



**SECON: Social Economy -
Regional Policies for supporting
Social Economy Enterprises**

**Task A1.2. Identification & Analysis of best practices
in social economy in SECON regions**

Best Practices Report

KMOP, January 2024
KMOP Social Action and Innovation Centre



SECON: Social Economy - Regional Policies for supporting Social Economy Enterprises

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Introduction

The SECON project

Europe is undergoing unprecedented technological, social and economic changes, which have given rise to labour market restructuring, job insecurity, inequalities, but also opportunities and a redefinition of European's individual and collective goals. The importance of the social economy in these settings is increased as it can lead the response through engaging citizens in creating solutions to societal challenges untouched by private enterprises such as unemployment, the 'great resignation', social exclusion and discrimination, and thus act as a driver for economic and societal progress. This can benefit all regions in Europe, but perhaps more so rural ones with a lower population and knowledge capital density. Regional development issues are hindered access to markets and funding, recognition of enterprises in the policy/legal frameworks, and awareness & visibility.

SECON aims to support EU regions to exchange experiences and improve policies based on identified best practices for supporting and scaling up social economy, with a focus on rural settings. Specifically, the project sets the following aspirations through improved policies and project activities:

- Raise awareness and visibility of the social economy to consumers interested to buy more responsibly / locally.
- Facilitate social enterprises' access to responsible public procurement and funding instruments and opportunities to support the generation of revenues and lead to financial self-sufficiency.
- Provide business support and capacity-building opportunities for social enterprises.
- Maximise the contribution of the social economy to the green and digital transitions.
- Boost regional social innovation.

Good Practices in the context of Interreg SECON project

The present document provides information on selected good practices implemented in the SECON regions, corresponding to one or more domains of social economy. The practices have been selected towards the following criteria:

- **Relevance** to the political/strategic context of social economy and/or social innovation.
- **Relevant timescale**: Practice that has been in place for at least two years.
- **Quality assurance** procedures: Practice with quality assurance processes in place, including information on indicators, methods, or tools used throughout the implementation.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency**: Practices showcasing tangible and measurable results, with valuable impact in the region.
- **Sustainability**: Practices that have to be maintained in the long-term with the available resources, adapting to social, economic and environmental requirements of the context in which they are developed.
- **Transferability** potential: Practices with results that are systematized and documented, making it possible to transfer it to other contexts or to be upscaled to a broader target population/geographic context.
- **Ethical Aspects**: Practices that are respectful with ethical values and guarantee the safeguarding of dignity.

Best Practices in Social Economy in SECON regions

Belgium, Flemish Brabant

Doeners.be

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Belgium</p> <p>Region: Flanders - Province of Flemish Brabant</p> <p>Scope: Regional</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Province of Flemish Brabant</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): public body</p> <p>The Province of Flemish Brabant assumes a pioneering role in supporting initiatives within the social economy. This commitment particularly focuses on creating jobs for groups that find it difficult to find work in the standard labour market, and on stimulating enterprises with a social angle. Together, the Province of Flemish Brabant and social economy enterprises form an essential part of both the social and economic webbing in Flanders. They emphasise the importance of inclusiveness, social responsibility and the pursuit of sustainable development in the region.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start date: May 2021</p> <p>End date: ongoing</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>Doeners.be, a job matcher tool, highlights that cooperation between companies from the mainstream economy or governments and the social economy can be a win-win situation.</p>
Resources	<p>In terms of funding, the Flemish government contributes 70% of the total project costs, amounting to €49,000. The province is providing 30% co-financing, equal to €21,000.</p> <p>The project provides initial costs for several crucial components, with a total budget of €70,000. The costs are divided as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Development of a Digital Sales Platform: An amount of €30,000 has been earmarked for developing a digital platform aimed at selling products and services from the social economy. -Promotion of the Platform: A budget of €20,000 is planned for the marketing and promotion of the platform.

	<p>- Professionalisation trajectory: A budget of €20,000 is also earmarked for a professionalisation trajectory, which will further strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the project.</p> <p>The project will also employ two full-time equivalent (FTE) staff.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>Doeners.be is an innovative platform that focuses on facilitating opportunities for people who struggle to find work in the regular labour market. These people, characterised by their determination and skills, find their place within social economy enterprises. These enterprises strive to create social added value, with a strong focus on job creation for vulnerable groups and sustainability. They operate in a wide range of sectors, from assembly and printing to consultancy and food.</p> <p>The primary goal of doeners.be is to create jobs for people who would otherwise remain on the sidelines of the labour market. By collaborating with social economy enterprises, the platform not only contributes to individual employment but also helps achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This collaboration encourages social and inclusive entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Doeners.be was launched by the province of Flemish Brabant, in cooperation with the Flemish Department of Work and Social Economy. Initially limited to companies in Flemish Brabant, the platform soon expanded with the participation of other Flemish provinces. This resulted in an extensive representation of social economy companies on the platform.</p> <p>A key challenge for doeners.be is to continuously improve the user-friendliness and efficiency of the platform. This includes strengthening the search engine with the Algolia application, AI-driven SEO optimisation, and integrating the search engine on partner websites. The platform is also considering the use of Open AI applications, such as chatbots, to increase accessibility and collect valuable marketing data.</p> <p>The main beneficiaries of doeners.be are individuals struggling to find work in the regular labour market and social economy businesses committed to social causes. Stakeholders include the Flemish government, local governments, and various partners committed to social economy and employment.</p> <p>Doeners.be aims to be 'futureproof' by improving search functionality, investing in AI and SEO, and maintaining a strong digital presence. This includes launching thematic and seasonal digital campaigns, leveraging successful cases with household names, and closely monitoring the customer journey. In addition, the platform places a strong emphasis on</p>


	gathering new testimonials and stories to increase engagement and visibility.
Results Achieved	Doeners.be shows strong user engagement and a healthy mix of new and returning visitors between its launch in May 2021 and October 2023. The data suggest that the website is performing well in terms of user interaction, with room for growth in certain areas such as social media and external referrals.
Potential for learning or transfer	The job matcher platform, which serves as a bridge between the social economy and mainstream businesses and governments, brings numerous benefits. This platform facilitates access to the social economy, which was often seen as a challenge before. The resulting collaborations offer multiple benefits.
Useful links - website	www.doeners.be
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	 <p>Promotional video: https://youtu.be/Ruxox_r0JVE</p>

People Made

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Belgium</p> <p>Region: Province of Flemish Brabant</p> <p>City: Leuven, Vilvoorde, Ternat</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Entity name(s): Province of Flemish Brabant, City of Leuven, City of Vilvoorde, Oostrem, Welzijnskoepel West-Brabant</p> <p>Type: Public authorities, public body, non-profit organisation</p> <p>The Province of Flemish Brabant takes a pioneering role in supporting initiatives within the social economy. This commitment focuses in particular on creating jobs for groups that find it difficult to find work in the standard labour market, and on stimulating enterprises with a social angle.</p>

	<p>Leuven is a central city and municipality in the Flemish province of Flemish Brabant. It is the capital of this province. Leuven has an area of 57.51 km² and a population of over 102,000 inhabitants</p> <p>Vilvoorde is a city in the Belgian province of Flemish Brabant directly north of Brussels. The city had 46,993 inhabitants on 1 January 2023.</p> <p>Oostrem supports adults with mental, motor or multiple disabilities. These people may have additional problems (e.g. social-emotional, sensory, medical...). They can be assisted to the extent that the assistance required for these complex problems is part of the existing care offer.</p> <p>The Welzijnskoepel West-Brabant is a welfare association that manages this form of umbrella cooperation and helps shape it with all partners and parties involved.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start date: 2021</p> <p>End date: ongoing</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>People Made is a warm network of social economy organisations and labour care workshops in Flemish Brabant.</p>
Resources	<p>Funded by:</p> <p><u>2021</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welzijnskoepel West-Brabant - City of Leuven - Province of Flemish Brabant <p>Total subsidy: €59,500.00</p> <p><u>2022</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welzijnskoepel West-Brabant - City of Leuven - ILV ISSE Vilvoorde-Machelen-Grimbergen - Province of Flemish Brabant <p>Total subsidy: €51,500.00</p> <p><u>2023</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department Work and Social Economy (call to set up social enterprise) - Residual capital of dissolution Flemish Brabant regional partnership (ERSV) - A balance totalling €135,000 was also allocated to People Made as unavailable reserve.

	<p>Total grant: €33,755.00</p> <p>Staff employed: 1 full-time employee</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>People Made, active in Flemish Brabant, is a network of social economy organisations and employment care workshops. These organisations provide employment to people who cannot work in the mainstream economy due to various challenges. They produce a wide range of unique products such as ceramics, jewellery, bags, beer and nut oil, often characterised by their artisanal quality and customisation.</p> <p>People Made aims to make these unique products better known to a wider audience. Their mission is clear: to market products manufactured by talented individuals working within their organisations, while creating meaningful work and pride for people who would otherwise be on the sidelines of the job market. Key objectives include expanding both physical and online outlets, positioning People Made as a premium brand, developing a digital platform, and pursuing self-reliance.</p> <p>People Made began by opening pop-up shops in several cities. This concept evolved into the establishment of a webshop and physical outlets, improving the professionalism and circularity of products, and strengthening their network. They emphasise the artisanal and precise production process, with a strong focus on sustainability and circularity.</p> <p>One of the challenges is to corporatise the concept and expand its reach. Innovations include using recycled materials and developing circular products, such as bags made from recycled banners and products made from coffee grounds.</p> <p>The main stakeholders are People Made's participating organisations, local authorities, customers and employees. The beneficiaries are the employees, who find valuable and meaningful work thanks to People Made, and the customers who purchase unique and sustainable products.</p> <p>People Made is working to further professionalise their branding and products, together with expert product developers and designers. They are pursuing independence as a social enterprise and have already taken steps to form a company. Their future plans include participating in markets and shop-in-shops, further developing their digital platform, and increasing their focus on B-to-B and B-to-G sales.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>During the period from 17 October 2022 to 23 November 2023, the People Made website experienced significant visitor numbers and interactions, indicating strong public engagement.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The People Made initiative is considered potentially interesting for other regions to learn from for several reasons: Innovative Integration of Social</p>

	Economy and Labour Care; Diversity of Products and Services; Combining Physical and Online Sales; Focus on Sustainability and Circularity; Strong Community Engagement and Storytelling; Professionalisation and Branding.
Useful links - website	https://www.peoplemade.be
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	<p>Logo:</p>  <p>Promotional video: https://youtu.be/yPJVX4M2zN4</p>

Bulgaria, Haskovo region

Participatory Budgeting project in Haskovo region

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Bulgaria</p> <p>Region: Southern Central</p> <p>City: Haskovo</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): HALO Foundation NGO in collaboration with Haskovo Municipality</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): NGO and municipal administration</p> <p>Two runs of the Participatory Budgeting project empowering people from the municipal villages to improve their living standards by providing volunteers, funds and know-how for various projects important to the local people. The project also supports a platform where people submit their ideas and the best ones are chosen ensuring transparency, improving communication between the municipality administration and the citizens, and involving people in improving their community. Not only do the local communities receive a better quality of life through improved infrastructure, but they also receive invaluable knowledge and experience with different crafts which they can apply professionally or in their everyday life. People feel they are part of a greater goal.</p>

	<p>The first run of the project was arranged with municipal funds, while for the second run European funding under the Good Governance programme has been utilised.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: 10.08.2022</p> <p>End Date: 31.12.2023</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>The Participatory Budgeting initiative is a project funded by the European Social Fund 2014-2020 through the Operational Programme Good Governance and co-funded nationally. The project is aimed at supporting citizens from the villages of the municipality with the means, funds and know-how to improve their community, environment and infrastructure in the best possible way. The project provides a platform where citizens submit their suggestions and ideas to improve the regional environment and infrastructure in different aspects. The suggestions are assessed and voted on, and the best ones are implemented with volunteers and members of the communities where the improvement takes place. Because the communities are heavily involved in the process – idea through implementation, they cherish the results and are more likely to safeguard the infrastructure rather than if it were implemented solely by the public service.</p>
Resources	<p>Funded by/Sponsors: Operation Programme Good Governance and Haskovo Municipality</p> <p>Funding/financial resources needed: The funds used in the second run are 46 965,59 BGN (c.a. €24 011,77) from which 39 920,75 BGN (c.a. €20 410,00) funded by OP Good Governance and 7 044,84 BGN (c.a. €3 601,77) locally.</p> <p>Human resources needed: Bright ideas coming from local citizens, volunteers to turn the ideas into reality</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>Major improvements within the projects were renovating children's playgrounds and kindergartens, creating outdoor kindergartens, renovating local community centres, adding new benches to parks, creating museum exhibitions, improving parks and community gardens as well as dog parks, and adding recycling bins. The results are not only the infrastructure elements created but also providing know-how to the communities so they can have proper experience with woodworking, gardening, landscaping, painting, steel- and metalworking, renovating, building, etc.</p> <p>The specific needs of the local communities are targeted, as requested by the community members. Citizens submit ideas through a platform, ideas are evaluated and voted on, and the best ones are chosen and</p>

	<p>implemented. Meetings with the communities are also being arranged in the process.</p> <p>The innovation in this project is that people from the community are involved in improving their quality of life through renovating various items of infrastructure and landscape.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries are the Foundation, Haskovo Municipality, and citizens of Haskovo region.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>Pictures of implemented ideas can be viewed at https://halo-platform.halongo.eu/archive</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The initiative has proven to be quite successful in other places. As the local communities are involved in the process rather than the result being granted to them, they feel more in control with the public funds. The results are more likely to stay and not be vandalised.</p> <p>This initiative was initially implemented in Brazil in 1989, then in New York City in 2011, and Paris followed suit in 2014.</p>
Useful links - website	<p>https://halo-platform.halongo.eu/</p>
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	<p>Photos available at https://halo-platform.halongo.eu/archive</p>

Art and crafts fair in Haskovo

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Bulgaria</p> <p>Region: Southern Central</p> <p>City: Haskovo</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Haskovo municipality, Regional Chamber of crafts Haskovo, other organisations</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Public body</p> <p>Several times a year the Haskovo municipality together with the Regional Chamber of crafts holds an art and crafts fair where talented local artisans can show and sell their creations. A lot of the artisans belong to vulnerable groups and this is their chance for their creations to reach more potential customers and gain clout.</p>

Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: 2017</p> <p>Regularly – during Christmas, Easter, Bulgaria's national holiday March 3rd, and Haskovo day September 8th. Each fair lasts 2-3 days.</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>The fair takes place at the square between the Municipality and the Regional Administration. Talented craftsmen are carefully selected to participate in the event. Each artisan gets their little cottage to skilfully show their creations. Advertisement for the event is arranged by the Municipality and the Regional Chamber of crafts. As the crafts are not regulated professions, they are often the only choice for people who are long-term unemployed, elderly, who raise children with disabilities or have disabilities themselves and are unable to enter the job market.</p>
Resources	<p>The municipality provides the cottages, land and infrastructure needed to organise the event free of charge. Other than that, the event gathers private and corporate sponsors and benefactors. Sometimes the events are arranged through projects such as the initiative Interreg Bulgaria Turkey (in 2020).</p> <p>The initiative is organised with the municipality's own resources and staff.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>Throughout the years skilled woodworkers, steel and metalworkers, jewellers, crocheters, felters, potters, tailors and seamstresses, painters, portraitists, artists who carve intricate artwork on wood, weavers, puppet creators, masters who create traditional brass bells and various other arts have taken place in the fair.</p> <p>People who are unable to enter the job market or find it difficult to open their own enterprise find an opportunity at the fair to sell their products and build their name.</p> <p>A challenge for the Haskovo municipality is to ensure better marketing for the fair and more emphasis on the social aspect of it.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the initiative include Haskovo municipality, Haskovo Regional chamber of crafts, independent artisans, various organisations, and the community as a whole.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>Although information is not gathered on the gains of the artisans that participated in the fair, the success of the event is evident by how quickly the cottages are reserved each time and the popularity of the fair amongst citizens.</p>

Potential for learning or transfer	Keeping the traditions and crafts alive while helping talented local craftsmen and artisans achieve their goals is a win-win for any region. This project is not large in terms of investment but brings a lot of value back.
Useful links - website	<p>Some articles of the festival in the local press:</p> <p>https://haskovo.info/134463/%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%81-%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0-%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B8%D1%80-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D0%B2-%D0%B3%D1%80/</p> <p>Article in the Haskovo municipality website:</p> <p>https://www.haskovo.bg/bg/posts/view/6724/</p>
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	Photos available at https://www.haskovo.net/news/500294/panair-na-zanayatite-zapochna-v-haskovo

Germany, Verband Region Rhein Neckar

Freiräume (Open Spaces)

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Germany</p> <p>Region: Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region (MRN)</p> <p>City: Four rural pilot municipalities in the Rhine-Neckar district: Eberbach, Meckesheim, Neckargemünd, Wilhelmsfeld</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity: Rhine-Neckar district office/Economic development department</p> <p>Type: Public body</p> <p>As a municipal district authority and at the same time a state authority, the district office in Baden-Wuerttemberg has a wide range of different functions and tasks (e.g. schools, youth, social issues, order, health, environment, mobility/transport infrastructure, rural areas).</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: September 2021</p> <p>End Date: August 2026</p>

Short summary of the practice	In the project smart city concepts are tested and implemented in the environs of urban centres through a 3-pillar concept consisting of smart tourism, coworking, multifunctional spaces.
Resources	<p>The project is funded by KfW bank with a grant for smart cities model projects. Joint project application with Rhine-Neckar metropolitan region (lead partner and grant recipient) and city of Heidelberg.</p> <p>The initiative needs a 4.5 million total investment volume, of which approx. 2.9 million subsidised (65 % subsidy rate)</p> <p>Human resources include 1 full-time position (Rhine-Neckar district), varying scope of project hours/position shares in the respective pilot municipalities for implementation.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The major topics covered include smart tourism, smart city, data management, vacancy management, coworking in rural areas, new work, and social innovation.</p> <p>Freiräume (Open Spaces) is one of eight sub-projects under the umbrella brand Smart and Sustainable Metropolitan Regions, funded in the 3rd Smart City season of the federal government. The project operates in the context of increasing disparities between the city and smaller, rural communities in terms of digitalisation and offers for social meeting places and premises for clubs. In rural areas, town centres are dying out, there are many vacancies and at the same time there is a lack of social meeting places. New multifunctional concepts for vacant premises need to be developed involving local people with their specific needs (local based approach/bottom-up). Coworking in the countryside has a different dimension than in the city and needs to be bundled with other functions, e.g. in the tourism sector.</p> <p>The main needs addressed and objectives of the initiative include the creation of four Open Spaces in four different municipalities, each implementing all three pillars (i.e. smart tourism, coworking, multifunctional spaces) acting as a network: revitalisation of local centres and activation of vacancies, support of self-employed persons/employees with coworking and premises offers, premises offers for new social meeting points to strengthen municipal societal cohesion, strengthening tourism through digital technologies, raising awareness for digitization.</p> <p>The project is coordinated by the district, through regular four fix appointments with the municipalities, and is independently implemented by the municipalities with support from the district. Concept-development in the municipalities with participation of civilian population to adapt the concept to the local needs. A strategy phase (end of 2021 to end of 2022) was followed by a 2-month test phase providing more</p>

	<p>detailed information about the users' needs, possible price structure and desired equipment. The implementation phase is ongoing (project end 2026). Exchange with similar smart city projects from the same funding lines within a working group on common challenges, best practices tour with on-site visits, as well as exchange and close connection with the other 7 subprojects of Smart and sustainable Metropolitan Region.</p> <p>The main challenges include suitability of vacancies; limited time, financial and personnel capacities in the municipalities; smart city concepts need first analogous framework conditions; ineligible costs for construction measures; lengthiness of municipal council decisions/award and approval processes because New Work, Smart City and Coworking are often unknown terms in rural areas that need to be explained and introduced into the public discourse; compliance with state aid law.</p> <p>Its innovation lies in the three-pillar concept combining different modules/ functions with coworking in favour of the creation of sustainable structures; social innovation combined with smart city</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries include associations, voluntary groups, coworkers/ commuters/ students/ self-employed, companies and their employees with residence near the Open Spaces locations, tourists, and in two municipalities also retailers and restaurateurs of the city centre.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>Regular (re-)adjustment according to empirical evidence; future workshop and monitoring mechanism; 2-month test phases with extensive evaluation and user survey; knowledge transfer from the more advanced to the less advanced municipalities; vent to pass on the lessons learned to interested municipalities</p> <p>Scientific support with regard to the spatial impact of the Technical University of Kaiserslautern: revitalisation of vacancies, strengthening of the community, new contacts and networking-based innovations; increases in footfall in the town centres (already observed); snowball effect: other groups get inspired and think about future-proof concepts for other vacant premises. Long-term success factor: economically viable operation of the open spaces beyond the duration of the project.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>Most municipalities have similar problems with dying inner cities, too little digitisation and the need for new social meeting places, so that the 3-pillar concept - or even just individual aspects of the concept - can be easily transferred. Scaling-up takes place first in the Rhine-Neckar district before the concept is spread beyond the Metropolitan Region.</p>

	The project is not yet in the scaling phase; experience and developed solutions are already requested from other municipalities from the Rhine-Neckar district and other projects from Germany, close cooperation with the project CCI-City Centre Consultants, as both projects take place simultaneously in two of the four pilot-municipalities and synergies are used.
Useful links - website	https://www.deinfoerderprojekt.de/foerderprojekte-des-rnk/freiraeume/
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	Leaflet (German): https://www.deinfoerderprojekt.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FREIRAeUME-Flyer-Stand-08.11.2023.pdf

Social Economy Cluster in Mannheim

Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Germany Region: Baden-Wuerttemberg City: City of Mannheim
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	Name of entity: City of Mannheim, Economic Development Office Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Public body In the economic policy strategy adopted by the municipal council in 2021, the City of Mannheim specified that four clusters are to be set up by the Economic Development Office with household funding. The clusters aim to create networks between the relevant businesses in the sector and to establish a support ecosystem for the cluster stakeholders in order to leverage synergies between the associated businesses. One of the clusters is the Social Economy Cluster. Preparations to establish the target group began back in 2019 with projects and activities. Cluster management was established in September 2022.
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: 2021 End Date: Middle of 2025 (However, extension options are examined.)
Short summary of the practice	With the Social Economy Cluster Management, the city of Mannheim supports social innovation and social entrepreneurship on equal footing with other economic clusters.
Resources	The cluster management is financed by the City of Mannheim from its own resources. The other necessary financial and human resources are

	<p>acquired through various subsidies Sponsoring is provided for competitions/money awards.</p> <p>About 40,000 euros in in-kind resources per year are spent for implementing events, programmes and activities. In addition, 80,000 euros per year funding is provided for human resources for consulting staff positions (80 % subsidy rate, 50% coming from the EU/ESF Plus and 30% from the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg).</p> <p>Regarding the staff needed for the day-to-day operation of the cluster, there is a full-time position for the head of cluster management and one part-time position for project management</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The clusters' activities focus on networking and opening up opportunities for local social economy stakeholders; increasing public awareness of social economy issues and stakeholders (including awards); advice and support for existing social enterprises; pre-seed counselling for social entrepreneurs for the stable development of new social enterprises; support measures for the professionalisation of stakeholders; financial support measures for investments.</p> <p>The support and development of enterprises is one of the core concerns of the economic policy strategy of Mannheim. As part of the strategy update in 2021, new impulses were set with the focus on four competence fields: Medical Technology, Smart Industries, Green Industry and Social Economy. Cross-clustering is intended to accelerate innovation.</p> <p>The aim is to further establish social innovations and social entrepreneurship in Mannheim and to facilitate the development of the city, specifically through cooperation with the welfare associations. The Social Economy Cluster Management aims to give answers to challenges faced by social enterprises in particular through comprehensive (free) consulting services, networking and organising training courses.</p> <p>The cluster structure is suitable for maximising the social impact of social enterprises. This is because activities can be initiated directly by the cluster management and its network of social enterprises and stakeholders generates self-reinforcing effects once it reaches a certain size.</p> <p>The challenge is that the Mannheim Social Economy Cluster is one of the first in Germany. As a pioneer, it is not possible to copy projects that have succeeded and everything has to be built from the beginning. At the same time, the social economy has a low visibility problem among the public, while it is often criticised for a lack of professionalism.</p>

	<p>Concerning innovation, the counselling services for social entrepreneurs in the pre-seed phase is an innovative element in comparison to classic start-up consulting as the scope of counselling covers the impact model and the business model of the planned entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, innovative event formats for networking, pitching and capacity-building have been developed.</p> <p>The beneficiaries are social enterprises/entrepreneurs and the main stakeholders are welfare institutions, relevant science, foundations, public administration units, such as the labour and social administration.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>The evaluation and monitoring mechanism consists of annual reports to funding organisations and analysis of output criteria for municipal control.</p> <p>The success of the project is validated by the implementation of the European Social Economy Summit (EUSES) together with the European Commission (2021); support provided to 40 social entrepreneurs in 1.5 years; inclusion of social enterprises in the local funding programme KREASOCTECH from 2021; inclusion of the Social Economy category in the MEXI start-up prize for four years and procurement of 10,000 euros in prize money per year; scaling of a social innovation project in 2023 (Pre-Seed counselling for social entrepreneurs); development of different event formats: launching of the Open Social Innovation Forum, Social Innovation Bar, Social Impact Weekend, Cross-Cluster Event, Start-up Seminars; 200 different stakeholders in several active networks</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The social economy sector is playing an increasingly important role in the great transition context and is thus a relevant policy field for all regions. The Mannheim Social Economy Cluster shows how professionalism, adequate basic funding from own resources and supplementary project funding as well as innovative event formats can succeed in creating a promising social economy community within a relatively short time. However, every good practice is embedded in a specific local/regional context to which it needs to be adapted. The Cluster practice, requesting a certain “player density”, might encounter more reticence or need more time to develop in smaller cities or in a more rural context.</p> <p>The city of Mannheim is sharing its experiences and expertise with partners in two networks:</p> <p>The city is a partner of the European Social Economy Regions (ESER) initiative launched in 2018 to raise awareness about social economy at regional/local level and to build a network of social economy stakeholders.</p>

	At national level, Mannheim is participating in a City Network grouping cities highly engaged in social economy among which the cities of Kiel, Bremen, Hannover, Berlin, Dortmund and Munich (35 cities in total, search for more cities is ongoing).
Useful links - website	Social Economy Mannheim.de Mannheim Social Economy Cluster: Übersicht LinkedIn List of Official ESER partners 2023
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	Mannheim Declaration on Social Economy (EUSES 2020)

Greece, Region of Peloponnese

Sustainable Olive Oil Production by “Eleonas” Cooperative

Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Greece Region: Messinia, Peloponnese City: Gargalianoi
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	Name of entity(ies): “Eleonas” Agricultural Cooperative Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Cooperative Launched in 2004, “Eleonas” aims to boost the quality of Messinian olive oil, prioritizing environmental sustainability, consumer health, and the well-being of producers, thereby ensuring a holistic approach to olive oil production.
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: 2004 End Date: Ongoing
Short summary of the practice	The Cooperative in Gargalianoi elevates olive oil production via sustainable methods and stringent quality management, ensuring premium Messinian olive oil.
Resources	The cooperative's endeavours are sustained through the dual channels of member investments and EU grants, the latter awarded for alignment with the EU's green directives. This financial model undergirds the cooperative's ambitious agenda, from ecological initiatives to operational continuity.



	<p>The cooperative is relied on its human capital: member experts and specialists in agronomy and quality management. Members contribute labour and knowledge, while experts ensure that agricultural practices meet sustainability benchmarks and that olive oil quality surpasses industry standards.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The "Eleonas" cooperative, since its inception in 2004 in Gargalianoi, Messinia, has been dedicated to elevating the quality of the renowned Koroneiki olive oil through sustainable and quality-focused practices. With a commitment to environmental stewardship, consumer health, and the prosperity of its producers, the cooperative employs Good Agricultural Practices and Environmental Management Systems, addressing contemporary agricultural challenges.</p> <p>The cooperative's efforts concentrate on sustainable agriculture, quality enhancement, and the incorporation of environmental management into olive farming. It emerged from a recognised need to uplift olive oil standards while safeguarding natural resources and ensuring favourable outcomes for consumers and producers alike. The approach integrates judicious use of inputs, strict hygiene protocols, and a traceability system that guarantees the excellence of their extra virgin olive oil.</p> <p>Navigating the dual objectives of conforming to modern standards and preserving product integrity, "Eleonas" innovatively merges quality management with eco-friendly production.</p> <p>The cooperative's stakeholders extend from its olive oil producers to the local community that benefits from sustainable agriculture, and ultimately, to the environment itself.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>The cooperative has demonstrated remarkable progress, particularly in elevating Messinian olive oil quality and sustainability since 2004. Achievements include significant adoption of sustainable farming practices, successful certification of quality and environmental management systems, and increased production of high-quality extra virgin olive oil. This progress reflects positively on consumer trust and market demand, indicating a strong performance with potential for further growth and impact.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The Cooperative's approach to integrating sustainable practices and quality management in olive oil production offers valuable insights for other regions interested in sustainable agriculture and product quality enhancement. The cooperative's success in achieving high-quality standards and environmental sustainability makes it a model worth emulating. Its practices could be particularly interesting for areas with</p>

	similar agricultural contexts or those looking to shift towards more sustainable and quality-focused production methods.
Useful links - website	https://vatsiko.gr/
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	Agricultural Cooperative "Eleonas" (youtube.com)

"Recycle at the Source": Enhancing Community Engagement and Environmental Sustainability

Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Greece Region: Achaia, Peloponnese City: Patras
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	Name of entity(ies): "Recycle at the Source": Social Cooperative Enterprise Type: Social Cooperative Enterprise Launched in 2013 and initiated under Greek law (Law 4019/2011), it is a social cooperative aiming to promote source separation for recycling, directly involving the community in sustainable waste management practices to achieve higher recycling rates and environmental conservation.
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: 2013 End Date: Ongoing
Short summary of the practice	A pioneering social cooperative in Patras, this cooperative focuses on promoting recycling at the source. By engaging the community, it aims to improve recycling rates, reduce landfill use, and foster a culture of environmental responsibility.

Resources	<p>The cooperative thrives on a unique blend of funding, primarily sourced from member contributions who are actively engaged in its mission, complementing this is the potential support from national or EU programmes that target environmental sustainability and waste management.</p> <p>The cooperative's success relies on committed individuals. Volunteers are handling recyclable sorting and community outreach, while the staff manages the day-to-day, coordinates volunteer efforts, and steers the cooperative's strategy. Specialises in environmental science, waste management, and community relations are integral, crafting effective recycling programmes, leading informative sessions, and guaranteeing that operations are ecologically and socially responsible.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The Social Cooperative Enterprise in Patras is at the forefront of innovative recycling initiatives, centered around the concept of source-separation recycling. This method encourages the community to separate recyclables at the origin—be it at home, at work, or in communal areas—to streamline the recycling process. With its roots in the Arctic District of Patras, the project has since flourished, extending its environmental ethos throughout the municipality.</p> <p>Since 2014, the cooperative has been instrumental in redirecting hundreds of tons of recyclable materials to local industries, establishing a robust system for material recovery. Its warehouse serves as the core from where volunteers distribute sorted materials. Community engagement is twofold: individuals participate by sorting recyclables and delivering them to specific drop-off points, or they join as cooperative members with shares and active roles in decision-making processes.</p> <p>The initiative has markedly improved Patras's recycling rates from a low starting point, transitioning from a heavy reliance on landfills to a sustainable, community-centric recycling model. This shift represents a deliberate stance against the privatisation of communal resources, ensuring the community reaps the benefits of its collective efforts.</p> <p>"Recycle at the Source" has also pioneered the first Repair Café in Greece, a venture that aligns with the global non-profit RepairCafe.org, advocating for the repair and reuse of everyday items.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>It has successfully redirected tons of recyclable materials from landfills to local industries, demonstrating the viability and efficiency of source-separation recycling. With a robust volunteer network, it fosters a culture of environmental responsibility and active citizenship. Its achievements also include the establishment of the first Repair Café in Greece. These accomplishments underscore the significant impact on</p>

	waste reduction, resource conservation, and public awareness, setting a precedent for sustainable waste management practices.
Potential for learning or transfer	The initiative's model, driven by volunteer action and collective involvement, offers a sustainable blueprint that could be adopted by urban areas worldwide to enhance waste management and reduce landfill usage. The success in Patras provides valuable insights for other regions looking to cultivate a culture of environmental stewardship.
Useful links - website	https://recycleatsource.gr/
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	 <p>Students visit the Cooperative's storage in Patras</p>  <p>Volunteers collecting electronic devices</p>

Latvia, Riga Planning Region

Grants for social entrepreneurship development from financial institution “Altum”

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Latvia</p> <p>Region: Riga Planning Region and 4 other regions in Latvia</p> <p>Scope: National</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entities: Latvian Ministry of Welfare (MoW), Development Finance Institution “Altum”</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Public bodies</p> <p>The Latvian Ministry of Welfare is a national authority responsible for implementation of labour and social policies, including the national policy of social entrepreneurship. Development Finance Institution ALTUM is a state company providing financial instruments such as loans, grants guarantees in areas which are national policy priorities and in which private financing is insufficient.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: January 2018</p> <p>End Date: March 2023</p> <p>The grant program will be resumed in the 2nd half of 2024.</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>Within ESF project “Support for Social Entrepreneurship” Ministry of Welfare has allocated a certain amount of ESF funding for business grants to social enterprises. Grants are made available through public financial institution “Altum”. Social enterprises apply for “Altum” grants for starting or development of social entrepreneurship. In the period 2018-2023 “Altum” supported 204 projects for the total amount of 12.2 million EUR.</p>
Resources	<p>The initiative is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The resources needed reach 12.2 million EUR, of which 85% comes from ESF, and 15% from the Latvian national budget.</p> <p>The initiative engages 5-6 persons (not full time) involved at Ministry of Welfare and 4-5 persons (not full time) involved at financial institution Altum.</p>

**Detailed
information of
the practice**

The major topics include the financial support for social entrepreneurship, business grants for social enterprises, and business development of social enterprises.

The project Support for Social Entrepreneurship includes among other things financial support to social enterprises. Social enterprises are invited to prepare social entrepreneurship projects and apply for financial grants.

The status of a social enterprise requires that the enterprise works for public benefit (no dividends allowed to the shareholders) and accepts the obligation to ensure social impact. The activities supporting public benefit are not always profitable or financially sustainable, especially in the initial stages. For some enterprises it may take time to become financially stable. Thus, there is the need to strengthen social enterprises financially, to support their long-term sustainability and to improve their business competence.

The Ministry of Welfare implements ESF project Support for Social Entrepreneurship from which it allocates a certain amount of support financing. Cabinet of Ministers regulations are adopted to define the main provisions for providing financial support. MoW has signed a cooperation agreement with “Altum” about roles and responsibilities of both institutions. Both institutions define the Further, “Altum” announces the call for applications. Grants are available in the amounts from 5000 EUR to 200 000 EUR and they can be used for starting entrepreneurship or for development of existing entrepreneurship. The main criteria for project ideas are financial viability and long-term sustainability. The applications can be submitted as long as funds are available. High-quality projects are awarded financing. Financing is issued in several parts. “Altum” monitors implementation and reviews the reports on progress of implementation.

Cooperation between the MoW and “Altum” to set up a financial support instrument for social entrepreneurs to encourage both: starting a social enterprises and continuing and developing business for public benefit. The financing scheme also serves to develop and improve competences of social entrepreneurs, because they can receive consultations from MoW and from “Altum”. Refused applications can be gradually improved and resubmitted, because access to grants is not limited to separate calls. Financing remains available to all applicants throughout the whole period as long as there are funds.


As to their background activities there are 2 main types of entities which apply for grants: companies with business experience which wish to add social entrepreneurship aspect to their activities and for whom the main motivation may be financial sustainability, so, their focus is made more

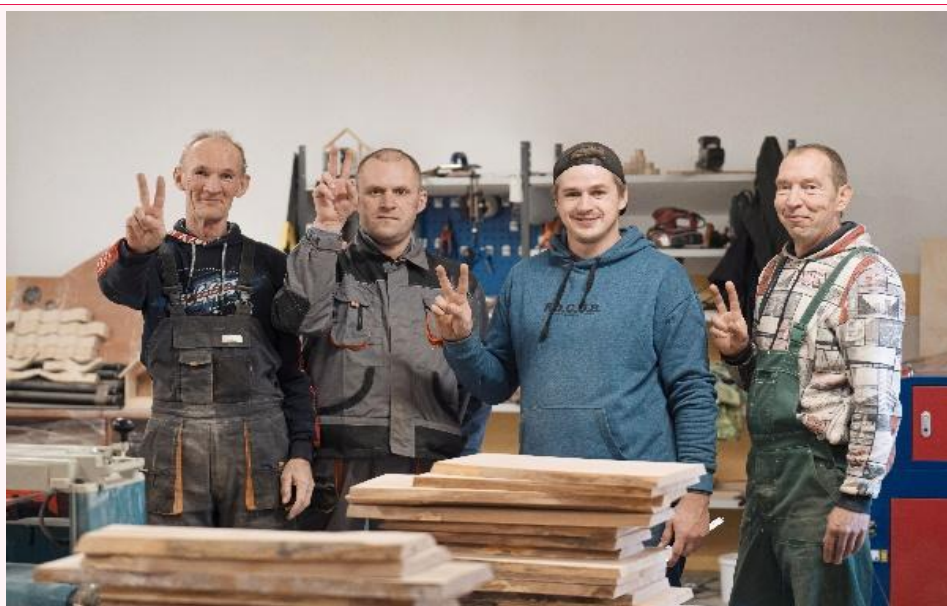
	<p>on the business aspects than the social impact and public benefit; and NGOs or individuals who have focus on public benefit and are social economy actors, but do not have much experience with entrepreneurship and have difficulty with developing a sustainable business.</p> <p>The main stakeholders are Latvian Social Entrepreneurship Association, municipalities and especially municipalities in Riga Planning Region. The main beneficiaries are 168 legal entities (majority are social enterprises, but there are some NGOs and foundations) which have received grants and developed their social entrepreneurship projects.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>The Financial institution “Altum” reviews and provides evaluation of grant applications. The applications are supported if the business ideas are of good quality and financially viable and sustainable in long-term. The grants are disbursed in several instalments and the beneficiary has to submit a progress report on the use of funds to receive the next instalment. Final report is required upon completion of the project. In the case of larger amounts (e.g., investment projects), “Altum” makes site visits.</p> <p>In the period 2018-2024, “Altum” grants have supported 204 successful social entrepreneurship projects for total amount of 12.2 million EUR. 168 legal entities (most of which are social enterprises) have implemented their projects.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>Availability of grants activates social entrepreneurship, motivates development of new entrepreneurship ideas, makes social economy environment more dynamic.</p>
Useful links - website	<p>MoW: https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/finansu-atbalsta-sanemsana</p> <p>Altum: https://www.altum.lv/pakalpojumi/biznesam/sociala-uznemejdarbiba/</p>
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	<p>https://youtu.be/nN6HBBxII8Y?si=8yQPO0fve1KAQaHb</p> <p>https://youtu.be/nN6HBBxII8Y</p>

Rehabilitation Combined with Employment for People with Functional Disabilities

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Latvia</p> <p>Region: Riga Planning Region</p> <p>Municipality: Sigulda</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entities: Sigulda County, Association Cerību Spārni (<i>Wings of Hope</i>), <i>Visi Var</i> (Everybody Can)</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Public body, NGO, social enterprise</p> <p>Sigulda County is one of 9 municipalities of Riga Planning Region. The Municipality includes the town of Sigulda and the surrounding rural area.</p> <p>NGO <i>Wings of Hope</i>, founded in 2003, supports people with disabilities and their families by providing day care centre services, group housing, rehabilitation therapies and workshops.</p> <p>The social enterprise <i>Everybody Can</i> was established by the NGO <i>Wings of Hope</i> to enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities or their parents by selling the products made in workshops.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: Year 2004</p> <p>Ongoing/Permanent</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>NGO <i>Wings of Hope</i> set up the service for people with functional disabilities in which rehabilitation and therapy is combined with labour integration. Sigulda Municipality provides premises and pays for the service provided by the NGO. On the basis of municipal financing, NGO together with the social enterprise operate 5 day care centres providing support for approximately 150 individuals. Day care centres combine rehabilitation with employment opportunities. At workshops people with disabilities acquire vocational skills and make high quality products which are sold at a shop operated by social enterprise “<i>Everybody Can</i>”. The generated profits are reinvested in job creation, equipment for workshops, charities.</p>
Resources	<p>The initiative is funded by the Municipality of Sigulda County through annual transfers. It involves 121 employees of NGOs and social enterprises.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The initiative covers labour integration, employment opportunities for people with functional disabilities, rehabilitation, and collaboration between a municipality, NGO and social enterprise.</p> <p>For anyone it is essential to have a sense of social inclusion, improvement of their skills and talents, being part of a society, and</p>

	<p>having daily interaction with friends and colleagues. Association <i>Wings of Hope</i> was founded in 2003 by a group of parents all of whom had children with disabilities. They were united by the goal to ensure well-being and social support of their children. Gradually, the NGO became a partner of the municipality in supporting socially disadvantaged groups.</p> <p>The main needs addressed by the initiative include social inclusion, employment, skills development, vocational training, as well as rehabilitation and therapy.</p> <p>Since 2004 the association <i>Wings of Hope</i> is having a contract with Sigulda municipality, which is renewed every three years. The municipality provides premises and pays for the service which has been developed by the NGO and is implemented together with the social enterprise. The NGO operates five Day Care centres currently providing support for approximately 150 persons with disabilities. The daily activities include rehabilitation, therapy, and employment at 11 different workshops. There are products which are commissioned or ordered by companies or individuals, e.g., candles or ceramic pieces as corporate gifts. Most products are sold at a shop which is operated by the social enterprise <i>Everybody can</i>.</p> <p>Cooperation “triangle” – municipality, NGO, social enterprise – in providing social services to local communities; Rehabilitation process combined with labour integration at crafts workshops enable people with disabilities to develop and demonstrate their creativity and working skills, ability to work in a team, plan and take responsibility.</p> <p>The tax system is not sufficiently motivating for social enterprises; The success and efficiency of such service depends on the attitude of the people in municipality. As the NGO is trying to develop the service in other municipalities, the level of support and cooperation is not the same in each of the municipalities. The main beneficiaries are people with functional disabilities and their families.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>The NGO <i>Wings of Hope</i> is required to prepare and submit reports to the Municipality. The Municipality makes annual check-up and assessment of the quality of provided service. There are annual reports to the State revenue service about the use of financing. Social enterprise submits annual reports about the social impact to the Ministry of Welfare.</p> <p>Other municipalities are inviting <i>Wings of Hope</i> to develop this type of service (day care centres) for their communities; The number of people</p>

	<p>who receive the service has grown gradually. Families from other municipalities are applying for the service.</p> <p>Recently two new multifunctional centres for people with disabilities, managed by <i>Wings of Hope</i>, were opened. The association is expanding its services and providing more people with jobs and meaningful life. 85% of the social enterprise employees are with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. Each individual receiving a support from the association means another family member or care giver able going to work or pursuing their lives. 90% of parents or caregivers of the participants are employed.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	Other municipalities in Latvia have shown interest and requested the association <i>Wings of Hope</i> and the social enterprise to develop the same type of service (day care centres with work integration) in their municipalities.
Useful links - website	https://visivar.lv/ www.ceribusparni.lv
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	<p> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAJpwrMVs6M https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0ZEgvaqGBo&t=20s https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELWiTiS9GkE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIOFmSvVZNk&t=4s </p> 



Poland, Mazowieckie Region

Joint Social Cooperative (Centrum Usług Środowiskowych) in Drobin

Location/ Geographical Scope

Country: Poland
Region: Mazowieckie Region
City: Drobin

Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Social Cooperative of Legal Persons Centrum Usług Środowiskowych (Environmental Services Centre)</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Social cooperative</p> <p>The Social Cooperative of Legal Persons Centrum Usług Środowiskowych (Environmental Services Centre), established in 2012, is a pioneering social cooperative in the Plock Mazovia subregion, formed by collaboration with local governments and organisations of Słupno Municipality, Mała Wieś Municipality, Bulkowo Municipality, the Roman Catholic Parish of St. Martin in Słupno, the Association Centre for Innovation of Information Society, the Municipality of Radzanowo, and Municipality of Drobin, where the Cooperative currently has its headquarters. Operating from the City and Municipality of Drobin since 2016, the cooperative engages in municipal services, care for war cemeteries, and runs an Occupational Therapy Workshop for participants with disabilities. Entrusted by Drobin in 2015, it operates the Senior+ Day Care Centre and a club for seniors since 2019. Diversifying its activities, the cooperative ventured into the catering business in 2019, establishing the "Symphony of Taste" banquet hall, providing comprehensive catering and logistics services. The catering business serves as the primary revenue source, demonstrating the cooperative's commitment to community support and social impact.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: 2012 - the beginning of the cooperative, the beginning of the entity linked to EU funds for job creation and further employment growth using EU funds (PO KL 2007-2013).</p> <p>End Date: ongoing</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>The social cooperative is made up of five communities and performs social, communal, educational, tourism and catering services.</p>
Resources	<p>The initiative is funded by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - creation with the use of funds from the European Union - financing under contracts with local governments for the provision of social, municipal services (public procurement mode) - financing within the framework of tourist services (school trips, study visits) - financing within the framework of external projects (local governments, programmes of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy) <p>In 2023, 22 people were employed. Currently, the increase in employment is dependent on winning more orders.</p>

Detailed information of the practice	<p>The Social Cooperative of Legal Persons Environmental Services Centre operates on the territory of the City and Municipality of Drobin. At the same time, it provides services that meet the real needs of local society, creates a local labour market, and counteracts social and professional exclusion. The multi-sectoral social cooperative provides an opportunity to effectively solve social problems through intersectoral cooperation while creating new jobs for people at risk of social and professional exclusion.</p> <p>The first social cooperative of legal entities was established in the Mazovia province. The initial creators in 2012 were the municipality of Słupno, the municipality of Bulkowo, the municipality of Mała Wieś, the Roman Catholic Parish of St. Martin in Słupno and the Center for Innovation of Information Society in Płock.</p> <p>The main objectives of the initiative include the continuation of operation, as well as seeking new projects for seniors and commissions for community and care services.</p> <p>The initiative makes use of EU funds for the creation of social cooperatives and jobs and implementation in accordance with the conditions of the project and with the support of the services provided by the social economy support centre, under the Human Capital Operational Programme 2007-2012.</p> <p>The main challenges include the further expansion to more municipalities, maintaining further cooperation, despite political changes after local elections; and looking for new fields of work.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries include citizens, local governments forming the social cooperative, and local governments using the services.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>Confirmed correctness of project implementation (evaluation and report by the Ministry of Family and Social Policy) and tenders (evaluation and monitoring by the contracting authority - municipal governments).</p> <p>In 2023, the Cooperative achieved substantial growth and impact by securing six permanent work orders with the Municipalities of Słupno and Drobin, in addition to contracts for about 10 contracted services. The cooperative expanded its services to include maintenance for the Kindergarten in Drobin and the Children's Club, as well as collaborating with the Mazovian Centre for Social Policy to provide meals for Ukrainian migrants. Engaging in cleanliness and order maintenance for two shopping malls, the cooperative completed around 50 orders for local governments and companies, resulting in a turnover exceeding 2 million zlotys. Beyond its core services, the</p>

	cooperative successfully obtained funds for various projects, including Independence Day, an 84 thousand zlotys grant from the Enterprise+ project, and 176 thousand zlotys from the National Reconstruction Plan for the CUS for Climate project. This financial success allowed the cooperative to sustain employment for 23 people, with additional hires on commission contracts, while focusing on further territorial and personal development in municipal and care services provision.
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>A ready-made model of cooperation of many municipalities, which with the use of cooperatives carry out municipal and welfare tasks for the residents of their municipalities. A wide range of cooperatives forming, there are no cooperatives formed by so many local governments in the Mazovian province that want to act together.</p> <p>Based on the experience of the social cooperative Environmental Services, the social cooperative Podkowa of Kobylka was established in January 2022. The founders of the Podkowa social cooperative are the City of Kobylka and the Municipality of Jadów, and its headquarters are in Kobylka. The PODKOWA social cooperative providing care services, cleaning services, handicrafts and hippotherapy.</p>
Useful links - website	<p>https://cus-drobin.pl/</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/cusslupno/?locale=pl</p>

Social Integration Centre (Centrum Integracji Społecznej) in Zbijów Mały

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Poland</p> <p>Region: Mazowieckie Region</p> <p>City: Village of Zbijów Mały</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Gmina Mirów (Mirów Commune)</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): local government unit</p> <p>The Mirów commune is located in Szydłowiec County. The district area has been characterised by the highest unemployment rate in the country for many years. On February 20, 2020, the Mirów Commune received a decision from the Masovian Voivodeship to grant the status of the Social Integration Centre (CIS) based in Zbijów Mały 61 A, 26-503 Mirów Stary. It started operations on September 1, 2021. CIS pursues the goal of reintegrating excluded people, both professionally</p>

	<p>and socially. Provides psychological counselling, career counselling and workshops, such as care services, green areas care workshops, road maintenance workshops, servicing the municipal water and sewage network, renovation and construction</p> <p>According to data as of December 2023, 10 people used CIS support. Number of people who have benefited from support since the beginning - 15, Number of people who have become independent - 6</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: September 1, 2021 – date of admission of the first participant</p> <p>End Date: CIS received the status for 5 years, the minimum implementation period expires on February 17, 2025 and this period may be extended.</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>It is a comprehensive, individualised approach to the problems, needs and challenges faced by people in difficult life and professional situations.</p>
Resources	<p>In 2021, the Mirów Commune received a subsidy for the initial equipment and CIS activities for the first 3 months from the funds of the Masovian Voivodeship Local Government pursuant to Art. 8 of the Act of 13 June 2003 on social employment in the amount of PLN 1,219,800. The subsidy was settled in 2022. Additionally, CIS may apply for subsidies from the commune's own income (including funds for the implementation of the municipal programme for preventing and solving alcohol problems), funds from the European Union, and income from the activities conducted by CIS.</p> <p>Funding/financial resources needed: approximately PLN 650,000 per year</p> <p>Human resources needed: min. 6 employees</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The major topics covered include social economy, social exclusion, support, social reintegration, and professional reintegration.</p> <p>Professional reintegration in CIS involves providing people with the opportunity to participate in various forms of work and adapting them to working conditions on the market.</p> <p>CIS participants can benefit from professional courses and training that improve their qualifications, workshops and apprenticeships that give them experience, classes on starting and running your own business, with emphasis on social cooperatives as a form of social entrepreneurship.</p>

	<p>The main objective of the initiative is the socio-professional reintegration of people at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>The project implementation period was over a year - from the time of obtaining the CIS status from the Masovian Voivodeship to the reception of the first participant and the creation of the first workshops.</p> <p>The possibility of outsourcing commune tasks to a social economy entity, as well as a comprehensive socio-professional activation programme - each participant signs an Individual Social Employment Programme. People are accepted for a trial period of 1 month. After successful completion of the trial period, the participant is qualified for classes at CIS for up to 11 months, and in justified cases, up to 24 months.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries include the Mirów Commune, the Municipal Social Welfare Centre in Mirów, the District Labor Office in Szydłowiec, homeless people, long-term unemployed people, addicted to alcohol or drugs, persons with mental disorders, former prisoners, a strictly defined group of refugees, and people with disabilities who are subject to social exclusion and due to their life situation, they are unable to satisfy their basic life needs on their own and are in a situation that prevents or limits their participation in professional, social and family life.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>Annual substantive and financial reports are submitted to the Masovian Voivode, participation in CIS forums in Mazovia.</p> <p>Implementation of the commune's tasks by CIS, number of people who have become economically independent - 6 people since the beginning of CIS's existence. The number of people who have been CIS participants since its inception is 15.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The idea of the Social Integration Centre is to socially and professionally activate people at risk of social exclusion. These are supposed to be long-term activities that will change the attitude of these people and allow them to function in the environment again and differently. The opportunity to work and train for a profession, combined with therapy, will allow excluded people to regain the ability to live independently.</p>
Useful links - website	<p>https://www.mirow.pl/</p>

Portugal, Municipality of Oliveira de Azeméis

Support Unit for Autonomy	
Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Portugal Region: Aveiro City: Oliveira de Azeméis
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	Name of entity(ies): Centro de Apoio Familiar Pinto de Carvalho Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): IPSS CAF Pinto de Carvalho was founded on 16/09/1856 by António Pinto de Carvalho and is a house intended to shelter orphaned children as well as sick pilgrims. Over time, the institution has adapted to the needs and reality of its users, always with a focus on children and young people. It currently develops six social responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Residential Care Home (CAR):- Centre for Family Support and Parental Counselling (CAFAP)- Nursery- Pre-School- Leisure Activities Centre (CATL)
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: 2018 End Date: Ongoing
Short summary of the practice	The project aims to meet the requalification of residential care in Portugal, preparing young people in care for active life and full autonomy, in a structured and supported manner.
Resources	The project has been funded through applications to private entities and initiatives that support projects in the area: BPI Solidarity Prize, La Caixa Foundation, and local company sponsorship. The funding was necessary to carry out refurbishment works of the physical spaces, construction of a kitchen (furniture and household appliances), furniture, utensils (dishes, towels, cutlery, pots), simple and welcoming decoration to facilitate the management of daily life for the young people, a budget of €19,660.64 was required. The project relied on the existing teams (human resources) in the care facility.

<p>Detailed information of the practice</p>	<p>The reality of residential care, which is the reality of our institution, is based on young people with an average age of 16, with a long history of being in care or late entry into care, and families without the capacity to be alternative support to care. It is clear that there is a need for greater investment in preparing young people for full autonomy in order to avoid a transition without support and disjointed, which can lead to the destabilisation of young people after leaving care, usually resulting in endless cycles of disorganised and deviant lifestyles.</p> <p>The intervention aims to provide essential tools for structured detachment from care through collaboration with the community, enhancing full autonomy.</p> <p>Regardless of each young person's life project, CAF Pinto de Carvalho develops a set of personal and social skills for them to grow sustainably and be capable of taking individual responsibility for their affairs and actions. Thus, the intervention for full life autonomy is carried out through four phased levels of action that will occur according to the pace of each young person.</p> <p>Residential care institutions in Portugal are mostly large institutions with rigid operating rules, a high number of young people, and basic care provided by services such as laundry, kitchen, and cleaning, without the direct involvement and participation of the resident children/young people in daily routines. This unit allowed for a change in this "institutional vision" and the creation of a response that directly addresses the needs of young people, allowing them to participate in everyday family routines, such as learning how to cook or iron.</p> <p>The beneficiaries are young people residing in the CAF Pinto de Carvalho with foster care promotion and protection measures.</p>
<p>Results Achieved</p>	<p>Throughout the process, the technical team and the young person perform an assessment to determine their stage and preparation for the subsequent phase, until they are ready to leave residential care. Since September 2018, an average of 20 young people has been integrated into this project annually, benefiting from this intervention before leaving residential care. At the end of the support, a follow-up was carried out after 6 months to assess the impact of the measure and intervention on the young people's life path after leaving residential care. Based on the feedback obtained, the majority of the young people reported feeling more comfortable making conscious decisions and choices after the intervention.</p> <p>This project allowed CAF to pioneer the creation of a specific response with an impact on post-foster care and the prevention of endless cycles of social exclusion.</p>

Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The Autonomy Support Unit project started in September 2018 for 13 young people in foster care. In March 2021, the project was replicated in a 2nd unit for another 13 young people in foster care, given the positive results of the initial wing.</p> <p>Considering the relevance of this intervention, a new Decree was issued on December 22, 2023, establishing the operating and installation regime for foster homes for children and young people, highlighting the importance of current institutions organizing themselves into family models with common facilities similar to a common family household.</p>
Useful links - website	https://www.cafpintodecarvalho.org/pt/inicio
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	https://www.cafpintodecarvalho.org/#galeria https://www.cafpintodecarvalho.org/pt/espacos

Social Network Programme

Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Portugal Region: Aveiro City: Oliveira de Azeméis
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Municipality of Oliveira de Azeméis</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Local Authority</p> <p>Oliveira de Azeméis is a small municipality with 66.000 inhabitants in the Northern Region of Portugal, near PORTO. It is an industrialised municipality where 60% of total employment is in the industry sector. The Municipality of Oliveira de Azeméis guides its action in the public interest pursuit, aiming the sustainable local development and the continuous increase in its population's quality of life. The municipality carries out activities in such diverse areas as the administration of the municipal public domain, spatial planning, environment, social affairs, education, culture, sports and youth.</p>
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: 2002 End Date: ongoing
Short summary of the practice	The Social Network Programme in OAZ is a partnership work practice that optimises existing resources and mobilises synergies for the

	diagnosis and resolution of local social problems and the subsequent pursuit of local social development
Resources	<p>During the first two years of implementation, the programme was funded by the Social Security. The Municipality currently funds it.</p> <p>The funding is needed to cover the salary of a Higher Technician (sociology), as well as Logistics and operational costs.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The Social Network programme is presented since 2002 in Oliveira de Azeméis as a fundamental structural programme in the local development process, through the implementation of territorialised strategic planning processes as the basis for social intervention. The Social Network Programme was based, from its inception, on the recognition of the existence of multiple local solidarity networks, and until today it is assumed as a model of organisation and articulated work, based on a methodology of joint analysis of problems and optimisation of existing resources, aiming to achieve the goal of social development, integrated, participatory, and sustained in territories. With the implementation of this programme in our municipality, it was possible to carry out Social Diagnosis documents and the Social Development Plan, supported by local intervention planning and contributing to the resolution of real problems experienced, felt, and expressed by people.</p> <p>The main needs addressed and objectives of the programme are to combat poverty and social exclusion and promote local social development.</p> <p>Methodologically, the Social Network is structured in the implementation of participatory social diagnoses, the implementation of local information systems, and the implementation of social development programmes and their respective action plans. This intervention strategy ends up promoting greater territorial cohesion, involving greater coordination between different sectors and spheres of power, always seeking to improve the quality of life of communities and their greater participation in defining solutions to better meet their needs.</p> <p>Participation, empowerment, territory, economy, solidarity, and innovation are keywords in the continuity of work in networks and their articulation is a true impulse in transforming forms of social intervention.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project are the entire population residing in the Municipality of Oliveira de Azeméis.</p>
Results Achieved	Formally, the Social Network programme, its implementation, and the impact it has on territories have been periodically evaluated by the Institute of Social Security. With these evaluations, it was possible to

	<p>analyse the regulatory legal framework of the Programme and analyse the degree of implementation of its principles and underlying objectives.</p> <p>One evidence of its success is its durability over time. Without a specific funding programme, the Social Network is present in almost all municipalities in Portugal. Recognizing the changes and different dynamics driven in territories by the Social Network programme, recently, the Portuguese Government, through the Recovery and Resilience Plan, created a measure called "Social Radar," which aims to reinforce the role of the Social Network and its role as a local policy instrument.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>The processes of territorialisation of poverty and social exclusion and the need to promote social development in these contexts for the quality of life of populations are transversal to different countries and territories.</p> <p>Network operation is a practice implemented and tested in Portugal and can be replicated in all territories that demonstrate this need and want to ensure greater intervention capacity of stakeholders, creating conditions of proximity to solve social problems affecting populations in situations of social vulnerability and at risk of poverty and social exclusion, redirecting local social intervention towards the development of inclusive territories.</p>
Useful links - website	https://www.cm-oaz.pt/acao_social.352/rede_social.560.html
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	https://www.cm-oaz.pt/noticias.6/acao_social.15/.a10506.html https://www.cm-oaz.pt/noticias.6/acao_social.15/.a11477.html https://www.cm-oaz.pt/noticias.6/acao_social.15/.a9574.html

Romania, Harghita County Council

Short Food Supply Chain (food hub) initiative in service of small producers and community

Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Romania Region: Centru City: Odorheiu Secuiesc
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Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Helyenvalo SRL (Helyenvalo SRL (The Appropriate Food Hub))</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): social enterprise created by Civitas Foundation</p> <p>The Helyénvaló (The Appropriate) food hub has been operating since 2018 in the middle of Romania, on the outskirts of Transylvania, in the Eastern Carpathians, specifically in Odorheiu Secuiesc. They have their own shop and an e-shop. They operate as a social enterprise owned by the Civitas Foundation. The opening of the food hub was preceded by 15 years of work with villages, communities, and farmers in the region. They have helped them to re-evaluate their relationship with the land, orchards and vegetable gardens, and organised fruit festivals for them, showing them that it is worth bringing their produce to the market. The Foundation has also set up a small fruit processing plant together with the Szekler Fruit Association. They work in a short food supply chain (food hub), sourcing all products directly from the producers and passing them on to the consumer. This gives their consumers a choice of healthy, fresh, locally sourced products.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: 2018</p> <p>End Date: ongoing</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>The Helyénvaló provides advice, organises training and facilitate networking for local producers. The food hub can apply for marketing costs and can employ online marketing specialists. Producers are interviewed by the food hub staff and the Civitas Foundation's Professional Panel decides whether they can be admitted to the shop based on their performance in the region (producers involved in scandals, political</p>
Resources	<p>The initiative is funded by the Romanian American Foundation and NESsT</p> <p>The financial resources needed are 55000 Euro/year for staff and online marketing (4 employees, and several external experts helping the marketing)</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The major topics covered by the initiative include local production, small farmers, environmental aspect of local produce, and consumers.</p> <p>The creator of the Helyénvaló, the Civitas Foundation, has been working with farmers in the area for decades, providing training and organising fairs, and it was discovered that there was a lack of a sales platform</p>

	<p>where they could sell their goods 6 days a week. This is why the foundation created the food hub.</p> <p>The main challenge constitutes Attracting local firms as consumers and the establishment of food hub in Romania.</p> <p>Both an e-shop (www.helyenvalo.ro) and physical shop is available for consumers.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the practice include 104 small-scale producers, buyers, municipalities, licensing authorities, tourism units, HORECA, SFSC organisers, market operators, County Council, Via Transilvanica, Via Maria, and adult education NGOs.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>The Helyénvaló reports to both funders on a quarterly and semi-annual basis on both economic and social/environmental indicators. It also reports annually to the Board of Trustees of the Civitas Foundation on all indicators. It analyses the monthly financial balance sheet, as well as the economic performance and the RAF expects to produce a separate economic statement every month and they analyse it together. At the same time, it keeps a monthly breakdown of the shop and online sales indicators: revenue, number of customers, shopping basket.</p> <p>Its uninterrupted operation since 2018, is evidence of its success.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>In Romania, 5 food hubs were launched at the same time, four of them survived (but none of them are economically sustainable). By training producers on the issues that are important to them and helping them to build relationships, the Helyénvaló ensure the sustainability of both the producers and the food hub. The dual trading platform (online and physical shop) ensures higher turnover.</p> <p>Information on transfer(s) that already took place (if possible, specify the country, the region – NUTS 2 – and organisation to which the practice was transferred):https://www.facebook.com/tercsi.termekok, www.tercsi.ro , Local Market Remetea (NUTS 2), Kislépték Hungary</p>
Useful links - website	www.helyenvalo.ro , www.foodhubs.ro
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	<p>https://www.google.com/maps/uv?pb=!1s0x474b175db0e88c05%3A0x543c859c05b6b95a!5sHely%C3%A9nval%C3%B3%20Helyi%20Bolt!15sCglqARICEAE</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AScljHd9pNI&t=8s</p>

Equestrian centre for connecting generations in Dârjiu

Location/ Geographical Scope	Country: Romania Region: Centru City: Dârjiu
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	Name of entity(ies): Kanthaka Association Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): NGO <p>The association was created as a social enterprise and it received support in one of the Exino Association's projects through the Human Resource Development Operative Programme. As an enterprise, they created an equestrian centre, they operate it, and their economic activity is based on it. The social activity of the association is the creation and operation of a day centre for the elderly, with the aim of reducing and preventing the isolation of the elderly residents of Dârjiu. In the period following the project, they will continue to operate both the equestrian centre and the senior centre.</p>
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: April 2021 End Date: March 2023
Short summary of the practice	The equestrian centre returns 90% of the profits to the day centre for the elderly. Main services: riding, horse tours, demonstrations, horse-assisted activities, horse therapy.
Resources	The project is funded by its 5 founding members. The project needs 5 employees.
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The major topics covered are improving the quality of life, preventing, and combating the risk of social exclusion through collaboration between generations to solve the special needs of the elderly in Dârjiu. Promotion of local traditional values.</p> <p>The initiative has established a day centre for socialisation and spending free time for the elderly in Dârjiu, within primary social services are provided, through which the prevention and limitation of situations of difficulty or vulnerability, which can lead to marginalisation, will be sought or social exclusion. To finance social activities, they established an equestrian centre, which carries out economic activity.</p> <p>The main objectives include the real improvement of the mental state, and the body health of the elderly people participating in the programme, which in the long term positively influences the (spirit) state of the</p>

	<p>extended families and the community; through creating an environment that corresponds to the needs of the third age, and in which they can spend their time in a cultural and comfortable way.</p> <p>The example of the equestrian centre proposes solving the problems identified at the local level through entrepreneurial means, based on the development of a partnership between generations.</p> <p>The main stakeholders and beneficiaries include elderly people from Dârjiu, people interested in riding, and people with disabilities.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>The monitoring activity of the project was carried out by the Exino Association and the ASIMCOV. The main outcomes include: a) the equestrian centre was equipped with 6 horses (4 horses purchased through the project) and performance equipment, b) it was capable of providing services throughout the year and generating income, c) 30 elderly people from Dârjiu, who benefited from the social services provided by the Day Centre, d) 50 club-type activities/year for the elderly.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>It is a good example of how to promote local, traditional values, and at the same time support the elderly, connecting the generations, improving the quality of life in the community.</p>
Useful links - website	<p>www.nyargalo.ro</p> <p>https://www.facebook.com/ZarandokNyargalo</p>

Spain, Junta de Extremadura

Young School of Social and Circular Economy of Extremadura (EJESEC)

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Spain</p> <p>Region: Region of Extremadura</p> <p>Scope: Regional</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): Regional Government of Extremadura</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Public body</p> <p>The physical and demographic characteristics of Extremadura (large territory with more than 200 municipalities and low population density) have led this General Directorate to create the Young School of Social and</p>

	Circular Economy of Extremadura (EJESEC, in Spanish acronym), as an online training centre to offer young Extremadurans MOOC courses on social economy and digital and ecological transformation.
Duration of practice/project	Start Date: October 2021 End Date: Ongoing
Short summary of the practice	The Extremadura Youth School of Social and Circular Economy (EJESEC) offers free MOOC courses to young people interested in starting and developing social, green or circular economy projects.
Resources	The initiative is funded by the Regional Government of Extremadura. It needs 33,000 euros at the moment, production is financed by courses carried out (currently 5). In terms of human resources, it needs 3 full-time employees from design and development phase until the delivery of each course.
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The major topics covered are social economy, young people, rural areas, depopulation, and online training.</p> <p>The current panorama with the European Green Deal, the 2030 Agenda and the Green and Circular Extremadura strategy, provides many opportunities for the development of cooperativism, the social economy, digital and ecological transformation to fight the climate emergency. EJESEC aims to train the young population to face the challenges that lie ahead through MOOC courses to develop Social, Green and Circular Economy projects in Extremadura.</p> <p>The primary goal is to promote a virtual school to train, inform and raise awareness about the Social Economy, cooperativism, green and circular economy; Educate and train for employment young people from Extremadura who are interested in these fields in MOOC format; Create a free, public and online service and open 24/7.</p> <p>EJESEC began in 2021 as an initiative of the Government of Extremadura, through the General Directorate of Cooperatives and Social Economy, as an online training system for young people of Extremadura.</p> <p>The key challenge is to expand this training to a greater number of students and expand the courses currently available to increasingly more specific topics demanded by young people.</p> <p>The main stakeholders are young people who are looking for employment and wish to establish their own company and, specifically, through one of the legal forms of the social economy: cooperative, labor company, etc.</p>

Results Achieved	<p>The implementation of each MOOC has been evaluated, technically, economically and legally, by the General Directorate of Cooperatives and Social Economy.</p> <p>So far, in the 5 MOOCs that have been carried out, there have been 337 young participants, who have obtained a qualification and an improvement for their training in the social economy.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>Organizing training events in rural areas with dispersed localities and low population density is complicated, makes it difficult for attendees to attend and its economic cost is high. EJESEC has demonstrated that at a moderate price, online MOOC training courses can be effective and reach all locations in the region, facilitating the training of any group in rural areas. EJESEC is a very useful tool to increase the visibility of social economy organisations and to train young people in the field.</p>
Useful links - website	<p>https://www.ejeseec.org/</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCx87xaMbb0IkBKGhMIYIRRg</p>

COOPRADO Foundation's Shepherds School

Location/ Geographical Scope	<p>Country: Spain</p> <p>Region: Extremadura</p> <p>City: Casar de Cáceres</p>
Organisation in Charge of good practice/ Implementor	<p>Name of entity(ies): COOPRADO Foundation</p> <p>Type (NGO, public body, foundation, other): Foundation</p> <p>Short background/description: Foundation COOPRADO was born in 2018, driven by the will of the members of the agri-food cooperative Nuestra Señora Del Prado, with the main aim of formalizing and consolidating the social projects that had been developing.</p>
Duration of practice/project	<p>Start Date: November 19, 2018.</p> <p>End Date: Ongoing</p>
Short summary of the practice	<p>COOPRADO Foundation's Shepherds School seeks with this initiative to promote the innovation and professionalisation of this activity which, in certain territories, contributes to the creation of employment and the conservation of the environment and rural culture.</p>

Resources	<p>Funded by/Sponsors: Agri-food Cooperative Nuestra Señora del Prado and Regional Government of Extremadura</p> <p>Funding/financial resources needed: 610,665.69 (2020-present).</p> <p>Human resources needed: 15, including administrative, teaching and other personnel.</p>
Detailed information of the practice	<p>The major topics covered include social economy, young people, rural areas, depopulation, and practical training on livestock farms.</p> <p>The training offer of the Shepherds School has intensive programmes for people who want to join pastoral livestock farming activity, which is developed over approximately 5 months, with 615 hours of theoretical-practical training, which includes the necessary accreditations to obtain the livestock farming certifications:</p> <p>For the COOPRADO Foundation, the creation of this school has been key for the future. The generational replacement is essential for the future of the coming years and the intention is that people who join the agricultural sector, have adequate training because the modes of production over recent decades have changed and people who want to work in this sector have to adapt and train properly.</p> <p>The school not only provides both theoretical and practical training, but also allows students to obtain licenses and accreditations for agricultural incorporation for young people, biocides, animal welfare and animal transport.</p> <p>The main challenge is to increase the number of students receiving direct training, without losing quality, as well as to introduce more advanced training in technology-based processes in the field of livestock and pastoralism.</p> <p>The main beneficiaries include directly, unemployed young people in rural areas and, indirectly, livestock farms in need of skilled labour for grazing.</p>
Results Achieved	<p>Annual financial statements in accordance with the legislation on foundations, as well as on the specific elements of financing (contracts, subsidies, etc.).</p> <p>Since its creation, more than 70 young people have been trained in shepherding and more than 1,200 people have been trained in specific courses on the subject.</p>
Potential for learning or transfer	<p>It is relatively easy to implement and has been very successful in our region, due to the lack of skilled labour in these tasks and the lack of opportunities for young people in rural areas, acting positively on depopulation.</p>

Useful links - website	https://fundacion.cooprado.es/proyectos/escuela_pastores/
Annexes (videos, photos, quotes, documents, etc.)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onHRrJz6lf4

Conclusions

Good practices from the social economy across the various SECON regions demonstrate innovative and impactful approaches to addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges at the local level. These initiatives range from fostering social entrepreneurship and inclusion, enhancing local food supply chains, to promoting sustainability and community engagement. They showcase a diverse set of strategies employed by social economy organisations to drive regional development, improve access to markets and funding, and increase awareness and visibility of the social economy sector.

Across the different EU regions, there is a common emphasis on community-led initiatives, sustainability, and social inclusion. Projects often aim to tackle local issues through collaborative approaches, valuing stakeholder engagement and participatory governance models.

At the same time, the scale, focus, and maturity of social economy initiatives vary significantly by region. While some areas concentrate on environmental sustainability, others prioritize social inclusion or economic development. The legal and policy frameworks supporting the social economy also differ, affecting the ease with which social enterprises can operate and scale.

Innovative elements that can be highlighted include initiatives that have embraced digitalization to enhance their reach and efficiency, incorporating social media platforms, digital marketplaces, and tech-based solutions to foster inclusivity and sustainability; as well as innovative financing models, such as social impact bonds and crowdfunding, supporting projects with social and environmental impacts.

Additionally, it should be underlined that the social economy faces significant challenges including limited access to funding, regulatory hurdles, and a lack of public awareness and understanding of the social economy's value. The need for capacity building and professional development within organizations is also evident, as is the challenge of measuring and communicating the social impact effectively.

In conclusion, these practices underline the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, adaptability to local contexts, and the integration of social and economic objectives. They highlight the potential of the social economy to contribute to sustainable development, social cohesion, and the resilience of communities. In light of these insights, future efforts should aim to address these challenges by enhancing access to finance, simplifying regulatory frameworks, and increasing visibility and understanding of the social economy's benefits. Furthermore, scaling successful initiatives, enhancing cross-regional knowledge exchange, and strengthening the policy and legal framework to support the growth of the social economy sector will be crucial in leveraging the full potential of the social economy across the EU. This would ensure that the social economy continues to play a pivotal role in addressing contemporary societal challenges and achieving inclusive and sustainable growth across the EU.

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