



Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU Social Economy

Improving the socio-economic knowledge of the proximity and social economy ecosystem

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Executive summary

This report summarises findings of the project 'Benchmarking the socio-economic performance of the EU social economy', (Call for tenders EISMEA/2022/OP/00159 - Lot 1). This study assesses the socioeconomic weight of the 'Proximity and Social Economy' ecosystem and its contribution to a sustainable, innovative and resilient economy and society. The European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises - EURICSE (consortium leader), CIRIEC International and Spatial Foresight have pursued two interconnected aims: to represent the social economy of today based on current data as well as to identify methodological and operational tools to improve this representation.

For this project, the social economy is defined by the **2021 European Commission Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP)**¹. The plan covers four types of entities, or 'families', including entrepreneurial and non-entrepreneurial initiatives as well as organisations promoting the interests of their members and organisations pursuing objectives of general interest, namely: **cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), foundations**, plus **social enterprises**, as a recent, crosscutting dynamic within the social economy.

There are social economy organisations in all European (EU) countries, though some operate outside the radar. What changes across EU Member States is how much such entities are acknowledged by policymakers, the general public and grassroots organisations - and recognise themselves - as part of the social economy. Factors explaining the limited visibility of the social economy and underestimates of its contribution include a poor understanding of the diverse roles played by the organisations and the lack of high quality, comparable data and statistical analyses. Currently, only a few Member States have national statistics specifically measuring the social economy, including different types of social economy organisations, employment, the number of volunteers and the value added.

Research methodology

To ensure consistency across countries, the qualitative and quantitative analysis is based on an operational definition of the social economy and social enterprise. The qualitative analysis included desk research and interviews. These shed light on the tradition, institutional framework, roots, trends and level of recognition of the social economy in each Member State. Special attention was paid to assessing the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and recovery by focusing on sectors most affected by the social economy and analysing the weight of the social economy in the agri-food, cultural and creative industries, energy-renewables, health, retail and tourism ecosystems. The quantitative analysis assessed the size of the social economy in the 27 Member States based on available data². Statistical units were identified in each country that are consistent with the operational definitions of the social economy and social enterprise. National researchers engaged for the purpose of the study, aggregated social economy statistics in their countries for the number of entities, employment, turnover and value added, number of members and volunteers and, if available, the hours of volunteering. Specifically for social enterprises, national researchers were asked to consider both ex lege and de facto social enterprises. Building on findings at national level, the core research team conducted the comparative analysis at EU level.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Building an economy that works for people: an action plan for the social economy (SEAP)". <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1537&langId=en>

² Reference year 2021. When not available, data refers - in order of priority - to 2019, 2018 or 2020.

Social economy tradition in the European Union – Historic roots

The social economy is both a socio-economic field shaped by the capacity of civil society to self-organise in response to unmet needs and a theoretical concept. As a socio-economic field, it has its historical roots in 19th century workers' self-help associations, cooperatives and mutual benefit societies. As a concept, the social economy was originally shaped to bring together organisations traditionally representing local communities, namely associations and cooperatives. Foundations, typically representing philanthropy, were added later while social enterprises have been acknowledged only recently. The challenge of operationalising the social economy in Member States is two-fold. Firstly, it implies self-recognition by the organisations as well as acknowledgement by public authorities and the general public of them as full-fledged components of a unitary field. Secondly, there are different trajectories in different countries. In some Member States, institutionalisation of the social economy was strongly supported by a common sense of identity. In other countries, this conceptual crystallisation has not yet taken place.

The EU and the social economy

At EU level, the attitude of European institutions towards the social economy has varied. In the decade 1990-2000, attention was mainly paid to the capacity of the 'third system' to create employment and the ability of civil society organisations to strengthen democracy. There was a significant change in 2009 when the European Parliament adopted a report recognising the social economy as a social partner to help achieve Lisbon Strategy objectives. Then in **2011 the Social Business Initiative**³ was launched to increase the visibility and recognition of social enterprises. Ten years later, the European Commission launched the SEAP, which makes a significant step towards conceptual convergence. The same year, a new ecosystem identified as the 'Proximity and Social Economy' was introduced in the EU Industrial Strategy. These steps were complemented by the **Council's first recommendation on the social economy**⁴ (adopted in November 2023), that Member States to take measures to acknowledge and support the social economy in the social fabric of EU countries.

Components of the social economy

Given its strong local anchorage and proximity dimension, the social economy tends to be extremely context-specific and dynamic. It is creatively shaped in sometimes unique ways by the organisational and legal forms of grassroots organisations, in line with characteristics and traditions of their local legal systems. Country variations in size and diffusion, along with recognition of the diverse components of the social economy, are due to interrelated political, social, economic and cultural factors.

The four 'families' of the social economy have been named before: **cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations (including charities), foundations**. Associations are evenly spread across all Member States and together with foundations are regarded as the vital expression of a vibrant civil society that can contribute to democracy in a practical way. However, the role and potential of traditional cooperatives is recognised to differing degrees across Member States. The same is true for mutual benefit societies, or 'mutuals', which nowadays play a key role only in a few countries where they are highly integrated into the public health system. **Social enterprises** deserve separate consideration since they do not

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Social Business Initiative (SBI) Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation". [https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM\(2011\)682&lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/documents-register/detail?ref=COM(2011)682&lang=en)

⁴ Council Recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32023H01344>

refer to a specific legal entity. They are transversal, cutting across diverse legal forms of the social economy and – under specific conditions – even beyond.

Applying the social economy definition in Member States

To include the diverse types of organisations under the four social economy families has not been straightforward for three reasons. There is a predominance in some countries of concepts which only partially overlap with the social economy, such as ‘third sector’ and ‘non-profit sector’. There can also be a narrow understanding of the social economy and either a too-broad or too-narrow understanding of the social enterprise concept. Operationalising the social economy needed in depth analysis of extremely diverse country contexts while sticking rigorously to a shared research framework. The core research team continuously worked together with national researchers to scrutinise the complexity of the social economy on the ground.

National recognition

How the social economy is understood as a concept varies dramatically across Member States due to diverse traditions and historical roots. The concept is relevant in countries with a tradition of fruitful interaction between its components, such as France, Belgium, Portugal and Spain. It is not commonly used as a concept in countries with a strong division between cooperatives (as organisations solely promoting the interests of their members) and associations (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy). The social economy is gaining relevance in countries where specific policy actions have been recently adopted (Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia).

The poor recognition of the social economy in central and eastern European countries is partially due to a negative perception of cooperatives versus significant recognition of traditional non-profit organisations. Finally, in countries like Cyprus, Estonia, the Netherlands and Sweden the social economy is struggling to find its way due to a predominance of other concepts and approaches including social innovation, social entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.

Due to the interplay of diverse historical, political and social factors, the social economy and the social enterprise do not enjoy the same recognition. The social enterprise enjoys strong legal, policy and self-recognition in Ireland and Italy. Its recognition is challenged in Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Luxemburg by the strong and widespread acknowledgement of the social economy. The social enterprise has gained relevance in Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia and Slovenia thanks to new legislation. Conversely, it tends to be conflated with work integration in Croatia, Czechia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Finally, the social enterprise concept is not commonly used in Austria, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands or Sweden due to the predominance of traditional welfare institutions.

The EU social economy in numbers

Across the 27 Member States, the **social economy includes more than 4.3 million entities**⁵. Social economy entities are mainly cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations and foundations. In addition, other legal forms are recognised as part of the social economy by national/regional legislation or meet this study’s operational definition of the social economy. Finally, data takes into account also limited liability companies (LLC)

⁵ All data presented in this summary are sourced from Chapter 4 of the report ‘Benchmarking the Socio-Economic Performance of the EU Social Economy’ and are the result of calculations made by the authors at the European level by aggregating data available from individual Member States. For more information on data coverage at national level, refer to the tables in Chapter 4. Moreover, for detailed sources and reference years for each country, refer to the Appendix 3 of the report.

that can be considered as social enterprises which represent only a very low percentage of the total number of entities counted.

Indeed, this study estimates there are **more than 246 000 social enterprises**, of which almost 43 000 are ex lege and over 203 000 are de facto social enterprises. Most social enterprises continue to use legal forms that have not been designed specifically for them also in countries where social enterprises have been legally recognised. There are various reasons explaining this situation, including shortcomings in legislation like the lack of proper fiscal incentives which fail to acknowledge the social responsibility taken on by social enterprises. An additional barrier is the poor self-recognition of a significant share of eligible organisations in the social enterprise. Interestingly, some 89.1% of the social enterprises belong to one of the four families traditionally constituting the social economy.

People employed, members and volunteers

At least **11.5 million people – 6.3% of the employed population⁶ – are occupied in the social economy⁷**. More than 6.2 million people (54%) are employed in associations and 3.3 million (29%) in cooperatives. Social enterprises employ at least 3.9 million people⁸. A lack of data in some Member States hinders analysis of **female employment⁹**. In Belgium and Portugal, women account for more than 70% of employment in the social economy, while in France, Poland and Italy the figures are 66%, 60% and 46%, respectively. It is clear that women are strongly represented in associations and foundations, while in cooperatives the figure varies by country and by sector.

Data on membership refers only to 16 Member States where information covers only part of the social economy. From this limited information, there are **over 95 million membership of cooperatives and 135 million memberships of associations**, though this includes multiple affiliations. National data on volunteers are only available in 15 Member States but show more than 53 million active volunteers. Data does not consider the somewhat occasional dimension of voluntary work or the possibility of individuals volunteering with more than one organisation.

The economic size and characteristics of the social economy

Two methods can be used to calculate the economic size of the social economy. Turnover reflects the revenue generated by an enterprise or sector, and value added measures the contribution of that enterprise or sector to GDP excluding intermediate costs of production. For turnover, data totalled **EUR 912.9 billion in 2021**. It could be obtained for only 19 Member States¹⁰. France, Italy, Spain and Finland account for the largest cooperative sectors in terms of turnover, predominantly driven by agricultural, consumer and worker cooperatives. France and Germany registered the highest turnover for associations, foundations and mutuals. Data on value added is only available for eleven Member States and in half of these it is incomplete.

Reconstructing **sectoral diversity** based on existing classifications faces several limitations. Not all countries have up-to-date statistics on activities carried out by social economy organisations and where data is available, it is often not comparable due to different national classifications. Nevertheless, despite the limitations, it is interesting to note

⁶ This does not include Malta and the Netherlands, where data on employment in the social economy are not available. Data on total employment refer to 2021 and have been extracted from the Eurostat database.

⁷ Employment data was collected for 25 Member States as data was not available for Malta and the Netherlands.

⁸ This figure underestimates the number of people employed in social enterprises as data are not available for Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Ireland and the Netherlands. Even where data are available, it may not cover certain types of social enterprises.

⁹ Data on female employment is available for nine Member States, i.e. Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

¹⁰ Turnover information was obtained for cooperatives from 19 countries, for associations and foundations from 16 countries, and for mutual benefit societies and other legal forms from even fewer countries.

that **at least 3.3 million people are employed in the health and social care sector, a further 702 000 in education and 622 000 in arts, culture and entertainment**¹¹.

The European business fabric contains many small- and medium-sized enterprises. According to the Structural Business Statistics published by Eurostat¹², the large majority (99.8%) of enterprises active in the EU non-financial business economy in 2021 were micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In this respect, the social economy data is unsurprising, as it shows the vast majority of enterprises in the social economy are SMEs, with **micro enterprises accounting for more than 93%**.

Social economy and the Covid-19 crisis

Based on information provided by the national researchers and interviews with key players, the analysis highlights how much the social economy was impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. Social economy entities played a special role in welfare and this report presents interesting practices and initiatives, often in collaboration with public authorities, to mitigate the health crisis. Few reports studied the impact of Covid-19 on the social economy at European level and these are mostly either national or regional. They often only mention some interactions, reactions, or resilience and adaptive strategies of social economy organisations/enterprises. Otherwise, reports covering the crisis may have a section dedicated to social economy entities or are limited to one type of entity such as an umbrella federation or activist network and often only on behalf of its members. These studies do not give a comprehensive picture of social economy organisation reactions to the crisis, or its impact on the social economy ecosystem. They do not compare the social economy to the rest of the economy. Nevertheless, thanks to the expertise of national researchers, this report features interesting illustrative cases. A specific bibliography provides references to national studies (with diverse examples from different sectors).

It is very difficult to measure or evaluate the effects of just the pandemic on the social economy. Most of the time the health crisis boosted development within an organisation or enterprise, based on initiatives and projects already in the design phase and along existing strategic lines. Institutional settings adapted because of the pandemic, at policy or national/regional level, with collateral effects on the social economy as on many other areas, notably teleworking.

Covid-19 disproportionately affected the poorest segments in Europe. This has been confirmed during the interviews made with European networks, such as the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), European Network of Social Integration Enterprises (ENSIE), European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES), Social Economy Europe (SEE), and Social Services Europe (SSE). These organisations also published papers and reports on this issue¹³.

Two key features were pointed out by national researchers and in interviews with national and European stakeholders: digitalisation, as well as initiatives and developments in health and care services.

Covid-19 exacerbated existing inequalities. It revealed the digital gap not only in equipment, digital literacy and internet service subscription, but also in housing conditions (overcrowded with confinement and unfit for families to learn and work from home, with no or only one computer). However, across Europe the increased use of digital tools and communication

¹¹ Data by NACE codes are available for Austria (only for cooperatives and mutual benefit societies), Belgium, Croatia, Czechia (partial data for cooperatives), Estonia, Finland (excluding mutual benefit societies), France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia, Spain (only for cooperatives, mutual benefit societies and, partially, for "other legal forms"). However, due to confidentiality, some data may not be published for all sectors in these countries. For Germany and Sweden, partial data were obtained for education, health and social work and housing by searching for matches in the available classifications.

¹² See : https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Structural_business_statistics_overview#Size_class_analysis

¹³ See Chapter 5 in the report.

with organisation members are positive outcomes of the crisis, but this is nuanced. Online meetings allow more participants though this does not mean more participation in the democratic governance advocated by social economy entities. Furthermore, there is a downside to accelerated digitalisation, an increased digital divide. Post Covid-19, many services remain accessible only online.

A lesson from the crisis is that public health measures and prevention such as communication and convincing people to wear masks, supported by local social economy organisations, are less costly for society as a whole than infected patients. Another positive aspect is that new delivery modes for 'health' services have proved feasible via 'tele-consultation/help/support'. However, many social economy entities underestimated mental health issues and excess burdens on staff as a consequence of Covid-19, because serving people and beneficiaries was the goal even at the expense of an individual's own health.

The social economy includes many small entities acting locally next to very large structures, especially insurance or financial sector mutual benefit societies or large cooperatives. Those mostly engaged directly with people during the crisis were front-line workers from small entities.

An important contribution from the social economy is to complement the provision of public services through partnerships with public authorities, increasing capacity. Social economy entities and organisations do not have the means – nor is it their role – to take responsibility for state functions. However, they do help organise and deliver welfare and can complement social and socio-economic functions with important benefits for society (e.g. social inclusion, sustainable development, territorial cohesion, social resilience, population well-being, etc.), on a national, regional, local and autonomous basis. Social economy enterprises and organisations, thanks notably to their local anchorage and their volunteers, also advance the green and digital transitions with a real impact on preventing and mitigating negative effects of the climate crisis and the digital divide.

Social economy entities also need to learn lessons from the Covid-19 experience to better use and adapt their operations to the digital era, while upskilling their staff. Nevertheless, management of a similar crisis would benefit greatly from collaboration or ad hoc partnerships with public authorities. This could include sharing facilities, devices and platforms as well as operational costs. The social economy could provide workers and volunteers to co-organise and deliver services, benefiting from each other's experience, including through joint training. This would also foster mutual knowledge between social and public sector partners. Social economy entities also need to self-critique and apply social economy principles and values to themselves and their internal governance to be more convincing about this way of doing business. Nonetheless, building socio-economic resilience based on collective and structural partnerships between the social economy and the public sector is a long-term endeavour, which needs adaptation and goodwill from the participants.

Social economy vis-à-vis other industrial ecosystems

The research shed light on the relevance of the social economy during multiple on-going crises, especially the environmental, food and energy crises, and as a result of ageing, the transformation of work, the dramatic increase in inequality and the recent pandemic. At the same time, it highlighted the poor visibility of the social economy, especially in the health, energy-renewables and agri-food ecosystems as well as a lack of awareness of the general public that some key services are being delivered by the social economy. Several interviewees highlighted the need to broaden the assessment of the social economy's contribution beyond narrow quantitative parameters.

Agri-food: Social economy organisations in the agri-food ecosystem are very diverse. Well-established traditional agricultural cooperatives in some countries have evolved into very large enterprises that control the food system. Alongside these is a parallel system of local organisations including smaller cooperatives and networks of small producers who support the development of Local Food Systems. They are also particularly inclined to foster a reversion to more sustainable production. Compared to other ecosystems, the social economy - especially agricultural cooperatives - has a much greater influence in agri-food. The role of agricultural cooperatives is particularly relevant in the Netherlands, Finland and Italy. Unlike older Member States, agricultural cooperatives are less developed in central-eastern Member States. Agricultural cooperatives have historically improved members' economic sustainability and working conditions. They have enhanced the competitiveness and sustainability of agri-food in rural areas, induced a positive effect, contributed to innovation and acted as supply chain coordinators. New social economy initiatives facilitate communication between farmers and consumers, triggering a new attitude towards sustainability in the whole production-consumption system. They also increase agri-food diversity, ensure access to fresh and healthy food as well as support the shift towards sustainable farming.

Cultural and Creative Industries: Non-profit cultural organisations have a long tradition in most Member States. The social economy contributes to valorising and improving access to cultural heritage and art, enhancing social capital in local communities, supporting sustainable development especially in sparsely and underpopulated areas, promoting inclusive and integrated territorial development as well as promoting and preserving decent working conditions in an ecosystem with poor protection for labour and social rights. From an EU comparative perspective, the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Spain and Portugal account for the most creative, arts and entertainment enterprises.

Energy-renewables: From a historical perspective, citizen-led initiatives have existed for almost a century next to big corporations and highly centralised energy infrastructure in Germany, Austria and Italy. Community energy projects have flourished in other Member States in recent decades. These are extremely diverse in terms of size, legal form, organisational capacity, technology, people involved, diffusion and as energy producers or providers. The social economy has been particularly impactful in the energy-renewables ecosystem. It has played a crucial role in transforming this ecosystem by stimulating policy design. The main contributions have been better retail prices than conventional enterprises, tackling energy poverty, educating the public about renewable energy and fostering public acceptance of renewable energy technology, fostering energy independence for communities, as well as creating new employment and enhancing social cohesion by cultivating a positive vision of the future.

Health: The health ecosystem includes diverse social economy organisations, including worker, production, user and new multi-stakeholder cooperatives, associations, mutual benefit societies and foundations. The role of the social economy has dramatically increased over the past 20-30 years. It currently plays a key role especially in Spain, Belgium, France, Germany and Portugal. There has been a two-fold shift of setting up multi-stakeholder organisations involving workers, volunteers, recipients and donors alongside the pursuit of explicit social aims by member-oriented organisations. In addition to treatment, cure, preventative, palliative and rehabilitation services, social economy organisations manage hospitals, clinics and other health facilities in some countries. They provide health insurance for services that may not be covered by the health system. They also provide pharmaceutical services, care for vulnerable people and promote, inform and educate on health. Social economy development is likely to increase in importance in the near future, especially filling severe gaps in healthcare provision. The contribution of the social economy will be key especially in providing soft health services such as long-term care, prevention services and fast diagnostic treatment. Its added value is mainly connected to its capacity to engage different stakeholders, build support networks around the patient and the family, design new services and push other healthcare providers to improve their quality standards while keeping reasonable prices.

Tourism: Tourism is a relatively new ecosystem for the social economy and its potential is far from being fully exploited. It includes areas not normally regarded as attractive by conventional enterprises such as accessible tourism for people with disabilities, authentic cultural practices, innovative tourism services in remote and sparsely populated areas and innovative work integration pathways. In addition to a multitude of small, locally-based initiatives that are sometimes difficult to detect since they often operate in multiple fields, noteworthy are online platforms structured and managed according to social economy principles. Work integration social enterprises employing disadvantaged people operating touristic activities have emerged in almost all Member States, whereas social economy initiatives facilitating the connection between tourism facilities and small agricultural producers are present in France, Ireland, Italy and Romania. The social economy has the power – still to be fully harnessed – to transform the tourism ecosystem from below. It contributes innovative services that foster economic vitality in areas traditionally overlooked by for-profit enterprises, improves the quality of work, valorises and preserves local cultural and landscape heritage and wisdom, fosters community empowerment and the involvement of disadvantaged groups and persons at risk of exclusion and also redistributes income from tourism to enhance inclusive and integrated territorial development combining social, economic and environmental aspects.

Retail: In the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Austria consumer cooperative trade disappeared more or less completely due to its inability to handle competition from large-scale and highly competitive firms, while in Finland, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway cooperative developments were much more positive. The landscape of the social economy in the retail ecosystem is however extremely diversified. A wide range of actors often have divergent interests. At one extreme is cooperative large-scale distribution, with consumer and producer cooperatives which have often become very powerful in some countries. At the other extreme is a multitude of small local cooperative retail shops. Not surprisingly, these highly diverse social economy entities do not feel they belong to the same retail ‘world’. Particularly noteworthy are small cooperatives and work integration social enterprises innovating the retail ecosystem. Both contribute to close links with local communities by enhancing territorial cohesion, stable and high-standard jobs with equitable conditions for each partner in the supply chain, fostering sustainable development, empowering consumers, prioritising high-quality products and contributing to the circular economy.

New indicators and approaches to assess the social economy

The role of the social economy in generating both social and economic value is increasingly recognised by scholars and international bodies such as the European Parliament, the OECD, and the United Nations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO). However, assessing its macro level impact remains a challenge. Key questions concern its added value compared to the public and private sectors, including who should identify this and how it can be effectively measured.

Addressing these questions requires a nuanced understanding of the macro functions of the social economy since its greatest added value is through social cohesion and inclusion, territorial cohesion, sustainable environmental development, civic and political engagement and participation. Current economic indicators such as GDP and employment fail to fully capture this contribution. Proposals for new indicators face obstacles related to data (un)availability, high computational complexity as well as time and human resources. Moreover, the social value of activities such as volunteering and membership transcends economic and quantitative evaluations, necessitating innovative and more comprehensive approaches. Efforts to move beyond GDP have gained traction internationally.

However, two main challenges in the design of new indicators persist. Firstly, prior efforts to measure social progress have neglected the social economy role. Secondly, there is a need to encompass the multifaceted contributions of the social economy and highlight its distinctiveness from for-profit enterprises and the public sector.

Recommendations

This study has enabled to design a set of recommendations to improve the representation of the social economy. Recommendations are addressed to different key actors: the European Commission (including Eurostat); the research community; national/local governments and/or national statistical offices; and social economy umbrella organisations.

The first set concerns the urgent need to promote a better understanding of the social economy. The second set relates to the visibility of the social economy, particularly the need to improve its recognition at different levels. Both sets of recommendations are regarded as a prerequisite for improving statistics and designing policies that take stock of the contribution of diverse social economy entities to welfare improvement, employment growth, social inclusion, sustainable development and enhanced social cohesion. The recommendations then address methodological issues that need to be resolved to improve the production of comparable statistics.

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