

## RESPONDET European Policy Lab: Social economy at the core of local/regional policies promoting green transition

#### Gothenburg, 8-9 June 2023

### Report



RESPONDET partners used the occasion of the presence of local/regional and European policy-makers, social economy actors, academics and civil society to organize a European Policy Lab in the framework of the European conference "Social Economy 2023 – Building a stronger and resilient Europe" and linked to the REVES General Assembly. The event took place on 8 and 9 June 2023 in Gothenburg (SE).

The European Policy Lab had the following objectives:

- share experiences RESPONDET partner regions/city and their social economy partners made whilst drafting in a participatory way local action plans promoting the role of the social economy in green transition (with a specific focus on circular economy and community energy initiatives) and
- discuss possible solutions to challenges RESPONDET partners have come across in this process or that they perceive for the implementation of planned actions.

The Lab was organized in two parts: The afternoon session of 8 June focused on circular economy, the morning session of 9 June on community energy initiatives.

42 participants (26 women, 16 men) took part in the event, representing local and regional authorities, social economy organisations and enterprises, European organisations, European institutions and consultative bodies (such as the CoR, EESC), etc.

### European Policy Lab/First Part - "Circular Economy":

After the welcoming words by Katarina Kuzmanovic - Councillor, Region of Västra Götaland and REVES board member - participants were given an insight into objectives and activities of the RESPONDET project, followed by some general observations of RESPONDET partners concerning policies promoting the role of the social economy in the circular economy.

#### *Introductory presentation:*

When it comes to the circular economy, social economy organisations in RESPONDET partner regions and cities operate in a diversity of fields of activity (collection of waste and waste management; repair&reuse; recycling, upcycling) and product value chains (Textiles, Food, Nutrients, Plastics, Electronics and IT, Construction materials, Wood and glass, Fuels such as biochar, biodiesel, etc.). In parallel, they pursue a number of additional activities, including training and work integration; development and testing of innovation regarding products, services and/or processes; awareness-raising/education; the provision of advice and consultation-related services, policy work...

Different type of *support by/partnerships with* public authorities exist in this framework in RESPONDET partner territories, among them:

- Financing in form of diverse subsidies, grants and loans some of these instruments being based partially also on EU funds (Cohesion Policy, LIFE, Horizon Europe...);
- Special Accreditation (e.g. Reuse in the Social Economy Accreditation in Wallonia);
- · Green Procurement;
- Experimentation/Training/Promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives: examples here are the programmes and facilities developed and put at disposal in relation to the Torino City Lab or Catalonia Circular Hub...;
- (Online) Platforms which enhance the visibility of the social economy (in the circular economy), its approach and added value;
- Awareness-raising activities;
- Consultation/Co-construction of Policies: in two partner regions, social economy is part also of
  multi-stakeholder councils addressing the development of the circular economy and related
  policies, even though social economy stakeholders would wish to have more weight than at
  present in this type of processes.

A number of windows of opportunity have opened also recently for the social economy and policies aiming to strengthen the role of the latter in the circular economy. They include National and local legislation; strategies&policies implementing the EU Circular Economy Package; the implementation of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans; Regional Strategies for Sustainable Development; Regional Strategies for Climate; Regional Development Strategies in general; Social Economy Development Strategies; Strategies/Policies promoting the Green Economy or Cohesion Policy-related Programmes, to name just a few ....

Yet, RESPONDET partners still perceive a number of challenges, such as:

- the need for a more coherent legislation at the national and regional level;
- the fact that circular economy policies still seem to target mainly 'mainstream' enterprises;
- sectoral policies (with social economy being considered in its specific 'niche');
- policy-makers falling into the green- and social washing trap of enterprises with strong marketing capacities, but without real social (and environmental) values applying to the operations of the whole enterprise;
- social economy being not present enough in the creation, implementation and monitoring of circular economy strategies and policies;
- a need for better communication towards social economy players regarding existing support mechanisms;
- with regard to financing: a need for long-term guarantees maintained also in a context of political change;
- a lack of an entrepreneurial culture on the side of social economy-based community initiatives in the circular economy;
- a sometimes still weak innovation capacity (including cooperation with universities etc.);
- opportunities and risks of online platforms which sometimes 'take over' activities pursued by the social economy without nevertheless providing the added value of the social economy;
- need for more collective action and creation of synergies between the social economy and other type of actors;
- awareness-raising and change of mentalities among policy-makers, (social economy) entrepreneurs, citizens.

Panel with RESPONDET partners and representatives of other regions/cities:

A panel including Valeria Vacchiano (City of Turin), Diana Ghinea (Gothenburg City Leasing) and Sergio Pérez Garcia (Navarra Region) shared with participants their experiences in the development of policies promoting the circular economy and the role of the social economy in the latter.

Valeria Vacchiano referred to the diversity of circular economy initiatives (including in the social economy) which already exist in the City of Torino. The RESPONDET project and related work on local action plans, however, is considered by her city as an important opportunity to a) bring together different policy strands; b) bring together different stakeholders (public actors, social economy, SMEs, civil society, universities, other educative actors) and c) become a city of experimentation regarding climate action. Turin aims to become one of the 100 cities which will be climate neutral by 2030... In this framework, experimentation and related policy initiatives such as the Torino City Lab are considered vital and the city provides support to innovative circular economy ideas.

**Sergio Pérez Garcia** presented the <u>Navarra Circular Strategy</u> which is an inter-departmental initiative promoting a circular economy approach in enterprises and based on a public-private initiative. In the

framework of the initiative, the region sought, amongst other activities, to map circular economy experiences among companies. This was not always easy, as some companies are not even aware of them acting in the field of the circular economy. Based on the mapping exercise, a catalogue of "circular companies" was created. In this catalogue, one out of four enterprises is a social economy enterprise. Navarra Circular is promoting cooperation between companies operating in the circular economy and other actors at local, regional, national and transnational level. One of the objectives of the government of the Navarra region is to more strongly link the Social Economy Action Plan of the Navarra Region with the Circular Strategy. A promising point of departure in this respect is the fact that the Circular Strategy is being implemented by different policy departments which come together on a regular basis to coordinate their actions (in cooperation with stakeholders).

**Diana Ghinea**, chair of the board of Gothenburg City Leasing, a public company, presented the Environmental and Climate Programme, which is one of the seven main strategies of the City of Gothenburg. An important element of the strategy is multi-stakeholder cooperation. Different public and private players, including social economy, are involved in its implementation. One of the focus themes and instruments of the strategy is procurement. Here, local politicians and stakeholders work in close cooperation with the city authority for green procurement. Guidelines relating also to the development of the circular economy and related possibilities with green and social procurement have been developed. Efforts are being made to encourage also different public authorities to follow these guidelines.

Discussion in groups and final panel discussion:

After the first panel participants were given the opportunity to share experiences and discuss in smaller groups.

RESPONDET partners had prepared three main challenges they perceive for the implementation of their local/regional action plans, hoping for ideas and inspiration from other participants:

- Challenge 1 Access to data: Civil servants and policy-makers find it still difficult to have access
  to certain data (even data collected by the own local or regional authority) and/or know where
  certain type of data are stored and who is in charge of it.
- Challenge 2: Promoting and making the social economy visible as an important player within the circular economy (existing policies dealing with the circular economy have hitherto rather addressed/worked with other type of enterprises)
- Challenge 3: Overcoming silos in policy-making and administration

Challenge 1 – access to data – is considered still a great challenge by many participants. Interdepartmental or multi-stakeholder working groups (see ideas below under challenge 3) might promote a better exchange of information. In some regions, public online platforms allow for a sharing of certain type of data between public and private players, encouraging the latter to cooperate (also in the field of circular economy). Another participant points to opportunities related to ESF-related National Competence Centres of Social Innovation (set up in many countries also in cooperation with universities) which could further enable interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder cooperation as well as a sharing of information.

Discussing Challenge 2 participants highlight the importance of the social economy and social economy principles being mainstreamed into a diversity of EU-policies and EU-funded programmes dedicated to the circular economy. This can then also have an impact on national and local policies.

Public procurement and more specifically the use of social and green criteria is considered by many participants as an impactful means to strengthen visibility and recognition of the social economy. Environmental legislation in general should, in the view of participants, include clear social considerations.

In some cities and regions, communities of practice around specific topics have helped demonstrating the added value and capacities of the social economy as driver of circular economy practices and partner for different other players.

Other participants point to the role of social economy federations (regional, national...) which in some regions have already been developing online tools making social economy initiatives (in the circular economy) more visible to policy-makers, civil servants and citizens more in general (example: Observatoire de l'économie sociale, ConcertES).

Several participants also point to the fact that social economy as a model is still largely unknown among citizens and that much more has to be done to raise awareness and provide education in this respect.

With regard to Challenge 3 – breaking up policy silos - several partners shared good practices of cooperation between different policy departments which already exist in their region or city. Examples are the cases of the Navarra Region or the City of Braga where multi-disciplinary teams and working groups bringing together different departments are involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of specific policies and strategies. In the case of Braga, this approach exists for example with regard to strategies concerning sustainability, culture or social topics. Moreover, in the Navarra Region, civil servants also receive specific training enabling them to work on the topic of circular economy with a broader perspective (training of civil servants is also a specific objective with a related indicator in the Circular Navarra Strategy). In other cities and regions, multi-stakeholder committees, working groups or "sharing café meetings" have been created around specific projects and initiatives which also involve different policy departments etc.

Local Green Deals fostering cooperation between different type of players through appropriate instruments and objectives, whilst also clearly defining roles and responsibilities for the implementation process can also have a positive impact on the break-up of silos.

Participants also highlight the importance to recognize and promote the social economy from the very beginning as a *transversal system* covering *different areas* and therewith as a partner for the implementation of a *diversity* of policies.

A participant also stresses that cooperation between different policy departments on specific strategies and policies should be made mandatory and not be left to the willingness of individual persons.

Finally, another participant also points to the importance (and challenge) of multi-level governance and cooperation between different policy levels which could, in her view, be encouraged more strongly by bodies such as the European Committee of the Regions and EU legislation.

In the final panel discussion, speakers were invited to formulate their concluding thoughts from the perspective of the organization they represent.

Anna Athansopoulou, Head of Unit at the European Commission, DG Grow, stressed that the social economy can act as a powerful driver for green transition. However, to this end, an enabling environment has to be created with the right policies, the right partnerships, a promotion of the right skills... A number of blockages still need to be solved in this respect through development of the right regulatory framework, right incentives (taxes, public procurement, etc.) or capacity-building, to name

just some elements. In all type of crisis there is, in Athanasopoulou's view, also a window of opportunity for the social economy and the creation/strengthening of locally rooted ecosystems for the latter. What is important in this respect is to create missing links (for example within specific value chains).

Social economy does not only comprise WISES. It is active in many fields and can contribute to the development of innovative products and services. In this respect it appears, according to Athanasopoulou, also vital to think about opportunities provided by technology (but also about related risks).

With the <u>Transition Pathway for the social and proximity economy</u> the European Commission would like to encourage local green deals, facilitate peer-learning and communities of practice.

Ricardo Rio, in his capacity also as member of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and rapporteur of the CoR opinion "Creating an enabling environment for the social economy – the local and regional perspective" stated that the nature of challenges such as they have been raised in the Policy Lab is the same all over Europe.

In his view, it is fundamental to ensure multi-level governance – a cooperation between different policy levels, but also between different areas of policies. More cross-sectoral initiatives should be created. In this respect Rio also pointed to the importance of inter-institutional work between European institutions and bodies such as the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Also cooperation between university and society should be further enhanced.

Paula Santaren, Chair of the Sector Group Proximity&Social Economy of the Enterprise Europe Network presented the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) which brings together different players active in business support for small and medium enterprises. The network provides services, including opportunities for exchange/cooperation, to actors such as chambers of commerce and industry, regional development organisations, universities and research institutes or innovation agencies. The Sector Group "Proximity&Social Economy" is still rather recent. For Santaren, who also works for Accio, the Catalan Agency for Business Competitiveness, and also in this context specifically on support for social economy, circular economy is an important topic. A main challenge, however, which was confirmed by the first meetings of the EEN sector group on social economy, is first of all to better spread and educate on the concept and model "social economy". A number of persons in chambers of commerce, regional development agencies, traditional support agencies etc. still lack the respective knowledge and experience. It is thus difficult for them to accompany the social economy also in areas such as circular economy. Transnational exchange, involving this type of players together with the social economy and public authorities can be of added value here. Santaren experienced this for example in the framework of the INTERREG project RAISE which was led by Accio.

## **European Policy Lab/Second Part – "Community Energy Initiatives"**

#### *Introductory presentation:*

For some years now EU legislation has become a main driver for the development of community energy initiatives in form of renewable energy communities (REC) or citizen energy communities (CEC) in many EU Member States. With the adoption of the Renewable Energy Directive in 2018, the Electricity

Market Directive in 2019 and the European Solar Rooftop Initiative new doors were opened through a much stronger promotion – at EU level – of these initiatives and increasing legal certainty.

The directives meant the recognition of a (new) form of producing and consuming energy which empowers consumers and local actors based on a participatory governance model in which one can actually find a number of social economy principles. EU legislation provided community energy initiatives with responsibilities and rights.

How does the situation in RESPONDET regions (and countries) look like? Here, legislation and policy frameworks provide both opportunities and obstacles. First of all, RESPONDET partners could state that regions (except for Poland) have been frontrunners in the promotion of community energy initiatives and the development of a related regulatory framework. However, a number of uncertainties remain due to a missing, constraining and/or incoherent national legal framework and limits set by the latter.

Despite these obstacles RESPONDET partner regions and cities have sought in the past and present to put policies and measures in place which aim to strengthen local communities and to promote the development of community energy initiatives that are driven by social economy principles.

#### Examples are the following:

- Start-up financing and administrative support for community energy initiatives (e.g. Piedmont region);
- Specific budget lines supporting social economy-based community energy initiatives and intercooperation (e.g. Region of Catalonia, Wallonia region);
- Cooperation with community energy initiatives in the framework of public procurement (e.g. Wallonia region);
- Capacity-building (e.g. Ateneus cooperatius in Catalonia, Energy Centre of the Polytechnic University of Turin; ...);
- Mobilisation/Creating eco-systems of support:
- ⇒ multi-stakeholder alliances (e.g. Torino Social Impact)
- ⇒ awareness-raising and educational initiatives (e.g. Regional Education Centres in Poland)
- ⇒ local offices & observatories focusing on green transition and/or community energy initiatives
- ⇒ strategic plans for communication targeting also the field of renewable energy (example Wallonia Region).

In addition, local communities in the same geographical area, sometimes in cooperation with universities and others, engage in inter-cooperation projects among themselves (as it is the case for example in the Piedmont Region). In Poland, several local communities are experimenting pilot energy clusters. Research projects are running in which municipalities, social economy, civil society and other actors are involved as partners of universities. Finally, public authorities also support initiatives and organisations which federate community energy initiatives, among them energy cooperatives (example RESCOOP in Belgium).

Yet, a number of challenges remain for community energy initiatives to develop without (a number of) obstacles and in cooperation with cities and regions. RESPONDET partners frequently referred to:

- a) An inappropriate legal framework:
- Lack and/or Incoherence of legislation

- Vagueness of definitions in legal texts (example: proximity criterion REC)
- (Rapidly) changing legislation to which initiatives have to adapt
- b) Investment/Financing:
- Very high investment necessary
- Lack of structural funding (heavy dependence of smaller initiatives on the work of volunteers)
- Risk of allocation of public funding rather to larger structures at the expense of smaller initiatives
- Lack of a specific business model adapted to the way RECs operate
- c) Administrative aspects:
- Administrative burden
- Lack of (administrative) capacities (to a large extent also linked to the lack of human resources)
- Delays in the granting of permits, particularly for wind power, sometimes also due to lack of time limits in procedures
- d) Mobilisation of citizens:
- Difficulties, on the side of citizens, to understand the functioning of the electricity market and the functioning of installations for the generation/distribution/consumption of renewable energy
- Difficulty to mobilise citizens in general
- e) Attitudes of policy-makers:
- Lack of political will and/or vision
- Fear to lose control

Panel with RESPONDET partners and representatives of other regions/cities or social economy:

For the Region of Catalonia and the Federation of Catalan cooperatives – represented by Roser Hernandez (Region of Catalonia) and Elena Bernet (COOPCAT) - the RESPONDET project and related work on a regional action plan have been an occasion not only to deepen cooperation across policy departments and agencies, but also to bring together different sectors – in this case cooperative sectors. Existing cooperatives in fields such as housing or agriculture can be an important vector for the mobilization of citizens, knowledge and capacities when it comes to creating community energy initiatives. The Region of Catalonia, which would like to stimulate this inter-cooperation further, would like to do this also in the field of energy.

A key element in (policy) work on community energy initiatives in Catalonia is the cooperation of the Region of Catalonia with the Catalan Energy Institute and the Catalan Finance Institute. This cooperation was facilitated through a previous policy initiative on the promotion of community energy

initiatives in form of consumer cooperatives in which the different departments/agencies had already worked together.

In Wallonia, represented by Walter Pirnay (Wallonian Public Service) and Pascale Zoetaert (ConcertES), a specific decree concerning the social economy law, adopted already in 2008, has created a fertile ground for the development of community energy initiatives — in particular energy cooperatives — which are not a *recent* phenomenon in this Belgian region, but exist already since a number of years.

The Alternativ'ES Wallonia strategy 2019-2024, which aims to promote the development of the social economy in Wallonia identified renewable energy amongst its five priority sectors. In this context, the RESPONDET project, presents, however, an opportunity to continue work on the current policy framework. The policy and institutional framework with competences spread in different ministries and departments (energy vs. economy/social economy, ...) does not always facilitate this work. Social economy organisations such as ConcertES would therefore also like to use the occasion of upcoming regional elections (2024) to further push for improvements.

A public investment agency (W.Alter), set up specifically for the promotion of the social economy through tailor-made financial instruments, contributes to the provide financial support to (newly created) community energy initiatives. In this respect, however, the region deplores limits for the provision of financial support imposed by EU legislation.

Also in its work on policies promoting community energy initiatives the City of Turin – represented in the Lab by Raffaella Scalisi (Torino Chamber of Commerce/Torino Social Impact) - is building on the force of mobilization of the Turin Chamber of Commerce (a public body!) and Torino Social Impact, a multi-stakeholder alliance created by the Chamber of Commerce. RESPONDET has been an occasion for the City and its partners to deepen the work on the development of an eco-system around local community energy initiatives. This is done in close cooperation with the social economy (in particular cooperatives), the university and other players. Point of departure for this work and experimentation are already existing community projects (not necessarily linked to energy) such as the network of neighbourhood houses in Turin. The multi-stakeholder partnership which was created to work on policies to promote eco-systems around local community energy initiatives will continue also after the end of the RESPONDET project.

Ulrik Boe Kjeldsen from Kooperationen (Denmark) shares some insights into the development of citizen energy communities/renewable energy communities in Denmark which, as a country, can be considered a frontrunner in this respect. He refers in particular to the example of the Middelgrunden Wind Cooperative in Copenhagen which also became the first offshore wind project based on sale of shares and community ownership. The history of the cooperative has not been without obstacles. However, thanks to the strong willingness and force of mobilization of a group of visionary persons, which Kjeldsen considers a key element for the success of the initiative, most of these obstacles could be overcome. Due in particular to a strong information campaign the cooperative succeeded in mobilizing new members (approximately 10 000 locals at the initial stage) and therewith also financial means. Moreover, a unique partnership with the local utility Copenhagen Energy (owned by the municipality of Copenhagen) - which now runs 10 of the 20 turbines of the windfarm as a separate business, but with which the cooperative still cooperates regarding the operations of the wind farm - allowed to share costs during the construction and testing period. In addition and through a public grant the cooperative was able to finance an analysis of organizational and economic aspects of the cooperatively owned part of the wind farm.

Initial resistance on the part of certain groups of the population and organisations—e.g. the Danish Society for the Conservation of Nature — could be resolved through transparency, information, dialogue, involvement and cooperation with a large number of experts.

Discussion in groups and final panel discussion:

The panel was followed by a session in which participants were invited to exchange their experiences in smaller groups and to discuss, more specifically, possible solutions to the following challenges/questions identified by RESPONDET partners working on the promotion of community energy initiatives:

#### Challenge 1:

Citizens: How to mobilise citizens and reach real ownership of the initiatives by them?

#### Challenge 2:

How to overcome silos in policy-making and administration also in the field of energy/community energy projects?

#### Challenge 3:

How to find the right balance between a transversal approach (involvement and mobilization of different parts of public administration/policy departments), expert knowledge and citizen ownership?

In the restitutive part of the session, several participants presented their ideas, proposals and/or experiences.

FAECTA, the Federation of Worker Cooperatives in Andalusia, is working on community energy initiatives since three years. In this framework the organization developed a <u>guide for the creation of renewable energy communities</u>, which is supposed to provide citizens with information, contacts and other type of support needed. Further referring to the first challenge of how to mobilise citizens and to his own experience, the representative of FAECTA points to the importance of getting in touch with opinion leaders in the community (e.g. through associations, sports clubs , local companies). Cooperation with municipalities can also be of help when it comes to informing citizens and encouraging them to become part of a community energy project.

Another participant thinks that citizens could sometimes be better mobilized by incentives rather than a mere focus on a problem to be solved.

Participants from Poland and other countries in Central Europe share the difficulties they still have in promoting a cooperative culture and social economy in general in their countries.

With regard to Challenge 2 several participants come back to experiences of regular inter-service cooperation and meetings such as they were presented the previous day (examples are the Navarra Region or the city of Braga).

Referring to Challenge 3, participants stress the need to involve and mobilise citizens at a very early stage and create true opportunities for citizen ownership. In Sweden for example there has been a lot of resistance to windmills by citizens which was also and very much due to the fact the wind farms are/were set up by big companies. Communication and dialogue are crucial.

Experts knowledge is often needed to set up and run community energy projects, but this should be balanced from the very beginning with citizen involvement and ownership - a suitable model of governance should be identified from the start.

In her concluding thoughts, **Brigitte Fellahi-Brognaux**, **Head of Unit at the European Commission**, **DG Employment**, highlighted the importance of putting in place enabling framework conditions for the development of the social economy in a diversity of fields. She expressed hope that the Council Recommendation on developing social economy framework conditions, for which a first proposal should be published by the European Commission on 13 June 2023, will further facilitate this in all EU Member States. Cooperation at local, national and also transnational level, using a shared pool of knowledge and know-how, is according to Fellahi-Brognaux vital in this context. Policy-makers, administration, experts and civil society should be involved – all of them at an early stage.

Referring to difficulties regarding public (financial) support to social economy initiatives (in the field of energy), caused partially by existing EU legislation, and resulting constraints also for the innovation potential of these initiatives, Fellahi-Brognaux assured participants of ongoing reflections and work in the European Commission regarding this challenge.

**Katarina Kuzmanovic, Councillor at the Region of Västra Götaland**, regretted a lack of citizen initiative and (support for) cooperative culture in Sweden where currently only three citizen energy communities exist. She also hopes for changes in the legislative framework in Sweden. Current provisions, including fiscal regulation, present a number of obstacles for community energy projects.

Ana Umbelino, Vice-Mayor of the City of Torres Vedras and REVES President, pointed to the need to create the "cognitive fundaments" for a social economy-based community management of resources. In her opinion, changes are needed with regard to visions (that are sometimes lacking), ways to mutualise knowledge and competence, or concerning openness to and possibilities for innovation. Communities and the will of citizens to contribute to their development are a major factor. In this context, Umbelino stressed the importance of education – including early childhood education, but also an improvement of the literacy of politicians regarding cooperation, community involvement, etc. This literacy is also a basic condition for the ability and success of working in a more transversal way

With regard to the topic of ownership and management Umbelino thinks that not the same model has to be applied to each case. It is, in her view, nevertheless crucial to always openly discuss the level of ownership of citizens. According to Umbelino, one of the roles of policy-makers and the public sector is "to ask relevant questions" enabling community initiatives to emerge and develop in the respective (local) context.

Attachments:

Invitation/Programme

and breaking silos.

**Introducing Powerpoint Presentation** 





## RESPONDET European Policy Lab: Social economy at the core of local/regional policies promoting green transition

#### **Programme**

The <u>RESPONDET initiative</u> brings together regions, cities and social economy organisations to better equip local and regional policy-makers, public administration, social economy and civil society for the joint development of green transition-related (policy) initiatives.

In the framework of this Policy Lab, RESPONDET partner cities and regions would like to:

- share experiences they made whilst drafting in a participatory way local action plans promoting the role of the social economy in green transition (with a specific focus on circular economy and community energy initiatives) and
- discuss possible solutions to challenges they have come across in this process or that they perceive for the implementation of planned actions.

The Policy Lab addresses local, regional, but also European policy-makers, civil servants, social economy, academics and civil society organisations.

**8 June 2023, 14h-16h30** (Venue: School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg, Vasagatan 1, Gothenburg/Room: Malmstensmatsalen)

#### Policy Lab - Part 1: Social economy at the core of local circular economy development plans

- 14.00 Welcome and introduction
- Katarina Kuzmanovic, Councillor, Region of Västra Götaland and REVES board member
- 14.10 Preparation of local action plans promoting the role of the social economy in the circular economy: Short overview on main points discussed by RESPONDET partner regions/cities
- Erdmuthe Klaer, REVES aisbl

- 14.25 Insights from (RESPONDET partner) cities/regions: Potential and Challenges
- Valeria Vacchiano, City of Turin
- Diana Ghinea, Chair of the board, Gothenburg City Leasing (public company)
- Sergio Pérez García, Director General for External Action, Region of Navarra
- 15.00 Interactive discussions between participants
- 16.00 Concluding thoughts by
- Anna Athanasopoulou, Head of Unit Proximity, Social Economy and Creative Industries, DG Grow, European Commission
- Ricardo Rio, Mayor of Braga and Member of the Committee of the Regions of the EU
- Paula Santaren, Chair of the Sector Group Proximity & Social Economy of the Enterprise Europe Network

**9 June 2023, 9.00-11.30** (Venue: School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg, Vasagatan 1, Gothenburg/Room: Malmstensmatsalen)

## Policy Lab – Part II: Social economy at the core of local action plans promoting community energy initiatives

- 9.00 Welcome and introduction
- 9.15 Preparation of local action plans promoting the role of the social economy in community energy initiatives: Short overview on main points discussed by RESPONDET partner regions/cities
- Erdmuthe Klaer, REVES aisbl
- 9.30 Insights from (RESPONDET partner) cities/regions and social economy: Potential and Challenges
- Roser Hernandez, Region of Catalonia/Elena Bernet, Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia
- Raffaella Scalisi, Torino Chamber of Commerce/Torino Social Impact
- Werner Pirnay, Wallonia Region/Bénédicte Sohet, CONCERTES
- Ulrik Boe Kjeldsen, Kooperationen
- 10.15 Interactive discussions between participants

## 11.15 Concluding thoughts by

- Brigitte Fellahi-Brognaux, Head of Unit Social and Inclusive Entrepreneurship, DG EMPL, European Commission
- Katarina Kuzmanovic, Councillor, Region of Västra Götaland and REVES board member
- Ana Umbelino, REVES President





# European Policy Lab

« Social economy at the core of local/regional policies promoting green transition »

"Social Economy 2023 – Building a stronger and resilient Europe"

Gothenburg, 8 June 2023





The RESPONDET project: Co-designing policy initiatives for a social economy-driven community management of resources

# The RESPONDET project - Partners

- Generalitat de Catalunya Business and Labour Department (Leader)
- Confederation of Coopératives of Catalunya
- European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES aisbl)
- Service Public de Wallonie
- Concertation des organisations représentatives de l'économie sociale ConcertES
- Municipality of Turin
- Chamber of Commerce of Turin
- Malopolska Voivodship Regional Centre for Social Policy













## **RESPONDET – Main activities**



Peer learning missions

1: Community energy initiatives (Catalunya)

2: Circular economy (Wallonia)

3: Capacity-building (Małopolska)

4: New forms of cooperation/governance



Elaboration of local/regional action plans





Policy recommendations

Based on:

- Local Action Plans
- Inputs by (local) stakeholders
- European Webinar and Policy Lab

## Objective of the Policy Lab

 sharing experiences RESPONDET cities/regions made whilst drafting local action plans promoting the role of the social economy in green transition

## and

discuss possible solutions to challenges
 RESPONDET cities/regions have come
 across in this process or that they perceive
 for the implementation of planned actions.





## Some general rules:

- Concentrating on local/regional policy-making and cooperation between the social economy and policy-makers
- EU policies: Topic of the final panel and our final webinar (14 September 2023)
- Going beyond a specific national context/problem



## Circular economy – applied definition:

2015/2020 European Commission
Action Plan: "...a more circular economy,
where the value of products, materials
and resources is maintained in the
economy for as long as possible, and the
generation of waste minimized..." (EU
Action Plan for the Circular Economy COM(2015) 614 final)

"... products and materials retain their value for as long as possible; waste and resource use are minimised and, when a product reaches the end of its life, the resources that make it up are kept in the economic cycle so that they can be used again and again to recreate value..."



# Circular economy - applied definition

2015/2020 European Commission Action Plan: "...a more circular economy, where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimized..." (EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy - COM(2015) 614 final)

"... products and materials retain their value for as long as possible; waste and resource use are minimised and, when a product reaches the end of its life, the resources that make it up are kept in the economic cycle so that they can be used again and again to recreate value..."



## Social Economy in the Circular Economy

## 1. Activities:

- Collection (and sometimes waste management)
- Recycling
- Upcycling
- Repair&reuse ...

### BUT also:

- Work Integration
- Innovation
- Awarenessraising/Education/Prevention
- Advice/Consultation
- Policy work

## 2. Product value chains:

- Textiles
- Food, nutrients
- Plastics
- Electronics and IT
- Construction materials
- Wood and glass
- Fuels (biochar, biodiesel)

- ..



Image: Vart Göteborg

Circular Economy: Forms of cooperation between local/regional authorities and the Social Economy

Financing:

⇒ diverse subsidies, grants (call for projects), loans, based partially also on EU funds (Cohesion Policy, LIFE, Horizon Europe...)

- Special Accreditation (e.g. Reuse in the Social Economy Accreditation in Wallonia)
- Green Procurement
- Experimentation/Training/Promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives:
   ⇒ Torino City Lab, Catalonia Circular Hub...
- Platforms (online)
- Awareness-raising
- Consultation/Co-construction of Policies







# (New) Opportunities

- National and local legislation,
   strategies&policies implementing the EU
   Circular Economy Package
- Regional Strategies for Sustainable Development
- Regional Strategies for Climate
- Regional Development Strategies
- Social Economy Development Strategies
- Strategies/Policies promoting the Green Economy
- Cohesion Policy-related Programmes ....





# Social Economy and Circular Economy: Main Challenges (I)

- Need for a **more coherent legislation** at the national and regional level
- Circular economy policies still seem to target mainly the 'mainstream' enterprises
- ⇒ Sectoral policies (with social economy being considered in its specific 'niche')
- Policy-makers falling into the green- and socialwashing trap
- Social economy is not present enough in the creation, implementation and monitoring of circular economy strategies and policies.
- Need for better communication towards social economy players regarding existing support mechanisms
- Financing: need for long-term guarantees maintained also in a context of political change



# Social Economy and Circular Economy: Main Challenges (II)

- Lack of an entrepreneurial culture on the side of social economybased community initiatives in the circular economy
- Innovation/changing existing processes (including cooperation with universities etc.)
- Opportunities and risks of online platforms ...
- Need for more collective action and creation of synergies between the social economy and other type of actors
- Awareness-raising and change of mentalities among policy-makers, (social economy) entrepreneurs, citizens...



- ... within the public authority
- ... regarding existing initiatives in my region/city







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## Key concepts and definitions

## **Social Economy:**

- "... the social economy covers entities sharing the following main common principles and features:
- the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit,
- the reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users ("collective interest") or society at large ("general interest") and
- democratic and/ or participatory governance."

EU Action Plan for the Social Economy

- Organisations set up collectively by a group of people
- Autonomy from the public sector

EMES, RESPONDET partners...





# European Policy Lab

« Social economy at the core of local/regional policies promoting green transition »

"Social Economy 2023 – Building a stronger and resilient Europe"

Gothenburg, 9 June 2023





The RESPONDET project: Co-designing policy initiatives for a social economy-driven community management of resources

# The RESPONDET project - Partners

- Generalitat de Catalunya Business and Labour Department (Leader)
- Confederation of Coopératives of Catalunya
- European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES aisbl)
- Service Public de Wallonie
- Concertation des organisations représentatives de l'économie sociale ConcertES
- Municipality of Turin
- Chamber of Commerce of Turin
- Malopolska Voivodship Regional Centre for Social Policy













### **RESPONDET – Main activities**



Peer learning missions

1: Community energy initiatives (Catalunya)

2: Circular economy (Wallonia)

3: Capacity-building (Małopolska)

4: New forms of cooperation/governance



Elaboration of local/regional action plans





Policy recommendations

Based on:

- Local Action Plans
- Inputs by (local) stakeholders
- European Webinar and Policy Lab

## Objective of the Policy Lab

 sharing experiences RESPONDET cities/regions made whilst drafting local action plans promoting the role of the social economy in green transition

#### and

 discuss possible solutions to challenges RESPONDET cities/regions have come across in this process or that they perceive for the implementation of planned actions





## Some general rules:

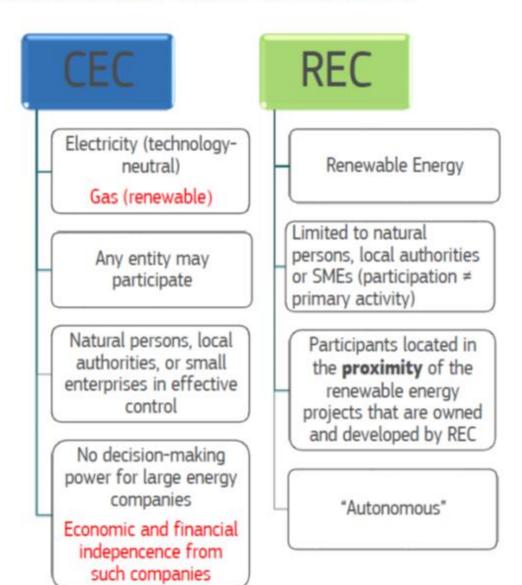
- Concentrating on local/regional policy-making and cooperation between the social economy and policy-makers
- EU policies: Topic of the final panel and our final webinar (14 September 2023)
- Going beyond a specific national context/problem



Picture: INTERREG Europe 2

Social Economy at the core of local development plans promoting community energy initiatives

### Differences between REC and CEC



# EU legislation opening doors...

- Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 (Art. 22)
- Electricity MarketDirective 2019/944 (Art. 16)
- European Solar Rooftop
   Initiative

- ...

# Legislation and policy framework: Opportunities and obstacles

### Legislation:

- Regions as frontrunners in the promotion of community energy initiatives and the development of a related regulatory framework (except for Poland)
- Legal uncertainties/missing legal framework at national level
- National/regional legislation imposing limits
- Challenge of incoherence between different pieces of legislation

#### **Policy framework:**

- Central role of and opportunity linked to the National Recovery and Resilience Plans
- Regional Strategies and Action Plans related to the topic of climate/energy or/and green transition (example Małopolska)
- Regional Strategies and Action Plans on the development of the social economy (example Wallonia, Catalunya)
- Individual financial support schemes (example Torino/Piedmont, Wallonia)

# Local/regional policies supporting community energy initiatives: Examples

- Start-up financing and administrative support for community energy initiatives (e.g. Piedmont region)
- Specific budget lines supporting social economy-based community energy initiatives and intercooperation (e.g. Catalonia, Wallonia)
- Public procurement (e.g. Wallonia)
- Capacity-building (e.g. Ateneus cooperatius in Catalonia, Energy Centre Politecnico di Torino; ...)
- Mobilisation/Creating eco-systems of support:
- ⇒ multi-stakeholder alliances such (e.g. Torino Social Impact)
- ⇒ awareness-raising and educational initiatives (e.g. Regional Education Centres in Poland)
- ⇒ local offices&observatories focusing on green transition and/or community energy initiatives
- ⇒ strategic plans for communication targeting also the field of renewable energy (example Wallonia)









### ... but also

- Intercooperation between local communities (example Piedmont Region)
- Pilot Energy Clusters in Poland (Virtual Green Powerplant Ochotnica)
- (Research) initiatives tackling energy poverty
- Federating community energy initiatives (example RESCOOP – Belgium)

• ...





# Social economy-based community energy initiatives: Main Challenges (I)

### **Inappropriate legal framework:**

- Lack and/or Incoherence of legislation
- Vagueness of definitions in legal texts (example: proximity criterion REC)
- (Rapidly) changing legislation to which initiatives have to adapt

### **Investment/Financing:**

- Very high investment necessary
- Lack of structural funding (heavy dependence of smaller initiatives on the work of volunteers)
- Risk of allocation of public funding rather to larger structures at the expense of smaller initiatives
- Lack of a specific business model adapted to the way REC operate

# Social economy-based community energy initiatives: Main Challenges (II)

### **Administrative aspects:**

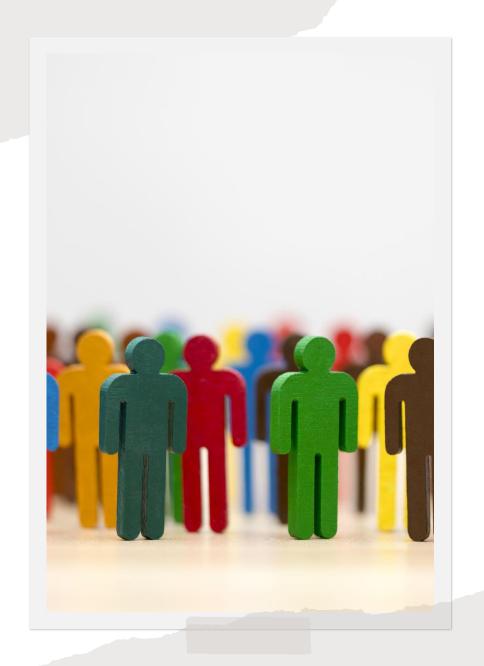
- Administrative burden
- Delays in the granting of permits, particularly for wind power, due to lack of time limits in procedures
- Lack of (administrative) capacities (to a large extent also linked to the lack of human resources)

#### **Mobilisation of citizens:**

- Difficulties, on the side of citizens, to understand the functioning of the electricity market and the functioning of installations for the generation/distribution/consumption of renewable energy
- Difficulty to mobilise citizens

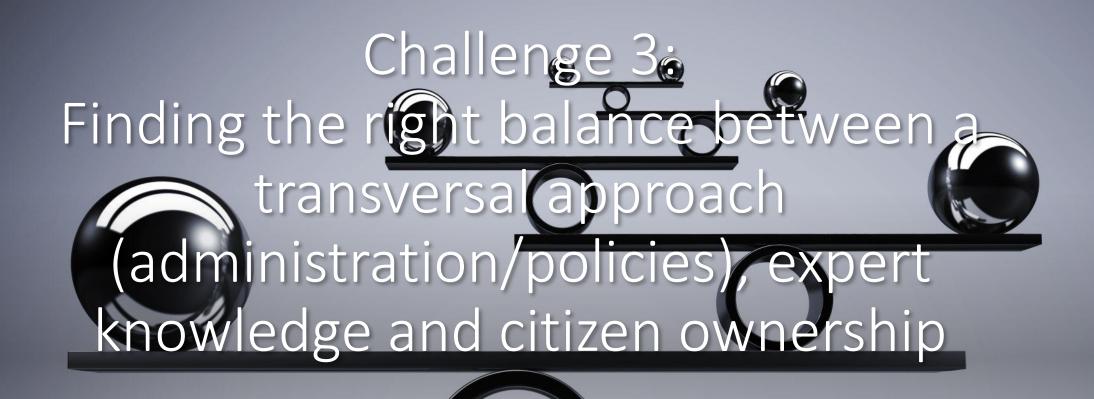
### **Attitudes of policy-makers:**

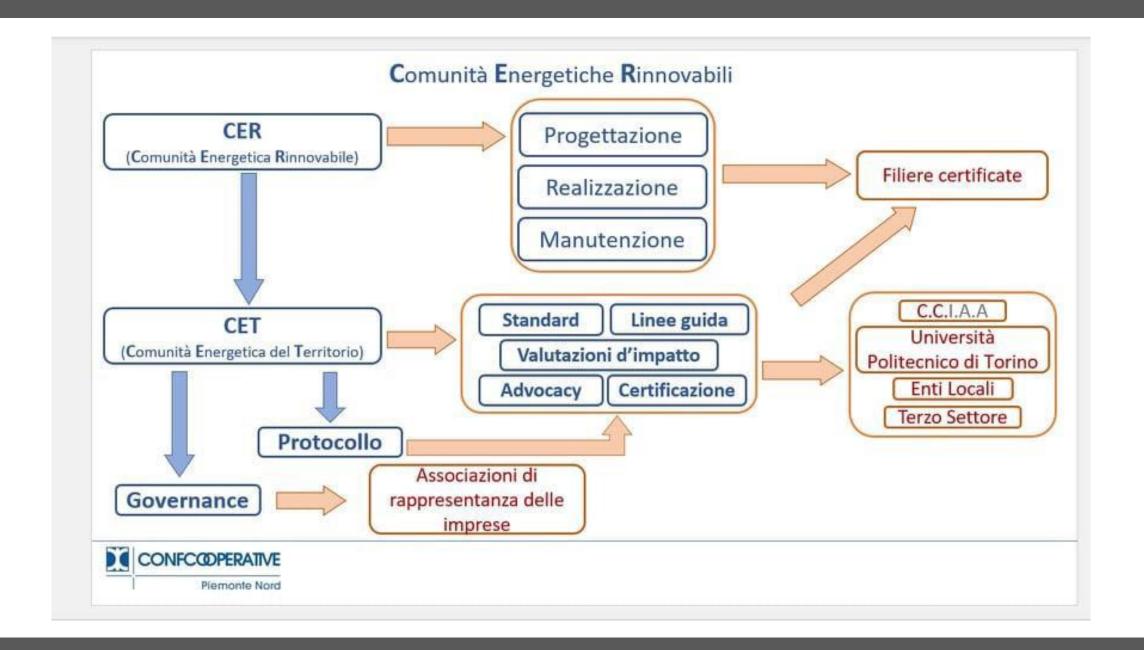
- Lack of political will and/or vision
- Fear to lose control













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