



Social and Solidarity Economy, Urban Communities and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Final Report

Coordinator: Prof. Marco Giugni (UNIGE)

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1. Abstract of the Executive Summary

This research project aimed to examine how the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) can contribute to building solidarity, protecting and integrating refugees, migrants, and the native-born unemployed both within local communities and into labor markets, and what enabling policy environments are required. The opportunities, challenges and tensions involved in a context of austerity and welfare retrenchment, growing xenophobia and populist politics have also been assessed. Three localities are examined as case studies: Geneva (Switzerland), Bergamo (Italy), and Heraklion (Greece). The project's comparative findings will inform scholarly and policy debates by providing concrete recommendations on the SSE potential for addressing vulnerable groups in contentious times.

2. Executive Summary

- *Research plan*

Since 2008, the European Union has become synonymous with crises: the economic crisis, the Eurozone crisis and finally the refugee crisis. As a result of the financial crises and subsequent cuts in social spending, European societies have further witnessed the weakening of solidarity policies for the social protection of the native-born unemployed, migrants and newly arrived refugees. Against this background, the research aimed to generate evidence and policy suggestions to maximize the potential of SSE actors to integrate refugees, migrants, and the native-born unemployed at local level, and to create spaces and relationships of solidarity in times of controversy. Three localities are examined as case studies: Geneva (Switzerland), Bergamo (Italy), and Heraklion (Greece). The project's comparative findings will inform scholarly and policy debates, by providing concrete recommendations on the SSE potential for addressing vulnerable groups in contentious times. The main research questions underpinning the project are: How do SSE organizations and practices contribute to the protection and integration of migrants, refugees and native-born unemployed persons into local communities and labour markets, and what are the main macro-level contextual (policy, legal, economic, political) enablers and barriers involved? What mechanisms are put in place by SSE actors to support and protect these groups, mitigate tensions as they compete for resources and services and build solidarity relationships at the local level in times of austerity (and diminishing public goods and resources), xenophobia and populism? And what are the specific challenges and opportunities observed in different local settings? Are we able to identify forms of innovative and sustainable SSE practices that can mitigate contention and become an asset or a basis for developing enabling policies of solidarity and protection for these vulnerable groups in local societies? And is there scope for mutual learning, cooperation, and policy transferability across local settings?

The project was organized into three research WPs and one dissemination WP. The research WPs involved conducting of an **organizational survey and network analysis** in the three localities, a **contextual analysis**, and a **prescriptive analysis**, as described in more detail below. Data were gathered using desk research and in-depth qualitative interviews. WP1 consisted of an analysis of SSE organizations (SSEOs), practices, actions and networks in support of the project target groups. It assessed the role of the recent economic and refugee crises on the ways SSE actors become mobilized and interact with other civil society organizations, social movements and policy actors in the three localities. This WP aimed to capture meso-level variables referring to socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the initiating groups, their networks, resources, supporters, their repertoires of action and practices, especially forms of innovation and solidarity promoted, and the types of needs of the target groups covered. WP2 aimed to assess how SSE actors at the micro-level can be empowered by looking at the extent to which current policy responses undermine or facilitate the growth of SSE practices. We thus examine a set of macro-level, contextual factors – barriers and enablers (e.g. legislative and fiscal frameworks, current public policies supporting the

SSE, trade-offs and synergies between the SSE initiatives and public policies, etc.) – that promote or hinder SSE organizations' growth, networks and innovative potential in each locality. The impact of austerity and welfare state curtailment as well as anti-migrant legislation were also captured. In WP2, the analysis looked deeper into cross-country variation as well as into commonalities and differences between and across the three localities with regard to a set of aspects such as: 1). The conditions and contexts, such as laws and policies, which affect SSE growth in local settings; the implications of such processes and interactions for SSE organizations in terms of realizing their growth and ability to forge solidarity, their networks and their sustaining itself over the long term; the ways in which constraints and contradictions can be addressed. 2). The factors contributing to an enabling policy environment for SSE, the role co-construction can play in different policy and decision-making settings; claims-making by SSE actors that goes beyond co-construction; the ways in which SSE actors can be empowered to provide for the target groups. WP3 synthesized the findings of previous WPs and advanced a set of policy conclusions and recommendations that are put together into a final working paper. The recommendations aim to suggest optimal (innovative) ways to create enabling environments for SSE organizations, and how to build effective synergies between local policies and SSE practices in terms of protecting and integrating migrants, refugees, and the native-born unemployed. The results of WP3 are put together into a final working paper, and a policy brief.

- *Results*

During WP1 and WP2, fieldwork was conducted in the three localities and their wider regions. In particular, we conducted 16 interviews in Bergamo, 14 in Geneva, and 15 in Heraklion. The sample in Bergamo included two policy-makers from Bergamo Municipality, one policy-maker from the province of Bergamo, one policy-maker from the Lombardy region, one policy-maker who was a mayor of a provincial town, two from institutional organizations (city of Bergamo), one from the chamber of commerce of Bergamo, one from the provincial education center, three from trade unions (CISL and CIGL, local offices), and three coordinators of local networks (voluntary ass. / social coop./ grassroots org.). The sample in Geneva included mostly heads of units/departments, but also some “street-level bureaucrats”. Geneva being a city-canton, the sample included actors from both municipalities and cantonal authorities. In addition, as SSEOs are active in the whole urban area, the sample included the main peri-urban municipalities (Geneva, Vernier, Meyrin, Lancy, Onex, Carouge). The sample concerning the case of Heraklion included policy-makers from local/regional levels but also from the national level as SSE policy-making in Greece is highly centralized (national level). The sample included, therefore, two ministry representatives (national level), one SSE federation representative (national level), one Heraklion regional unit representative, two Heraklion regional unit SSE advisory actors, two municipalities' representatives, two semi-public municipality entity on immigrant integration, one coordinator of SSEOs local network, one supporting body on SSEOs (local level), two local representatives of an international organization (helping migrants/refugees) active in the city Heraklion, and one church-related representative (local level). Key results of WP1 and WP2 are presented below.

The case of Bergamo/Italy: In Bergamo, our interviews with policy-makers and stakeholders showed that, in general, interviewees recognize that SSEOs play an important role. However, they also report a general situation of marginalization: the role of SSEOs is not given the recognition it deserves by the institutions. Even during and after the economic crisis, SSEOs in the Bergamo territory have maintained good levels of efficiency, especially the social cooperatives. The territory of Bergamo is recognized by the interviewees as particularly fertile for cooperation. The third sector has expanded, and even with the crisis it has continued to develop both in terms of thinking and operativity. Further, the efficiency of SSEOs in providing basic needs (housing, food, education, etc) is very well recognized by interviewees. In particular, in Bergamo this takes place through the work of certain historical/well established organizations of the local territory. According to the interviews, the main limits of the integration process concern legislative constraints and the lack of adequate public policies. In the Bergamo territory, some co-planning initiatives are already in action, but collaborations with local administrations should be enhanced. Finally, many interviewees underline the necessity of a change in the perspective of the state on people's needs and on SSE, to make legislative material a support instead of an obstacle. Reaching this goal requires greater participation of the state in social processes, which means being able to operate at the micro-level by listening to people to understand local needs. The impact of the economic crisis on the SSE sector in Bergamo is evident from the interviews with SSEO representatives. Examining the collected data on the year of foundation, we can observe that 32 SSEOs were founded in Bergamo before the crisis, and 25 (corresponding to 44%) after the crisis. The Italian SSEOs seem to have a strict relationship with their territory, in particular at the local level. In fact, the data about the geographical areas of action show that almost all the organizations are active inside the municipal territory (56) and in the provincial territory (42); 35% operate in the regional territory. Only a few organizations carry out activities at national level and/or abroad. This strong connection with the local dimension emerges also through other data, such as that on networking and political participation. Concerning the organizational types of SSEO in Bergamo, we can observe a predominance of voluntary/non-profit associations (21) and social cooperatives (19); there are also eight organizations of immigrants (the majority are registered as cultural associations), a soft but significant representation of foundations and religious groups; only two social economy enterprises and five informal groups (community groups / grassroots organizations). This framework respects the historical and social background of the Italian context linked to cooperativism and voluntarism, and in particular the context of Bergamo. The SSEOs in Bergamo also share the characteristic of addressing a large number of people: 47% of them have more than 500 beneficiaries per year; 25% have between 100 and 499 beneficiaries per year. Concerning the target groups of this research, in Bergamo there are 14 SSEOs directing their activities to all three target groups: immigrants, refugees, unemployed; and 11 SSEOs that are targeting immigrants only; 10 only the unemployed; eight only immigrants and the unemployed; eight immigrants and refugees; six only refugees; one only the unemployed and refugees. This set-up reflects the local process of integration of new needs through existing organizations. In example, at the time of the refugee crisis there were already a good set of organizations (in particular

associations and social cooperatives) well implemented in the territory. These structures have opened up their activities and services to refugees, while maintaining their commitment to previous targets (i.e. the precarious, poor and vulnerable people, the disabled, minors). The majority of the SSEOs carry out activities concerning basic-urgent needs, such as education activities, the provision of an accommodation/shelter and food, clothes and medicines/health services. Looking at the singular activities of this kind, we can observe educational or training activities (80% declare they do these regularly or occasionally) and in-kind support/relief/help line/aid/assistance services (18 organizations declare these as their most important activities, corresponding to 30%). The sectors of employment and labor relations and of community development/neighborhood or local demands are also relevant for the Italian SSEOs. The sectors of activities related to social and political integration issues appear important for the SSEOs, in particular regarding immigration, the integration of migrants, ethnic concerns and discrimination issues and human rights.

The case of Geneva/Switzerland: The canton of Geneva benefits from a very dense associative network, which is heavily state-supported. Foundations are a common type of organization. Our interviews with policy-makers and stakeholders show that most policy-makers consider that the SSE sector cannot work without state support; it is therefore seen as state-funded (even “assisted”) economy. The recurrent conflation with associations relies partly on this. Moreover, the findings reveal some organizations (including SSE actors) gravitating around the social state, offering complementary services (it is not necessary that the state take care of these services, but it is good that some do instead), rather than subsidiary services (the state should take of these services, but doesn’t). Crucially, SSE is not on the political agenda of the canton and the municipalities (except Meyrin and Geneva). However, SSE is considered as a means and a potential partner to support vulnerable populations. Furthermore, as the interviewed organizations are almost all and for a large part state-funded, they choose associations and foundations as a juridical structure allowing them to benefit from state-funding. Even the organizations that self-define as “social economy enterprise” are in juridical terms a foundation or an association. Collaboration among organizations is important in Geneva. Some collaborations are formalized through umbrellas. Indeed, almost half of the interviewed organizations are part of an umbrella. However, these umbrellas are often the national or international umbrella, or issue-specific umbrellas. Indeed, the collaborations of the interviewed actors between them occurs mainly within less informal structure such as networks or platforms. 82.5% of the interviewed actors are member of a network or platform. There are several recurrent networks/platforms which a large part of the interviewed organizations are members. Beside strong and permanent structures, the coordination of actors to support migrants and the unemployed is mostly informal, punctual, and issue-specific. The main sector of activity is “employment” because a lot of organizations are active in terms of professional (re-)insertion. Indeed, several organizations benefit from state-funded “solidarity jobs” or “activities of reinsertion”: jobs paid by the state within non-profit organizations. The second sector is “migration”, because several organizations are specialized in supporting migrants/refugees, often through administrative or juridical support. Education is the third sector, mostly because training (language or professional) is essential for socio-economic integration. Fourth are basic needs, that

is providing food, clothes, shelter, and emergency healthcare. Few organizations are specialized on this issue, without targeting particular some vulnerable groups. Fifth, non-material encompasses all the social and psychological support activities. Again, some organizations are specialized on this issue, without targeting particular some vulnerable groups. Finally, a couple of multisectoral organizations are active in all these sectors, without focusing on one specifically. Education is considered as main activity by 25% of the organizations. This is the case because most of the organizations active in the sector of employment consider their main activity to be “professional training”. In addition, “professional reinsertion” not being a possible category, they were inclined to choose “education/training”. Furthermore, the category “other” includes mostly organizations working indeed on “professional reinsertion”. Finally, only few organizations are specialized in political activities (sending letters and lobbying). Both migrants/refugees and economically precarious people are the main target groups of the interviewed organizations. It should be noted that “economically precarious” is not restricted to unemployed but encompasses several categories (poor/economically vulnerable; homeless; unemployed; precarious workers). “Vulnerable social groups” encompasses categories such as children, youth, elders, disabled, families, women, single parents, etc.). Almost half organizations have participated these last two years to an institutional decisional process at the local level. Indeed, several municipalities are active in the fields of migration and unemployment, and work in collaboration with SSE organizations. Almost two-thirds of organizations participate in such processes at the cantonal level. That is the case because most of the important decisions regarding migrants and the unemployed are taken at this level. In addition, the canton is the major funding institution for SSE organizations. At the national level, participation is rather an exception: only few large and powerful organizations have consulted at the national level.

The case of Heraklion/Greece: Among the positive impacts identified by those policy-makers and stakeholders interviewed are the potential of the SSE to: empower vulnerable groups and local communities by creating new jobs; build strong solidarity ties; provide mutual aid when the public welfare state can no longer support disadvantaged groups to the extent required; as well as supporting democracy and volunteering. At the same time, certain barriers and limitations to long-term SSE growth are acknowledged, such as: lack of policies and mechanisms to enable and support SSE entities to network among themselves but also with public authorities; lack of support services, access to adequate financing to support both start-up and scale-up stages; excessive bureaucracy and lack of a strategic vision and comprehensive policies and regulations to boost the SSE sector; effective decentralization and joined-up initiatives to support the SSE across Greek regions have been found lacking; lack of effective formal structures and mechanisms for collaboration and communication between SSE entities (and their networks) themselves as well as between SSE entities and state authorities at both national and local levels. Moreover, as confirmed by interviews with both the policy-makers and the representatives of SSE entities, there is a correlation between the recent economic and migration/refugee crises and the emergence of urgent needs related to e.g. the provision of food, shelter, medical services, clothing, and emergency support to groups in need (e.g. unemployed, women, children, refugees). Hence, the SSE sector in

Heraklion has been found to be growing over the crises years as a response to unmet social needs, and the limits of traditional social and employment policies to tackle social exclusion. In terms of the emergence of SSE, the number of the SSE entities in Heraklion that make their appearance during the crises years was more than double compared to the number of SSE entities pre-existing the crises. SSE entities in Heraklion are also diverse, not only in their type/form, but also in their social objectives, activities, thematic sectors or areas of action, and target groups. In terms of types and form, those with highest frequencies, meeting our criteria in being part of our sample (namely targeting refugees/ migrants and unemployed/ economically precarious) are social cooperatives and voluntary associations/NGOs/non-profit organizations followed by immigrant groups/organizations and community groups and grassroot initiatives forming a significant part of the SSE landscape. In addition, our study brings to surface certain specific thematic sectors or areas in which SSE entities are most active. In particular education, recreation and culture, immigration and ethnic concerns and media and communications, are holding the highest frequencies. Given the great need Greek society faces following the crises, SSEOs seem to focus more mostly (92.1%) in covering basic and urgent needs of the vulnerable groups. Next and with a very high percentage (84.2%) comes the economic integration of those populations (community development, job finding, labor claims, etc.). This seems consistent to the view of most policy makers that the peak of the economic crisis 2011-2014 gave rise to more movements/ initiatives aiming to address the parallel humanitarian crisis and cover the state's inability to do so. In the same vein with regards to the activities of the SSE entities, educational and training actions are the most prevalent, followed by the provision of services related to the welfare system. Another important finding is that the number of people who benefit from the organizations' activities seems particularly high compared to their actual size in terms of membership (and of budget as you can see below), since almost half of the SSEOs in our sample (44.7%) have more than 500 beneficiaries. The term *beneficiaries* is mostly appropriate for the grassroots initiatives / voluntary associations / foundations which seem to focus more in the social benefit of our target groups, while in terms of social cooperatives and social enterprises the collective benefit is more prevalent, namely the benefit of their own members. For instance, in terms of combating unemployment, establishing a social enterprise/ cooperative was in many cases perceived as a working-alternative. Regarding the participation of SSEOs in the institutional process, the local level (municipality) seems to be more prominent although the contact between the organizations and the institutions/departments of each Municipality are mostly occasional. Regular contacts to all levels are limited to 18.4-26.3%. The absence of any contact though, is more evident in the case of political parties or individual politicians. Only a 18.4% maintains regular contacts and this seems to be with a certain political party/politician of the region.

- *Summary indicating whether the results obtained correspond to those expected at the beginning of the research*

In sum, the project has given rise to a number of key results that fully correspond to those expected at the beginning of the research. **The case of Bergamo/Italy:** The research shows that the recent

economic crisis has affected job and income prospects for both migrants and the native unemployed in Italy as a whole, and in Bergamo as well. In this context, as initially expected, conflicts between Italians and migrants emerged. Tensions are perceived in particular regarding access to resources and job opportunities. There are also cases of conflict between older immigrants and newcomers, such as asylum seekers. This is another kind of internal competition within this vulnerable group. A key finding is the positive role of the local SSEO networks in providing labour services such as consultancy, training, and finding jobs through specialised social cooperatives. Moreover, some foundations specialised in housing vulnerable people and in association with the social cooperative world have programmed services to manage social fragilities. In general, the research found an important role in SSEOs but reports a general situation of marginalization, in the sense that this is not recognised by the institutions as perhaps deserved. Hence, as expected at the beginning of our research, there is a need to forge collaborations between SSEOs and local administrations and make better known the different typologies of SSEOs (the majority of collaborations with institutions are held with social cooperatives). In this respect, a popular legislative initiative on SSE was activated in Lombardy Region thanks to the collaborations of the SSEOs and the Province of Bergamo. The procedure was based on the principles of the recognition of the importance of the SSE sector, dialogue and support and promotion of districts at the provincial territorial level.

The case of Geneva/Switzerland: As expected, the findings show that the main issues faced by migrants relate to lack of knowledge of the language of the host society, lack of social resources in facing administrative complexities, lack of qualifications or non-recognition of qualifications. The main issues faced by the native unemployed population concern the lack of social support, difficulties in finding a job quickly, rather than focusing on professional training for long-term reinsertion. A key finding of the research is that the concept of SSE lacks clarity for policy-makers, though the *associative sector* is big in Geneva. Yet, most policy-makers conflate other type of associations with SSE actors. Some policy-makers consider that limited profit is the main criteria defining SSE. Moreover, most policy-makers consider that the SSE sector cannot work without state support; it is therefore seen as state-funded (even "assisted") economy. The recurrent conflation with associations relies partly on this. In terms of professional reinsertion, as we expected to find, SSE is perceived as useful because it offers activities and trainings to vulnerable groups (including migrants and the unemployed). In addition, policy-makers consider SSE actors as not very efficient in terms of long term stable professional reinsertion. For professional reinsertion, partnership with private companies (non-SSE) are seen as more promising by most policy-makers.

The case of Heraklion/Greece: The research finds that SSE entities in Heraklion are diverse, not only in their type/form, but also in their social objectives, activities, thematic sectors or areas of action, and target groups. The most prevalent types are social cooperatives and voluntary associations/NGOs/non-profit organizations followed by immigrant groups/organizations and community groups and grassroot initiatives – these form a significant part of the SSE landscape. As we initially expected, a key finding is that the SSE has contributed considerably to supporting and protecting vulnerable groups such as refugees, migrants, and the native-born unemployed

within the local community and the labour market; it has effectively mitigated tensions between these groups as they compete for (scarce) resources and services, and it has built solidarity relationships in times of austerity thus, making "integration" in times of crisis a less contentious issue. Overall, the research shows that SSE entities and actors are seeking to combat some of the city's most crucial challenges, primarily unemployment and social protection, but they are also seeking to demonstrate and advocate an alternative economic model and vision of egalitarian socioeconomic organization. This finding confirmed our initial hypothesis about the role of the SSE actors in the specific locality. Ultimately, this finding is promising and demonstrates the potential for policy and practice to boost the SSE sector both nationally as well as regionally and locally.

- *Information regarding the practical application of results*

The case studies find that the SSE has contributed in different degrees in the three localities/countries to supporting and protecting vulnerable groups such as refugees, migrants, and the native-born unemployed within local communities and labor markets; while social solidarity entities cannot and should not replace the more institutionalized forms of social protection, the fact that vulnerable groups can resort to such SSE initiatives while public support structures are weak, shows that solidarity conveyed via SSE entities in the three localities is an untapped potential for further future development. For this to happen, a number of conditions are required which relate to the practical application of the project results. First, our case studies show that if SSE entities are to become effective means to expand and diversify according to each community's needs and dynamics, then policy-makers must put in place comprehensive strategies and ways to learn and adapt to complex and changing circumstances, and not least to external pressures and shocks (such as economic or migration crises). This also involves the ability to produce new goods, innovative services and processes that meet social needs or create new social relationships and collaborations. Seen in this way, the recent growth of SSE entities presents the opportunity to plan more comprehensive and democratic economic and social policies which comprise production inclusion, social equality, and poverty eradication within a wider model of welfare pluralism. Moreover, the case studies show that participation and membership in SSE entities contribute to an empowerment process, individually and collectively (within local communities). Participants and beneficiaries gain empowerment through their active involvement in the participatory decision-making process within the organization and outside the organizations when they bargain with external stakeholders. At the collective level, SSE entities also contribute to the empowerment process of individuals and local communities by demonstrating that all individuals can become active and productive economic and social actors. Nevertheless, more sustained efforts are required at local level to build and establish a common understanding about the necessity of an SSE-oriented policy-making. SSE actors need to comprehensively understand the features as well as the barriers and enablers for an enabling SSE ecosystem in Greece when designing measures and policies to support the SSE sector. This needs to be accompanied by a deeper understanding within local communities about the opportunities and benefits of the SSE, and how such an environment can open new

opportunities, address unemployment, and establish relationships of solidarity and social support beyond periods of crisis. Finally, the case studies show that the SSE at local level cannot be developed or sustained by isolated organizations and enterprises. Networking and partnerships are key factors in building a strong, recognized and visible SSE. More particularly, SSE entities need to root themselves in community, mobilize various stakeholders and build strong alliances with social partners and public authorities. While this process requires a lot of effort on the part of SSE actors, for successful partnerships and networks to emerge, local governments need to acknowledge the crucial role of SSE entities in the provision of goods and service because of their capacity to mobilize resources from the community and within the marketplace to achieve public benefit. The capacity of SSE entities to produce innovative solutions to complex problems should become the focus of local policy and of interventions aiming to support the SSE entities and local communities in creating strategic planning processes and collective projects. On the part of policy-makers, efforts are required to determine what is required to create strong networks and partnerships with SSE entities, adapted to the specific realities of a region and SSE potential. For instance, networks that practice inclusiveness are expected to be the most successful in developing new public policy and creating development tools for the emerging SSE entities. Networks that can bring together a wide variety of SSE entities and other stakeholders will, in the end, manage to initiate social dialogue with government and other social partners. Further on, international experience shows that the strongest networks are those that are based on local and regional structures, that are rooted in communities and territorial realities. Such networks will benefit from the support of a wide range of partners and their contribution to socio-economic development and inclusive growth will be clearly demonstrated in the field. Put it differently, encouraging, promoting, and supporting networks and partnerships may play an enriching role in reinforcing peer learning among SSE actors and policy-makers – locally– and, more broadly, even across multiple localities.

- *Questions that merit further exploration (scientific, practical, methodological) or that have arisen as a result of the research;*

What has been noted throughout the project is that there are some key areas where more in-depth research might be useful: (1) Intention and motivation: there was an interest from a number of the interviewed policy-makers to understand people's intentions and motivations for starting SSEOs. This is probably best conducted as qualitative research, and should look at whether these organizations are starting from need, innovation or personal experience (or a combination of these and other factors). (2) Social Objectives and entrepreneurial means: related to intention and motivation, it would also be useful to conduct further research on the specific stated social goals of SSE organizations, their relation to the social impact produced, the entrepreneurial means of achieving the stated social goals and the consistency between the two. This may help in clarifying different models of SSEOs in terms of their social goals, entrepreneurial activity and contribution to local communities. (3) Internal barriers: the findings of the project's interviews places specific emphasis on the external systemic factors that can act as barriers to developing an SSE enabling environment as a way of supporting policy-making and implementation at the local level. It will

be useful in the future to identify in more-depth those factors internal to SSEOs that impede their development and sustainability in local settings.

- *Practical and policy recommendations that follow from the results obtained*

Despite SSE demonstrating its resilience during the economic downturns and contributing to providing services for vulnerable groups, SSEOs in three cities are still small in terms of their share of employees, outputs and influence in local political economy. Strengthening the capacity of SSEOs requires public policies to recognize the specific characteristics and added value of the SSE in economic, social, and political dimensions. The policies need to facilitate rather than undermine the dynamics of SSEOs to constantly evolve and respond to changing social conditions - as well as demand for genuine participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring. The research on SSEOs' activities in the three localities offer insights on the directions of policies to make SSEOs succeed at the services they provide. They are: recognizing SSE entities as a social actor in public dialogue; raising awareness about the role and activities of the SSE sector. Also, to be more effective, public policies for the SSE must be conceived as a result of citizens' collective action ("co-production"). Crucially, creating overall 'enabling policy environments' raises some issues. For example, how to institutionalize SSEs in governmental structures; the centrality and interfaces of the SSE in other policies; and, how to establish permanent and effective mechanisms for SSE participation in policy management. This should be treated cautiously so to avoid antagonistic relations between SSE and state actors emerging. In this respect, meeting the main challenges for a policy and legal framework supportive of the SSE entities requires: adequate legislation (with less bureaucracy), regulations and norms; monitoring and evaluation mechanism including statistics on SSE; designating institutional roles to government ministries or specialised agencies for SSE; developing and delivering effective technical assistance to SSEOs; facilitating access of SSEOs to appropriate technologies, and assistance etc.; facilitating access of SSEOs to finance and making available funds to finance projects; providing capacity-building to SSEOs' staff; tools for impact assessments of SSE services and operation at the local level; better integration of policies among different government levels (sectoral and regional); and a reinforced dialogue between SSE actors and political decision-makers, particularly at the local level.

- *Information regarding past and expected publications and other activities*

Two major publications reporting project findings are foreseen and currently in preparation. First, we plan to prepare an edited collection to be proposed to a major academic publisher. This book will summarize the main findings stemming from the project. Chapters will be written by team members. Second, we plan to prepare a journal special issue focusing on more specific aspects addressed in the project. To this end, we will submit a proposal to the *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*. Papers will be written by team members. Additionally, a panel on "Social Movement Networks in Times of crisis" is organized by the research team at the 2020 General Conference of the European Consortium of Political Research (Innsbruck, 25-26 August). Four papers stemming from the project are included in the panel.

3. Internal Report

- *Were the research plan and schedule followed?*

The Consortium conducted its research following the description of the research tasks described in the original research plan submitted to the SNIS. In respect to timetable, the project teams during the Geneva kick-off meeting decided to start the research with WP2 instead of WP1 (as initially foreseen in the timetable) because it was considered essential to first complete the desk research analysis, to get a first complete picture of the institutional and policy context in each locality, and then to draw from this in order to design the other planned research task in WP1 and WP2. At the end of the research in WP1 and WP2 and extension was asked from the Contracting Authority in order to analyse and review the results.

- *What activities took place during the research period in order to make the best possible use of the information gathered and what is planned for the future to communicate the results to target audiences? If time and resources had permitted, what further action could have been taken to achieve the maximum visibility or other potential benefits?*

All the activities foreseen in the original research plan were conducted. For the future, the following dissemination activities will be pursued: two major publications reporting project findings are foreseen and currently in preparation. First, we plan to prepare an edited collection to be proposed to a major academic publisher. This book will summarize the main findings stemming from the project. Chapters will be written by team members. Second, we plan to prepare a journal special issue focusing on more specific aspects addressed in the project. To this end, we will submit a proposal to the *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*. Papers will be written by team members. Additionally, a panel on “Social Movement Networks in Times of crisis” is organized by the research team at the 2020 General Conference of the European Consortium of Political Research (Innsbruck, 25-26 August). Four papers stemming from the project are included in the panel.

- *How would you describe the participation of the partners in the project? Do you have advice to offer in view of future collaboration of a similar nature?*

The collaboration with the partners was excellent. All the partners were equally included into the implementation of the project WPs as per the project research plan, while roles and functions were clear and mutually respected. At the same time, there was a productive exchange of know-how and ideas as regards the preparation of the project research tools (e.g. the interview questionnaires) and outputs (e.g. the desk research reports). All partners, overall, showed a strong and sustained commitment to the project from the onset till its closure.

- *Where will the research results be stored?*

The results will be stored in repositories offering open access.

- *Please provide additional information on publications and other activities if this was not sufficiently covered in the "Executive Summary"*

It should be mentioned that the final conference did not materialize due to the covid-19 situation. In September 2019, though, a workshop was organized in Bergamo which allowed the teams to present findings of their research and exchange input and ideas about the final conclusions and results.

- *What has the SNIS support allowed you to do, to conclude or to recommend that would not have been possible without its support?*

The SNIS support made possible the full realisation of the present project which would not have been possible to implement otherwise.

- *How did the interdisciplinary nature of the project affect the results?*

The interdisciplinary approach pursued by the project had many benefits particularly in terms of developing the research instruments, such as the questionnaires, and in analyzing the results. In both cases, the feature of interdisciplinarity allowed the Consortium researchers to tackle questions and findings (concerning e.g. what actors think about the type of enabling policies and SSE practices that can provide effective support to vulnerable groups in times of crises, and the role of public policies in enabling SSE or hindering its potential for solidarity and social cohesion) from different and multiple perspectives, thereby enriching understandings.

- *What follow-up will you give to the project? Do you find it useful to maintain the network that was created? If so, how will you go about doing this?*

The dissemination activities already planned constitute an important follow-up of the project. Moreover, the Consortium researchers will be encouraged by the Coordinator to further disseminate the project findings via participation in scholarly and other type of events (conferences, workshops), national and international, and also via the writing of articles, blogs, working papers and other similar outputs that could be disseminated via the partners' institutional and individual networks. Finally, in the future the same Consortium/network will seek further funding opportunities that will enable its researchers to build on the key findings of this project and at the

same time explore new angles that have to do with the new socioeconomic environment which is now evolving and the SSE would need to respond.

- *What is the potential for application of the research results?*

The project has given rise to a number of concrete policy recommendations that are presented in its policy brief. These recommendations emphasize that the growth of SSE entities and development of the SSE sector requires public policies to recognize the particularities and added value of the SSE in economic, social and societal terms (e.g. forms of governance, outreach of vulnerable groups). It requires that public policies for supporting the SSE entities are dynamic - constantly evolving in response to changing social conditions - as well as demand the strong and active participation of civil society in their planning, execution and monitoring. The project recommendations and the policy brief will be widely disseminated by the project partner UNRISD across the national policy communities and the UN system in order to raise awareness. It is expected that these recommendations will encourage new ways of thinking about SSE and its actors, barriers and enablers for its growth, leading to an important paradigm shift.

- *In hindsight, what would you do differently (organization, method)?*

Overall, the research plan fully corresponded to our initial expectations and plans. More time would be needed though to pursue a greater number of dissemination activities,

- *The SNIS welcomes any other comments or suggestions.*

No further suggestions.

4. Budgetary Report

Refer to:

Annex I - Financial Report

Balance III - Excel Sheet

Annex III - Declaration

5. Working Paper

Refer to Annex IV