baSE

Blueprint for advanced skills
& trainings in the social economy

baSE Model of Social Economy Enterprise as an Example of a Sustainable Business Model

Deliverable 2.1

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Table of content

Acronyms

baSE – Blueprint for advanced skills and trainings in the social economy
EC – European Commission
NPO – Non Profit Organisation
EU – European Union
SE – Social Economy
SEO(s) – Social Economy organization(s)

1. Introduction

The urge to transit toward a more inclusive, fit for the digital age and climate-neutral economy has been widely acknowledged. To move toward a more sustainable life for all, since 2017, the European Commission (hereafter EC) has released its Green Deal[1], its digital strategy[2] as well as the social rights action plan3 (2020 Climate & Energy Package, 2020; 2030 Climate & Energy Framework, 2020; 2050 Long-Term Strategy, 2018; Europe's Digital Decade | Shaping Europe's Digital Future, 2023).

To tackle the green and digital transitions, as well as the inclusivity challenges, novel approaches are necessary. New business models are needed. The kind that can maintain human impacts within the environmental boundaries of a finite planet while at the same time building a fair and more inclusive economy for all.

As Social Economy Organizations (hereafter SEOs) are driven by social or environmental aims, they are at the start of many innovations created to supply sustainable goods and services or to bridge the employment or digital gap for those far from the market or technologies. For instance, the Social Economy ecosystem includes organizations producing and distributing renewable energy, local and organic food, low carbon transport solutions, as well as care of the elderly, access to culture, early childhood care, and the list goes on. As such, SEOs are known for their ability to answer social or environmental needs unmet by mainstream business or governments (Borzaga et al., 2016; Mertens, 2010).

But more fundamentally, Social Economy ecosystem encompasses a large and rich diversity of emblematic business models that can help meet the challenges ahead. Indeed, beyond their social or environmental mission, some of the specific features that lie at the heart of Social Economy (such as the primacy of social aim, the limitation of profit distribution, as well as their local anchorage and their democratic and participatory mechanisms) contribute to the emergence of innovative solutions suggesting new ways of working, producing and consuming. For this reason, it is imperative to study inspiring SEOs and learn from the specificities of their business models in order to progress toward a more sustainable and inclusive economy for all.

However, despite the opportunities and solutions that it offers, Social Economy ecosystem is also facing challenges on the path toward transition. In this context, the recent "*pathway for the green and digital transition of the 'proximity and social economy' ecosystem*"[4] presents 14

[1] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_fr
[2] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en
[3] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en
[4] https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/proximity-and-social-economy-transition-pathway_en

action areas and 30 concrete actions for the transition pathway (European Commission, 2022). During the co-creation process that led to this transition pathway, stakeholders agreed upon the key importance of addressing existing green and digital skills shortages while preventing exclusion of workers in a transforming economy. The need for re-skilling and up-skilling strategies is also emphasized in the 'Social Economy Action Plan'[5] as it creates opportunities for SEOs to develop (European Commission, 2021a).

Indeed, over the past decade, a set of ground-breaking, emerging technologies have signalled the start of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is massively disrupting skills and competences needs across a broad range of industries and geographies. *"New data from the Future of Jobs Survey suggests that on average 15% of a company's workforce is at risk of disruption in the horizon up to 2025, and on average 6% of workers are expected to be fully displaced."* (World Economic Forum, 2020, p. 8).

When it comes to the green transition, there is probably two trends to consider. On one hand, as the number of SEOs driven by environmental purpose is growing, the SE demand for workers with green skills and aptitudes increases as well. This trend requires re-skilling or up-skilling effort as well as facilitation of workers reallocation for those who will lose their jobs because of the green transition (i.e. workers in fossil fuel industries). *"The transition to environmentally sustainable and inclusive economies and societies cannot take place if the skills demanded by new jobs are not available in the labour market."*(International Labour Office, 2019, p. 25).

On the other hand, regardless of the sectors and the activities, all SEOs will need to integrate more sustainable practices to reduce their environmental impact (such as energy efficiency, low-impact mobility solution, waste management, etc.). *"The transition is therefore conditional on investment in training to develop skills to meet new requirements and avoid skills mismatches."*(International Labour Office, 2019, p. 25).

To ensure a just and inclusive transition to an environmentally sustainable economy with better-quality jobs, specific attention should be brought to establish an open and fair access to the acquisition of relevant skills. Inclusive competences are needed to design inclusive re-skilling or up-skilling policies but also at the level of employers and workers to implement inclusive workplace (International Labour Office, 2019).

Therefore, as social economy is not exempt from the need to re-skill or up-skill workforce to face digital, green and inclusivity challenges. It is necessary to support SEOs in particular by strengthening its human capital, through the design and offer of adapted curricula. *Developing and enhancing human skills and capabilities through education, learning and meaningful work are key drivers of economic success, of individual well-being and societal cohesion."*(World Economic Forum, 2020, p. 8).

[5] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en

For this reason, and on conjunction with the EC Pact of skills strategy[6], the baSE project aims at reinforcing the capacities of Social Economy (hereafter SE) and its human capital in key areas such as the digital and green transitions in which SEOs already have an important added value.

To reach this goal, the baSE project involves 25 partners (Social Economy Federations, Umbrella Organisations and support structures, higher education and Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, research institutions, and sector experts) from 10 European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain) forming an alliance for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills for the Social Economy and proximity ecosystem. More precisely, the baSE project will focus on skills mismatches for upskilling and reskilling of SE practitioners contributing to develop a new strategic approach (Blueprint) to sectoral cooperation on the offer of skills for new or updated occupational profiles in the SE sector.

This first and present project report has three primary objectives. First, advancing why SEO's models constitute a suitable avenue for fair and inclusive transition. Second, this report is setting the baSE project scope on which the partnership will further build on to determine the respective role of its human resources. And the third objective is to gather elements of context to build a common vision of current as well as future trends and needs that would give a window of opportunity for growth and sustainability of SEOs.

The report draws on academic literature as well as on 10 Country Fiches and 1 EU level Fiche that were compiled by project partners based on a common template. The content presented in these fact sheets results from partners' expertise and their work to summarize available (non-exhaustive) sources of information. We are confident that the complementarity of the partners' expertise and national context provide a significant overview of SE context, challenges, and opportunities for the future.

The report first starts by describing precisely the scope of the baSE project (section 2). Then, the non-exhaustive literature review summarized by the University of Liège (BE) will allow to define properly *what is Social Economy* (section 3) and to provide detailed arguments on *why Social Economy constitutes a suitable path toward fair and inclusive transitions* (section 4). Section 5 resumes the country fiches to give a general overview of *Social Economy present and future trends* across EU and more specifically within the 10 countries forming the baSE consortium. Sections 6 and 7 are respectively focusing on energy and care areas of activities. They provide descriptions for policy context, an overview of SE presence as well as opportunities and challenges faced by SEOs in these fields of activity. The rationale behind this scope of study is presented in the next section.

[6] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en

2. baSE project scope

SEOs are present in all sectors of activity (mobility, health, tourism, retail, etc.) which, in terms of educational need, encompass all together an incommensurable variety of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and competences. However, the baSE project aims at strengthening SEOs for the unique set of skills that are at the heart of SE and that created the worthwhile added value to face the twin transition as well as inclusivity challenges. Consequently, the baSE project will not study the skills and training needs that are specifically related to one sector or another. In fact, other sectorial blueprints exist for that matter (i.e in automotive, defense, maritime technology, space, textile, clothing, leather & footwear, tourism, etc.). Rather the baSE project will focus on skills, knowledge, attitudes, and competences that are transversal to the whole SE ecosystem.

Having said that, to tackle the risk of cross-sectional results being not sufficiently extensive to provide details on skills needs at precise working levels (practitioner, manager, enablers), the the baSE consortium has decided to add thorough analysis of two sub-areas within SE: Care and Energy. As Figure 1 illustrated, it means that regarding day-to-day challenges, twin transition and inclusivity challenges, the baSE project will study skills and training needs that are common to all SEOs regardless of areas of activities. In addition, it will also question sectorial skills mismatches when it comes to energy and care sub-areas. This way the project will be able to provide new or updated occupational profiles and design relevant competence-based curricula.

With the prospect of making significant analysis, that will provide details on skills needs at various working levels (practitioner, manager, enablers), the consortium has decided on a twofold scope of analysis. On one hand, we will study skills and training needs at a transversal level, for all SE ecosystem regardless of areas of activities. On the other hand, we will question the skills mismatches in two sub-areas of SE, namely energy and care. With this focus we increase our chance to provide more detailed analysis with data, as much comparable as possible, across the 10 countries covered by the consortium.

In the context of the baSE project, SEOs operating in Care area are understood as SEOs providing high-quality and person-centred care services, affordable to all, regardless of age, gender or social status, with the aim to empower people to maintain their autonomy and live in dignity, exercise their human rights and prevent poverty and social exclusion. It includes childcare, long-term care of older persons or those with disabilities and healthcare, etc.

SEOs operating in Energy area are considered as SEOs in connection with engineering or organizational applications for Renewable Energy production, efficiency and distribution/consumption, energy devices production and energy waste management. They include SEOs from all economic sectors, active in production, recycling, reducing energy use

or using green energy where possible or linking energy producers and consumers together in mutual interdependence.

We chose care and energy based on several hypothesis suggesting that the two areas are complementary in terms of challenges and opportunities faced. Indeed, by studying SEOs in the energy area, our analysis should provide relevant information regarding an emergent sector of activity that is directly contributing to green transition. However, as it is emergent, "citizen energy communities" or "renewable energy communities" represent only a small part of social economy ecosystem and its development differ widely across the countries involved in the baSE project. In contrast, care is a historical segment of SE that is present in every partner's country. Usually, SEOs in care do not directly contribute to green transition, but they are very much concerned by re-skilling and upskilling process as they must transform internal practice toward more sustainability. Also, care analysis complements energy analysis as we forecast that SEOs in care will bring up interesting output when it comes to bridging the digital gap and inclusivity. This report aims also at presenting the relevant intelligence that verifying these hypotheses.

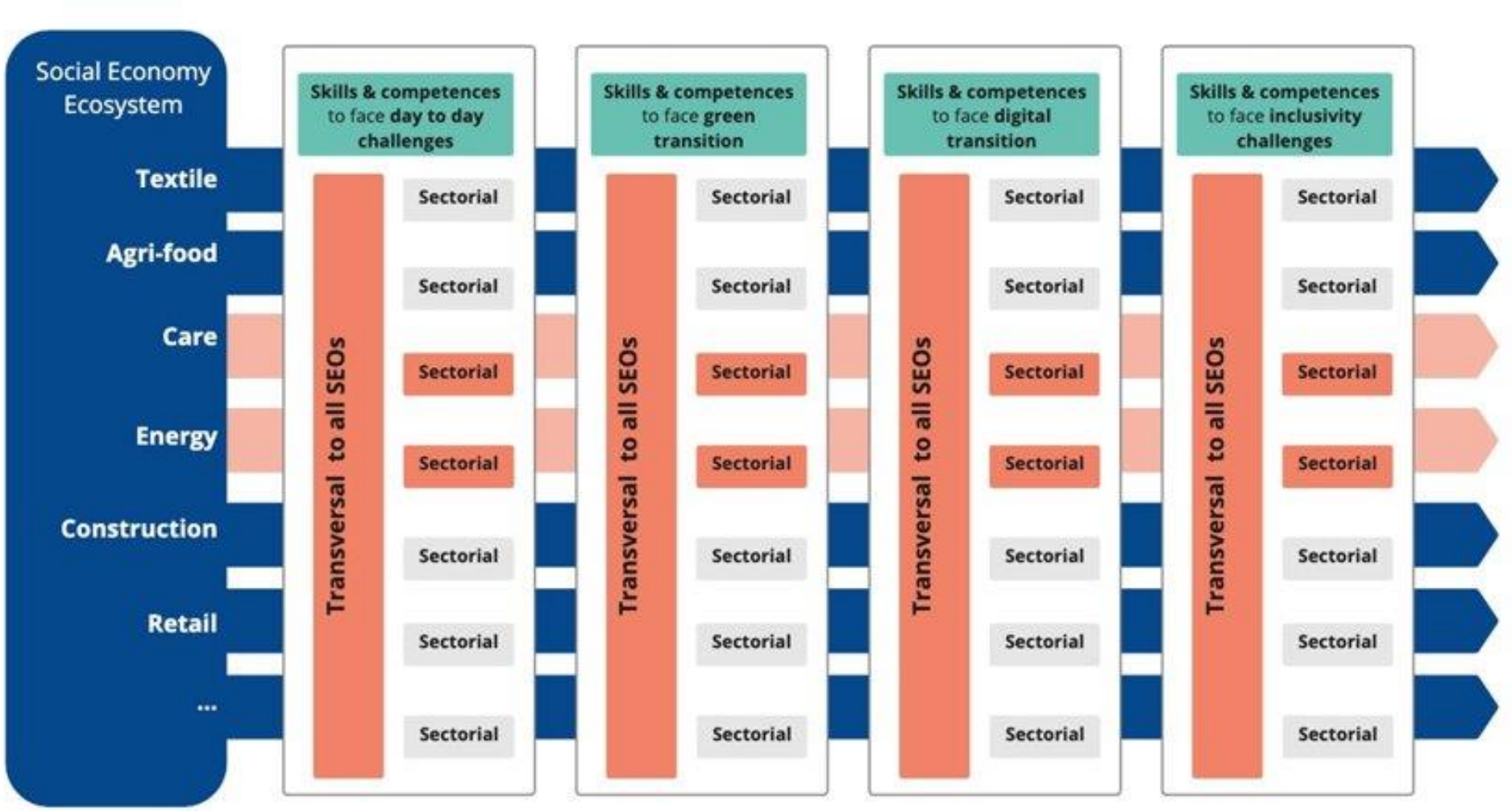

Figure 1 – Scope for baSE project (in red)

3. What is social economy?

The SE ecosystem comprises a wide range of organizations that comes in diverse legal forms (cooperative, non-profit and not-for-profit organization, mutual, foundations, limited liability companies, etc.) and that operates in various sectors of activities (agri-food, care, energy, construction, textile, home services, retail, finance, etc.). The commonality between SEOs – in other words, what defines the SE ecosystem – resides in specific features or practices that differentiate them from other conventional (or 'capitalist', see below) private enterprises or public organizations.

Neither academics nor practitioners agree on a single definition for SE. In the context of this work, we define SE as suggested by Social Economy Action Plan, through three criteria that Social Economy Organizations share (cf. Figure 2):

- The primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit;
- The reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users ("collective interest") or society at large ("general interest");
- Democratic and/or participatory governance.

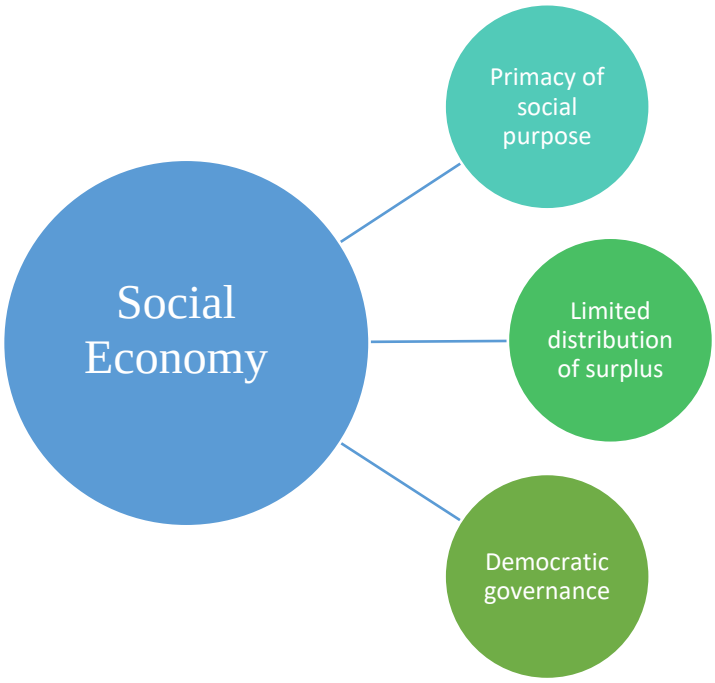

Figure 2 - Social Economy Criteria

First, SEOs are primarily driven by social purpose rather than financial maximization or investor enrichment. The social purpose can serve a mutual but non capitalist interest of the organization's members or users (such as providing health insurance, quality food, jobs, etc. to members), or/and it can serve the general interest of the society at large (such as protecting the environmental protection, reducing poverty, etc.).

Second, if profits are made (as they are not forbidden), for the most part they will be reinvested to support the social purpose rather than capitalist enrichment. And if a SEO chooses to distribute surpluses, it is strictly limited as people and the social purpose remain priorities.

Third, SEOs are also characterized by democratic and/or participatory governance. In capitalist organizations, investors are dividend recipients as well as decision-makers, and their decision power is proportionally linked to their capital contribution. In SEO, whatever the number and the variety of stakeholders, decision-making power is not based on capital ownership but is usually limited by the principle of "one person, one vote". Moreover, to gain stakeholders participation, SEO's governance usually goes beyond statutory requirements (Defourny & Nyssens, 2017; Petrella, 2017). Thereby, in addition to the formal governance bodies (i.e. general assembly and board of directors), other participatory mechanisms (e.g., committees, working groups, ad hoc governance bodies…) are usually implemented (Labie, 2005; Laville & Mahiou, 1985).

4. Why social economy constitutes a suitable path toward fair and inclusive transitions?

This section describes how the principles that define the SE, and more importantly their combination, provide an encouraging path toward fair and inclusive transitions.

First, SEOs are primarily driven by a social aim that is often aligned with societal challenges. Indeed, we find numerous SEOs developing innovative solutions to offer sustainable goods and services, such as local & organic food supply chains, alternative modes of transportation, repair solutions, etc. By answering to societal needs, SEOs contribute to a fair and inclusive transition.

Second, SEOs are not only driven by their social purpose, but they prioritize it over solely profit maximization. This means that SEOs are more incline to try innovative solutions even if they generate little revenue. And they do it while operating in the market and maintaining a high level of efficiency. Which in turn is achieved by considering not only economic impact but the overall social impact produced by the SEO (Yunus et al., 2021).

The combination of these two first features (social aim and its primacy over profit maximization) allows SEO to avoid more easily the traditional trade-offs between social, environmental and economic performance –or at least to deal with them more sustainably (Hudon & Huybrechts, 2017). Indeed, SEOs are better equipped for multi-objectives approach: "pursuing social and environmental goals within the context of an economically sustainable project" (Hudon & Huybrechts, 2017). In this line of reasoning, they are also more prone to experiment with complex innovative practices, than organizations constrained by profit maximization. That space for experimentation and innovation can lead to concrete solutions for sustainable development and therefore contribute to transition.

Third, SEOs are very often bottom-up and locally anchored organizations. As such, they are sometimes called 'grassroot innovation' as they respond to local issues, by taking into consideration the interests and values of local communities. As a result, there are SEOs delivering goods or services to places or people generally neglected by the market or the state. As stated by Yunus et al. (2021), "their proximity to the problems make them understand what works and what doesn't" and therefore particularly well suited to respond in appropriate manner.

Finally, SEOs are characterized by democratic and/or participative governance. But some of them show exemplary practices in terms of deliberation and self-governance. Through participatory and democratic mechanisms, they empower stakeholders that are not traditionally

given a voice and provide a major avenue toward social justice and social changes. Moreover, those practices of deliberation and self-governance allow developing highly appropriate answers to real societal needs.

Therefore, in view of the green and digital transition, SEOs present valuable advantages to help consider the undeniable related social dimension, which has been long underestimated.

The combination of the presented principles provides SEO the ability to identify local and specific emerging needs as well as the capacity to develop tailored solutions for local communities. Subsequently, SEOs can be seen as more efficient, equitable collectors, organizers and distributors of resources to progress toward transitions than other market driven organizations.

Apart from the benefits that SEOs bring toward transition, they also face some challenges that suggest more support should be brought to this ecosystem. Indeed, as suggested by Hudon & Huybrecht (2017), the road ahead for SE ecosystem involves scaling (or several SEOs sometimes face difficulties when replicating or growing) and long-term sustainability challenges (reaching financial sustainability in the long term, dependence on subsidies, etc.).

5. Past and present context for social economy in EU

Historical background

The modern SE movement was born in Europe in parallel to the industrial revolution (Britannica, 2023), although its origins can be tracked to the Middle Ages when the first charities, guilds and craftsmen associations were created.

Most researchers identify the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers as the first modern cooperative. The cooperative was funded in 1844, in Rochdale, near Manchester, by a group of 28 artisans working in the cotton mills, with the purpose of buying together 'honest food, at honest price'. The cooperative was guided by the Rochdale principles voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, cooperation among cooperatives, as well as concern for the community (Fairbairn, 1994).

After the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, these principles persisted, inspired the cooperative movement worldwide and eventually a revisited version became instituted by the International Cooperative Association (ICA). Beyond cooperatives, the Rochdale's principles influenced the whole SE's identity, since, in many European countries at the time, SE was rooted in the history of cooperative movement.

Examples of SEOs during industrial period in Europe are numerous. We know of cooperatives in the financial sector established in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1856. Countries such as France, Italy, Belgium (and probably others) counted large number of worker cooperatives defending workers' rights and promoting economic democracy. Different forms of associations were also emerging sometimes initiated by religious institutions (often the catholic church) to answer poverty and social challenges (this trend was particularly strong in Ireland, Italy and Belgium). It is also during this industrial period, that the first mutual societies were created to ensure a solidarity-based access to insurance and social protection by workers and their families (Monzón Campos & Chaves Ávila, 2013).

During the 19th and 20th centuries, the main SE entities (cooperatives, mutuals, associations, charities and foundations) significantly expanded across Europe and other regions of the world, becoming key actors of Europe's socio-economic landscape (Monzón Campos & Chaves Ávila, 2013).

The second half of the 20th century played a decisive role in catalysing the various experiences of associationism and cooperation, both religious ones and those with a secular imprint. Indeed,

each of these forms progressively saw the emergence of a various legal frameworks allowing their recognition. For instance, in France, the Waldeck Rousseau law of July 1, 1901 institutes associations while cooperatives were instituted by law in 1947. In Belgium, cooperatives are legally authorized since 1873 and the Law on association was promulgated in 1921 (ruling both associations and foundations) (Defourny, 2017).

In some countries, SE development was severely affected by communism. In Poland, after a strong cooperative development during the interwar period, cooperatives were abolished in the territories occupied by the third Reich (Frączak, 2006). Similarly, in Romania, associations and foundations ceased their activity during communist period (Petrescu et al., 2021; Petrescu & Lambru, 2019a). After the fall of communism, came a resurgence of SE entities except maybe for cooperatives. Their previous politicization and their often difficult financial situation caused negative connotations that sometimes persist to this day in popular perception (Frączak, 2006). Later, the accession of these territories to the EU in 2004 and 2007 strongly influenced SE development. The funding opportunities, and the EU agenda, enabled research and programs that helped increase SE visibility as well as legal framework creation.

At the European level, SEOs and particularly cooperatives, have been recognized since the funding of the European Economic Community in 1957 with the signing of the Treaty of Rome[7]. Article 58 of the treaty states: "Companies are defined as companies under civil or commercial law, including cooperative societies, and other legal persons under public or private law, with the exception of non-profit companies".

Policy framework in the 2000's

However, it wasn't until the 2000's that the term SE – in reference to the whole ecosystem it encompassed - would be integrated in national laws. This is, at least partly, the result of an increase in the number of SEOs as well as various actions taken at the EU level, for instance, the launch, in 1989, of the European Commission's first communication devoted to the SE, the regulation of the European Cooperative Society in 2003 and the European Commission communication on the Social Business Initiative (2011).

In fact, in addition to the separated laws existing on associations, cooperatives, mutuals, and other SE entities, several countries adopted an additional law defining and establishing the SE ecosystem and/or on social entrepreneurship: the Spanish Social Economy Law (2011), the Slovenian Act on Social Entrepreneurship (2011), the Netherlands Law on Social Enterprises (2012), the Portuguese National Law on the Social Economy (2013), the French National Law on Social and Solidarity Economy (2014), the Romanian Law on the Social Economy (2015), the Lithuanian Order on the 'Concept of Social Entrepreneurship (2015), the Luxembourg's law on Societal Impact Societies (2016), the Greek Law on Social and Solidarity Economy

[7] Treaty of Rome (EEC), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/treaty-of-rome

(2016), the Italian Code of the Third Sector (2017), or the Recent Polish Act on Social Economy (2022).

Currently and despite the recent evolution at national level and EU influence, the member state's legal framework remains very unequal across EU. Not all countries (i.e Germany, Ireland) dispose of a legal definition for the SE (as an ecosystem) nor for social enterprises. Also, when definitions exist, the defining criteria composing them vary as well across countries.

Most of the time, countries have legal frameworks regarding each entity composing SE (cooperatives, associations, foundations, etc.). In addition, states established certifications or accreditation related to some entities or some areas of activities. For instance, most countries adopted specific legislations regarding work integration social enterprises (WISEs) leading to specific certification for those. The German Renewable Energies Law is also worth noticing as it forms the legal basis for citizen-owned energy cooperatives that helped with their successful expansion, especially in the mid-2000s. Another example is the adoption of a special legislation for worker-owned enterprises in Spain.

On top of this, some countries grant a SE recognition through additional, mandatory or not, certifications or accreditations.

For instance, in Romania, Italy or Belgium, social enterprise certification can be voluntarily obtained by any private legal person that satisfies the associated principles. In contrast, SE accreditation in Greece is not only granted through the satisfaction of some SE principles, it can also depend on the field of activity or the organization's aim (i.e. inclusion of vulnerable groups, collectives of employees, etc.). In Ireland, the certification concerns charity only and Italy recognizes the 'third sector' organizations.

This overall diversity is rich as lot can be learned between European countries but it also makes it harder for comparison.

Statistical overview

Only a few countries from the baSE project's consortium are able to produce reliable statistics regarding their entire SE ecosystem. The diversity in legal forms and activities renders statistics calculation quite challenging. Indeed, since SE or social enterprises certifications – when existing - is often quite recent, and usually non-mandatory, many SEOs are not included in the associated databases. Therefore, to obtain relevant statistics one is often obligated to aggregate available statistics regarding legal entities that composed the SE, namely cooperatives, associations, foundations, mutuals, as well as data from other relevant legal status available to member states.

This method runs the risk of including organizations that do not satisfy some of SE principles (such as democratic criteria that are difficult to verify). It could also omit some *de facto* SEOs because they didn't obtain a specific status or because they were not even conscious of their adherence to SE ecosystem.

For instance, Romania disposes of a social enterprises label that should help evaluate the importance of its SE ecosystem. However, they estimated that only 0,9% of SEOs are certified social enterprises (Petrescu et al., 2021; Vamesu, 2022). The same situation prevails in Slovenia, where the registered social enterprises employ 0.045% of the active Slovenian population while the estimated effective SE employs a higher share of the working population – 0.268% – with revenues equivalent to 0.269% of GDP (excluding companies for persons with disabilities that employ 1.37% of the active population) (European Commission, 2019). In contrast, in Greece, according to the General Register held by the Directorate of Social and Solidarity Economy[8], the number of registered SEOs is 2281. Yet, 438 are either named as 'inactive', 'temporarily deleted', or 'permanently deleted'.

Countries as France and Belgium produce more accurate data on the SE (including number of units and employees per economic sector) through their SE observatories. The European Commission has recently published a call for tenders aiming at 'Improving the Socio-economic Knowledge of the Proximity and SE ecosystem'.

Currently, according to the latest EU available data (2016), the SE accounts for 2.8 million entities (mostly cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations and social enterprises), employing 13.6 million people (i.e. 6.3% of the EU's working population), and mobilizing more than 82.8 million volunteers. According to the same source, there are 232 million members of cooperatives, mutuals, and similar entities.

Generally non-profit organizations, associations, foundations and mutuals have a higher share among SEOs both in numbers of employees as in revenue. In contrast, cooperatives are usually less numerous, but their employment rate is often higher. For instance, in Romania, associations and foundations represent the vast majority of the SE ecosystem but cooperatives employ around a quarter of SE workers (Vamesu, 2022).

In terms of geographical distribution, the SE is very heterogeneously developed in the EU, where it represents between 0.6% and 10% of all jobs across member states (European Economic and Social Committee. & CIRIEC International., 2017). According to the available estimates, the SE plays a major role in France, Spain, Italy and Belgium where, it represents more than 10% of jobs and approximatively 10% of the GDP (European Economic and Social Committee. & CIRIEC International., 2017). The significant variation in SE development

[8] https://kalo.gov.gr/

across member states suggests an untapped economic potential, including in terms of job creation, in many Member States where SE is less advanced.

In terms of sectorial distribution, as already stated, the SE is present in all economic sectors. However, for the majority of countries covered by the baSE project, the most important sectors are (in different orders) social and health services, education, sport and artistic activities. Two unusual situations are worth noticing. In Poland, based on Polish Classification of Activity, the majority of cooperatives (21,9%) operate in industrial processing or manufacturing (Goś-Wójcickiej, 2022; Social Economy Satellite Account for Poland 2018, 2021). In Germany, one in four organizations is developing services for migrants. One in 10 organizations is involved in refugee aid (Priemer et al. 2018).

The above description is based on the number of SEOs in each area of activity. This picture needs to be taken with caution as further analysis conducted in France and Belgium notably, shows that the most represented sector in number of SEOs involved isn't necessary the first in term of workforce. SEO's operating in social and health services, or in education tend to have higher employment rates (Sohet, 2022).

6. SEO in energy area: context, opportunities and challenges

Policy context

At EU level, the Clean Energy Package (European Commission, 2019) and the REPower EU Plan (REPowerEU, 2022), are substantial supports. On one hand, the Clean Energy Package recognises 'energy communities' in European legislation. As the Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the council of 5 June 2019 introduces the citizen energy communities, they should be transposed in the national legislation of each EU member state (Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on Common Rules for the Internal Market for Electricity and Amending Directive 2012/27/EU (Recast) (Text with EEA Relevance.), 2019). Energy communities (either 'citizen energy communities' or 'renewable energy communities') are understood as ways to 'organize' collective energy actions around open, democratic participation and governance with the provision of benefits for members or the local community. On the other hand, the REPower EU Plan highlights how empowering energy communities are of particular importance, in order to help address the ongoing energy crisis.

At the national level, the German legal and political environment is probably the most inspiring. It demonstrates that certain dispositions such as the Renewable Energy Act can make significant difference. Indeed, by guaranteeing long-term feed-in tariff for electricity self-produce, it enabled solar and wind power to become economically viable. In addition, the recently elected government has set the ambitious goal to reach climate-neutrality by 2030 in transport and building sectors. They also want to make self-consumption more attractive. To this end, various subsidy programs are currently being launched, focusing on storage technologies (buffer storage), heat pumps for the energy supply of new and existing buildings, and tax relief for self-consumption.

The context in France underlines the importance of EU legal framework, as France has transposed the energy communities' measures in their Energy Code. However, it also reminds us that it is a tedious process as local energy communities are still waiting on the implementing decrees. Besides, even after decree's passing, French authorities would still need time to adapt and adjust as the existing energy communities don't fit with a unique definition. They are very diverse in terms of legal status, SE enrolment and as they often gather several levels of structures (cooperatives, association, simplified joint-stock companies, etc.).

This process can even become more complex in countries where responsibilities regarding energy are distributed between several levels of authorities. For instance, in Belgium, each of the 3 regions embraces the challenge of renewable energy in its way.

Among policies from other countries covered by baSE, it is worth noticing that in *Poland*, a Law on Renewable Energy Sources has been signed in 2015; *Ireland* has a national energy agency (Sustainable Energy Authority) aiming to develop new technologies to increase the share of renewable energy and to decarbonize the national energy supply. Also, each EU member state had to integrate a National Energy and Climate Plan9 that outline how the EU countries intend to address decarbonisation, energy efficiency, energy security, internal energy market as well as research, innovation and competitiveness.

SEOs operating in energy

SEO can be found at every step between production and consumption of energy. The main legal form used by SEOs producing or distributing renewable energy is the cooperative form. But numerous non-profit associations work on energetic sobriety by raising people's awareness and by providing them with eco-gestures. Besides, many of SEOs work on energetic efficiency by providing advice and renovating buildings to avoid wasting energy.

But again, only a few countries can provide reliable statistics regarding SEOs operating in energy sector. They encounter difficulties either to identify any SEOs all along the energy value chain (from production to consumption) and among these, the ones that are in fact working with/for renewable energies.

However, relevant intelligences provided by baSE partners are worth mentioning. In particular, it is useful to understand the type of activities carried out by SEOs along the energy value chain as well as the overall structuration they implemented in each country.

In *France*, SEOs have invested the whole value chain of renewable energy: the first citizens' solar central was built in 1992 and the first citizens' wind farm in 2003. In 2010, a national network called Energie Partagée was created to develop, support and finance citizen projects that produce renewable energy. To accomplish these missions, the movement is structured around an association, a cooperative and an investment tool. The national list of SEOs, managed by the National observatory of social and solidarity economy, counts 151 SEOs in energy area. However, some of them could also be counted within other sub-sectors and would not appear within those figures. Among them, 75% produce energy, 12% distribute it and 9% operate trade activities. 133 are cooperatives.

[9] https://commission.europa.eu/energy-climate-change-environment/implementation-eu-countries/energy-and-climate-governance-and-reporting/national-energy-and-climate-plans_en

In *Belgium*, and more specifically in Wallonia, REScoop, born in the 2000s, federates 19 regional citizen-initiated energy cooperatives which in 2021 involved around 15,000 members and produced around 76 million kWh (Rescoop, 2023). Among them, 13 energy-producing cooperatives created an additional cooperative structure to operate the distribution of 100% green electricity. This model guarantees a fair price and transparent management. It thus completes the short electricity loop.

Germany counts 835 energy cooperatives with 200,000 members, they operate all along the value chain (consumption, production, producer-consumer, energy service). In total, they invested 3.2 billion euros in renewable energies and, in 2020, they generated around 8.8 TWh of clean electricity (Dannemann, 2021). Concrete forms are the energy consumption cooperative, the energy production cooperative, the energy producer-consumer cooperative, the energy service cooperative. The production cooperatives focus on photovoltaics and wind energy, as well as reheating networks, bioenergy villages and energy supply companies (Henkel 2018: 19). In 2015, 80% (516) of energy cooperatives were engaged in the electricity sector, 23% (151) in the heat sector, and 2.5% (16) in the mobility sector. Of the 16 energy cooperatives that offered services in the mobility sector 12 energy cooperatives were active in the field of electric mobility, car sharing was offered by 5 energy cooperatives (Fischer & Wetzel, 2018, p. 11).

In *Spain*, although the sector is complex, and activating new initiatives is demanding at legal-administrative level, there is a diversity of SE initiatives related to the energy area. They count 21 cooperatives of consumers and users of renewable energies that have set up a union specifically adhering to SE principles (Atutxa Ordeñana et al., 2022). At the national level, organizations support cooperatives creation. There are also self-managed communities formed as associations or foundations that promote alternative ways of life in a comprehensive manner, including about energy topics.

In *Italy*, even if energy communities were introduced by the conversion into a national law of the European Directive RED II 2018/2001/EU (Milleproroghe Decree 162/2019, converting in Law 8/2020), to this date there are still few energy communities accredited by law (23), including cooperatives for energy at local and at community levels. Co-operatives and foundations are the most active SEOs in this sector (De Vidovich et al., 2021). Foundations have a key role in supporting the development of energy communities. They are designing supporting structures, tools and specific grants aimed at fostering the start-up of energy communities in their reference territories. However, a new Law Decree launched on February 2023 should boost the numbers. It includes two distinct measures: on the one hand, a general incentive intervention for those who join energy communities with a reward for self-consumption. On the other hand, an allocation from the National RRF (PNNR) of more than 2 billion to co-finance the cost of building new plants or upgrading existing ones in the territory of municipalities with up to 5 thousand inhabitants.

In other countries covered by baSE, SEOs are progressively investing in the field of energy.

In *Romania*, we find many associations, foundations that are active in environmental protection and that have raised concerns regarding green energy (Vamesu, 2022). An important SE cluster has worked to enable production of sustainable energy from local biomass source. It led to a first biomass production cooperative created in 2019. There is also an Energy Cooperative with 809 members, 150 consumers and in 2021 it delivered 42 GWh (Cooperativa de Energie, 2023).

In *Ireland*, SEOs have embraced the energy sector in the 2010s, because it was a state-owned asset until recently. This was a manner for SEOs (mainly cooperatives) to democratize and make more sustainable energy.

In *Greece*, a small number of registered SEOs are active in energy production (mostly solar panels production). In *Slovenia*, only one SEO (a cooperative) is active in energy and is part of the European network REScoop. It will soon be joined by a community solar plant, currently existing but in the process of registration as a cooperative (Zadruga sončnih elektrarn Slovenije, 2023).

Finally, in Poland, the Law on Renewable Energy Sources of February 20, 2015 allows for energy cooperatives to emerge. However, the legislation isn't consistent with the national framework of the SE sector. As a result, the current state of the law in Poland makes it difficult to unambiguously link this type of entity with the framework of the SE sector. Regarding non-profit associations, the ones specialized in environmental protection and ecology represent only about 3% of all non-profit associations (The Capacity of NGOs. 2002-2022 Trends survey, 2023). Many of them are engaged in education and promotion of ecological lifestyles. When looking historically at the development of the size of this sector, there has been a slight upward trend over the past few years.

Opportunities and challenges for SEOs in energy

One of the more important and urgent aspects of the twin transition is energy. This sector is rapidly expanding and increasing its impact: more than 3,500 renewable energy cooperatives are now estimated to be active in Europe, of which 1,900 are federated by REScoop, the European Federation of citizen energy cooperatives (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2020; REScoop UE Annual report 2021, 2022). A recent study found that half of EU citizens – including local communities, farmers, schools and hospitals – could be producing their own renewable electricity by 2050, meeting 45% of the total electricity demand by then (Kampman, 2016). SE is taking up the challenge of increasing the share of renewable energy, which is essential in the context of green transition.

We find SEOs operating at every step of the way from production (i.e. energy cooperatives or communities producing and supplying renewable energy) to efficient consumption (association raising awareness regarding sustainable habits). In *France*, a cooperative that provides

electricity has shown that its clients consume 20 % less than the average French people (Enercoop, 2022). Also, as highlighted in Germany, the energy communities, whatever form they take, can play a major role in enabling transition. Not only are they supplying renewable energy and raise awareness but also, as a political movement, they criticize national energy policies and push for changes.

Energy sector is highly challenged by inclusivity. On making green energy affordable and accessible to all, energy communities participatory business models are particularly relevant to lay the foundations of a fair and inclusive transition. SEOs, with their governance and management models, can make energy communities drivers for territorial development, acting not only for an efficient and affordable energy consumption, but also to generate social capital.

Various innovations illustrate the ability of SEOs to contribute to a fair transition for all. For instance, in Italy we see alliance of foundations and energy communities involved in the pilot of social inclusion project. In France, Enercoop and Energie Solidaire created an innovative tool: the "energy donation". It enables households in a situation of energy precarity to benefit from the solidarity of renewable energy producers throughout France.

There is an integration between green transition and welfare strategies aimed at fighting against new forms of poverty and inequalities. Energy poverty is one of strengthening needs across EU. (New scenarios are developing in this field which see, for example, the commitment of foundations in piloting social inclusion projects starting from energy communities, self-consumption groups and other activities related to the use of energy).

The importance of SE in relation to energy is also crucial considering the present energy crisis, as SE enterprises offer an attractive energy producing model to further develop and disseminate in different parts of the EU. Moreover, while the current energy crisis poses many challenges for social entrepreneurs, it may also stimulate further investment and innovation within the ecosystem: the crisis also serves as an accelerator to find and develop new solutions. This includes the use of technology to monitor and save energy consumption in (social) infrastructure or to optimize local renewable energy production and distribution through energy communities and cooperatives (European Commission, 2022).

Regarding digitalization, possibilities offered by technologies are broad. Among other things they can be useful to manage meteorological conditions that influence energy production and consumption. Also, digitalization offers the possibility to monitor and to collect daily data, in order to plan energy production and consumption more efficiently. Current examples of digitalization within SEO operating in energy area are: REScoop in France that is planning on setting up a community-driven virtual power plant that would provide flexibility services to the grid and contributes to a 100 % share of renewable energy sources into the grid (REScoopVPP, 2023). In *Slovenia*, the cooperative of solar power plants uses blockchain technologies (A plan for recovery and resilience, Slovenia, 2021).

It is however important to consider digitalization with a critical view. On the one hand, it is polluting, so the impact of the decarbonization of energy offered by the technology should be balanced with the impact of the technology on the environment, and on the other hand, those new technologies require high-skilled maintenance technicians.

7. SEO in care area: context, opportunities and challenges

Policy context

Taking care of the most vulnerable and defenceless social groups, lies at the roots of SE. Care activities (such as childcare, long-term care of older person or those with disabilities, etc.) are historical segment of SE since its beginning. As a result, and in contrast with energy area that is emerging, describing the EU and national legislative development would be tedious and with little added value for the baSE project.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of care work and pointed out the need to improve the resilience of the care services for both care receivers and care givers. As an answer, the European Commission launched the European Care Strategy (A European Care Strategy, 2022). The objective is to ensure quality, affordable and accessible care services with better working conditions, gender equality and work-life balance for care workers. It will also help advance the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the 2030 EU headline targets on employment, skills and poverty reduction. The Care Strategy is based on two proposals for Council Recommendations: one on the revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care and one on the access to affordable high-quality care.

At the national level, it is worth mentioning that although there is a common understanding of care (cf. supra for the definition used in the baSE project), the activities included in care area vary across EU countries, so does state's support. Indeed, at Member State level, there are relevant differences with regard to care policy and their organizational framework. Some Member States currently allocate relatively low levels of expenditure to care, which might be indicative of care being a low policy priority or of a heavy reliance on informal care (sometimes expressed as a legal obligation for family members to take care of their dependent relatives).

SEOs in care area

Traditionally SE has long been an important provider of care services. SEOs are considered in some countries as natural state partners to provide such services.

For the same reasons as above, *Belgium* and *Slovenia* do not have statistics on the number of SEOs active in care. For other countries, there are data, but those are hardly comparable:

- In *Italy*, there are 48,446 NPOs active in health and social services, representing 13,4% of the sector (*Struttura e profili del settore non profit*, 2022).

- In *Germany*, in 2014, 61 % of all workers in NPO worked in care (Priller & Zimmer, 2022).
- In *Spain*, SEOs are responsible for 43.5% of the total supply of care services.
- In *Poland*, 10.6% of registered SEOs are part of care sub-sector (called there 'social services'), and more than the half of them are cooperatives.
- In *Greece*, less than one quarter of SEOs enrolled in the General Record for Actors of Social and Solidarity Economy is active in care sector.
- In *Ireland*, care is a large part of SE, and reversely, SE plays a large role in the delivery of social, health and childcare.
- As in Ireland, in *France*, care and SE work hand in hand: care represents 46.9% of the whole employment in SE, and as explained before, SEOs handle more than a third of care employment.
- Finally, in Romania, 46% of the total social services providers authorized are associations and foundations (Acreditare-Furnizori si Servicii Sociale, 2023).

Opportunities and challenges

SE has been recognized as an actor that brings added value to the provision of high-quality care services due to its person-centred approach and the reinvestment of profits into mission and local communities.

Two of the most important challenges faced by care sector are probably the demographic evolution as well as the shortage of workforce.

Indeed, care in the European Union is marked by a global rise of the number of aged people: according to the European Commission Atlas on Demography, by 2070, 30.3% of the population will be aged 65 years or older (compared to 20.3% in 2019) and 13.2% is projected to be aged 80 years or older (compared to 5.8% in 2019) (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2021). This increases the number of potential beneficiaries of care services, and at the same time diminish available workforce. In this context, if not subsided properly, it will become even harder for SEOs to sustain, as their core principles prohibit them to reduce costs and maximize their profits, as classic private actors might do.

As called for in the Social Economy Action Plan, policy and legal frameworks should create the right environment for the SE to optimize its contribution to care services. The systematic use of socially responsible public procurement could boost the potential of the SE to contribute to high-quality standards in care and to provide fair working conditions.

On another note, in a context of limited resources, hybrid and community solutions -as those typically linked to the SE- will most probably be on the rise. Mutuals, associations, cooperatives, would attract higher attention as solidarity and self-help instruments (such as senior co-housing models).

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic also underlined the global shortage of workforce in care activities (YHCW2021 Campaign, 2022). A highly feminized and precarious workforce currently characterizes this sector. Those factors underline the necessity to valorize those jobs, which are for now low paid and unattractive. Among other measures, the professionalization of those jobs, through more training and better possibilities for career evolution constitutes relevant responses.

Regarding the challenges of green transition, in contrast with SEOs in energy area, services and goods supplied by SEOs in care are not in themselves directly serving green transition's objectives. However, SEOs in care need to implement green practices in their day to day activities, and they can raise their beneficiaries' awareness.

According to the *Belgian* care workers, mobility is probably the main polluting post of care organizations, especially care provided at home. In *Germany*, efforts in care sector could take the form of efficiency gains through cooperative resource sharing and the prioritized use of renewable resources. Environmental education is implemented through projects as the German Alliance for Climate and Health, among others. In *Italy*, care SEOs are aware that environment is probably one of the biggest determinants to health and that they contribute to pollution throughout their activities. They are thus working for the implementation of the Mission 2 of the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience, which is about Ecological Transition. Examples of action that they can undertake are: choosing wisely their energy provider, investing in zero emission building and transport, maximizing telehealth and tele assistance to close the last mile, providing sustainable food in community canteens and using circular material.

However, these actions are threatened by some issues. As mentioned by our Italian partners, not all organizations can bear the volume of investments that are needed for the adaptation for instance of buildings and fleets. In addition, managers in this area might not have sufficient financial literacy to attract investment. Some also lack the skills to adequately manage the trade-off between the needed investment and the duration of the service assignment. To add up, many SEOs operating in the care depend on public funding. This means that sometimes they have limited options for improving energy efficiency (Borzaga et al., 2023; Campedelli et al., 2022).

The way the digital transition impacts the care economy is documented in recent research (European Commission, 2018a; UN Women, 2020). The global market for ICT solutions for healthcare monitoring in private homes was projected to grow from nearly EUR 11 billion in 2016 to roughly EUR 32 billion by 2021, while the European market for robots and other devices assisting older people is estimated to be worth about EUR 13 million in 2016, with clear prospects for further growth (European Commission, 2018b).

The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated inspiring technology-based initiatives in the SE (e.g., Tech for Good) and urged several SE actors to use or develop digital solutions. Digital social innovation (DSI) brings forth solutions in a variety of fields such as health, care and social

services, education, housing, ecology and public governance. The potential of Tech for Good was highlighted in areas such as data monitoring (mobility, pollution, health and housing), development of hardware and assistive technologies (care and social services), traceability and crop management (agri-food).

In *Spain*, platform companies have taken the role of intermediary between users and care providers. In response to those platforms, SEOs have created fair platforms, in the form of cooperatives, that guarantee decent jobs and provide specialized support, online training and shared services to care professionals (Plataformas.coop, 2022).
As Spain, SEOs of other countries might have to work on their digitalization in order to support the creation of digital tools that truly benefit care workers and beneficiaries.

The Transition Pathway also stressed the relevance of cross-cutting topics of data management and interoperability linked to wider developments in data technologies, including the potential of artificial intelligence and Machine Learning for the improvement of services, for instance in the health and care sectors. This puts in evidence that those applications are promising but that they require a degree of data maturity at the level of individual SEOs, which is currently mostly lacking (European Commission, 2022).

Finally, when it comes to inclusivity, it seems fair to say that it lies at the core of care SEOs' activities, as they propose concrete solutions for vulnerable people. Work integration social enterprises are significant actors in the matter. However, since another Blueprint project (B-WISE[10]) is currently studying these organizations, here we will mostly focus on the inclusivity challenge for the rest of the ecosystem.

Overall, SEOs operating in care are playing a significant role in women employment. In Italy, most of the employees in the SEOs care sub-sector are women (74.6% in 2017). A high number of women working in care services in other EU countries (Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany) come from *Romania* (Kuhlmann et al., 2020).

Concerning women participation in SEOs middle and high management position, Italy observes quite high level. They respectively represent the 27.7% and the 26.1% of the employees where in the non-SE enterprises the percentage are (29.5%) and (15.4%) (Borzaga et al., 2023). However, in Belgium, it has been showed that management is still mainly handled by men whereas other level workers are almost only women (Degavre, 2022). The same study also shows insufficient working conditions (regarding social welfare or harassment) for women in this field of activity. Those problems have been highlighted by the 2019 pandemic, but they are structural, and might change with a salary review, the protection of workers in international mobility, a renewal in the public discourse regarding care, etc. (Degavre, 2022).

[10] https://www.bwiseproject.eu/

In *Germany*, there is very little research or data available to answer the question of the actual contribution of the SEOs operating in care to inclusivity. However, in the area of care for the elderly and the people with disabilities, a rising proportion of people with a lack of or different prior professional qualification in the recent years suggests a greater influx of people that otherwise might not have had the opportunity to secure access to the primary job market, even though actual background data on this topic is not available.

Another advantage of care SEOs regarding inclusivity, underlined by *France*, is their commitment to provide services to isolated areas such as rural territories or working-class neighborhoods. According to Spain, It can even be argued that such initiatives support the green transition, by maintaining live in rural areas (INE, 2023).

8. Summary

The present work lies within a 4 year-project of a Blueprint for advanced skills & trainings in the social economy (baSE). This first report's objective is to gather relevant intelligence to set common definition and vision for Social Economy on which the Partnership will further build to determine the respective role of its human resources.

In this perspective, the report describes the unique assets of social economy models which make it a suitable avenue to reach EU's target to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 while leaving no one behind[11]. Indeed, SEOs are primarily driven by a social aim that is often aligned with societal challenges. As a result, SEOs are developing and offering sustainable practices, goods and services in a wide range of fields. In addition, SEOs are not only driven by their social purpose, but they prioritize it over solely profit maximization. In contrast with non-SE organization, this allows SEOs to avoid traditional trade-offs between social or environmental needs and economic performance. SEOs can also experiment with complex innovative practices considered not fruitful enough by profit SE seeker. As they are often locally anchored, they have the ability to identify local and specific emerging needs and the capacity to develop tailored solutions for local communities. Finally, their democratic or participative governance system, allow SEOs to empower stakeholders that are not traditionally given a voice. This present valuable advantages toward social justice and social changes. Subsequently, SEOs can be seen as efficient, equitable collectors, organizers and distributors of resources to lead toward a fair and sustainable economy for all.

However, apart from the benefits that SEOs bring toward transition, they also face some challenges. In particular, social economy is not exempt from the need to re-skill or up-skill workforce to face digital, green and inclusivity challenges. For this reason, and in conjunction

[11] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

with the EC Pact of skills strategy12, the baSE project aims at reinforcing the capacities of Social Economy and its human capital in key areas such as the digital and green transitions in which SEOs already have an important added value. To do so, the baSE consortium has decided to focus on skills, knowledge, attitudes, and competences that are transversal to the whole SE ecosystem. Having said that, to tackle the risk of cross-sectional results being not sufficiently extensive to provide details on skills needs at precise working levels (practitioner, manager, enablers), the baSE consortium has decided to add thorough analysis of two sub-areas within SE: Care and Energy. They have been chosen based on hypothesis that their analysis will provide complementary results relevant for the entire SE ecosystem.

On that basis, the remaining section of this report presents a contextual overview of SE across the 10 countries covered by the project and at EU level. Additionally, it studies more in details context, opportunities and challenges for SEOs operating in care and energy sub-areas.

The results mainly emphasize the heterogeneity in SE across EU. Important differences are found in SE general development, notably in territories affected by communism were for instance cooperatives are still poorly perceived. But for the territories that access EU in 2004 and 2007, the funding opportunities, and the EU agenda, enabled research and programs that helped increase SE visibility as well as legal framework creation.

Currently and despite EU influence, the most important variation concern legal framework. Indeed, not all countries (i.e Germany, Ireland) dispose of a legal definition for the SE. And, when definitions exist, the defining criteria on which the definition is built vary as well.
This heterogeneity is making comparison across countries difficult. Statistical comparison is all the more difficult that only a few countries from the baSE project's consortium are able to produce reliable statistics for their entire SE ecosystem.

Concerning more specifically SE in Energy area, the results confirm the initial hypothesis that the movement is emergent (with only a few initiatives in some region) but facing growing opportunities due notably to the influence of EU legislative and the support of various sustainable strategies. Indeed, this sector is rapidly expanding and increasing its impact: more than 3,500 renewable energy cooperatives are now estimated to be active in Europe. A recent study found that half of EU citizens – including local communities, farmers, schools and hospitals – could be producing their own renewable electricity by 2050, meeting 45% of the total electricity demand by then (Kampman, 2016). SE is taking up the challenge of increasing the share of renewable energy, which is essential in the context of green transition.

If on one side green energy initiatives are directly contributing to the path toward sustainability, on the other side the sector is highly challenged by inclusivity concerns. But energy communities' participatory business models are particularly relevant to lay the foundations of a fair and inclusive transition. Regarding digitalization, possibilities offered by technologies are

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en

broad. Overall, it seems that example of SEOs implementing significant digitization are scarce but emergent.

Concerning opportunities and challenges face by SEOs operating in Care area, the findings show that as expected, Care is an historical and significant segment of SE, well represented across the country covered by the baSE project. Two of the most important challenges faced by care sector to which SE are not exempt, are probably the demographic evolution as well as the shortage of workforce.

Regarding the challenges of green transition, in contrast with SEOs in energy area, services and goods supplied by SEOs in care are not in themselves directly serving green transition's objectives. Actually, SEOs in care need to implement green practices in their day to day activities. However, not all organizations can bear the volume of investments that are needed for the adaptation (for instance of buildings and fleets). In addition, managers in this area might not have sufficient financial literacy to attract investment. Some also lack the skills to adequately manage the trade-off between the needed investment and the duration of the service assignment.

Finally, when it comes to inclusivity, it seems fair to say that it lies at the core of care SEOs' activities, as they propose concrete solutions for vulnerable people as well as services to isolated people or area. In addition, SEOs operating in care are playing a significant role in women employment. However, in some region, it has been showed that management in this field of activity is still mainly handled by men whereas other level workers are almost only women with insufficient working conditions

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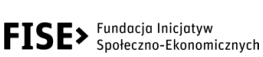

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