

Investing in the future through Social and Solidarity Economy



POLICY BRIEF • APRIL 2018

People in Europe and around the world are living in an era of multiple crises, in which education and employment are challenged by great social inequalities, unsustainable technological developments and a dysfunctional economic and financial system, leading to exploitation, precarious employment and worsening living conditions, due to climate change, pollution and depletion of natural resources.

Decent living conditions for everyone across the globe are not compatible with our prevailing economic path: a new social paradigm is needed and Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) can play a vital role in making cooperation and community wellbeing the foundations of our life, rather than competition and individual profits.

About the project

The SSE.IVET project is funded by Erasmus+ Programme and supported by the ideas that SSE is an alternative to the current socio-economic model and that Initial Vocational and Educational Training (IVET) is a tool to achieve social change, as new generations should be familiarised with SSE values and principles, democratic management and ethical and solidarity finance. For this reason, a group of civil society organisations, associations and social enterprises from seven European countries¹ - involved in the field of SSE and part of training agencies and the European SSE network (RIPESS) - have been working for the last two years to include SSE in IVET curricula and to disseminate collaboration and solidarity principles through training, aiming to inspire teenagers in becoming active promoters of a fairer and more liveable future.

SSE.IVET aims to draw policy and decision-makers' attention to the package of tested training modules intended to innovate IVET curricula, pedagogical approach and training practices.

Why SSE and what is it?

Social and Solidarity Economy is increasingly offering a vibrant and promising socio-economic model worldwide. It is a transformative, critical, concrete and plural approach towards all socio-economic activities that promotes democracy at workplace and community levels, emancipatory relations, cultural diversity, social justice and environmentally safe and local/decentralised development, thus meeting the 2030 Agenda principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²

Although there isn't a unique definition of SSE at European level, SSE.IVET developed a clear definition and delineation of SSE organisations.

¹ Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Romania.

² 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015.

These are organisations³ that produce goods and services and have a value-based approach:

- They are part of networks and production-distribution chains
- They promote a participative and democratic structure, set up by citizens' initiatives
- They pursue social, cultural and ecological objectives
- They carry out economic activities for social benefit (not for private gain)

Why should SSE be included in IVET trainees' curricula?

A change in paradigm requires a change in consciousness, a new work mind-set and skills development. This is why education and training are a fundamental part of this process; especially programs as IVET, which are aimed at young people in the most delicate phase of their formation.

IVET is indeed designed to provide younger individuals with professional qualifications to assume an active role in the redefinition of the labour market, to create equal opportunities and to encourage cooperation. Due to the current socio-economic crisis and the traditional economic system, the youth is faced with growing unemployment or underemployment and there is a high rate of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) and school drop outs⁴ in many European countries.

Hence, IVET curricula need to be innovative, in order to meet local development needs with new strategies and to provide younger people skills from different vocational areas.

Although SSE is nowadays hardly mentioned in training curricula, SSE and IVET have certain common aspects: development of key citizenship competences, attention to soft skills development (such as social and civic competences, initiative and entrepreneurship, awareness and cultural expression) and attention to peer to peer methodologies.

Framing SSE training

For the past three semesters, the SSE.IVET project comprehended the following stages:

- A mapping of opportunities and constraints of IVET in partner countries and at EU level
- A common package of IVET training modules on SSE, focused on three basic topics: "*Values and Principles of SSE*", "*Democratic Management*" and "*Ethical and Solidarity Financing and Resources*".
- Three pilot-trainings involving teenagers from all seven partner countries, to test the modules and evaluate them - thanks to a shared effort of partners, trainees, trainers and interested stakeholders coming from SSE and IVET contexts.

The mapping of the results showed that the IVET curricula are mostly under the State's responsibility and are framed as the reference for schools or training centres/ agencies. Based on a combination of skills, competences and acquired knowledge, IVET curricula focus on learning outcomes and include a contents list necessary for their attainment and also an evaluation system.

As the curricula are not formatted to SSE, the trainers apply the directives of the National Education System; however, they have a degree of autonomy in integrating new topics. This appears to be the option for IVET providers that are part of the Third Sector.

In some countries (Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic and Italy) IVET systems involve employers and trade unions. However, policy-makers need to act in order to respond with more flexibility to the needs of the labour market, by making decisions according to the values and principles of SSE.

³ CIRIEC International; Centre International de Recherches et d'Information sur l'Economie Publique Sociale et Coopérative (2017). *Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union*.

⁴ According to SSE.IVET Mapping Report (2017). *Mapping Opportunities and Constraints for affirming SSE in IVET curricula*. "There are significant difference between low rates of school drop outs (Germany and Czech Republic - 6 to 7%) versus countries with higher rates (Italy, Portugal and Bulgaria - 13 to 15 %) to dramatically high (Greece and Romania - up to 20%), with a gap between men and women: young men leave school more often than young women".

Conclusions

Social and Solidarity Economy is a concrete socio-economic approach to address the structural underpinnings of exclusionary and unsustainable development, which can play a crucial role in the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through concrete social, institutional and technological innovations and practices.

Therefore, SSE.IVET supports the United Nations Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (TFSSE) in recognising the need to mobilise and bring together States, SSE organisations, networks and civil society into a worldwide movement meant to reassert social control - by prioritising social objectives over profit maximisation, through SSE as a vital form of economy that is focused on social protection and equality. The involvement of youth to create a cultural shift towards equality, sustainability and a renovated European citizenship is crucial for the future.

SSE.IVET will be doing its part to achieve this goal and is committed to promote the collaboration between the IVET sector, SSE organisations and institutions. In particular, SSE.IVET aims to:

- Identify the skills, capacities and abilities offered by the SSE
- Deepen the identification of indicators that can help to better define the field of SSE
- Promote the collaboration among IVET and SSE by collecting the existing SSE initiatives and enterprises that are ready to welcome young people in training.

Political representatives sharing these goals can help achieve them by adopting the following recommendations.

Recommendations

At the European level:

- Implement article 1 of the newly approved “European Pillar of Social Rights” promoted by the main EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament and European Council)⁵ through concrete policies that make SSE part of the application of the right to “quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning”; substantiate article 4B: “Young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education”.
- Address SSE as an innovative and concrete element to be added to national educational programme; it ought to follow European standards and provide adequate resources to map existing experiences, test programmes and train teachers and trainers, in collaboration with SSE organisations and IVET providers - through the European Parliament Intergroup on “Social Economy, Social Economy Enterprises, Social Entrepreneurship and Third Sector”⁶.
- Ensure the liaison between the European Parliament Intergroup, GECES (Commission Expert Group on Social Entrepreneurship) and CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), in close collaboration with SSE organisations and networks and other civil society actors.⁷
- Include SSE in the newly proposed Council “Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” (to replace the one adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in 2006),⁸ to encourage SSE in IVET schools through the partnership between SSE organisations and schools at local, national and European levels.

⁵ European Commission (2017). *Deeper and fairer economic and monetary union*. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

⁶ Social Economy. Available online: <http://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/social-economy-intergroup>

⁷ European Commission. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises/expert-groups_it
https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies/cedefop_en

⁸ European Commission (2018). Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelong-learning.pdf>

At the national level:

- Build or strengthen a cooperative coordination mechanism among institutional and SSE actors to collaborate in the recognition of SSE skills, capacities and abilities as part of National Qualification Systems and promote their integration in the European Qualification Framework (EQF).
- Take into account the European tendency to develop work-based learning with part-time schooling, add SSE in secondary schools and IVET curricula (including traineeships opportunities) in SSE organisations, in order to experience a more cooperative and socially oriented entrepreneurial environment.
- Recognise the importance of SSE in IVET curricula as a vector of skills to be developed by youth, to find their vocational area, to experience collaborative forms of work, to relocate sustainable production-distribution chains and to improve local communities - thus preventing NEETs and the increase of unemployment and underemployment rates.

Within the national and local education systems:

- Inform younger people of the existence of social solidarity economy in all relevant programmes and make them aware of the possibility of becoming actors and promoters, through self-managed entrepreneurial and professional experiences. The resulting work opportunities, created through the SSE approach, will favour both the community and the environment in which they live, helping them succeed according to their vocation.
- Develop training for trainers on SSE principles, values and methodologies and coherent pedagogical approaches, moving away from frontal approach and involving trainees in educational relationship with the teachers and peer group dynamics.
- Promote SSE values and principles in mainstreaming IVET curricula through the recognition of credits for trainers who participate in training courses in SSE, educational events and conferences, organised in partnership with SSE actors.

Among national and local SSE actors:

- Promote SSE career guidance courses for young people as an opportunity to get to know SSE values and experiences as an alternative social, economic and cultural model; they should include a series of activities, such as visits to social enterprises, volunteer programs, mentoring programs in SSE organisations, etc.

Partners and funding



With the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union

For further information, please contact: info@apdes.pt