

solidar



REALISING
A SOCIAL EUROPE
FOR ALL

AN ECONOMY BEYOND PROFIT: SOLIDAR MEMBERSHIP'S VISION ON SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

From a desired future toward an action-based present



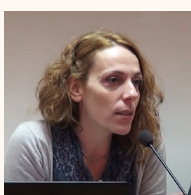
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We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the members of SOLIDAR who participated in the empirical study. Their wealth of experience, nuanced perspectives, and innovative approaches have been the crowning jewel of this report.

This work would not have been possible without the guidance, coordination, and unwavering support of the SOLIDAR team. In particular, we are deeply grateful to Carlos Roldán and Martina Corti, whose trust and vision inspired us to capture SOLIDAR's commitment to advancing the Social and Solidarity Economy.

This report is the result of a collective effort of individuals and organizations dedicated to fostering a more just and equitable society. The rest, as always, is up to all of us to bring this vision to life!

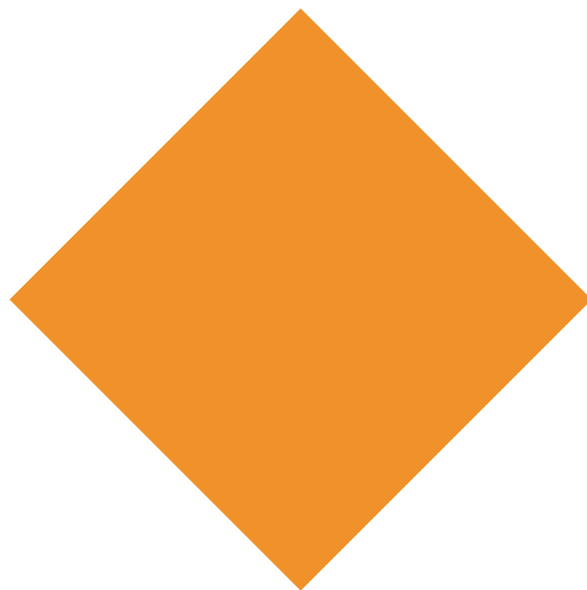
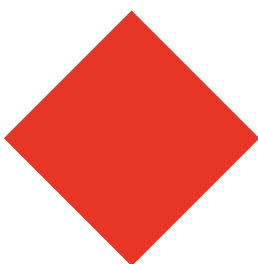




TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Abstract	7
Executive Summary	8
1. Introduction	10
2. Methodology	12
3. Current state and institutional environment of the SSE	14
3.1 The current state of SSE	14
3.2 The future state of SSE - The institutional perspective	20
3.3 Analytical axes	22
4. The future state of SSE – SOLIDAR’s perspective	23
4.1 Introduction and methodology of the empirical research	23
4.2 Analysis	25
4.3 Vision statement	33
4.4 Recommendations for SOLIDAR	34
5. Conclusions	36
References	38
Appendix	42



FOREWORD



In a world shaped by pressing challenges such as the ongoing climate and environmental crises, geopolitical tensions, rising economic inequalities, and shifting demographics, the need for a new economic paradigm has never been more urgent. Traditional systems of economic governance and market-driven economics have proven inadequate in addressing these systemic challenges. In this context, the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) emerges as a compelling alternative, a complement that offers a vision of a more just, social, and sustainable future.

This publication, a collaborative effort between SOLIDAR and its member organizations led by Professors Ifigeneia Douvitsa and Sofia Adam, presents a vision for the SSE rooted in collective wisdom, practical experience, and a shared commitment to a more humane, inclusive, and just economy. By starting with an ideal future, the study outlines the concrete steps necessary to achieve it, providing a roadmap for how we can pave the way for a future in which SSE has a more predominant role and is enabled to make society more just.

One of the most important points of this publication is the need to recognise SSE as a key economic alongside the public and private sector. It calls for a coherent legal and policy framework that supports the SSE's growth and development; while ensuring it remains true to its foundational principles of solidarity, democracy, and sustainability.

The vision emphasizes the importance of synergies between bottom-up initiatives and enabling laws and policies. These synergies will

allow the SSE to address pressing challenges, such as aging populations, climate change, and social inequality, while shifting a large part of the economic paradigm from competition to cooperation. The SSE has the potential to revolutionize various sectors, including healthcare, housing, education, and green energy, offering innovative solutions that prioritize people and the planet.

A central aspect of this vision is the inclusion of non-profit organizations within the SSE framework. This challenges the conventional notion of the economy as essentially market-driven and highlights the crucial role of civil society organizations also in this sphere to be able to adequately address social and environmental issues. It redefines the boundaries of economic participation, ensuring that all sectors—whether business or non-profit—can collaborate toward a common goal of sustainability and social justice on equal footing. This is particularly relevant from the perspective of SOLIDAR, as we are a vocal advocate for a deeper integration of civil society organisations in the definition also of socio-economic priorities and policies at EU and national level. At the EU level, this could easily be done by a reform of the European Semester process. To include a

broader range of voices and in a way that aims at fostering a wellbeing economy where social, economic and environmental objectives have equal standing, and where the Pillar of Social Rights is the beacon of all policies.

We take this opportunity to thank Prof. Ifigeneia Douvitsa and Sofia Adam for their insightful and much-needed research, which will guide our advocacy efforts and future strategies. We also extend our gratitude to all our member organizations who contributed to the elaboration of this vision. Finally, we acknowledge the European Commission for its funding through the EU programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), without which, this publication would not have been possible.

This work is an invitation to join us in shaping the future of the SSE, one that offers hope, cooperation, and a commitment to the well-being of people and the planet.

Mikael LEYI
Secretary General of SOLIDAR



ABSTRACT

The study aimed to co-design the vision of SOLIDAR for the social and solidarity economy (SSE) based on the valuable input of its member organizations. Towards the study's goals, we adopted the definition of SSE by the International Labour Organization (ILO). Our methodology is qualitative and informed by the back-casting method according to which the starting point is the desired future and then we construct the necessary steps and actions towards this desired future. In terms of data collection, we first implemented a desk analysis in order to identify convergences and divergences in major policy frameworks and documents from international organizations as well as the overall strategy and position papers of SOLIDAR. Then, we proceeded with interviews and a focus group with participants from SOLIDAR's member organizations.

Their contributions led to a multifaceted vision for the SSE. According to the latter, the SSE was envisioned as a major economic sector recognized as such by co-constructed and

supportive laws and policies and on an equal footing with the public and the private for-profit sector. It was also anticipated that in an ideal future, the SSE would have a presence in any sector of the economy while being a leader in social services. SSE was also thought of developing bottom-up initiated and top-down facilitated synergies to serve multifaceted goals, substituting in this manner competition with cooperation while transforming gradually and peacefully the current system - from within - into a more humane, inclusive, and just, so that no one is left behind.

Overall, SOLIDAR's vision based on the inputs of its member organizations presented an illustrative example of building an SSE vision by and for its actors, without being limited to the international institutional perspective. It was also inspiring in its effort to bridge the SSE universe and grassroots communities, which, despite their shared foundations, often perceive each other as worlds apart.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Our study's focus was SOLIDAR, a European and worldwide network of civil society organizations that work to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and beyond. By studying SOLIDAR, we aimed to co-design its vision for the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) with the valuable input of its member organizations. To serve the study's goals we undertook a multi-layered approach based on the back-casting method and involving a combination of data collection methods (desk analysis, interviews, and a focus group).

During our desk analysis, we approached the SSE through the lens of the definition of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and extrapolated the analytical axes condensed into the following research question: "What is the desired and current state of the SSE's purpose, impact, institutional environment, synergies and sectors of activity?". To address the above question, the empirical study took the form of interviews and a focus group, in which SOLIDAR's member organizations participated. Coming mainly from the nonprofit sector of Albania, Belgium, Germany, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, and Spain, they offered context-specific insight based on their fieldwork and advocacy, which occasionally expanded to other countries and regions. Moreover, the back-casting method, as it focuses on the desired future(s) and not on the likely-to-occur future, invited participants to open up their visions for the future of the SSE.

Before delving into the specific findings, it is important to note that there was some degree of reluctance by some of the participants to view the non-profit sector as part of the SSE, under the dominant approach which equates economy

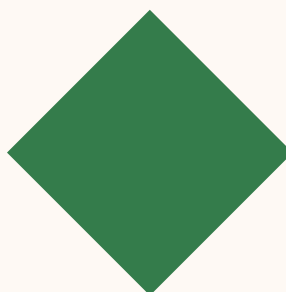
with market. Thus, the SSE being part of the economy was expected in practice to encompass mainly businesses and economic actors, despite the ILO's definition which includes business and non-business entities as long as they follow the SSE principles.

When it comes to our findings, a multifaceted vision of the SSE was revealed during the empirical study, according to which the SSE:

- would be a major economic sector, of equal weight with the public and private (for-profit) sectors, aiming and eventually achieving a smooth, gradual, and peaceful transition toward a more humane, inclusive, and just economy, by changing the current system from within,
- would be recognized by a coherent legal and policy landscape, co-designed by the SSE actors, which would encompass organization laws on the SSE and its actors, and a variety of support measures that would prescribe state interventions but would also refrain from *'doing anything against the SSE'*, while providing *'a safe space for experimentation'*, (e.g. during 'cross-border activities among SSE actors from different countries' or when introducing 'an SSE label'),
- would develop synergies bottom-up initiated and top-down facilitated by enabling laws and policies, addressing multifaceted needs through different forms of collaboration, while substituting competition with cooperation,
- would be present in any sector of the economy, a leader in social and care services,

balancing the short supply and high demand in elderly care services, as well as working as a reverse-privatization mechanism offering an alternative paradigm that prioritizes the well-being of people and the planet before profits, while ensuring the affordability and accessibility of services, even in remote areas and for vulnerable groups.

Building on the above, SOLIDAR's vision – co-constructed by its member organizations – serves as a compelling example of developing an SSE vision by and for its actors, allies, and social movements, influenced but not limited to institutional perspectives. It also offers inspiration in its effort to bridge the SSE sector and grassroots communities, which, despite their common ground, have often perceived themselves as worlds apart.



1. INTRODUCTION



‘Welcome to the matrix!’ Or more accurately to a poly-crisis nexus, which Europe had gradually entered in the last decades (Dekeyrel et al., 2024). Multiple crises had not only coincided but reinforced each other with unprecedented intensity (World Economic Forum, 2023; Whiting and Park, 2023). This dynamic has already had a grave impact on multiple fronts, from peace and health to energy and food security, social inequalities, and climate change. With these threats remaining intact, the poly-crisis was also manifested at the political level with political unrest and the rise of the far-right as the results of the European Parliamentary elections in 2024 demonstrated. In this context, where to search for adequate responses, as the dominant political and economic system has not been able to provide them?

Amidst buzzwords that disappear as quickly as they appear in the public discourse, the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and the International Labour Organization (ILO) – among others, re-discovered the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) as an alternative paradigm consisting of associations, foundations, cooperatives, mutuals, social enterprises and other entities (Monzon and Chavez, 2017, Chaves and Monzon Campos, 2007). Despite the diversity of these forms, their common denominator is that they prioritize the well-being of people and the planet above profits while pursuing the collective benefit of their members or the community through democratic/inclusive decision-making processes (Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini, 2017). Due to the above principles which differentiate the SSE from the other sectors, its actors have the comparative advantage of addressing current social and

environmental issues, while balancing economic, social, and environmental goals.

Despite the above, the SSE’s true potential remains untapped due to numerous obstacles in practice associated – not least – with education, and access to finance including SSE laws’ and policies’ coherence and proper implementation.

Unraveling the capacity of the SSE should not be treated as a simple task, as it requires a robust ecosystem composed of various committed actors (micro-level), broader alliances among SSE actors, civil society organizations (CSOs), and social movements with a shared vision (meso-level), in a conducive environment of laws and policies, co-constructed for and with the SSE field (macro-level) (European Commission, 2021).

In light of the above, SOLIDAR, which is a European and worldwide network of civil society organizations (CSOs), trade unions, and social movements, developed an interest in the SSE and aspired to form its own SSE vision. The fact that it has a wide reach, strong ties with grassroots organizations, and a prominent role in political arenas, renders its vision-drafting exercise a basis for public discourse, a valuable tool for advocacy, and a reference point to develop broader synergies. Furthermore, SOLIDAR’s values, mission, and policy on social justice through a just transition, albeit not identical, are closely interrelated with the SSE principles and may find direct expression in SSE actors’ aspirations and activities with regard to social integration, social and labor rights protection and implementation, and environmental protection.

Taking into account the above, this study focused on SOLIDAR exploring in particular how its member organizations perceived the SSE's purpose and impact, laws and policies, synergies and sectors of activity from the desired future standpoint linking retrospectively with concrete steps and actions to the present situation.

To fulfill its goals, the study is divided into five parts (introduction included). In Chapter 2 ('Methodology') we describe the methodology adopted and the combination of data collection methods in order to better serve the needs of our study. The latter include desk analysis, interviews, and a focus group. The back-casting method was not developed as a stand-alone method but influenced the other two methods by adding the perspective of the desired SSE future. In Chapter 3 ('Current state and institutional environment of the SSE ') we introduce the reader to the study's theoretical framework highlighting the SSE's current state of development, as well as its potential state with an emphasis on the international organizations' perspective. The analytical axes guiding the empirical study are also identified at this point. The next part (Chapter 4 'The future state of SSE – SOLIDAR's perspective') specified the research question. Also, it further elaborated on the methodology used for the empirical study and presented the findings from the interviews and the focus group with SOLIDAR's member organizations. Their input was used as the basis for the recommendations we concluded. The chapter ends with a condensed vision statement, in an attempt to summarize all the major contributions. The last chapter ('Conclusions') presents the study's concluding remarks, reflecting on the final outcome of the SSE vision-drafting exercise of SOLIDAR, as well as its potential impact.

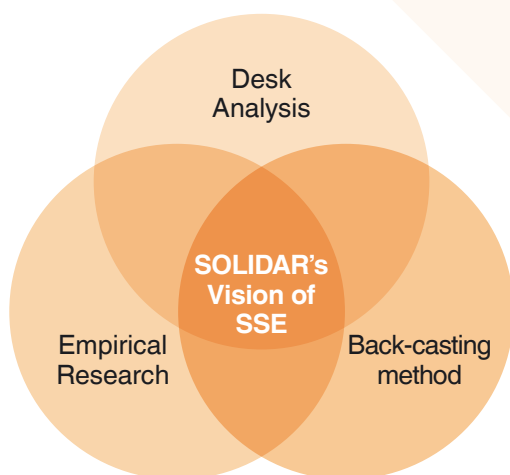
With our three-level analysis, combined methodology, and the above structure, we strive in this study to capture SOLIDAR's multifaceted vision for the SSE, as perceived by the member organizations at the micro-level, amplified by synergies at the meso-level and facilitated by a conducive environment at the macro-level.

2. METHODOLOGY

To realize its goals and enrich its results, the study undertook a combination of a desk analysis, interviews, and focus groups, all informed by the back-casting method.

In particular, the desk analysis provided the theoretical framework, the empirical study the context-specific insight, and back-casting offered the imaginative pathway to build SOLIDAR's vision for the SSE. Involving SOLIDAR's member organizations in the process aimed at the democratic co-construction of the vision thus enabling ownership, comprehension and future implementation.

FIGURE 1 Combining three methods to capture SOLIDAR's vision of SSE



More specifically, in our desk analysis, we approached the SSE through the lens of the ILO definition of the SSE for various reasons, especially its inclusiveness and broad acceptance. During our literature review, the issue of SSE's purpose, impact, laws and policies, synergies, and sectors of activity emerged as key elements of building the SSE through an ecosystemic approach, which we analyzed from

an ideal and current standpoint. The latter themes were developed into the analytical axes of the study and condensed into the research question that guided our empirical research ('What is the desired and current state of the SSE's purpose, impact, institutional environment, synergies and sectors of activity').

To address the above question, the **empirical study** took the form of interviews and a focus group, in which SOLIDAR's member organizations participated. Coming mainly from the nonprofit sector in Albania, Belgium, Germany, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, and Spain, they offered context-specific insight based on their fieldwork and advocacy, which occasionally expanded to other countries and regions. The latter was further developed in Chapter 4.

Back-casting informed all methods of data collection and analysis. The above method was introduced by Robinson, who described it as a normative approach working backward from a particular desired future endpoint to the present. The method's goal was rather simple: to determine the feasibility of the desired future and the steps/actions needed to reach it (Robinson, 1990).

Such a method was fitting to capture the vision of an organization, as it was wired to reveal how the organization envisions a desired future, instead of focusing on what would be the most likely to occur future. In light of this, we included it in our methodology for two reasons:

- a) to facilitate the conception of SOLIDAR's vision for the SSE beyond the current constraints,

b) to inspire member organizations' creativity, intuition, and out-of-the-box thinking.

Given the fact that we had to identify a future timestamp to help participants in their thinking process in visionary terms, we chose the year 2030, for two reasons:

a) to inspire more concrete replies by the informants,

b) to coincide with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the milestone set by the Social Economy Action Plan and the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (EPSR) targets so that the link between the SSE and social justice, just transition, and sustainable development could be further enhanced.

With the use of all three methods, we strived to connect the dots between: 'theory vs. practice', and 'current state of SSE in Europe vs. desired future state of SSE in Europe', deepening our understanding, enriching our findings, and concluding with overarching and action-based recommendations.

3. CURRENT STATE AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SSE

In this chapter, we invite our readers to explore the current landscape of the SSE. At first, we define the SSE and its particular traits, then examine its actors' potential and actual impact. We continue our analysis with current trends in SSE law and policy at national, EU and international levels. Also, the sectors of SSE's activities and synergies are briefly presented.

From the SSE's current state, we move on to its desired future state, as perceived by international institutions. The limitations in their approach paved the way for a grassroots approach and, in particular, for the specific case of SOLIDAR's network to build its own SSE vision; the latter being this chapter's concluding remark.

The analytical axes that we extrapolate at the end of this chapter guided our empirical research, creating thus an internal link between the two relevant chapters.

3.1 THE CURRENT STATE OF SSE

3.1.1 The definition of SSE

'SSE is small and beautiful, but it is also powerful!'¹: small due to its modest size, beautiful given its pluralism, yet powerful for its capacity to lead the way toward a better world. The actors belonging to the SSE universe exist between the public and the private (for-profit) sectors. They range from traditional entities (associations,

TABLE 1 'The pluralism of SSE actors, and their estimated share of employment in the target countries'

No.	Countries	Actors	Estimated share of employment
1	Belgium	social enterprises, associations (ASBL), cooperatives, foundations, mutuals, social purpose companies	9%
2	Spain	non-profit social entities, cooperatives, foundations, mutual societies	7.70%
3	Germany	traditional associations (e.V), foundations, cooperatives, limited liability companies with a public-benefit status (gGmbH)	6.70%
4	Serbia	n/a	x
5	North Macedonia	n/a	x
6	Albania	n/a	x
7	Portugal	associations, cooperatives, foundations, Holy Houses of Mercy ("misericórdias"), mutual societies	5.9%

Source: Social Economy Gateway (European Commission)²

¹ We paraphrased Kostakis and Giotitsas' article title 'Small and local are not only beautiful; they can be powerful' in which they referred to cosmopolitan initiatives that are small-scale, decentralized, resilient, and locally controlled. Available at: <https://antipodeonline.org/2020/04/02/small-and-local/>

² Official site of Social Economy Gateway - https://social-economy-gateway.ec.europa.eu/index_en

foundations, cooperatives, and mutuals) to recently emerging social enterprises (Monzon and Chavez, 2017; Chaves and Monzon Campos, 2007). Depending on the country, the list of SSE actors may be shorter or longer (Hiez, 2021). In the countries under study, an impressive pluralism of traditional and emerging SSE actors was noted under each jurisdiction (Table 1).

All these different actors are part of a broader sector/field often described as ‘Social Economy’ (SE), ‘Social and Solidarity Economy’ (SSE), or ‘the Third Sector’. Among the multitude of co-existing terms whose content does not necessarily coincide, for the needs of this study, we used the term ‘SSE’. This term is defined by the ILO and endorsed by the UN, gaining significant momentum, without diverging considerably from the one followed by the European Union (EU) and Social Economy Europe (SEE)³.

The ILO’s approach does not limit the economy to a formal engagement with the market but encompasses all activities covering the needs of a community, revisiting in this way the economy’s ancient Greek root⁴. Thus, the ILO’s inclusiveness is the main reason we adopt its definition of the SSE (RIPESS, 2015)⁵, as it calls for business and grassroots to join hands under common principles (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005; Fonteneau and Pollet, 2019). The openness of the ILO approach fits well with the study’s goal to approach the universe of SSE in the widest possible manner given SOLIDAR’s strong ties with national and EU-level CSOs, trade unions, and grassroots organizations.

According to the ILO definition, the principles that aspire to unify the SSE actors are voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence, and the primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits as well as assets (Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini, 2017; ILO, 2022).

These principles put into practice the values of care for people and the planet, equality and fairness, interdependence, self-governance, transparency and accountability, and the attainment of decent work and livelihoods (ILO, 2022).

The list of SSE principles that realize the SSE values is not another code of good governance or corporate social responsibility. Instead, their range is deeper and wider. They serve as a compass, guiding SSE actors’ collective decisions and actions within and beyond their organization when interacting with the community, the market, and the state. They also serve as a magnet, influencing other types of companies, such as small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to follow similar patterns (European Commission, 2021). However, in practice, they may face limitations in their implementation when they conflict with the profit maximization goal permeating the dominant economic system.

3 SEE is an organization that represents and advocates for SSE actors within Europe. See official site of SEE <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/about/>

4 ‘The economy [the word is derived from the ancient Greek “economy” (= “ecos” + “nemomae”), which means management of the household] can be formally and generally defined as the set of conscious and systematic actions of people living in society, and includes the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of limited goods and services by different agents in a given geographical location.’ Wikipedia (term under search: [economy](#))

5 The ILO definition encompasses informal initiatives (ILO, 2023), from waste pickers, trying to make a living in the informal economy in hopes that through SSE they may transition to the formal economy, to solidarity initiatives covering social needs without engaging in the market, such as the case of social clinics providing health services to vulnerable groups that are excluded from the official public health system (Adam and Teloni, 2015).

3.1.2 The potential and actual impact of SSE

SSE can create alternative spaces for resisting the market-dictated rules and rejecting the exploitative practices of the existing economic system. In these spaces, different realities are created through everyday experiences, socially innovative practices, and learning-by-doing processes that slowly emerge and gradually crystallize (Dinerstein, 2017).

In particular, under the SSE's democratic and inclusive governance, producers and consumers, volunteers, and employees can join hands and cover their needs, while drawing decisions of wider reach and impact. Over time, SSE actors can also develop the skills and practices that render them resilient to crises, following a slower pace of growth (Birchall & Ketilson, 2009; Mullings and Otuomagie, 2022; Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini, 2017).

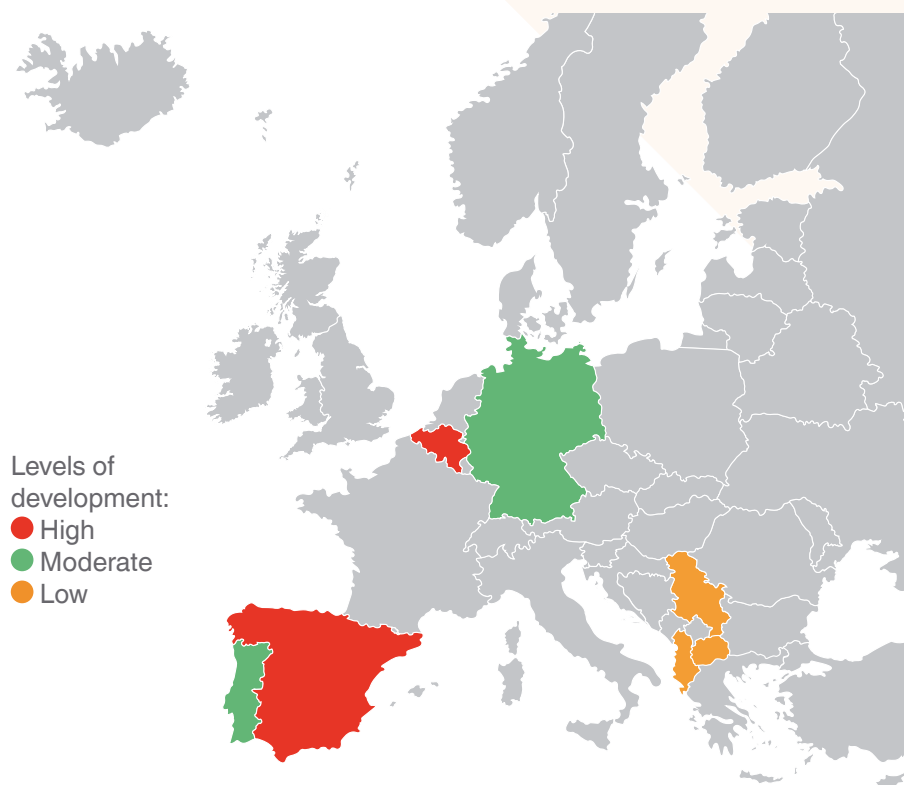
SSE has also the capacity to protect social rights while leading by example and implementing them in their everyday life. For instance, SSE actors can offer a safe work / social environment to social groups in vulnerable situations (e.g. migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers), as well as a democratic platform for them to participate equally and equitably in the enterprise's decisions (Spear and Bidet, 2005; Miedes and Fernandez, 2013; O'Connor P. and Meinhard, 2014; Cooney et al., 2022).

Additionally, SSE actors can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, the green transition and mitigate the climate crisis because of their other-than-profit goals, democratic governance, and equitable profit and risk distribution. Overall, they tend to adopt a different stance towards economic growth while being locally rooted. In this regard, energy cooperatives present an interesting case as they allow

democratic citizen control in energy production and consumption and blur the boundaries between social and environmental concerns (Končalović, 2023). Thus, promoting and supporting SSE initiatives can also be justified in terms of a new wave of eco-social policies (Mandelli, 2022).

The above may offer some insight into SSE's potential impact. Regarding the impact it currently has, based on the recently published data, we note that in the 27 Member States of the EU, 4.3 million social economy entities employ more than 11.5 million people

FIGURE 2 'The levels of SSE development in the target countries'



Sources: *Social Economy Gateway (European Commission); Petrescu, 2022.*

(6,3% of total employment) with a turnover of more than EUR 912 billion (Carini et al., 2024). Concerning other aspects of the SSE's impact within the EU, we are confronted with an overall absence of comprehensive, up-to-date, and comparable data.

When it comes to the countries under study, the SSE's actual impact and degree of development varies. In particular, in Belgium and Spain, the SSE is considered highly developed with a strong impact, in Germany and Portugal the SSE's degree of development and impact is moderate, whereas in Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia it is still growing (Figure 2). Similar remarks can be made in these countries for the SSE's contribution to employment, ranging from 6% up to 9% (Table 1).

The above shows a heterogeneous picture of the SSE's development within the European region, which is indicative of its dependency on national circumstances.

3.1.3 The institutional environment of SSE

To enhance the SSE's impact, national legislators, after international pressure, have passed framework laws and supportive public policies for the SSE and/or social enterprises, occasionally co-constructed with the participation of SSE's actors (Caire and Tadjudje, 2019; Poirier, 2016; Hiez, 2021; Hiez, 2022; OECD, 2022; OECD, 2023; United Nations, 2024, United Nations, 2022; International Labour Organization, 2022; Civil Society Forum for Sustainability, 2023). In the countries under study, we noticed a strong presence of laws on specific SSE actors (e.g. on social enterprises), whereas only in a few cases (Spain) framework laws for the whole SSE sector have been passed (Table 2). The latter reflects an ongoing trend of prioritizing the social enterprises' recognition (usually as a legal status or label), over that of the whole SSE sector⁶.

The recognition of social enterprises is a positive step forward. However, it makes visible only one

TABLE 2 'The legal and policy landscape of SSE and social enterprises in the target countries'

Countries	National Framework SSE laws	National laws on social enterprises	National Policies/ Strategies on SSE	National policies/ strategies on social enterprises
Belgium	✗	✓	✗	✗
Spain	✓	✓	✓	✗
Germany	✗	✗	✗	✗
Serbia	✗	✓	✗	✗
North Macedonia	✗	(draft law)	✗	✓
Albania	✗	✓	✗	✗
Portugal	✓	✗	✗	✗

Source: (Petrescu et al. 2022; OECD, 2022; OECD, 2023; Fici, 2020, Sherifaj, 2022).

⁶ The law/policy preference on social enterprises over the whole SSE sector is also reflected online, which might be an indication of their influence on the public discourse and shifting public interest in new directions. Without prejudice of Google trends' data accuracy, Google searches for the last two decades show that people's interest picked over the term 'social business' over 'social economy', as well as on the case of 'social enterprise' over 'social and solidarity economy' (Figure 3(a) and 3(b)).

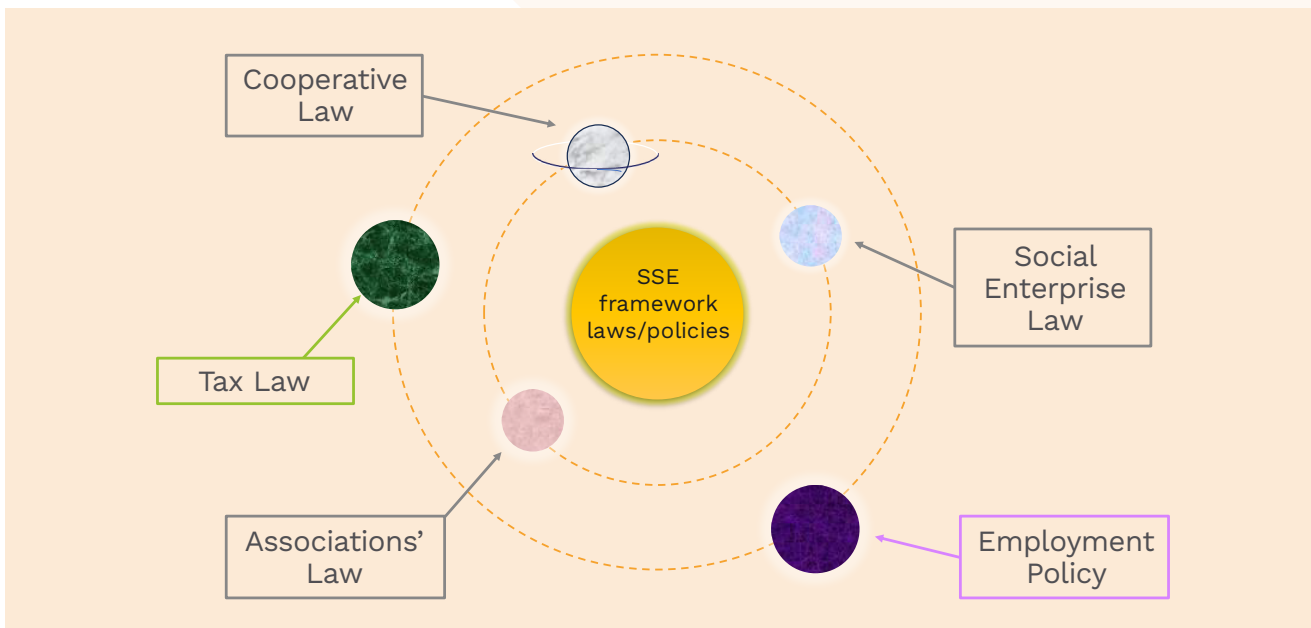
emerging family of the rich-in-diversity universe of the SSE, which includes business and non-business entities.

Another key trend in the SSE law and policy-making is the transition from traditional policies⁷ towards a new generation of transformative policies (e.g. Spain). These new policies include a variety of measures and tools (e.g. educational, financial, promotional) and mechanisms for their design, implementation, and evaluation with the active participation of the SSE actors and other stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, experts, and SMEs). These policies also integrate the SSE into broader policies and strategies, which strengthens the visibility of the SSE sector (Chaves-Avila and Gallego-Bono, 2020).

All of the above show the complexity of the SSE legal and policy landscape, at the center of which are the SSE framework laws, followed by laws addressing certain SSE families of organizations, and SSE-specific policies, and at its periphery we find all general laws/policies that apply additionally to SSE actors, as well (Figure 3). Attaining consistency between all of the above legal acts and relevant policies becomes a difficult task, yet crucial as it affects their interpretation and implementation. Thus, it comes as no surprise that many SSE laws and policies seem to remain inapplicable or when applied do not have a substantial effect on the field⁸.

Overall, whether and how effective SSE laws and policies are is still an open question (Fajardo, 2018; Adam and Douvitsa, 2022).

FIGURE 3 ‘An indicative intake of the SSE universe from a legal and policy perspective’



Source: Authors

⁷ By traditional, we refer to the first-generation public policies, which were mainly focused on particular SSE families of organizations, their duration tended to be short-term, and the measures that they foresaw were limited to financial and budgetary (e.g. subsidies for job creation). In addition, the degree of mainstreaming of these policies was limited and mechanisms for their evaluation, when included, were based on quantitative criteria. On the contrary, nowadays more and more policymakers lean toward second-generation policies of SSE, as an add-on while not abolishing the existing ones on SSE (Chaves-Avila and Gallego-Bono, 2020).

⁸ For instance, we observe a dominant trend pointing to their limited capacity to facilitate access to credit for SSE. The same can also be said for enacting adequate tax measures, attracting social investments, and, overall, creating a level playing field between SSE and other economic actors in the open market. When it comes to available data, although supranational initiatives are trying to centralize SSE-related information (e.g. the Social Economy Gateway) most governments have not yet taken measures to incorporate officially and systematically the SSE in their statistics, while available tools to measure social impact, by and large, are not adopted by SSE actors due to administrative costs and the absence of incentives (European Commission, 2021).

3.1.4 The synergies within and outside SSE

SSE actors tend to cooperate, instead of competing with each other to serve more effectively and efficiently their members and the community (Henrý, 2012; Fici, 2015). The first SSE actors realized early on the value of cooperation and developed a relevant praxis (Fici, 2015; Holyoake, 1906), which is occasionally reflected in the law.

Such cooperation tends to take place among the same category of SSE actors or of the same sector, taking the form of unions, federations, or apex organizations pursuing economic and/or social goals, while being active locally, nationally, or even globally.

As SSE actors realized that they share a set of common principles that unite them, they started to form broader synergies with different SSE families. The SEE and RIPESS are examples noteworthy in this regard with members from diverse SSE families of organizations, which they represent before regional and international fora. With the SSE sector gaining maturity, synergies continued to grow and expand, including other stakeholders as well, from SMEs, academia, trade unions, public authorities, and CSOs. Such practice became acknowledged, supported, and promoted by the wave of SSE framework laws (e.g. Spain, France, Greece) (Adam and Douvitsa, 2022).

Although many SSE entities have kept growing in numbers and membership and developed strong ties with social movements and local initiatives, others have lost their focus, especially the ones with an economic objective, occasionally yielding to the pressure of open markets and converting into for-profit partnerships, while mimicking mainstream business practices (Henrý, 2012).

All in all, cooperating in a competitive world, even if it is promoted by law, faces several difficulties due to differences in objectives, size, and modus operandi especially among SSE actors and mainstream businesses.

3.1.5 The SSE's sectors of activity

It is often said that SSE actors are present in almost all sectors of the economy. In reality, this depends heavily on national circumstances. Nevertheless, more often than not, SSE is active in work-intensive sectors, such as care services or proximity services. Social services, overall, tend to be promoted by law, while other sectors are disregarded. Such a trend diminishes the SSE's dynamic in the compounds of a single sector. In addition, as these services used to be offered by the welfare state, the SSE's involvement, via social enterprises, has been critiqued as enabling a soft privatization of such services, while social enterprises are being pressured to offer market-based solutions to social problems (Adam, 2018).

Nevertheless, SSE actors have recently expanded to circular economy activities, such as recycling, and upcycling, whereas they still have a weak presence in construction, finance, banking, or insurance compared to for-profit companies, as capital investments are required.

From the above, we may conclude that the SSE can unravel its capacity and resist market-dictated tendencies based on a combination of forces and a clear vision for a robust ecosystem composed of committed actors (**micro-level**), broader alliances among SSE actors, CSOs, and social movements with shared aspirations (**meso-level**), in a conducive environment of laws and policies co-constructed for and with the SSE sector (**macro-level**) (European Commission, 2021).

3.2 THE FUTURE STATE OF SSE - THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

3.2.1 International institutions' texts

International organizations have expressed their interest in the SSE model on many occasions and more attentively since the 2008 crisis. The latter is stated in several of their strategies, policy, and communication texts. These texts reflect how they perceive the SSE and its actors, how they position it within the dominant economic system, and what kind of measures they consider as necessary to support its growth. In the section that follows we have chosen three key texts that crystallize the stance of the EU, the ILO, and the UN toward SSE.

The **Social Economy Action Plan** adopted by the European Commission in 2021 encompasses a range of entities with different business and organizational models focusing on the primacy of people as well as social and/or environmental purpose over profit, reinvesting most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities in the interest of members/users or society at large through democratic and/ or participatory governance. The action plan has a list of suggested actions to be undertaken nationally and at a European level, while it acknowledges the SSE's transformative power towards a just green and digital transition. Furthermore, it refers to the European Pillar for Social Rights, as it considers the social economy as an enabler of its implementation, especially concerning issues associated with employment, inclusion, and poverty reduction.

The **ILO's Resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy** (ILO R.) of 2022 points to opportunities for SSE actors and their challenges, while suggesting several actions to further promote the SSE sector. Overall, the ILO R. moves in a similar direction to the Commission's action plan, albeit putting

a greater emphasis on work-related issues and how the SSE through supportive policies may address them, without becoming the vehicle for circumventing labor law and labor rights.

Following the above initiatives, the **UN adopted the Resolution on Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development** (UN R.) in 2023. The text points to the fragilities of the current economic system that were exposed during the pandemic, hence the need for a *'deeper, more ambitious, transformative and integrated response'* that the SSE may facilitate. The link between SSE and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is not only demonstrated in its title, but it also permeates the whole text perceiving SSE as a tool to pursue them. Furthermore, it endorses the ILO definition of the SSE, creating thus a bridge between the two texts.

An idea permeating all three texts is that they recognize the current system's limitations and consider ways of its re-adjustment through the SSE's involvement by promoting second-generation SSE policies. However, the ILO R. puts a greater emphasis on work-related issues and how the SSE may address them, whereas the UN R. has a broader agenda linking the SSE potential with the SDGs, while the European Social Economy Action Plan retains a middle ground by focusing on the social rights and a just green and digital transition through SSE. Nevertheless, these texts do not contradict but complement each other's views on the SSE.

3.2.2 A critical approach to the institutional vision of the SSE

A synthesis of the texts' key points follows, so that we may unravel their collective SSE vision. In particular, we shall explore their perception of the SSE's purpose and impact, its supportive institutional environment, as well as its synergies and sectors of activity.

Purpose: From the institutional perspective, the SSE's growth is perceived as a means to re-adjust the dominant system toward becoming more just, sustainable, and resilient. To reach this end, various actions are suggested to balance the system's malfunctions.

Limitations: Such purpose does not represent the whole SSE universe, but only a fraction of it, mainly traditional SSE actors who focus on addressing the economic system's imbalances, while the texts leave out the grassroots vision. The latter aspires to change the development model by embracing more radical concepts, such as that of degrowth⁹.

Opportunities: (1) To expand the SSE's purpose and reflect on its impact, so that different actors and narratives of the SSE are well-represented.

Institutional environment: To support the SSE's progress, they call policymakers to introduce SSE or social enterprise laws/policies, incorporate elements of second-generation public policies, and ensure their consistency with the rest of the legal system. Concerning their implementation, it mainly depends on public awareness and the political will to implement them.

Limitations: A first contradiction of the institutional approach is that the legal and policy acknowledgment of the whole SSE sector is not promoted, albeit the diversity of its actors is acknowledged. The principles permeating the SSE laws/policies conflict with those of the dominant economic and social policies. This hinders their proper implementation while setting multiple limits on the scale, duration, and expansion of SSE actors in the current system forcing them to remain on the fringe of the economy.

Opportunities: (1) To promote the whole SSE sector's legal and policy acknowledgment in addition to that of its families. (2) To identify systemic obstacles embedded in the institutional environment preventing SSE actors from realizing their goals and (3) to reflect on ways to overcome them.

Sectors of activity: Based on the institutional perspective, the SSE should not be prevented from being active in all sectors of the economy. However, a greater emphasis is paid to the care services provided by social enterprises which collaborate with the local authorities to cover unmet needs.

Limitations: The focus on social services provided by social enterprises and accompanied by relevant support measures, albeit necessary given the growing unmet social needs, seems shortsighted as to the rest of the sectors where SSE may be developed. Furthermore, the above texts do not reflect on how these initiatives may open the door for soft privatization of social services while justifying the shrinkage of the welfare state and instrumentalizing social enterprises to cover unmet needs through market solutions. Also, the necessity of blending eco and social policies towards a sustainable welfare model is not addressed.

Opportunities: (1) To formulate the SSE vision in a way that encompasses not only sectors where SSE has already a strong presence but also (2) envisioning ways to expand its presence to new ones, while (3) reflecting the welfare state's transformation through their partnership.

Synergies: The institutions comprehend the importance of synergies within the SSE but also with mainstream businesses and public authorities.

⁹ A simple definition of degrowth would be that of describing it as 'an idea that critiques the global capitalist system which pursues growth at all costs, causing human exploitation and environmental destruction.' <https://degrowth.info/degrowth>

Limitations: Any tensions that arise within and outside the SSE due to such synergies seem to be overlooked. In particular, among SSE actors and even within the same actor, the pursued economic, social, and environmental goals may not always be in harmony. Furthermore, a collaboration between SSE and mainstream businesses may not always run smoothly, due to their differences in objectives, principles, and modus operandi, which is often noted when SSE actors are being subcontracted by large for-profit companies in public procurement contracts and become pressured to follow their lead and practices. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that none of the institutional texts refer to the SSE's synergies with social movements, the support of which has often been crucial in the formation of SSE practices in the first place while also ensuring their adherence to core values and principles.

Opportunities: (1) To broaden the synergies of the SSE so that key stakeholders such as CSOs and social movements are included, (2) to reflect on their role, as well as (3) to identify any potential conflict and ways to resolve it.

The overall examination of the institutional vision of SSE revealed several limitations. In this regard, the need for a grassroots approach becomes stronger, so that the SSE vision can be built by and for its actors, allies, and social movements. These actors, due to their first-hand experience and accumulated knowledge are better placed to convey such vision in a creative, innovative way, so it does not simply mirror the limitations of the current regime but aspires to surpass them. That is why SOLIDAR's mission to build its own vision of the SSE is not only useful for its network but also inspiring to others interested in investing their time and energy in the SSE.

3.3 Analytical axes

Based on the current state of the SSE, as described above, and the future state, from the institutional perspective, the following key themes emerge that shall serve as our analytical axes guiding the design and implementation of the empirical research in the next chapter:

a. SSE's Purpose and impact

- Identification of variations of the SSE's purpose as it is perceived by different actors and narratives within the SSE
- Redefinition of the SSE's purpose to include the broad spectrum of diverse actors and narratives
- Reflection on ways that this redefined purpose enhances its expected impact.

b. Laws and Policies (Conducive Environment)

- Examination of how law/policy may enable SSE's development and enhance the sector's unity
- Reflection on the degree of implementation and identification of systemic hindrances.

c. Synergies

- Exploration of synergies within the SSE among actors of the same and different families.
- Analysis of external synergies with mainstream businesses, public authorities and social movements.
- Identification of tensions and search for solutions.

d. Sectors of Activity

- Identification of traditional and emerging sectors of SSE activity.
- Examination of tensions and opportunities of the welfare state's transformation through their partnership.

4. THE FUTURE STATE OF SSE – SOLIDAR’S PERSPECTIVE



4.1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The study’s main purpose was to capture SOLIDAR’s vision of the SSE. However, the latter was not planned to be realized as a purely academic or theoretical exercise. On the contrary, SOLIDAR intended the process of building its vision to be participatory and its outcome to be deeply rooted in its members’ experiences.

To realize the above, we undertook an empirical study in the form of semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The latter enabled SOLIDAR’s member organizations to participate in the vision-drafting process so that their inputs could become the building blocks of the vision statement (see section 4.3) and inspire the recommended actions, included in this section.

Research question: The research question that guided our empirical study was designed based on the following:

- a. the analytical axes, as they were identified in the previous chapter,
- b. the back-casting method.

The analytical axes specified the key areas of interest (SSE’s purpose, impact, conducive environment, synergies, and sectors of activity) to be examined from a micro, meso, and macro perspective, so that SOLIDAR’s vision would be built on an ecosystemic foundation.

The back-casting method, fitting for any vision-drafting exercise, added the dimension of time

to the mix. More specifically, it expanded our investigation beyond the current or most likely to occur SSE future, toward a desired version of the SSE’s future.

Based on the above, our research question was formulated as follows:

‘What is the desired and current state of the SSE’s purpose, impact, institutional environment, synergies, and sectors of activity’.

Selection of the qualitative research methodology and two of its tools:

Given the prescriptive goal of the study, the exploratory nature of the research question, as well as the qualitative-dependant process of vision drafting, we relied on the qualitative research methodology as fitting the needs of our study. Nevertheless, quantitative information, when accessible, was also examined during the desk analysis and taken into account in the empirical study’s design and implementation.

With regard to the qualitative research tools, we chose individual/group (semi-structured) interviews with one or more representatives of each member organization. With the interviews, we intended to provide the space and time to each organization and comprehend through its representative(s) its views. In addition to the above, we also selected the focus group, so that we could observe the group dynamics around SSE matters and, in particular, whether, how, and why a convergence or divergence of opinions would emerge among the group’s participants.

Development of interview guides: The research question was further specified and divided into open-ended sub-questions for the interviews (and statements in the case of the focus group). The latter fed the guides for the interviews and the focus group (see Annexes 1-3).

The initial open-ended questions for the focus group were substituted with three illustrated cards with provoking statements and questions exclusively on the SSE's future (see Annex 3) to stimulate a debate among the group's participants on the SSE's desired future.

Selection of member organizations and their representatives: SOLIDAR provided a list of its member organizations with (medium to high) engagement in activities/projects that could be considered SSE-related and made suggestions on identifying fitting interviewee candidates. The selection of the member organizations that would participate in our study was based on:

- a. SOLIDAR's input,
- b. geographical representation among countries,
- c. representation of countries with different degrees of SSE development,
- d. coverage of underrepresented countries, especially in international literature, and,
- e. the time availability of the member organizations' representatives.

Overall, for the interviews we reached out to **ten** member organizations, out of which **eight** accepted to participate in the empirical study and **one**, albeit unable to participate actively sent valuable information on the member organization's vision of the SSE. In the case of the focus groups, all **eight** member organizations that were invited participated. The latter is indicative of the member organizations'

interest in SSE matters and their strong ties of communication and active participation in their network's activities.

About the **countries** of the selected member organizations the following observations were made:

- **geographical representation:** A wide array of European regions was covered, as the selected member organizations were from:
- Central Europe (Belgium, Germany).
 - Southeastern Europe (Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia).
 - Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain).

The latter enriched our findings with input from diverse national contexts and varying socio-political and economic conditions.

- **diverse degree of the SSE's development:** The selected member organizations were not only from countries with a high degree of SSE development (e.g. Belgium, Spain), but also from countries with limited recognition (e.g. Germany, North Macedonia, Albania) (Monzon and Chaves, 2017). The latter prevented us from focusing only on country examples with a widely acknowledged SSE, which would distort our findings, especially when identifying key obstacles and opportunities.

- **literature coverage:** The countries of the selected member organizations were both well-represented (e.g. Belgium, Spain) and underrepresented in the relevant literature (e.g. Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia), striving in this manner to address the above research gap¹⁰.

Concerning the **profile** of the selected member organizations, the vast majority of them were entities with more than 20 years of being established, counting also many years of being

¹⁰ For instance, Belgium and Spain were included in the publication of OECD (2023), whereas Germany, Serbia, North Macedonia were not.

adhered to as members of the SOLIDAR network. Most of them were established as nonprofit associations, engaging in social and educational services, especially concerning the integration of groups from a vulnerable context.

Some of them had also a broad reach and diverse activities expanding to other countries and occasionally, to other regions. As a result, the overall input was not always tied to a specific national context, but enriched by a wider SSE picture that some member organizations depicted while taking into account recent, dominant trends of the SSE around the globe.

At least one **representative** was identified per selected member organization with the help of SOLIDAR, that would participate in the interviews or/and the focus group. Since most of the identified representatives were founding members, members of governance bodies, project managers, researchers, or advisors on SSE-related projects, they were able to address all of our questions and provide valuable feedback.

Furthermore, a satisfactory degree of gender inclusiveness was achieved among the identified representatives, which was lower in the interviews [40% women participants (4/10)], but significantly higher in the focus group [75% women participants (6/8)] (see Table 3).

In addition to the above, most of the representatives took part in both the interviews and the focus group, which enabled them to familiarize themselves with our study goals and create a continuum between the two methods (see Table 3).

Interview and focus group design and implementation:

→ **Timeframe:** The interviews and the focus group took place from mid-August until the beginning of October, whereas the focus

group, took place by the end of September.

→ **Modality:** Five of the interviews took place online through the platform Zoom to facilitate the engagement of member organizations. The other three interviews, including the focus group, took place in vivo during a field trip in Germany organized by SOLIDAR and one of its oldest member organizations (AWO).

Overall, the methodology that was co-designed with SOLIDAR, aimed to capture its SSE vision via a bottoms-up approach, enabling the active participation of its members and giving prominence to their voice. In this light, the vision-drafting process functioned both as an exercise of member empowerment and bonding for the participants – SOLIDAR’s members and the SOLIDAR network.

4.2 ANALYSIS

As the interviews and the focus group ended, we collected, processed, and analyzed all empirical data. The outcome was the synthesis that follows. In the latter, we divided all findings into common emerging themes that reflected the analytical axes. In line with the back-casting method, in each theme, we examined the desired future SSE state, and its current state as well as introduced action-based recommendations to SOLIDAR. All of the above were pieces that were brought together and revealed in the end the broader picture of SOLIDAR’s SSE vision.

SSE’s purpose and impact

Future state: As stated in the methodology, the participants were mainly from the non-business part of the SSE (as representatives of NGOs, associations, non-statutory welfare actors, and relevant networks). The latter influenced the way they perceived the SSE in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it was not always clear to some participants that they were part of the SSE. The latter was due to an ongoing misconception

that the SSE is composed mainly of business actors, which is not always addressed clearly by international institutions and literature. On the other hand, their focus on social matters and limited, if any, economic or/and entrepreneurial activity, influenced, as expected, their vision of the SSE. As a result, when called to define the SSE's purpose in a desired future state, they put a great emphasis on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, especially from the social enterprises' perspective, which was occasionally used as a synonym for social services. Nevertheless, as a participant pointed out *"SSE is not economy for the poor, it is much larger than that"*, which may be interpreted as a cautionary tale not to limit the SSE to a specific goal, form, activity, or group in need.

As for the broader purpose of the SSE in an ideal future, participants agreed that it should not substitute entirely the existing socio-economic system. As they were encouraged to further shed light on the purpose of the SSE, they compared it with that of *'a seed for transformation in the way of connecting, producing and consuming, as its values bring us closer to a sustainable and just society' while 'they depart from those of the capitalist system'*.

In particular, participants described the SSE's transformative trait as an ongoing and gradual process of change by putting people and the environment above profits and capital, which may be achieved by furthering the presence and impact of SSE, so that the current regime changes from within. Reiterating the above, a participant highlighted that *'we do not need to build something new but transform the existing one into something better'*. In this regard, the SSE would ideally become a vehicle that would enable - as it already does - a smooth, gradual, and peaceful transition toward a more humane, inclusive, and just economy, in which no one is left behind.

In line with the above, we noted that there was a dominant opinion around the three-pillar narrative, which participants seemed to embrace aligning in this aspect their views with those of international organizations,, although a few voices were arguing initially in favor of the SSE and social enterprises becoming the main entrepreneurial model (*'all or most companies should become social enterprises'*).

One scenario that was considered and participants agreed upon, was for the SSE not to remain part of the periphery but, on the contrary, to become a main economic sector, of equal weight with the public and private (for-profit) pillars. A participant's following words vividly depicted the latter: *'SSE should not be treated as the adopted child and mainstream business as the normal one'*, the stigma of which often pushed SSE actors to seal their identity (*'Do not say that you are a social enterprise! They would instantly consider you are less professional!'*)

Although participants did not agree on whether the SSE should be the future role model for the whole economic system, several noted that some of the SSE values were already influencing the public and the private sector in the form of environmental and social standards (e.g. public procurement with social clauses, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan).

Current state: By setting up, transforming into, or supporting social enterprises (or other socially oriented SSE actors), participants discovered in the SSE a model that balances social needs with economic sustainability and a low environmental footprint.

As to the SSE's impact, participants shared the opinion that it was achieved in varying degrees as it heavily depended on regional, national, and supranational circumstances. Equal attention was paid not only to the local

and national context, but also the European one ('SSE is not only a local or national matter, but a European one').

To further shed light on the SSE's impact, participants referred to a number of cases, in which they had been involved, especially on social integration and social service provision. Although some of them provided data including but not limited to the contribution of the SSE to employment and the GDP, these metrics were considered limited, since the SSE's dynamic could not be measured solely with these quantitative indicators.

Recommendations: During the empirical study, it became evident that the SSE was not a new concept for the participants, which had built an understanding over the years of being active in the broader social welfare sector. Yet, a deep dive into further clarifying what SSE is and rich universe of its practice, especially with regard to more business-oriented SSE actors may be beneficial for SOLIDAR, as well as for its member organizations encouraging potential, future collaborations.

In this regard, it would be advisable for SOLIDAR to undertake interactive initiatives /exercises within its network to:

- take a deep dive into the SSE concept and further explore how its member organizations associate with it,
- develop a deeper understanding of the SSE's breadth and diversity,
- comprehend the diversity of the SSE by inviting participants from the business part of the SSE,
- identify common needs and aspirations among SOLIDAR's members,
- and explore potential collaborations with entrepreneurial SSE actors, as well as with SSE networks with more radical views.

Laws and Policies (Conducive Environment)

Future state: All participants acknowledged the crucial role of laws and policies in the SSE's future development, moving in a similar direction with the international organizations. In particular, upon reflecting on the desired future state of the SSE, most of the participants approached the legal and policy framework holistically, starting with - but not limited to - the organization laws on the SSE and its actors. As one of the participants mentioned: '*all European countries should have a SSE framework law*'. Such an emphasis did not overshadow the equally important role of special organization laws on SSE actors, especially on social enterprises, which participants also brought to the fore during our study, while highlighting the need for an in-between coherence.

With regard to supportive SSE measures, although participants mentioned in many instances the issue of funding, they did not limit their focus on that but confirmed the need for a variety of legal and policy interventions. Some of the examples they provided in this regard were the integration of SSE in the educational system, the inclusion of social and environmental clauses in public procurement, as well as tax measures for SSE actors and tax incentives for those investing in SSE actors. From the above, it seemed that the model of second-generation public policies, which is interlinked with such variety, had gained ground in the field and redefined the advocacy goals of SSE actors.

Furthermore, apart from undertaking an action, participants also called policymakers to refrain from '*doing anything against the SSE*', such as by overregulating the SSE field or imposing legal obstacles on the SSE associated with its particular traits. Based on both aspects raised above, an ideal regime for the SSE should strive for a balance between safeguarding the

SSE nature with adequate measures, while abstaining from suffocating its autonomy and self-determination.

Except for the content of SSE laws/policies, participants also referred to the process of law and policy-making. Ideally, for participants, such a process would take the form of co-designing with the active participation of SSE actors, so that the produced laws/policies may better align with the needs of the field. The latter has been also promoted in many instances by international organizations as a good law-making and policy-making practice.

An interesting point made by one of the participants was that in an ideal future state of the SSE, there would be *'a safe space for experimentation'*. The latter may be viewed in light of the design as well as of the implementation of SSE laws and policies. Examples of such experimentation may be found in the words of another participant who argued in favor of enabling *'cross-border activities among SSE actors from different countries'*, as well as introducing *'an SSE label'*, so that any social-oriented activity may be acknowledged as such and treated accordingly, as it is the case for fair trade. The idea of having spaces of experimentation fostering innovation, irrespective of the form they undertake, deserves further attention by research and consideration by policymakers.

Current stage: In the current context, participants acknowledged the progress that has been made in the recognition of the SSE as a whole or/and partially of some of its actors, such as that of the social enterprises. Nevertheless, they identified a number of issues that they had noted either from their fieldwork or from their advocacy, such as the level of coherence between SSE laws and the rest of legislation, the degree of complexity which became even greater in states with multiple national and regional legislative competencies,

as well as a high degree of limited or total inertia of supportive measures, such as that of public procurement with social clauses; confirming issues that were identified in the literature, as well. As one participant characteristically stated: *'there is an unstoppable trend in practice'*, referring to the persistence in using the lowest price criterion in public procurement as the default rule while ignoring the inclusion of any additional social clauses due to a lack of awareness and training of the competent authorities.

Participants also identified factors outside the legislative realm that influenced the legal and policy landscape on the SSE, such as the changes in the political scenery that also impacted the continuation and implementation of SSE-related supportive measures.

With regard to the EU, its influence on the public policy agenda setting and implementation was highlighted as it paved the way to enact laws and policies that acknowledge and support the SSE at the national and regional level. Some participants observed that the increased interest in the SSE went hand in hand with the perceived renewed interest of European politics for social and environmental matters in the framework of the just transition narrative. However, they raise concerns about their advocacy role due to the new power dynamic after the EU elections with the rise of the far-right, as the above political shift may be proven detrimental to environmental and social policies, endangering also the interest in SSE. That is why a need emerges for orchestrated initiatives and broader alliances advocating for the SSE along with broader social and environmental matters as a potential way of addressing current changes in the political landscape at the EU level.

Despite these challenges, some participants expressed their optimism. The mere fact of the existence of such laws/policies was considered a positive step forward since the focus may be

on improving them and not on how to enact them from scratch.

Recommendations: Based on the above observations SOLIDAR is encouraged to:

- Promote good country examples within and outside its network with regard to the legal and policy landscape of SSE, which was also suggested by one of the participants.
- Monitor the developments in the legal and policy landscape affecting the SSE in support of member organizations' advocacy role at a local, regional, national, or/and European level, as well as provide the space to experiment and reflect upon future improvements. Such monitoring mechanism may take the form of an observatory, a multi-stakeholder committee, or an online tool/platform (e.g. explore the possibility of expanding the Social Rights Monitor¹¹), to be updated periodically.
- Guide its member organization on the specific topic of public procurement with social clauses, given the social orientation of most of them and how often they expressed their concerns on this topic, be it about their advocacy or business activities. In this regard, it may be beneficial to organize internal activities within the SOLIDAR network, as well as external activities exchanging good practices on public procurement by extending the invite to public authorities that had already designed and implemented successful social and environmental clauses in their procurement contracts. The outcome of such activities could gradually feed the development of a guide helping member organizations to advocate, promote, and participate in such contracts.

Synergies

Future regime: When invited to envision a synergistic SSE landscape, a participant commented that: *'The SSE is not an island in the ocean, but part of the ocean'*. In other words, the SSE, as part of the economy and occupying one of the three main pillars, is expected to develop a wide array of collaborative initiatives with the other two pillars: the public and the private (for profit). Thus, in an ideal future SSE state, the synergies that would be established should take different forms (e.g. social campaigns, study visits, bidding for funding and public procurements, advocacy before policymakers) with diverse stakeholders each time depending on the goals to be achieved. Participants' suggestions on the above were endless, showing how deeply rooted is the idea of synergies in their modus operandi and how they have already (or intend to) experimented with different ways of collaborating. One aspect to be pointed out is that their proposals were not limited to the local or national level, but included also the European one.

An interesting element that came about during the discussion on the synergies' ideal future state was the fact that participants viewed them as bottom-up initiated, but top-down facilitated. In other words, synergies even in an ideal SSE future should not only depend on mere individuals' willpower, but be fostered by enabling laws and policies, e.g. that promote cooperation and not competition among organizations and actors in accessing funds and other supportive measures.

Another key aspect raised by some participants was how necessary are these collaborations for various reasons, not least strengthening the sustainability and resilience of the actors under collaboration. The latter shows that participants perceived synergies not merely as a tool of economic survival, but as a multifaceted

¹¹ 'Social Rights Monitor is SOLIDAR's interactive map that assesses the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) at national level from the perspective of civil society'. See the official site of SOLIDAR: <https://www.solidar.org/resources/social-rights-monitor/>

mechanism serving diverse needs at the same time, such as that of peer-to-peer learning to better address their social goals or as a learning process for actors from other sectors to comprehend first-hand the SSE values and principles by collaborating with them.

Although there was not a clear consensus, some agreed that such synergies may enable a cross-fertilization, especially between the SSE and the private for-profit sector. The latter may help the SSE navigate better itself in the market, while the SSE may inspire SMEs to adhere to social and environmental standards.

Within such synergies, the competition that is currently the rule in the market would be substituted to that of cooperation as long as there would be an alignment of goals to be achieved and building of trust, as participants observed from their experience. The latter may be one way of overcoming the market's brutal competition, which the SSE cannot escape, especially the part of the SSE with entrepreneurial activities.

Current regime: Building synergies with the public authorities and, occasionally with mainstream businesses, was a usual activity undertaken by most participants. During the study, they provided good case examples of such collaborations. Interestingly enough, these synergies tended to be built across the three pillars more often than within the SSE field and even less between business and non-business actors, limiting, thus the pool of potential collaborators/stakeholders with which they share a common basis of values and principles. One exception to the above was the coalition for a just transition that brought closer CSOs and the grassroots. Through such an alliance, environmental organizations comprehended the SSE model and advocated for it as a means to address their social and environmental concerns. Participants also referred to factors that hinder such synergies, such as mistrust or misunderstanding

of the SSE. In this regard, the experience of a participant was enlightening stating that before any collaboration it was necessary to adequately communicate the SSE's particularities, which once understood were well received.

Another hindering factor to building synergies especially with the public sector was the opposition by far-right political parties with a multiplying effect on the local communities and the SSE actors' reputation, especially when engaging in collaborative projects with a focus on migrants/refugees/minorities' inclusion. A solution that emerged out of the experience was to prioritize the focus on the service or products and less on the identity of the provider in its communication policies. In other cases, any kind of synergy was a mission impossible, especially with large companies and chains which when losing public contracts used paralyzing tools such as lawfare against SSE actors. The latter was interrelated with the thought of another participant stating the need for 'being inclusive but not too inclusive' when building such alliances.

In some sectors, such collaborations run smoother, such as that of education, potentially due to easier alignment of goals among universities, schools, and SSE actors.

Recommendations: Taking into account the above, SOLIDAR is invited to:

- Encourage potential collaborations within the SSE field and especially with entrepreneurial SSE actors.
- Promote successful examples of such synergies.
- Undertake a mapping exercise of identifying the diverse types of synergies of its member organizations, the goals they pursue, and the activities they undertake in these synergies, as well as the type and nature of their collaborators while reflecting on lessons learned from good and bad practices. Member

organizations with longer experience may be invited to run a pilot with member organizations with less experience and help them identify what needs could be better addressed through such synergies, replying to the key questions of 'why', 'with whom', and 'how' that are associated with any synergistic attempt.

Sectors of Activity

Future state: In a desired SSE future, participants envisioned the SSE having a great presence in specific sectors, such as in social and care services, circular economy, inclusive education (*'we should be there!'*), and managing commons. While *'nothing would stop SSE in any other field'*, participants in the above sectors saw the SSE as being a pioneer and undertaking a leading role.

Particular attention has been paid to the elderly care services which will reach a new peak in the future, according to participants' estimations (*'we have to prepare for that, (for) such high needs and even now we do not have enough'*). In this regard, the SSE was viewed as able to address them in collaboration with local and national authorities and balance the supply and demand (e.g. by safeguarding the rights of caregivers and attracting more workforce to occupy the field while providing flexible and holistic services to people in need, including vulnerable groups).

Linking social services with the SSE was a dominant view that was shared among participants. However, a more nuanced approach that deserves equal attention supported by some participants was that in the future the SSE should not be limited to a specific sector but due to its versatility, be approached as being *'transversal'*, depending on the communities' needs which it would aspire to address (*'every field of the economy would be a potential field for SSE'*). Following a similar approach, a participant reflected on the SSE's future role in cases *'where privatization goes too far'*. Ideally, in the

sectors at risk or already being privatized, where privatization undermines the quality of goods or services or highjacks the exercise of social rights (such as that of housing), the role of the SSE would be crucial to reverse the trend and offer an alternative that prioritizes the wellbeing of people and environment before profits. In this regard, participants envisioned the SSE being present in the housing sector, in health care, and the energy sector, ensuring the affordability and accessibility of services, even in remote areas and for vulnerable groups.

Current state: When discussing the current context of the SSE, it was no surprise that social services were considered the most prominent sector where the SSE was found to have a strong, if not the strongest, presence, while construction and circular economy were among the emerging sectors, in which the SSE has started to grow.

When participants were confronted with the question of whether there was an actual or potential conflict with the welfare state, the message they communicated was loud, clear, and in unison. They considered the SSE's involvement in social services as positive beyond any doubt. A line of argument was introduced to support such a view, based on the SSE's key traits (e.g. *'Not haunted by profit maximization'*). That is why participants considered the SSE as well suited to contribute to the improvement of the quality and coverage of such services in a decentralized manner. Thus, the SSE and the welfare state were not viewed as rivals, but as allies working in a complementary way. To depict how such a synergy has a multiplying effect, a participant vividly stated that in this case: *'one and one equals three'*. On a similar note, another participant noted that the SSE is a mechanism capable of changing the welfare system from the inside. Given how the old system is more paternalistic and at times conservative or authoritarian, the SSE brings a fresh air of *'self-determination'* (*'we help people help*

themselves’) in the communities, groups, and people in need while advocating for users’ social rights and care workers’ labor rights through innovative approaches to service delivery.

Recommendations: In line with all of the above, SOLIDAR is invited to:

- Form sectorial working groups on social services to exchange ideas and experiences on their progress with the aim to further grow their presence.
- Encourage member organizations to explore the possibility of expanding their activities to emerging SSE sectors (housing, long-term and elder care, energy).
- Monitor privatization trends and advocate for their transition to SSE- SMEs - public partnerships, promote good practice examples, and explore the enabling factors including legal hacking, if the legal environment is not supportive.

4.3 VISION STATEMENT

In an attempt to condense the above findings we formulated the vision statement that follows, which shall be open for discussion and re-adjustment by the SOLIDAR network:

‘SOLIDAR envisions a future where the SSE is recognized as a major economic pillar by co-constructed and supportive laws and policies on an equal footing with the public and the private for profit pillars. By being present in any sector of the economy and pioneering in social services, the SSE builds with key stakeholders’ bottom-up initiated and top-down facilitated synergies that serve multifaceted goals, substituting in this manner competition with cooperation and transforming gradually and peacefully from within the current system into a more humane, inclusive, and just economy, where no one is left behind’.

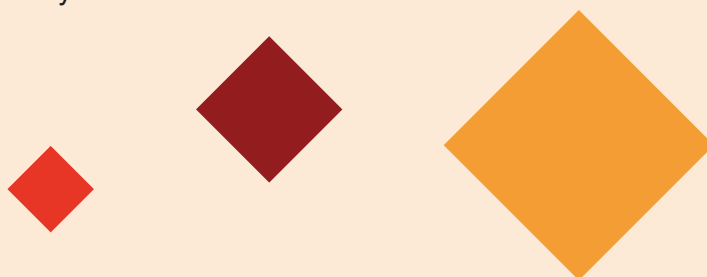
To sum up, SOLIDAR’s member organizations envisioned an ideal future for the SSE comprising of the following elements under each analytical axe:

Purpose and impact: SSE was conceived as an economic sector of equal importance with the public and private (for-profit) sectors. Although pioneering in social welfare, SSE was not limited to an “economy for the poor”. Instead, it was acknowledged as balancing social matters, environmental concerns, and economic empowerment, by being a key driver of a peaceful transition toward a more humane, inclusive, and just economy, while changing in this manner the current system from within.

Laws and policies: Organization laws on the SSE and its actors, as well as a variety of support measures were perceived as the building blocks for a coherent and co-designed environment by the SSE actors, providing a safe space for their experimentation.

Synergies: Broader SSE coalitions were pictured as bottom-up initiated and top-down facilitated by enabling laws and policies. To address multifaceted needs exceeding that of economic survival, they would undertake different forms and involve diverse stakeholders each time depending on the goals to be achieved; the final goal being to change the mindset of competition into that of cooperation.

Sectors of activity: SSE was foreseen to have a presence in any area of the economy, while leading the way in specific sectors such as social and care services, circular economy, including education, and managing commons. In addition to the above, in the sectors at risk or already being privatized, the SSE was envisioned as an alternative that puts the well-being of people and the environment before profits. In terms of emerging sectors, the potential of SSE lies with long-term and elder care, housing, and energy sectors, while ensuring the affordability and accessibility of these services, especially in remote areas and for vulnerable groups.



4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOLIDAR

To realize such a multifaceted vision for the SSE, SOLIDAR is advised to reflect on a number of recommendations that emerged during the study, summarized as follows:

Deepen the understanding of the SSE concept: SOLIDAR could undertake capacity-building activities within its network to:

- a. further explore how its member organizations associate with the SSE concept,
- b. develop common grounds among its member organizations on the SSE concept,
- c. gain a deeper understanding of the SSE's breadth and diversity,
- d. provide the time and space for experimentation on SSE-related topics and with SSE actors.

These activities could strengthen the ties among SOLIDAR's members and inspire new collaborations among them. Inviting participants from the business part of the SSE, even if they are outside SOLIDAR's network, would also be beneficial to bridge the gap between the business and non-business families of the SSE while identifying common needs and aspirations under potential synergies.

Comprehend SSE's legal landscape and support public procurement

With regard to the institutional environment, SOLIDAR is suggested to explore the following ideas:

- develop monitoring mechanisms on the laws and policies affecting the SSE in support of member organizations'

advocacy role at a local, regional, national, or/and European level. (e.g. create an observatory, a multi-stakeholder committee, or an online tool/platform or explore the possibility of expanding the Social Rights Monitor),

- organize field trips and exchange good country examples within and outside its network about the SSE and its laws and policies, while extending the invite to public authorities that had already designed and implemented successful social and environmental clauses in their procurement contracts,
- develop a guide for its member organizations on how to navigate their advocacy or practice with public procurement with social clauses.

Foster synergies

SOLIDAR and its member organizations would benefit from:

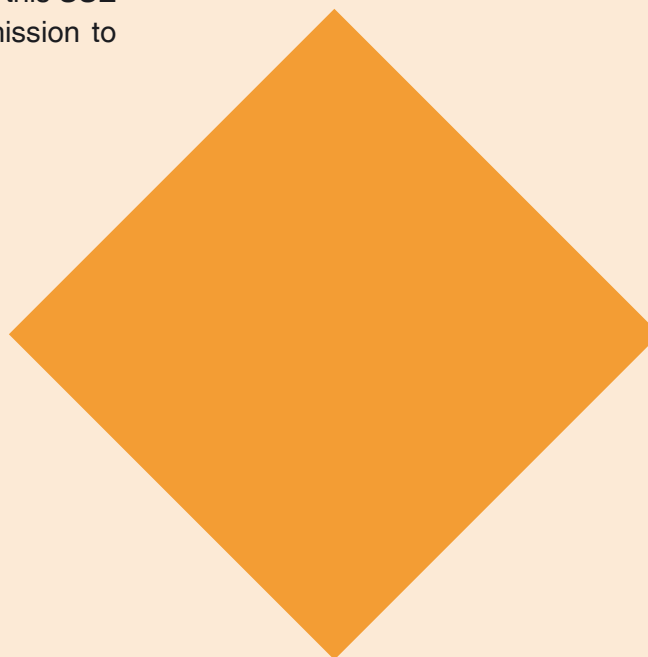
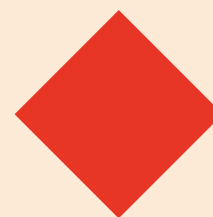
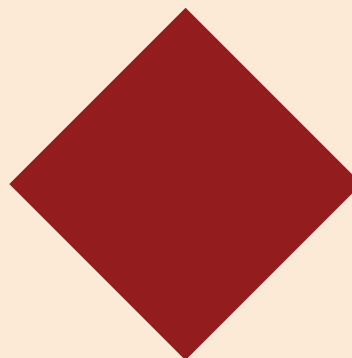
- undertaking a mapping exercise (with regular updates) on the diverse types of SSE synergies of its member organizations, the goals they pursue, and the activities they undertake in these synergies, as well as the type and nature of their collaborators while reflecting on lessons learned from good and bad practices,
- encouraging potential collaborations within the SSE sector and especially with entrepreneurial SSE actors within and beyond SOLIDAR's network,
- running a pilot with member organizations with longer experience and those with less experience to help them identify what needs could be better addressed through such synergies, replying to the key questions of 'why', 'with whom', and 'how' that is associated with any synergistic attempt.

Strengthen strategic sectors

SOLIDAR could also explore:

- Forming sectorial working groups on social services to exchange ideas and experiences on their progress to further grow their presence,
- encouraging member organizations to expand their activities to emerging SSE sectors (housing, long-term and elder care, energy),
- monitoring privatization trends and advocating for their transition to SSE-SMEs - public partnerships, promoting good practice examples and exploring the enabling factors including legal hacking if the legal environment is not supportive.

Overall, the key to the recommendations' successful implementation is not to treat them as stand-alone, isolated initiatives. Instead, they should be viewed as interconnected with each other and with SOLIDAR's broader agenda. Thus, SOLIDAR's intention to integrate the SSE concept in its strategic planning, starting with the drafting of this SSE vision, paves the way to bring its mission to reality through the SSE avenue.





5. CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on SOLIDAR, an international network of CSOs aiming to advance social justice through a just transition. Over the years SOLIDAR has developed an interest in the SSE and recently decided to formulate its own SSE vision. Our mission was to help unravel such a vision based on a desk analysis, through a participatory approach, and according to the back-casting method.

During our desk analysis, we approached the SSE through the lens of the ILO definition and extrapolated the analytical axes condensed into the following research question: “What is the desired and current state of the SSE’s purpose, impact, institutional environment, synergies and sectors of activity”.

To address the above question, the empirical study took the form of interviews and a focus group and offered context-specific insight from SOLIDAR’s member organizations in Albania, Belgium, Germany, North Macedonia, Portugal, Serbia, and Spain. Moreover, the back-casting method, as it focuses on the desired future(s) and not on the likely-to-occur future, provided an imaginative pathway to envision what an ideal future for the SSE should look like.

One of our key findings showed that some of the empirical study’s participants were hesitant to consider themselves as part of the SSE family as they were nonprofit organizations with limited to no entrepreneurial activity, despite the ILO’s definition pointing otherwise. The latter reflects a deeply rooted and rarely addressed misconception (affecting also the SSE) that economy equals market, whereas the SSE introduces a new perception of economy

by revisiting the ancient Greek root of the term, which encompasses any kind of activity that a household, or broadly, a community needs.

When called to reflect on the SSE’s **purpose and impact** in an ideal future, participants foresaw the SSE aiming and achieving a smooth, gradual, and peaceful transition toward a more humane, inclusive, and just economy, by changing the current system from within. To realize that, the SSE should be recognized, according to participants, as a major economic pillar, of equal weight with the public and private (for-profit) pillars, whose values and principles may influence the other two pillars through the promotion of environmental and social standards.

With regard to a **conducive institutional environment**, participants’ perception was holistic, according to which an ideal law and policy landscape should encompass organization laws on the SSE and its actors, as well as a variety of support measures not least in education, taxation, and public procurement. They also envisioned such a landscape to be coherent and co-designed by SSE actors, calling not only for state interventions but also for refraining from ‘doing anything against the SSE’, such as by overregulating the SSE field or imposing legal obstacles on SSE actors; an element that tends to be missed out by international organizations. Participants also anticipated a conducive environment to provide ‘a safe space for experimentation’, (e.g. during ‘cross-border activities among SSE actors from different countries’ or with the introduction of ‘an SSE label’) which is not central, if existing at all, in the institutional perception.

As to the **synergies** of the SSE, ideally, these should be bottom-up initiated and top-down facilitated by enabling laws and policies. To address multifaceted needs exceeding that of economic survival, they should undertake different forms (e.g. social campaigns, study visits, bidding for funding and public procurements, advocacy before policymakers) and involve diverse stakeholders each time depending on the goals to be achieved; the final goal being to change the mindset of competition into that of cooperation.

When it comes to the **sectors** of SSE activity, in an ideal future, the SSE should be transversal, having a presence in any area of the economy, while being a leader and pioneer in specific sectors such as social and care services, circular economy, inclusive education, and managing commons. Especially in the elderly care services, the SSE in collaboration with local and national authorities would be expected to address the soaring needs, while balancing supply (by attracting more care workers and guaranteeing good working conditions) and demand (by addressing the diverse needs of the care receivers).

Participants also envisioned the SSE being present in sectors at risk or already being privatized, where the quality of goods or services is undermined or the exercise of social rights highjacked. In this light, the SSE would be expected to reverse such a trend and offer an alternative that prioritizes the well-being of people and the environment before profits (e.g. in housing, health care, and the energy sector), while ensuring the affordability and accessibility of services, even in remote areas and for vulnerable groups.

Based on the above, SOLIDAR's vision co-constructed by its member organizations, presents an illustrative example of building an SSE vision by and for its actors, allies, and social movements, influenced but not limited to the institutional perspective. It is also inspiring in its attempt to bridge the SSE universe and the grassroots community both of which despite their common ground often viewed each other as being worlds apart.

Reaching the end of this study, we wish to leave our readers in hopes that this vision-drafting may inspire more actors to discover the SSE universe and build a SSE-focused vision. Some may (re) discover hope in the SSE, whereas others might find nothing but utopian dreams. Irrespective of that, there is a cautionary tale when engaging with concepts like the SSE as they do not always lead to immediate results. In this light, the words attributed to Galeano¹² come to mind as a reminder that the value of utopia is not that it is attainable, but because it is outside our reach, we keep on moving forward.

¹² The phrase belonged to the Argentinian filmmaker Fernando Birri but has been attributed to Galeano. *Para qué sirve la utopía* (youtube video) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFp6vvpvVbAc>

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APPENDIX

TABLE 3 'The selected member organizations – participants in the empirical study

Coded name	Legal form	Country	Est.	Year of adherence at SOLIDAR	Interview	Focus Group
A	Non-profit association	Belgium	More than 20 years	More than 5 years	✓(f, m, m)* <i>*Group interview</i>	✓(f)
B	Non-profit association	Spain	More than 20 years	Less than 5 years	✓(f)	✓(f)
C	Non-profit association	Serbia	More than 20 years	More than 10 years	✓(m)	✓(f)
D	Welfare associations	Germany	More than 100 years	More than 5 years	✓(m)	✗
E	Social enterprise	North Macedonia	n/a	More than 5 years	✓(m)	✓(m)
F	Non-profit association	Spain	More than 20 years	More than 5 years	✓(f, m)* <i>*Group interview</i>	✗
G	Non-profit association	Spain	More than 20 years	More than 10 years	✓(m)	✓(m)
H	n/a	Albania	n/a	n/a	✗	✓(f)
I	n/a	Portugal/Brazil	n/a	n/a	✗	✓(f)
J	n/a	Belgium	n/a	n/a	✓(f, m)* <i>*Group interview</i>	✓(f)

ANNEX 1 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introductory Questions

1. Could you please describe **briefly** your organization (goals, activities, membership)?
2. How does your organization engage with the SSE and why?

Future State of SSE

3. Let us imagine that we are in the year 2030 when the SSE would have reached its ideal state. Could you please describe in as much precision and detail as possible and with examples:
 - a) What would be its purpose and impact?

- b) What the institutional environment (laws and policies) would be like? And what kind of actors would it encompass?
- c) What kind of synergies it would have developed and why?
- d) In which sectors it would be active and what kind of impact it would have?

Current State of SSE

Degree of the SSE's Development in the Country

- 4. What is the degree of the SSE's development (high, mediocre, low) in your country and why?

Laws and Policies

- 5. How laws and policies support the SSE's development in your country?
- 6. What kind of legal/policy obstacles, if any, are there and how do they hinder the SSE's development?
- 7. What new policy tools could better support the SSE's growth?

Synergies

- 8. What synergies exist within the SSE community? How effective are these?
- 9. Can you provide examples of successful collaborations between SSE actors and mainstream businesses or public authorities?
- 10. What challenges have arisen from these synergies, and how have they been addressed?

Sectors of Activity

- 11. Which sectors have the strongest presence of SSE actors and why?
- 12. What emerging sectors hold potential for SSE development?
- 13. In the case of social services, how do you perceive the impact of SSE activities on traditional public social services?

Impact

- 14. What is the social, economic, and environmental impact of SSE in your country?
- 15. Which factors enhance it and which hinder it?

ANNEX 2 FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Introductory Questions

- 1. Why have you agreed to join the focus group and what are your expectations?
- 2. Why SOLIDAR should engage in building its own vision of the SSE?
- 3. How would that help SOLIDAR promote its mission?

Future State of SSE – Identifying Gaps Between Future vs Current State

Let us imagine that we are in the year 2030 when the SSE would have reached its ideal state. Could you please describe in as detail as possible, as well as with examples:

4. What would be the SSE's purpose? How does it relate or differ from the purpose that currently pursues?
5. What kind of impact would it have on its communities and the country? How does that compare to the impact it has currently?
6. What the institutional environment (laws and policies) would be like? How would it be more effective and efficient compared to the one currently applicable?
7. What kind of synergies would it have developed and why? How do they differ from the ones that it has currently developed?
8. In which sectors would it be active? How do they differ from the sectors in which it is currently active?
9. What kind of actions, measures, initiatives, and by whom are needed for the SSE to reach its ideal state?

ANNEX 3 FOCUS GROUP CARDS

1ST CARD – The Purpose of the SSE



'The SSE:

- should **not only** meet existing needs or address imbalances ,
- but transform **THE entire socio-economic organization.**'

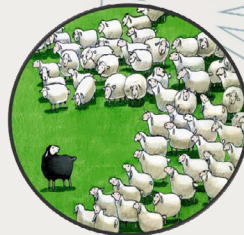


2ND CARD: The Institutional Environment of the SSE



'The SSE and its actors should remain

- **at the margins** of law and policy,
- **without introducing** a new approach towards lawmaking and public policy design.'

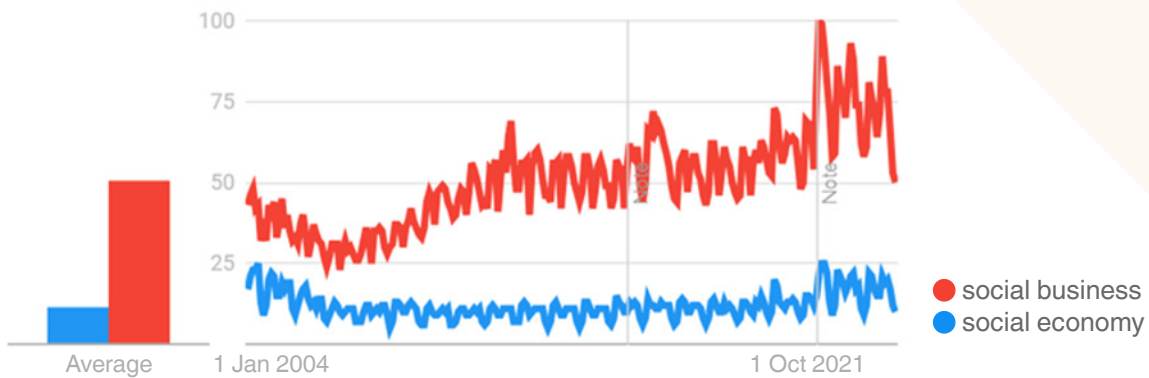


3rd CARD : The synergies of the SSE

‘What kind of
- **synergies** &
- **with which actors**
are needed for the SSE to reach
its ideal state?’

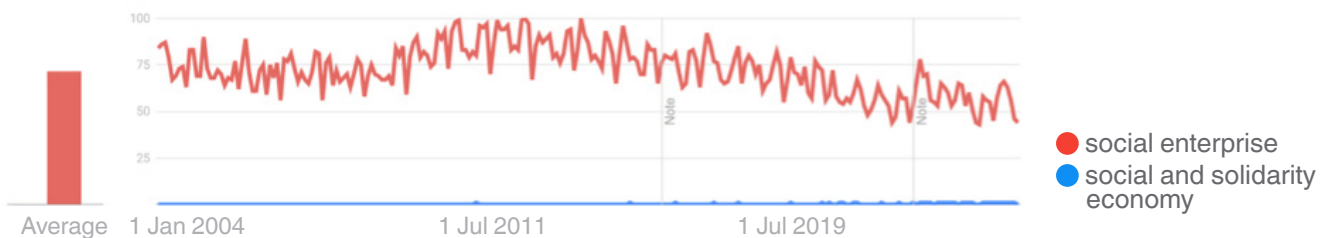


FIGURE 3(A) ‘Comparison of interest based on Google searches of terms ‘social business’ and social economy’ from 1.1.2004 until 1.10.2021’



Source: Google trends

FIGURE 3(B) ‘Comparison of interest based on Google searches of terms ‘social enterprise’ and social and solidarity economy’ from 1.1.2004 until 1.10.2021’

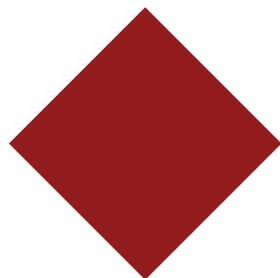
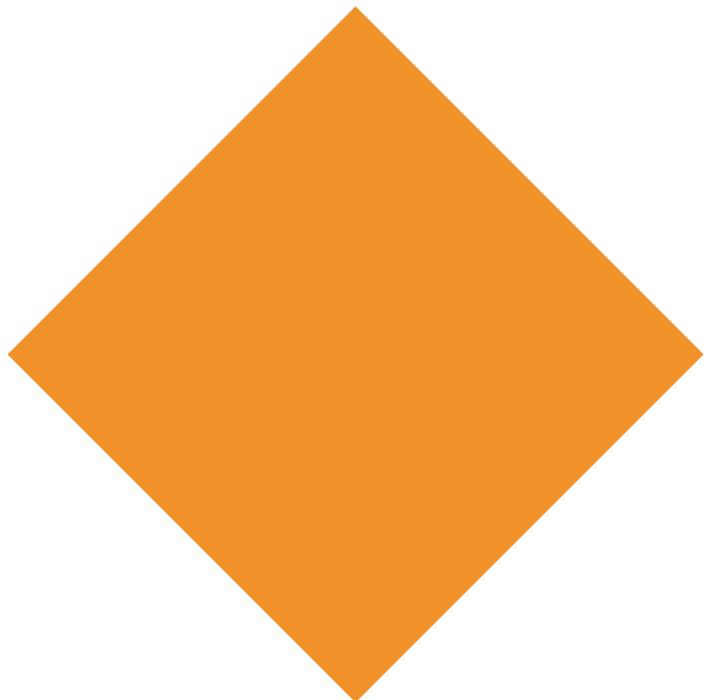


Source: Google trends

solidar

ABOUT SOLIDAR

SOLIDAR is a European and worldwide network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working to advance social justice through a just transition in Europe and worldwide. With over 50 member organisations based in 26 countries (19 of which are EU countries), member organisations are national CSOs in Europe, as well as some non-EU and EU-wide organisations, working in one or more of our fields of activity.



solidar



REALISING
A SOCIAL EUROPE
FOR ALL

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The publication of the Social Economy Action Plan in 2021 paved the way for a renewed momentum for the recognition and strengthening of social and solidarity economy (SSE) in Europe. What is needed to ensure a bright future for SSE?

SOLIDAR, with the help of researchers Ifigeneia Douvitsa and Sofia Adam asked this to its member organisations active in the field and produced an analysis of their interpretation on and vision of SSE. It will guide the advocacy of the network in this area and contribute to the wider discussion of the role of SSE in the future of Europe.



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