

Training contents SSOLEIL project. SECTION 8

Local and Solidarity Economy Tools for the Local Level



**Cofinanciado por
la Unión Europea**

Section 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Main Conclusions

SSE has established itself as a viable and transformative alternative to traditional economic models. Throughout the manual, its principles, application tools and success stories have been analysed in different contexts.

8.1.1 The Transformative Impact of SSE

SSE has a significant impact on the economy and society, generating decent employment, strengthening social cohesion and promoting environmental sustainability. Its capacity to respond to economic and social crises has been key in its consolidation as an alternative model.

8.1.2 Diversity of Experiences and Contexts

The SSE is not a single model, but a diverse ecosystem that adapts to local realities. From agro-ecological cooperatives to digital solidarity platforms, SSE manifests itself in multiple forms depending on the context in which it operates.

8.1.3 The Fundamental Role of Governance and Networks

Inter-cooperation and democratic participation are key elements in the SSE. Participatory governance strengthens the resilience of organizations and encourages the building of collaborative networks that allow for sharing resources and experiences.

8.2 Identified Challenges

Despite its positive impact, the SSE faces challenges that hinder its expansion and consolidation, such as limited visibility, challenges in the digital age, lack of institutional recognition and integration of the care economy.

8.2.1 Limited Visibility

SSE still lacks a strong media and social presence in many countries, which makes it difficult to recognize as a viable economic alternative.

8.2.2 Challenges in the Digital Age

Digitalization presents opportunities, but also challenges for SSE. Many institutions have difficulties adapting to new technologies and competing with conventional digital platforms. The creation of cooperative platforms and training in digital tools are key strategies to meet this challenge.

8.2.3 Lack of Institutional Recognition in Some Contexts

Although in countries such as France and Spain the SSE has specific regulatory frameworks, in many others it is still not recognized as a distinct economic sector. Lack of favourable public policies and the absence of fiscal incentives limit their development.

8.2.4 Care Economy

One of the remaining challenges is the integration of the care economy into the SSE. This sector, which is fundamental to social welfare, remains undervalued and in many cases precarious. SSE can provide sustainable and equitable solutions through care cooperatives and models of social co-responsibility.

8.3 Recommendations for Strengthening the SSE

In order to strengthen the SSE and broaden its impact on the economy and society, it is essential to implement strategies that will consolidate its model and expand its reach. These strategies should focus on increasing their visibility, improving institutional support, fostering inter-entity cooperation and strengthening the capacity of the actors involved. Below are some priority lines of action for strengthening the SSE.

To strengthen the SSE and broaden its impact, it is essential to implement strategies that address current challenges and enhance its transformative capacity in society. The following are some of the main actions recommended:

8.3.1 Awareness and Promotion

Lack of knowledge about SSE remains one of the main barriers to its expansion. Increasing its visibility through communication campaigns, education in solidarity economy and digital media content generation is key to strengthening its positioning in society. To achieve this, the following actions are proposed:

- **Dissemination through the media:** Create spaces in the press, radio, television and digital platforms to disseminate successful SSE experiences.
- **Awareness raising campaigns:** Organize events and activities that bring citizens closer to responsible consumption, ethical finance and cooperativism.
- **Incorporation of SSE in the education system:** Introduce SSE content into the curricula of schools, institutes and universities to raise awareness from an early age.
- **Promotion of digital tools:** Develop web platforms and applications that facilitate access to information on SSE networks, social markets and opportunities for citizen participation.

One of the main challenges of the SSE is its low visibility compared to the dominant economic model. In order to increase their recognition and foster social acceptance, it is crucial to design effective communication strategies that include:

- **Information and educational campaigns** aimed at the citizenry, with the aim of spreading the values and benefits of SSE.

- **Use of digital media and social networks** to amplify the reach of SSE initiatives and generate an active community of consumers and promoters.
- **Incorporation of SSE in education** through educational programmes in schools and universities, ensuring that new generations are aware of this alternative economic model.
- **Creation of spaces for meeting and dialogue**, such as fairs, social markets and thematic forums, which allow citizens to experience first-hand the opportunities offered by SSE.

8.3.2 Political and Institutional Support

Public administrations play a key role in the consolidation of the SSE. To achieve a favourable environment, governments need to adopt public policies that promote their development and recognize their impact on the economy and social welfare. Some of the measures that can be implemented include:

- **Development of specific policy frameworks:** Legislative reforms that ensure the recognition and promotion of SSE, ensuring its inclusion in sustainable development strategies.
- **Fiscal and financial incentives:** Establishment of tax benefits for SSE entities and creation of specific investment funds for solidarity economy projects.
- **Responsible public procurement:** Integrate social and environmental clauses in public contracts to prioritize the participation of SSE entities in the provision of goods and services.
- **Establishment of SSE observatories:** Monitoring and evaluation spaces to analyse the impact of the sector and design appropriate policies for its strengthening.
- **Partnerships between administrations and SSE networks:** Generation of mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation between governments and sector entities to ensure their recognition on the public agenda.

The support of public institutions is essential to consolidate the SSE as a legitimate and viable economic model. For this, it is recommended:

- **Development of specific public policies** that integrate SSE into economic and social development strategies at local, regional and national levels.
- **Implementation of fiscal and financial incentives** to facilitate the creation and consolidation of SSE entities.
- **Promotion of responsible public procurement**, ensuring that administrations prioritize the purchase of goods and services from SSE companies.

- **Strengthening public-community collaboration networks**, allowing for greater interaction between local governments, SSE entities and civil society.

8.3.3 Encouraging Collaboration

Inter-cooperation between SSE entities is a fundamental pillar for its sustainability. Local, national and international networking enables knowledge sharing, generating synergies and access to funding opportunities. To strengthen collaboration in SSE, the following strategies are proposed:

- **Creation of platforms for inter-cooperation:** Digital and physical spaces where SSE entities can share experiences, resources and projects in common.
- **Support for social markets:** Strengthening solidarity-based economic circuits that facilitate the responsible consumption and marketing of SSE products and services.
- **Development of sectoral networks:** Establishment of sector-specific clusters (renewable energy, agro-ecology, cooperative housing, etc.) to promote specialization and joint growth.
- **Partnerships with private entities and NGOs:** Promotion of collaborative agreements with non-profit organizations and socially responsible companies to broaden the impact of SSE.
- **Promotion of international cooperation:** Participation in transnational cooperation programmes that enable the transfer of good practices and access to global financing.

Networking is one of the strengths of SSE. To enhance its impact and resilience, it is essential to encourage inter-cooperation through:

- **Establishment and strengthening of local, national and international SSE networks** to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources.
- **Development of digital platforms for inter-cooperation**, where entities can share services, products and experiences.
- **Promotion of collaboration between different sectors** of the SSE, such as cooperatives, integration enterprises, associations and mutual societies, promoting joint development strategies.
- **Establishment of alliances with key actors**, such as universities, research centres and private companies committed to the solidarity economy.

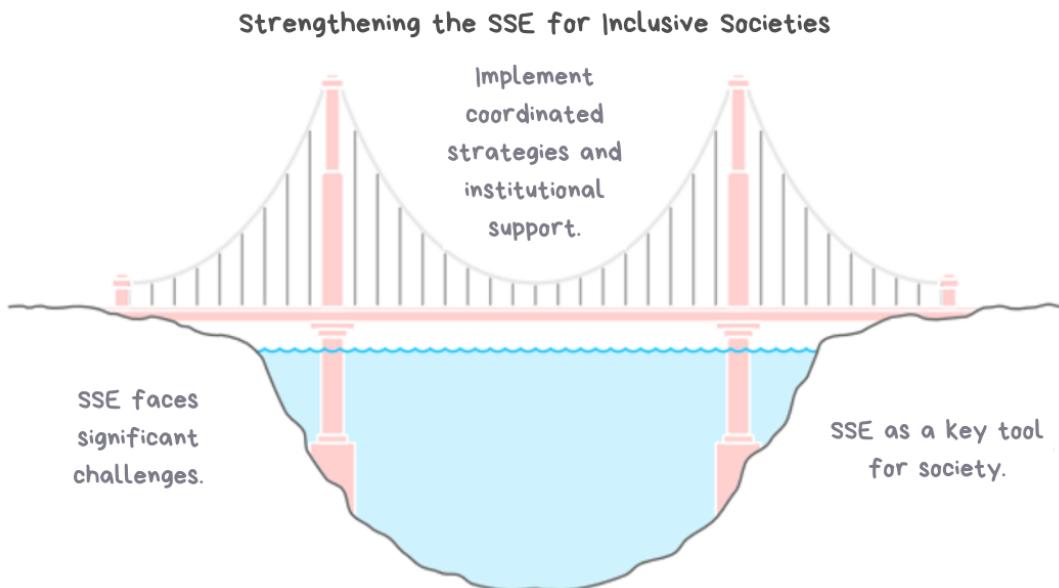
8.3.4 Formation and Training

The professionalization of SSE actors is essential to ensure its growth and sustainability. Investing in the training of social entrepreneurs, cooperative managers and workers in the sector will strengthen their capacities and improve the efficiency of their projects. Some of the actions needed in this area include:

- **Development of specific training programmes:** Creation of courses and workshops on cooperative management, ethical financing, democratic governance and circular economy.
- **Incorporation of SSE in higher education:** Inclusion of the solidarity economy in university programs and technical training centers to strengthen knowledge generation in the sector.
- **Online learning platforms:** Development of digital training resources accessible to those interested in undertaking SSE.
- **Training in digital tools:** Training in the use of technological platforms and digital networks to improve the competitiveness of SSE entities.
- **Network of mentors and technical advice:** Creation of a support system where experts and professionals from the sector provide support for new SSE initiatives.

Strengthening the SSE involves the professionalization of its actors. For this, it is necessary to develop training programmes that include:

- **Courses and workshops specialising in SSE,** addressing topics such as cooperative management, circular economy, social innovation and responsible marketing.
- **Training in digital skills,** allowing SSE entities to take advantage of new technologies to improve their operability and visibility.
- **Integration of SSE in academic curricula,** promoting its teaching at universities, business schools and vocational training centres.
- **Promotion of collaborative learning,** through mentoring and accompaniment programmes between established entities and new SSE enterprises.



8.4 Future Perspectives of the SSE

The future of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is linked to its ability to adapt to the structural changes facing society, such as digitalisation, ecological transition, developments in labour markets and new forms of work organization. In a global context where economic inequalities and the environmental impact of traditional production patterns have become priority concerns, SSE is emerging as a viable and sustainable model for addressing these challenges. The following are some of the key factors that will shape the evolution of SSE in the coming years.

8.4.1 Digital Innovation and Collaborative Economy

One of the great challenges and opportunities for SSE is digital transformation. The emergence of new technologies has changed the way people work, consume and interact in society. While the traditional model of digital economy has favoured the concentration of power in large corporations, SSE has the opportunity to develop digital alternatives that promote democratic participation and equitable redistribution of benefits.

The promotion of cooperative digital platforms, based on self-management and shared ownership, is one of the main strategies to ensure that digitalization benefits communities rather than perpetuate labor exploitation and precarization. Examples of this are initiatives such as **CoopCycle**, a sharing platform that operates under a cooperative model, or **Fairbnb**, which promotes sustainable tourism with reinvestment in local communities.

In addition, the SSE must incorporate digital tools to improve the management and transparency of its entities, from systems of participatory governance based on

blockchain technology to collective financing platforms (crowdfunding) to facilitate access to resources for new solidarity projects. It is also essential to develop strategies for bridging the digital divide in those SSE sectors that still rely on more traditional working methods.

8.4.2 Expansion of Ethical Consumption

The growing interest in responsible consumption and social impact of products and services is a trend that SSE can leverage to expand its reach. In recent years, increasing environmental and social awareness has led to a change in consumer habits, with increased demand for fair trade products, renewable energy, ethical banking and social markets.

To consolidate this growth, SSE must strengthen the distribution infrastructure of its products and services. The creation of **alternative trade networks**, the consolidation of social markets and the implementation of specific certifications for SSE products can increase their visibility and facilitate their access to a wider audience.

Collaborative consumption initiatives, where people share or exchange goods and services without corporate intermediaries, also represent an opportunity for expansion. Models such as **collective purchasing groups**, consumer cooperatives and social currencies can contribute to more resilient economies that are less dependent on large globalized markets.

8.4.3 Integration in Global Policies

The role of SSE in sustainable development strategies is gaining increasing recognition in international forums. Organisations such as the UN, the ILO and the European Union have begun to highlight the importance of SSE in combating poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The adoption of comprehensive policies that include SSE in their economic and social development strategies is a fundamental step to ensure its consolidation.

SSE is directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in areas such as decent work, responsible production and reducing inequalities. In order to take advantage of this favourable context, it is essential that SSE networks strengthen their presence in international governance spaces, Promoting recognition of their impact and demanding policies that facilitate their access to funding and inclusion in international cooperation programmes.

8.4.4 Implementation of Strategic Public Procurement

Strategic public procurement represents one of the greatest opportunities for SSE in terms of consolidation and expansion. Governments and public administrations manage large volumes of procurement of goods and services, and the inclusion of social and environmental criteria in these processes can have a significant impact on the social economy.

Integrating SSE into public procurement allows for the reorientation of public resources towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns. Some countries have already taken steps in this direction by introducing **social clauses in public contracts**, which favour the award of contracts to cooperatives, insertion enterprises and solidarity economy entities. However, for these strategies to be effective, it is necessary to ensure that they are effectively implemented and that bureaucratic procedures do not exclude small SSE organizations.

Key actions to strengthen the SSE presence in public procurement include:

- **Market reserve:** Establish public procurement quotas exclusively for SSE entities, ensuring that a percentage of state contracts benefit cooperatives and integration enterprises.
- **Sustainability criteria:** Incorporate environmental, social and fair trade requirements in the bidding processes, prioritizing suppliers that comply with these principles.
- **Public-community partnerships:** Encourage cooperation between local governments and SSE entities for the design and delivery of public services under participatory models.
- **Transparency and monitoring:** Implement evaluation and accountability mechanisms to ensure that contracts awarded to the SSE actually generate positive social and environmental impact.

8.4.5 Strengthening the Community Fabric and Local Resilience

Beyond economic and policy aspects, the future of SSE is linked to its ability to strengthen community fabric and build networks of solidarity that strengthen community resilience. In a global context marked by climate crises, health crises and economic inequalities, SSE can play a key role in building more cohesive and self-reliant societies.

Solidarity economy initiatives have proved to be an effective tool for strengthening the economic sovereignty of territories, promoting local production and distribution models, facilitating energy self-sufficiency through **renewable energy cooperatives**, and ensuring access to decent housing through **co-housing and cooperative housing projects**.

To ensure its growth, the SSE must continue to rely on models of participatory governance, where communities are protagonists in decision-making about the use of their resources and the design of their local development. Collaboration between SSE entities, public administrations and citizens is key to consolidating these models and ensuring their sustainability over time.

8.5. Closure

The path to a more just, inclusive and sustainable economy involves strengthening SSE as a viable alternative model. Digitisation, the expansion of ethical consumption, integration into global policies and responsible public procurement are some of the pillars on which SSE can rely to consolidate its impact.

The **SSOLEIL** project, from which this handbook is derived, has highlighted the importance of transnational collaboration and exchange of experience to strengthen SSE. Experiences shared between Spain and France show that, when the right conditions are created, SSE can transform the local economy, generate decent jobs and foster more resilient societies.

This manual is not a closure, but a starting point for action. Every tool, strategy and case study presented here is an invitation to build a future where the economy is at the service of people and the planet. The challenge is great, but the transformative potential of SSE is even greater.