European Commission

Transition pathway for Proximity and Social Economy

DISCLAIMER

This report reflects the results of a co-creation process with proximity and social economy stakeholders across the ecosystem and the EU Member states. The action recommendations, however, do not necessarily represent the position or endorsement of all stakeholder groups nor the position of individual Member States or the European Commission. This document is without prejudice to Commission's future initiatives in the field of proximity and social economy. The actions presented in this document describe ambitions and desired objectives for transition. However, the realities of different territories have different starting points and possible limitations to the implementability of actions (e.g. considering islands, remote rural regions, densely populated urban environments). The objectives, actions and their follow-up should always consider the specificities of the territory.

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Transition Pathway for

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I. Introduction

1. The transition pathway: a policy tool fit for action

On 10 March 2020, the Commission adopted a new EU industrial strategy to help the European industry lead the way on green and digital transformation and to boost the EU's global competitiveness and open strategic autonomy.[1] In light of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission updated[2] its EU industrial strategy in May 2021, confirming the need to accelerate the green and digital transitions and increase the resilience of key industrial ecosystems by launching transition pathways.[3] The first Annual Single Market report outlined transition challenges and opportunities for 14 industrial ecosystems, including the 'proximity and social economy' ecosystem.[4]

While still addressing the aftershock of the COVID-19 pandemic and facing the new economic shocks of the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine, the priorities of the EU industrial strategy (resilience, the green and digital twin transition and open strategic autonomy) regain their relevance within the current geopolitical and economic context.

Achieving the European Green Deal objectives of transition to climate neutrality by 2050[5] and meeting the Digital Compass targets for 2030[6] will require profound changes of economic and business models, backed by substantial and targeted investments to sustain recovery and competitiveness.

This is particularly the case for the 'proximity and social economy' industrial ecosystem, which encompasses entrepreneurship models of diverse scale and capacity (hereafter referred as 'the ecosystem'). Parts of the social economy contribute to the green and digital transitions at large by supplying sustainable goods and services and bridging the digital divide. Their participatory business models, that take into account the needs of citizens, employees and other stakeholders, help to ensure that the transitions are fair and inclusive. At the same time, reinforcing sustainable and digital practices within the whole ecosystem will build long-term resilience and allow its diverse actors to be active levers of the twin transition.

Against this background, a pathway for the green and digital transition of the 'proximity and social economy' ecosystem is presented.

The action areas outlined in the transition pathway resulted from a co-creation process with stakeholders launched in December 2021, on the occasion of the adoption of the European Action Plan for the social economy[7], which sets out the EU vision on social economy for 2030 and whose implementation the transition pathway underpins.

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[1] COM(2020) 102 final

[2] COM(2021) 350 final

[3] Proximity and social economy transition pathway (europa.eu)

[4] SWD(2022) 40 final

[5] COM(2019) 640 final

[6] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/europes-digital-decade

[7] Social Economy Action Plan

2. Co-creating the pathway for resilience, the green and digital transition

The process of co-creating the transition pathway was launched on 9 December 2021 with the publication of the Commission Staff Working Document[8], annexed to the Action Plan for the social economy and presenting potential scenarios to achieve the transition. Between December 2021 and March 2022, the Commission sought stakeholders' input to the questions raised in this Staff Working document and called for the first pledges for action. The online EU survey[9] elicited responses from 79 stakeholders. A set of eight key topics emerged from the responses and are presented in a separate report on the survey.[10] They largely build on the proposed scenarios in the Staff Working Document, while also adding new elements.

The guiding tool for the co-creation process of the pathway is the "Blueprint for transition pathways",[11] which is a tool proposed by the EU Industrial Forum[12] to understand challenges and opportunities of the twin transition in the different industrial ecosystems. The blueprint is structured along seven "building blocks": sustainable competitiveness; regulation and public governance; investment and funding; research and innovation (R&I), techniques and technological solutions; infrastructure, skills and social dimension.[13]

On this basis, twelve consultation meetings and workshops with stakeholders between April and June 2022 were organised.[14] Detailed summary of the five open stakeholder workshops is presented in separate workshop reports and a final consultation report.[15]

Overall, more than 400 ecosystem stakeholders participated during the co-creation process, including Member States experts, regions and cities delegates (European Social Economy Regions network, Intelligent Cities Challenge), and networks such as the New European Bauhaus[16] community, the Enterprise Europe Network[17] as well as events linked to other EU initiatives such as the Rural Pact[18]. EU institutions and bodies were informed and consulted during the co-creation process. The EU Industrial Forum was consulted and received regular updates.

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[8] SWD(2021) 982 final

[9] Scenarios towards co-creation of a transition pathway for a resilient, innovative, sustainable and digital proximity and social economy ecosystem (europa.eu)

[10] Idem

[11] DocsRoom - European Commission (europa.eu)

[12] Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities (europa.eu)

[13] Considering the application of the blueprint building blocks it needs to be noted that: (i) The social aspects are rooted in the essence of the ecosystem and are shaping activities of its entities. Consequently the "social dimension" is not addressed as a separate Blueprint building block. (ii) Since the co-creation delivered many overlaps between building block "regulation and public governance" and "investment and funding", it was decided to merge both building blocks for reasons of consistency. (iii) Along the co-creation process, the blueprint became subject of modification to address the impact of the energy crisis and the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine. This update is not yet finalised and could consequently not be used in the workshops but has been indirectly addressed to great extend in the co-creation process as well as in this policy report, particularly under chapter I.5 on resilience.

[14] See GROW website – Proximity and Social Economy

[15] Idem

[16] New European Bauhaus: beautiful, sustainable, together. (europa.eu)

[17] Enterprise Europe Network | Enterprise Europe Network (europa.eu)

[18] A long-term vision for the EU's rural areas | European Commission (europa.eu)

Stakeholder input collected during the co-creation process resulted in the identification of 14 action areas and 30 concrete actions for the transition pathway. The work flow (capturing the scenarios from the Staff Working Document and the output from EU survey), is presented in a thematic matrix, see Annex II. This matrix formed the basis of the co-creation workshops.

Each action area of the transition pathway includes specific actions and identifies the most relevant actors. In turn, each specific action is matched with an indicative timeframe of implementation (short-, medium- or long-term) and intended outputs.[19] It should be noted that actions referring to the EU as a potential actor do not commit the Commission to new initiatives or the allocation of new resources under the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027. Where a reference is made to EU spending programmes, the aim is to indicate potential financing and funding opportunities for social economy in existing programs.

3. 'Proximity and social economy' as an industrial ecosystem

The ecosystem encompasses public and private actors connected through value chains promoting local production and consumption, as well as social economy business and organisational models.[20] The ecosystem accounts for 6.54% of EU value added (EUR 791 billion).[21]

The social economy is the centre of gravity of the ecosystem and of the transition pathway. At the same time, social economy business models are present in different economic sectors and industrial value chains and are therefore concerned by the transition pathways of other industrial ecosystems, in particular mobility, tourism, textiles, agri-food, retail and construction and energy. Social economy entities provide jobs to 13.6 million people, representing 6,3% of the EU workforce[22], and mobilise the equivalent of 5.5 million full-time workers in entities such as cooperatives and associations.

While the social economy is developed unevenly across EU Member States[23], its contribution to national GDP can range up to 10% in some Member States[24]. The degree of acceptance and understanding of the social economy varies to a significant extent across EU Member States, depending on historic and cultural reasons as well as the make-up of their economies and the existence of tangled concepts.

In the framework of the ecosystem, the 'proximity economy' includes services and businesses fostering local and short value chains for mainly local production and consumption. Proximity businesses include local businesses and SMEs operating in the tertiary sector, such as small shops, bars and restaurants, repair, and cleaning and maintenance services. The proximity economy is characterised by the presence of diverse

[19] Indicatively, "S", i.e. short-term indicates activities that should start as soon as possible; "M" indicates activities that should start in the medium-term i.e. by 2030; while "L" indicates the long-term i.e. activities that should start and complete by 2050.

[20] For reasons of consistency, the transition pathway will address the social economy as the centre of gravity of this industrial ecosystem. Due attention will be given to the proximity economy, as part of the ecosystem. The "Civil Security" dimension (announced in SWD (2021), will not be captured as part of this industrial ecosystem anymore, due to the minimal economic activity and as it concerns mostly public services. Civil security industries are equally represented in other industrial ecosystems identified in the Annual Single Market report 2021 SWD (2021) 351 final.

[21] SWD(2021) 351 final

[22] With large disparities amongst Member States (between 0.6% paid employment in some Member States and 9.9% in others).

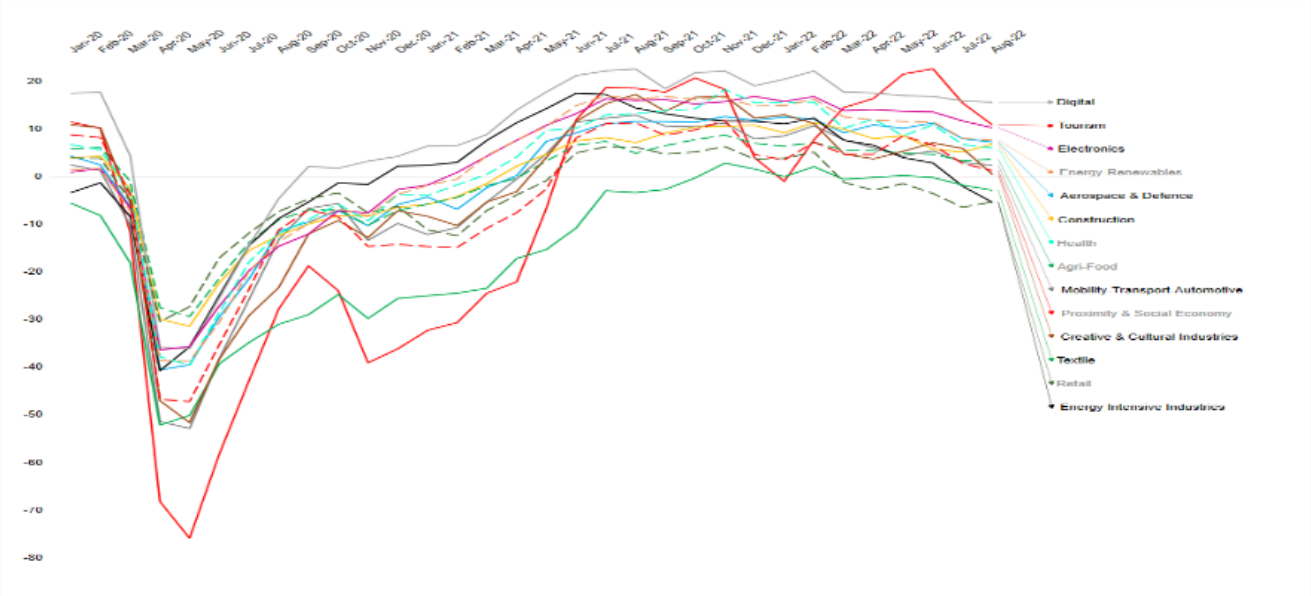
[23] European Commission - Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe – Comparative synthesis report, Comparative synthesis report, 2020: Publications catalogue - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

[24] According to latest data available: share of GDP estimations for Poland 1.95% (GUS & EUROSTAT, 2021), Spain 10% (CEPES 2017), France 10% (Cress 2017), Portugal 3% (INE, 2016). Member States results cannot necessarily be compared, nor aggregated as the methodologies are different.

sets of enabling 'proximity hubs' such as cities, local communities, community initiatives, businesses clusters, and public private partnerships.

4. The ecosystem in front of global challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions

The COVID-19 pandemic affected social economy business and organisational models differently, depending on the industrial value chains and ecosystems they are part of (e.g. health, care and social services, hospitality, tourism, cultural and creative industries, retail). The ecosystem was amongst the most hit industrial ecosystems (together with tourism, creative and cultural industries and automotive), with an estimated equity loss of between EUR 52 billion and EUR 87 billion. As depicted in the graph below, the ecosystem saw a sharp drop of business confidence and was amongst the lowest of the 14 industrial



ecosystems monitored in the Annual Single Market Report 2021 (data for 2020). Since early 2021, it showed gradual improvement, followed by a new gradual decrease since Q4 2021 reflecting the broader economic outlook in 2022.

Confidence indicator per ecosystem, European Commission, August 2022.

Some nuances are worth highlighting. Social economy activities crucial for urgent sanitary and social needs witnessed a spike in demand during lockdowns and this trend is expected to continue during recovery post COVID-19. Moreover, the pandemic, along with the economic and social challenges the EU is currently facing (i.e. energy and housing crisis, inflation, increasing regional disparities,) accelerated inspiring initiatives and investment trends generating social impact (e.g. crowd funding campaigns, impact investing, impact bonds, philanthropy, volunteering, community initiatives, Tech for Good[25]), thereby showing social economy entities' ability to reinforce place-based dynamics and empower people-

[25] Tech for Good involves technology-powered, affordable, trustworthy solutions and services that advance good social and environmental causes.

driven resilience and growth, including in times of crisis and adversity.[26] Similar positive trends are occurring within the proximity economy, such as the popularity of 'buy local' or the accelerated development of the '15- minute city' concept[27], building on growing consumer awareness and demand.

While still recovering from the shock of the pandemic, the ecosystem is being exposed to the new economic and geopolitical challenges: high inflation, energy insecurity, disruption of value chains and production bottlenecks of certain commodities across EU industry. In particular, the soaring prices of energy, especially gas, impacts different industrial sectors, including businesses in the 'proximity and social economy' ecosystem[28].

The impact of the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine is twofold for the ecosystem. On the one hand, social economy entities face the general disruption of certain supply chains (e.g. agricultural commodities, metals or energy supply). On the other hand, the ongoing situation in Ukraine has triggered an alarming humanitarian, social and economic crisis; and social economy entities have been mobilised to address the needs in that country and in EU Member States.

5. Resilience of the ecosystem

Stakeholders had already provided extensive input on elements related to resilience during the preparation of the European Action Plan for the social economy. The co-creation process of the transition pathway therefore focused on the challenges and opportunities linked to the twin green and digital transition.

The long-term resilience of the ecosystem depends on effective ways to address chronic and structural challenges, but also to capitalise on emerging mega trends.

During the co-creation process, stakeholders linked the twin transition to recurring and chronic challenges within the social economy, such as lack of policy recognition, a fragmented regulatory framework across Member States, and limited access to funding or upskilling/reskilling needs.

In that regard, the Commission plans to propose a Council recommendation on social economy framework conditions in the course of 2023, as announced in the European Action Plan for the social economy. Moreover, the 2022 Council Recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality[29] (which offers guidance to Member States by addressing the relevant employment and social aspects linked to the twin transition) includes specific references to the social economy's role in the green and digital transitions.

At the same time, the co-creation process of the transition pathway brought forth some key messages relevant to the resilience of the ecosystem.

First, stakeholders welcomed the establishment and recognition of the 'proximity and social economy' ecosystem as such, but stressed the need to further work on strengthening the capacity of the ecosystem actors along the challenges identified in the Action Plan for the social economy.

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[26] Advancing the 2030 Agenda through the Social and Solidarity Economy (ilo.org)

[27] The concept of the "15-minute city" is a city model that allows every citizen to live, work, enjoy and thrive, within a short walk or bike ride of their home. It creates a 'human-scale' city composed of vibrant, people-friendly, 'complete' neighbourhoods. It means decentralising city life and services, boosting the local economy, offering local and diverse employment opportunities and more productive use of buildings and street space.

[28] Quarterly_report_on_european_electricity_markets_q1_2022.pdf (europa.eu)

[29] (2022/C 243/04)

Second, discussions pinpointed at emerging mega trends important for the long-term resilience of the ecosystem and in the face of current and future crises.

Mega trend for resilience 1: Convergence of proximity economy and social economy - 'local and social value chains'

The supply shortages observed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine invite us to rethink inter-dependencies of global or regional value chains and foster a debate around the notion of the proximity economy to fulfil citizens' needs.[30]

Moreover, social economy business models and their local anchorage provide vital products and services in niche and local markets and show agility during periods of crisis. This is particularly relevant in remote or rural areas, in the EU Outermost Regions,[31] or areas in need of economic regeneration. In such regions, public-private partnerships, local businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises can boost for example, local renewable energy production, circular value chains, local food markets and social infrastructure projects such as construction and sustainable renovation of affordable housing stock.[32]

The social economy may, over the coming decades, emerge as a core part of the proximity economy *par excellence* offering alternative business models fostering relocation of production or enabling new businesses to deliver sustainable goods and services in the heart of EU territories, notably in sectors like agro-food or energy.[33]

Mega trend for resilience 2: Cross-fertilisation between mainstream businesses and social economy

During the co-creation process, this topic was broadly addressed, stressing the emerging convergence and cooperation potential between mainstream businesses and the social economy.[34] The rise of 'impact or mission-led' enterprises and private self-recognition initiatives[35] can lead to enhanced or new forms of cooperation. However, concerns were raised by stakeholders regarding phenomena such as corporate social and green washing.

Accountable transparency standards and labels, backed by an enabling framework, are one way of strengthening cross-fertilisation between mainstream business and the social economy, in particular to build green and circular value chains or enable innovative products and services. Improving business interaction on several levels and especially promoting 'business partnerships on equal terms' and with shared objectives, was raised as another crucial incentive for establishing a level-playing field between mainstream and social

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[30] Harvard Business Review – *Global Supply Chains in a post pandemic world* – (2020/09)

[31] EU Outermost Regions, as defined in Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, are 9 EU regions located in the Atlantic Ocean, in the Indian Ocean, in the Caribbean and in Latin America.

[32] In this view, the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI) can serve as good practice. This initiative will pilot the renovation of "100 lighthouse social and affordable housing districts" following a smart and integrated neighbourhood approach. This, by providing support (e.g. technical, financial, regulatory) to local partnerships composed of SMEs active in the construction sector, public authorities, social housing providers and other relevant stakeholders in affordable and social housing renovation projects.

[33] L'ESS dans les dynamiques collectives de territoire en transition – Hugues Sibille – RECMA 2022 (n°364) and L'ESS en 2042 vue par Jérôme Saddier | Avise.org.

[34] To identify the potential of cooperation between mainstream and social economy business, the European Commission published a report in 2018. Several drivers for cooperation identified by this report were confirmed in the co-creation process, more precisely labour market shortages, legal requirements related to sustainability and greening of processes and products, as well as consumers being increasingly demanding in terms of ethics and sustainability.

[35] Such as the B Corporation Certification: https://bcorporation.eu/create-systems-change/changing-policy/Legislation supporting or recognising B-Corps is developed in Spain, Italy and France.

economy businesses.[36] An element highlighted in that regard is the potential of workers buy-outs offering continuation perspective for SMEs owners looking for successors.[37]

Many barriers hamper advanced forms or cooperation such as assimilation of business models or mergers and joint ventures.[38] Root causes identified by stakeholders are 'inequality of power', differences in governance models, mission objectives and scale capacity.

Increasing awareness and improving the perception among mainstream businesses of the potential of social economy models - for example, in terms of economic performance and sectoral added value - is an important step in promoting such partnerships. To achieve this, it is crucial that social economy businesses also have access to business support available to mainstream businesses, as appropriate. Stakeholders confirmed the key role that business communities, such as sector organisations, chambers of commerce, incubators and extra- or intrapreneurs, can play in achieving this.[39] The potential of national and regional initiatives, and EU business support initiatives such as the Enterprise Europe Network, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs network[40] and the EU Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)[41], was also recognised. It was acknowledged that these types of initiatives are not yet exploited enough by ecosystem stakeholders.

Mega trend for resilience 3: Integrating social economy business models in industrial ecosystems

Social enterprises and social economy business models are embedded in other industrial ecosystems such as mobility, renewable energy, agri-food, tourism, health and textiles. They have strong potential, on the one hand, in developing inclusive business models (e.g. principles of solidarity, participation and transparency) and, on the other hand, in the increase of sustainable products and services (e.g. energy communities and cooperatives, local and sustainable agriculture and tourism, circular products and services).

Stakeholders' voices converged in one overall message for the long-term resilience of the ecosystem: enabling levers are necessary for the take-up of social entrepreneurship in sectors of the economy and in EU regions, where it can offer a comparative advantage to develop services and products for inclusive green and digital transitions. The action areas of the transition pathway illustrate what this may mean for different actors and industrial ecosystems concerned.

Mega trend for resilience 4: the development of impact investment market

The global market for social and green investment (e.g. social bonds, impact investment, philanthropy, crowdfunding) increased in recent years.[42] This also builds on on the increasing role of venture philanthropy during the last decade: in 2017, investors for impact funded 11,951 social purpose organisations with EUR 767 million[43], through highly engaged grant

[36] https://www.social-enterprise.nl/application/files/4116/0499/5322/Social_Enterprises_as_influencers.pdf

[37] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=88&eventsId=1993&furtherEvents=yes

[38] Work integration Social Joint-Ventures between incremental and transformative change | Avise.org

[39] https://www.leagueofintrapreneurs.com/

[40] European business exchange programme - Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs (erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu)

[41] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/1ceb9a1d-6146-11ec-9c6c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[42] IFC (2020). Green bonds represented just 4% of total corporate bonds issued in 2020. In the first half of 2019, Europe accounted for 48% of the global green bond market.

[43] The 2020 Investing for Impact Survey - A Snapshot of European Investors for Impact

making or social investment. In Europe, impact investing has taken hold, especially over the last 10 years, with Member States and regions being most advanced than others, despite supportive policies applied across the EU.[44]

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly caused major shifts in the practice of impact finance, while tackling societal issues remains a political priority under the current Commission mandate.[45] Stakeholders stressed the role of impact investors in using traditional tools of entrepreneurial finance to support the development of social economy entities, specifically in the twin transition. Impact investors can help them reach financial sustainability in a structured manner so that they no longer rely on a constant stream of philanthropic subsidies.

While much progress has been made towards mainstreaming impact investing, many steps remain to increase the impact investment market in Europe. Stakeholders recalled that tailored public policies in EU Member States and regions, exchange of best practices or the development of impact measurement tools can support such development.[46]

6. The transition pathway – 14 action areas for the green and digital transition of the ecosystem

Transition Pathway Action Areas – Green Transition
1. Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains
2. Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models
3. Certification, labelling and self-regulation
4. Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy
5. Greening infrastructures and business operations
6. Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives
7. Addressing capacity and skills gap

[44] https://ssir.org/articles/entry/how_to_mainstream_impact_investing_in_europe, International alliance to uncover impact investment in Europe | EVPA

[45] President von der Leyen State of the Union Address 2020 at the European Parliament.

[46] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/658185/IPOL_STU(2020)658185_EN.pdf

Transition Pathway Action Areas – Digital Transition
1. New business models – the platform economy
2. Data Maturity and data driven business models
3. Public and private tech partnerships and support
4. Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct
5. Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship
6. Access to technology
7. Boosting digital skills by - and in the social economy

II. Enabling the green transition of the ecosystem

Supporting the ecosystem on its pathway to the green transition is instrumental for aligning the social and green objectives of the EU. On the one hand, unlocking the untapped potential of social economy can drive change and innovation towards a climate-neutral and environment-friendly economy. On the other hand, entities within social economy enable grassroots initiatives to emerge and ensure a fair green transition for EU citizens.[47] Furthermore, it should be stressed that digital solutions that provide capabilities to measure, analyse and optimise operations and processes, are one of the key enablers for the green transition. In this sense, the green and digital transitions are intertwined.

While some parts of the social economy contribute to the green transition by supplying sustainable goods and services[48] and can be considered as frontrunners on this transition, other actors, who are less equipped to cope may experience more difficulties in turning green and driving sustainable change.[49]

1. Sustainable competitiveness

Action Area 1: Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains

The co-creation process highlighted the importance of Business to Business (B2B) cooperation, notably in the context of local value chains and partnerships in green and circular economy.

Social economy businesses have been largely contributing to develop circular economy value chains (e.g. in electronics and textile recycling, reusable consumer goods, repair and remanufacturing activities, regenerative farming techniques, online platforms), but need more support for scaling, data gathering and building partnerships.[50] Concerning circular economy specifically, the ecosystem presents considerable potential to contribute to the ambitions of the EU Circular Economy Action Plan[51], for example in waste management. Considering the labour-intensive nature of these activities, social enterprises play a pivotal role in providing access to employment to vulnerable persons while contributing to the fulfilment of the waste hierarchy.

Stakeholders indicated that social economy actors face obstacles such as liquidity and a lack of supporting structures enabling Business to Business partnerships to respond to consumer demand for more sustainable and local products and services. Stakeholders called for the recognition of associative, participatory and cooperative business models at national level to improve the visibility and offer of such products and services.

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[47] According to recent Eurobarometer survey 527 "Fairness perceptions of the green transition", 88% of EU citizens agree that the green transition should not leave anyone behind.

[48] Social Economy Action Plan – p.17-18.

[49] Pour la Solidarité (PLS), Green deal and Social Economy, Issues and Perspectives

[50] Policy brief on making the most of the social economy's contribution to the circular economy | en | OECD

[51] COM(2020) 98 final

Companies' sustainable purchasing policies (called 'private procurement' or 'buy social'[52]) could boost new business partnerships, for example via the integration of social and circular objectives. Similarly to public procurement, such purchasing behaviours need to be stimulated to open up potential new markets for social economy entities (e.g. in mobility, waste management, construction and agri-food). The co-creation process underlined various avenues of action in that regard such as business matchmaking, technical assistance, guidance as well as dissemination of best practices that would allow such cross-fertilisation.

The Enterprise Europe Network can also provide support through its network of sustainability advisors, while its sectoral working group on Social Economy can facilitate the exchange of good practices and connect actors on the ground. Projects under Horizon Europe[53] also have the potential to pilot new multi-stakeholder approaches.[54]

Box 1: Social economy and circular value chains in electronics, chemicals and textiles ecosystems

- In some resource-intensive industries such as electronicsor textiles, social economy businesses can be attractive partners thanks to their strong local outreach.
- Case in focus: Envie, the French Federation of social inclusion enterprises, helps marginalised groups back to work through an economic activity which specialises in the collection, repair and sale of second-hand electric and electronic appliances. The organisation contributes to environmental protection and preservation of resources through the reuse and recycling of Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). Today, Envie collects nearly 1/3 of the total WEEE produced in France and has developed agreements with EDF (Electricité de France) or Ecosystem, one of the WEEE producer responsibility schemes operating in France. ENVIE puts back into the market of reused products some 100,000 items per year. The example has been successfully exported to the UK, Germany, Belgium and Italy where it has brought its know-how to local organisations.

Action Area 1 : Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
1. Create dedicated matchmaking services between social economy entities and mainstream enterprises to boost local green and social value chains and private Business to Business "buy social "markets"[55]. Promote Clusters of Social and	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased number of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation in the Member States. Establishment of local, regional and national Business to Business "buy social markets" in

[52] https://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/buysocial/

[53] Horizon Europe (europa.eu)

[54] In this sense, the European CO-FRESH project, which aims at creating innovative (including technological and non-technological approaches), sustainable and competitive value chains for fruits and vegetables can serve as an inspiring example.

[55] Social Economy Action Plan (p.10) and for instance via the call for proposals supported by Action Area 2: Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models.

The Single Market Programme: Boosting awareness raising for mainstream enterprises to work with social enterprises - Buy social: business to business market (europa.eu).

Ecological Innovation.			the Member States.
2. Support the establishment of strategic circular partnerships between enterprises in the social economy and mainstream enterprises in different industrial value chains (textiles, food, retail, electronics, and plastics).[56]	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased participation of social economy entities in mainstream business' supply value chains in green and circular economy.

2. Public governance, investments and funding

Action Area 2: Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models

The co-creation process shed light on the fact that procurement and access to markets are key tools for the green transition of the ecosystem. However, it also highlighted existing caveats, such as the need to develop guarantees and adapted schemes to boost investments, as well as existing public purchasing practices separating social and green public procurement tenders. On the latter, it appears that contrary to green procurement, public purchasers do not seem to have enough knowledge and tools to evaluate economic operators in terms of the social impact of their products, although some promising examples are observed internationally.[57]

In addition, the legal forms of social economy business models appear to face barriers when it comes to accessing public funding and attracting private investments. For instance, social enterprises registered as associations[58] or foundations are not recognised as enterprises in several Member States and are, thus, excluded from public procurement and SMEs grants programmes. Stakeholders also invited Member States to adapt legislation hampering green or circular activities in the social economy, such as regulation on waste management (e.g. food waste, repair of electronic equipment)[59] and energy production and sharing.[60]

Responses to the consultation and discussions during the different workshops identified concrete solutions to overcome the abovementioned challenges.

[56] The Action Plan for the social economy announced the issuance of guidance to support partnerships for the circular economy between social enterprises and other actors, including mainstream companies (Social Economy Action Plan – p.18).

[57] https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/public-procurement/tools-public-buyers/social-procurement_en

[58] In this context, the European Commission is currently working on a Proposal for a legislative initiative on cross-border activities of associations which aims to ensure full single market freedoms for associations, simplifying their cross-EU activities and promoting their fundamental rights.

[59] https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/en/knowledge/regulatory-barriers-circular-economy and https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/studies/Documents/Local%20and%20regional%20dimension%20of%20the%20CEAP.pdf,

[60] https://www.rescoop.eu/uploads/Report-on-drivers-and-barriers.pdf and https://friendsoftheearth.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Energy-Communities-in-the-EU-opportunities-and-barriers-to-financing.pdf

First, stakeholders called for better coordination among competent public authorities by creating cross-departmental and inter-ministerial cooperation to better coordinate circular and environment-related policies with policies and support for the social economy.[61]

Second, stakeholders agreed that support through fiscal incentives and subsidies to green social economy business models should be fostered at national level to stimulate collaboration amongst social economy actors of different sizes and sectors, but also with mainstream enterprise. In that regard, stakeholders agreed upon the importance of National Resilience and Recovery Plans[62] as an essential tool to drive investments and strengthen the capacity of social economy for the twin transition. Another element strongly repeated in the co-creation process is the role of European Structural and Investment Funds[63] to support start-up social enterprises in circular and green sectors. Awareness amongst management authorities in the Member States about social economy is not always present, for example in Member States with a less strong social economy tradition or supportive framework. Stakeholders have underlined the added value of the Interreg programme,[64] as part of the European Regional Development Fund to create synergies between different EU regions and Member States, and highlighted specific successful case studies[65]. In addition, the co-creation process shed light on the role of competence centres for social innovation[66] developed under the European Social Fund+.

Third, stakeholders raised the importance of support for worker buy-outs and employee-owned companies[67], given the role these models play in aligning the interest of the company with those of employees, communities and the environment. In particular, stakeholders called for the adoption of a generic model for an Employee Share Plan for Europe (ESOP)[68] and called upon Member States to work on support schemes for employee-owned companies pilot projects as well as to develop financial incentives to encourage investors (e.g. development banks, credit unions) to provide buy-out capital to these entities.

Fourth, with regard to investment, stakeholders stressed that social banking (e.g. bank cooperatives, ethical and impact investment firms) and micro-finance institutions can increase local investments for green transition projects with a social dimension. They also highlighted the added value of the philanthropy sector and foundations for boosting green and circular innovations. They also stressed the specific role of innovative financial tools such as impact investment platforms, crowd-funding platforms, community finance, foundation and philanthropy sponsorships for innovation and R&D and Social or Green bonds. At EU level, micro-finance support instruments under InvestEU,[69] and their predecessors under the EaSI Programme,[70] can play an important role in the further development of these investment markets. Other EU funding opportunities (e.g. Cohesion policy[71], Just Transition Fund[72]) can provide significant financial support for social economy

[61] The Action Plan for the social economy identified this need and encouraged Member States to designate social economy coordinators in their institutions for leading their strategies and ensuring consistent policy making across government departments (Social Economy Action Plan– p.21).

[62] Recovery and Resilience Facility | European Commission (europa.eu)

[63] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/

[64] https://interreg.eu/

[65] Social Plate, HELIOS, RaiSE, Social Seeds.

[66] https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/competence-centres-social-innovation

[67] See Marcora Law in Italy - The Marcora Law supporting worker buyouts for thirty years | ICA

[68] European-ESOP-2.pdf (ekonomska-demokracija.si).

[69] https://investeu.europa.eu/what-investeu-programme/investeu-fund/about-investeu-fund_en

[70] EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

[71] Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 - Regional Policy - European Commission (europa.eu)

entities. Stakeholders also voiced the importance of establishing clear tax schemes for philanthropy investments through the establishment of an EU Single Market for philanthropy, notably to lower risk-aversion and to avoid fragmentation across Member States laws which, amongst other might hinder the flow of cross-border donations.[73]

Fifth, with regard to public procurement, public purchasers could make a more strategic use of procurement to create incentives, notably by integrating both social and environmental criteria in published tenders. Stakeholders argued that green and social aspects are still considered as a trade-off instead of integral elements of procurement processes. Additionally, stakeholders agreed that the governing principle of 'paying for results' and a 'lowest cost' dominance cannot stimulate effective green and digital innovation projects. Besides, stakeholders consider that the introduction of more inclusive, social or green requirements would indirectly promote more (tech driven) green social economy business models and solutions.

Finally, advisory services usually represent a high cost for these small and micro-entrepreneurs. At EU level, the Enterprise Europe Network sustainability advisors and the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Centre can play a supportive role.[74]

Action Area 2: Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
3. Improve coordination among competent public authorities in the elaboration of environmental and climate policies taking into account the potential and the specificities of social economy entities.	Member States, Regions	M	Increased cooperation among national ministries, regional departments and across different levels in Member States to ensure efficiency and coordination to support the green transition of social economy entities.
4. Incentivise social finance and micro-finance institutions and the philanthropy sector to provide financial and capacity-building schemes for green projects and investments.	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased investments in social economy entities for greening of their infrastructure and business operations.
5. Enable social economy entities to access impact-measurement tools on their carbon footprint and advisory services to green their operations.[75]	EU, Member States, Regions	M	Enhanced mutual understanding between financial actors and social economy entities in terms of investment purposes and decreased risk profile.

[72] Just Transition funding sources | European Commission (europa.eu)

[73] The Action Plan for the social economy notably stresses that foundations have reported issues with tax treatment of cross-border donations to public benefit organisations in other Member States (Social Economy Action Plan– p.7).

[74] https://een.ec.europa.eu/ and https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/fr/node/840

[75] Social Economy Action Plan (p.17-18) and for instance via the call for proposals supported by the Single Market Program: Greening social economy SMEs and entrepreneurs in the proximity and social economy ecosystem through transnational co-operation (europa.eu).

Action Area 3: Certifications and labelling and self-regulation

As announced in the Action Plan for the social economy, the Commission will launch a study mapping national social economy label and certification schemes in order to provide guidance to Member States and foster mutual recognition.[76]

An organisation can use international standards, such as ISO 14401, to enhance the management of its environmental performance. However, it appears that very few social economy entities are taking the steps to comply. This is often due to lack of resources, but also because they are not aware about the added value of such standards. In this context, stakeholders identified several actions related to certification and labelling that can serve the green transition needs of social economy entities.

When it comes to obtaining recognised certifications such as ISO standards, stakeholders argued that targeted support is needed, certainly for micro- and small social economy enterprises. This could include (i) raising awareness about certifications and labels and their added value, (ii) providing capacity building and consultancy (e.g. training, process adaptation, IT and software infrastructure), and (iii) financial support for the required infrastructure adaptation. Stakeholders also stressed the need for social economy federations and associations to build necessary capacity in terms of advisory services to their members regarding certification and standards.

Label and certification systems have been successfully implemented in some Member States.[77] However, these systems are not necessarily taking into consideration the green performance of social economy entities.

Some stakeholders called for the creation of regional and national labelling schemes for social economy actors undertaking environment-friendly, circular, and climate-neutral activities, for instance to certify social enterprises active in reusing, repairing, and upcycling. The added value of recognised labels for green social economy products or services is to increase visibility, incentivise impact investors, facilitate replication of good practices and raise consumer awareness.

At the same time, many stakeholders recalled that social economy enterprises are more likely to take the self-regulatory steps, arguing it is part of the ecosystem's DNA. In this context, they agreed on the need for private and sector-owned initiatives to foster the adoption of green labels,[78] awards,[79] voluntary standards, codes of practices or sector/industry-based accreditation arrangements. This will strengthen the link between the social and environment purpose of the business models present in the ecosystem and overall, help to boost value chains with stronger social and environmental impacts.

Considering the aforementioned constraints, two initiatives of the European Commission aim to prevent misleading claims and greenwashing practices. First, the proposal for a directive on empowering consumers for the green transition, through better protection against unfair practices and better information[80] and, second, the forthcoming proposal for a regulation on

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[76] Social Economy Action Plan – p.8.

[77] Examples are "solidarity enterprise of social utility", also called ESUS in France, and the "social enterprise" status introduced by Bulgaria, Italy, Romania and Slovakia). Another example lies in the recent launch of a label for companies having been granted the status of "Société à Impact Sociétal" in Luxembourg.

[78] Solid'R label can serve as an example.

[79] European Social Economy Awards can serve as an example.

[80] Proposal for a Directive on empowering consumers for the green transition and annex | European Commission (europa.eu)

substantiating environmental claims using the product or organisation environmental footprint methods.[81] The Commission will also promote support actions for social economy to obtain certifications and standards under the Single Market Programme.[82]

Action area 3: Certification, labelling and self-regulation			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
6. Map[83] and/or set up certification and labelling schemes for green social economy entities (e.g. circular social economy label) and promote initiatives of social economy entities to reduce their carbon footprint at company and product level. Support social economy to obtain existing certification and comply with standards for environmental management, sustainable production and service offer.	EU, Member States, Regions, stakeholders	M/L	Increased number of green products and services by social economy entities. Social economy entities obtain certification and standards promoting their sustainable performance and reducing their carbon footprint.
7. Establish at organisation or company level policies and actions to reduce carbon footprint and improve environmental sustainability of processes and products. Take sector-owned/private self-regulation initiatives for green social economy activities.	Stakeholders	M/L	Improved business strategies towards climate neutrality[84] and environmental sustainability at business and product level in the social economy.

3. R&I, Techniques and Technology solutions

Action Area 4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy

Investing in Research and Innovation in green technology can boost the development of new products and processes thus helping business growth in the social economy. Stakeholders recalled that it was key to involve social economy actors to develop partnerships building on the 'societal perspective' of R&I projects while fostering experimentation that could help the green transition.

Throughout the co-creation process, a recurrent theme revolved around the difficulties in scaling up green innovations. Stakeholders mentioned, for example, that actors in the ecosystem struggle to establish collaborative partnerships for innovation with other actors

[81] Initiative on substantiating green claims - Environment - European Commission (europa.eu)

[82] For instance via the call for proposals supported by the Single Market Program: Greening social economy SMEs and entrepreneurs in the proximity and social economy ecosystem through transnational co-operation (europa.eu).

[83] As announced in the Action Plan for the social economy, the Commission will launch a study on national social economy labels/certification schemes mapping those existing in Member States, identifying good practices and common features (Social Economy Action Plan – p.8).

[84] https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy_en

across industry, but also with academia. This, in turn hampers the diffusion of social economy-driven green innovation and prevents the scale-up of social and digital innovation aiming to meet climate neutrality or protecting the environment (e.g. related to energy efficiency, renewable energy production, waste and resource management, circularity).

Stakeholders also pointed out the lack of support structures, such as accelerators or incubators to boost innovative products or processes in the markets, encourage the implementation of new value chains or help scale up business models, especially at local level. Participants in the workshops agreed upon the fact that new forms of partnerships should also be promoted to drive the green transition of the ecosystem via innovative and multi-stakeholder approaches.[85]

Taking these issues into account, stakeholders call for "sandboxes for experimentation" and dedicated tools to share knowledge (e.g. on experiments/pilots that have been successful), for instance in the shape of "Social Economy Hubs". This would increase the participation of the ecosystem in R&I and leverage its innovation capacity. Social economy actors can, for instance, already make the most of the Hubs4circularity initiative (Horizon Europe)[86] to advance the agenda of European industries towards the Green Deal's objectives.

The European and national competence centres for social innovation also support knowledge sharing and collaboration between social innovation stakeholders. In this regard, the role of digital platforms as essential enablers for developing and disseminating social innovations was highlighted during the co-creation process. The network of European Digital Innovation Hubs will also provide testbeds for circular economy solutions, help to connect stakeholders in sustainable value networks and support the dissemination of good practice examples.

The development of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) could pool resources and enable multi-stakeholder partnerships. The CSEI guide[87], developed by the European Commission analyses the main aspects that such clusters bring about to social and ecological transitions and the features that facilitate transfer to other contexts. The Commission will continue its research and mapping, more precisely on the place-based innovation capacity of CSEI.

Action Area 4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
8. Promote the participation of social economy stakeholders in research and innovation projects and partnerships via awareness raising, technical assistance, and sandboxes for experimentation.[88]	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S	Increased participation of social economy actors in research and innovation programmes.
9. Promote Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) or social economy hubs to pool resources and enable multi-	EU, Member States, Regions,	M	Increased number of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) in Europe. Better support to social economy actors to develop

[85] An example lies in the framework of "*revenu de transition écologique*" experimenting by Foundation Zoein, which aims to provide income, support and networking opportunities to individuals setting up innovative green transition projects.

[86] Funding & tenders (europa.eu)

[87] Clusters of social and ecological innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences - Publications Office of the EU (europa.eu)

[88] Call for proposals supported by the Single Market Program: Greening social economy SMEs and entrepreneurs in the proximity and social economy ecosystem through transnational co-operation (europa.eu)

	stakeholder partnerships for innovation, e.g. via Hubs4Circularity.[89]	Stakeholders		green products and processes.

4. Infrastructure

Action Area 5: Greening infrastructure and business operations in social economy – The ecosystem as enabler for the green transition

A key aspect for the transition of the ecosystem is energy efficiency and specifically, the decarbonisation of infrastructure,[90] which many social economy actors either use or own to run their economic activities. Investment in the greening of social infrastructure (e.g. hospitals, schools and universities, social & affordable housing[91]) remains a critical issue, which, if not addressed effectively, will become a hurdle for the future growth of many actors of the ecosystem and the wellbeing of EU citizens. Investment gaps are estimated at EUR 192 billion per year and have been reinforced by the pandemic (see table below).[92]

Social infrastructure investment needs *(EURbn, per year)*	
Education and long-life learning	15
Health*	70
Long term care	50
Affordable housing	57
Total	**192**
* The original estimate of 20bn before the crisis has been inceased to 70bn due to the crisis. Source: European Green Deal Investment Plan Communication (January 2020) and the Report of the High-level taskforce on investing in social infrastructure (2018)	

Beyond social infrastructure, actors of the ecosystem are contributing to reducing the carbon footprint of other industrial ecosystems, thereby acting as enablers of the green transition of the broader economy.[93]

As highlighted in the REPower EU Plan[94], empowering energy communities is of particular importance, in order to help address the ongoing energy crisis. The crisis requires all ecosystems and actors to become more energy-efficient while increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy production and consumption. Despite the supporting EU framework developed through the EU Clean Energy Package[95] and the Guidelines on State

[89] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/news/all-research-and-innovation-news/new-flagship-initiative-hubs-circularity-concept-opportunities-challenges-successful-implementation-2021-04-14_en

[90] Defined in Boosting investment in social infrastructure in Europe, Report of the High-Level Task Force on Investing in Social Infrastructure in Europe as "long-term physical assets in the social sectors (in this report these are sectors related to education and lifelong learning, health and long-term care and affordable, accessible energy-efficient housing) that enable goods and services to be provided".

[91] The aforementioned Affordable Housing Initiative can serve as an example.

[92] Retrieved from SWD (2020) 98 final.

[93] France Relance : les appels à projets au bénéfice de l'économie sociale et solidaire | economie.gouv.fr

[94] REPowerEU: affordable, secure and sustainable energy for Europe | European Commission (europa.eu)

95 Clean energy for all Europeans package (europa.eu)

aid for climate, environmental protection and energy 2022[96], stakeholders voiced that the remaining hurdles in national legal frameworks, combined with the structure of the electricity markets, impede the spreading of energy communities and cooperatives across the EU Member States.[97]

Another key area concerns transport and mobility, where social economy actors offer alternative services which are innovative, inclusive and environmental-friendly, such as railway cooperatives, shared mobility services (via associations or cooperatives), taxi cooperatives, or volunteer services for people with limited mobility (e.g. elderly, ill persons). While successful examples exist in various cities and regions, social economy entities providing such services are not always integrated in mobility planning processes and therefore, they may find it difficult to access funding to scale up.

To overcome these challenges, stakeholders put forward several solutions throughout the co-creation process.

First, a vast majority agreed that specific attention should be given to develop a pipeline of viable projects for social infrastructure, such as in the field of affordable housing.

Second, opinions converged towards the importance of disseminating best practices among energy communities and cooperatives, boost their scale up across the EU and provide technical and administrative assistance for the development of such initiatives across the EU[98]. In the context of the current energy crisis, they offer an attractive energy producing model to develop further and disseminate in different parts of the EU. Stakeholders also underlined the need for support measures for industrial cooperatives and social enterprises active in the production (e.g. manufacturing of components, assemblage) and recycling of solar photovoltaic panels. The upcoming European Solar Photovoltaic Industry Alliance[99] will foster development and scaling-up of these activities within social economy. The development of new multi-stakeholder business models and social economy value chains encompassing the manufacturing of photovoltaic panels and batteries, the production and distribution of electricity and the recycling of the photovoltaic panels should therefore be further explored.

Third, stakeholders urged public authorities to encourage the development and scale-up of social economy business models in clean and shared mobility services, notably by allowing the uptake of digital tools based on Open Data, such as shared platforms. This could be done by mapping stakeholders active in the field and by supporting public-private partnerships to stimulate investment and facilitate access to finance.

[96] EUR-Lex - 52022XC0218(03) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

[97] Energy communities (europa.eu)

[98] Energy communities

[99] Commission kicks off work on a European Solar Photovoltaic Industry Alliance | European Commission (europa.eu)

- **Box 2: The social economy and the energy renewables ecosystem**

Local, integrated and responsible energy systems, where citizens collectively manage their energy production and consumption, is a key lever for a sustainable future. Such systems lead to energy savings, energy sobriety and energy solidarity, as they encourage responsible investments by members so that they can save money on their energy bills (kilowatt-hours), particularly those who are most vulnerable and at risk of energy poverty.

- Case in focus: The TM EnerCoop cooperative society in Luxembourg was developed in 2013 as part of the Transition Minett citizens' initiative. TM EnerCoop becomes a local energy producer, with seven citizen projects in green energy (photovoltaic): one in Esch-Lallange, Kayl-Tétange, Bettembourg and Differdange and three in Schifflange.
  The seven installations will each produce an average of 26,000 kWh of electric energy per year. TM Enercoop is working with SOLUXTEC Gmbh which is an innovative producer of photovoltaic modules in Germany.

Action Area 5: Greening infrastructures and business operations			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
10. Develop sustainable construction, renovation and regeneration projects in social infrastructure (e.g. affordable housing)[100] and boost social economy enterprises capacity to green their infrastructure, operations and processes via fiscal incentives or technical support.	EU, Member States, Regions and stakeholders	S/M	Decreased annual investment gap in social infrastructure in MS Improved energy and resources efficiency of infrastructure in the social economy.
11. Map needs and boost pioneering social economy businesses in sectors such as mobility, textiles, food, renewable energy, circular economy and transport services and reinforce their capacity to scale.[101] Disseminate best practices and enable networking opportunities.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	Expansion of the number of social economy business models in green transition markets.

Action Area 6: Local Green Deals, green business communities and citizens' initiatives

The co-creation process shed light on the pivotal importance of entrepreneurial behaviour and grassroots initiatives to drive a green and fair transition. Such civil society-led initiatives

[100] Affordable housing initiative (europa.eu), European Structural and Investment Funds - Regional Policy - European Commission (europa.eu), The European Urban Initiative | UIA - Urban Innovative Actions (uia-initiative.eu)

[101] Publications catalogue - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

should be promoted and catalysed by actors in the ecosystem (i.e. associations, foundations and cooperatives).

Participants in the co-creation workshops recognised that the potential of green business communities[102] and citizens' initiatives are not always well known and could be diffused at a larger scale to test new models and practices at local level.

During the co-creation process, many stakeholders mentioned that citizens should exploit to the full the outreach capacity of online platforms to mobilise communities and raise awareness about decarbonisation and circular economy practices. In this context, the New European Bauhaus initiative seeks to mobilise different communities at grassroots level for the development of sustainable, enriching and inclusive projects (e.g. in housing, green infrastructures, recycling).

Moreover, stakeholders recalled that regional and local authorities should reinforce awareness-raising campaigns to invite citizens to get involved in sustainable projects and initiatives alongside the ecosystem. Stakeholders invited local authorities to implement Local Green Deals with more integrated multi-disciplinary governance structures and more collaborative partnerships and accelerate investments in infrastructure and technologies in areas such as decarbonisation of buildings and transport, low-emissions energy systems, waste and water management. Multidisciplinary is in this case a key requirement to ensure that new technologies are developed based on their potential for social and economic transformation, rather than on their technological value *per se.*

In this spirit, the Commission's Intelligent Cities Challenge (ICC)[103] launched a Blueprint for Local Green Deals. Many European cities are already piloting Local Green Deals with positive results.[104] In the same vein, the ongoing EU Mission for climate-neutral and smart cities[105] can serve as a key example of how to engage cities, citizens and local businesses to reach climate neutrality by 2050. Another example lies in the EU funded Just Green project[106], which aims to support the green transition of social economy organisations and published 'Guidelines for municipalities' in that regard.

Action Area 6: Green business communities and citizens' initiatives			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
12. Develop Local Green Deals, with the participation of local businesses and citizens focusing on multidisciplinary expertise and civil society involvement.[107]	Regions, Cities Stakeholders	S/M	Increased number of European regions and cities as drivers for climate neutrality, involving social economy stakeholders alongside local businesses and citizens. Better data on civil society initiatives, increased visibility

[102] Zsolnai, L. , "Green business or community economy? "*International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 29 No. 8, pp. 652-662.

[103] Local Green Deals - A Blueprint for Action | Intelligent Cities Challenge

[104] Such as Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, Barcelona, Mannheim, Rotterdam, Milan, Espoo, Umea, and Leuven, mobilising local businesses and industrial ecosystems.

[105] Commission announces 100 cities participating in EU Mission (europa.eu)

[106] JustGreen COSME Project (ensie.org)

[107] Green economy and local green deals | Intelligent Cities Challenge

			and support for citizen's actions in green projects and development of a civic space.

5. Skills

Action Area 7: Addressing the capacity and skills gap

Stakeholders unanimously agreed upon the key importance of addressing existing green skills shortages in certain value chains (e.g. repair and reuse, construction) while preventing exclusion of workers in a transforming economy. Additionally, they argue that equipping social entrepreneurs (staff and management) with the right technical and operational skills would help them to develop new green activities.[108] Alternative organisational and managerial approaches such as eco-leadership[109] should be promoted within and beyond social economy to foster synergies and collaboration across entities and ecosystems.

Stakeholders called upon the EU institutions to integrate more systematically the Sustainable Development Goals[110] and Just Transition objectives in upcoming EU strategies on skills. Ongoing projects under the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills[111] can serve to gather sectoral skills intelligence, map relevant occupational needs and profiles and roll-out training programmes. The multi-stakeholder partnership[112] recently set-up under the EU Pact for Skills[113] can drive collective action to map and address skills gaps necessary for the green transition of the ecosystem, in particular in cooperation with national and regional skills development strategies and partnerships[114]. Cities and local actors also ramp up reskilling initiatives[115] and put in place Local Skills Partnerships to enact cross-sectoral mobility of the local workforce towards emerging skills needs. These initiatives will be given an extra impetus in 2023, which, as recently announced will be the "European Year of Skills".[116]

Stakeholders also referred to the need to improve curricula in secondary, higher education and non-formal education, to make sure they include, for example, green entrepreneurship concepts and multidisciplinary understanding of the technologies enabling new business models. They also invited education institutions to include social economy business models in curricula addressing climate change and environment-related issues.

Finally, when it comes to the dissemination of case studies and good practices, stakeholders called for more networking opportunities between social economy actors and mainstream enterprises, (micro) and finance organisations and for more interaction among local

[108] Technical skills are often required to operate machinery, tools, software, and coding. Operational skills include the ability to think analytically, communicate effectively, and execute efficiently.

[109] A Brief Guide to Eco-Leadership - Social Science Space

[110] THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org)

[111] Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

[112] New Pact for Skills partnership to bolster skills in the proximity and social economy sector

[113] Pact for Skills - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission (europa.eu)

[114] Action 6 of the 2020 European Skills Agenda focuses on supporting the twin transition until 2025

[115] Cities Guide for reskilling of the local workforce

[116] State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen (europa.eu)

authorities. In this regard, they stressed the importance of establishing dedicated training and capacity building activities, skills-based sponsorships, *intrapreneurship and extra-preneurship*[117] along with job-shadowing and peer-learning programmes. At EU level, stakeholders suggested that networking, mutual learning and sharing of good practices (among and across sectors) can be launched through the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform[118], the Education for Climate Coalition[119] or the EU Pact for Skills.

Action area 7: Addressing capacity and skills gap			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
13. Gather intelligence for green skills, promote skills certification, develop specific curricula anticipating green skills needs and training programmes for the social economy.[120] Join the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy under the EU Pact for Skills[121] by signing its Declaration.	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M/L	Upskill and reskill 5% of the workforce each year, including social economy entrepreneurs.[122] Better information and data on green skills needs for the social economy. Specific ecosystem curricula and targeted programs[123] supporting up- and re-skilling of employees are developed. Targets set by the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy under the EU Pact for Skills are met.

[117] Report Cooperation between social economy enterprises and traditional enterprises (2018)

[118] European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform | A joint initiative by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (europa.eu)

[119] Education for Climate Coalition | Education for Climate Coalition (europa.eu)

[120] Such as developed by the Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills. Incorporating new skills profiles in vocational education and training policy and curricula, through cooperation between education authorities, social partners and institutions for vocational and higher education. B-WISE (Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Work Integration Social Enterprises) is an Erasmus+ project that aims to develop a European strategy (Blueprint) to address the skills needs, in particular regarding digital skills, in the Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) sector.

[121] Pact for Skills on proximity and social economy, https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=25533&langId=en

[122] Idem

[123] For example supported by ESF+ and based on outputs of proximity and social economy sector skills alliances: sectoral skills needs, VET profiles and sectoral curricula.

III. Enabling the digital transition of the ecosystem

Digitalisation of the economy and the society in a broader sense, and the increased scope for data and technology-driven services, will provide opportunities for the digital transition of the ecosystem and for its resilience. COVID-19 and recent geopolitical and economic challenges have led to extended disruptions of supply chains but have also accelerated the digital transition in many industrial ecosystems, including this ecosystem. Moreover, while the current energy crisis poses many challenges for social entrepreneurs, it may also stimulate further investment and innovation within the ecosystem. This includes the use of technology to monitor and save energy consumption in (social) infrastructure or to optimise local renewable energy production and distribution through energy communities and cooperatives.

The Digital Decade for 2030 sets targets for Europe's digital transformation, focusing on four key aspects: skills, infrastructure, business, and government (public services).[124] All four dimensions are relevant to the ecosystem. Echoing recent research[125], the stakeholder consultation and co-creation process stressed that social economy businesses generally have a low level of digitalisation, mainly in terms of lack of digital skills and investment in digital infrastructure, and they take limited advantage of the potential offered by the platform economy. At the same time, the heterogeneity of actors within the ecosystem makes the policy analysis very complex when it comes to identifying concrete digital needs covering the entire ecosystem.

6. Sustainable competitiveness

Action Area 8: New business models – the platform economy

Social economy has been a frontrunner in developing collaborative or shared economy platforms, including those with a not-for-profit nature[126], as well as platforms based on the cooperative business model (e.g. shared mobility, cooperative housing, taxi-driver coops, renewable energy and tourist accommodation).

An ecosystem of social economy based platforms brings new opportunities in the collaborative economy, for example by promoting shared ownership, shared assets, mutual and collective awareness, co-decision making, P2P markets, crowd sourcing and capital raising (impact investment platforms, crowd-funding platforms), and transparency in value chains. In this regard, the development of local and social economy-based investment platforms, such as crowd-funding, impact investment and donation platforms (philanthropy), was stressed by stakeholders as a particular evolution favouring local economic development, as well as empowering citizens' investments in innovative projects and businesses.

Several platforms[127] in the social economy have managed to reach a considerable (international) scale. Platform cooperatives are a specific model in this regard, pursuing a

[124] Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 | European Commission (europa.eu) - COM(2020) 66 final.

[125] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/208a8be9-39d5-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[126] e.g. Wikipedia, Couchsurfing, Warm showers, GNU project and many more.

[127] Several cases were highlighted during the co-creation process. Decentralised platforms: https://themobilityfactory.coop/, https://coopcycle.org/fr/ and the https://openfoodnetwork.org/ Centralised platforms: www.fairbnb.coop and https://www.fairmondo.de/, https://energycommunityplatform.eu/ and https://cosh.eco/en/.

positive impact on working conditions, a fairer distribution of incomes, practice union rights, mutualise costs and enable equitable distributions of incomes. However, such models are not widely known or accessible and remain mostly tailored towards niche markets. Scaling up may be a challenge, particularly in very competitive markets or markets dominated by a few large platforms.

Successful social economy platforms are mostly developed within a favourable local ecosystem, for example supported by local development agencies, cooperative groups, business clusters or technology campuses. Stakeholders also emphasised the role of such enablers to stimulate pioneers developing platforms and other technologies such as (closed) Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT), which embed certain social economy values (e.g. democratic control, traceability and transparency), and stressed their potential in sectors such as energy, agri-food, textiles and finance. Sharing of best practices and facilitating cross-fertilisation with other industrial ecosystems offer particular opportunities, as highlighted in Box 3 below.

Besides these successful models, it needs to be stressed that most social economy entities do not operate platforms and are not making use of platform services either. This is mainly due to lack of knowledge about how existing mainstream or social economy digital platform services can support their access to online markets, finance as well as peer communities.

Stakeholders also highlighted that in certain markets (e.g. tourism, food delivery), the dominance of large players leaves few alternative outlets compatible with social economy values and stressed the need to influence big tech platforms towards practices closer to the social economy values by (i) raising awareness amongst users and clients about sustainable and responsible business conducts (e.g. labour conditions), (ii) engaging in strategic partnerships with social economy enterprises and (iii) stricter regulation and supervision to restore fair and sustainable competition, as well as labour rights[128].

Box 3: Social economy digital business models and other industrial ecosystems

The meal delivery platform market has boomed in the last decade. Social economy-based alternative platforms have emerged, mostly rooted in the cooperative movement. Typically, workers and restaurant owners become owners/members of the platform, with positive effects on innovation, working conditions, tariffs, fees, and profit distribution. Shared mobility is a booming market and social economy alternatives are equally rapidly emerging, especially at city level. As application development is expensive, social economy businesses struggle to find a balance between locally operated services, business autonomy and centrally developed tools.[129] A similar observation can be made in the agri-food sector.
Cases in focus:

- *CoopCycle*[130] is a federation of bike food delivery coops in Spain, Italy and Denmark. Governed by cooperatives, it enables to reduce operational costs thanks to resources pooling of platform software, smartphone application as well as the commercial offer of restaurants. Moreover, it creates a strong labour bargaining power for the delivery platform workers.

[128] Relevant in this context is the Proposal for a Directive on improving working conditions in platform work - COM(2021) 762 final.

[129] Such technologies allow a decentralised application and usage, while maintaining interoperable features through central developing.

[130] https://coopcycle.org/en/

- *The Mobility Factory*[131] is a European cooperative society owning the platform technology for car sharing services used by several local cooperatives in Belgium, France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. The local cooperatives are independent businesses and are members/owners of the European cooperative.
- *The Open Food Network*[132] is a worldwide open-source platform supporting farmers to sell online by bringing together producers in the same area to create a virtual farmers' market and connect to wholesalers. Food producers can create an online shop, collect payments, and sell through other shops on the platform.

Action area 8: Social Economy and the Platform Economy			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
14. Support the development (scale, finance and market access)[133] of social economy-based platforms, such as platform cooperatives[134] or those based on Digital Commons principles.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	M	Social economy platforms become a sustainable alternative in several product and service markets.
15. Promote the development of financial platforms rooted in the social economy such as civic crowd-funding-, social finance-, impact investment-, and donation- based platforms. Develop pilot methods of match funding[135] or guarantee[136] provision to increase the impact and attractiveness of (online) social finance initiatives.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	M	Digital social finance markets further develop and diversify within the internal market.
16. Develop partnerships with mainstream on-line platform service-providers to boost visibility and sales of products or services offered by social economy.	Stakeholders	S/M	Improved online presence of social economy products and increased online sales.

Action Area 9: Data Maturity and data driven business models

Data maturity: awareness and potential

While many proximity and social economy organisations might never need advanced data strategies to run their operations, basic knowledge and awareness about responsibilities and legal obligations regarding data management (mainly GDPR) is indispensable. Stakeholders observed a lack of basic awareness within the ecosystem about what data are, how they can

[131] https://themobilityfactory.coop/

[132] https://openfoodnetwork.org/

[133] Single Market Programme and Digital Europe (EDIH).

[134] https://platform.coop/

[135] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/crowdfunding_potential_esif_en.pdf

[136] https://investeu.europa.eu/index_en

be used, which risks may occur and what advantages they can bring for improving and expanding business activity.

Against this reality, stakeholders agreed that, for the social economy, data might not be only an economic asset, but first and foremost an asset to support their social or ecological mission, as well as a tool to enable their inclusive and democratic governance. Data maturity tools[137] can be of great value to social economy businesses, primarily by helping social entrepreneurs discover how data works and become more proficient in data use and management. Yet, current tools are not adapted to the needs of the social economy.

In particular, digital enablers[138] rooted in social economy can play a significant role in overcoming data illiteracy amongst social entrepreneurs, as well as in offering opportunities and supporting the development of date-driven strategies. Stakeholders argued that the creation and development of "social economy tech knowledge centres" would enhance data management, standardisation and sharing. Such iniaittves could foster the creation and promotion of interoperability standards.

When it comes to data sharing, social economy-based Data Services and Data Sharing Services are still rare and often locally based. Stakeholders stressed that actions are necessary to develop and enhance initiatives where the data is "community owned", like in case of platform and data cooperatives. This requires in some cases, specific public-private partnerships as well as more Business to Business cooperation amongst peers (e.g. in terms of interoperability). Open Data principles are key to ensure that the data generated by social enterprises can benefit peers in the same ecosystem.

Data-driven business models: untapped potential

Like any other SME, social economy enterprises could find added value in data to improve their business performance and offer. Several successful data-driven business and impact models are rooted within the social economy, serving different purposes. For example, this includes some with a business model orientation, such as energy and mobility efficiency or optimising agricultural processes, as well as models with a societal or policy purpose, such as predictive models for domestic violence and homelessness. The latter are often the result of "big data for good" or "big data for social innovation" interventions.[139] Regardless of the purpose, many ecosystem actors need support to move from traditional business intelligence to (advanced) data analytics.[140]

During the co-creation process, stakeholders specifically highlighted the need for data strategies to measure impact at the level of individual social enterprises. Several impact

[137] For example (1) the Data Maturity tool JADS Datalab https://www.jads.nl/business/jads-mkb-datalab/. (2) Diginno Tool - SME Digital Maturity Recommender | Digital Skills and Jobs Platform (europa.eu) (3) Data maturity tools can also exist to support cities such as the Digital Cities Challenge Self-Assessment Tool https://www.intelligentcitieschallenge.eu/assess-your-citys-digital-maturity.

[138] For example the initiatives developed by WAAG Society (NL, https://waag.org/en/) in terms of technology and data research, support for new data-based business models in different sectors (e.g. energy, textiles) as well as citizens initiatives are remarkable in this regard.

[139] https://lirias.kuleuven.be/retrieve/498034, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/big_data_for_social_innovation and https://www.esf-vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/attachments/articles/toolkit_on_si_in_esif.pdf.

[140] Sedkaoui & Moualdi (2018), Big Data Analytics for the Small Social Enterprise - How to Create a Data-Driven Approach to Address Social Challenges

measurements tools[141] for social economy exist, but they are rarely supported by a fully-fledged data strategy.

Lastly, stakeholders stressed the importance of ensuring that social entrepreneurs understand how cross-cutting topics of data management and interoperability link to wider developments in data technologies, including the potential of artificial intelligence and Machine Learning for the improvement of services, for instance in the health and care sectors. Those applications are promising but require a degree of data maturity at the level of individual social economy enterprises, which is currently mostly lacking.

Box 4: Data-driven social economy and the agri-food ecosystem

Data analysis optimising technology usage and processes can potentially benefit small-scale farmers. Pooling of resources and knowledge through social economy models such as agri-coops (producer coops), agri-clusters or local tech enablers can generate more resilient farming activities to climate and natural hazards and optimise sustainable techniques to add-value in particular to sustainable and organic agriculture.

Case in focus: In the Greek prefecture of Karditsa (Thessaly Region), farming pilot applications for decision-making in the agriculture process are developing based on data analysis. The applications use data on weather, type of crops, crops treatment, water usage, etc. It is a pioneering initiative in the planning phase of the local Community Led Local Development project organised and developed in cooperation with the Agricultural University of Athens, as well as with local farmers and the cooperative movement. Data analysis optimising technology usage and processes can potentially benefit small-scale.[142]

Action area 9: Data Maturity and data driven business models			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
17. Improve data maturity within the ecosystem by raising awareness about (Open) Data as a business asset and supporting data-driven business models in the social economy.	Stakeholders	S/M	More business in the ecosystem are using data driven impact models, business processes and market analyses.
18. Support exchange on existing data impact models and data sharing 'for good' (e.g. crowd sourcing initiatives, data philanthropy, Open Data, and impact measurement) including interoperability standards and multilingual elements. The European and national competence centres for social innovation could facilitate such exchange.[143]	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased development of data sharing practices and Open Data platforms amongst social economy players to improve joint (e.g. local) impact.

[141] In this sense, the work carried out by the European Commission (GECES report on impact measurement, Social Economy Canvas) and the OECD was highlighted as important first steps to be further developed and linked to data modelling. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0c0b5d38-4ac8-43d1-a7af-32f7b6fcf1cc and https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eupolicylab/portfolios/social-economy-canvas/

[142] Case collected during a workshop of the European Social Economy Regions on the Transition Pathway.

[143] https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/competence-centres-social-innovation

7. Public governance - investment and funding

Action Area 10: Public and private tech partnerships and support

According to stakeholders, due to their different business culture and mission orientation, social economy actors in the digital economy or 'social tech entrepreneurs' benefit less from business support services, such as the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) and the European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH).[144]

However, the network of EDIH will drive the Tech for Good theme in future. Additionally, as no particular indicators are yet available allowing the identification of social economy actors or digital social innovation[145] actions, efforts are underway within the EDIH network to build a community within the network.

Stakeholders equally highlighted the need to include social economy businesses in national, regional and EU tech support structures (e.g., tech clusters, federations, tech hubs, tech campuses, networks, incubators). At Member state level, such partnerships could be the cradle for *regulatory sandboxes* for Tech for Good applications, favouring policy change or market readiness.

When it comes to public funding supporting digital social innovation and Tech for Good, stakeholders considered that funding criteria are too much "solutions" or "technology specific" oriented (e.g. "tech over purpose"). This encourages technology developers to copy existing tools that might not address the real challenge (critical to social innovation), or that are not adapted to the context, and to think in "technology silos".

Action area 10: Public support, Business to Government and Business to Business partnerships			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
19. Explore the possibility to create a thematic group on digital social economy within the network of EDIH to boost cooperation and bottom-up contributions within the network, as well as ecosystem specific indicators in the EDIH mapping tools – allowing for example better identification of hubs supporting "community, social and personal services" as well as Tech for Good.[146]	EU, Member States, Regions	S/M	Visibility of social economy potential within the EDIH network improved through specific indicators, with increased number of EDIH developing dedicated social economy support actions.
20. Enhance collaboration between Tech Clusters and Clusters of		M	First social tech clusters become recognised by the European

[144] 4PDIH, focusses on digitisation and tech transfer for rural and remote business in Slovenia. It builds a PPP engaging Industry, Education, Public administration and Communities. Pico Foundation is the Digital Innovation Hub for cooperative digital transformation, offering support services to the digitalisation of the 15.000 affiliated cooperatives in Italy as well as training and funding.

[145] Digital social innovation involves the use of digital technologies in the development and implementation of innovative products, services, processes and business models that seek to improve the well-being and agency of socially disadvantaged groups or address social problems related to marginality, inequality and social exclusion (Qureshi, Pan, & Zheng, 2017; Shalini et al., 2021.

[146] New European Bauhaus

	Social and Ecological Innovation,[147] facilitating tech transfer at the local level and through the European Cluster Cooperation Platform.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders		Cluster Cooperation Platform and social tech businesses join mainstream tech clusters.
21.	Create regulatory sandboxes to test Tech for Good, knowledge and data sharing or Digital Social Innovation pilots in certain policy areas or value chains (e.g. social policy, housing and construction, circular economy).	Member States, Stakeholders	M/L	Digital Social Innovation applications become regularly embedded in relevant policy areas thanks to extensive testing and piloting.

Action Area 11: Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct

Data sharing

Recent regulatory and supportive initiatives at EU level, including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)[148], the Open Data Directive[149], the Data Governance Act[150], Data Act[151] and the establishment of sectoral data spaces (announced in the EU Data Strategy[152] and supported by the Digital Europe Programme) enable a level playing field and up a broader policy context for data sharing, reuse and innovation. Those initiatives can potentially leverage proximity and social economy actors and their business models by ensuring harmonisation. The Data Governance Act for example, recognised “data cooperatives”, next to “data intermediaries”, as a data-sharing service and introduced, for the first time through a regulation, the concept of “data altruism”.[153]

Regarding GDPR, specific models are developed within the social economy to provide more security and accountability for personal data, while still making use of the data in an anonymised and secured manner for societal or business purpose.

At the same time, stakeholders stressed that there is a lack of awareness about these opportunities within the ecosystem.

During the co-creation process, discussions were held about the need for a dedicated “EU data space for the proximity and social economy ecosystem". This was not considered relevant or a mature need at this stage, given the transversal nature of the ecosystem, the low data maturity and low availability of proximity and social economy-based datasets. Promoting engagement of social economy in sectoral[154] Common European data spaces was

[147] The “SocialTech4EU” project is aiming at building the first Eurocluster for the proximity and social economy ecosystem, so as to strengthen the resilience and innovation capacity, competitiveness and sustainability with a special focus on technology social ventures.

[148] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection_en

[149] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019L1024

[150] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/data-governance-act

[151] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/data-act-proposal-regulation-harmonised-rules-fair-access-and-use-data

[152] COM(2020) 66 final

[153] An entity engaging in data altruism will be able to register voluntarily as a data altruism organisation in a new public register. The organisation has to have a not-for-profit character and meet transparency requirements as well as specific safeguards to protect the rights and interests of citizens and companies.

[154] For example: skills, mobility, tourism, health, care and social services, energy, agriculture.

considered as a more promising strategy. Access of social economy actors to national portals making Open Data available[155] in a Business to Government (B2G) context could be particularly meaningful in domains such as health, care and social services, mutual insurance, environment, population & society, traffic information, water quantities, road and street (infrastructure) and housing. Moreover, at the local level, data and data-based services can be exchanged among public and private actors through Common Smart City or Community Data Platforms (Local Data Platforms).[156]

Data management & Digital Code of Conduct

As seen in the previous sections, data maturity is overall low within the ecosystem. In particular, data management and the development of protocols on how data is stored, owned, shared and monetised present a challenge to most social economy entrepreneurs, especially small and micro-enterprises. Even if these enterprises develop the skills to manage their data in-house, they may still face particular challenges such as contractual data lock-ins with online service providers (e.g. sales platforms, payment platforms).[157]

Without being able to manage and store their own data or collaborate with enterprises who store and use their business data along the social economy values, data stewardship[158] for social entrepreneurs remains a complex task. Stakeholder argued consequently that alternative forms of data ownership should be promoted.

To further build data management capacity within the ecosystem, stakeholders consider that it would be helpful to develop a 'code of conduct' establishing a set of principles for how data should be managed and used in the social economy, building on existing best practices for the use of business and public data commons and on the existing EU regulatory framework.[159]

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[155] All national data portals promote and support Open Data re-use. 25 of the EU27 national portals have. The federated open data portal: Datasets - data.europa.eu a designated section to promote applications that make use of Open Data. Additionally, 23 Member States provide the possibility for users to submit their own use case examples. In most instances (85%), those portals that have a dedicated use case section on the portal also reference the datasets that the use cases are based on. https://data.europa.eu/sites/default/files/landscaping_insight_report_n7_2021.pdf.

[156] To this end, the European Commission developed the European Interoperability Framework for Smart Cities and Communities (EIF4SCC): interoperability framework of (private and public) data generated at local level. Ecosystem businesses can develop new data-driven services by (re)using such datasets. The framework builds initiatives, such as the Living-in.EU movement, the 2017 European Interoperability Framework (EIF), Smart Cities Marketplace, Intelligent Cities Challenge, Digital Transition Partnership under the Urban Agenda) and EU funded projects (Synchronicity, Triangulum, etc.).

[157] Meaning that the sovereign ownership of their (beneficiaries') data might not be automatically reclaimed. Such lock-ins are an obstacle for the 'portability' of data (e.g. when transferring to another/own sales platform) as well as client/user privacy.

[158] Data stewardship can be defined as the tasks and responsibilities that relate to the management, sharing, and preservation of research data throughout the research lifecycle and beyond. Fostering FAIR Data Practices in Europe (Horizon 2020 project by fairsfair).

[159] For instance, the recently developed DECODE project proposed a "Digital Data Commons Privacy Pledge" for the use of personal data. https://decodeproject.eu/ and https://culturalfoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Waag-Report-on-European-Digital-Public-Spaces.pdf.

Action area 11: Data sharing, data management & Code of conduct			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
22. Support social economy enterprises to be compliant with legal requirements on data management (e.g. GDPR) and benefit from new possibilities such as "data cooperatives" for Open Data sharing services and "data altruism" (Data Governance Act).	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S	Improved understanding and compliance regarding legal requirements for data storage, sharing and processing.
23. Develop a Code of Conduct for data collection, sharing and management in the social economy[160] to build a community of practice.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	S/M	Community of practice for data management and sharing is setup and a Code of Conduct for data to be agreed by stakeholders in 2024.
24. Connect social economy actors with relevant common European data spaces to enable the development of data-driven business models in the social economy, e.g. via the network of EDIH[161] and national and local data Business to Goverment data sharing platforms.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	M	Social economy actors in particular sectors benefit increasingly from the data available in the common European data spaces.

8. R&I, Techniques and Technology solutions

Action Area 12: Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship

Stakeholders emphasised that Digital Social Innovation is a key enabler for new business activity and non-commercial solutions. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated inspiring technology-based initiatives in the social economy (e.g. Tech for Good) and urged several social economy actors to use or develop digital solutions. Similar agility can be observed in relation to the response of social economy actors to the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine.[162]

Digital social innovation (DSI) brings forth solutions in a variety of fields such as health, care and social services, education, housing, ecology and public governance. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of digital social innovation to accelerate the twin transition of the ecosystem and stressed the importance of place-based innovations driven by the social economy.[163]

[160] As announced in the Action Plan for the social economy.

[161] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/staff-working-document-data-spaces

[162] Initiatives such as https://techfugees.com/, https://employukraine.org/ , www.ukrainetechcollective.com and many more examples collected by an internal DG GROW mapping on the response of Social Economy to unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine.

[163] https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_importance_of_place

Stakeholders highlighted the broad potential of Tech for Good for business opportunities with social or ecological impact, as well as towards societal progress. During the co-creation process, the potential of Tech for Good was highlighted in areas such as data monitoring (mobility, pollution, health and housing), development of hardware and assistive technologies (care and social services)[164], traceability and crop management (agri-food). Moreover, more effective impact measurement could illustrate how Tech for Good products and services can drive the green and digital transition in diverse areas. Still, the visibility of Tech for Good is generally low, compared to unicorn tech start-ups in the mainstream economy. Finally, stakholders highlighted that incentives are needed to support deep tech social innoavtors in the ecossytem, for example via the The European Institute of Innovation and Technology Deep Tech Talent Inititive.[165]

Considering access to open and replicable technologies, stakeholders regularly pointed to the need for (sectoral) Tech for Good marketplace(s). Social economy intermediaries such as federations and business networks were considered similarly important for leveraging access to (open source) Tech for Good solutions and to offer capacity building and training. It is estimated that open source drove between EUR 65 and 95 billion of European GDP in 2018.[166] Partnerships with mainstream (tech) companies may therefore be another way to scale, find investments, additional research opportunities and access to new markets. In that regard, several stakeholders pointed out the potential of Business to Business cooperation to facilitate access to technology for the development of Tech for Good, such as clusters[167] and industrial alliances.

The European Commission organises since 2013 the European Social Innovation Competition to test social innovation solutions and bring them closer to the market. Each year the social innovation challenge focuses on a different area. In 2017, the theme 'Equality rebooted' aimed to showcase next-generation technologies and digital solutions, such as assistive technologies and Peer to Peer (P2P) platforms, developed or applied to solve societal challenges.[168] In 2020 the European Commission also awarded the European Innovation Council (EIC) prizes on "Blockchains for Social Good" to solutions related to traceability & fair trade, financial inclusion, aid & philanthropy, decentralised circular economy and energy. Finally, in the context of the Intelligent Cities Challenge action, the European Commission launched a Tech4Good[169] marketplace to gather trustful, ethical, technology-powered solutions and business models designed to advance economic, social and environmental causes at city level.

[164] A specific type of Tech for Good developed mainly within the social economy lies in the support of persons with disabilities or other target groups in their daily life, work and societal functioning. Examples are based on language technology, laser technology, augmented reality, and robotics.

[165] https://eit.europa.eu/news-events/news/eit-skill-one-million-tech-innovators-join-pledge

[166] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/study-about-impact-open-source-software-and-hardware-technological-independence-competitiveness-and

[167] See examples mentioned in the GECES report "Clusters of social and ecological innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences".

[168] Feelif (Slovenia) Feelif developed a multimedia tool for blind and visually impaired people which enables them to feel shapes on a standard touchscreen. SAGA (Netherlands) is a peer-to-peer learning platform that reflects and compensates the true value of knowledge and skills exchanged between educators and learners.

[169] Featuring over 80 solutions, often developed by local SMEs, social enterprises and start-ups, it helps cities and social economy stakeholders address the most pressing challenges with technology. Home - Tech4Good Marketplace (intelligentcitieschallenge.eu)

Action Area 12: Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
25. Develop multidisciplinary communities of social innovators, to facilitate the transferability and scale up of Tech for Good.[170]	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	Best practice exchange and enhanced access to open Tech for Good tools and Digital Social Innovation project results and blueprints.
26. Increase access and interaction of social economy to/with tech support structures (e.g. tech federations, digital innovation hubs, campuses, incubators, clusters, industry alliances) to enable social tech entrepreneurship.	Member State, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Social economy support programmes are developed within public and public-private tech support services and networks. Validated and transferable Tech for Good applications addressing societal challenges or the business capacity of social economy.

9. Infrastructure

Action area 13: Access to technology

Stakeholders highlighted that high-quality digital connectivity is a precondition for a successful digital transition of SMEs in the proximity and social economy. This remains a key barrier in many remote and rural areas as well as in the EU Outermost Regions.[171] Meeting the Digital Compass objective to reach 5G coverage across the EU by 2030[172] will contribute to the digital transformation of the ecosystem.

Next to connectivity, adapted and affordable technology and adapted financial and advisory support are identified as the biggest needs for the development of the right IT infrastructure. Many small enterprises in the ecosystem lack basic digital hardware and maintenance services (computers and network environment). More advanced hardware is not broadly used in the ecosystem (e.g., GPS guided machinery, drones, 3D printing, robotics, laser cutting, robotics, Internet of Things, etc.). Another obstacle highlighted is the lack of digitalisation of public services, affecting social economy' efficiency, as many social economy entities work in close cooperation with public services.

Stakeholders described the IT support market as immensely diverse (it ranges from traditional on-premises IT solutions to more advanced cloud packages)[173] and therefore not easily accessible. A potential solution highlighted by stakeholders, which has gained ground

[170] Potentially supporte, amongst others by the European Digital Innovation Hubs and European Competence Centres for Social Innovation and Tech4Good Marketplatce Intelligent Cities Challenge.

[171] Analysis by the Joint Research Centre shows that the average internet speed differs in different NUTS3 regions According to NUTS 2021 classification, there are 1166 regions at NUTS 3 level in the EU; For Outermost Regions: https://datavis.europeandatajournalism.eu/obct/connectivity/.

[172] Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030 | European Commission (europa.eu) - COM(2020) 66 final.

[173] SaaS packages (Software As A Service, e.g. integrating in one online package access to a menu of IT tools needed such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM), accounting and project management software, plug-in tools, e-commerce and e-payment services, etc.).

in recent years, could be globally designed open-source business tools, for example based on no-code or low-code technologies by Tech for Good developers. The uptake of such solutions would require basic to moderate digital capacity, but remains challenging, given the low digital awareness within the social economy and competition with established software companies.[174]

Action area 13: Access to technology			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
27. Support emergence of "digital accelerators" in the ecosystem offering technology solutions to boost impact models and digital commercial presence.	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	90% of Proximity and social economy SMEs have reached a basic level of digital intensity by 2030.[175] Proximity and social economy intermediaries have developed (basic) digital support services and know-how leveraging the digital capacity (skills and access to technology) of their members.
28. Support and reinforce Tech for Good marketplaces[176] providing access to open and replicable technologies, adapted to smaller social economy entities' needs and with specific focus on remote or rural areas (such as assistive technology, mobility technology, Internet of Things).	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	The market of basic open source and affordable IT services becomes a relevant source of support for the digitisation of social economy business, e.g. those in most remote areas or employing persons in need of assistive technologies.

10. Skills

Action Area 14: Boosting digital skills by - and in the social economy

The low level of digital skills is considered as the most pressing barrier for social economy SMEs to take up new digital solutions. More specifically, the skills shortages identified by stakeholders cover all five dimensions of the DigComp framework.[177] During the co-creation process, stakeholders referred most to basic IT skills needs (e.g., office applications, internet and searching, basic operating system usage, specific software package usage), as well as more moderate to advanced skills in data science, social media marketing, e-commerce handling, data- and cyber security, Customer Relationship Management, etc.

Multi-stakeholder skills alliances to support upskilling and reskilling, such as the Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy ecosystem established under the EU Pact

174 For example, when desiring the development of data driven solutions and applications, the service user has no control of the data stored in the cloud of the service provider which might potentially harm privacy of their clients, in case of SaaS, Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) as well as Platform as a service (PaaS) offers.

175 Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030

176 Home - Tech4Good Marketplace (intelligentcitieschallenge.eu)

177 DigiComp dimensions.

for Skills,[178] can help to identify the skills needs. On a sector level, the Alliances for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills[179] (ERASMUS+) offer a suitable framework for joint sectoral skills strategies as well as foresight exercises.[180] The potential of exchange programmes for students (e.g. Erasmus+) and entrepreneurs (e.g. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs) could be used more. Cooperation with large corporations is another potential avenue through, for example, facilitation of traineeships, exchange of employees or the offer of pro-bono training to social entrepreneurs.[181] The role of intermediaries in facilitating exchanges is key as many proximity and social economy actors are not aware of such opportunities.

Social Economy as a digital training provider

The specific role of certain social economy organisations offering training in digital skills was highlighted regularly by stakeholders.[182] A successful model are coding schools in disadvantaged areas (e.g. specific inner city areas, remote areas) creating job perspectives in the IT sector for vulnerable groups. These activities are the result of strategic cooperation between social economy and mainstream tech companies, for example for access to technology.[183] These unique business models and their societal relevance[184] have much scaling potential across the EU. Such initiatives play an important role for the integration of refugees and for example when supporting internally displaced persons from Ukraine arriving to the Member States following the unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine.

- **Box 5: Social Economy as a digital training provider and the Digital ecosystem**

Pioneering social economy 'coding schools' train persons with a distance to the labour market in coding, addressing labour market shortages for IT jobs, promoting (social) tech entrepreneurships and new developers of Tech for Good.

Case in focus: BeCode, is a "next-generation training centre", active in 6 cities across Belgium. BeCode aims at providing competitive and responsible coding school programmes and training programmes on digital technologies, accessible to all and free of charge. BeCode has developed strategic partnerships with IT and Telecom companies such as Orange, Microsoft and SAP, as well as several foundations and public services.[185]

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[178] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en and https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=25533&langId=en

[179] https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1415&langId=en

[180] Currently two blueprints for sectoral skills within proximity and social economy are under development.

[181] Mainstream enterprises offering "skills-based sponsorship" where a company put the skills of its own employees at the service of a social economy entity. For example in France '*Mécénat de compétence'* programme.

[182] Such packages (e.g., fast coding, language technology, augmented reality, etc.) are developed in the social economy, albeit in a dispersed order and in a format that might not be easily replicable (because of language, target group and contextual differences, etc.).

[183] Such technologies benefitting training of for example young persons not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs); elderly persons; persons with a migrant background; persons with disabilities, etc. Inspiring projects related to the work integration sector: https://rreuse.org/how-social-enterprises-contribute-to-the-digital-transition/ and https://www.ensie.org/projects/wise-for-digital-upskilling.

[184] Pioneering social economy entities have built-up several digital training models (e.g. coding schools) targeting NEETS in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, for example in cooperation with tech companies, generating digitally skilled job seekers and potential new social tech entrepreneurs. In this context, stakeholders highlighted specifically the intergenerational learning models developed by SE (knowledge sharing regarding digital skills) as promising business model given the greying of societies.

[185] https://www.becode.org/

Action area 14: Boosting digital skills			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
29. Promote social economy specific curricula and certification.[186] Join the EU Pact for Skills[187] and in particular the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy by signing its Declaration and actively engaging on its commitments on digital skills.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M/L	Upskill and reskill 5% of the workforce each year, including social economy entrepreneurs.[188] Better information and data on digital skills needs. Specific ecosystem curricula and targeted programs[189] supporting up- and re-skilling of employees are developed. Targets set by the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy under the EU Pact for Skills are met.
30. Facilitate Business to Business (B2B) cooperation between social enterprises and tech companies to further develop social economy digital training centres (e.g. coding schools).	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Social economy training centres are key partners for Public Employment Services in supporting vulnerable groups towards an IT job. Social economy contributes to the Digital Decade target of having 20 million ICT Specialists in the EU by 2030.

[186] Sectoral skills alliances and blueprints for sectoral skills under Erasmus+.

[187] Homepage of Pact for skills (europa.eu)

[188] Pact for Skills on proximity and social economy

[189] For example supported by ESF+ and based on outputs of sector skills alliances: VET profiles and sectoral curricula.

IV. Monitoring and co-implementation

1. Launching the co-implementation of the transition pathway

The transition pathway requires cooperation at all levels. The co-creation process has shown how relevant it is for all ecosystem stakeholders to work together to support the twin transition of the ecosystem and strengthen its resilience.

Stakeholder engagement is an indispensable building block of the co-implementation of the transition pathway. The online EU survey collected initial pledges or areas for potential engagement, which are presented in the EU survey report.[190]

The publication of the transition pathway kick-starts the co-implementation process with a call for stakeholder pledges to underpin the 14 shared action areas of the transition pathway. The European Commission will facilitate the co-implementation, in cooperation with stakeholders, by taking stock of stakeholder pledges and progress made.

2. Synergies with other EU policies

The “Proximity and social economy” ecosystem is interlinked with other industrial ecosystems where proximity economy and social economy business models are present, for example tourism, textiles, food, retail, construction and mobility. For this reason, the Commission will ensure that the co-implementation process adequately considers the progress made by other industrial ecosystems in the context of the EU Industrial Strategy, as well as developments in other EU policy areas. Commission services will make best use of the Technical inter-service group to implement the Action Plan for the social economy, as well as of the EU Industrial Forum.

3. Assessing the progress

The EU Industrial Forum oversees the transition pathways of all industrial ecosystems, and it will be regularly updated on progress of this transition pathway. The Commission will explore how the Commission expert group on social economy and social enterprises (GECES) and, more broadly, ecosystem stakeholders, can contribute to the co-implementation of the transition pathway. Assessing the progress should be a collaborative process with stakeholders of the ecosystem. The European Commission will facilitate cooperation and the assessment of progress made.

[190] Proximity and social economy Transition Pathway – EU Survey Report.

V. Annexes

ANNEX I: Thematic flow

Topics identified in the different co-creation phases:

1. Scnerios for a transition pathway, identified in the Staff Working Document, (December 2021).
2. Stakeholder survey (December 2021 – March 2022) and co-creation process (March 2022 – October 2022)
3. Final transition pathway action areas (November 2022)

Green Transition		
Scenarios for a transition pathway	**Survey and co-creation process**	**Transition pathway action areas**
1. Leveraging the social economy business model for a just green transition.	• Green innovations & business models • Partnerships & Local Green Deals	• Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains • Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy
2. Innovation uptake, operational (skills) and financial capacity of social and proximity enterprises to green their operations and lead green innovation	• Green innovations & business models • Greening the ecosystem	• Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy • Addressing capacity and skills gap • Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models
3. Accessing emerging green markets and sustainable public procurement	• Partnerships & Local Green Deals • Circular Economy	• Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains • Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy

		business models • Certification, labelling and self-regulation
Energy poverty and annual investment gap of EUR 57 billion in social housing, EUR 192 billion annual investment gap in social infrastructure	• Greening the ecosystem • Partnerships & Local Green Deals	• Greening infrastructures and business operations
Engagement models for civil society, social and proximity economy actors to develop *Local Green Deals*	• Partnerships & Local Green Deals	• Green business communities and citizens' initiatives

Digital Transition		
Scenarios for a transition pathway	**Survey and co-creation process**	**Transition pathway action areas**
Digitalisation of social economy entities	• Social tech entrepreneurship • Digital Platforms & shared economy	• Boosting digital skills • Access to technology
Marginal investment and public-private partnerships in R&I and deployment of 'Tech for Good'	• Tech for Good • Digital Platforms & shared economy	• Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship • Social Economy and the Platform Economy
Low digital innovation uptake by businesses as well as limited number of new social tech entrepreneurs.	• Social tech entrepreneurship • Tech for Good	• Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship • Data Maturity and data driven business models • Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct Access to technology
Lack of promotion and best practice sharing to	• Tech for Good	• Public and private tech partnerships and support

support digital social innovations and Tech for Good		
Visibility and scaling up of social economy business models in the platform economy	• Digital Platforms & shared economy	• Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship • Social Economy and the Platform Economy
Data sharing among players to support data enabled solution.	• Data management & interoperability	• Data Maturity and data driven business models • Data sharing, Data management & Code of Conduct

ANNEX II: Overview of thematic matrixes

Matching bluebrint building blocks with topics identified by the stakeholder survey. This matrix was used as a basis for discussion in the co-creation workshops.

Green transition	Greening the ecosystem	Circular Economy	Green innovations & business models	Partnerships & Local Green Deals
Sustainable Competitiveness (incl. Buy social private)		x	x	x
Regulation and Public Governance (Public Procurement)	x	x		x
Social Dimension	x			
R&I, Techniques and Technological Solutions	x	x	x	x
Infrastructure	x	x	x	x
Skills	x	x		
Investments and Funding (incl. impact Investment & philanthropy)	x		x	x
Digital transition	**Data management & interoperability**	**Digital Platforms & shared economy**	**Tech for Good**	**Social tech entrepreneurs**
Sustainable Competitiveness (incl. Buy social private)			x	x
Regulation and Public Governance (Public Procurement)	x	x		
Social Dimension	x	x	x	
R&I, Techniques and Technological Solutions		x	x	x

Infrastructure	x	x	x	
Skills	x	x		x
Investments and Funding (incl. impact Investment & philanthropy)		x	x	x

Annex III: Overview of actions

Action Area 1 : Reinforcing Business to Business collaboration for greener and circular value chains			
Actions	**Actors**	**Timeframe**	**Output**
1. Create dedicated matchmaking services between social economy entities and mainstream enterprises to boost local green and social value chains and private Business to Business "buy social "markets. Promote Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased number of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation in the Member States. Establishment of local, regional and national Business to Business "buy social markets" in the Member States.
2. Support the establishment of strategic circular partnerships between enterprises in the social economy and mainstream enterprises in different industrial value chains (textiles, food, retail, electronics, and plastics).	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased participation of social economy entities in mainstream business' supply value chains in green and circular economy.
Action Area 2: Creating financial incentives and supportive regulation for green and circular social economy business models			
3. Improve coordination among competent public authorities in the elaboration of environmental and climate policies taking into account the potential and the specificities of social economy entities.	Member States, Regions	M	Increased cooperation among national ministries, regional departments and across different levels in Member States to ensure efficiency and coordination to support the green transition of social economy entities.
4. Incentivise social finance and micro-finance institutions and the philanthropy sector to provide financial and capacity-building schemes for green projects and investments.	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased investments in social economy entities for greening of their infrastructure and business operations.
5. Enable social economy entities to access impact-measurement tools on their carbon footprint	EU, Member States,	M	Enhanced mutual understanding between financial actors and social economy entities in terms of

	and advisory services to green their operations.	Regions		investment purposes and decreased risk profile.
Action area 3: Certification, labelling and self-regulation				
6.	Map and/or set up certification and labelling schemes for green social economy entities (e.g. circular social economy label) and promote initiatives of social economy entities to reduce their carbon footprint at company and product level. Support social economy to obtain existing certification and comply with standards for environmental management, sustainable production and service offer.	EU, Member States, Regions, stakeholders	M/L	Increased number of green products and services by social economy entities. Social economy entities obtain certification and standards promoting their sustainable performance and reducing their carbon footprint.
7.	Establish at organisation or company level policies and actions to reduce carbon footprint and improve environmental sustainability of processes and products. Take sector-owned/private self-regulation initiatives for green social economy activities.	Stakeholders	M/L	Improved business strategies towards climate neutrality and environmental sustainability at business and product level in the social economy.
Action Area 4: Innovation as enabler for green transition and business development in the social economy				
8.	Promote the participation of social economy stakeholders in research and innovation projects and partnerships via awareness raising, technical assistance, and sandboxes for experimentation.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S	Increased participation of social economy actors in research and innovation programmes.
9.	Promote Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) or social economy hubs to pool resources and enable multi-stakeholder partnerships for innovation, e.g. via Hubs4Circularity.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	Increased number of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) in Europe. Better support to social economy actors to develop green products and processes.
Action Area 5: Greening infrastructures and business operations				
10.	Develop sustainable construction, renovation and regeneration projects in social infrastructure (e.g. affordable housing) and boost social economy enterprises capacity to green their infrastructure, operations and processes via fiscal incentives or technical support.	EU, Member States, Regions and stakeholders	S/M	Decreased annual investment gap in social infrastructure in MS Improved energy and resources efficiency of infrastructure in the social economy.
11.	Map needs, boost pioneering social economy businesses in sectors such as mobility, textiles, food, renewable energy, circular economy and transport services, and	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	Expansion of the number of social economy business models in green transition markets.

reinforce their capacity to scale. Disseminate best practices and enable networking opportunities.			
Action Area 6: Green business communities and citizens' initiatives			
12. Develop Local Green Deals, with the participation of local businesses and citizens focusing on multidisciplinary expertise and civil society involvement.	Regions, Cities, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased number of European regions and cities as drivers for climate neutrality, involving social economy stakeholders alongside local businesses and citizens. Better data on civil society initiatives, increased visibility and support for citizen's actions in green projects and development of a civic space.
Action area 7: Addressing capacity and skills gap			
13. Gather intelligence for green skills, promote skills certification, develop specific curricula anticipating green skills needs and training programmes for the social economy. Join the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy under the EU Pact for Skills by signing its Declaration.	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M/L	Upskill and reskill 5% of the workforce each year, including social economy entrepreneurs. Better information and data on green skills needs for the social economy. Specific ecosystem curricula and targeted programs supporting up- and re-skilling of employees are developed. Targets set by the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy under the EU Pact for Skills are met.
Action area 8: Social Economy and the Platform Economy			
14. Support the development (scale, finance and market access) of social economy-based platforms, such as platform cooperatives or those based on Digital Commons principles.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	M	Social economy platforms become a sustainable alternative in several product and service markets.
15. Promote the development of financial platforms rooted in the social economy such as civic crowd-funding-, social finance-, impact investment-, and donation- based platforms. Develop pilot methods of match funding or guarantee provision to increase the impact and attractiveness of (online) social finance initiatives.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	M	Digital social finance markets further develop and diversify within the internal market.
16. Develop partnerships with mainstream on-line platform service-providers to boost visibility and sales of products	Stakeholders	S/M	Improved online presence of social economy products and increased online sales.

or services offered by social economy.			
Action area 9: Data Maturity and data driven business models			
17. Improve data maturity within the ecosystem by raising awareness about (Open) Data as a business asset and supporting data-driven business models in the social economy.	Stakeholders	S/M	More business in the ecosystem are using data driven impact models, business processes and market analyses.
18. Support exchange on existing data impact models and data sharing 'for good' (e.g. crowd sourcing initiatives, data philanthropy, Open Data, and impact measurement) including interoperability standards and multilingual elements. The European and national competence centres for social innovation could facilitate such exchange.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	S/M	Increased development of data sharing practices and Open Data platforms amongst social economy players to improve joint (e.g. local) impact.
Action area 10: Public support, Business to Government and Business to Business partnerships			
19. Explore the possibility to create a thematic group on digital social economy within the network of EDIH to boost cooperation and bottom-up contributions within the network, as well as ecosystem specific indicators in the EDIH mapping tools – allowing for example better identification of hubs supporting "community, social and personal services" as well as Tech for Good.	EU, Member States, Regions	S/M	Visibility of social economy potential within the EDIH network improved through specific indicators, with increased number of EDIH developing dedicated social economy support actions.
20. Enhance collaboration between Tech Clusters and Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation, facilitating tech transfer at the local level and through the European Cluster Cooperation Platform.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	First social tech clusters become recognised by the European Cluster Cooperation Platform and social tech businesses join mainstream tech clusters.
21. Create regulatory sandboxes to test Tech for Good, knowledge and data sharing or Digital Social Innovation pilots in certain policy areas or value chains (e.g. social policy, housing and construction, circular economy).	Member States, Stakeholders	M/L	Digital Social Innovation applications become regularly embedded in relevant policy areas thanks to extensive testing and piloting.
Action area 11: Data sharing, data management & Code of conduct			

22. Support social economy enterprises to be compliant with legal requirements on data management (e.g. GDPR) and benefit from new possibilities such as “data cooperatives” for Open Data sharing services and “data altruism” (Data Governance Act).	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S	Improved understanding and compliance regarding legal requirements for data storage, sharing and processing.
23. Develop a Code of Conduct for data collection, sharing and management in the social economy to build a community of practice.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	S/M	Community of practice for data management and sharing is setup and a Code of Conduct for data to be agreed by stakeholders in 2024.
24. Connect social economy actors with relevant common European data spaces to enable the development of data-driven business models in the social economy, e.g. via the network of EDIH and national and local data Business to Government data sharing platforms.	EU, Member States, Stakeholders	M	Social economy actors in particular sectors benefit increasingly from the data available in the common European data spaces.
Action Area 12: Supporting Digital Social Innovation & Tech for Good entrepreneurship			
25. Develop multidisciplinary communities of social innovators, to facilitate the transferability and scale up of Tech for Good.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M	Best practice exchange and enhanced access to open Tech for Good tools and Digital Social Innovation project results and blueprints.
26. Increase access and interaction of social economy to/with tech support structures (e.g. tech federations, digital innovation hubs, campuses, incubators, clusters, industry alliances) to enable social tech entrepreneurship.	Member State, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Social economy support programmes are developed within public and public-private tech support services and networks. Validated and transferable Tech for Good applications addressing societal challenges or the business capacity of social economy.
Action area 13: Access to technology			
27. Support emergence of “digital accelerators” in the ecosystem offering technology solutions to boost impact models and digital commercial presence.	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	90% of Proximity and social economy SMEs have reached a basic level of digital intensity by 2030. Proximity and social economy intermediaries have developed (basic) digital support services and know-how leveraging the digital capacity (skills and access to technology) of their members.
28. Support and reinforce Tech for Good marketplaces providing	Member States,	M	The market of basic open source and affordable IT services becomes

	access to open and replicable technologies, adapted to smaller social economy entities' needs and with specific focus on remote or rural areas (such as assistive technology, mobility technology, Internet of Things).	Regions, Stakeholders		a relevant source of support for the digitisation of social economy business, e.g. those in most remote areas or employing persons in need of assistive technologies.
Action area 14: Boosting digital skills				
29.	Promote social economy specific curricula and certification. Join the EU Pact for Skills and in particular the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy by signing its Declaration and actively engaging on its commitments on digital skills.	EU, Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	M/L	Upskill and reskill 5% of the workforce each year, including social economy entrepreneurs. Better information and data on digital skills needs. Specific ecosystem curricula and targeted programs supporting up- and re-skilling of employees are developed. Targets set by the Stakeholder Skills Partnership for the proximity and social economy under the EU Pact for Skills are met.
30.	Facilitate Business to Business (B2B) cooperation between social enterprises and tech companies to further develop social economy digital training centres (e.g. coding schools).	Member States, Regions, Stakeholders	S/M	Social economy training centres are key partners for Public Employment Services in supporting vulnerable groups towards an IT job. Social economy contributes to the Digital Decade target of having 20 million ICT Specialists in the EU by 2030.

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