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SEED'S Planning Solidarity Economy Districts for
Social, Economic, and Environmental
Sustainability

WP2 – Planning: Reviewing existing frameworks and training
needs

National Report – Italy

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Introduction (max. 1 page)

How the target group was identified and reached

The target group was identified and reached according to the different stakeholder groups involved. For the first coaching circle addressed to stakeholders, organisations were identified on the basis of stakeholder mapping exercise and participant selection. A direct invite was sent to the Contact person or legal representative of the identified organization. The coaching circle took place on 18 November during the “Fa la Cosa giusta! – Umbria” fair. Direct invitation of stakeholder participating to the fair was also considered.

For young’s involvement, open calls were made (via Tamat's social channels) and targeted invitations were sent to local associations active on the project’s topic (IAAS - International Association of Agricultural Science Students - Perugia section, GIMO Association, Association Dea Migranti de Retour Dans la Region de Tambacounda). In addition, an invitation was sent to the “Informagiovani” office of the Municipality of Perugia. Some participants were also involved thanks to a seminar organised by the Department of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences of the University of Perugia on 7 December. The seminar, organised at the opening of the youth coaching circle, allowed the last participants to get involved. Attempts were also made to involve young students of related subjects who were about to drop out of University.

For over 65 involvement, we used the channels set up with the Organisation participating in our first coaching circle, asking them to spread our invitation among their staff. In addition, open calls were made (via Tamat's social channels) and targeted invitations were sent to local association engaged in activities with over 65s (ADA – Associazione Diritti Anziani, Università della Terza Età, Associazione Pian di Massiano).

Participants in the stakeholder coaching circle had medium to high knowledge of the topic. The young and old people who participated in the activities had an average knowledge of the topic.

In order to reach an adequate number of participants (5/8 per coaching circle), a series of recalls and direct phone calls were made. In total, 22 participants attended our coaching circles (7 stakeholders’ representatives, 8 young, 5 over 65 and 7 on the mixed coaching circle-among them 2 new participants).



Analysis of desk and field research findings

(3-4

pages)

National legal and administrative context regarding Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs)

In Italy, social economy refers to: Cooperatives, associations, foundations and other non-profit organisations (ecclesiastical organisations, mutual societies, amateur sports clubs, social enterprises, other organisations with a private legal status).

The **Italian Code of the Third Sector** - Legislative Decree no. 117 of 3 July 2017 - has provided for the reorganisation and complete revision of the regulations in force on the subject, both civil and fiscal, defining for the first time the scope of the so-called "Third Sector" and, in a homogeneous and organic manner, the entities that are part of it.. The reform regulates in a single text all types of organisations called "Entities of the Third Sector (ETS)". It provides a common definition for different entities, ranging from small organisations, national networks, social cooperatives to philanthropic entities. These are associations, foundations or other private entities, other than companies, which carry out one or more activities of general interest (a list of 26 areas of intervention central to the life of communities) in the form of voluntary action or the free provision of money, goods or services, or in the form of mutuality or the production or exchange of goods or services, which are united by registration in the single national register of the third sector (Runts) and which pursue civic, solidarity and socially useful non-profit purposes. There are seven new typologies: voluntary organisations (VOs); associations for social promotion (Aps); social enterprises (including the current social cooperatives); philanthropic entities; associative networks; mutual societies; other entities.

At the heart of the third sector is the performance of activities of general interest, a list that can be updated and that brings order to the usual activities of the non-profit sector (from health to assistance, from education to the environment) and adds some that have emerged in recent years (housing, social agriculture, legality, fair trade, etc.). Becoming a third sector organisation means meeting a series of obligations in terms of internal democracy, transparency, labour relations, insurance for volunteers and the distribution of any profits, in exchange for exemptions and economic and tax benefits, including incentives.

Another key sectorial policy related to this domain is the Italian **Legislative Decree no. 112/2017, defining the concept of "social enterprise"**. According to this normative reference, a social enterprise is established by public deed and its articles of association must expressly state the social nature of the enterprise, in accordance with the provisions of Legislative Decree no. 112/2017, specifying in particular the social purpose and the absence of profit motive. Social enterprise is not a separate form of civil law, but a "qualification". In other words, it is a specific way of "doing business" that is independent of the legal form of the organisation carrying it out. Therefore, all private entities in both Book I (associations, foundations, committees) and Book V of the Civil Code (i.e. companies, both corporations and partnerships, with the exception of



companies with a single shareholder who is a natural person) can acquire the status of social enterprise.

In Italy, short Chain and Zero Kilometre are becoming well-defined concepts, with greater transparency for consumers. After so many years without a specific regulation, in 2022 law has been passed that sets out the criteria for defining a product as “zero kilometres” or “short supply chain”, establishes logos, defines certain promotion and marketing tools and establishes penalties for illegal use. The regulation, Law No. 61, was published in the Official Gazette on 11 June and entered into force on 26 June 2022.

The law stipulates that food produced within a maximum radius of 70 km from the place of sale or consumption, or coming from the same province (or, in the case of fish, landed within 70 km), can be considered zero km. As far as the short supply chain is concerned, products bearing the label may not pass through more than one intermediary before reaching the final consumer. The products defined in this way are promoted by the Regulation through a number of logistical measures, such as the requirement that at least 30 % of the area set aside for markets in general be reserved for fishing, as well as adequate space in front of landing sites. Regions and local authorities can also encourage the creation of ad hoc spaces within supermarkets, subject to agreement with the brands.

The Italian social economy spectrum is mainly regulated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and mainly by the Directorate for the Third Sector and Corporate Social Responsibility. Under this Ministry the “Fondazione Italia Sociale”, a not-for-profit participatory foundation to finance the activities of third sector organisations from private resources. It was created at the behest of the Italian State as a national foundation with the aim of increasing private funding for social initiatives and projects of a scale and impact for the whole country. The incentive promotes the expansion and strengthening of the social economy, supporting the creation and growth of enterprises that operate throughout the country in pursuit of deserving general interests and socially useful purposes. The scheme operates throughout Italy and supports investments that have one of the following objectives: increasing the employment of disadvantaged workers; social inclusion of vulnerable groups; the improvement and protection of the environment, urban regeneration and sustainable tourism, and the environmental sustainability of economic activity; the preservation and enhancement of historical and cultural heritage or the pursuit of cultural and creative purposes or social benefits of major public interest within a municipality or territory.

Another Ministry involved in this domain is The Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, which carries out regulatory, administrative and supervisory activities in relation to the cooperative system and to social enterprises.

With regard to the agri-food sector, the role of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry should be highlighted, which in 2015 adopted a national law on social farming (Law No. 141 of 18 August 2015). According to the aforementioned law, within the framework of the Rural Development Plans, the Regions may promote specific programmes for the multifunctionality of agricultural holdings, with particular reference to integrated territorial planning practices and the development of social farming. There are some legal instruments that also provide for a series of



measures to support social farming activities.

Social Agriculture is supported also in the 2023-2027 programming. Indeed, within the framework of the PHP, AS activities are included among those financed by interventions for Investments, in particular those aimed at agricultural holdings for diversification into non-agricultural activities - SRD03. In addition, AS activities can also be financed by other types of interventions, such as Co-operation, AKIS and LEADER (RRN, 2023)

At regional Level, in Umbria Region, it has to be noticed the presence of a specific law on “Shared Administration” (Regional Law n 2 of 6 March 2023). This is a regulatory intervention that aims to introduce, at regional level, the novelties of art. 55 of the Code for the Third Sector, offering public and third sector actors in Umbria a framework of common principles and rules to guide them and give coherence to the co-planning and co-development processes. The approach chosen was to introduce a transversal discipline in order to ensure the active participation of the Third Sector (ETS) in all the areas of activity of general interest falling within the competence of the Region (art. 1, cc.4-5). It can therefore be said that Law 2/2023 innovates the entire regional system, offering - in the individual regional policies - an additional tool for the exercise of administrative functions, which does not eliminate those already tried and tested, but enriches them (Gori, 2023).

At regional level, it has also to be highlighted The Regional Law of 26 May 2023, no. 6, which provides for "Further Amendments and Additions to the Consolidated Text of Agriculture (Regional Law 12/2015)", in addition to transposing the national legislation that promotes social agriculture, enhancing the multifunctionality of businesses in the sector aimed at developing interventions and services of socio-educational and socio-occupational integration, and improving the quality of life of families and communities, particularly in rural or disadvantaged areas, it responds to the needs of the sector, which in recent years has aroused growing interest both for its social benefits and for its income generating opportunities.

Common opinion among the young and the elderly on Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs)

Young: All participants are familiar with the term. It is a type of economy that is fair to all phases in the transformation process, with particular reference to the latter. When we talk about social economy in agriculture and rural areas, we are also talking about social gardens and the possibility of using food as a flywheel for creating sustainable and caring communities. When we talk about the social economy, we are not only talking about purchasing groups, but also about creating networks and links that include people with physical, mental and other difficulties (e.g. unemployed or imprisoned people). An important element in this context is the need to offer quality products also to people in difficulty. While the concept of a Solidarity Economy District is less well known among the participants, the concept of a short supply chain is well known. All participants recognize that the concept of supply chain refers to the steps a product goes through to get from the producer to the final consumer. When we talk about a 'short supply chain', we are talking about a supply chain with as few steps as possible. This concept also includes the concept of direct sales, a method that can allow more of the value added to remain with the producer.



Over 65: Participants are generally familiar with the terms "social economy", "solidarity economy district" and "short food supply chain", although not all of them from a technical point of view. Some concrete examples involving the participants themselves are presented, e.g. the network activity set up by Caritas, which consists of collecting food close to its expiry date or surplus from canteens and restaurants and distributing it to families in need. It is stressed that the approach of the solidarity economy must necessarily change the current paradigm: we must move from an approach of competition to one of cooperation. It is necessary to pursue this paradigm not only outside Italy, but also in Italy itself, even if this is currently very difficult to achieve. The new trend is not competition but cooperation. The concepts of "social economy", "solidarity economy district" perfectly embody these needs.

Attitude of economic actors regarding Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs)

Participants are familiar with the terms "Social economy", "Solidarity Economy District" and "Short Food Supply Chain". Reduced transport-related impact, connection to the territory, supporting the local economy, rewarding care for the territory are the main related features. They usually buy from SFFCs channels.

Perceptions of measures and mechanisms needed for the promotion of Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs)

Concerning the promotion of Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs), coaching circle participants are aware that it is needed a very important communication activities, starting from the recognition of the real value of the products to the social and solidarity aspects of SEEDs and SFFCs. , in order to realize a cultural change in the consumers, in particular investing in the added values of such products, which are more expensive than the ones produced and delivered by the large scale distribution, but they are healthier, so more economic in a long-lasting period.

Moreover, it is needed to become a critical mass, able to influence the wide public behaviour, through education (starting from the children) .

Finally, common communication and promotion tools are needed to support SEEDs and SFFCs, where producers and consumers can easily meet and find products, focus on new needs and discuss on public events to promote this new culture.



Conclusions and recommendations

(2 pages)

Main obstacles and challenges that the stakeholders of the social and solidarity economy face

There is a need to **create a culture of social enterprise**, which is still an exception compared to the business world as a whole. It has also become clear that this is a relatively new issue, which has been promoted and strengthened thanks to the reform of the third sector. For this reason, there is still a lot of confusion, also because the reform has not been completed in its operational elements. When we talk about social enterprise in the non-profit sector, we are actually introducing the “entrepreneurial” element, which is not always widespread and easy to integrate.

Another identified challenge relates to the **competition** between ethical and unethical products, for which some costs can be reduced. It is necessary to devalue those who do not act ethically. In this sense, a tool that is increasingly used and that will gradually become compulsory is the social balance sheet. Another identified challenge is the **bureaucracy** associated with pure associationism. These are realities in which only volunteers are involved, who are obliged by the Third Sector Reform to become social enterprises, but who do not have the time to deal with the administrative and bureaucratic paperwork involved. With this dynamic, the reform could actually lead to the disappearance of local buying groups and associations. Social enterprise needs professionalism, but there is a risk that pure volunteerism will be overwhelmed by too many tasks and therefore tend to disappear. Then there is the question of the acceptance of the Local Purchasing Group activity itself, because it is seen as an activity in competition with local food businesses. Moreover, a challenge is the creation of a culture by communicating the values of social entrepreneurship: changing consumption patterns, adapting production. An example of this is the organic sector, which is booming because a lot of European resources have been invested in promoting it. Raising awareness leads to 'voting with your wallet', rewarding those who produce ethically. Another challenge is the ability to maintain economic sustainability while giving voice to social values. From a technical point of view other obstacles and challenges have been identified: achieving economies of scale, continuity of product availability, competing with the service offered by large-scale organised distribution, having a sufficient product variety, availability and immediacy are the main identified obstacles and challenges among stakeholders.

Young participants think that the main obstacles and challenges are related to the education that is seen as a fundamental element. Educating citizens and children about critical and conscious consumption is a key element and contributes to having critical and attentive consumers of the future.

Over 65 thinks that the main challenges and obstacles are related to increasing trust between producers and consumers. Moreover, participants hope that the pursuit of the “common good” will become the primary goal of society. In this sense, a major obstacle is the lack of ability to value



the common good, moving away from the logic of mere profit. The creation of ethical products should be encouraged and rewarded.

Main training needs for the promotion of Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs) and connection with the EntreComp and GreenComp Framework

In the first coaching circle (stakeholders), it became clear that the world of social enterprises needs to take an important step in order to be considered as enterprises capable of making a profit by generating positive spill-over effects in the territory. In order to achieve this goal, sound training on **accounting and administrative management** is needed. The first coaching circle also highlighted the need for **trained professionals in project design and management**. Transversal skills and experts are needed in **planning, fundraising, European fundraising and reporting** (administrative figures), experts in sector **legislation** and experts in **social budgeting**. The second meeting (youth) identified the need for training on **improving dissemination and information on these issues**. It became clear that even where there are opportunities to buy local and ethical products, citizens are not always aware of them. In general, the domain was found to be very complex and not always very well known. For this reason, **group work and conflict resolution were considered important transversal skills**. The profile to be trained by the project must be able to relate to many different realities. The training must therefore aim to create a person who is able to coordinate and find common solutions. Basic elements of **co-planning and engagement skills**, active citizenship involvement and participation are also needed. **Therefore, techniques for social animation, communication (including social) and marketing would be as necessary within the course**. In summary, the ability to design and implement interventions with a “soul” has been shared” It is therefore necessary to supplement technical knowledge with **elements of sociology, communication and psychology**. Moreover, as the training participants have different backgrounds, it is considered important to set up an initial training phase to define common concepts and languages. Knowing how to **analyse the territory** and its potential and analysing market outlook were also identified as a key competence. In addition to the ability to analyse the local area, **the knowledge and ability to analyse existing cases, the ability to analyse local economic chains of an agricultural nature and the innovative capacity to create new chains** are considered key elements. A valuable element of these pathways would be the ability to actively involve disadvantaged people. **Field training** (project work) could be linked to the **practical organisation of markets, direct sales organisation or meetings with different stakeholders**. Other elements highlighted concern the possibility of deepening **social economy** themes in general and **elements of agricultural economics**. Another proposed element is the creation of a pathway highlighting the **formal steps for the creation of social economy districts**, also highlighting existing examples. The possibility of recognising informal and non-formal learning was recognised as fundamental in order to make the identified learning pathways more interesting and valuable from a professional point of view.

In particular concerning the **EntreComp Framework** following competences have been highlighted by the coaching circle participants related in particular to entrepreneurial learning:

1 - **Ideas and opportunities**, in particular **spotting opportunities** (use imagination and abilities to identify opportunities for creating values): it is clear to the coaching circle participants that the



creation of a Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs) requires a new paradigm, a new vision to create value to cooperation instead of competition, to give the right value to products and methodology used by social enterprises instead of by large scale distribution. Spotting opportunities are closely linked to **creativity** (developing creative and purposeful ideas), which means thinking differently, proposing ideas and opportunities to create value, proposing new challenges. Moreover, another important competence to be achieved though the course is the capacity to **evaluate ideas**, judging them in social, cultural and economic terms, in order to create value and identify sustainable ways to make it ethical and sustainable in the future.

2- **Resources**, even if all the competences could be necessary, coaching circle participants focused on **mobilizing resources and mobilizing others**: it is necessary to focus on communication to inspire and enthuse relevant stakeholders, but also to have the capacity to know and use funding opportunities.

3- **Into action**, focus can be given to **planning and management, working with others and learning through experience**

Concerning **GreenComp Framework**, the competences are more transversal and should be all taken into consideration in the WP3 activities.

Recommended actions for the promotion of Social Economy Districts (SEEDs) and Short Food Supply Chains (SFFCs)

According to coaching circle main results, training and communication and information are key elements. A widespread lack of consumer knowledge on where to buy local and quality products has been reported. This element is not always clear and information asymmetry is often a factor.

It would be therefore necessary to improve communication on these aspects, to manage the information available and to make it useful and usable for the consumer. One idea that has emerged is a web application that shows where to buy local food. Training professionals (e.g. agronomists) in the management and administration of this type of reality has been identified as a useful element in both strengthening this system and making it known, while at the same time creating job opportunities for professionals.

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