & analysis for preliminary reference contexts analysis transnational”

EU: European Union

SEAP: Social Economy Action Plan

SRPP: Socially Responsible Public Procurement

TG: Target Group



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1. Introduction

Building community REsilience and sustainable Development through social economy (BREED) is a European project engaging different and various partners as a consortium such as local public authorities, stakeholders, and social economy organisation from Belgium, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The main general objective of BREED is to increase the capacity of local public administrations, social economy organisations, including civil society, in order to foster social change and boost the conditions for social economy in the regions involved by the project and beyond. In addition, BREED wishes to contribute to a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable community growth through the involvement of various actors and organisations such as local public administrations, social cooperatives, small-medium enterprises, social economy stakeholders coming from public and private sector, not for profit associations and local community. By working together, this group of key actors will build social economy ecosystems and co-develop strategies in order to reach the objectives set.

The deliverable 2.1 “Data collection & analysis for preliminary reference contexts analysis transnational” (D2.1) was developed by the European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE) in cooperation with all project partners. The main objective of D2.1 is to provide support tailored to the needs of each community and region by mapping social challenges faces, possibilities and also potentialities. This document offers an overview of the context of social economy in each local area part of the project and gives the opportunity to highlight and understand the specific needs of social entrepreneurs in terms of financial, administrative, legal, regulatory, markets aspects. Therefore, the aim is to capture critical insights and identify areas of improvement and capacity building in the field of social economy at local level.

For this purpose, the D2.1 contains the approach taken to the methodology in order to collect all the necessary information that appears in this analysis for preliminary reference contexts. This will be followed by a section explaining the instruments available at European level to promote the social economy at several levels, namely European, national, regional, and local. Then, the main part of the report will contain a transnational comparative approach based on the information gathered in the public and private sector during the data collection in each region of the countries involved. Finally, an individual national description will be given for all of them in order to draw up a specific identity card gathering the current situation, the challenges, the opportunities for development of the social economy and the specific needs.



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2. Methodology

D2.1 is based on desk research followed by quantitative and qualitative analysis of each local community through questionnaires and interviews targeting two groups. Notably, the main target groups (TG) have been identified, involving the private and public sector. On the one hand, the private sector encompasses representatives and managers of social cooperatives, social small-medium enterprises, non-profit organisations, not for profit association, other social economy stakeholders from both public and private sector engaged in social inclusion, education, culture, arts, sport and community development in general (TG1). On the other hand, the public sector contains policy makers and managers from local public administration offices engaged in the social economy and community development in general (TG2).

As the objective of the project is to involve private and public sector actors and to understand and map their specific needs, two separate questionnaires were prepared: one for the public sector and the other one for the private sector. Each questionnaire contained a precise and clear definition of the social economy, so that the respondents could understand this alternative economy in concrete terms if they did not have a previous knowledge of it. Thus, the definition used has been as follows: “Social economy is another way of economic functioning when comparing it to the traditional one. Social economy enterprises are characterised by:

- Primacy of people and the social objective over capital;
- Democratic governance;
- Solidarity;
- Reinvestment of most profits within the enterprise to carry out sustainable development objectives.”¹.

The questionnaires refer to a number of themes, and the responses were collected according to the following themes:

- General information: this part includes the name of the organisation, the number of employees, the legal status of the structure, and the job position of the interviewee;
- Knowledge and working in the field of social economy: it groups knowledge of the social economy and whether the organisation works within the social economy or not.

¹ <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/the-social-economy/>



- Sector of activity and social economy: this theme refers to the sectors of activity of the structure interviewed with the precision to know if their sector is relevant to social economy and if work opportunities, related to social economy, are available in their region.
- Networking: it provides an overview of networking activities situation and its implementation in the local area.
- Financial and human resources: it mainly informs on the situation regarding the human resources for the promotion, the development, and the implementation of social economy and also the work integration of disadvantaged groups within the entity. A question has been added for the financial situation of the private sector.
- Public support: this concerns the specific action plans implemented by local authorities for the promotion of social economy and used by the private sector, and also the necessary measures (e.g., subsidies) to create/develop the organisation and/or the insertion of disadvantaged groups. Socially responsible public procurement (SRPP) was part of the discussion through the involvement of both sectors and the obstacles faced to properly use this kind of procurement.
- Partnership: this part provides information on whether cooperation between the two sectors exists and if there is a willingness to construct a close partnership between them.

Both forms of questionnaires were sent to the local and regional public administration involved in the project: Municipality of Katerini (Greece), Municipality of Alcamo (Italy), Municipality of Paredes (Portugal) and Mancomunidad de la Ribera Alta (Spain). Besides, these public authorities were asked to translate the two questionnaires into their own language in order to reach out to local people more easily. In terms of their dissemination, each partner has proceeded differently, based on their system of public functioning and the local context. Thus, the questionnaire could take the form of face-to-face interviews, online interviews, etc. In total, the data collection for the D2.1 reached 92 different stakeholders across Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, including 39 from the public sector and 53 from the private one.

3. Social economy at European level

The need for a more social approach to the economy was felt more acutely during the pandemic and the current economic system showed its own limitations. In the context of raising the European Union (EU), many measures have been adopted and policies have been strengthened to best address the problems. In terms of the European needs and taking into consideration the social, economic, technological and ecological challenges that the society is



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facing, a more inclusive and resilient society is desirable by all stakeholders to obtain a fair transformation.

Social economy has shown its importance in the European labour market. For instance, over 2,8 million social enterprises are employing more than 13,6 persons which represent 6,3% of the working population of the EU-28². With regard to the impact on the labour market and on the daily lives of Europeans, social economy is contributing to the European Pillar for Social Rights and also to the Sustainable Development Goals such as decent work and economic growth, reducing poverty and inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, etc. Social economy is, therefore, perceived as an alternative economy which can deal with these main challenges mentioned above. It is also providing social innovative solutions to these issues through the creation of jobs, the social inclusion, the work integration of disadvantaged groups, and the contribution to the digital and green transitions by offering sustainable goods and services.

With the aim of addressing the problems identified and proposing appropriate solutions, the European Commission initiated and adopted the Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP) in December 2021. This plan needs to be adopted by other EU institutions in the next few years since it includes a variety of measures and policies in favour of the social economy sector. The European context had clearly showed a real necessity to embrace social economy in the daily activities of each Member State at national, regional, and local levels. Three main areas were identified by the European Commission in the SEAP in order to stimulate the promotion and the development of social economy at EU level. They are as follow: business environment; opportunities and building capacity; awareness and recognition.

Firstly, the business environment concerns the overall framework at EU level by developing coherent policy and legal frameworks through the consideration of the national context, the diversity of the legal forms covered by the social economy and the needs. The enhancement of SRPP and the public financial support are also part of the business environment point in order to facilitate social enterprises in the access to markets and to include social and environmental objectives. The promotion of social economy at regional and local levels is another point that the European Commission mentioned. Indeed, social economy is an

² Factsheet: Social Economy Action Plan (2021) <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en>
EU-28 includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, and United Kingdom



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important tool to the local economic development in order to revitalise European rural areas and to foster inclusive, sustainable and resilience society.

Secondly, the opportunities and building capacity for social economy entities include business support and capacity building as social economy actors have entrepreneurial characteristics with a sustainable dimension for the development of jobs and growth. There is a specific focus on promoting the social entrepreneurship among young people and some vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, low-skilled adults, migrants, ex-prisoners, persons with disabilities and other people often discriminated in the labour market. The promotion and development are possible whether adequate access to finance at EU and national level is implemented. Therefore, there is a need to improve the access to financing through new mechanisms, an improved understanding of social impact measurement and complement financial instruments. Moreover, social economy and its actors contributes to obtain a fair green and digital transition by offering sustainable practices and services. The idea is to enhance social innovation and to maximise this contribution by boosting the green and digital capacities of social enterprises at regional and local level through work with public authorities and partnerships between different sectors.

And thirdly, the focus is the enhancement of awareness and recognition of the social economy and its potential. The main objectives are to promote the social economy and to increase the visibility of its different actors among the public, including vulnerable groups, in order to address the positive impact by adopting social economy in the daily work routine. Besides, key existing data are often incomplete or do not reflect the reality of entities working in the field of social economy. Therefore, it is crucial to obtain complete data to help its awareness and recognition.

These three main areas above mentioned outline the European approach on social economy and the needs at this level. Besides, it is also essential to consider the situation of the social economy in the specific local context in order to understand the local background and the particular needs of the different stakeholders involved in the field of social economy to better address them. This is the reason why this analysis has been carried out: to better tailor the next actions of the BREED project, including the implementation of social local missions (D2.2 Report on the Transnational social mission) and the drafting of local social economy action plans (D2.3 Compendium of guidelines for the development of the social action plans).



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4. Social economy at regional and local level

4.1. Knowledge and working in the field of social economy

Knowledge of the social economy is an essential starting point for local and regional communities to promote and develop actions in line with the principles of this form of economy. Indeed, these actions can have a positive impact as they respond to specific community needs while supporting a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable living and working environment. Overall, social economy is known by the private and public sectors in Portugal and Italy, while a lack of awareness is felt in both sectors in Greece. One can distinguish a certain disparity and heterogeneity in Spain since public authorities state knowledge of the social economy whereas most private sector organisations express the opposite.

The private structures in Italy, Portugal and half of them in Spain working on social economy focus on social inclusion, work integration of vulnerable people, support to social enterprises and social innovation. The private sector can have a wide scope of actions due to the involvement of the public sector in Spain and Portugal in the promotion and development of social economy at regional and local level. Indeed, public authorities in Portugal claim to deal with social economy by supporting social organisations and associations with the aim to promote their development and involvement. The situation is almost identical in Spain, with a specific focus on European projects to create and develop social enterprises. Although public entities familiar with the social economy are not in majority in Greece, they operate in the fields of employment of persons with disabilities, education, culture and sport. However, private organisations in the same country do not concretely opt for actions following social economy.

There are two main reasons for the large number of activities related to the social economy. The first is the nature of the private structures as they include mostly social cooperatives, associations and non-profit organisations in Italy and Portugal. The second reason is the knowledge of social economy. When it is known and understood by the public authorities and the private sector, the promotion and development of social economy activities increase. However, exceptions can emerge in Italy where the public sector does not carry out as many actions in this field, although they are aware. Furthermore, some private structures in Greece claim to have difficulties for reasons of sustainability, considered as an obstacle for the deployment of activities.



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4.2. Sector of activity and social economy

A large part of the private entities, in the four participant countries, is coming from the sectors of agriculture, culture, sport, youth, education, hotel business, social services with some specifics on telecommunication, building industry, bank and legal services (e.g., Greece) or training, beauty industry, circular economy (e.g., Spain). When it comes to the public entities, they are mainly working on the field of education, social services and youth.

The relevance of the sectors of activity of the private and public organisations is demonstrated in several common fields of action. These are the response to the needs of the local and regional communities and, notably, to the specific needs of the work integration of vulnerable groups or the maintenance and creation of activities for capacity buildings. In addition, the creation of jobs, the promotion of social cohesion and the training related to digital transformation, entrepreneurship and technical skills are also mentioned. The public sector in Italy and Spain also emphasises the importance of their role through European projects, funding opportunities and the development of regional and local policies to promote and implement the social economy through spaces and opportunities. Furthermore, the focus is on the development of cooperation by public authorities with youth and voluntary organisations in Greece and Portugal to operate social structure for disadvantaged groups.

In a fairly general way, most of actors belonging to the private sector are not aware of the business and work opportunities in the field of social economy in their region. Some think that there are no opportunities in this sense (e.g., Portugal) or very few opportunities (e.g., Spain, Italy). Nevertheless, several sectors of activity are globally considered as opportunities such as agriculture, social services, energy, crafts, training, sport and education. The creation and development of associations, cooperatives and other forms are also seen as opportunities for the integration of disadvantaged people. Emphasis is also placed on the creation of employment grants and exchanges, as well as the development and implementation of methodologies to evaluate the socio-economic impact of social economy enterprises and structures.

Although there are business and work opportunities, private organisations did not think to convert their business sector during the pandemic. Some have made internal changes due to the health context such as the distance training and new ways of working (e.g., Portugal, Italy). According to the findings of the survey, only one private structure in Spain decided to adapt to the circumstances of the pandemic situation and to open a store selling bulk product as it gathers important social and environmental values.



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According to the public sector, social economy offers various work opportunities for local and regional communities in all participants countries. Indeed, it provides a direct and reliable solution to the new challenges through direct and indirect resources on which to base a potentially effective social and work integration. This entails more inclusive job opportunities, vibrant entrepreneurship, the creation and the development of cooperatives and work initiatives in public and private social work. Some sectors of activities in Spain are more likely to include work opportunities such as agriculture and energy. Due to the industrial characteristic of the region in Portugal, many opportunities revolve around the industrial sector, especially the furniture sector. However, one can observe that a large part of the public sector in Greece have no knowledge about the related work opportunities.

4.3. Networking

Networking is seen as an indispensable tool for the exchange of ideas, opportunities, and the building of a solid network according to the sectors of activity. It also allows for a more precise development of favourable relationships necessary for the promotion and development of the social economy at regional and local level. In general terms, networking sessions are not set up and/or not developed enough by the local public authorities of the four participating countries. This lack of networking moments is therefore a main obstacle for the deployment of social economy and its impact on the regional and local communities.

A large majority of private organisations do not participate in public networking initiatives dedicated to the social economy in Portugal, Spain and Italy, while in Greece none do. Although very few participate in networking events organised by local public actors, the emphasis in Italy, for example, is particularly on initiatives proposed by the private sector such as the conference "Resilea: The community does business" having as its goal the creation of a network aimed at developing a systemic approach for the social-ecological resilience of the island. However, some partnerships between the two sectors are also seen as opportunities of networking (e.g., Portugal, Spain).

On the public sector side, the entities in the four countries also state a lack of networking sessions in the field of social economy. Some local and regional initiatives are implemented such as "Paredes de Inclusão" allows networking (e.g., Portugal) and training and workshops (e.g., Spain). In addition, BREED is considered as an impetus for social economy networking by the Greek public authorities. Both sectors emphasise the urgency of developing such initiatives in order to allow enriching meetings and exchanges.



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4.4. Financial and human resources

Human resources are an essential element of the internal organisation of any structure, whether in the private or public sector. Indeed, this internal aspect allows for the development of activities and the achievement of objectives previously set by the entities. In addition, financial resources are mainly concerned with the private sector due to the lack of funding and certain issues regarding their sources of revenue. This is an element to be considered as it has a direct impact on the human capacity of private organisations in terms of the number of employees for example.

The main challenges faced by the private sector in terms of human and financial resources are quite diverse and depend on the national situation. In Portugal, one can observe the absenteeism of employees, the difficulty to reach a certain financial stability and a dependence on the beneficiaries as well as projects. Private organisations in Greece claim that their main sources of revenue are from the sales of goods and services and some European and national grants, while mentioning the climate crisis and the growth of the business as challenges. As for Spain, some structures face difficulties to hire employees as their financial resources are scarce at the moment. The private structures in Portugal, Italy and Greece as well as the public authorities in Portugal do not employ people in vulnerable situations. Besides, in some private organisations in Spain, one can notice young people, women over 45 years old, persons from family living in depressed areas and migrants. The situation seems to be more positive in the public sector in Italy, Spain and Greece as some structures allow for the professional integration of disadvantaged groups, particularly people with disabilities.

Overall, the public entities in the four participating countries do not specifically have an officer working on the social economy nor the employees are aware of this information. However, some departments of local and regional authorities are working on social economy. These departments can be the Social Action Department (e.g., Portugal) or the Economic Promotion Department, the Employment, Training and Entrepreneurship Department (e.g., Spain) or Public Benefit Enterprise of the Municipality of Katerini (e.g., Greece) which contribute to the social and economic development. Having a public officer in charge mainly of the social economy could indeed be useful and is considered as a positive point in order to promote a better dynamism between the sectors and further develop the social economy. However, there are cautions that the current conditions do not allow for such a position to be put in place due to the complexities of the regulations (e.g., Italy) and the small size of the entity and the respective coverage area (e.g., Portugal).



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4.5. Public support

Due to the legal nature of private structures and their difficulties in terms of financial resources, public support is one of the most important opportunities for those who wish to promote and develop activities. Overall, most public authorities do not have a specific action plan for the promotion of social economy, although at local level in Spain and Portugal, this is much more developed. Particular emphasis is placed on the transversal aspect, the creation of jobs and the desire to achieve a more sustainable economic and social model. Besides, many support measures, including financial ones, are put in place in the territories concerned. They are aimed at the creation of social enterprises, the professional integration of vulnerable groups, entrepreneurship, but also specific sector of activities such as recycling, renewable energy and training. Although measures are proposed to support the development of organisations and/or the employment of vulnerable people, a majority of the private sector does not receive support in Italy, Portugal, and Greece. On the other hand, the Spanish structures are still attentive to public grants and proposals from the EU, national and regional public authorities. Due to a lack of support, private organisations in Italy are diversifying their sources of revenues by opting for private funds.

When it comes to the SRPP, public sector employees do not know whether their entity offers this alternative procurement in Portugal and Spain, while a majority of them are not involved in Italy. Furthermore, it is important to underline that a large proportion in Greece are not familiar with the term "socially responsible public procurement". However, one can report some situations where it has been used in Spain. This statement corresponds to the situation mentioned by the private sector. Indeed, the latter has not predominantly participated and/or won reserved contracts in SRPP, but some may join in implementing a programme on sustainable development goals (e.g., Spain). As regards the possibilities of using this form of public procurement in the near future, a lack of knowledge about it is mostly observed in the four countries, although the public sector in Italy is strongly considering using it.

Obstacles do not necessarily make it easy to engage in SRPP. One can observe that the identification of difficulties differs between the private and the public sector. Indeed, bureaucracy was identified as the biggest obstacle to concrete participation due to a lack of understanding and uncertainty, whereas the public sector recognised a lack of knowledge on the subject. For the other barriers identified by the private sector, bureaucracy is followed by a lack of knowledge, legal barriers, and the time spent. As for the public sector, the difficulties come from the legislation and the culture but also stem from a budgetary counter-indication



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and public perception (e.g., Portugal), a lack of human resources (e.g., Greece) and the type of activities and a lack of networking (e.g., Italy). These elements do not necessarily allow for the further promotion and development of SRPP.

4.6. Partnership

Partnership is another element to consider when it comes to carrying out actions to promote and develop a particular theme. Indeed, it offers facilities, knowledge and a greater impact that would be indispensable for social economy. Cooperation between the public and private sectors is still generally difficult in the participating countries. Although partnerships are created and developed through programmes and projects, the majority of private organisations do not collaborate with regional and local public entities in Portugal, Italy and Spain. As for the private sector structures in Greece, none of them has cooperated nor is currently cooperating with the public authorities. A lack of information regarding the knowledge of a possible partnership stands out for both sectors in Greece.

As for the public sector, the situation is different as the majority of public entities claim to cooperate with private structures in the field of the social economy notably through the purchase of sustainable products (e.g., Portugal) and the promotion of projects and programmes as well as support to cooperatives for example (e.g., Spain). On the other hand, Italy is in the middle ground as most public authorities pointed out an absence of partnerships with the private sector, while in Greece no cooperation is reported or employees do not know whether such a partnership has developed in their region.

Overall, the private and public sectors are keen to continue their various partnerships in Portugal and Spain. There is therefore a strong will on both sides to promote and develop the social economy in their communities. Indeed, the private and public structures are well aware that a close cooperation would be more than beneficial to meet the needs of communities and to exchange good practices and knowledge. Thus, this partnership would further support and encourage sustainable objectives. In the Italian context, the private sector is open to further develop their partnership with local and regional public administrations to implement sustainable and inclusive actions and to increase opportunities to work. Although a majority of them is also in favour of developing this cooperation, there is a certain reluctance concerning the conditions of the partnership. The situation in Greece is quite different as the caution are from the private sector while the public authorities are willing to initiate cooperation due to flexibility and effectivity of private structures to achieve a positive impact.



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5. A national overview

5.1. Greece

In the framework of this report, in total, 13 interviews with the public sector and 14 with the private sector were conducted by the Municipality of Katerini. The private sector mainly included a variety of organisations such as banking institution, hotels and small-medium sized enterprises. They are mainly from building industry, education, hotel business, machinery industry, law and bank services, and telecommunication. For the public sector, they are from the municipality of Katerini, university, electricity distribution network operator, etc.

Overall, 61,5% of the public sector had no knowledge of social economy while the latter is less known in the private sector with a percentage of 78,6%. One can observe that social economy was defined as an alternative form of economy, an entrepreneurship that equally includes and provides employment opportunities to all social groups, a solidarity economy which does not set profit as its own goal or an economy covering the needs of the weakest social stratum. In terms of working with social economy, a clear difference has been seen between the two sectors. The private sector is not dealing with social economy. The principles of the business ethics are quite similar to the values of social economy but the sustainability reasons, the lack of knowledge and the company's scope are mentioned as key issues. The situation is different in the public sector as some work on the employment of people with disabilities, social clinic, and counselling centre for abused women.

The sectors of activity of private and public structures can be relevant for social economy through the work integration of disadvantaged groups. This integration may include unskilled workers, people with disabilities, Roma people, immigrants, and refugees. It is possible through a close cooperation of companies and social enterprises, the creation of local social solidarity networks and the involvement of voluntary organisations. Therefore, the idea is to provide the necessary resources to improve the life and the quality of life of these persons. Usually, public and private entities are not aware of work opportunities in their region.

When it comes to the networking initiatives, one can observe that not many networking activities are implemented by public authorities and this lack of networking is mirrored in the private sector. However, BREED is perceived as an impetus to implement activities and as a networking opportunity for social economy actors. With respect to financial and human resources, the private sector affirms that the sources of their revenue are from the sales of goods and services and some European and national grants. One can note that an officer is



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not exclusively working on social economy. Regarding the work integration of disadvantaged groups, it does not appear in the private sector while a difference can be observed in the public sector since persons with disabilities may have an employment contract.

Overall, public support measures for the creation and the development of social enterprises are available through social benefit programmes and insurance contributions for the work integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market, especially persons with disabilities. Although some measures are in place, the private sector did not receive grants and supports. In addition, SRPP is not used by public administrations and private organisations. The combination of bureaucracy and a lack of knowledge are the key elements limiting the engagement and making the procedure difficult and time consuming. The other elements were as followed: legal obstacle, lack of human resources and cultural obstacle.

Finally, in the area of cooperation, the two sectors do not work closely together, but they show a certain level of willingness in order to initiate a collaboration. This one is intended to create more impact in society due to the flexibility and efficiency of the private sector to achieve sustainable missions. Although one can notice a positive aspect for future cooperation, there is still a certain level of mistrust from the side of some private organisations.

5.2. Italy

A total of 21 people were interviewed by the municipality of Alcamo, 12 from the private sector and 9 from the public sector such as local public entities and local schools. Their sectors of activity are mainly social services, environment and territorial protection. Among the private structures, we find mostly cooperatives, non-profit organisations, non-recognised associations, and small and medium-sized enterprises. Their activities are based on agriculture, youth, education, sport, culture and fair trade.

Overall, social economy is known by private organisations at 91.67% and also by public entities at 88.90%. It is defined as a response to specific needs and challenges, or an economic activity for the general interest, including social clauses and common values and ethical principles. Due to the nature of private structures, most work in the social economy. Indeed, this work is characterised by support to social enterprises, inclusion of disadvantaged people, job creation, fair trade, awareness raising, and trainings. Some who do not work in this field explain organisational difficulties. As for the public sector, half do not know exactly whether public entities deal with social economy, but for concerned structures, the work focuses on



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people with disabilities and the social inclusion of various groups, and their sector of activity could be relevant by providing public funds and creating more partnerships with cooperatives.

Regarding the work opportunities for social economy in the region, local public authorities state that the third sector is an essential part of opportunities, followed by the creation of start-ups for the development of the private sector in the green economy and the creations of jobs. The private sector has a mixed view of business and work opportunities. Indeed, some are unaware of the opportunities in the social economy field while others claim opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and other forms of services to family farms. Many did not convert or did not think of converting their sector of activity, following the pandemic, as they did not see the point and their activities had already been going on for several decades. However, there was one case where an industrial sector moved into consulting and others simply modified their structure to include social principles.

In terms of networking, the private sector does not generally participate in sessions organised by public entities but would be interested. Some private structures take the initiative on their own to meet potential actors, and those who do participate feel that there is a need to develop them further. This situation is mirrored among public organisations as they do not necessarily propose such initiatives but are quite motivated to do it. For the human resources, the public sector does not have a person in charge of social economy, but it is perceived as useful with some reluctance due to the complexity of the regulations. Concerning the disadvantaged workers under contracts, some public entities employ them, but the situation is different in the private sector as the majority does not.

Public authorities do not propose an action plan including measures for the promotion of the social economy in their region. Although subsidies are proposed for the integration of vulnerable people and the creation and development of social enterprises, there is still a lack of opportunities and knowledge on the part of public authorities. In a fairly general way, the private sector does not receive public financial support and turns to private funders like foundations and religious organisations. In addition, they have not participated and/or won reserved contracts in SRPP. This situation also occurs in the public entities with a lack of knowledge about this point, but they would like to use it by considering careful conditions and the difficulties in the regulations. Other obstacles were cultural obstacles, the type of activities and the lack of presentation by the mass media. As for the private sector, the main difficulties in accessing this type of procurement are a lack of knowledge, bureaucracy and legal obstacles. Bureaucracy complicates the submission of proposals as it makes it very time-



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consuming, and sometimes it is slow and also unclear and uncertain on how the services will be implemented.

A cooperation between the public and private sector is not developed and hardly exists in the field of social economy. Some private structures highlight the needs to have it and they fill this gap with partnerships with the private sector, but this is not considered as enough. The organisations working with public authorities collaborate on some projects on well-being and health. Both sectors are generally in favour of cooperation in order to acquire new skills, to implement sustainable and inclusive development directives, to increase the opportunities of the community and to respond to the needs of communities and disadvantaged groups. However, some public entities are still reluctant, particularly with regard to the conditions of the partnership and, on the private sector side, operating system of public authorities causes a difficulty to work together.

5.3. Portugal

Data collection was carried out by the municipality of Paredes, including 12 surveys from private sector and 5 from the public sector. Non-profit organisations and associations, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives, individual companies, private institutions participated as private sector in the realisation of this report. Their activities are mainly based on agriculture, textile, social services, education, training, consultancy, culture and sport. As for the public sector, they are public entities, councils and institutions and are involved in education, management and the promotion and protection of children and youth.

The entities of the public sector have a knowledge of social economy highlighting social and economic activities for the general interest of society and the sustainable development of enterprises. The public entities claim to work in the field of social economy through the support of social associations. Regarding the private sector, social economy is not also a discovery since it is defined as a response to various challenges, notably social exclusion. This sector is particularly involved in innovation and qualification of the social sector, social entrepreneurship and social inclusion.

Thus, private entities state to have a positive impact by considering the needs of the community, providing social responses for vulnerable groups, offering training in digital, entrepreneurship and technical skills and developing their activities through the creation of jobs and the promotion of social cohesion. As for the public sector, it ensures an impact with a focus on youth and the active promotion of solidarity in order to contribute to the economic



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and social development of society. The industrial character of the region with the location of many factories is considered as a work opportunity for public entities. However, the position of the private sector for this point is not unanimous. Structures claiming work opportunities list education, training and sport. In the field of social economy in the region, the private sector identifies many possibilities such as training for children and young people, the creation of job opportunities, the development of associations and local production. None of the companies have changed their sector of activity due to the pandemic but some internal changes have been made in working methods and distance training.

In terms of networking, the public sector implements initiatives to foster the development of social economy in the region through projects like "Paredes de Inclusão" in the field of equality, sport, health. However, a large majority of private organisations do not participate in these networking moments. Nevertheless, some of them are involved in initiatives proposed by public authorities through partnerships and campaigns to fight against poverty and social exclusion. With respect to financial and human resources in the private sector, emphasis was placed on the challenges faced by organisations such as the sources of revenue, the search for sponsors and the fight against absenteeism. Some private and public organisations employ disadvantaged people in order to promote social inclusion. Besides, most of public entities do not have an officer working in the field of social economy, but some have a department dedicated to social action. The creation of this job position is well perceived by a majority as it could be useful to further stimulate relations between organisations and to promote the social economy although some report difficulties such as geographical areas and the small size of public local entities.

Action plans are implemented by public authorities related to projects and financial support is offered for the business creation, the integration of vulnerable groups, the entrepreneurship through the national public employment service measures. Some private structures therefore receive public support. Public sector employees are not aware of the participation of public sector organisations in SRPP, while very few private sector organisations have participated and won reserved contracts. Obstacles to the practice of this form of procurement are numerous. Approximately 60% of the public sector report a lack of knowledge followed by legal and cultural barriers and budgetary constraints. The emphasis is on a necessary to change public opinion through social, economic and legal levels. Concerning the obstacles expressed by the private sector, one can observe that 50% state bureaucracy as a central element followed by a lack of knowledge and an absence of offers in terms of socially responsible products and services.



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Overall, collaboration between the public and private sectors in the field of social economy exists in the region through Family Support Component, social insertion income and private institutions of social solidarity. The private structures which are not collaborating with the public sector would like to develop networking and partnerships to establish a close relationship. Indeed, exchanges would promote the social economy and add value to their activities. The social economy also plays an indispensable role for the needs of the weakest sectors of society. Regarding the public entities, they wish to continue their collaboration with the private sector by emphasising the exchange of knowledge and experience in order to have access to responses that are difficult to access for them.

5.4. Spain

27 interviews were conducted by the Ribera Alta association of municipalities as part of the data collection, including 12 from the public sector and 15 from the private sector. For the first sector mentioned, the participants were particularly representative of local public authorities, the Valencian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, voluntary association of municipalities and also political and institutional structures. Regarding the private sector, they are from predominantly from small and medium enterprises, followed by associations. Their sector of activity is quite diverse as it includes agriculture, training, horticulture, metallurgical industry, catering, hostelry, recycling, beauty salon and bulk.

60% of public sector participants have knowledge of social economy as they are involved in social and economic development projects, but also in training and through European projects. They are supporting the creation of social enterprises and adequate policies to promote the social economy and partnerships. As for the private sector, some are working on social exclusion, the work integration and circular economy. However, some structures define their activities more in relation to the economy of the common good. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship is perceived as a work opportunity according to the public sector. However, the above result is not in line with the private sector one. Although some mention the presence of opportunities for social economy, others do not know what the possibilities are.

The public sector proposes some networking initiatives related to environment and common good, solidarity economy network and training through the Territorial pact for employment. Besides, one can observe that a part of the private structures does not participate in the networking moments organised by the public authorities while some establish themselves networking sessions. In terms of human resources for the public sector, all do not have a department or a person in charge of the field of social economy. Some of them have a



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department in charge such as the economic promotion department, or the employment, training and entrepreneurship department. Regarding the work integration of disadvantaged people, some are working as a temporary interim public worker and they can obtain contract in some private organisations. Besides, private structures have some issues concerning their financial situation. The sources of their revenue are from the sales of good and services or they are scarce to hire employees.

Public authorities propose action plans for the promotion of social economy by implementing economic activities which generates employment at the local level in the domain of trainings, recycling policies and renewable energies. Financial measures are also proposed indirectly or through European projects and private organisations are attentive to public grants and proposal at regional, national and European level. However, SRPP is not well known by the public sector as the majority do not know exactly whether their structure is involved in it. Only few public entities have already used this kind of procurement to incorporate social and ecological impact in their activities. Overall, the private sector has not obtained reserved contracts with an exception of tender to implement a sustainable development goals program. Although participation of this public procurement remains minimal, both sectors have no idea of the barriers that might limit it.

Finally, the collaboration among the public and the private sectors is a reality. They cooperate to support each other although some private structures state a lack of partnership with public entities. The latter cooperate with cooperatives working on agriculture and energy sectors through an exchange of information regarding the availability aids, encouragement, and support. Both sectors wish to continue and further develop their cooperation through projects having social, economic, and environmental impact. Besides, the private sector highlights the necessity of the public authorities to collaborate with small-sized organisations and enterprises.



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6. Conclusion

As shown in this report, social economy is trying to find its place at European level, but also at national, regional and local level. A social economy action plan was established by the European Commission, in December 2021, to respond to the specific needs and many challenges faced by communities. It foresees various different actions to boost the social economy. The aim of this report was to give an overview of the context of the social economy in four communities, namely Katerini (Greece), Alcamo (Italy), Paredes (Portugal) and Ribera Alta (Spain). By identifying their needs, the idea is to increase the capacity of local public administrations, social economy organisations and civil society to foster social change and stimulate the conditions for social economy.

Overall, social economy is known by the private and public sectors whereas in certain regions, this is not developed. Social inclusion, work integration of disadvantaged people, development of social enterprises and education are the main activities of public and private organisations target in the survey. The sectors of activity of the structures presented in this report (section 4.2) allow for insights on work opportunities in the field of social economy. They also make it easier to consider long-term perspectives with a particular emphasis on the professional integration of vulnerable groups, job creation, and entrepreneurship.

Due to the general lack of networking, this was recognised as a fundamental need to address by both the private and the public sector. Indeed, networking moments are urgently required to meet structures working in the same sector with identical values. This would facilitate the promotion and the further development of social economy in the regions, to exchange on opportunities and to create new partnerships. As far as cooperation is concerned, it is not sufficiently developed, and a lack of collaboration has a negative impact on the actions. However, there is a strong wish to create or strengthen partnerships between the two sectors to implement joint projects.

Besides, public and private structures also have a few components of the staff belonging to disadvantaged groups, but there is still an effort to be made. Departments working on social, entrepreneurship and economy deal with the missions of social economy. In addition, an agent in charge of social economy will be well received by the public authorities, even if doubts are raised about the legal feasibility and the small size of the entities. The financial resources are also an essential point since they encounter difficulties that negatively impact the development of the private sector. Thus, public financial support is crucial for them. Financial measures are partially proposed (section 4.5) by public authorities, but they are still



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insufficient. Most of the private sector has difficulties in accessing them and some of them prefer to use private funds. Socially responsible public procurement is also problematic for reasons of bureaucracy, knowledge, understanding and accessibility.



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