



RESPONDET  
REGIONAL SOCIAL ECONOMY POLICIES  
FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN  
ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSITION

## REgional Social economy POlicies for sustaiNable community-Driven Environmental Transition

RESPONDET Final publication – An insight into main project outputs



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## Introduction : The project RESPONDET - Regional Social economy POLicies for sustainAble community-Driven Environmental Transition

RESPONDET aimed to improve the capacity of local and regional policy-makers, public administration, social economy and civil society to jointly develop (policy) initiatives which would strengthen social economy-driven community management of resources. The latter is considered a main element of (socially) sustainable green transition processes and a fundament for the resilience of local communities. The project consortium had decided to focus specifically on social economy-based local energy community initiatives as well as the circular economy.

RESPONDET brought together the following regions/city and social economy organisations :

- 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

Several mission workshops and a European Policy Lab provided project partners with an opportunity to mutualise knowledge and experience, as well as to jointly think about possible solutions to a number of challenges when it comes to reinforcing the role of social economy-based community initiatives in green transition processes. At the same time, partners engaged a diversity of local stakeholders into a participatory co-construction process of what finally became local action plans for green transition recognising the important potential and role of the social economy in energy transition and circular economy.



With regard to the concept “social economy” RESPONDET partners refer to main elements contained in the European Action Plan for the Social Economy and the EMES definition:

- 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”) ;
- democratic and/ or participatory governance ;
- set up collectively by a group of people ;
- autonomy from the public sector.

This publication provides an insight into the different activities and outputs of the project.

The reader will find:

- A summary of the state of the art identified in RESPONDET partner regions and city, including main challenges with regard to the promotion of community energy initiatives, on one hand, and social economy-based circular economy, on the other
- Good practices from RESPONDET partner regions/city
- An insight into local/regional action plans developed by the project partners
- Final recommendations

## 1. Community Energy Initiatives – State of play and good practices in RESPONDET partner regions



*Picture: La Bordeta/Coopcat*



## 1.1 Renewable energy and community energy initiatives - a general state of play in RESPONDET partner regions

In background papers circulated some time ahead of the first mission workshop project partners provided a first insight into the state of play regarding renewable energy and related community energy initiatives in their country/region. The situation in the different partner countries still differs as regards the proportion and origin of Renewable Energy – the latter being due obviously also to specific (topographic) features of countries and regions:

	Proportion of Renewable Energies	Renewables - Sources
Catalonia	19,8 % (2020)	Hydroelectric energy (approx. 60%) and Wind energy (approx. 30%)
Wallonia	15,7 % (2022)	Wind energy (40%), biomass (32.3%), photovoltaic (22.1%), hydroelectric energy (5.6%)
Małopolska	12,6 % (electricity and heat), 5,5 % (transport)	Mainly hydroelectric energy and photovoltaic
City of Turin/Piedmont Region	Approx. 20%	Central role of hydroelectric energy: 66%

Source: Background papers RESPONDET partners

With regard to legislation promoting the creation of community energy initiatives (in the form of citizen energy communities – CEC - and/or renewable energy communities - REC) regions appear rather as frontrunners. An exception among the partner territories is Poland where main competences are situated at national level. In Belgium, legislative competences for the field of renewable energies are with the regions, which are currently implementing aforementioned EU directives that pave the way for citizen energy communities and renewable energy communities. Italian national legislation built on already existing regional legal provisions. In the case of Spain, regions such as Catalunya are forced to ‘experiment’ and develop own provisions, due to the absence of national legislation implementing European directives and/or legal uncertainties. Challenges reported by partners relate, for example, to limits imposed by national and/or regional legislation (e.g. the proximity criterion for renewable energy communities) or to an incoherence of legislation regarding renewable energies and/or the electricity market and legal provisions in other fields such as enterprise.

When it comes to the policy framework promoting community energy initiatives, partners in all regions/countries seem to perceive measures on the promotion of renewable energy (including sometimes explicitly also the creation of community energy initiatives) in National Recovery and Resilience Plans as a main opportunity. Support is also provided in Strategies and Action Plans related to the topic of climate/energy or/and green transition (example Małopolska) or Strategies promoting

the development of the social economy, which also include provisions on the stimulation of social economy-based community energy projects (example Wallonia, Catalonia). In addition, some partners (e.g. Turin, Piedmont Region) mention individual financial support measures.

Differences between RESPONDET partner regions can be observed with regard to existing *practices* of community energy initiatives and their state of development:

In Catalunya, with the exception of Som Energia, these initiatives are rather recent. Social economy/citizen-led projects are often still in a stage of infancy and take mainly the form of cooperatives. A not insignificant obstacle to their development, however, is the lack of an appropriate legal framework.

In Poland and Małopolska, community-based energy cooperatives and energy clusters are emerging and promoted in the framework of recent legislation and policies linked to recovery, green and just transition.

The creation of community energy initiatives in Piedmont Region/Turin is also rather recent. Most often, these initiatives are launched by local communities (groups of citizens) in cooperation with local authorities. They might also include associations or cooperatives – however, in the view of RESPONDET partners from Torino, existing social economy organisations are for the moment less considered a driving force.

In Wallonia, a certain number of social economy-based community energy initiatives (citizen energy cooperatives, associations, ...) in the field of renewable energy have existed for a number of years already. Social economy is seen as a central player in their development, including mobilization of citizens and local communities.

In all partner regions, existing community energy initiatives are financed mainly with the help of public subsidies/grants in combination with own income. Some initiatives also mobilise membership fees, which have to be considered, however, rather insignificant. Structural public financing of community energy initiatives does not seem to exist in any of the partner regions.

Partners in different regions seem to perceive often similar challenges for the development of community energy initiatives:

<b>Attitude of policy-makers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of political will</li> <li>- Fear of losing control</li> </ul>
<b>Inappropriate legal framework and/or legal uncertainties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of conceptualisation of the term « community energy initiative »</li> <li>- Lack and/or Incoherence of legislation</li> <li>- (Rapidly) changing legislation to which initiatives have to adapt</li> <li>- Wallonia: Risk of exclusion of initiatives such as citizen energy cooperatives from being recognized as REC due to vagueness of definitions in legislation (example proximity criterion)</li> </ul>
<b>Investment/Financing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very high investments necessary</li> <li>- Lack of structural funding (heavy dependence of smaller initiatives on the work of volunteers)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risk of allocation of public funding rather to larger structures at the expense of smaller initiatives</li> <li>- Lack of a specific business model adapted to the way REC operate</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative aspects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Administrative burden</li> <li>- Delays in the granting of permits, particularly for wind power, due to lack of time limits in procedures</li> <li>- Lack of (administrative) capacities (to a large extent also linked to the lack of human resources)</li> </ul>
<b>Mobilisation of citizens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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</li> <li>- Difficulty to mobilise citizens in general</li> </ul>

## 1.2 Community Energy Initiatives - Best practices from RESPONDET partner territories

### Region of Catalonia: Community Energy Initiative of La Bordeta

The Comunitat Energètica de La Bordeta was born in the district of Sants-Montjuïc in 2022 to respond to global energy challenges from a local perspective, empowering the neighbourhood and providing it with transformative tools. The association was founded by two housing cooperatives (La Diversa and La Borda), a small business (l'Economat Social) and a public facility (La Lleialtat Santsenca). With the technical support of Batec, the project has obtained financial support from the Barcelona City Council through grants and an agreement with the Energy Agency, as well as from the Ministry of Ecological Transition, through the CE Implementa programme.

More information: <https://comunitatbordeta.batec.coop/>

### Region of Catalonia: Application “Som comunitat energètica”

The Catalan cooperative Ciclica - in cooperation with the Catalan Energy Research Institute and other (social economy) players as well as with the support of the region of Catalunya – developed the application “Som comunitat energètica”. “Som comunitat energètica” provides citizens with a possibility to assess the potential of their own residential building and living environment with regard to the generation of photovoltaic energy, but also to find out about existing community energy initiatives in their surroundings. Moreover, citizens willing to establish a community energy initiative or to join an existing one can find, through the application, an overview of important contacts, advisory services and other potential support as well as providers (e.g. of photovoltaic panels) in their proximity.

More information: <https://somcomunitatenergetica.cat/>

## **Region of Catalonia: Cooperation between social economy and lawyers**

An interesting example for multi-stakeholder cooperation in strengthening the capacity of citizens and social economy to set up and run social economy-based community energy initiatives are the 'cooperative cafés' and other initiatives developed by the Social Economy Section of the Illustrious Advocacy Association of Barcelona in collaboration with the Catalan Confederation of Cooperatives CoopCat.

More information: <https://www.icab.es/en/formacion/course/1r-Cafe-Cooperativo-Las-comunidades-energeticas-y-las->

## **Region of Catalonia: Inter-cooperation between social economy entities on green transition**

In the Region of Catalonia cooperatives and other social economy entities work together on the elaboration of strategies in front of a common problem, such as "Cooperative Pole for the Energy Transition" or "EPlural".

In September 2023, 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 was born as a result of the process of inter-cooperation generated between different Catalan stakeholders that took part in transnational missions of the RESPONDET project.

More information: <https://cooperativesagrarias.cat/ca/noticies/2900-la-fcac-i-som-energia-inicien-una-collaboraci.html>

## **Brussels-Capital Region (BE): PMO Nos Bambins project (Ganshoren)**

"PMO Nos Bambins" has the mission to facilitate electricity sharing between neighbours in Ganshoren. Since 2020, the first energy-sharing pilot has started around the Nos Bambins school. Its objective was to create a renewable energy community (in the form of a non-profit association 'ASBL') by 15 residents of the school neighbourhood and the municipality of Ganshoren. This pilot project is a good example of an energy community in which energy sharing at local level is functional.

The initiative is financed by Brussels Environment, Sibelga (the Brussels electricity network manager) and has been granted a derogation by Brugel (the Brussels energy regulator).

More information: <https://nosbambins.be/>

## **Wallonia Region (BE): SOCCER project (Verviers, Ans and Chapelle-lez-Herlaimont)**

The SOCCER project ('socio-economics of renewable energy communities') relies on a living laboratory to develop a guide of good citizen practices and identify key success factors for stakeholders (public authorities, citizens, companies, associative and non-profit sector) to set up inclusive Renewable Energy Communities (REC) and shared mobility. In the city of Ans, the project consists of developing a CER including a social housing company. A photovoltaic installation of about 1 MWp will be installed on a public building and will partly supply the 350 social housing units nearby. The project lasts for a 3 years period (2021-2024). The total budget is €1,264,767.04, from which about 80% is financed by the Walloon Region.

The project consortium is composed of a panel of complementary partners including the academic world (the UMONS and UCLouvain universities), the world of small and large companies (ELIOSYS and ORES), the associative sector (Cluster TWEED and APERE), the public sector (SLP and the sponsoring municipalities) and the research world (CRM).

More information: <https://energie.wallonie.be/servlet/Repository/soccer.pdf?ID=61948>

#### **Wallonia Region (BE): Investments by a specific public investment agency**

The Walloon Government has provided the public investment agency W.Alter, set up specifically to support the social economy, with a budget to support Walloon cooperative projects in their green transition and in short circuit. The proposed financial solution consists in an investment by W.Alter in the enterprise's patient capital (for a minimum period of 5 years and a maximum of 10 years investment).

<https://www.w-alter.be>

#### **Małopolska Region (PL): Virtual Green Powerplant Ochotnica (WZE Ochotnica)**

The Virtual Green Powerplant Ochotnica is a cluster coordinated by the municipality Ochotnica Dolna. The members of the cluster are inhabitants using renewable energy sources, organizational entities of the Ochotnica municipality, Tauron Distribution S.A., Green Podhale Cluster (as an advisory body). Energy produced by the cluster is consumed by the inhabitants and self-government and the surplus of energy is stored e.g. in electric vehicles. The initiative led already to the creation of 726 installations. The actions that are planned to take place include, at a first stage, PV installation on 15 public utility buildings, the creation of an electric vehicle supply station and a biogas plant at the sewage treatment plant in Tylmanowa as well as the monitoring of the existing renewable energy sources. At a second stage, the cluster plans to install a biogas plant on a public building, several micro-installations on dwelling houses, the replacement of street lighting lamps, the creation of three photovoltaic farms as well as the establishment of four charging stations to be located in touristic places. At a third stage a network of small water plants will be built. Moreover, so-called pilot objects where heating with electric energy and heat pumps will be installed will be identified and an agricultural biogas plant will be set up. The cluster has received a certificate of a pilot energy cluster from the Ministry of Energy.

#### **Piedmont Region - Municipality of Magliano Alpi (IT): Local network for the collective and democratic production of energy the use of renewable sources**

The Municipality of Magliano Alpi, with about 2100 inhabitants, has launched a local network for the collective and democratic production of energy through the use of renewable sources, combining attention to the environment, citizens' active involvement, care for the territory and economic savings. This is the first example of a renewable energy community in Italy. The project is spreading fast inside the local community, and an increasing number of citizens are asking to take part in it.

The City has installed photovoltaic panels directly on the roof of the municipal center, producing energy that is shared with the other members (families and local economic entities).

The Community has been supported by the Energy Center of the Politecnico di Torino, with which a path to enable citizens to implement the new shared energy resource management model was defined.

### **City of Turin/Piedmont Region (IT): COSMO project**

The COSMO project is promoted by CAST (Centro per un Appropriato Sviluppo Tecnologico), a NGO from Piedmont Region and a consortium of local municipalities in the Verbania area.

It intends to create a training/action path that increases the skills and competences of the local community - starting from the municipalities of Besozzo, Laveno Mombello, Luino and Travedona Monate as promoters on the territory of Agenda 21 Laghi and the Valli del Verbano Mountain Community - in the establishment of Renewable Energy Communities, the management of an Observatory on energy efficiency in public and private buildings and an energy consumption monitoring system.

The structure of the project envisages the participation of public officials, individual and associated private citizens and companies in training courses based on the principles of cooperative learning, so that at the end of the specialists' intervention, the communities trained can in turn replicate and disseminate their knowledge and experience to other emerging communities.

### **Piedmont Region (IT): Protocole for the development of citizen community initiatives**

Third sector organisations, public authorities, universities and players active in the development of citizen energy initiatives in the Piedmont region are currently working on the establishment of an alliance and protocol around citizen energy initiatives. The objective is to ensure a common vision – linked to the development of the region as a whole and to the pursuit of community interest and related principles – as well as to develop services and communities able to accompany the creation of new citizen energy initiatives. Also, service providers that will engage with citizen community initiatives in Piedmont will have to adhere to the protocol and therewith confirm also their respect of the ethical principles it stipulates.

### **Piedmont Region (IT) : Dialogue table**

The Chamber of Commerce of Turin is promoting the establishment of a dialogue table which should bring together community energy initiatives as well as local and regional public authorities to discuss together ways to facilitate the creation of community energy initiatives in the Piedmont Region.

## 2. Circular Economy – State of play and good practices in RESPONDET partner regions



## 2.1 Circular economy and the role of social economy – general state of play in RESPONDET partner regions

In background papers RESPONDET partners had shared information on main policies and (social economy-driven) practices regarding the circular economy in their region/city.

### Legislative and policy framework

In legislation and policies mentioned by RESPONDET partners the impact of the European policy framework with the different EU Action Plans for the Circular Economy, the European Green Deal and various related measures is clearly visible. However, some Member States and regions also continue to further develop relevant legislative and policy initiatives they had launched before – sometimes independently of indications from the European level. This also includes the integration of circular economy-related measures in other strategies and policies which are not directly referring to the topic (e.g. promotion of the social economy, regional development, policies promoting digital transition ...).

	Directly topic-related policies	Other related policies
<b>Wallonia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Circular Economy Roadmap 2021-2024</li> <li>- Circular Wallonia Strategy (including references to other already existing policies, such as the Walloon Waste Resources Plan of 2018)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walloon Government Recovery Plan 2021-2024</li> <li>- Alternativ'ES Wallonia</li> <li>- Digital Wallonia Strategic Plan</li> </ul>
<b>Catalonia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spanish Circular Economy Strategy 2030</li> <li>- Spanish Circular Economy Action Plan</li> <li>- PERTE (Strategic Project for Economic Recovery and Transformation) Circular Economy</li> <li>- Strategy for the Green Economy and the Circular Economy</li> <li>- Catalan Eco-Design strategy for a circular and eco-innovative economy</li> <li>- Prevention and Management of Waste and Resources Programme of Catalunya</li> <li>- Pact for Industry and Circular Economy 2022-2025</li> </ul>	
<b>Małopolska</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Responsible Development Strategy</li> <li>⇒ National Roadmap towards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Productivity Strategy 2030</li> </ul>



	the transition to circular economy - Regional Development Strategy Małopolska 2030 - Regional Action Plan for Climate and Energy - Resolution launching the current drafting of the « Programme of the Circular Economy in Małopolska » - ecoMałopolska - Declaration « Małopolska free of plastic »	- National Social Economy Development Programme - Regional Social Economy Development Programme
<b>Municipality of Torino/Piedmont region</b>	- National law on environmental provisions to promote green economy measures and curb the excessive use of natural resources (2015) - Legislative decrees implementing the EU Circular Economy Package (national level) - Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development	

Source: Background papers of RESPONDET partners

Nevertheless, the state of the art in RESPONDET partner regions shows also that the existence of a more or less developed legislative and policy framework focusing on the circular economy is not a guarantee for an appropriate policy support regarding the development of *social economy initiatives* in this field. Contrary to what is sometimes erroneously claimed: By far not all circular economy initiatives are social economy (see definition in chapter 1.).

Linking other type of legislation or policy initiatives (if existent) to policies regarding the circular economy might to a certain extent compensate for, but not fully remedy the lack of reference specifically to the social economy in the latter.

Furthermore, the experience of RESPONDET partners shows that also the institutional framework in which policies for the circular economy are developed and implemented has often a significant impact on opportunities and support specifically for the social economy. Partners from a region in which the responsibility for the topic lies mainly with the Ministry for Economy (which, in this specific case is not in charge of social economy-related policies) report policies addressing mainly ‘traditional’ enterprises without necessarily taking into account the added value of social economy initiatives and their specific needs.

## **Social Economy in the Circular Economy**

Experiences shared by RESPONDET partners in their background papers illustrate the role social economy – as a pioneer also in the circular economy - already has in the circular economy as well as its enormous potential regarding different fields of activity and product value chains. As for the latter, activities focus mainly on textiles, food/nutrients, plastics, electronics and IT, but also construction materials or wood and glass.

Social economy organizations, but also smaller and less formalized community initiatives following social economy principles often concentrate on a) the collection of waste (and partially also waste management); b) repair and reuse; c) recycling or/and d) upcycling. In some cases – particularly, but not exclusively where a cooperation between social economy and other players such as universities/research entities exists – social economy also contributes to the development of new products and processes linked to the circular economy. It therewith proves its innovation potential which, combined with its additional social added value, goes, however, beyond mere technological innovation.

The aforementioned type of activities are often coupled with additional ones, linked, for example, to the objectives to create employment – also, though not exclusively for those finding themselves far from the labour market - and/or fight social exclusion.

Moreover, social economy organisations and related community initiatives play an important role when it comes to carrying out awareness-raising and educational activities targeting different parts of the population (including disadvantaged groups) and age groups. The objective here is to convey the principles of the circular economy to citizens, encourage persons to adopt ‘circular practices’, make relevant local/regional initiatives better visible and prevent waste.

Likewise, social economy initiatives have also been set up to offer advice to citizens regarding circular practices in different fields (including textiles and food, but also construction etc.).

RESPONDET partners also shared a number of social economy-related community initiatives aiming to connect different type of stakeholders (citizens, initiatives in the circular economy, other social economy enterprises, public authorities, traditional SMEs, researchers, civil society and others) with the objective to promote cooperation around the circular economy (including green public or private procurement).

Finally, several social economy entities such as federations of social economy enterprises working in the circular economy or other type of social economy-related platforms – also provide an important contribution to dialogue with policy-makers and the development of public strategies, policies and programmes.

## **Circular Economy : Cooperation between public authorities and the social economy**

In RESPONDET partner territories cooperation between local/regional authorities and social economy-driven initiatives in the circular economy may take different forms.

Some regions make subsidies (partially, but not exclusively also linked to work integration activities) available. These might also be linked to a specific accreditation (e.g. Reuse in the Social Economy Accreditation in Wallonia).

Social economy initiatives in the circular economy might also receive grants based on call for projects or loans. This is partially, but not exclusively, made possible through the mobilisation, through public authorities, of EU funding (e.g. Cohesion Policy-related funding, funding related to Recovery and Resilience Plans, LIFE programme, Horizon Europe programme, ...).

Several partner regions also practice green procurement – sometimes linked with social clauses/criteria - in the framework of which cooperation with social economy entities working in the circular economy is made possible.

Public initiatives - partially created in partnership with social economy organisations, amongst others - such as the Torino City Lab or the Catalonia Circular Hub have the objective to promote experimentation, training and the development of entrepreneurial initiatives in the field of the circular economy, opening also opportunities for the social economy.

Public authorities, in cooperation with the social economy, civil society and other players, have also been involved in the creation of digital tools such as online platforms and apps which have the objective to connect different players (citizens, social economy and other type of enterprises, public authorities, civil society, universities and others) in order to strengthen circular economy approaches. In addition, social economy and related community initiatives in all RESPONDET partner regions are an important partner for public authorities when it comes to raising the awareness of the local/regional population on the importance of circular economy approaches and on relevant projects at local/regional level.

With regard to the co-construction of policies in the field of the circular economy and/or related processes of consultation, much could probably still be done in RESPONDET partner regions and elsewhere to better involve social economy players. In two RESPONDET partner regions Councils that were set up specifically to accompany the development of policies related to the circular economy (Wallonia) or other related topics (Małopolska) include representatives of the local/regional social economy sector. However, despite this fact, the general impression in RESPONDET partner regions is still that social economy actors are consulted mostly in a sporadic and indirect manner when it comes to the development of policies regarding the circular economy.

### **Social Economy and Circular Economy: Main challenges**

Social economy has been a pioneer (even though this is not always recognized) in the development of the circular economy and its initiatives in this field are continuously increasing. Public authorities – due probably also to the momentum social economy has currently gained at European level and in different Member States in general – become more aware of the potential and added value of social economy. However, social economy organisations and other type of initiatives in the circular economy which are based on social economy-related values are still facing a number of obstacles and related challenges. In their background papers, RESPONDET partners mentioned in particular the following:

<b>Legislation</b>	- Need for more binding EU legislation in the field of circular economy which would oblige Member States and regions to act and further adapt their legislative framework
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	- Need for a more coherent legislative framework at the national (and regional) level
<b>Policy framework and policy development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policies linked to the circular economy still seem to target mainly the 'mainstream' enterprises</li> <li>- Sectoral policies (with social economy being considered in its specific 'niche')</li> <li>⇒ Need for more transversal, less sector-oriented policies integrating both the social economy and other type of enterprises</li> <li>- Need to (better) involve the social economy in the creation, implementation and monitoring of circular economy strategies and policies</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need for more communication towards social economy players informing them about opportunities to become active in the circular economy and/or have (better) access to existing support mechanisms</li> <li>- Lack of an entrepreneurial culture</li> <li>- Lost opportunities with emerging online platforms that do not take into account the additional value of the social economy</li> </ul>
<b>Financing</b>	- Need for long-term guarantees maintained also in a context of political change (e.g. through « framework measures »)
<b>Innovation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possible lack of cooperation with other type of players</li> <li>- Lack of time, skills, investments and human resources</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperation</b>	- Necessary: creation of stronger synergies between the social economy and other type of actors – need for more collective action and partnership
<b>Mindsets</b>	- Fundamental: Awareness-raising and change of mentalities among policy-makers, (social economy) entrepreneurs, citizens...

## 2.2 Good practices - Best practices from RESPONDET partner territories

### Region of Catalonia: Financial support to (social economy-based) circular economy

The General Directorate of Social and Solidarity Economy, the Third Sector and Cooperatives has established the subsidy line "Unique Projects aiming to generate employment through the creation of new business projects, new lines of business, new companies, new markets, within the framework of the social and cooperative economy and taking advantage of strategic opportunities in the activity

sector itself, or in the territory". In this context, it financed also 12 projects related to the circular economy, which were selected for the alliance between cooperatives and other entities of the social and solidarity economy.

The Catalan Institute of Finance (ICF) has financed several green and circular economy projects in recent months for an amount of €18.3M. It has opened the "ICF EcoVerda " loan line, promoted jointly with the Department of Territory and Sustainability of the Generalitat of Catalonia, to make sustainable and socially responsible investments.

### **Wallonia Region (BE): Circular Wallonia Strategy**

The Circular Wallonia Strategy (budget of more than 200 million EUR) articulates and completes several already existing plans and policy initiatives with the aim of strengthening and amplifying the regional dynamic and responding to the triple ambition - social, economic and ecological - set out in the Regional Policy Declaration (DPR).

Other plans and strategies of the Region which already (co-)existed and which the Strategy seeks to integrate in a more comprehensive vision address certain facets of the circular economy. Examples are the Smart Specialisation Strategy, the long-term strategy for the energy renovation of buildings, the Employment-Environment Alliance, and the Walloon strategy to support the development of the social economy Alternativ'ES. Circular Wallonia aims to be consistent with these other strategic documents, and intends to coordinate, reinforce and increase the regional dynamic in circular economy.

A Circular Wallonia Coordination Cell organised jointly by the SPW EER Economic Policy Directorate and the General Secretariat Sustainable Development Directorate was created to stimulate cooperation and initiatives of different public and private stakeholders.

A Circular Economy Council has also been set up which involves business and academic stakeholders, including a representative from the social economy. Its role is to issue opinions on the actions implemented and to propose complementary actions.

One of the two types of official waste management schemes in Wallonia is a structural reuse scheme implemented through the "Reuse in the social economy" accreditation (currently under review). Non-profit associations and social enterprises which operate in the field of reuse and related activities have the possibility to receive subsidies, as long as they fulfill certain criteria (based, amongst others, on social economy principles and criteria, including also aspects such as wage differences etc.).

More information: <https://economiecirculaire.wallonie.be/fr>

### **Wallonia Region (BE): Labels to provide recognition to circular economy following social economy principles**

Two labels which recognize and provide visibility to the combination of a circular economy approach following quality objectives and social economy principles were developed by the RESSOURCES federation (see previous example). They are implemented by the latter in cooperation with the Wallonia Region.

The Rec'Up label defines organisational criteria that guarantee the quality of products and services offered by social economy enterprises active in the collection, sorting, reuse, recovery and recycling of goods. Rec'Up labelled companies are part of a global approach to continuous improvement, which is economic, environmental and social. The label is a support tool in particular for public authorities

which grant financial support to reuse-related activities (with financing made available for each ton of waste converted for reuse).

The Solid'R label was set up to provide a better visibility to organisations in the reuse and recovery sector which apply ethical and solidarity-based principles in their daily work. It is supposed to attract the especially the attention of citizens on main features that distinguish these organisations from an increasing number of pseudo-social initiatives that appeared in the reuse sector (danger of social and green washing).

More information:

<https://www.res-sources.be/fr/recup/>

<https://www.res-sources.be/fr/solidrweb/>

### **Wallonia Region (BE): Calls for projects addressing social economy initiatives in the circular economy**

The Regional call for projects 'Go Circular' (SPW Sustainable Development; budget: 1 Million €) allocates funding for projects led by start-ups and small project leaders. It is, however, especially open to associations and cooperatives and addresses all sectors combined (products and services). Three types of projects are financed: new circular economy projects (max. 80,000 per company); the transformation of an existing activity towards a circular economy (max. €80,000 per company); ambitious circular purchasing projects (max. €20,000 per company).

The Call for projects 'Reuse' (PRW - SPW ARNE), launched by the SPW Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, provides financing for projects that will contribute to increase the volumes of reused goods and/or improve the readiness for reuse in Wallonia (e.g. projects that develop collection for reuse and/or stimulate the demand for reused goods through the development of sales points). This call is addressed to Walloon social enterprises and CPAS. Budget: min. 3.000€ and max. 25.000€ per project.

More information:

<https://economiecirculaire.wallonie.be/appels-projets/go-circular>

<https://www.wallonie.be/fr/demarches/participer-lappel-projets-reutilisation>

### **Małopolska Region (PL): Małopolska 2030 Strategy/Council for ecoMałopolska**

The Regional Social Economy Development Programme, adopted in 2021, serves as an operational and implementation programme for the Development Strategy "Małopolska 2030". Among the crucial trends for social economy development in Małopolska that have been indicated in the document are also conscious consumerism, circular economy and climate change.

In 2019 the Board of the Małopolska Region established a Council for its ecoMałopolska strategy. The opinion of the Council is crucial for the regional Board when preparing programs and development strategies in terms of air protection, which also include initiatives related to the circular economy. The members of the Council are representatives of varied institutions – entrepreneurs, universities, self-governments and non-governmental organizations. The Council for ecoMałopolska is responsible for providing advice regarding, for example, the regional action plan for air protection, strategic documents such as Air protection strategic program, Air protection strategic program, the regional Waste Management Plan or the regional Action Plan for Climate and Energy. It will also give opinions on eco-initiatives – ideas and eco-friendly solutions provided by citizens.

More information: <https://raport.togetair.eu/human/regional-policy/ecomalopolska-we-care-about-the-environment>



### **Wallonia Region (BE): Data platform regarding social economy initiatives in the circular economy**

The Walloon Federation of social economy enterprises active in the circular economy Ressources developed a digital system which has the purpose to collect information on the different reuse-related activities of member organisations. Beside providing an important monitoring and reporting tool in the context also of labels such as Rec'UP and Solidar, the system represents an important instrument for the (joint) planning and management of reuse activities by the members of the association.

The Region of Wallonia envisages to further strengthen the potential of this type of platforms in the framework of its Circular Wallonia and Digital Wallonia Strategies.

### **Małopolska Region (PL): Nowohucka zero waste map**

Created by citizens of the Nowa Huta district in Cracow, who are also members of the Polish Association Zero Waste, the Nowohucka Zero Waste Map encourages the inhabitants of the district to avoid waste.

The map presents public utility points such as shops and service points that can be reached within a 10 minutes walking distance. The Public Transport Board – a municipal entity, supports it by providing three publicity boards in three different spots on which the Map is visible. The idea is to promote a “go local life style” where citizens use their own bags, boxes, cups and visit service points located nearby. The main aim of the project is limiting waste such as plastic bags, food boxes, coffee cups that become trashes soon after being bought. In 2019 the project was awarded the 3rd place in the Climathone initiative in terms of mobility and zero emission. It is a good example of cooperation between public administration and a social economy entity.

More information: <https://zero-waste.pl/nowohucka-mapa-zero-waste-krakowianie-badzcie-blisko/>

### **Małopolska Region (PL): Bank of ideas and best practices**

The ecoMałopolska initiative, launched by the region, has, amongst others, the objective to create a bank of good ideas and best practices. In this framework, citizens, NGOs, entrepreneurs and experts are going to be involved in the process of co-creating regional policies in terms of air environmental protection and concrete solutions, which also include circular economy practices. The best initiatives will be taken into consideration for implementation and receive financial support.

In addition, other financial instruments such as a small grants programme, an open call for proposals for civil society organisations, including the social economy and civic budget will be activated.

### **Małopolska Region (PL): Cooperation with the social economy in the field of awareness-raising and education**

Social economy organizations cooperate with the Marshal's Office of the Małopolska Region – a regional public administration – in the field of eco-education, including education regarding circular (economy) practices. The Regional Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Economy organizes an ecological education contest in which social economy may take part and then educate children at schools.

In addition, a specific public service was established which encourages cooperation between larger mainstream enterprises and the social economy in the field of waste management. Big companies produce a lot of waste and small organizations may use it for recycling or upcycling giving them a second loop (e.g. producing bags from old banners).

### **Małopolska Region/City of Cracow (PL): Foodsharing Initiatives**

Taking inspiration from initiatives in other EU Member States and other regions, an increasing number of foodsharing points have opened in the Polish city of Cracow since 2016. Citizens and organisations/enterprises are invited to bring surplus of still eatable food they might not be able to use to solidarity fridges which have been established in public places. Any person in need of food may then serve herself/himself. Most of the initiatives have been founded by groups of citizens – volunteers which also maintain the points (fridges) – partially also in cooperation with municipalities and a church which may provide locations and other type of support. Next to public authorities, foodsharing groups also cooperate with enterprises, NGOs, schools and other actors in keeping the initiative alive and mobilizing the local population. Local fair share points have also been created virtually, using social media.

More information : <https://www.facebook.com/foodsharing.krakow>

### **Belgium/France/Spain/Italy: TESS European Economic Interest Grouping**

Since 2016, TESS-European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) has brought together European Social Economy actors from different EU Member States (Belgium, Spain, France and Italy) and has the following missions: 1) to address the challenges of the textile industry related to the circularity of resources; 2) to guarantee the ethics and transparency of the textile, household linen, footwear and leather goods recovery chain. The objective of TESS is to reach a sufficiently large critical size (annual objective: 100,000 tons of collected and reused clothing) to compete with the large brands or private chains that engage in the reuse of textiles without respecting the values of the social economy (for example, H&M, which organizes clothing collections in its Belgian stores but exports the collected goods to be processed in Berlin). TESS is notably working with a law firm to examine what room for manoeuvre and directions to take at the European level.

More information: <https://tess-geie.eu/fr>

### **Municipality of Torino (IT): Mercato Circolare**

This start-up with a social vocation, which works also in close cooperation with the municipality of Torino, creates digital and cultural connections between citizens, companies, associations and institutions within the circular economy ecosystem. It develops different innovative cross-media services and tools such as:

- Mercato Circolare App that creates B2B and B2C connections, promotes circular business products and services, allows the user to purchase circular goods and services near her/him or online, makes interactive and competent information on circular practices accessible.
- Training aimed at companies, institutions, schools or people, from educational and cultural events to serious games on the theme of the circular economy.
- Consulting and networking opportunities to accompany companies and institutions in the

circular and sustainable transition.

- Research and documentation in partnership with universities and research centers active in the field of the circular economy.

More information: <https://www.mercatocircolare.it/fr/home-francais/>

### **Municipality of Torino (IT): Experimentation Edilizia Circolare**

The City Lab of the City of Turin was created as a Living Lab to promote the development and testing of innovative solutions to challenges the city and its inhabitants are facing. It also serves as a vehicle to stimulate cooperation among different actors – economic players, researchers, citizens, public authorities ... “Green, climate resilience and circular economy” is one of the four priorities which the City Lab follows currently.

In this context, the project Edilizia Circolare came into being which applies the concept of reuse and recycling in the construction industry. The aim is to give life to a new way of approaching construction, following criteria of sustainability, originality and quality, promoting the conversion of material, intellectual and manual resources towards alternative architecture and design projects.

The final product of the experimentation will be the restyling of a space entrusted in concession by the City of Turin to the Cooperative Social Paradigma, which will host a cafeteria for members and new laboratories.

Many partners collaborate in the project, ranging from public authorities, academics from the Politecnico di Torino, architects, craftsmen, graduate students, cultural associations and other social economy players. Potentially reusable materials will be donated by citizens, companies and local artisans, to be then transformed and come back to life in new furniture and finishes. Throughout the course of the action workshops and focus groups for professionals and for fans of do-it-yourself will be organised.

The involvement of the Lingotto and Mirafiori Sud districts of the city is fundamental and made possible thanks to the support of Paradigma Cooperativa sociale, Associazione Tablò, Casa nel Parco and Associazione Bene Comune. They are fundamental in mobilising craftsmen, businesses and local inhabitants with the aim of promoting social cohesion through training and exchange, as well as a sense of responsibility and solidarity through neighbourhood projects.

More information: <https://www.torinocitylab.it/en/edilizia-circolare>

### 3. Local Action Plans – Abstracts



**Introduction:**

The local action plans developed by the partners of the RESPONDET project were conceived on the basis of several elements.

**Transnational exchange:** Important input for the plans was generated by four transnational “mission workshops” (Barcelona, Namur, Krakow, Turin) and a European Policy Lab (Gothenburg) which provided an opportunity to exchange on existing legal and policy frameworks, good and bad practice as well as challenges and their possible solutions. Point of departure of the workshops were background papers prepared by each local partnership several weeks ahead of the meeting. Partners had decided to specifically focus on two themes related to green and social transition: community energy initiatives and circular economy. Both were discussed in a dedicated workshop. The third and fourth mission workshop provided the opportunity to deepen related ‘transversal’ topics, namely “Capacity-building” and “New forms of cooperation and governance”.

**Methodological guidance:** Partners jointly elaborated a guiding matrix for the development of the local action plans and the related co-construction process with local stakeholders.

**Participatory Co-design process at local level:** For the whole duration of the project and the design of the local action plans, RESPONDET partners regions/city have been working in close cooperation with local/regional social economy organisations, civil society, universities and other partners. Three social economy organisations were official project partners. Other actors were involved through local meetings, local events, webinars and surveys. Several local stakeholders also had the opportunity to take part in the transnational missions and the European Policy Lab.

All local action plans have been written in the language of the respective partner region/city. Hereafter, the reader can find a short summary of all action plans in English.

The full version of the plans in original language can be found here:

<https://www.revesnetwork.eu/project/respondet/>

### 3.1 Action Plan for the development of Energy Communities in cooperative form in Catalonia



*Inter-cooperation: Signature of a collaboration agreement between Som energia cooperative and Catalan agricultural cooperatives (Picture: Som energia)*

#### Context

The climate crisis is a reality that poses ecological, social and economic challenges at a global level. Responding to these multidimensional challenges requires a paradigm shift and a new model that puts citizens and environmental criteria at the center.

#### Current framework

From Catalonia, within the framework of the European project RESPONDET, an Action Plan has been drawn up for the development of Energy Communities in a cooperative manner in Catalonia. A plan that has as its general objective the structuring of a framework for the promotion of actions in terms of legislation, financing, training and mobilization that leads to the promotion and consolidation of the Energy Communities model of the Social and Solidarity Economy as a response to the sustainability challenges we face as a society.

The European project Respond (Regional Social Economy Policies for Sustainable Community-Driven Environmental Transition) aims to improve the capacity of local and regional policy makers, public administration, the social economy and civil society to jointly develop public policy initiatives that strengthen community management of resources. In Catalonia, the project is led by the Generalitat, together with the Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia (CoopCat), with the technical assistance of REVES (European Network of Regions and Municipalities of the Social Economy).

#### Methodology of the Action Plan

The work process to design the Action Plan consisted of four phases: missions to Turin, Krakow, Namur and Barcelona to share challenges and good practices; diagnosis of the situation of the Energy Communities in Barcelona in the areas of legislation, financing, training and mobilization; and finally, participative virtual work sessions with a total of 56 relevant agents from the different fields and a meeting at the Summer University of Cooperativism. The result of this work is an Action Plan that is structured in 5 major areas of action, 10 strategic objectives and 31 actions.



## **Content of the plan**

The actions to be developed have as objectives the political and strategic positioning of the model of energy communities of the Social and Solidarity Economy and the articulation and networking of the ecosystem of agents in this sector; the promotion of a regulatory framework favorable to the development of energy communities in cooperative form; the generation of economically sustainable activity models and the development of appropriate financing tools.

Also in parallel, the development of training strategies to professionalize the projects and generate knowledge about the cooperative model of energy communities; and finally, strengthen and diversify the social base of energy communities by generating accessible and inclusive models and diversify and scale the model through transformative energy projects.

## **Implementation**

The implementation of the actions will be carried out between 2023 and 2030, starting with a technical-political meeting to prioritize them and from there generate work structures and follow-up of the plan that specify the actions and results expected, coordinated by a motor group.

In order to achieve the set objectives, there are financial instruments from the Department of Business and Work of the Generalitat de Catalunya, such as the SolarCoop grants from the Catalan Energy Institute, lines of funding from the Catalan Institute of Finance, the Network of Cooperative Universities, the Network of Urban Communities, the Singular projects and several lines of projects from the Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia.

## **3.2 Green transition and resilience in the social economy. Action plan and recommendations for Walloon public authorities (August 2023)**



The present document aims at raising local politicians' awareness of the green transition challenges in the Walloon Region, and to encourage them to implement actions in the fields of the social economy, the circular economy, and renewable energies. This action and recommendation plan provides thus a solid working basis to feed into (future) political programs and government agreements, to rely on for the next Belgian legislature in 2024.

It comprises three parts: 1) an in-depth action plan on the role of energy communities in the energy transition; 2) several specific recommendations for the circular economy; 3) cross-cutting recommendations for the social economy to support the green transition.

This plan is innovative and relevant in several ways: 1) the proposed actions and recommendations take into account the entire Walloon ecosystem (political leaders, public administrations, funding bodies, social economy organizations, civil society); 2) the challenges identified by social economy players are conveyed here with a single voice through their umbrella federations ; 3) the commitment to a decompartmentalized political vision aims at encouraging the meeting of complementary expertise between the various ministerial offices and public administrations; 4) the actions and recommendations have been drawn up in close collaboration with key players in the field and public authorities, giving them a high degree of relevance and a realist view of their implementation.

The social economy is seen here as a major driver of transition processes, and as a foundation for the resilience of local communities. Through the suggested actions and recommendations, we intend to mobilize and empower regional authorities on issues of green transition in relation to the social economy. We also advocate for better recognition of the added value of approaches based on the social economy model, as real levers for a fairer, more resilient, and sustainable society.

The plan was drafted jointly by ConcertES, the consultation platform for organizations representing the social economy in French-speaking Belgium, and the Social Economy Department of the Walloon Public Service (SPW). It was fed by several key players in the Walloon ecosystem: public administrations (SPW Agriculture, Ressources naturelles et Environnement [ARNE]; SPW Direction du Développement durable; SPW Économie, Emploi, Recherche [EER], Cellule de coordination de la Stratégie de déploiement de l'économie circulaire [Circular Wallonia]), a funding body (W.ALTER), a renewable energy facilitator (Energie Commune), and social economy federations and organizations (Crédal, Initiatives, REScoop, RESSOURCES, Step Entreprendre).

### **3.3 Local Action Plan for Malopolska's green transition with the participation of social economy entities**



*Zero Waste Map in Cracow (Picture: Zero-Waste.pl)*

#### **The Local Action Plan and the RESPONDET project**

This Local Action Plan (LAP) has been elaborated in cooperation with varied stakeholders (representatives of social economy entities, social economy support centres, local and regional public

administration) on the basis of the information acquired during RESPONDET (REgional Social economy POLicies for sustaiNable community-Driven Environmental Transition) project realisation (transnational missions, reports and workshops) that has been co-financed under the Single Market Programme. The authors of the Plan have also analysed European, national, regional legislation devoted to the main topic: energy communities and circular economy. Best practices from the region and abroad have become an inspiration when constructing the Plan. Participation in various meetings and workshops dedicated to green transition made it possible to increase knowledge in this matter and introduce much valuable information in the document.

The Local Action Plan consists of XIII chapters. They include basic information about the RESPONDET project; reference to European, national, regional legislation; specific chapters on energy communities and circular economy; a SWOT analysis; an analysis of the social economy potential in terms of its involvement in the green transition process; objectives, interventions; financial resources; a timeline of planned activities; references to cooperation with regional stakeholders; monitoring of planned activities; further information on the implementation of the Local Action Plan; details on communication and dissemination.

## Regional legislation

Currently, in the Malopolska region the Regional Plan for Climate and Energy is being updated and the Programme for Circular Economy is being elaborated. They both deal with the topic of green transition. The authors of the Local Action Plan have been invited to take part in the meetings constituting basic guidelines of these documents. As a result, references to the potential of the social economy is going to be introduced in those strategies, and its crucial role in the “green process” of our region is going to be emphasized. The Local Action Plan is consistent with the assumptions of the main regional strategy – the Regional Development Strategy Malopolska 2030 - as well as with the most important regional document devoted to social economy – the Regional Social Economy Development Programme till 2030.

## Objectives, Interventions, Actions

In the Local Action Plan, main objectives, interventions and activities meant to be realised by Malopolskas’ social economy entities have been specified. Potential financial resources, mainly from European Union funds, have also been indicated.

A main aim of the Local Action Plan to be achieved is the following: **„The social economy sector in the Malopolska Region plays a crucial role in the sustainable regional development in the economic, environmental and territorial dimensions”.**

Its two strategic objectives and related interventions are the following:

**Strategic objective I. Strengthening the social economy potential for regional green transition.**

**Intervention I:** Social economy transition in terms of energy efficiency with the use of Renewable Energy Sources.

**Intervention II:** Educating and building awareness about energy transition and adaptation to climate change.

**Strategic objective II. Bigger role of social economy entities in the circular economy implementation in the region.**

**Intervention I:** Stronger engagement of social economy entities in the implementation of circular economy activities.

**Intervention II:** Raising awareness about circular economy. Dissemination and education.

Authors of the document - with the help of regional stakeholders (mainly participants in the transnational missions of the RESPONDET project) - have also identified concrete activities and results

to be undertaken and achieved by social economy entities. On the one hand, they are meant to transform social economy entities into modern, eco-friendly enterprises with highly-developed green competences. On the other, they should underline their potential in undertaking valuable actions leading to green transition of our region.

## **Financial Resources**

Above-mentioned interventions are going to be co-financed mainly under National Resilience Plan, national and EU funds being at the Region's disposal, as well as with own regional resources. The Regional Centre for Social Policy in Cracow will recommend the elaboration of criteria which would improve the chances of social economy entities to receive grants from these funds.

## **Social Economy Potential**

Through the involvement of the social economy and its potential in the green transition process we assume mobilising technical and technological skills and abilities (e.g. connected with setting up renewable energy systems), skills and abilities linked to business (financing and fundraising) and management, but also social and innovative skills.

Among crucial factors that emphasize this potential are: the fact that SE entities are deeply rooted in local communities; their democratic way of governing; their ability to create work places for persons facing or risking social exclusion; some experience in realising circular economy actions and education activities connected with ecology.

In RESPONDET partner regions, there are tools that enable the social economy to further develop their potential in the green transition process. Malopolska region has set up a social economy coordination body which has the following main competences: cooperation with social economy entities, strengthening skills of the latter, providing advisory services and financial support. Regional documents dedicated to the social economy such as the Regional Social Economy Development Programme underline the fact that social economy plays an important role in the green transition. Thanks to the recommendations elaborated during the preparation of this Plan, green transition and circular economy have been introduced to this main regional document. Bodies such as the Malopolska Committee for Social Economy Development, which bring together regional representatives from different institutions, notice and promote the social economy potential in the "green change" of the Malopolska Region.

## **Monitoring**

This Local Action Plan is the first regional document devoted to the inclusion of social economy entities in the green transition process.

The results indicated in the Plan demand monitoring. Main data provider will be an annual monitoring of the Malopolska social economy condition provided by social economy entities. Among its main recipients are the regional self-government, social economy support centres, social economy entities, self-government entities and the inhabitants of the Malopolska Region.

Indicators constitute a base of the monitoring system, as well as evaluation of priorities and interventions of the Local Plan. In this case, data providers will be those responsible for particular actions.

## **Communication and Dissemination**

The Regional Centre for Social Policy in Cracow is going to disseminate the Local Action Plan on a regional level during varied committees, meetings, workshops etc.

Social economy entities, social economy federations and local governments will be main target groups.

### 3.4 Local Action Plan for Circular Economy and Renewable Energy Communities in Torino



*Picture: Torino Social Impact*

The document "Local Action Plan Economia Circolare e Comunità Energetiche Rinnovabili a Torino" presents the local action plan to promote the circular economy and renewable energy communities in the city of Turin, contributing to the sustainable urban development of the City.

The document is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the general context of the RESPONDET project, which addresses the issue of green and digital transitions in the social economy at regional and local level, focusing on Community Based Energy Initiatives (CBEIs) and the Circular Economy, offering an overview of the objectives at European, Italian and local level. At this point the working group, made up of the City of Turin, the Chamber of Commerce of Turin and Turin Social Impact, with the technical support of Mercato Circolare, is also presented in the document. The methods and the three phases of work are described below: the first concerned setting up an analysis of the context of the two issues, using the SWOT analysis method, the second concerned the mapping of the main stakeholders who are dealing with the circular economy and CBEIs in the Turin context, the third and final phase was developed in a few meetings with the identified stakeholders, collecting needs and requests and defining the priority intervention areas.

The second chapter, after a brief description of the concept of circular economy, presents the results of the SWOT analysis on the circular economy, highlighting the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats in the Turin ecosystem. Afterwards, the trajectories and actions that the Municipality of Turin, the Chamber of commerce and other actors intend to undertake to promote the circular economy in the city are described, providing a complete description of the planned actions and the strategies to achieve them. In particular, 15 actions are foreseen, of which: 9 pertaining to the Municipality of Turin (6 towards the territory and 3 within the Municipality), 3 towards the territory pertaining to the Chamber of commerce of Turin, 1 towards the territory pertaining to both and 2 in synergy with other actors.

The third chapter, after a brief presentation of the meaning of Renewable Energy Communities, presents the results of the SWOT analysis, highlighting the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats in the Turin ecosystem. Next, the trajectories and actions that the Municipality of Turin, the Chamber of Commerce and other actors intend to undertake to support and foster the development of CBEIs in Turin are described, providing a complete description of the planned actions and strategies to achieve them. In particular, 7 actions are planned, of which: 3 towards the territory headed by the

Municipality of Turin, 1 towards the territory headed by the Turin Chamber of commerce and 3 in synergy with other players.

The final objective of the Local Action Plan is to stimulate innovation in the field of circular economy and CBEIs, to reduce environmental impacts and to improve the quality of life of citizens in Turin.



#### 4. RESPONDET Final Recommendations



#### 4. RESPONDET Final Recommendations

*At European level, but also in an ever-growing number of European regions and cities, the social and solidarity economy seems to be increasingly recognized as an important partner for local development, including green transition. A number of strategies, policies and programmes have been launched to strengthen this role.*

*However, RESPONDET partners still see much room for improvements on the side of policy-makers and public authorities, the social economy ecosystem, local communities themselves and other players. Hereafter, main proposals raised during different moments of transnational and local exchange – the mission workshops, discussions with local stakeholders, the European Policy lab, or the final webinar – are summarized. A first series of recommendations focuses specifically on the promotion of social economy-based community energy initiatives and circular economy, the following on more general framework conditions linked to capacity-building and governance/partnership.*

##### A) Community Energy Initiatives

1. In some EU Member States relevant EU directives (2018/1999, 2018/2001 and 2019/944), which are a fundament for an explicit recognition and development of community energy initiatives – especially, but not only through a definition of (rules around) Citizen Energy Communities (CEC) and Renewable Energy Communities (REC) - have not yet or only partially been transposed. This creates a number of legal uncertainties for community energy initiatives. RESPONDET partners call on Member States to become (more) active by **accelerating the full implementation of the directives and/or clarifying related national legislation** (including aspects such as cooperation with distribution system operators etc.). This should be done *in the framework of a genuine multi-stakeholder dialogue* - taking into account experiences and proposals of already existing community energy initiatives, local and regional authorities, experts, social economy, civil society, academics and others.

In this context, RESPONDET partners ask the European Commission to further monitor and push for the implementation of the aforementioned directives.

2. Monitoring of the implementation of National Recovery and Resilience Plans, but also operational programmes related to EU Cohesion Policy, and the possible review of these plans and programmes at the national level are another opportunity to encourage the promotion of community energy initiatives.

3. No other type of actor corresponds, with its principles and characteristics, as closely to the main features listed in the EU definition of Citizen Energy Communities (CEC) and Renewable Energy Communities (REC) as does the social economy. RESPONDET partners therefore call on the European Commission, Member States and regions to explicitly **recognize – in the implementation and possible reviews of EU directives - the role of cooperatives and other type of social economy organisations in the promotion of community energy initiatives.**

4. EU and national legislation should include provisions - or leave flexibility to local/regional authorities to formulate specific criteria for citizen/renewable energy communities - which contribute to **better identify and act in view of “false” renewable energy communities**, e.g.

initiatives set up by multinationals without giving citizens and local communities a real possibility to own, manage and control the activities of the energy community. The latter are often also a reason for resistance of citizens face to renewable energy projects.

In case specific criteria are formulated by local/regional authorities this should be done, however, respecting the principle of proportionality and without introducing additional administrative burden for citizen initiatives.

5. ***Citizen/renewable energy communities - in particular if clearly based on social economy principles - pursue general interest objectives.*** This should be better recognized – even more so, if the initiative pursues multiple objectives, including for example energy sharing schemes aiming to address energy poverty or the active involvement of disadvantaged households. As a consequence, ***European and national policy-makers should make use of the possibility to exclude these initiatives from state aid rules.*** This would also facilitate the participation of local/regional authorities in these initiatives which may contribute in a significant way to local/regional development.

6. ***As long as an exclusion from state aid rules through a clear recognition, in national legislation, of the general interest character of citizen/renewable energy communities has not been realised in EU Member States, a revision of European State Aid rules should include an increase of the de minimis threshold for these initiatives,*** thereby recognizing the substantial investment necessary especially in the start-up phase of many of these communities.

7. Incoherences in legislation concerning renewable energy policies and other policies - such as those promoting entrepreneurship, to provide just one example - are another obstacle in the development of community energy initiatives. European, national and regional policy-makers are therefore strongly encouraged to carry out an **(ex-ante) assessment of the impact of different policies on the creation of an appropriate eco-system for citizen/renewable energy communities and strive for a more coherent policy framework in general.**

8. The often complicated and lengthy administrative procedures in place in many EU Members States when it comes to REC and CEC and related installations, as well as sometimes large incoherences regarding administrative rules and capacity at different level (e.g. local and regional), are a significant obstacle for their development. ***Member States and competent regions should cooperate and revise/align administrative rules and procedures,*** but also provide ***capacity-building to civil servants enabling the latter to acquire knowledge (going sometimes also beyond their concrete field of expertise) on the specific cases and characteristics of citizen/renewable energy communities and related legislation*** in order to adapt procedures and services. In the framework of such capacity-building measures, specific attention should also be given to conveying knowledge on the specific characteristics and functioning of the social economy, including cooperatives.

9. Community energy initiatives are a rather recent phenomenon in a number of EU Member States. Uncertainties and a lack of experience still exist regarding the legislative framework (in particular in cases where an – appropriate – legal framework is still missing), business and financing models, governance and ways to better involve citizens, to name just some examples. ***Member States, regions and municipalities should jointly create opportunities for experimentation in these fields (e.g. through “sandbox experiments”)*** and integrate results in a review of legislation, appropriate services, financing schemes, etc. The European Union should encourage this kind of experiments through programmes such as Horizon EU – in this context it appears, however,

important not to focus on quantitative aspects and results in the first place, but on the development of replicable concepts and models (including governance, citizen involvement etc.). Moreover, with regard to innovation the focus should not be on technology only. Also social innovation has to be encouraged (with regard to energy, for example, more experimentation and innovation with regard to energy poverty, energy sobriety and related topics is urgently needed).

10. Community Energy Initiatives often require a significant investment in particular, but not exclusively, in their start-up phase. Local communities are not always able to raise the amount needed from the start. Member States and regions should **support work on appropriate financial mechanisms and programmes providing start-up financing, but also opportunities for financial support at a later stage**. The initiatives developed by specific public investment agencies focusing specifically on the social economy, including loan-to-grant financing models, but also models combining public and citizen finance or other already existing experiences in different EU Member States and regions can serve as an inspiration.

11. Likewise, **structural funding covering staff costs of community energy initiatives in their launching and development phase** might boost the emergence of these projects. A number of citizen/renewable energy communities rely on the contribution of volunteers and/or do not (yet) have sufficient human resources. This has also an impact on their capacity to raise financing and/or extend their activities.

12. In a number of Member States, public authorities tend to rather fund larger structures at the expense of smaller initiatives. **Smaller projects and their replication should be promoted much more**. Organisations such as Som Energia, Societat Cooperativa Catalunya have shown the strength of smaller, though well-connected, projects, their potential to mobilise and involve citizens and therewith their contribution to green and social transition.

13. Public authorities might also decide to **support community energy initiatives in other ways, providing resources such as land, buildings, administrative support or training**, to name just a few means of support. Policy-makers and public administration should evaluate existing possibilities in their city/region and discuss their potential with local stakeholders, including citizens.

14. **Programmes and financing related to Recovery and Resilience Plans, but also Cohesion Policy, as well as other European, national and regional policies should be used also to implement capacity-building measures** enabling local communities to ask for and make use of existing support measures. The latter does not always happen due, amongst other aspects, to a lack for example of (human) resources or know-how.

15. Member States, but also and in particular regions and municipalities should stimulate the **creation and strengthening of a multi-actor eco-system supporting community energy initiatives at different level (starting from neighbourhoods)**. Incentives for cooperation between these players should be given. These networks are not only of great importance when it comes to raise funding - they also help increasing visibility and acceptance of community energy initiatives and to mobilise different type of competences and other resources.

16. Much still remains to be done in order to **mobilise citizens** as active members and/or supporters of community energy initiatives. Member States, regions and municipalities – in cooperation with other actors such as social economy, civil society, media or organisations in the

field of education and training - should ***realise appropriate information and awareness-raising activities. These activities should enable citizens to better understand the added value of community energy initiatives, cooperation and the multiple roles citizens take in these initiatives.*** Media campaigns, public events at different level (including events such as the Social Forum) or boot-camps with all stakeholders involved in the creation and support of community energy initiatives are only some of the possible instruments that could be used for this purpose. Information and awareness-raising actions should be based to a large extent rather on a positive narrative which also highlights the added value of acting as a community.

17. Referring to the previous point: ***Specific attention, in awareness-raising and capacity-building measures, should be given to disadvantaged persons and households*** which still too rarely participate in initiatives linked to local energy communities, energy sharing etc. Projects linked to the renovation of social housing, for instance, could be an opportunity (and examples exist!) to actively approach (future) beneficiaries.

18. The EU definition of the models of 'renewable energy community' and 'citizen energy community' reflects to a large extent the values and principles of the social economy. Municipalities, regions, Member States, European policy makers and civil servants might therefore link their efforts to raise awareness on these models with ***providing higher visibility of the social economy concept as such.***

19. Competent public authorities, in cooperation with the social economy and players in the field of education and training, should ***ensure an appropriate educational offer for different age groups which either integrates the topic 'community energy initiatives (and social economy)' in existing modules or creates new learning opportunities of different format.***

20. Likewise, ***citizens*** should have access to capacity-building enabling them to ***better understand the functioning of the electricity market*** and the functioning of installations for the generation/distribution/consumption of renewable energy.

21. ***Exchange, capacity-building and mutual learning on the topic "community energy initiatives" between different policy departments, institutions and organisations*** should also be stimulated.

22. Finally, RESPONDET partners propose a specific European taskforce to be set up which would bring together different representatives of the European Commission, practitioners, civil society, researchers and policy-makers (local/regional, national European ...) to work on topics raised in the aforementioned proposals and exchange best practices.

## **B) Circular Economy**

1. A number of public strategies and policies promoting the circular economy still seem to consider the latter also and above all as an opportunity in terms of economic development to be promoted mainly among 'mainstream' enterprises. The potential of the social economy in this field, its initial role as a main pioneer of circular economy approaches and the importance to combine objectives linked to sustainable development, economic development and social cohesion are not yet recognized and considered enough. EU policies have an important potential to mobilise policy-makers at local/regional level – also and in particular with regard to green transition. ***RESPONDET partners therefore invite EU policy-makers to more explicitly highlight the***

**added value of circular economy activities based on social economy principles** which lies, amongst other aspects, in the creation of fair employment, the integration also of most disadvantaged groups into the labour market and society, the mobilization of the population, the stimulation of cooperation and the creation of networks able to enhance solidarity and mutual learning. All this supports an inclusive green transition.

2. **Even where policies for the promotion of the social economy exist, stronger links need to be created - at the EU, national and regional/local level – between these and policies promoting the circular economy.** Examples where this has been done and is further improved exist already (e.g. Wallonia Region).

3. **Programmes/financial support for the circular economy should become better accessible for and adapted to the needs of a diversity of enterprises, including the social economy.** For the moment, in a number of cities/regions, social economy is still too often considered as a kind of “niche” with some specific measures, but it has problems accessing the – often more numerous - initiatives that target above all mainstream enterprises.

4. RESPONDET partners invite policy-makers and public administration at different level to **more strongly promote – also and especially through financial support measures – the integration of social economy principles in circular economy practices and projects.**

5. Developing integrated support measures that are accessible as much for social economy and/or social economy-based citizen initiatives as for other type of enterprises might also provide opportunities to **encourage stronger cooperation between these different players and a spill-over of practices based on social economy principles.** This presupposes, however, to avoid initiatives in which the social economy is automatically pushed into a role as a ‘junior partner’ or ‘client’ and ‘last part of the chain’ without any opportunity to co-develop the initiative together with the other partners. Practices promoting cooperation such as they have been developed in the region of Catalunya might provide inspiration here

6. At the same time, **evaluation systems should be developed and applied which help counteracting the currently increasing risk and practices of ‘green washing’ and ‘social washing’.** One of the possibilities are, for example, **labelling processes** developed and realized in cooperation with, amongst others, the social economy.

7. **Support instruments should target also smaller, less formalized citizen initiatives in the circular economy which follow social economy principles.** Apart from being an important vehicle to mobilise local communities, these initiatives often prove to be a fertile ground for experimentation and therewith also innovation (see, for example, the development of relevant maps and services by citizens in Cracow or the Mercato Circolare in Turin).

8. As also in other areas, the **simplification of administrative procedures** linked, for example, to the application of financial support, is a key condition for the success of support measures.

9. **Communication of existing support** – be it finance, advice or other – is another crucial element in the promotion of social economy-based initiatives in the circular economy. Often, in particular smaller citizen initiatives, but also other social economy players are not aware of existing opportunities. Here, RESPONDET partners consider the establishment for example of **online platforms centralizing different type of information in a kind of “online one stop shop”** useful. At

the same time, **communication campaigns** raising the awareness of citizens on the existence of these platforms should be carried out.

10. Public authorities should **more strongly evaluate and explore possibilities of green and social public procurement and develop appropriate measures (including guiding legislative and administrative acts)** which enable public administration to actively apply such approaches.

11. Social economy players are often not directly – or to a very limited extent – involved in the **co-construction of public policies** relating to the circular economy. **Local and regional governments should dare to implement stronger participatory approaches** (initiatives such as the Eco-Małopolska Council or the Circular Economy Council in Wallonia might provide some inspiration here).

12. Local and regional authorities, in cooperation with the social economy, civil society, academic actors and other players, should use the current momentum circular and social economy receive - but also opportunities provided with the Recovery and Resilience Plans or the start of the new Cohesion Policy-related programming period – to **develop and/or promote capacity-building**. Measures in this field are necessary to enable different type of actors (reaching from public administration over social economy and other type of organisations and enterprises to citizens) to a) become aware of the large potential and added value of social economy practices in the circular economy, b) support the latter with appropriate tools and/or c) become (more) active in the circular economy and apply circular (economy) approaches.

13. Initiatives promoting capacity-building for green transition (including circular economy practices) should **consider social economy enterprises (active in the circular economy) not only as potential beneficiaries, but also as a provider of skills** (participatory management, mobilization and team work-related skills, digital skills for example with regard to technologies facilitating participation in the labour market of disadvantaged groups, etc.). The capacity of the social economy also in this field is often under-estimated and under-exploited.

14. RESPONDET partners still perceive a need for **stronger campaigns and actions which would increase the awareness and knowledge, among the population, of the added value of social economy-based initiatives in the field of the circular economy** in terms of sustainable local development, social cohesion, employment creation etc. Moreover, **appropriate tools should be developed and/or be better made visible which allow citizens to identify ways and means to adopt and support circular practices in their immediate environment**. In this context, campaigns organised in cooperation with local media, or events might sometimes have stronger effects than other type of instruments.

### **C) Social economy as a key driver of green transition – Strengthening capacities of all players**

1. Policies promoting (social economy-based initiatives in the field of) green transition, including circular economy and community energy initiatives, should not be considered mainly another means to promote yet new possibilities for economic growth. They should be seen above all as an instrument to create decent living conditions for everyone that are intrinsically linked with the preservation of the planet and its resources.



2. Policy-makers should further strive towards more integrated approaches of policy-making which overcome sectoral approaches and foster better communication and cooperation between different policy departments and services: much potential to fully develop the capacity of local communities to create social economy-based initiatives in the field of community energy and circular economy is lost due to legislation and support measures which in many cities/regions are often still rather punctual, sometimes incoherent, not always known or not tailor-made to the specific characteristics and needs of the social economy. In this context, also public budgets should be less sectorised – common budget envelopes could be (much more) developed for specific transversal topics touching on the competences of different ministries.
3. Administrative procedures at different level (local, regional, national...), but also of different policy departments should be harmonized as much as possible – their incoherence is another major hindrance for community initiatives in the field of energy or circular economy to emerge and/or further develop their activities.
4. Legislation, including legal definitions, should be adapted with a view to better stimulate social economy initiatives in the field of community energy and circular economy, taking their specificities better into account and thus allowing them to deploy their full potential.
5. Programmes and measures supporting diverse initiatives for green transition, also in the field of (renewable) energy and circular economy, should be made *more accessible for* and *communicated to* social economy-based community initiatives of different size. They should take into account the specificities (including potential also in terms of social inclusion etc.) of these type of initiatives and stimulate spill-over to other type of enterprises based on clear principles and criteria, thereby also avoiding the “green and social washing” risk. It is not always necessary to create entirely new programmes and instruments, but to adapt what exists, if necessary, and – above all – make it known to potential beneficiaries.
6. Cities and regions should more strongly engage in awareness-raising campaigns on the (potential) role of the social economy in green transition which should target politicians and public administration, the local population in general, but also the social economy as such: even in territories which are rather pioneers regarding the development of policies promoting the social economy, the potential of the latter when it comes to develop and implement community energy initiatives or initiatives in the field of the circular economy is often rather unknown.
7. Possibilities for different groups of the local population, including different age groups, to acquire knowledge on the added value of the social economy model – also in fields such as energy and circular economy – and related know-how are of utmost importance and still very much lacking in schools, universities, adult education centres and other educational institutions. RESPONDET partners see a need for the promotion of life-long learning on these topics and the application of an interdisciplinary approach.
8. Policy-makers, in cooperation with social economy umbrella organisations and federations, civil society, universities and other actors, should support the development of databases, online platforms and other systems which allow for the collection of data on existing activities and experiences of social economy-based initiatives in green transition – including circular economy and community energy initiatives. This information should be as much as possible made accessible to different type of actors, including social economy and related citizen initiatives. It can stimulate the replication of successful initiatives, exchange between practitioners, foster the development

of knowledge and know-how and, not at least, help creating trust as a major fundament for cooperation and local value chains and not at least feed into policy-design.

Already existing tools at European level such as the Social Economy Gateway or the Rural Pact Platform Community Group on Social Economy could (further) promote exchange on *specific* topics such as energy or the circular economy.

9. Policy-makers, in cooperation with other actors, should create possibilities, for local communities, to experiment different initiatives in a secured environment before launching a project. This has proven, in some cities/regions an element of success for policies promoting (social economy) initiatives in various fields. Moreover, in this context, experimentation can also be a means to stimulate partnerships between the various actors.

10. Financial support in fields such as community energy initiatives and others should be provided as much as possible in combination with other capacity-building measures such as training regarding technical skills and knowledge or advisory services.

11. Member States and regions all over Europe should make use of the opportunities linked to Next Generation EU, the new programming period of Cohesion Policy Funds and other programmes to further stimulate and strengthen partnerships around the social economy in the field of green transition. This should also include support for capacity-building and experimentation.

12. Regarding the scope of policy measures fostering social economy-based initiatives, be it in the field of energy, circular economy or other sectors, the former should be available as much for rural areas as for urban ones and possibly and, where appropriate, create synergies and cooperation between citizens in both areas.

13. RESPONDET partners invite governments and public authorities at different levels not only to support social economy initiatives in the fields of (community) energy and circular economy, but to become active players in these areas themselves and this in different ways (energy installations, public purchase practices, etc.), thus leading by example.

#### **D) Social economy as a key partner in green transition processes - Governance and partnership**

1. The general policy framework at European level – for example in the field of citizen energy initiatives, but also regarding more general topics such as public procurement – already opens up important opportunities for the establishment of (new forms of) partnerships between citizens, social economy and related community initiatives, public authorities, SMEs and others that are vital for achieving progress in green transition. However, in a number of cases, legislation is not or only slowly implemented and/or related opportunities are not used. The European Commission should closely monitor progress in the different Member States and further encourage peer reviews and peer-learning between Member States and Regions.

2. Administrative rules and procedures are another major obstacle for collaboration and partnership that should not be under-estimated. RESPONDET partners would encourage a stronger dialogue between policy-makers (including public administration), the social economy and related community initiatives as well as other stakeholders which should *lead to* or *accompany* a review

of existing procedures. In this context, it also appears vital to involve in the discussions, wherever appropriate, public authorities from different levels of government (local, regional, national, ...) in order to also promote a stronger coherence of rules and procedures.

3. Social economy should be involved in social dialogue. Its strong absence here in many countries has, in the opinion of RESPONDET partners, a negative impact by isolating the social and solidarity economy from the design of more transversal strategies, their implementation and monitoring. Moreover, it reduces possibilities to develop partnerships with mainstream enterprises and other players.

4. Policy-makers and public administration, in cooperation with other actors and stakeholders, should support the publication of legal texts (for example those linked to renewable or citizens energy communities, etc.) – in a language which is understandable to citizens.

5. In recent years, in some European regions and cities, partnerships between public authorities and the social economy increased and might even have taken new forms. This has also encouraged citizen engagement and led to new initiatives. However, it appears fundamental that the role of each player (including public authorities) and expected outcomes of the partnership are always well defined. Otherwise, there is a risk of a decreasing engagement of social economy and related community initiatives in dialogue and cooperation. Reasons might be deception about, for instance, the (unclear and invisible) outcome of consultation procedures marked as ‘co-design’ or a feeling of “control” by public authorities, which might ultimately also lead to a lack of trust.

6. Public authorities play an important role in stimulating partnerships also between the social economy and other type of players, such as private enterprises. They might help making the social economy, its added value and potential more strongly visible and fighting stereotypes. At the same time, public authorities should play a more active part regarding the fight against green and social washing and should establish frameworks in which cooperation between social economy and other private players can develop on equal terms, without the former being absorbed or ‘hijacked for marketing purposes’ by the latter.

7. RESPONDET partners call on policy-makers at different levels to open up larger opportunities and support for experimentation. The French law on experimentation (2021) and related local/regional projects or “Living Lab” experiences in certain cities and regions show the potential lying in occasions to develop and test new policies and ways of doing, including new forms of partnership between the social economy and other players. In this context, the possibility to derogate, at least temporarily, from existing legislation and/or to have further financial support for the test period may be of great importance.

In this context, but not only, RESPONDET partners would like to stress the fact that another vital condition for the mobilisation of citizens and the creation of partnerships between different kind of players, in the framework of experimentation and beyond, is the acceptance – also on the side of supporting public authorities and investors - of failure.