



# CLUSTERS OF SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

REPORT GECS WORKING GROUP 2021- THE ROLE OF CLUSTERS AND SIMILAR FORMS OF  
BUSINESS COOPERATION IN FOSTERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ECONOMY

*Internal market,  
Industry,  
Entrepreneurship  
and SMEs*

The expert group on social economy and social enterprises (GECES) created a sub-group on "The role of clusters and similar forms of business cooperation in fostering the development of social economy" with the task to research and explore insights on social economy clusters and their role in fostering innovation in the European Union.

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# **Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation in the European Union, perspectives and experiences**

**REPORT GECES SUB- GROUP**

**THE ROLE OF CLUSTERS AND SIMILAR FORMS OF BUSINESS COOPERATION IN FOSTERING  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ECONOMY**

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	5
Executive summary .....	6
Policy Context.....	10
Introduction.....	12
1. Literature on clusters and social economy clusters .....	12
2. The concept of Clusters of Social & Ecological Innovation .....	23
3. Identifying and analysing CSEI .....	28
4. CSEI socioeconomic characterisation and trends .....	30
5. CSEI perspectives and experiences in fostering innovation .....	40
6. CSEI perspectives and experiences in innovation transferability .....	45
7. Thematic focus & Cases .....	47
8. Conclusions.....	68
9. Working group achievements & recommendations.....	70
10. CSEI to join the EU Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP).....	76
Appendices .....	78

## Executive summary

**AIM:** This report identifies the model of **Clusters of Social and Ecologic Innovation (CSEI)** and explores their presence across the European Union.

**Objectives:** The analysis had the following objectives:

- 1) To obtain a socioeconomic characterisation of the CSEI concept;
- 2) To identify and analyse the main innovative aspects that CSEI bring about to social and ecological transitions and;
- 3) To identify and analyse the clusters features, components and/or determinants that facilitate innovation dissemination and transfer to other contexts.

**METHODOLOGY:** After a literature review a simple multiple case study was conducted, based on 30 potential social economy clusters, identified and selected in 13 European Union country-members. The case study used a questionnaire, built and fulfilled in by the GECES members. Data was subject to content analysis and descriptive statistical analysis. In a second phase further thematic exploration was done on how CSEI emerge and what type of activities and services they provide to their members and communities, including several policy cases that can be favourable for clusterisation and CSEI. On the basis of the identifiers and the many activities by the working group more CSEI were added to a extend list of 70 cases;

## Main results:

### *Clusters of social and ecologic innovation: dimensions, characterisation and trends*

- Social economy "*clusterisation*" is a recent and growing social movement in the European Union.
- Almost all clusters are meeting the multiple partnership approach; they congregate at least 2-3 types of actors in their composition. Almost half of the sample congregates 3 to 6 types, which express wider and more complex forms of cooperation between social economy entities, traditional for profit enterprises and other supportive actors such as public authorities, education and research centres. Many CSEI have the specific feature to include civil society organisations, though mostly in an informal manner.
- CSEI are usually cross-sectoral in terms of sector of activity (NACE). This means they have usually other drivers than improving the (local) sectoral competitiveness.
- Majority of CSEI are of small and medium size.
- Majority of CSEI are engaged in interregional and international networks or projects.
- Job creation and local economic development are the most pursued priorities. Another priority recognised in some case is purely the development of the local or regional "social economy ecosystem" in itself by creating a favourable conditions and support. Still, in most cases this is linked to a societal or policy

ambition such as social inclusion, job-inclusion, education, promoting an ecological and circular economy, etc. In few cases the initiatives are purely private driven.

- Majority of CSEI present a financial model characterized by multiple sources of income. Support of public resources is present in most of the cases, for some in structural manner for the majority through project funding. Other resources are member contributions, loans and private donations.
- Some clusters are developed around a specific physical space or want to pursue their reallocation into such a joint space. These are often organised as “third-” “common-” or “open spaces”, hubs or *fablabs* and have a variety of activities and services that go beyond pure businesses activity (creative and cultural, leisure, education, housing, etc.). This type of cluster is often part of a broader industrial regeneration or urban development vision.
- In terms of membership, there are three basic types: closed and formalised membership, informal membership and open membership.
- CSEI can be a vehicle for financial opportunities (e.g. project funding, crowd funding, public-private investments) and are used to pool financial resources for social economy or specific projects with a driving role of social economy actors.
- The vast majority of clusters have their activity confined to a political-administrative jurisdiction or frontier, making the “proximity” element important.
- Within the territorial aspect, the promotion of a “proximity economy” is an important dimension. Some other forms of cooperation which lack the “proximity dimension” are also considered in this report when they might have common characteristics with, or supportive actions towards CSEI (for example sector federations, business groups or associations). Some of those are successful in promoting *clusterisation* and might function as a ‘*cluster of clusters*’, ‘meta clusters’ or ‘national or EU level cluster associations’.
- Most CSEI have a legal entity, a cluster manager and employees. Others have rather an informal cluster manager (pro bono) and are for example running on the basis of a *Memorandum of Understanding*, other cluster are even initiated by local or regional governments. The latter tend to evolve, or have the ambition to evolve, in more structural and independent cluster organisations over time.
- The decision making process in a CSEI is, when formalised is always participatory and in most cases democratic.

### *Perspectives and experiences in fostering innovation*

- CSEI formation contributes to the following main roles or developments towards economic innovation: promotion of the economic context and cluster agentic capacity; access to new markets; delivering of positive economic impacts; promotion of economic sustainability as well as economic regenerative opportunities and new jobs, mainly in areas with little economic assets or where there has been a serious decline in economic activity.
- CSEI formation contributes to the following main roles or developments towards social innovation: promotion of collective learning; new social models of intervention; organisational development equity; regeneration of local territory in

industrial transition; empowering communities; pooling new financial resources for communities and the general interest; building trust among people and society and developing democratic policies and business models; promoting sustainable and flexible social integration and changing the relation between the social economy, mainstream enterprises, civil society and public authorities.

- CSEI formation contributes to the following main roles or developments towards governance innovation: defining and advocating for ethical values and principles; cooperative forms of governance and ownership; creating new forms of accountability beyond the enterprises' boundaries in safeguarding its mission. Moreover, CSEI are facilitating the transferability of such standards and governance models to other players in the territory not belonging to the social economy, e.g. public authorities, mainstream business or civil society organisations.
- CSEI formation contributes to the following main roles or developments towards ecological innovation: building on principles such as environmental standards, improving biodiversity and circularity and addressing climate change.

### *Perspectives and experiences in innovation transferability*

- A small minority of clusters was aware that their model had been disseminated and implemented in other settings, while some others identified themselves as focus of attention of other social economy entities that are willing to partly or totally implement their models.
- Most transfers are considered at Member State level as support structures and practices are equal. However, thanks to several stakeholders actions and the actions of this working group, increased exchanges at European level of CSEI can be observed, as the majority of clusters affirmed their engagement in transnational projects, participation in international networks or partnerships as well as the registrations of CSEI in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP).
- CSEI identified 3 main categories of facilitating or impeding factors to their model dissemination: clear and objective description of the theoretical model, identification of contextual factors and visible social impacts.
- In future, CSEI might be used to deliver more impactful and efficient on: reporting standards, public procurement, skills and training of employees, pooling of financial resources and match funding for innovation and research activities (e.g. R&D for social and ecologic impact), labour market inclusion, regeneration of industrial sites or areas and education strategies.

## Conclusions:

### *Clusters socioeconomic characterisation and trends*

- Social economy "*clusterisation*" in the EU presents a high variety of experiences, in some cases, a majority bottom-up and a minority policy inspired and (initially) directed by public agencies.

- Even when the majority of the analysed CSEI match the cluster criteria in terms of composition, actions, organisation and territorial aspect, they do not necessarily identifying themselves necessarily under the industrial or competitive “cluster” concept, nor do they present themselves with the term “cluster”.
- The most commonly used alternative terms are *hubs, poles, partnerships, networks, alliances, associations*, business platforms, third-, common- or joint spaces.
- Promotion of the CSEI concept might overcome this problem and create a more common understanding and conceptual identification, as well as policy fine-tuning.
- Although it is possible to identify common structural dimensions and trends, each cluster is a highly contextualized social body with characteristics (e.g. missions, activities, composition) that are usually very rich and diverse resulting in highly complex relationships and structures. Most often those missions are capturing local or regional challenges be it from a broader sustainability, innovation or social approach.
- The financial dimension of CSEI has been proved as a difficult analysis area, as many depend on temporary funding, usually in the form of government support and limited members' income.
- Social economy clusters, and more specifically CSEI are rather “a resource for the territory’ than “using the territory as a resource”.

#### *CSEI perspectives and experiences in fostering innovation*

- CSEI play an important role in fostering different types of innovation with a clear priority for economic, social and ecological innovation.
- Technological innovation is present in a limited amount of analysed cases. In those case the cluster is mainly used as an experimental cradle for new technology development and experimentation, joint investment as well as the facilitation of technology transfer across the cluster members. Still, evidence shows that those social economy clusters developing advanced tech are rather rare cases as most of them did not yet reach a solid degree of technology maturity. Several clusters on this extensive list (see appendix IV) are known for their strong promotion of technological innovation, for example through fablabs, joint engineering and specific advanced technology focus.
- The cross-sectoral nature of most clusters makes on the one hand transfer of innovation more complex, but it allows on the other hand to develop more advanced and integrated innovations that go beyond the needs of a particular sector and focus on local or regional development.
- Ecological innovation are also significant areas of innovation, in the analysed cases, the focus is mainly on circularity and energy efficiency. The cases focussing on rural development, have usually a focus on organic production of food, textiles or sustainable services such as tourism.

## Policy Context

COVID-19 has shaken Europe to its core, testing our societies, economies and our way of living and working together. The pandemic has exposed our vulnerabilities calling us to rethink economic and social models as well as our worldwide interdependencies. While the pandemic is still challenging our societies, the time is right to reflect on the first lessons learned, and more specifically what role the social economy can play in aspiring to build back better.

One of those lessons is that we need to enhance our efforts for an industrial recovery which is delivering on green and digital transition. A transition in line with our priorities, including the European Green Deal, New Skills Agenda, Europe Fit for the Digital Age and an Economy that Works for People.

Consequently, [the update of the EU Industrial Strategy](#)<sup>1</sup> offers concrete tools for this green and digital transitions of EU Industry. The strategy identified 14 industrial ecosystems, of which one is the “proximity & social economy” ecosystem. Among the various instruments to achieve the acceleration towards the twin transition, the Commission proposed to co-create, in partnership with industry, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders, transition pathways for this ecosystems.

The proximity and social economy ecosystem is amongst the first to develop such a transition pathway, which is kicked-off by the publication of a Commission Staff Working Document<sup>2</sup> **“Scenarios towards co-creation of a transition pathway for a more resilient, sustainable and digital Proximity and Social Economy industrial ecosystem”**. This document is accompanying the **European Commission Communication ‘a European Action Plan for the Social Economy’**<sup>3</sup>, both published on 9 December 2021.

This report will be valuable contribution to the challenges and opportunities highlighted in the Action Plan and for the development of the transition pathway for the proximity and social economy ecosystem. It is the result of a joint expert exercise which started in 2019 by mandate of the EU expert group on Social Economy and Social Enterprises (GECES). Given the COVID-19 crisis, it has a chance to become even more relevant as it pictures the social economy cluster models as a prominent contributor to the green and digital transition, in a social and regenerative manner.

This report presents a unique cluster model called “clusters of social and ecological innovation” (CSEI). It is based on the classic cluster model and aims to stress the unique combination of a versatile partnership to foster specific social, ecological but also technology innovation capacities. It also stresses the potential opportunities for cooperation with mainstream clusters in a local and European context<sup>4</sup>. Links are regularly made to, for example, the [European industrial cluster policy](#), the [European](#)

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<sup>1</sup> COM (2021) 350

<sup>2</sup> SWD (2021) 982

<sup>3</sup> COM (2021) 778

<sup>4</sup> “Proximity & Social Economy” was integrated as a specific strand in the most recent EU cluster collaboration call ‘EUROCLUSTERS’.

[Cluster Collaboration Platform](#), the [EU expert group on clusters](#) as well as concrete examples on how social economy and mainstream companies can collaborate strategically through the cluster model.

Clusters of social and ecological innovation are ideal vehicles to align local SMEs, social enterprises, citizens' initiatives, local-regional governments and research to help digital and sustainable transition of a local and proximity economy.

Clusters of social and ecologic innovation provide prosperity in territories in numerous sectors, help build resilient local value chains and serve a broad range of stakeholders. The mutualisation processes embedded in these clusters go far beyond mere networking. They require a stronger commitment and membership from all involved parties as well as a willingness to share not only resources, but also (decision making) competences on shared aspirations. The main strength of these clusters is therefore their capacity and know-how in terms of cooperation stemming from the values of the social economy as well as their capacity to experiment and innovate.

Together with social economy and industrial clusters have shown to be valuable in terms of crisis response and recovery as they have demonstrated concrete actions of solidarity, cooperation, innovation and regeneration. The European dimension is equally visible in clusters' drive to expand their model and learn from other structures alike.

This report collects new existing evidence and new evidence and collects over 70 cases. It offers ideas for policymakers at European, national, regional and local levels to identify levers of action to be activated to support the development of CSEI and allow their growth.

## Introduction

This report aims at exploring clusters of social and ecologic innovation (CSEI) contributions to foster innovation in the European Union, in light of the socio-ecological transition.

The expert group on social economy and social enterprises (GECES) created a sub-group on "The role of clusters and similar forms of business cooperation in fostering the development of social economy" has developed a working plan to address this topic through different phases and tasks. The first goal was to gain more information and insight on CSEI and their role in fostering innovation in the European Union. The following specific objectives were identified:

1. To obtain a socioeconomic characterisation of CSEI;
2. To identify and analyse the main innovative aspects that CSEI bring about to social and ecological transition;
3. To identify and analyse cluster features, components and/or determinants that facilitate innovation dissemination to other settings.

The report is organised in ten chapters. The first chapter conducts a short literature review, followed by a conceptual outline, highlighting the relationship between CSEI and innovation, in a time of socio-ecological transition. The third chapter describes the study setup and the methodology used. The following three chapters introduce the process of analysis and its results: clusters socioeconomic characterisation and trends; CSEI perspectives and experiences in fostering innovation and innovation transferability. Chapter seven offers several thematic focusses and cases illustrating the variety of CSEI. Chapter eight presents the conclusions followed by the main recommendations in chapter nine. The report ends with an invitation to CSEI join the European Cluster Collaboration Platform in chapter ten.

## 1. Literature on clusters and social economy clusters

### 1.1. The European Union approach to clusters

According to the European Commission clusters cannot be understood as fitting into the narrow sectoral view that most industrial policies have, but should be considered as regional ecosystems of related industries and competences featuring a broad array of inter industry interdependencies, more precisely

***clusters are defined as groups of firms, related economic actors, and institutions that are located near each other and have reached a sufficient scale to develop specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills.***

They are referred to both as a concept and a real economic phenomenon, such as the Silicon Valley, the effects of which, such as employment concentration, can be measured – as is done by the cluster mapping of the European Cluster Observatory<sup>5</sup>, today converted into the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)<sup>6</sup>

The European Commission has developed a policy in favour of clusters, defined as groups bringing together a sufficient number of companies, especially SMEs, closely related economic actors and related institutions, such as technology centres or development agencies. Working together in a cluster allows enterprises to develop specialized and common expertise, services, skills, new resources, suppliers and markets. Clusters encourage and animate collaborations and networking between all these actors.

The Commission also emphasises the role of a Cluster Organisation (CO), as a driving force of the cluster. Cluster organisations are the legal entities that support the strengthening of collaboration, networking and learning in innovation clusters. These act as innovation support providers by delivering or channelling specialised and customised business support services to stimulate innovation activities, especially in SMEs. They are usually the actors that facilitate strategic partnerships across clusters. For more definitions related to clusters see appendix I.

Clusters constitute a significant part of the European industrial landscape. They are dynamic geographic concentrations of interconnected firms and related economic entities that have reached a sufficient scale to develop specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills. They include mainly business companies, but also other essential entities of an industrial ecosystem such as research and knowledge institutions, science and technology parks, talents and financial service providers, non -profit organisations, related public bodies. More than 3000 clusters exist in the EU. Their members employ over 50 million people. They account for almost every fourth job in Europe (61.8 million jobs or 23.4% of total employment) and about half of the jobs in exporting industries (50.3%).

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<sup>5</sup> Smart Guide to Cluster Policy (2016). Following the definition by Michael Porter a cluster is a geographical proximate group of interconnected companies and associated institutions in a particular field, linked by commonalities and externalities. Today many clusters are defined by a group of companies joining forces with research and knowledge institutions, public stakeholders, private investors and start-ups with the aim of collaborations within a branch or a technology area. Often the cluster have a geographic starting point at local or regional level. A cluster is a neutral platform independent of political and technological interests

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 10.



## 1.2. Social economy Clusters

The concept of a 'social economy cluster' mirroring industrial clusters has not a long standing research tradition as compared to industrial clusters. First observations of such concepts are quite recent. This chapter gives an overview of main sources and conceptual analysis.

According to Bembenek and Kowalska (2015), *social clusters* embrace several sectors. They are often formed in a specific geographical area, but they are also open spaces which people can access from the outside, allowing various ideas and values to be developed in the cluster beyond its geographic restrictions. Nevertheless, interaction between a social (economy) cluster and its community is important, as their innate purpose is to meet the needs of the community.

REVES (2018), sees social economy clusters as *“open, flexible and community-rooted, consisting of a concentration of entities representing non-governmental organisations, traditional and socially-oriented enterprises and other institutions. Its benefits correspond to the benefits of traditional forms of networks and clusters, such as exchange of experience, mix of skills and innovation.”*<sup>8</sup> They are pivotal in promoting a new culture of cooperation and competition, where diverse stakeholders have the same rights and obligations.

A recent Scottish research project into Cluster Models and Opportunities for Social Enterprise (2019) emphasis rather the “proximity economy” aspect by defining cluster as *“a group of like-minded locally based enterprises creating a critical mass of enterprises happening closely together. These geographically concentrated groups are interconnected enterprises (and/or are related in some way) who work collaboratively to trade and as a result; have the potential to become more productive, innovative and competitive. Together these enterprises could, with the right support and resources; increase their effectiveness; organisational efficiency and be more successful in winning tenders.”*<sup>9</sup> –

The report also describes main incentives for “clusterisation” driven by social enterprises. Those are pooling of resources and knowledge (e.g. joint innovation strategy), enhanced market presence and sales (e.g. in terms of access to public procurement) as well as more practical aspects such as transport links, local knowledge, digital connectivity etc. Consequently, clusters are more likely to flourish in a particular locality or local authority boundary area.

Nonetheless, it must be stressed that only very few academic articles were devoted to this topic, which makes it difficult to define precisely the characteristics. At the same time, one may assume that many social economy clusters might exist without naming and

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<sup>8</sup> REVES (European Network of Cities & Regions for the Social economy) (2018). *The Role of Clusters and Regions in Scaling Up*. European Day of Social economy Enterprises 2018, European Economic and Social Committee, 4 June 2018, Brussels.

<sup>9</sup> Research into Cluster Models and Opportunities for Social Enterprise in Scotland, Partnership for Procurement and Co-operative Development Scotland (2019)

labelling themselves as "clusters" (as this is the case for numerous traditional competitive clusters). Consequently, one must consider that there is no single approach or concept widely acknowledged regarding social economy clusters, certainly not at EU level.

The French "*pôle territorial de coopération économique*" (territorial poles of economic cooperation - PTCE) is one of the most developed and inspiring examples of social economy clusters that reached a certain degree of institutionalisation and recognition. The figure below from Matray and Poisat (2015) shows a typology of four types of social economy clusters based on the PTCE model. See also box 'PTCE in France'.

Such a "territorial pole of economic cooperation" is a group of actors (local authorities, companies, research / training actors), anchored on a territory aiming at developing together innovative economic projects and strategic cooperation. The PTCE are intended to boost the territories by promoting the development of social and solidarity economy projects that have a strong local impact and that create mostly non-relocatable jobs while respecting people and the environment (Le Labo de L'ESS, 2014).

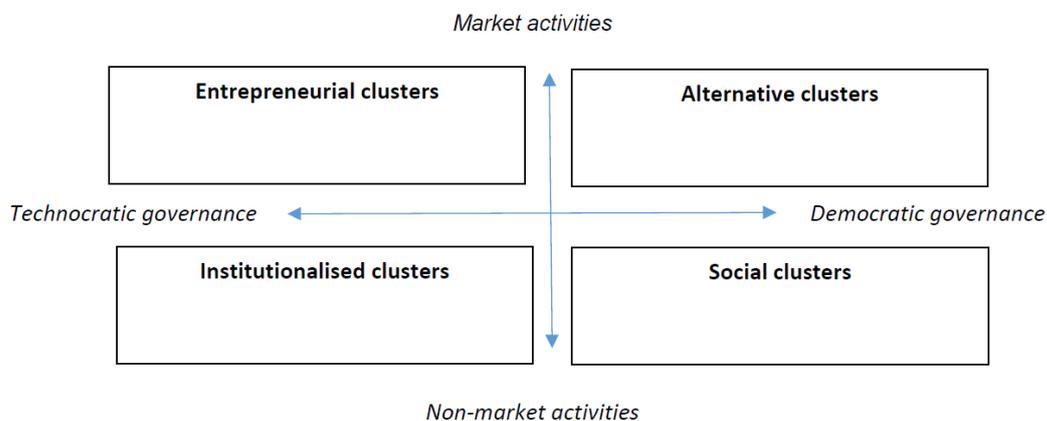


Figure 2: Typology of social economy clusters, Matray and Poisat, 2015

The main features displayed by the four types of clusters proposed by Matray and Poisat (2015) are<sup>10</sup>:

1. Institutionalised clusters: the main goal is to create societal wealth and jobs through reinforced networking of social economy organisations already present in the considered area;
2. Entrepreneurial clusters: these are the closest to traditional 'techno-economic' or industrial clusters. In entrepreneurial clusters, social economy-related issues are integrated through activities which, in particular, aim to increase the employability of specific populations (e.g. disabled persons) within the territory concerned;

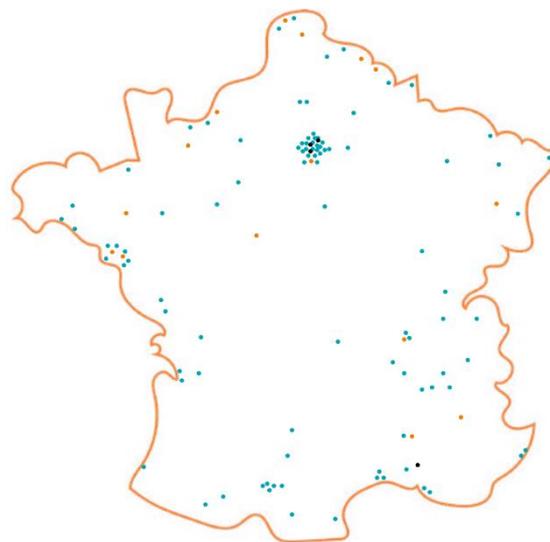
<sup>10</sup> The authors stress that: "Of course, this typology is not static. These four categories refer to major trends, ideal types, and they do not perfectly match TCEC. Above all, the study of the Rhone-Alps TCEC showed that the positions of the different poles have evolved more or less rapidly since their creation, and in various ways." (Matray and Poisat, 2015, p. 9).

3. Social clusters: citizens seek to provide a response to the social needs of the territory. Partnerships with local authorities are crucial, both for the emergence and the development of the social cluster;
4. Alternative clusters: these are an atypical and rare form of social economy clusters, associating the profitable activities of traditional companies with democratic governance.

### Territorial poles of economic cooperation (PTCE) in France<sup>11</sup>

The concept of territorial economic cooperation clusters (PTCE) emerged in 2009 from a discussion initiated and led by *Labo de L'ESS* in cooperation with several social and solidarity economy networks. This collective conceptualisation work followed the observation of the emergence in France of multiple dynamics of territorial cooperation initiated by the Social & Solidarity Economy since the early 2000s. In 2010, the analysis of these initiatives led to a first definition of the PTCE:

*“A territorial pole of economic cooperation (PTCE) is a grouping, on a given territory, of initiatives, companies and networks and networks of the social and solidarity economy associated with socially responsible SMEs, local authorities, research centres and training organisations, which implements a common and continuous strategy of cooperation and mutualisation in the service of innovative local development innovative economic projects for sustainable local development.”*



In 2014, the creation of a “PTce3” charter formalised the values and principles of action. This charter was signed by 56 PTCEs. In the same year, PTCE were recognised by the French law on social and solidarity economy under article 9:

*“The PTCE are constituted by the grouping together in the same territory of companies in the social economy [...] as they join forces with companies, in association with local authorities and their groupings, research centres, higher education and training or any other natural or legal person to implement a common and continuous strategy of pooling, cooperation or partnership to develop social and economic innovation projects, carrying social or technological innovation and which are conducive to local sustainable development.”*

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lalabo-ess.org/system/files/inline-files/2021.05.07%20Relancer%20les%20PTCE%20-%20WEB.pdf> and [https://www.lalabo-ess.org/system/files/2021-01/enquete\\_d\\_analyse\\_ptce\(1\).pdf](https://www.lalabo-ess.org/system/files/2021-01/enquete_d_analyse_ptce(1).pdf)

In July 2013, a first call for projects to support PTCEs was launched (EUR 3 million) distributed among 23 PTCE. In 2015, a second call supported (2.7 EUR) 14 PTCEs. Besides those benefitting others, PTCE were created and are still being created today. The number of PTCEs that are currently active is nearly 60. In addition, other form of local cooperation or collective dynamics, such as third spaces or hubs are very close to the concept of PTCEs and might become a cluster over time.

Delving into social economy clusters, and examining more precisely one of their core elements (i.e. social economy entities), it is interesting to note that social economy entities constitute multi-stakeholder organisations in itself. Defourny and Nyssen (2013) stress: “empirical evidence shows that the involvement of various categories of stakeholders in social enterprises constitutes a channel for developing relations and trust among these groups.” These authors point also to the fact that their “inner mode of functioning” is deeply heterogeneous (for instance a mix of revenues from sales of services, public subsidies, donations and volunteering).

Accordingly, it is reasonable to hypothesise that social economy clusters reproduce such behaviour and incentives at a higher scale than what happens within social economy entities. In other word, there are grounds for an assumption that the very nature of social enterprises (i.e. multi-stakeholder organisations) facilitates the constitution of social economy clusters more than is the case for traditional enterprises in relation to the constitution of (technology-related) clusters. Still, this doesn't take in account certain critical barriers and obstacles for social economy cluster to emerge and develop.

### *The role of technology*

Some authors point to the fact that social economy clusters reinforce the social innovation capabilities of their members. The hypothesis is that social innovations are more likely to emerge in such environments than in situations where actors are acting alone. Analyses by Türkeli and Wintjes (2014) and by Alijani and Wintjes (2017) tend to comfort this hypothesis. Should this be the case, social economy clusters would have an impact on the innovation capacities of their members similar to that which traditional competitive clusters are expected to have on (the mostly technological) innovation capacities of firms involved in those clusters.

More recently, Calderini et al (2021)<sup>12</sup> have published an article building further on the first findings of this GECES sub-group. The article focusses on how *clusters of social innovation* can be a cradle for social tech enterprises and technology transfer amongst the members<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> An ecosystemic model for the technological development of social entrepreneurship: exploring clusters of social innovation, Calderini, Gerli & Chiodo (2021)

<sup>13</sup> Those members do not need to be necessarily 'social economy' actors, however they need to subscribe similar local societal or ecological missions.

When it comes to actual technology transfer, the sample research of Calderini et al (2021) shows that those existing clusters are not yet sufficiently structured to represent actual enabling environments for an organisation’s technological development. Despite the absence of such formal technology adoption practice within social enterprises members, some of the cluster models integrated in this report<sup>14</sup> show clear potential in this sense. They show that promotion of the knowledge-intensive partnerships focussing on technology can leverage new technology solutions for social and ecological impact and create a catching-up effect for members with low technology capacity thanks to the cluster environment.

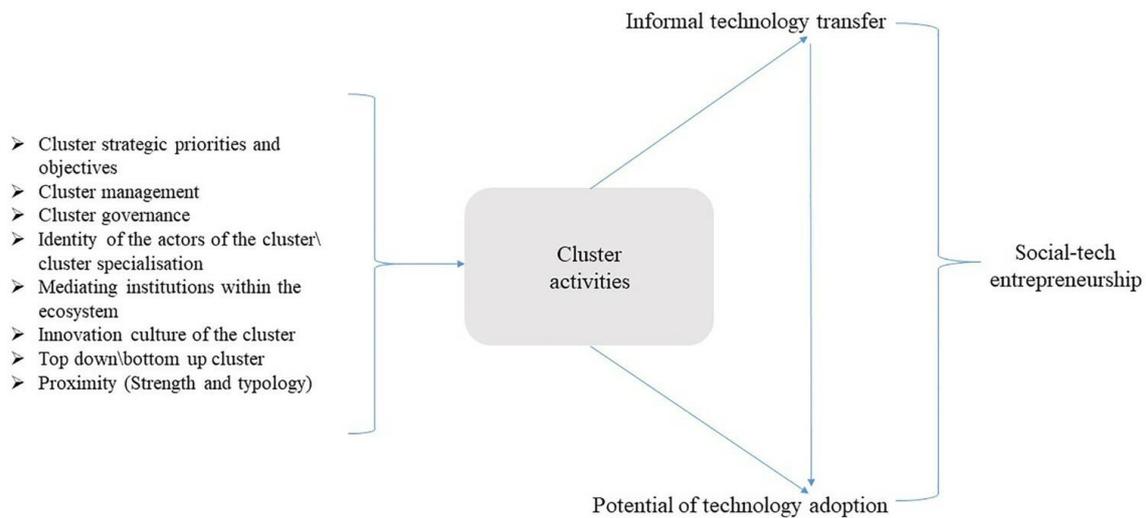


Figure 3: Cluster characteristics that can affect the creation of technology transfer and the adoption of technologies by social entrepreneurship, Gerli et al., 2021<sup>15</sup>

### Public and private procurement

In 2019, a report was conducted by the Partnership for Procurement and Co-operative Development Scotland and Community Enterprise Scotland on the role of “Cluster Models and Opportunities for Social Enterprise in Scotland”. The study explored the potential of social enterprise cluster model(s) across Scotland as catalysts for inclusive growth, with a dedicated focus on how social enterprises can create favourable conditions to play a successful role in competitive tendering. One of the key challenges addressed by clusters is that smaller geographically focused organisations are not or barely able to compete with larger contractors in the private and third sectors are.

On the on hand, the potential was confirmed as clustering can provide the necessary (i) critical mass for individual smaller organisation, (ii) a broader experience and capacity as well as (iii) a more positive perception: by working together as a cluster, organisations’ external perception of being a much larger agency with extensive geographical and client reach, giving them a more sustainable competitive advantage.

<sup>14</sup> See for example 4-Werk, Torino Social Impact & Impact City The Hague.

<sup>15</sup> Gerli, Chiodo, and Bengo 2021; Corsi, Pagani, and Kovaleski 2020; Borrás and Tsagdis 2008; Huber 2012; Scillitoe, Poonamallee, and Joy 2018; Terstriep, Rehfeld, and Kleverbeck 2020; Vlasisavljevic, Medina, and Van Looy 2020.

However, several risks were equally highlighted. Those are (i) a reluctance by private sector SMEs to jointly tender with social enterprise, (ii) when procurement is the single driving force of a cluster to arise, it can be both, a crucial success factor, as well as the biggest risk, which makes broader contributions vital. Such broader engagements within a clusters can create new opportunities for the social economy beyond access to public procurement, such as setting up broader partnerships between organisations (including mainstream SMEs); proposing joint ventures; securing joint finance and funding.<sup>16</sup>

Clusters can not only be an asset for better positioning social enterprises jointly towards public procurement. They can equally be organised to gain access to new private markets and boost sales by offering joint products, establish joint online and off-line selling points or platforms (B2C) as well as joint services or product portfolio towards other businesses (B2B).

### *Short chain food clusters*

When it comes to local sustainable private sales or procurement, local food cluster aiming at organisation local short chain supply could be considered as one of the most present or known 'sustainable clusterisation phenomena'. Such agro-food consortia, often rooted in the cooperative movement (new or with a long tradition) are emerging more and more into complex forms of cooperation adding more traditional competitive cluster characteristics to sell their goods (e.g. under a local and organic (bio) label) to local consumers.

A first example is the Belgian 'ceinture alimentaires'. These are territorial projects<sup>17</sup> developing relations of production, processing, distribution and consumption in short food circuits. The term "ceinture" (eng: "belt") refers to the development around metropolises, which in this way build solidarity and reciprocal interaction between city and surrounding countryside.

In Germany the model of "Regionalwert" (RW) goes a step further by adding several components such as a rural financing and investment schemes. Regionalwert AG is regional cooperation including an instrument for financing and networking companies across the entire regional agricultural value chains. RWAG brings private and institutional investors together for investment in SMEs across the entire agri-food chain, mainly focusing on organic production. In this way, a real network is created connecting those local RWAG. The investors are not investment funds, but mainly citizens of the regions who want to participate in the sustainable development of their region.<sup>18</sup> Most RW bring together rural businesses, civil society, investors and regional or local public authorities and have developed a rich set of services beyond the investors programs such as innovation projects, training, networking and business support.

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<sup>16</sup> Research into Cluster Models and Opportunities for Social Enterprise in Scotland, Partnership for Procurement and Co-operative Development Scotland (2019)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ceinturealimentaire.be/fonctionnement>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ess-europe.eu/fr/bonnepratique/regionalwert-ag-burgeraktiengesellschaft-der-region-freiburg-rwag>, <https://www.accesstoland.eu/IMG/pdf/regionalwert-ag-parts-of-book-english.pdf> and <https://www.regionalwert-ag.de/>.

Another inspiring practice is the Glasgow Community Food Network, functioning under a Community Interest Company applying co-operative principles and founded in May 2017 to bring together practitioners and organisations in the private, public and third sectors along with other interested individuals to develop a flourishing food system in Glasgow. The Network's vision is of "a city where high quality, fresh, local, organic produce is available and affordable for all and where good food is a celebrated part of our culture". The cluster has also a clear mission to approach corporate buyers and local authorities, which means addressing their procurement policies. A large part of the Network's work is therefore in raising awareness of local food issues, which it does in collaboration with national initiatives such as "Sustainable Food Cities."<sup>19</sup>

### *Differences and convergence between social economy clusters and traditional competitive clusters*

In addition to the question of social economy activities propensity to clusters, an important aspect is the relation between social economy clusters and mainstream clusters (i.e. "traditional" mostly technology-related clusters), for example in terms of cooperation, integration of a social economy in those clusters or cluster populated by both social and mainstream enterprises.

To answer the question as to whether social economy purposes can be combined with clusters' competitiveness objectives, one first step is to examine how far social economy clusters and traditional competitive clusters can be considered "compatible" rather than following opposing logics.

Bembenek and Kowalska (2015) state that the aims of social economy clusters are, among others, to stimulate local development, to promote the concept of social entrepreneurship, to design and implement valuable changes in the social economy and more generally in the society. In this respect, a social economy cluster may have "similarities to the industrial cluster, but it also has its own unique characteristics; it is more open, flexible and community-rooted. Using participatory and democratic approach aligned with citizen's local needs and aided by advances in information and communication technology, these kind of clusters is a new mechanism for social development and regional competitiveness."<sup>20</sup>

From this perspective, social economy clusters' objectives can, at least partly, be combined with 'competitiveness logics' when it comes to creating new solutions for diverse social issues, basing the clustering effects on organisational accumulation of knowledge, cooperative projects and more generally relationships between actors aiming at greater efficiency (of the individual actors as well as of the whole clusters). In other words, being or not being 'profit-oriented' does not profoundly affect the very reasons why clustering occurs not the cooperation amongst those actors can be facilitated in a cluster. The real difference consists in the nature of the actors as well as the mission and goals: (i) commercial firms versus social economy actors which are

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<sup>19</sup> Research into Cluster Models and Opportunities for Social Enterprise in Scotland, Partnership for Procurement and Co-operative Development Scotland (2019)

<sup>20</sup> Bembenek and Kowalska, 2015

anchored in values and principles that prescribes a certain governance model, and relational dynamics based on cooperation (ii) improvement of competitiveness versus improvement of social and/or ecological impact as well as economic performance.

Marsé et al. (2015) point out that a social economy cluster provides its members (e.g. firms, research organisations, public agencies, etc.) with some intangible assets such as networking, knowledge flows and fluidity in human resources. This increases the potential for different activities, such as innovating, exporting or reinforcing value chains. It also increases the potential of the cluster to generate cooperation projects related to for example the “shared value” concept (Porter & Cramer, 2011)<sup>21</sup> between (traditional and social) enterprises as well as with further actors (e.g. public authorities). Thus, such cooperation allows the companies to define strategies with a focus in social value in order to align businesses with tendencies in consumer’s priorities such as a major awareness of welfare, environment, health and social value contribution.”<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted that not all social economy entities will be willing to subscribe themselves to the shared value principle within a cluster, as this concept has still the dominance of competitiveness over cooperation embedded. In the cases examined in this work we see that these differences are often more nuanced in reality. This is also pushed by trends in the broader economy where, for example under influence of an improved sustainability conscience and for example the Sustainable Development Goals, mainstream and social economy are converging.

Table 1 provides a summary of the specificities of the policy logics behind the creation of social economy clusters in comparison to the logic leading to the creation of traditional competitive clusters.

**Table 1 – The differences between traditional competitive clusters and social economy clusters: the example of France**

<b>Table</b>	<b>Traditional competitive clusters (e.g. French pôles de compétitivité)</b>	<b>Social economy clusters (e.g. French PTCE)</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	<b>Economic growth</b>	<b>Sustainable &amp; regenerative local growth</b>
<b>Approach</b>	<b>Top down</b>	<b>Bottom up</b>
<b>Main form of innovation</b>	<b>Technological</b>	<b>Social &amp; Ecological</b>
<b>Funding</b>	<b>National and local</b>	<b>Local, regional</b>

<sup>21</sup> See appendix I

<sup>22</sup> Marsé et al., 2015

<b>Actors</b>	<b>Large multinational firms, SMEs, national research organisations and public authorities</b>	<b>Very small firms, SMEs, local authorities, regional research centres and civil society</b>
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Technocratic logic</b>	<b>Democratic and participative logic</b>
<b>Sector focus</b>	<b>Sectoral</b>	<b>Cross-sectoral</b>
<b>Relationship with the territory</b>	<b>Territory is a resource for the cluster (aiming at an economic leadership)</b>	<b>Cluster is resource for the territory (aiming at meeting needs of the local population)</b>

Source: adapted from Matray and Poisat, (2014)

Matray and Poisat (2015) propose an empirical analysis of situations in which public authorities can back the emergence and development of social economy clusters with financial support and even by law. In the French case, 'official' social economy clusters have been organised and funded using the model of technology-oriented competitiveness clusters.<sup>23</sup> "If the dynamics of local actors are essential in a bottom-up logic, public institutions can play a key role as well. In other words, next to the presence of civil society and entrepreneurial dynamics, social economy clusters could be understood as mostly emerging and developing by the engagement of public authorities." (Matray and Poisat, 2015).<sup>24</sup>

## 2. The concept of Clusters of Social & Ecological Innovation

The GECES sub-group had the ambition to gather first insights in how social economy entities use and setup clusters similarly to competitive clusters. This narrative was developed as a first attempt to describe the added value of exploring this relatively new phenomenon. The working group was required to collect a set of existing cases and analyse them to distill recommendations and disseminate good practices.

The GECES sub-group believes that the time has come to identify more substantially social economy across Europe, in a manner comparable to the competitiveness clusters, however by adding addressing its specific innovation potential. This should not be done "against" them but in good agreement with them and moreover by facilitating

<sup>23</sup> The social economy clusters *Pôles territoriaux de coopération économique* (PTCE) were created in 2013, directly inspired by the example of the traditional technology-oriented clusters *Pôles de compétitivité* launched in 2005 (see section 4).

<sup>24</sup> The Literature review was partly integrated and adapted from the Report on Social economy clusters, European Observatory for Clusters, 2020.

cooperation. They are favouring new forms of cooperation, and responding to the current transitional challenges that Europe must face quickly.

These clusters, based on cooperation, and often social and ecological innovation, will foster a social and solidarity-based economy, and a sustainable local economy firmly rooted in all territories and not just in the most competitive regions. These “third type clusters” should be able to have in the near future supportive regional, national and European public policies nurturing their ecosystems based on economic and social cooperation.

### ***The concept of Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation***

As seen in the literature review, the ‘social economy cluster’ model is characterised by a consistent set of common interests, values and principles and different forms of cooperation among its members to pursue them. Therefore, it can be a valuable model to social economy entities that search for new strategies and development perspectives, especially having as a background the socio-ecological transition that European societies and the world at large face.

What can also be inferred from the literature review, is that the social economy cluster concept incorporates or strives majorly for a quadruple-helix model, rather than the triple helix model that is pursued by traditional competitive clusters. This means, within this ‘cooperation vehicle’, unique synergies exists between (i) social economy and mainstream enterprises, (ii) research & education, (iii) public authorities and (iv) civil society. Adding civil society modifies fundamentally the balance into the direction of the general or collective interest and could amplify the social impact ambition.

Social economy clusters are also like traditional competitive clusters functioning through a jointly managed legal entity or an informal structure, led by a cluster organisation (CO). They setup supporting projects and services for the members, and potentially the near society or community. Fields of activity are diverse, and in most cases cross-sectoral.

However, social economy clusters go beyond the membership and formal aspect of a cluster by linking the unique (and often complex) membership composition to **innovation objectives in terms of social and ecological innovation**. This report will majorly focus on those clusters and therefore presents and defines them as “Cluster of Social and Ecologic Innovation” (CSEI):

***“Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) group mainly social economy entities with mainstream enterprises, civil society organisations, public authorities, education and research institutions that cooperate in a particular location to improve local economic, ecological and societal prosperity***

***and regeneration by facilitating cooperation, pooling of resources and enhancing innovation capacity.”<sup>25</sup>***

To explore the presence, functioning and components of such CSEI, the GECES sub-group conducted a multiple case study, based on 30 potential CSEI, identified and selected in several European Union country-members. Data was collected by a questionnaire completed by the GECES members, and then subject to content analysis and statistical descriptive analysis. Along the research period and knowledge building phase more potential CSEI were added in an extensive list (see appendix IV). In this extensive list the final report has gathered 70 potential CSEI of which 30 were subject of this report's analysis. Identifying CSEI on the basis of a conceptual approach adapted from the traditional competitive or industrial cluster seemed to be a complex task for several reasons:

- 1) The concept of an industrial 'cluster' is not widespread and rather new within the social economy.
- 2) Many other denominations are used to address those partnerships within the social economy with very similar characteristics
- 3) The very local activity makes a mapping difficult from a centralised perspective: meaning the identification of this type of cluster in every country and region requires often local networks, knowledge and often needs to overcome a language barrier.

Nevertheless, this report aims at being a first step in the broader task of exploring the role of CSEI in fostering the socio-ecological transition in the European Union. The term 'Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation' was also chosen in this mind-set by the GECES sub-group and can indeed be understood as the "next step" for the social economy clusters. The working group wanted to stress in this concept the particular innovative characteristics embedded in social economy clusters. As seen in the analysis, this is mostly articulated in economic, social and ecological manner, mainly described in the last part of the analysis: chapter 6 CSEI perspectives and experiences in innovation transferability.

### ***The role of clusters of social and ecologic innovation in fostering the development of social economy***

Across Europe, many social innovation initiatives, often driven by the social economy, aim to develop new responses to new or poorly met social needs under the current conditions of an increasingly competitive market and social policies in crisis. They involve the participation and cooperation of relevant stakeholders, including users/ target groups and communities. These innovations concern a product or a service as well as a mode of organisation or distribution. They are also a cradle for to the creation of many social start-ups, spin-offs, joint ventures, intrapreneurship and many other types of multiple business cooperation and creation. Social economy characteristics and missions are

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<sup>25</sup> The CSEI definition was adapted from the cluster definition used at the EU Cluster Portal. See appendix I for more definitions.

likely to be taken over in the cluster construction; from governance principles to social impact ambitions. Similar observations can be made for ecological innovations, as well very often driven and rooted by social economy actors. Examples are omnipresent in various sectors such as renewable and clean energy provision (e.g. energy communities and cooperatives), fair trade and ethical fashion and food, organic food and sustainable agriculture, circular economy and biodiversity.

CSEI can be important cradles for such innovations as they can constitute real “Poles”<sup>26</sup>, involving a variety of local/regional actors, capacity, knowledge and resources. These poles or clusters also promote the (re)localisation of activities by valuing untapped resources, based on a voluntary and reciprocal commitment between stakeholders. These stakeholders can be formed around a “hard core” but not exclusive set of social economy entities, but also by artisans, (small) private companies, vocational training centres, universities and of course local communities.

CSEI, concern various sectors of activity, most often cross-sectoral organised and not necessarily with a high capital intensity. They may be organised for mutual capacity building, technological innovations, market exploration and anchorage purposes such as: eco-building, thermal insulation, heritage development, sustainable food and agriculture (short circuits, organic, catering, solidarity groceries), cultural and artistic activities, local tourism, information, formation and communication projects, collaborative and sharing activities, insertion and securing courses, services to the individual, employee and volunteer, etc.

These types of clusters are based on a culture of cooperation rather than competition, making it possible to pool resources, products or services: exchange of experiences or knowledge, pooling of workspaces, places of accommodation, group purchasing or public procurement, training, etc. They allow cooperation on common projects, such as managing shared jobs and establish common responses to public contracts. They are slowly becoming social and ecological R&D ecosystems that can better respond the local needs with new social and ecological standards.

Besides the local reality, a cluster might be the perfect vehicle to connect the local level to international policies and ambitions such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Clusters can transform these strategies in reality by engaging more parties and mutualise efforts. It also might open opportunities for new partnerships and cooperation, such as cooperation under the shared value principle.

### **‘Barcelona, capital of cooperative clusters and gateway to a Mediterranean Social Economy.**

The social economy has a long history in Catalonia. The (re)construction of a Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) ecosystem has been accelerating over the past ten years, and the city of Barcelona provides illustrative examples. The appearance of dedicated poles is one of the striking facts. They correspond to the profile defined in this report as “clusters of social & ecological innovation (CSEI)”.

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<sup>26</sup> Inspired by the PTCE (FR)

The clusters of Social and Solidarity Economy in Barcelona are a resource for the territory within the framework, from a collective standpoint, of a society in current needs. Indeed, those clusters aim to generate social and economic changes for the city and the citizens through public and private stakeholders by creating links and strong collaboration among them. While Barcelona counts with a great diversity and significant active and participative organisations in the field of SSE, we can turn the spotlight on the main *hubs* that support the development of SSE in Catalonia's capital. In chapter 7, two cases are included in this report: Coopolis (cluster case) and InnoBa (policy case).

*The European cooperative iesMed – innovation and social economy in the Mediterranean*

It is important to highlight that Barcelona gather different centres or platforms of the SSE and of several geographical “scoops”. It is a cooperative network fostering the “SEE clusterisation” in Mediterranean. To that extent, two experimental CitESS (regional resource centres) were launched in 2017 in small towns in the centre of the country and another two new generation CitESS are launched in 2021 in Tunis and Sousse. iesMed's objective is to develop a network of CSEI/CitESS throughout the Mediterranean Rim, in order to connect the territorial poles that share the same missions and the same philosophy.

Now is the time to get to know and recognise the experiences of CSEI. We say social and ecological because we are convinced that these two transitions are intimately linked and they require new forms of innovation that go beyond technology without going against it.

Firstly, it is necessary to ensure an inventory of existing social economy related clusters in their diversity within the different countries of the European Union. The next step is to analyse trends and identify good practices that allow for European dissemination. It should take stock about relevant economic models, effective governance, and specific impact measurement tools. To offer tangible examples of clusters, a thematic approach is added to this report based on experience of the member of the GECES sub-group.

Finally, it is a question of recommending public, regional, national and European policies to encourage and promote the development of CSEI. At the European level, and for the current Commission, it is particularly important to clarify how to include clusters of social and ecological innovation in its policy of general support for clusters, in a new policy of support for the social economy more ambitious, in the access to funds and social inclusion in certain programs such as Erasmus+, Single Market Program (COSME), European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund+.

### 3. Identifying and analysing CSEI

As seen in the literature, "Clusterisation" is a largely documented and discussed phenomenon in the traditional economic sector, but in the social economy it is still an emergent study object.

Academic contributions on this very specific field are very rare and often entailed to single cases. Such cases have certain traditional competitive cluster characteristics and are mostly populated by social economy actors. Others are for example adjacent structures and partnerships such as business networks, sectoral associations, project consortia and public-private partnerships. Those usually come into the picture because of converging aspects towards a clusters by adopting a more complex partner composition, broader and more intensive activities and services. However, those are often these usually deviate due to the lack of a 'proximity' element, membership and shared strategic vision by all partners, etc. That is why we started from a rather open view on the concept, to allow some deviations and interpretation.

The working group started from the traditional competitive cluster concept, literature and created a narrative to add social economy and innovation characteristics. A multiple case study was conducted to identify, select and further develop the concept of CSEI, in the European Union country-members or neighbouring countries.

A questionnaire was considered the most adequate tool to collect data. This was mainly conducted by assembling a template that was based on the assessment of a traditional competitive cluster and adding some social economy characteristics to it. The template integrated the following descriptive and analytical dimensions (Table 1):

**Table 1 - Clusters' questionnaire descriptive and analytical dimensions**

Categories	Descriptive and analytical dimensions
Identification	Name; country; website, contacts.
Description	Year of creation; geographical scope reasons to develop; implementation actions; development stage; responsibility of the initiative; type and number of members; types of social economy actors engaged; sectors of activity; priorities and desired social impact.
Implementation	Mission and objectives; promoter; stakeholders involved; services provided; resources and budget; member fees.
Governance	Type of governance; cluster manager and staff; forms of public support; legal nature; label obtained; policies and legal framework.
Evaluation	Innovative aspects; impact measurable; main successes; main failure issues.
Transferability	Experience of dissemination; model dissemination potential; membership of international networks.

The questionnaire was built and completed by the GECES members. It aggregated both closed and open questions, though a limit of words was suggested for the open questions. Cases were identified and selected through the GECES professional knowledge and information networks.

Data was collected in two phases. A first one, that gathered 13 cases, and a second one that gathered 28 cases. During the second phase, the working group also contacted the first 13 cases in order to obtain some important missing information. From this group of 41 cases (Appendix I), 30 were selected for final analysis. Inclusion criteria was applied so that each case could be classified as a cluster:

1. Presence of a group of entities that cooperate together, preferably from different social sectors: social economy, business, governmental and research.
2. Governance structure: the entities that form the cluster assure its governance, not a distinctive third entity.
3. Geographical proximity: proximity to territories and communities is an important feature. Regional dimension is basically the threshold, with preference for local or business park/site. However, a national scale might work for small countries.
4. Significant interconnection among members, materialized in their exchanges that goes beyond each individual's ambition.

Data from the selected 30 cases were subject to two forms of analysis: content analysis and statistical descriptive analysis (univariate). Results are organised and presented collectively. In order to illustrate the results, the report presents a selection of examples, extracted from the analysed clusters.

The working group identified and selected 30 social economy clusters in the European Union, based on 13 member-states (Table 2).

**Table 2 - Number of Clusters per country**

Country	No.	Country	No.
Belgium	3	Italy	3
Croatia	1	Luxembourg	1
Denmark	2	Spain	10
Finland	1	Sweden	1
France	3	The Netherlands	1
Germany	1	United Kingdom	1
Ireland	2		

One country, Spain, is evidenced by the number of clusters identified (n=10). Belgium, France and Italy follow, with 3 cases each. The particular characteristics of these countries may be in accordance with a more sustained social economy development, particularly regarding the formation of clusters. However, it should be noted that the data cannot give any conclusion towards appearance of CSEI in different Member states, as the data was collected by volunteering members of the working group.

It should be noted that in total 11 more cases were collected, besides the 30 listed above. These were not analysed below because they were too much outside the scope of our exercise or were missing essential information. Nevertheless, many of these have

shown other very attractive forms of enhanced cooperation and are therefore discussed in a separate chapter.

The analysis presents the following problems or limits. The cluster creation, organisation and functioning are quite complex and multidimensional phenomena, not always easy to communicate in a short questionnaire. Also, due to the clusters diversity, the questionnaire not always suited the different realities. The respondents used different terms and concepts due to lack of contextual information, which makes data interpretation and categorisation harder.

## 4. CSEI socioeconomic characterisation and trends

The analysis of the cases highlighted the following main socioeconomic characteristics and trends.

### 4.1. Scale and development phase

Social economy "clusterisation" is a *recent and growing social movement* in the European Union. 11 cases situate their age between 6 to 15 years, revealing themselves as recent, but consolidated experiences. Almost half of the cases are 5 years or less (3 of them were created in 2018 and 1 in 2019), showcasing how this particular phenomenon is still growing. The oldest cluster in the group is 35 years old.

**Table 3 - Clusters age**

Clusters	Until 5 years	Between 6 to 15 years	16 years and more	Total
N.º	14	11	5	30

Despite the recent appearance of a significant number of clusters, the vast majority of them classify their *development stage as a mature one*. This implies a governance structure in place and a consolidated delivery of its social and economic outputs. The mature development phase does not exclude the existence of future plans, or the initiation of a different development phase (e.g. economic scaling, internationalisation). Contrastingly, a smaller number of clusters (n=5) describe themselves as still carrying out efforts to go through the first phases of its creation plan.

**Table 4 - Clusters phase of development**

Clusters	Initial phase	Mature phase	N/answer	Total
N.º	5	24	1	30

The fact that a cluster is based in collectivism and involves cooperation among the different organisations that integrate it, this may explain that at its birth, and in the majority of the cases, there is already a collective structure. Nine clusters indicate in their origin, whether as a single entity or combined with others, public agencies (ex. Municipalities, public institutes, regional departments). This output emphasises the

significant role that public authorities in the EU are playing/may play in the development of social economy. Majority of cases (n=20) identify social economy entities as present when the first steps of the cluster were taken. This reveals that "clusterisation" is mainly an *endogenous movement* (bottom-up) within the social economy sector.

**Table 5 - Type of entity that initiated the cluster**

Cluster initiation		N.º of clusters
<b>Single entity</b>	A public entity	3
	A social economy organisation	2
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Group of entities</b>	A group of individuals/citizens	4
	A group of public entities	2
	A group of public entities & social economy organisations	1
	A group of for-profit enterprises	1
	A group of social economy organisation	7
	A group of social economy organisations & for-profit enterprises	7
	A group of public entities & social economy organisations & for-profit enterprises	3
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

The analysed clusters operate in two main geographical scales.

**Table 6 - Clusters geographical scope<sup>27</sup>**

Clusters	Local	Regional	National	Transnational	Total
N.º	11	15	1	3	30

The results express the level of *geographical proximity* that the creation of a cluster implies. "Local" and "regional" levels reveal themselves as the most adequate scales for the necessary interconnection and proximity that a cluster development demands.

The vast majority of clusters have their activity confined to a political-administrative jurisdiction or frontier, whether in a form of a municipality, a region or a country. It is important to notice the number of clusters (n=3) that operate at a transnational level, which express wider forms of cooperation, apart from the mentioned limits. Usually these are interregional clusters with a clear cross-boarder dimension, while still maintaining the proximity aspect. Those clusters can also become a "cluster so clusters" (bringing together different clusters from both sides of a border). These ones are very rare but extremely interesting in terms of differences of legislation, such as the examples of Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

Others are classic regional clusters where the proximity aspect is adequately present; however, they have a clear transnational ambition in terms of promoting their cluster

<sup>27</sup> For data analysis, just one dimension was considered: the biggest geographical scope where the cluster operates. Geographical scopes are considered not to be exclusive. A national cluster can operate at regional and local levels too.

concept in international networks or use it as a trade and information vehicle such as Mondragon, GOEL or The Rediscovery Centre.

## 4.2. Members and sectoral composition

In relation to their formation, the majority of clusters identified themselves as mainly integrated by social economy actors (Table 7). The share of a common language, interests and needs may facilitate the establishing of links and the recognition of common goals.

**Table 7 - Clusters' formation, per Type**

Clusters	Traditional competitive cluster with shared value	Hybrid cluster (social economy and SMEs)	Cluster mainly social economy actors	Total
N.º	0	14	16	30

A significant number of clusters (n=14) in the sample is based on forms of cooperation between social economy entities and for-profit small and medium enterprises.

Table 8 intends to highlight the different members' compositions that the group of clusters presented.

**Table 8 - Number of clusters per composition**

No. of sectors	No. of clusters	Traditional enterprises	Social economy enterprises	Other eco-system actors	Research & innovation institutions	Public authorities	Other type
1 sector	7						
2 sectors	5						
	1						
3 sectors	1						
	2						
	2						
	1						
4 sectors	2						
	1						
	2						
	1						
5 sectors	2						
	1						
6 sectors	1						
Total	29	14	30	10	12	12	6

Type of member categorisation revealed not always simple, once different concepts and/or legal nomenclatures are used by the respondents.

The table above demonstrates that clusters' composition is extremely diverse. Clusters that exhibit just one sector in their composition are a minority (n=7). In this minority

subgroup the single sector represented is always "Social economy Enterprises". The majority of the cases result from the congregation of 2 and more sectors. In fact, more than half of the sample (n=16) congregate 3 to 6 sectors, expressing wider and more complex forms of cross-sectoral cooperation.

After "Social economy Enterprises", the most represented type is "Traditional Enterprises" (understood as for profit SME's and Multinationals), followed by "Research and Innovation institutions". Cooperation with the economic "traditional" sector is strongly represented in the analysed group of clusters. The need for innovative strategies, services or products, and the search for evidence-based action may emerge from a strong presence of research and innovation agencies. "Public authorities" and "other eco-system actors" immediately follow. The presence of public authorities is still significant in the group of cases, demonstrating the important role that public organisations play in the social economy domain. "Other type" of actors appears in just 6 of the cases. The identified situations are Unions, company networks, financial institutions and individuals.

Another type of "partner" that was not taken on board in the survey, but along the experience tended to be more present are civil "society organisations". They are to an extent reflected in the 'other type', but in practice, we have noticed that they are omnipresent, however rather in an informal way – or at least not as an active member. This means they are at least an influence partner in a cluster.

This is somehow meeting our expectations that a CSEI mostly incorporates the quadruple-helix model in its constituencies, rather than the triple helix model that is pursued by traditional competitive clusters, however not always in a formalised way.

Lastly, CSEI are usually cross-sectoral in terms of businesses sector (NACE). Only 4 CSEI were organised on the basis of a sector: Grupo Empresarial de Cooperativas de Enseñanza en la Región de Murcia (ES, Education), Berziklatu (ES, Waste), Grappe construction Bruxelles (Construction) and Comptoir des Ressources Créatives (creative industries). Tpfieferwerk has also a main focus on creative industries but has also other sectors involved. This means they have usually other drivers than improving the sectoral competitiveness.

Another niche are the Work Integration Social Enterprises, which are not a sector, but rather a specific form of social economy. They also tend to gather in a cluster on the basis of their very similar business models. Such examples are: Base 202 (IT) and 4-Werk (BE).

The numerical expression of clusters' members is presented in Table 9.

**Table 9 - Cluster classification per number of members**

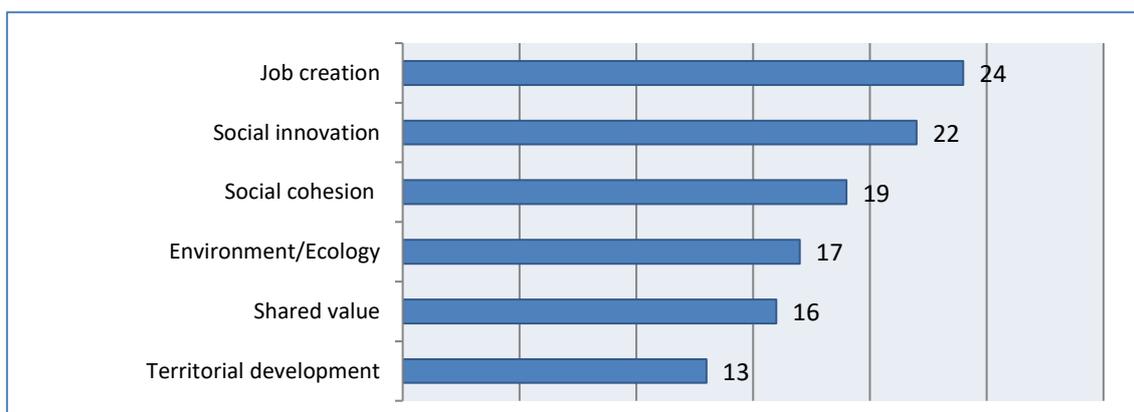
Clusters	Small (Until 20 members)	Medium (21 to 50 members)	Large (51 to 80 members)	Mega (81 and more members)	No answer / Don't know	Total
N.º	10	13	2	3	2	30

Majority of clusters are of *small and medium size*. The two smallest clusters present 2 and 4 members, respectively. "Large" and "mega" clusters represent a minority in the analysed group.

### 4.3. Priorities, services and target groups

The clusters identified the following main 6 priorities for their action (Graphic 1):

Graphic 1 - Clusters priorities ranking<sup>28</sup>



First, almost all CSEI have a multi-purpose reality. Job creation is the most pursued priority, expressing the very high priority that social integration, economic development, the right to work and individual autonomy have in European societies. The need to obtain new solutions and to think aside from conventional frameworks is also a major priority. On a third position appears social cohesion, which highly reinforces the social mission of the analysed clusters.

Something that is not directly indicated by the figures is the purpose to support social enterprises generally as a tool for the listed purposes. This is possible to conclude when linking this to the figures that indicate the 16 cluster where only social enterprises are member. Some clusters have the specific goal in their mission to develop the role of social enterprises in any of the mentioned 'purposes', such as Andalusian Association of Social economy Education Centres (ES), Le Cluster ESS Grande Région (LU), CLADE (ES) and Grupo Empresarial de Cooperativas de Enseñanza en la Región de Murcia (ES).

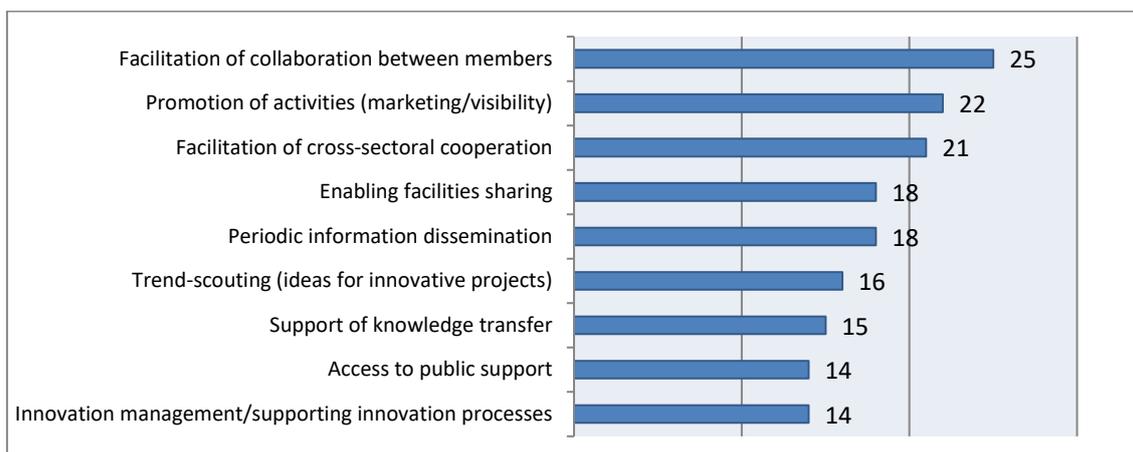
Cluster members exist within a social system, in other words a community of practitioners and institutions that jointly address social issues. In this sense, services provided to the

<sup>28</sup> The graphic just provides the services that gathered 13 or more answers.

members are quite an important indicator of these exchanges and dynamics. Mostly it is the core of cluster and its most important reason of existence, just like for traditional competitive clusters.

Clusters identified the following 9 main services/strategies of cooperation (Graphic 2).

Graphic 2 - Most frequent <sup>(1)</sup> types of services provided to clusters members<sup>29</sup>



This role is an important aspect for a CSEI, as this might bring a lot of confusion with many federations or associations' activities. Here, the role of the cluster organisations (separate legal entity) is important, because they are not only facilitating services towards the members, but are organising inter-member cooperation and networking. Moreover, they are the drivers of the overall cluster strategy and keep focus on the purpose connected to local socioeconomic challenges and priorities. This is somehow different for many sector organisations that mainly have the role of political representation.

Clusters organise their socioeconomic activity towards two main types of target groups: single or multiple (Table 10).

**Table 10 - Type of cluster main target group**

Clusters	Multiple target groups	Single target group	Total
N.º	10	20	30

Diverse target groups happen in consequence of a multiple service offer. The majority of clusters mainly identify one single target group, expressing in this sense, a *certain level of specialisation*. In this type of clusters, the identified groups are as follows:

**Table 11 - Clusters with single Target groups**

<sup>29</sup> The graphic just provides the services that gathered 14 or more answers.

	Social economy organisations	Vulnerable groups regarding their integration in the labour markets	Artists and other cultural creators	Total
N.º of Clusters	10	9	1	30

The above Table essentially reveals two main single target groups: social economy organisations and people that present socioeconomic vulnerabilities regarding their integration in the labour market. In the first case, clusters aim at intervening in a group of social economy organisations, by transversally addressing its socioeconomic and cultural determinants. In this type of clusters, the main target group are the agencies that perform in the social economy field. The goal is, through different strategies, create activities together, independently of the social domain they act upon or the type of intervention they perform. In the second case, clusters aim at creating different types of social opportunities and resources for people that present stronger vulnerabilities regarding their integration in the labour markets. Young people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, long-term unemployed, low-skilled workers are examples of groups that clusters aim to reach through several programmes and initiatives.

#### 4.4. Governance

Regarding their governance, the analysed clusters present three main types of leadership (Table 12). Private leadership, performed by a social economy entity, is the most common form of leadership found among the cases. In comparison, examples of public leadership are not that frequent (n=5) and are normally based on a local or regional public entity (ex. municipality or a public institute). Three cases revealed a combined form of leadership, based on a public-private partnership.

**Table 12 - Type of cluster leadership**

	Public leadership	Private leadership	Public & private leadership	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	5	21	3	1	30

The majority of clusters refers the existence of an autonomous cluster management, whether performed by a collective entity (ex. Board of directors) or by a single individual<sup>30</sup>.

**Table 13 - Existence of a cluster manager**

	Yes	No	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	25	4	1	30

<sup>30</sup> This question was interpreted in two different ways by the respondents: cluster management as a single individual or as a collective entity. Both interpretations were considered valid. In this sense, some of the "NO" answers may become "YES".

As far as the number of employees is concerned, the majority of the clusters are micro size ones<sup>31</sup>, having less than 10 employed individuals (part-time or full-time). An important number of clusters did not provide information on this topic. The presented numbers do not include the employees that work in every individual organisation belonging to each cluster.

**Table 14 - Number of clusters, per number of staff**

	No staff	Micro < 10	Small 10 - 49	Medium 50 - 249	Large > 250	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	1	12	4	2	0	11	30

## 4.5. Financial model

With three single exceptions, all the analysed social economy clusters present a financial model characterized by *multiple sources of income* (Table 15).

**Table 15 - Clusters' sources of income, per type**

	Single source	Multisource	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	3	20	7	30

The multisource trend among the analysed clusters confirms the *financial creativity* that they have to put in place to support their action. In these type of clusters sources of income are quite diverse (Table 16).

**Table 16 - Clusters' type of income, per source of origin**

Source of origin	Type of income
<b>External</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monetary funds provided by the European Union programs</li> <li>Monetary funds provided by the State or a public organisation (structural or occasional basis)</li> <li>Monetary funds provided by a private organisation (structural or occasional basis)</li> <li>Monetary funds obtained through a project application</li> </ul>
<b>Internal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monetary funds provided by the cluster founders</li> <li>Member fees</li> <li>Rental of facilities</li> <li>Occasional rental of facilities and equipments</li> <li>Own business revenues (services and products sale)</li> <li>Voluntary work</li> <li>Fund raising campaigns</li> </ul>

Among the single financial sources clusters, funds are provided by a public agency or a private foundation. The multisource clusters vary in the combination of external and

<sup>31</sup> Using the enterprises economic classification provided by the OECD.  
See: <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3123>

internal sources they present. In these particular cases, available data does not allow assessing the comparative financial weight of the diverse sources.

In the clusters financial relationships and dynamics, public authorities play an important role (Table 17). The vast majority of the clusters refer receiving public support.

**Table 17 - Clusters relation with public support**

	With public support	No public support	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	21	6	3	30

The type of public support received is diverse (Table 18), although grants are the dominant type of support among the group of cases. In this sense, public authorities play an important financial role for the analysed clusters.

**Table 18 - Type of public support that clusters benefit from**

	Grants	Natura (location, etc.)	Financial instruments	Capacity building	Consultancy/ advisory	Other	Total
N.º of clusters	21	6	5	2	1	2	21

Belonging to a cluster may be subject to a fee payment. The group of cases is almost divided in half, regarding this financial option, though the number of cluster that did not provide information is relevant. In the vast majority of the cases, fees are charged proportionately in relation to economic capacity, use of services/facilities or other criteria.

**Table 19 - Fees paid by the clusters' members**

	Yes	No	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	11	12	6	29

The notice of being a 'member' is quite clear for the ones that pay a regular membership fee. For the other group several different forms of membership exist. Some have open membership without any requested regular payment. These are for example pfefferwerk (DE) and The Elephantpath (UK). These clusters are developed around a specific physical space or want to pursue their reallocation into such a joint space. These are often organised as open spaces, creative commons and have a variety of activities and services that go beyond pure businesses activity (culture, leisure, housing, etc.). Other have similar setups such as KaléidosCOOP (FR) and Initiatives et Cités (FR), however with as fixed membership fee for the later or a fixed payment for services for the first one and usually under the form of a cooperative. This brings us to another variant that works on the cooperative traditions where members are also owners via shared (Berziklatu and

Modragon). Teple Misto <sup>32</sup> (UA) is a case that has a unique setup: access to the cluster site is provided by a crowdfunding system. Enterprises funded by the crowdfunding platform have also access to the space, which is a regenerated industrial site just like KaléidosCOOP and pfefferwerk.

A third category recognised is the ones with an informal membership without any recurring payments. The membership is rather decided on the basis of delegation, such as The Partnership for social innovation in Örebro County (SE) and Impact city the Hague (NL) and Grappe construction Bruxelles (BE). These CSEI have the tendency to be strongly connected to the public authorities or a policy strategy.

Majority of clusters did not provide information regarding their annual budget (reference year - 2018). The remaining are divided as follows (Table 20).

**Table 20 - Annual budget values**

	Less than €500.000,00	Between €500.001,00 and €1.000.000,00	€1.000.001,00 and more	N/answer	Total
N.º of Clusters	6	3	4	17	30

Disclosure of other financial data is residual, such as turnovers and annual growth, (approximately 75% of the cases did not answer these questions).

<sup>32</sup> Teple Misto is not included in the case selection. This cluster was presented during the EU cluster conference in 2018, Romania under the workshop 'social economy clusters ad shared value' <https://warm.if.ua/en>

## 5. CSEI perspectives and experiences in fostering innovation

In a time of socio-ecological transition, societies face massive challenges, which press on social actors to look for new ways to solve social problems and needs. The case study tried to identify and analyse the main innovative aspects that social economy clusters bring about to social and ecological transitions, in five main dimensions: economic, social, technological, governance and ecological. It is important to emphasize that this division is merely indicative; innovation is a multidimensional phenomenon that can be understood from different perspectives.

The vast majority of the cases identified innovation aspects (n=25) brought up by their experiences.

**Table 21 - Number of clusters that identified innovation aspects**

	Identified innovation aspects	N/answer	Total
N.º of Clusters	25	5	30

The identified innovation is mainly focused on the social dimension, followed by the economic one (Table 22). This result seems to emphasise the closest relation between the need to attend to people's social needs and problems and the search for an effective economic business model. The dimension of governance also appears as an important area of innovation. The existence of a collective initiative and the need to effectively manage the coexistence of individual and collective interests may explain this particular result. Technological innovation is almost absent even though we have clearly observed several actions or projects in that sense. Most likely it is not taken addressed in the survey as it was still in development phase or not seen as the main innovation priority. The extensive list of potential CSEI identifies several clusters with an outspoken technology focus. Also the heavy financial investments normally needed to promote technological innovation may withdraw social economy entities from this particular area. Ecological innovation appears mentioned in approximately 30% of the cases.

**Table 22 - Number of clusters that identified innovation dimensions (per type)**

N.º of Clusters	Innovation dimension					
	Economic	Social	Technological	Governance	Ecological	Other
Identified innovation	14	20	0	12	9	0
N/answer	16	10	30	18	21	30
Total	30	30	30	30	30	30

The following sections intend to provide a more comprehensive listing of the aspects identified by the CSEI.

## 5.1. Economic innovation

Within the economic dimension, the clusters identified the following main economic innovation aspects, listed in Table 23:

**Table 23 - Economic innovation**

Economic subcategories	Innovation aspect or factor
<b>Cluster economic context</b>	Economic development rooted in local organisations, characteristics, resources and needs of the territory. Possibility of economic scaling (economic growth), in particular to transnational dimensions. Enlargement of business forms of cooperation to include other economic actors (ex. For-profit enterprises).
<b>Cluster economic capacity</b>	Stronger ability to spot opportunities and react quickly (ex. Creation of new economic activities more adapted to the markets). Stronger, more demanding and advantageous presence in the markets (ex. Bigger scale, better economic power to negotiate). Better cooperation and exchange of information among the cluster members to encourage innovation.
<b>Clusters economic impacts</b>	Creation of socioeconomic opportunities for individuals/organisations to create their own employment/business. Creation of new and innovative business models (ex. Fair-share of facilities, 'meta-preneurship', design platform). Stronger complexity, sustainability and competitiveness of the business models.
<b>Cluster economic sustainability</b>	Integration of public and private resources with a common purpose. Stronger financial independency given by the capacity to produce income autonomously. Promotion of each organisation economic responsibility at the same time that forms of financial redistribution are implemented (ex. Capacity to support a member in financial need). Expenses reduction (individually and globally) by an increased negotiation power and different utilisation of pre-existing resources.

Cluster organisation promotes a *proactive attitude* towards economic development and growth. The access to new resources, ideas and knowledge, promotes change and fosters new development strategies. A more isolated agency may be more prone to limit its reactions to day-to-day demands, not being able to find opportunities and resources to foster its own economic growth and/or change. *Economic proactivity* and *flexibility* are seen as fundamental, not only because the social economic sector face increasing and sometimes rather critical demands, but also because the socio-ecological transition brings about new, complex and diverse socioeconomic challenges that need to be expertly addressed.

*Economic sustainability* is also an important innovative trend, potentiated by a cluster formation. Being part of a larger structure adds a new economic value to *pre-existing resources*, once they can be used, transformed or re-created in many different ways. In doing so, each member not only diversifies its economic/financial sources, but also largely diminishes its individual investment plan and its correspondent costs. The ability to diversify the financial sources is also pointed out as a positive strategy to achieve *economic sustainability*.

Social entrepreneurs strive to manage the duality of applying a business approach to bring about a social outcome. Being part of a cluster increases the chances of getting funds from public and private agencies, and as a result, the risk of one-single-source dependency diminishes.

## 5.2. Social innovation

Within the social dimension, the clusters identified the following main economic innovation aspects, listed in Table 24:

**Table 24 - Social innovation**

<b>Social subcategories</b>	<b>Innovation aspect or idea</b>
<b>Social intervention model</b>	A model (cluster) based on mutual cooperation and on the recognition that every player / sector has a valuable and indispensable contribution.
	Development of eco-social intervention models, where ecological concerns (ex. recycling) and social concerns (ex. creating more employment) are combined.
	Development of social models and strategies that are new and innovative, because away from traditional ways of doing things.
	An approach to problems that because it is local can better take in consideration the specific cultural, economic, political and social dimensions of the problems.
<b>Social capacity building</b>	Assuring an equitable access to resources and opportunities to every social economy organisation.
	Inter-organisational flexibility in resources allocation, whether human, material or financial.
	Creation of a bigger scale to problems solving (ex. Professionals mobility) which is more responsive to people's needs (ex. job maintenance).
<b>Social impacts</b>	Empowering communities and building trust among people and actors that did not have previous relationships.
	Stronger and enlarged ability to intervene with people and territories needs and problems, reaching areas that non-profit organisations traditionally were not comfortable to (ex. Urban rehabilitation).
	Producing impacts that are more sustainable and therefore able to benefit territories and people at long-term.
	Providing information and best practices examples (ex. Environmental practices) to visitors and local population.
	Strengthening the socio-political position of social economy actors, whether in the economic markets or as lobbying and advocacy agents.
	Employment rise in general and in particular for the most vulnerable groups in society (ex. long-term unemployed, migrants, people with disabilities).
<b>Social sustainability</b>	Stronger and sustained capacity to maintain the social outcomes of the intervention (ex. Jobs creation), once a more effective economic model is put in place.

Whereas individuals, organisations and communities were working in an isolated manner, which does not promote and sustain positive innovative synergies, clusters facilitate and encourage exchanges (e.g. knowledge, experiences, problems and solutions) among people and institutions. Consequently, these new social dynamics foster change and progress in the cluster social area of intervention.

Being a part of a collective process enlarges the ability to create new social models of intervention. Also, certain social models of intervention may need the involvement of different actors and resources to become a reality.

Organisational development equity is a socio-political concern addressed by clusters, mainly horizontal ones. In this domain, it is assumed that interactions not only promote the generation of new knowledge but also help social enterprises acquire and develop capabilities. With this focus, clusters members' inclusion facilitation becomes a priority.

Clusters highlighted the importance of trust between actors in fostering relationships and promoting the exchange of resources, which are often scarce due to several forms of competition (ex. Funding or volunteers). In addition, the collective movements in each clusters may unlock resources that until then did not integrate social enterprises action.

Vulnerable social groups face a higher risk of social exclusion from different social areas (ex. Education, health care, labour market). In this sense, social innovations have a cultural focus, aspiring to address unmet human and social needs. Assuring the sustainability and the necessary flexibility of the interventions is powered by the cluster dynamics.

Social economy clusters may play a role in lobbying and advocating for better socio-political conditions for their own development. While all clusters can perform this role, it tends to be conducted by horizontal clusters that aim at addressing the broader political determinants of social economy.

### 5.3. Governance innovation

The governance dimension appears as the third most mentioned one for the group of cases. The clusters identified the following innovation aspects (Table 25):

**Table 25 - Governance innovation**

Governance subcategories	Innovation aspect or idea
<b>Inclusive governance</b>	Interventions are managed on a permanent basis by a collective entity which represents different sectors; decisions are faster and more effective. Clusters have to mix missions, values and objectives of different entities which represent a quite demanding, complex and valuable task. Decisions that affect the cluster need to be inclusive, understood, and accepted among its members, which contributes to a more harmonious social environment (sociocracy).
<b>Participation and ownership of the target groups</b>	The participation of the target-group in the governance structure guarantees a more effective respect of their rights and interests. The participation of the target-group in the governance structure also helps to increase/train their performance as more capable professionals/entrepreneurs.
<b>Promotion of ethical values and principles</b>	The collective governance structure of the cluster enhances transparency of decisions among its members.
<b>Leadership</b>	The complex and demanding dynamics of a cluster imply a strong, positive and democratic leadership, accepted by its members.

<b>Quality assurance</b>	As a collective initiative, a cluster may play a fundamental role establishing quality patterns for its members / services / products and supporting its achievement.
<b>Cultural change</b>	Stronger cluster dynamics in the social economy helps to raise people consciences in general about ecological and social problems and needs.
	A cluster dynamic reverses the cultural model from competition to cooperation (for mutual socioeconomic growth and scaling).

Reaching change and consensus on the most important ethical values and principles that should guide a social entrepreneur is seen as an important dimension. Building a communal set of values and principles orients the action, services deliver, facilitates interpersonal and organisational relationships, as well as with the target groups and the community in general. Cluster structure provides an optimal opportunity for this change to happen. Identification of ethical guidelines should be a priority for every single organisation, but the combined result of a group of organisations or projects may have the ability to positively influence the social economy and society at large.

Different forms of governance may be put in practice, according to the cluster objectives and strategies. Clusters identify forms of cooperative governance that imply ownership, members' participation and other forms of representativeness in general.

## 5.4. Ecological innovation

The ecological dimension appears as the fourth most mentioned. The clusters identified the following innovation aspects (Table 26):

**Table 26 - Ecological innovation**

<b>Ecological subcategories</b>	<b>Innovation aspect or idea</b>
<b>Ecology has no borders</b>	The creation of cooperation and links wherever needed, that cross - borders, is a substantial advantage for ecological purposes.
<b>Raising awareness and promoting change</b>	The ecological models implemented by clusters (ex. Eco-buildings; recycling practices; circular economy) raise awareness and constitute examples that other economic agents may follow and learn from.
<b>Building capacity to intervene</b>	Through clusterisation, social economic initiatives may find a more sustainable, solid and coherent structure to affirm and advocate for environmental principles and strategies. Development of business models that are ecological-sensitive.

Ecological innovation may be accelerated through clusterisation, once organisational capacity and a stronger socio-political will appear, given by a collective power. In this sense, ecological strategies may be put in place and constitute important examples for other organisations.

## 6. CSEI perspectives and experiences in innovation transferability

Social experiences that proved to be successful have the potential to inspire other social entrepreneurs to reproduce them, partly or in total, in search for identical or similar results. According with the analysed group of clusters, just a small minority (n=7) was aware that their model had been disseminated and implemented in other settings (Table 27).

**Table 27 - Number of Clusters whose model has been disseminated**

	Yes	No	N/answer	Total
N.º of clusters	7	21	1	30

Despite not having their model being transferred to other settings, some of the remained clusters identified themselves as focus of attention of other social enterprises that are willing to partly or totally implement their models. One cluster affirmed that it is presently working with other social entrepreneur in order to implement its model.

One cluster identified transferability as a goal on its own. In this case, the underlined idea is to create a prototype of the enterprise, evidence-based, and disseminate it so that other social actors may benefit from it.

In actual information societies, internet is essential to divulge organisations and their social initiatives. All the clusters revealed they have websites and indicate their addresses (Appendix I). The websites contents were not subject to any form of evaluation; this objective was not foreseen. Nevertheless, this aspect, from a transferability perspective, may be relevant.

Another pertinent indicator that helps to understand dissemination experiences is the cluster internationalisation. With this purpose, clusters were invited to answer if they took part in any international networks or partnerships (Table 28).

**Table 28 - Cluster internationalisation**

Clusters	Yes	No	N/answer	Total
N.º	17	3	10	30

Seventeen clusters affirmed their participation in international networks or partnerships. The participation in these forums may foster the clusters social visibility and creates moments of exchange and constructive discussion.

The dissemination of a social experience to a new setting is never an objective and straightforward process. As so, clusters were invited to identify facilitating or impeding factors to their model dissemination. Clusters answers can be divided in 3 main

categories: cluster theoretical model, contextual factors and social impacts (Figure 4). Table 29 identifies the main ideas that correspond to each category transmitted by the clusters.

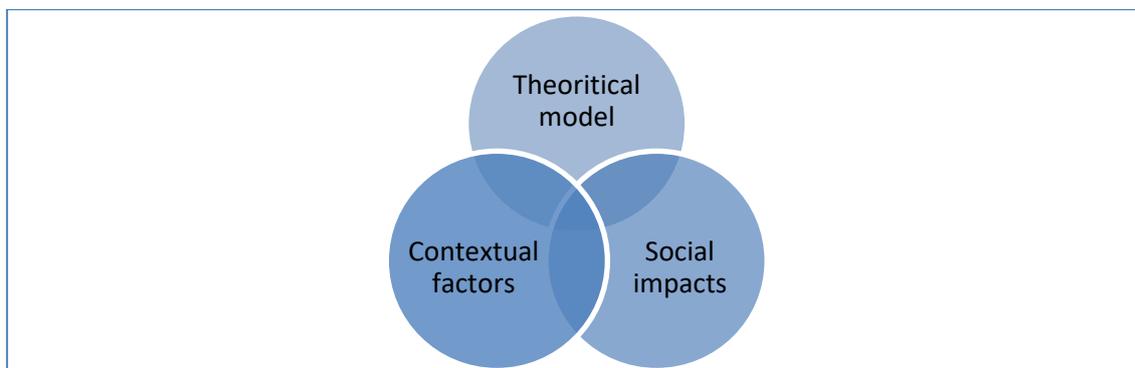


Figure 4: analytical dimensions of transferability, authors, 2021

**Table 29 - Identified facilitating factors for clusters model dissemination**

Subcategories	Facilitating factors
<b>Cluster model</b>	Provide a clear and documented description of the social economy cluster theoretical model, and make it available for other social economy actors (ex. internet, presentations, site visits, workshops).
<b>Contextual factors</b>	Identify the contextual factors (ex. Public support, grants involved, legislation, local culture) that helped or hampered to put the experience in place.
<b>Social impacts</b>	Provide information and insight on the model components/strategies that proved to be more and less successful. Make the impacts known and visible!

The identification of its objectives, assumptions, main inputs and resources, production and delivery outputs and governance strategies, are fundamental to understand *how it does and plans 'social business' activities*. This could be classified as a universal prerequisite, a clear and detailed theoretical description of the model is critical to ascertain for its interest and transferability potential.

Clusters recognise themselves as highly embedded in their local contexts and therefore have access to information on the contextual factors that helped or hampered the experience implementation as an important factor for model dissemination.

Visible social impacts are also mentioned as an important facilitating factor. Social entrepreneurs look for experiences with proven results, whether intermediate or final ones. A clear identification of the cluster impact is therefore essential to demonstrate their socioeconomic utility and to encourage other agencies to reproduce it.

## 7. Thematic focus & Cases

In this chapter, short thematic contributions and 19 inspiring cases are included on how CSEI have specific social or ecological missions, develop services addressing a local social and ecological impact, act as vehicle for regeneration and boost business activity of its social economy members. Some thematic focusses include cases of operating clusters, others might evolve into a cluster. Several policy cases are included showing how public intervention can pave the way CSEI to emerge.

### 7.1 Industrial and urban regeneration

In the exploration phase, we could identify a certain amount of clusters that are setup under a broad(er) economic regeneration project. Usually such project is initiated to replace abandoned industrial complex or brownfield, and the cluster might be used as a project leader or a specific subset of the project. The cluster is mainly seen as a way to make the project led by a multiplayer partnership and boost new economic activity by making a dedicated territory, district or space inclusive and green.

Such clusters might be at the origin initiator of the project, bringing different partners together, for example under a cooperative or public private partnership. Or these might arise when different parties are engaged in a development project leading into a more sustainable and long-term relationship once the project finished.

#### **Main characteristics:**

- A combination with real estate activities, target group or employment related initiatives, social housing and (social/cooperative) entrepreneurship support.
- Capital intensive as a combination of public funding and private investors (individual donators, social economy and mainstream enterprises).
- Advanced green ambitions in terms of energy production and savings, use of materials, circular streams and biodiversity.
- Catalyst for urban development projects engaging broader economic and civil society partners
- In case of urban development, integrated in a wider area development vision aiming at revaluing former industrial sites or neighbourhoods.
- Innovation characteristics: mainly social and ecological innovation

#### **Services operated:**

- Incubation: assuring those spaces are a source of new (social) entrepreneurs
- Co-working spaces and SME sites
- The cluster can act as facilitator for neighbours, citizens, governments and enterprises in the project
- Attract co-investors and promote co-ownership models

- Housing offer
- Arts, sports and cultural spaces
- Creative or technology hubs
- Social and educational service provision (crèches, care, health, education, ...)

### *Cluster Case: Kaleidoscoop – Strasbourg, France*

*“Agir ensemble, autour d’un lieu partagé à Strasbourg, pour contribuer au développement économique, social et solidaire du territoire”*

On the COOP site in Strasbourg (neighbourhood of former cooperative industrial activities), *KaléidosCOOP* is a cross-border third-place cooperation project open to all for working, doing business and consuming differently. An accelerator of social and environmental innovation, it brings together players in employment, economic development and the social and solidarity economy who, together, will develop new services and new activities for the territory and its inhabitants.



Figure 5: © KaleidosCOOP, 2021

*KaléidosCOOP* promotes cooperation between residents, project leaders, associations and companies, who wish to share their skills, move forward together, support each other in the development of their projects and contribute to social innovation. This alternative and innovative place will allow everyone to see the city, the economy and work differently. *KaléidosCOOP* will offer people the opportunity to meet and share a common ambition: to live together in a creative and cooperative dynamic.

<http://www.kaleidos.coop/>

### *Cluster Case: Teple Misto – Ivanska Frisk, Ukraine*

*“A progressive modern warm city with warm people in it”*

*Teple Misto Urban* development program was created to promote the dialogue among the residents of Ivano-Frankivsk during the process of urban spaces renovation and transformation. This is a process of constant intercity communication, accompanied by problem diagnostics and the search or borrowing of profound and effective mechanisms of problem solution in the city.

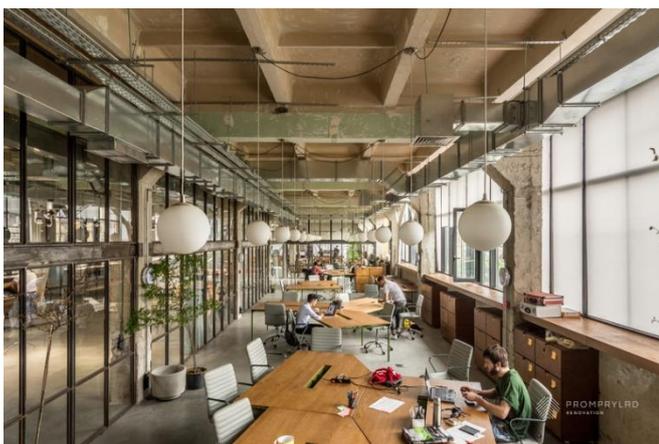


Figure 6: © *Teple Misto and Trans Europe Halles*, 2018

The program is equally aimed at encouraging the dialogue and cooperation of the city administration, businesses and community in the projects concerning the improvement of communication and comfort of Ivano-Frankivsk citizens in the urban environment. Experts (architects, urbanists from Ukraine and abroad), partner public organisations, and volunteers take part in the initiatives and processes. The participation of students studying such disciplines as architecture, IT, journalism, sociology and economics is also important<sup>33</sup>.

<https://warm.if.ua/en>

### *Cluster Case: Coòpolis*

Coòpolis (founded in 2016) is a Civil Society Community that gathers private (mostly but not only cooperatives) and public stakeholders with the aim of fostering the SSE in the city of Barcelona. It is part of the XAC ('Xarxa d'Ateneus Cooperatius' – Cooperative Centres Network), which gathers 14 branches covering the whole of Catalan territory, and in practice Coòpolis leads the Network. Coòpolis gives training sessions and technical support. Its goal is to develop the establishment of new cooperatives and the creation of jobs among the various initiatives already implemented.

Coòpolis coordinates the implementation of an extremely ambitious real estate and social project on the brownfield site of Can Batlló, on the outskirts of the city. For a budget of €7 million financed by the City of Barcelona, a block of 4,000 m<sup>2</sup> will be entirely dedicated to cooperativism and ecological and solidarity transition, making this project the largest CSEI in southern Europe. The work, delayed by the pandemic, begins at the time of publishing the report.

<https://www.bcn.coop/>

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<sup>33</sup> <https://creativelenses.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Creative-Lenses-Teple-Mesto.pdf>

## Cluster Case: Circularium, Brussels, Belgium

*“Circularium, c’est la transformation de plus de 20.000m2 de surface industrielle en grand centre d’innovations locales et de production circulaire dédié à la ville”*

Circulariums started in 2020 and is a very new site regeneration project with much potential to become a cluster case. The project was initiated by a mainstream company that wanted to use its non-used former automobile complex for innovation and circular production dedicated to an urban context. Circularium is not a specific social economy initiative but brings together a combination of social and for profit start-ups and enterprises as well as civil society and cultural organisations. Circularium is organised locally for and intents for productive activities with short supply chains. Circularium has now 25 members, mainly start-ups and NGO's.

Circularium wanted to realise a “reconfiguration into an innovative, attractive and sustainable place for a new type of entrepreneurship and urban economy”. During the 5-year transition phase, the site will host various projects, preferably an interesting mix of long-term projects, start-up projects, pop-up projects and event projects. This period of 5 years makes it possible to test these new activities and possibly settle permanently as a cluster.

Circularium has four focus areas:

- reinstalling production and manufacturing activity addressing urban needs;
- a hub for companies, start-ups and other project that subscribe to the circular economy logic and foster collaboration for circular design and development amongst them;
- a flexible start-up environment with several support and facility offers;
- connection with the neighbourhood by hosting NGO's with a strong neighbourhood anchoring.

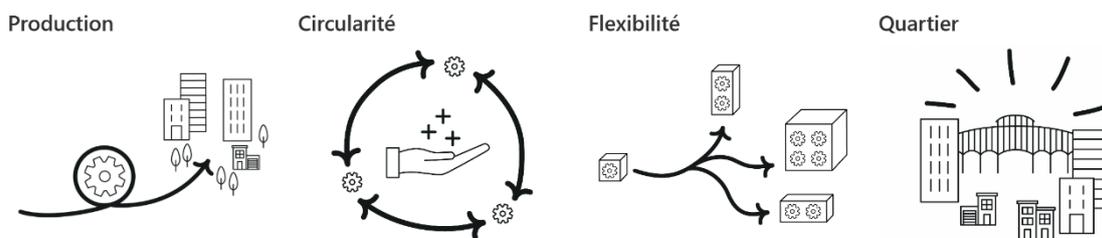


Figure 7: © Circularium, 2021

<https://www.circularium.be/>

## 7.2 Rural regeneration

According to the EU Science Hub, 91 % of the territory, and 56 % of the population represent rural areas in the EU. Many of these rural areas face significant environmental and socio-economic challenges. In order to handle these challenges in the most creative

way, it is often essential to develop special clusters focusing on rural regeneration, cooperation and pooling of scarce resources and knowledge.

Unlike many sectoral clusters, these rural regeneration clusters often need to adopt a more comprehensive approach to addressing local development needs and to face different types of challenges. Shared interests and a strong social capital often build up the rural regeneration clusters. They are multi- or cross-sectoral with a strong agriculture and craftsmanship backbone and rest on the need for large-scale changes, often depending on the local demographic situation. Over time, the concrete development needs can change, but it is often about basic living conditions such as job opportunities, inclusion and social cohesion, cultural aspects, ecological considerations and a desire to build on the pride and heritage of a place.

Building a 'brand' to give identity to specifics of geographic areas and an interest in developing the attractiveness of areas are vital components. This might picture for example new sectors such as tourism and operational niches such as organic, bio and similar sustainable forms of production.

Developing, leading and coordinating a rural regeneration cluster requires both determination, persistence and humility. On the one hand, the clusters must deal with basic societal challenges, which often takes a long time to tackle. While, simultaneously, be inclusive and create conditions for groups lacking resources and involve those who are not normally active in innovation support systems. Dealing with multi-sectoral and local development, the rural regeneration cluster needs to listen to all ideas in the community, not just the "big ones".

The cluster management requires access to, and trust from the political level, and at the same time have a broad acceptance among citizen groups, the social economy, the local business community, etc. They often take advantage of the multitude of funding opportunities, combining an infrastructural approach with digitalisation. "Clusterisation" in such areas might be an interesting opportunity to pool the resources that are still present amongst local business, social economy, local governments and civil society and streamline those in a 'cluster project' based on cooperation, solidarity and community initiative.

### *Cluster Case: Dunhill Community Enterprises, Waterford, Ireland*

Dunhill Community Enterprises is part of the National Association of Community Enterprise Centres (NACEC). Enterprise centres and hubs are much more than physical locations accommodating remote workers. They are conduits for entrepreneurship, enterprise creation and innovation across communities; playing an integral role in developing and sustaining the start-up / scale-up pipeline. Dunhill Community Enterprises has a mission to develop the community economically, culturally, and socially by harnessing the talents of people and all the resources available.

- Create sustainable enterprises and jobs
- Provide new educational opportunities
- Protect and enhance biodiversity of the area
- Add value, avoid duplication, displacement and waste
- Empower people- Let 1.000 flowers bloom
- Leverage dormant resources in community/ state/ private sector
- Champion an integrated approach to rural development
- Adhere to good governance practices

#### Achievements:

- Created 250 jobs-2000-2021
- Currently 31 businesses and 70 jobs in the EcoPark
- Graduated 3000 accredited students from the education centre
- Increase in staff in 2 schools from 3 to 9 & from 2 to 23
- Developed 26 Integrated Constructed Wetlands
- Built 40 affordable houses
- Increase in population, 1.500 to 2.500 (1994-2021)
- 25 viable social enterprises in Copper Coast Geopark
- Mix of 20 developments/ a huge platform for growth

[www.dunhillecopark.com](http://www.dunhillecopark.com)

#### *Cluster Case: GOEL GROUP, Calabria, Italy*

Cluster Case: GOEL – Cooperative Group, Calabria, Italy

*“Through effective ethics and social enterprise, we aim to show the people of Calabria that it is possible to build a successful, legal and democratic economy free from mafia influence and control with an impact that could extend far beyond Calabria”*

GOEL was set up in 2003 as a community movement determined to challenge the mafia by creating a flourishing economy based on sustainable and ethical social enterprise. GOEL is



Figure 8: © GOEL Group, 2021

a network of co-operatives that work across a wide range of economic sectors – including organic agriculture, health services, food distribution, hospitality, responsible tourism, eco-fashion, textiles and organic cosmetics.

GOEL was founded to delegitimise the Calabrian mafia “*ndrangheta*” by creating a grass-roots ethical and sustainable economy. GOEL social enterprises and cooperatives show citizens that it is possible to find decent jobs or setup a business free from mafia influence or control. Cooperatives within the GOEL network offer guaranteed wages and conditions for workers and fair market prices for producers and suppliers. GOEL has also created a defence network to protect members against violent attack by the mafia.

GOEL works especially with entrepreneurs developing new avenues of a future ethical and environmentally sustainable economy, with a particular characterization about innovation. GOEL also offers ideas and support to companies on developing ethical products using our experience across the value chain.

GOEL offers innovation and business support to specific sectors:

- GOEL Bio includes organic farming and food production, processing and distribution as well as bio-cosmetics, restaurants and catering.
- The GOEL label CANGIARI is a leader in ethical fashion, in organic textile manufacturing, hand woven fabrics and handicrafts.
- GOEL Travel is developing new standards for responsible tourism in Calabria, a sector influenced by the mafia until now.
- “Campus GOEL” is an incubator for Calabrian start-ups, focussing especially on entrepreneurs developing new avenues of a future ethical economy.
- GOEL Welfare runs a shelter and skills workshop for new migrants arriving in Calabria and prevents them falling into the hands of the mafia. GOEL also works with socially disadvantaged children and offers health services to psychiatric ill people.

GOEL has setup several support services to create new economic activity and support social inclusion, research and start up. All the Group’s activities will be hosted in Villaggio GOEL: the project of future “Headquarter” will include social workshops, ethical shops and organic restaurants and is designed to strengthen the public perception of GOEL as an everyday working alternative to the mafia-dominated economy. The group supports its members by developing joint research activities focussing on the main sectors represented (tourism, agri-food and textiles).

<https://en.goel.coop/>

*Cluster Case: Silicon Vilstal, Vilstal, Germany*

*“Home for new ideas”*

Silicon Vilstal is committed to promoting social innovation in rural areas, networking people and identifying digital opportunities. Silicon Vilstal applies the approach of open social innovation to tackle rural and entrepreneurial challenges more effectively. The activities are driven by a broad regional and social network of institutions, municipalities, companies and individuals. The cluster wants to build bridges between tradition and modernity and between town and country as well as connecting the rural community of Vilstal with relevant social economy initiatives from all over Germany.

Silicon Vilstal offers a wide set of support activities and events for its members in the fields of STEM education, entrepreneurship and culture & creativity. They use a digital platform called “Virtual Makerspace” that connects education formats with the production resources of their members. Silicon Vilstal’s cross-sectoral start-up program “Farmer seeks Startup” is the core of the entrepreneurship promotion, including pilot projects for start-ups in all industries present in the cluster. The ambition of the program is to leverage the region as a living lab, attracting start-up sponsors and promoting digital opportunities.

The cluster has a yearly flagship event, called the “Silicon Vilstal Experience Festival”, one of Germany's major rural innovation events and also an “European Social Economy Regions” (ESER) event. The experience festival offers a testbed for developed prototypes or new ideas. Startups supported by the cluster have expanded their reach, won industry awards or got access to considerable growth capital.



Figure 9: © Silicon Vilstal, Liane Hoder, 2019

<https://siliconvilstal.de/>

### *Cluster Case: Ceinture alimentaire Charleroi, Belgium*

The Charleroi Métropole food belt (CACM) is a large network of actors (de facto association) of the food sector on the territory of Charleroi Métropole. Producers and processors of local and organic food, distributors, retailers, associations, etc. share the same values and cooperate to offer organic, local and seasonal food to all inhabitants of the territory of Charleroi Metropole. More than a simple supply chain in short circuit, SAW-B (regional social economy platform), coordinator of the CACM, brings together the actors to develop a global vision of the issues related to food on the territory and find

an economic and human balance for each. The territory is composed of 29 municipalities located in a life basin around the city of Charleroi, including the south of the Hainaut region, and several municipalities located in the Namur province.

The actors around the Food Belt Charleroi have the objective to build a solidary sector that takes into account the existing actors and that allows others to integrate the approach or to settle down, without endangering the first ones. Co-construction and cooperation are basic principles. The Food Belt would like to contribute to strengthening the current players while developing the missing links in the chain, based on the needs of the players in the field. The economic, cultural and associative partnerships created within the framework of the Food Belt imply long-term commitments. Based on the knowledge of the realities of the territory, the actors decide to implement practical solutions adapted to the needs and realities of the field:

- production planning,
- organisation of goods transport and logistics,
- communication actions,
- according to the needs: exchange of know-how, actions of sensitisation and citizen mobilisation, discussions on prices, ...

A logistical platform managed by the cooperative Circulacoop has been created to facilitate and ensure distribution. The initiative is supported by the Region of Wallonia and SOWALFIN group (a regional investment company targeting specifically SMEs). Several other “Ceinture alimentaire” exist in Belgium, however not all of those tend to converge towards a CSEI. The *clusterisation* trend of long existing local food chains can be observed as well in other Members States, for example in Germany with the *Regionalwert* or Italian *Social Economy Districts* (SED).

<https://www.ceinturealimentaire.be/>

### *Policy Case: Cultural Planning, Laxå, Sweden*

The work on cultural planning in Laxå represents an emerging cluster with the main purpose to improve the living conditions of citizens and to ensure a long-term sustainable development. The common approach and working method in the cluster is about integrating culture in physical planning, to promote cultural entrepreneurship and participation in cultural life among the citizens.

Laxå is a small municipality with smaller villages and large rural areas. The cluster consists of representatives from various policy areas in the public sector at both municipal, regional and state level in Sweden, social economy entities and citizen groups. The cluster is experiencing increasing international interest. So far, the cluster has contributed to the development of local development plans, where local residents themselves have identified development needs.

Local funds (public funding) have been set aside where development groups themselves largely control how the funds are to be used. A training program on cultural entrepreneurship is being developed, and “micro-stories” on culture and identity are being formulated. A culturally site-specific artistic design programme with roots in the community, reflecting both traditions and a future-oriented view, is being developed. In this way the cluster is becoming a “role model” for Swedish communities/municipalities on how to increase participation and strengthen social cohesion in rural areas based on cultural planning.

<https://www.laxa.se/>

### 7.3 labour market Inclusion

Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs) might cluster to share joint interest in terms of job inclusion and work integration, as well as dedicated services towards the target group they employ and support. Such clusters are, as most CSEI, likely to be cross-sectoral, as WISEs themselves are active in a very broad area of sectoral activities. Drivers for *clusterisation* of WISEs might be of economic as well as of social nature and are usually driven by their common mission to offer employment and support opportunities for target groups with a distance to the labour market.

A WISE cluster might for example support the joint positioning of their services in the market (e.g. labels, branding, promotion and PR), exploration of new market opportunities and business cooperation with mainstream companies (networking, strategic partnerships), trajectories of professionalisation and joint investments such as development of specific technologies and skills to support their employees.

Several EU regions and member states have specific legislation under which WISEs operate or support the target groups employed (e.g. wage support schemes, supported employment schemes). This creates a natural relationship with public authorities (e.g. Public Employment Service) and other affiliated social economy activities (e.g. social services and social work) as well as civil society. Such legal frameworks might bring a specific incentive for cooperation within a cluster to streamline the different and complex roles and relationships at regional and local level.

Clusters can also emerge from the government's initiative to address unemployment through the creation of local public-private partnerships. These are usually government-led project initiatives, but can also lead to the creation of a private cluster through long-term and intensive cooperation between companies and service providers.

*Cluster Case: 4Werk, West-Flanders, Belgium*

4Werk is a cluster of 24 WISEs in the Belgian province of West Flanders. They are a structured non-profit organisation with paying members, an external chairman, a governing body, meetings of its directors and a coordinator. They represent the WISE's ("maatwerkbedrijven"- customized work companies) that employ approximately 6.000 employees, of which more than 80% are people who, for various reasons, cannot, not yet or may never be able to work in mainstream companies. 4Werk operates on the basis of the common interest of their members and has close cooperation with several public authorities (local, provincial and regional level). Currently, the cluster is delivering on 3 support actions for their members:

#### *COVATTI (ERDF project)*

4-Werk works on technological innovation with various testing grounds. The WISE's position themselves as true pioneers in technological innovation and human-centred production (technologies developed are for example camera recognition, collaborative robotics, cognitive support tools and rapid prototyping). Such technologies provide opportunities to make difficult tasks easy and thereby empower employees with a physical or cognitive disability.

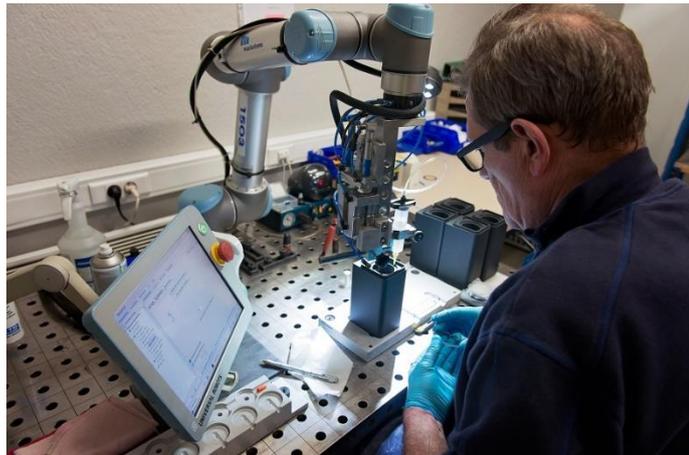


Figure 10: © 4-Werk, 2020

Technology also helps to become a professional and reliable supplier. The developed technologies are not only applied in the social enterprises, but have also proven their usefulness in mainstream companies, for example through supported employment programs.<sup>34</sup>

#### *SEB (Shared Engineering Bureau)*

4Werk created a Shared Engineering Bureau that ensures knowledge sharing and collaboration among the members and strengthens the innovation culture. A shared engineer (recruited by the cluster) puts open innovation into practice and is at the service of all WISE's, with following services:

- to support the living labs in experimental development and co-creation;
- to help translate and rescale technological solutions to the specific context of (often smaller) WISE's;
- to strengthen the flow & transfer of technological knowledge to other WISE's and the wider business community.

#### *E-learning*

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<sup>34</sup> [www.technologiehelpteenhandje.be](http://www.technologiehelpteenhandje.be)

The partnership applies the principles of a “learning network”. Various WISE’s want to use a better and more efficient way to train target group employees and to professionalize their competency management by:

- familiarize new target group employees with the organisation;
- detecting the competences and areas of interest (during intake) and monitoring the evolution in terms of competences and employability;
- learning and practicing the tasks to be performed;
- evaluating and formalizing results (eg in safety training)

This trajectory is focused on developing tangible teaching packages at all participating companies and applying them in practice. Through cooperation and exchange of experiences (and teaching packages), 4Werk systematically responds to the most pressing questions and current needs of their members. The use of tools that promote autonomous practice offers the target group employee the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills necessary to work at their own pace.

<https://4werk.be/>

### *Cluster Case: Cooperative cluster, Bulgaria*

The cluster was created 2016 with the mission to support its members’ business development, believing in an ethical economy development, based on cooperative principles and values and moved by innovation leading to a better global social and ecological environment. The priorities of the cluster are related to new markets and scaling, job creation and urban development. The cooperative cluster fosters deeper their co-operation, creating new business opportunities (including consulting), attracting new members, following cooperative principles and values.

The Cooperative cluster was found to support the specialised worker-producers’ cooperatives for persons with disabilities (more than 30% of the staff are persons with disabilities) in terms of product development and exploring new markets. The model of the cooperative cluster collects the needs and possibilities of the members, together with the production power of not specialised cooperatives and links it with the support of science and innovation programs provided by universities.

The clusters has a diverse membership with 17 social economy entities, including specialised cooperatives for people with disabilities; 2 universities with technology & innovation centres and 1 association of social economy – the National Union of Worker Producers ‘Cooperatives. Also the creative lab is as an essential part of the cluster work. The members represent more than 1.000 employees.

Services offered by the cluster to its members are:

- networking activities between its members, relevant to innovation, development of new products, marketing, production and technologies (through access to technology services and direct advisory services, as well support of technology transfer);

- support cluster's members in the field of education (including trough support of knowledge transfer), information services, advertising and other activities of common interest;
- support the implementation of initiatives in the field of social economy and social activity of its members;
- support the international cooperation with similar entities.

This successful story - the first Cooperative Cluster – was in Spring 2019 awarded during the Eight European Forum on Social Entrepreneurship, Plovdiv, Bulgaria.



Figure 11: © Cooperative Cluster, 2021

<https://cluster.coop>

*Cluster Case: Métropole Européen de Lille (MEL), Territoire zéro chômeur de longue durée, InitiativesETcité cluster and PTCE Lille Métropole Solidaire, Lille, France*

A regional partnership in the cities of Loos and Tourcoing engaging local employment and economic partners with a focus on employment experiment in two districts. The objective is to offer a solution to exit from unemployment to any long-term unemployed person who volunteers and lives in one of the two districts. To achieve this, the MEL relies on "employment companies" (WISEs) from the field of the social and solidarity economy. These companies position their commercial activities in non-competitive fields, hiring people who have been unemployed for more than a year on permanent contracts, on missions that correspond to the needs of each territory.

The MEL is piloting two-district approach project in connection with two local dynamics involving the municipalities and local business actors. The activities developed are focusing on wood, metal and textile recycling centres, solidarity grocery stores, urban agriculture, and services to residents.

*InitiativesETcité and the PTCE Lille Métropole Solidaire*

The MEL cooperates strongly with the "first social & solidarity economy cluster" in France, called InitiativesETCité. InitiativesETCité started by bringing together around twenty companies in 2010 with the objective to contribute to sustainable local development, by building on the values of Social & Solidarity Economie in the region Nord-Pas-de-Calais, today called région Hauts-de-France. The interest of the cluster is to formalise relationships between member companies, to ultimately pool resources, and offer a common range of services to local players (associations, communities, elected officials, residents, business leaders) in terms of legal, financial, events, communication and training advice. There is a public relations consulting agency, a sponsorship consulting firm, an accountancy firm, etc. One way of using inter-company cooperation as a lever

for the development of an economic sector and the creation of new social economy start-ups by a yearly incubation program.<sup>35</sup>

In 2014 InitiativesETcité engaged with the MEL to pilot the region's first Pole Territorial de coopération économique (see also literature review on PTCE), which will be *called* Lille Métropole Solidaire with the objective to bring together SSE stakeholders - private, public, associations, research centres, unions, etc. - to carry out a local development strategy. The Cluster also includes two cooperatives focussing on activation and employment (Coopératives d'Activité et d'Emploi - CAE): "Smart" and "Grands Ensemble" which make it possible to offer a salaried alternative to project leaders and to allow them to benefit from an offer of shared services.

The cluster's economic model is supported by public subsidies schemes (provided by the MEL and support grants for French TCE), but also private subsidies provided by foundations and member contributions.<sup>36</sup>

<https://initiativesetcite.com/>

### *Policy Case: Recruitment from the edge of Lolland-Falster*

In south-eastern Denmark, for a number of years, jobs have disappeared from the area, resulting in high unemployment. The population has relatively short educations and there is a need for support of people with other challenges of a physical and mental nature. Authorities have planned in 2022 the establishment of the Fehmarnbelt connection (which is a fixed link between Denmark and Germany) which will provide new opportunities for this area. This connection is expected to attract many jobs to the area, especially in construction, as well as secondary created jobs in for example, in the hotel and restaurant, cleaning and service industries.

From 2017-2021, a partnership has been established to get vulnerable unemployed people into jobs in one of Denmark's most outlying area. In order to support vulnerable people for the new labour opportunities, a company-oriented effort and integrated approach was established. It requires close cooperation between companies and the two municipalities' job centres as well as well as the supportive efforts from the municipalities' health and social departments. In that effort, contact was established with more than 400 companies, which commit to engage in the employment of vulnerable people. The project has organised specific training sessions targeting business, employment services and target groups.

Social enterprise Cabi (non-profit and independent organisation) is in the lead of the project. They receive public and private funding. They brought other partners on board such as private consultancy, the two municipalities, 3F Lolland (Local workers trade Union), Erhvervspark-Lolland (Business Park Lolland) for local enterprises and Business Lolland-Falster (private fund/business association financed by membership from enterprises and the two municipalities).

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.cerdd.org/Parcours-thematiques/Transitions-economiques/Initiatives-sur-les-transitions-economiques/InitiativesETcite-retenu-pour-piloter-le-premier-Pole-Territorial-de-Cooperation-Economique-de-la-region>

<sup>36</sup> [https://www.adu-lille-metropole.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Dev-eco-dossier2\\_web.pdf](https://www.adu-lille-metropole.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Dev-eco-dossier2_web.pdf)

During the project period, 1,300 citizens have so far been part of the effort. Out of these, 170 have made such great progress that they have become self-sufficient, 122 have found employment, where there is still a need for public support in the form of, for example, cash benefits, and 76 have found flexible jobs. These are good results when you consider that these are people with severe physical, mental or social challenges:



Figure 12: © Cabi, 2020, Employer and new employee, thanks to the Lolland-Falster recruitment project.

- New collaboration across two municipalities, where companies, business organisations and the trade union movement are part of the effort from the beginning.
- Companies are an active part of the employment effort at an earlier time than usual.
- Cooperation across, for example, employment, social and health administrations.
- Companies that part of the effort act as ambassadors who involve new companies in the collaboration.
- Use of a large infrastructure project as a starting point for creating derivative jobs for vulnerable unemployed.

Besides the direct benefits of the project in terms of employment, social progress and inclusion the economic cooperation amongst different actors might bring even greater opportunities in future, for example driven by clusters gathering different types of business, social and civil society organisation in the aim of regenerating local economy. The two municipalities have a direct interest in maintaining this momentum and boosting such forms of cooperation to strive for a sustainable economic model potentially carried by a cluster-type of cooperation.

## 7.4 Social economy business and incubation clusters

### *Cluster Case: Impact Noord, Northern Holland, The Netherlands*

Impact Noord is the Northern Netherlands' network for social entrepreneurs (locally called 'Impact entrepreneurs') and companies engaged in mission-driven innovation. The cluster is growing rapidly and has more than 70 members, from start-ups, civil society, public-private bodies, education, to established SMEs.

The association strengthens the ecosystem for local social entrepreneurs by engaging with the broader business community, educational institutions and government. The cluster focusses beyond networking and capacity building on specific interests of the members by acting as a knowledge hub to share experience on access to funding, public procurement, impact measurement and business modelling. They want to act as a bridge between the entrepreneur members and get them in touch with other social entrepreneurs in the Northern Netherlands and beyond.

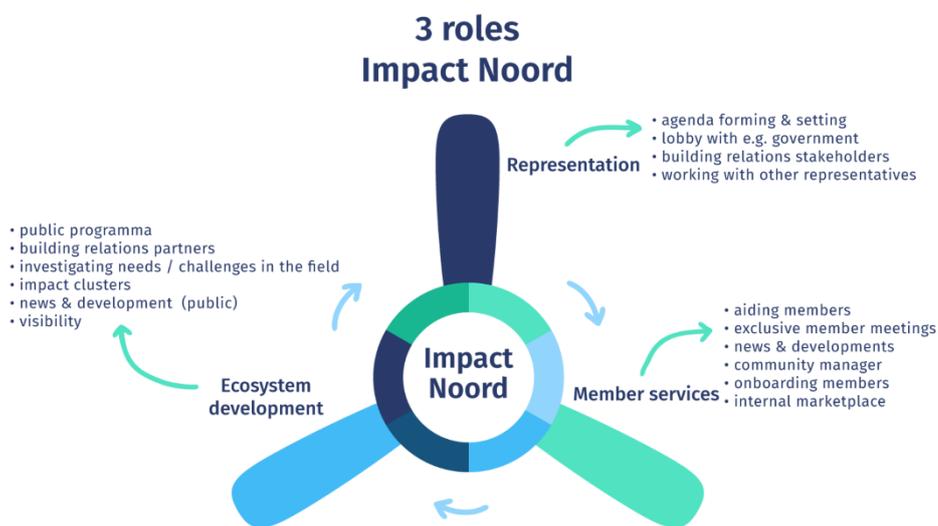


Figure 13: © Presentation ECA, Jan Willem Wennekes, 2020

Impact Noord wants to create especially strong partnerships at local level to tackle societal problems. Therefore, the cluster stimulates and supports municipalities and provinces in thinking about how they can stimulate entrepreneurship with impact, e.g. by conducting research, organising events and holding discussions with key figures.

<https://impactnoord.nl/>

*Cluster case: Torino Social Impact, Torino, Italy*

*“The fast-growing ecosystem for social entrepreneurship and impact investors”*

Torino Social Impact is an alliance between social enterprises, mainstream companies, public and private institutions to test a strategy for the development of entrepreneurship and impact investments in the Turin metropolitan area. Torino Social Impact aims to build an ecosystem in which companies can find the best conditions for experimenting with business models and sustainable innovation solutions. Exploring new forms of competitiveness, attracting social impact investments and experimenting new forms of transformative local welfare.

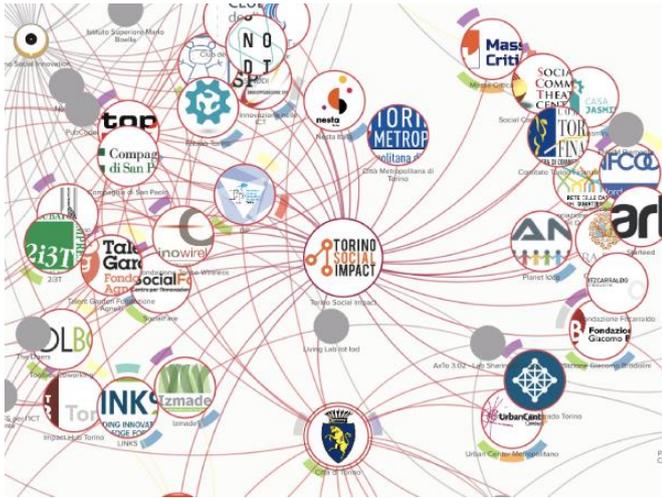


Figure 14: © Torino Social Impact, 2019

The cluster was founded in 2017 but finds its roots already in 2012 when The City of Torino launched Torino Social Innovation Platform. Multiple stakeholders have tried since then to understand the social innovation scenario, the urban needs and the potential solutions to develop both in terms of experimentation and as commercial offer. The result was the creation of Torino Social Impact<sup>37</sup>.

Torino Social Impact has anno 2021 over 160 members (companies, institutions, financial operators, charities, foundation and third sector enterprises). They joined the project by subscribing a Memory of Understanding aimed at sharing ideas, experiences, projects and resources in order to catalyse and attract investments and activities which aspire to solve emerging social problems through economically sustainable business models.

The cluster has 4 main activities:

- Services: Training, mentoring, co-working spaces, networks of competence, support and guidance
- Projects: Common infrastructures, impact finance pilots, collaborative projects, partner's initiatives
- Opportunities and financing: Calls and expressions of interest for acceleration programs, idea (social innovation) competitions, co-planning activities, projects, contributions and funding.
- Events: Seminars, workshops, presentations, meetings

Beyond the services, the cluster wants to foster collaboration in a horizontal strategic planning aimed at: building common infrastructures and pilot projects to strengthen the

<sup>37</sup> [https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/iap\\_torino\\_-\\_25\\_maggio\\_2018\\_-\\_en.pdf](https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/iap_torino_-_25_maggio_2018_-_en.pdf)

ecosystem; creating a collective brand to promote the ecosystem and position it on the global map of social impact investments.

<https://www.torinosocialimpact.it/en/>

### *Policy Case: InnoBA, Barcelona, Spain*

Innoba (2018) is the municipal Reference Centre for Socio-economic Innovation based in Barcelona. It is supported within the public structure of Barcelona Activa, the Economic Development Agency of Barcelona City Council. The aim of this facility is to offer activities, specialised services, research and training, as well as experimentation and incubation spaces for SSE and socio-economic innovation. This benchmark centre is addressed to people and organisations who wish to have a first contact with the SSE, as well as those who already have projects in progress.

InnoBA has played a particularly active role over the past 3 years in the Municipal horizon 2030 strategy formulation.

[https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/tema/city-council/innoba-the-new-centre-for-the-social-economy\\_742213.html](https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/tema/city-council/innoba-the-new-centre-for-the-social-economy_742213.html)

## 7.5 Ecologic clusters & public procurement

CSEI can be catalyst for sustainable public procurement as they can support members in procurement applications and create partnerships for procurement. In some cases, a CSEI even finds its roots in a consortia that was formed in a public procurement process.

Such collaborations and consortium organisations has largely been driven by an opportunity to bid in for a contract, (mostly public sector contracts). Consortia established have formed in direct response to an opportunity to tender, the membership has been shaped around the tender requirements to ensure the bidding consortia has the best chance of competing and winning the tender<sup>38</sup>.

### *Cluster Case: ECOBI, Italy, Ferrara, Bologna and Modena*

Consorzio Ecobi is a social-economy cluster of 28 individual social enterprises (type-B cooperatives) situated in the northern part of Italy covering the three provinces Ferrara, Bologna and Modena. In 2018, the cluster became a social enterprise (Societa consortile ARL) with headquarters in Modena, with one coordinator working closely with three area managers. In 2020, Consorzio Ecobi had a turnover of 28 million EUR, employing around 1,000 individuals of which 40% are disadvantaged.

The cluster came about as a result of public municipal and regional procurement opportunities related to waste management and the management of green spaces. In order to be able to bid for large multi-annual contracts across the region of Emilia

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<sup>38</sup> <https://p4p.org.uk/>

Romagna, either as a subcontractor of public companies or direct contractor, social cooperatives in the region decided to join forces and provide a professional, green and inclusive offer to regional authorities.

By mutualising each other's strengths in terms of infrastructure, know-how, quality standards and processes, Ecobi has seen major success in winning contract for waste management and green space management in the Emilia Romagna region. Alongside its professional approach, Ecobi's focus on employing disadvantaged individuals through consortium members is supported by local and regional authorities through social clauses in tendering procedures.

Recent successes for Ecobi include winning a joint tender for 15 years serving 1,100,000 inhabitants across the provinces of Ferrara, Modena and Bologna. As the actual ground-work is carried out by consortium members, once Ecobi is awarded a contract, internal processes dictate how the money will support consortium members in a particular activity and in a specified region.

Over time, given the diverse interests of consortium members, Ecobi has the possibility to diversify its offering to public authorities beyond traditional waste management activities, including management of used textiles or even professional cleaning and sanitation services for public buildings. The strength in such a cluster opens up new opportunities for cluster members not only in their current activities but also in new ones for the future.

<http://www.consorzioecobi.eu/>

### *Cluster Case: Fe2i - PTCE, Val de Fensch, France*

*"Ensure the waste of some becomes the raw materials of others in a territory"*

The Fe2i is a French cluster promoting territorial economic and ecological development by offering assessments and monitoring programs, as well as labour market inclusion. The information collected (types of waste, the cost of treatments and purchases, energy consumed, services used, etc.) makes it possible to map the different value chains and their economic and ecologic performance (energy, materials, services).

The PTCE initiative, aims to limit the impact of the industry on the environment. They approach the territory as an industrial ecosystem connecting a set of actors and resources that interact with each other and generate flows of energy, materials and information. "Industrial ecology" approaches allows the members to understand how these flows circulate.



Figure 15: © Fe2i, 2018

As part of this approach, Fe2i carries out an inventory of the needs of the territory thanks to an industrial ecology diagnosis carried out by a support cooperative ECOTA in volunteering companies. The information collected (types of waste, the cost of processing and purchases, energy consumed, services used, etc.) makes it possible to map the various flows (energy, materials, services). On the basis of this information, Fe2i organises thematic workshops called “Inter-company Synergy Detection Workshops” aimed at shared solutions, such as pooling of purchases or intelligent waste management, with a view to circular economy.

The core of the cluster is made up of five structures:

- A social integration company (Valo ') specializing in the provision of industrial cleaning, collection and sorting of waste
- A cooperative of sustainable development consultants (ECOTA Conseil)
- A biolubricants company (BIOLUB Scop)
- A temporary work integration agency (Valo 'TTI)
- An association responsible for regional coordination and animation (Florange e2i)

Through the cluster they establish structuring partnerships with local authorities, such as the Val de Fensch Agglomeration Community in 2014, or the former Lorraine Region, but also R&D-oriented cooperation with university centres such as the university's ENSAIA of Lorraine. Fe2i was one of the grant winners of the 2014 PTCE call for projects (see box 3), the Fe2i project aims to create a network amongst the various social economy players in the Val de Fensch territory, around an ambitious industrial ecology approach<sup>39</sup>.

[Flux Economiques Inter-entreprises \(fe2i.fr\)](http://fe2i.fr)

### *Cluster Case: Circular Communities Scotland Re-Use consortium, Scotland, UK*

*“Cooperation among social enterprises in the field of procurement and the green transition”*

Created in 2017, the award-winning Circular Communities Scotland Re-Use consortium (formerly CRNS<sup>40</sup>) brings together social enterprises providing high quality, pre-owned furniture and goods to local authorities at affordable prices. In turn, low income households and people in need are supported through access to essential household items, reducing waste and benefitting communities. To date, 17,780 essential goods have provided to local authorities helping nearly 7,800 households in need, saving 2090

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<sup>39</sup> [Florange Ecologie industrielle et Insertion \(Fe2i\) développe l'écologie industrielle sur son territoire | Le Mag' | Le Labo de l'ESS \(lelabo-ess.org\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> Research into Cluster Models and Opportunities for Social Enterprise in Scotland, Partnership for Procurement and Co-operative Development Scotland (2019)

tons of CO2e and resulting in over 1.63 million pounds GBP of public spending with social enterprises.

The consortium, currently consisting of 12 social enterprises, came about following the recognition of a market gap for high-quality used furniture to be made available to local authorities supporting low-income households in accessing essential goods. Prior to the Reuse Consortium existing, public authorities could only purchase new essential goods exclusively using the Scottish welfare fund<sup>41</sup>.

CCSRC, Scotland's national network for the community re-use and recycling sector, encouraged network members to come together as a consortium to win a framework agreement with Scotland Excel, Scotland's main body for national public spending, that would allow local authorities to purchase quality used goods from them as an alternative to buying new. Without the creation of an official consortium (or quasi-cluster) of social enterprises, all working to a professional standard, winning such a contract would have been impossible for any social enterprise alone.

The consortium is managed within CCSRC by one dedicated staff member. The partnership between the Reuse Consortium, local authorities and Scotland Excel is resulting in a win-win for the environment, economy and local communities. For example, in 2019, Fife Council allocated 8% of their Scottish Welfare Fund budget to purchasing reuse furniture through the Consortium – around £186,000. This saved them a massive £104,000 over purchasing new items, enabling them to support around 200 more households in need.

<https://www.crns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Consortium-Impact-report-October-2019.pdf>

<https://www.crns.org.uk/councils-spend-over-a-million-pounds-on-reuse-furniture/>



Figure 16: © Circular Communities Scotland, 2021

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<sup>41</sup> Scottish welfare fund: A national level fund helping families and people in Scotland who are on low incomes

## 8. Conclusions

### *Clusters socioeconomic characterisation and trends*

**Social economy "clusterisation" in the EU presents a high variety of experiences.**

The collection and analysis of the 30 cases revealed an important variety of social economy "clusterisation" experiences in the European Union. This is a valuable asset once different experiences may provide different inspirations and solutions to different needs and problems. The case study cannot be considered representative and therefore further knowledge of other experiences may enrich the state-of-the-art.

**Although it is possible to identify common socioeconomic characteristics and trends of the clusters, each cluster is a highly contextualized social body.** The knowledge of the communalities should not erase the fact that each cluster is highly embedded in its social and cultural context. The experiences' context should be taken in consideration when analysing the cluster way of doing innovation and its transferability potential.

**The financial area is an almost absent dimension of the analysis.** The study faced some difficulties in collecting clusters financial data. Social entrepreneurs aim at performing not only socially but also financially, and thus further efforts needs to be done in order to overcome this knowledge gap.

As a result of the research and exploration in this report several CSEI characteristics are identified: most known economic activities of CSEI focus on **employment and job inclusion, local food and sustainable agriculture, incubation and social entrepreneurial and social economy support<sup>42</sup>, ecology, circularity, education activities, etc.**

The role of **social economy entities** is key in such clusters as they are usually initiators and wish to complement their individual economic activities with joint projects: **mainly setting up joint services, pooling of resources and building a joint innovation capacity.** The latter is driven by social innovation, potentially resulting in digital, technological, process, product and service innovations. Some cluster experiment specifically on more environmental or green innovations, mostly targeting circularity, biodiversity and clean energy provision and are therefore cradles for ecological innovation.

Often, CSEI grow out of **grass-rooted experimental projects** and become instrumental to regenerate economic activity, create new enterprises and jobs and revitalise socially and economically stricken areas. Other CSEI are initiated by local authorities, have similar objectives and are supposed to be driven by a strong public-private partnership. For both, many CSEI should not be strictly seen as social economy

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<sup>42</sup> A specific subject might be for example cluster support for worker owned cooperatives.

populated structures, as they might include mainstream enterprises that subscribe themselves into the cluster's ambition, mission and goals.

### *CSEI perspectives and experiences in fostering innovation*

**CSEI play an important role in fostering innovation.** "Clusterisation" dynamic plays a strategic role in creating and promoting different types of innovation. Clusters represent themselves as creators of innovative trends and models, as well as beneficiaries of other social innovations.

**The majority of innovations created by clusters are of economic and social nature.** The intervention in the socioeconomic structures is the main goal of the analysed clusters. Governance and ecological innovation also present relevant examples, though in a smaller number.

**The analysed group of clusters is more focused on economic and societal challenges, rather than ecological ones.** The majority of the established priorities and interventions intend to address social structures, such as the labour markets. Though some clusters may have significant and relevant ecological concerns, they are not the majority.

### *Clusters perspectives and experiences in innovation transferability*

**In general, the CSEI are aware of the importance of innovation dissemination.** As far as innovation dissemination is concerned, social economy actors play a double role, both as beneficiaries and disseminators.

**The acceleration of innovation transferability may be potentiated through a stronger investment.** The acceleration of clusters' innovation dissemination may be reinforced with a specific investment on the area (ex. research on the topic, experiences dissemination). The cluster structure and characteristics need to be well known and documented, as well as its social impact and results. It is also important to have a comprehensive insight on the cultural, social and economic factors that helped to put the experience in place, so that other actors could properly evaluate their transferability to their own contexts. Most transfers are considered at Member State level as support structures and practices are equal. However, thanks to several stakeholders actions and the actions of this working group, increased awareness at European level of CSEI can be observed, for example when considering the registrations in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP).

## 9. Working group achievements & recommendations

### 9.1 Achievements

At the start of the working group a set of ambitions were expressed. The working group acted jointly with European Commission services between 2019 and 2021 on the following ambitions. In 2021 most of them were achieved:

- Publication of a GECES sub-working group report that develops the concept - and explores current practices of “social economy clusters”.
- Recognising the potential of CSEI for social economy in the EU by the EU communication ‘An Action Plan for the Social Economy’<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, in the Staff Working Document “*Transition pathway for a more resilient, sustainable and digital Proximity and Social Economy industrial ecosystem*” the potential of CSEI is highlighted several times.<sup>44</sup>
- Presenting the work of the GECES on CSEI at the European Summit in Mannheim (EUSES)<sup>45</sup>.
- Awareness raising for the work carried out by this group in EU level cluster conferences in order to facilitate more visibility for CSEI amongst traditional competitive clusters.
  - Presentations and contributions about the CSEI model in several EU level cluster events such as the EU cluster conferences, European Cluster Alliance against COVID-19<sup>46</sup>, EU cluster GECES sub-group, EU cluster capacity building webinars as well as social economy events organised on the cluster topics, for example by the ESER<sup>47</sup> members where CSEI was identified as a thematic focus in several ESER calls.
- Establishment of an online “resource centre” on clusters of social and ecologic innovation to access case studies, contacts, examples of national or local policies for clusters of social and ecologic innovation, preferable as a part of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)<sup>48</sup>.
  - The ECCP has established a thematic focus on Social Economy clusters<sup>49</sup> and a dedicated European Commission wiki-page was setup<sup>50</sup>.
- Include within the ECCP mapping tool social economy relevant dimensions (for example governance models, public and private procurement tools, social impact ambition, SDG focus, social innovation) that will allow an easier access and identification for clusters of social and ecologic innovation within this platform.

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<sup>43</sup> COM (2021) 778

<sup>44</sup> SWD (2021) 982

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.euses2020.eu/programme/?lang=fr> and appendix V.

<sup>46</sup> <https://clustercollaboration.eu/tags/european-alliance-against-coronavirus>

<sup>47</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/SEC/ESER++European+Social+Economy+Regions>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://clustercollaboration.eu/social-economy>

<sup>50</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/SEC/Clusters+of+Social+and+Ecological+Innovation>

- Several characteristics allow mapping CSEI in the ECCP platform by including the “*proximity and social economy ecosystem*” under industrial ecosystems, “*Supporting social innovation or engaged in social economy development*” component and Work in “*social economy sectors and/or technologies*” component. The registration form also recognises most used legal forms by social economy enterprises such as associations, cooperatives and foundations.
- Adapt European cluster policy, tools, actions and priorities so that clusters of social and ecologic innovation can benefit from it.
  - Partly achieved:
    - social economy is added as a thematic focus in the ECCP mapping tool.
    - in 2020 a series of capacity building webinars were organised targeting industrial clusters on several topics, including “Clusters addressing societal challenges” picturing CSEI and several cases.
    - ‘proximity & social economy’ is one of the 15 strands in the latest cluster collaboration call.
    - the Cluster GECES sub-group Report, published in December 2020, makes explicit reference to CSEI<sup>51</sup> and includes a CSEI example as best practice.
- Continuation of CSEI mapping beyond the initial cases analysed in the report, which will allow to develop a more conclusive stratification and specific target measures to support different types of clusters.
  - See Annex IV: extensive list potential CSEI: 70 cases.
- Trigger academic interest in the concept of Social economy clusters / CSEI.
  - Several academics contributed to the working groups activities.
  - In November 2021 an article was published by Gerli, Chiodo & Calderini: “An ecosystemic model for the technological development of social entrepreneurship: exploring clusters of social innovation” focussing on technology development within CSEI.<sup>52</sup>

## 9.2 Recommendations

### *Recommendations to the European Commission*

This report is first of all an invitation to the Commission to (1) continue research and conceptualisation about CSEI and (2) mainstream CSEI model in the broader cluster policy. Following recommendations invite the Commission to:

<sup>51</sup> [https://clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/news\\_attachment/European%20Expert%20Group%20on%20Clusters%20-%20Recommendation%20Report.pdf](https://clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/news_attachment/European%20Expert%20Group%20on%20Clusters%20-%20Recommendation%20Report.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09654313.2021.1999396>

- **Continue research on the concept** of CSEI by fine-tuning the conceptual model and its characteristics. Given the diversity of CSEI it is recommended to setup a more conclusive stratification of different CSEI types allowing potential measures to support different types of clusters. This report gives clear option for deeper analysis.
- Continue the **mapping and identification of potential CSEI**, with a specific focus on Central and Eastern EU member states as well as NEAR countries, as those are least present in this report given the language barrier, limited network reach-out and different concepts and articulation of the “social economy”.
- Organise and facilitate EU level exchanges and transfers of know-how between **‘traditional industrial’ clusters and CSEI**, include them in the best practices used by policy makers and highlight/ foster their presence in the “Cluster Manager of the Year award”.
- Ensure that access to **European support instruments targeting “traditional industrial” clusters** include CSEI and adapt eligibility rules where appropriate to the specific characteristics of CSEI (e.g. non-profit characteristic, recognising legal forms, valorising community and civil society engagement in the cluster).
- Promote the role of CSEI to boost sales (*private procurement strategy*) and **business cooperation** of its members with mainstream enterprises (e.g. joint communication, services offers, strategic cooperation, etc.).
- Promote the potential of cluster for **socially responsible public procurement (SRPP)** and especially social clauses developed by clusters and traditional enterprises. Promote matchmakers who take an active role to shape these partnerships (for example *extrapreneurs*).
- Consider and endorse the specific contributions CSEI have to **urban and rural development/regeneration, community resilience and a just transition**. Consequently, CSEI can be seen as a powerful tool in those policy areas and interventions.
- Make use of **interregional and transnational exchanges** to facilitate cooperation and joint project development amongst CSEI across the EU. E.g. Interreg programme (ERDF), European Social Economy Regions & Missions (SMP), *transnationality* and the network of national Competence Centres for Social Innovation under ESF+, the Horizon Europe program, Cluster Collaboration calls (SMP) and the European Agriculture Fund (EAGF).
- Actively promote the model of CSEI in the **European Neighbourhood Policy (NEAR)** as a tool for local socioeconomic development and community engagement (interregional and across borders) from a bottom up perspective.<sup>53</sup>
- Promote tools for **measuring the impact** of CSEI starting from a triple bottom line perspective to encourage better accounting of their ecological, social and economic impacts, including the contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>53</sup> Some potential initiatives that could be turned into a cluster were mentioned during the WG: *The CitESS, Tunisia, la Maison de l'ESS, Tangiers, the Cap Jeunesse Poles, progRESS (National Center of resources SSE), Tunisia.*

- Setup **capacity building** schemes to support the development of CSEI. For example specific guidance instruments (roadmaps, blueprints) organisational support (training of cluster managers,

### *Recommendations to Member States*

Generally the working group invites member states to support the role of clusters of social and ecologic innovation in relevant policy areas such as social economy, employment, social inclusion, rural or urban development, circular economy, empowerment of citizens and communities, digital (social) innovation, public procurement, business development as well as traditional industrial cluster policies.

More specifically, Member States are invited to

- Ensure that the **legal frameworks** allow CSEI to operate under sufficient conditions of legal certainty and where appropriate draw inspiration from legislation of other Member States (e.g. PTCE legal framework in France)
- Facilitate the access of CSEI to **seed funding**, including by facilitating access to the European Structural Funds as well as public private investment funds.
- Include a specific reference to CSEI in the operational programs of **structural funds** and consider their role as an intermediate body.
- Recognise CSEI not only as subject of economic or social policy, but equally recognise it as a partner for:
  - Sectoral / generic training schemes
  - Social innovation projects and programs and as a matchmaker for partnerships in innovation
  - Digital and technology investments such as local (social) service platforms, assistive technology development,
  - Joint investment schemes in infrastructure, ecologic optimisations and utilities
  - Promotion, incubation, and capacity building of social entrepreneurships and alternative governance models such as the cooperative and mutual model.
  - All types of innovation finance and community finance.
  - To attract new investors in clusters of social and ecologic innovation, such as impact investors, local/ citizens investors and philanthropic investors.
- Promote the **cross-border clusters** to provide common answers to social and ecologic needs or challenges (long-term unemployment, ecologic challenges, product recycling, sustainable tourism, waste management...). Such cross-border cooperation might evolve into a 'cluster of cluster' linking several clusters (across regions or countries).

### *Recommendations to regional and local authorities*

- Develop a proper cluster policy promoting CSEI and cluster in general as **cradle for local (social) innovation** and attracting renewed **economic activity and jobs**.
- Promote the CSEI concept to embed social and ecological ambitions in the local or regional **business environment**.
- Participate where appropriate in cluster, for example by integrating **public private partnership** for social inclusion, labour market inclusion, green and energy transition, rural and urban development, local and proximity economy support, etc. Take part in the governance in a spirit of stakeholder and not in a spirit of public control mechanism.
- Promote actively the use of CSEI to support service, products and projects of **general economic interest**, while safeguarding the social and ecological focus.
- Target cooperation for delivering on **public procurement**, for example through CSEI engaging:
  - businesses, social economy and mainstream enterprises
  - universities, training centres and employment services
  - civil society organisations
  - public authorities and bodies
- Make available, where possible and necessary, a **property portfolio** owned or managed by the local authority, which is open for usage, leasing or donation towards the CSEI under conditions that balance the business model of the cluster with the societal ambition. See for example the CSEI regenerating industrial sites.
- Define with companies and organisations indicators of "**territorial corporate responsibility**" that concretise the notion of triple bottom line in the territory.

### *Recommendations to social economy stakeholders*

This report shows the grass-root models of CSEI and its empowering characteristics towards its social economy members. This working group invites social economy stakeholders to engage in CSEI and to

- Ensure the creation of a separate cluster organisations (CO) with a **formalised membership structure**, a separate **legal entity** and own resources.
- Use the **legal tools of the social economy**, such as the cooperative or the social enterprise statutes, to structure cluster project and the governance model applied.
- Ensure that **governance models** applied by CSEI are democratic or participatory as well as open for citizens and communities' needs.
- Develop CSEI as bottom up initiatives (e.g. involvement of the wider civil society and communities in proximity) – to contribute to the **core values of social economy** in terms of governance, impact, independency, profit distribution and reinvestment, stakeholder management and general interest.

- Strengthen the **ecological dimension** (e.g. focusing on circular, climate, environmental, or biodiversity) within CSEI so that the positive social impact is not at the expense of a negative ecological impact (balancing the triple bottom line).
- Investing in **social development research** (R&D) and **social innovation** by engaging universities, communities and civil society actors in the working methods of the cluster.
- Setup clusters to improve **labour market participation of disadvantaged groups**, by establishing or promoting long-term partnerships between mainstream enterprises, public employment services (PES), training centres and work integration social enterprises. As demonstrated by several examples in this report.
- Setup CSEI as vehicles for **joint technology development and experimentation** (e.g. Techforgood) by engaging R&D institutions and mainstream enterprises, leading into new forms of social entrepreneurship as well as **technology transfer** amongst those entrepreneurial members. As demonstrated by several examples in this report.
- Setup CSEI to **pool financial resources and joint investment** in technology, innovation capacity, training and skills, community building, utility provision (waste management, water, electricity,...).
- Deploy joint **support structures and capacity building** tools to support organisations interested in CSEI concept and help them to develop these locally. Promote them as a real asset for their joint impact, access to markets, finance partnerships and innovation.
- Actively promote the concept of clusters and more precisely CSEI **in less developed EU regions** as a source for economic regeneration and regional development, for example by pooling of (scarce) local economic assets through CSEI.
- Participate in **EU level cluster support policies** and exchange programs.

## 10. CSEI to join the EU Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)

This report has besides the identification and conceptualisation of CSEI, the ambition to mainstream social economy clusters in the EU cluster support policies. This will open up new opportunities for CSEI in terms of networking, innovation support, capacity building, access to new markets and economic cooperation from the EU to local levels.

An important aspect to join the EU cluster community is the registration in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP). This is the European online hub for industrial clusters. It wants to strengthen the European clusters through fostering collaboration, networking and capacity building.



The ECCP has a thematic focus on social economy clusters and a specific identification of clusters performing on social innovation. Those clusters are equally visible as such in the mapping tool of the ECCP under the labels “*Supporting social innovation or engaged in social economy development*” and industrial ecosystem “*proximity & social economy*”.

In September 2021, the first “Joint Cluster Initiatives (EUROCLUSTERS) for Europe’s recovery” call<sup>54</sup> was launched targeting cluster organisations and cluster networks. This call has 15 strands, of which one is dedicated to clusters in the “Proximity & Social economy” industrial ecosystem.

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<sup>54</sup>[https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/joint-cluster-initiatives-euroclusters-europes-recovery\\_en](https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/joint-cluster-initiatives-euroclusters-europes-recovery_en)

## Our services

The services of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform to support your work



### ClusterXchange

ECCP supports short term exchanges to better connect Europe's industrial clusters and their ecosystems.

[Explore](#)



### COVID19 Response Portal

ECCP's industry response portal to fight COVID-19 enabling organisations to find each other and share knowledge.

[Explore](#)



### Funding and tenders

ECCP provides an overview of relevant funding and tenders for your work.

[Explore](#)



### Events

ECCP organises and shares events organised by either ECCP or others related to cluster development.

[Explore](#)



### Knowledge sharing forum

ECCP has for its registered members a knowledge sharing forum where you can exchange with others.

[Explore](#)

Figure 17: © European Union, Services of the ECCP (screenshot), ECCP, 2021

## Appendices

### Appendix I: GECES sub-group members and other participants

- Rapporteur to GECES: **Ana Umbelino, Hugues Sibille, Denis Stokkink**
- European Commission Chair: **Karel Vanderpoorten**
- European Commission Secretariat: **Ines Rodado Perez**

#### *Sub group Members (GECES members):*

Organisation	Member	
BE - Département du travail et de l'économie sociale	VAN MELKEBEKE	Taube
BG- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	TODOROVA	Teodora
DK - Danish Business Authority	KUSIER	René
LU - Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Économie sociale et solidaire	SCHUMMER	Vanessa
Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege (BAGFW)	LIEWALD	Tilo
Cooperatives Europe	MATHIS	Agnès
Credit Cooperatif (rapporteur)	SIBILLE	Hugues
ENSIE	BUSSI	Patrizia
EUCLID Network	WISSE-HUISKES	Suzanne
European Confederation of Industrial and Service Cooperative (CECOP)	DOVGAN	Diana
Ashoka	VAN CUTSEM	Loïc
ISMED	EGAL	Roderick
Partas	KEARNS	John
Pour la Solidarité (rapporteur)	STOKKINK	Denis
Region Örebro län	BRO	Anders
REVES Network (rapporteur)	UMBELINO	Ana
RREUSE	LEN	Michal
Social Economy Europe	MESEGUER	Victor
Social Impact gGmbH	KUNZ	Norbert

***The following people, selected by the Secretariat and based on recommendations from the members of the sub-group acted as ‘invited experts’ and contributed to the activities, case presentations and research of the working group and its report from 2019-2021:***

Organisation	Name & funtion	Working Group (WG)
KaléidosCOOP, Strasbourg, FR	Manon Marquis & Stéphane Bossuet	WG site visit
Municipalité Strasbourg, FR	Sandra Guilmin, Chargée de mission Economie Sociale et Solidaire	WG site visit
Strasbourg éco 2030, TIGA & Biovalley, Strasbourg, FR	Julien Mourey & Fanny Loux	WG site visit
Régie des écrivains, Strasbourg, FR	Mikael Reichert & Stève Duchene	WG site visit
La Locomotive, Strasbourg, FR	Guillaume Kieffer & Michèle Frey	WG site visit
Point COOP, Strasbourg, FR	Alice Frémaux & Corinna Ewald	WG site visit
Circularium - Brussels, BE	Gerd De Wilde, CEO Makett	EUSES <sup>55</sup> - WG
Fondazione Innovazione Urbana Bologna, IT	Giovanni Ginocchini, President	EUSES - WG
Klaster sociálních inovací a podniků (Social Innovation and Enterprise Cluster: SINEC), CZ	Vojtěch Camřla, President	EUSES - WG
UNIMOS Foundation, AgroBioCluster, Warsaw School of Economics, PL	Dr. Katarzyna Rull Quesada	EUSES - WG
European Clusters Alliance, ES	Antonio Novo Guerrero, President	EUSES - WG
Torino Social Impact, IT	Raffaella Scalisi, Senior Expert	WG & ECA <sup>56</sup>
Coopolis Barcelona and La Ciutat Invisible, ES	Ivan Miro, President	WG
City of Bologna, IT	Matteo Lepore, Deputy Mayor & Francesca Martinese, Policy officer	WG
Politecnico Milano and co-founder Torino Social Impact, IT	Prof. Mario Calderini	WG
Cluster Économie sociale et solidaire Grande Région, LU	Bernard Lahure, President	WG
Initiatives et cite, Lille, FR	Kenneth Quiguer, program manager	WG
Teple Misto Platform and Promprylad, Ivano-Frankivsk, UA	Marta Hladka, network manager	European Cluster Collaboration Conference <sup>57</sup> & WG
Arctic Smartness Cluster & Regional Council of Lapland, FI	Mervi Nikander, Programme Director	European Cluster Collaboration Conference & WG
Region of Navarra, Consejero de Desarrollo Económico y Empresarial, ES	Minister Irujo Amezaga, Mikel	European Cluster Collaboration Conference & WG

<sup>55</sup> European Social Economy Summit 2021, <https://www.euses2020.eu/?lang=fr>

<sup>56</sup> European Cluster Alliance against Covid-19, 2020 <https://www.ess-europe.eu/fr/news/la-commission-europeenne-met-en-lumiere-la-proliferation-des-clusters-dinnovation-sociale-en>

<sup>57</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/events/registration-open-european-cluster-conference-2019\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/events/registration-open-european-cluster-conference-2019_fr)

CEDRA cluster, HR	Ranko Milic, President	European Cluster Collaboration event & WG
ICAMCyL Foundation, International Center for Advanced Materials and Raw Materials of Castilla y Leon, ES	Dr. Santiago Cuesta-López, President	WG
P4P Scotland, UK	Yvonne McBride, researcher	WG
Labo de L'ESS, FR	Nikola Jirglova, researcher	WG
Impact Noord	Jan Willem Wennekes, director	ECA
Social Entrepreneurship Cluster in Vojvodina (CASPEV)	Sinisa Tesic, cluster manager	ECA
Cluster ESS Grande-Région du Luxembourg	Bernard Lahure, Director	ECA + WG

### ***European Commission experts:***

European Commission, cluster expert	Oceane Peiffer-Smadja
European Commission, cluster expert	Anna Sobczak
European Commission, cluster expert	Peter Czaga
European Commission, neighbouring countries policy expert	Virginie Cossoul

## Appendix II: Cluster Definitions

*What is a cluster?*

***Clusters should be considered as regional ecosystems of related industries and competences featuring a broad array of inter-industry interdependencies.***<sup>58</sup>

They are defined as groups of firms, related economic actors, and institutions that are located near each other and have reached a sufficient scale to develop specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills. Clusters are referred to both as a concept and a real economic phenomenon, such as the Silicon Valley, the effects of which, such as employment concentration, can be measured.

The European Commission definition of a cluster

***Clusters are defined as groups of firms, related economic actors, and institutions that are located near each other and***

<sup>58</sup> 1 Delgado, Mercedes/Porter, Michael E./Stern, Scott, 2013: Defining Clusters of Related Industries, Working Paper 20375 of the National Bureau of Economic Research. Available at: [www.nber.org/papers/w20375](http://www.nber.org/papers/w20375).

**have reached a sufficient scale to develop specialised expertise, services, resources, suppliers and skills.**

#### *Cluster of social and ecologic innovation*

**Clusters of Social and Ecological Innovation (CSEI) group mainly social economy entities with mainstream enterprises, civil society organisations, public authorities, education and research institutions that cooperate in a particular location to improve local economic, ecological and societal prosperity and regeneration by facilitating cooperation, pooling of resources and enhancing innovation capacity**

#### *Cluster organisations*

Cluster organisations are the legal entities that support the strengthening of collaboration, networking and learning in innovation clusters and act as innovation support providers by providing or channelling specialised and customised business support services to stimulate innovation activities, especially in SMEs<sup>59</sup>. They are usually the actors that facilitate strategic partnering across clusters.

#### *Cluster policies*

Cluster policies are an expression of political commitment, composed of a set of specific government policy interventions that aim to strengthen existing clusters and/or facilitate the emergence of new ones. They are to be seen as a framework policy that opens the way for the bottom-up dynamics seen in clusters and cluster initiatives. This is different from the approach taken by traditional industrial policies, which try (and most often fail) to create or back winners. Instead, modern cluster policies aim to put in place a favourable business ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship in which new winners can emerge and thus support the development of new industrial value chains and 'emerging industries'. This thus implies more than merely supporting networking activities and setting up cluster organisations that manage networking and provide support services to SMEs. It means that specialisation strategies need to be placed in a broader context and anchored in a policy framework that goes beyond a sectoral, geographical and departmental 'policy-silo pattern'. Modern cluster policies thus follow a systemic approach that combines different policies, programmes and instruments.

#### *Shared Value*

Shared value is a concept described by Professor Michael E. Porter and a known principle amongst industrial clusters. It is defined as "*policies and operating practices*

---

<sup>59</sup> Annex 1 to the EU 'Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation' (Commission Communication 2014/C 198/01) lists eligible costs for aid for the operation of innovation clusters. This gives a more detailed picture of the typical related activities that a cluster organisation may undertake. These include '(a) animation of the cluster to facilitate collaboration, information sharing and the provision or channelling of specialised and customised business support services; (b) marketing of the cluster to increase participation of new undertakings or organisations and to increase visibility; (c) management of the cluster's facilities; and (d) organisation of training programmes, workshop and conferences to support knowledge sharing and networking and transnational cooperation.' The full reference text can be found at [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014XC0627(01)&from=EN).

*that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates. Shared value creation focuses on identifying and expanding the connections between societal and economic progress.*<sup>60</sup>

More definitions, explanations and examples can be found in the Smart Guide to Cluster Policy and the ECCP portal (such as national cluster association, EU cluster partnerships, etc.).

## Appendix III: List of identified clusters and other forms of cooperation

Remark: all listed clusters were subject of assessment in this report. Still, being listed here, is not an automatic recognition by the Commission as cluster or a labelling as CSEI. Therefore an application should be done in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

### *List of clusters subject to analytical analysis*

No.	Name of the cluster	Country	Cluster website
1	Base 202	Italy	<a href="http://www.base202.it/(1)">http://www.base202.it/(1)</a>
2	DFBA Community Enterprises CLG	Ireland	<a href="http://www.dunhillecopark.com">www.dunhillecopark.com</a>
3	Impact City / The Hague	The Netherlands	<a href="https://impactcity.nl">https://impactcity.nl</a>
4	Grennessminde	Denmark	<a href="http://www.gminde.dk">www.gminde.dk</a> / <a href="http://www.coenhagendome.dk">www.coenhagendome.dk</a>
5	Vierwerk / 4Werk	Belgium	<a href="https://4werk.be/">https://4werk.be/</a>
6	The Partnership for social innovation in Örebro County	Sweden	<a href="https://utveckling.regionorebrolan.se/PartnershipSI">https://utveckling.regionorebrolan.se/PartnershipSI</a>
7	Le Cluster ESS Grande Région	Luxembourg	<a href="http://www.clusteress-gr.eu/">http://www.clusteress-gr.eu/</a>
8	Elephant path	United Kingdom	<a href="http://elephantpath.citymined.org">http://elephantpath.citymined.org</a>
9	Pfefferwerk Foundation & Pfefferberg	Germany	<a href="http://www.stpw.org">www.stpw.org</a>
10	Grupo Empresarial de Cooperativas de Enseñanza en la Región de Murcia	Spain	<a href="http://Ucoerm.es">Ucoerm.es</a>
11	The Rediscovery Centre - The Irish National Centre for the Circular Economy	Ireland	<a href="http://www.rediscoverycentre.ie">www.rediscoverycentre.ie</a>
12	Lapland - Artic Social economy Cluster	Finland	<a href="https://articsmartness.eu/publications/">https://articsmartness.eu/publications/</a>
13	Atelier El Costurerico (Proyecto Abraham IKEAMurcia)	Spain	<a href="http://www.proyectoabraham.org">www.proyectoabraham.org</a>
14	Rummelig imidt / Labour inclusion in the Region	Denmark	<a href="https://www.rummeligimidt.dk/">https://www.rummeligimidt.dk/</a>
15	Figeacteurs - PTCE	France	<a href="http://www.figeacteurs.fr/">http://www.figeacteurs.fr/</a>
16	KaléidosCOOP	France	<a href="http://www.kaleidos.coop">http://www.kaleidos.coop</a>
17	Comptoir des ressources creatives	Belgium	<a href="https://www.comptoirdesressourcescreatives.be/">https://www.comptoirdesressourcescreatives.be/</a>

<sup>60</sup> Harvard Business Review, 2011

18	Grappes d'entreprises Wallonie	Belgium	<a href="https://clusters.wallonie.be/ecoconstruction-fr/grappes-d-entreprises.html?IDC=6466">https://clusters.wallonie.be/ecoconstruction-fr/grappes-d-entreprises.html?IDC=6466</a>
19	Coopolis, Ateneu (athenaeum) Cooperatiu de Barcelona	Spain	<a href="http://www.bcn.coop">www.bcn.coop</a>
20	Asociacion proyecto Lazaro	Spain	<a href="http://www.proyectolazaro.org">www.proyectolazaro.org</a>
21	ANE (Navarra Social economy Cluster)	Spain	<a href="http://www.anel.es">www.anel.es</a> <sup>(2)</sup>
22	Cluster for Eco-Social Innovation and Development CEDRA Split & CEDRA HR	Croatia	<a href="http://www.cedra.hr">www.cedra.hr</a>
23	GOEL - Cooperative Group	Italy	<a href="https://en.goel.coop/">https://en.goel.coop/</a>
24	Andalusian Association of Social economy Education Centres		
25	Berziklatu	Spain	<a href="http://www.berziklatu.eus">www.berziklatu.eus</a>
26	ecoBI - Italy	Italy	<a href="http://www.consorzioecobi.eu/">http://www.consorzioecobi.eu/</a>
27	Mondragon	Spain	<a href="https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/fr/">https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/fr/</a>
28	CLADE Group	Spain	<a href="http://www.grupclade.com/">http://www.grupclade.com/</a>
29	Initiatives et cité	France	<a href="https://initiativesetcite.com/">https://initiativesetcite.com/</a>
30	Navarre Social Innovation Unit	Spain	<a href="https://economiasocialnavarra.com/innovacion-social/">https://economiasocialnavarra.com/innovacion-social/</a>

(1) Not working presently.

(2) Not an individual website.

## Appendix IV: Extensive list of potential CSEI

Remark: not all listed clusters were subject of assessment in this report. Clusters listed below were collected during the meetings, activities or research activities of this working group. Still, being listed here, is not an automatic recognition by the Commission as cluster or a labelling as CSEI. Therefore an application should be done in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

### *Extended list of potential CSEI*

Name of the Cluster	Country	ECCP registered	Cluster Website
The 56 "Pôles territoriaux de coopération économique" (PTCE)	France		<a href="http://lelabo-ess.org/poles-territoriaux-de-cooperation-economique-36-.html">http://lelabo-ess.org/poles-territoriaux-de-cooperation-economique-36-.html</a>
Some are listed below:			
- Coursive Boutaric (Quartier des Grésilles, Dijon) - PTCE	France		<a href="https://www.la-coursive.fr/le-lieu">https://www.la-coursive.fr/le-lieu</a>
- Domb'Innov (territoire Dombes-Saône-Côtière de l'Ain) - PTCE	France		<a href="https://www.dombinnov.fr/">https://www.dombinnov.fr/</a>
- Lille Métro Pôle Solidaire (Métropole Européenne de Lille, Région Nord-Pas de Calais) - PTCE	France		<a href="https://www.lillemetropole.fr/votre-metropole/competences/developpement-territorial-et-social/economie-et-emploi/economie-sociale">https://www.lillemetropole.fr/votre-metropole/competences/developpement-territorial-et-social/economie-et-emploi/economie-sociale</a>
- InnoVales (Saint-Pierre-en-Faucigny, Vallée de l'Arve,	France		<a href="https://www.innovales.fr/">https://www.innovales.fr/</a>

Grand Genève Français) - PTCE			
Fe2i - PTCE Val de Fensch	France		<a href="http://FluxEconomiquesInterentreprises(fe2i.fr)">Flux Economiques Inter-entreprises (fe2i.fr)</a>
- Le Périscope (Ramonville, Communauté d'agglomération du Sicoval) - PTCE	France		<a href="https://www.le-periscope.coop/">https://www.le-periscope.coop/</a>
- Pôle Sud Aquitain (Sud des Landes/Pays Basques, Canton de Seignanx, Landes) - PTCE	France		<a href="https://ptcesudaquitaine.coop/">https://ptcesudaquitaine.coop/</a>
Base 202	Italy		<a href="http://www.base202.it/">http://www.base202.it/</a>
Circular Communities Scotland Re-Use consortium	Scotland, UK		<a href="https://www.crns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Consortium-Impact-report-October-2019.pdf">https://www.crns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Consortium-Impact-report-October-2019.pdf</a>
DFBA Community Enterprises CLG	Ireland		<a href="http://www.dunhillecopark.com">www.dunhillecopark.com</a>
Impact City - The Hague	The Netherlands		<a href="https://impactcity.nl">https://impactcity.nl</a>
Grennessminde	Denmark		<a href="http://www.gminde.dk/">www.gminde.dk /</a> <a href="http://www.coenhagendome.dk">www.coenhagendome.dk</a>
Vierwerk / 4Werk	Belgium		<a href="https://4werk.be/">https://4werk.be/</a>
The Partnership for social innovation in Örebro County	Sweden		<a href="https://utveckling.regionorebrolan.se/PartnershipSI">https://utveckling.regionorebrolan.se/PartnershipSI</a>
Le Cluster ESS Grande Région	Luxembourg		<a href="http://www.clusteress-gr.eu/">http://www.clusteress-gr.eu/</a>
Elephant path	UK		<a href="http://elephantpath.citymined.org">http://elephantpath.citymined.org</a>
Pfefferwerk Foundation & Pfefferberg	Germany		<a href="http://www.stpw.org">www.stpw.org</a>
Grupo Empresarial de Cooperativas de Enseñanza en la Región de Murcia	Spain		<a href="http://Ucoerm.es">Ucoerm.es</a>
The Rediscovery Centre - The Irish National Centre for the Circular Economy	Ireland		<a href="http://www.rediscoverycentre.ie">www.rediscoverycentre.ie</a>
Lapland - Arctic Social Economy Cluster	Finland	YES	<a href="https://articsmartness.eu/publications/">https://articsmartness.eu/publications/</a>
Lithuanian Social Innovation Cluster (LSIC)	Lithuania	YES	<a href="http://www.lsik.lt/en/">http://www.lsik.lt/en/</a>
Atelier El Costurero (Proyecto Abraham IKEAMurcia)	Spain		<a href="http://www.proyectoabraham.org">www.proyectoabraham.org</a>
Rummelig imidt / Labour inclusion in the Region	Denmark		<a href="https://www.rummeligimidt.dk/">https://www.rummeligimidt.dk/</a>
Figeacteurs - PTCE	France		<a href="http://www.figeacteurs.fr/">http://www.figeacteurs.fr/</a>
Silicon Vilstal	Germany	YES	<a href="https://siliconvilstal.de/">https://siliconvilstal.de/</a>
VONNE - Social Innovation Cluster	UK		<a href="https://www.vonne.org.uk/">https://www.vonne.org.uk/</a>
KaléidosCOOP	France		<a href="http://www.kaleidos.coop">http://www.kaleidos.coop</a>
Comptoir des ressources creatives	Belgium		<a href="https://www.comptoirdesressourcescreatives.be/">https://www.comptoirdesressourcescreatives.be/</a>
Clusters Eco-construction or 'Grappes d'entreprises' Wallonie: Mons, Huy et Luxembourg	Belgium		<a href="https://clusters.wallonie.be/ecoconstruction-fr/grappes-d-entreprises.html?IDC=6466">https://clusters.wallonie.be/ecoconstruction-fr/grappes-d-entreprises.html?IDC=6466</a>
Coopolis, Ateneu (athenaeum) Cooperatiu de Barcelona	Spain		<a href="http://www.bcn.coop">www.bcn.coop</a>
Asociacion proyecto Lazaro	Spain		<a href="http://www.proyectorlazarro.org">www.proyectorlazarro.org</a>
Gebiedscoöperatie Westerkwartier	Netherlands	YES	<a href="https://gebiedscooperatie.info/">https://gebiedscooperatie.info/</a>
ANE (Navarra Social Economy Cluster)	Spain		<a href="http://www.anel.es">www.anel.es</a> <sup>(2)</sup>

CEDRA (national cluster association)	Croatia	YES	<a href="https://www.cedra.hr/">https://www.cedra.hr/</a>
CEDRA Association for Creative Development Osijek Waterfall	Croatia		<a href="https://slap.hr/cedra-hr/">https://slap.hr/cedra-hr/</a>
DESA: Regional Center for Community Building and Civil Society Development Dubrovnik	Croatia		<a href="https://desa-dubrovnik.hr/">https://desa-dubrovnik.hr/</a>
CTK Rijeka: Centar tehničke kulture Rijeka	Croatia		<a href="https://www.ck-rijeka.hr/hr">https://www.ck-rijeka.hr/hr</a>
Cluster for Eco-Social Innovation and Development CEDRA Split	Croatia		<a href="https://www.cedra.hr/klaster/">https://www.cedra.hr/klaster/</a>
GOEL - Cooperative Group	Italy		<a href="https://en.goel.coop/">https://en.goel.coop/</a>
Andalusian Association of Social Economy Education Centres	Spain		
Berziklatu	Spain		<a href="http://www.berziklatu.eus">www.berziklatu.eus</a>
ecoBI - Italy	Italy		<a href="http://www.consorzioecobi.eu/">http://www.consorzioecobi.eu/</a>
Mondragon	Spain		<a href="https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/fr/">https://www.mondragon-corporation.com/fr/</a>
Alaturi de Voi Romania Foundation (ADV Romania) / Accelerator of Social Enterprises Cluster	Romania	YES	<a href="https://alaturidevoi.ro/">https://alaturidevoi.ro/</a>
CLADE Group	Spain		<a href="http://www.grupclade.com/">http://www.grupclade.com/</a>
Smart and Sustainable Arctic Tourism Cluster	Finland	YES	<a href="https://arcticsmartness.eu/smart-and-sustainable-arctic-tourism/">https://arcticsmartness.eu/smart-and-sustainable-arctic-tourism/</a>
Arctic Smartness Rural Community	Finland	YES	<a href="https://arcticsmartness.eu/arctic-smart-rural-community/">https://arcticsmartness.eu/arctic-smart-rural-community/</a>
Initiatives et cité	France		<a href="https://initiativesetcite.com/">https://initiativesetcite.com/</a>
Navarre Social Innovation Unit	Spain		<a href="https://economiasocialnavarra.com/innovacion-social/">https://economiasocialnavarra.com/innovacion-social/</a>
Torino Social Impact	Italy	YES	<a href="https://www.torinosocialimpact.it/">https://www.torinosocialimpact.it/</a>
Teple Misto	Ukraine		<a href="https://www.warm.if.ua/en">https://www.warm.if.ua/en</a>
Impact Noord	The Netherlands	YES	<a href="https://impactnoord.nl/">https://impactnoord.nl/</a>
Circularium	Belgium		<a href="http://www.circularium.be/fr/">http://www.circularium.be/fr/</a>
WAAG Society	The Netherlands		<a href="https://waag.org/">https://waag.org/</a>
Fondazione Innovazione Urbana	Italy		<a href="https://fondazioneinnovazioneurbana.it/en/">https://fondazioneinnovazioneurbana.it/en/</a>
Fondazione Comunità de Messina	Italy	YES	<a href="http://www.fdcmessina.org/#slider-5">http://www.fdcmessina.org/#slider-5</a>
Klastr sociálních inovací a podniků ( Social INnovation and Enterprise Cluster: SINEC)	Czech Republic		<a href="https://www.klastr-socialnich-podniku.cz/">https://www.klastr-socialnich-podniku.cz/</a>
Darwin Camp Bordeaux	France		<a href="https://darwin.camp/?doing_wp_cr on=1619703883.7630610466003417968750">https://darwin.camp/?doing_wp_cr on=1619703883.7630610466003417968750</a>
PROGRESSUS	Poland		<a href="http://progressus.info/o-projekcie.html">http://progressus.info/o-projekcie.html</a>
The Szczecinek District NGO Cluster	Poland		<a href="https://porozumieniesamorzadowe.powiatszczecinecki.info/">https://porozumieniesamorzadowe.powiatszczecinecki.info/</a>
CASPEV -The Custer of social entrepreneurship in Vojvodina <sup>61</sup>	Serbia		<a href="http://kaspev.net/Home">http://kaspev.net/Home</a>

<sup>61</sup> [https://clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/WYSIWYG\\_uploads/cluster\\_of\\_social\\_entrepreneurship\\_in\\_vojvodina\\_-\\_caspev.pdf](https://clustercollaboration.eu/sites/default/files/WYSIWYG_uploads/cluster_of_social_entrepreneurship_in_vojvodina_-_caspev.pdf)

Cieszyn Social Cluster (activity unknown)	Poland		/
Lower Silesian Cluster of Social Initiatives (activity unknown)	Poland		/
Łomża Social Economy Cluster (activity unknown)	Poland		/
Nadodrzański Social Economy Cluster (activity unknown)	Poland		/
Lower Carpathians Social Economy Cluster (activity unknown)	Poland		/
Shopkeepers Artisans and Production Marketing Cooperative <i>Esnaf Zanaatkarlar ve Üreticiler Pazarlama Kooperatifi</i>	Cyprus	YES	/
Social Cluster "Heritage Trail", Social Enterprises Cluster in Walbrzych (activity unknown)	Poland		/
PTCE FE2I	France		<a href="https://www.fe2i.fr/ptce-florange-e2i/">https://www.fe2i.fr/ptce-florange-e2i/</a>
"Growth platform Social Entrepreneurship" - De Punt	Belgium		<a href="https://www.depunt.be/">https://www.depunt.be/</a>
Sumando Empleo Aragon	Spain		<a href="https://sumandoempleoaragon.org/">https://sumandoempleoaragon.org/</a>
Cooperative cluster	Bulgaria		<a href="https://cluster.coop">https://cluster.coop</a>

## Appendix V: EUSES session on CSEI

### **Session introduction**

The cluster model is characterised by a consistent set of common interests, values and principles and different forms of cooperation among its members to pursue them. Therefore, it can be a valuable model to social economy enterprises that search for new strategies and development perspectives, especially having as a background the socio-ecological transition locally. This workshop wants to give an insight in the model of Clusters of Social & Ecological Innovation, developed by a GECES sub-working group.

### **CSEI cases:**

- Gerd De Wilde, Circularium - Brussels, Belgium
- Giovanni Ginocchini, Director Fondazione Innovazione Urbana Bologna - Italy
- Vojtěch Camřra, President, Klastř sociálních inovací a podniků (Social Innovation and Enterprise Cluster: SINEC) - Czech Republic
- Hugues Sibille, Labo de l'ESS – Le modèle des PTCE & Rapporteur GECES Working group 'Clusters of Social & Ecological Innovation' - France

### **Panel discussion**

Chair: Miss Vereadora Ana Umbelino, Rapporteur GECES Working group 'Clusters of Social & Ecological Innovation'

- Antonio Novo - European Cluster Alliance Antonio Novo, Spain.
- Peter Czaga - Policy officer DG GROW Cluster Policy, European Commission
- Katarzyna Rull Quesada, President of the UNIMOS Foundation (institutional coordinator of AgroBioCluster), researcher at the Warsaw School of Economics – Poland

<https://www.euses2020.eu/programme/>

## List of figures and copyright pictures

Figure 1: © European Union, Mapping of 3000 clusters in the EU, ECCP, 2020 .....	14
Figure 2: Typology of social economy clusters, Matray and Poisat, 2015 .....	16
Figure 3: Cluster characteristics that can affect the creation of technology transfer and the adoption of technologies by social entrepreneurship, Gerli et al., 2021 .....	19
Figure 4: analytical dimensions of transferability, authors, 2021 .....	46
Figure 5: © KaleidosCOOP, 2021 .....	48
Figure 6: © Teple Misto and Trans Europe Halles,, 2018 .....	49
Figure 7: © Circularium, 2021 .....	50
Figure 8: © GOEL Group, 2021 .....	52
Figure 9: © Silicon Vilstal, Liane Hoder, 2019 .....	54
Figure 10: © 4-Werk, 2020 .....	57
Figure 11: © Cooperative Cluster, 2021 .....	59
Figure 12: © Cabi, 2020, Employer and new employee, thanks to the Lolland-Falster recruitment project. ....	61
Figure 13: © Presentation ECA, Jan Willem Wennekes, 2020 .....	62
Figure 14: © Torino Social Impact, 2019 .....	63
Figure 15: © Fe2i, 2018 .....	65
Figure 16: © Circular Communities Scotland, 2021 .....	67
Figure 17: © European Union, Services of the ECCP (screenshot), ECCP, 2021 .....	77

## List of graphics

Graphic 1 - Clusters priorities ranking .....	34
Graphic 2 - Most frequent <sup>(1)</sup> types of services provided to clusters members .....	35

## List of tables

Table 1 - Clusters' questionnaire descriptive and analytical dimensions .....	28
Table 2 - Number of Clusters per country .....	29
Table 3 - Clusters age .....	30
Table 4 - Clusters phase of development .....	30

Table 5 - Type of entity that initiated the cluster .....	31
Table 6 - Clusters geographical scope .....	31
Table 7 - Clusters' formation, per Type .....	32
Table 8 - Number of clusters per composition .....	32
Table 9 - Cluster classification per number of members .....	33
Table 10 - Type of cluster main target group .....	35
Table 11 - Clusters with single Target groups.....	35
Table 12 - Type of cluster leadership .....	36
Table 13 - Existence of a cluster manager .....	36
Table 14 - Number of clusters, per number of staff.....	37
Table 15 - Clusters' sources of income, per type.....	37
Table 16 - Clusters' type of income, per source of origin .....	37
Table 17 - Clusters relation with public support .....	38
Table 18 - Type of public support that clusters benefit from.....	38
Table 19 - Fees paid by the clusters' members .....	38
Table 20 - Annual budget values .....	39
Table 21 - Number of clusters that identified innovation aspects .....	40
Table 22 - Number of clusters that identified innovation dimensions (per type) .....	40
Table 23 - Economic innovation .....	41
Table 24 - Social innovation.....	42
Table 25 - Governance innovation .....	43
Table 26 - Ecological innovation .....	44
Table 27 - Number of Clusters whose model has been disseminated .....	45
Table 28 - Cluster internationalisation .....	45
Table 29 - Identified facilitating factors for clusters model dissemination .....	46

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- at the following standard number: +32 22999696, or
- by email via: [https://europa.eu/european-union/contact\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/contact_en)

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