Skills for Transition - Increasing the impact of micro and small social economy enterprises

Guidelines, Practical Tools and Recommendations for Enterprises, Support Organisations and Policymakers

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Introduction

Social economy is, by its specific values, principles and objectives, deeply rooted in territories and local communities.

Social economy enterprises frequently operate within a complex network of actors, which might sometimes be the point of departure for the creation of the enterprise as such. They often follow a general interest mission and seek, with their activities, to respond to a multitude of (social) objectives. Even though green transition is not a new topic for a number of social economy actors, and the social economy has even become a pioneer for example in the circular economy field, much still needs to be done to "green" the entirety of practices of social economy enterprisaes.

In November 2022, the European Commission launched the Proximity and Social Economy Transition Pathway.*It is in this context, responding to a specific call for proposals, that social economy support organisations from Denmark, Italy and Poland decided, together with two European networks, to develop the SKI.F.T. initiative which had the objective to accompany micro and small social economy enterprises in their efforts to make their business model and related practices more environmentally sustainable.

More specifically, the project aimed to enable small and micro community-based social economy enterprises to:

a) develop sustainable business models, based also on new technologies as enablers;

b) rethink their role also in their relationships with other private and public actors and in the creation of local green markets and local value chains and

c) communicate their efforts more effectively.

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* In December 2024, the EU Proximity and Social Economy Transition Platform was created. It is supposed to connect stakeholders around the topic and stimulate knowledge-sharing and (collective) action.

This publication contains several key outputs of the project:

1. Methodological guidelines for the analysis of the performance of a social economy organization and possible improvements, including good practices

2. Reference to the SKI.F.T. Repository of programmes and tools

3. Communicating green transition efforts – some recommendations , including good practices

4. Guidelines for social economy support organisations

5. Recommendations to policymakers

1. Green transition: Analysing existing performance and possible improvements in a multi-stakeholder context

In this chapter we present an analysis grid which might help gaining an overview on the different aspects a social economy enterprise should/ might have to take into consideration when reflecting on possible pathways towards green transition.

It might be a support when defining the 'state of the art' of the green transition-related performance of a social economy enterprise and when it comes to identifying priorities regarding specific aspects the enterprise might need or wish to improve.

An analysis of existing practices, which would at the same time take a forward looking perspective towards future activities, should take into account the complexity of relations in which the social economy finds itself and which is or could be its strength. This includes participation and democratic processes within the enterprise, but also relationships with suppliers and different type of customers, (future) cooperation with other enterprises and actors – be they social economy or not, or interaction with the local community in which it is rooted.

Cooperation with stakeholders (co-entrepreneurs, members, clients, partner organisations and others) already in this process, can be of added value also and in particular for micro and small social economy enterprises, which often do not have the resources and opportunities to appoint/employ a specific Environmental Sustainability Manager or a person with a similar profile. It is a means to mobilise additional knowledge and capacities, to collect information and data, as well as to deepen existing or launch new partnerships.

The following "grid" does not replace evaluation tools in the different topic areas as such. Its objective is above all to visualise different as-pects (in particular relations to different stakeholders that are specific to the social economy) that should or might influence green transi-tion-related strategies, policies and actions of an enterprise.

Obviously, depending also on the type of social economy enterprise and context, not all 'boxes' might apply (some might remain empty). We kept them, however, for reasons of completeness.

SKI.F.T. Analysis Grid/Part I

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Members / Employees/worker		Suppliers		Customers/Users (Public)		Customers/Users (Private)	
	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication
Quality of the product/ service								
Purchase								
Transport								
Energy								
Waste Management/ Circular Practices								
...								

SKI.F.T. Analysis Grid/Part II

	(Potential) Private Partners		(Potential) Public Partners		Local Community	
	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Communication
Quality of the product/ service						
Purchase						
Transport						
Energy						
Waste Management/ Circular Practices						
...						

Hereafter you will find two examples of discussions the grid is supposed to stimulate. Considerations regarding **Purchase Policies** will encompass different elements, such as:

- Purchases for the simple functioning of the enterprise and its different activities (including quality of products and services) and related cooperation with suppliers;

- Purchases relating to the well-being of employees (e.g. an enterprise might wish to replace water bottles it bought for use by employees/workers by an office water fountain);

- The impact of purchase policies also on the local community (e.g. the added value of buying local, possibilities to set up partnerships contributing or not to the creation of 'social green' local supply chains and value chains, and other aspects).

With regard to **Waste Management/Circular Practices**, aspects such as the following might need to be considered:

- Waste management/Circular practices within the enterprise linked to the production, delivery and other processes;

- Final use of the product/service by the customer/beneficiary;

- Waste management/Circular practices related to the needs/well-being of employees/workers;

- Waste management/circular practices applied by suppliers;

- Waste management/circular practices and their impact on the local community;

- ..., etc.

Participation and democracy being main values and principles of the social economy, we considered that they should be given a particular focus in this exercise. To what extent might improved practices of governance or communication, including the different stakeholders, help create more sustainable practices and how should they look like?

Below you will find individual sub-chapters with more explanations for each of the green transition-related areas identified by the SKI.F.T. consortium. Other areas could be added following the same principles and method. Each sub-chapter includes a matrix which visualises the different "relationships" a social economy enterprise should or might take into consideration when analysing its environmental impact and reviewing its activities accordingly. Obviously, depending on time and data available, but also on the context, mission and the field(s) of activity of the enterprise, the latter might choose to focus more on certain aspects than on others, or to not consider certain elements at all. **The guiding questions are only examples and could be replaced or complemented by others.**

1.1 Quality of the Product/Service

The specific design of a product or service has obviously a significant influence on the carbon footprint and environmental impact of an enterprise, the users/beneficiaries of the product/service and beyond. It determinates processes within the enterprise, but also the development of supply and value chains, etc.

Social economy enterprises develop, produce and deliver their products and services often in response to specific needs of their membership, cooperators and/or the local community in which they operate. Sometimes they might do this in cooperation with other enterprises or organisations, universities, groups of citizens, etc.

It appears thus vital, when rethinking the design of products and/or services, to consider perspectives of and potential cooperation with these different stakeholders.

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ **Members (with decision-making competences)**	**Employees (without decision-making competences)**	**Suppliers**	**Public Customers**
State of Play/ Existing policies and practices of the enterprise	To be analysed: - Existing strategies/ policies/actions aiming at a (continuous) improvement of the design of products/ services in terms of sustainability.	To be taken into consideration: - Experiences of employees related to the development and/or delivery of a product or service, and the current use (or not) of these experiences.	Having a look at (potential) suppliers: - Which opportunities would their services/ products/experience offer for a more sustainable design of products and services of the client enterprise? - To what extent did the enterprise analyse (potential) suppliers and their capacity to deliver "greener" products and services?	- In how far do expectations/rules of public customers influence the (sustainable) design of products/services of the enterprise?
Areas for Improvement/ Perspectives for future action	To what extent and how could knowledge of co-entrepreneurs/ cooperators/ members (with decision-making competences) regarding more sustainable product or service design be improved?	How could knowledge/expertise and related proposals by employees better be integrated into the design of more sustainable products/ services?	Which changes on the supply side could lead to a more sustainable design of products/ services? To what extent is the enterprise aware of existing possibilities/ offers on the supply side – what would be needed to improve its knowledge here?	(To what extent) Could public customers be made better aware of possibilities to design more sustainable products/services (and changes of behaviour that would be necessary on the side of the customer to accept for example a different quality, a higher price, ...)? Could public customers cooperate in the design of more sustainable products/ services and how?
Drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?
Governance/ Participation	Would it be beneficial to better include cooperators/members in the design of products and services of the enterprise and how could this be done?	To what extent and how are employees involved in the design of products and services?	To what extent does the enterprise discuss possibilities for a more sustainable supply of products and services, but also the design of its products and services as such, with (potential) suppliers?	To what extent do public customers influence the design of products and services? Could public customers, with their expertise and resources, contribute to a greener design of products/services of the enterprises and if so, how could this happen?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

	Private Customers/Users	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners
State of Play/Existing policies and practices of the enterprise	In how far do expectations of private customers influence the (sustainable) design of products/services of the enterprise?	To which extent did cooperation with private partners so far enable the enterprise to improve its capacity to design more sustainable products and services? Does the enterprise regularly look for ways to innovate the design of products/services also in cooperation with (potential) private partners? Does the enterprise have the impression to know well existing opportunities for cooperation and potential private partners to improve the sustainable design of products/services?	To which extent did cooperation with public partners so far enable the enterprise to improve its capacity to design more sustainable products and services? Does the enterprise regularly look for ways to innovate the design of products/services also in cooperation with (potential) public partners? Does the enterprise have the impression to know well existing opportunities for cooperation and potential public partners to improve the sustainable design of products/services?
Areas for Improvement/ Perspectives for future action	To what extent could private customers be made better aware of possibilities to design more sustainable products/services and thus of changes of behaviour that would be necessary on the side of the customer to accept for example a different quality, a higher price, ...)? Could private customers cooperate in the design of more sustainable products/services and how?	Could the enterprise further improve sustainable design of its products/services through existing cooperation with private partners or new partnerships? How?	Could the enterprise further improve sustainable design of its products/services through existing cooperation with public partners or new partnerships? How?
Drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement** you perceive?	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement** you perceive?	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement** you perceive?
Governance/ Participation	To what extent do private customers influence the design of products and services?	To what extent are (potential) private partners involved in the design of products/ services of the enterprise?	To what extent are (potential) public partners involved in the design of products/ services of the enterprise?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

Practice Examples:

The Bohemian Football Club is one of Ireland's oldest clubs (founded in 1890), owned by its members. Bohemians has made climate justice and sustainability one of the main focuses of its Community Strategy, founding its own coop, the Climate Cooperative. Their main project, SPARK, aims to create a worker climate cooperative by involving the whole community, promoting climate-friendly programs and building practical resources, like a cafe, a library, or a bike repair shop.

The Sound Lounge

The first carbon-neutral certified music venue in the UK, **The Sound Lounge** is providing opportunities for artists from the local surroundings and all over the world to perform on its stage and for persons from all different backgrounds to come and listen for affordable prices or even for free. Visitors also have the possibility to purchase drinks and vegan food. Moreover, the Community-Interest Company organises on a regular basis different kind of training (often for socially disadvantaged groups), free music classes for children, or a live-music festival in a nearby parc, to name only some of their additional activities. Involving a huge community of volunteers, (regular) visitors, partners and friends, Sound Lounge sought to continuously reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to spreading awareness of and cooperation around climate change and social injustice. It uses renewable energy, provides 100% plant-based food, avoids single-use plastic and works with local suppliers respecting social and environmental standards. Moreover, the organisation provides (free) workshops on topics such as food or waste reduction for children and other parts of the local community. All this is made possible through the ideas, knowledge and time brought in by friends, volunteers, partners and the broader community around Sound Lounge.

1.2 Purchase

Just as it is the case for other enterprises or public actors, not only activities linked directly to the production of goods and services of a social economy enterprise, but also its purchase practices can influence significantly its carbon footprint and impact on the environment and society.

Different elements should or could be taken into account in this respect. Some examples are:

- Purchases needed for the day-to-day operations of the enterprise, i.e. the production and delivery of services and products: Is there already a specific policy in place regarding responsible purchasing? To what extent is the enterprise informed and is seeking information about the origin and other characteristics of products and services it is buying, to what extent is data available and accessible? To what extent does the enterprise buy locally and contributes thus to the creation and strengthening of "local social green supply chains"?

- Aspects going beyond decisions and actions of the enterprise alone: To what extent does cooperation with other (social economy) enterprises lead to an improvement of responsible purchase practices (e.g. in the framework of collective purchasing). How could purchase practices be improved in this respect?

- Is there an ongoing dialogue and cooperation with public and private customers regarding responsible purchase practices of the enterprise (which might also have an impact on the price of products and services)?

- Also, not to forget: To which extent could the enterprise and its employees, as a team, but also as individual persons and customers, mutually better inspire each other with regard to responsible consumption?

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
State of Play/ Existing policies and practices of the enterprise	To what extent do entrepreneurs/ cooperators/members of the social economy enterprise contribute to developing and implementing sustainable purchase practices of the enterprise and responsible consumption within the team (where applicable)?	To what extent do employees of the social economy enterprise contribute to purchasing practices of the enterprise and responsible consumption within the team (where applicable)?	Which policy does the enterprise apply vis-à-vis suppliers when it comes to the environmental sustainability and carbon footprint of products and services? Which standards/ criteria are applied? In how far are topics related to environmental sustainability and carbon footprint of products and services discussed with (potential) suppliers?	To what extent are responsible purchase practices a topic in discussions/ negotiations with (potential) public customers?
Areas for Improvement/ Perspectives for future action	To which extent and in which respect could responsible consumption patterns/ purchase practices within the team be improved? To what extent could knowledge of co-entrepreneurs/ cooperators/members regarding responsible consumption patterns and purchase policies be improved?	To which extent and in which respect could responsible consumption patterns within the team be improved? To what extent could knowledge of employees regarding responsible consumption patterns and purchase policies be improved?	In which respect could purchase practices (including, for example, criteria for the selection of suppliers of goods and services) be improved? To what extent does the enterprise have knowledge of potential "green" suppliers? To what extent could knowledge of entrepreneurs/ cooperators/members regarding new ways of cooperation with (potential) suppliers be improved?	What are the expectations of public authorities with regard to the (environmental) sustainability of products and services and how could your enterprise better meet these expectations? Which kind of cooperation with local/ regional governments/ public authorities could you set up or strengthen to promote a supportive framework for the creation of local social green value chains and responsible purchase?
Drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
Governance/ Participation	Is the purchase policy of the enterprise a topic in management meetings/board meetings/General Assemblies and other places of decision-making? To which extent and how are co-entrepreneurs and/or members involved in developing ideas and taking decisions on possibilities to improve your enterprise's performance regarding purchase practices? How could this be improved?	How are topics linked to purchase practices of the company or consumption patterns of the team dealt with in your enterprise: Do you have a specific person responsible for proposing action/improvements? Are these topics discussed on a regular basis in team meetings? Or are they dealt with rather on a punctual basis (e.g. through suggestion boxes through which staff members can share their ideas/proposals)? Do employees have a possibility to contribute to the development of related strategies and initiatives? Do you see any possibility and space for improvement?	Which might be possible ways/means to discuss and implement possible improvements regarding the quality of services and products with your (potential) suppliers? In a perspective also of creating local social green value chains: Are you part of or could you stimulate the creation of local alliances for local social green value chains?	To what extent do you have the opportunity to discuss and negotiate expectations of public authorities regarding social and environmental impact together with the latter? How could this be improved?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
State of Play	To be analysed: - Responsible purchase practices as a topic in discussions/ negotiations with (potential) private customers. - Existing cooperation with (potential) private customers around responsible purchase practices and their implications.	To what extent are responsible purchase practices a topic in and subject of cooperation with (potential) private partners?	To what extent are responsible purchase practices a topic in and subject of cooperation with (potential) public partners?	To what extent are considerations regarding the (possible) impact of purchase practices of the enterprise on the local community (creation of employment, short circuits ...) an element influencing these practices?
Areas for Improvement/ Perspectives for future action	- Do you see any way/means to better integrate expectations of your (potential) private customers regarding responsible purchase practices into policies of your enterprise?	- Could cooperation with private partners contribute to the improvement of purchase policies of the enterprise (social economy and others) – for example through the joint creation of maps and registers of responsible potential suppliers or through the creation of a purchase group? How could this be done? - Which type of partnership could be put in place or be strengthened to develop genuine (local) social green value chains?	Could cooperation with public partners contribute to the improvement of purchase policies of the enterprise (social economy and others) – for example through the joint creation of maps and registers of responsible potential suppliers, the organisation of events promoting networking between different local (social economy) enterprises and promotion of local social green value chains, etc.? How could this be done?	Which actions could your enterprise take to raise the awareness of the local population on the importance of responsible consumption? Could you take any actions, together with (groups of) citizens and other actors in the local community, to promote the creation of local social green value chains?
Drivers/ Obstacles for Development	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
Governance/ Participation	Do you interact with your customers/clients/ beneficiaries about their expectations regarding quality and origin of the products/services you have to purchase in order to be able to produce and deliver goods/services? How do you do this? Is there room for improvement?	Are purchase policies a topic in projects of cooperation and partnership with your (potential) private partners? Do you discuss these topics together and which influence does it have on your own purchase policy? Is there anything that could be done to improve interaction on this topic and the creation of knowledge and launch of initiatives through better exchange on both sides?	Are purchase policies a topic in projects of cooperation and partnership with your (potential) public partners? Do you discuss these topics together and which influence does it have on your own purchase policy?	How could (parts of) the local community (better) be involved in the definition of purchase strategies and practices of your enterprise?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

Practice Examples:

Eko Synergies is an association established by a grouping of social economy enterprises in Ille-et-Vilaine (FR). The objective of the association is to identify suppliers of goods and services which respond to certain environmental and social criteria and to negotiate attractive prices for member enterprises with these suppliers. This enables member enterprises not only to significantly improve their responsible purchase practices, but also to cost savings up to 20%. Moreover, Eko-Synergies support its members in developing a concrete needs analysis (always within a perspective of sustainable transition) and technical specifications for suppliers of goods and services. A development officer accompanies member enterprises in the improvement of individual or collective purchase practices.
More information: www.eko-synergies.org

Ceinture Alimen-Terre Liègoise has been set up by an alliance of citizens, social economy enterprises, cultural actors and civil society at large to create short food supply chains and foster with this environmental protection, sustainable and healthy eating as well as the creation of quality employment in the province of Liège. The alliance accompanies food-related projects and enterprises, among them small farms etc., and provides support regarding production, training, processing and the creation of start-ups (often in cooperative form). In this context it also promotes inter-cooperation between different actors and initiatives. Amongst the instruments that were developed are for example a map of environmentally-friendly vegetable farmers, a map of cooperative shops selling products of the latter, etc. Moreover, the alliance succeeded in mobilizing a large number of municipalities that are now involved in different initiatives and have integrated transition to sustainable and short food supply chains in their own policies and strategies.
More information: www.catl.be

1.3 Transport/Mobility

(Soft) mobility and sustainable transport have become a main topic in discussions on possibilities to reduce carbon footprint and fight climate change. An increasing number of cities, regions and even smaller municipalities develop specific strategies in this regard. Social economy enterprises, with their practices, expertise and cooperation potential, can become or are already examples for and important partners in the implementation (and even conception!) of these strategies.

Rethinking mobility-related behaviour might mean for a (social economy) enterprise to re-consider transport systems by which it delivers its own products and services. At the same time, there might also be room for improvement regarding the way in which the enterprise receives products and services from suppliers/partners.

Depending on the specific context and (geographical) area in which the enterprise operates there might be interesting opportunities for cooperation with other (social economy) enterprises and (local) initiatives operating in the (soft) mobility sector, such as for example bike delivery services or initiatives in the field of shared mobility. This can also be an opportunity to join forces in other areas, e.g. when it comes to making the initiatives of your enterprises and their added value in social and environmental terms better visible and known to the public.

Micro and small social economy enterprises might not always be able to offer free public transport tickets or bikes to their employees and co-entrepreneurs. However, there might be opportunities to encourage the latter to (jointly) rethink their ways to get to work – switching from the car to softer mobility solutions or car-sharing, for example.

Moreover, an enterprise might also encourage its users/clients/beneficiaries to change transport-related behaviour. Initiatives may include information (e.g. about possibilities to access the enterprise/a location by public transport), the establishment – where possible – of bicycle parking spaces, car-sharing opportunities, and other incentives.

	Co-entrepreneurs/Cooperators/Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
State of Play	What are the mobility patterns of co-entrepreneurs / cooperators / members / employees (e.g. mode of transport used for the way to the office; mode of transport used in work-related activities, etc.)? Does the enterprises have specific policies/strategies/initiatives regarding sustainable transport/mobility?		What are the mobility patterns/mode of transport used by suppliers when delivering products/services to the enterprise? Do suppliers have specific policies/strategies/initiatives regarding sustainable transport/mobility?	What is the state of play regarding delivery of products and services to public customers and related mobility patterns? What expectations do public customers have regarding sustainable transport and how is the enterprise able to meet them?
Areas for Improvement	How could co-entrepreneurs / cooperators / members and employees of the enterprise be encouraged or enabled to improve their mobility patterns (commuting between home and place of work; mobility in work-related activities, etc.)? How to increase capacities and knowledge?		Where and how could suppliers be encouraged or enabled to improve their mobility patterns and use of sustainable transport when delivering goods/services to the enterprise?	Which actions could be realized jointly by the enterprise and public customers in order to enable the former to increase its performance regarding sustainable transport?
Drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development / improvement** you perceive?	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement** you perceive?	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement** you perceive?	Which are the possible **drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement** you perceive?
Governance/Participation	To which extent and how are co-entrepreneurs and/or members involved in developing ideas and taking decisions on possibilities to improve your enterprise's performance (including related behaviour of co-entrepreneurs/cooperators/members as such) regarding sustainable transport? How could this be improved?	How are topics linked to sustainable transport (including related behaviour of employees) dealt with in your enterprise: Do you have a specific person responsible for proposing action/improvements? Are these topics on a regular basis discussed in team meetings (including management of the enterprise)? Or are they dealt with rather on a punctual basis? Do you see any possibility and space for improvement?	Which might be possible ways/means to discuss and implement possible improvements regarding sustainable transport with your (potential) suppliers ?	Are public customers involved in discussions and/or planning of sustainable transport solutions concerning directly or indirectly the activities of your enterprise (e.g. in the framework of local alliances)? To what extent? Do you see room for improvement in this respect?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private PartnersUse	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
State of Play	What is the state of play regarding delivery of products and services to private customers and related mobility patterns? Which are (possible) sustainable transport-related expectations on the side of private customers and how is the enterprise able to meet them?	How are transport-related topics dealt with in your cooperation with (potential) private partners? If transport-related questions are relevant for your cooperation: To what extent is sustainable transport a topic and which solutions have you found so far?	How are transport-related topics dealt with in your cooperation with (potential) public partners? If transport-related questions are relevant for your cooperation: To what extent is sustainable transport a topic and which solutions have you found so far?	To what extent do mobility patterns of the enterprise and its stakeholders impact the local community?
Areas for Improvement	How do you improve soft mobility solutions in the relations of your enterprise with private customers?	Which actions could be realized jointly by the enterprise and private partners toimprove their performance regarding soft mobility/sustainable transport?	Which actions could be realized jointly by the enterprise and public partners in order to improve their performance regarding soft mobility/sustainable transport?	What could be done to improve the impact of mobility patterns of the enterprise and its stakeholders on the local community? Which initiatives could be taken jointly with (parts of) the local community to improve mobility patterns of the enterprise and in the local community in general?
Drivers/ Obstacles for Development	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?
Governance/ Participation	Do you interact with your (potential) customers/clients/ beneficiaries about their expectations regarding (sustainable) transport and related policies and practices of your enterprise? If so, how and to what extent? Do you see room for improvements in this respect?	Do you involve (potential) private partners in discussions and planning of sustainable transport solutions concerning the activities of your enterprise or may they influence related policy and practices of enterprise in another way (e.g. in the framework of local alliances)? To what extent? What might be improved – how could this (potential) partnership contribute to increase capacities and performance of your enterprise in this regard?	Do you involve (potential) private partners in discussions and planning of sustainable transport solutions concerning the activities of your enterprise or may they influence related policy and practices of enterprise in another way (e.g. in the framework of local alliances)? To what extent? What might be improved? What might be improved – how could this (potential) partnership contribute to increase capacities and performance of your enterprise fin this regard?	Should (parts of) the local community (better) be involved in defining more sustainable mobility patterns and related policies of the enterprise and if so, how?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

Practice Examples:

Cargo Velo is a shared bike delivery service for retail, e-commerces and entrepreneurs. It ensures delivery by (cargo) bike in the Brussels-Capital Region, Antwerp and Gent. In some cases, some municipalities even offer the service to local entrepreneurs/retail. Beside fair prices for those using the service, Cargo Velo also ensures fair working conditions for the courriers through a partnership with the cooperative Urbike. The service has initially been set up as "Bike Delivery Brussels" with the support of Groupe One and the Brussels-Capital Region.

More information: https://cargovelo.be/fr/

Mobicoop, a French platform cooperative, was set up more than 10 years ago to promote car-sharing based on the principles of solidarity, sustainablility and fairness. Next to car-sharing solutions for individuals the SCIC (société coopérative d'intérêt collectif) also developed a digital tool for a better and more sustainable management of the car fleet of an enterprise which stimulates car-sharing and helps counteracting the under-utilisation of vehicles. A possible opportunity also for mutualised car-sharing of a group of micro enterprises ?!

More information : https://pro.mobicoop.fr/gestion-de-flottes/

Since the end of December 2024, inhabitants of the Arc-en-Ciel housing project of the Community Land Trust Brussels have two electric cars to share at their disposal which they can rent at affordable prices. This enabled them to get rid of a personal car which are too expensive or no longer compliant with standards. The project received support by an initiative of the regional agencies Bruxelles-Environnement and Bruxelles Mobilité which aims to promote car-sharing. By experimenting with this service in collaboration with residents, the Community Land Trust Brussels is identifying obstacles to car sharing, particularly for low-income drivers, and tests solutions to overcome them. Two residents act as advisors and can help their neighbours get started with car sharing or resolve minor technical issues.

More information: https://cltb.be/wp-content/uploads/sites/17/2025/05/jaarverslag_FR2024_online_compressed-1.pdf

1.4 Energy

On different occasions the SKI.F.T. project partners stated that many micro and small social economy enterprises – especially those active in the service sector – might meet certain limits in optimizing questions linked to their own energy efficiency and consumption. This might occur, for example, with regard to renewable energy projects, if the enterprise is not the owner of its own work spaces.

Typical initiatives that could, however, be taken, encompass the mobilization of co-entrepreneurs and employees regarding the saving of energy in everyday office life through simple gestures. Ideally, also such simple gestures will be easier memorised and be shared by the whole team if they are based on objectives and convictions that have been discussed and identified by the whole team. In the experience of some SKI.F.T. partners providing eco-audit support, a lack of action by team members/employees and management is often linked also to missing or weak internal communication processes.

Yet, energy consumption and energy efficiency is obviously also one of the aspects to consider when planning transport for the delivery of products and services, when purchasing products or services, when cooperating with other organisations/enterprises, but also in events/initiatives with the local community, to name just some examples.

Finally, inter-cooperation between social economy enterprises or between social economy enterprises and other public or private actors can be a solution for mutualizing resources and setting up joint initiatives also and in particular where one enterprise alone would not be able to mobilise means and knowledge.

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
State of Play	To what extent is the enterprise monitoring its energy consumption? Does the enterprise have a specific strategy or policy linked to energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy? Which role do co-entrepreneurs/ cooperators/members play in promoting responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy?	Does the enterprise have specific initiatives in place to encourage employees to become more aware of and act regarding possibilities to reduce energy consumption? Are employees encouraged or have the possibility to get involved in other type of initiatives regarding energy efficiency and/or the use of renewable energy through the enterprise?	To what extent is responsible energy consumption/ energy efficiency/ use of renewable energy a criterion in the selection of suppliers?	Which role does responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy play in your relationship with public customers (e.g. use of clauses/criteria in public contracts, etc.)? To what extent do you or could you suggest improvements regarding energy-consumption to public customers (in the beginning this might be linked to a cost - for example of changing equipment - ... - to what extent are such investments accepted and supported?)?
Areas for Improvement	How could the existing strategy/ policy or simply performance of the enterprise related to energy consumption/ energy efficiency/ use of renewable energy be improved? Which would/should be priority fields of action?	Which role do the employees play in promoting responsible energy consumption/ energy efficiency or even the use of renewable energy within/by the enterprise?	Which might be possible ways/ means to discuss and implement possible improvements regarding responsible energy consumption/ energy efficiency/ use of renewable energy with your (potential) suppliers?	Do you perceive possibilities to improve the performance of the enterprise regarding responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy in cooperation with public customers?
Drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
Governance/ Participation	To which extent and how are co-entrepreneurs and/or members involved in developing ideas and taking decisions on possibilities to improve the enterprise's performance regarding responsible energy consumption/ energy efficiency/ renewable energy? How could this be further improved?	How are topics linked to energy consumption/energy efficiency by staff members dealt with in the enterprise: Do you have a specific person responsible for proposing action/ improvements? Are these topics on a regular basis discussed in team meetings (including management of the enterprise)? Or are they dealt with on a punctual basis (e.g. through suggestion boxes through which staff members can share their ideas/ proposals)? Do you see any possibility and space for improvement?	To what extent does the enterprise discuss aspects linked to responsible energy consumption/ energy efficiency/ renewable energy with its (potential) suppliers?	To what extent do public customers play a role/are involved in discussions around the performance of the enterprise regarding responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/renewable energy? What could be improved?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

Practice Examples:

The Eco-Auditing Tool, developed by FISE (PL), focuses on environmental management processes within a company, i.e. on actions to be taken by management and staff of the company regarding the management of space, use of different types of equipment, waste management, etc. It was applied for the first time in 2023. FISE Eco-Auditing includes measurements/mapping (e.g. of the space used by an office, café, kindergarten...), the analysis of data as well as interviews with and a survey among members of the management of the respective company and staff. At the end of the process, a report, including specific recommendations, is provided to the company after a last exchange with the latter's management and a meeting with the staff is held in which conclusions and recommendations are presented despite its focus on basic behaviours and every-day life decisions, FISE eco-auditing also includes governance-related aspects regarding, for example, opportunities for employees to be informed and involved in discussions and decision-making.

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
State of Play	Which role does responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy play in your relationship with private customers? Are customers part of initiatives of your enterprise around responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency and/or the use of renewable energy?	Which role does responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy play in your relationship with (potential) private partners?	Which role does responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy play in your relationship with (potential) public partners?	Does your way of consuming energy have an impact on the local community?
Areas for Improvement	Do you perceive possibilities to improve the performance of the enterprise regarding responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/use of renewable energy in cooperation with private customers?	Where applicable (depending on the context): Did you already consider improving energy efficiency/responsible energy consumption of your enterprise through cooperation with other (social economy) enterprises or organisations – e.g. in the framework of energy sharing, the involvement in community energy initiatives, with regard to shared transport options, etc? How could your enterprise improve energy efficiency/ responsible energy consumption/use of renewable energies in cooperation with other (potential) private partners?	Where applicable (depending on the context): Did you already consider improving energy efficiency/responsible energy consumption of your enterprise through cooperation with (potential) public partners– e.g. in the framework of energy sharing, the involvement in community energy initiatives, regarding shared transport options, etc.? How could your enterprise improve energy efficiency/ responsible energy consumption/use of renewable energies in cooperation with other (potential) public partners?	Could new policies and actions linked to responsible energy consumption/energy efficiency/renewable energy also benefit (more than before) the local community?
Drivers/ Obstacles for Development	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development / improvement you perceive?

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
Governance/ Participation	(How) Do you exchange with your customers/ clients/beneficiaries about possibilities and their expectations as concerns energy efficiency/responsible energy consumption? Are they part of related projects of your enterprise? Do you jointly co-construct initiatives in this field? (How) Could the aspects mentioned above be improved?	Are questions of energy efficiency/responsible energy consumption/ use of renewable energy a regular topic when planning and realizing joint projects/ events/initiatives with (potential) private partners? (How) Could this be improved?	Are questions of energy efficiency/ responsible energy consumption/use of renewable energy a regular topic when planning and realizing joint projects/events/ initiatives with (potential) public partners? (How) Could this be improved?	To which extent are (parts of) the local community involved in discussions around responsible energy consumption/ energy efficiency/use of renewable energy of your enterprise? (How) Could this be improved?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

Practice Examples:

The Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives of Catalonia (FCAC), and the energy cooperative Som Energia, have signed a historic cooperation agreement, which will link more than 180 agricultural cooperatives with presence in a large part of the Catalan territory, with the cooperative for the generation and consumption of green energy, with more than 83,000 people and partner entities. This agreement should facilitate also and in particular the participation of small agricultural cooperatives in initiatives around the generation and use of renewable energy. Through the advice and services of the Som Energia cooperative (which, apart from marketing, also has its own generation plants and provides representation services to producers of renewable electricity), the agricultural cooperatives will be able to form renewable energy communities and maximize the opportunities as such, integrating within the cooperative's activity different activities aimed at self-sufficiency, optimizing their energy consumption and that of their partners Among others, they will be able to generate their own energy, both to cover the activity of each cooperative and to supply part of the energy demand of its members.

For more information: https://blog.somenergia.coop/som-energia/2023/09/iniciem-una-col%C2%B7laboracio-agro-energetica-amb-la-fcac-inedita-dins-el-mon-cooperatiu/

1.5 Use of resources, including circular practices, waste management and waste reduction

More responsible waste management practices and initiatives for the reduction of waste have at least partially already found their place in many micro and small social economy enterprises. However, often, these practices are still limited to a specific way of sorting waste (also as a consequence of legal obligations), certain types of waste, or purchase practices avoiding for example the acquisition of packaging and/or specific type of material.

Unless required by law, specific strategies focusing on concrete ways to avoid the production of different type of waste (this might also include aspects such as wastewater, etc.) all throughout the production process and the value chain, for example, are in many cases still missing. Reasons for this are again multifold, ranging from a lack of awareness and expertise to financial or time constraints, to name just a few.

Much still remains to be explored also regarding the potential of (micro and small) social economy enterprises to develop circular practices/ engage in circularity, i.e. to rethink the production process and use of resources in a way which would avoid the generation of waste and promote reuse of material.

A number of possibilities might be found also here in cooperation with other enterprises. These could include, for example, a mutualization of resources and development of new value chains either through the development of new activities by the enterprise as such in partnership with others or the support of activities of other (social economy) enterprises active in the circular economy (e.g. through the delivery of 'waste' material the enterprise might not be able to use anymore. Beside clear results regarding the environmental impact, including carbon footprint, of the enterprise, such practices might finally also lead to a significant reduction of costs. At the same time, already existing practice examples have shown the importance of local frameworks (set either by the social economy and/or other type of enterprises and their federations themselves, by local/regional governments or both) which facilitate this type of cooperation and capacity-building, including mapping processes leading to better visibility of possible partners and initiatives.

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
State of Play	Does the enterprise have a strategy/policy in place regarding waste management/waste reduction? Does the enterprise have a strategy/policy in place regarding circular practices?	To which extent are staff members aware of possibilities regarding waste management/waste reduction within/by the enterprise and to which extent do they make use of these possibilities?	To which extent is waste management/ waste reduction a topic or even a criterion in relations with suppliers? To which extent are circular practices a topic or even a criterion in relations with suppliers?	To which extent is waste management/ waste reduction a topic or even a criterion in relations with public customers? To which extent are circular practices a topic or even a criterion in relations with public customers?
Areas for Improvement	How could a proper or improved policy/ strategy regarding waste management and circular practices be put in place? If a strategy/policy already exists: How could it be improved or could its implementation be improved? How could cooperators/ members better contribute to the development and implementation of policies/ strategies regarding waste management and circular practices? How could cooperators/ members better contribute to the development and implementation of policies/ strategies regarding circular practices?	Which improvements could be made by each staff member regarding waste management and circular practices? Which actions could be put in place by your enterprise to encourage employees to further improve waste management and circular practices?	(How) Could the enterprise improve its knowledge regarding suppliers, and their practices related waste management/waste reduction? (How) Could the enterprise improve its knowledge regarding suppliers and their attitude and performance regarding circular practices? - How could cooperation with suppliers regarding waste management/ waste reduction be improved? - How could cooperation with suppliers regarding circular practices be improved?	Are there opportunities to improve waste management practices/waste reduction of the enterprise in cooperation with public customers? Could the enterprise better support public costumers with regard to waste management practices/waste reduction? Could the enterprise better support public costumers regarding circular practices (e.g. through possibilities to return empty/still reusable material, etc.)?
Drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/ improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development /improvement you perceive?

	Co-entrepreneurs/ Cooperators/ Members	Employees	Suppliers	Public Customers
Governance/ Participation	To which extent and how are co-entrepreneurs and/ or members involved in developing ideas and taking decisions on possibilities to improve your enterprise's performance regarding waste reduction/waste management? How could this be improved?	How are topics linked to waste reduction/ management by staff members dealt with in your enterprise: Do you have a specific person responsible for proposing action/ improvements? Are these topics on a regular basis discussed in team meetings (including management of the enterprise)? Or are they dealt with on a punctual basis (e.g. through suggestion boxes through which staff members can share their ideas/ proposals)? To which extent are staff members aware of and contribute to the development and implementation of circular practices within/by the enterprise? Do you see any possibility and space for improvement?	Which might be possible ways/means to discuss and implement possible improvements regarding waste practices and circular practices with your (potential) suppliers? In perspective also of creating local social green value chains: Are you part of or could you stimulate the creation of local alliances for circular economy/ circular territories?	(How) Do you exchange with your public customers about their expectations regarding waste reduction/waste management and possible improvements? (How) Do you exchange with your public customers about their expectations regarding circular practices and possible improvements?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
State of Play	To what extent is waste management/waste reduction a topic in relations with private customers? To what extent are circular practices a topic or even a criterion in relations with private customers?	To what extent is waste management/ waste reduction a topic in relations with (potential) private partners? To what extent are circular practices a topic or even a criterion in relations with (potential) private partners?	To what extent is waste management/ waste reduction a topic or even criteria in relations with (potential) public partners? To what extent are circular practices a topic or even a criterion in relations with (potential) public partners?	To what extent does your enterprise consider the impact of its waste management practices on the local community? To what extent does your enterprise consider the potential or needs of (parts of) the local community when working on its strategy and actions related to circular practices?

	Private Customers	(Potential) Private Partners	(Potential) Public Partners	Local Community
Areas for Improvement	Are there opportunities to improve waste management practices/waste reduction of the enterprise in coopzeration with private customers? Could the enterprise better support private costumers with regard to waste management practices/waste reduction? Could the enterprise better support public costumers with regard to circular practices (e.g. through possibilities to return empty/still reusable material, etc.)?	How could existing cooperation with private partners be (better) used to improve waste management/waste reduction practices? How could existing cooperation with private partners be (better) used to improve circular practices? Which new partnerships could the enterprise set up to improve its waste management/waste reduction practices? Which new partnerships could the enterprise set up to improve its circular practices?	How could existing cooperation with private partners be (better) used to improve waste management/waste reduction practices? How could existing cooperation with private partners be (better) used to improve circular practices? Which new forms of cooperation with (potential) public partners could the enterprise set up to improve (its) waste management/waste reduction practices? Which new forms of cooperation with (potential) public partners could the enterprise set up to improve its circular practices?	Could/Should (parts of) the local community (better) be involved in the definition of strategies and actions of the enterprise with regard to waste management? How? Could/Should (parts of) the local community (better) be involved in the definition of strategies and actions of the enterprise with regard to circular practices? How?
Drivers/ Obstacles for Development	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement you perceive?	Which are the possible drivers of – or obstacles for – development/improvement you perceive?
Governance/ Participation	(How) Do you interact with your customers/clients/beneficiaries about their expectations regarding waste reduction/waste management? How) Do you interact with your customers/clients/beneficiaries about their expectations regarding circular practices?	(How) Does the enterprise interact with (potential) private partners on questions related to waste management/waste reduction? (How) Does the enterprise interact with (potential) private partners on questions related to circular practices?	(How) Does the enterprise interact with (potential) public partners on questions related to waste management/waste reduction? (How) Does the enterprise interact with (potential) public partners on questions related to circular practices?	Does the enterprise involve (parts of) the local community in the definition of strategies and actions linked to waste management? How? Does the enterprise involve (parts of) the local community in the definition of strategies and actions linked to circular practices? How?
Expertise partners	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)	To be identified by the enterprise (and stakeholders)

Practice Examples:

- The Social-Circular Hub Ghent is part of a network of 12 Social-Circular Hubs in different Flemish municipalities, financed by the Flemish Region and ESF. It brings together different local/regional actors, including the city of Ghent, social economy enterprises and organisations, a business hub, a research centre and a university of applied sciences.

A main point of departure for the activities of the hub is the creation of a network of companies that are already active in the field of circular economy. This is done mainly through the organization of events and with the help also of existing organisations and networks such as the Chamber of Commerce or employer organisations. In a second step, mobilized enterprises are connected to social economy actors. These partnerships are then accompanied in their efforts to work together and create new business concepts.

Each year events focusing on a specific topic (such as specific materials) are organized and convene both enterprises which are active in the circular economy and social economy enterprises. Together, participants have the opportunity to develop new ideas relating to the activities of both type of enterprises. This also includes social economy enterprises proposing their services to the other companies. An example for the latter is a company wishing to focus more on the reuse of wood which engaged in a partnership with a social economy enterprise taking over the manual task of removing any undesired objects (e.g. nails) from the material. A social economy enterprise might, however, also develop other new activities, such as selling itself used wood or organizing workshops on how to reuse different types of material.
More information: https://www.circulairwerkt.be/hubs/so-ciaal-circulaire-hub-gent

- Over the course of three years Groupe One carried out a pilot project which had the objective to contribute to more efficient waste reduction through a system of 'mutualised waste management' involving small shops and social economy initiatives in Brussels. The guide "Boost your shop: Guide "Quartier Clean et Circulaire", developed by Groupe ONE aims to share the experience and conclusions of this experimentation: **https://boostyourshop.brussels/gerer-nos-dechets.php**

2. Capacity-building tools and programmes supporting green transition processes of (micro and small social economy) enterprises

In the first months of the project SK.I.F.T. partners identified a number of already existing tools/programmes developed to facilitate green transition processes of enterprises and organisations. In this context, the focus was not only on tools conceived specifically for social economy enterprises. The consortium decided to take a wider look:

In terms of target groups project partners included tools/programmes developed for the social economy, but also those addressing other type of enterprises/organisations, and/or public authorities and that could potentially be used for the social economy, as well.

The consortium screened different types of support, including training courses/webinars, guidelines, (online) self-assessment tools, good practices, etc.

In addition, project partners also took into consideration different type of providers/organisers of green transition-related capacity-building programmes and tools: social economy-related structures, consultancies/other type of private enterprises, business development agencies, universities; (European) networks/associations, …

It should thus be taken into consideration that from the more than 90 tools/programmes spotted, only a part has been built mainly for the social economy or for organisations close to the social economy. Nevertheless, many, if not all courses, guidelines and instruments mentioned may inspire also the development of specific capacity-building measures and tools for micro and small social economy enterprises, and provide help in analysing the performance of the enterprise and/or conceiving and implementing new actions.

Some tools might be accessible only in the specific countries in which they were developed – yet, they might still serve as an example and model for similar initiatives taken by social economy intermediary organisations, public authorities and others.

The tools and programmes identified can be found in a repository which you can access HERE. Please note that the list is not exhaustive, it is a selection relating in parts specifically also to the Member States in which SKI.F.T. project partners are based.

3. Communication

Reaching out to (potential) beneficiaries and/or clients, establishing new partnerships with other enterprises and organisations, cooperating with public authorities and taking part in public procurement procedures – all this would not be possible without communication activities, which are an essential fundament for the success of an enterprise.

Social economy enterprises engaged in green transition processes have, in theory, a double asset if they succeed in conveying successfully their added value in terms of social and environmental impact.
Yet, many micro and small social economy enterprises do not necessarily have a communication department. Even where a specific communication officer exists, s/he might not always be in charge of communication activities only but fulfill also other roles within the enterprise.

Below we seek to outline some solutions for micro and small social economy enterprises SKI.F.T. partners discussed during the project, including practice examples.

Several have their point of departure in inter-cooperation between different social economy enterprises as well as partnerships between the social economy and other players. This (inter-)cooperation can take the form of (punctual) partnerships, networks, federations or clusters, to give just some examples.

Social Reporting and Sustainability Reporting

Even though social or sustainability reporting is – so far – not in every EU Member State an obligation for micro and small social economy enterprises, an increasing number of organisations develop reports which highlight their social, societal and/or environmental impact.

This reporting does not necessarily have to follow a standardized pattern following European or international reporting methods, which so far apply rather to other sizes of enterprise (even though a standardized method specifically for small actors is currently being developed). Examples from different European regions demonstrate

the success also of more customized methods – sometimes developed in a participatory way and in cooperation by different local actors – that are adapted to the capacities of micro and small enterprises as well as to the local context, and that might also have the capacity to spur cooperation.

Through reporting the enterprise does not necessarily respond to (indirect) obligations and expectations on the side of public authorities or private funding partners/investors only.

Reporting can be and is used also as an important means of communication to showcase the added value the enterprise generates in social, societal and also environmental terms.

In addition, it is an occasion for the enterprise to carry out a review regarding the implementation of its own vision, objectives and related indicators.

Obviously, much then depends on how results are conveyed to stakeholders/target groups: Important to make stakeholder analysis (the matrix presented in chapter 1 might help), to well define the specific objectives, messages (including possible 'storytelling'), communication channels, etc.

Further reading on communicating impact:

The European project "Baltic: Youth: Impact" developed **Social Impact Communication Guidelines** (which can also be applied to environmental impact) to support social enterprises in their effort to communicate their impact in an understandable – and inexpensive – way. They guide users in organizing internal and external communication, use the right channels, formulate messages... and finally develop a comprehensive communication strategy which also small enterprises confronted with limited resources are able to implement. Guiding questions help organisations to design their strategy, tools and messages.

Whilst developing the different tools, various objectives of communication – including raising the visibility of the social enterprise in the general public, reaching out to (potential) partners, attracting potential funders/investors, but also (future) employees, members or volunteers - were taken into account.

Mapping

From the initial survey realized by SKI.F.T. partners among small and micro social economy enterprises, it appeared that one of the main obstacles for (inter-) cooperation and value chain creation is the lack of information about potential partners.

Also, public authorities are not always aware of potential providers of products and services.

Online platforms which allow for a (participative) mapping or the creation of a catalogue of social economy enterprises with environmental added value in a specific geographic region are important means to create visibility and therewith foster cooperation.

A key condition of success is the existence of a structure/organization able to establish and maintain the platform which could then be fed even in a participatory way – providing the opportunity for social economy enterprises to add information about themselves.

Important and not always evident, however, is the ability to update the platform on a regular basis. This often requests also a significant number of working hours offline which must be dedicated to direct contact with present and future mapped companies and others.

Offline working hours would obviously also need to be allocated for the follow-up of communication activities (e.g. accompanying companies in a joint public procurement-related application, etc.).

For micro and small social economy enterprises, membership in a larger federation of social economy enterprises or cooperation with other types of support organisations may help provide access to this kind of tools and services.

Also public authorities could provide technical support in this context.

Examples:

ESS France, the French national social economy representative organisation, established **CARTECO**, an online map highlighting social and solidarity economy organisations and projects which contribute to green transition of municipalities and regions all over France. So far, the focus has been on four transition areas: waste management, agriculture and sustainable food, responsible mobility and sustainable construction. The user has the possibility to carry out an advanced search including elements such as the specific region, sectors of activity, openness to the public, public or private procurement possibilities, etc. CARTECO is a tool which is co-constructed with social and solidarity economy initiatives that have the possibility to include their organization or project on the map.

The Green and Social Virtual Trade Fair, a pilot innovation project, was created in 2022 to facilitate market dialogue between members of the Community Resources Network (50 enterprises of different size, working with different specialisations regarding material) and public procurement agents in a context of growing market opportunities related, amongst others, to the green public procurement objectives of the Irish Climate Action Plan. With social and environmental public procurement being a rather recent phenomenon, the fair provides visibility to social economy enterprises, which could theoretically have a comparative advantage over other type of businesses offering similar goods and services.

The virtual space created replicates the typical set-up of a trade fair, providing the visitor with the possibility to move from stand to stand and to receive information in different formats (presentations, audiovisual material, leaflets...) on the respective enterprise, its profile, activities, products and/or services, including also contact information, etc. All enterprises exhibiting at the trade fair are members of CRNI. The website is open for public and private procurers. The trade fair contributes to raising the visibility of social economy enterprises and their offer. Procurers had and have the occasion to discover new goods and services.

Labels

Some experts also point to the importance of labels in fostering the visibility of social economy enterprises, including micro and small ones, and their contribution to green and social transition. These labels might then also become a condition for accreditation and access to public procurement.

However, for labelling to generate added value for small and micro enterprises it is important to limit the administrative burden linked to procedures leading to the acquisition of the label.
Moreover, and not least, the label should be meaningful.
The fact that a label is created, coordinated and controlled by public authorities and/or recognized representative organisations linked to the social economy or civil society more in general can contribute to the credibility of the label and enhance awareness and recognition within the population.

Example:

Ressources, the Federation of social and circular enterprises in Brussels and Wallonia, created – with the support of the regions of Wallonia and Brussels-Capital – several labels which help public authorities and customers recognize enterprises acting along the values of the social economy and principles of green transition (with a specific focus on reuse). In the case of **the Recup' label,** for instance, the enterprise commits to respect a quality charter of 120 norms/standards. It has been allocated to a number of micro and small social economy enterprises.

4. Advice and Coaching for Green Transition: SKI.F.T. guidelines for Social Economy Support Organisations

In the course of the project the SKI.F.T. consortium developed guidelines for social economy support organisations and their work with micro and small social economy enterprises on green transition. Even though they have been conceived specifically for SKI.F.T. advisory and coaching sessions, we think they might serve as an inspiration also for others.

4.1 Methodological approach

The methodology adopted to create the SKI.F.T. advisory and coaching services has its roots in service design, trying to create sustainable solutions and optimal experiences not only for the SEEs, but also for the stakeholders involved in the entire growth process and social enterprise green transition.

Service Design is nothing more than the practical application of Design Thinking, an approach to solving complex problems in not well-defined situations. It is a person-centred method, in which it is given the possibility of generating multiple different ideas and hypotheses.

Service Design Thinking is based on an iterative and holistic process.

Below are the key principles that have been adopted during the development of the SKI.F.T. services:

1. **User-centred approach**: When designing the service, users - social enterprises - must always be taken into consideration.

2. **Co-creative approach**: All stakeholders should be taken into consideration in the analysis and development process. Indeed, all of them should have an active role in the transition project and be able to contribute to the creation of local social green value chains.

3. **Sequencing** (iterative process): Services must be displayed for key moments in the user journey, where each moment can be explored in depth before, during and after using the service.

4. **Holistic approach**: The design must take the whole into consideration, i.e. all the touchpoints of an experience, encouraging the development of networks and interactions between social economy enterprises (and other actors).

The system of advisory and coaching services is therefore the result from constant work that the organizations involved carry out on a daily basis with social economy enterprises in their respective ecosystems. It seeks to generate a synthesis, a reference framework that makes territorial activities a) homogeneous in terms of services that can be provided and b) comparable in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of the action.

The services that were provided by SKI.F.T. partners (social economy support organisations), designed and developed in a tailor-made logic, may differ in theme and intensity of the accompaniment, depending on the specific characteristics of each ecosystem and actual needs of the individual social economy enterprises involved. However, they all aimed at a collaborative development of the enterprises themselves and their real green transition.

4.2 Advisory and Coaching Sessions

Advisory Step 0: Get to know the social economy enterprise

The first activity, common to all the organizations that will provide the services, is linked to the organization of a cognitive interview with the social economy enterprise (SEE) involved.

This is a first meeting, lasting an average of 15/30 minutes, in which the SEE is introduced to the process, and which allows the organization providing the service to better understand the reality, both in terms of the contact person for the green transition, as well as the enterprise motivation in participating in the process.

During this first meeting the «Service Pact/Agreement» will be signed by the parties.

What to expect participating in

SKI.F.T. advisory services and coaching

A first interview to understands your needs for green transition.

UNDERSTANDING

Elaboration of a dedicated path to meet your needs

GOAL SETTING

Thematic webinars, workshops or on the job accompaniment

ADVISORY

Individual or group coaching to exchange with others and network

COACHING

Final assessment pattern for the green transition of your organisation

STRATEGY

Advisory Step 1: Understanding/Assessment of Green Transition Positioning

The assessment is a fundamental step to delve deeply into the organizational and strategic development needs of the SEEs in relation to the green transition. The activity can be conducted in different ways depending on the maturity of the SEEs with respect to the topic.

One of the possible methodological approaches to be adopted is that of GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) or ESRS (European Sustainability Reporting Standards), including the criteria envisaged in these standards to build the assessment matrix. The GRI Standards are a modular system of interconnected standards. Three sets of standards support the reporting process: the GRI Universal Standards, which apply to all organizations; the GRI Industry Standards, which apply to targeted sectors, and the GRI Specific Standards, which list relevant disclosures for a particular topic.

They can be used by any organization - large, small, public or private, regardless of the reference product sector or relevant geographical area - that wants to identify and report its impacts and communicate its contribution to sustainable development. In particular, the GRI 300 is dedicated to the environment strand of the ESG framework. The GRI standard is aligned with the ESRS. To learn more about this new standard please refer to https://www.efrag.org/lab6.

The assessment is an individual action, for a single enterprise, to be able to build a personalized and effective plan to support the green transition.

NEW COMERS
- Enterprises that **HAVE NOT YET APPROACHED THE TOPIC OF THE GREEN TRANSITION** and therefore do not have sufficient skills to be able to carry out an assessment independently.
- In this case, a support activity aimed at carrying out the assessment with a consultant within the partner organization is envisaged.
- Average duration **2/4 HOURS**

FOLLOWERS
- These are SEEs who **HAVE APPROACHED THE TOPIC**, perhaps through previous training activities or because the type of activity carried out falls within sectors with an impact on environmental as well as social sustainability, but who have in fact never developed organizational strategies (process, product or service) compliant.
- In this case, the support envisaged can be that of organize moments of discussion dedicated to compiling the selected assessment tool and which therefore act as guiding moments for the SEE that draws up its own assessment.
- Average duration **2/4 HOURS**
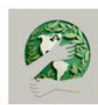
EXPERIENCED
- The SEE has already **ACQUIRED MATURITY WITH RESPECT TO THE GREEN TRANSITION**, because it has activated dedicated internal processes (specific projects, internal protocols, strategies linked to environmental sustainability, etc.), but it needs to further invest in its connotation as a green SEE to respond to its interlocutors / stakeholders.
- In this case the support is lighter in terms of assistance in drafting the assessment, but it will interact with the SEE in the shared re-reading of the assessment outcomes. In this way the organization will be able to acquire better knowledge of the SEE and at the same time intervene in the event of a lack of information (qualitative and quantitative).
- Average duration **2/4 HOURS**

	Co-entrepreneurs/Members/ Employees/Workers		Suppliers		Customers/users (public)		Customers/users (private)		(Potential) Private Partners		(Potential) Public Partners		Local Community	
	Area(s) of Improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of Improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of Improvement	Governance/ Communication	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Comm.	Area(s) of improvement	Governance/ Comm.	Area(s) of improvement	Governance / Comm.	Area(s) of Improvement	Governance/ Comm.
Quality of the product/service														
Purchase														
Transport														
Energy														
Waste management/ Circular Practices														
...														

Tools for the assessment - Examples

Here below you will find examples of tools that can be used for the assessment activities. Each of the organisations delivering the service will select the most appropriate tool to be administered to SEEs according to the level of maturity, to the capacities and the effectiveness of the information to be collected and elaborated to structure the accompaniment plan / road map for the enterprise.

SKI.F.T. MATRIX – structured interview tool for assessment
This tool (see also chapter 1) has been developed by the SKI.F.T. consortium to support an in-depth analysis of the needs and potential of enterprises in terms of green transition, considering specific fields/ sector of intervention, such as: Quality of the product/service; Purchase; Transport; Energy; Waste management. The analysis is not limited to the enterprise, but wants to investigate about existing and potential actions and strategies of the enterprise and their impact in terms of green transition all along the value chain in which the enterprise is included as well as the stakeholders with which it collaborates or could collaborate also in green transition processes to generate impacts (Co-entrepreneurs /Members/ Employees/ Workers; Suppliers; Customers/users (public); Customers/users (private); (Potential) Private Partners; (Potential) Public Partners; Local Community).
For each of the subjects involved and each of the areas two aspects are considered:

- Areas of improvement.
- Governance / communication.

Per each of the squares in the matrix, some guiding questions are provided to support the counsellor in carrying out the interview.
The tool does not replace impact measurement tools in the different topic areas as such (examples for impact measurement tools are, however, referred to). It can be used in a flexible way, according to

capacities, mission and priorities of the micro and small enterprise as well as the context in which it operates. The guiding questions are only examples and could be replaced or complemented by others, the aim is that of stimulating the analysis done by the counsellor with the SEE.

EXPLORE – Group One

EXPLORE is a transition path dedicated to different type of SMEs, among which also social enterprises are concerned and consists of the possibility to first measure the carbon footprint of the enterprise combined with a qualitative social impact assessment.

Specifically on the topic of measuring carbon footprint and taking concrete action to improve the latter Groupe One published the Eco-toolkit, consisting of Eco Scan (an instrument to measure the carbon footprint of an enterprise) /Eco Tips/ Eco mapping tool (a tool to visualize the environmental performance of an enterprise).
To access the tools please follow the link: **https://www.ecotoolkit.eu/**

ValorESS – UDES
ValorESS is a free online tool developed by UDES specifically to support micro and small social economy enterprises in measuring their carbon footprint. When conceiving ValorESS, UDES and external experts took into consideration the limited resources micro and small enterprises have with regard to time, expertise, finance etc. The objective was to develop an easy-to-use tool.

VALORESS focuses on 11 greenhouse gas emission indicators (1. Energy; 2. Business travel; 3. Home/work journeys; 4. Visitors, users, tourists; 5. Freight transport; 6. Inputs – Purchases; 7. Fixed assets; 8. Waste; 9. Other greenhouse gases; 10. Products; 11. Investments). Moreover, when calculating its carbon footprint, the user enterprise or organisation has the possibility to choose between two levels, adapted respectively to « beginners » regarding carbon footprint reduction or those being more advanced and wishing to go more in depth in their actions and commitment. In addition to the online calculator, 11 practical guidance sheets proposing actions for each of these indicators are at disposal for those interested.

Self-assessment tool to evaluate circularity
https://goforcircular.be/your-circular-analysis

Advisory Step 2: Goal Setting/Roadmap for Green Transition

This activity is carried out by the support organisation alongside the SEE and involves the construction of the roadmap to accompany the micro and small enterprise in its preparation process for the definition of the corporate strategy linked to the green transition.

The roadmap or strategic plan will then also be used in step 5 to define the final assessment pattern.

This activity should be accompanied by an expert that guides the enterprise in setting its goals and better define the transition expected. For each of the transition points envisaged the expert will identify the best solution to reach the goals associated.

Tools for the goal setting - Examples

1. Transition journey
It is a tool normally used in service design and allows to analyse how the behaviour and role of the enterprise in the ecosystem could evolve over time, leading to different types of paths.

Often a service can offer different types of experiences based on the different roles or needs of users; typically, such experiences are analysed as individual pieces to examine each specific path and plan project interventions that make it work better. With transition paths, the focus of the analysis shifts to the connection points that would lead specific stakeholders to move from one path to another, evolving their behaviour and role into a new one.

TOOL | **SKI.F.T. TRANSITION JOURNEY // ROADMAP**

| ENTERPRISE

....

| PHASES
Period from - to

| 01 _____ | 02 _____ | 03 _____ | 04 _____ |

| STAKEHOLDERS

ENTERPRISE / MANAGEMENT →

WORKERS / MEMBERS →

PROVIDERS →

CUSTOMERS →

| OPPORTUNITIES

The steps to be followed to create this transition journey/roadmap are the following:

1. Reflect on one kind of actor of the value chain / stakeholder at-a-time and think of the possible evolutions of their behaviour and role throughout the transition experience.

2. Link the different actors' / stakeholders' journeys, highlighting the transition points that provide them the opportunity to switch to another type of journey.

3. Focus on each transition point and highlight the triggers/enablers that could facilitate that shift as well as the barriers/blockers that could prevent it from happening.

4. Ideate design opportunities that enable each of the desired transition to happen, improving the overall service engagement.

Advisory Step 3: Capacity-building

Advisory activities are considered training and knowledge acquisition actions with different levels of difficulty depending on the needs of the SEEs.

The shared format, which will then be adapted to the specific needs of the SEEs involved, will be as follows:

• Training sessions dedicated to topics shared between participants	• In-depth sessions on individual topics through direct experimentation by participants (in groups/individuals)	• One to one training sessions with the SEE to allow the topic to be introduced directly into the organisation and better initiate change at an organizational level.
WEBINAR	WORKSHOP	ON THE JOB

The topics that may be addressed within the advisory activities, for which a selection can be made in accordance with the SEE needs, will be the following:

Resilient business models	Tap into sustainable investing	Making business processes greener	Develop environmentally friendly products and services
Optimization of water consumption	Promote sustainable innovation	Reduction of harmful emissions	Adopt circular economy solutions for materials
Reduction of carbon footprint	Improve waste management and reduce waste	Maximize energy efficiency	

The duration and combination of the planned actions will be extremely variable depending on the actual needs of the companies, but the objective of the partner organizations will be to create synergies between the needs of the companies, grouping the SEEs as much as possible in shared activities in order to create a network and animate a comparison between the realities involved.

Coaching Step 4: Guiding the Transition

For the coaching activities the enterprise might choose the more suitable of different types of experts:

1. A coach who is not an expert in green transition but that can support the enterprise in setting goals, getting in touch with experts, explore different options and define a plan of concrete actions.

2. An expert in green transition (or a specific theme) that guides the enterprise in creating a specific plan with actions and KPIs.

In the first case, we can propose a methodology called Green Coaching, in which the coach supports the enterprise in finding the resources necessary to achieve the environmental impact reduction objectives that have been shared within the enterprise, stimulating awareness and responsibility. It is based on the idea that people do not acquire knowledge from the coach but find it by drawing on it within/ or outside the enterprise, with the support of his/her guidance.

Coaching activity in this case allows to build shared processes, which workers recognize as their own and which for this reason are easier to apply and maintain. The translation of corporate values into objectives and processes is simpler, as it is developed in a participatory logic.

This specific approach in coaching is addressed to groups and not individuals and translates within the enterprise into:

*   Support for groups: members/ workers are supported in formulating proposals and finding ways to implement them.

*   Support for technicians: on the basis of agreed projects, internal or external technicians are supported in finding the best implementation methods.

*   Support for stakeholders: all stakeholders are involved and supported in participating in the enterprise's ecological transition.

Advisory and Coaching Step 5. Strategy/Final assessment patterns for green transition

This last step involves reconstructing the path followed with the SEE and going together to structure a targeted framework of actions that can truly lead to the desired green transition. On the one hand, the roadmap will have highlighted the areas in which the transition can be designed in relation to the SEE and its reference ecosystem. Advisory actions, in addition to increasing the SEE's knowledge, can help build networks and relationships with other local entities on specific issues. Finally, the coaching actions provide a concrete and targeted action plan to trigger the transition in the SEE. This final activity therefore traces the growth process of the SEE and is intended to generate a document that can act as a guide to develop strategic proposals and projects for the SEE itself, as a sort of operational plan to be inserted into the entrepreneurial strategies.

Possible tools:

-   Sustainable Transition Canvas https://www.sustainabletransitioncanvas.com/

Phase	Description	Related resources
1 – Set your ambitions	Before undertaking any project or strategic initiative, one needs to be clear about what one wants to achieve. Are goals realistic? Do they make sense in the context of the broader organizational strategy? To ensure that businesses have a clear understanding of their ambitions, the first two steps (steps 1 and 2) focus on identifying "hot spots" – high impact areas – and the possibility for change. In this phase, enterprises have established principles to guide the prioritization and ultimately positioning of elements in their green transition roadmap.	Include the tools elaborated in step 1 and 2
2 – Select opportunities	Steps 3 and 4 focus on building the content of the roadmap, filling it with priority items (opportunities) to ensure the achievement of transition goals. It is essential to ensure that this information is reflected in the roadmap, as it could alter the priorities initially set. Consider external use cases and stimulate internal ideas to uncover additional roadmap elements that may have been missed during initial scoping actions. It is important also for micro and small social economy enterprises, with a view to enhance capacities, create synergies and contribute to the creation of 'green social local value chains', to identify key stakeholders both inside and outside the organisation who can support the acceleration of transition goals. This may include external suppliers or partners.	Include the outcomes of step 3 and 4
3 – Prepare for execution	The penultimate phase (step 4) must culminate in a roadmap for a relevant and robust transition. In fact, we therefore proceed with a validation of the roadmap with respect to the priorities. Phase 5 guides the preparation necessary to ensure effective implementation. This includes assigning ownership for each activity to provide clarity on accountability, perhaps gaining board buy-in by presenting the completed roadmap and clearly explaining the benefits it will achieve.	

5. Recommendations to Policymakers

Micro and small social economy enterprises all over Europe have demonstrated their capacity to act as important partners in making municipalities and regions advance towards socially and environmentally sustainable local development. They also have been and are the point of departure for innovations in several areas such as circular economy, energy or mobility.

Policymakers at local, regional and European level can do a lot to further leverage this potential.

The recommendations you will find hereafter are the result of several moments of exchange between SKI.F.T. partners and policy-makers in the framework of online events, the final conference, interviews, etc.*

Before, however, we would like to showcase some examples for possible initiatives that could be taken by policymakers and public administration, also in cooperation with other actors.

5.1 Policy initiatives facilitating green transition of (small and micro) social economy enterprises

Circulair Werkt

With the support of the European Social Fund and the Flemish Region of Belgium, the Circular werkt initiative led to the creation of so-called social-circulair hubs in twelve Flemish cities. The hubs bring together social economy enterprises, other types of enterprises, knowledge institutions, local governments and others to create a link between circular entrepreneurship and social impact. The hubs stimulate mutual cooperation and innovation and offer their knowledge and network. Most of them work on specific focus areas such as ICT, textiles or food.

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* In this context, SKI.F.T. would like to thank also and particularly Giuseppe Guerini, President of CECOP/CICOPA and member of the European Economic and Social Committee.

Green Enterprise Partnership Sutton

The purpose of the Green Enterprise Partnership launched by the London Borough of Sutton is to assist local micro and small enterprises, including the social economy, to become more environmentally sustainable. The support provided by the municipality, based also on opportunities enshrined in national legislation (such as the UK's Localism Act), consists in capacity-building as well as tax reductions. The municipality takes some risks, as the technical assistance which selected enterprises receive is free of charge and provided before beneficiaries are supposed to implement the plans towards more sustainability they develop in the framework of the programme. Tax reductions are applied twice (during two years): once a beneficiary enterprise has set up its climate action plan and once the plan is implemented and a 5% reduction of carbon emissions has been achieved. Whilst, in the beginning, much effort had to be made to convince the financial department and local policy-makers of the potential such a programme could have, the feedback after its launch has been very positive.

EXPLORE programme Groupe One

The EXPLORE programme was developed and is run since 2022 by Groupe One, a main actor for the promotion and support of sustainable entrepreneurship in the Brussels-Capital Region. It received the financial support of the Brussels-Capital Region.

The programme, dedicated to the transition of business models, targets small enterprises in general, including social economy enterprises. In this framework, Groupe One accompanies approximately 20-30 entrepreneurs a year.

EXPLORE consists of the possibility to first of all measure the carbon footprint of the enterprise combined with a qualitative social impact assessment, as well as several workshops (some compulsory, others optional). In a second step, the participating enterprise will develop a concrete action plan focusing on specific priority topics. These topics are identified based on the results of the previous evaluation and on decisions of the enterprise regarding its own priorities and feasibility of actions. A dedicated transition coach will then accompany the enterprise for 20 hours in total plus an additional 4 days dedicated to work on a concrete action plan and its implementation. When developing the methodology for EXPLORE, Groupe One was faced with the strong time constraints small enterprises often have and their limited possibilities to follow training courses. For this reason, the figure of a

dedicated transition coach for each participating enterprise – a coach which accompanies the team of an enterprise directly on the spot in the enterprise - has become central. The transition coach will identify the needs and possible actions of the enterprise and direct it towards experts and other useful contacts (e.g. in public agencies and support services, etc.). Experts will then work with the enterprise on specific action areas. The enterprise does thus not have to search for support on its own. Moreover, support in obtaining certain labels – e.g. such as they have been taken up in the Shifting Economy Strategy of the Brussels-Capital Region - is provided to the participants. EXPLORE participants may also decide to join additional collective workshops in which they can meet each other.

Peloponnese Trails

Social economy players have been put at the heart of an initiative taken by the Greek Region of Peloponnese, which aims to foster local sustainable development and green transition around a network of certified hiking trails of a total length of 1700 km. Social economy initiatives are considered and promoted not only as main actors in the planning and maintenance of the paths, but also in the development of services around the trails, the creation of employment in rural areas, the development of digital tools improving amongst others environmental protection, the establishment of responsible tourism initiatives, etc.

A cornerstone of the Peloponnese Trail initiative is the shared decision-making process between the regional government, a regional development agency and the PELOPAS Union of Social Economy.

5.2 Recommendations

A European policy agenda building on and fostering the diversity of enterprises, the potential of the existing SME landscape and the added value of the social economy

Europe's entrepreneurial landscape is composed to 98% of small and medium enterprises. Important drivers for the transition of territories, they create employment, deliver much needed products and services in municipalities and regions with sometimes very different features, generate innovation and are also in other ways actively contributing to the well-being of local communities. Social economy, including micro and small social economy enterprises, provide further added value in social, environmental, economic and cultural terms, including their

capacity to mobilise people and different types of resources for the common good, and to strengthen democracy. A European economic agenda which would focus mainly on unidimensional growth and so-called "European champions" in order to improve European leadership and competitiveness, as suggested in documents such as the Draghi report, risks destroying the existing SME ecosystem, including many social economy enterprises. European (macro-) economic policy should enable further development of an ecosystem for micro, small and medium (social economy) enterprises, which is different than that of larger economic players. Also reviews of internal market rules, including public procurement and state aid, should take this into account. The access of the social economy to the Single Market should be further improved.

Recognition of and awareness-raising on the need for a green and fair transition and the role of the social economy and its micro and small enterprises

In an increasing number of municipalities and regions citizens are more aware of the need to change their habits and become a part of transition processes – in many others, however, this is not yet the case. Likewise, citizens and policy-makers often still lack awareness on the potential of social economy enterprises in this field and their capacity to generate environmental and social added value together with important opportunities for participation. Concrete initiatives such as campaigns, events, info desks, but also educational programmes at schools, universities and within public administration as such are needed to increase knowledge of people regarding the social economy and stimulate their active participation – as co-entrepreneurs, consumers/users, members, …

Creating shared spaces—whether they are physical, digital, or political—for experimentation, learning, and storytelling can strengthen identity and legitimacy. Being confronted with real-life initiatives for transition driven by cooperatives, associations, and other social economy forms may help citizens and policy-makers to understand their systemic value. That recognition can spark new alliances, change consumption patterns, and inspire younger generations to engage in alternative economic models.

Finally, policy-makers and administration can also lead by example. If a mayor is willing to change something in her/his town this can change a whole community. Very simple solutions and steps might

already demonstrate the power of citizens to realise change in their communities. Afterwards this can have a snowball effect provoking change in many other areas.

Financial support tailored to the specific needs of micro and small enterprises

Several initiatives have already been taken at EU level and in a number of Member States to stimulate green transition of enterprises and provide related support.

Nevertheless, existing financial support at European, but also national and regional/local level targeting entrepreneurs needs to be further adapted also to the specific reality and needs of micro and small social economy enterprises.

Small social economy enterprises would welcome for example more direct loans or loan guarantees.

At the same time, there is a need for funding that would also support mid-term and long-term development of social economy structures.

A better coordination of different kind of support tools managed by different (policy) departments would in many cases significantly increase the effectiveness of these instruments and programmes.

Moreover, many micro and small social economy enterprises would welcome initiatives and instruments enabling them to identify WHERE to find support - financial support, expertise, other type of resources.

Public programmes and support tools enabling micro and small social economy enterprises to further diversify and strengthen their revenue streams (e.g. through diversification of activities and capacity-building regarding management in general) can also boost the development of micro and small social economy enterprises and their active role in transition processes.

Access of micro and small social economy enterprises to public procurement needs to be improved in many Member States and regions. This can be stimulated by appropriate capacity-building programmes for the social economy, on one hand, and public administration, on the other. An example here are previous EU initiatives which have produced useful material (see for instance WeBuySocialEU).

Public administration could make stronger use of clauses obliging pro-fit firms to cooperate with the social economy in the provision of services.

Ways should be found to involve all relevant stakeholders in (financial) support mechanisms: In several EU Member States, the triple funding model including citizens, business and public actors appears to be rather fruitful. Important here are participative and transparent mechanisms and methods through which mutual trust can be built and collective local impact can be demonstrated.

Different possibilities of raising financing and mobilizing investment in green and social sustainability need to be further explored. This does not only mean to further develop social impact investment, but also to make the existing finance system in general more accessible for social economy enterprises of different sizes.
Instruments such as InvestEU should be maintained and Invest EU and its Social Window be more finetuned to the needs of SMEs and social & green transition.

Other types of finance actors should be encouraged to apply social and environmental criteria in their operations. This way, private financing from a larger diversity of financial providers could be mobilized also for small and micro social economy enterprises.

European programmes aiming to support (social economy) enterprises in their transition efforts have a huge potential stimulating change and capacity-building within the enterprise, but also cooperation and networking at local and European level. On the other hand, however, it is very important to create better access to these programmes and opportunities also and in particular for small and micro enterprises by facilitating a better and less cumbersome application process easing reporting procedures, etc. An example is the administrative burden and techn(olog)ical knowledge required to manage projects in digital platforms such as the Funding and Tenders Portal.

Finally, finance needs to be accompanied by skills development: Financial support is most effective when coupled with training/mentoring and other capacity-building measures for the enterprise.

Nevertheless, there is a need to adapt capacity-building measures to the specificities of micro and small (social economy) enterprises such as the lack of human resources and time to follow training courses out-

side the enterprise. In this regard it would be useful to develop and offer more individualised training schemes, including on-the-spot mentoring, or to explore the potential of Massive Open Online Courses, to provide just two examples.

Taxation

Experience has shown that taxation may be another means to provide support to micro and small social economy enterprises. This can be done, for example, through a corporate tax discount upon achievement of specific objectives such as certification, training, or the development and implementation of a transition action plan for the enterprise. Also, the specific taxation system of the third sector in Italy may serve as an example. With these tax reliefs the value created by the social economy and the fact that this value remains in local communities are clearly recognised.

Promoting Intercooperation and (Transnational) Networking

Inter-cooperation and membership in networks are of key importance also for small and micro social economy enterprises. They provide possibilities to mutualise knowledge, expertise and other type of resources, to jointly develop new activities, services and products based on complementarities and synergy, to access public procurement, to jointly enter in dialogue with policy-makers, etc. However, often, public programmes and support stimulate rather competition. Initiatives should be taken to foster cooperation and create ecosystems which make micro and small social economy enterprises thrive together – also with other local players - and deploy their rich potential for creating quality jobs and innovation with social and environmental value.
Building on the idea of local clusters, there is potential to foster ecosystems of cooperation at local and regional level that bring together public and private actors around shared goals. These clusters could serve as laboratories for developing and testing new activities, sharing knowledge, know-how and other resources and finally contribute to the creation or strengthening of local social green value chains in which also micro and small social economy enterprises can thrive.
Exchange and cooperation should be fostered beyond local, regional and national borders also at transnational level. Several examples show the positive impact which opportunities for transnational exchange also between micro and small enterprises generate, as they contribute to capacity-building of the latter, to the dissemination of innovation and new partnerships.

Many micro and small social economy enterprises point to the neces-

sity to strengthen cooperation also within public administration and between different governance levels. Intermediary mechanisms for example could be created between national and sub-national governments, involving both levels as well as different stakeholders - such as funders and social economy - for a better coordinated support of micro and small social economy players.

Streamlining social and green transition into other policies

Individual programmes and instruments promoting transition processes of micro and small social economy enterprises might not have a lasting impact and ecosystems able to accompany these enterprises in their efforts might not be fully achieved if governments do not mainstream social and green transition in each of their policies, thereby creating also links between initiatives of different policy departments.

Innovation and Experimentation

Successful multi-actor cooperation for sustainability and sustainable innovation often emerge in contexts in which governments and administration at different level dare to experiment more, exploring the boundaries of their powers and existing regulations which might need to be adapted, for example, in the case of municipal waste management and possibilities to provide access to circular economy initiatives promoted by the social economy.

At the same time, experimentation should be encouraged within social economy enterprises. This can be done also by improving access of the social economy to innovation networks and through a stronger cooperation between social economy and other type of enterprises and/or organisations.

Documenting and communicating Impact

More effort and support should be invested in promoting impact measurement and communication to make the added value of the social economy as a key actor of green and social transition more visible towards citizens and potential private and/or public funders. Also here, expectations and support instruments should, however, take into account the specific needs and capacities of small and micro social economy enterprises.

Regarding environmental sustainability of enterprises and related reporting schemes, certification and impact measurement, methods adapted to the specific reality of small and micro social economy enterprises

must be further explored. Current regulatory systems orient themselves rather in the context of large enterprises. Social economy should be further encouraged to develop its own systems, indicators, requirements and methods to measure its performance (examples and proposals were already made also in studies of the European Commission and OECD proposals). Of specific interest and value for local communities might be the creation of a common tool to measure impact which could then be transversally applied for both the public and private actors – for the sake of joint commitment, comparability and cooperation. Here it should be ensured that voices of micro and small enterprises and grassroots organizations are included and heard.

In this context, principles around sustainable development and the promotion of entrepreneurship should also be combined with values such as democracy and inclusion. The triple bottom line "People, Planet, Prosperity" which is supposed to measure the success of entrepreneurship also in terms of sustainability should be complemented by "Productivity, Participation and Progress for all".*

To support the meaningful use of impact measurement, capacity-building should be strengthened through continued coaching, peer-learning opportunities, and tools that help actors not only measure but also communicate their impact.

To conclude, a profound shift in how value is understood, recognized, and supported—both internally within organisations and externally by institutions and the broader public - is much needed. The core imperative is to build ecosystems that enable cooperation over competition, where social economy actors are not marginal players but central to delivering public value. This means investing in long-term relationships rather than short-term projects, creating mechanisms that allow local and democratic ownership of services and resources, and ensuring that the voices of small and micro enterprises are not only heard but actively shape policy and practice.

By advancing a European policy agenda that embraces the diversity of enterprises, nurtures the potential of the existing SME landscape, and highlights the added value of the social economy, the foundations for systemic change can be laid. Recognition and awareness of the role of the social economy in enabling a green and fair transition must be paired with tailored financial support, fair taxation frameworks, and

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* Suggestion by Giuseppe Guerini, President of CECOP/CICOPA and member of the European Economic and Social Committee

policies that streamline social and environmental objectives into the mainstream economy. Intercooperation and transnational networking should be promoted as vital tools for scaling impact, while innovation and experimentation need to be encouraged as pathways to new solutions. Crucially, documenting and communicating the social economy's impact is essential to ensuring legitimacy, visibility, and influence.

Together, these priorities pave the way for a stronger and more inclusive European approach—one that not only supports micro and small enterprises but also unlocks the full potential of the social economy. By aligning recognition, financial and fiscal measures, cooperation, innovation, and impact with the green and fair transition, Europe can create an economy that is more resilient, sustainable, and just - an economy that serves people and planet first.

FISE>

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Den Kooperative Arbejdsgiver- og interesseorganisation i Danmark

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