



# The building blocks of a social economy strategy

Thematic discussion paper

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## Table of Contents

|          |  |           |
|----------|--|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Introduction .....</b>                                    | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Setting the scene.....</b>                                | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>The building blocks of a social economy strategy.....</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| 3.1      | Vision & objectives .....                                    | 6         |
| 3.2      | Administrative and institutional setup .....                 | 11        |
| 3.3      | Consultation mechanisms and stakeholder engagement.....      | 12        |
| 3.4      | Visibility and recognition.....                              | 14        |
| 3.5      | Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) .....                        | 17        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Conclusions.....</b>                                      | <b>18</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>References .....</b>                                      | <b>21</b> |

# 1 Introduction

The social economy aims to generate a positive impact on people, communities and the environment. It is also described as “a key driver of economic and social development in Europe” that contributes to building “an economy that works for people”<sup>1</sup>. (EC, 2021)

The social economy is an ecosystem with increasing weight and importance in European economies. There are about 2.8 million social economy entities of different business and organisational models in the European Union<sup>2</sup> (EU), which employ about 6.3% of the total workforce<sup>3</sup> (OECD, 2020). In countries where it is most developed, the social economy can contribute as much as 10% to the GDP<sup>4</sup>.

Social economy organisations are private entities and may take various organisational forms, such as associations, cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations and social enterprises. They respond to social and environmental needs and use participatory and democratic governance (OECD, 2020). Social economy organisations are active in most sectors of the economy, from agriculture, healthcare or education to retail trade, waste management, banking or utilities. They often use sustainable and inclusive economic practices and are a source of innovative entrepreneurial models that offer solutions to social and environmental challenges. They facilitate social inclusion and access to the labour market and, therefore, contribute to reducing poverty in the EU. Their response during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated their flexibility, resourcefulness and resilience (OECD, 2020). Social economy organisations offer partnerships and inspiration to other stakeholders in the economy and can play an important role in achieving the targets of the [EU Green Deal](#) and the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). For all these reasons, the social economy has received increasing attention from policy makers as well as market actors. At the same time, much of its potential to deliver economic, social and environmental impact remains untapped due to a series of obstacles in the national and European ecosystems.

This paper was written to lay the grounds for the mutual learning workshops on “Developing strategies for the social economy in the Member States”, which aim to support national and regional authorities in designing or updating their social economy strategies in line with the Council recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions<sup>5</sup>.

The workshops aim to encourage Member States to look at EU policy frameworks and draw inspiration from practical examples in other countries. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to:

- give an overview of the EU policy frameworks for the establishment and development of the social economy at the EU level and in Member States.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2021). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, ‘Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy’, COM/2021/778 final, at page 8. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en>.

<sup>2</sup> Figure covering the EU-28. See European Economic and Social Committee, Monzon, J. L., Chaves, R., Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union, 2017, p. 66.

<sup>3</sup> OECD. (2020). Social economy and the COVID-19 crisis: current and future roles. Available at: [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=135\\_135367-031kjiq7v4&title=Social-economy-and-the-COVID-19-crisis-current-and-future-roles](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=135_135367-031kjiq7v4&title=Social-economy-and-the-COVID-19-crisis-current-and-future-roles)

<sup>4</sup> (EC 2021).

<sup>5</sup> Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions (C/2023/1344)

- Provide an overview of strategies/action plans at Member States or regional level (existing or under development).
- Explain the main building blocks (pre-conditions) for building or updating a strategy.
- Showcase case studies and examples of social economy strategies from Member States and regions that illustrate the use of these building blocks and offer insights into strategy development.
- Highlight examples of how Member States can use EU funds to develop and implement their social economy strategy.

## 2 Setting the scene

Recognising the potential social and environmental impact and increasing appeal of the social economy, the European Commission has introduced a series of policy initiatives over the years to encourage Member States to create enabling environments where social economy entities can thrive and deliver their social and environmental impact. The first attempt was made through the [Social Business Initiative](#)<sup>6</sup> (EC, 2011), launched in 2011. This initiative focused on the legal environment, access to finance and visibility of social enterprises. In its more recent policy packages, the European Commission has become more ambitious and intends to use social economy policies to change mainstream practices and help the transition towards a green and fair economy in the Union. Social economy business models can influence mainstream businesses and offer role models, which can be encouraged by regulation. Policy makers have recognised the need to develop a holistic approach, including providing support and funding, to increase the potential impact of the social economy on mainstream practices.

### **Social Economy Action Plan**

Launched in December 2021, the [Social Economy Action Plan \(SEAP\)](#) is a comprehensive policy initiative. It recognises the social economy's contribution to achieving the objectives of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) and the EU's 2030 headline targets in employment, training and poverty reduction<sup>7</sup>. Building on learnings from past actions, the SEAP addresses challenges and opportunities for social economy entities, setting up over 60 actions to be implemented by the European Commission. The SEAP uses a broad definition of social economy that includes cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations, and social enterprises.

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2011), The Social Business Initiative, Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/14583>

<sup>7</sup> The three EU-level social targets to be achieved by 2030 are: 1) at least 78% of people aged 20 to 64 should be in employment; 2) at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year; 3) the number of people at risk of poverty or social inclusion should be reduced by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children compared to 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10299>

Figure 1. Main categories of SEAP measures from 2021 to 2030



Source: Author's own elaboration based on the *Social Economy Action Plan*.

Implementation of the SEAP is ongoing and will run until 2030. The European Commission will publish a progress report in 2025. In 2023, two main actions were accomplished: the set-up of the EU Social Economy Gateway and the adoption of the Council recommendation. The [EU Social Economy Gateway](#) is an online one-stop-shop that offers up-to-date information about the concept and development of the social economy, relevant EU policies and funding opportunities as well as social economy ecosystems in the Member States.

### Council recommendation

The Council recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions ("Council recommendation") is a legal act adopted in November 2023 and is one of the main deliverables of the SEAP. It "aims to foster access to the labour market and social inclusion by guiding Member States on promoting enabling policy and regulatory frameworks for the social economy and measures that facilitate its development"<sup>8</sup>.

While the SEAP focuses on commitments by the European Commission, the Council recommendation contains measures for the Member States to implement in order to create a favourable environment for the social economy. This involves amending existing legal frameworks, designing targeted policies, and setting up an institutional structure that can effectively collaborate with stakeholders in the social economy<sup>9</sup>.

The Council recommendation addresses gaps identified in Member States policies and offers EU support to improve them.<sup>10</sup> Table 1 illustrates how the Council recommendation

<sup>8</sup> Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions (C/2023/1344). Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14113-2023-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the Council recommendation suggests that Member States set up a one-stop-shop to provide support to social economy entities, select national, local or regional contact points acting as social economy ambassadors and appoint social economy coordinators in national public institutions to ensure consistency across policies.

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_3188](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3188)



measures are split up into two dimensions that reflect the SEAP’s main priorities<sup>11</sup>: the first part is about fostering access to the labour market and social inclusion and the second part is about developing enabling frameworks for the social economy.

Table 1. Overview of the Council Recommendation measures

| Thematic approaches to foster access to the labour market and social inclusion | Developing enabling frameworks for the social economy |
|--|---|
| Access to the labour market  | Access to private and public funding                  |
| Social inclusion   | Access to markets and public procurement              |
| Skills   | State aid   |
| Social innovation, sustainable economic development, territorial cohesion      | Taxation  |
|  | Social impact measurement and management              |
|  | Visibility and recognition                            |

Source: Author’s own elaboration based on the Council recommendation

The Council recommendation’s overall aim is to stimulate a coordinated approach across the EU; it pushes Member States to do more and align their national policies closer with the needs and requirements of the social economy<sup>12</sup>. It offers support and encourages Member States to use EU funding to adopt best practices.

Importantly, the Council recommendation calls on Member States to draw up or update strategies for the social economy within 24 months following its adoption, and report on the implementation within four years thereafter.

Several Member States have put social economy or social enterprise strategies in place. A preliminary overview of targeted strategies and other relevant plans can be found in Annex 1.

- Strategies exist in: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, (Slovenia, to be adopted).
- Strategies are being updated in: Greece, Ireland.
- Strategies used to exist in: Croatia, Sweden.
- Social economy is explicitly part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan in: Bulgaria, Italy.
- Social economy is an explicit part of another strategy/policy in: Romania (national employment strategy).

<sup>11</sup> They also correspond to the main building blocks of social economy ecosystems listed in the OECD Council’s Recommendations (OECD, 2022b) and the Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool.

<sup>12</sup> Impact Europe (2024) Brief: Spotlight on the Social Economy Action Plan consulted at <https://www.impacteurope.net/insights/spotlight-social-economy-action-plan>

- Components of a strategy (e.g. a legal framework or a funding programme) exist without an actual strategy document in: Austria, Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal and The Netherlands.

### 3 The building blocks of a social economy strategy

*This section discusses the building blocks of a social economy strategy and illustrates best practices, opportunities and challenges through examples from Member States. At the end of each section, there are questions depicting challenges for further discussion. As the practices of national approaches in Finland and Ireland and the regional approach of Île-de-France (France) will be featured in separate papers for the second Workshop, this thematic paper seeks to highlight other examples.*

Member States have taken different policy approaches to develop the social economy ecosystem, depending on their policy goals and other factors, such as the predominance of regulatory/legislative solutions, the sophistication of economic and financial systems, the political commitment to solving social and environmental problems, the centralised vs decentralised state structure, the level of resources available from local, regional, national and/or EU sources and the stage of development of the social economy in their territory.

In many countries, policy makers and stakeholders rely on research, public consultations or other methods to gauge intervention needs or opportunities for “quick wins”. One such method is the [Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool](#)<sup>13</sup>, which serves to assess social enterprise ecosystems by analysing key policy dimensions and identifying gaps that should be addressed by policy responses<sup>14</sup>.

The Council recommendation proposes measures addressing these critical areas in social economy strategies. The possible building blocks of such a strategy are shown in Figure 2. The Council recommendation considers that the vision and objectives for the social economy can be articulated through policy goals to improve access to the labour market, social inclusion and skills, or enhance social innovation, sustainability and territorial cohesion (see Table 1 for thematic approaches). The vision and objectives provide the basis for the other four building blocks: stakeholder engagement (article 10 of the Council recommendation), visibility and recognition (article 11), administrative and institutional setup (article 25), monitoring and evaluation (article 26). The act spells out recommended measures for Member States to develop key dimensions of an enabling framework for social economy, such as access to finance, access to markets and taxation (see Table 1 for a list of these dimensions).

An assessment sheet based on the building blocks will be developed for the workshops’ participants, enabling them to assess the social economy policies in their own country.

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<sup>13</sup> This self-assessment policy tool was jointly developed by the OECD and the European Commission and has two modules: Social entrepreneurship and Inclusive Entrepreneurship. Stakeholders can assess their own ecosystems individually or jointly, and use guidance notes and case studies offered by the tool to develop their policies.

<sup>14</sup> In 2022, the OECD Recommendation added two new policy dimensions (social innovation and production of data) to the original seven and suggested using these to design policies for social and solidarity economy and social innovation<sup>14</sup> (OECD, 2022b). See Annex 2 for further details on the nine pillars.

Figure 2. The building blocks of a social economy strategy



Source: Author's elaboration based on the Council recommendation

### 3.1 Vision & objectives

The vision defines the purpose and direction: what social economy represents, its role, size, reach, potential contribution to achieving policy goals and significance for the economy and society in the future. Objectives are concrete targets and steps that translate the vision into action and offer a roadmap to achieve it. Relevant objectives are specific, measurable and time-bound, with indicators on how progress regarding their delivery will be measured.

Governments need to have a vision for the social economy as an ecosystem with all its diversity and impact potential. The social economy can be a vehicle to achieve specific policy objectives, but it is also an increasingly important segment of the economy, which requires dedicated resources and infrastructure for its development, coordination and support. Social economy entities innovate in entrepreneurial models and business practices and are crucial for maintaining the vitality of disadvantaged or isolated communities. Impact-oriented entrepreneurial models often inspire public and private sector businesses and create new standards. The social economy, therefore, merits a comprehensive vision and objectives from governments, on which support and resources could be based.

It is important to note that while vision focuses on the long-term and strategies are meant to be comprehensive, certain objectives may be set for the short or medium-term. Planning and delivering on short-term actions, such as pilot projects or visibility campaigns, can be beneficial to gain traction in the implementation of a strategy.

Most Member States have already recognised the potential contribution of the social economy to society and, therefore, included its role and added value in various policy documents, even without an explicit social economy strategy. The most typical examples are social or labour market policies, circular economy or environmental strategies. In several EU countries (Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Slovenia), the presence of social economy organisations was so important in the areas of employment and social care that the definition of social (economy) enterprise was based on work integration models. While the focus on employment and social care strengthens social economy entities active in these sectors, overlooking other policy areas could be a missed opportunity, as social economy can also deliver sustainable solutions for many other policy areas such as environment, education, culture, social housing, community development, energy, industrial policy, forest management or local entrepreneurship.

Strategies usually start by defining social economy based on national legislation and/or the EU's definition of social economy and social enterprise. Although often similar in the general criteria, the concept of social economy can differ in Member States depending on the traditions of the social sector, historical factors, and the government's vision.

The following examples illustrate a vision and objectives for the social economy in Member States. In the first three cases (Spain, Slovenia and Wallonia) the scope of the vision and objectives are leading to a comprehensive strategy that addresses the needs of the social economy in key dimensions, including infrastructure, access to markets, financing or entrepreneurial culture. The fourth and fifth examples (Romania and Portugal) highlight social economy-related objectives under a particular policy (employment strategy) or strategic initiative (social innovation and access to finance). In these two cases, there is no indication of an overall vision or plan for social economy as an ecosystem and therefore many important needs, such as visibility, access to mainstream support and resources, are not addressed.

### 3.1.1. Vision and objectives in a comprehensive social economy strategy

The **Spanish Social Economy Strategy 2023-27**<sup>15</sup> (Government of Spain, 2023) is the continuation of the first national strategy of 2017-20. It is based on a detailed needs analysis and a SWOT analysis of the social economy, although the updated strategy does not refer to an assessment of the first one. The strategy recognises the social economy as an important model for the recovery during a period of economic and social uncertainty with the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, especially in creating employment (in particular for vulnerable communities) and promoting entrepreneurship among youth. The social economy is considered a standard practice of sustainable and inclusive development.

The strategy articulates the following vision: the social economy becomes a reference for a people-centred business model; is equipped to contribute to achieving the objectives of sustainable development, especially through social and territorial cohesion; and generates economic growth and quality employment by taking advantage of the opportunities in emerging sectors and incorporating social innovation. The strategy identified four strategic axes (three thematic ones and one cross-cutting one) to support the social economy. These axes reflect the priorities that matter most to all consulted stakeholders in Spain.

- Axis 1. Visibility and institutional participation in the social economy
- Axis 2. Improved competitiveness
- Axis 3. Entrepreneurship and emerging sectors
- Axis 4. Social and territorial sustainability

In the action plan that follows, each axis is broken down into actions, each having its own objective, a range of activities, a responsible implementing body, a timeframe and monitoring indicators. Some actions can be considered “quick wins” with immediate impact. For example, raising the international visibility of the social economy, as Spain held the EU

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<sup>15</sup> Government of Spain, Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social. (2023). 13033, Resolución de 17 de mayo de 2023, de la Secretaría de Estado de Empleo y Economía Social, Estrategia Española de Economía Social 2023-2027. Boletín Oficial del Estado n130, (June 1, 2023). Available in Spanish at: [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2023-13033](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2023-13033)

presidency in the second half of 2023 and put the topic on the political agenda during this term.

In **Slovenia**, the Social Economy Council, which is in charge of the social economy, has drafted a ten-year strategy for 2022-32<sup>16</sup>, which is currently awaiting government approval. The draft offers a good example of articulating a vision, identifying strategic areas (axes) and formulating strategic goals. The vision rests on three main pillars:

1. Empowered community for and through the development of the social economy - a community that connects, cooperates and is competent for the development of the social economy
2. A functioning social economy ecosystem - connected and professional civil (society) and state support for the social economy
3. Attainable size of the social economy - representing 4.1% of total employment and 4.3% of GDP.

Accordingly, the strategic development goals suggest an increase in the contribution of the social economy to the Slovenian GDP to a level comparable to the European average. They also plan an increase in the number of jobs created by social economy organisations. Similar goals are set for registered social enterprises, which are a subset of the social economy.

The draft document identified four strategic areas of action: 1) increasing the visibility and promotion of the social economy, 2) creating an enabling environment, 3) establishing a constructive dialogue between government and civil society and supporting the setting up representative bodies of the social economy, and 4) developing a model for measuring social impact.

The **Polish National Programme for Social Economy Development (KPRES)**<sup>17</sup> was launched in 2022 and is the second comprehensive government strategy for the social economy. It is the result of strategic policy review, which led to the amendment of the first KPRES dating back to 2014<sup>18</sup>. The strategy is grounded in the long-term vision that social and solidarity economy will become an important instrument for active social policy, support for social and local development. The overarching objective of the current strategy running to 2030 is to turn social economy entities into important actors that can contribute to social inclusion of people at risk and to the provision of social services. The overarching objective is broken down into four strategic areas and objectives with corresponding targets:

- *Area I. Solidarity Local Community.* The Promotion of a sustainable partnership between social economy actors and local authorities in the delivery of social services. An increase in the share of social services outsourced to social economy entities to at least 2% in local government budgets.
- *Area II. Solidarity Labour market.* Increase in the number of quality jobs in social enterprises for people at risk of social exclusion to 35,000.

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<sup>16</sup> Government of Slovenia (2022) Strategy for the Development of the Social Economy for the Period 2022-2032 is available in Slovenian [here](#)

<sup>17</sup> Government of Poland (2022) Resolution 212 of the Council of Ministers, National Programme for the Development of Social Economy by 2030. Economics of Social Solidarity. Monitor Polski 2022, item 1171. Available in Polish at: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/dokumenty-programowe-i-strategiczne>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.pl/web/rodzina/dokumenty-programowe-i-strategiczne>

- *Area III. Competitive Social Entrepreneurship.* Increase the competitiveness of social economy actors in the market. Increase in the number of social economy entities carrying out economic activities by 9000 entities.
- *Area IV. Solidarity Society.* The stimulation of positive attitudes towards the social economy. Increasing the membership of young people under the age of 18 in social economy entities by 5%.

**Wallonia, Belgium** adopted a regional social economy strategy. In Belgium, there is no overall national legislation or strategy for the social economy and the political competence of the topic has been transferred to the regional level. The Wallonian government launched its five-year strategy called *Alternative ES Wallonia* in 2020. It aims to develop the social economy from 2019 to 2024 by supporting the creation, development and growth of social economy businesses along three strategic axes:

- Social innovation and creating social businesses;
- Professionalisation and scaling of social economy enterprises; and
- Visibility of social economy enterprises

*Alternative ES Wallonia* identified five priority sectors for the social economy to develop:

1. Food and short supply chains;
2. Energy (green and renewables);
3. Culture;
4. Housing;
5. Recycling of goods and materials.

The priorities are translated into ten cross-cutting measures, such as support, advice and financing for social economy enterprises, stimulating social innovation and impact evaluating, as well as encouraging social economy businesses to participate in the digital transformation.

### 3.1.2. Vision and objectives under a particular policy

**Romania** does not have a social economy strategy, but promotion, development and consolidation of entrepreneurship and social economy initiatives are included under a key objective of its National Employment Strategy for 2021-27<sup>19</sup>. The main aim of this strategy is the creation of quality jobs, and the proposed measures address the startup and early-stage enterprises that integrate disadvantaged individuals. The initiatives include measures such as:

- business consultancy and support combined with grants;
- developing tools, for example, for awareness raising and monitoring the evolution of social economy;
- financing for consolidated enterprises, promotion and visibility;
- subsidies for the employment of disadvantaged people; and
- setting up social innovation centres (including incubators).

In **Portugal**, the government programme 2022-2026<sup>20</sup> acknowledges the role of the social economy. The social economy is also included in the People (Pessoas) component of

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<sup>19</sup> Government of Romania (2022)

<sup>20</sup> Government of Portugal (2022), p 129

Portugal 2030, the Partnership Agreement with the EU. Dedicated to human resource development, social inclusion and employment, this programme will be co-financed with EUR 5.7 billion from the ESF+, some of which will be used to achieve its social economy goals.

Although not part of the social economy strategy, [Portugal Social Innovation \(PSI\)](#) is another key strategic initiative, developing innovative financing structures for the social enterprise/social economy. PSI is a government initiative designed to catalyse social innovation and social investment and address finance issues faced by social enterprises. In the 2014-2020 period, PSI set up a Social Innovation Fund, which offered match-funding to private investors, delivered capacity-building to social enterprises and tested the first Portuguese social impact bond. PSI was co-financed with EUR 150 million of the ESF+, which had been negotiated between the government of Portugal and the European Commission as part of the Portugal 2020 Partnership Agreement (OECD, 2017). [Agenda for Impact 2030](#) is the next National Strategy for Social Investment and Innovation in Portugal. (Miguel, A., Nunes, C. (2022). Its overall objectives are:

1. maintaining Portugal's leading international role in the social innovation arena; and
2. contributing to solving social problems effectively and efficiently.

Questions for discussion:

- How to obtain the political will and the agreement of government departments on a common vision and priorities?
- How to establish a clear vision and mission for the social economy, taking into account countries' specific regional/national needs and goals?
- What priorities are essential when designing a strategy that can have a long-term impact?

### BOX 1 – Should regulation be the first step?

Many governments have based their social economy strategies/social enterprise policies on a national (framework) law that defines and regulates such entities in their territory. The motivation is mostly to identify which social economy entities/social enterprises are eligible to benefit from public resources. Social enterprise/economy legislation seems to have contributed to increasing visibility and recognition of the ecosystem, including in the public sector. In Spain, a country with a long history of the social economy, the first national Social Economy Law (Law 5/2011) was passed in 2011 and national strategies followed afterwards. Law 5/2011 was not introduced in a vacuum; Spain already had an ecosystem with national and regional policy documents and several social economy umbrella organisations.

Regulating before or without a strategy may be putting the cart before the horse and has proved counterproductive or ineffective in some cases. Examples include Slovenia (see details in section 3.3) or Greece, where legislation was introduced in a nascent ecosystem with limited policy support. In Greece, the social economy legislation published in 2016 narrowly defines social enterprises as 'cooperatives' and leaves social economy entities with other legal forms outside the legal framework. Consequently, they are not considered part of the social economy universe in data and statistics, and their needs are not taken into account.

The role of social economy laws in social economy strategies is changing as Member States are learning from experience. The legal framework is becoming one of many policy dimensions **that should serve the vision and objectives rather than drive them**. A social economy law and/or a specific legal form may be fundamental for the success of other strategy components, such as access to public tenders or financing. The contrary might also be true. In Ireland, for instance, the potential for a distinct legal form for social enterprise was assessed in 2021. The study did not find enough compelling evidence to prove that such a legal form was necessary, so the proposal was abandoned. In Ireland, most barriers

faced by social enterprises are related to lack of implementation of existing policies, lack of access to resources or insufficient recognition (OECD, 2023).

## 3.2 Administrative and institutional setup

The administrative and institutional setup to coordinate the support for the social economy should be linked with the vision and objectives and have a positive influence on their achievement. Governments in several Member States have set up dedicated social economy units or councils that are responsible for the coordination and monitoring of social economy policies, and communication with stakeholders. Such units are often part of the ministries of labour and/or social affairs to reflect their policy relevance and corresponding resources. This can be very useful for accumulating expertise and securing support, but it can also be a disadvantage, as it could limit the social economy strictly to a few impact areas (e.g. employment and social care). In some Member States, the responsibility for the development of social economy enterprises belongs to the Ministry of Economy, as they are considered part of the enterprise sector and wish to have access to facilities open to mainstream enterprises.

The institutional setup is always influenced by overall government and administrative structures in each Member State. The social economy may become the mandate of an existing department or new social economy units may be set up. The position of social economy units within the government will reflect the level of ambition and priority of the social economy on the agenda. In federal structures or decentralised states, regions, local governments and municipalities can have significant autonomy and can play an important role in supporting the social economy directly.

In **France**, for example, the social economy has the strong political endorsement of the national government and enjoys the support of local governments at the same time. At national level, the State Secretary for Social and Solidarity Economy and Associative Life is in charge of social economy policies and reports directly to the Prime Minister. The State Secretary collaborates with the French Treasury, which oversees social economy finance measures. Social and solidarity economy enterprises are invited to the table through the Chamber of Social and Solidarity Economy, which ensures representation and promotion at the national level. Regions, cities and other levels of local government support the social economy through direct action, including via social campaigns, business incubation or funding. Regional Chambers of Social and Solidarity Economy (CRESS) representing social and solidarity enterprises at the local (and regional) level are major actors in economic development and important partners to local governments.

**Wallonia** also has a Minister of Social Economy and a dedicated department for social economy within the public administration, [the Social Economy Directorate](#), which was set up in 2009. The government also established the [Wallonia Council for Social Economy](#), whose mission is to advise the government on all matters relating to the social economy and the implementation of various measures. The Council draws up an annual evaluation report. The Parliament of Wallonia votes every year on a budget dedicated to the social economy.

The **Spanish strategy** presents its own governance structure, whereby the General Directorate of Autonomous Work, Social Economy and Corporate Social Responsibility is in charge of coordination and communication together with other ministries and departments. The Directorate is part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy. In 2023, Spain nominated a Secretary of State for the Social Economy and a Special Commissioner for the first time, whose responsibilities include the promotion and coordination of all



projects related to the development of the social economy<sup>21</sup>. For better coordination between various government departments, the State Council for the Development of Social Economy is in charge of drawing up a coordination plan. Several ministries including Foreign Affairs as well as the autonomous regions are represented in the State Council. Spanish regions enjoy financial autonomy under the Constitution and substantive rules and regulations regarding the social economy fall within the competence of regional governments. This autonomy makes them a crucial actor and resource in implementing the strategy. Monitoring implementation is the task of the Technical Monitoring Committee, which comprises representatives of the relevant ministries. The [Spanish Confederation of Social Economy Enterprises \(CEPES\)](#), an umbrella body of 29 national and regional confederations and business groups, is a permanent member in several government consultative bodies. This shows their keen interest in representing members and engaging in the processes related to the social economy, as well as the government's commitment to involving key stakeholders.

In addition to the position within government, the existence or absence of coordination mechanisms and processes is also critical. The Spanish example illustrates that a coordination plan can be very useful to bring together people from various government departments and it should be supported by adequate resources. Lack of resources and capacity constraints are often an argument for dropping the social economy if it is not a priority of a given department. The answer can be the creation of a specific social economy unit with dedicated resources and appropriate weight in the state administration. This step usually accompanies the launching of a new legislation or strategy, which needs its own supervisory or support body (for example, for keeping a social enterprise register).

**Questions for discussion:**

- Where is the best place for a social economy unit within a government? Who should cover its costs?
- How to coordinate the involvement of various governmental departments and different agencies?
- What are the benefits of setting up a new institutional body in comparison to using a less formal structure when designing and implementing a social economy strategy?
- How to ensure that administrative and institutional frameworks are flexible and adaptable to changing needs in the social economy?

### 3.3 Consultation mechanisms and stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement and consultation are the cornerstones of a successful social economy strategy, not only in the preparatory phase but also for a successful implementation. The vision and objectives – and, at a later stage, the design of the corresponding measures – should build on a need analysis and consultation with stakeholders or on the joint assessment of the previous strategy, if there was one. The contribution of stakeholders has been demonstrated in several examples in Member States. The main purpose of involving other actors from the ecosystem is to gather information and feedback, and obtain buy-in and support. Member States often use SWOT analysis to organise information in the preparatory phase, as demonstrated in the examples of the Spanish and Greek strategies below. A thorough review of needs in the planning phase and continued close collaboration with main stakeholders during delivery ensures that policies address the main gaps and respond to reality on the ground. Stakeholder support

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<sup>21</sup> [https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/my-country/spain\\_en](https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/my-country/spain_en)

is key to bringing additional capacity, resources and expertise to the social economy ecosystem.

Stakeholders in the social economy ecosystem include public and private sector entities alike. From the government's perspective, stakeholders within the government structure, such as relevant departments, ministries and other authorities, are crucial partners for the social economy cause. They help maintain political support and can take part in coordination and documentation.

Regional or local governments can be very important stakeholders. Being closer to the communities and having a tighter relationship with social economy entities, they usually have a better understanding of the actual challenges and the possible solutions. Oftentimes, they dispose of additional resources thanks to their autonomy. For these reasons, local and regional authorities can be considered external stakeholders from the central government's point of view, even though they are part of the public sector. Depending on their status and autonomy, public sector institutions, such as development banks, enterprise development agencies, research institutes, or universities, can also be considered external stakeholders.

Private-sector and third-sector stakeholders are considered external. Examples are social economy organisations, social enterprises and their umbrella bodies, funders and financiers (banks, private individuals, foundations, investment funds), a wide range of mainstream enterprises, academia, media and the general public. They have varying levels of interest in social economy and bring very different priorities to the table. Stakeholder mapping is useful to identify the key actors, their influence and potential for the ecosystem.

The following examples from Member States illustrate how governments engaged with different stakeholder groups in the preparation and/or implementation of their social economy strategy, and what role those stakeholders played in the process.

The **Spanish strategy document** shares a great level of detail about the consultation exercise that led to a SWOT analysis in the preparatory phase. Sixty-two selected external stakeholders received the online questionnaire, which had been drawn up by a joint working group of stakeholders and contained statements under strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Respondents were asked about their agreement with each statement and their answers were aggregated into percentages. The response rate was 77% and included respondents from a high number of autonomous communities and from the CEPES Board of Directors. A few experts and municipalities had also been consulted. The result was an elaborate analysis of the most important strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats viewed by stakeholders. For example, the biggest opportunity identified was the growing societal demand for social and educational services and for an increased participation of businesses in the solution of economic, social and environmental problems. There was agreement that the most important threat was the lack of understanding of the concept of social economy by the public sector administration. The SWOT analysis and the previous studies on the state of the ecosystem provided enough ammunition for the design of a strategy, with the backing of all parties involved. To illustrate the engagement of internal stakeholders, we can look at the administrative structure of the Spanish strategy above (section 3.2) and see how such stakeholders are consulted on a regular basis and kept engaged through various councils and committees.

In **Ireland**, the National Social Enterprise Policy 2019-2022<sup>22</sup> was largely implemented by ecosystem partners and the follow-up strategy is being developed in close collaboration with stakeholders. Public consultations have taken place and are still in progress to gather feedback. An OECD in-depth policy review as well as the completion of a major data

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<sup>22</sup> Government of Ireland (2021). National Social Enterprise Policy Ireland 2019-2022, Annual Report 2021. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/19332/2fae274a44904593abba864427718a46.pdf>

gathering exercise on social enterprise should also feed into the development of the new strategy.

The **Greek** government conducted extensive research when updating the Social Economy and Innovation Action Plan in 2022<sup>23</sup>, which currently exists in draft form. The assessment of the previous strategy of 2014-2020 had not been completed, and therefore, evidence-based conclusions could not be applied when planning the next cycle. The government used desk research to analyse the information from different reports, studies and programme documents available to the Directorate of Social Economy. This was complemented by a “field survey” of social economy stakeholders to obtain a comprehensive overview of challenges as well as proposed solutions. A total of 41 interviews were conducted with individuals representing different stakeholder groups, such as ministries, EU funding managing authorities, regional and local authorities, social economy enterprises, cooperatives and their umbrella organisations, support centres, accelerators and academic institutions. The results were integrated into a detailed SWOT analysis of the social economy, leading to the articulation of the emerging needs of the ecosystem. The needs from the previous national strategy are still relevant and are used to feed into the new proposed action plan.

In Greece, social economy-related measures have been financed through Human Resources Operational Programmes (OP) under ESF / ESF+ Programmes. This is the case in the 2021-27 period as well, where both national and regional support programmes will be financed by ESF+ and ERDF. According to the Action Plan, the Human Resources and Social Cohesion Programme 2021-27 will fund, for example, the setting up of the National Competence Centre for Social Innovation, the development of social impact measurement tools and the development of a coordination and monitoring mechanism for public policies in support of the social economy. The current strategy also considers the [EU Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), as the social economy features in the Greek national development plans.

Questions for discussion:

- What are the main difficulties in the engagement of the key stakeholder groups and what are possible solutions?
- How to ensure inclusive and effective consultation with all stakeholders in the social economy ecosystem, including underrepresented groups?
- How can stakeholders be involved during the various phases of carrying out a social economy strategy (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation)?
- What particular challenges can be expected at national, regional or local levels?

### 3.4 Visibility and recognition

Increasing the visibility and recognition of the social economy has been a high priority in policy packages since the Social Business Initiative in 2011. Many strategies name this area as a strategic axis or objective (for example, in Spain or in Ireland) and employ a wide range of measures in different policy dimensions to improve recognition. Depending on the gaps, efforts may target policy makers and the public sector or society at large, in some cases, global audiences (as in the Spanish strategy). Public sector awareness can be increased by collecting better statistics and data and improving access to and presence of social economy representatives in state structures, policy fora and decision-making and training. Information campaigns, events and support of own campaigns of social economy entities can, in turn, contribute to higher overall visibility. The following examples illustrate the

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<sup>23</sup> Government of Greece (2023). Social Economy Action Plan Draft. Available in Greek at: <https://ypergasias.gov.gr>

experience of Member States in improving visibility and recognition using legal frameworks, campaigns and labels and data collection.

### **Legal frameworks**

The legal framework and social economy laws are often mentioned as important instruments that increase visibility and recognition, primarily in the public sector. Better awareness and legal recognition are supposed to positively impact the access of social economy organisations to subsidies, preferential financing conditions, public contracts or tax breaks. This requires the alignment of other relevant pieces of legislation, for example, regarding labour integration, public procurement or tax incentives as well as updating implementation practices. Otherwise, increased recognition could remain an objective on paper only.

In **Spain**, the above mentioned Law 5/2011 helped increase the recognition of the social economy by affecting the state administrative structure. It resulted in the setting up of the Social Economy unit in the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy and it meant that priority was given to social economy when allocating ESF funds.

In the new Spanish strategy, a specific action is dedicated to increasing the visibility of the social economy at the institutional level and in the legal framework. This is not only understood as better information about social economy in state structures, but also, for example by developing a tool that can be used to assess the potential impact of new legislative proposals on the social economy. The facilitation of social economy representatives in policy working groups or the strengthening of the Social Economy Development Council are measures that aim to increase the participation of social economy actors in decision-making and thus resulting in a higher profile for the ecosystem.

In **Slovenia**, recognition happened to a limited extent. The Act for Social Entrepreneurship entered into force in 2011 to encourage the growth of social enterprises with a strong employment and labour integration focus. The Act introduced a narrowly-defined social enterprise status and a registration process. The intention was to create a status for existing social enterprises operating in a wide variety of legal forms and impact areas. In practice, however, restrictions in the provisions and lack of incentives led to few applications and the legal status was met with minimal interest within the ecosystem. The Act was revised in 2018, but again failed to consider the existing landscape, the needs of social enterprises and the range of policies that affected them. The process lacked a strategic foundation and involved stakeholders to a limited extent. As a result, the Act still does not meet the needs of the social economy and lacks their support/ownership, which limits its effectiveness and impact. Nevertheless, the Act succeeded in increasing political attention to social enterprises and in improving access to financial resources and procurement opportunities for registered social enterprises in specific calls for tender (OECD, 2022a).

### **Campaigns, events, awards and labels**

Campaigns, events, awards and labels are other measures that are often used to raise the overall visibility and recognition of social economy organisations and the ecosystem as a whole. Campaigns and awards often feature in government policies and strategies as they are relatively easy and not costly to implement and offer immediate benefits. Labels, on the other hand, require more coordination of policies and incentives, if they are to carry value on the market.

The **German National Strategy for Social Innovation and Social Enterprises**<sup>24</sup> (2023) dedicates 11 action areas to visibility and recognition primarily targeting the general public and the private sector. The proposed measures reflect these target groups and measures, include regular summit meetings for stakeholders, specialised competitions, communication campaigns and the promotion of social enterprises in trade fairs. Public sector recognition, on the other hand, can be better achieved through other measures, such as public procurement (Action area 4).

**Austria** does not have a social economy strategy but has a voluntary “*Verified Social Enterprise*” label for businesses committed to impact. It is awarded to enterprises by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Economics and handled by Austria’s ‘Wirtschaftsservice’, the promotional bank of the government in close collaboration with the Social Entrepreneurship Network Austria and the Federal Economic Chamber<sup>25</sup>. Verified social enterprises may use the name and logo in public communication, but there is no specific incentive offered by the government. The label does not seem to be a part of a deliberate policy but could be incorporated into a future strategy with higher recognition and incentives attached.

### Collection of data and intelligence

Collection of data and intelligence can lead to a better understanding and recognition of the social economy by the public sector, and it can contribute to evidence-based policy making as well as more effective monitoring and impact measurement.

**Portugal** has a satellite account for social economy, which is the result of a collaborative effort between the National Statistics Institute and the [António Sérgio Cooperative for the Social Economy \(CASES\)](#). Its legal foundations were laid in the 2013 framework law for social economy. The latest statistics covering 2019-2020 were released in 2023, providing up-to-date information about the economic importance and the main characteristics of the sector. Headline figures show that in 2020, the social economy accounted for 5.9% of all employees<sup>26</sup>.

The **Spanish strategy** is committed to obtaining more and detailed data about the social economy. The strategic axis on visibility and recognition has an action on the elaboration and dissemination of statistical data on the social economy.

The **German strategy** recognises the need to address the lack of data about social enterprises and proposes, therefore, firstly that the Federal Government carries out a study on data collection and, secondly that it commits the Federal Government to examine the possibility of introducing satellite accounts for social enterprises. This measure is included under the action area that targets further research on social innovations and social enterprises.

The [Social Economy Observatory](#) in **Wallonia** is a centre of excellence supported by the regional government. It collects and analyses statistical data relating to social economy entities in the French speaking part of Belgium. The database is accessible to policy makers as well as project leaders or academics who need information for the development of action plans or policies for the social economy.

Questions for discussion:

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<sup>24</sup> Federal Government of Germany. (2023) German National Strategy for Social Innovations and Social Enterprises. Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. Available at: <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/Mittelstand/national-strategy-for-social-innovations-and-social-enterprises.html>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.aws.at/en/verified-social-enterprise-label/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://cases.pt/social-economy-satellite-account-2019-2020/>

- Who are the most important target groups for recognition and visibility measures? What have proved to be the most successful actions?
- What strategies and tools can Member States use to enhance the visibility and understanding of the social economy's impact and value?
- How can Member States effectively acknowledge and promote the achievements of social economy organisations to increase community support and engagement?

### 3.5 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Strategy documents need to include a monitoring and evaluation plan, attaching performance targets and indicators to key objectives and actions. A good monitoring plan starts with policy objectives that are specific, time-bound and measurable.

Selecting the right indicators is a crucial step. They need to be relevant (measuring what matters), and correspond to data that is feasible to collect and to the timeframe for achieving a given objective. Indicators and measurement often remain short-term and output-oriented, such as the number of people trained and employed by social economy entities, or the number of social enterprises created. These are appropriate to monitor progress on specific action items but give little information about the achievement of long-term objectives, if the link to the strategic long-term objectives is not established. For example, to assess the sustained success of measures in employment, indicators such as successful entry to the labour market, quality of employment (longevity, increase in income and status) or household income are also important.

Once the indicators are drawn up, it is important to put in place mechanisms for data collection, either from existing sources, such as official statistics or through one-off evaluation exercises with the use of surveys or interviews. The M&E framework should include feedback loops that can carry learnings forward to update the strategy or to create a new one. The M&E plan will only work if there are dedicated resources and capacities attached.

In the M&E framework of the **Polish National Programme for Social Economy Development (KPRES)** each of the four strategic areas has its corresponding indicators, source of data and baseline where available. Table 2 shows a sample of indicators for Area III, where the Central Statistical Office is listed among the data sources. This seems to indicate that official statistics can distinguish social economy entities from other economic entities and report on them separately.

Table 2. Sample indicators from the M&E framework of the KPRES

| Area  | Targeted result/indicator   | Source of data             | Base value (2016) | Intermediate value (2019) | Target (2030) |
|---|---|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| <b>AREA III COMPETITIVE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b> |   |                            |                   |                           |               |
|   | By 2030, the number of social economy entities (SEE) carrying out economic activities or remunerated public benefit activities will increase by 9000. | Central Statistical Office | 28,700            | 27,900                    | 36,900        |
|   | Value of preferential loans granted to SEE (PLN)  | BGK <sup>27</sup>          | 39 million        | 91 million                | 318 million   |

<sup>27</sup> Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, Polish Development Bank

|  |                            |         |         |         |
|--|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| The average revenue of social economy entities (PLN) | Central Statistical Office | 330,700 | 353,700 | 357,000 |
| Number of accreditations granted                     | MRiPS <sup>28</sup>        | 122     | 130     | 330     |
| Number of SEE-certified quality label.               | MriPS                      | 0       | 198     | 600     |

Source: based on Government of Poland (2022), p 70

KPRES has three main financing sources: the state budget, special purpose funds and EU funding. The latter includes the ESF+ for the 2021-2027 programming period and funds under the National Recovery Plan. The previous KPRES used EUR 7.9 million from the ESF to create and finance a loan fund for social enterprises during the 2013-2016 period.

In the **Spanish strategy**, the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation lies with the Technical Monitoring Committee, which tracks indicators and elaborates annual reports for the coordinating Ministry of Labour and Social Economy. The annual reports will feed into a mid-term and final evaluation of the strategy and should make sure that they remain living documents that can be adapted to respond to new challenges faced by the social economy. Indicators are built into the action plan per action item under each action and strategic axis. For example, in order to improve gender equality in the social economy under Axis 4: Social and Territorial Sustainability, there is a range of targeted measures that aim to improve employment opportunities for women. Output indicators - such as the number of awareness raising courses and their participants, or number of women-led businesses set up under capacity-building and financial support programmes - are attached to most measures. It is unclear, however, how this data will be collected and analysed and by whom, as well as how it will contribute to the overall impact indicator of this action.

Questions for discussions:

- How can data be aggregated to provide meaningful information on progress towards objectives? How can such information find its way into decision-making?
- How can methodologies, indicators and metrics be designed to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of social economy strategies?
- What are promising examples of linking key performance indicators to policy and strategic objectives?

## 4 Conclusions

With the introduction of the EU Social Economy Action Plan and the Council Recommendation, Member States are presented with a remarkable opportunity to develop their social economies with vision, strategic guidance and practical support from the European Commission and other EU organisations. They are encouraged to strategically build and scale enabling conditions that tap the social economy’s potential for solving social and environmental problems. This paper has offered a brief overview of these EU policy documents and the recommended building blocks of a social economy strategy illustrated with examples from Member States.

While strategies vary greatly across the EU, they show signs of convergence thanks to more than 20 years of EU programmes and policy initiatives, studies, exchanges of experience and research, which have all contributed to the development of the social economy. Governments have increasingly realised the economic, social and environmental impact of

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<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Family and Social Policy

social economy entities and the need to create deliberate and comprehensive long-term plans for their support. From the review of the national and many regional strategies, the following success factors and risks stand out:

### **Success factors**

- Social economy strategies need to be a part of or closely linked with specific policy areas or goals, such as social innovation, employment, social inclusion or community development, to ensure consistency across policies and receive attention and necessary resources from the government. The examples from Member States illustrate a close connection to and consistency with policy goals, but some remain uncertain about resource allocation.
- A strategy is necessary and helpful as it promotes coordination within governments. The strategy process allows for the integration of external stakeholders in design and/or implementation.
- A strategy must be based on a vision that is put into practice through objectives; actions operationalise the objectives and respond to the needs and opportunities identified during the preparatory phase.
- Stakeholder consultations should be an integral part of designing the social economy strategy to incorporate the beneficiary perspective and obtain buy-in and expertise. The Spanish, German and Greek examples illustrate this approach. Engaging stakeholders throughout implementation also helps bring additional capacity to the table and maintains a focus on impact. This is the case in Ireland or France, where representatives of social economy organisations are actively involved.
- A comprehensive strategy should address the needs of the social economy in many key dimensions, including infrastructure, access to markets, financing and entrepreneurial culture. This may seem daunting, especially in countries without a strategy in place and where social economy is at an early stage. Even in such cases, priorities can be identified and some short-term goals can be achieved to maintain the momentum.
- Legal frameworks of varying complexity regulating social economy entities exist in many countries and often successfully improve their visibility and recognition, as shown in the French or Spanish examples.
- High-level government support and agreement across the political spectrum give weight to social economy policies and strengthen the position of the social economy. This leads to greater recognition by the general public, facilitates collaboration with other sectors and ensures long-term, predictable conditions for the development of the social economy. France and Spain provide good examples.
- The allocation of resources is fundamental for successful policy design and implementation. EU funding from funds such as ESF+ and ERDF can be used for these purposes, as demonstrated by the Polish and Portuguese cases.

### **Pitfalls to avoid**

- Concrete measures may lead to partial solutions if they are not underpinned by an overall strategy. To ensure success and sustained impact, action plans must align with a larger strategy.
- Regulating too early or without the necessary assessment of the social economy ecosystem may stifle the development of the ecosystem. If existing legal forms and frameworks are not considered or incentives do not accompany regulation, the desired growth of the ecosystem may not follow.



- The launch of national social economy strategies requires government leadership and vision. The primary role of the government (national, regional or local) is to enable the work of other players, using financial resources and other infrastructure at its disposal.
- Monitoring and evaluation are key to ensure that implementation is moving towards the intended results and corrections can be made when necessary. If an M&E framework does not accompany the strategy or if previous strategies are not evaluated, valuable lessons may be lost, and past mistakes may be repeated in new strategic cycles.

### Questions for further discussion

Several Member States have drawn up and implemented successful strategies that can serve as good practice examples for other countries. However, strategy documents do not often reveal the challenges governments face during the strategy design process and implementation. These workshops offer a unique opportunity to lay out those challenges and discuss possible solutions. Questions from each section for joint consideration include:

- How can political will and the agreement of government departments on vision and priorities be obtained?
- Where is the best place for a social economy unit within a government? Who should cover its costs?
- What are the main difficulties in engaging with key stakeholder groups and what are possible solutions?
- Who are the most important target groups for recognition and visibility measures? What have proved to be the most successful actions?
- How can data be aggregated to provide meaningful information on progress towards objectives? How can such information find its way into decision-making?

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Spanish Confederation of Social Economy Enterprises (CEPES): <https://www.cepes.es/>

UN Sustainable Development Goals: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy: <https://yepa-hub.org/>

## Annex 1 Mapping of the Member States' strategies/action plans

The table below is a preliminary mapping of the strategies and action plans to promote the social economy. We look forward to receiving your inputs to flag new strategic documents or cross out outdated ones.

Table 3. Overview of Social economy strategies and action plans (updated on 6 February 2024)

| Country               | Social Economy Strategy  | Year | Other relevant information and documents  |
|-----------------------|--|------|---|
| <b>Austria</b>        | No strategy, but vision & policy objectives exist  |      | AT adopted a <a href="#">circular economy strategy</a><br>A recent study was conducted on the <a href="#">state of social enterprises</a><br>Available only in German.                      |
| <b>Belgium</b>        | <a href="#">Alternativ'ES Wallonia (Walloon strategy)</a><br><a href="#">Flemish policy paper for the social economy (2019-2024)</a> , (in EN, machine translated) | 2020 | BE adopted a <a href="#">federal circular economy plan</a> , however, administratively, social economy is a regional competence. Hence, strategies are rather defined at this level.        |
| <b>Bulgaria</b>       | <a href="#">Social Economy Action Plan 2022-2023 and Strategy for corporate social responsibility 2019-2023</a> (in EN, machine translated)                        | 2022 | The <a href="#">National Recovery and Resilience Plan launched in 2022</a> has a chapter on social economy with concrete actions. Available only in Bulgarian.                              |
| <b>Croatia</b>        | <a href="#">National Strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship</a> (in EN, machine translated)   | 2015 | OECD analysis: <a href="#">The National Strategy for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship in Croatia</a>  |
| <b>Cyprus</b>         | <a href="#">Action Plan for the Development of Social Enterprises Ecosystem</a> (upcoming)   | 2018 | <a href="#">Law on Social Enterprises (N. 207(I)/2020)</a><br>The action plan is currently being updated<br><a href="#">Mutual-learning workshops on SE summary</a>                         |
| <b>Czech Republic</b> | N/A  |      | <a href="#">National Strategy for the development of social services for the period 2016–2025</a><br><a href="#">Evaluation of Social Entrepreneurship (2018)</a> . Available only in Czech |
| <b>Denmark</b>        | N/A  |      | <a href="#">2014 Act on Registered Social Enterprises (Act 711/2014)</a> . Available only in Danish   |
| <b>Estonia</b>        | N/A  |      |   |
| <b>Finland</b>        | <a href="#">Strategy for Social Enterprises</a>  | 2022 |   |

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF SOCIAL ECONOMY STRATEGIES

|                    |  |      |  |
|--------------------|--|------|--|
| <b>France</b>      | Social Economy Growth Pact   | 2019 | <p><i>Feuille de route pour l'économie sociale et solidaire</i> to be developed throughout 2024-2025</p> <p>Stratégie régionale pour l'économie sociale et solidaire – Région Île-de-France</p> <p>Innovating together: Summary of the promotion strategy for new social and inclusive economy models abroad</p>   |
| <b>Germany</b>     | National strategy for social innovation and social enterprises   | 2023 |  |
| <b>Greece</b>      | Action Plan for the Social Economy and Social Innovation (in English <a href="#">here</a> and <a href="#">here</a> , machine translated)     | 2023 | National OPs in 2021-27 programming period to include social economy projects.   |
| <b>Hungary</b>     | N/A  |      | <p>National OPs included social enterprises in the past.</p> <p><a href="#">2019-2023 amended SME strategy</a> has a passage on social enterprise.</p>   |
| <b>Ireland</b>     | National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland (2019-2022)  | 2019 | Currently working on new national policy   |
| <b>Italy</b>       | N/A  |      | <p>National Plan of Interventions and Social Services</p> <p>The <a href="#">Italian plan for Recovery and Resilience</a> will be a crucial instrument to promote territorial development and social economy</p> <p>Bologna's 'metropolitan plan for the social economy' is a good example of local strategies</p> |
| <b>Latvia</b>      | There is a concept paper about the <b>implementation of social entrepreneurship in Latvia</b> " 2014 (OECD factsheet) – not available online |      | <a href="#">Evaluation report on the Social entrepreneurship support system</a>  |
| <b>Lithuania</b>   | N/A  |      | <p>An <a href="#">in depth-policy review</a> on social entrepreneurship was recently conducted by OECD.</p> <p><a href="#">DIESIS study on social economy</a>, published in February 2023.</p>   |
| <b>Luxembourg</b>  | N/A  |      | <a href="#">National Reform Programme 2021 includes social economy</a>   |
| <b>Malta</b>       | N/A  |      | Adopted a <a href="#">Social Enterprise Act</a> in 2022  |
| <b>Netherlands</b> | N/A. <a href="#">Amsterdam Impact</a> as a local strategy.<br>At national level, <a href="#">City Deal Impact Entrepreneurship</a>           | 2015 | Adopted a <a href="#">circular economy strategy</a> .  |
| <b>Poland</b>      | National Programme for the Development of Social Economy by 2030, (in English <a href="#">here</a> , machine translated)                     | 2021 |  |

## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF SOCIAL ECONOMY STRATEGIES

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|                 |  |      |  |
|-----------------|--|------|--|
| <b>Portugal</b> | N/A  |      | The government programme 2022-26 acknowledges the role of SE across multiple policy documents. High level list of measures, SE is also included in the HR component of Portugal 2030, the Partnership Agreement with the EU. |
| <b>Romania</b>  | N/A. SE is included as a strategic objective in the <a href="#">National Employment Strategy 2021-2027</a> . Available only in Romanian                        |      | Currently working on a strategy  |
| <b>Slovakia</b> | Action Plan to support the social economy and social enterprises in the Slovak Republic with a view to 2030  | 2023 |  |
| <b>Slovenia</b> | <a href="#">Draft strategy (WIP)</a> , (in English <a href="#">here</a> , machine translated)  |      |  |
| <b>Spain</b>    | <a href="#">Spanish Social Economy Strategy 2023-2027</a> , Available only in Spanish  | 2023 |  |
| <b>Sweden</b>   | <a href="#">Government strategy for social enterprises – a sustainable society through social enterprise and social innovation</a> , Available only in Swedish | 2018 |  |

## Annex 2 The pillars of a social economy strategy based on the OECD Recommendation



Source: <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/social-economy/social-economy-recommendation/>



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